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**Global Bystander Non-intervention: Cross-level Insights on Cross-national Helping**

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## Abstract

Why don't people in rich nations do more to help people in poor nations? Large disparities in material well-being across the globe are sobering. Nearly 800 million people do not get enough food, leaving nearly one third of the world's children malnourished (United Nations Development Programme, 1999). Equally sobering are the relatively low rates of helping on the part of governments and individuals in the world's wealthy countries. The developed world repeatedly fails to hit aid targets, giving on average only a third of the goals (United Nations Statistics Division, 2003). A large body of psychological research has addressed bystander non-intervention. In this paper, a cross-level review, we frame the scientific study of the phenomenon of a low level of cross-national helping as a form of bystander non-intervention: global bystander non-intervention. We review and conceptually analyze the work done on bystander non-intervention, identify the mechanisms that inhibit helping, and examine their applicability to understanding and promoting helping across national groups. The promises and limitations of the work to date are examined. In this way, a large body of psychological literature is leveraged to catalyze research and theory towards cross-national helping in a world of great disparity in material well-being.

## Global Bystander Non-intervention: Cross-level Insights on Cross-national Helping

The world is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do well is my religion.

Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason*, 1794

Kitty Genovese was murdered in New York City in 1964; no fewer than 38 bystanders heard her pleas for help, but none helped (Latané, 1987). In 2000, more than 10 million children under the age of five died across the globe from easily preventable causes: malnutrition, unsafe water, and a lack of basic health care. Hundreds of millions of people in developed nations had resources and knew of the need for help but did not intervene.

There is, of course, some cross-national helping. Governments give foreign aid and some individuals donate time and money. But seen in the light of global disparities in material well-being, the amount of cross-national helping is disturbingly low. In 1994, average giving for development assistance by the national governments of the developed world was a mere 0.3% of GNP, only slightly more than one third of the 0.7% agreed upon in 1969 (UNICEF, 1996). The United States reported giving only 0.1% of its GNP, less than any other developed country (UNICEF, 1996). By 2005, the United States was giving 0.15% of its national income, less than a fourth of its pledge amount (Sachs, 2005).

Evidence certainly suggests that individuals in developed countries have money to spare. While private charitable giving from American individuals to both domestic and international causes was approximately \$240.72 billion in 2003 (Giving USA Foundation, 2004), Americans spent \$203 billion on entertainment in 2000. In fact, the average American spends over \$10,000 annually on entertainment (Tseng, 2003). Starbucks enjoyed company-operated retail revenues

of \$1.1 billion for its luxury products during the 13-week period ending December 28, 2003 (Starbucks announces record first quarter results, 2004). Collectively the world spent \$66 billion on cosmetics in 1999 (United Nations Development Programme, 1999). Consumption in developed countries, particularly luxury consumption, proceeds largely unfettered by the global disparities and global need.

This behavior raises an interesting question at the interface of psychological science and society: Why do the citizens of developed nations offer such limited help when they know that so many others are suffering on such a dramatic scale? While there has been much research on the form of non-intervention witnessed in Kitty Genovese's murder, known as *bystander non-intervention*, there has been surprisingly little psychological research on a parallel phenomenon: members of national identity groups not helping each other. We term the lack of cross-national helping *global bystander non-intervention*.

The question is far more than just a conjectural one for psychologists. In the week this manuscript was completed, an earthquake and tsunami devastated coastal areas in southern Asia. The death toll soared to over 147,000 (Kessler, 2005). The public and media discussion of this tragedy reflected three of the key concerns of this paper.

First, rich nations were rebuked for not doing enough. Jan Egeland, the UN's chief of emergency relief, referred to "rich" nations as "stingy" and chided them for contributing only about 0.1% of their GNP to international aid (Kennedy, 2004). Furthermore, much press attention was paid to the fact that government pledges have historically not translated into action and donations. For example, more than \$1 billion in aid was pledged after an earthquake in Bam, Iran, killed over 31,000 people in 2003, yet only \$17 million was eventually delivered (Milligan, 2005).

Second, and germane to the focus of bystander non-intervention research, the response to the tsunami disaster raises—in the public discussion as well as for social scientists—the disturbing question of why so many other humanitarian crises go underaddressed. Examples of such crises include the wars that have killed and continue to threaten hundreds of thousands of people in Africa and other areas and the plight of street children in Brazil, Bulgaria, Sudan, Guatemala, India, and Kenya who are subject to unchecked police violence in addition to extreme poverty.

Third, and very germane to the present discussion, a clean and clear distinction is being drawn in public discussion between the potential responses of institutions and organizations and the potential responses of individuals. Individuals—and not just governmental or non-governmental organizations—are being strongly encouraged to take action and help (Lopez, 2004), the phenomenon with which the present discussion is concerned. Individuals in developed countries have always been free to help individuals and groups in less-developed countries. Such helping has been encouraged and organized by religious organizations and not-for-profits.

#### *A Cross-level Approach to Global Bystander Non-intervention*

Psychological studies have not directly examined the lack of helping across nations. Empirical work has tended to focus on questions of helping within a national context, and often more local contexts still (for reviews, see Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005; Piliavin & Charng, 1990). In the present investigation we examine the low levels of cross-national helping as a form of a well-studied problem in psychology: bystander non-intervention. Bystander non-intervention research addresses the circumstances in which, and the mechanisms by which, individuals do not help others who are clearly in need. We define global bystander non-intervention, by extension, as the circumstances in which, and the mechanisms by which,

individuals in one nation do not help individuals in other nations who are clearly in need. As a particular form of a more general phenomenon, global bystander non-intervention may share characteristics with other forms of non-intervention. But it may also have some unique and distinct characteristics meriting special attention.

We adopt a cross-level integrative review approach. In a recent review of the research on prosocial behavior, Penner et al. (2005) identified three levels at which the research can be examined: meso-level (helper-recipient dyads in a specific situation), micro-level (origins of prosocial tendencies and their sources of variation), and macro-level (prosocial action that occurs in groups and large organizations. Their review encourages the examination of prosocial behavior from a multi-level perspective that recognizes its diverse influences (Penner et al., 2005). This analysis takes up that challenge and seeks to spark the study of helping processes at a macro level—across individual members of different nations—rather than at a meso level—across individual members of a particular nation or smaller group—at which it is typically studied. We review the work done at other levels of analysis and ask if these findings can help us understand the lack of help across nations.

Central to bystander non-intervention is the cruel irony that the more bystanders there are, the fewer are likely to help (for reviews, see Dovidio, 1984, and Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark, 1981). An endemic feature of cross-national helping is the number of people who know—often hundreds of millions, even billions. Attempts to understand cross-national helping must address as a central concern this combination of widespread knowledge and widespread inaction. Thus, research models of cross-nation helping by individuals will have to be anchored in the bystander non-intervention findings.

A strange reversal occurs when helping is considered in a cross-national context. The psychological study of helping usually focuses on individual motivations and individual actions (for a review, see Piliavin & Charng, 1990). But when scholars, principally those outside psychology, look at cross-national helping, they focus on the motivations and actions of institutions such as governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Framing global bystander non-intervention as a case of bystander non-intervention will enable researchers to study cross-national helping as the behavior, or lack of behavior, of individuals.

