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Temptation in public places

Podhorzer, Saul, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1988

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TEMPTATION IN PUBLIC PLACES

by

SAUL PODHORZER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1988

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

TEMPTATION IN PUBLIC PLACES

by

Saul Podhorzer

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An open field study investigated pedestrians reactions to ambiguous situations that had a potential of monetary gain and/or moral censure. The following factors were explored: 1) the unresponsiveness of urban pedestrians; 2) the effect of various signs on pedestrians' behavior; and 3) how certain types of groups may reduce unresponsiveness and promote ethical risk-taking. The stimulus was an unusual display of fifteen one-dollar bills which was left unattended on a busy New York City Street. The degree of risk and ambiguity was manipulated in several conditions of the experiment by introducing various signs that defined the situation and either prohibited or sanctioned taking the money. The risk and uncertainty produced by the unusual displays caused some bystanders to affiliate with each other in an attempt to determine the appropriate response. Three different theories predict that individuals in groups

would be more likely to take the money than individuals who remained alone; a) deindividuation, b) diffusion of responsibility, and c) ethical risktaking in groups. In order to increase our understanding of ethical risk-taking, three different types of groups were identified and studied: a) preformed groups; b) preformed groups that interacted with strangers outside the group, and c) interacting groups of strangers.

The results indicate that most pedestrians were unresponsive to the unusual display of dollar bills. Although the signs did have a significant influence on some pedestrians' behavior the effect of the signs was very limited. In all of the different sign conditions (even in conditions that sanctioned taking) the majority of subjects did not take any money. The behavior of subjects who did take money can mainly be explained on the basis of group formation. Newly-formed groups of strangers were much more likely to take money than individuals who remained alone or individuals in preformed groups that did not interact with outsiders. Apparently, interacting with strangers facilitated the development of temporary norms which condoned taking the money.

Acknowledgments

The unusual study presented in this report began as an exploratory investigation into the behavior of urban pedestrians. Professor Salomon Rettig, who served as chairman of my dissertation committee, influenced me to explore new methods of doing psychological research. Extended discussions with Professor Rettig about ethical risk-taking in groups also led me to analyze group behavior in the present study.

My interest in urban social psychology was stimulated by several unique studies performed by Professor Stanley Milgram. The late Professor Milgram served on my dissertation committee during the early stages of the project (until he passed away in December 1984). I was also encouraged by Professor Herbert Salzstein who helped me focus and shape some of my original ideas and observations. Professor Salzstein served as a member of my dissertation committee and continued to work with me during various phases of the project. Professor Florence Denmark also served on my dissertation committee and gave me encouragement, expert assistance and support. I would also like to thank Professor Walter Reichman and Professor Herbert Krauss for serving as outside readers during my oral defense.

I would like to thank all of the research assistants employed during the project. Magen Massett and Harvey

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many people have a negative view of New York City streets and the people who occupy them. The streets are often characterized as dangerous, crime ridden, and the people as cold and inhuman. City inhabitants are seen as being self-centered, unconcerned with the welfare of others and out for whatever they can get. One often hears expressions such as: "The city is an untamed jungle, " and "life in the city is a rat-race." In addition, the city is often viewed as a haven for deviants whose bizarre characteristics may be freely expressed within the heterogeneous crowds on the streets. They say, "Anything goes," and "If you've seen New York City, you've seen it all."

People on city streets tend to be "on guard" to protect their well-being and their possessions. No matter what they may be carrying, people are afraid to leave their possessions alone. There is a general feeling that if one leaves one's possessions unattended they will be snatched up and carried off.

Views such as these are often communicated to the public through the mass media. These journalistic views of behavior in New York do not explain the social and psychological factors underlying the behavior. The

present field study is an exploratory investigation which focuses on norms and morals governing public behavior on city streets. More specifically, it investigates how city-dwellers react to unusual situations which have moral implications.

This study, which takes place in an urban environment, seeks to analyze city-dwellers adherence to a well-known moral standard, that people should not take anything that does not belong to them unless it is part of a legitimate exchange.

