2025-26 FALL

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Faculty of Art & Sciences

WEEK 14

Helping

Why do we help?
When will we help?
Who will help?
How can we increase helping?

Why Do We Help?

Without asking anything in **return**, people **offer** directions, **donate** money, **give** blood, **volunteer** time

Altruism: a **motive** to increase **another's welfare** **without** conscious regard for one's **own self-interests**

Social Exchange and Social Norms

Social-exchange theory: the theory that human interactions are transactions that aim to maximize one's rewards and minimize one's costs

- Does not contend that we consciously monitor costs and rewards, only that such considerations predict our behavior

Rewards that motivate helping may be external

Rewards may also be internal—often focused on increasing positive emotions

- Do-good/feel-good effect—helping boosts self-worth

Social Exchange and Social Norms

Benefits of helping also include reducing or avoiding negative emotions

- Near someone in distress, we may feel distress
- Guilt is a painful emotion that people seek to relieve
  - Reduce private guilt and restore a shaken self-image
  - Redeem ourselves and reclaim a positive public image
- Emotions like anger and grief tend not to produce compassion

Happy people are also helpful

- In a good mood, people are more likely to have positive thoughts and commit themselves to positive actions

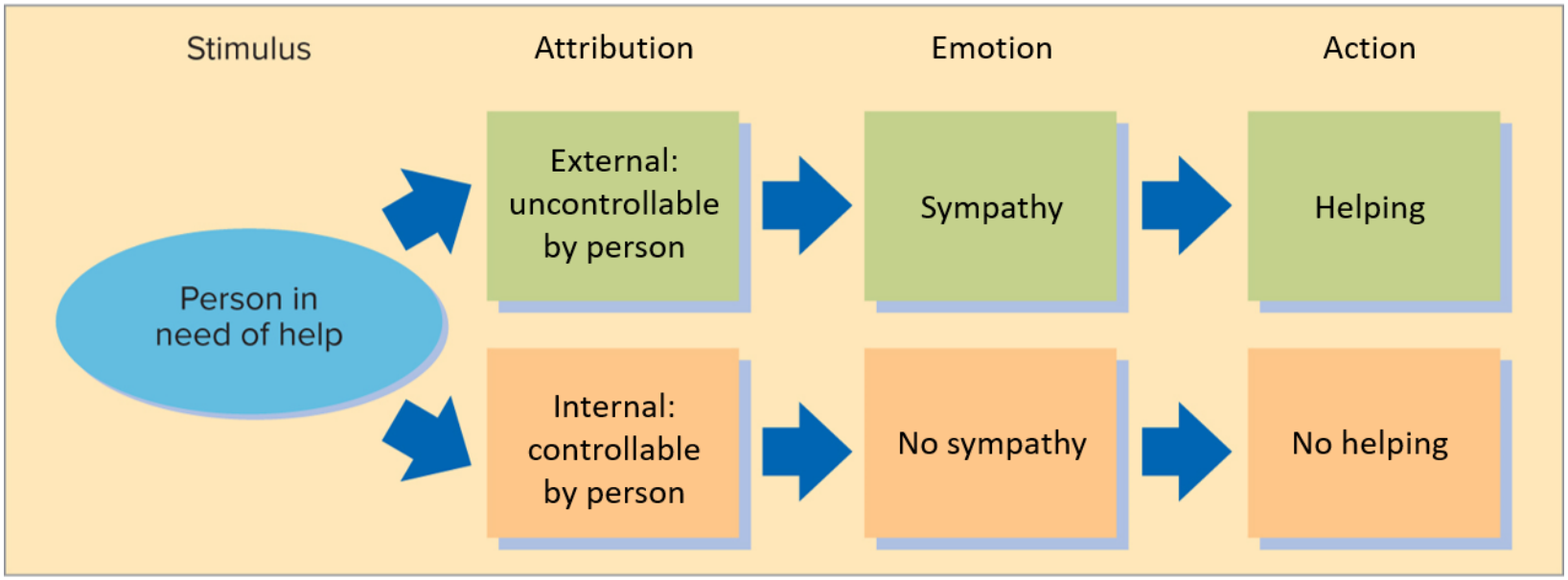
Social Exchange and Social Norms

Researchers have identified two social norms that motivate altruism

Reciprocity norm: an expectation that people will help, not hurt, those who have helped them

- Helps define the **social capital**—the mutual support and cooperation enabled by a social network—that keeps a community healthy

Social-responsibility norm: an expectation that people will help those needing help



Attributions and Helping

In this model, proposed by German researcher Udo Rudolph and colleagues (2004), helping is mediated by people's explanations of the predicament and their resulting degree of sympathy.

Social Exchange and Social Norms

Women offer help equally to males and females, whereas men offer more help when the persons in need are females

- Perhaps not surprisingly, men more frequently help attractive than unattractive women

Women receive more offers of help in certain situations and also seek more help

- They more often welcome help from friends

Evolutionary Psychology

Humans exhibit multiple mechanisms for overcoming selfishness

- **Kin selection**: the idea that evolution has selected altruism toward one's close relatives to enhance the survival of mutually shared genes
- Reciprocity, which works best in small, isolated groups
  - Direct reciprocity and indirect reciprocity
- Group selection, operating at both individual and group levels: sacrificing to support "us," sometimes against "them"

Comparing Theories of Altruism

Theory	Level of Explanation	Externally Rewarded Helping	Intrinsic Helping
Social-exchange	Psychological	External rewards for helping	Distress → inner rewards for helping
Social norms	Sociological	Reciprocity norm	Social-responsibility norm
Evolutionary	Biological	Reciprocity	Kin selection

