

# Essay on the strange case of matthew buford

[Environment](#), [Water](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## Question B

People are bound to react differently in response to a crisis. A decision on whether to intervene or not depends on an individual's impression that the situation is an emergency or not. In order to determine whether or not to intervene, an individual goes through three steps. This includes: noticing the event, determining whether it is an emergency and deciding on whether it is their moral responsibility to act (Miserandino, 2007). In Mathew Buford's case, the response exhibited by the videographer, the rescue team and the couples is reminiscent of what happens in many emergency crises.

The videographer, just like most of the bystanders at Fairmont Park, did not intervene to save Buford. Instead, he stood by to record the action on video. The bystanders felt that since the police and the fire rescue team were already on the ground, there was no need to get involved. This crowd behavior is referred to as deferred responsibility. The park was filled to capacity at the moment, but the fact that there were other people in the park made them less likely to intervene. People in a group tend to watch what others are doing before whether to intervene or not (Miserandino, 2007).

The rescue team did not physically restrain Buford from jumping off the bridge. The rescue team tried to act cool by talking down Buford. They tried very much not to lose their composure in the public. This allowed danger to mount to a point whereby the couples, unaffected by the seemingly calm situation, took the cue from Buford and predicted that he could jump into the river. The bystanders forced inaction through implying that the situation was

not an emergency hence it did not require quick intervention. As a result, the members of the rescue team did not want to make a fool of themselves by acting out of control. They were also worried about interfering with Buford's privacy. This is characteristic of many people who feel that it is poor manners to try and look closely at others in public, leave alone help them.

The couples intervened because they noticed the event, interpreted it as an emergency and felt that it was their responsibility to act. Conversely, if people do not see the event, they cannot interpret it as an emergency hence they are unlikely to help (Miserandino, 2007). The training of both couples one of them is a medical student while the other is a lifeguard played a key role in taking the cue from Buford, and interpreting that he was likely to jump. The moral obligation to save a life overcomes fear of disrupting another person's privacy. It happens that people look around to see what other people are doing before deciding on whether to help or not. People who respond to intervene in an emergency believe that they have a personal responsibility. The fact that one of the couples suggested they would dive into the river and rescue the victim if he jumped off into the river influenced the behavior of the other. This prompted the couple to make a decision to save Buford as they felt morally responsible.

Group behavior has the capacity to influence response to an emergency. If people appear unconcerned about the going on, no one would be interested in helping out. Deferred responsibility also plays a role here as many people would expect another person to act. In order to intervene, people go through three basics steps; noticing the event, interpreting it as an emergency and

having the personal conscience to act. The set of the three steps combined; with the moral responsibility to save Buford's life prompted the couple to help out Buford.

## **References**

Miserandino, M. (2007). *Insights Social Psychology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.