Several studies have investigated honesty by leaving desirable objects in public places. Although these studies are different from the current investigation, the techniques that were utilized are reviewed below. One of the popular methods used to study honesty and altruism is known as the "lost letter technique" (Merritt and Fowler, 1948). These researchers found that letters left on the street were less likely to be returned unopened if they contained lead slugs that felt like coins than if they contained a message. In studies, Hornstein and associates (Hornstein, Fisch, and Holmes, 1968; Hornstein, 1970; and Tucker, Hornstein, Holloway, and Sole, 1977) left a wallet containing money in an envelope on the street where members of the public could pick it up. In these studies, the return of the envelope constituted the helpful act, and keeping it constituted dishonesty (i.e., stealing). Penner, Summers, Brookmire, and Dertke (1976)

have used a similar technique, which they term the "lost dollar technique," in order to study the effects of situational and personality variables upon what they suggest is "pro" and "anti-social" behavior. Other kinds of desirable objects have also been left unattended to assess peoples' reactions. For example, Zimbardo (1970) left abandoned cars (with open hoods) in urban and suburban areas and measured how quickly they were "stripped." The results of these studies seem to indicate that the context within which the desirable object is placed affects what may be considered pro or anti-social behavior.

The present study differs from these previous investigations in several respects. First, the context within which the desirable object (i.e., money) was displayed was varied, and was designed to produce an air of uncertainty about the situation. Second, various signs were employed within some of the experimental conditions to introduce different meanings into the situation and to indicate the appropriate mode of response. Third, this study assesses the contribution of certain group factors (i.e., social comparison processes, group risk-taking, diffusion of responsibility and deindividuation) in arriving at a definition of an ambiguous situation.

In the field experiment reported here, fifteen one-dollar bills were presented to the public in an

unusual display which was left "unattended" on a busy New York City street. The dollar bills were taped on to the front of a large plexiglass board with wooden sides (the money box). The top and front of this tall, wide display were left open so that people on the sidewalk could easily reach in and take the money. The money box was at the center of a larger display of cardboard boxes that were placed on the ledge of a large alcove facing the sidewalk (See Figure 1). The display of money was designed to produce situational ambiguity.

The major purpose of the present study was to investigate how people behave when they are confronted by an ambiguous situation in a public urban environment. In what ways do they confront the ambiguity and how does their style of confrontation affect their behavior in a situation where there is a potential for financial gain and/or moral censure? Do they attempt to understand the situation or disregard it? What are the ways in which they attempt to attribute meaning to the situation? How does this interpretive process influence their behavior?

When confronted by situational ambiguity people may react in several different ways. They may search the immediate environment for clues to interpret the situation, interact with others in an attempt to understand it better or become unresponsive and avoid the situation.

