# MENTAL REPRESENTATION OF THE SEVEN HELP-SEEKING EVENTS OF AUSTRALIAN AND MALAYSIAN: PERSON, AFFECTIVE, AND BEHAVIOURAL SCHEMAS AS REASONS FOR HELPING AND FAILING TO HELP IN EMERGENCY

Fazliyaton Ramley[*] and Wally Karnilowicz[**]

Prosocial behaviour and/or the drive to help are central to the effective functioning of a productive humanistic society. Prosocial behaviour is the most basic of human attributes. It transcends geographical boundaries and is constantly reinforced and valued, albeit varying in form and practice, across cultures. This variability in practice is best illustrated as a continuum. At one end is the person who even while in a perilous and life-threatening position helps wholeheartedly and without hesitation. At the opposite end of this continuum are people who in response to another's need and for whatever reason(s) decide to not help.

The act of helping as a prosocial behaviour encompasses a broad array of behaviours and interpretations including comforting, sharing and rescuing. As a result, the study of helping is also broad and all-encompassing.

## THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON HELPING BEHAVIOUR

The relevance and importance of prosocial behaviour as part of a functioning contemporary society has resulted in it being the subject of a considerable amount of research activity. This research has contributed to an overwhelming increase in data, knowledge and generation of theory. However, the enormous breadth and quantity, along with variations in the quality of the research, problematizes any attempt to obtain a coherent interpretation and summary of this field of study. In order to make some sense of this broad literature, one needs to locate the literature within an area of emphasis. Among a range of approaches used to encapsulate the characteristics of prosocial behaviour, a useful means for interpreting its position is through the lens of a more direct and depth analysis of the costs and rewards incurred by helping. For example, there is a robust and significant amount of research investigating motives which underpin prosocial behaviour (e.g., Anker & Feeley, 2011; Conway & Peetz, 2012) interpreted within an arousal cost-reward

[*] Program of Psychology and Counseling, School of Social and Economic Development, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT), 21030, Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia, *E-mail: fazliyaton@umt.edu.my*

[**] College of Health and Biomedicine (Psychology), PO Box 14428, Melbourne, Victoria Australia 8001, *E-mail: Wally.Karnilowicz@vu.edu.au*

analysis. This perspective contends that help is more likely to occur if the benefits outweigh the costs (Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark, 1981). If the act of helping is considered too risky and the costs outweigh the benefits, potential helpers will withdraw from prosocial acts (Pilliavin *et al.,* 1981). Risks include the threat of personal (Midlarsky & Midlarsky, 1973) and emotional harm (Midlarsky & Hannah, 1985). Recognition (Fisher & Ackerman, 1998), reputation (Johnson, Erez, Kiker & Motowidlo, 2002) and personal gratification (Smith, Keating & Stotland, 1989) are additional motivating forces increasing the likelihood of individuals engaging in prosocial acts.

The cost-reward model demonstrates the thinking and analysis process that may underlie helping pro-social behaviour, suggesting that the decision to help or not help is a choice based on the weighing of potential risks and benefits associated with the behaviour. A person experiences an aroused state when confronted by an emergency. This state incorporates an array of emotional responses including fear, personal distress, sympathy, and/or urgency. The cost-reward model suggests that to reduce this arousal people are drawn to a consideration of relative costs and rewards, and select an action that minimises cost and maximises reward (Piliavin *et al.,* 1969). The actions and the relative rewards and costs may include decisions to act or to not act (Silveri, 2007). Derived from an egoistic frame of reference rather than from altruistic hypotheses of prosocial behaviour, the cost-reward model demonstrates that the person in deciding to act or not act perceives a reward in either case of one sort or another. The general consensus is that a person is more likely to engage in prosocial behaviour when the perception of an associated reward is greatest (Pilliavin *et al.,* 1981).

However, while those who are acutely aware of the rewards are more likely to help, in its purest form helping is altruistic, displayed as a selfless act devoid of personal reward. The altruistic thesis, in contrast to the cost-reward model, contends that a person when confronted by one in need will act unselfishly and solely to benefit the other. Within this analysis, different perspectives on prosocial behaviour have been approached. The hypothesis introduced the intrapsychic determinants of helping which examine the desire and feelings in doing good to others. Toi and Batson (1982) extended empathy theory associated with pro-social behaviour in positing an *'empathy-altruism hypothesis'*. This hypothesis is based on the contention that a person will help another without feeling a need for reward if the behaviour is imbued with a degree of empathy. Initially, empathy referred to the emotional aspects of a person who experienced compassion, care, and sympathy toward a person in need (Batson, 1987, 1991). Built on the existing concept of empathic concern, Batson (1987, 1991) further included perspective-taking to acknowledge and highlight the multidimensional nature of empathy. Specifically, this dichotomy of affective-based and cognitive-based empathy shows that some individuals behave pro-socially when they experience empathic concern, while

others behave pro-socially when they understand the feelings and thoughts associated with the feeling of distress by imaginatively placing themselves in the place of the distressed.

The *empathy-altruism hypothesis* was formerly tested by Toi and Batson (1982) in their investigation of college students' reactions to interviews from a radio program. One of the interviewees, Carol, related her story of a serious car accident in which both her legs were broken. Carol expressed her associated struggles and in particular how these related to her falling behind in class. Students listening to this interview were issued with a letter asking them to meet with and to share their lecture notes with her. Toi and Batson (1982) manipulated the degree of empathy by telling one group to focus on how she was feeling (high empathy level) while instructing another group to not be concerned with Carol's feelings (low empathy level). Toi and Batson (1982) also manipulated the cost of not helping. Under a high cost condition, students were informed that Carol on returning to school would be in their psychology class. Under the low cost condition, students were informed that Carol would finish the class at home. The results supported the empathy-altruism hypothesis. Consistent with the hypothesis, people in the high empathy condition helped regardless of cost, while those in the low empathy condition helped only if the cost of not helping was high.

In contrast to Toi and Batson's (1982) analysis of humanistic motivation related to helping behaviour, Cialdini, Schaller, Houlihan, Arps, Fultz, and Beaman (1987) posited that the motivation to help associated with empathic emotion was egoistic and focused on helping behaviours acting to rid the helper of negative states. Cialdini *et al.,* (1987) coined the term 'Negative State Relief' in which guilt and shame are associated with increased unhelpfulness. The central tenet to this form of relief is in the arousal of a sense of responsibility to help someone in need since ignoring might induce a sense of guilt. The probability of helping is positively correlated with the drive to reduce or remove a state of guilt. Thus, egoistic preferences, in which prosocial engagement is aimed at reducing one's own distress and restoring a mental state, is not wholly altruistic, given that the benefactor's motive for helping is not selfless. While human is relatively an active being who constantly affected by their fluctuation of mental and emotional state, who may or may not help, this model challenges onlooker's consistency in giving help out of selfless motives.

In addition to Negative State Relief and guilt as it relates to helping behaviour, others (i.e., Carlson & Miller, 1987) suggest a relationship between negative mood and helping acts. Prosocial behaviour plays a critical role in establishing a 'good' mood, given that behaviour of this type is intrinsically rewarding. A positive mood is powerful in many cases and may play out indirectly, i.e., through a bystander's positive transitory psychological state influencing one's decision to intervene. Vrugt and Vet (2009) induced positive mood by displaying a smile expression prior to a request to help. A request for help accompanied by a smile is more likely to be

responded to positively than is a request for help accompanied by a neutral expression.

Theories of and perspectives on helping behaviour are not restricted to notions of egoism and altruism. Other perspectives view helping behaviour through the lens of common societal rules and practices. Thus, the decision to benefit others implies societal influence of (in) action, which acknowledges human as a social being, and not merely subjugated by individual preferences. For example, the norm of reciprocity expects that the experience of being helped promotes helpfulness in the form of a favour-in-return. Helping those who helped is associated with a sense of gratefulness. Simpson and Willer (2008) investigated the question of the link between indirect reciprocity and altruism. They reported that altruists, in comparison to egoists, were significantly more likely to indirectly reciprocate a prosocial behaviour. Simpson and Willer (2008) also suggested that reciprocity manifests in maintaining equity in a relationship. This occurs because a human interpersonal relationship is framed within an economic perspective in which those who in the past received help will seek to equalise the ratio of benefits by and with the opportunity in the future and in turn engage in an act to helping. Furthermore, a potential benefactor responds positively to helping in order to construct a trustworthy character that guarantees that he or she receives help from others (Frank, 1988). Adhering to an internalised system of social values reinforces the importance of returning a favour in the form of a helpful act. In contrast to an emphasis on other's perspectives on creating self-image (Burger, Sanchez, Imberi & Grande, 2009), an act according to an internalised system of values is concerned with living up to expectations consistent with inner values and or adhering to a personal list of items of what is 'right and legitimate' (Perugini, Gallucci, Presaghi & Ercolani, 2003).

With reciprocity there is the associated social attribute of social responsibility. There is a general, albeit not consistently behaviourally supported, cultural view that the strong should help the weak; the rich should help the poor and the healthy should help the sick. It is reasonable to assume that collectivistic cultures, in contrast to individualist cultures, have value structures higher on dependency and a connection with others and community and emphasise a compliance with this norm of social responsibility(Baron & Miller, 2000). Building on the existing construal of the self and others within collectivistic cultures, selfish responses to the help-seeking behaviour are inappropriate and deviant from the societal expectations and are associated with social disapproval (Hechter & Karl-Dieter, 2001).

## SITUATIONAL DETERMINANTS OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: WHEN DO PEOPLE HELP?

Situational and dispositional factors are also integral to understanding prosocial behaviour (Baron & Byrne, 2000). Situational factors revolve around the characteristics of the situation and constitute a direct influence on a person's decision

to help or not help. For example, bystanders to an event or circumstance in and of themselves and dependent upon context are more-or-less likely to engage in prosocial behaviour. A bystander to an event in which another is injured or attacked may or may not decide to help, based on their perception of the seriousness of the event and the presence of other observers and/or actors.

The 'bystander effect' suggests a diffusion of responsibility in the company of others which reduces the enactment of a prosocial behaviour. This reluctance to act is positively correlated with the number of bystanders witnessing an event (Latané & Darley, 1968). Without the bystanders, a person is engaged in a circumstance of sole responsibility and therefore may be forced into a position in which they feel they have to act. The performance or non-performance of a prosocial behaviour is also directly associated with the perception of an emergency in contrast to a context considered a non-emergency. Latané and Darley (1968) proposed a series of decision-making processes undertaken when faced with an emergency or non-emergency. This five-step model of the decision-making process includes: (1) the onlooker was immediately and consciously aware of the event; (2) the event provided cues that help is needed; (3) the observer assumed he or she was part of the event and duty-bound to help; (4) the observer decided on the type of prosocial behaviour to be undertaken consistent with the characteristics of the event; and (5) the enacting of the prosocial behaviour was feasible. Throughout the five stages and in deciding to act or not act, the observer goes through an assessment of the associated personal and emotional probable risks and rewards.

The presence of an 'other' has the potential to discourage prosocial behaviour. For example, the cue given by an emotional and/or physically unresponsive observer may be interpreted as indicating a non-emergency. This is generally referred to as 'pluralistic ignorance'. The level and characteristics of pluralistic ignorance defines the 'non-emergency' and ultimately influences other observers in terms of their interpretations of the characteristics of the event, i.e. help not needed (Latané & Darley, 1970). Moreover, enacting a behaviour which is inconsistent with the interpretation by the other observers of the appropriate reaction to an event may be embarrassing, particularly if the actor misinterprets the characteristics of the event (Bierhoff, 2002).

Less obvious examples of context and how it affects prosocial behaviour is in the choice to act or not act for the benefit of the public good, for example organ donation. Organ non-donors are significantly less likely than donors to interpret an organ shortage as a cry for help, are less likely to accept personal responsibility to help and often do not have the level of knowledge deemed necessary to engage or intervene (Anker & Feeley, 2011). Other examples of the effects of context associated with engaging in or not engaging in a prosocial acts includes the witnessing of an emergency or crime, such as sexual violence (Banyard, 2008), the presence of security camera within the vicinity of the help-seeking spot (van

Bommel, van Prooijen, Elfffers & van Lange, 2014); interpersonal events such as the retrieval and return of dropped personal articles (Prevos, 2014) and sensitivity toward and activity around and in reaction to bullying among peers (Howard, Landau & Pryor, 2013) particularly enacted in schoolyards and playgrounds. Information overload (Milgram, 1970) in terms of context may also influence the enacting of a prosocial behaviour. The impact of information overload has been examined in investigations of rural environs in contrast to urban environs. Urbanites in contrast to rural dwellers are less likely to intervene in the presence of others (Steblay, 1987; Amato, 1981). Consistent with the principle of information overload, the hectic nature of and irritations of living in the city results in the filtering of and processing of information, particularly in terms of external cues. As a result, this reduction in information processing directly influences the frequency of and engagement in prosocial behaviour.

Prosocial behaviour is generally considered an artefact of socialisation. Important others exert an enormous influence on an individual's propensity and/or capacity to engage in prosocial behaviour. For example, the drive for social approval is an important situational factor which, dependent upon circumstance, may act to promote prosocial behaviour as appropriate and expected. Prosocial behaviour in this circumstance is and associated with and complemented by increased social status and feelings of self-worth. The choice to act or not act is affected by the presence of others, with the decision to act in some cases allowing the individual to avoid feelings of shame and guilt (Dovidio, Piliavin, Gaertner, Schroeder & Clark, 1991). At the extreme, the display of a 'heroic' action is deemed to be responsible and reputable (Haley & Fessler, 2005).

Societal expectation in terms of social behaviour is derived from what is considered ideal and appropriate behaviour performed within and considering a particular context. These behaviours often occur almost subconsciously, while other behaviours are consciously considered in terms of the perceived expectations of the particular context. For example, Yoeli (2009) in a field-based study investigating a residential electricity market reported that customers of a large electric utility were more likely to endorse and sign up for a blackout intervention program if their decision was revealed to their neighbours. However, the influence of others in terms of a person engaging or not engaging in prosocial behaviour does not always motivate action. For example, there is lack of consensus on whether the individual would independently be more or less likely to respond to improve the welfare of someone in need (Burger, Sanchez, Imberi & Grande, 2009).

As stated previously, context is an extremely important consideration when attempting to understand the characteristics of prosocial behaviour. Subsequent bystander's attention to act selflessness is largely focused on the perceived seriousness of the situation. In short, events ranging from non-serious or non-intense circumstances to a life-threatening emergency elicited different reactions.

The intensity of the situation significantly influenced the behaviour of participants (Thornberg, 2007). Environmental factors such as time, noise and odours are also key determinants in influencing whether a person decides to help or not help. People who are under time constraints are less likely to stop and offer help (Darley & Batson, 1973). Noise is an additional factor in decreasing helping behaviour (Darley & Batson, 1973; Mathews & Canon, 1975; Geller & Malia, 1981). The presence of increasing noise levels may decrease helping as the attention to another's distress is constrained and/or obscured by sound. Another less common influence on action to help is smell. A pleasant ambient fragrance may result in heightened levels of positive mood, which in turn increases the likelihood of an act to help (Baron, 1997; GuPguen, 2012). Smell more commonly plays out in a response to personal body odour. The response to a person's body odour if unpleasant will commonly result in avoidance. However, less frequently, an individual's unpleasant body odour contributes to an act to help since such an odour may invoke pity (Camps, Stouten, Tuteleers & van Son, 2014).

## DISPOSITIONAL FACTORS IN HELPING BEHAVIOUR: WHY DO PEOPLE HELP?

The research in prosocial behaviour has tended to focus on considerations of context and physical characteristics. Dispositional factors, by contrast, have received less attention. The research in dispositional factors indicates that an individual with strong values and positive emotional reflection will engage more frequently in prosocial altruistic acts (Richman, Brown, & Clark, 1984). The higher the level of empathy, the more willing the individual is to engage in prosocial behaviour (Batson, Lishner, Cook, & Sawyer, 2005); this encompass feelings towards others including sympathy, compassion, softheartedness, tenderness and emotional warmth. These feelings are often strengthened toward a vulnerable target such as a child (Batson et al., 2005). Compassion, emotional concern and caring when activated in response to a person in distress contribute directly to an altruistic act to help (Weng, Fox, Hessenthaler, Stodola and Davidson, 2015).

The importance of focus on empathy as indicative and predictive of prosocial behaviour has coincided with the greater recognition of empathy as multidimensional. A cognitive aspect is central to the multidimensionality of the construct and includes critical factors such as the individual's capacity to accurately imagine a person's feelings and thoughts in assessing an act to help (Sun, Lao, Li & Lv, 2011). The capacity to accurately assess feelings and thoughts dovetails into the capacity to understand a person's perspective, particularly when that person is in a distressed state. For example, bystanders will vary in the capacity to take the perspective of another and this in turn will inform their behaviour. A bystander is more likely to engage in act to help when they perceive some similarities and connections with the victim (Sturme, Snyder & Omoto,

2005), assume an 'imagined self' in which they position themselves cognitively within the thoughts and feelings of the distressed victim (Myers, Laurent & Hodges, 2014), and the situation involves a sympathetic victim (Batson, Chang, Orr & Rowland, 2002).

High levels of personal self-evaluation are also associated with a willingness to engage in prosocial behaviours (Bénabou & Tirole, 2005). Such behaviour provides helpers with a self-rewarding sense of satisfaction, pride or joy (Rodriguez, 2005). These positive senses reinforce a benefactor's self-worth (Diener & Diener, 1995). However, mere imagination, while potentially elevating self-esteem and the satisfaction with the individual's own abilities and awareness, does not necessarily translate to an act to help (Szabla, 2012). An act to help may also be negative in outcome. Social exchange models suggest that those who receive help assume a lower social status in contrast to the higher status associated with being a giver of help (Flynn, Reagans, Amanatullah & Ames (2006). Helping behaviour is also an acquired response. People learn to be helpful. For example, previous success in reducing arousal and anticipating costs leads to enhanced helping in subsequent events (Dovidio, 1984).

A more traditional approach to understanding prosocial behaviour is through the principles of behaviourism. Skinner (1948) maintained that behaviour followed by reinforcement (positive or negative) has an increased probability of recurrence. By contrast, behaviour followed by extinction or punishment has a decreased probability of recurrence.. The consequences of human action generally fall on a continuum of pleasant to aversive. Behaviours associated with pleasurable consequences are reinforced, while behaviours associated with aversive or unpleasant consequences tend toward non-occurrence or extinction. The positive (Koestner, Franz & Weinberger, 1990) and negative (Baumeister, Stillwell & Heatherton, 1994) perceived and real consequences of prosocial behaviour, such as social approval, appraisal, assured feelings, guilt and looking foolish, directly relate to the probability of one behaviour occurring instead of another.

Teaching and learning strategies based on the principles of reinforcement within operant conditioning are a popular technique in reinforcing prosocial behaviour and traits, particularly amongst children. The strategies are characterised by introducing reinforcement contingencies in factors such as social approval (Gelfand & Hartmann, 1982), tangible rewards (Rushton & Teachman, 1978), and self-rewards (Bar-Tal, Raviv & Goldberg, 1982). Tangible rewards, i.e., prizes, reward points, money, tend to be a relatively less effective reinforcer for prosocial behaviour. Tangible rewards tend toward maladaptation when engaging the internalisation of prosocial behaviour and may instead undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 2001). As a result, tangible rewards of one sort or another should not be used frequently or excessively in reinforcing behaviour(s) (Bierhoff, 2005). A more effective reinforcer of prosocial behaviour

is positively associated with the socialisation process in which the act of helping is viewed as socially desirable (Kenrick, Baumann & Cialdini, 1979).

In contrast to behaviourism, social learning theorists (e.g. Bandura, 1977) posit that people learn from one another through observation, imitation and modelling. This approach or theory suggests that people learn not only by being rewarded or punished as suggested in the behaviourist approach, but also by observing somebody else being rewarded or punished. Consistent with Social Learning Theory, Williamson, Donohue and Tully (2013) reported that two-year-old children who saw a video of an adult aiding a person in distress were inclined toward imitating and implementing the prosocial behaviour in response to their parents' physical distress. Williamson *et al.* (2013) suggested that children in this age category will model adult behaviours and are capable of reproducing associated prosocial behaviours in social interactions and within appropriate circumstances. Somogyi and Esseily (2014) reported mimicking behaviour among 16- month- old infants following their exposure to an experimenter's play and demonstration on using a tool. In turn, Kolb and Weede (2001) reported an increase in prosocial skills among pre-kindergarteners following their participation in cooperating learning lessons delivered through teacher modelling. The modelling of prosocial behaviour may also be symbolic in the form of exposure to television and film (Liebert, Sprafkin &Poulos, 1975). For example, Watt Jr., Welch and Shea (1977) reported, with college students, a positive relationship between the prosocial content of television programs and prosocial behaviours.

Social learning suggests the capacity to cognitively engage the perspective of another. An observation and modelling of behaviour necessarily requires a level of cognitive processing, including the capacity to perceive, recall, interpret and evaluate (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). These processes provide a framework to understand others-perspective-taking (Froming *et al.,* 1998), moral reasoning and the acceptance of (Conway &Peetz, 2012), decision-making related to the implementation of intervention in an event, and, memory and exposure to past experiences (Gino & Desai, 2012). Advanced and functional cognitions enable a capacity to accurately assess cues related to another's distress, bolster prosocial emotions such as sympathy and empathy and directly lead to the initiation of a prosocial act (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). The prediction of such acts is based upon the ability to correctly access stored information which contains life scripts from previous related encounters consistent with the characteristics of the person and event.

Within the domain of cognitive determinants, Crick and Dodge (1994) posit a Social Information Processing model to better understand prosocial behaviour. They formulate a step-by-step guide incorporating an evaluation of cues to decision-making in terms of how to react toward a particular situation. A social dilemma is interpreted on the basis of past memories (schemata) interplaying with the

characteristics of the current event. These memories, combined with favourable scripts gathered from direct experience and observation, inform an individual's behaviour in response to the current event. However, information processing is problematized when people overlook current social cues that might be different from previous cues. An application of this model to prosocial behaviour is found in numerous studies explaining the impacts of prosocial media on children (e.g., Calvert & Kotter, 2003; Wiegman, Kuttschreuter & Baarda, 1992).

Social Cognitive Theory is a useful framework to explain human behaviour within event schema. People comprehend behaviours and events based on their current knowledge. Organizing current knowledge as a framework for future understanding are functions of schema (Kumar, 2010). For example, children aged two years or more, on repeated exposure to social events, begin to formulate their own life scripts regarding social events (Damon, Lerner & Eisenberg, 2006). These observations, memories, exposures and life scripts then become their representation and mental framework of the events and in turn build expectations and understanding of how those events should occur in the future. With aging and an associated greater exposure to events and behaviours, life scripts become more complex. For example, parenting, memories of related behaviour, trauma exposure and past moral deeds help in forming event schema related to help-seeking events.

## CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN HELPING BEHAVIOUR

Culture and what it constitutes has been much discussed but not clarified. It is, as with other concepts such as socio-economic status, nebulous and therefore open to variability in interpretation. Aspects of culture impact powerfully on the form and frequency of helping behaviour. Observed differences and similarities in social-psychological phenomena are significantly related to the environmental causes evident and enacted with culture. At the national level, however, there is a relatively clear distinction between two types of culture: collective and individualist. Hofstede (1980) investigated this distinction in his use of data from forty countries to derive value dimensions which vary according to culture. However, the relationship between Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions and basic psychological processes is not fully confirmed. In his research on the dichotomy of individualism-collectivism, considerable attention has been focused on the crucial differences of each cultural dimension, such as independence vs interdependence (e.g., decision-making, life satisfaction). However, it is most controversial when it comes to the question of whether or not persons with individualism values free from collectivism values, or whether majority people, if not each person in given culture, share specific cultural traits (e.g., urban dweller vs country folks). Despite the substantial amount of sampling used in Hofstede's study, there is still a great deal of ambiguity in the generalizability to other population as the participants were predominantly male who had marketing background (Smith & Bond, 1998). The individualism-

collectivism dimension bring some broad cultural concepts which arouse more curiosity as to what constitutes the traits specific to the constructs. Others, particularly within cultural psychology, have offered alternative models. For example, Triandis (1996) specifically examined cultural syndromes and how they were characterised within various cultures. These cultural syndromes include, cultural complexity (interdependent culture tends to be more complex as the individual is subjugated to the collective needs and this is especially complicated in the larger population which might consist of layers of sub-cultures compared to independent culture in which the individual has freedom in action and is aloof from collective responsibility) individualism, collectivism, tightness (the degree to which the individual feels responsible in following societal norms), active-passive (the extent to which the culture values elements that allow individuals to have great control of their independent elements (i.e., achievement, success, action) rather than dependent elements (e.g. cooperation and hierarchical-based decision), honour (perceived threat to one's own cultural values and norms should be firmly challenged) and vertical/horizontal relationship (the social behaviour of vertical society tends to be submissive to the authorities, but horizontal society favours equality and freedom in actions). The dimensions which stand out amongst all others are individualism and collectivism.

Individualism is characterised by a great emphasis on personal freedom and achievement. Individualist cultures highlight distinct properties of the individual which makes them unique. This uniqueness is reflected in personal achievement and success. In contrast, collectivism highlights the individual as a social being embedded within an interrelated and interdependent group of people. Hofstede (2011) further conceptualised individualism as '…cultures in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family' (p. 11). Hofstede illustrated the difference in conceptualising collectivism as '…cultures in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents) that continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty, and oppose other in-groups' (pp. 11).

Individualist cultures emphasise elements that make a person stand out from the other and are expressed as pride in personal accomplishment (Taylor, 1989), personal freedom (Veenhoven, 1999), and autonomy (Inglehart & Oyserman, 2004). In contrast, collectivist cultures emphasise group interests, shared responsibility and obedience (Triandis, 1994; Oyserman, Sakamoto & Lauffer, 1998; Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 2001).

While considerable research in individualism-collectivism has investigated dispositional characteristics and their influence to the likelihood and motivation of helping, the application of existence helping models and theories on these elements is typically overlooked. Individualist help others when such behaviour provide a

more personal reward at a lesser cost. The effect of helping may bring positive personal feelings such as heroic and achievement, rather than collectivist who is drawn to help because of a much more collective feelings sensed afterwards (e.g., obedience to group norms and interdependence). Likewise, individualist are less likely to experience guilt (cost of not helping) toward the victim and other bystanders than collectivist, hence, the in(action) is more autonomously generated.

An essential motive for collectivist cultures is that individuals may be impelled to reduce the discomfort feelings experienced when witnessing the suffering of other, which is usually aggravated with the presence of other bystanders, and much of the helping behaviour is consistent with personal goal to lessen the guilt and shame in public due to ignorance. In this instance, collectivist individuals have more anxiety than individualist over neglecting a needy, not only feeling guilty of not helping, but also feeling shame at not fulfilling other bystander's expectation to carry out the responsibility of onlooker. To get rid of this immense anxiety and assure the public's approval and liking, the collectivist individual opts to reduce the suffering of another person, a motive of helping that is well encapsulated by negative-state relief model.

Collectivism and individualism are characterised differently when considering helping behaviour. Socialisation and parenting characteristics are consistent with the cultural and social characteristics of collectivism and individualism. Parental socialisation strategies and practices within a collectivist society teach and reinforce a child's dispositional characteristics consistent with altruistic tendencies (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). Whiting and Whiting (1975) and Stewart and McBride-Chang (2000) identified two potentially important factors related to the 'enculturation' of helping behaviour in children among individualistic and collectivistic societies. These include parenting techniques and conformity to cultural traditions. These techniques and traditions enable the transmission of prosocial values from the older generation to the younger with an emphasis on personal responsibility in consideration of others. Prosocial behaviours among children in collectivist cultures become more enculturated compared to children raised in individualist and industrialist societies. For example, children in an Israeli Kibbutz were exposed to a socialisation strategy which emphasised interdependence, obedience and responsibility to others (Nadler, 1986).

The dynamics of parenting techniques and socialisation in collectivist society has potentially improved collectivist's 'other-focus' emotions, leading to the feeling of empathy. In addition to these collectivist parenting traditions, the cultural values which prioritising other's emotions and need above their own could also heighten collectivist's emotional engagement. Studies on the relationship between empathy and altruism have shown that prosocial behaviour depends most crucially on the increased empathic concern, that is, the ability to take the victim's perspective (Sassenrath, Pfattheicher & Keller, 2017; Sibicky, Schroeder & Dovidio, 1995).

Therefore, it is important to note that there has been quite a relevant relationship among these three constructs, empathy-collectivism-altruism. In light of *empathy-altruism hypothesis,* helping behaviour among collectivists is partly due to the experience of strong empathetic emotions and concern toward a needy, which is rooted in their parenting values, socialisation and cultural tradition.

The relationship of culture and helping behaviour can be objectively determined in how frequently behaviours occur and which form of helping behaviour is enacted in different populations (Hill, 2001). These differences have been explained by diverse aspects of subjective and environmental culture and their specific characteristics which illustrate, albeit not exhaustively, differences and similarities in the rate of helping (Levine, Martinez, Brase & Sorenson, 1994), motives underlying helping (Levine, Norenzayan & Philbrick, 2001; Levine, 2003), perceived urgency of the need for help (Miller, Bersoff & Harwood, 1990) and levels of helpful traits (Realo & Luik, 2002). Generally, the findings from these studies suggest that cultural values and norms are associated with regional variability in helping behaviour.

Several cross-cultural studies have examined the impact of different societal values and norms on helping responses among adults (Levine, Norenzayan & Philbrick, 2001; Levine, 2003; Miller, Bersoff & Harwood, 1990). Others have identified emotional levels and differences that explain prosocial behaviours including trust (e.g., Irwin, 2009) and empathy (e.g., Miller, Kozu & Davis, 2001). In addition, researchers have tended to focus on understanding cultural norms and values such as compassionate love (Vaughan, Eisenberg, French, Purwono, Suryanti & Pidada, 2009) and interpersonal responsibilities (Miller, Bersoff & Harwood, 1990).

Religiosity also plays a significant role in explaining the act of helping, particularly since related beliefs, attitude and emotions are directly associated with prosocial behaviour. Helpfulness varies according to the degree of religiousness, particularly if believers have the freedom to choose which religion they embrace (Stavrova & Siegers, 2014). For example, religious pro-sociality dictates that the giving of aid should be equally allocated to the stigmatised and 'normal' person (Wardhaugh, 2009).

Within individualist culture, the 'autonomous' and 'discrete' self (Sommers, 2012) directly influences the decision to act. By contrast, the collectivist notion suggests that individual boundaries permeate through others and that social context is an important consideration in explaining the individual's behaviour and/or predicament (Lee, Hallahan & Herzog, 1996).

The tendency to explain the behaviour of others as the outcome of their personalities occurs across cultures. However, the intention to act to help varies according to the cultural norm (Cardwell & Flanagan, 2005). For individualistic cultures, individuals viewed as more personally responsible for an event or circumstance are less likely to help, compared to persons in collectivistic cultures.

Duclos and Barasch (2014) focussed on independent and interdependent self-construal on prosocial behaviour of American and Chinese people. They found that people with stronger independent orientations are as likely to act benevolently toward a member of the in-group as they would toward a member of the out-group. In contrast, the interdependently orientated person is inclined to bolster prosocial attitudes and practices toward a member of the in-group rather than toward a member of the out-group. Cultural values prescribe who deserves help and hence independents consider help-giving to the others in need regardless of group membership due to their 'lesser propensity to see themselves contextually (i.e., in relation to others)'. As people from embedded cultures are concerned about their responsibility toward extended members of the same social group, the same social norm is not extended to strangers and outsiders (Knafo, Schwartz & Levine, 2009).

In-group membership is of particular interest to a consideration of helping in a collectivist environment. Evaluations of who deserves assistance vary by cultural context. For example, Feldman (1968) suggested that rate of helping varies between a person categorised as individualist a person categorised as collectivist. Levine, Norenzayan and Philbrick (2001) reported data on helping strangers in non-serious situations from 23 urbanised cities around the world, including Rio de Janeiro, San Jose, New York and Kuala Lumpur. They found considerably lower levels of helping in the cities where there were high levels of economic productivity, pace of walking, and individualism.

Individualist and collectivist norms frame help-giving behaviour. People associate the act of asking for help with personal incompetency (Meyer, 1982) and inferiority (Sandoval & Lee, 2006). Seeking help has negative connotations in individualist cultures relative to collectivist cultures since the former emphasises self-sufficiency, competence and independence (Oyserman & Lee, 2008). While many have examined the relationship between collectivistic values and prosocial tendencies (i.e, Kogut, Slovic & Västfjäll, 2015; Lampridis & Papastylianou, 2014; Roberts, 2005), the general view is that the emphasis on interdependence and collective responsibility in a collective society suggests that seeking help is more common and normal (Sandoval & Lee, 2006).

Collectivist and Individualist societies vary in their characteristics of prosocial behaviour in terms of the psychological self (Kagitcibasi, 1997), self and group interdependence and connectedness (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), autonomy (Gagné, 2003) and moral reasoning (Miller, Kozu & Davis, 2001). These cultural variations affect the likelihood of and how persons behave in different contexts within different cultures in their response to an emergency. For example, persons from collectivist societies, while exhibiting lower degrees of trust toward strangers, still readily engage in prosocial behaviours (Yamagishi, Cook, & Watabe, 1998; Yamagishi, 1988a).

Individualism-Collectivism constitutes differences in self-orientation in which persons within an individualist society have clear boundaries and are separated from others (Kagitcibasi, 1997). Individualist values affect self-orientation, independence, self-reliance, autonomy and self-direction and these influence cognitive, emotional, behavioural and motivational aspects of behaviour (Schwartz, 1992). In contrast, collectivist society values self-conformity, tradition, benevolence, interdependence and connectedness (Schwartz, 1992). Persons in collectivist cultures emphasise the interests of the other. Consistent with their cultural values, individuals in individualist societies internally attribute feelings, thoughts and behaviours (Miller *et al.,* 2001). Conversely, individuals in collectivist societies believe that help is given out of social rules and responsibilities which are external to the individual (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Robust values of connectedness and interdependence in collectivist societies are directly associated with higher levels of empathetic sensitivity (Miller *et al.,* 2001). These values correlate positively with prosocial behaviour, and persons from collectivist culture may tend toward being more helpful. For instance, American Indians as members of a collectivist culture are more likely than White Americans to engage in more prosocial behaviour involving minor assistance with a close friend or stranger (Miller *et al.,* 2001).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Investigations in prosocial behaviour continue to be relevant and important in contemporary society. This research focuses on event schema as stored information on what is expected and occurring in a given help-seeking event (Kumar, 2010). Schema predicts many forms of prosociality (Froming, Nasby & McManus, 1998). However, event schema related to prosocial behaviour has not been examined in a wide variety of different sociocultural contexts and instead has been largely limited to investigations within western individualist cultural contexts. This research investigates the role of event schema in shaping prosocial acts within an individualist culture, Australia, and a collectivist culture, Malaysia. Specifically, this study explores the influence of community context on prosocial behaviour. The goal is to explore cognitive processes among Australians and Malaysians when each is confronted by a help-seeking event. The study attends to the following research questions:

1. How persons of Australian and Malaysian birth and place of residence interpret the experience of a help-seeking event?

2. How persons of Australian and Malaysian birth and place of residence perceive helping and not helping?

3. What are the differences in event schema of persons of Australian and Malaysian birth and place of residence when perceiving and interpreting a help-seeking event?

**METHOD**

**Participants**

The participants in this study were carefully selected to ensure representative and comparable cultural groups across age, gender, marital status, and family structure. Of the twenty-four participants, 16 were born and resident Malaysians (8 females; 8 males) and 8 were born and resident Australians (4 females; 4 males). Participants born and raised in Australia were aged between twenty to fifty years and defined as Anglo-Australian. Participants born and raised in Malaysia were in a comparative age group and were defined as Malay.

Malay participants were recruited from university students attending various public and private universities and from staff-members working within diverse government bodies. Government agencies were a valuable recruiting resource given the availability of multi-ethnic government staff employed within a range of low-rank positions to top management offices.

Australian participants were recruited from students attending a university in Melbourne, Australia. Potential Australian participants were initially alerted to the study by an advertisement pinned on notice boards around the university campus and on-line via the university Web-site (refer to the appendix for advertising materials). In addition, the researcher sent a recruitment letter via email to all students for which contact lists were available and accessible. The advertisements were the first point-of-contact and included the researcher's mobile number and e-mail address. Also included for the prospective participant was a 'plain language' information sheet with general details on the project and on how it was to be conducted. Prospective participants indicated their willingness to participate through a 'return' e-mail. Subsequent interviews between the researcher and participant were conducted in a private room located on the university campus.

The recruitment process for participants in Australia was repeated in recruiting participants from within Malaysia. In addition, consistent with the processes undertaken with the Australian participants, interviews were conducted in private rooms located on the university campus. In some cases with the participants from within Malaysia, interviews were also conducted in their homes.

In all cases, the researcher attempted to best accommodate the participant's needs and fully explained in plain language terms the objectives of the study, along with an explanation of risks and safeguards associated with the procedures. Participation in the study was voluntary with the freedom to withdraw at any time or stage of the process. As part of the consent process, participants were also informed that there involvement and subsequent interview data would remain confidential i.e., through the use of pseudonyms. The data, in line with university processes and in order to further ensure participant confidentiality, is retained in a secure environment under the care and control of the principal investigator and

research supervisor. The audiotaped interviews, transcriptions and associated hardcopy documents are restricted in access to the researchers only.

**Measures**

Seven of interview vignettes, matched by gender, were created based on the existing body of literature. The vignettes are as follows:

1. On the way to an appointment with your doctor you see a middle-aged man wearing casual attire who seems restless and puzzled. When seeing you, he approaches you explaining that he has to make a phone call to his wife but he left his mobile at home. He requests the use of your mobile to ring his wife to inform her of his whereabouts.

2. On you crossing a busy road, you see a blind sixty year old man balancing on a walking stick waiting at the traffic light on the opposite side of the road. You notice that there is no bleeping noise to tell blind people to cross the road at the traffic light.

3. Driving on a quiet street on your way back home from work, you come across a young husband and wife stopped along the roadside attending to a problem with their car. You can see the hazard light has been turned on and the front hood has been lifted up. You also notice that the husband is trying to make a phone call while the wife restlessly standing beside him. Then, you're aware that you are the only one who is passing by the road at the moment.

4. You hear a man loudly crying and surrounded by a crowd of onlookers. As you approaching the crowd, you see a middle-aged man lying on the ground and unable to get up due to a deal of blood loss resulting from an injury to his legs. Most of the crowd turns their head towards the man, showing some curiosity as they hurried along, while some others appear to have conversation about the situation. One man bends down to calm him.

5. On a rush hour tram/train/bus, you see a casually attired passenger clench his fist and collapse onto the floor with his eyes squeezed shut as a result of drunkenness, but the train continues on.

6. A slovenly and dirty homeless ma n holding an empty can out approaches your vehicle begging for some money to buy his food.

7. While you are sunbathing on the beach, you see an eight year old boy struggling to stay above the water, splashing and unable to swim to safety. The boy while thrashing his arms is unable to call for help. His body position is vertical in the water; the body is very low in the water with the mouth just above the surface. The victim goes up and down in the water as he pushes and tries to get air. The boy is drowning in the sea whereas

you despite not being able to swim are incidentally caught up in the situation.

The vignette is in the form of a series of hypothetical scenarios constructed to serve as the principal source of attention in engaging with the research question which in turn counts to its internal validity (Gould, 1996). The hypothetical scenarios were designed to identify participant's pattern of interpretation to characters, contexts and conditions. The construction of the vignettes was in large part informed by research findings and associated literature (Carlson, 1996) and personal experience (Spratt, 2001). The process of designing a vignette drew on the existing body of cross cultural literature and associated research findings in helping behaviour.

Each vignette was presented verbally to the participant accompanied by a series of points of conversations, including broad questions. Questions were constructed to engage the participant in a broader conversation. As such, responses were allowed to flow and were not restricted strictly to the question at hand. Questions included the following:

(1) What comes to your mind in this situation?

(2) What do you feel in facing this event?

(3) What makes you respond to this event as such?

(4) What are the costs of your helping/non-helping action?

(5) What type of different situation or social circumstances in this event that you think would change your decision to help/not help?

(6) How do you think people in your society would react to this event?

(7) Do you have any other similar experience?

(8) What has you learned/experienced that allow you to see this particular event as such?

**Procedure of Data Collection**

The data collection process involved participation in face-to-face, unstructured, in-depth conversational interviews (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998). Participants were asked to respond to a series of situational imageries of help-seeking events, in particular emergency situations, framed and presented as oral vignettes. The interview focused on exploring participant perceptions of prosocial behaviour in each help-seeking context. For each vignette, participant opinions on several follow-up questions were explored. The 24 participants (8 Australians and 16 Malaysians matched by age, gender and education.) provided in-depth data about the meanings and self-perceptions they held about personal and societal helping behaviour.

A great deal of attention was devoted to the use of everyday language as a critical approach in engaging in the conversational interview. Hence, a resident

Australian was recruited as a research assistant to interview participants from within Australia. The research assistant was an honours student in psychology with extensive experience in the clinical setting. Among the research assistant's qualifications were invaluable personal experience in supporting personal recovery and well-being through the provision of personalised support services for clients and their families and the skill in developing a trusting relationship. The qualifications and associated personal characteristics were an excellent match with the requirements of engaging in a conversational interview. The research assistant attended and completed a brief training session with the researcher which involved the development of experience with the topic and use of guided questions and or points of conversation The research assistant also engaged with the researcher in post interview meetings to review the conversation process and determine the extent to which the interview generated information consistent with the topic under investigation.

The conversational interviews centred on participant responses to a set of vignettes. Interview guides i.e., points of conversation, were developed with the assistance of the Chief Investigator and Associate Investigator. The Chief Investigator has over 20 years of experience as a methodologist (Qualitative and Quantitative) and researcher in Social Psychology. The vignettes were developed by the researcher, in partnership with the chief investigator and associate investigator, as '…stories about individuals and situations which makes reference to important points in the study of perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes' (Hughes, 1998, p. 381). Each vignette emphasised character and context in defining an event. The vignettes although detailed were left with 'holes' constructed as incomplete anecdotes in order to encourage participants to fill in blanks and spaces with their own pattern of description of characters and contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Participants were asked a series of questions by the researcher informing a broader conversation in response to a set of vignettes. Each vignette illustrated a person engaged in an event ranging from personally non-serious to a personally threatening high-cost emergency. The questions revolved around reactions to and perceptions of the event as illustrated in each of the vignettes. The questions and subsequent conversation are structured in order to elicit a person's reaction and perception of the event based on their culturally ascribed values and morals. The responses to the events as illustrated in the vignettes are expected to be reasonably consistent within a cultural group i.e., Malaysian-Eastern, but differ across cultural groups i.e., Malaysian-Eastern in contrast to Australian-Western.

Participants' perception of characters, contexts and circumstances in relation to helping behaviour were examined. A further question focused on respondent's opinion of the third person (community) response to the scenario, *How do you think people in your society would react to this event?* The interview was completed with a series of questions accessing participant's thoughts on socialization agents

such as parents, peers and the social/mass media and their relationship to the regulation of prosocial values.

The questions and subsequent conversation are structured in order to elicit the participants' perception of and reaction to the event, based on their culturally ascribed values and morals. The responses to the events were expected to be reasonably consistent within a cultural group. i.e., Malaysian-Eastern, but differ across cultural groups i.e., Malaysian-Eastern in contrast to Australian-Western. Participants' perceptions of each help-seeking scenario and response to the follow-up questions were recorded with their permission. The lesser number of Australian participants was based on the contextual detail gathered from each of the interviews which averaged three hours in length. The average length of interviews of the Malaysian participants was ninety-minutes. In both instances the number of participants, length of interviews, quality and quantity of data generally satisfied the basic conditions consistent with achieving data saturation (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006; Dibley, 2011). The other important factor associated with achieving data saturation is at the stage of data analysis in which there is no evidence to support additional coding and development of new themes (Guest et al., 2006).

In order to assess translation quality and accuracy, the Malay interviews were transcribed and translated into English and then back-translated into Malay. The final version of English translated written transcripts was used as raw data for further analysis.

## Phenomenology as a Research Methodology

Phenomenology is a '...philosophical paradigm for conducting qualitative research that emphasizes the focus on people's subjective experiences and interpretations of the world' (Rubin & Babbie, 2011, p. 218) .It engages a first-person 'lifeworld' embedded within an immense and evocative experience (Banister, Bunn, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 2011). The phenomenologist examines the subjective experience of participants without adding or reducing variables to fit in the psychological essence of the phenomenon (Smith, 2008). The experience is preserved as close as it is in the original context as the approach extracts psychological meanings from intact individual interpretations of the world.

The interpretive interactionist within phenomenology (Denzin, 2001) seeks to explore the expression of human life experience and makes it available to the reader. Dependent upon the nature of the research question, phenomenology is widely used as it examines one's reflections of the events in their life. The events in and of themselves may on the one hand seem mundane and boring (i.e., the everyday events of an everyday life) while on the other hand will be major epiphanies (i.e., the life altering effect of the loss of a loved one). In any case one is in the continual process of interpreting and making sense of a sometimes complex series of social interactions as a part of their not always normal everyday lives.

Perhaps the most popular method used in organising, analysing and reporting on phenomenological psychology data is Smith and Osborn's (2003) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA assumes an idiographic focus with an emphasis on how a person makes sense of their experience of a phenomenon within a specific context and point-of-time. In these circumstances it is best that the researcher avoid having a firm and solid view of the phenomena as this might blur the process of 'seeing' the reality of everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1996). The researcher instead needs to be aware of a fluid 'reality' and 'knowledge' and how these might influence the way they interpret a person's interaction with an event. Over time, one is able to immerse themselves in an other's lived reality and determine 'classificatory systems of understanding that people develop as a consequence of their history of interaction' (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). The phenomenologist nonetheless uses bracketing to purposefully avoid prejudgments and preconceived ideas of what is real. The essence of the phenomenologists approach is to consider interpreting an event as a clean slate, not encumbered by theory and prior knowledge (Denzin, 2001).This interpretative phenomenological approach is concerned with the interpretation of a person's interpretation of an event and associated experience. It is a 'double-hermeneutic' which to be truly effective as a form of investigation requires a high degree of empathy between the researcher and researched. The researcher is most effective in practice when within an interaction with the researched there is the capacity to engage in shared meanings and expectations. This capacity to engage in shared practices does not deny the very real and inevitable probability the one in contrast to another will interpret an event differently even though similar in context. One of the keys to the effective use of the phenomenological approach is to identify similarities and differences in a shared interpretation of an event from the perspective of direct and indirect experience. The researcher's lived experience combined with an attempt to capture subjective phenomena from research subjects collectively underpins the characteristics of a research question.

