Feeling Good and Helping: Really?

Gregory A. Blevins
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FEELING GOOD AND HELPING: REALLY?

by

Gregory A. Blevins

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
of the
Degree of Master of Arts

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While the author is, of course, primarily responsible for the material presented in this thesis, there are a number of people who have contributed in varying ways to its preparation.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude and respect to my advisor, Paul Wienir, for the guidance and friendship he has provided. Also, Bob Wait, Dick MacDonald, and Jim Schellenberg have played important roles in completing this thesis. I have benefited much from the insights of these four colleagues.

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Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their encouragement and help, particularly the repeated typings of manuscripts done by my Mother.

To each of you, I can only say sincerely—Thank You.

Gregory A. Blevins

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in the study of helping or altruistic behavior (Krebs, 1970). This interest has been stimulated, in part, by a concern with such events as the well publicized murder of Kitty Genovese in the presence of at least thirty-eight persons who made little or no effort to help her (cf. Baron & Liebert, 1971; Schellenberg, 1974; Tavris, 1974). A second major line of research has treated helping behavior as an extension of a more general interest in pro-social behavior as it relates to the social order (Berkowitz, 1972).

The three studies which are included here represent an effort to explore the role that non-contingent rewards (i.e., unexpected benefits) may play in influencing whether or not one is inclined to help a stranger not apparently associated with one's good fortune. These studies are in accord with the more general orientation of studying behavior beneficial to another under conditions of minimal probable reciprocation from others involved in the situation.

None of the studies to be presented here is concerned with emergency situations; however, the major theoretical perspectives
for explaining and predicting the occurrence of helping behavior are derived mainly from the analysis of emergency situations. One such theoretical model which was developed by Piliavin, Rodin, and Piliavin (1969) and (following Schellenberg, 1974) may be summarized as follows. Observation of an emergency situation tends to be accompanied by emotional arousal which the observer will seek to reduce in some way. The reduction of arousal will occur in whatever manner is most rewarding and least costly where there are both rewards and costs associated with helping and not helping.

Latane and Darley (1970) and Schwartz (1970) also deal with emergency situations in providing a decision making model. Latane and Darley maintain that help is dependent on the individual (a) noticing the incident, (b) interpreting the situation as an emergency, (c) deciding he has a personal responsibility to act, and (d) believing he is able to carry out the required act. Similarly, Schwartz has argued that the individual must first be aware that certain actions in the particular situation have consequences for the welfare of the other person and, second, he must decide that he has personal responsibility for these actions and their consequences.

A third explanation for helping behavior is Gouldner's norm of reciprocity. According to Gouldner (1960), the norm of reciprocity stipulates that people should help those who have helped
them, or, when one can anticipate that helping now will be reciprocated later. While this norm does explain some occurrences of helping behavior, it seems to be most applicable to situations involving interactions of some duration. Emergency situations and fleeting interactions of the type to be presented here restrict the operation of reciprocity.

Berkowitz (1972) has also argued that the norm of reciprocity and related notions of social exchange (particularly as advanced by Blau, 1968) are insufficient to account for helping behavior. Essentially, Berkowitz maintains that reciprocity and social exchange apply to organizational situations such as those found in business or government because these settings promote exchange concerns for extrinsic benefits.

Berkowitz proposes that the norm of social responsibility is a more adequate explanation. The norm of social responsibility asserts that the perception of another's dependence on self for their rewards induces feelings of responsibility to others. This felt obligation, moreover, induces motivation to help where the motivation is inversely related to the costs for helping.

In two of the above described models there are explicit references to the affective state of the potential helper (emotional arousal in Piliavin, et al., 1969; and feelings in Berkowitz, 1972). Furthermore, there are at least two components of the decision
process model which imply affective arousal: interpretation of a situation as one in which some act is necessary and assessment of the situation as one in which the welfare of the other is dependent upon one's actions. In general, these theories imply that the affective state of an individual is probably an important determinant of differences in helping behavior.