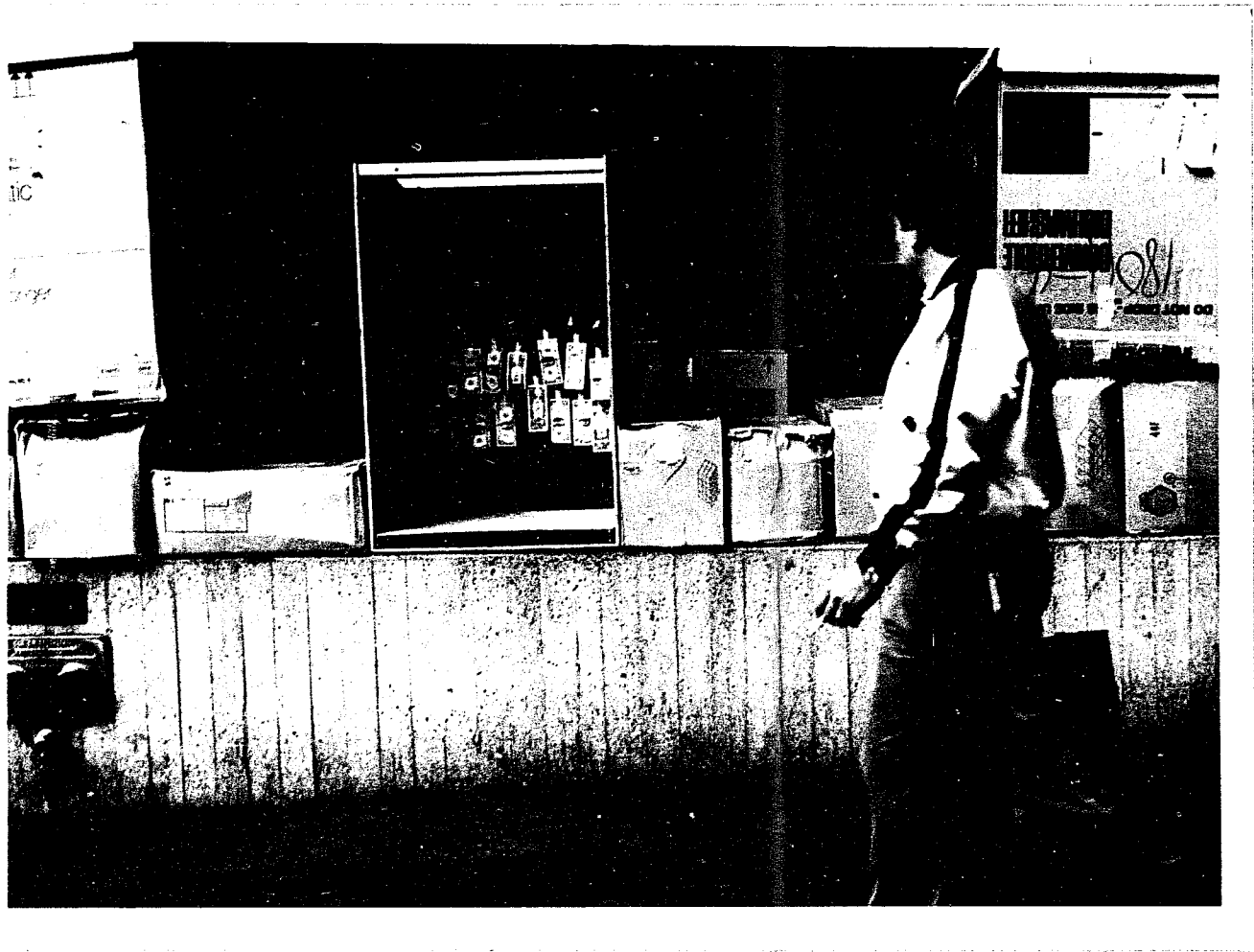


Figure 1. Photograph of the Experimental Display With The Money Box in the Middle.

I. Situational Ambiguity and Unresponsiveness.

Several studies have demonstrated that situational ambiguity leads to a lack of responsiveness in emergency situations especially when other people are present (Latane and Darley, 1970; Clark and Word, 1972; 1974). The urban field study presented here suggests that situational ambiguity may also inhibit behavior in situations the subject may benefit by responding.

This lack of responsiveness is more likely to occur in an open urban environment, especially if the behavior is public. According to Fischer (1976), the impersonal noninvolvement that characterizes urban public behavior may result from being in the presence of a multitude of strangers. Fisher suggests that, "The proper etiquette in these circumstances is to be politely impersonal, not to intrude, not to annoy. Each individual may actually feel very personal, eager to talk, sexually attracted, hostile, curious, and so on but usually will not act on those feelings" (p. 190). Similarly, Simmel (1950) has suggested that "distrust" and "reserve" which characterize "metropolitan life" stems from the city dweller's continuous external contacts with "innumerable" unfamiliar people. These concepts suggest that when city dwellers are in public they will tend to be unresponsive to ambiguous situations.