The present study seeks to explore different meanings and personal experiences associated with helping behaviour. The research interprets the existential experience and taken-for-granted meanings embedded in day-to-day interactions of persons as they travel through their journey in life. It involves collecting and interpreting existential meaningful experience through the construction of self-story. Schemata within a particular culture are identified through language used to symbolize helping acts during a particular event. This research reflects upon and investigates the historical, structural, emotional, knowledge-base and ideological roots of the culture. In analysing an interpretative repertoire, this study seeks to critically interpret through thick description the context, emotions and motives underlying the act to help or not help. The study investigates the extent to which one give meanings to their past help-seeking and help-giving experiences and how these views reflect upon their execution of such behaviour as it continuous over time and across situations.

**Narrative Analysis**

The conversational interview (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998) examines data derived from largely semi-structured conversational interviews based on a two-way process which '...facilitates rapport/empathy, allows a greater flexibility of coverage and enables the interviewer to enter novel areas, and [it] tends to produce richer data' (Smith, 1995, p. 12). Consistent with the conversational technique, interview questions are largely unstructured and open-ended. The researcher presents detailed vignettes to the participants and draws the information out from the participant in an informal conversation, rather than adhering to a structured format of interview questions.

The conversational interview was used to explore interviewees' reaction to and interpretation of deciding to intervene or not intervene in another's experience of a life event. The interview fits well within this investigation by creating a space in which 'individual respondents define the world in unique ways' (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). This technique further enables 'the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent and to new ideas on the topic' (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). The reciprocal and reflexive nature of this approach also requires a context within which the interviewer is comfortable and secure. The technique is nonetheless challenging as a conversation requires significant listening skills, full engagement in every moment of conversation and depends on the interviewer's capacity to pick up unforeseen cues in order to inform subsequent conversation and questioning (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996).

Conversational interview questions are more engaging and allow for more accurate responses as the words chosen are tailored to the interviewees' understanding of the subject matter without leading them to a unidirectional answer (Conrad & Schober, 2000). Another advantage of the conversational interview is that it prompts interviewees to reflect upon the questions in a much more comfortable atmosphere (Widdowson, 2010). A relaxed atmosphere facilitates an interviewee to answer to the interviewer's queries in a coherent and consistent manner without being disturbed by structured and planned script questionnaire interviews (Holmes, 2001). Conversational interview techniques also potentially generate rich and intricate data that enable new emerging themes and categories to surface, because the techniques allow 'flexibility, spontaneity, and responsiveness to individual differences and situational changes. Questions can be personalized to deepen communication with the person being interviewed and to make use of the immediate surroundings and situations to increase the concreteness and immediacy of the interview questions' (Patton, p. 343, 2002).

Consistent with the conversational technique, interview questions were largely unstructured and open-ended. The interviews were analysed using an interpretive interactionist approach. The approach focuses on making the lived experience of

participants vivid for the reader. As a method it involves researchers' active engagement with participants and acknowledges that understanding is constructed and that multiple realities exist (Banister, *et al.,* 1994). Personal accounts are valued and emergent issues within the accounts are explored. These accounts are analysed and themes are drawn out to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Banister *et al.,* 1994). Through this process the qualitative researcher discloses his or her own values, assumptions and experiences to avoid bias and also to allow readers to interpret the analysis and consider possible alternative interpretations (Willig, 2008).

The interpretive phenomenological approach inherently acknowledges itself as an interpretation of another's experience. Analysis of audio recorded interview transcripts was completed in accordance with a qualitative method of analysis as outlined by Willig (2008). Each participant's transcript is initially analysed individually using the following steps: (i) Read interview transcript several times and make notes regarding initial thoughts and observations, (ii) Identify and label conceptual themes, (iii) Introduce structure into the analysis by clustering concepts together and identifying hierarchical relationships, (iv) Produce a summary table of the clustered themes using participant quotations as illustrations of the theme. Following this process, themes are integrated across all transcripts to identify shared themes and hierarchical relationships.

A strategy of reflexivity is employed which involves a process of continual self-reflection for the researcher to understand how his or her own assumptions and biases may influence his or her interactions with participants and interpretation of the data. Reflexivity is a widely acknowledged strategy within qualitative enquiry which helps to ensure that the research accurately portrays the meanings intended by participants rather than a meaning imposed by the researcher (Fischer, 2005; Willig, 2008).

### Employing Self-Reflexivity in the Research Process

Self-reflexivity involves one's beliefs, experiences and associated worldview. Perhaps more than at any other stage of the research process, these characteristics of self-reflexivity commonly play out in (1) the data collection phase; and, (2) the data interpretation/analysis phase.

The research question was driven by my interest in further exploring prosocial behaviour using a cross-cultural lens. Central to understanding the study is the need to incorporate associated culturally structural, historical and theoretical foundations. Participants were initially persons targeted from culturally diverse backgrounds. However, sourcing such participants did not lend itself readily to random sampling and consequently this process was replaced by convenience and snowball sampling. As a result, the dynamic between me as the interviewer and the interviewee brought about a different form of rapport building, openness, verbal and non-verbal understanding and trust. Extra effort and time needed to be, and was, devoted to building rapport and having the participant feel comfortable and willing

to express personal episodes and events which they seldom shared with others. The approach toward the building of rapport was different when recruiting and interviewing acquaintances. Prior to the interview 'social talk' was necessary to accommodate unsettled nerves and alleviate anxiety. The interview was undertaken in the form of a normal everyday interpersonal communication with the delivery and exchange of explicit and implicit messages. However, not all messages were clearly and/or effectively communicated. There is a difference between interviewing a friend and interviewing an acquaintance or stranger. When interviewing acquaintances it was easier to interpret and react to an emotion, hesitance and a pause. This capacity to interpret a response and or interaction was not as readily available in dealing with a stranger's gestures, facial expressions, paralanguage, posture, eye contact and or vocal tone. The latter involved a greater sensitivity toward misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the response and behaviour of the interviewee

A good interviewer stimulates respondents to comfortably engage in appropriate and relevant self-disclosure. This engagement is also promoted through appropriate body language and emotional facial expressions. Reflexivity in this process involves judgements and strategies in terms of verbal responses and physical cues. Understanding the explicit and implicit aspects of the interaction guides responses expressed at times as a paraphrase, searching for explanation in response to the vague comment. The moments of doubt and confusion are seized upon as points of opportunity for further clarification and an avenue toward entering that core of understanding unique to the interviewee.

The path of the interview revolves around an understanding of the assumptions of the research and how these relate and become meaningful within my interpretations of the interviewee's responses to the conversation points. Social constructionism lends itself to this approach, particularly in open-ended questions and associated conversations which allow for and promote the expression of one's own understandings and meanings. There is the absence of a 'right' or 'wrong' answer and or opinion. The interest and curiosity is in their stories and perspectives and not based on a researcher's personal opinions, social influences, values and beliefs. The reflexivity within the process involves creating a neutral atmosphere in which the interviewee feels comfortable in relating their stories. The interviewer is merely the conduit through which the respondent is directed subtly through the path of the conversation.

While the researcher initiates the study and has associated assumptions constructed within a personal value system, it is not their task to approve or disapprove of the participants' expressed beliefs and values. Of course, it is likely if not inevitable that the participant will hold significantly different and varied values in relation to their response to an event. Rather than viewing heterogeneous ideas and thoughts as inconsistent with the core of the study, they may instead constitute potent new knowledge and contribute to the research literature. This

study as such is not burdened by the shackles of theory and associated models of human behaviour. Rather, it is an exploratory study investigating first-person 'life-world' views embedded within personal experience. This life world experience is secured and intact and rests on a release of the restrictions represented within a predetermined theory and/or associated model of human behaviour. The interviewer therefore subtly directs the conversation in a way in which the interviewee is led to believe they are in control.

Phenomenologists are interested in exploring a person's subjective experience, and how one makes sense of their life. This life is embedded within the historical, structural, political, emotional, sociological and ideological roots of culture. It lends itself readily and necessarily to the notion of reflexivity. It is difficult if not impossible to interpret an interviewee's account of an event without reflecting almost subconsciously on one's personal ideology and the moral stance. This suggests that while one is able to reflect and interpret from the perspective of the other and embrace another's worldview, it is nonetheless reflected through a personal lens which is educationally informed and culturally ascribed. The collected data is revisited over time to ensure a sense of truthfulness and fairness in interpretation. In short, the research process in this type of study is not value-free and the good researcher is able to manoeuvre their values and morals within the values and morals of the participant in order to obtain a truthful account of the participant's view of the world.

Participants were recruited from Australia and Malaysia, respective representing individualist and collectivist dimensions of culture.

## PERSON SCHEMA
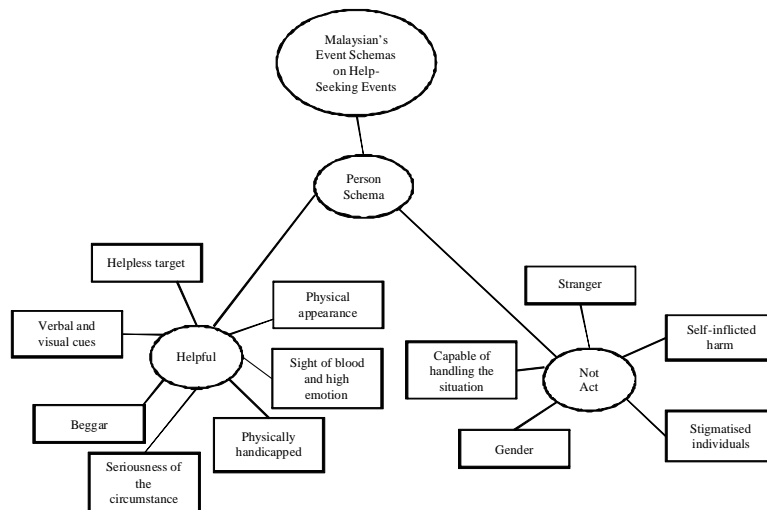


**Figure 1:** Malaysian's person schemas on help-seeking events.

**Helpfulness**

The responses to the vignette presented as 'low-cost' varied among the participants. Participant responses to the questions; 'What comes to your mind given this situation?' and 'How would you feel if you were in this situation?' exposed initial thoughts and expectations of the help-seeking event encompassing the target person, where the event took place and the sequence of events.

A person's response schema is a source of information used to validate and cross-check the perceived legitimacy of an event. In an event requiring a decision leaning toward an interpersonal intervention, the participants in general used their perception of the character of the helpless target as a strong source of information and cue to act. Participants generally carefully considered their perceptions of the motives of help-seeking strangers. However, other participants were more forthcoming and responded readily and emotionally '…he really needs help as he insists on giving his wife a call, informing her that something has happened to him. He doesn't know what else to do.'(Zai, Female). The reading of verbal and visual cues is particularly important when evaluating the legitimacy of an event:

> His reason of calling his wife would seem reasonable. If he says he is going to make the call elsewhere, I would be cautious; assuming that he might took the phone away. … Things like this happen all the time. I would give him the phone because of his solid reason which is calling his wife. (Jue, Female)

Helpless desperation is not only reflected in the perceived seriousness of the circumstance or in the heartfelt appeal of the victim. Inevitably and directly associated with the probability of getting help is the likeability of the helpless target. Circumstance and environment are nonetheless important. Although the majority of participants agreed that they would not help if the help-seeking event is situated within a secluded and private area, there is a system of prioritisation in interpreting the victim as desperate and having little chance of getting assistance, 'We would feel pity and there is a need to offer help. If we don't help them out, maybe there is no more car would be passing by.' (Abdullah, Male)

The sight of blood coupled with high emotion is a cue calling for an appropriate quick response, 'With a bleeding leg, crying her eyes out … definitely it means that she is in pain.' (Mamu, Male). An emotionally-charged event, even if acknowledged as a situation in which the target person requires help, may be met with confusion and uncertainty. In contrast, a clear connection between the target's condition and expressed feelings provide explicit situational cues enabling the respondent to be confident in the validity of the target's predicament and to act accordingly 'She is in real pain. Plus she is lying on the road, bloodied…Sympathy and the need to help.' (Harun, Male)

Material factors such as physical appearance along with an emotional expression by the target in part and often together effect a respondent's reaction

and intention to act to help. Most male respondents suggested that the motive behind the event is emotionally and behaviourally accessible through their interpretation of the target's physical appearance and body language:

> From the whole situation he looks genuinely anxious. If he has bad intentions, he would have thought in advance. Normally a thief would be more confident. But this guy really looks in trouble... If we want to help, it would be helpful if we observe the situation first... Look at his condition first. If we could see a bulge in his pants that looks like a shape of a hand phone, that means he is cheating. (Zack, Male)

The decision to engage in prosocial helping behaviour is based on an interpretation of a critical situation, strong situational cues, intense emotional expression, a perception of truth and body language. This interpretation of situations, cues, emotions and body language lead to decisions based on levels of doubt or certainty concerning engaging in pro-social behaviour. In some cases the decision to help is easily made:

> As a human, we know that if he's not in a dire need, he won't ask money from others. Because he's in financial distress, he needs help from us. Perhaps he wants to work but his body is too weak and maybe he doesn't have working experience that would help him to land a job. I feel pity and sympathy towards this kind of people, that's why I'd just give the money to him; consider the money as part of my donation. (Siti, Female)

The 'donation' to the beggar in this case is based on the participant's interpretation of a level of distress sufficient to elicit compassion. Unlike the 'beggar' scenario, in which the intention to act to help is compromised by the need to interpret a problematic in which one is not entirely sure of the need to help, concerns are consistently and completely validated when the respondent is confronted by the disabled, 'It is an obligation for us to help judging from his condition. It would be a different situation with an old man with eye sight who wants to cross the road because we'd feel that he would be alright.' (Jue, Female).

**The Decision to not Act**

While most participants in reaction to the event outlined in a vignette were likely to help, others were less inclined to help or decided not to help at all. The latter group simply opted to avoid helping strangers in the belief that the decision to help would disadvantage themselves and or the target:

> First thing that comes to my mind is he's a stranger... Firstly, I would think about my safety. From that point, I won't stop to help him because (thinking) I think he might lie to me, or perhaps want to rob me …. Even though Malaysia has been categorized as a safe country, this situation happens a lot in Penang and Kuala Lumpur. (Siti, Female)

The interpretation of an event and a decision to engage in prosocial behaviour is dependent upon the characteristics, views and beliefs of the participant. Adding to the variability in interpreting an event is that visual cues may distort awareness

and reasoning which inform the potential of an engaged prosocial behaviour. The strength of the tendency to support is lessened when the target is perceived as capable of dealing with their immediately surrounding circumstances and therefore not in need of help.

The participant reaction is also often compromised by one's gender:

> I would just continue with my journey because I'm a girl alone in this car. If I had my brother or a friend with me, that would be better. Plus … she has a phone [and] a husband, so she should be in good hands. The road is a shortcut, even though it is secluded, there would be other motorists using the road... If both of them are women, I would have asked a question. In this case there is guy, so I think it's OK for them. For ladies, they might have lost their way or stumped and I could call my brother to ask for a mechanic's number. To me, having a guy in situations like this is very helpful because we, women, can rely on him for help. If this situation happens when I'm with a male forced, I would have stopped. But as I am alone, I will never ever stop because of my safety. (Sue, Female)

The presence of the man in this circumstance presented a less conflicted context than would have been the case if the circumstance involved two women. When confronted with technical problems of this type, women within Malaysian culture are considered relatively inexperienced and therefore helpless. Engaging in a decision to not act and or not help when confronted by a person engaged in self-inflicted harm and/or discomfort, e.g., drunkenness, is also influenced by context, including religious affiliation. A prosocial intervention is less likely to occur in a situation in which the target is stereotypical of a less than socially accepted act and or identity:

> I would not help because he's drunk and he asks for it. It makes us think that the religion of Islam forbids us from drinking alcohol because of we could get drunk and we can see it in reality, therefore we could gauge that our religion's lessons are true. (Syib, Male)

In the Malaysian context and across the range of events, the decision to not help is informed by religious principles which view alcohol intoxication as abhorrent. The drunkard is considered a public nuisance whose mere presence brings discomfort to others. The stigma attached to this state corresponds with the decision not to act and the target in this instance is generally ignored. When the help-seeking event is considered a moral flaw, there is a consequent lack of commitment and questioning of legitimacy, e.g., when confronted by a beggar despite their obvious physical disability:

> I don't really tend to help beggars a lot because I've read an article about beggars' group or gang that acts like a beggar but are actually rich. *Majalah 3* once published about it and it really gave quite an impact on me. If he really is a beggar, know that the hardship wouldn't end by just begging. (Amjad, Female).

The symbolic representation of the 'beggar' is compromised and interpreted as illegitimate and suspicious.

## AFFECTIVE/EMOTIONAL SCHEMA
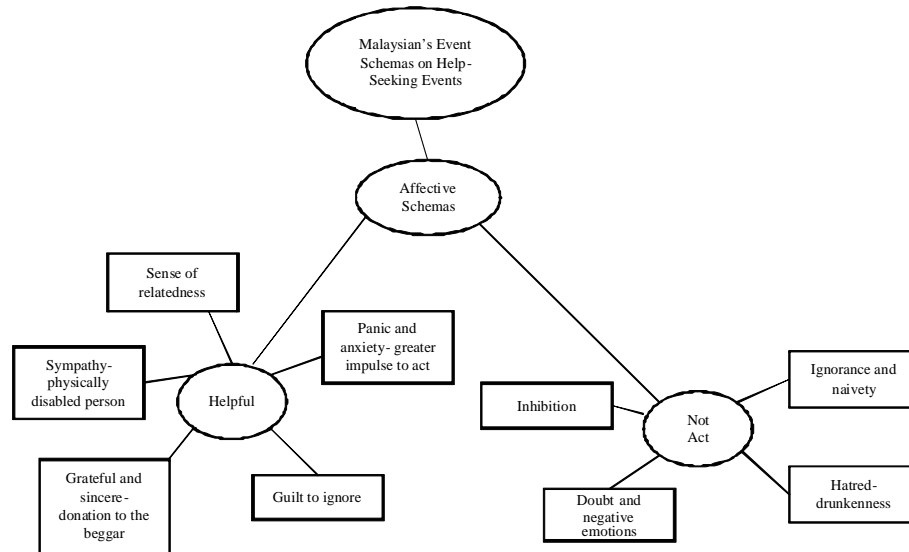


**Figure 2:** Malaysian's affective schemas on help-seeking events.

### Helpfulness

Affect is a major factor within one's cognitive representation of a help-seeking event. Those inclined to help emphasized positive and compassionate feelings. However, women in contrast to men were more empathetic and charitable when confronted by a help-seeking event. Prosocial behaviour and associated emotion and level of affect are also directly related to the type and characteristics of an event.

Various emotions are displayed by observers as they respond to a help-seeking event. The emotions experienced by the observer in their response are often dependent upon the event and overtly displayed within intentions to act and associated behaviours. Within this emotional connect is the assumption and perhaps necessity to engage with the target: 'If we were in his shoes where it is dark to go anywhere and there is no one to help us, we would feel sad. Being a blind man, we could tell his difficulties of wanting to go anywhere.'(Zack, Male).

The interpretation of risk and cost is particularly unveiled and enacted in the display of pity toward the people with disabilities. Sympathy in particular is a common emotion under these circumstances and consistent with religious and associated moral belief structures. Observing a person with a physical handicap grappling with the physical demands of their everyday lives elicits sympathy. Nonetheless, the extent or depth of feeling associated with the emotion is manifested

according to the perceived type and extent of disability, 'I would feel sympathy and sad because looking at the crying old woman. I would step in if I see that the man did not manage to calm the old woman down and I would try to soothe her using my own approach.' (Nor, Male). For example, the extent or depth of feelings of sympathy influences the practice of enacting helpful values across many events with someone who is less fortunate e.g., the beggar.

Helpfulness is also the result of being grateful for one's own state of being relative to the helpless person. There is an accompanying sense of gratitude coupled with a compulsion on the part of the more privileged to share their fortune with the less privileged. The sharing is viewed as an obligation and responsibility aligned directly with religious doctrines that enjoin giving in charity (*sadaqah*) to eradicate other's miserliness. The ways people situate themselves against others' miserliness influences their perceived need to help, 'Sad if we were to put ourselves in his shoes. I would feel blessed because we own a car, and with him being all dressed up in ragged and messy clothes like that. We should be thankful, and it is not wrong if we help this uncle who is in need of help.'(Nor, Male).

Some participants were sincere in giving donations and were not overly interested in knowing more of the circumstances underlying the need to beg:

> I pity him and would not hesitate to give him money. Even if he is playing me for a fool, that would be between him and God. But as a human, I would give and the money would at least help him buy rice. At least Malaysian Ringgit (MYR) 5.00 and not a ringgit or two. (Sue, Female)

The engagement in prosocial behaviour is driven by religious doctrine which eliminates aspects of doubt related to the characteristics of the target and instead primarily focuses on helping the less fortunate. However, the decision to act may also be framed within elements of guilt and ignorance:

> Maybe God sent him for us to do some good things. .I don't know that much. But if I don't help, the event will haunt me because I would start questioning myself why didn't I help him? Has he eaten? Who else would help him? If nobody gives him money, would he have any food to last for the night? But actually even though I gave him money it didn't make me happier or relieve, I just did it to rid myself of thinking about him. (Sue, Female)

When behaviours and or circumstance are more clear-cut in terms of perceived levels of seriousness, e.g., the drowning, a drive to help is more consistent and less subject to question or doubt. Instead, negative emotional responses such as 'panic' and 'anxiety' are directly associated with a greater impulse to act. The response to the vignette illustrating a high emergency elicits sudden alarm and in turn promotes a helping reaction. An initial sense of panic at a perceived crucial time associated with the saving of a life is often followed by the compulsion to help:

> I would be anxious, that the boy would drown. It is because the boy is already panting for air and I am concerned that people may not have enough time to save him and then he

> would drown. Other than anxious, I am terrified that the boy drowns. Then I would be calling out for someone to help the boy because I cannot swim and I have no experience in saving people. (Jue, Female)

Panic is also an important precursor in activating a spontaneous prosocial reaction:

> I would panic because I don't know what to do. I would think about the boy. If he drowns and sinks, we would never know where to go in order to save him. I would think of how I could help, I'd be edgy, so my first action is to search for people, screaming to notify people that a boy is drowning. (Ana, Female)

The contextual characteristics of an emergency elicits a strong sentiment and is the basis of a pattern of helping behaviour different to the behavioural intentions elicited in response to vignettes illustrating less problematic events.

### The Decision to not Act

There is a general inhibition among members of the Malaysian community to overtly display prosocial acts. This inhibition often results in a general reluctance to engage in an intention to act. In this instance, feelings of sympathy and concern are insufficient as motivations to act:

> There would be a tendency to help, even sympathy towards the old, blind man. However, I think it would not happen even though I would be worried whether the man would it to the other side of the road... Maybe because I feel shy or because I can see some people are already near him and they would probably help him. I feel shy when I want to do something good compared to doing bad things. When we do something out of the norm and it's good, we would feel embarrassed with other people's view on us. (Abdullah, Male)

The existence of doubt and negative emotions involving trepidation and reactions to disfigurements and or negative characteristics i.e., the beggar, along with the context in which the event takes place, directly impacts the interpretations and intentions related to the event. The characteristics of the accompanying audience also impact upon a person's rationale and capacity to analyse and react to an event. There is a tendency toward stereotypical assumptions associated with similar events. The cost-reward model is often enacted as participants measure their acknowledgement of safety and precious resources in contrast to naive and unrealistic helpful action, 'Possible crimes or scam, I just pass by and let it go, the feeling of guilt might be there, what I would do?' (Zol, Male). Ignorance or naivety related to one's knowledge of or reaction to an event led to experiences of guilt within hazy cues of desperation, 'I would just pass by because I would be thinking whether the situation of him needing help is for real or not ... Moreover, I am terrified just in case it is a syndicate or a scam.' (Ana, Female).