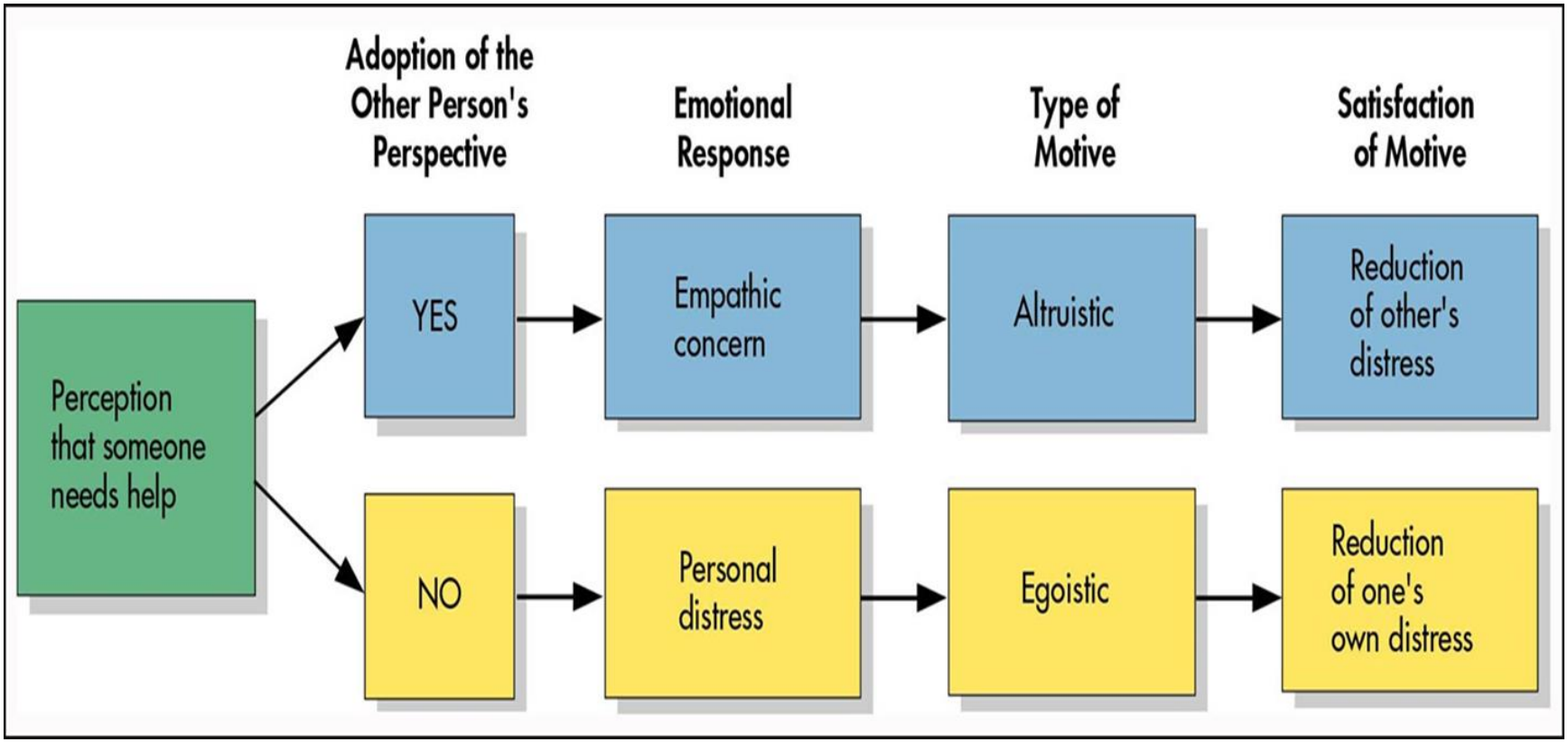
Genuine Altruism

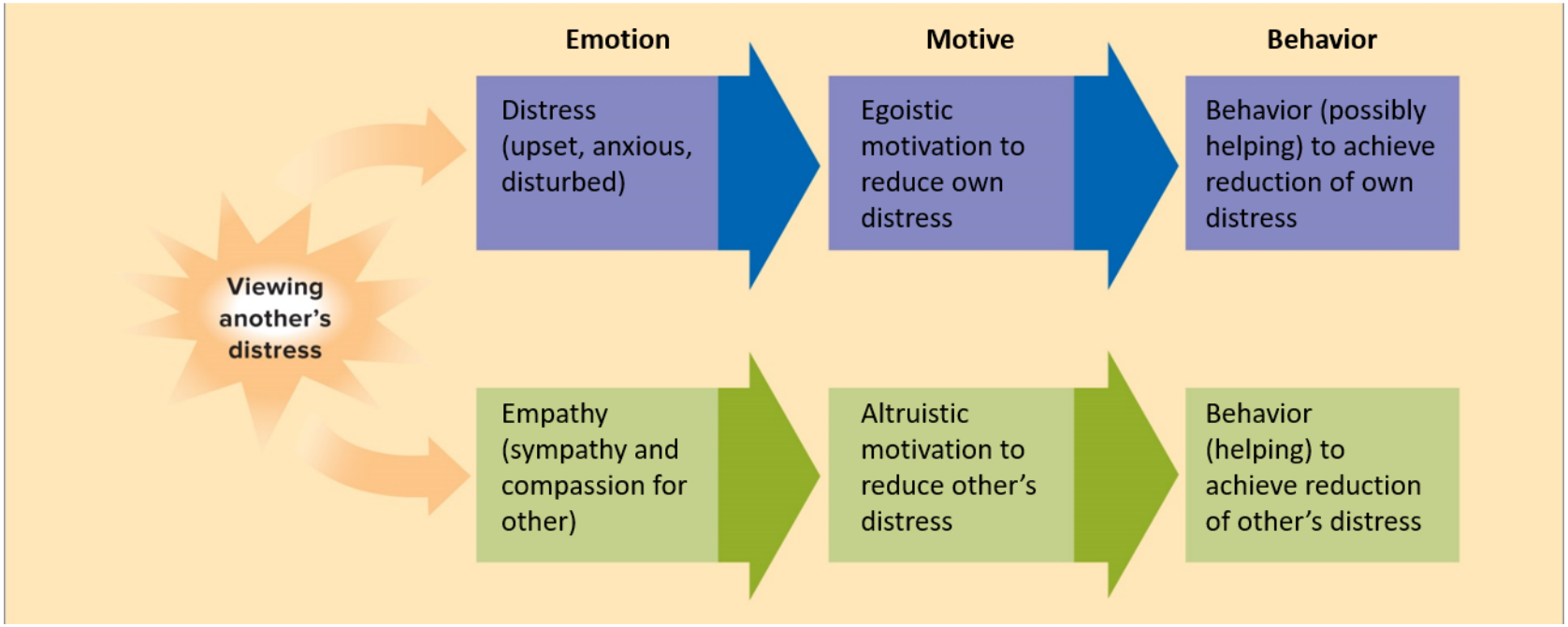
Our willingness to help is influenced by both self-serving and selfless considerations

When we feel empathy, we focus not so much on our own distress as on the sufferer

- **Empathy**: the vicarious experience of another's feelings—putting oneself in another's shoes
- With their empathy aroused, people may help even when they believe no one will know about their helping

Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis





Egoistic and Altruistic Routes to Helping

Viewing another's distress can evoke a mixture of self-focused distress and other-focused empathy. Researchers agree that distress triggers egoistic motives. But they debate whether empathy can trigger a pure altruistic motive.