Simmel (1950) also suggest that the intense stimulation produced by living in a metropolis produces a

"blase' attitude" which results in a lack of responsiveness. Milgram (1977) presented a similar concept, termed "overload", which suggests that people living in cities are bombarded with too many sensory inputs and environmental demands. The city dweller adapts to the overstimulation by disregarding "low-priority inputs." According to Milgram, "Principles of selectivity are formulated such that investment of time and energy are reserved for carefully defined inputs" (p. 15). Also involved are; "... the adaptation of the urban dweller's cognitive processes...his screening of sensory stimuli, his development of blase' attitudes toward deviant or bizarre behavior, and his selectivity in responding to human demands..." (p. 33). Unusual or ambiguous situations are selectively screened out and avoided.

The open field study presented here takes place in a public urban environment. Under these circumstances, an ambiguous situation is likely to increase the tendency for urbanites to be unresponsive and indifferent. The money display that was presented in the most ambiguous condition of the experiment was very unusual and it was expected that many city-dwellers would disregard it. Pedestrians would disregard the unique display even though they could potentially gain monetary benefits by responding. It was assumed that the lack of responsiveness due to the ambiguity of the situation would outweigh the potential benefits of responding.

II. Presenting Signs to Reduce Situational Ambiguity.

One way of reducing the ambiguity of the situation is to present a sign which will introduce meaning into the situation. Signs are a form of symbolic interaction between individuals. As Stone and Farberman (1970) state,

...man responds not to some objectively given environment, but instead to a symbolic transformation of that environment. This transformation can only be accomplished by man's use of symbols, for most of which he is not himself responsible, but which he must implement in his definitions of situations... The very fact that man must use symbols to define the situations in which he conducts himself implies communication, since those very definitions require the meaningful responses of others (Stone and Farberman; 1970, p. 148).

Signs are symbols that are often used to replace face-to-face communication. Modern society is filled with signs which communicate information, instructions, directions, restrictions and requests to the public. In certain circumstances signs appear to have a powerful effect upon pedestrian behavior.

Although signs are an important part of social life only a few scientific studies have been performed to investigate the effects of signs on people's behavior. Two studies performed by McNeese, Egli, Marshall, Schnelle, and Risley (1976) demonstrated that posting signs in a department store indicating that shoplifting is a crime reduced shoplifting rates. In addition,

identifying products that were likely to be shoplifting targets (which may increase the risk of detection) was even more effective in reducing shoplifting rates. Although signs may be effective in preventing shoplifting, they may not be effective in eliciting bystander intervention during a theft. In another pair of field studies, Bickman and Green (1977) assessed the effects of signs, describing how to report a shoplifting, on bystander intervention during a staged theft. In these two studies the signs had no effect on bystander intervention. However, definition of the situation as shoplifting by a confederate had a strong influence on shoppers' reporting the shoplifting. Perhaps there was a degree of situational ambiguity surrounding the staged theft that was not reduced by the signs. On the other hand, the confederate clarified the situation by indicating that shoplifting was taking place and this caused bystanders to report the theft. Taken together these studies seem to indicate that signs are more likely to be effective if they clearly define the situation by reducing situational ambiguity. In other words people are more likely to comply with a sign if they understand and believe the message written on it.

In the current investigation the meaning of the unusual display of dollar bills and the degree of situational ambiguity was altered by introducing various

signs. In addition, signs were used to indicate whether or not taking the money was appropriate.

III. Defining the situation With Others.

The unique experimental display of dollar bills creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and risk which may cause people to turn to others in an attempt to define the situation and determine the appropriate response. Similarly, when subjects approach the display as a group they may be more likely to take the money than as individuals. Earlier studies on the "risky shift" have indicated that, in many circumstances groups are more willing to take risks than are individuals (Kogan and Wallach, 1967). Studies on ethical risk taking (Chapko, 1972; Rettig, 1966(a), 1966(b), 1969, 1972, 1986; Rettig and Turoff, 1967) have shown that groups tend to enhance the utility value of the gain resulting from such risk taking.