The response to the event illustrating a drunken target was clear-cut. Participants were less likely to help the inebriated man and instead were more likely to express a degree of hatred or scorn as drunkenness is considered one of the thirteen greater sins in Muslim religion. This level of scorn and hatred is further reinforced

throughout the Malay culture given that the vast majority of Malays in Malaysia are Muslim. Even though individual understandings and practices of Islam vary, there is the strong societal emphasis on and respect of the tenets and practices of Islam given that it is also Malaysia's dominant religious practice. However, this does not categorically suggest that Malays use religion as the basis for a negative interpretation and judgement of the drinking of alcohol by other races in Malaysia:

> I would just look at him because he is drunk. It would not occur to me to have any sympathy for him. I would watch him with empty eyes. No feelings. I would look around and if no one is helping out, then I would not. I would be less helpful if he is Malay as he is asking for it, knowing that drinking alcohol is a sin. In fact, he is not even injured, he just passes out ... You ask for it, so you get on own two feet even if you pass out or anything. I would feel like rage boiling inside of me if I see a Malay acting like this, if he is Chinese then that is a different story...I wouldn't care if he is Chinese or Indian, no one cares if he is drunk. (Jue, Female)

There is a general reluctance to help if the questionable behaviour of the target is considered self-inflicted.

## BEHAVIOURAL SCHEMA

Most participants talked about the framework of their roles, particularly enacted within reactions and their thoughts about individuals involved in the incidents. Given different circumstances, participants were asked to visualise themselves having two different behavioural reactions consisting of (i) engaging in various forms and degrees of helping or (ii) deciding to not intervene.
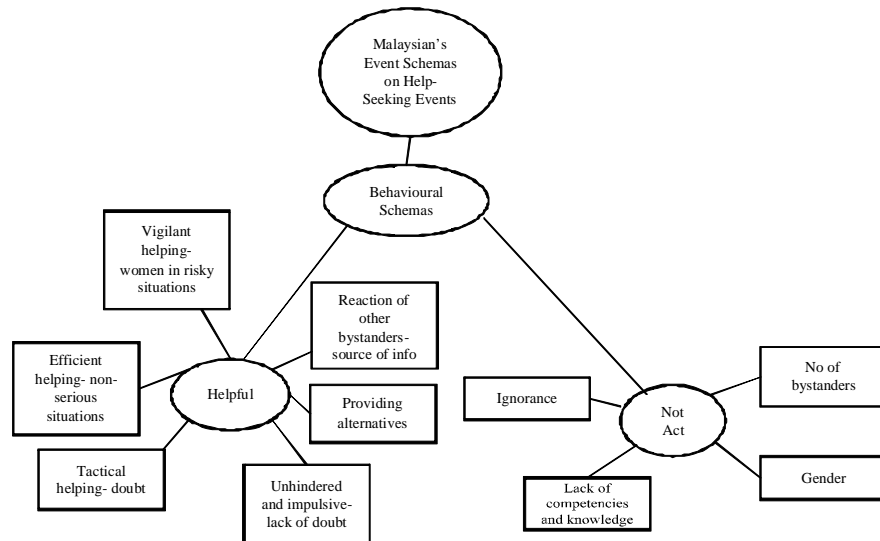


**Figure 3:**   Malaysian's behavioural schema on help-seeking events.

Male and female participants were anxious when assessing whether to assist in non-serious situations, particularly in circumstances which were interpreted as problematic and related to a victim's feeling of desperation. The balance of risks to costs predicted participants' motivation towards engaging in prosocial behaviour. In this sense, there were gender differences in the distribution of social power with female participants:

> I would… ask his name, his wife's number, and I'll do the calling, make it into the loudspeaker mode and ask him to talk out loud without giving him the phone. It's me being careful since he's a complete stranger. I'll be the one who is controlling the situation. (Sue, Female)

In addition, Malaysian women in contrast to men are generally more sympathetic in their reactions toward a help-seeking event. This tendency toward sympathy can at times compromise a woman's safety:

> I will be extra careful because there are similar scenarios like this these days that lead to robberies and scams, especially when it comes to women. When it comes to safety, most people these days tend to take things for granted because women especially, could be easily fooled out of sympathy. When we go through the news updated on TV and newspapers, there are so many cases where women were fooled because they were too sympathetic. (Sue, Female)

The awareness of the importance of being vigilant when offering help is directly associated with the need to carefully interpret social cues and thereby not compromise one's safety and/or the condition of the target person. Counterbalancing the importance of vigilance are the characteristics of Malay culture and the tenets of Islam which imbue a degree of status in engaging in prosocial behaviour as a matter of pride in being identified as a 'kind person', '…maybe I am the chosen one. The one that he sees first in order to ask for help.' (Amjad, Female)

Even in instances of non-threat or in any events in which the circumstances are clear-cut, the decision to engage in humane behaviour still needs to be considered diligently and with due care especially when dealing with unforeseen risks and difficulties. This approach is consistent across genders. Efficient enacting of prosocial behaviour is also important in non-serious situations where there is absence of the need of prompt and spontaneous prosocial actions:

> I would have so much sympathy for him when I look at his condition, but I would look around just in case there is someone who is willing to help the old man. If there is no one to help, only then I would cross over the road again, ask him where he is heading to, and if he wants to cross the road, I would help him. (Abdullah, Male)

When an event and associated reaction is considered a 'win' for helper and target, an intervention is provided readily and more comfortably. 'Tactical helping' or 'heedful helping' best illustrates this way of helping and still supports the needs of those in distress. This action allows the help-giver to exercise a degree of control over the situation. Tactical helping is rooted in the doubt that resides in the situation rather than in misinterpreting or misjudging the event. In this case, the enacting of a prosocial behaviour is still more likely than not:

> I must help because they need help but still I need to be careful because there could be danger on the road. I would be more encouraged to help if I see children on board, but if it's only the couple I have some doubts. The couple may have some bad intentions … When we go help them, we must make sure the car is secured first. Who knows there might be accomplices hiding in the bushes? (Harun, Male)

If there is a lack of a sense of doubt associated with the situation, the intention to act tends to be unhindered and impulsive, '…while the husband is making a call, the wife is looking restless, then most probably they need help. The best I could do is maybe to stop and ask.' (Zack, Male). However, generally the decision to help strangers is often difficult and with a range of choice among various prosocial behaviours. Besides giving direct or immediate help, the help-giver behaviour might centre on providing a series of alternatives to the target person, 'They're in trouble! It's not like we don't want to help but we will show them some alternatives on what to do and they will need to wait for it.' (Amjad, Female)

The reaction of an audience to an event also significantly influences a help-giver's decision making process when confronted with an event. For example, the decision to act is dependent upon the help-giver's view that a member or members of the audience might or should have responded to the needs of the target person:

> I would look and see what the commotion is about and I expect that help would have already arrived because of so many people in the crowd. To me it's important to see the setting. If it's at the highway, stopping is not an option. Massive traffic jams happened because people slowed down their cars and start to rubberneck to see the accident. But in this situation if I don't see any help being given to the lady, I would volunteer to send her to a hospital. I think I am the type who only jumps in to help when there is no other option available. (Abdullah, Male)

Help-givers determine their behaviours dependent upon the more or less accurate interpretation of the behaviours of bystanders.

While ambivalent and uncertain on how best to manage a given situation, help-givers were generally inclined to act immediately to help someone in need i.e., the drunkard. This could be due to a sense of duty, accountability and empathy. The prominent obstacle in enacting behaviour is the lack of knowledge and restricted past exposure to a person with specific characteristics. Being confronted by the unfamiliar is associated with worry and fear, leading to the act of 'avoidance of risk'. Indirectly helping others also enables the help-giver to avoid having to touch or talk to the victim:

> I would wait and see what other people would do. If nobody does anything, hence I would start by asking the drunkard whether he's ok or not. But I won't hold him because based on the stories I've seen on television, drunkards normally vomit when they are in this state. (Anis, Female)

Although negative states of emotion such as guilt, panic and the associated observation of perilous life-situations increase the likelihood of helping behaviour, the ultimate decision to help is still considered with due care and diligence.

**The Decision to not Act**

While taking actions towards those in need lies within the framework of responsibility and accountability, some people choose to provide minimal support or little help. This latter group is not averse to displaying themselves as less considerate, less kind and less generous. Personal competencies, knowledge, as well as skills and abilities aid or compromise a person's capacity to act. Skills and abilities are useful in effectively tackling a particular task. For example, technical and vocational skills used to repair a vehicle. The capacity to help by way of a skill set constitutes a powerful force in enabling one to view one's self as helpful. Of course, conversely, not having an appropriate skill set restricts one's capacity to help:

> My reason is firstly if it's their car that is problematic, I wouldn't be much of a help because I don't know anything about car engines ... deep down inside I do sympathise with their plight, I mean what if it happens to me? But seriously, if I don't have anything that could help them, I wouldn't stop. (Fahada, Female)

In contrast, circumstances in which the skills, knowledge, or lack thereof of the characteristics of the events influence one's intention to act, many would merely walk past and or ignore the fate of the person within an event, i.e., in the instance of the middle-aged woman lying on the ground. One of the factors driving the intention to not act centred upon the audiences or the number of onlookers perceived to be present at the incident. Under these circumstances there is a higher probability of a prosocial behaviour:

> The setting of an incident also plays an important part. For example, in shopping malls where there are many people, if a person's ankle hurts or injured there would definitely many people who want to help and would even send to the hospital. (Fahada, Female)

Nonetheless, there are instances where the presence of others as onlookers heightens interdependency and increases the likelihood of assisting others. Hence, while a lack of onlookers is often associated with the lack of engagement in prosocial behaviour, the presence of others increases the probability of the occurrence of prosocial behaviour. The effect of the perceived lack of onlookers in lessening the probability of prosocial behaviour is further enhanced if the incident occurs in a remote, isolated area. The decision not to engage in a response might be interpreted as wise, leading to a person leaving the vicinity of the incident:

> I saw a broken car once, but there were two to three people in the car. I just looked around and continued my journey because I was alone at the Jerangau highway. I guess maybe he could make a call because there were a few of them and it is easier to get help when you have many people around. (Nor, Male)

An analysis of the process of decision-making suggests structural and relational assumptions are developed and reinforced over years built on one's exposure to the same type and or similar event. At times the judgement based on the decision-

making process may be inaccurate and flawed. The core of understanding in each case as presented in each vignette is a mental representation of prosocial behaviour.

## PERSON SCHEMA
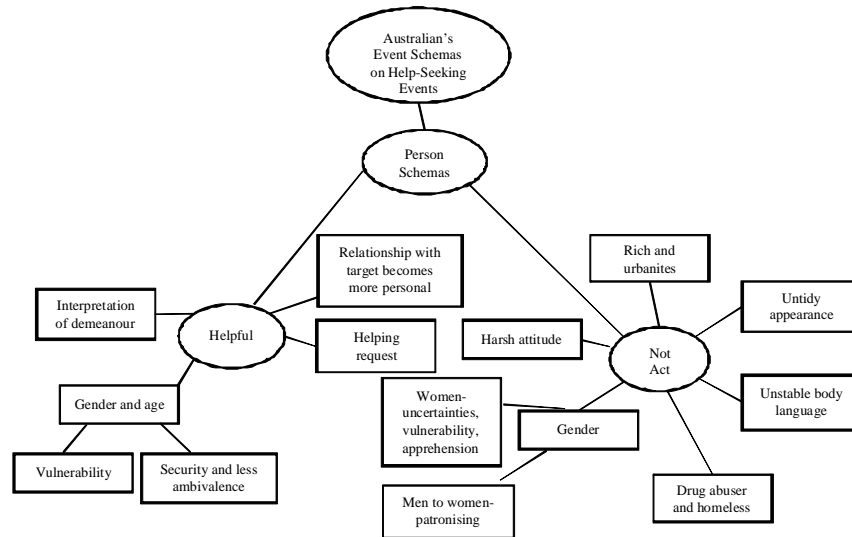


**Figure 4:**   Australian's person schema on help-seeking events

## Helpfulness

The desire to help when faced by a non-serious event is associated with variable interpretations. Within this circumstance, when a stranger requests aid an intention to help is often guided by an interpretation of demeanour and outward appearance:

> I want to help him because he's an old man. I'm also concerned that he's a bit confused and maybe I should call the police for help, not so much for me but for him. (Shae, Female)

Physical characteristics of a potential target clearly influence one's intention to help. Gender and age often act together across cultural contexts in one's interpretation of an event:

> Depending on the neighbourhood, I guess a woman could be seen as being more vulnerable depending on the time of day, the kind of clothes she was wearing … That I would see it as more normal of the middle-aged woman to not quite know where they are… Not so much needing assistance, but it's more typical be lost and disoriented. (Ada, Male)

There is also a degree of security and less ambivalence when engaging in a helpful act with a same gender target, 'There's a natural sense of comfort with a woman rather than a man, but I'd still be assessing the situation in the same way as I think and would respond in the same way.' (Isadora, Female)

In contrast, within a help-seeking event in which there is a compromise to one's safety, an intention to help is also informed by the age of the target person, i.e., young and elderly and an apparent level of associated vulnerability. For example, the elderly are more likely to have a person consider helping them dependent upon circumstance as is also the case with a youngster:

> To not help would have to be some sort of absolute fear and especially if it's a child or someone screaming in trouble, I just couldn't imagine it… I just couldn't imagine it and probably seeing a child or someone like that would make you probably more so want to help and take a risk. (Docia, Female)

For many when interpreting an intention to help, the target person's image or appearance is always considered and important. An intention to help may at times consider appearance as important as the extent of emergency. One is more likely to help if a target person's apparel, demeanour and overall appearance more readily justify a need to help. There is also the consideration of the capacity of the target person to self-help. There is also often the compulsion on the part of the observer to interpret and decide based on the consideration of the level of impairment and disability.

In addition to age, gender, and physical ability, a decision to engage in prosocial behaviour also depends on the request of the person in distress. With the request, comes a conscious interpretation of need:

> If he did come to me for help, I'd feel honoured that he chose me to help him and so, of course, I'd feel happy to help him. But in a sense I'd also be obligated, I guess, but that wouldn't be a problem since I was willing to do so. (Ada, Male)

The relationship between the help-recipient and the help-giver becomes more personal when the level of distress is clearly interpreted and informed:

> The more I speak to the person, … the more I would have some understanding of what's happening, and if the person presents more and more confused, then I think my concern for him would increase in time. (Gabby, Male)

## The Decision to not Act

Factors related to the observer in terms of their determining an intention to act were analysed. Consistent with previous interpretations of data, generally women are more reluctant than men to respond to and engage in a prosocial behaviour toward a stranger. This reluctance to act is occasionally associated with one's uncertainties and vulnerabilities, 'I have seen occasions where people would sort of feel – perhaps a particular woman might feel afraid or not sure what the motives were.' (Docia, Female)

The anxiety associated with encountering a stranger requesting aid increases to an even greater extent when engaged with a cross-gender interaction. Women generally are more apprehensive, apathetic and less likely to act to aid a male stranger. Women may associate men with violence and aggression and therefore interpret them as a threat to their personal safety:

> I'm a bit socially paranoid, so I'd be anxious about a guy approaching me, I'd be a bit apprehensive because he's a man… I'm really conscious of – I think because I've sort of done – I do volunteering with community legal centres and stuff and know a lot about assault rates and stuff. This might sound a bit weird, but especially if he was a white guy, I'd be anxious. I wouldn't be as anxious if he wasn't white, just because I know that it tend – crime like that sort of tends to go along racial like it's – you'll have more intra-racial than interracial crime, so in my head, I'm doing like a victim calculus of like, is this person likely to attack me? (Amanda, Female)

Women find it difficult to engage in behaviour to help a male. There is variation in the dynamics between men and women in how they interpret a target person. While women present a broad array of reasons for not engaging with a male stranger, there is an emphasis on safety and protection from harm. In contrast, males are hesitant to engage in help due in part to a desire to not appear as patronising. A decision to not help may also be considered a form of provision of empowerment:

> When you first come up to someone to offer help in this day and age, you kind of get the feeling that it's not something you should be doing. … Feminism, for example, you would offer a woman help, it seemed – she could be offended whether she needed actually help or not. … To be seen as needing help, she could be offended, in which case it's going to get through in my head briefly, so it might cause me to hesitate. (Ada, Male)

Socio-Economic status may also be considered a factor in defining an intention to act toward and in response to a person in need. There is the suggestion that the wealthier, more economically and socially advantaged are less likely to engage in displays of altruism:

> People in wealthier suburbs are less likely to help than people in lower class communities. People in lower class communities are more likely to give a hand… It's from things I've noticed and stories that I've heard from people from different communities… And also – and people who are from upper class communities are more likely to walk away and they just kind of go, 'Don't talk to me. I'm not interested'. And just quickly walk past. (Gabby, Male)

Displays of altruism are also less likely in urban areas than in rural areas. Urbanites carefully consider their time and associated activities:

> I think most people, especially who live in the city maybe, or someone who lives in the country and experiences, they might find a bit more short value and you feel like maybe they should – did assist because maybe there's a bit more of a community sort of feel there. But people here [urban areas] are out to please themselves and I don't think they care at all that a homeless person asking for money and that would be reinforced by just as I was mentioning it. (Jace, Male)

The physical presentation of the target person clearly influences intention to help. An untidy, slovenly appearance undermines interpretations of integrity and individual worth:

> If the person was neatly dressed … approaching people individually …they would more likely get a better response than someone who was a bit – looking a bit scruffy. If they were scruffy, they're less likely to get a good response.' (Gabby, Male)

Displays of agitation, restlessness and interpretations of an unstable body language by the target person coincide with a negative interpretation. These cues simultaneously lessen the likelihood of arousing an intervention among observers:

> Equally, if you're all looking puzzled and he's not looking alarmed, if there was a time he's looking aggressive or anything, I'd be kind of looking to see who's around… Restless could also be associated with a range of other things so I'd be kind of checking to see that he was – yeah… I mean like drug users could often look restless when they're trying to find or waiting for the next hit or something like that, or someone who is a little bit jumpy. I think that could be a bit interpreted restless. (Isadora, Female)

The significance of a person's appearance, clothing and movement is clearly related to the degree of helping behaviour amongst participants. While there are different types of stigmatised group, responses toward related groups are relatively consistent. Drug abusers and homeless generally are less likely to receive a helpful response:

> A lot of homelessness is caused from drugs, so they're actually quite strong. I believe they're strongly correlated. I feel they're just wasted. It's – they're just going to prefer to themselves into this routine, this life. They need something to change it, not continue it and money may not necessarily be the answer to that. (Lloyd, Male)

The intention to help is subjugated by the interpretation of the target person's attitude and the way they approach and request assistance. For example, an observer would feel intimidated and annoyed if the approach by the target was harsh:

> His attitude, of course. If he walks straight up and does it really blatantly, obviously like – and does really quickly so he could get to the most people possible. It's like, you know, I wouldn't feel as good beyond that. He needs to put a bit of effort… if he is polite or not… It kind of feels like he's trying to rob me. So that would make me less likely to want to give it to him. Unless I felt like I was in danger, then I have to rethink. (Ada, Male)

## AFFECTIVE/EMOTIONAL SCHEMA
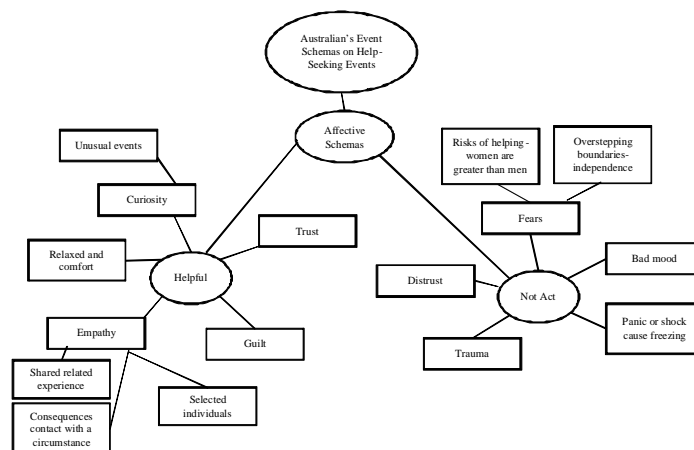


**Figure 5:** Australian's affective schemas on help-seeking events.

**Helpfulness**

Positive and negative emotions influence an engagement in helping behaviour through two processes. The first encourages one to attempt to benefit others consistent with the current state of the emotion. The second, prosocial motivation, is based on the need to relieve the negative states one is experiencing. Having encountered an unusual event in the day, the attention is increased in those with some level of curiosity associated with the event:

> He's left his phone at home and had to call his wife to tell her about where he is. That's strange… It's actually – I'd been intrigued, so I'd go and ask him these questions myself, not in a 'are you crazy,' kind of way. Yeah, if it's just – Ask what's going on… First I'd thought it'd be wow this is change from my uneventful day that I had planned. (Ada, Male)

In contrast to the curiosity associated with engaging in an unusual event, the apparent 'normality' of an event may also influence one's intention to engage in a prosocial behaviour, 'I just think it's a normal human sort of situation that not everybody has access to a phone. I've been stuck myself before, and it's not like we have lots of public phones that work anymore.' (Docia, Female)

Feelings of normality in prosocial motivation are consistent with the feeling of trust, particularly within the encounter with a random stranger. Therefore trust is crucial in helping behaviour in which the benefactor feels reassured with the legitimacy of the help-recipient and the non-emergency situation. The lower level of emergency is associated with higher level of trust and expressed within acts of benevolence. Trust in this instance may be considered cognitive in that it functions as a deliberate thoughtful action of the recipient to prove his or her trustworthiness:

> I was like 'Oh', so I'm a bit like 'Oh! Cautious'. But then what struck me as kind of important to that circumstance was there were lots of people around. He had a phone but he claimed he had run out of credit, and he kind of put the phone on the seat next to him. It was kind of like a show that I could trust the situation. So I think there was a level of trust there that enabled me to give the phone. (Isadora, Female)

Nonetheless, there are costs and discomfort associated with helping, particularly among women. The costs in helping for a woman may be significantly increased when the intention is directly compromised as a result of the interpreted physical characteristics of the target.

People, over a period of time, may display a wide array of helping behaviours and tend to be helpful when they feel comfortable engaging in an act, even though there is an associated risk of one sort or another. Much prosocial behaviour is directed at unknown strangers with whom they feel more relaxed in establishing a helping relationship. As has been illustrated in earlier accounts, the state of comfort in engaging with the target person is inevitably based on that person's characteristics:

> You might not really think that there would be a risk of giving your phone to some random person because obviously, they're just in trouble, especially people who are in the same

middle-aged man in this situation would be most –would probably most likely feel comfortable helping someone who's like them. (Amanda, Female)

Along with characteristics such as age, comfort also emanates from gender related factors, particularly when it involves women, 'There's a natural sense of comfort with a woman rather than a man.' (Isadora, Female).