While it seems rather obvious that situationally induced arousal will effect the type and extent of help given, some researchers have suggested that a subject's pre-situational mood is also a factor in helping behavior. Most notably, Isen and Levin (1972) conducted two studies to investigate a hypothesized positive relationship between "feeling good" and helping. In one study, a 2 x 2 factorial design was used which indicated that "... subjects receiving cookies volunteered to help more ... than those not receiving cookies \[1972:386\]." A second study was carried out to determine if a non-contingent reward (finding a dime) would influence helpfulness in nonsolicited, low-cost situations. The results of the second study indicated that "differential unsolicited helping occurs even when good mood is induced in an impersonal manner \[1972:387\]."

The position advocated by Isen and Levin (1973) implies a partial revision of the three models of helping behavior above. In terms of Piliavin, Rodin, and Piliavin (1969), situationally induced arousal may be different in degree and/or direction as a function
of "feeling good" and thereby make alternative behavioral hierarchies more or less probable in the emergency situation. Also, "feeling good" may induce a subject to accept lower rewards and/or greater costs for helping or not helping than if he were unaroused or feeling bad prior to the emergency situation. Similarly, "feeling good" may bias an individual's perceptual, interpretational, decisional, and belief processes in the model proposed by Latane and Darley (1970). Finally, "feeling good" may introduce greater feelings of responsibility or induce one to accept greater costs for helping as suggested by Berkowitz (1972). The main point is that whichever model one is working with, the subject's affective state prior to the occurrence of the helping situation becomes an important determinant of his behavior in the situation.

Support for the notion that "feeling good leads to helping" (Isen & Levin, 1972) is derivable from a number of sources. If, for example, we assume that success, approval, or other benefits obtained by a subject induce "good feelings," then research by Berkowitz and Connor (1966), Berkowitz and Daniels (1964), Berkowitz and Macauley (unpublished), Isen (1970), Isen, Horn, and Rosenhan (1973), Macauley and Berkowitz (unpublished), and Stapleton, Macci, and Tedeschi (1973) indicates such rewards lead to helping. Moreover, it may only be necessary that the rewards are expected (Aderman & Berkowitz, 1970; Aderman, Johnson, &
Berkowitz, unpublished). Similarly, both the proportion of rewards relative to the amount possessed (Pruitt, 1968) and the perceived freedom of the other to reward or not reward (Goranson & Berkowitz, 1966; Frisch & Greenberg, 1968; Horowitz, 1968) may affect how "good" we feel about those rewards. Thus, it can be argued that rewards received from others can induce a positive affective state which leads to helping behavior.

The hypothesis proposed by Isen and Levin (1972) is actually composed of two stages: (1) rewards from others induce positive affective states and (2) the positive affective states lead to helping behavior. As Aderman (1972) has pointed out, while it seems plausible to assume that many types of rewards do generate good feelings and these good feelings mediate the helping differences between experimental and control subjects, the absence of a mood check makes it possible to entertain alternative interpretations (e.g., competence, Midlarsky, 1968; equity, Adams, 1965). However, introducing physiological or questionnaire checks on affective arousal creates a number of additional problems. For example, (a) rationales presented to subjects for the inclusion of such checks in the experiment must be developed to reduce the reactivity of the checks, (b) the timing of the check must be determined (e.g., continuously, after the independent manipulation, after the dependent measure), (c) additional control groups become necessary and, of
course, (d) the reliability and validity of the check must be established. While the problems connected with measuring affective states may be resolvable in the simulated conditions of the laboratory, both methodologists (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1969) and theorists (Homans, 1974) alike are becoming more sensitive to the fact that the artificial conditions of the laboratory may create additional problems; most notably, the problem of generalizing beyond the laboratory. Research on artifacts in experimental behavior has strongly demonstrated that, although subjects may act reliably in the experimental situation, aspects of the experimental situation itself may lead to behavior different from conditions which do not appear to the subject as simulated.

