



# Bystander intervention and norm shifting: A social psychological research overview

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Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' He said, 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?' (Genesis 4:9)

### **Introduction**

In the biblical story of creation, Cain murders his brother Abel in an ancient act of fury and jealousy, creating a prototype for human evil against a defenseless and innocent other. Since then, humans have committed every conceivable despicable act of cruelty against each other, the extent to which seemed to explode during the last century, taking its most vile and extreme form in the genocides committed against various minority groups. When we are reminded of examples of unspeakable cruelty between humans, many of us are haunted by the question: "What would I have done?" In order to approach an answer, soul searching will just not do the trick. Decades of social psychological research has taught us that situations that we find our selves in can be overwhelmingly powerful and that even the most courageous and altruistic personality, even the most humane of intentions and the most enlightened of educations will not constitute a vaccine against the passivity in the face of extreme violence and cruelty. As has been demonstrated time and again in classic social psychological experiments, perfectly normal people are capable of humiliation and abuse even in the absence of threat of punishment for disobedience (Milgram, 1974; Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973; Zimbardo, 2007; Bandura, Underwood & Fromson, 1975).

The unresponsive bystander is not a clear-cut phenomenon. Bar-On (2001) differentiates between different classes of bystanders depending on a variety of factors, such as the seriousness of the harm inflicted, the relationship among perpetrators, victims and bystanders and degree of benefit to the bystander. A person

rushing by a beggar on a busy city street is a very different kind of bystander from one who passively observes as his friend commits a brutal act of violence. These two situations are both vastly different from the one where the sensitive television viewer turns off the news broadcast of reports from raging conflicts in distant countries because he does not want to hear more about human suffering. In the classic bystander situation, which will mainly be referred to in this overview, *the bystander is an individual who passively observes a victim in dire straits without intervening even though he has a clear opportunity to come to the aid of the ailing victim*. Other situations, where the physical and psychological distance between bystander and victim is greater and when the opportunity to intervene is more circumscribed, are vastly different from a legal and ethical point of view. However, the psychological mechanisms underlying inactivity in the face of an emergency are assumed to be the same, varying more in quantity than in quality.

When discussing the social psychological mechanisms underlying bystander behavior and norm shifting, one must constantly relate to the other relevant parts in the genocidal situation, since the bystander by definition is a relational concept. The bystander is a passive observer of other actors and without a perpetrator and a victim, there can be no bystander. The central dilemma of the passive bystander is why he does not intervene in a situation where a fellow human being is in an obvious and acute need of help. In this sense, explaining bystander behavior becomes intertwined in the general endeavor of understanding human evil. The lack of inhibition of the performance of cruel acts belongs to the same category of behavior as the failure to abide by a moral imperative to act prosocially. Thus, theories of how people become perpetrators and helpers are also relevant to the study of the bystander. In this

research overview, I will therefore also refer to theories of the psychology of evil and altruism, to the degree that these theories bear relevance to the bystander dilemma

The strength and weakness of social psychology lies in its power to generate generalities (Suedfeld, 2000). In social psychological research one normally aims to find the commonalities in any given situation. An underlying assumption of the field is that you can reduce exceedingly complex phenomena to their presumed central characteristics and build a model of them in the laboratory. This allows the researcher to control and vary the different aspects of the situation and thus explore the interactive effects of the multitude of possible causes in the situation. Herein lies the strength of experimental social psychology, since the case study of a past real life event with necessity will contain an infinite number of possible causes, rendering any cause and effect-conclusion all but impossible to establish conclusively. On the other hand, in the search for commonalities, the uniqueness of every individual situation is lost and one runs the risk of imposing an overly structured frame on a reality that is infinitely more complex, thus losing sight of the trees in the intensive search of the forest. In light of the generalistic nature of social psychological research, this overview will take a broad view of bystander behavior, not only examining a certain kind of bystander behavior in a specific historical situation, but rather look at research relevant to bystander behavior in any kind of emergency.

Whenever possible, I will choose to use gender neutral pronouns and terms in the text ("the individual", "you", "one"). Occasionally I will use the masculine pronouns ("he", "himself", "his" etc.) in order to increase readability. This is by no means meant to imply neither that bystander behavior is a male phenomenon, nor that the

man is the norm against which to compare. Women can be bystanders, perpetrators, victims and rescuers as well as men and the use of male pronouns is not meant to imply the male as a norm for behavior.

Societal norms are the ideals against which members of society compare their behavior. If the norms of a society shift, then so will the point of reference for the individual when he is to judge the moral value of his actions. Another assumption underlying this overview is thus that the shifting of norms in the direction of the normalization of violent behavior in a society will serve to perpetuate and deepen the twisted murderous logic of the genocidal setting, including the acceptance of inactive bystanders to extreme violence.

After reviewing classic psychological studies of bystander passivity, a general oversight of the historical and present directions in bystander research will be surveyed, using the three principles of the Bystander effect as described by Latané and Darley (1970) as an organizing principle – namely *Social Influence*, *Diffusion of responsibility* and *Audience inhibition*. Some influential dispositional theories will then be briefly presented, as will the most recent theories regarding bystander behavior, grounded in Social Identity Theory. Hereafter, the process of norm shifting will be introduced and a number of social psychological explanations attempting to explain the processes of norm shifting, behavior inducement and attitude change will be presented. A theoretical model of the effect of bystander behavior on the perpetration of extreme violence will then be introduced, based on the literature reviewed. Finally, future directions for research will be suggested and a list of active researchers and institutions in the area will be listed.

In order to start to untangle the dilemma of passivity in the face of evil, any self-respecting social psychological research overview on the mechanism of bystander behavior has to return to the quintessential scene of the bystander conundrum in an apartment building in Kew Gardens in Brooklyn, New York.

### **The Bystander Effect**

The brutal rape and murder of Kitty Genovese in 1964 caused a public outrage due to the reported inaction of the many bystanders to the crime (see Manning, Levine & Collins, 2007, for a dissenting view on the case). The failure to explain the causes of the perceived passivity gave rise to a flurry of social psychological research during the 1970s and 1980s, initiated by the seminal research of John Darley and Bibi Latané in 1968. Darley and Latané attempted to recreate what they perceived to be the key elements of the non-responsiveness of the bystanders to the Kitty Genovese murder, namely the presence of other onlookers and unawareness of the other bystander's reactions. The effect that was found, subsequently dubbed the "Bystander Effect", was that the possibility that someone else already had initiated helping behavior served to "diffuse the responsibility" of the individual bystander to take action. The diffusion of responsibility further gave rise to the counterintuitive effect that the likelihood of intervention decreases as a function of the number of bystanders present. Darley and Latané's bystander effect tells us that seemingly unimportant details in the immediate situation (how many people are present, whether or not you can see, hear or communicate with the other onlookers) makes the difference between a hero and a coward.