While the question of what promotes or hinders organizational and institutional helping is clearly a related and critical question, we keep our focus on the individual for two reasons. First, organizational and institutional responses are the purview of political scientists and sociologists. Second, the potential impact individuals can have relative to organizations and institutions has greatly increased. Individuals can now directly target recipient groups in any nation of the world through the Internet. The collective impact of individuals acting across national divides can be remarkable.

For example, members of many immigrant communities often send small amounts of money to their native country (Taylor, 1999); they do not wait to be organized. Annual remittances to developing countries have more than doubled between 1988 and 1999 (Gammeltoft, 2002). In fact, in that time, remittances have been a much larger source of income for developing countries than official development assistance (Gammeltoft, 2002). Official estimates of migrants' remittances are around \$100 billion annually, with some 60% going to developing countries (Gammeltoft, 2002). Although each individual action is small, together they are reshaping the economic progress of entire regions.



*Social Identity and Social Categorization Theories As Explanations of Global Bystander Non-intervention*

The lack of attention to global bystander non-intervention raises an interesting question of whether the factors that hinder or facilitate cross-national helping are already obvious. Because global bystander non-intervention is expressly concerned with the lack of helping across national groups, social categorization theory or social identity theory and the well-established findings on ingroup enhancement bias and outgroup denigration (e.g., Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Abrams & Hogg, 1990) might be invoked as principal explanatory variables for why conspicuous non-intervention occurs. Does the examination of global bystander non-intervention need to go any further?

Evidence does suggest that perceived group membership, and the salience of group membership, effect helping (e.g., Garcia, Weaver, Moskowitz, & Darley, 2002; van Baaren, Holland, Kawakami, & van Knippenberg, 2004). We know this from research on intergroup relations in general and research on intergroup relations and prosocial and helping behavior in particular (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992; Flippen, Hornstein, Siegal, & Weitzman, 1996; Vaes, Paladino, & Leyens, 2002). Related work on social categorization has found convincing evidence that social categorization can lead to an increased sense of belonging and helping (Dovidio, Gaertner, Validzic, Matoka, Johnson, & Frazier, 1997; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). As Penner et al. (2005) astutely observe, these non-conscious identity and categorization influences on helping can be studied for both micro-level and macro-level helping.

Nevertheless, findings of group identity and group categorization effects on helping are not sufficient to account for global bystander non-intervention. While they may be intuitively

appealing explanations, they provide only a piece of the puzzle. Alone, without additional theorizing and empirical research, they are insufficient for at least six reasons.

First, the effect sizes often found in social identity and social categorization studies are moderate; thus there is ample room, and indeed the need, for alternative influences to be explored.

Second, national identification varies greatly within a country's population, ranging from very strong identifiers to very weak identifiers. If national identification were the sole cause of inaction, one would expect high levels of cross-national helping on the part of weak identifiers. There is no evidence reported yet to suggest this is the case.

Third, social identity theory might actually be used to predict an effect opposite to bystander non-intervention. That is, psychologists have found that individuals often derive great esteem from helping. Indeed, this has been one of the arguments against the notion of true altruism. Since individuals have been found to take pride in helping, groups of individuals might be expected to take pride in helping.

Fourth, some helping does occur, suggesting that the appropriate question is why so little. Social identity and social categorization may inhibit helping, but they do not prevent it, suggesting there is important research to be done on what factors will increase helping, even while national identity may inhibit it.

Fifth, crossing national borders does not just involve crossing national identity divides, but often means crossing religious, political, and geographical divides as well. These factors, which correlate with national identity but are distinct, may inhibit helping. For example, identifiability can increase helping (Small & Loewenstein, 2003) and identifiability of victims may be low in instances in which cross-national helping is not observed. If one observes a lack of

cross-national helping, it would be premature to implicate national group social identity and/or categorization effects without consideration of these related factors.

Sixth, a host of other influences have been identified in the bystander non-intervention literature to date, influences that have been observed to work in parallel with social identity and categorization influences, including evolutionary influences, biological and genetic bases, developmental influences, and personality influences (Penner et al., 2005). Given the diversity of influences uncovered in intra-national helping research, and the evidence amassed regarding these influences, it would be premature to focus the study of global bystander non-intervention only on social identity and social categorization explanations.

For each and all of these reasons, research into global bystander non-intervention is a compelling exercise.

### *Overview*

In this paper, we first present an overview of the understanding of bystander non-intervention in the psychological literature. Next, we report the mechanisms in the bystander non-intervention model and their applications to global bystander non-intervention. We then report on subsequent findings in the literature after the basic model was developed. We conclude with some comments on directions for future research and on the potential applications of global bystander non-intervention research to practice. In this way, the large body of psychological literature is leveraged to catalyze the development of research and theory.

### Bystander Non-intervention

In this paper, we examine the models and mechanisms developed in bystander non-intervention research. We use them to identify theoretical mechanisms and testable hypotheses to

improve our understanding of global bystander non-intervention. In this discussion, we restrict ourselves to the conspicuous lack of helping others to meet their basic needs (Maslow, 1954). Focusing on extreme cases puts the phenomenon of non-intervention in vivid relief. In accord with the general helping literature, we are also not concerned with cases where there is a clear benefit to the helper. For example, when Armenian Americans help individuals in Armenia or Taiwanese Americans help individuals in Taiwan, there are clear psychological, and arguably material, benefits for the helper. These are very interesting examples of cross-national relations, but less interesting examples of cross-national helping.

The intra-national literature on bystander non-intervention is rich and fertile. Early work includes classic studies by Latané and Darley (1968a, 1968b, 1970) and by Latané and Rodin (1969). Interest in bystander non-intervention has continued, as can be seen, for example, in recent contributions by Markey (2000) and Garcia et al. (2002). We analyze the work on bystander non-intervention to identify directions for research and theory development on global bystander non-intervention.

Because the literature is vast, as recent reviews illustrate (Penner et al., 2005; Piliavin & Charng, 1990; Dovidio, 1984; Piliavin et al., 1981), our goal is not to exhaustively explicate all the nuances of bystander non-intervention, but to identify the applicability of key core processes in order to begin the examination.

While studying the infamous murder of Kitty Genovese on a New York City street in 1964, Bibb Latané and John Darley observed an interesting and disturbing phenomenon: No less than 38 bystanders heard the young woman crying for help, yet none took any action to save her life (Latané, 1987). This event stimulated a wave of research that documented the finding that bystanders are not likely to intervene and examined the hypothesis (indeed, the paradox) that the

more bystanders—that is, potential helpers—are present in a situation, the less likely the victim is to receive help (Latané & Darley, 1970; Latané & Nida, 1981; Latané & Rodin, 1969).

In one representative study, subjects were left in a room, either alone or with one other participant. The experimenter then left and four minutes later the subjects heard her (over a tape recorder) climbing up to reach some papers and then falling to the floor with a crash. She then cried out that she had hurt her ankle. The classic bystander effect was observed. Those participants who were alone were much more likely to help than those in the presence of another bystander. Only 70% helped when alone, but a mere 40% helped when in the presence of another (Latané & Rodin, 1969).