From these studies it would seem that uncertainty and temptation aroused by the display may cause isolated individuals, who were originally strangers, to associate with one another in order to interpret the situation so as to legitimize taking the money. This "social comparison" process will lead individuals to form temporary "interacting groups" whose communications will attempt to enhance their gain in such situations. More specifically, they will attempt to interpret the purpose of the display, in such a way as to suggest the

legitimacy of taking the money and assess other pedestrians' reactions to their suggestions. If others agree (or no one disagrees) they may be more tempted to take it.

Three different theories about group behavior all seem to indicate that individuals in groups would be more likely to take the money: 1) deindividuation (Festinger, Pepitone and Newcomb, 1952; Zimbardo, 1970); 2) diffusion of responsibility (Wallach, Kogan, and Ben, 1964; Latane and Darley, 1970); and 3) ethical risk-taking in groups (Rettig, 1987). While the first and second theory imply that individuals who are part of a group are more likely to engage in unethical, antisocial, or risky behavior, the third theory directly states so.

Both deindividuation and diffusion of responsibility imply that the mere presence of other group members may lead to risky (unethical behavior). The concept of deindividuation suggests that the anonymity and loss of personal identity associated with being in a group or crowd may lead people to perform antisocial acts. According to this theory the more anonymous the group members the more likely they are to engage in unethical behavior because they feel less responsible and less concerned about the consequences of their actions. Similarly, the concept of diffusion of responsibility implies that the negative consequences of unethical or risky decisions will be diminished if individuals act

together as a group. According to this theory, people are more likely to act unethically if they are in the presence of others who share the responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

Deindividuation and diffusion of responsibility also imply that social interaction and communication are not necessary for unethical group risk-taking to occur. According to these two theories it is merely the presence of others that produces risky behavior in groups. This suggests that individuals who are in a crowd know each other and do not communicate with one another would be more likely to perform antisocial or risky behaviors, than individuals who are strictly alone. According to these two theories, one might expect more risky behavior from crowds of loners than from groups of people who know or who communicate with each other.

Another explanation of group risk-taking has been offered by Rettig (1966; 1986). Rettig suggests that the communication process among the members of a decision-making group alters their perception of the risky situation. With regard to ethical group risk-taking Rettig (1966) suggests that:

...the discussion provides each member with the opportunity of testing the approval or disapproval of the other group members and adjust his responses accordingly. In other words, the process of communication set in motion by the group discussion may result in a lowered expectancy of being censured and a concomitantly greater feeling of

security. The resulting reduction in anticipated censure would, in turn, permit preference of a more "offensive" strategy (maximization of gain) over a "defensive" one (avoidance of censure) (p. 633).

With regard to ethical risk-taking in groups, Rettig has demonstrated that as group members communicate with each other they tend to focus on and enhance the value of the benefits that can be gained from the situation.

According to Rettig and Turoff (1967), "information" by itself is not sufficient to produce a group shift toward consensus of gain. Rettig (1972) suggests that the "presence of other group members whose communications are 'trustworthy'" may facilitate the "transfer of control over outcomes from the individual to the group" (p. 222). Other factors that may contribute to the consensus reached by the group include the credibility and clarity of the communication and whether or not the risky behavior is viewed as appropriate and acceptable by the members of the group (Rettig; unpublished manuscript, 1987).

The field study presented here distinguishes among three different types of groups in order to acquire a better understanding of the factors that lead to ethical risk-taking in groups. A description of the three group types and specific hypotheses concerning the behavior of group members is presented at the end of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

EXPERIMENTAL CONDITIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The concepts and theories described in the previous chapter may be useful in understanding pedestrian's reactions toward the unusual display of dollar bills. The unique display of dollars was presented to the public under five different conditions. Four of the five conditions were produced by placing different signs above the display. These signs were designed to reduce situational ambiguity by either prohibiting or sanctioning the taking of money. In the present study, situational ambiguity may also be reduced when pedestrians interact with other pedestrians or other group members. The following chapter contains several hypotheses about pedestrians reactions to the unusual display of dollar bills presented to the public under five different conditions.