In a follow-up to the experiment, Latané and Rodin (1969) investigated another situation in which a victim was crying out for the help of participant bystanders. They dubbed the scenario "Lady in distress" since it involved participants overhearing a woman fall and cry out in pain, either alone, with a (confederate) stranger or with a friend. The participants were the least likely to intervene in the condition in which they overheard the lady in distress in the company of a non-responsive stranger. The result was seen to indicate that the bystander in a situation like this tends to look to others for guidance before acting, often misinterpreting their apparent lack of concern, and thus mistakenly decide that the situation is not serious. Following these experiments, Latané and Darley (1970) presented a theory mapping three central processes hindering onlookers from intervening in emergencies - *social influence diffusion of responsibility* and *audience inhibition*.

### **Social Influence**

In the seminal studies of Solomon Asch (1951) the effects of group pressure on the individual was shown with devastating clarity. The participant in the experiment was put in a group of confederates and was asked to give an answer to a deceptively simple question, such as which of three lines was the longest. One after the other of the confederates started providing the wrong answer in a uniform fashion, finally causing the participant to yield to group pressure and choose the same erroneous answer as the confederates had chosen. The experiment was seen as a powerful demonstration of conformity and the tendency to follow the group, even in instances where you disagree with it. In a situation where you witness a violent scene, you are thus likely to survey the reaction and behavior of the other bystanders in order to decide on a beneficial course of action. If the other present bystanders are passive,

then the effect of conformity tells us that you will conform to the passivity of the group. Others may subsequently observe your passivity and be likewise affected by your inaction in a reciprocal fashion.

The phenomenon of losing our personal integrity and becoming cogs in the larger machine of the overarching group was one of the earliest areas to be the subject of social psychological investigation (Le Bon, 1885; Freud, 1951). These early formulations also pointed out the potential primitive urges and aggressiveness that may be unleashed in the anonymity of the crowd. In the Stanford Prison Experiment (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973; Zimbardo, 2007), Zimbardo et al. utilized this mechanism by equipping their "prison guard"-participants with reflecting sunglasses which hid their eyes, thereby increasing their sense of anonymity and identification with the role they were playing. This effect is also apparent in the traditional executioner's hood meant to cloak him in an aura of impersonalism and thus prepare him for his violent act. This sense of anonymity presumably increases conformity and is one of the key factors in accounting for bystander passivity in the face of extreme violence.

*- Anonymity vs. Self Awareness*

Schwartz and Gottlieb (Schwartz & Gottlieb, 1976; Schwartz & Gottlieb, 1980) found that the sense of anonymity caused bystanders to become momentarily paralyzed in an ambiguous emergency situation, significantly delaying the helping response and further that the sense of anonymity seems to increase the more homogenous the bystander group is. As a consequence of the increase in anonymity,

the tendency to help a victim in need of help decreases (Smith, Smythe, & Lien, 1972). Feeling like an anonymous cog in a larger machine is to be contrasted with the increased sense of individuality and integrity that is involved in a heightened sense of self awareness, a state that seems to increase the tendency for bystanders to intervene in an emergency. Becoming self aware functions to raise the individual sense of responsibility and accountability and thus increase the readiness to help (Ellsworth & Langer, 1976; Wegner & Schaefer, 1978, Gibbons, 1990).

One way of achieving the self-awareness effect is the stare. If the victim singles out one individual bystander and stares at him, it works to take the bystander out of the anonymity of the crowd, and impel him to intervene (Ellsworth & Langer, 1976). A strategy for a victim to increase the helpfulness of the onlookers of a crime is thus to implore a single individual with verbal or non-verbal (staring) communication. The process that is believed to account for this effect is that self awareness serves to accentuate the individual's personal standards and values and thus makes him more resistant to group pressure and conformity (Gibbons, 1990). The beneficial effects of self awareness on helping behavior have accordingly been shown to decrease the bystander effect and increase helping behavior in an experimental setting (Ellsworth & Langer, 1976, Wegner & Schaefer, 1978).

### **Diffusion of responsibility**

The diffusion of responsibility refers to the tendency for people in groups to allow events to occur which they would never allow if they were alone. In the presence of others, responsibility is seen to be diluted and diffused with no one of the present

individuals feeling that they are personally responsible (Darley & Latané, 1968). The sense of a lessening of the individual responsibility can be seen as the result of the mere presence of others (Darley & Latané, 1968), the sense of being part of a hierarchical or bureaucratic system (Milgram, 1974; Bauman, 1991), the effect of "groupthink" or dysfunctional group pressure (Janis, 1972; Welzer, 2007) or resulting from blaming the victim himself for his predicament (Lerner & Simmons, 1966).

In order to experience something as a personal moral dilemma, a person must first assume that he has some responsibility for the action that he performs. Milgram (1974) showed that you can cause people to perform morally dubious acts through attaining a shift to an *agentic state*, where the actor sees himself as an instrument for the wishes of another and thus relinquishes responsibility to the authority. The lack of responsibility hinders a person from considering the morality of what he is doing. Milgram also studied the tendency for bystander intervention, by asking the participant in the experiment to perform an auxiliary task, such as recording the levels of the shocks administered by a confederate to the learner/victim. In this bystander-like condition only 3 out of 40 disobeyed the experimenter's cruel orders. As bystanders, they felt doubly absolved from responsibility, firstly through the warrant given by a legitimate authority and secondly because they were exempted from committing the act themselves. Milgram's agentic state is mirrored in Bauman's (1991) concept of *adiaphorization* – the stripping of moral significance from actions, simply leaving a definition of the actions as effective/ineffective. Through the machinery of the division of labor into smaller and smaller tasks, the consequences of the individual actions are not experienced (Bauman, 1991).

In some groups, particularly those characterized by high cohesiveness, directive leadership, homogeneity of group members and isolation from the outside world, the phenomenon of "groupthink" can arise, in which group members make hasty and irrational decisions as a consequence of the desire to maintain consensus and avoid in-group conflict (Janis, 1972). The fear of being seen as foolish, or a desire to avoid embarrassing or angering other members of the group, cause group members to suspend critical thinking and engage in reciprocal encouragement of the group's chosen path of action. In groupthink, the individual places the responsibility on the group's consensus decisions, when in fact these decisions actually are a result of a dysfunctional process hampered by the absence of individual responsibility and critical thinking.