This phenomenon, dubbed “bystander non-intervention” (Latané & Darley, 1970), has been replicated in many subsequent laboratory and natural experiments. The body of work on bystander non-intervention sensitizes us to some of the factors that may account for the conspicuous lack of helping and the inaction of the majority in the case of global helping.

#### *Global Bystander Non-intervention*

The time is ripe for the analysis of helping behavior across different levels of analysis (Penner et al., 2005). Examining a phenomenon across levels of analysis is risky but potentially fruitful (Rousseau, 1985; Gittel & Weiss, 2004). Klein, Dansereau, and Hall (1994) proclaim the great potential for illumination and explication of many phenomena through crossing levels. They do, however, encourage researchers seeking to cross levels to make sure to explicitly state the level or levels at which they are working and to investigate where the variances in their variables lie before moving from one level to another.

Researchers can move down one level—from more elaborate units of social activity to simpler ones—in order to achieve a more “basic” understandings of phenomena, a technique

often referred to as reductionism (see Hackman, 2003). For example, in recent research on culture and identity, Holland and Skinner (1997) shed light on the processes of culture and identification at the individual level by extending Johnson's (1987) model for how collectives create and adopt cultural forms. This has also been done in bystander non-intervention research literature in studies of individual characteristics that may effect helping (e.g., Christy & Voigt, 1994) and studies of relationships among actors that may effect helping (e.g., Christy & Voigt, 1994; Levine, Cassidy, Brazier, & Reicher, 2002). Hackman (2003), however, suggests not only reductionism, by moving down a level of analysis, but what he refers to as "bracketing"—looking at phenomena at the level being studied and then at both the level above and the level below.

Global bystander non-intervention research is an example of looking at a phenomenon at the level of analysis above that at which it is usually studied. In the case of global bystander non-intervention, we study the action—or more precisely the inaction—of members of national groups. Inaction despite need is manifest at both levels. For this reason, it is plausible that some of the same mechanisms may be at play. At the least, it is plausible that some related mechanisms may be at work and might account in part for the observed phenomenon. For this reason, the mechanisms of bystander non-intervention merit examination. As Hackman (2003) observes, crossing a level of analysis may illuminate a phenomenon at both a higher level and at a more individual level. Thus, the study of global bystander non-intervention by psychologists may, in turn, invigorate the study of bystander non-intervention in the contexts in which it is more commonly investigated.

Crossing levels with a construct must be done with care. Indeed, as Lawrence and Dodds (1997) observe, "explanations mounted at different levels do not automatically contain all the

same elements or cover the same relationships between elements” (p. 298). Despite differences between the traditional focus of non-intervention research and the present phenomenon, three key elements are shared, suggesting that exploration of this particular construct at a more general level is warranted.

First, the phenomena at the global and more local scale share the basic behavior: bystanders not helping despite evidence of great need.

Second, non-intervention has been studied in both emergency and non-emergency instances (Latané & Darley, 1975; Darley, 2000), replicating the variety of conditions of need manifest at the global level. Global bystander non-intervention occurs not only in emergencies such as natural disasters when there is acute need for helping, but also in non-emergency situations of chronic need for helping, as in parts of the world where malnourishment and child mortality have been the status quo for decades.

Third, while the literature sometimes varies the individual characteristics of the bystanders studies (with some minimal effects on the research findings), one fact remains the same in virtually all experimental treatments: Multiple individuals witnessing an emergency tends to reduce helping. In the global case, very many bystanders with varied traits observe the emergency. Decreased helping may likely be explained, at least in part, by the large numbers of bystanders.

One might point out three apparent differences between the phenomenon of global bystander non-intervention and those phenomena typically studied as bystander non-intervention: direct versus indirect contact, direct versus indirect knowledge, and the physical distance between bystanders and those in need. These points are not independent of each other; they overlap.

*Direct Versus Indirect Contact*

Helping someone nearby in the case of an emergency—such as the assault on Kitty Genovese or an injury from an accident—is clearly different from helping to alleviate the suffering of someone in another country or advocating for one’s government to help more. Indeed, degree of contact is one of the variables that has been studied in the bystander non-intervention research (Solomon, Solomon, & Stone, 1978). It was discovered in this study that those who both saw and heard an emergency were more likely to help than those who only heard an emergency. This was attributed by Solomon et al. (1978) to a decrease in ambiguity due to the actual sight of the person in distress.

Nevertheless, the degree of contact in instances of bystander non-intervention and global bystander non-intervention may not be as different as they first seem. Global media increase our vivid, if not physically direct, contact with those in need globally. In fact, with direct physical contact, you can see a person on the ground, obviously in some kind of need, without knowing what happened or what help is needed. In contrast, when you see an image of a starving child on television, you are typically told what is happening and what is needed. Thus, while bystander non-intervention and global bystander non-intervention involve different degrees of contact, these differences do not seem deep enough to render the cross-level consideration of mechanisms unfruitful. Quite the contrary—as the media evolve and become more interactive, they make indirect contact closer and closer to direct contact.

*Direct Versus Indirect Knowledge*

The way in which a bystander knows about the person in need might be seen as differentiating global bystander non-intervention from bystander non-intervention as it is typically studied. But again, under examination, this difference does not seem to qualify as a



reason not to apply the bystander non-intervention construct to the next higher level of analysis. In many of the pioneering studies on bystander non-intervention, there was no direct knowledge; neither the person in need of help nor other bystanders were ever seen by the subject of study. Bystander non-intervention has been studied in scenarios in which a person in need—one supposedly having a seizure—was merely heard over an intercom system after a previous claim that the hearer was either alone or that there were people in other rooms (Latané & Darley, 1970). Other research has demonstrated that even priming someone by having them imagine themselves in a group activity, such as imagining themselves having dinner with many friends, leads to decreased predicted charity, compared to those who imagined themselves previously having been alone or with one friend (Garcia et al., 2002). Thus, in bystander non-intervention as it is typically studied, neither the other bystanders nor those in need of assistance must be physically present in order for them to be cognitively taken into account and thus affect the actions of the potential helper. In this way, the construct is congruent with global bystander non-intervention.

### *Physical Distance*

Oftentimes in bystander non-intervention literature, the person receiving help is, or is at least believed to be, nearby. The bystander sees a (staged) rape (Christy & Voigt, 1994) or believes a victim is in the next room (Latané & Darley, 1970). Even in the study by Wiesenhal, Austrom, and Silverman (1983), the person requesting aid was physically present to the bystanders although the supposed aid recipients were not.

On the global scale, the recipient and requester of help are more physically distant from each other. The recipient of help will likely never meet the helper or the other bystanders; they are often quite literally on the other side of the world. The requester of help is often simply an

image or a sound as the plea comes through a mass media appeal. But this great physical distance does not render the exercise of examining parallels unfruitful. Indeed, previous research on computer-mediated interactions has found that some of the laws that have been found to influence bystander intervention in physical proximity have been found to apply to mediated and more distal interactions; this provides a useful starting point for generating theories (Markey, 2000).

