

RESPONSES TO EMERGENCIES

What can we learn?

WHAT ISSUES ARE TESTED?

- Personalistic vs. social determinants
- The truism. Bad behavior is committed by bad persons
- The utility of phenomenological analyses

ORIGINS OF PSYCHOLOGY'S INTEREST

- Genovese incident
- The New York Times
- Other incidents
- Continues to this day. The Detroit incident.

FIRST EXPLANATIONS WERE PERSONALISTIC

- Alienation of city dwellers
- Apathy of 20th Century Man
- Latent hostility. People enjoy watching others be killed.
- All of these assume bad responses stem from bad people.

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.

- The event is noticed by the potential helper.
- The event is defined as an emergency by the observer.
- The observer decides she has the responsibility for intervention
- The observer has the skills/resources to help

EFFECTS OF PRESENT OTHERS ON DECISIONS

- Noticing. Cues and adaptations to stimuli
- Defining. Poker faces in our culture.
- Taking responsibility. Others diffuse it
- Skills. When others are present, they may have more skills.

SO WHAT IS THE PREDICTION?

- Groups--the presence of others--will often inhibit learning.
- That is, what so shocks us--that no help comes from 38 witnesses--contains the seed of the explanation.
- The decision tree. Only one path leads to helping.

THE EVIDENCE: DEFINITION EFFECTS

- The smoke-filled room.
- The experimenter crashes. (Rodin)
- Crashes again. Orientation of respondents
- The blind confederate. Less than conscious computations. Automaticity rears its head
- What we forgot. Asch and the object of judgment.
- What we missed. Pluralistic ignorance.

EVIDENCE: DIFFUSION EFFECTS

- Seizure study
- The tied down other
- The other far away.
- More hints of computations

CONCLUSIONS

- Social rather than personalistic explanations work.
- Or perhaps we should separate personalistic explanations from personality ones.
- “Only bad people do bad things.” No. We too could fail to intervene.
- The utility of the phenomenological approach. Socially driven construals.