Harald Welzer (2007) refers the testimony of several commanders of one of the Nazi "Einsatztruppen", battallions that were responsible for indescribably cruel mass murders of Jews during World War II. In his detailed description of the process with which the critical decision to carry out the heinous orders was made, elements of dysfunctional group decisions are unmistakably present. Welzer describes how the highest ranking officer hesitates about the carrying out of the order and therefore summons his fellow officers in order to make a joint decision, the weight of issuing such a vile order being too heavy for the top ranking officer to bear by himself. When they gather, noone is willing to take the initiative and thereby accept responsibility for the decision. This clears the stage for the most ideologically extreme individual to take the lead in carrying out the mass murder. Through this process, the person who is ultimately responsible can reduce his own sense of responsibility by focusing on the fact that someone else actually grasped the initiative in the end. Further, his hesitance

can serve as a personal reassurance that he is still a good person. The other parties can in turn absolve themselves by relaying the responsibility to the very same high ranking officer and see themselves as simply obeying orders, perhaps even feeling victimized about having to carry out such a difficult and psychologically costly job. The description is that of the diffusion of responsibility of the perpetrators, but the psychological mechanisms causing the individual to relay the responsibility to consensually made group decisions is likely to be the same among bystanders and/or peripheral collaborators.

Besides transferring the responsibility to other bystanders, to the system of hierarchy and authority or to the group it self, the responsibility can also be attributed to the victim himself as is apparent in the "just world-hypothesis" – a term coined by Melvin Lerner and Carolyn Simmons (Lerner & Simmons, 1966) to capture the tendency for people to want to believe that the world is "just" so strongly that when they witness an otherwise inexplicable injustice they will rationalize it by searching for things that the victim might have done to deserve it. In order to make sense of an otherwise unfathomable genocidal reality, bystanders to genocide may thus rationalize what they are seeing by assuming that the victims must have it coming – if not, then the world seems an unbearable place to be. The placing of responsibility on the victim himself will consequently cause a diffusion of personal responsibility and thereby decrease the tendency for intervention and aid.

### **Audience inhibition**

Dan Bar-On (2001) introduces the construct of "Mind your own business" as one of

the key elements to account for the unwillingness of bystanders to intervene in emergencies. Bar-on sees the construct as having been introduced in order to protect individual integrity at a time when social control was overly strict. He further sees it as a trademark of individualist society. The norm of minding your own business tells us that we should not interfere in an event between two strange people. Overcoming this norm requires a tremendous psychological effort and the prospect of intervening in a situation where we are not wanted is seen as exceedingly embarrassing and is to be avoided at any cost. This of course attenuates our tendency to intervene and help a fellow human in need, especially if the need for our intervention is not fully clear and the risk of embarrassment is considerable. When asking ourselves why people do not intervene, consideration must be taken of the psychological cost of a possible failed intervention. We are intently busy with managing the impression that we make on others and try to avoid humiliation and degradation of our peers. When choosing any course of action, we engage in a calculation of the costs and benefits of the action before deciding if we should perform it.

- *Cost of intervention*

In the *arousal: cost-reward*-model of helping behavior (Piliavin et al., 1969; Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner & Clark, 1981), the bystander experiences an emotional arousal state in the face of an emergency. Depending on the quality and strength of the emotional reaction, several courses of action can be taken, most notably providing some form of assistance, leaving the situation, remaining passive or rejecting the victim as undeserving of help. At the heart of this model is a cost-reward matrix that is assumed to be used by the bystander in order to determine his course of action. The bystander is expected to weigh the costs of intervening (embarrassment, effort,

danger) against the possible costs associated with not helping (self-blame and censure from others), rewards associated with helping (self praise, victim gratitude) and rewards associated with not helping (continuation of other activities). The final decision to intervene or not will be the result of this calculation. Several empirical studies have supported this view of bystander intervention (Piliavin & Piliavin, 1972; Morgan, 1978). The cost-arousal model of helping behavior is essentially motivated by maximizing the gains for the self, rather than being motivated by altruism and a genuine will to aid your fellow man.

This rather grim portrait of the selfish motivations behind helping has been subsequently challenged by Batson and Shaw (1991) who proposed the empathy-altruism hypothesis, stating that if you feel empathy towards another person you will help them, regardless of what you can gain from it. When experiencing empathy toward the other, relieving suffering becomes a motivator in it self and overrides any self-interest concerns. When you do not feel empathy, the cost-benefit matrix becomes activated and help will only be provided if the benefit of intervening outweighs the costs.

As demonstrated by earlier studies by Darley and Batson (1973), a situation that can effectively hinder the experience of empathy for our fellow man is being in a rush. An ingenious experimental setting was put into place where presumed powerful determinants, such as education, professional commitment to helping and an awareness of ethics were juxtaposed against the seemingly mundane factor of time pressure. In the experiment, priest seminar students encountered a man slumped in an alleyway coughing and in apparent need for help. The only aspect that was varied for

different subjects was the amount of hurry they were said to be in. The participants were on their way to a discussion with their professors (a few were even getting ready to talk about the Good Samaritan Parable, a Bible verse about the importance of helping strangers in need) and some of the participants were told that they were already late to the meeting and had to hurry up if they were to make it. The surprising result was that time pressure overrode years of education on Christian ethics and a life long commitment to the curing of souls and caused the participants to rush by their fellow human in need, some of them even stepping over the victim in the doorway in order to get faster to the awaiting ethics discussion! It would seem that the lack of time made empathizing with the victim more difficult, even though the priest seminar students presumably had a dispositional tendency for caring about the needy.

### **Dispositional theories**

Even though the majority of social psychological studies have focused on the situation influence in a situation of extreme violence, there are those who have tried to explain the behavioral differences as a function of the different personalities of the actors (Oliner & Oliner, 1988; Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). These theories do not disregard the situational factors as powerful influential factors, but rather try to explain the fact that, even in extreme circumstances, there are interpersonal differences with regards to how to deal with the situational pressures. For example, even though German people under Nazi rule were reluctant to intervene, according to some even willingly going along with Hitler's murderous intentions (Goldhagen, 1996), there were those who stood up to authority and provided help and resistance. To take another example, the 65% that seemed to be ready to give a lethal shock to the unsuspecting and undeserving victim in the Milgram studies (Milgram,

1974) is a chillingly high percentage, but the fact remains that there were still 35% who did not comply with the experimental authority. Likewise, in Darley and Latané's diffusion of responsibility-study, the result that is most often cited is that the tendency to intervene decreased as a function of the number of bystanders present, hiding the fact that, even in the condition with the highest number of bystanders, 62 % still reported the emergency to the proper authorities (the experimenter). This is of course a significantly lower amount than the 100 % who reported the plight of the ailing victim in the condition without other bystanders present, but it still indicates that the tendency to become a perpetrator, a bystander or a helper varies across people as well as across situations. After all, if the situation was all-powerful, the controlled environment of the laboratory would cause people to behave in an absolute uniform fashion.

