

Capitolo 14

Case Study 1

The more other people that are present, the less responsible for helping every individual feels: Diffusion of responsibility

Darley and Latané (1968) found that the number of bystanders influences the likelihood of helping behavior: The more bystanders there are, the less likely it is they will help. The researchers explain the effect by a diffusion of responsibility: The more bystanders there are, the less responsible every individual feels. However, Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark (1981) explain this effect a bit differently: According to these researchers, the presence of others reduces the costs of not helping. Piliavin et al. (1981) developed the bystander-calculus model, which is a cognitive and physiological explanation of the process that involves a decision whether or not to help in an emergency situation. The model consists of three stages: First, there is physiological arousal. Next, this arousal is labeled as an emotion. Finally the consequences of helping or not helping are evaluated.

In this last stage lies the difference between Darley and Latané's explanation and that of Piliavin et al. In the last stage, potential helpers decide whether or not to help. They evaluate the consequences of helping, and the consequences of not helping. Helping can lead to costs for the helper. But helping also relieves feelings of personal distress. So, the potential helper chooses the action with the lowest costs that reduces his or her personal distress. The two main costs are time and effort: the greater these costs, the less likely it is that the bystander will help. The man who attacked a woman we decide to help might attack us, and therefore we might decide not to help.

However, not helping can also involve costs. Piliavin et al. distinguished between empathy costs and personal costs of not helping. Empathy costs of not helping involve feelings of distress to a bystander who empathizes with a victim's plight. The more we empathize with a victim, the greater the chance that we will help. Personal costs of not helping refer to the costs that not helping might cause: blame, and even penance when it is legally clear that a bystander failed to do his or her civic duty. However, when there are a lot of other bystanders, these last costs are less and therefore there are fewer reasons to help.

References

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- Piliavin, J. A., Dovidio, J. F., Gaertner, S. L., & Clark, R. D. III (1981). *Emergency intervention*. New York: Academic Press.

Case Study 2

Do you know the way to Valentine Street? Priming chivalrous behavior in men

People's gender stereotypes can influence whether or not they engage in prosocial behavior. For example, men are stereotyped as being heroic, chivalrous and strong, whereas women are more often perceived to be helpless and in need of saving. Based on these stereotypes, men (as opposed to women) should be expected to help others in emergency situations. In a clever study by Lamy, Fischer-Lokou, and Guéguen (2010) [DOI: 10.1024/1421-0185/a000019], the extent to which a love prime induces men to engage in more chivalrous behavior was examined.

In this study, a female confederate approached men who were walking alone on the street and asked them for directions to either Valentine Street or Martin Street (both streets were fictitious). After explaining that he didn't know where the street was located, each man walked on and was approached by a second female confederate. This confederate asked the men if they would help her get her phone back from a group of disreputable young men who had taken it from her. The dependent variable was the number of men in each condition who approached the group of young men and asked for the woman's phone back. The results showed that men in the Valentine Street condition were significantly more likely to engage in chivalrous behavior on behalf of the female confederate. These results suggest that priming gender stereotypes can lead men to engage in prosocial behavior designed to help a "damsel in distress." Do women always need saving? Certainly not. But the knowledge that people's prosocial behavior is influenced by the stereotypical expectation that men should help in emergency situations and women should help in relational situations might just come in handy someday.

Reference

- Lamy, L., Fischer-Lokou, J., & Guéguen, N. (2010) [DOI: 10.1024/1421-0185/a000019]. Valentine Street promotes chivalrous helping. *Swiss Journal of Psychology*, 69, 169–172.

Case Study 3

Tainted altruism

Have you ever felt happiness or pride after being praised for helping someone in need? If your helping behavior was motivated to obtain positive feelings from helping another person, then this is an example of egoism. What do you think would happen if other people learned that your prosocial

behavior was guided by self-interested, egoistic motives? Newman and Cain (2014) [DOI: [10.1177/0956797613504785](https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613504785)] conducted a study to determine just how such behavior is perceived. In a set of four studies, Newman and Cain (2014) asked participants to make judgments of people who were described as receiving a personal benefit from a charitable act, or as engaging in a similar behavior that was not charitable. In Study 1, participants read about a man who was described as volunteering at a particular location because a woman that he liked worked there and he wanted to impress her. Participants rated the man as being less moral when he was described as volunteering at a homeless shelter, than when he was described as volunteering at a coffee-shop. So, despite the fact that the man was engaging in charitable behavior by volunteering at a homeless shelter, he was still perceived to be less moral than the man who worked at a coffee shop and did not engage in any charitable behavior at all.

In Study 2, participants read about one of two for-profit organizations. Some of the participants learned that the organization was being hired to raise money for charity, whereas other participants learned that the organization was being hired to raise money for a corporation. The results of this study showed that the organization that raised money for charity, but also took a cut of the proceeds, was perceived to be less moral than the organization that did no charitable work, but raised money for a corporation. In addition, in the charity condition, participants were less willing to hypothetically hire the for-profit company even if doing so would have allowed them to raise more money for charity.

Studies 1 and 2 both provide evidence of what the authors call *tainted altruism* in which “actions that produce both charitable and personal benefits will be evaluated as worse than equivalent self-interested behaviors that produce no charitable benefit” (p. 649).

The results of Study 3 showed that this *tainted altruism* effect is mitigated when you remind people that, even though businesses may donate money because it helps their bottom line, they don't have to engage in this type of behavior. In fact, some charity is better than no charity at all. When framed in this way, participants perceive the companies as more moral than when this information is not included.