Thus, although three differences between bystander non-intervention and global bystander non-intervention present themselves, they do more to highlight the distinct nature of global bystander non-intervention as a particular form of bystander non-intervention deserving of study than to delineate it as a wholly distinct phenomenon.

#### The Bystander Non-intervention Model Applied to Global Bystander Non-intervention

Latané and Darley (1970) proposed a five-step model of bystander non-intervention. In order for a person to intervene and give aid, he or she must (1) notice the situation, (2) interpret the situation as an emergency, (3) take responsibility to help, (4) know how to help and be capable of doing so, and (5) decide to do so. This model has been fruitfully applied to begin to examine a range of helping phenomenon (Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio, & Piliavin, 1995). Here we consider each of the five steps in turn and examine how they may illuminate helping, or not helping, on a global scale.

##### *Noticing the Emergency: Global Awareness*

The first condition necessary for helping is for potential helpers to notice the situation (Latané & Darley, 1968b). One can scarcely read a newspaper or turn on the evening news without being made aware of the large number of suffering poor in the world; this awareness is

only increasing as globalization progresses. Perhaps there is actually too much knowledge and, as a result, people are tuning it out. In either case, noticing the need is not the step at which most of the needed help is likely lost.

*Interpreting as an Emergency: Pluralistic Ignorance*

After noticing the event, bystanders must interpret it as requiring help (Latané & Darley, 1970; Newcomb, Rabow, Hernandez, & Monto, 1997). The less serious the event is perceived to be, the less likely people are to help (Piliavin et al., 1981; Shotland & Stebbins, 1983). The main mechanisms behind a lack of help at this stage are social influence (Latané & Darley, 1968a) and pluralistic ignorance (Miller & McFarland, 1987; Prentice & Miller, 1996).

When situations are ambiguous, their interpretations can be varied and are extremely complex. The more ambiguous the situation is, the less likely people are to help (Clark & Word, 1972; Solomon et al., 1978). But ambiguity is not intrinsic to the situation only. Social influence can reinforce ambiguity. One way in which people interpret ambiguous situations is by looking at how others are reacting (Festinger, 1957). But if everyone looks to everyone else and sees others that are uncertain or not helping, no one will interpret the event as an emergency since no one else is helping (Bickman & Rosenbaum, 1977; Latané & Darley, 1968a; Latané & Rodin, 1969; Schwartz & Gottlieb, 1976). The interpretation of others' confusion as a conscious, informed decision not to act, which leads one to believe no action is required, is referred to as pluralistic ignorance. In contrast, when a bystander sees that other bystanders are alarmed and likely do interpret the event as an emergency, the bystander effect is essentially eliminated and the individual in need is quite likely to receive help (Darley, Teger, & Lewis, 1973).

Pluralistic ignorance and social influence may be self-reinforcing factors in contemporary global bystander non-intervention. Individuals in developed nations may not help—by sending

aid abroad as individuals or by lobbying their governments—because they do not observe others doing it. Everyone interprets the situation as less serious than it really is because they all see the inaction of their peers.

Pluralistic ignorance is directly applicable to global bystander non-intervention. When individuals do not take action—that is, do not send considerable amounts of aid abroad—it is likely that other individuals become concerned that the pleas for aid they hear are exaggerated. Thus, people may adopt the line of thinking discussed in the literature and assume that if no one else is helping, it must not really be all that necessary.

Bystanders to problems such as poverty and starvation cannot, however be entirely ignorant; these problems are too well publicized throughout the world. Failure to interpret world poverty as an emergency may depend largely on the causes of poverty. When there is mass suffering due to droughts in Africa or mudslides in South America, it would be all but impossible not to interpret such suffering as emergencies. Often, however, the suffering has gone on for a long time and seems likely to continue for a long time. In these cases, global bystander non-intervention may persist because the suffering may be interpreted as an unfortunate but natural condition rather than an emergency.

#### *Taking Responsibility: Diffusion of Responsibility*

The third condition is that bystanders must take responsibility for giving the necessary help (Latané & Darley, 1970). An important obstacle to this is a mechanism called diffusion of responsibility. Latané and Darley (1970) first discussed diffusion of responsibility and hypothesized its role as a mechanism in bystander non-intervention. If multiple people see the need for help but also see each other witnessing the need for help, then they will all anticipate that someone else will provide the help and conclude that they will not have to do it themselves.

Thus, they will not act. This mechanism of diffusion of responsibility is further supported by evidence that if other bystanders are perceived as unable to help, then the bystander effect is essentially eliminated and a greater number of bystanders does not significantly reduce helping (Bickman, 1971; Ross, 1971).

Diffusion of responsibility may indeed be at work in global bystander non-intervention. The majority of campaigns for helping are made through the mass media in the hope that if more people are reached, more aid will be given. Ironically, this strategy may actually be counterproductive. If those hearing and seeing the pleas for aid realize that thousands of other people are seeing or hearing the same pleas, they may ignore the pleas, believing that others will help and that their individual help is unnecessary.

As globalization increases, citizens become more aware of the global nature of many of the world's problems—particularly poverty and deprivation in underprivileged nations. This view of the problem as global inherently increases one's sense of the number of people who are able to help. Thus, people assume that their help is unnecessary since others will be "helping for them." As Darley & Latané (1968) proposed, too many people helping can be perceived as unhelpful or even harmful. For example, if someone donates his or her time and goes door to door in the neighborhood asking for donations for UNICEF to aid poverty relief in Africa, this may help. But if all of his or her neighbors do the same, they are being extremely inefficient and the tenth request for aid from someone standing at the door will likely be ineffective.

Thus, diffusion of responsibility is strongly applicable to our global model and further study of this mechanism will likely be very fruitful in attempting to explain the present lack of cross-nation helping.

*Knowing How to Help: What Is Needed?*

The fourth condition is knowing how to help (Latané & Darley, 1970). Applied to the case of global bystander non-intervention, this condition would suggest that, in some cases, people may not help because they do not know how to help.

Is a lack of knowledge of how to help responsible for the lack of helping? It is unlikely that many citizens of privileged nations do not know that the Red Cross, UNICEF, and other charitable organizations help people in need in other nations. Finding out how to give help through these organizations is extremely easy, involving a phone call, letter, or visit to a website. Nevertheless, a more specific lack of knowledge—how to help *effectively*—may contribute to global bystander non-intervention. Many aid organizations attempt to reach the people of a nation through their government and some of those governments are known to be corrupt or at least inefficient. Not knowing how to help without contributing to fraud or corruption may be the most important way in which the mechanism of not knowing how to help, observed in bystander non-intervention research, contributes to the persistent low levels of cross-national helping by individuals.

*Taking Action: Inhibitions and Ability*

The final condition for helping posited in Latané and Darley's (1970) model of bystander non-intervention is that, possessing the knowledge of how to help, one decides to do so. In global cases, several factors may promote bystander non-intervention at this stage. People may still not be entirely certain that the need is really an emergency or that their attempt to help will really be helpful or that the problem is not already being taken care of without their help. People also may not act in order to avoid looking foolish through the mechanism of evaluation apprehension, which can lead either to facilitation or to inhibition (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, & Salomon,

1999; Seta & Seta, 1995). People fear the embarrassment of negative evaluations from peers if they are viewed as acting incorrectly (Latané & Darley, 1970).