I. An Ambiguous Situation: The No Sign Condition

In the no sign condition the display of dollar bills was left unattended without any indication of the purpose or meaning of the display. This condition was specifically designed to produce situational ambiguity. The situation was designed to be unique and to deviate from what people normally encounter. In this experimental condition fifteen one-dollar bills were

presented to the public in an unusual display which was left unattended on a busy New York City street.

The display was designed to produce a situation that was out of the ordinary since people do not normally encounter money left unattended in this fashion. Pedestrians who noticed the display were confronted by a unique situation. In this particular condition, there is no indication as to the display's owner, its purpose, or its meaning.

Money was chosen as the object of value because it is easy to quantify and is highly desirable. It attracts the attention of potential subjects and lures them into the experimental situation. The unusual display of one-dollar bills may arouse an approach-avoidance conflict within the subject. The conflict stems from the individual's desire to possess the money, on the one hand, and the individual's apprehensions about the possible negative consequences of taking the money, on the other. This conflict may be accompanied by confusion and suspicion because the consequences of taking the money are actually unknown. In fact, the entire situation was extremely ambiguous and was designed to generate uncertainty within the subject. Taking the money under these circumstances involves an element of risk. The risk is especially salient because the situation was public.

Hypothesis 1: When the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended without any indication of ownership, purpose or meaning (i.e., the no sign condition) only a very small percentage of the people who notice the display will take any of the money.

City-dwellers will tend to ignore the display because there are no relevant cues in the environment to define the situation and nothing to indicate the appropriate response. Situational ambiguity causes most people to become unresponsive.

An ambiguous situation tends to be ignored because city-dwellers require time and effort to interpret its meaning and to determine the appropriate response. City inhabitants are oriented towards conserving their time and energy for more routine and/or more important activities. Unusual situations may also produce uncertainty, confusion and suspicion which would cause city-dwellers to avoid them. In public, the inhibition of their responses may be amplified by the possibility of being reprimanded or embarrassed if their actions are unacceptable to bystanders. Taking the money under these circumstances may be perceived as risky.

II. Defining The Situation With Signs

The display of dollar bills in the no sign condition confronts pedestrians with a unique and ambiguous situation which may motivate them to search for the meaning of the situation. If the subjects arrive at an

adequate interpretation of the situation, they may then act appropriately. In the No Sign condition it is difficult for the individual to define the situation because the display produces an unfamiliar situation with no proprietor and no contextual cues to communicate its meaning. It may be obvious to pedestrians that someone had to have placed the display in its present position. Even though pedestrians may assume that someone is responsible for having left the display, they may still be uncertain about why it is there and whether or not it is acceptable to take the money.

In the current investigation the meaning of the unusual display of dollar bills and the degree of situational ambiguity was altered by introducing various signs. In addition, signs were used to indicate whether or not taking the money was appropriate. In two conditions, the signs were designed to adequately define the situation so that situational ambiguity would be reduced. These signs revealed the purpose of the display and also indicated the appropriate response. Two other conditions had signs that only partly defined the situation by indicating the appropriate behavior, but the meaning of the situation was still left somewhat ambiguous. In each case, taking the money was either prohibited or sanctioned by the signs.

A. Signs That Prohibit Taking.

Two different signs that prohibited taking the money

were placed above the display of dollar bills to determine whether or not signs would have an effect on pedestrians behavior. In one of these two conditions the display of dollar bills was left unattended with a sign that said "Do Not Take Any Money" (Do Not Take Condition). This situation was designed to convey that the unknown proprietor of the display did not want any money to be taken. The appropriate response of pedestrians who obey the sign is not to take any money. The definition of the situation was still somewhat ambiguous because the meaning and purpose of the display remained unclear.

