

POSTER SESSION

Power and Pro-Social Behavior

The Powerful Will Help in the Presence
of Others

SURF Conference Panel Session 8

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Introduction

The Bystander Effect: When individuals do not offer any means of assistance to a victim when in the presence of other people (i.e. bystanders) ¹

Fischer's meta-analysis of the bystander effect shows that across experiments, the bystander effect is robust and consistent: 75% of participants who are alone help when faced with a choice to help, but only 53% do so when others (i.e., bystanders) are present.¹

The bystander effect emerges in a wide variety of situations — especially those that involve a high-stakes situation in which a human's life may be at risk. For example, those in a group are less likely to help (vs. individuals alone) when the victim is injured, is physically ill or has an asthma attack.^{2, 3, 4}

1 Fischer et al "The Bystander-Effect: A Meta-Analytic Review on Bystander Intervention in Dangerous and Non-Dangerous Emergencies." *Psychological Bulletin* 137, no. 4 (2011): 517-537.

2 Darley, John M. and Bibb Latane. "Bystander Intervention in Emergencies: Diffusion of Responsibility." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 8, no. 4 (1968): 377-383.

3 Ibid.

4 Harris, Victor A. and Carol E. Robinson. "Bystander Intervention: Group Size and Victim Status." *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society* 2, no. 1 (1973): 8-10.

Power

- **Powerful people** exhibit more approach-oriented behavior. In other words, those who are powerful are more likely to enter others' social space and initiate contact⁵
- **Powerless people** are more likely to express inhibitory behavior⁶
- **Power is a force unparalleled in the influence it has on social situations (own definition)**
- **Low-power is associated with increased concern for one's actions** — in experimental settings, those who have low power exhibit more complex thinking. Complex thinking reflects careful considerations of trade-offs of one's actions⁷
- **To act**, one must be freed from the inhibition that is produced by doubt⁸

5 Keltner, Dacher, Deborah H. Gruenfeld, and Cameron Anderson. "Power, Approach, and Inhibition." *Psychological Review* 110, no. 2 (2003): 265-284.

6 Ibid.

7 Lerner, Jennifer S. and Philip E. Tetlock. "Accounting for the Effects of Accountability." *Psychological Bulletin* 125, no. 2 (1999): 255-275.

8 Moskowitz, Gordon B., Ian Skurnik, and Adam D. Galinsky. "The History of Dual-Process Notions, and the Future of Preconscious Control." In , 12-36: Guilford Press, New York, NY, 1999.

Hypothesis

Powerful people will help as much when they are alone as when they are in a group, thereby “breaking” the bystander effect. In contrast, the powerless will behave in accordance with the bystander effect.

Methods

Goal: To measure response behavior of participants to an emergency situation

Sample Size: N=51

Conditions:

- 1) Low Power and Alone
- 2) Low Power and Bystander
- 3) High Power and Alone
- 4) High Power and Bystander

Experimental paradigm adopted from Fischer⁹

Adjacent rooms in the Haas School of Business were utilized (Room 1 and Room 2).

Prior to data collection, a video was recorded in Room 1. The video featured paid actors interacting with one another. During the interaction, the male actor left to use the restroom. While he was gone, the female actress choked on a piece of popcorn. She choked for a full minute before the male actor returned from the restroom.

15 takes were completed with 10 different actors and actresses. The videos were pilot tested for believability. The most believable video was chosen to be used as stimulus material during the experiment.

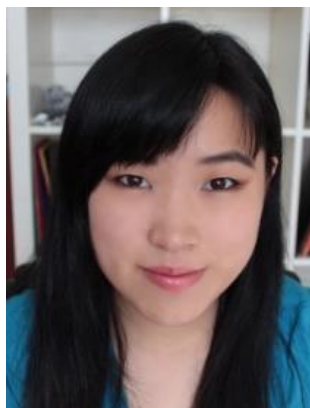
⁹ Fischer et al "The Unresponsive Bystander: Are Bystanders More Responsive in Dangerous Emergencies?" *European Journal of Social Psychology* 36, no. 2 (2006)



Figure 1 Room 1 (photo taken by author)



Figure 2 Actors recording the video. (photo taken by author)



Eba Kim
(photo taken by author)



Rodney Witherspoon
(photo taken by author)

Prop Replication: A marker was used to denote the exact location of popcorn, chips, and water bottle to ensure that their positions were replicated during the experiment as they were during the filming. The proportion of chips and popcorn in the bowls was measured every time to the exact same level. All this was done to ensure believability of the study – the participant would not be able to see any difference between the room as they saw it during study and the room as they saw it in the video.

Procedure: Participants signed up for the experiment via Haas online subject database. They were informed that the experiment is about “social decision making.”

When the participants showed up, they were directed to go to Room 2.