Perhaps the most common dispositional explanation for why people feel responsible in helping others is their need for empathy. People who feel concerned while observing the needs of another are inclined to help. In these circumstances empathy arises from one's ability to cognitively interpret and understand the perspective of another and to accompany this understanding with behavioural affect. Empathy is further enhanced when there is sharing of experiences between the target person and the observer, 'I'd be fine with him using my phone. I've been stranded in places a couple of times and needed to ask to use people's phones'. (Amanda, Female). Empathy, however, often arises as a consequence of contact with a circumstance and not necessarily the sharing of related experiences:

> I work at a health centre doing counselling and we …and I hear different stories about people who are quite vulnerable in the community and about some situations where there've been incidents where it's been traumatic for them … that influences my – it affects my view of the world at times, sometimes in a positive way.' (Gabby, Male)

Helping behaviour also flows from feelings of empathy towards selected individuals or groups. For example, understanding the narrative in the lives of the homeless:

> I have a lot of empathy for people in that situation. Sometimes you just feel like what difference could you make as an individual and what – where's this – what's this two or three dollars or 50 cents or 20 cents, how is this going to help? … Then you do – it does creep in your mind that maybe they're not deserving of the money, which is not true, because you don't know what they've been through – homelessness. (Jace, Male)

Nevertheless, empathy is not necessarily directed towards lessening suffering. In instances, helping others contains selfish purposes when it is aimed at reducing personal distress and discomfort due to witnessing victim's difficulty:

> I'd probably get pretty worried. I'd start as soon as it occurred to me that there might be a problem there. I'd start thinking about it. I could imagine if I'd probably end up doing something like getting halfway across the road and doubling back, and be like, 'Oh. This is the situation!' and just feeling really silly. We'd probably miss the lights back on. Once those kinds of things occur to me, I don't tend to let them go, so I'd probably obsess.' (Amanda, Female)

The presence or absence of the feeling of connectedness with the suffering of others is associated with prosocial behaviour. A sense of belonging or feeling emotionally connected with those in need motivates people to consider the welfare of others but does not necessarily absolve personal responsibility:

> You got yourself in a situation … if you could blame them for their predicament, 'you got yourself here without your phone' or if they were homeless something like that and this is

> your issue. I think it takes away – it disconnects us from them and takes away a responsibility
> to help because it's like you've already ended up in a situation. It's not my problem. (Jace,
> Male)

Generally and across various circumstances people will feel some level of empathy
and will likely help a person in need. This positive frame of mind and or behaviour
is more likely and more often associated with helping a target considered positively
and interpreted as worthy of empathy and positive affect. This level of positive
affect and behaviour is less likely in the case of a target person interpreted as
negative and a circumstance imbued with the possibility of danger and risk.

Others are more egoistic and confronted by guilt, 'I'd feel a bit guilty, imagining
that maybe he needs a lift or he's unwell, or lost.' (Docia, Female).

### The decision to not act

Many are fearful in risking harm to themselves particularly when there is less
chance of reward. Fear inhibits the impulse to help. Different levels of fear are
embedded within the variable context of a given situation or circumstance. Generally
and across circumstances a woman in response will express greater fear than a
man. Nonetheless, a woman, like a man will base her desire to engage in a helpful
act on her emotional response to the cost of helping, 'A particular woman might
feel afraid or not sure what the motives were.'(Docia, Female).

The perception that the need for assistance is reduced or increased as a function
of the target person's level of self-efficacy is a reflection of one's sense and/or
interpretation of independence. The cost of helping is based upon an interpretation
of a benevolent act as demeaning to the recipient. The observer's level of fear and
or of overstepping the mark in terms of enabling a victim's autonomy is influenced
by the target person's perceived level of physical disability and/or compromised
personality:

> I feel like he could do it himself. Plus a lot of people don't like to be helped when they don't
> need help. Especially – this is my interpretation of people with disability. A lot of the time,
> just because they have the disability, they feel they get sympathised way too much. They're
> over-sympathetic. It's like someone in a wheelchair. They go up a ramp. They're struggling.
> Someone comes up and helps off the ramp, and they'd be like, 'Why'd you do that? I could
> have done it by myself.' It could hinder who they are, their influences and – not influences.
> It could affect the way they think about themselves because having the ability to do it
> yourself would help them regain some of that confidence in themselves and I could still do
> this. I'm still functioning. I'm still good. So taking that away from someone when they
> don't ask for it … going over to help them fully would kind of negate that independence
> that they were trying to look for. (Lloyd, Male)

One's mood expressed as a subjective positive or negative emotional state at the
time of the interaction may also influence behaviour. Mood influences motivation
and in turn may increase or inhibit the person's intent to engage in helping. The
subjective emotional state of feeling bad or good may drive an underlying motivation
for helping:

> It's also about the mood of the person. If the person helping has had a crappy day, I reckon they're less likely to help when compared with a person who has had a great day – they're more likely to help. … Around Christmas time people are more likely to help that person than when it's not Christmas. (Gabby, Male)

The observation of an event interpreted as an emergency and high in personal cost is also likely to be accompanied by an associated high level of stress. For some the experience of stress expressed as panic or shock may result in that person emotionally and behaviourally 'freezing', 'People get a shock and they freeze … I could totally understand them not going to help her because it's a really big deal.' (Ada, Male). In contrast, others feel aroused and disturbed based on past experience and previous encounters within similar circumstances. The repercussions associated with helping in the previous circumstance, particularly if unpleasant, are likely to influence one's intent to help in a similar circumstance, '… if something awful had happened and I'd been attacked by somebody, I think you'd be more reticent to stop and talk to a stranger at any time.' (Docia, Female).

Trust is the ultimate determinant in driving the decision to help a random stranger. More than any other factor, people are less likely to help when trust compromised by an uncertainty associated with the costs of helping, particularly when there is some question of the legitimacy of the random stranger and their needs, 'Some people wouldn't give their phones because they're like, "Oh, you got yourself into this scenario. I don't necessarily trust you. I don't know you." They wouldn't give you the phone.' (Jace, Male).

## BEHAVIOURAL SCHEMA
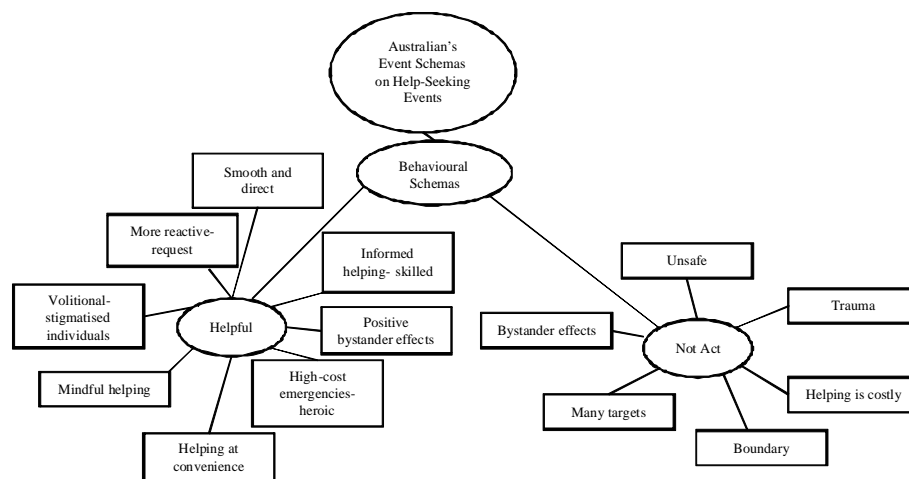


**Figure 6:** Australian's behavioural schemas on help-seeking events.

**Helpfulness**

Among the personality characteristics and associated motivational states which motivate people to help are empathy and the capacity to care. However, the intent to behave in a caring and emotionally positive way is significantly predicted by an interpretation of an event as legitimate and non-ambiguous. Pure and direct forms of altruism are less likely in ambiguous situations. The decision to not act under these circumstances may still lead to feelings of remorse and guilt. The careful interpretation of a circumstance vacillates between the need to protect oneself from harm and the desire to uphold his or her welfare. Help is often enacted in a vigilant way. People are generally unlikely to engage in risky behaviour, particularly in considering personal circumstance:

> Ten years ago I would have handed over my phone. Now, I would ask him, 'Could you give me the number and I'll put on speaker phone and I'll hold it while you talk' or something because that's innate. I would like to help but I do think in this current time and because I have two children I may think twice about helping. Ten years ago, I wouldn't have an issue but I've got two kids at home who need me and I would be on guard. (Shae, Female)

The assessment of trustworthiness and the associated circumstance is embedded within the process of interpreting an intention to help. Helping may be perceived as high cost. By contrast, when the cost is considered low, for example, losing a relatively cheap mobile phone, there is little difference in the enacting of a type of help. In contrast, the enactment of a helping behaviour out of empathy and ritual acts with a perceived lower cost is relatively smooth and direct:

> I would absolutely give him my phone. I've been in that situation myself, maybe not completely dishevelled or anything, but if there's no pay phones around – there's no payphones anymore – I would offer my assistance. I also work at a phone shop part-time and people come in all the time asking to use my phone. I have free calls, so, I mean – a middle-aged man – it wouldn't come to mind straight away that he was going to do anything wrong with my phone like break or run away with it. I don't think I would have any objections to letting him use my phone. (Jace, Male)

Others suggest that they might go further and become more reactive toward helping towards those actively seeking help and are clearly in trouble:

> That would probably make me more – even more responsive to want to help in some way. I might ask them could I help them beyond the phone call, where did they need to get to, is it – were they okay? Is it urgent? Perhaps offer them a lift. And just trying to help where you can. (Docia, Female)

The capacity to empathise enables one to interpret the relative condition of the target. This further enables the observer to tailor their behaviour to suit. Under these circumstances and cultural similarity, the observer is able to read in the target a level of stress. This cultural sharing allows one to resonate with the needs of the other. The need to instantly assess the plight of another is

particularly important in helping a person in dire need of support, i.e., high cost emergency:

> To stop the bleeding. If possible. If it's like an artery or the femoral artery, she's got like 30 seconds before she's dead. Just do the first aid in that and you got to tell people to call an ambulance if ambulance hasn't been called and do everything I could to stop the bleeding. (Ada, Male)

The volitional act of helping includes the weighing and balancing of the cost of helping against the cost of not helping. A decision to engage in a prosocial act is malleable. The effects of the proliferation of cases of seeking help when created a degree of fear and wariness in many people:

> I'd be in two minds. There's a very large part of me that wants to help but there have been too many reported cases of where this is fake, where this is to pull you in. Again because she's looking distressed, I think I would call the police and say look this is just what happened and they'd probably say we're too busy but it clears my conscience that I've reported that she may need help. (Shae, Female)

The decision to helping in a number of public places is often difficult. The benefactor needs to be careful of and consider the perceptions of the nearby spectator and the target. Misinterpretations of an event arise from the way the aid is delivered and could bring discomfort to both the benefactor and recipient:

> I guided this guy at the train station from the train to – along the platform and I was mindful of – firstly, what – how comfortable he was holding my hand, but also I was thinking, which sounds really weird – what are other people thinking? Here I am holding this guy's arm and we're kind of linked like we're a married couple. What [does] this mean? Because his cane was a bit – he wasn't really holding his cane because he didn't need to. I was kind of guiding him. With the woman, I think the help would be probably the same, but I would be more cautious about the touch and making sure it wasn't inappropriate or deemed inappropriate. That would be my concern. More so than the actual helping would be, how I'd be perceived by other people in relation to – how I'd be perceived by the woman, but also how I'd be perceived by other people as well, more so the woman. I don't want to be misinterpreted as I'm going out with this person or that this is uncomfortable for this person. (Gabby, Male)

Mindful helping is as important as a decision to intervene, without necessarily overly and/or deliberately engaging a thinking process on how the aid should best be given. Considering the recipient characteristics and their immediate surroundings, the intention to be good and kind might instead deliver an emotional catastrophe.

Helping responses towards individuals in need are typically displayed in a pattern of behaviour within one's capability. However, in some instances the decision to help stretches the capacity to help beyond the helper's capabilities, especially in a context where the need is not urgent:

> I'd pull over and see what's going on. Not see what's going on – sort of see if I could help or to just to see what's going on to see if I *could* help. If it's some sort of a mechanical issue

> that I have no clue about, I'd probably going to be like, 'I can't really help you here. I'll be off. Have fun!' If it's something else like I need to a change a tyre, I don't have this tool and the jack's in the car. 'Sure. You could borrow the jack. I'll give you a hand. Do you know how to do it?' If it's something simple that I could help with … If it's something I can't fix though or I have no clue about, I'm like, 'Well? You've already called someone, so you could – you're pretty much set on your way. There's nothing I could do to help. So have fun.' (Lloyd, Male)

Time is another consideration. If time is not pressing, it creates the conditions for a more considered and sensitive response. The decision to help may be more direct in form and function:

> I might – depends on how rushed I am. If I've got all the time in the world, I might say, 'How do you want to do this? I could help you cross the road? Do you want me to – do you want me to hold my arm? Here's – my arm's on the left of you.' Give them descriptions and take it that way. If I was a bit rushed and there were stacks of people behind the person, then I might say, 'Hey, you could grab my arm? I'm going to touch your arm, so you know where it is, and I could just lead you.' As we're walking, I might talk to them about where they're going if they need a hand going to where they're going. (Gabby, Male)

Importantly, even though most benefactors have the capacity to donate money to the homeless beggar, however much or little they are prepared to donate does not equate to an observable lifting of fortune of the homeless beggar. However, despite the absence of any notion of bettering the life of another, one may still donate an amount which is immediately convenient and readily accessible:

> If I had change, I'd probably give them change. I probably wouldn't give a note. I don't really ever give a note out. If I didn't have change, I'd say, 'No! Sorry!' Inconvenience? That would definitely be one. I think you become – especially living in a big city, you become accustomed to being asked for change. Someone who's maybe never had a homeless person go up to them – they never had that experience before and someone came on, obviously in need and said, 'Could I have some change?' 'I had some in the back of my car or over there'. I'd probably be like, 'Oh! Of course!' But I think after you've been asked enough times, you start to – the black and white becomes less and there's – the grey area starts to get bigger, and bigger, and bigger, and bigger. If it's a massive inconvenience for me to go grab some change, I'll say 'No!'. It's not justified. Probably not! But I think that that's a reaction that I think a lot of people would have and I don't really know why. We don't want to put ourselves – again, we don't want to put – we love to help, but unless – if it puts us out too much, then we're not so responsive. (Jace, Male)

A wide range of different types of events ranging from the non-emergency to the life-threatening elicit unique motivational explanations for enacting different helping behaviours. For example, there are differences in how the high-cost emergencies are perceived and the extent to which one experiences some level of suffering in order to benefit another person, particularly when the victim is regarded as powerless or helpless. This tendency to respond in one way or another to an event while unique in content is nonetheless consistent across genders. A significant difference in helping behaviour in high-cost emergencies correlated with prior

feelings of heroic or courageousness provided by how one perceives being helpful within the categories of behaviour, '…it depends how brave I was. Just steal a surfboard that just happens to be lying on the beach and paddle out and then fell off and drown.'(Ada, Male)

Typically, the chance of receiving help in a public place is disadvantaged by the bystander effects. In these circumstance people often wait for somebody to make the first move. The cue initiated in the first move instigates a domino effect with others actioning further behaviour, albeit not necessarily helpful. Helping in this situation is not only targeted towards an individual in need, but it also encompasses taking the initiator's role in having bystanders cooperate within the event:

> Depending on where it was, I'll probably try and shepherd people away a little bit because I know that not overcrowding someone in that kind of situation is important. I'd ask, 'Is anyone here a doctor or a nurse or a paramedic or have training of how to help?' I've been in a couple of situations like that and I've sort of martialled people a bit – have been like, 'You go!' Once I was at Northland Shopping Centre and a lady collapsed and – an old lady, and I was just like, 'You go tell the centre staff. I'm calling an ambulance. You just stay with her and see if you could find out if anyone else is with her.' That kind of thing. Ordering people about. Someone's got to take control in that situation and I mean I've also been the one collapsed in that kind of situation, so I know how important it is that someone – that people – someone take control and someone take charge of the situation because it's – I think people really do mean well, but there is like a sort of tendency for everyone to assume that someone else has the situation under control and sort of just mill about. Someone's got to be the loud order giver and if no one else is going to do it, I'll do it. (Amanda, Female)

Others tend to play supportive roles in aiding the person in need in the presence of bystanders. Bystander are a prominent factor that might best account for indirect form of helping in which behaviours are aimed at easing other bystanders in providing care to the victims:

> If I was going to offer help, I would probably be like, 'Is it something I could do?' I would probably direct out of the person helping her rather than her. Because I feel like he's already built a rapport with her. He's already sort of ascertained what has happened, and then maybe I could assist him in supporting her rather than supporting her directly. Because I know if there was – all these people being like, "Could I help? Could I help? Could I help?" in that situation, you probably wouldn't be much organised. (Jace, Male)

The extent to which one is skilled and experienced in helping is an additional important factor in determining one's willingness to help. Helping is largely informed by one's credentials and knowledge and boosts confidence in an intention to help in the thought that they know what to do in that particular circumstance:

> These days because of a bit more experience in training, I'd probably be less anxious and feeling more confident about knowing what to do from a health side of things… You sort of do your first aid things. I mean obviously, you don't have a lot of equipment on you, but if

the person was bleeding seriously, you grab your jumper or a shirt or whatever… I think probably prior to that, I still would have gone to help, but I now feel less – when I go to situations, less of that, 'Oh my God!' and more of a 'Okay!' Just go into that mode of 'what have I got to do first?' … To the degree that – and again, that's the training. Probably before, I would have just jumped in but the training now says to me, if there's something really – bit of riot or something happening, a lot drunk people and things getting thrown, and it is part of a melee or something, you might go, 'I'll just step aside. I'll make a call.' Or I'll wander past and then make a call to the authorities sort of thing, rather than dive in. (Docia, Female)

The association between competency and feeling heroic is related to bystanders being more likely to step in or stand up during a violent emergency. Such dangerous events are high risk for those who get involved, imposing danger or threat to bystanders and victims alike. Nonetheless, helping is provided by bystanders with levels of self-efficacy in the perceived event of aggressiveness and exhibitions of injustice.

**The decision to not act**

There are many factors underpinning the decision to not act to help or do nothing. A negative reaction toward helping may be rooted in selfish motives defined through situational and dispositional characteristics related to demand restrictions and complex responses in various help-seeking circumstances. The following examines specific stimulus events, personal and interpersonal conflicts, reticence and the ideas surrounding helping inhibition. Subsequent effort at threat reduction could be best justified by the extreme negative response where helping is perceived as unsafe:

'I'd be more wary if it was dark! If I was in an area that I didn't know so well! If I was a bit sort of lost anyway, then I'd probably be less likely to help. … Probably if it was dark and if I was in an unfamiliar place, I probably also be sort of thinking in the back of my head, 'If this did go bad, what would I do?' That sort of thing (Amanda, Female)

Fear tends to be amplified at times of the day and an unfamiliar location. Furthermore, fear may stem from an interaction in which the characteristics of the person seeking help are interpreted as violent and aggressive, 'Tone plays a big thing! If she was agitated and aggressive … If she was similar in aggressiveness to a guy, then I probably would keep my distance from her.' (Gabby, Male)

The experience of fear is not restricted to the uncertain intuitive belief of the existence of a threat. Fear is also borne from personal experiences existing as psychological and/or physical scars. The lessons learned from previous encounters in similar events will likely trigger similar if not identical situational or dispositional cues. Being confronted within such an event may lead to withdrawal, 'If something awful had happened and I'd been attacked by somebody, I think you'd be more reticent to stop and talk to a stranger at any time, I suppose.' (Docia, Female)

Fear or caution is predominantly experienced when help-givers are apprehensive about the associated cost of their effort to help:

> People don't – they don't want to risk hurting someone more. There's the thing of when – if someone might have a spinal injury, it's really dangerous to move them. You don't want to risk accidentally really hurting someone when they might've had a mild dizzy spell and you don't want to risk making them paraplegic or something. You definitely want to just be cautious and not sort of barrel in if you don't really know what you're doing. (Amanda, Female)

A physical handicap poses a different set of interpretations. Helping a person with a physical disability may be perceived as denigrating the resilience and ability of the handicapped to live on an equal footing with the non-disabled. It is then a question of recognising one's capacity to be independent with associated outcomes surrounding notions of confidence and efficacy:

> I don't want to ask someone for help for them to genuinely not need my help at all and feel like I'm patronising them. … I learned from a young age … to be really careful about that, to think that you could rescue someone like people don't want their issues or things like that to be used as they don't want to be treated differently. They want to be treated like everyone else. Because of my background with individuals who have disabilities and such that to only give help when they obviously need it or when they ask for it, not to just offer it willy nilly. (Jace, Male)

There is also the assumption that the physically disabled are part of the normative characteristics in contemporary society and therefore there is the associated expectation of treating a person with a disability as one would treat a non-disabled person, 'If there're a lot of people around him then I will just assume that he would walk when they walk and I think most blind people would.' (Shae, Female)

A prospective helper may also interpret an intention and/or desire to help dependent upon the number of targets in a given situation. People are less inclined to help if there is more than one target, particularly if they feel that each of the targets is in a position or have the capacity to help each other:

> People respond differently when more than one person is involved in a distress. It'll be very easy for people just to keep driving. They'll think because it's a couple and they've got two people, they could kind of talk to each other and sort it out together. (Isadora, Female)

Generally, the greater the number of targets together in a given situation is inversely related to the likelihood of a helpful response from an observer. Consistent with this observation is the 'bystander effect'. This effect suggests that in the instance of more than one bystander, any given bystander is more likely not to act and instead assume that responsibility onto the shoulders of the fellow bystander(s). A sense of empathic arousal stems from an awareness that there is an emergency. However, the presence of others decreases the likelihood of one's intention to help, '…if there's already someone else there, I wouldn't bother, because someone else is there.' (Lloyd, Male)

A bystander's inhibition in intention to help is also based on their assessment of personal inconvenience and reactions to aversive environmental cues such as blood, smell, and/or the physical appearance of the victim. Satisfying a level of curiosity and not having to act is, to many, the preferred option:

> You'd get the person who's not comfortable, doesn't want to get involved and keep moving, or I don't know that it's more just because they want to see – to be voyeuristic, but people will stop and then think, '…what's actually happening? I don't know what to do'. (Docia, Female)

Helping is conceptualised as an expression of genuine care and concern. However, when confronted with a life-threatening emergency and the danger of somehow compromising one's own safety as a result of a well-meaning but perhaps misdirected behaviour, a passive response is considered more prudent:

> I probably wouldn't try and save him if I didn't know how to swim because I can't swim myself. Me trying to swim with him as well is not going to end well, then we're both in trouble. Then we'll just need extra help. For no extra gain. If it endangers my life, but I know I could help, then that's fine. If it endangers our lives with no extra help, that's just silly. (Lloyd, Male)

**DISCUSSION**

The participants answered the first and second research questions, 'How persons of Australian and Malaysian birth and place of residence interpret the experience of a help-seeking event?' and 'How persons of Australian and Malaysian birth and place of residence perceive helping and not helping?' under three major themes, which are discovered through the analysis of responses from 16-person Malaysian cohort and 8-person Australian cohort. The interview questions were designed in a variety of ways following seven different vignettes to capture participants' core opinion underlying their decision process in two competing response tendencies – to help or not to help. These answers emerged as themes building the whole framework of this study and are supported by prior research findings, thus adding to the empirical relevance of research findings. The discussion of these findings is as follows:

The participants in this study, Australian and Malaysian, overwhelmingly supported the view that individual motives in help-seeking behaviour in the degree to which people behave and appear were pivotal in assessing their level of need and the legitimacy of the event. Both groups asserted that the assessment for a legitimate event is possible through their impression of the recipient of help, including their clothing, body language, helping request and other clear emergency indicators such as the sight of blood. Piliavin, Piliavin and Rodin (1975) also argued that there are relative differences in prosocial tendencies due to the victim's appearance. Furthermore, the clear and visible signs of an emergency are consistently seen to have an impact on people's tendencies to engage in prosocial

behaviour (Harari, Harari, & White, 1985). Emotional expression and body language are other factors that contribute to the care-related concerns (Small & Verrochi, 2009). As such, a sad face has been viewed as an important cue in the helping context, evoking sympathy and prosocial behaviour, particularly when charity is concerned. The participants in this study view a clear helping request as a solid reason to not ignore someone who is in the distress. The certainty of the help-seeking situation, the clarity of victim's need and the presence of a request to help instigates action. Similarly, Rogers, Miller, Mayer and Duval (1982) report that a clear helping request leads to an increased awareness of the victim's need, which in turn motivates helping behaviour. Although both Australians and Malaysians bring up the importance of helping request as one of the major mechanisms in interpreting the need of the victim as real and genuine, Australians are more likely to explicitly state that the presence of clear request can facilitate acts of assisting across circumstances. The Australian cohort is more likely, through critical and non-critical situations, to account for the effect of the helping request in increasing the likelihood that individuals will intervene. Furthermore, the Australian participants suggested that in the absence of a clear request, random intervention can be construed as a presumptuous act particularly toward the disadvantaged. This coincides with Rogers et al. (1982) and Eisenberg, Cameron, and Tyron (1984), who reported the importance of request in predicting the likelihood of bystanders' intervention. Cultural differences in embraced norms, values, and perceptions create variations in how a helping request is perceived. Australians might have stronger attitudes about attending to the explicit helping request. Self-reliance and independence seems to be highly regarded amongst persons in an individualist culture such as in Australia (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), with the expectation that each person is able to self-govern.

