

Darley, J. M., & Latané, B. (1968). Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8, 377-383.

Over 30 witnesses watched Kitty Genovese murdered and no one offered any help; research has not shown why people in a groups do not offer aid in emergencies. Darley and Latané (1968) measured 72-college students responses to a seizure heard over headphones. The experimenters had each participant sit alone in a room. The participants talked to one, two, or five recorded male and female voices. Each participant heard the seizure for 125 s, and then the microphone cut off. The experimenter measured how fast the participants responded to the emergency.

Participants reported the seizure significantly slower when more people were thought to be listening. Of the participants who thought they were alone with the victim, 85% reported it, whereas 31% of those who thought four other bystanders were present reported it. The authors mentioned that a diffusion of responsibility between the bystanders occurred, group size directly affected helping behavior in emergencies. The experimenters mentioned that communication with other bystanders might counteract the diffusion of responsibility. Darley and Latané (1968) concluded that the number of bystanders present affected how fast people reported the emergency.