When Will We Help?

In some cases—some of them well now famous—someone has been in dire need and bystanders have failed to act

Social psychologists curious and concerned about bystanders' inaction have undertaken numerous experiments

- When will people help in an emergency?
- Who is likely to help in non-emergences—by such deeds as giving money, donating blood, or contributing time?

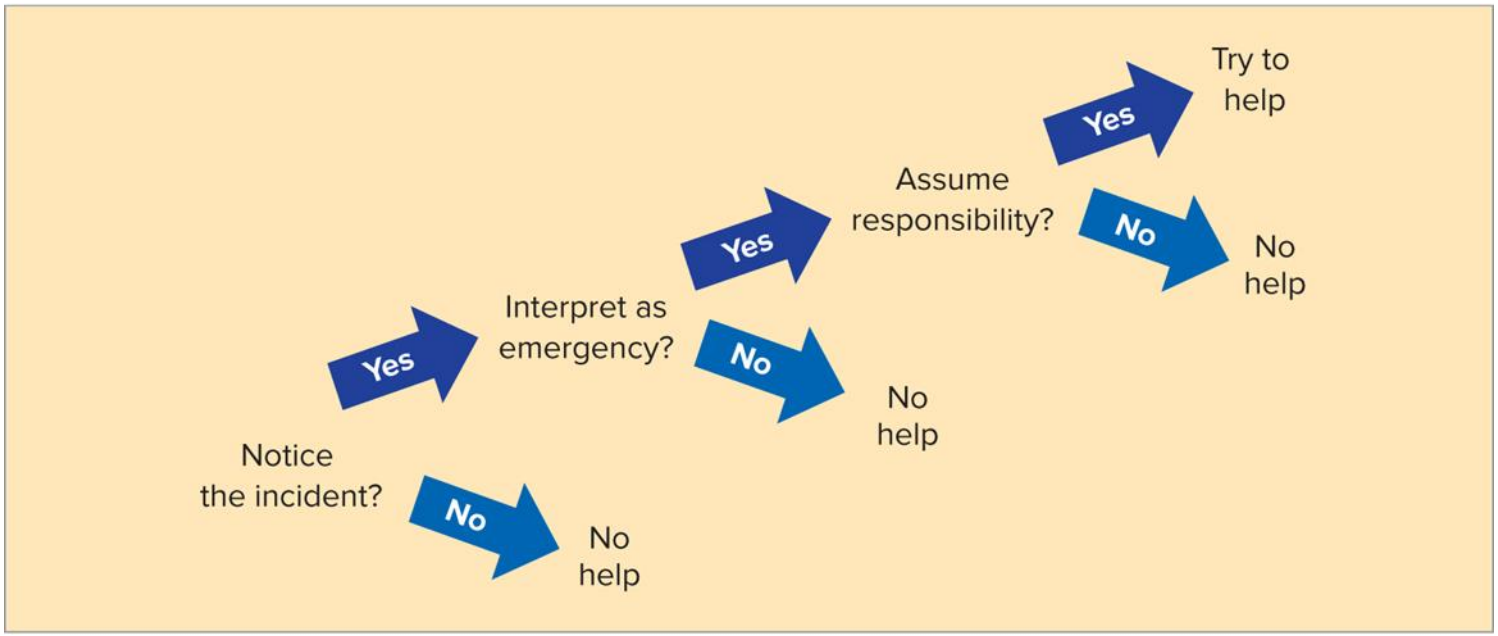
Number of Bystanders

As the number of bystanders increases, any given bystander is less likely to:

- Notice an incident
- Interpret the incident as a problem or an emergency
- Assume responsibility for taking action

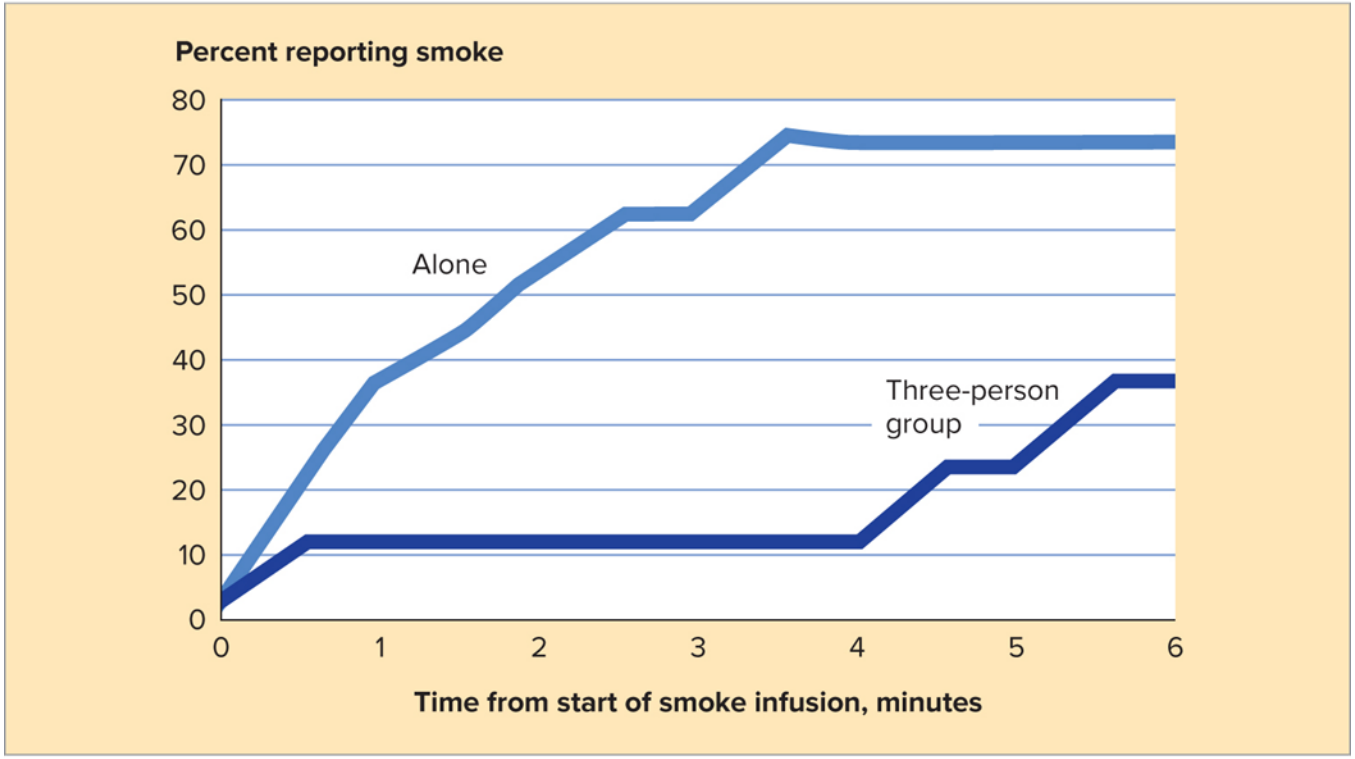
Bystander effect: the finding that a person is less likely to provide help when there are other bystanders