It takes considerable courage for a person from an individualist culture to admit that he/she cannot cope with the situation. Whenever a helping request is made, it signifies that the help requester has critical need for assistance, which can be satisfied only with another's intervention. Past research has demonstrated that the increment in perceived urgent need of help would increase the likelihood of giving help (Berkowitz & Daniels, 1963; Fischer et al., 2006). Moreover, person within an individualist culture value the right to privacy (Hofstede, 1980); therefore, crossing another individual's boundary violates the societal norm. Offering help when it is actually not needed could annoy others, particularly if the aid is perceived as potentially threatening to their self-esteem (Fisher et al., 1982). Collectivistic societies, as characterised by Malaysia, emphasise dependency, connectedness and flexibility (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The need to observe an individual's boundary is not as complex as in Australian culture. Consequently helping occurs without the concern of invading another's privacy. In addition, it is not uncommon for a person in a collectivistic society to rely on others (Hofstede, 1980); thus,

helping can easily be construed as the person behaving in accordance with the societal norms.

Both cohorts were split in responding to the beggar or homeless person wandering around asking people for money. The responses of the participants who were generous to the beggar were similar, as aligned with the emerging themes. There are, however, different degrees of factors that related to helping behaviour, ranging from such emotional experience to variations in the overt response. Malaysians were more generous and gave a larger amount of money to the beggar, especially towards elderly female and unkempt people. Higher levels of pity and empathy often led them to respond altruistically to this group of people; their form of helping was quite extensive, and not restricted to the amount of money being donated. It is evidenced in the themes which emerged in the interview with Malaysians that religious doctrines constitute a solid foundation for them to increase altruistic feelings because such behaviour is desirable and enjoined in their religion. In a collectivistic culture like Malaysia, interdependence and connectedness define self-construal; therefore, it is assumed that Malaysians will be more likely to develop other-focused emotions such as responsibility, shame, guilt (Markus & Kitayama, 1994) and this will include empathic sensitivity toward others in need.

Australian participants' helping behaviour toward beggars appeared to be motivated by empathy, but hampered by the stigma attached to homelessness. Individualist cultures such as Australia, which value self-reliance and autonomy, are less likely to help if the need for assistance is interpreted as self-inflicted (Cardwell & Flanagan, 2012). By contrast, Malaysians consider beggars to be deserving of help consistent with the recognition of and entitlement to a proportion of others' fortunes; their view of beggars is more guided by their pity for the beggars' perceived unfortunate condition and by religious tenets. Hence, helping and supporting beggars has been easy to accomplish due to the acknowledgement of beggars' dependency on another's wealth. These findings may also be relevant to the notion that there is a link between ethical/religious traditions and people's perception of beggars, in which care interaction is the outcome of religiously guided behavioural congruence (Dromi, 2007). The extent to which sympathy, compassion and care are invoked by the disadvantaged corresponds to part of the literature in compliance with the request made by the stigmatised (Doob & Ecker, 1970).

There are differences in the way the Australians and the Malaysians perceive people with disabilities. The effect of this perception on the helping decision was maintained across the majority of participants. The disabled had the effect of drawing more assistance from the Malaysians, but the response was totally different with the Australians. Given that the disabled people are considered as having control and efficacy in their day-to-day life, Australians were more unlikely to be helpful toward them, especially with the absence of a request to help. The cultural emphasis on individualism and independence and due to this socialisation practice, it is

imperative for every individual in the culture, including the disabled, be given maximum freedom and control over their functioning (Iwakuma & Nussbaum, 2000). On the other hand, it emerged as a prominent theme that in Malaysia disabled people are considered vulnerable individuals to whom the duty of care has been part of the social norm. In collectivistic cultures, it is expected that the community be 'overprotective' and caring toward the disabled (Iwakuma & Nussbaum, 2000). As Malaysia emphasises interdependency, it is a much more comforting environment in which the disabled are able to rely on others without feeling shame. The preference to help the disabled in the Malaysian context is in light of causal attribution (Weiner, 1986), in which helping behaviour is increased when people perceive that the cause of behaviour is not under the person's control. In turn, this perception of a person's extent of controllability over their disabled condition influences the emotional response, heightening the sympathy level, which influences the willingness to display helping behaviour toward them. On the other hand, the findings from the Australians supports the normalisation principle, which gives the disabled more choice and control to operate their life consistent with people without disabilities and acknowledging their capacity to function independently in society, particularly in the educational system (Wehman & McLaughlin, 1981).

**The Decision to not Act**

Both Australians and Malaysians believe that women help strangers less than men. Erring on the side of caution is one of the underlying causal factors brought up by both cohorts; women are believed to do risk-assessments more than men; and, women are more likely than men to perceive that they have much to lose if the intervention goes wrong with a stranger. Some of the literature explains that women, in comparison to men, are less likely to offer help to others (Eagly, 1987), which assumes that interacting with a stranger in the short-term encounter, especially when there are some risks associated with the intervention, may instil fear and anxiety.

For some, the probability of declining to offer help is better explained by the increased feeling of self-sufficiency and competence (Halabi, Nadler & Dovidio, 2011; Nadler & Fisher, 1986); assumptive help can be easily interpreted as undermining the recipient's independence to function normally without the aid of others. Australians and Malaysians have the tendency to avoid helping when the perceived need of assistance is low. However, this was more prevalent amongst Australians as they indicated how contextual features, such as the control that the recipient has on the situation and the personal characteristics (i.e. disabled and female), can affect their responses to the help-seeking event. Most Australians indicated that understanding how feminism and the rights of people with disabilities to function equally within the society has shaped a different reaction to helping behaviour, whereas assumptive helping can be detrimental to the recipient's sense

of worth. While most Australians were careful not to ask the disabled and women for help for them to genuinely not need the help at all, there is no such feminism or empowering disabled mentioned by Malaysians. Less responsiveness may be practised toward others perceived as capable of handling the situation independently to respect their capacity to function within individualist culture, which upholds independence and personal achievement (Verderber, Verderber & Sellnow, 2012).

Amato (1983) indicated that urban dwellers are prone to be unhelpful and reluctant to engage in help-giving behaviour. Additionally, Amato (1983) indicated that urban dwellers would help more in non-critical situation and in the presence of a helping request, where they could uncover the true needs of the recipient. Amato (1983) also postulated that helping in a non-serious situation is much more favourable due to less engagement required with perceived less risk involved. Similar to the findings of Amato (1983), the Australian and Malaysian cohorts identified stereotypes of urbanites as being less helpful than rural dwellers.

The homeless are also less likely to receive help from a passer-by. The belief that the stigmatised homeless will continue begging if people keep giving away money or goods has made passers-by unresponsive and aloof to their request. Prior literature in this area of research addressed people's adoption of an unresponsive orientation toward stigmatised victims as a way of reacting to beggars' perceived low moral character (Piliavin & Piliavin, 1975). Specifically, non-involvement with the homeless is argued to help society stop the sporadic begging activities (Desyani, 2013). In addition, the stigma attached to the homeless – for example, they have been alleged to be social threat in the street (Kelling & Coles, 1996) – is responsible for the unhelpful forms of behaviour toward them. Other social scientists have expressed views that in order to avoid a feeling of discomfort interacting with the stigmatised victim, people are more attentive to the consequences of intervention (Ungar, 1979). The avoidance option is much more favourable when the perceived cost of helping is high.

Interviews with Australians and Malaysians identified similar forces supporting their indifference toward homeless/beggars. The findings indicated that inhibition of prosocial behaviour towards beggars is due to the assumption that street-begging is uncivil, illegitimate and suspicious. Participants suggested that there is a link between substance abuse and homelessness, which forms another potential inhibitor to provide support to the poor (Westminster City Council, 2004). The tendency to be helpful is decreased when the victim is held personally responsible for his/her condition and he/she is perceived to have the means to control the causes of the need (Weiner, 1986).

The findings of thematic analyses indicated that both cultures suggested identical reasons for the decrease in helping behaviour toward beggars. However, Malaysians attributed their inhibition to help intoxicated and other stigmatised individuals mostly to their disapproval of socially unacceptable behaviours and

their commitment to the Islamic principles. Malaysians spoke of a strong emotive response with a high degree of negativity held toward the intoxicated and sought to explain the influence of such sentiment upon their reaction. To test whether any decrease in the propensity for aiding in the subsequent dependency was the effect of disliking, 60 female subjects were originally recruited from a university to sit for an experiment requesting them to repeat the sequence of numbers. Liking and help giving were significantly correlated, in which the extent of help and the seconds spared on helping were measured with significant effect sizes, $(F(1,56) = 4.03, p < .05$ and $(F(1,56) = 6.08, p < .02)$ respectively. Thus, there is some suggestion that the subjects who like one another would increase helping behaviour and vice versa. Lesser preference of helping intoxicated people among Malaysian participants also resulted from the fact that they have had little exposure to drunken behaviour, whereby uncertainty avoidance is activated due to the lack of understandings on how the event should be handled. The degree to which an individual perceives that he/she is capable and confident in delivering effective aid to the target can significantly increase or decrease prosocial behaviours (Wishart, McKenzie, Newman, & McKenzie, 2013; Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, & Penner, 2006).

Both cultures experience unique feelings when caring for others; however, commonalties and differences did exist. Australians were more likely to respond in curiosity when observing another person in need and this acted as a driver for them to offer help. They had the tendency to understand the predicament and help others if the situation is not too complicated for them to comprehend. Participants' disposition to notice and care about others is related to prosocial behaviour and has been recorded in numerous studies (e.g., Latane & Darley, 1970; Wuthnow, 1995; Bekkers & Wilhelm, 2006). Latane and Darley (1970) formulated that individuals need to go through five stages of decision making prior to helping and the first step is to notice the cues indicating distress. Interested in knowing another's need is not enough to generate an intention to help if it does not come with the moral principle of caring about others. Curiosity can influence people's intention to help; however, those who feel that they should react upon witnessing others in need of help are more likely to be driven to engage in the actual helping behaviour (Bekkers & Wilhelm, 2006). The relationship between curiosity and care has been demonstrated in the literature (i.e., Phillips, 2015); however, this research does not appear to attend to the link between curiosity and prosocial tendencies. In terms of cultural influence, the results of this study support Kim and Drolet (2003), who confirmed the relationship between freedom and uniqueness (IND cultural values) and variety-seeking in the act of choices. Thus, individuals in an individualistic culture are keener to explore the variety of choices of decision.

Interestingly, both cohorts indicated that the perceived degree of connectedness could encourage prosocial behaviour; the more similar to the participants the person in need is perceived to be, the more likely the participants would be to grant help.

In comparing the findings of this study to that Rabinowitz et al., (1997), participants in both studies acted in a more and extensive socially responsible manner toward someone like themselves. In addition, the participants in this study identified interpersonal engagement between them and another person in need as antecedent to increasing helpfulness as the more they communicate to each other, the more they are exposed to the shared features.

The third affective schema, 'trust', surfaced as the participants answered, 'What do you feel in facing this event?' A focus on helping a total stranger caused participants from both cultures to acknowledge the role of trust in eliciting some degree of prosocial reaction. Trust serves two significant roles in a helping relationship. First, it reassures the participants/benefactor that the suffering of the other is legitimate and results in helping behaviour toward this individual. The literature is clear on the trust-induced helping behaviour, particularly in the context of leadership in the workplace (Yue Zhu & Syed Akhtar, 2014). Specifically, trusting people in need is a result of risk assessment of potential exploitation, which in turn produces an altruistic movement. Second, the research provides evidence of how trust level and helping is usually bound by social norms (Kit Tong, Hung, Man Yuen, 2011). Indeed, Kit Tong and associates (2011) showed that trustful people are more likely to connect to and are less likely to be doubtful about developing a relationship with others. Trusting in others provides a wider social network to a person and inculcates a sense of respect towards the social interaction, and these factors facilitate helping behaviour. In the present research, Australians were more enthusiastic about engendering a trusting community, where helping behaviour can be seen as normative functioning; hence, asking, giving, and receiving help is much more comfortable and common in the society. While trust is context-bound (Abdul-Rahman & Hailes, 2000), perhaps the idea of 'evolutioning' helping behaviour in Australia stems from the challenge of making trust more relevant among separate and autonomous individuals. The need to engender a trusting community in a collectivistic culture is believed to be less intense, presumably due to its communal nature that is already in place, such as belongingness and sharing (Hofstede, 1991). Thus, individuals who uphold collectivistic views are more likely to follow these societal values and assume that everyone in the society will act in the same way.

The fourth affective schema, and perhaps the most prominent theme emerging from the findings of such schema, was centred on 'empathy' reflected in the ability to understand the neediness of others. The general consensus of these findings from Australians and Malaysians was that empathy allows them to perceive an individual in need from an affective and cognitive perspective, which can lead them to respond altruistically. However, the significant findings from the conversation with participants were that individuals in one culture tend to use one element of empathy (i.e. affective or cognitive) more than the other when perceiving

an individual in need. On the one hand, empathy-induced helping behaviour among Malaysians, dependent upon context, was a function of affect-based activation. Malaysians used and emphasised many 'sympathy', 'pity', and 'sad' terms to describe their emotional reactions to those less fortunate than them. These findings are consistent with Realo and Luik (2002) in their attempt to explain the relationship of the affective element of empathy and collectivism. Family and society aspects of collectivism are moderately related with the affective-based empathy yielding new findings that suggest individuals with family and societal orientation of collectivism are more likely to feel compassionate, caring and concern about other people, especially to in-group members (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Another explanation of the nature of the relationship between affective-based empathy and collectivism values could be attributed to the way the emotion is perceived and expressed. Emotions that enhance connectedness and interdependence, such as empathy, responsibility, sensitivity and other-focused affective factors are a very important element in forming a harmonious and cohesive society (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). It is therefore not uncommon for people in collectivistic culture such as Malaysia to affectively empathise with another's difficulty. In addition, empathy among Malaysian participants is necessarily the effect of observing the emotionally-charged situation where the target channels their tension through crying, wailing, heavy breathing, sighing, etc. Moreover, Malaysian participants were prone to show empathy toward certain sets of targets such as elders, females, beggars, and handicapped and more explanation about this can be found in the section of person schemas-helpfulness.

In contrast, the effect of empathy on helping among Australian participants was more the result of cognitive processing, rather than an affective outcome. There were often times when Australians could expect that others are in need due to their ability to comprehend another's feeling being in the difficult situation. Terms and sentences such as 'think', 'imagine', 'put myself in someone shoes' have been used across the interview. There is a difference between imagining what another person is feeling and experiencing the feeling oneself, as the latter describes a more passive and reflexive psychological phenomenon compared to the former (Hoffman, 2000). Caring and concern toward the elderly and females among Australians is associated with understanding the target's vulnerable characteristics and how it feels to face the uncontrollable predicament with the capacity that the target has. Based on the responses of the Australians, the concept of analytic cognitive thinking styles which is predominantly associated with individualistic culture (Witkin, Dyk, Faterson, Goodenough & Karp, 1962) is a plausible explanation for the prevalent stimulation of cognitive aspect of empathy. Surprisingly, lack of the affective aspect of empathy has been connected to analytic thinking (DeVore, Beck, Clark & Goorey, 1989). Whether it was cognitive thinking styles or emotional expression, there was a clear mention of the distinct pattern of

empathy between members of the comparison group. Scarcely found in the literature, yet a topic that surfaced across the interview, Australians experience and develop empathy differently from Malaysians. Research on cognitive empathy is typically restricted to the empathy accuracy (Levenson & Ruef, 1992; Kraus, CôtP, Keltner, 2010), which is defined as the exact inferences of another's emotions and thoughts. In order to better understand the effects of the cultural dimension (i.e. IND-COL) on the distinct element of empathy (i.e. affective-cognitive), it would be beneficial to know which aspect of empathy is most activated in which culture. Moreover, in contrast to their Malaysian counterparts, Australians expressed less empathy and sympathy toward the beggar and the disabled, as described in the previous section, person schemas/unhelpfulness.

The fifth significant finding emanating from the interviews is the role of doubt in regulating helping behaviour toward the unknown stranger. For a few, a low degree of doubt helps them to develop an adaptive kind of helping behaviour, but not totally to dismiss the intention to provide assistance. Doubt starts when the benefactor feels that something is not right with the situation or with the target's trustworthiness. The literature has provided research on the conceptions of doubt in facing a stranger (Berg, Dickhaut & McCabe, 1995) and the suggestion that scepticism towards strangers can be desensitised (Uslaner, 2004). The likelihood of trusting strangers in business transactions can be traced to the generalised trust of the society, if believing is not too costly (Courtois & Tazdaït, 2012). While the research on the doubt-prosociality link is still scarce, such constructs link with other social behaviour such as consumerism (Tormala & Rucker, 2015), conflict (Gordon & Riboni, 2015) and the latest trend and well documented online social network (Mir, 2015).

The final emotional schema that has been elucidated by the research literature and the findings of this study is guilt. The negative emotional schemas have a distinct direction in Australian and Malaysian helping enactments, where commitment to such behaviour is intended to lessen any tension of ignoring. This is in accordance with Kugler and Jones (1992), who postulated that helping behaviour is undertaken to reduce guilt which is rooted in the ability to empathise with another's distress (Baumesiter, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994) and the personal assumption that one should be responsible to intervene (Hoffman, 1982).

## The decision to not act

There is also evidence across the interviews that fear is among the central features of avoidance in offering help. There is extensive research on sources of fear and the likelihood of offering help. Karakashian, Walter, Christopher and Lucas (2006) and Malouff (1998) both highlight the role of shyness (fear of negative evaluation) within the context of young adults and young children respectively in social situations including helping interaction. For Karakashian *et al.* (2006), shyness

leads to behavioural inhibition in both social and non-social settings, suggesting that the reaction is consistent across situations. For a shy individual, the inhibition starts with the predisposed belief that others would evaluate their helping offer negatively. The effect of fear of negative evaluation on helping behaviour was more prevalent among Malaysians, but it is not significantly pervasive among their Australian counterparts. In collectivistic culture, like Malaysia, individuals develop other-focused emotions such as fear of negative evaluation/shyness to allow them to synchronise with the community and culture (Burger, 2015).

Both Australians and Malaysians had negative feelings about helping when it could seriously jeopardise physical and social well-being. For those who feared losing, most seem to feel that their helping responses to severe or non-severe situations could compromise their safety and precious resources. This is consistent with the cost-reward model, which approaches helping decisions from a cognitive assessment standpoint in which a very costly helping behaviour would increase the bystander's apathy (Ito, Miller & Bekhuis, 2014; Piliavin & Piliavin, 1972). This study suggested that the arousal of intense fear and terror due to perceived high costs of providing help inhibited contributions to the target. The interrelation of cognitive assessment, fear, and helping decision is rarely made in the literature. Therefore new information concerning the observer's emotional reaction to the cognitive processing, which in turn influences helping responses could be further developed in future research. Females from both cultures are more prone to erring on the side of caution which causes lesser prosocial tendencies, particularly in an ambiguous help-seeking context. This can be understood in a light of the inherent social norms of women and vulnerability, as reported by Butler and Gambetti (2013); the power differential between men and women has made the latter more susceptible to harm.

## BEHAVIOURAL SCHEMAS

### Helpfulness

Australian and Malaysian participants concluded that to lend a helping hand in an ambiguous non-serious situation, a thorough investigation on the situational cues prior to helping should be undertaken. While helping behaviours are not necessarily spontaneous, these behaviours would most often be performed with high self-awareness, in which the participants become attentive to a possible scam. This finding supports the cognitive processes theory postulated by Calvo and Eysenck (2000), arguing that an ambiguous situation or stimulus is the basis for interpreting the incident as a threat, which then leads to a vigilant reaction. However, instead of avoiding the situation, as suggested by Calvo and Eysenck (2000), both cultures consider the presumed threat as crucial information to more cautiously guide their helping behaviour. A frequent mention of vigilant ways of helping across the

interview was found more in the female excerpts, suggesting their embraced vulnerability to the dangerous and unsafe condition. While feminist activism is widespread in today's society, it is reasonable for women to justify their action (or inaction) due to inherit societal norms of vulnerability and powerless that put them in a greater exposure to the risk (Butler & Gambetti, 2013).

Variation in how people taking care of others in need is predictable by variation of the cost and benefit of performing such behaviour. In many help-seeking events, Australians and Malaysians preferred tactical and efficient helping, particularly in an ambiguous situation. Both cultures opted to provide tactical helping after judging the costs and benefits associated with the intervention. According to Barclay and Reeve (2012), high-quality individuals tend to resort to efficient prosocial behaviours to lessen the costs and risks that accompany helping.

Within the discussion of the findings of this study, it is noteworthy to mention that most participants from Australia and Malaysia linked a significant level of sympathy and compassion to the formation of smooth, direct, and spontaneous helping. Malaysians may have a higher level of empathy, as mentioned in the affective schemas section. This is theoretically and practically the primary antecedent to direct helping (Eisenberg, Eggum, & Di Giunta, 2010), yet the findings pinpoint that Malaysian's behavioural consequences, specifically in the event where the need is interpreted as less pronounced, were quite ambivalent. Considering the presence of doubt in ambiguous situations, it has implicitly affected the way Malaysian participants deliver assistance, even when they experience high empathic concern while realising the need of another person.

Extensive forms of helping are associated with the presence of the request for help, and this point mostly came from the Australians. This finding should not be interpreted, as it is doubly hard to get help in Australia without asking for it. In contrast, the request for help is construed as the desperation of need – the victim is really in need to the extent that he/she could put aside the shyness and fear of others' evaluation of his/her efficacy to self-govern. Asking for help is challenging, especially within an individualist culture, where being independent and self-reliant are highly regarded (Chew, 2001). Thus, Australians are more likely than Malaysians to associate a helping request with the matter of urgency as it is not easy for them to expose their vulnerability and admit that they cannot cope with the situation. An explicit request also simplifies the help giver's efforts to think about and execute how the help could be best addressed in response to the recipient's need (Eagly & Koenig, 2009). From the cultural standpoint, direct and explicit styles of communication are favoured in individualistic cultures (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). It seems that the helping request serves as the guideline for the help-giver on how to perceive and have confidence in interpreting the recipient's needs.

