

What is the bystander effect

Society



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Rebecca Aspinwall Professor Patrick Shal 11/05/2012 What is The Bystander Effect? Dr's John M Darley and Bibb Latane are both professors of psychology. Even though they have not attended or worked at the same university, their credibility is equally the same. Their award-winning research was gathered to complete their essay " Why Don't People Help in a Crisis," they suggest the probability of a bystander helping is correlated to the number of bystanders present. Next Darley and Latane state that, " there are three things a bystander must do to intervene in an emergency. First the bystander must be aware of the situation, second the bystander has to establish if the situation is an emergency, and then third they have to decide if it is their duty to intervene and help the person in need (141). Darley and Latane have done an exceptional job on informing the reader, however, their research fails to take into account outside variables which may call into question the validity of their research. The language used in this essay by Darley and Latane " Why Don't People Help in a Crisis" is emotional to say the least.

One of the examples used to inform their readers of the bystanders actions demonstrates their use of emotional appeal with language. Making the subjects relive others horrific situations, the authors are able to portray in an emotionally packed explanation of what happened to the victim in each narrative. For example the first victim they mention, is Kitty Genovese, who was murdered in her home in Kew Gardens, New York. Thirty eight of her neighbors watched her die without helping or even calling nine-one-one (140).

This emotional technique is effective, because the initial impact of this heinous act grabs the reader's attention heightening their arousal. The residual effects are intended to make the reader feel sympathy for the victim. Thus taking a more shock and awe approach the authors use emotional language to engage the reader into the topic. The intended audience is students and professors of psychology, which would constitute an audience whom is well educated with specific psychology erminology and references like " Apathy" and " Indifference", however, the language betrays this notion of a specific audience since it is fairly easily understood among the general population. The authors involve simple phrases like " lose your cool" or " sleeping of a drunk" to make the article easy to follow (142). Therefore the author's intended audience was a highly educated group of the population, however, it was written with the intent to intrigue the general public.

Using an ethical approach the authors make the reader self reflect upon their own moral judgment. The authors asked ethical questions that forces the reader to become personally related to the topic, Questions such as " How can so many people watch anotherhuman beingin distress and do nothing? ' Why don't they help? ' We needn't feel guilty, or re-examine ourselves or anything like that. Or should we? " (141). The authors use of moral questions brings the reader to very front line of the topic ethically and has without a doubt a very effective result.

The reader is not able to remain an objective party but becomes subjective to the point where they begin to question whether or not they themselves would have the same reactions as the bystanders in the examples or if they

would help in an emergency? This moral examination is a good strategy for persuasion, because it engages the reader to become subjective. The authors do a wonderful job in appealing to emotion, by using individual stories of tragic events instead of multiple stories. The authors persuade their readers by giving a face to the victims.

As a result the reader becomes emotionally involved in the article and is just what the authors intended to capture their audiences attention. Another persuading technique is the appeal to logic because of the use of inductive reasoning in gathering evidence . The authors experiment with test subjects to find answers as to why bystanders don't help in an emergency? They've drawn a conclusion, from the experiments of the bystanders actions which depends on the number of people around at that time. If the bystander was in a large crowded area the probability of helping a victim in need is slim.

But if the bystander is alone than the odds of helping the victim is greater (141). The authors begins the essay with a specific case using Kitty Genovese as an example and then states another specific case with Andrew Mormille (140). Next the authors draws hasty generalizations to conclude that bystanders don't help if they are surrounded by others. Darley and Latane use a sufficient amount of reliable evidence when they use their experiments as a way to explain their theory. Darley and Latane do not give any other information about the experiments, other than stating that there was " 72 college students" (143).

But the authors do give information about the test results. One of the experiments used in the essay was completed with 40 people who were paid two dollars each to participate in the research. First the authors used an <https://assignbuster.com/what-is-the-bystander-effect/>

attractive young woman to lead the test subjects into a room. Then separated them so that the test subjects were alone and had a divider wall between them and the young woman. Next the woman pretends to have an accident and called out for help, seventy percent of the subjects who were alone offered their help .

The next experiment they tried was to see if the subjects would offer help if they were paired up with other subjects and the results were drastically different " 8 out of 40" subjects " offered to help. " and " the other 32 remained unresponsive" (143). The experiment used in this statement was used in an ethical appeal because most individuals would like to assume that they would help in a situation like the one mentioned, but given the results the individuals would mostly agree with the authors. The authors don't give much attention to the possibility to variables that may have changed the dynamics of their research.

An example of one of these variables is location. In our popularculturetoday, people are more susceptible to believe the validity of the research if the location is taken into effect. The bystanders in New York may be different then the bystanders in Minnesota and vice versa. Another example of a variable that could have an effect on the responses of bystanders could be group dynamics such as age, socio-economic status, and many more. Another effective suggestion is if the authors gave the readers examples of ways to improve their behaviors o help people in need instead of stating that bystanders have an " apparent indifference of others. " and also stating that " We can choose to see distress and step forward to relive it" (145). This statement would have been more believable if the authors showed examples

how to step forward and change the behaviors of not helping. Overall, the authors have done an effective job informing their readers about the probability of a crowded bystander not helping someone in need. The authors used the emotional appeal to capture their readers attention, and used their logical reasoning to convince their readers.

This informational essay was published in *Arguing Across the Disciplines: A Rhetoric and Reader*, because of the eye opening reactions intended for the readers. But the authors don't pay any attention to the variables used in the experiments. For example the location, age and race of the subjects could have made a huge difference in the results. Work Cited Darley, John M. , and Bibb Latane. " Why People Dont Help in a Crisis. " *Arguing Across the disciplines: A Rhetoric and Reader*. Ed. Stuart Hirschberg and Terry Hirschberg. New York: Pearson Longman, 2007. 140-45. Print