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4S1LLrSzVE)



Latané and Darley's Decision Tree

Only one path up the tree leads to helping. At each fork of the path, the presence of other bystanders may divert a person down a branch toward not helping.



The Smoke-Filled Room Experiment

Smoke pouring into the testing room was much more likely to be reported by individuals working alone than by three-person groups.

When Will We Help?

We do tend to help with someone else does so

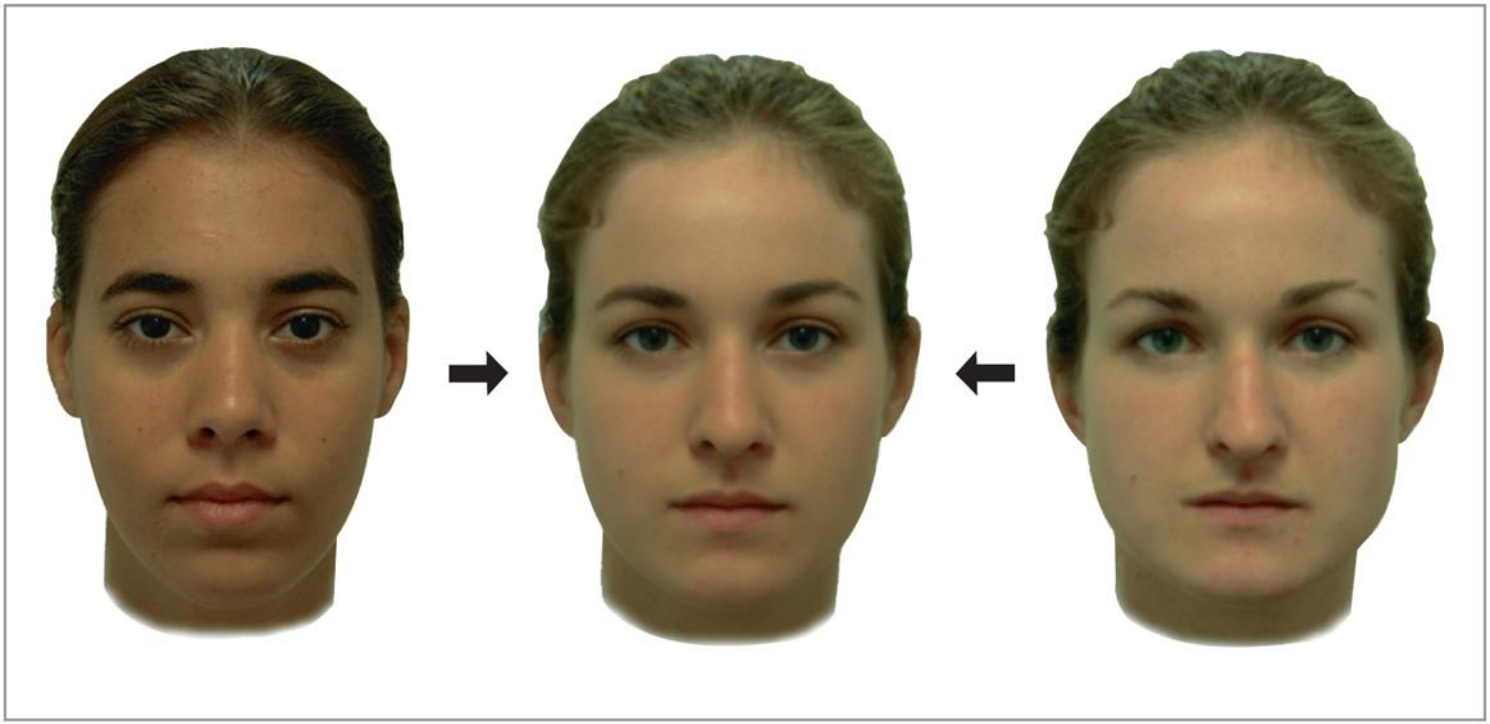
- Prosocial models promote altruism

Time pressures affect whether people help

- When harried, preoccupied, and rushing, people often do not take time to tune in to a person in need

Because similarity is conducive to liking, and liking is conducive to helping, we are more empathetic and helpful toward those who are similar to us

- Where racial similarity is concerned, reactions may be affected by the desire to not appear prejudiced



Similarity Breeds Cooperation

Lisa DeBruine (2002) morphed participants' faces (left) with strangers' faces (right) to make composite center faces—toward whom the participants were more generous than toward the stranger.

Who Will Help?

Internal influences on the decision to help include guilt and mood

External influences include social norms, number of bystanders, time pressures, and similarity

Who will help is affected by the helpers' dispositions

- Personality traits
- Gender
- Religious values

Personality Traits and Status

Attitude and trait measures seldom predict a *specific* act; but they can predict *average* behaviors

- Individual differences in helpfulness persist over time and are noticed by one's peers
- Network of traits—positive emotionality, empathy, and self-efficacy—predisposes a person to helpfulness
- Personality influences how people react to particular situations—such as whether they are attuned to others' expectations

Status and social class also affect altruism

Gender

When faced with potentially dangerous situations, men more often help

In safer situations, women are slightly more likely to help

- Women are more likely to describe themselves as helpful
- Faced with a friend's problem, women respond with greater empathy and spend more time helping
- Women tend to be more generous

