

FEELING GOOD AND HELPING: FURTHER PHONEBOOTH FINDINGS¹

GREGORY A. BLEVINS AND TERRANCE MURPHY

Western Michigan University

Isen and Levin (1972) have argued that helping behavior is facilitated by positive affect states and cited a number of studies which can be interpreted as supporting this contention. In particular, they suggest that a non-contingent reward induces positive affect which results in helping behavior. In a field study, similar to the present one, they found a significant relationship ($N = 24$, $p = .005$ for females and $N = 12$, $p = .025$, for males) between finding a dime in the coin return slot of a public telephone and unsolicited helping behavior.

Four phones in an enclosed mall were selected as the site of the present study. Ss were 26 females and 25 males who used one of the four phones during one week. In every case, the phone had a dime in the coin-return tray. While Ss were using a phone, a female accomplice pretended to window-shop in order to observe S. When S left the phonebooth the accomplice walked parallel to S until she was approximately one step in front. She then dropped her load of packages in S's path. The dependent variable was whether or not S helped the accomplice pick up her packages.

The following frequencies of helping or not helping were obtained:

	Females		Males	
	No Dime	Dime	No Dime	Dime
Helped	7	1	8	5
No Help	13	5	7	4

Fisher exact tests indicate: (1) no relationship between finding a dime and helping for either males or females; however, (2) there is a weak relationship between sex and helping, males being more willing to help the female accomplice than were 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. Further, our data are somewhat supportive of a courtesy prediction that males more than females will aid a lady in distress. Our findings are therefore opposed to those of Isen and Levin (1972). Clarifying basic issues might come from manipulation of time between the non-contingent reward and the opportunity to help, size of the non-contingent reward, distance between S and confederate at time of drop, amount dropped, and stimulus characteristics of the confederate.

REFERENCE

- ISEN, A. M., & LEVIN, P. F. Effect of feeling good on helping: cookies and kindness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1972, 21, 384-388.

Accepted November 29, 1973.

¹The authors are especially grateful to Sharon Montry who acted as our accomplice and to Jim Schellenberg and Paul Wienir for their advice and encouragement.