Thus, although investigation of the mediated relationship (non-contingent rewards induce positive affective states which lead to helping behavior) needs further examination, the prior demonstration of the corollary hypothesis that non-contingent rewards lead to helping behavior in natural settings must be more fully substantiated. As of now, to the author's knowledge, only Isen and Levin (1972) have conducted such research. The studies reported here are an attempt to further this line of research.

The three field experiments presented below all focus on the hypothesis that: non-contingent rewards induce helping behavior toward strangers not apparently associated with one's good fortune.
These studies differ in terms of whether or not help is solicited and if solicited, whether the solicitation is for immediate or deferred help. Study I involves a non-solicited, immediate helping situation, Study II incorporates a solicited but deferred helping opportunity, and Study III includes both immediate and deferred solicited helping opportunities. Moreover, while Study I is representative of episodic relationships, Studies II and III involve situations which establish the possibility of future interactions.
CHAPTER II

RESEARCH DESIGNS AND RESULTS

Study I

The first study (Blevins & Murphy, 1974) is similar to one utilized by Isen and Levin to test their prediction that persons who "felt good" would be more likely to help another than persons not induced to "feel good" where "...good feeling was induced in a subject by discovery of an unexpected dime in the coin return slot of a pay telephone [1972:386]."

Method

Subjects were twenty-six females and twenty-five males who used one of four phones in an enclosed shopping mall over the course of a one week period. In every case, a dime was left in the coin return tray of the phone and after the subject left the phone the tray was checked to determine if the dime was taken. Only subjects who actually took the dime were treated as experimental subjects, other subjects acted as controls in this study.

While subjects were using a phone, a female accomplice
pretended to "window shop," place a call herself, or appear to be
resting at some point not too far removed from the subject so that
she could observe the subject without calling undue attention to
herself. When the subject left the phone, the accomplice walked
parallel to the subject's path and, when she was approximately one
step in front of the subject, dropped a load of packages as nearly
in the subject's path as possible. The dependent measure was
whether or not the subject helped the confederate pick up the
packages.

In congruence with Isen and Levin (1972), results are pre-
sented in terms of the subject's sex as well as whether or not the
dime was taken. The following frequencies of helping or not helping
were obtained:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females (^a)</th>
<th>Males (^b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Dime (\backslash) Dime</td>
<td>No Dime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped (^c)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Help</td>
<td>13 (65%)</td>
<td>5 (83%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(a_p = .38\) \(b_p = .63\) \(c_p = .55\)

Fisher exact tests of the above data indicates: (1) no
relationship between finding a dime and helping \(p = .55\) for either
males (p = .63) or females (p = .38); however (2), there is a weak relationship between sex and helping (p = .08) with males being more willing to help the female accomplice than females. These results do not support the hypothesis that a non-contingent reward induces helping behavior; at least, when the reward is a dime and the person to be helped is not apparently associated with that dime.

Our findings are, therefore, opposed to those of Isen and Levin (1974) who found a clear relationship between finding a dime and helping (p < .005 for females, N = 24, and p = .025 for males, N = 17).

Study II

Study II (Schellenberg & Blevins, 1973) is of the same general type as Study I. However, since it has been demonstrated that the behavior of other in a situation may induce similar behavior (positive modeling) or opposite behavior (negative modeling) by a subject (cf. Krebs, 1970), explicit controls for modeling effects were included in this study.

Method

Subjects were ninety-four campus pedestrians walking between classroom buildings. Half received a non-contingent reward (a certificate redeemable for a free hamburger) and half
were matched control subjects.