Research might profitably address which of these can inhibit action. Examination of the directions of influence will be particularly important. While it may be intuitively appealing to reason that each may have a causal role in global bystander non-intervention, the commonly presumed direction (that inaction results from each) may in fact be reversed. Each of the above may in fact result from, rather than cause, inaction, in which case it would be necessary to identify other causes.

A particularly interesting finding on inhibition of action concerns one's not being sure that one is the person most competent to offer the needed help. In a study of helping at the small-group proximal level, Schwartz and Clausen (1970) found that bystanders were less likely to help in a medical emergency when they thought that one of the other bystanders was a medical student. These people refrained from helping because they felt that another observer was more qualified to help than they were.

This inhibition may operate in global bystander non-intervention. The middle class may give less if they feel that those who are richer are better able to help. There is evidence to suggest that, even amid great privilege, individuals feel financially strained; that feelings of deprivation are often a relative phenomenon (Glock, 1964; Weber, 1970). Further, if individuals feel that governments or NGOs are more competent to help than they are, they may expect these entities to do more and so do less themselves. The intriguing and disturbing possibility exists that celebratory accounts of individuals and organizations that do help may suppress rather than inspire helping.

### Other Relevant Factors in Subsequent Findings in the Literature

The five-stage model proposed by Latané and Darley (1970) was the platform for a wave of subsequent bystander non-intervention research. This research has uncovered several further insights into non-intervention, with implications for how psychologists might understand and study global bystander non-intervention.

#### *Hurry*

The bigger a hurry one is in, the less likely one is to help another in need (Batson, Cochran, Biederman, Blosser, Ryan, & Vogt, 1978; Darley & Batson, 1973). This influence may help explain global bystander non-intervention. Research has found that individuals in highly industrialized nations, particularly the United States, often experience a time bind (Hochschild, 2003) and that the pace of modern life has sped up at a dizzying pace (Schor, 1991). Hurry is thus a plausible moderator for global bystander non-intervention, one that could be directly tested.

#### *Salience of Those in Need*

Research has found that the salience of those in need to the potential helper affects bystander non-intervention and that national identity can greatly reduce the salience of members of other nations. A lack of salience may therefore be a factor in global bystander non-intervention. The suffering of foreigners is likely much less salient than a domestic disaster. This can explain the huge influx in aid from Americans to their countrymen following the September 11 terrorist attacks compared to the stagnation of aid to underprivileged nations despite their intense need and suffering. Salience of those in need is likely a strong mechanism in global bystander non-intervention.



### *Firsthand Experience of Bystanders*

Bystander non-intervention research has found that people who have been in a situation similar to that of the victim are more likely to help (Christy & Voigt, 1994). Thus it might be the case that those who have undergone economic hardship are more likely to assist the poor than those who have always known economic security. This is a provocative possibility which can be directly tested by examining means-adjusted giving. Citizens of the rich world, few of whom have ever been extremely poor, may not understand the hardship of those who are and thus feel less empathy and help less. Because the full degree of suffering cannot be directly known by the overwhelming majority of the rich world, the effect of firsthand experience is likely to be an important factor to account for the present state of global bystander non-intervention. Those within the rich world who have experienced poverty might be the most likely to help.

### *Bystander Relationships to and Perceptions of Other Actors*

Bystander non-intervention research has found that bystander non-intervention is influenced by four relevant relationships: bystander and victim, bystander and other bystanders, perpetrator and victim, and bystander and perpetrator. The last two depend not only on the perpetrator's relation to others involved but also on the bystanders' perceptions of the perpetrator.

### *Bystander-Victim Relationship*

People are more likely to offer aid in a situation where they know the victim or in which the victim is at least part of their ingroup (Austin, 1979; Bar-On, 2001; Christy & Voigt, 1994; Emswiler, Deaux, & Willis, 1971; Gilles & Hagan, 1983; Levine et al., 2002; Moriarity, 1975; Newcomb et al., 1997; Suedfeld, Bochner, & Wnek, 1972). Even in non-emergency situations, bystanders are more likely to help those similar to themselves. The similarity can be minor, as in

the study by Emswiller et al. (1971) where people were more likely to give someone a quarter for a phone call if the person asking was dressed similarly to the giver. This suggests an inherent cause of global bystander non-intervention, since individuals in the richest nations, which are mostly in Europe, North America, and East Asia, likely view the poorest nations, which are mainly in Africa, as members of an outgroup that is geographically remote and racially and culturally extremely different. Also, individuals in many rich countries may expect that individuals in other countries are more similar to the citizens of poor countries.

Particularly important in extending the discussion to global bystander non-intervention is evidence that bystanders are more likely to help when victims are perceived to have similar political ideologies and opinions (Hornstein, 1978; Karabenick, Lerner, & Beecher, 1973). Indeed, recent evidence from economics suggests that nations offer aid more consistently to other nations whose political ideologies are most similar to their own. Democracies, controlling for other factors, receive much more foreign aid, most of which is from the U.S. and the democracies of Europe (Alesina & Dollar, 2000).

Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, and Neuberg (1997) have argued that an increased sense of self-other overlap, caused by some of the same conditions which lead to empathy, causes the helper to identify more with a victim and thus increases helping. This idea stems from a body of past research in which the self is viewed as malleable (Higgins, 1996; Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1984; Markus & Wurf, 1987; McGuire & McGuire, 1988). When one learns of another experiencing hardship, this fluid self merges with the sufferer, causing one to feel empathy because he or she feels closer to the person in need (Cialdini et al., 1997). This increases helping since one's own identity is now bound up with the identity of the one in need (Aron & Aron, 1986; Cialdini et al.,

1997; Hornstein, 1982; Lerner, 1982; Piliavin et al., 1981). This feeling of “oneness” can be directed even to those in distant lands such as victims of natural disasters (Cialdini et al., 1997).

Identification with a victim is not entirely beneficial; it can lead individuals to concentrate on a single victim to the detriment of other or future victims (see, for recent discussion, Small & Loewenstein, 2003; Small, Loewenstein, & Slovic, 2005).

In sum, the relationship of the bystander and the victim is a key mechanism to be focused on in the study of global bystander non-intervention.

### *Bystander-Bystander Relationship*

People are also more likely to help when their fellow bystanders are acquaintances (Rutkowski, Gruder, & Romer, 1983; Yinon, Sharon, Gonen, & Adam, 1982) or even simply members of the same ingroup (Christy & Voigt, 1994). This is believed to result from the increase in the individual’s general comfort level within an ingroup (Christy & Voigt, 1994). If people are with members of their own ingroup, they are more likely to feel well within their comfort zone and thus may worry less about being embarrassed or acting “correctly.” If they feel they have correctly interpreted an event as an emergency, they may be more willing to take responsibility for helping when they are among their peers, since doing so would enhance their reputation within the group. Even when bystanders were previously strangers, a simple introduction to one another (name, age, etc.) was found to increase helping in the form of aid to an ill individual (Solomon, Solomon, Arnone, Maur, Reda, & Rother, 1981).

