

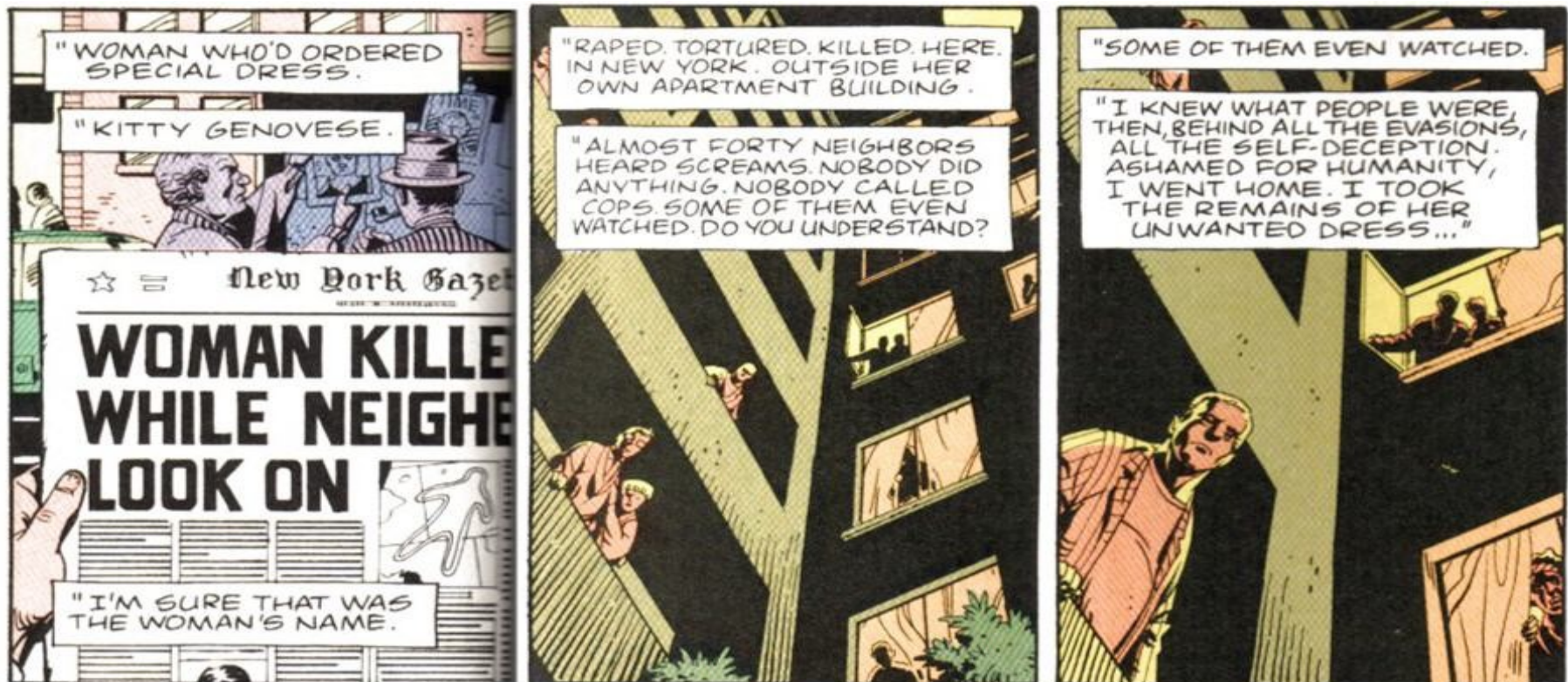
# Prosocial Behaviour

# Helping in an emergency

- Heroism – Engaging in a dangerous behaviour with a prosocial goal
- Not limited to self-preservation
  - Miep Gies & Oskar Schindler in WWII
  - First responders on 9/11
  - Live organ donors
- This is such an interesting field of research, because many heroes appear to have very limited insight into their behaviour
  - “There was no choice, of course I helped”

# Helping in an emergency

- And unfortunately, there are also numerous examples of people not helping in an emergency
- The inaccurate, but important, story of Kitty Genovese