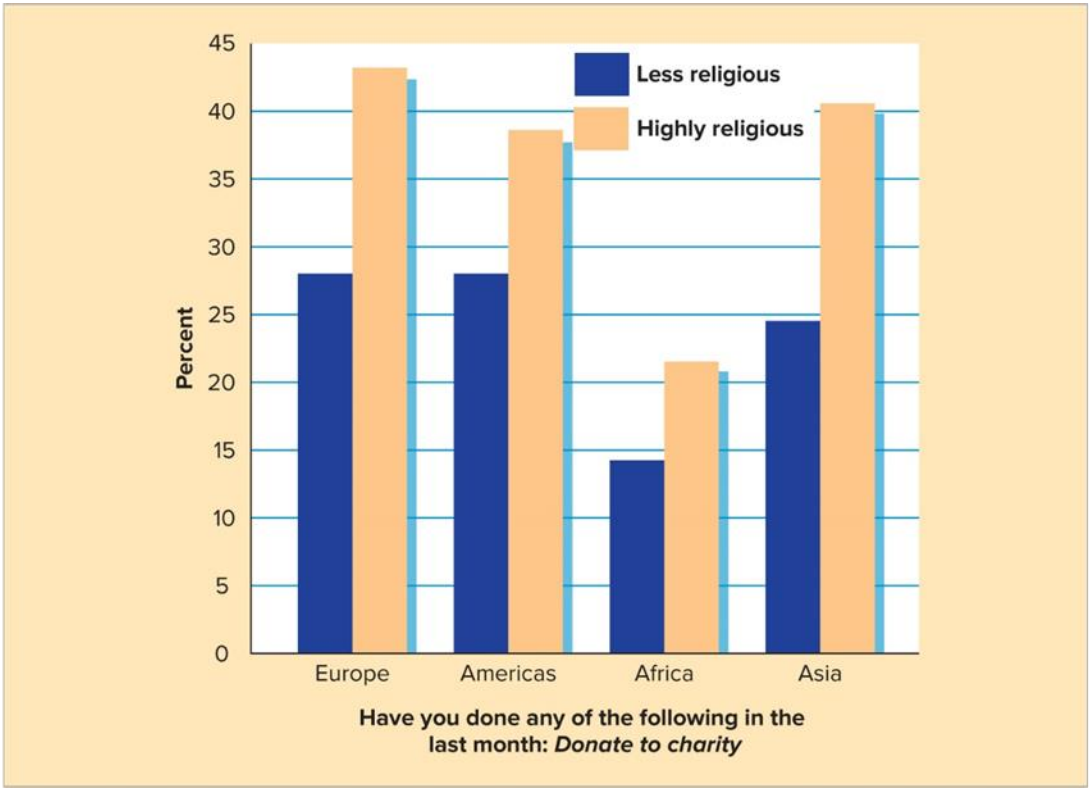
Religious Faith

Although often associated with opposition to government assistance such as support for the poor, religiosity also promotes prosocial values

- Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism all teach compassion and charity
- Highly religious people report markedly higher than averages rates of charitable giving, volunteerism, and helping a stranger

Prosocial effects of religiosity appear to be strongest in countries in which religious behavior is a matter of personal choice

Helping and Religious Engagement



Worldwide, reported Gallup researchers Brett Pelham and Steve Crabtree (2008), highly religious people are—despite averaging lower incomes—more likely to report having given away money in the last month and also to report having volunteered and helped a stranger. Highly religious people said religion is important in their daily life and attended a service in the last week. Less religious are all others.

How Can We Increase Helping?

One way to promote altruism is to reverse those factors that inhibit it

- Reduce ambiguity, increase responsibility
- Awaken people's guilt and concern for their self-image
- Socialize altruism

Reduce Ambiguity, Increase Responsibility

Helping should increase if we can prompt people to correctly interpret an incident and assume responsibility

Personal appeals are much more effective

- Verbal and nonverbal appeals
- Reducing anonymity
- Anticipation of interaction

Socializing Altruism

Morally inclusive people are more likely to help others

- **Moral exclusion**: the perception of certain individuals or groups as outside the boundary within which one applies moral values and rules of fairness
- *Moral inclusion* is regarding others as within one's circle of moral concern
- First step in socializing altruism is therefore to counter people's natural ingroup bias

Socializing Altruism

When helping is modeled by others, we become more likely to offer assistance ourselves

- Real-life modeling
- Media modeling

Altruism is be learned by doing

- Helpful actions promote the self-perception that one is caring and helpful, which in turn promotes further helping

BYSTANDER EFFECT

by

Latané and Darley

a social psychological phenomenon

- ***bystander effect***, or ***bystander apathy***

- individuals do ***not*** offer any means of ***help*** to a victim when ***other*** people are present
- the probability of help is ***inversely*** related to the ***number*** of bystanders
- In other words, the ***greater*** the number of bystanders, the ***less*** likely it is that any one of them will help

why it occurs?

➢ ***variables :***

- ambiguity,
- cohesiveness,
- diffusion of responsibility

The Experiment

- by ***John Darley*** and ***Bibb Latané*** in 1968
- the murder of Kitty Genovese in 1964

- an emergency situation is staged
- researchers measure how long it takes the participants to intervene

Kitty Genovese's murder

- In New York City, 38 people witnessed her being stabbed to death over a period of 45 minutes, but no one called the police.

❑ Latané and Darley attributed ***the lack of help*** by witnesses to ***diffusion of responsibility.***

- ***each*** *witness saw* ***others*** *witnessing and assumed that they would be taking* ***responsibility*** *and calling the police, and did* ***nothing*** *to stop the situation themselves.*

Kitty Genovese's murder

- an article published in ***American Psychologist*** in 2007
- Genovese's murder was ***exaggerated*** by the media
- ***not*** 38 eye witnesses
- police were contacted at least ***once*** during the attack
- many of the bystanders who overheard the attack could ***not*** actually ***see*** the event

Variables affecting bystanders

1. Emergency versus non-emergency situations
2. Ambiguity and consequences
3. Understanding of environment
4. Priming the bystander effect
5. Cohesiveness and group membership
6. Cultural differences
7. Diffusion of responsibility

Variables affecting bystanders

1. Emergency versus non-emergency situations

- Latané & Darley performed 3 experiments for ***non-emergency*** situations
  - ask a bystander for his or her ***name*** → more people gave an ***answer***
  - ask bystanders for a dime with an ***explanation*** (72%) , (34%)