The role that similarity among bystanders may play in global non-intervention is intriguing. Japan, an extremely homogenous society, had the highest rates of giving from 1992 to 2000 (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001). The Netherlands, similar in its homogeneity, is similar in its level of giving (Organization for Economic Co-

operation and Development, 2001). The U.S., a far more diverse society, gives very low aid, as percentage of GNP, compared to other developed countries (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001; UNICEF, 1996). The figures cited are for governmental helping, not individual giving, so they are suggestive rather than illustrative. But they do suggest that similarity and closeness among members of a nation may increase their likelihood of giving, in part because it reflects on the group as a whole.

The mechanism of close relationships among global bystanders is somewhat unclear, however, when considered in light of earlier findings of strength of relationship between the privileged and those in need of help; it may have different effects depending on the group in question. As the similarity of relationship among those in a position to help is emphasized, which may increase helping, the dissimilarity between those who are in a position to help and those needing help may be unwittingly heightened, which may decrease helping (Christy & Voigt, 1994). That is, the more individuals in Japan are aware of their similarity to each other, the more they may also be aware of how different they are from, say, Rwandans. Determining which of these two influences is stronger, and under what circumstances, calls for further research. Our review suggests that relationship among bystander will have a potentially strong applicability to the understanding of global bystander non-intervention, but the direction of relationship cannot be readily deduced without additional study.

#### *Existence of a Perpetrator*

The perceived existence of a perpetrator may be an important factor in bystander non-intervention. Without the existence of an actual perpetrator, people may tend to fault the victim (Lerner, 1975). Thus, absence of a perpetrator (perceived or real) may “reinforce one’s bystander behavior [inasmuch as] one [is] obligated to care or do something only when the

attribution is made to the perpetrator of the atrocity” (Bar-On, 2001, p. 128). Placing blame on a perpetrator may increase helping whereas blaming the victim may decrease helping. Victim derogation will be discussed at length later in this paper. The finding that the salience of a perpetrator may increase intervention is a fruitful one for conceptualizing global bystander non-intervention. It would predict that individuals would be motivated to help less in cases where the suffering was caused by natural conditions and there was no perpetrator to blame, and more in cases where the suffering was caused by perpetrators such as corrupt, inept, or oppressive governments, rebel leaders in civil wars, or leaders of other countries engaged in aggression against the country needing aid.

#### *Perpetrator-Victim Relationship*

When a perpetrator exists and the victim and perpetrator are viewed to be members of the same ingroup and also members of the bystander’s outgroup, help has been found to decrease, particularly if the perpetrator and victim are perceived to be in a close relationship such as a familial or marital relationship (Levine 1999; Shotland & Straw, 1976). The mechanism behind this seems to be a belief that ingroup members know better than bystanders how to treat one another, which then lowers concern by outsiders. This indicates that type of government may play a significant role in the amount of help received from specific “helper” nations if various types of governments are perceived as having different sorts of relationships with their citizens.

The perpetrator-victim relationship likely has explanatory power for global bystander non-intervention, but only when there is a perceived or actual perpetrator. It suggests that, in such cases, highlighting the differences between the perpetrators and the victims would increase helping on the part of individuals in the rich world.

### *Bystander-Perpetrator Relationship*

The more similar a bystander is to the perpetrator, the more likely that bystander is to help (Christy & Voigt, 1994). It appears that people feel more invested in what their friends, acquaintances, and other ingroup members do than in what strangers do and thus feel more of an impetus to help (Christy & Voigt, 1994). Likely a good part of this pattern stems from guilt felt when one's ingroup member acts in a shameful manner.

This mechanism has very interesting applications to understanding global bystander non-intervention. National leaders are often cast as responsible for much of their countries' suffering. The extent to which we perceive ourselves as similar to or different from these leaders may influence our likelihood of helping. Note, however, that what is relevant here is not the actual perpetrator but who the relevant bystanders *believe* to be the perpetrator. Indeed, little psychological research has examined the processes by which we assign responsibility to foreign leaders (Pittinsky & Welle, 2005).

### *Belief in a Just World*

Psychologists have argued that people believe, to varying degrees, that the world is, for the most part, a fair place in which people get what they deserve (Lerner, 1980; Rubin & Peplau, 1975). This belief may be psychologically functional; if we believed that the world was horribly unfair, we would likely be driven mad by uncertainty and stress. Since this belief is, at least to some extent, a desirable one to maintain, evidence of unfairness causes a type of cognitive dissonance which people then seek to reduce in order to regain comfort from their sense of a fair world (Lerner, 1970; Lerner, 1977). This dissonance is especially strong when one knows that innocent victims are experiencing persistent suffering which one does not know how to relieve

(Lerner, 1980). This is likely the type of dissonance experienced by those in the privileged nations.

Such cognitive dissonance is generally reduced by either (a) altering the situation to increase its fairness or (b) changing one's beliefs about justice in the world. The first strategy is more common and is achieved either through "rational strategies"—compensating or aiding victims to reduce "actual" unfairness, or through "defensive strategies"—blaming the victims in order to make them seem deserving of their fate (Lerner 1980; Ryan, 1971). That is, one reduces the suffering of innocents by reducing either their suffering or their innocence. "Defensive strategies" are taken (Lerner & Miller, 1978) because they are far less costly than providing help (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1976). This is particularly true of cases of enduring injustices. In these cases, potential helpers are more likely to develop such negative attitudes toward the victims as derogation and blame (Reichle & Schmitt, 2002). Thus, those with a strong belief in a just world will perceive fewer situations as unfair since they feel that the victims somehow deserve their fates (Hafer & Olson, 1989).

Reichle, Schneider, and Montada (1998) have shown that an individual's felt responsibility to help those less fortunate and proclaimed willingness to do so are negatively correlated to his or her belief in a just world. This may interact with the mechanism of diffusion of responsibility, as discussed above, to create a rather dismal picture: If a group of high belief-in-a-just-world individuals views the problems and injustices facing the less fortunate, then not only will they feel low degrees of responsibility to help, but help will be further decreased by this minimal responsibility being diffused across many bystanders.

Belief in a just world has been found to be a powerful influence on helping, and clearly has strong applications to the arena of cross-national helping. Indeed, Smith (1985) found that

individuals' belief in a just world is linked to personal beliefs that contribute to the preservation of existing inequalities. If members of the rich world have a strong belief in a just world, they view the poor of the Third World as deserving their hardships. Those blamed for their own plight receive less help (Piliavin, Rodin, & Piliavin, 1969).

