

## EFFECT OF FEELING GOOD ON HELPING: COOKIES AND KINDNESS<sup>1</sup>

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Two experiments with adult subjects investigated the effects of a person's positive affective state on his or her subsequent helpfulness to others. "Feeling good" was induced by having received cookies while studying in a library (Study I) and by having found a dime in the coin return of a public telephone while making a call (Study II). In Study I, where the dependent measure involved volunteering in reply to a student's request, a distinction was made between specific willingness to help and general willingness to engage in any subsequent activity. In Study II, the dependent measure was whether subjects spontaneously helped to pick up papers that were dropped in front of them. On the basis of previous research, it was predicted that subjects who were thus made to "feel good" would be more helpful than control subjects. Results support the predictions.

Recent investigations of determinants of helping have begun to focus on the role of mood state in producing differences in helpfulness. The first studies that indicated the relevance of a potential helper's internal affective state used reports of success and failure at a task as their independent variable. A study by Berkowitz and Connor (1966) indicated a relationship between success and helping, when the beneficiary was dependent on the subject. A later study (Isen, 1970) also indicated a link between success and helping, where there was no relationship between the people involved and where helping was a low-cost, naturalistic, behavioral measure. It was postulated that in just such a situation (i.e., nonsolicited, low-cost helping),

an important determinant of helpfulness may be the potential helper's positive affective state or "warm glow of success" (Isen, 1970). In addition, even though their success/failure manipulation was not aimed specifically at affecting internal mood state, Berkowitz and Connor (1966) also made reference to a "glow of goodwill" in their discussion. In both of these studies which suggested that "feeling good" may be a determinant of helping, positive affective state was induced via a report of success. However, report of success may not be an entirely satisfactory way of manipulating mood, since induced affective state may be confounded with estimates of competence.

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Several recent studies have indicated that manipulation of affective state in ways other than via success/failure also results in differential helping, thus lending credibility to the hypothesis that a relationship between feeling good and helpfulness does exist. Two naturalistic experiments seem to indicate that good feeling aroused through positive verbal contact results in increased aid, both solicited (Berkowitz & Macaulay, as cited in Aderman, 1971) and nonsolicited (Isen, Becker, & Fairchild).<sup>4</sup>

Studies by Aderman (1971) and Aderman and Berkowitz (1970), while conducted in an

<sup>4</sup> A. M. Isen, D. M. Becker, and P. Fairchild. Effects of nature of verbal contact on helping. Manuscript in preparation.

experimental setting, manipulated mood state in several novel ways. In the Aderman and Berkowitz study, the subject's mood state was varied by having him observe one of several interactions between two male college students, one who needed aid and one who was a potential helper. The experimental condition varied according to the person with whom the subject was instructed to empathize, the helping response of the second person (helped or did not help), and the reaction of the helped person (thanked the helper or did not). The subject then filled out a mood questionnaire and finally was given an opportunity to comply with the experimenter's request for help. The results of the experiment, though complex, tended to support the idea that feeling good can be related to increased helping under some circumstances (empathy with the thanked helper), while feeling bad can be associated with increased helping under other circumstances (empathy with the nonhelped person in need).

In the study by Aderman (1971), elation or depression was induced in subjects by having them read sets of mood statements. Aderman found that following the reading of the cards, subjects in the elation condition wrote more numbers for the experimenter, when this task was presented as a favor rather than a requirement of the experiment. In addition, elation subjects volunteered more often for a future experiment. Such findings do lend credence to the "glow" hypotheses, yet one complexity of the findings is that the "help" was solicited.

A further question remaining is whether success, or good mood, leads specifically to helping or, more generally, to increased activity and/or productivity. In other words, does the good feeling lead to an increased desire to do something nice for someone else, or would subjects who have been made to feel good, as opposed to those who have not, engage in more or any subsequent activity?

Using a  $2 \times 2$  design, we performed an experiment that attempted to answer the two questions posed above: First, whether feeling good leads to increased helping; second, whether, following the induction of good feeling, the response to an opportunity to help

differs from the response to an opportunity to engage in some other activity. We predicted an interaction between the two independent variables such that those subjects who were feeling good would subsequently be more willing to help but less willing to hinder (distract) than those not made to feel good.

## STUDY I

### *Method*

*Subjects.* The study, which spanned five sessions, was conducted in the libraries of a university and two colleges in the Philadelphia area. Fifty-two male college students who were studying in individual carrels served as subjects.

