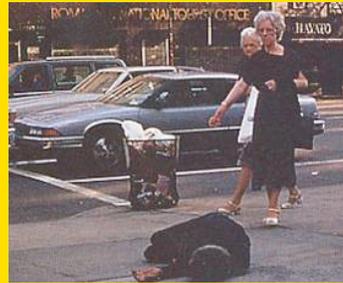


# *Pro-Social Behavior*



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**Psych 240; Fall 2007  
Purdue University  
Prof. Kipling Williams**

## What is Altruism?

- Benefiting another at ones 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

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## 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

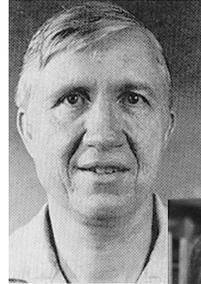


"We thought it was a lover's quarrel!" said one tenant. "Frankly, we were afraid," said another witness. One woman who didn't want her name used said, "I didn't want my husband to get involved." Others had different explanations for their conduct. "We went to the window to see what was happening, but 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”

- Lay person explanation for the lack of help 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.



Bibb Latané



John Darley

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## 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 does this effect occur?

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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?

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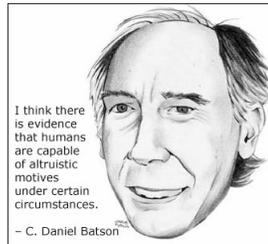
## Robustness of Bystander Effect

- 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

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## Evolutionary Psychology and Pro-Social Behavior

- Kin selection
  - We are more likely to help kin-gene preservation
- Reciprocal altruism
  - Why we might be inclined to help strangers - long-term reciprocation
- Is there real human altruism?
  - Empathy, Dan Batson - A motivational state with the goal of increasing another person's welfare
- Pro-social personality
  - A pre-disposition to be helpful to others, Paul van Lange
- Selfishness (Cialdini)



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## 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 by others (bystander effect) recedes

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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

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## DVs: Helping

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

	Low Danger	High Danger
Alone	50% 393s	44% 377s
With Bystander	5.9% 420s	40% 338s

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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
- Critique?

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## Volunteerism

- “Altruism’s biggest motivator may be selfishness”  
(*American Psychologist*, Dec. 2006)
- 1/3 adult Americans volunteer (Snyder, 2006)
- 5 primary motivations (agendas) for volunteering
  - **Values:** satisfy personal values/humanitarian concerns/religious reasons
  - **Community concern:** one to whom person feels attached
  - **Esteem enhancement:** feel better about self/escape other pressures
  - **Understanding:** gain better understanding of others
  - **Personal development:** challenge self, meet new people
- Empathy or Egoism? Does it really matter?

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