Helping behaviour can be enacted in many ways, such as giving alternatives to the recipient's need instead of providing for exactly what he/she asks. From the findings, Malaysians were more likely to educate the recipient about the other choices of forms of helping. From personal accounts, this distribution potentially reflects the possible perceived imbalance of risks and benefit with respect to intervention. This interpretation was grounded in the understanding that the cost of both helping (cost to the donor) and non-helping (cost to the recipient) is high (Piliavin & Piliavin 1972; Bode, Miller, O'Gorman & Codling, 2015). As the participants explained, there is some tension when deciding whether or not to help, to balance out all the possible costs of helping such as personal harm, being fooled, inconvenience, with the costs of not helping including profound guilt, regret, others' attribution on inaction. Malaysians most often defined efficient helping as a win-win solution for both the donor and recipient. Another understanding that is possible for the interpretation of findings from this culture is that the prevalence of forms of illegal aggression and criminal behaviours has heightened sensations of danger and fear (Füredi, 2002). In contrast to the Australians, feelings of insecurity were especially prevalent among the Malaysian and contributed to the ideas about direct helping.

The literature on 'bystander effects' clearly illustrates the dynamic, factors and effects of this social psychological phenomenon. This literature is important since it allows for the comprehension and understanding of questions related to the facilitation and or inhibition of helping behaviour in the presence of a group of people. Generally, the number of bystanders potentially decreases various types of helping behaviour for three main reasons: diffusion of responsibility, pluralistic ignorance and evaluation apprehension (Latan P & Darley, 1970; LatanP & Dabbs, 1975). This body of research also focuses on the positive factors as determinants of bystander-oriented help-giving behaviour. Whether the dilemma is either trivial (i.e. picking up a dropped pen) or severe (i.e. rescuing a drowning victim), the helping reaction from someone to these help-seeking situations would catch another's attention and enhances the benefactor's social image (Chekroun & Brauer, 2002). Studies on the positive impact of crowd presence have also shown that the accomplished help-seeking behaviour depends most crucially on the level of emergency, that is, the higher the danger associated with an emergency, the more responsive the crowd (Fischer, Greitemeyer, Pollozek & Frey, 2006). As such, it is more difficult for a victim who is in high potential danger to seek help from an individual rather than a group of people. This could be explained by the *arousal: cost-reward* framework, which postulates that a dangerous and clear emergency is easier to recognise and thus will increase the arousal that can be best addressed only with helping reaction to the victim (Fischer *et al.,* 2006). In addition, the presence of others may attenuate helping in a dangerous emergency as an individual can seek support from the other bystanders who are more competent in handling

the emergency-related needs (van den Bos, Müller & van Bussel, 2009). However, the role of knowledge on the bystander effect has generated contradictory findings: the individual's knowledge on the negative effects of bystanders is insufficient to control his/her inhibitory reaction in subsequent help-seeking events (Katzev & Averill, 1984). Many Australian participants who have an awareness of the bystander effect tend to care very strongly for the victim, whereas Malaysians helping tendencies were more inhibited and restricted in a public place as explicitly outlined by the literature in this field.

In the sub-theme of indirect helping, Australians and Malaysians responded similarly to the stigmatised individual, particularly toward the drunkard and other substance abuser. The public in Malaysia holds many misperceptions of drunkenness due to their religious views, which abominate the consumption of alcohol. The public in Malaysia, referring to the Malays especially, underestimates (or overestimates) some common drunkenness symptoms due to their unfamiliarity with being drunk or meeting a drunkard. For Australians, the tendency to focus on the nature of uninformed risks associated with stigmatised individuals has led them to balance out between the perception and reality; consequently, indirect forms of helping are preferred. Füredi's (2002) approach through his *Culture of Fear* may also play a part in explaining this finding. He suggested that the tendency to generalise the fears and doubt about the uninformed risks may be rooted in the distrust of others. However, despite fear, worry and doubt, participants still want to help, but in a safer and more cautious way. The study of *arousal: cost-reward analysis* (Piliavin, et al., 1972) offers a rich theoretical explanation for this finding, as participants demonstrated that there is a tendency to intervene, although in an indirect way, if the perceived cost of not helping due to the uninformed fear of risks is intolerable, for example, self-blame (to the benefactor), or high danger to the victim.

Australian participants were more sensitive and mindful in offering help, especially toward the disadvantaged. Because inadequacy has been directly linked to assumptive helping (Butzel & Ryan, 1997), it is important to consider how Australians are being respectful to how social support is being offered and to what extent help is considered limitless. Australians see the irony in observing the interpersonal boundary so that the recipient's self-esteem and dignity are intact while furthering a sense of empathy with the intent to help. As a result, the greatest concern for Australians when confronting a non-serious help-seeking event, especially with the disadvantaged, is the existence of an explicit helping request.

As described in the previous paragraphs, Piliavin *et al.* (1981) believed that an economic approach, *cost-reward analysis,* serves as the basis in understanding an individual's helping behaviour in various circumstances. This study states that one of the Australian behavioural schemas is to assist others in a non-serious circumstance within one's own range of capabilities. An extensive form of helping

which requires an immense amount of time, effort and money would accumulate to high costs and therefore decrease the probability of help from a passer-by. However, to react passively to other's need is not straightforward; one still needs to evaluate the costs of not helping (for instance, the costs incurred to both passer-by and victim). Ultimately, the best personal decision is to contribute to the help-seeking event within one's preferred means of power, knowing that any stretch of it will result in a higher cost of helping to the benefactor.

Competency is a key factor in influencing the giving of help in a competency-related task. The finding, mainly from the Australians, supports the view that competency (for instance, repairing and maintaining machinery, training in first-aid and swimming) is a factor in facilitating intervention by boosting the confidence to intervene of the observer. It further confirms that competency adds extra responsibility and pressure to a bystander engaging in helping because not all other bystanders possess the same training and skills to intervene appropriately and efficiently; therefore, non-intervention would result to a more stringent condition. The literature is clear on the importance of competence and its interaction with the decision to intervene (Midlarsky, 1968). Although it is unclear how competence augments aiding, the research has focused on the positive relationship of competency and helping behaviour, suggesting high competence leads to the propensity to intervene in competency-related situations. This gap between competence, responsibility and providing help has attracted Bierhoff, Klein and Kramp (1990), who wanted to understand the relationship between these two subjects, what makes a high-competence person more responsible to decide to be a prosocial bystander. Initial attempts to understand this relationship have taken a survey approach, by which the participants were given several types of help-seeking scenarios, including a car accident. Bierhoff et al. (1990) developed a more extensive model to include decision confidence as an explanation for the competency-helpfulness connection. Their findings further confirmed that decision confidence mediates the significant relationship between competence and feelings of responsibility, an important key step to helpfulness.

**The decision to not act**

In terms of the most prominent reason for the inhibition in helping by Australians, it appears that a variety of fears can influence the way they process the threat accompanied with intervention. Some of this threat reduction attempt includes withdrawal from the help-seeking event. According to Cialdini and Kendrick (1976), people provide aid for egoistic purposes i.e., one's own welfare. Other researchers argue that helping is also done with the hope that aiding responses can terminate other's suffering, hence putting the victim in a better situation and improve well-being (Dovidio, Schroeder & Allen, 1990). Here, a model of *cost-benefit analysis* (Piliavin *et al.,* 1981) is used to resolve conflicts in predicting a response. The

payoff of helping will be not valued in the help-seeking circumstances where the perceived threat of helping (either to the benefactor or recipient) is high. The interjection of fear into this model can be applied in a few ways: first, fear can influence the benefactor's cognitive evaluation of the situation regardless of the clarity of the situational stimulus; second, fear can take place after evaluating certain cues. The cost of performing a helping behaviour for both conditions arouses apprehension, which in turns leads to inhibition.

An examination of the behavioural schemas for Malaysian participants who act less prosocially showed that bystander effects are among the primary factors contributing to inhibition. According to Darley and LatanP (1968), an apathetic bystander can assume that the number of other bystanders present at the help-seeking event makes it impossible for the target to be ignored, a social psychological phenomenon termed as diffusion of responsibility and social loafing. This assumption is consistent with most Malaysian's reasons for not helping.

In terms of the detrimental effect of assumptive helping, Nadler, Fischer and Ben-Itzhak (1983) reported that the inherent power disparities of the benefactor-recipient relationship can cause the reception of helping to be seen as dependent and lacking self-insufficiency. This appears to be relevant to the notion revolving around helping resistance among Australians in this study who reported that unrequested helping can denigrate the help-recipient's resilience and capabilities to be independent, and therefore, giving some space for them to function like any others is favoured. However, while a few Australians hesitated to offer direct assumptive helping toward another whom they think is in need, others appeared to be more apprehensive of expressing their empathy toward the disadvantaged. The majority of Australian participants did not easily convey their generosity to the blind man who was about to cross the road, while previous research found the alternative reaction, indicating that the helping response toward the physical handicapped person was much more automated (Slochower, Wein, White, Firstenberg & DiGuillo, 1980). Prior research was conducted over the last 35 years which signified enormous societal change including the order of the day where everyone has the right to be treated equally and live independently.

The Malaysian participants were more focused than their Australian counterparts on not delivering helping in an appropriate way which could potentially aggravate the situation. Lack of experience and subjective skills restricted their helping tendency in competency-related help-seeking events. The importance of competency in this study was consistent with prior research (Midlarsky, 1968; Bierhoff, Klein & Kramp, 1990).

**CONCLUSION**

Findings point to the involvement of cultural values of individualism and collectivism at individual interpretations of helping behaviour, which could be

seen in the differences of how Australian and Malaysian perceive the recipient, the help-seeking and help-giving behaviour and the experience of emotions encountering the event.

The results of the thematic analysis indicated that both Australians and Malaysians suggest that strangers who portray looking-trustworthy-person's image, genuine body language of in need of help, neat and tidy clothing, helping request, and clear emergency cues such as the sight of blood, are more likely to receive help than the others. These findings also revealed that helping request is a crucial aspect in determining prosocial acts among Australians, due to their emphasis and recognition on other's independence. In addition, assumptive helping could potentially denigrate social values. Meanwhile, Malaysian individual's boundary are less pronounced, hence, it is common to see people in the society asking and giving help.

Individualist and collectivist cultures in Australia and Malaysia respectively are often different in terms of their perception toward the stigmatised people, such as the beggar and physically disabled. Although both cultures differ in their treatment of the stigmatised person, the act reflects the influence of religious beliefs and prejudice against this group of people. Obedience to Islamic tenets is an important factor in the Malay's experience of helping behaviour toward the beggar, while for Australians who preferred to be not so generous to them considered by-and-large that homelessness was self-inflicted. Australians prefer not to continuously be concerned in the perception of taking responsibility to help people with disabilities because presumptuous helping could lead to denigration. Most Malaysian initiate helping people with disabilities. Malays extend the help rather than assume that these people could operate their live independently, partly, due to the socially acceptable belief, 'We must concern toward people with disabilities'.

In both the Australian context and Malaysian context, women and urban dwellers are reluctant to help. Women often seemed to be more vulnerable, which extended to their ignorance towards high-cost emergencies guided by their fear, but not necessarily by selfishness. Malaysians are consistently less responsive toward intoxicated people because they discern such behaviour as social taboo and against Islamic principles. In contrast, Australians consider the decision not to help toward certain group of people such as homeless, people with disabilities and women is due to their appreciation of other's capability to function adequately and independently.

Encountering a help-seeking event could arouse the curiosity, hence, the individual would aware of other's distress, the first important step in deciding whether to help. Australians in general are more curious in the help-seeking occurrences, perhaps, due to their embraced Independent cultural values. However, curiosity without a care could not guarantee prosocial tendencies. In addition, Australians associate level of trust with helping. Thus, Australians perceive that in

order to engage in social helping, there must be action taken to restore generalised trust. Australians and Malaysians agree that the degree of connectedness could potentially activate the 'feeling of alike'; a critical element of a decision to help.

Australians and Malaysians strongly agree that empathy is one of the most prominent affective schemas that the individual must feel before deciding to help. However, both cultures differ in regard to which component of empathy was mostly activated when witnessing others in need. Fundamentally, in a collectivist culture such as Malaysia, helping behaviour tends to be guided by affective-based empathy, characterised by feeling of compassion, care and pity. In contrast, an individualist culture such as Australia exhibits analytic cognitive thinking in terms of their emphasis on cognitive-based empathy in order to act in the interest of other's well-being. Guilt is another aspect in affective schemas that both Australians and Malaysians engage as a precursor in deciding whether to intervene; feeling of blame and not taking responsibility when observing another in need is alleviated in the act of helpfulness.

Australians and Malaysians are guarded in their response to a help-seeking behaviour, particularly when it involves one's well-being and survival. Fear in itself results in an inhibition to help. Malaysians are also on occasion reluctant to help when confronted by other-focused emotion and evaluation and the fear of a negative evaluation. Australians and Malaysians are particularly reluctant to help when confronted by a high-cost emergency in which the helper's life and well-being is in jeopardy. An individual in either the Australian or Malaysian context is not likely to intervene if the costs outweigh the rewards and this consideration is heightened in a situation perceived to be potentially dangerous or harmful.

Many of the Australian and Malaysian participants were aware of the importance of being considerate and tactical in determining their intention to help particularly in the ambiguous help-seeking event where a rushed decision to help could result in unfavourable costs and risks. Australian and Malaysian women were particularly vigilant, because they perceive themselves as more vulnerable and exposed to the threat. For Malaysians whose sympathy level is higher, the proclivity to provide direct and smooth helping is conditional and is associated cues indicating that the help request is legitimate. The presence of an explicit helping request has been construed as 'real', particularly among Australians who highly value self-governing. Nonetheless, investigating the influence of the degree of seriousness of the help-seeking event on the helping behaviour, when the situation is not urgent, Australians balance the cost of the intervention with the reward prior to helping.

**Strengths**

An important element of this exploratory qualitative research study is the exploration of different views from an Individualist culture (Australia) and a Collectivist culture (Malaysia) on how experience in a help-seeking event should be defined, and,

accordingly, how helping (or non-helping) is perceived. From very early on, similar and different views have been formulated about the helping norms and other socialisation and cultural factors influencing prosocial behaviour in each culture. This provides the researcher the opportunity to ascertain the uniqueness of cultural meanings on people's interpretation of helping behaviour from direct interaction with participants representing individualist and collectivist cultures.

This research supports the existing literature and adds some fresh findings to the understanding of social and cultural effects on the interpretation of helping behaviour. The findings of the study are led by three research questions and reveal that there are connections and disparities in Australian and Malaysian interpretation of helping or non-helping that justify further research. The study demonstrates that the interpretation and motivation to display helping behaviour in Australians' learning of helping behaviour are partly influenced by cultural meanings illustrating the societal values of independence, freedom, and achievement. For Malaysians, the cultural conceptions of belongingness, responsibility, and dependence are found prevalence through the findings of the interview.

Numerous discussions have focused on the situational and dispositional determinants of helping behaviour. This qualitative exploration of the acquisition of altruistic response has brought together cultural meanings from persons in an individualist population and persons in a collectivist population. The Australian participants reveal the role of cultural implications in their perception of help-seeking behaviours, help recipients, situational as well as personal determinants of altruism and helping behaviour. The significance of explicit helping requests reflects and implies individualist values which emphasise independence, self-government and privacy. These concerns are of great importance to both helper and recipient; the help is not presumptively offered and the help is not easily asked. By contrast, the act of giving and requesting help in Malaysia is much more linear, without too much perception and expectation involved.

Additionally, Australians' expression of individuality can be found through their perception of and response to stigmatised individuals, for example, beggars and people with disabilities. Australians who consider homelessness to be self-inflicted are less inclined to help. By contrast, Malaysians, who accept beggars as deserving of a proportion of others' wealth as well as their sympathy exhibit more positive their reactions to helping such people. The findings of this study also pinpoint the differences in terms of how Australians and Malaysians emotionally and behaviourally react to the people with disabilities who appear to be experiencing difficulties while operating their daily living.

## LIMITATIONS

Limitations of this study include restricted demographic characteristics of the participants from both cultures. First of all, the participants' level of education in

this study (the lowest is undergraduate or equivalent) might lead to a bias of response on one particular question or vignette. Different responses of these questions and vignettes from different background of study would be necessary if the study were to be replicated. Second, the exclusion of other ethnicities in Malaysia, such as Chinese and Indian, may have made it difficult to generalise the effects of 'Malaysian cultural stereotypes', not restricted to 'Malay cultural membership'. The inclusion of other ethnicities, both in Australia and Malaysia, would be required to properly interpret the effects of a bigger cultural membership (nation) on perception of and reaction to the help-seeking events.

Although the present study suggests that qualitative research is the best design to answer the research concerns, the content of the findings are limited to what the nature of the research design can offer. One implication is that the content of the identified findings may have been overgeneralised. An exploration and explanation of the complexity of prosocial emotions such as empathy, for example, would have offered some insights, but the degree and measurement of empathy levels of each cultural group is unknown. The use of quantitative research design is more likely to contribute to the measure of to what extent Australians are different from Malaysians in terms of their level of empathy, and a resort to statistical analysis may be necessary for reliability and validity purposes.

Lastly, it is possible that the interviewers' following questions to the answers given by the research participants were not effectively directed to the sequel of the narratives because of fatigue, lack of attention or competency-related factors. In this qualitative research, the background of both interviewers in counselling was a valuable aspect of the interview process. Nevertheless, there is always a room for improvement. With a greater focus on wording used by the participants, deeper and richer meanings of an understanding could be achieved. Moreover, there is a possibility that the participants tended to appear good to the researcher and the public, a term known as social desirability. Perhaps the response given in the interview was distinguished from the real life behaviour, as to act is not as easy as saying.

## *References*

Abdul-Rahman, A., & Hailes, S. (2000). Proceedings of the 33rd Annual Hawai'i International Conference on System Sciences. IEEE.

Amato, P. R. (1983). Helping behavior in urban and rural environments: Field studies based on a taxonomic organization of helping episodes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 45*(3), 571-586.

*http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.45.3.571*

Anker, A. E., & Feeley, T. H. (2011). Are nonparticipants in prosocial behaviour merely innocent bystanders? *Health Communication* (26), 13-24

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*. New York, NY: General Learning Press.

Banister, P., Bunn, G., Burman, E., Daniels, J., Duckett, P., Doodley, D., Lawthom, R., Parker, I., Runswick-Cole, K., Sixsmith, J., Smailes, S., Tindall, C., & Whalen, P. (2011). *Qualitative Methods in Psychology: A Research Guide.* (2nd ed.). England: Open University Press.

Banyard, V. L. (2008). Measurement and correlates of prosocial bystander behaviour: The case of interpersonal violence. *Violence Vict.* 23 (1), 83-97.

Baron, R. (1997). The sweet smell of .helping: Effects of pleasant ambient fragrance on prosocial behaviour in shopping malls. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23, 498–503.

Baron, R. A., & Byrne, D. (2000). *Social Psychology* (9th ed.). MA, USA. Allyn and Bacon.

Baron, J., & Miller, J. G. (2000). Limiting the scope of moral obligations to help: A cross-cultural investigation. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 31, 703–725.

Bar-Tal, D., Raviv, A., & Goldberg, M. (1982). Helping behaviour among preschool children: Observational study. *Child Development*, 53, 371-376.

Batson, C. D. (1991). *The Altruism Question: Toward a Social Psychological Answer.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Batson, C. D. (1987). Prosocial motivation: Is it ever truly altruistic? In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology,* Vol. 20, pp. 65-122). San Diego, CA, US: Academic Press.

*http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60412-8*

Batson, C. D., Chang, J., Orr, R., & Rowland, J. (2002). Empathy, attitudes, and action: Can feeling for a member of a stigmatized group motivate one to help the group? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28,* 1656-1666.

Batson, C. D., Lishner, D. A., Cook, J., & Sawyer, S. (2005). Similarity and nurturance: Two possible sources of empathy for strangers. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, *27*, 15-25.

Baumeister, R. F., Stillwell, A. M., & Heatherton, T. F. (1994). Guilt: An interpersonal approach, *Psychological Bulletin, 115,* 243-267.

Bekkers, R., & Wilhelm, M. O. (2006). Helping but not always empathic: Helping behaviour, dispositional empathic concern, and the principle of care. *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 73(1), 11-32.

Bénabou, R., & Tirole, J. (2005). Incentives and prosocial behavior. *National Bureau of Economic Research,* 1-7. Retrieved September 11, 2012, from NBER Working Paper Series.

Berg, J., Dickhaut, J., McCabe, K. (1995). Trust, reciprocity, and social history. *Games and Economic Behavior* 10, 122–142.

Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge.* Garden City, NY: Anchor Book.

Berkowitz, L, & Daniels, L. R. (1963). Responsibility and dependency. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology,* 66(5), 429-436.

Bierhoff, H.-W. (2002). *Prosocial Behaviour.* East Sussex: Psychology Press

Bierhoff, H. W., Klein, R., & Kramp, P. (1990). Factors inhibiting the giving of help: Studies on the causes and recommendations on how to reduce them. Research reports of the Federal Agency of Road Traffic. Aachen: Mainz.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners.* UK: Sage Publications, Inc.

Burger, J. M. (2015). *Personality* (9th ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

Burger, J. M., Sanchez, J., Imberi, J. E., & Grande, L. R. (2009). The norm of reciprocity as an internalized social norm: Returning favors even when no one finds out. *Social Influence, 4*(1), 11-17.

*http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15534510802131004*

Burgess-Limerick, T. & Burgess-Limerick, R. (1998). Conversational interview and multiple case research in psychology. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 50,* 63-70.

Butler, J., & Gambetti, Z. (2013, September 16-19). *Rethinking vulnerability and resistance.* Paper presented at the Women Creating Change Workshop, Istanbul. Retrieved 18th Jan 2016 from http://socialdifference.columbia.edu/projects/rethinking-vulnerability-feminism-social-change.

Butzel, J. S., & Ryan, R. M. (1997). The dynamics of volitional reliance: A motivational perspective of dependence, independence, and social support. In G. R. Pierce., B Lakey., I. G. Sarason., & B..R. Sarason. *Sourcebook of Social Support and Personality.* New York: Springer Science and Business Media.

Calvo, M. G., & Eysenck, M. W. (2000). Early vigilance and late avoidance of threat processing: Repressive coping vs low/high anxiety. *Cognition and Emotion, 14,* 276-787.

Camps, J., Stouten, J., Tuteleers, C., & van Son, K. (2014). Smells like cooperation? Unpleasant body odour and people's perceptions and helping behaviours. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 44,* 87-93.

Cardwell, M., & Flanagan, C. (2012). *Psychology A2: The Complete Companion.* Oxford: OUP Press.

Cardwell, M., & Flanagan, C. (2005). *Psychology as the Complete Companion.* United Kingdom: Nelson Thornes Ltd.

Carlson, B. E. (1996). Dating violence: Student beliefs about consequences. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence,* 11, 3-18.

Carlson, M., & Miller, N. (1987). Explanation of the relation between negative mood and helping. *Psychological Bulletin, 102*(1), 91-108.