- ***Results*** indicated
  - ***the way*** in which the subjects were ***asked*** for help mattered
  - the more ***information*** given to a bystander, the more likely they will ***help***

characteristics of emergencies

- ***According to Latané & Darley,***

1. Emergencies involve ***threat*** of harm or actual ***harm***
2. Emergencies are ***unusual*** and ***rare***
3. The ***type*** of action required in an emergency ***differs*** from situation to situation
4. Emergencies can**not** be ***predicted*** or ***expected***
5. Emergencies require ***immediate action***

characteristics of emergencies

- *Due to these five characteristics, bystanders go through **cognitive** and **behavioural** processes:*

1. *Notice* that something is going on
2. *Interpret* the situation as being an emergency
3. *Degree of responsibility* felt
4. *Form of assistance*
5. *Implement the action choice*

Notice

- Columbia University students
- to complete a questionnaire
- smoke was pumped into the room
- when alone, noticed the smoke immediately (within 5 sec.)
- in groups took longer (up to 20 seconds)
- *People who are **alone** are more likely to be **conscious** of their surroundings and therefore more likely to **notice** a person in need of assistance.*

Interpret

- According to the principle of ***social influence***,
  - bystanders monitor the reactions of other people in an emergency situation
  - if others are ***not*** reacting to the situation, bystanders will interpret as ***not*** an ***emergency*** and will ***not intervene***
  - ***pluralistic ignorance*** or ***social proof***
- Referring to the smoke experiment,
  - even though they ***noticed*** smoke, they were ***unlikely*** to report
  - no-one suggested fire as a possible ***cause***

Degree of Responsibility

Darley & Latané determined that

- *Feeling reponsible depends on three things:*

1. Whether or not they feel the person is ***deserving*** of help
2. The ***competence*** of the bystander
3. The ***relationship*** between the bystander and the victim

Forms of Assistance

- Latané & Darley defined two categories:

1. ***Direct*** intervention: directly assisting the victim
2. ***Detour*** intervention: Detour intervention refers to reporting an emergency to the authorities (i.e. the police, fire department)

Implementation

- *After going through steps 1-4, the bystander must implement the* ***action of choice****.*

Variables affecting bystanders

Ambiguity and consequences

- a ***high*** ambiguity situation ⇨ reaction time is ***slow***
- a ***low*** ambiguity situation ⇨ reaction time is ***quicker***
- bystanders determine their own safety before proceeding

➢ ***Bystanders are more likely to intervene in low ambiguity***

Variables affecting bystanders

Understanding of environment

- if ***familiar*** with the environment, they are ***more*** likely to help
- if ***not*** familiar with the surroundings, they are ***less*** likely to help

Variables affecting bystanders

Priming the bystander effect

- priming a social context may ***inhibit*** helping behavior
- Imagining being around ***one*** other person or being around a ***group*** of people can affect a person's ***willingness*** to help

Variables affecting bystanders

Cohesiveness and group membership

- the ***more*** cohesive a group, the ***more*** likely the group will act in accordance to the **social** responsibility ***norm***
- ***low*** cohesive groups were the ***slowest*** and ***least*** likely to respond to the victim
- role of **similarity**, shared group ***membership*** encourage bystander intervention
- ***altruism, self-categorization and empathy***

Variables affecting bystanders

Cultural differences

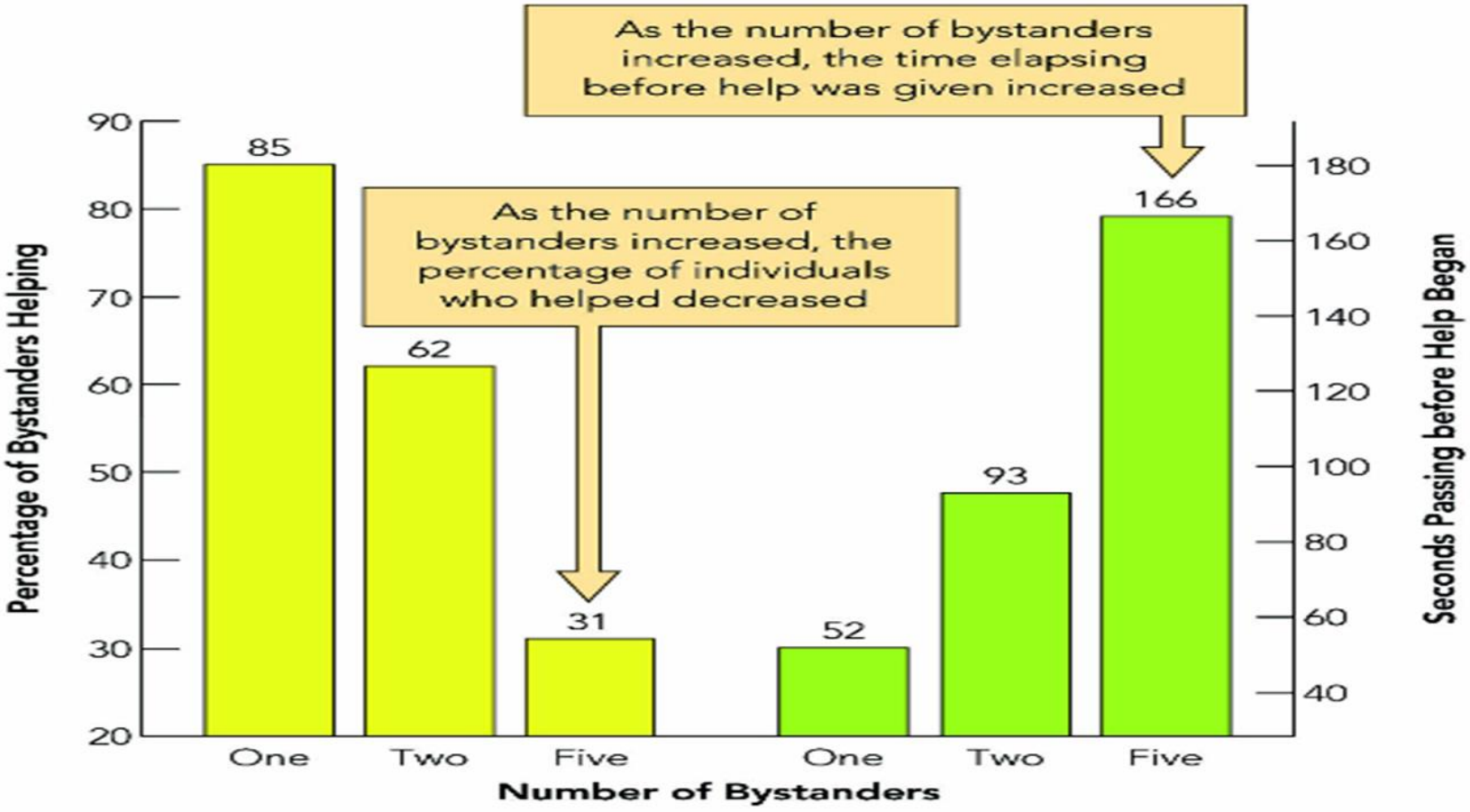
- reactions can ***change*** according to historical and cultural differences

