



PSYCHOLOGY

Bridging Work

Deadline: final lesson in the week commencing 9 September

Task



1. Read through the classic Psychology conducted by Jane A Piliavin in 1969.
2. Can you identify any strengths about the way in which the study was carried out? List as many as you can think of and explain why you think each one is a strength.
3. Can you identify any limitations about the way in which the study was carried out? List as many as you can think of and explain why you think each one is a limitation
4. Do you think we will get the same findings if the study was repeated today? Explain why or why not

Background

This research came about after 28-year-old Kitty Genevese was assaulted and stabbed to death outside her apartment building in 1964. After the murder, The New York Times reported that 38 witnesses didn't call the police. The idea that so many people witnessed the crime yet still failed to help shocked many and led psychologists to investigate why people don't immediately jump to the rescue when they hear about or see a crime.

They put two theories forth to try and explain this phenomenon: 'the bystander effect' and 'diffusion of responsibility'.

The Bystander Effect suggests that people are less likely to help someone with other people around.

Diffusion of Responsibility suggest If there are several bystanders, each bystander feels their responsibility decreases.

Piliavin (1969) designed and conducted a field experiment investigating these factors. Her key question was "*Why would someone be less likely to help someone with other people around?*"

She suggested a number of possible reasons:

1. If no one else is helping, the individual believes the situation is **not** an emergency.
2. They fear others will unfavourably judge them.
3. Diffusion of responsibility.
- 4.

Procedure

Piliavin et al. conducted the study on a seven-and-a-half-minute journey between **two** New York City subway stations. The subway did not stop at stations in between. There were **103 trials** (times the experiment was repeated) conducted in total. In total, there were about **4450 participants**.

Four researchers (two male and two female) got on the subway for each trial. The female researchers sat down and took notes.

One male researcher played the 'victim' while the other male was a 'helper'.

Four males played the victim role (**three white and one black**). In 38 trials, the victim smelled of alcohol and carried alcohol in a brown bag (drunk condition). In 65 trials, the victim was sober and carried a cane (ill condition). All the victim males took part in both conditions.

The study was set up so that the victim collapsed after the subway passed the first station, which took approximately 70 seconds. There were then two conditions:

- **'No help' condition:** The helper did nothing to help the victim until the train arrived at the destination station. The helper then helped the victim to his feet.
- **'Help' condition:** The helper assisted the victim.

The researcher sitting down and taking notes did not only take quantitative data such as the number of people helping and the number of seconds needed for help to be provided. Qualitative data was also gathered, which included the words and comments that the participants expressed throughout the experiment.

Controls

The study presented a number of **control variables**:

- The victims all dressed the same and behaved the same way, so all participants were exposed to the same standardised behaviour.
- The scenario took place between the same two subway stations in New York City.
- Victims were always male

Results

An ill person is more likely to receive help than a drunk person. In both conditions, men were more likely to help than women. In the ill condition, there was no difference in the amount of help given to black and white males. In the drunk condition, the victim was more likely to receive help from those of his ethnicity.

Across the trials, in **60% of cases**, the help received was from more than one person. After one person approached to help, the results found that two, three, or even more people quickly followed. However, the longer the victim did not receive help, the people were more likely to move away from victim or justify why they did not help.

Conclusions

The study found that more help was given and more quickly than '**the bystander effect**' and '**diffusion of responsibility**' would have suggested. Researchers observed no real 'diffusion of responsibility'. The results could be due to the location where the passengers were in a subway, and there was no way for them to 'escape' or run away from the emergency, resulting in a higher level of assistance.

Piliavin proposed that when someone witnesses an emergency, it prompts an emotional response, and they decide whether they help by a cost-reward analysis. Their motivation to help is to get rid of the unpleasant emotions while witnessing the emergency.