What is Altruism?

- Benefiting another at one's own expense
- Risking or losing one's life to save another
- Selfless helping
- Think of some instances of selfless helping….
What is Pro-Social Behavior?

• Helping others
  – Donating time, effort, or money
  – Volunteering
  – Helping in an emergency
  – Helping in a non-emergency
  – Cooperating rather than competing

How Did Social Psychologists Get Interested in Pro-Social Behavior?

• Murder of Kitty Genovese
  – March 13, 1964; 3:15am
  – Kew Gardens, in Queens, NYC
  – 38 witnesses; no one helped

"We thought it was a lover’s quarrel," said one tenant. "Frankly, we were afraid," said another witness. One woman who didn’t want her name used said, "I didn’t want my husband to get involved." Others had different explanations for their conduct. "We went to the window to see what was happening, but the light from our bedroom made it difficult to see the street," There were lots of excuses. Maybe the most apathetic was the one who told reporters, "I was tired." But the fact remained that dozens of people stood by and watched a woman being brutally assaulted for an extended period of time, and did nothing.
A Social Psychological Account of the “Bystander Effect”

- Tended to be dispositional
  - “Typical New Yorkers”
  - “What do you expect from people in a big city?”
- Two social psychologists, Bibb Latané and John Darley, thought that perhaps the social situation may have had a lot to do with it.

What is the “Bystander Effect”

- The more bystanders that are present, the less likely any one of them will act to help
  - Note: This is NOT saying, the more people present the less likely the victim will receive help
  - Why?
Reasons for the “Bystander Effect”

• Three main hypotheses:
  – Pluralistic ignorance
    • We look to others to see how to act
  – Social inhibition
    • We don’t want to draw negative attention to ourselves
  – Diffusion of responsibility
    • The burden of helping is shared with others

Studies on the Bystander Effect

• Where there’s smoke…
  – 75% of alone Ss reported,
  – 10% of those with confederates reported it
  – 38% in naïve 3-person groups reported it
• Lady in distress
  – 70% of alone subjects responded
  – 7% responded if with a passive confederate
  – 40% of stranger pairs offered help
Studies on the Bystander Effect

• Epileptic seizure
  – 85% of alone subjects responded
  – 31% responded when they thought there were 4 other bystanders
• Pencil dropping in elevators
• Telephone answering
• Does it really need to be an emergency?

Evolutionary Psychology and Pro-Social Behavior

• Kin selection
• Reciprocal altruism
  – Helping strangers
• Real Empathy, real altruism?
  – Dan Batson
• Pro-social personality
  – Paul van Lange