The experimental team consisted of the same three persons for all subjects. One person randomly selected forty-seven pedestrians at intervals of approximately five minutes and distributed a certificate for a free hamburger to each. The remaining two members of the experimental team identified these subjects and selected a matched control subject (the person just in front of or behind the certificate recipient on an alternative trial basis). The experimental subject and control subject were stopped by the latter two experimenters to request their participation in a social psychology experiment. The request was in the form of a sheet of paper which described a planned experiment and invited the subject to send in an attached postcard to schedule a time for their participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.2. -- Frequency of helping or not helping</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Certificate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Helpinga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Not Helping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a\( \cdot p > .30 \)

Chi-squared analysis of the above frequency table revealed no significant differences between experimental and control groups \( (X^2 = .64, 1 \text{ df, } p > .30) \). These results, similar to Study I, fail to support the hypothesis that a non-contingent reward induces helping.
Study III

Study III (Schellenberg & Blevins, 1973) was similar in procedure to Study II with the exception that a means of assessing three degrees of helping behavior varying primarily in terms of time delay was included.

Method

Subjects were sixty-six pedestrians selected for experimental and control pairs in precisely the same manner as in Study II.

Two experimental teams worked in a fashion similar to Study II, except that the two follow-up experimenters sought to administer a one minute questionnaire to all subjects. The last question on the questionnaire asked if the subject would be willing to take part in a proposed social psychology experiment. If the subject agreed to participate (by signing to do so), he was given an explanatory sheet with an attached postcard for him to mail later. This procedure allowed for the recording of three different degrees of helping: (1) filling out the one minute questionnaire; (2) volunteering to take part in a later experiment; (3) sending in the postcard to schedule a time for the experiment. The results are reported in Table 2.3.
TABLE 2.3.--Frequency and type of helping or not helping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helping:</th>
<th>No Certificate</th>
<th>Certificate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire Only(^a)</td>
<td>13 (39%)</td>
<td>13 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also Volunteering</td>
<td>11 (33%)</td>
<td>12 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also Sent in Postcard</td>
<td>7 (21%)</td>
<td>4 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Not Helping</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>4 (12%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) \(p > .10\)

Friedman two-way analysis of variance of the differences between experimental and control groups did not attain statistical significance \(X^2 = 5.55, 3 \text{ df}, p > .10\). As with Studies I and II, the hypothesis that a non-contingent reward induces helping is not supported by Study III.
CHAPTER III

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In three separate studies using two types of populations, two difference independent variable manipulations, and four measures of helping behavior, we were unable to find support for the hypothesis that a non-contingent reward induces helping behavior. There are at least three major possible sets of reasons for our failure to substantiate the hypothesis. These include methodological differences between our studies and those of Isen and Levin (1972), failure to induce arousal, and differences in subjects' interpretations of their feeling states.

Methodological Differences

The basic problem in conducting field experiments is the presence of uncontrolled variables which may either mask "true" relationships or create spurious results. In this section, we will describe a number of such uncontrolled variables which may be responsible for the differences in results between our studies and the studies of other researchers.
Ingratiation

Following Jones and Wortman (1973), ingratiation refers to "a class of strategic behaviors illicitly designed to influence a particular other person concerning the attractiveness of one's personal qualities." While this definition obscures an important distinction between instrumental and expressive ingratiation, the data presented here do not permit separate analysis. The major types of ingratiation tactics are: other enhancement, opinion conformity, rendering favors, and self-presentation. Since the attribution of ingratiation appears to induce feelings of resentment or psychological reactance (Brehm, 1972) toward the ingratiator, we hypothesize that to the extent that a subject perceives himself to be the target of ingratiation tactics as a product of the experimental conditions he will be less likely to engage in helping behaviors. Such perception of themselves as targets of ingratiation is more likely to occur in laboratory experiments than in field experiments.

Another way in which ingratiation may be confounded with helping behavior occurs when the experimental situation introduces conditions which make ingratiation tactics by the subjects probable. Jones and Wortman's (1973) discussion of ingratiation points to a number of variables which must be controlled in order to identify ingratiation behavior as distinct from helping behavior. Such variables as the subject's awareness of and acquaintance with others
in the experimental situation or the existence of situational cues which increase the desirability and probability of future inter-
actions with an other person (e.g., place where encounter occurs, 
similarity-dissimilarity between self and other, and attractiveness 
of other) must be taken into account. Notice, moreover, that the 
subject's ingratiation target may be the experimenter, confederates, 
other subjects, or, as in the case of field experiments, other 
persons present in the immediate situation.

