LUND UNIVERSITY

Different Mechanisms Underlie the Identified Victim Effect, Proportion Dominance Effect and In-group Effect in Helping Situations

Erlandsson, Arvid

2013

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Erlandsson, A. (2013). *Different Mechanisms Underlie the Identified Victim Effect, Proportion Dominance Effect and In-group Effect in Helping Situations*. Abstract from Society for Judgment and Decision Making 34th Annual Conference.

Total number of authors:
1

General rights
Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.
• Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
• You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
• You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

Different Mechanisms Underlie the Identified Victim Effect, Proportion Dominance Effect and In-group Effect in Helping Situations

Arvid Erlandsson

Lund University, Sweden

Abstract

This study systematically investigated if different helping effects are mediated by different psychological mechanisms. The results suggest that:

- ❖ The identifiable victim effect is best mediated by sympathy
- ❖ The proportion dominance effect is best mediated by perceived utility
- ❖ The in-group effect is best mediated by perceived responsibility.

Psychological Mechanisms Underlying Helping

According to Weber´s theory of decision modes (1998; Ames, Flynn & Weber, 2004), decisions are primarily affect-based, calculation-based or recognition-based . In the current studies, these decision modes are operationalized as three psychological mechanisms that each can increase helping motivation.

Emotional Reactions

Sympathy (directed outwards) or Distress (directed inwards) elicited by the emergency situation can increase helping motivation (Batson, 2011; Kogut & Ritov 2005a, 2005b).

Perceived Utility

The more valuable people believe that their contribution can be, the more likely they are to help (Duncan, 2004).

Perceived Responsibility

Believing that one has an obligation or duty to help will increase helping motivation (Cryder & Loewenstein, 2012).

Helping Effects

Situational differences that influence helping motivation.

The Identifiable Victim Effect

The tendency to be more motivated to help when one can save a determined and identified victim than when one can save an undetermined and statistical victim (Small & Loewenstein, 2003; Kogut & Ritov, 2005a).

The Proportion Dominance Effect

The tendency to be more motivated to help when one can save a large proportion of the victims (e.g., 20 out of 24) then when one can save a small proportion of the victims (e.g., 20 out of 400; Baron, 1997; Bartels, 2006).

The In-group Effect

The tendency to be more motivated to help when one can save in-group victims than when one can save out-group victims (Burnstein, Crandall & Kitayama, 1994; Levine et al., 2002).

Hypotheses

- Emotional reactions will increase the steepest when victim-identifiability increase, and emotional reaction will mediate the identified victim effect.
- Perceived utility will increase the steepest when the size of the reference group decrease, and perceived utility will mediate the proportion dominance effect.
- Perceived responsibility will increase the steepest when the victims become more part of one´s in-group, and perceived responsibility will mediate the in-group effect.

Method

Three separate studies were conducted using a within-subject design where participants read four different versions of a helping situation and rated their reactions (distress, sympathy, perceived utility of helping, perceived responsibility to help) and subsequently their helping motivation to each version.

- In Study 1, participants read that they could sponsor a Children´s Village in Africa. Identifiability of one child in the village increased gradually.
- In Study 2, participants read that they could sponsor a vaccine that could cure 275 children with meningitis. The size of the reference-group decreased gradually thereby increasing rescue proportion.
- In Study 3, participants read that they could donate one of their kidneys to a girl. The relation one had to the girl´s father gradually became closer to one´s in-group.

The analyses were done in three steps.

1) Confirming the main effect on helping motivation.
2) Comparing the slopes of the different psychological reactions using a polynomial contrast (linear version × mechanism type) and then simple contrasts.
3) Testing if any of the four psychological mechanisms mediate the helping effect using the method suggested by Judd, Kenny and McClelland (2001).

Results

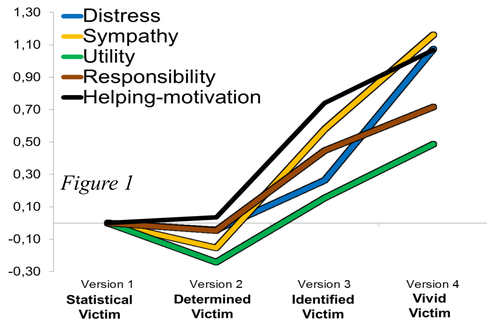

Figure 1

Study 1: Identifiable Victim Effect

$N = 58$, $M_{age} = 21.90$ ($SD = 2.06$)

1) Main effect on helping motivation. $F(3,55) = 9.41$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .34$
2) Sympathy and distress increased the steepest when identifiability of a victim increased (Figure 1).
3) Only condition differences in sympathy completely mediated condition differences in helping motivation.