Variables affecting bystanders

Diffusion of responsibility

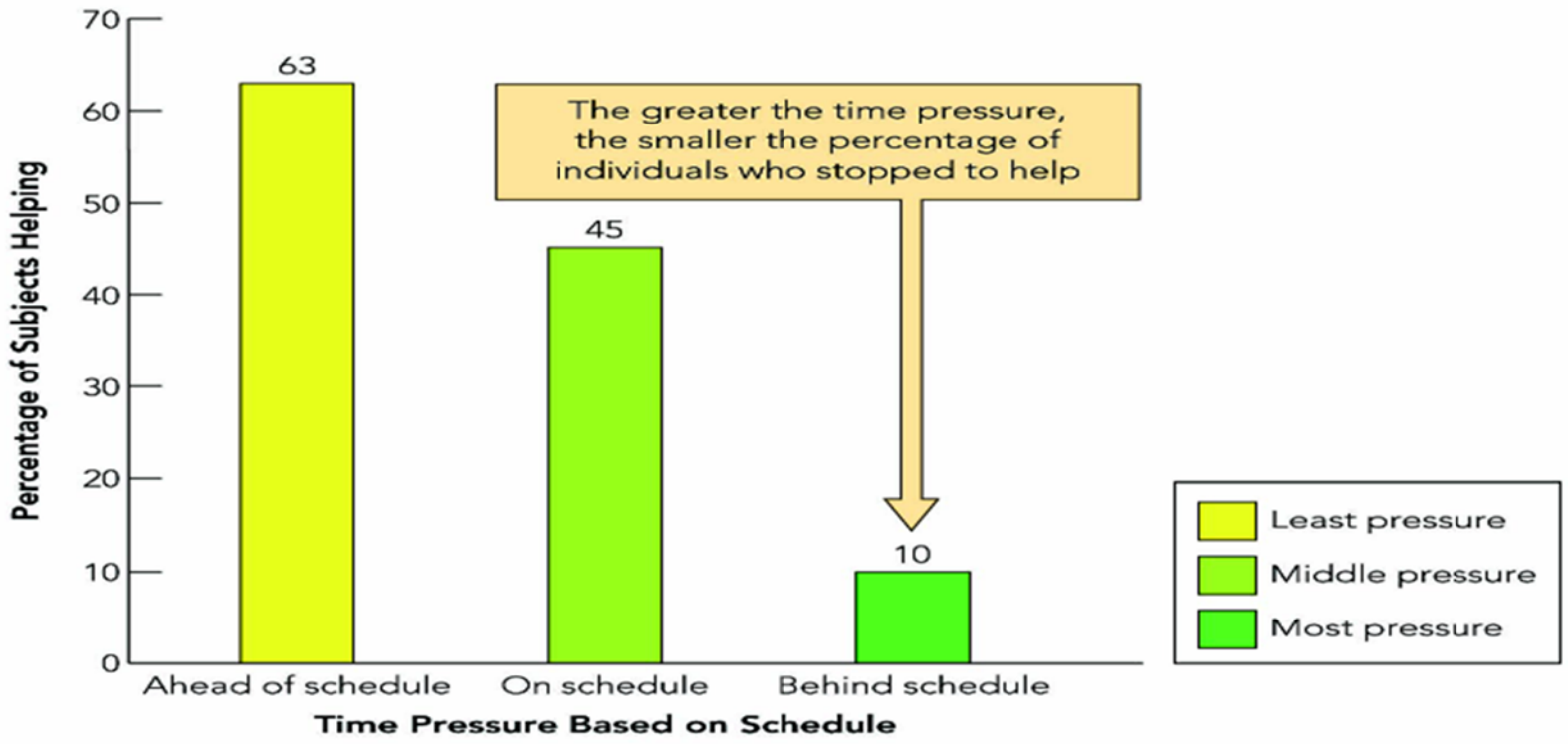
- Darley & Latané (1968) suggested that,
- if other people exist, bystanders are less likely or slower to help a victim
- someone else will take responsibility
- afraid of facing the legal consequences