While it is unlikely that subjects were involved in ingra-
tiation attempts toward the experimenter in our studies since the 
subjects were unaware they were involved in an experiment in Study 
I and in Studies II and III, the experimenter was not a readily avail-
able target, experimenter ingratiation may be an alternative 
explanation for the results of laboratory studies on helping. How-
ever, helping as an ingratiation technique toward the confederates, 
other persons, or other subjects is a possible alternative explana-
tion for differences in results between our studies and those of 
other researchers, including Isen and Levin. For example, the 
confederate of Study I was an attractive female and, since attrac-
tiveness is positively related to ingratiation attempts, the results 
of Study I may be due to male ingratiation tactics. The differences 
in results between male and female subjects of Study I tend to 
support this supposition: males were more likely to help the female
accomplish than were females (Fisher exact test, \( p = .077 \)). Thus, the possibility that differences in results between our studies and those of Isen and Levin (1972) are due to ingratiation confounding is implied.

**Request for help**

Isen and Levin (1972) have implied that solicited help is more likely to be given than unsolicited help. Moreover, Langer and Abelson (1972) indicate that the legitimacy of a request for help by an unknown person may be an important determinant of whether or not the help is given. Berkowitz (1972) implies that requests for help tend to substantiate one's perception of the other's dependency on self and, in addition, give some indication of the other's control over the situation. Since both increased dependency and decreased control produce greater helping, solicited help is more probable than unsolicited help. These considerations suggest that whether or not the help is solicited and the way in which it is solicited are important conditions for help-giving. However, the results of Study I indicate that non-contingent rewards have no effect on unsolicited help. Moreover, if one accepts requests for help in conducting research as legitimate requests, then the results of Studies II and III imply that non-contingent rewards have little effect on legitimate solicitations for help. Thus, differences in
results between the present studies and those of Isen and Levin (1972) are not attributable to the way in which the help was sought.

An additional consideration involves when the help is to be given: help requested immediately is more likely to be given than deferred help. There are two major reasons why immediate help is more probable than deferred help: (a) stimulus conditions which induce helping behavior are more salient in the former than latter conditions and (b) alternative activities which decrease the probability of helping are likely to develop or intervene in deferred helping situations. Some evidence in support of the hypothesis that immediate help is more likely than deferred help may be derived from Study III.

Of the sixty-six subjects (33 experimental and 33 control subjects), sixty filled out the questionnaire, thirty-four volunteered to take part in the experiment, and eleven mailed postcards to schedule a time for the follow-up experiment.

Using a single-sample test for proportions on the percentages presented in Table 3.1, there were significantly more persons willing to fill out the questionnaire than were willing to volunteer for the experiment ($Z = 6.31$, $p < .01$) or who mailed in postcards to schedule an appointment ($Z = 15.44$, $p < .01$). Also, a significantly greater percentage of subjects volunteered to take part in the experiment than actually mailed in postcards to arrange
a time for the experiment \((Z = 7.25, p < .01)\). Thus, requests for immediate help are more likely to be honored than are requests for deferred help.

**TABLE 3.1.--Frequencies of immediate and deferred helping**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Help</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire(\text{a})</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered(\text{b})</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailed Postcard</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\text{a} p < .01\) between questionnaire and volunteering and between questionnaire and mailed postcard

\(\text{b} p < .01\) between volunteering and mailing postcard

**Modeling**

Studies which have dealt explicitly with the effects of models on helping behavior suggest that both observing another give help (Krebs, 1970) and observing another violate social expectations by not giving help (Macauley & Berkowitz, 1970) may induce help giving by a subject. The present studies controlled for possible modeling effects through the use of time delays between subjects (Study I) and explicit control (Studies II and III). However, other reported studies on the relationship between non-contingent rewards and helping do not permit us to ascertain what role, if any, modeling...
effects may play in their results. Thus, the potential effect of modeling on helping is a possible explanation for differences in results between the present and other studies.

