



## THE DEATH OF KITTY GENOVESE

In 1964, 38 New Yorkers watched through their windows as one of their neighbors was brutally murdered. Her name was Kitty Genovese, a 28-year-old woman.

M: The Genovese incident, where a young woman, coming home, late at night, from her work, was assaulted by somebody — he was one of those random, crazy people...

M: Kitty was running up the block. And Winston Moseley ran after her...until she reached the midpoint of the block, almost directly under this streetlight.

Moseley caught up with her. And stabbed her four times in the back.

Her screams were loud, unmistakable, and reverberated throughout the entire area.

M: Lights went on, in, in the windows around the courtyard. So we know that people were seeing this.

Nobody called the police.

Somebody who lived on the seventh floor opened his window, and yelled out: what's going on down there?

When Moseley heard somebody yelling out, he ran back to his car — and Kitty was still alive. She managed to get up. She staggers around the corner here, still screaming. People in that building heard her as well. And she collapses inside this hallway.

There's one apartment above here. It was occupied by Carl Ross. Carl opened his door at the time that Moseley, who turns, and he saw the second attack taking place.

And he did nothing.

NARRATOR: After stabbing Kitty another eight times, in this very hallway, the killer ran away, leaving Kitty to bleed to death. Eventually a neighbor called the police. But it was too late. Kitty died before the ambulance could get her to the hospital.

JOHN DARLEY: That shocked the city. Now, it's not that a person got murdered that shocked the city. That happens, sadly. It's that a person got murdered, and her neighbors watched. And nobody did anything.

Bib Latane and I, we read about the murder, as did everybody else. Yeah, we were two young social psychologists, starting our research careers. We knew about Stanley Milgram's set of experiments on obedience to authority. And we started to think about, in an offhand way, what could have produced the Genovese effect?

M: Perhaps Kitty Genovese might have been alive today if, uh, fewer people had seen her.

M: There were perhaps 38 people who could have responded. But each were looking to see what these other people were doing.

{WHISPERING}

JOHN DARLEY: Uh, we decided to try to create a relatively ambiguous situation, in which we could see how people responded. We thought that one kind of thing that comes up that's often hard to tell whether it's a real emergency or not has to do with fire.

JOHN DARLEY: You see smoke coming through the vent. And it is ambiguous. What do you do?

SUBJECT: Um, there's, there's smoke coming out from under the door in that room where he was filling out the questionnaire?

JOHN DARLEY: Almost everybody does that, if they face the smoke alone. Now let's have you face the smoke with two strangers.

One person can be seen glancing at the other. The other is continuing to fill out the questionnaire.

It's getting a little more smoky in the room. But nonetheless, you stay in the room.

By and large, people surrounded by people who react as if there's nothing wrong don't respond.

Everybody sees the other people not reacting, so they create a definition of the situation: no

emergency.

NARRATOR: To test their theories about how groups and individuals respond differently to a crisis, Darley and Latane conducted a second experiment. This time, the emergency was clearly defined.

RESEARCHER: First of all, I would like to thank the two of you for being here today to help out in this study.

NARRATOR: In this experiment, one student was asked to communicate via intercom with another student in a room down the hall.

"VICTIM": Would somebody give me a little help here, because I'm having a problem, and [UI] one of these [UI]. [UI] coming on, and...

NARRATOR: What sounded like a real seizure in the subject's headphones was just a tape recording of an actor playing a role for the experiment.

"VICTIM": If somebody would, would give me a little, little help.

SUBJECT: Huh?

"VICTIM": Could somebody...help, or...

JOHN DARLEY: If you knew there was nobody else but you to help, you got up; you opened the door of your room; and you headed off to find the person.

SUBJECT: Hello? Anybody there? Help! We need some help! We've got somebody hurt! Hello!

[UI]...

JOHN DARLEY: On the other hand, if there were three or four other people present who you heard...

RESEARCHER: Oh, I would like to thank the three of you for being here today to help us with th[e] study. We are interested in learning...

JOHN DARLEY: ...you are much less likely to respond yourself.

“VICTIM”: Somebody, ha-, get, g-, give me a little, little help here. ‘Cause I’m havin’ a real

probl-, problem right now, and...help me out...

JOHN DARLEY: The responsibility any individual feels for helping is diffused when there are other people who could also help.

F: [UI]...

1:25:11 JOHN DARLEY: So what can we say back to the bystanders in the Genovese situation?

The first thing we can say, I think, is they got a bum rap. They were reacting the way that you or me might react in those situations. There have been many incidents like the Genovese incident since then.

And there have been many incidents in which people who could help don’t help.