*http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.102.1.91*

Chekroun, P., & Brauer, M. (2002). The bystander effect and social control behavior: The effect of the presence of others on people's reactions to norm violations. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 32, 853–867.

Chew, P. K. (2001). *The Conflict and Culture Reader.* New York: New York University Press.

Cialdini, R., & Kendrik, D. (1976). Altruism as hedonism: A social development perspective on the relationship of negative mood state and helping. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 34, 907-914.

Cialdini, R. B., Schaller, M., Houlihan, D., Arps, K., Fultz, J., Beaman, A. L. (1987). Empathy-based helping: Is it selflessly or selfishly motivated? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*(4), 749-758.

Conrad, F. G., Schober, M. F. (2000). Clarifying question meaning in a household telephone survey. *Public Opinion Quarterly,* 64, 1-28.

Conway, P., & Peetz, J. (2012). When does feeling moral actually make you a better person? Conceptual abstraction moderates whether past moral deeds motivate consistency or compensatory behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin. 38(7),* 907-919.

Crick, N. R. & Dodge, K. A. (1994). A review and reformulation of social information processing mechanisms in children's social adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin, 115,* 74-101.

Darley, L. & Batson, D. (1973). From Jerusalem to Jericho: A study of situational and dispositional variables in helping behaviour. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 27*(1), 100-108.

Darley, J. M., LatanP, B. (1968). Bystander intervention in emergencies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 3, 377-383.

Deci, E. L., Koestner, R., & Ryan, R. M. (2001). Extrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation in education: Reconsidered once again. *Review of Educational Research, 71*(1), 1-27.

Desyani, A. (2013, November 28). Diberi sedekah, pengemis bertahan di Jakarta. *Tempo*. [Online] Available: http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2013/11/28/083533171/Diberi-Sedekah-Pengemis-Bertahan-di-Jakarta

DeVore, C. H., Beck, F. M., Clark, P. M., & Goorey, N. J. (1989). Cognitive style as related to emotional empathy. *Journal of Dental Education*, 53(9), 538-541.

Dibley, L. (2011). Analyzing narrative data using McCormack's lenses. *Nurse Researcher*, *18*(3), 13-19. Retrieved from http://nurseresearcher.rcnpublishing.co.uk/news-andopinion/commentary/analysing-qualitative-data

Diener, E., & Diener, M. (1995). Cross-cultural correlates of life satisfaction and self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68, 653–663.

Doob, A. N., & Ecker, B. P. (1970). Stigma and compliance. *Journal of Personal and Social Psychology, 14,* 302-304.

Dovidio, J. F. (1984). Helping behaviour and altruism: An empirical and conceptual overview. In L. Berkowitz. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 17.* Florida: Academic Press, Inc.

Dovidio, J. F., Piliavin, J. A., Gaertner, S. L., Schroeder, D. A., & Clark, R. D. III. (1991). The arousal: Cost-reward model and the process of intervention: A review of the evidence. In M. S. Clark (Ed.), *Review of personality and social psychology, Vol. 12. Prosocial behavior* (pp. 86-118). Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.

Dovidio, J., Schroeder, D., & Allen, J. (1990). Specificity of empathy-induced helping: Evidence for altruistic motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 59, 249-260.

Dovidio, J. F., Piliavin, J. A., Schroeder, D. A., & Penner, L. A. (2006). *The Social Psychology of Prosocial Behavior.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Duclos, R., & Barasch, A. (2014). Prosocial behaviour in intergroup relations: How donor self-construal and recipient group-membership shape generosity. *Journal of Consumer Research, 41.* doi: 10.1086/674976.

Eagly, A. H. (1987). *Sex Differences in Social Behavior: A Social-Role Interpretation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Eagly, A. H., & Koenig, A. M. (2009). Social role theory of sex differences and similarities: Implication for prosocial behaviour. In D. J. Canary, & K. Dindia. Sex Differences and Similarities in Communication. 2nd (Ed.) New York: Taylor Francis Group.

Eisenberg, N., Cameron, E., & Tyron, K. (1984). Prosocial behaviour in the preschool years. In E. Staub, D. Bar-Tal, J. Karylowski, & J. Rekowski (Eds.) *Development and maintenance of prosocial behaviour.* (pp. 101-114). New York: Plenum.

Eisenberg, N., Eggum, N. D., & DiGiunta, L. (2010). Empathy-related responding: Associations with prosocial behavior, aggression, and intergroup relations. *Social Issues Policy Review, 4,* 143–180. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-2409.2010.01020.x

Eisenberg, N., & Mussen, P. (1989). The roots of prosocial behavior in children. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Feldman, R. E. (1968). Response to compatriot and foreigner who seek assistance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 10,* 202-214.

Fischer, C.T. (2005). *Qualitative Research Methods for Psychologists: Introduction through Empirical Studies.*Burlington, Elsevier.

Fischer, P., Greitemeyer, T., Pollozek, F., & Frey, D. (2006). The unresponsive bystander: Are bystanders more responsive in dangerous emergencies? *European Journal of Social Psychology, 36,* 267–278.

Fisher, J. D., Nadler, A., & Whitcher-Alagna, S. J. (1982). Recipient reactions to aid. *Psychological Bulletin*, *91*, 27–54.

Fisher, R. J. & Ackerman, D. (1998). The effects of recognition and group need on volunteerism: A social norm perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research, 25,* 262-275.

Flynn, F. J., Reagans, R. E., Amanatullah, E. T., & Ames, D. R. (2006). Helping one's way to the top: Self-monitors achieve status by helping others and knowing who helps whom. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91,* 1123-1137.

Frank, R. H. (1988). *Passions Within Reasons: The Strategic Role of the Emotions.* New York:Norton.

Froming, W. J., Nasby, W., & McManus, J. (1998). Prosocial self-schemas, self-awareness, and children's prosocial behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.* 75(3).766-777.

Füredi, F. (2002). *The Culture of Fear: Risk-Taking and the Morality of Low-Expectation.* London: Continuum.

Gagné, M. (2003). The role of autonomy support and autonomy orientation in prosocial behavior engagement. *Motivation and Emotion, 27,* 199-223.

Gelfand, D. M., & Hartmann, D. P. (1982). Response consequences and attributions: Two contributors to prosocial behaviour. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.), *The Development of Prosocial Behaviour* (pp. 167-196). New York: Academic.

Geller, D. M. & Malia, G. P. (1981). The effects of noise on helping behaviour reconsidered. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 2*(1), 11-25.

Gino, F., & Desai, S. D. (2012). Memory lane and morality; How childhood memories promote prosocial behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 102(4),* 743-758.

Gould, D. (1996) Using vignettes to collect data for nursing research studies: How valid are the findings? *Journal of Clinical Nursing, 5,* 207-212.

Gudykunst, W. B., & Ting-Toomey, S. (1988). *Culture and Interpersonal Communication.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, *18*(1), 59-82. doi:10.1177/1525822X05279903

Halabi, S., Nadler, A., & Dovidio, J. F. (2011). Reactions to receiving assumptive help: The moderating effects of group membership and perceived need for help. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *41*, 2793–2815.

Haley, K. J., & Fessler, D. M. T. (2005). Nobody's watching? Subtle cues affect generosity in an anonymous economic game. *Evolution and Human Behaviour,* 26, 245-256

Harari, H., Harari, O., & White, R. V. (1985). The reaction to rape by American male bystanders. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 125*, 653–658.

Hechter, M., & Karl-Dieter, O. (2001), Social Norms. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.Heider, F. (1958). The psychology of interpersonal relations. New York: Wiley

Hill, G. (2001). *A Level Psychology Through Diagrams.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hoffman, M. L. (2000). *Empathy and moral development: Implications for caring and justice.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hoffman, M. L. (1982). Development of prosocial motivation: Empathy and guilt. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.). *The Development of Prosocial Behaviour* (pp. 281-313). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014

Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind.* London, UK: McGraw-Hill.

Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Holmes, J. (2001). *The Search for the Secure Base: Attachment Theory and Psychotherapy.* Hove: Brunner-Routledge.

Howard, A. M., Landau, S., & Pryor, J. B. (2014). Peer bystanders to bullying: Who wants to play with the victim? *Journal Abnormal Child Psychology,* 42 (2), 265-276

Inglehart, R**., &** Oyserman**,** D. (2004). Individualism, autonomy, and self-expression. In H**.** Vinken**,** J**.** Soeters**, &** P**.** Ester **(**Eds**.)**. *Comparing Cultures**,** Dimensions of Culture in a Comparative Perspective* (pp. 74–96). Leiden**,** The Netherlands**:** Brill**.**

Irwin, K. (2009**)**. Prosocial behavior across cultures: The effects of institutional versus generalized trust. In S.R. Thye and E.J. Lawler (Eds.) Altruism and Prosocial Behavior in Groups (Advances in Group Processes, Vol. 26) (pp. 165-198). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.

Ito, T. A., Miller, N., & Bekhuis, T. (2014). *Helping Behavior Theories.Encyclopedia of Health. Salem Press*

Iwakuma, M., & Nussbaum, J. F. (2000). Intercultural views of people with disabilities in Asia and Africa. In D. O. Braithwaite, & T. L. Thompson. *Handbook of Communication and People with Disabilities: Research and Application.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Johnson, D. E., Erez, A., Kiker, D. S., & Motowidlo, S. J. (2002). Liking and attributions of motives on relationship between a ratee's reputation and helpful behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87,* 808-815.

Kagitcibasi, C. (1997). Individualism and collectivism. In Berry, J. W., Segall, M. H., & Kagitcibasi, C. *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology: Social Behavior and Applications* (Vol. 3, pp.1-50). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Katzev, R. D., & Averill, A. K. (1984). Knowledge of the bystander problem and its impact on subsequent helping behaviour. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 123(25).* 223-230.

Kelling, G. L., & Coles, C. M. (1996). *Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in our Communities.* New York: Free Press.

Kenrick, D. T., Baumann, D. J., & Cialdini, R. B. (1979). A step in the socialisation of altruism as hedonism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 37,* 745-755.

Kim, H. S., & Drolet, A. (2003). Choice and self-expression: A cultural analysis of variety-seeking. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*(2), 373-382.

Knafo, A., Schwartz, S. H., & Levine, R. V. (2009). Helping strangers is lower in embedded cultures. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *40*, 875-879.

Koestner, R., Franz, C., & Weinberger, J. (1990). The family origins of empathic concern: A 26-year longitudinal study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58,* 709-717.

Kogut, T., Slovic, P., & Västfjäll, D. (2015). Scope insensitivity in helping decisions: Is it a matter of culture and values? *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 144*(6), 1042-1052.

Kolb, K., & Weede, S. (2001). *Teaching Prosocial Skills to Young Children to Increase Emotionally Intelligent Behaviour* (Master Thesis). Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED456916.pdf

Kraus, M. W., Côté, S., & Keltner, D. (2010). Social class, contextualism and empathic accuracy. *Psychological Science*, 21(11), 1716-23. doi:10.1177/0956797610387613

Kugler, K., Jones. W. H. (1994). On conceptualising and assessing guilt. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62,* 318-327.

Kumar, V. B. (2010). *A Textbook of Social Psychology.* Mumbai: Himalaya Publishing House PVT. LTD.

Lampridis, E., & Papastylianou, D. (2014). Prosocial behavioral tendencies and orientation toward individualism-collectivism of Greek young adults. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth,* DOI: 10.1080/02673843.2014.890114.

Latan P, B., & Dabbs, J. M. (1975). Sex, group size, and helping in three cities. *Sociometry*, *38,* 180-194. doi:10.2307/2786599

Latane´, B., & Darley, J. M. (1970). *The Unresponsive Bystander: Why Doesn't he Help?* New York, NY: Appleton-Century-Croft.

Latané, B., & Darley, J. M. (1968). Group inhibition of bystander intervention in emergencies. *Journal of Personality and Social Behavior, 10,* 215-221.

Lee, F., Hallahan, M., & Herzog, T. (1996). Explaining real life events: How culture and domain shape attributions. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 22, 732-741.

Levenson, R., & Ruef, A. (1992). Empathy - a physiological substrate. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63(2), 234-246. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.63.2.234

Levine, R. V. (2003). Measuring helping behavior across cultures. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, Unit 5. Retrieved from *http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/orpc/ vol5/iss3/2*

Levine, R. V., Martinez, T., Brase, G., & Sorenson, K. (1994). Helping in 36 U.S. Cities. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *67*, 69-81.

Levine, R. V., Norenzayan, A., & Philbrick, K. (2001). Cross-cultural differences in helping strangers. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *32*, 543-560. *http://dx.doi.org/ 10.1177/ 0022022101032005002*

Liebert, R. M., Sprafkin, J. N., & Poulos, R. W. (1975). *Television and social behaviour: A prototype for experimental programming.* Paper presented at the annual convention of the American Educational Research Association, Washington.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991).Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, *98*, 224-253.

Mathews, K. E., & Canon, L. K. (1975). Environmental noise level as a determinant of helping behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 32*(4), 571-577.

*http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.32.4.571*

Meyer, W. U. (1982). Indirect communications about perceived ability estimates. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 74,* 688-697.

Midlarsky, E. & Hannah, M. E. (1985). Competence, reticence, and helping by children and adolescents. *Developmental Psychology, 21,* 534-541.

Midlarsky, E. & Midlarsky, M. (1973). Some determinants of aiding under experimentally induced stress. *Journal of Personality, 41,* 305-327.

Milgram, S. (1970). The experience of living in cities. *Science,* 167, 1461-1468

Miller, J. G., Bersoff, D. M., & Harwood, R. L. (1990). Perceptions of social responsibilities in India and in the United States: Moral imperatives or personal decisions? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58,* 33-47. *http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022- 3514.58.1.33*

Miller, P., Kozu, J., and Davis, A. (2001). Social *Influence, Empathy, and Prosocial Behavior in Cross-cultural Perspective.* In W. Wosinka, R. Cialdini, D. Barret, and J. Reykowski (Eds.), *The Practice of Social Influence in Multiple Cultures.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Myers, M. W., Laurent, S. M., & Hodges, S. D. (2014). Perspective taking instructions and self-other overlap: Different motives for helping. *Motiv Emot, 38,* 224-234.

Nadler, A. (1986). Help seeking as a cultural phenomenon: Differences between city and kibbutz dwellers. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51* (5), 976-982.

Nadler, A., & Fisher, J. D. (1986). The role of threat to self-esteem and perceived control in recipient reactions to aid: Theory development and empirical validation. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 19, pp. 81–123). New York: Academic Press.

Nadler, A., Fisher, J. D., & Ben-Itzhak, S. (1983). With a little help from my friend: Effect of single or multiple act aid as a function of donor and task characteristics. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *44*, 310–321.

Oyserman, D., & Lee, S. W. S. (2008). Does culture influence what and how we think? Effects of priming individualism and collectivism. *Psychological Bulletin, 134* (2), 311-342.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Perugini, M., Gallucci, M., Presaghi, F., & Ercolani, A. P. (2003). The Personal Norm of Reciprocity. *European Journal of Personality, 17*(4), 251-283.

*http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/per.474*

Piliavin, J. A., Dovidio, J. F., Gaertner, S. L., & Clark, R. D. (1981). *Emergency intervention.* New York: Academic Press.

Piliavin, J. A., Piliavin, I. M. (1972). Effect of blood on reactions to a victim. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 23*, 353-361.

Piliavin, I. M., Piliavin, J. A., & Rodin, J. (1975). Costs, diffusion, and the stigmatised victim. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 32 (3),* 429-438.

Piliavin, I.M., Rodin, J.A. & Piliavin, J. (1969) Good Samaritanism: An underground phenomenon? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *13*, 289 -99

Realo, A., & Luik, M. (2002). On the relationship between collectivism and empathy in the context of personality traits. *TRAMES Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences, 3* (6), 218-233.

Richman, C. L., Brown. K. P., & Clark, M. L. (1984). The relationship between self-esteem and maladaptive behaviors in high-school students. *Social Behavior and Personality, 12(2),*177-185.

Roberts, G. (2005). Cooperation through interdependence. Animal Behavior, 70, 901–908. doi:10.1016/j.anbehav.2005.02.006

Rushton, J. P., & Teachman, G. (1978). The effects of positive reinforcement, attributions, and punishment on model induced altruism in children. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 4,* 322-325.

Sandoval, B. A., & Lee, F. (2006). When is seeking help appropriate? How norms affect help seeking in organizations. In S. A. Karabenick & R. S. Newman (Eds.). *Help Seeking in Academic Settings: Groups, Goals, and Contexts.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Sassenrath, C., Pfattheicher, S., & Keller, J. (2017). I might ease your pain, but only if you're sad: The impact of the empathized emotion in the empathy-helping association. *Motivation and Emotion, 41,* 96-106.

Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the structure and content of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.). *Advances in Experimental SocialPsychology* (Vol. 25, pp. 1-65). Orlando, FL: Academic.

Sibicky, M. E., Schroeder, D. A., & Dovidio, J. F. (1995). Empathy and helping: Considering the consequences of intervention. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 16* (4), 435-453.

Silveri, M. (2007). An analysis of helping behaviour. *The Journal of the Honors Program,* 82-92.

Simpson, B., & Willer, R. (2008). Altruism and indirect reciprocity: The interaction of person and situation in prosocial behaviour. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 71* (1), 37-52.

Singelis, T. M. (1994). The measurement of independent and interdependent self-construals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin.* 20 (5). 580-591.

Skinner, B. F. (1948). Superstition' in the pigeon. *Journal of Experimental Psychology, 38*, 168-172.

Slochower, J., Wein, L., White, J., Firstenberg, S., & DiGuilio. (1980). Severe physical handicaps and helping behaviour. *The Journal of Social Psychology,* 112, 313-314.

Small, D. A., & Verrochi, N. M. (2009). The Face of Need: Facial Emotion Expression on Charity Advertisements. *Journal of Marketing Research* 777 Vol. XLVI (December 2009), 777–787.

Smith, J. (1995). Semi structured interviewing and Qualitative Analysis In J. Smith, R. Harre & L. Van Langehove (Eds). *Rethinking Methods in Psychology,* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Smith, P. B., & Bond, M. H. (1998). *Social Psychology Across Cultures* (2nd ed.). London: Prentice Hall.

Smith, J.A. & Osborn, M. (2003) Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J.A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods.*

Smith, K. D., Keating, J. P., & Stotland, E. (1989). Altruism reconsidered: The effect of denying feedback on a victim's status to empathic witnesses. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57,* 641-650.

Sommers, T. (2012). *Relative Justice: Cultural Diversity, Free Will, and Moral Responsibility.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Somogyi, E.,& Esseily,R. (2014). Mimicry enhances observational learning in 16- Month-Old infants. *PLoS ONE* 9:e113695. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0113695

Spratt, T. (2001) The influence of child protection orientation on child welfare practice. *British Journal of Social Work,* 31, 933-954.

Steblay, N. M. (1987). Helping behaviour in rural and urban environment: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 102,* 346-356.

Sturmer, S., Snyder, M., & Omoto, A. M. (2005). Prosocial emotions and helping: The moderating role of group membership. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88*(3), 532-546.

Sun, B., Lou, B., Li, W., & Lv, L. (2011). The relation of perspective taking and helping behaviour: The role of empathy and group status. *Proceedings of the 2011 International Conference of Social Science and Humanity.* IPEDR, Vol. 5. (2011). Singapore: IACSIT Press.

Szabla, M. (2012). *The influence of imagined helping behaviour on self-esteem: Social psychology perspective* (Bachelor Thesis). Retrieved from http://arno.uvt.nl/show.cgi?fid=122990

Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the self: The making of modern identity.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Toi, M., & Batson, C. D. (1982). More evidence that empathy is a source of altruistic motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 43*(2), 281-292.

*http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.43.2.281*

Triandis, H. C. (2001). Individualism-collectivism and personality. *Journal of Personality, 69,* 907-924. http://doi.org/cg4kgt

Triandis, H. C. (1996). The psychological measurement of cultural syndromes. *American Psychologist, 51* (4), 407-415.

Uslaner, E. M. (2004) *Where you stand depends on where your grandparents sat: the inheritability of generalized trust.* Mimeo, University of Maryland.

van Bommel M., van Prooijen, J., Elffers, H., van Lange, P. A. M. (2014). Intervene to be seen: The power of a camera in attenuating the bystander effect. *Social Psychology and Personality Science, 5* (4), 459-466.

van den Bos, K., Muller, P. A., & van Bussel, A. A. L. (2009). Helping to overcome intervention inertia in bystander's dilemmas: Behavioral disinhibition can improve the greater good. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 45,* 873–878. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2009.03.014

Vaughan, J., Eisenberg, N., French, D. C., Purwono, U., Suryanti, T. A., & Pidada, S. (2009). Testing aspects of compassionate love in a sample of Indonesian adolescents. In B., Fehr, S., Sprecher, & L. G., Underwood. *The Science of Compassionate Love: Theory, Research, and Applications.* United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Veenhoven, R. (1999). Quality-of-life in individualistic society: A comparison of 43 nations in the early 1990's. *Social Indicators Research, 48,* pp 157-186.

Verderber, R. F., Verderber, K. S., & Sellnow, D. (2012). *COMM 2*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Vrugt, A., & Vet, C. (2009). Effects of a smile on mood and helping behaviour. *Social Behaviour and Personality, 37 (9),* 1251-1258.

Wardhaugh, J. (2009). Regulating social space: Begging in two South Asian cities. Crime Media Culture, 5(3), 1-9.

Watt Jr., J. H., Welch, A. J., & Shea, C. G. (1977). *Pro- and anti-social behaviour Subsequent to arousal and observational learning from television*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education to Journalism, Wisconsin

Wehman, P. & McLaughlin, P. (1981). Program development in special education. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Weiner, B. (1986). An attributional theory of motivation and emotion. Berlin: Springer-Verlag.

Weng, H. Y., Fox, A. S., Hessenthaler, H. C., Stodola, D. E., & Davidson, R. J. (2015) The Role of Compassion in Altruistic Helping and Punishment Behavior. PLoS ONE 10(12): e0143794. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0143794

Whiting, B. B., & Whiting, J. W. M. (1975). Children of six cultures: A psycho-cultural analysis. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Widdowson, M. (2010). *Transactional Analysis: 100 Key Points and Techniques.* East Sussex: Routledge.

Wiegman, O., Kuttschreuter, M., & Baarda, B. (1992). A longitudinal study of the effects of television viewing on aggressive and prosocial behaviors. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 31,* 147-164.

Williamson, R. A., Donohue, M. R., & Tully, E. C. (2013). Learning how to help others: Two-year-olds' social learning of a prosocial act**.** *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology***,** *114*(4), 543–550.

Wishart, J., McKenzie, K., Newman, E., & McKenzie, A. (2013). Staff responses to behaviour that challenges: The role of knowledge, attributions, and emotion regulation style. *Journal Intellectual and Developmental Disability, 38* (3), 205-214.

Witkin, H. A., Dyk, R. B., Faterson, H. F., Goodenough, D. R., & Karp, S. A. (1962). *Psychological Differentiation*. New York: Wiley.

Wuthnow R. (1995). *Learning To Care : Elementary Kindness In An Age Of Indifference*[e-book]. New York: Oxford University Press.

Yamagishi, T. (1988a). Exit from the group as an individualistic solution to the public good problem in the United State and Japan. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 24,* 530-542.

Yamagishi, T., Cook, K. S., & Watabe, M. (1998). Uncertainty, trust and commitment formation in the United State and Japan. *American Journal of Sociology, 104,* 165-194.

Yoeli, E. (2009). *Does social approval stimulate prosocial behavior? Evidence from a field experiment in the residential electricity market.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Chicago.