# Helping in an emergency

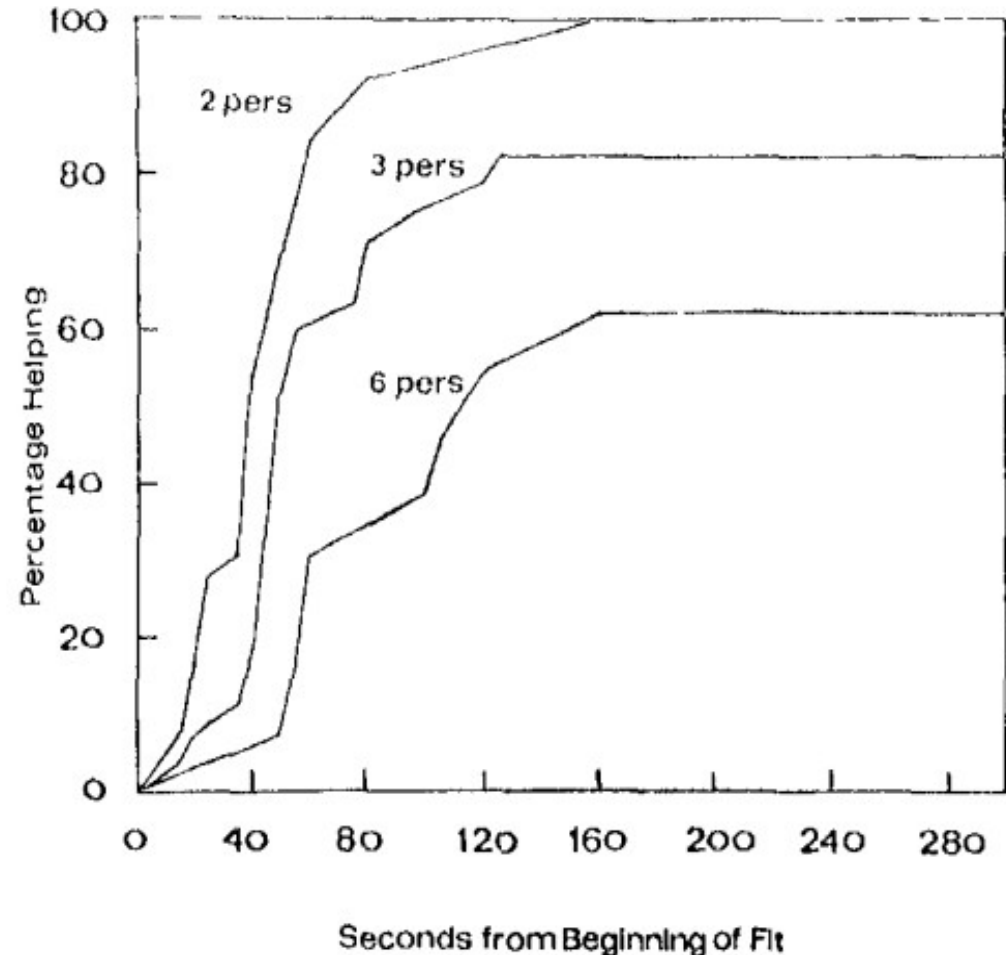
- The real story of Kitty Genovese
  - Several people called the police
  - One man shouted at the attacker
  - Much of the attack took place out of view, no one was watching it happen
  - The attack stopped for a period of time

# Helping in an emergency

- The bystander effect – the number of bystanders in an emergency affects the likelihood of a person responding
- Diffusion of responsibility - with more people present the responsibility to help is shared among the bystanders, so each individual has less motivation to help
  - Darley & Latane (1968, 1969)
  - Seizures, robbery, fire, etc