Once the participant came into Room 2, he or she was told that, “you are Viewer 2. The other participant, Viewer 1, has already arrived for the study, has dropped off his belongings, and is waiting in another room for the study to begin.” A backpack, water bottle, and sweatshirt were used to simulate the presence of Viewer 1.



Figure 3 Room 2 with backpack, water bottle, and sweatshirt. This was done to simulate the presence of another participant (photo taken by author)

Cover Story: The participant was told that the purpose of the study is to better understand nonverbal behavior (hand gestures, facial expressions, body orientation, etc.) In addition the participant was told that in order to control for experimenter's bias, it was the participant's task to watch subjects interact and make ratings about their nonverbal behavior. Furthermore the participant was told that two subjects would interact with one another and it would be the job of the participant to watch the from another room and make the ratings. The participant believed that the two subjects are other participants in the experiment whereas in reality they were actors. Instead of watching what the participant believed to be a real interaction, he/she actually watched the pre-recorded video.

Convincing the Participant: After the participant learned what they thought was the purpose of the study, they were shown the experimental set up. The participant was led to Room 1, where they saw the camera, popcorn, chips, and water bottle. They were told this is the room where the interaction will happen. They were then shown that the camera was hooked up to the television in the room they were just in (Room 2). In order to convince the participant that they will watch a live transmission, the participant was told that the transmission needs to be tested. The participant was directed to go to Room 2 while the experimenter remained in Room 1. The experimenter then turned on the camera and spoke into it, saying the participant's name (for example: "Jake, you should be able to see me and hear me. To confirm, please knock on the wall, then return to this room"). As the participant left to go back to Room 1, the experimenter switched to video mode on the camera, and thus the video was ready to be played.

4A



4B



Figures 4A & 4B The camera in Room 1 was hooked up via cables to the television in Room 2 (photos taken by author)

4C



4D



Figures 4C & 4D While the video played on the camera in room 1 (4C), it was simultaneously shown on the television in room 2 (4D) (photo taken by author)

Dictator Game: Participants were manipulated into feeling high power or low power via a “dictator game”. When a participant returned to Room 1, the experimenter told the participant that a person’s leadership style affects the way they judge other people. The participant was told that in order for the experimenter to be able to control for leadership style, the participant needed to fill out a leadership questionnaire (adopted from Bass & Avolio¹⁰)

The experimenter told the participant that Viewer 1 had already completed this questionnaire. Once the participant finished, the experimenter pretended to grade the two questionnaires. This was where the **power manipulation occurs**.

In the High Power condition the participant was told that based upon his or her answers, *he/she was a leader whereas viewer 1 was the follower*. As leader, the participant would be *in control of dividing an extra \$10* between him/herself and the other viewer at the end of the study.

In the Low Power condition the participant was told that based upon his or her answers, *he/she was a follower whereas viewer 1 was the leader*. As follower, the *participant would have no control over how an extra \$10 will be split*. Viewer 1 would have full control over how to split the extra money at the end of the study.

¹⁰ Avolio, B. J., Bass, B. M., & Jung, D. I. (1999). Re-examining the components of transformational and transactional leadership using the multifactor leadership questionnaire. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 72(4), 441-462.

Power Check: In order to test whether the power manipulation worked (i.e. the leaders felt more powerful than the followers), the participant was told that mood also affects a person's ability to judge other people, and thus a mood questionnaire would need to be completed. The mood questionnaire served as a manipulation check as it asked questions such as "do you feel high-status right now", "do you feel in control right now?", and "do you feel dominant". The participants gave their answers on a 1 to 7 scale, with one being "not at all" and 7 being "very much".

After the manipulation check was completed, the experimenter brought the participant back to room 2. This was where the bystander manipulation occurs.

Bystander Condition: The participant was told that both he/she *and* Viewer 1 would be watching the *same* interaction.

Alone Condition: The participant was told that he/she will be watching a *different* interaction than Viewer 1.

Observing Participant's Behavior via Secret Camera: The participant was given a body-language analysis sheet and told to fill it out *after* watching the interaction. The experimenter highlighted the importance of paying attention to the interaction throughout the entire time so as to not miss any body language behavior. The experimenter made sure that the participant understood his/her role, and then left back to Room 1. At this point the TV in Room 2 was showing a paused video with the still image of the popcorn, chips, and chairs from the other room. The experimenter pressed the play button on the camera and then headed to the Control Room. The participant in Room 2 was recorded via a hidden wall-mounted camera that transmitted video directly to the control room. The experimenter could thus observe the participant's reaction to the choking scene.