*Procedure.* At the beginning of the session, a coordinator randomly assigned rows of carrels to the feeling good or to the neutral condition. The assignment to condition was based on rows, rather than on individuals, in order to insure that subjects would be unaware that two conditions existed.

To induce good mood, confederates distributed cookies along the rows that had been assigned to the feeling good condition, while they merely walked by the rows in the neutral condition. This task was performed by a male and female pair of confederates in two of the sessions and by a female confederate in the remaining three sessions.

The coordinator also randomly divided subjects in each condition into "help" or "hinder" groups. The experimenter was told this assignment of "help" and "distract" subjects, but was kept unaware of whether a particular row was "cookie" or "no cookie." Similarly, the coordinator was careful to withhold from the confederates information as to help or distract condition of the subjects.

A few minutes after the confederates returned following the distribution or nondistribution of cookies, the experimenter approached each subject individually and asked if, and for how many 20-minute sessions, the subject would serve as a confederate in a psychology experiment. In the help condition, the purpose of the experiment was given as an investigation of creativity in students at examination times, as opposed to other times during the year. The confederate was needed in this experiment to act as helper to subjects who would be attempting to conceive of novel uses for ordinary items. The confederate's aid, which involved holding and manipulating the items, was described as "something which the subjects usually found very helpful to them." In the distract condition, the job of the confederate was described as a distracter of a randomly chosen, unwitting student who happened to be studying in the library. As distracter, he would stand near the subject and drop books, make noises, rattle papers, all while the experimenter unobtrusively recorded the subject's reactions. The purpose of such an experiment was given as an investigation of distractibility of students at examination time as



opposed to other times during the year. In addition, the experimenter cautioned each subject in the distract condition by saying, "I think it only fair to tell you before you decide to act as distracter, that the subjects find the distraction to be an unpleasant annoyance." Thus, in the help condition the role that the subject was invited to play was clearly that of a helper, one appreciated greatly by the creativity subjects; in contrast, the role that a confederate would play in the distract condition was clearly described as that of an annoying distracter of unsuspecting students studying in the library.

A debriefing and discussion period followed each subject's reply. Subjects' reports indicated that the independent and dependent manipulations were plausible, and that they had not been associated in the subjects' minds prior to the debriefing.

### Results

Since the five sessions yielded comparable results, the data were combined. Table 1 shows the proportion of subjects volunteering in each condition and the means and variances of number of minutes volunteered. A  $t$  test for proportions was performed on the number of subjects volunteering in each condition. This test revealed the predicted interaction between receiving a cookie or not and volunteering to help or to distract. That is, subjects receiving cookies volunteered to help more, but to distract less, than those not receiving cookies ( $t = 1.96, p < .05$ ).

For the data on number of minutes volunteered in each condition, an  $F$  test of the variances indicated that the data did not meet the assumptions of the analysis of variance ( $F = 20.69, df = 11/13, p < .01$ ). A two-way analysis of variance was performed, however, on the transformed scores, which did meet the assumptions of the test. This analysis indi-

cated no main effect, but did show the predicted significant interaction ( $F_A < 1, F_B < 1, F_{AB} = 7.71, p < .01$ ), with cookie subjects volunteering more time to help, but less to distract, than no-cookie subjects.

### Discussion

The results of this experiment indicate that in terms of both number of subjects volunteering and amount of time volunteered, subjects who have unexpectedly received cookies help more, but distract less, than do those who have not received cookies. Thus, feeling good, induced naturalistically and in a way other than via report of success, seems to lead to increased helping, and to helping specifically, rather than to general activity.

Although this finding provides evidence for the "warm glow" hypothesis—people who feel good themselves are more likely to help others—an alternative interpretation is possible. Following from a modeling or a normative explanation, cookie subjects might have been more helpful simply because they had just been exposed to a helpful model (the person passing out the cookies) who may have reminded them of norms of kindness to others. Furthermore, a few aspects of the dependent measure complicate the warm glow interpretation. Although the independent manipulation was more naturalistic than that found in many experiments, the dependent measure was one of *solicited* helpfulness. In addition, help was only volunteered, rather than actually performed.

Thus, a second study was conducted to determine whether nonsolicited, low-cost helpfulness increases following the induction of good feeling, without the good mood being directly brought about by another person. The question was, Does feeling good lead to increased helping, even if there is no helpful model? In the "dime" study, which is directed at this question and which is presented below, good feeling was induced in a subject by the discovery of an unexpected dime in the coin return slot of a pay telephone. The dependent measure was that of helping a young woman pick up papers which she had just dropped.