# Helping in an emergency

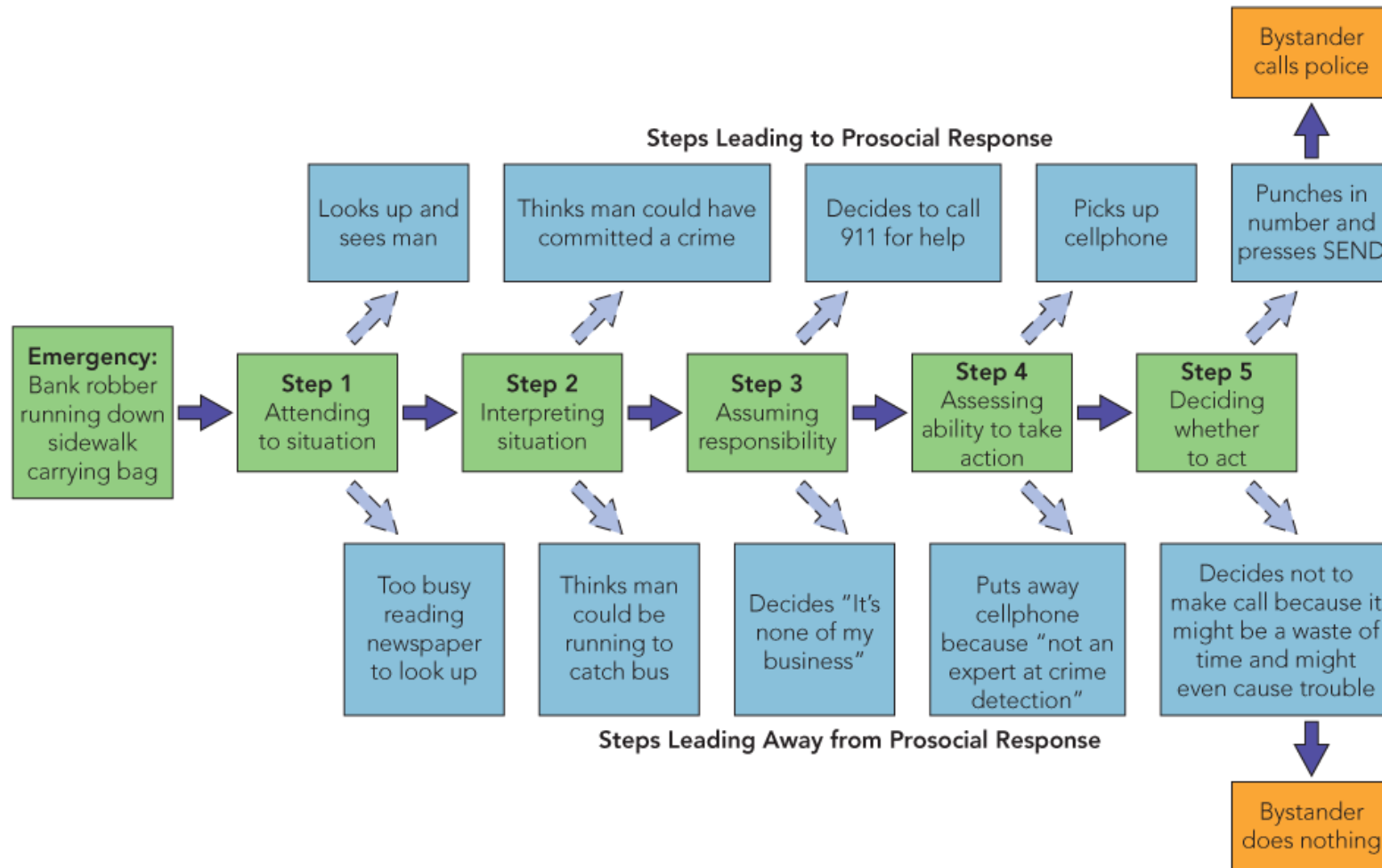
I-er-um-I think I-I need-er-if-if could-er-er-somebody er-er-er-er-er-er-er give me a little-er-give me a little help here because-er-I-er-I'm-er-er-h-h-having a-a-a real problem-er-right now and I-er-if somebody could help me out it would-it would-er-er s-s-sure be-sure be good . . . because-er-there-er-er-a cause I-er-I-uh-I've got a-a one of the-er-sei-----er-er-things coming on and-and-and I could really-er-use some help so if somebody would-er-give me a little h-help-uh-er-er-er-er-er-c-could somebody-er-er-help-er-uh-uh-uh (choking sounds). . . . I'm gonna die-er-er-I'm . . . gonna die-er-help-er-er-seizure-er-[chokes, then quiet].



# Helping in an emergency

- Five necessary steps to helping:
  - Notice and pay attention to the emergency
  - Correct interpretation of the event
  - Norm of social responsibility vs bystander effect
  - Deciding on whether one has the ability
  - Making a final decision to help or not (social exchange theory, cost-benefit analysis)
- Emergencies are often ambiguous

# Helping in an emergency



**Figure 10.3 ■ Responding to an Emergency: Five Steps to Prosocial Behaviour**

A prosocial response to an emergency has been conceptualized as the end point of a series of five steps or choice points. At each step, an individual either becomes less likely or more likely to engage in a prosocial response. (Source: Based on material in Latané & Darley, 1970)

# Internal determinants

- Male gender (for heroic behaviour)
  - Preference for heroic mates in both genders, but stronger in women (Farthing, 2005)
- Collectivist culture (but only for others of the in-group)
- Empathy
  - Genetics
  - Secure attachment style
  - Empathic role models (parents, media, peers)
  - Female gender
  - Similarity to the victim

# Internal determinants

- In general, positive emotions make one more likely to help and negative emotions make one less likely to help
- But positive mood can lead an individual to interpret an ambiguous situation in an overly positive manner
- And being in a bad mood can lead one to help in order to relieve the bad mood

# Internal determinants

- Altruistic personality (Rushton et al 1981) – personality features of individuals who tend to be most likely to engage in prosocial behaviour
  - High empathy
  - Belief in just world (affects cost-benefit analysis)
  - High social responsibility
  - Internal locus of control (affects perceived ability to respond)
  - Low egocentrism