Responding to an Emergency

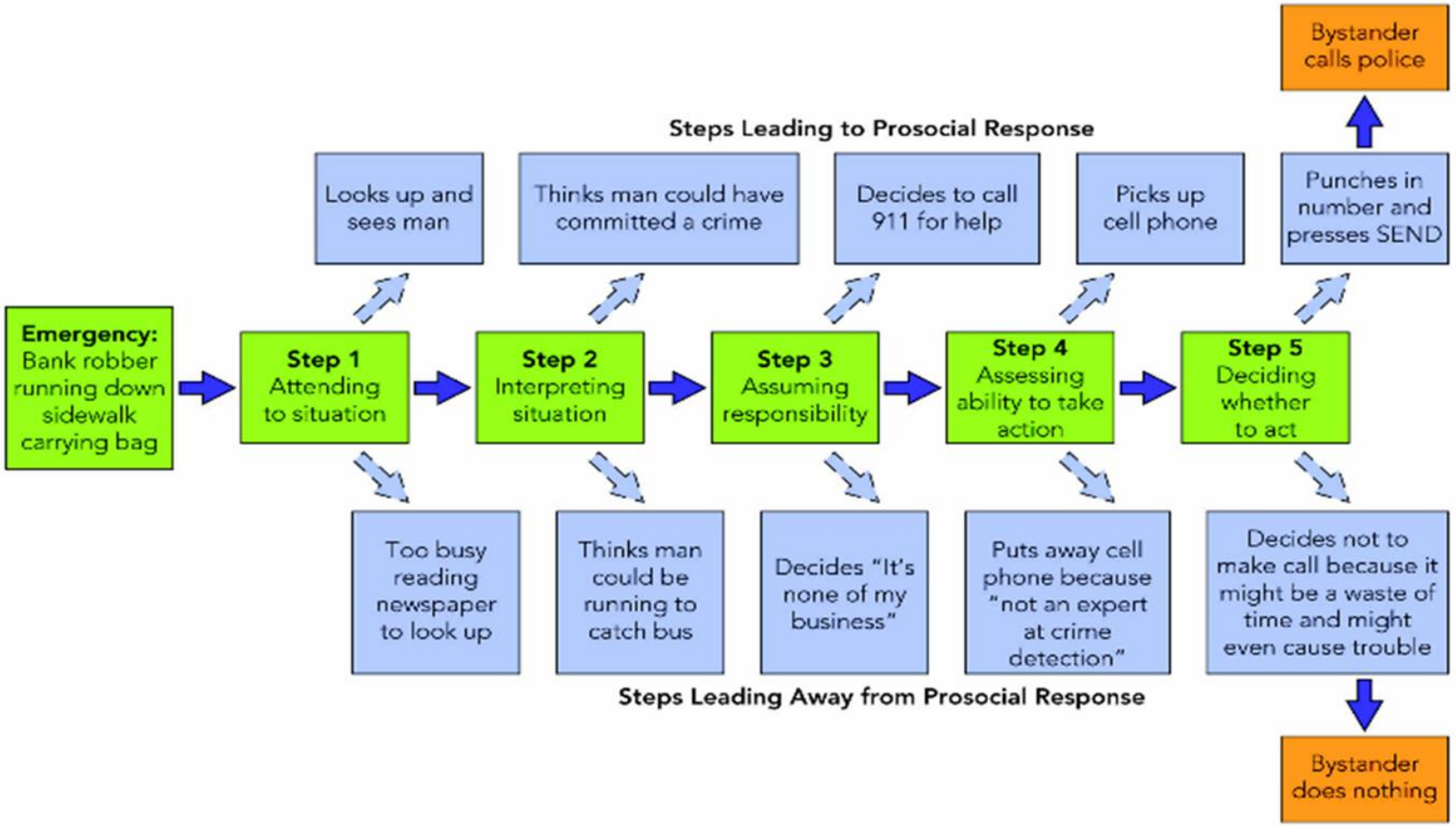


Responding to an Emergency

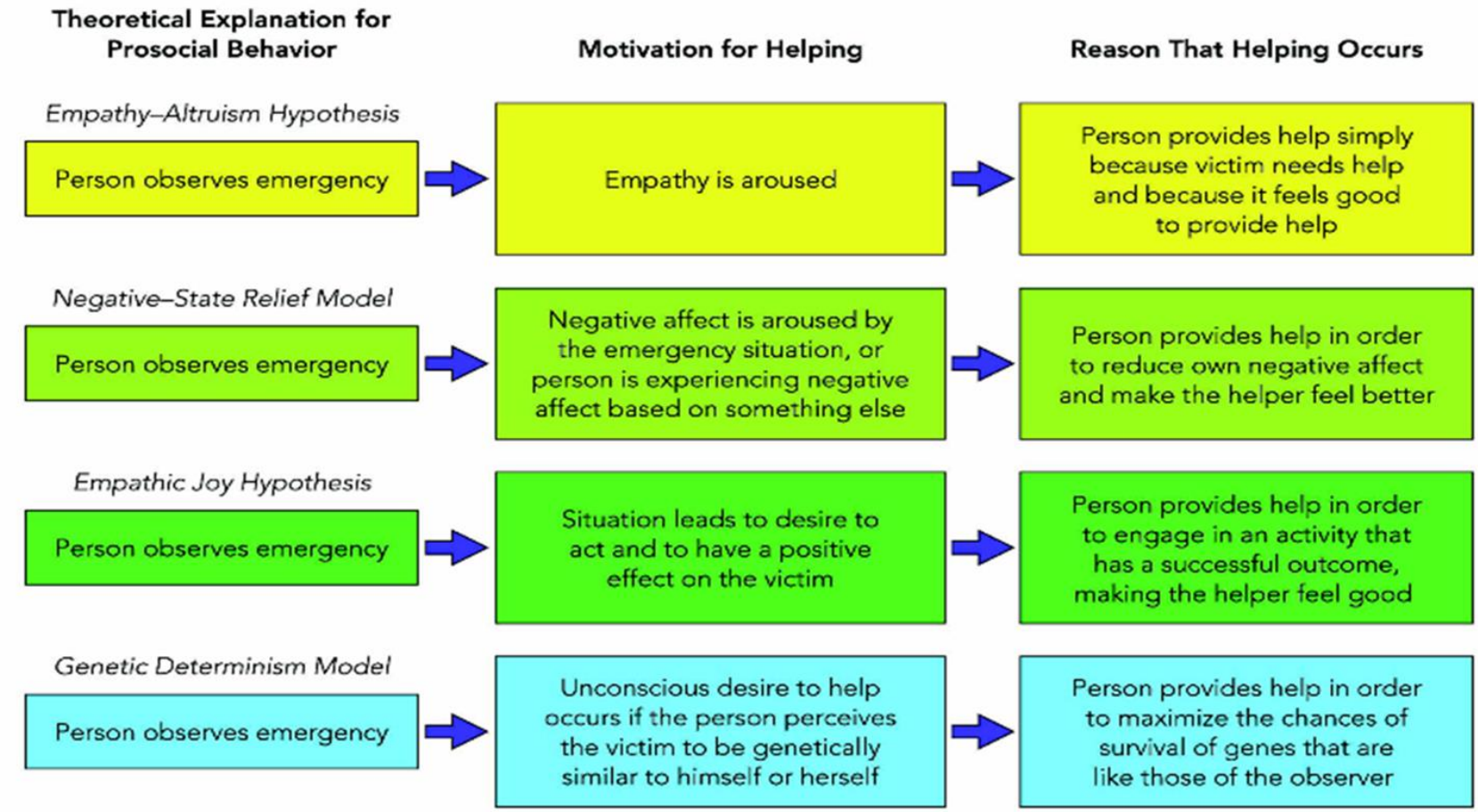
- People are less ***likely*** to help if in a ***hurry***



Responding to an Emergency



The Basic Motivation for Helping



Cost-Benefit Model of Helping

➢Cost-benefit analysis

- We are more inclined to help others when s/he will ***help us*** as well
- We weigh others' needs with our own. If helping "costs" ***too much***, we ***won't***.

Conclusions?

- Whether or not we intervene in a situation depends on the ***cues*** that we get from the participants and ***other*** bystanders