This situation is very unique and departs from the everyday expectations of the average city-dweller. Pedestrians may wonder why someone would leave a display of dollar bills unattended on a busy city street with a sign that says "Do Not Take Any Money." In addition, they may feel that if they were caught taking the money, they could be reprimanded for not obeying the sign. In this condition taking the money was designed to appear riskier than in the No Sign condition.

Hypothesis 2: When the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states "Do Not Take Any Money," an even smaller proportion of the people who notice the display will take the money than in the No Sign condition. Although the purpose and meaning of the display is still somewhat ambiguous, the sign

in this condition indicates that taking the money is inappropriate.

In the second prohibitive condition the display of dollar bills was left unattended with a sign that said, "Do Not Take Any Money. Donations for Cancer Care" (Donations condition). This sign defines the display as part of a charity campaign. Taking the money under these circumstances is morally wrong. On the other hand, donating to charity is a socially commendable act.

When the situation is defined in this manner, people should be less likely to take the money than in the No Sign or Do Not Take condition. In this condition, the sign explains the purpose and meaning of the situation and also makes it apparent that taking the money is socially unacceptable. Defining the situation in this manner introduces moral implications that may strengthen the prohibition against taking the money.

Although the purpose of the display has been defined, there may still be a degree of uncertainty aroused by this situation because the display did not solicit money nor was any proprietor present. Thus, even though people may not take money themselves, they may feel that other city-dwellers would. Under these circumstances it is unlikely that people will either donate or take any money.

Hypothesis 3: When the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states, "Do Not Take

Any Money, Donations for Cancer Care," a smaller proportion of the people who notice the display will take the money than in the Do Not Take condition.

The situation which is created in the Donations condition produces serious moral implications for the taker, as well as, making it more likely that the public might intervene and introduce severe negative sanctions. There is a general feeling within society that anyone who steals from charity should be condemned. Such transgressions tend to trigger moral outrage and are not likely to be tolerated by the general public. Most people are aware of this social taboo and will not take any money under these high-risk circumstances.

B. Signs That Sanction Taking.

In the present study, there were two conditions that sanctioned taking by introducing signs that legitimized taking the money. In one of these conditions the display of dollars was left unattended with a sign that said "Take One Dollar. Take Only One" (Take One Condition). This sign sanctioned taking the money, but at the same time, it introduced a limitation (i.e., "take only one"). The sign above the display indicated the appropriate behavior, but it did not explain the purpose or meaning of the display. Therefore, the situation was still somewhat ambiguous.

One might assume that city-dwellers would jump at the opportunity to acquire free money. However, further

consideration indicates that there may still be factors which inhibit taking even one dollar. Although the sign above the display condones taking a dollar, the situation may arouse suspicion and uncertainty because the sign does not provide the subject with an adequate explanation of the situation. This situation is unusual and does not fit the common everyday expectations and experiences of the city-dweller. Since the situation is still somewhat ambiguous, taking the money may involve a small degree of risk. However, for some people the risk may not be great enough to completely inhibit taking the money (since the sign legitimizes taking).

Hypothesis 4a: When the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states, "Take One Dollar. Take Only One," a larger proportion of the people who notice the display will take the money than in the No Sign condition.

If individuals do take the money, will they obey the sign and take only one dollar? Since the display has been left unattended with no apparent owner, subjects may be tempted to take more than one. On the other hand, the subjects may suspect that someone is watching them and that they will be reprimanded or embarrassed if they were to take more than one dollar. It is also possible that people will obey the sign because they are honest or want to appear honest and do what is morally correct.

Hypothesis 4b: When the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states, "Take One Dollar. Take Only One," a majority of the people who take the money will take only one dollar.

It is expected that, people on city streets will attempt to maintain their integrity and obey the sign. If they are caught taking more than one dollar, they may find it difficult to legitimize their behavior.