# External determinants

- We are more likely to help people we like
  - Remember the relationship between similarity and attraction (liking)?
  - Physical attractiveness may affect helping through the just-world belief (Callan et al, 2007)
- Blaming the victim results in less help
- Rural environment
  - Less information to attend to than cities
  - Social norms?
- Prosocial models
  - Others helping
  - Violent video games vs prosocial TV

# Non-emergency helping

- Volunteering refers to helping behaviours in non-emergency contexts, in which an individual sacrifices time and effort but at no risk
- Another beneficial effect of obedience?
  - Ontario requires 40 hours of community service in order to graduate from high school
  - 83% of public high schools in the US
  - Does the requirement affect intrinsic motivation to help?
  - How can any negative effects be minimized?

# Non-emergency helping

- Is there a personality type associated with volunteering?
  - Empathy
  - Internal locus of control
  - Extroversion and Agreeableness (Elshaug & Metzger, 2001)
- Accounting for time (billing by the hour) affects perception of time and makes one less likely to volunteer (DeVoe & Pfeffer, 2010)

# Non-emergency helping

- Three reasons to volunteer:
  - Self-interest: maximize pleasure and avoid unpleasantness
  - Moral integrity: the need to do the right thing
  - Moral hypocrisy: the need to *appear* to do the right thing

# Effect of being helped

- Self-esteem can suffer due to being helped (in non-emergency situations)
- Attributions matter!
  - Remember “discounting”?
  - When help is perceived as being due to positive feelings, the helper is liked more
  - When help is perceived as being the helper's job, or due to a cost-benefit analysis, the helper is liked less

# Motivation and causes

- Ultimately, why do people help others?
- Two basic reasons:
  - Self-interest – rewards outweigh the costs
  - Altruism – unselfish concern for others
- Most psychologists probably agree that *pure altruism* (helping with absolutely no positive benefit whatsoever to the self) does not exist
  - In other words, helping is almost always *instrumental*

# Self-benefits to helping

- Material, social, and self-rewards received
  - Payments
  - Gifts
  - Reciprocity credit (they owe you)
  - Positive attributions
  - Thanks
  - Esteem
  - Praise
  - Honour
  - Enhanced self-image
  - **Mood enhancement and maintenance**
  - **Empathic joy**
  - Heaven
- Material, social, and self-punishments avoided
  - Fines/imprisonment
  - Attack
  - Censure
  - Negative attributions
  - Recrimination
  - Sanctions for norm violation
  - Shame
  - Guilt
  - **Empathy costs (feeling bad for the person)**
  - Hell

# Motivation and causes

- Empathy-Altruism hypothesis – It feels good to help, and it feels bad not to help
  - When empathy for the victim is enhanced, helping is much more likely
  - Taking the place of someone receiving electric shocks (Batson et al, 1983)
- Two challenges for charitable campaigns:
  - We often avoid information that will prompt feelings of empathy
  - It is very difficult to feel empathy towards a large group of people

# Motivation and causes

- Negative-state relief model – helping reduces negative emotional state, or maintains positive mood
  - Feeling good or bad can be experimentally manipulated
  - Mood congruent effect - when in a good mood, we tend to remember the positive aspects of helping (benefits), and do not attend to the negative aspects (costs)
- *Moral cleansing* (Carlsmith, 1969) – compensating for past bad (antisocial) behaviour by engaging in prosocial behaviour
- Very closely related to *moral self-licensing* (ie: Merritt et al, 2010)
  - A good example is buying environmentally friendly products (then driving home in your SUV)

# Motivation and causes

- Empathic joy – helping is an achievement, and we are motivated to accomplish things
  - We are more likely to engage in helping behaviour if we expect to see the results of it
  - An especially challenging issue for anonymous helping such as blood donation
- Warm-glow hypothesis – a complementary hypothesis from the economics literature
  - We are motivated to help for the positive feelings that we experience as a consequence of the helping

# Motivation and causes

- Even if all these factors provide egoistic reasons for helping, they do not answer the ultimate question of why these processes exist
- Evolutionary psychology provides a tentative answer: helping would have been adaptive

# Motivation and causes

- Adaptive to the self – St. Thomas Aquinas observed that when someone else is in danger, there is a good chance that you are in danger yourself
  - If true, this would favour reciprocal altruism
- Inclusive fitness (kin selection) – natural selection does not just apply to individuals, but to anyone who shares our genes (Fletcher et al, 2009)
  - Our likelihood of helping is directly related to our genetic closeness to that person
  - Propensity for altruism would be favoured because it would be carried forward in the genes of relatives