Oliner & Oliner (1988) found few personality differences between 231 gentiles who saved Jews in Nazi Europe and 126 non-rescuers matched on age, sex education and geographical location during the war. However, rescuers did have higher ethical values, beliefs in equity, experienced greater empathy and were more likely to see people as equal. Theodore Adorno et al. (1950) sought the explanation for why some people seem to be more susceptible to prejudice and fascist propaganda and endeavored an "anthropological" search of the "species" of the authoritarian personality. According to Adorno et al., people characterized by authoritarianism seek conformity, security and stability. Events or circumstances that upset their previously existing world view cause them to become anxious and insecure. To avoid any disturbances to this view of the world, they become very intolerant of any divergence from what they consider to be normal, usually conceptualized in terms of their

belongingness to significant social categories such as religion, race, and/or nationality. To further safeguard the parts of the world that they cherish, they tend to divide life into dichotomous categories of good and evil and lend credence to superstitions and folktales that fit their preexisting definitions of reality. This type of personality is seen by the authors as a result of harsh parenting styles that cause children to repress hostility towards authority figures in fear of retribution. The hostility felt towards the punishing parent is repressed and is split up into two parts. The hatred finds its outlet against those with which the subject does not identify with and who are seen as weak (societal scapegoats and deviants), while the other part is transformed into love through the psychological defense mechanism of reaction formation, resulting in a masochistic subjugation under an idealized leader. Ambiguity can not be tolerated in this split-up world view and stereotyping and a highly dichotomous outlook is the inevitable outcome. Ideologies that include the ideas of stereotyping, of us vs. them, of the strong versus the weak and of authoritarian subjugation under one dominant leader thus resonate with this type of personality.

Adorno et al.s book had an enormous impact, as had other books trying to explain the personalities of the Nazi perpetrators with the help of psychodynamic theory (see also Miller, 1980) and much of the social psychological research on perpetration of violent crimes and passivity in the face of extreme cruelty have been a reaction to the popular belief that the perpetrators of genocide either belong to a foreign "species" or that they are suffering from some form of psychopathology as a result of having been subjected to childhood abuse. As a reaction to these dispositional theories, some times referred to as intentionalistic, countless accounts of violence have focused on the

description of how perfectly regular people can commit terrible crimes under the right (wrong) circumstances (Arendt, 1965; Milgram, 1974; Zimbardo, 2007; Browning, 1998; Welzer, 2007).

### **Social identification**

People have a strong need to defend and care for the group to which they belong in order to raise their self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), to strike a balance between individuality and belongingness (Brewer, 1991) and to escape from thoughts of the fleeting nature of individual existence (Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon, 1986). The need for identification with the group that you belong to can create tensions and conflict with other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Brewer, 1999, Halevy, Sagiv, Roccas, & Bornstein, 2006) and a vast body of research within the Social Identity paradigm has shown that the mere categorization into in- and outgroup can be enough to create prejudice and intergroup conflict (see Hornsey, 2008 for a review).

According to the tenets of Optimal Distinctiveness Theory, the conflicting needs of inclusiveness and exclusiveness motivates the individual to strike a balance between assimilation to his group and at the same time individual distinctiveness, searching for the perfect balance between integrity and belongingness, or in Marilynn Brewer's words – optimal distinctiveness (Brewer, 1991). If the group becomes too large and impersonal, then integrity is lost and if the group becomes too small and unimportant. The need for belongingness is consequently frustrated. In order to balance between the two basic needs, the individual manages his social identity, taking great care who to include and not include in his *Universe of Obligation*, to speak with Helen Fein (1984). Excluding someone from your universe of obligation presumably decreases

the likelihood of emergency intervention for the excluded person's sake.

The tradition in the group identity literature has been to see ingroup preference as a consequence of negative outgroup sentiment, such as prejudice and stereotyping (Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994), rather than overly positive regard for the ingroup (Brewer, 1999). However, an overly positive regard for the ingroup can also result in an increase in altruism and helping, at least for those who belong to "us" rather than "them" and there has been growing awareness of the potential beneficial consequences of attachment to the group (Manning et al., 2007). Some of the early studies on bystander intervention (Darley, Teger & Lewis, 1973; Rutkowski, Gruder & Romer, 1983) also hinted at the possibility that positive ingroup sentiment and cooperation under some circumstances in fact will increase the tendency for bystander intervention, especially if the group norms support altruism and helping (Rutkowski et al., 1983) and if the group members have a chance to interact face to face in the emergency (Darley et al., 1973).

In a more recent development, a team of researchers at the University of St Andrews in Scotland and Lancaster University in England have studied the positive effects of social identity on bystander intervention and have convincingly found that a sense of group identification raises the tendency to help ingroup members in an emergency, and that raising the salience of more inclusive and universalistic social identities will serve to extend this helpfulness to other groups (Levine, 1999; Levine, Cassidy, Brazier, & Reicher, 2002; Levine, Prosser, Evans & Reicher, 2005; Reicher, Cassidy, Hopkins & Levine, 2006). In a series of studies already deemed to become classic in the bystander intervention literature, Levine et al. (Levine et al., 2002;

Levine et al., 2005) studied the effect on helping behavior in an experiment where the victims wore football-jerseys, either belonging to an opponent team or to the supported team. It was found that the degree of helping the victim varied as a function of what social identity was made salient. The participants tended to help the victim associated to the rival team less if their support for their home team was made salient, but tended to help both emergency victims wearing football jerseys more than a victim wearing a plain shirt if their group belongingness to the more inclusive group of “football supporters” was made salient. The hypotheses of Levine et al. were applied to genocide through a case study of the actions of the people of Bulgaria during World War two (Reicher et al., 2006), where it was found that appeals to nationalism and group belongingness were used in the official debate regarding the fate of the Bulgarian Jews. This was done by using different rhetorical techniques, including the Bulgarian Jews in the ingroup as “fellow Bulgarians” and using national heroes and symbols to rally people around national values of courage, humanism and helping the weak, the result of which was the rescue of substantially more Jews as compared to most other Nazi-occupied countries in east Europe (Reicher et al., 2006).

### **Norm Shifting**

Welzer (2007) poses the provocative question of whether the Nazis were really breaking any social norms in the execution of the Holocaust. He convincingly shows that the Nazis were in fact following the social norms that were in effect at the time and the question is thus not was caused them to break the social norms, but rather how the societal norms were allowed to shift to the degree of normalizing the annihilation of a well integrated national minority. Welzer vividly describes the alarming speed with which the people that constitute society can change their norms, values,

identification and ways to treat others. That which would have been seen as inhumane in the start of the process is gradually seen as increasingly normal. Welzer claims that when an individual is faced with an order to perform an act that he perceives as immoral, he resolves the tug-o-war between morality and group pressure by admitting that the act is immoral, but at the same time seeing the action as necessary to achieve a higher goal. This achieves a double goal. Firstly, his moral qualms over the action convince him that he is decent and moral. Secondly, the performance of the action in spite of these difficulties enables him to see himself as industrious, resolute, and perseverant in the face of adversity. The individual will in this context not feel that he has broken any norms, but rather feel like he overcame weaknesses and selfish interests for the sake of a larger goal. Thus, the parties in the genocidal situation, as counterintuitive as it may sound, are not breaking any norms. They are rather obeying the very norms and values of society that have become distorted in an extreme violence-context (Welzer, 2007).