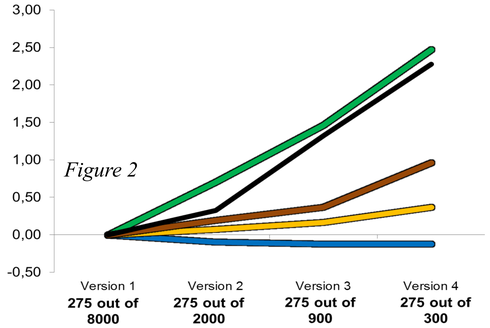

Figure 2

Study 2: Proportion Dom. Effect

$N = 40$, $M_{age} = 21.80$ ($SD = 2.17$)

1) Main effect on helping motivation. $F(3,37) = 14.44$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .54$
2) Perceived utility increased the steepest when the rescue proportion increased (Figure 2).
3) Only condition differences in perceived utility completely mediated condition differences in helping motivation

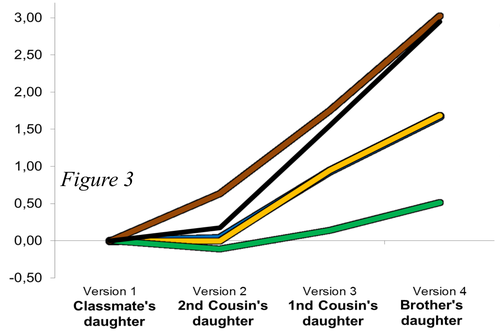

Figure 3

Study 3: In-group Effect

$N = 40$, $M_{age} = 23.48$ ($SD = 2.83$)

1) Main effect on helping motivation. $F(3,37) = 41.43$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .77$
2) Perceived resonsibility increased the steepest when victim in-groupness increased. (Figure 3).
3) Only condition differences in perceived responsibility completely mediated condition differences in helping motivation

Conclusion

This study systematically tested multiple mediators on multiple helping effects. The results suggest that different helping effects are best mediated by different psychological mechanisms. The identifiable victim effect is primarily mediated by sympathy toward the victims, the proportion dominance effect by perceived utility and the in-group effect by perceived responsibility. This illustrates an interaction between the "when" (i.e. helping effects) and "why" (i.e., psychological mechanisms) in helping.

LUND UNIVERSITY

References

Ames, D. R., Flynn, F. J., & Weber, E. U. (2004). It's the thought that counts: On perceiving how helpers decide to lend a hand. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 30(4), 461-474. doi: 10.1177/0146167203261890*

Baron, J. (1997). Confusion of relative and absolute risk in valuation. *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty, 14(3), 301-309. doi: 10.1023/a:1007796310463*

Bartels, D. M. (2006). Proportion dominance: The generality and variability of favoring relative savings over absolute savings. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 100(1), 76-95. doi: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.10.004*

Batson, C. D. (2011). *Altruism in humans. New York, NY, US: Oxford University Press.*

Burnstein, E., Crandall, C., & Kitayama, S. (1994). Some neo-Darwinian decision rules for altruism: Weighing cues for inclusive fitness as a function of the biological importance of the decision. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67*(5), 773-789. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.67.5.773

Cryder, C. E., & Loewenstein, G. (2012). Responsibility: The tie that binds. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 48(1), 441-445. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2011.09.009*

Duncan, B. (2004). A theory of impact philanthropy. *Journal of Public Economics, 88(9–10), 2159-2180. doi: 10.1016/s0047-2727(03)00037-9*

Judd, C. M., Kenny, D. A., & McClelland, G. H. (2001). Estimating and testing mediation and moderation in within-subject designs. *Psychological Methods, 6(2), 115-134. doi: 10.1037/1082-989x.6.2.115*

Kogut, T., & Ritov, I. (2005a). The "Identified Victim" Effect: An identified group, or just a single individual? *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making, 18(3), 157-167. doi: 10.1002/bdm.492*

Kogut, T., & Ritov, I. (2005b). The singularity effect of identified victims in separate and joint evaluations. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 97(2), 106-116. doi: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.02.003*

Levine, M., Cassidy, C., Brazier, G., & Reicher, S. (2002). Self-Categorization and bystander non-intervention: Two experimental studies. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 32(7), 1452-1463.*

Small, D. A., & Loewenstein, G. (2003). Helping the victim or helping a victim: Altruism and identifiability. *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty, 26, 5-16.*

Weber, E. U. (1998). From Shakespeare to Spielberg: Predicting selection among modes of decision making. *Presidential address, annual meeting of the Society for Judgment and Decision Making. Dallas, TX.*