Further support for the above ideas can also be found in system justification theory, which asserts that people tend to rationalize and support the status quo as just or legitimate (Jost, 2001; Jost, Burgess, & Mosso, 2001; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Kay, Jimenez, & Jost, 2002) even when reality provides evidence to the contrary (Lerner, 1980; Tyler & McGraw, 1986). This is highly applicable to global bystander non-intervention. The poverty of the underprivileged nations and the dramatic disparities in world income are indeed the status quo. Since there have always been poor in the world, individuals in the rich world likely are driven to justify the status quo to avoid the cognitive discomfort of acknowledging an unjust system (Chen & Tyler, 2001; Reichle & Schmitt, 2002). Indeed, mere participation in the social system of the status quo can cause an individual to be invested in its maintenance. At least in theory, people will be most likely to justify discrepancies and injustice in systems that they are invested in through complicit participation, since they must justify their participation to themselves (Blanton, George, & Crocker, 2001). It has been shown that the activation of the belief in a just world and of system justification need not even be conscious; they occur virtually automatically at unconscious or implicit levels (Hafer, 2000; Jost, Pelham, & Carvallo, 2002; Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002). Since most individuals in privileged nations are complicit in the current social system and all of its injustices simply by virtue of living within this system, it is likely that they automatically justify the status quo, or at least assume that it is just. And if the status quo is legitimate and the world is "as it should be," why would helping be necessary?



There are, however, conditions under which greater belief in a just world can lead to greater helping, in particular when victims are portrayed as completely undeserving of their fate (e.g., Christy & Voigt, 1994). This seems to suggest that global bystander non-intervention is as much the result of how the potential helper makes sense of the need for help as of the need itself.

While the majority of research on belief in a just world is still conducted at the intra-national level (for examples of such studies, see Best & Demmin, 1982; Kerr, Bull, MacCoun, & Rathborn, 1985; Rubin & Peplau, 1973; Sloan & Gruman, 1983), it is a very promising research stream for advancing our understanding the lack of cross-national helping by individuals. Implicitly, though not stated explicitly, Lerner suggests that the belief in a just world is universal and widely applied (Reichle et al., 1998). Indeed, recent research, working from these premises, has begun to demonstrate that belief in a just world applies to victim derogation even for geographically and culturally remote victims such as the impoverished of the developing world (e.g., Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert, 1986; Reichle et al., 1998).

### Conclusion

This paper reviewed the psychological research on bystander non-intervention and evaluated its applicability to understanding an important issue at the interface of psychological science and society: the conspicuous lack of cross-national helping. We adopted a cross-level approach to develop connections between a well-studied area of research, bystander non-intervention, and an understudied area of research, global bystander non-intervention. In doing so, we hope to spark future research and theory

We began with a phenomenon: great wealth among some nations, dire need in others, and relatively little helping across the groups. Adopting a psychological frame, we focused on individual actors in rich nations and examined their non-intervention—their lack of helping—as individuals. While research in political science, sociology, and related disciplines will likely have a lot to say about how and why institutions do or do not help one another, psychologists have an important role in illuminating the determinants of the individual-level dynamics. Philosophers have written eloquently on the ethics and morality of individuals not helping (Singer, 2002). Psychological perspectives are critical, in part because individual dynamics may influence institutional dynamics—policies are set by individuals. And because of today's technology and the existence of global not-for-profit organizations, individuals can make a bigger difference than ever. NGOs empower individuals to help across nations.

A rich body of work has focused on bystander non-intervention. We frame the lack of cross-national helping by individuals as a particular incidence of bystander non-intervention: global bystander non-intervention. We reviewed the five mechanism proposed in the original model of bystander non-intervention and five more mechanisms that have been proposed subsequently, evaluating the degree to which these mechanisms have explanatory power for global bystander non-intervention.

The exercise is fruitful but frustrating. It provides important directions for developing and testing a theory of global bystander non-intervention. But in moving to the level of global bystander non-intervention, we encounter a great deal more complexity than is typically considered in models of bystander non-intervention. In addition, little empirical work has explicitly addressed the case of global bystander non-intervention, leaving many unanswered

questions which suggest important directions for theory and research as well as for increasing international helping.

In conclusion, we address directions for future research and potential applications to practice.

### *Directions for Future Research*

The task of our review of the research findings was to identify where research attention might profitably be paid. The review surfaced ten process insights from the bystander non-intervention literature which can be employed in work on global bystander non-intervention: noticing the emergency (global awareness), interpreting it as an emergency (pluralistic ignorance), taking responsibility (diffusion of responsibility), knowing how to help, taking action (the role of inhibition and the role of ability), hurry, salience of those in need, firsthand experience of bystanders, bystander relationships to and perceptions of other actors (bystander-victim, bystander-bystander, perpetrator-victim, bystander-perpetrator), and belief in a just world.

These conceptual insights, as the review suggested, can—indeed must—be studied in multiple ways. For example, what seems at first glance to be an independent variable predicting global intervention on the part of individuals—for example, one’s perceived ability to help—may in fact be a mediating or moderating variable. Much empirical work needs to be done on which to base future theories.

Several findings, including bystander-victim similarity and recategorization effects, seem to suggest that the more we view ourselves as citizens of the world, the more likely we are to help across nations. Yet as our international awareness increases, the greater number of bystanders would, according to the mechanism of diffusion of responsibility, inhibit aid. Indeed,

in the famous “Robbers Cave” experiment, it was found that having the boys work toward a superordinate goal reduced hostility between the groups; however, their individual efforts were never studied (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). Did the boys work just as hard as they would have if fewer were present? If we proclaim poverty reduction to be a global goal, perhaps countries will feel less antagonistic and prejudicial toward one another, but will they make just as much of an effort to reduce global poverty as they would have if they felt they were the only country making the effort? This is an avenue for further research. If, as the world becomes more globalized, every problem is viewed as a global problem, then every problem will have virtually the entire world as bystanders, which would inhibit aid. However, it may also be possible that these billions of bystanders would be less salient since people would focus on “one world” rather than many individuals, thus not conceptually increasing the number of perceived bystanders and possibly even decreasing this number. Further research is needed to see the conditions under which each of these two competing forces is the stronger.

If some people help and this is made known, will the knowledge induce others to help or inhibit them from helping? The effect of models also calls for further research as, once again, competing hypotheses can be derived from the literature. Pluralistic ignorance and the idea of ingroup fellow bystanders facilitating further helping when one bystander intervenes (Levine et al., 2002) imply the former, while diffusion of responsibility implies the latter. If a few people step forward and vocally offer help, others are more likely to move past step two of Latané and Darley’s (1968b) model and interpret the situation as one that requires helping. Indeed, it has been shown that prosocial exemplars promote altruistic or helping behavior in others (Bryan & Test, 1967; Rushton & Campbell, 1977). On the other hand, these exemplars likely will also make it less probable that a bystander moves past step three since, if others are offering aid, they

will likely feel less responsibility to do so themselves. Thus, such exemplars may in some cases actually decrease helping among other bystanders. Again, future research must determine which of these two effects is stronger. We would, however, hypothesize that the latter is stronger. It is likely that most people already interpret international poverty as an emergency and recognize that some sort of help is needed. It is much less likely that people will take a degree of personal responsibility in helping to alleviate international poverty since the world is a huge community and many will likely feel that their personal assistance is not necessary. Thus, while we want aid to be given, it may be harmful for those giving aid to be publicly recognized.