**Hurrying**

A study by Darley and Batson (1973) found that people in a "hurry" were less likely to help than those not in a "hurry" even when helping norms were salient. Neither the present studies nor those of other researchers permit us to determine the extent to which the subjects were in a "hurry" and, therefore, unwilling or willing to lend assistance to those in need of help. Thus, "hurrying" is an uncontrolled variable which may contribute to reported differences in results.

**Failure to induce arousal**

Hebb (1966) has argued that the relationship between arousal and behavioral efficiency is curvilinear (inverted U) so that the optimal level of arousal is an intermediate one. If the relationship between arousal and helping is analogous, then our failure to support the hypothesis may be due to a failure to produce significantly different arousal states among experimental and control subjects. This suggests the need for research on the arousal properties of various non-contingent rewards.
An additional consideration is that our dependent measures were not appropriate to identify the existence of differences in helping as a result of the non-contingent rewards. Berscheid and Walster (1967) found that reciprocity is more likely if the unit returned is equivalent to that which has been received. Analogously, helping after receipt of a reward may be more likely if what is required is more similar to what has been received non-contingently. Of course, other studies of helping upon receipt of a reward which have demonstrated a possible link between these variables have done so with an unequal exchange. Since several studies have demonstrated this unequal exchange, the validity of this criticism is questionable.

Differences in subjects' interpretations of their feeling states

A third major reason for our failure to substantiate our hypothesis is suggested by the studies of Schachter (1964) and his associates. Schachter's studies indicate that emotional behavior is dependent upon both a state of arousal and a way of interpreting the experienced state. These findings suggest that if the dime and/or free hamburger certificate produced a state of arousal, they would not necessarily induce helping behavior unless appropriate situational cues were present to interpret that arousal state as one of "feeling good." The present studies involved some
uncontrolled variation in situational cues without supporting the hypothesis. However, our results do not permit us to discern whether it was a failure to induce arousal or the failure of the arousal to be interpreted as "feeling good" which resulted in our not supporting the hypothesis. Future investigations in this area should be more concerned with the importance of situational cues for interpreting arousal.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The three field experiments presented here have all failed to support the hypothesis that a non-contingent reward induces helping behavior towards strangers not apparently associated with one's good fortune. The results reported here contrast with those of Isen and Levin (1972) which did support this hypothesis in two separate field studies.

Three major sets of reasons for the failure to find additional support for the hypothesis were discussed. These included methodological differences between the present studies and those of other researchers, the possibility that our independent manipulations (a dime and a free hamburger certificate) failed to induce sufficient arousal in subjects, and the importance of situational cues to interpreting felt arousal as "feeling good."

The main implication of the methodological differences between our studies and those of other researchers is that alternative explanations for increases in helping behavior have not and are not being eliminated from contention by the research itself. In particular, arguments and data have been presented which indicate
that the subject's perception of himself as a target of ingratiation, the subject's attempts to ingratiate others present in the experimental situation, the way in which the helping opportunity is presented (solicited versus unsolicited, legitimate versus illegitimate, and help requested immediately versus deferred help), modeling, and the subject's desire to be elsewhere (hurrying) may determine whether or not help is given.

Our discussion of arousal induction and interpretation led to two points. First, research on the arousal properties of various non-contingent rewards is needed. Second, the importance of situational cues for the interpretation of arousal states has generally gone unrecognized by researchers in this area. Without such research, "feeling good" remains a hypothetical intervening state in the hypothesis that non-contingent rewards induce good feelings which leads to helping behavior.

Two major conclusions are suggested by the research and discussion presented here. First, the lack of statistically significant findings in the present studies suggests that we should be cautious in generalizing from previous studies about the effects of non-contingent rewards on helping behavior. Second, further research on the conditions under which the hypothesized relationship between non-contingent rewards and helping holds true is needed.
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