The gradual shifting of the norms is demonstrated by referring testimonies of Holocaust perpetrators, convincingly showing the existence of a national socialist moral and that, according to its twisted logic, the mass executions of Jews were defensible and in agreement with prevailing societal norms. It is also clear from the testimonies that the perpetrators did not see the executions as a breach of the norms of human conduct; something that is also apparent from the great importance placed on treating the other members of their unit in a respectful and moral way. To account for this, Welzer suggests exclusion of certain individuals from the Universe of obligation and a subsequent dehumanization of these individuals as a prime cause (Welzer, 2007).

Welzer speaks of the norm shifting leading to the perpetration of extreme violence, but the same shifting of norms can be assumed to underlie the increasing acceptance of bystander inactivity that is apparent in genocidal contexts. In the case of the bystander, the norm in question is not the one prohibiting a certain form of immoral behavior, but rather the failure to perform a behavior that is prescribed. In this way, being a non-responsive bystander to extreme violence is also the result of the norm of helping and altruism having been contorted beyond recognition.

Another influential account of norm shifting on a societal level is suggested by Ervin Staub (1989; 1999), who similarly describes the gradual dynamic process propelling a society towards genocide. Staub describes how, on the backdrop of a difficult life situation, a hurt national pride and a highly hierarchical systemic organization, a re-socialization of the bystanders takes place. The bystanders are persuaded to devalue and delegitimize the victims, effectively undermining any guilty feelings that the bystanders may feel towards the victims. This pacification of the bystanders gives the authorities breathing space and allows them to go about their business and prepare their cadre of perpetrators of mass destruction. Staub (1989) focuses his attention particularly on the internal (regular citizens) and external (other countries etc.) bystanders and their central role in allowing the dynamic process that spirals with an ever-increasing speed towards catastrophe to continue. The passivity and inaction of the bystanders encourage the perpetrators to commit further atrocities (Staub, 1999). Seemingly small acts, such as complying with the required greeting "Heil Hitler" in Nazi Germany, serves to involve the individual with the system, bit by bit incriminating the bystanders and thereby further decreasing their tendency to

speaking up and protesting. However, Welzer and Staub's brush strokes are broad and in order to understand the more precise mechanisms of norm shifting on the individual level, we will have to turn elsewhere.

### **Induced behavioral change**

A good place to start in order to understand the gradual character of social influence is the foot-in-the-door-technique, or the tendency to comply with ever larger requests, after first having implicated oneself through the acceptance of a small one (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). In an early study of this phenomenon, housewives in California were called and asked if they would answer a few questions about the household products they used. Three days later, the experimenter called again. This time, asking if they could send five or six men into the house to go through cupboards and storage places as part of a 2-hour enumeration of household products. The investigators found that these women were more than twice as likely to agree to the 2-hour request as compared to a group of housewives who were asked only the larger request. When attempting to explain why a person performs a cold-blooded murderous task (or indeed passively observing someone else performing the act without intervening), it is important to realize that it may be the end product of an extensive process, starting with a small act of compliance, involving and incriminating the person in the genocidal project. Each incremental step towards obedience and compliance locks the individual more and more tightly into the claws of the malevolent authority until he has past the point of no return and is ready to perform (or inactively observe) an act that he would never have complied with before the process started.

The tendency for one action to become perpetuated and accentuated with repeated occurrence is mirrored for inaction in the form of *inaction inertia*, a concept introduced by Tykocinski and Pittman (1998) to describe the tendency for a regretted inaction to increase the tendency for continued inaction. If a person fails to take advantage of buying a product at half price, he is less likely to buy it at a 20% discount at a later time, even though the 20% discount constitutes a substantial absolute gain compared to the full price. The reason for this is that the subsequent buy will serve to remind the actor of the forgone opportunity. In the former example, the actor may ponder how much he lost buy not buying the product at half price rather than appreciating the 20% discount that he got on the purchase. The anticipation of this regret causes people to remain inactive instead of taking corrective action (Tykocinski & Pittman, 1998). If a person has already been a passive bystander to an emergency and gets another chance to intervene, then the process of inaction inertia may come into play. When considering his options, the bystander may already feel incriminated by his former inaction and feel that he is stuck in his passive role. If he intervenes now, he may come to regret that he did not act earlier. If he instead remains inactive, he is still able to convince himself that there was nothing that he could have done to help the victim. This may cause to prevent subsequent intervention and perpetuate bystander inaction.

### **Attitude Change**

It is often believed that attitude change is brought about as a consequence of conformity to negative group pressure and obedience under a malignant authority. Herbert Kelman (1958) set out to explain the processes whereby the change is instigated and concluded that there are three major processes responsible: *compliance*,

*identification* and *internalization*. The actor may initially perform an act in order to *comply* with the demand of an authority. His need to *identify* with his group will then strengthen the tendency to act in accordance with the authority's decree through the will to do what "everyone else is doing". Finally, the positive effects of security and belongingness that come with complying and identifying with the group cause a person to *internalize* the group behaviors and see them as being part of their own self. At this stage an attitude change can be said to have taken place (Kelman, 1958). Moving from this general conception of attitude change, Kelman and Hamilton (1989) applied the model to the shifting of norms in a context of extreme violence (the My Lai-massacre in Vietnam), showing how moral inhibitions against violence are weakened, first by the approval of an authority figure, then by the very experience of committing violence and last by the dehumanization of the victim group, resulting in an attitude change justifying behaviors that were previously seen as immoral (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989).

Another influential theory akin to describe the mechanisms of norm shifting is the Theory of Moral Disengagement championed by Albert Bandura (1999). According to Bandura's theory, we abstain from immoral behavior and approach moral behavior as a result of a system of self regulation. In a healthy situation, the prospect of performing an evil act or the omittance of a moral duty creates anticipatory concern and self-condemnation and results in self-sanctions and an aversive attitude towards the immoral behavior and/or an increase in the resolve to perform moral behavior. However, self-regulatory mechanisms do not come into play unless they are instigated and there are a number of social and psychological maneuvers that can be used to disengage moral self sanctions (Bandura, 1999). Instead of describing a shifting of the

norms, Bandura thus describes how the retained norms are disengaged and ignored with the help of four major disengagement techniques.