There may be other mechanisms—existing only at the global bystander non-intervention level, not at the local level—waiting to be discovered. One such influence may be a belief that the responsibility to help lies with the governments of the rich nations, not with their individual citizens. Understanding how control is attributed to the self, others, and governmental institutions is one exciting direction in which new mechanisms can be unearthed. The answers will likely be tricky. For example, if individuals are waiting for governments to intervene, what prevents them from putting pressure on their governments? A whole line of research may address systems-level dynamics, the chicken-and-egg interplay between individual attribution and behavior.

While the larger story of global bystander non-intervention is one of inaction, the fact that there is some action raises an intriguing question for investigation. In many of the experimental paradigms to date, helping was something of a binary outcome: reporting a fire or not reporting it, seeing whether someone needs medical assistance or not doing so. The case of global bystander non-intervention—in which the degree of helping can range from giving a dollar annually to giving one's entire income—raises intriguing questions of how one decides

how much helping is help, once one has decided to help at all. In fact, reconceptualizing intervention from a binary to a continuous variable raises a whole host of important new questions for study in both the global and local cases.

A third area to examine is efficacy, which we expect will prove to be one of the key factors in the current lack of cross-national helping by individuals. Highlighting the potential beneficiaries to potential helpers should put the helpers in a prosocial mindset (Grant, 2004). In a case in which a victim is more local, it may often be easier to see what actions are necessary and take them. In a cross-national situation, the sheer magnitude of the problem and the uncertainty of the final destination of one's help can be confusing and lead to paralysis instead of action. What are the conditions under which individuals, faced with a problem far beyond their own power to address, will see the comparatively small actions they are able to take as part of a larger solution?

Are there personalities pre-disposed either to intervene or not to intervene, in the traditional contexts or in cross-national contexts? The search for the altruistic personality, for the identification of individual-level differences that will predict helping, has yielded some findings (Piliavin et al., 1981; Rushton, 1981). Other researchers, however, find little evidence of its existence (e.g., Oliner & Oliner, 1988). In reviewing the research, Piliavin & Charng (1990) point out that since there are many different forms of helping, searching for a single personality may not be productive. They suggest looking to dimensions of personality emerging in the literature to see if they are fruitful. An equally compelling alternative direction might be to look at the explanatory power of personality differences in helping at different levels. For example, do the same variables have similar explanatory power in predicting one's intervention in local versus global helping?

Once research findings emerge, theories of global bystander non-intervention can emerge. Such theories will need to address three basic questions: Why does the conspicuous lack of helping occur (explanation)? How does it occur (mechanisms)? When—under what conditions—does it occur (moderating variables and boundary conditions)?

*Applications to Practice*

One would hope and expect the development of a good empirical understanding and good theories of global bystander non-intervention to provide insight for practice (Lewin, 1951). This early-stage examination already suggests possible ways to increase cross-national helping.

### *Mass Appeals Versus Small Appeals*

Mass media appeals are expected to increase aid by reaching a larger audience. But given the phenomenon of diffusion of responsibility, they may actually decrease the number of people who help, while appeals through individual contact, community newspapers, and smaller groups such as church congregations and women's clubs might increase the aid given. Jason, Rose, Ferrari, and Barone (1984) found that personal appeals from friends to donate blood are far more effective than posters or other mass media approaches. However, the increased cost of making more numerous requests of smaller numbers of people may exceed the gain.

### *Group-Based Versus Individual Appeals*

The mechanism of closer inter-bystander relationships suggests that a mass media appeal would likely do well to emphasize commonality among viewers. Previous research suggests that contextual factors may be more important than subject factors in predicting helping responses (Stebly, 1987). Yet such a manipulation might also decrease helping by inadvertently casting those in need as an outgroup.

### *Feeling of "Oneness"*

Feelings of "oneness" and similarities between bystanders and victims tend to increase helping (e.g., Christy & Voigt, 1994; Cialdini et al., 1997). The evidence on bystander-victim closeness seems to indicate that if the citizens of developed nations were to view themselves as citizens of the whole world, giving would increase as more victims were included in various ingroups or merged into potential helpers' identities. Related recategorization effects are robust findings in the literature (Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Sikes, & Snapp, 1978; Sherif et al., 1961; Turner, 1981; Worchel, 1979).



Kramer and Brewer (1984) reported experiments in which restraint in a public good context was greatest when the superordinate collective-level group identity was greatest. Though not a direct test of proactive helping, their findings are consistent with an approach to promoting helping that would emphasize superordinate identity—for example, an emphasis on global citizenship. But the story is not that simple (Penner et al., 2005). While replacing group identities with a common ingroup identity seems to enhance prosocial interaction, maintaining separate group identities while emphasizing common group memberships can have conflicting effects (Hewstone & Brown, 1986 in Penner et al., 2005). Insko et al. (in press), for example, report that a common identity can increase cooperation between individuals but increase competition between groups. Criticism that oil-rich Persian Gulf states did not at first respond adequately to the destruction visited by the 2004 tsunami on their fellow Muslim nation, Indonesia (Kessler, 2005), suggests that a common identity does not automatically lead to cross-national helping.

Questions remain for further research. Can this cognitive reduction in certain prejudicial beliefs—reduction in overall prejudice amid a reinforced prejudice for those still in the newly defined outgroup—be extended into the realm of behavior? Can the mechanisms which have been shown to reduce a negative attitude (prejudice) also increase a positive behavior (helping)?

#### *Increased Efficacy*

The question for individuals becomes whether the victim can be effectively helped through a collective or institutional effort (Correia & Valla, 2003). Mohiyeddini and Montada (1998) found that people who scored high on an index of Self-Efficacy to Promote Justice in the World were less likely to derogate victims. Since victim derogation decreases helping (Piliavin et al., 1969), higher perceived efficacy might increase helping. Additionally, when one perceives that one can alleviate the suffering of the victim fairly easily, individual belief in a just world

actually increases helping (Bierhoff, Klein, & Kramp, 1991). Demonstrating to people that their help will have an impact is therefore likely to be one of the most effective ways to address global bystander non-intervention. Rather than just emphasizing how dire the need is, appeals should also emphasize how little it takes to have an impact in the Third World. In fact, readers or viewers are often assured that only a dollar or a few dollars a day would make an enormous difference in some very poor family's life.

The mechanisms of relationships between perpetrators and victims and the bystander's ability to help imply that help would be much more likely to go to governments that are perceived as legitimate, honest, or likely to get the help to the people. Interestingly, the findings on bystander non-intervention make competing predictions in this regard. If the rich democracies see other democracies as inherently more equitable, effective, or just, those regimes may be much more likely to receive assistance. On the other hand, if a government chosen by its people is perceived to be at least partly to blame for its people's poverty, then less help may be received due to the mechanisms of perpetrator-victim relationships and blaming the victim..

These four examples are illustrative rather than exhaustive of how the development of a theoretical model of global bystander non-intervention research can inform practice. The fact that, in several cases, competing hypotheses can be derived from the literature demonstrates that interesting and important work waits to be done.

Global bystander non-intervention is a disquieting reality; the need for help is manifest everyday in human suffering and lives lost. As a review of bystander non-intervention to date illustrates, psychologists can advance both scientific knowledge and the well-being of millions of suffering people by helping to elucidate why cross-national helping does not occur and how to increase it.

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