Figure 5 The subject watched what he believed to be a live interaction happening next door. In fact, he was watching the pre-recorded video (photo taken by author)



Figures 6 & 7 A wall-mounted camera is used to observe the participant's behavior. The camera transmitted to the control room, where the experimenter could observe the participant's reaction to the choking scene (photo taken by author)

Choking Intervention

If the participant got up and went to help the choker, the experimenter cut off the participant in the hallway before he/she was able to enter room 1. The experimenter told the participant that he will handle the situation and directed the participant to go wait back in Room 2. After a few minutes, the experimenter came into room 2, assured the participant that the “victim” was okay, and proceeded with a believability check (where the participant was tested whether they truly believed in the study or whether they knew they were watching a video) and debriefing.

If the participant did not react to the choking situation, the experimenter came into room 2 several minutes after the video was over, assured the participant that the “victim” was okay, and proceeded with a believability check and debriefing.

Results

N=51.

High Power & Bystander: 9/13 participants helped.

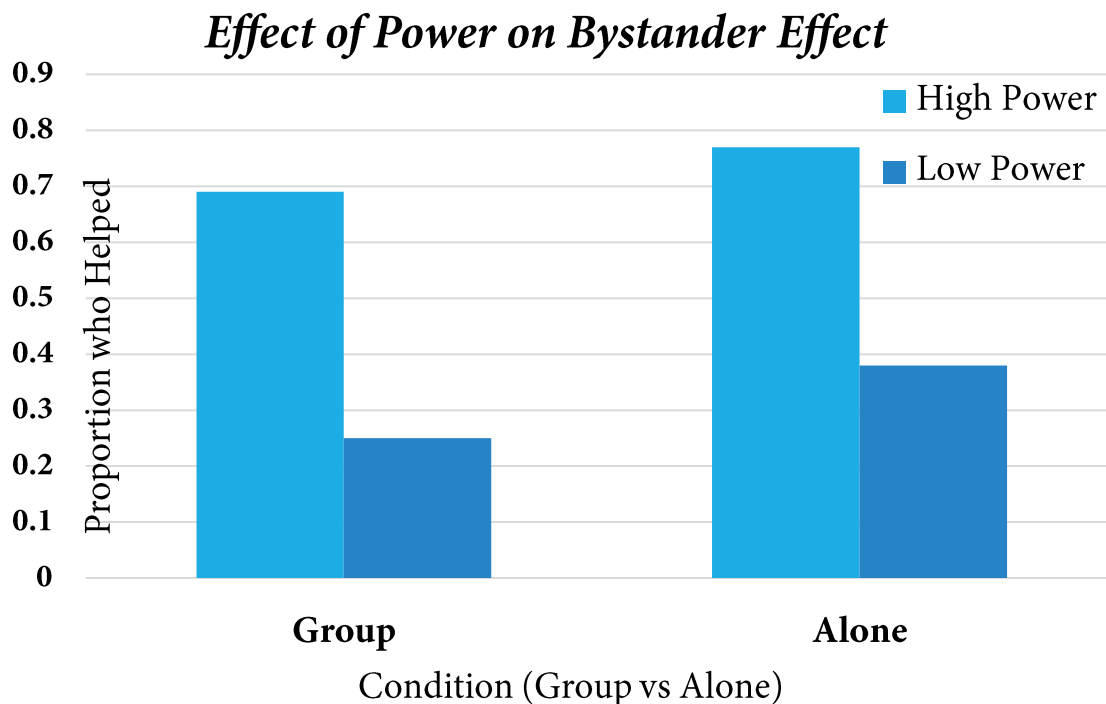
High Power & Alone: 10/13 participants helped.

Low Power & Bystander: 3/12 participants helped.

Low Power & Alone: 5/13 participants helped.

In the Alone condition, there was a significant difference in helping rates between the high power and lower power participants, where the high power participants helped more: $\chi^2(1, N=51) = 3.94, p < .05$.

In the Bystander condition, there was a significant difference in helping rates between the high power and low power participants, where the high-power participants helped more: $\chi^2(1, N=51) = 4.89, p < .03$



Discussion

Powerful Do Help: The hypothesis that in an emergency situation the powerful help regardless of the presence of bystanders – thus “breaking the bystander effect” – is supported. In the bystander condition, the powerful helped nearly just as much (9/13 participants, 69% help rate) as in the alone condition (10/13 participants, 77% help rate), which contrasts to the low-power participants, whose rate of helping was significantly lower in the bystander condition (3/12 participants, 25% help rate).

Limitations and Future Directions: One limitation of the study is the relatively small sample size (N=51). A sample size of N=100 is preferred so that each condition will have 25 subjects. This sample size would allow for more powerful statistical analysis.

Another limitation of the study is the lack of a control condition that gauges the presence of the bystander effect. It is important to include a no-power condition and test whether there is a significant difference in helping rates in the alone versus bystander condition. Without such a control condition, one can not rule out the possibility that the results reflect the influence that power has on both conditions.

Experiment #2 is planned to increase the sample size and will incorporate a “no-power” condition.

Bibliography

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