1. The *conduct* itself can be reconstrued so that it is no longer seen as immoral
2. The *responsibility* can be displaced or diffused
3. The *consequences* of the action can be minimized
4. The *victim* can be dehumanized or blamed.

The conduct is seen to be reconstrued through *moral justification* – the idea that the action serves a higher purpose, *euphemistic labeling* – sanitizing the action in more neutral words and *advantageous comparison* – comparing the consequences of the action to an event even more gruesome in its nature. Another common way of moral disengagement through advantageous comparison is to depict the anticipated consequences of not performing the cruel action as more grave than the consequences of performing it, like the surgeon afflicting pain in order to prevent more extensive injury. Diffusion and displacement of responsibility work to disengage the moral barrier through seeing oneself as a tool for someone else's wishes or assuming that the moral duty lies with other persons. The minimization of the gravity of the consequences of one's action is achieved through distancing oneself from the action, physically and psychologically. Finally, Bandura describes how the victim can be dehumanized and blamed for his own unfortunate fate. If the victim is seen as less worthy or even deserving of punishment, then the moral inhibitions can be substantially weakened, leaving the field open for violent sadistic actions.

In an earlier experiment on the consequences of dehumanization, Bandura, Underwood and Fromson (1975) led a group of college students to believe that they

were to teach a group of students from another college, punishing them with electric shocks as a teaching device if they gave a faulty answer. The participants overheard the research assistant talk to the experimenter about the students from the other college, describing them either as 'nice', 'animal-like' or without any descriptive label. The shock intensity varied massively depending on the description the students overheard. When the visitors were described as 'animals', the shock level rose dramatically, while those labeled 'nice' were given the least intensity of shocks. These results demonstrate the effect of dehumanization on cruel behavior. According to Moral Disengagement Theory, the disengagement of prohibitions against cruel behavior is no different from the disengagement of obligation towards prosocial behavior that underlies passive bystander behavior. Thus, the principles of disengagement apply equally to the omission of helping behavior. Moral disengagement of self-censure is seen to be a gradual process where the individual bit by bit finds himself performing increasingly cruel behavior, until the behaviors have become thoughtlessly routinized and habituated and no longer require moral disengagement (Bandura, 1999).

According to attribution theory, we are prone to overestimate the effect that our personality has on our behavior at the expense of the situational influence – an effect that has become known as the *fundamental attribution error* (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). This error may have several interesting effects regarding bystander behavior. Firstly, it may be one of the key reasons behind the popular belief that evil actions or inactions are due to something faulty in the actor's personality, disregarding the powerful impact of situational factors. Another effect of the fundamental attribution error may be to deemphasize the subtle situational influences on our own behavior

and assume that the behavior that we just performed (or failed to perform) must be in line with our attitudes, thereby letting our behavior bring about a change in our attitude. Two main explanations have been put forward in order to explain this effect – Self Perception theory and the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance.

According to Self Perception Theory (Bem, 1972), we observe our own behavior in the same way that an outside observer would and conclude from this behavior the inner state that we are experiencing ("Wow! I am eating a lot, I must really be hungry!"). If a person faces severe punishment or substantial reward for performing a certain behavior, he can attribute the cause of the behavior to these external pressures, but if he is subtly induced into performing a counterattitudinal act, he will mistakenly assume that he performed the action due to a dispositional tendency. The belief of the individual that this behavior is characteristic of his personality, functions to increase the probability that the behavior will be subsequently repeated.

Thus, the stronger the rewards and punishment for behaviors, the more individuals will attribute their behavior to the situation and consequently feel less personally responsible for the behavior. On the other hand, strong punishments would be expected to create homogenous and uniform behavior. Following this line of reasoning, behavior under a totalitarian regime would be characterized by a high degree of obedience, but a low degree of responsibility for ones actions, due to the lack of alternative actions and the severe repercussions of disobedience to authority. This combination of obedience and lack of responsibility would then constitute the ideal backdrop for the creation of perpetrators of extreme violent crimes as well as passive bystanders to these crimes.

Another theory that attempts to explain attitude change as a consequence of our behavior rather than the opposite, is the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, created by Leon Festinger in 1957. According to Festinger's original formulation of the theory, we are motivated to maintain consistency among our cognitions and behaviors. If we experience inconsistency, for example between a held attitude and a counter-attitudinal behavior, we experience cognitive dissonance. Dissonance is an unpleasant state to be in and we therefore feel the need to resolve it, either through admitting that the behavior that we just performed runs counter to our beliefs and values, or through changing our attitudes to be more in line with our performed behavior. Due to the substantial psychological cost of admitting that we performed an action that we find aversive, people tend to modify their attitudes to be in line with their performed behavior (Festinger, 1957; Cooper & Fazio, 1984; Aronson, 1992; Aronson, 1999).

In essence, our need to justify our own actions makes us vulnerable to social influence. All you need to do is to induce someone into performing a certain behavior, and the need for cognitive consistency will promptly cause the person to change their attitudes accordingly. However, as in Self Perception Theory, in order for a behavior to result in a behavioral change, the individual has to perceive that he performed the action out of his own free will. If he was forced to perform the action, he can simply conclude that the action was due to outside pressure and no attitude change is necessary in order to account for the behavior. If the outside pressure is subtle, then the actor will feel that he himself is the cause of the behavior, and subsequent attitude change is likely to follow (Cooper & Fazio, 1984).

In the original experiments by Festinger and Carlsmith (1959), participants were induced into performing an uninteresting and boring task and then asked to convince another student to perform the same task. The variable that was varied in the different conditions was the amount of payment that the participants received for their participation in the task. In one condition, they received a relatively big payment and in the other condition they received a very small one. In the condition in which the participants received a larger amount, they were able to justify their participation by pointing to this external cause (monetary reward). Due to this external causal attribution, no dissonance was experienced and little attitude change followed (the participants still found the task boring and uninteresting). In the condition with a meager reward, they participants failed to assess the actual subtle cause of their behavior (compliance with the requests of the experimental authority), were unable to attribute the cause of their behavior to the small monetary reward and thus experienced a sense of cognitive dissonance when trying to convince their fellow students to participate in the experiment. The result of this process was a modification of their original attitude and the participants in this condition subsequently reported that they in fact had thought that the task they had performed had been interesting and enjoyable after all (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959).

### **Active Passivity: The effect of bystanders on extreme violence**

Aronson (1999) applied the theory of cognitive dissonance to human cruelty, by describing how a person who is induced to perform a violent behavior that runs wildly against his own values and attitudes comes to experience a strong sense of dissonance, begging to be resolved. Admitting to oneself that one is a bad person constitutes damage to the self concept that is too hard to bear and the perpetrator therefore looks

incessantly for alternative paths to resolve this internal inconsistency. Two viable paths to reconcile one's action with the self concept is changing ones attitudes to justify the action, and/or to devalue the victim, projecting the blame to him and absolving the self.