Finally, in Study 4, participants read about GAP's (RED) campaign to raise money to stop the spread of infectious disease. As part of this campaign, GAP stores agree to donate 50% of the proceeds they make on certain products to charity. Some of the participants learned about this charitable giving by GAP, whereas other participants read this information as well as the fact that GAP has increased its profits substantially since starting this campaign. Participants in a different condition read all of this information and then were reminded that GAP doesn't need to donate any money to charity. The results again showed that GAP as a company was looked down upon when

the profits they made from the RED campaign were highlighted. In addition, participants indicated less willingness to buy such products from the GAP. In contrast, when the fact that the GAP did not have to engage in charitable behavior was mentioned, the participants perceived the company to be more moral and more likeable.

The results of this research demonstrate that people (and even organizations) that engage in prosocial behavior for egoistic motives are perceived as less moral. So, the next time you expect praise for helping someone in need, you should be sure that the individual you are helping is unaware of your primary motivation.

Reference

- Newman, G. E., & Cain, D. M. (2014). [DOI: [10.1177/0956797613504785](https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613504785)]. Tainted altruism: When doing some good is evaluated as worse than doing no good at all. *Psychological Science*, 25, 648–655.

Case Study 4

Mimicry promotes helping

Mimicry promotes helping. In a series of three studies Van Baaren et al. (2004) showed that when you are being mimicked, helping behavior is increased. First, they showed that participants whose gestures were copied by an interaction partner, helped their interaction partner to a greater extent when the partner accidentally dropped some pens on the floor. In the following studies they showed that this helping behavior is not restricted to the person who mimics. In their second study participants who were being mimicked also helped another person to a greater extent. Finally, they demonstrated that more money was donated to the “clinic clowns” (clowns who entertain children in a children’s hospital) when participants were being mimicked.

These studies showed that people who are being mimicked show an increase in helping behavior. In addition, mimicking (as well as being mimicked) also promotes prosocial behavior. Stel, Van Baaren, and Vonk (2005) showed that participants engaging in mimicry themselves also donated more money.

This can be explained by mimicry causing an empathic mode in people who mimic and are being mimicked. Stel and Vonk (2004) showed that participants become more empathic due to mimicking other people’s facial expressions. Compared to participants who did not mimic, mimickers became more emotionally attuned to the person who was being mimicked. In addition, mimickers could more easily take the perspective of other people.

In another study Stel, Vonk, and Smeets (2005) demonstrated that mimicry also communicated empathy and understanding towards the person who is being mimicked. So while the mimicker

experiences more empathy and understanding for the mimicker, the mimicker feels empathized with and understood. This empathic mode created by mimicry causes mimickers and mimicked to be more helpful towards others (Stel, Van Baaren, & Vonk, 2005).

References

- Stel, M., & Vonk, R. (2004). The social consequences of facial mimicry: Effects on empathy, understanding, feelings of similarity, and liking. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Stel, M., Van Baaren, R., & Vonk, R. (2005). Facial mimicry fosters charity. Manuscript in preparation.
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Case Study 5

Testosterone and prosocial behavior

There are a number of individual differences that influence whether any given person will decide to engage in prosocial behavior. Researchers from the Netherlands set out to determine the influence of testosterone on perceptions of trust and the likelihood of helping in a social interaction. You may be surprised that these researchers were exploring a connection between testosterone and prosocial behavior. After all, testosterone is usually associated with aggressive, dominance-seeking behavior by males. If a situation is not competitive, and there is no need to exert dominance over another, what role does testosterone play?

In their study, Boksem and his colleagues (2013) [DOI: [10.1177/0956797613495063](https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613495063)] had half of their female participants administer a liquid solution containing testosterone or a placebo liquid under their tongues. After waiting for a few hours for the testosterone to take effect (assuming the hormone was present in the liquid) the participants were then asked to play a game in which they had €20 and they could decide to invest some portion of that money in another participant (who was called the *trustee*). The participant/investors were told that whatever money they decided to invest in the trustee would then be tripled, and the trustee could then decide whether or not to give them any money back in return. Once the participant decided how much money (if any) they wanted to invest in the trustee, they then changed roles and played the role of trustee themselves. At this point, all participants were told that a previous participant had decided to invest the full €20 in the trustee,

thereby leaving the participant with €60 (which is the original €20 tripled). The participants were then asked how much money (if any) they would like to give back to the investor.

The results showed that the women who had previously ingested the testosterone solution were less generous in the first stage when deciding how much money to invest in a future trustee. In contrast, women who had received the testosterone were significantly more generous when they subsequently played the role of trustee. In the face of trust and generosity from an investor (who entrusted them with the full €20), the participants gave back generously themselves.

So why does testosterone facilitate stinginess when investing funds in a trustee, but generosity when repaying the trust and kindness of an investor? The authors suggest that, in the initial phase of this study it is not clear to the participant whether any act of kindness by them will be repaid. In such a threatening situation, testosterone leads people to be more competitive, less trusting and more vigilant for betrayals by others. Therefore, in this situation participants invest less money. In contrast, in a situation in which there is no challenge (in fact when there is instead a show of trust and faith), testosterone actually motivates people to more generously reciprocate kindness by the investor. In such situations in the 'real world', status and dominance might be more easily achieved if individuals engage in prosocial, rather than antisocial behavior. For example, people tend to like those who are seen as kind and generous to others and that liking may later translate into higher status for the kind and generous person.

This research suggest that, in certain non-competitive circumstances, we might be able to get ahead by showing that we put the needs of others ahead of our own.

Reference

- Boksem, M. A. S., Mehta, P. H., Van den Bergh, B., van Son, V., Trautmann, S. T., Roelofs, K., Smidts, A., & Sanfey A. G. (2013). [DOI: [10.1177/0956797613495063](https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613495063)]. Testosterone inhibits trust but promotes reciprocity. *Psychological Science*, 24, 2306–2314.