

Introduction to Psychology

APA IPI Tags: Theme 3

Content Area Tags: social psychology, bystander effect, biopsychosocial, perception of others

Estimated Time: 15-30 minutes, depending on depth of discussion

The Bystander Effect

Activity Instructions

The focus of this activity is on the bystander effect. After a brief demonstration, students watch a video on van Barran's research (link is provided). Students then discuss factors (biological, social, psychological, cultural) that might affect helping behavior.

- Some bystander demo, e.g., you or a confederate drop a bunch of pencils and see who helps, if any.?(**Recommend having a confederate do it, as students may be more likely to want to offer help to their instructor!**)
- Discuss who helps and why (not)? Discuss perceptions students had of why others did/didn't help (fundamental attribution error has a cultural basis; did any of them not even notice the dropped pencil – must be paying attention to offer help!; did they decide it was too minor/not a big enough deal to bother offering any help?)
- Describe the research by van Barran:
(http://www.communicationcache.com/uploads/1/0/8/8/10887248/mimicry-a_social_perspective.pdf) that used the pencil dropping paradigm and manipulated mimicking to further discussion of factors that influence helping
- Do as either a large group, or divide students into smaller groups: Highlight/have students highlight the psychological, biological (physical ability, mirror neurons; or own social experiences [could include discrimination]), social (how many others are present? Diffusion of responsibility), and cultural (socialized to believe whether we are responsible for others; individuality) factors that influence bystander intervention
- Can broaden discussion into how biases/prejudice/appearance/culture/perceived identities/own identities affect how we interpret others' need for help, our safety, who needs help, how others perceive us, the likelihood of helping, etc.

Student Learning Objectives

By completing this assignment, you will be able to...

- Recognize that who they are influences their perceptions of others
- Consider how biology, socialization, and culture shape not only self but how we see others

Post-Activity Discussion Questions (follow up activities)

1. Student reflection - take 2 terms from the chapter and apply them to the experience
2. Reflect on at least one psychological, biological, social, and cultural factor that might influence your likelihood of helping

3. Consider whether knowing about the bystander effect might impact your likelihood to help, moving forward

Activity Notes (for Instructors Only)

- Recommend breaking students into smaller groups for the first part of the discussion, then coming back together as a larger group for the second part of the discussion
- Works for asynchronous or synchronous classes
- Can assess mastery simply through participation, or via a reflective writing piece, or, a creative project (e.g., creating a brochure to help people become aware of bystander effect)

Other resources

- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/bystander-effect>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4S1LLrSzVE>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wy6eUTLzcU4>