A recent development in Dissonance Theory is the concept of Vicarious Dissonance (Norton, Monin, Cooper & Hogg, 2003; Cooper & Hogg, 2007), a concept meant to capture the tendency to experience dissonance as a consequence of a counter-attitudinal action that a significant other performed. The personal importance of group identification that is demonstrated in Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) causes a person to place great importance on the action of valued ingroup members. If they witness an act performed by another ingroup member that they perceive to be against the norms and values of the group member, then vicarious dissonance is experienced on behalf of the other. Vicarious dissonance, like regular dissonance, is experienced as an aversive state and begs to be resolved one way or the other. The devaluation of one's group member is costly to one's social identity and the vicariously felt dissonance is thus also likely to be resolved through the mechanism of attitude change in order to accommodate the significant other's behavior (Norton, et al., 2003; Cooper & Hogg, 2007).

In order to apply this process to norm shifting involved in bystander behavior, the bystander may find himself in a situation where he remains passive in the face of perpetrator cruelty and victim suffering. Even though the situational pressures are immense in this kind of circumstances (Arendt, 1965; Latané & Darley, 1970; Milgram, 1974; Browning, 1998; Welzer, 2007; Zimbardo, 2007) the fundamental

attribution error may cause the bystander to attribute the cause of the inaction to his own disposition (Nisbett & Ross, 1980), creating a sense of cognitive dissonance between the norm of helping and humanism and the factual own passivity (Festinger, 1957). Apart from the dissonance experienced due to the bystander's own behavior, a sense of vicarious dissonance may be experienced to account for the counterattitudinal behavior of the ingroup perpetrators (Norton et al., 2003; Cooper & Hogg, 2007). This sense of dissonance may further be resolved either through changing ones attitude towards the performed action (“the action was justified”) (Cooper & Fazio, 1984; Aronson, 1992), devaluating the victim – “they are just animals anyway” (Bandura, 1975), or blaming the victim – ”he had it coming” (Lerner & Simmons, 1966). The dissonance would lead to a change in attitude on the side of the bystander, leading him to lend his approval to the perpetration of the evil act. The bystander approval may further serve as an absolution for the perpetrator, in whose eyes, the inactive presence and silent approval of the bystander serves to normalize the situation, absolve him from guilt and encourage further perpetration of genocidal violence. Bystander inaction has thus become an *Active Passivity*, greasing the wheel of genocidal violence towards ever-increasing heights of cruelty. The model is illustrated in Figure 1.

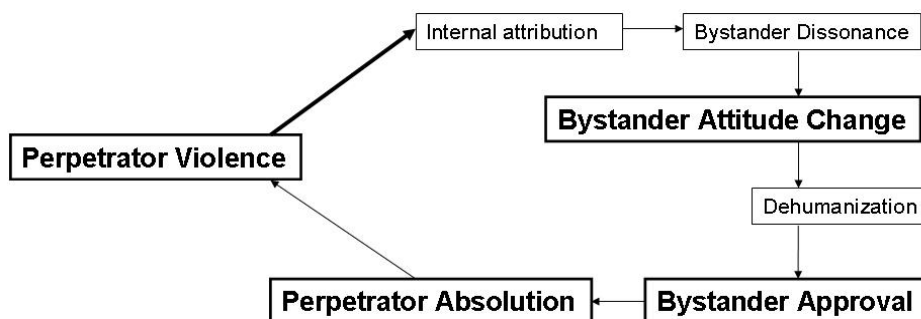


Figure 1. Proposed model of the interplay between bystander and perpetrator

## Future directions

How could they? This is the question that has overshadowed the research on the passivity in the face of aggression and violence in social psychology as well as the investigation of the causes of the perpetration of violent crimes. Focus has been on the motivation of genocidal behavior rather than the detailed psychological process involved in the behavior (Adorno et al., 1950; Arendt, 1965; Batson & Shaw, 1991; Goldhagen, 1996; Oliner & Oliner, 1988). Many studies have investigated what causes people to comply with external pressure and conform to the group (Asch, 1951; Milgram, 1974; Bauman, 1991). The question of whether or not the perpetrators of violent crimes suffer from some sort of psychopathology or are just "ordinary men" has also been studied (Browning, 1998; Welzer, 2007), as has the reasons behind the failures of bystanders to intervene in an emergency (Darley & Latané, 1970; Darley and Batson, 1973, Levine et al., 2002; Piliavin et al., 1981).

However, regarding the unresponsive bystander, many questions remain to be asked and many areas to be investigated. This overview is meant to be food for thought and to inspire more research in the field and here are a few suggestions for areas that as of yet have not been investigated.

- *Is bystander intervention fostered by abiding by prosocial norms or withstanding antisocial norms?*

In the literature as in the public debate, helping behavior and altruism is sometimes believed to stem from abiding by norms (Bandura, 1999; Barnett, 1999; Reicher et al., 2006) and sometimes by daring to break from conformity and obedience (Asch, 1951; Milgram, 1974; Darley & Latané, 1970). According to some, a return to more

traditional values of helping, law-abidance, and social norms will foster emergency intervention while others argue that independence, noncompliance and withstanding group pressure is the key to unselfish prosocial behavior. The question of whether or not compliance with prosocial norms or disobedience with anti-social norms should be fostered in order to decrease bystander passivity and increase helping behavior has not been sufficiently addressed in the bystander literature and thus constitutes a promising area for further research.

- *Will passivity produce more passivity and activity produce more activity?*

The theory of inaction inertia (Tykocinski & Pittman, 1998) states that an initial foregone possibility to perform a desired action will serve to perpetuate subsequent inaction. According to the foot-in-the-door-technique, the opposite is also true. That is, an initial compliance to perform an action will increase the probability of subsequent actions of the same sort (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). Further research could study the validity of these theoretical predictions in the bystander situation.

- *In what way will people justify unresponsive bystander behavior?*

Bandura's Moral Disengagement Theory (1999) maps a number of psychological maneuvers that a person can engage in, in order to justify his cruel behavior. A person can minimize the consequences of his action, blame the victim for his own predicament and use euphemisms in order to sanitize the conceptualization of the act, to name a few moral disengagement techniques. It is not clear when a person will resort to a certain disengagement strategy, what the consequences will be for the changing of his attitudes and if these strategies are used at all as strategies for disengagement following bystander unresponsiveness.

- *Creating a classification of different kinds of bystanders and investigating the psychological correlates of the different classes*

The bystander is not a uniform category of individuals (Bar-on, 2001). A classification of different types of bystanders is in need of development and an investigation of the characteristics of different types of bystanders is called for.

