



Psychology HL 30 min

1. The good Samaritan (Bateson and Darley 1973)

Does religious devotion make a difference in terms of willingness to help fellow human beings? Darley conducted a field experiment in which 40 students at Princeton Theological Seminary were asked to participate in a study of religious education. In the first session, a personality questionnaire concerning religiosity was administered. In a second session, the participant received instruction in one campus building and was then sent to a second building to give a presentation. Some were told to talk about jobs in which seminary students would be effective, and others were asked to speak on the parable of the good Samaritan, a biblical parable about a person who stops to help a stranger. In addition, before they left to give the presentation, some were told that they did not have to hurry, some were told that they had sufficient time, but that they should go to the building directly, and others were told that they were already late and had to hurry. While they were walking to the other building, the participants passed a person who appeared to have passed out in an alleyway. The Independent Variable [IV] (a factor, predicting their behavior) was whether they were told to hurry; the Dependent Variable [DV] (the effect they intended to study) was to what extent the seminarians stopped to help.

The results were that overall 16 (40 per cent) helped: 63 per cent of those in the low-hurry condition, 45 per cent of those in the intermediate hurry condition, and only 10 per cent of those in the late condition. Participants in a hurry were likely to offer less help than those who were not in a hurry.

Whether the participant was going to give a speech on the parable of the good Samaritan or not did not significantly affect helping behavior. Neither did the researchers find any correlation between religiosity and likelihood to help. The decisive factor seemed to be whether they had been told to hurry or not. In other words, it appears that situational rather than dispositional factors played the more significant role in this study.

1. Do you think the results could be applied cross-culturally (in other than US countries)? Why or why not?
2. Explain what were dispositional and situational factors in this study?
3. Provide a real life example of the situation, when social help was provided to somebody, what personal traits of the help provider could explain, why this person decided to help.

