Robustness of Bystander Effect

- Latané & Nida (1981): Ten years of research on the bystander effect
  - Robust across all emergency types and populations
  - While overall helping may increase or decrease because of a variety of issues, the pattern of less helping with bystanders stood up
Danger, Arousal, and the Bystander Effect

• New study by Fischer et al, 2006 (EJSP)
• Asks whether the bystander effect occurs when there is high danger (to victim and/or to potential help-giver)
• They hypothesize that when arousal is high (because of high danger), inhibition of others (bystander effect) recedes

Method

• 86 participants (54 females, 32 males)
• Told they would be assessing degree of sexual interest between couples who were meeting for first time.
• Watched 3 live interactions, and made assessments for each
• Mild flirtation in first two interactions; 3rd interaction contained the experimental manipulation
3rd Interaction

- Female was a 21 year old “petite female” with a fragile physique
- In High Danger condition, her counterpart was a “strong built, thug-like male”
- In Low Danger condition, her counterpart was a “skinny male of small stature”
- Over 5-min interaction:
  - Male: increasing dominance, sexual insinuation, sexual harassment, verbal insult, touching without permission, and shoving her to the wall.
  - Female: defended herself verbally and rejected the perpetrator and his statements. She tries to leave before he shoves her

Bystander Manipulation

- No Bystander
  - Participant was alone in a room watching the 3 videos
- Bystander
  - Participant watched videos with a confederate who feigned disinterest in reacting to the 3rd video
DVs: Helping

- Whether the participant tried to help
  - Leaving the viewing room to seek help or help directly
- How fast they helped (in seconds)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low Danger</th>
<th>High Danger</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>393s</td>
<td>377s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Bystander</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>420s</td>
<td>338s</td>
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</tbody>
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Arousal

- Dangerous situations:
  - Increase empathic arousal
  - Are recognized faster as emergencies
  - Change cost/benefit ratio, such that costs for not helping increase
  - Increase willingness to accept higher personal costs
Conclusions

• More research is needed on high danger situations and the impact of bystanders
• This, as is the case for all the research we have discussed in class, illustrates the point that our knowledge base is constantly evolving and our theories are subject to change as we acquire new information
• “Science marches on”