TABLE 1  
STUDY I: MEANS AND VARIANCES OF AMOUNT OF TIME (IN MINUTES) VOLUNTEERED AND PROPORTION OF SUBJECTS VOLUNTEERING IN EACH CONDITION

Condition	Help	Distract
Cookie		
<i>M</i>	69.00	20.00
<i>s</i> <sup>2</sup>	6923.08	1400.00
<i>P</i>	.69 (9/13)	.31 (4/13)
No cookie		
<i>M</i>	16.70	78.60
<i>s</i> <sup>2</sup>	563.64	11659.34
<i>P</i>	.50 (6/12)	.64 (9/14)

## STUDY II

*Method*

*Subjects.* Subjects were 24 female and 17 male adults who made calls from designated public telephones located in enclosed shopping malls in suburban San Francisco and Philadelphia. Excluded from the subject pool were those shoppers who were not alone and those who were carrying packages.

*Procedure.* Telephone booths were "set up" in the following manner. The experimenter made an incomplete call, ostensibly took her dime from the return slot, and left the booth. In actuality, the dime was left in the coin return slot for a randomly selected half of these trials. Thus, subjects using such telephones received an unexpected 10¢ when they checked the coin return before, during, or upon completion of their calls; these subjects constituted the experimental group. The control group was made up of individuals who used a telephone that had not been "stocked" with a dime and who therefore did not receive unexpected money.

The experimenter set up the experimental and control telephones without informing the confederate as to condition. This was done in order to eliminate any possible systematic bias in the confederate's performance of the paper dropping. The experimenter also checked to make sure that all subjects did look in the coin return slot. Only a few subjects failed to meet this requirement, and these were not included in the data analysis. This was done in order to avoid ultimately obtaining a sample of subjects which was inadvertently selected for attention. For this reason, no subject who was at an "experimental" condition telephone and simply failed to see his dime was included in the control group.

During the call, the confederate was able to observe the outline of the subject unobtrusively by pretending to "window shop," while actually watching the subject's reflection in one of the store windows. The aim of this surveillance was simply to know when the subject was leaving the telephone. When the subject did leave, the confederate started in the same direction as the subject and, while walking slightly ahead and to the side of him or her, dropped a manila folder full of papers in the subject's path. The dependent measure was whether the subject helped the female confederate pick up the papers.

TABLE 2  
STUDY II: NUMBER OF PEOPLE HELPING  
IN EACH CONDITION

Condition	Females		Males	
	Helped	Did not help	Helped	Did not help
Dime	8	0	6	2
No dime	0	16	1	8

*Results*

Table 2 shows the number of males and females helping in each condition. A Fisher exact test on the data of the females indicated a significant relationship between getting a dime and helping ( $p < .005$ ). A similar finding ( $p = .025$ ) was obtained for the males.

*Discussion*

These results indicate that differential unsolicited helping occurs even when good mood is induced in an impersonal manner. The finding appears to be less pronounced for males than for females, but the smaller number of male subjects may be responsible in part for this apparent difference. Because our society has specific norms applying to this particular helping situation for males, one might have expected the behavior of the males, more than that of females, to reflect not only the independent manipulation but also these norms for courtesy. The data show that while no females in the control condition helped, one male in the same condition did help. However, it must also be noted that two males in the experimental condition failed to help, while no female experimental subjects failed to help. Thus, while it is true that the behavior of the males may be more complex than that of the females, the simple courtesy expectation is not supported.

The results of the two studies taken together provide support for the notion that feeling good leads to helping. Because feeling good has been generated in a variety of ways and settings, and since the type of helping measure and the source of the subject populations have also varied, this relationship seems to have some empirical generality. We recognize, however, that the question of why feeling good leads to helping, or more properly, what mediates the relationship between the two, remains to be answered. Moreover, such an answer may provide some insights into the more general and important issue of how the observed determinants of helping, such as success, feeling good, feeling bad in some circumstances, guilt, verbal contact, and the presence or absence of other people, relate to one another. That is, while these states or



events may seem unrelated as determinants of helping, they may have some common aspects in that capacity. If so, then the determination of helping may be more parsimoniously understood in terms of broader concepts, such as maintenance of positive affective state, perception of costs and rewards, or both, and this possibility is now under investigation.

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