- *What is the role of self awareness in bystander intervention? If it fosters helping, then how can self awareness be brought about?*

Being aware of your self is believed to strengthen the personal values and ideals of the individual and make him less susceptible to negative group pressure and thus more likely to take responsibility and intervene in an emergency (Ellsworth & Langer, 1976; Wegner & Schaefer, 1978; Gibbons, 1990). More systematic research on the area is lacking however. Some studies have shown that imploring an individual bystander to help serves to concentrate the responsibility and increase the chances for bystander intervention, but the specific processes are yet to be understood. How can this be brought about in an emergency situation?

- *How norms of bystander intervention are shifted: testing of a theoretical model*

A gradual shifting of the norms is assumed to take place in a genocidal setting (Kelman, 1989; Welzer, 2007). The studies that have been done have focused mainly on the shifting norms of the perpetration of extreme violence. The norms of bystander intervention and helping are also expected to change and result in a decrease in bystander responsiveness. This has not as of yet been studied however and could constitute another future area of bystander research.

- *Minority influence on bystander intervention*

A ray of hope in the midst of all obedience to malignant authority and the conformity to indifference and prejudice is the powerful influence of the courageous minority. Experimental and anecdotal accounts show that a single voice of resistance can awaken people from their moral slumber and cause an immediate stop to the mechanisms of evil. In her book, *The German Trauma* (2000), Gitta Sereny describes a scene on the streets of Vienna after the Nazi "Anschluss" in which a group of Jews were publicly humiliated and a crowd of people stood passively by, observing and laughing. A young Sereny recognized one of the Jews as her old family doctor who had once saved her life. She pointed this out to one of the uniformed men, who answered with an ominous "How dare you?!". Sereny replied "How dare *you*!?" whereupon another spectator asked "Is this what you call our liberation?". Two minutes later, the mob was dispersed and the humiliation aborted. This illustrates the power of the few to influence the many, who may just be looking for an excuse to do the right thing, but feel stuck in the power of the situation until someone comes along and breaks it. In the Milgram experiments (1974), obedience shrank from 65% to a meager 10% when the participant was faced with the disobedience of a confederate that he believed to be another participant.

- *Using the mechanisms of evil in the service of good: Helping as a consequence of obedience and nationalism.*

A common conclusion from the reading of literature on genocide and extreme human violence is that we have to fight mechanisms of evil such as conformity, obedience and extreme nationalism, seen to be responsible for unspeakable amounts

of suffering. However, one can also conclude that these are some of the most potent and powerful factors available in the influence of human behavior and that they will continue to affect human behavior regardless of the efforts of those seeking to avoid further bloodshed. In line with the famous saying "If you can't beat them, join them", these forces can be used in the service of prosocial behavior and altruism. Obedience to authority will cause people to obey a benign as well as a malign authority and an effort to induce people into performing helpful actions through the force of authority may prove as powerful as the obedience to violent orders. All kinds of nationalism do not serve to exclude and dehumanize the outgroup and a division between a positive attachment to the group and a belief in group superiority and glorification of the group is important to make (Roccas, Klar & Leviathan, 2004). The power of a positive sense of nationalism and cherished national values to inspire people to help each other and feel responsible for each other's fate has already been illustrated in the study of Reicher et al.(2006) in the analysis of the rescue of Bulgaria's Jews. The studies of Levine et al. (2002) also indicate the positive potential of a sense of ingroup obligation.

- *What are the effects of bystander presence on the perpetration of violence?*

Finally, the effect that the presence of passive bystanders has on perpetrator violence seems a fruitful area to research. While the bystanders are affected by the violence perpetrated in front of their eyes, the presence of inactive bystanders would also seem to encourage and absolve the perpetrators and induce them into performing further violent acts, causing a reciprocal effect of ever-increasing violence and aggression. A theoretical model of how this may work is presented in Figure 1 above. However, bystander presence could conceivably also have the opposite effect and serve to

decrease the level of violence. As is assumed in the placement of UN observers in international conflicts and the presumable regulating effect of the press in war zones, the presence of observers and onlookers could cause the perpetrators of violence to feel watched and judged and thus take greater care not to seem too cruel and ruthless. When film maker Krzysztof Kieslowski in 1982 tried to make a documentary on the abuses committed in Polish courts under martial law, he discovered that their presence in court seemed to have a positive effect on the proceedings, causing the judges to be considerably more lenient in their verdicts (Stok, 1993). While this interfered with the intentions of the film maker to document government abuses, it indicates a possible benign effect of bystander presence on perpetrator behavior.

To return to the biblical story of creation and Cain's murder of his brother Abel; when Cain was implored to account for his brother's whereabouts, his level of self-awareness was presumably raised, causing him to feel guilty and defensive and attempt to disengage morally from the uncomfortable situation asking perhaps the most central question regarding helping behavior and bystander intervention – "Am I my brother's keeper?". Since Cain and Able were the sons of Adam and Eve, the first humans in creation, the risk of someone witnessing the heinous act was minimal and we can only speculate as for what would have been the effect of a nonresponsive bystander to this primordial homicide.

## Appendix A: List of researchers

### Arie Nadler

*Tel Aviv University, Israel*

Research interests:

- Helping relations and power relations between individuals and groups.
- Reactions to and willingness to seek assistance
- Social consequences of social traumas (e.g., the holocaust)

<http://freud.tau.ac.il/faculty/ArieNadler.html>

### Orit Tykocinski

*Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, Israel*

- Inaction inertia
- retroactive pessimism

<http://tykocinski.socialpsychology.org/>

### Dan Bar-on

*Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel*

- After-effects of the Holocaust
- Construction of collective identity
- Conflict resolution
- Intergroup conflict

<http://www.bgu.ac.il/~danbaron/>

Mark Levine

*Lancaster University, UK*

- Social Identity and Bystander Behavior
- Social Identity and Collective Behavior

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Stephen Reicher

*University of St Andrews, Scotland*

- Political rhetoric and mass mobilization around issues of national identity

[http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~www\\_sp/people/lect/sdr.shtml](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~www_sp/people/lect/sdr.shtml)

Rachel Manning

*University of the West of England*

- Social Psychology of Helping

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Clare Cassidy

*University of St Andrews, Scotland*

- Social identity and helping behaviour

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- Self categorization and bystander intervention

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- The organisation of collective action
- Strategic issues in identity definition and stereotyping

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- Diffusion of responsibility
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Pearl Oliner

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- Altruism and prosocial behavior

<http://www.humboldt.edu/~altruism/pearl.html>

Jane Piliavin

*University of Wisconsin, USA*

- Prosocial behavior

<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~jpiliavi/index.htm>

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