

Phi Kappa Phi Remarks
Fall, 2004
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1. Opening
 - a. I am honored to speak to my colleagues, our honorees and their fine family and friends
 - b. It is all too rare to speak to those who have a need for cognition.
2. I was taught to stand in the corner by my students and didn't realize it. We can always be unaware of what is happening in a situation.
3. Talk about John giving a talk on the Good Samaritan Parable.
 - a. The Seminary Study: Conducted at Princeton Theological Seminary. Give essence of situation in which 40 students were placed.
 - b. How many of 40 seminary students offered help? All of them?
 - i. Why? Because they are seminary Christians thinking about the Good Samaritan Parable.
 - c. Actually there were two groups of students; less than 10 percent of one group offered help and more than 60 percent of the other group helped the stranger.
 - i. Why was there such a difference? The most commonly asked questions are asked about the characteristics of the students and the man who needed help.
 - ii. Yet, all that really differentiated the two groups was how much time they had to get to the lecture.
4. This work grew out of a story that swept the country in 1964 known as the Kitty Genovese case.
 - a. The explanations focused on the characteristics of people living in a city, for example, the high level of alienation that was found in New York City.
 - b. John Darley and Bibb Latane rejected these explanations as too varied to account for the behavior of 34 different people.
 - c. Their very creative series of experiments resulted in the concept of diffusion of responsibility: don't help if someone else will.
5. While we have gone far beyond the concept of diffusion of responsibility in our studies of pro-social behavior, the research illustrates one of the most consistent findings in social psychology: *the power of the situation and our failure to*

- recognize that power.* Why do we fail to recognize the importance of the situation?
6. A social psychologist named Daniel Kahneman received the Nobel Prize in economics last year (another social psychologist Simon won the first Nobel Prize in economics). Kahneman's co-author, Tversky died before he could share the prize. Their work helps us understand our failure.
 7. Kahneman and Tversky focused on our everyday reasoning and its shortcomings.
 - a. The effect of saliency is one of critical factors in our everyday thinking. This effect is simply that we pay more attention to what is most noticeable at the expense of everything else.
 - b. What you attend to is what you attribute to.
 - c. Therefore being cognitive misers (we don't like to think if we don't have to) we attribute the cause to the person and ignore the situation.
 8. We call this mistake the Fundamental Attribution Error since it was found in almost every study we have done in the last 30 years. We were mistaken.
 - a. This error is not fundamental for all cultures.
 - b. Those in Western cultures are very susceptible to this mistake and it is difficult to change their minds if they have failed to give the situation its due.
 - c. Those of Eastern cultures are less likely to make this error and it is easy to get them to recognize their error.
 9. Thomas Kuhn said it well: "What a man sees depends on what he looks at and what his previous experience has taught him to see."
 - a. In many more times than not our culture teaches us to focus on the individual as the causative factor in most behavior.
 - b. Yet, we know that in many more times than not the critical cause is not within a person, but is the nature of the situation.
 - c. The failure to recognize the power the situation has on our behavior often results in failures to better our world and our efforts to obtain justice.
 10. Consider these examples:
 - i. Errors on a small scale: Ignoring layout and friendship.
 1. Turn three mid-floor bedrooms into a common lounge area significantly improved student life
 - ii. Errors on a major scale: 9/11 and a "war on terrorism"
 1. We focused on the men who attacked us and the men who planned the attack
 2. We need to spend as much time and effort understanding and changing the situations that led to terrorism.

- b. So let us learn from the cultures of the Pacific Rim and shift our attention from the person as the cause of behavior to their situation as the cause of the behavior.

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- Advances in Social Cognition* and numerous chapters in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*

Suggested Readings:

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