The second condition which sanctioned taking the money utilized a sign that defined the situation as a survey campaign where taking a dollar was appropriate if the subject responded to a survey question. In this condition, the sign defined the purpose of the display and also indicated the appropriate response. The sign above the display of one-dollar bills stated, "Take One Dollar For Your Response. Take Only One" (Survey - condition). Underneath the sign where the dollar bills were hanging was a survey response sheet which contained the following question: "SURVEY QUESTION - Do you feel that New York City streets are: Safe___or Dangerous___? (check one)."

This sign allows the subject to legitimately take one dollar if the subject engages in a reciprocal exchange with the display. One may assume that this display is a symbolic representation of an unknown stranger. Therefore, the sign in this condition promotes a reciprocal relationship between pedestrians and a

possible for a legitimate exchange to take place even though only one party is present.

Hypothesis 5a: When the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states, "Take One Dollar For Your Response...", a larger proportion of people who notice the display will take the money than the Take One condition.

One would expect a largest proportion of people to take the money in the survey condition because, in this condition taking the money is sanctioned and legitimized within an adequately defined situation.

On the other hand, in the "Take One Condition" the sign sanctions taking the money, but the situation is still somewhat ambiguous. In that condition the uniqueness of the situation may arouse uncertainty and suspicion within the subjects, and this may inhibit subjects from taking the free dollar. In addition, the notion of getting something for nothing may make some people uncomfortable. Many people take pride in working for their money and may resist taking a dollar without giving something in return.

In the Survey condition the sign requests that a reciprocal exchange take place when the subject takes a dollar. The norm of reciprocity suggests that people may feel more comfortable taking a dollar under these circumstances. Thus, the subject may legitimize taking a dollar with little effort (i.e., by responding to the

question). The sign also serves to define the display as a public-opinion survey. Although surveys are not generally performed in this manner, the situation is fairly well-defined for the subject. One unusual characteristic of this display is that the proprietor appears to be absent.

Since the display will be left unattended, people could take the money without responding and they also could take more than one dollar. The terms of the agreement in this situation are being dictated by a sign. Since signs are responsible for a great deal of social influence in our society, most of the subjects who take the money may be expected to fulfill the terms of the exchange as if the proprietor were present.

Hypothesis 5b: When the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states "One Dollar For Your Response...", the majority will take only one dollar and will respond to the question.

III. Sanctions and Prohibitions in Relation to Situational Ambiguity.

When the hypotheses mentioned above are combined they suggest that as the situation becomes less ambiguous, the percentage of subjects taking the money will increase or decrease depending on whether the signs have sanctioned or prohibited taking. In the No Sign condition the situation is highly ambiguous. The Do Not Take condition and the Take One condition are considered

moderately ambiguous because the purpose of the display has not been explained. In the Donations condition and the Survey condition the meaning and purpose of the display, as well as, the appropriate response are relatively clear. These two conditions are considered low in situational ambiguity because they are both situationally and behaviorally defined.

The Donation's condition and the Survey condition also introduce moral implications into the situation. In the Survey condition, taking is morally sanctioned through reciprocity, whereas in the Donations condition, taking is morally prohibited and may be viewed as stealing from charity. It is important to note that moral situations are often well defined because socially appropriate behaviors have been clearly and continually reinforced during socialization. Furthermore, in situations with moral implications, there are usually important ideological reasons underlying the sanctions imposed by society. These ideologies add meaning and purpose to both the situation and the appropriate behavior.

IV. Defining the Situation With Others.

The field study presented here distinguishes among three different types of groups in order to increase our knowledge of the factors that lead to the group risk-taking phenomenon. The following three different types of groups were identified and studied; a) preformed

types of groups were identified and studied; a) preformed groups that do not interact with outsiders); b) preformed groups that interacted with strangers outside the group, and c) loners who form interacting groups of strangers. A "preformed group" was defined as two or more individuals who appear to know each other and arrived at the experimental display together. Subjects were categorized as a "preformed group that interacted" when one or more members of a preformed group communicated with a stranger(s) about the display. An "new interacting group" was defined as two or more individuals (i.e., strangers) who came to the display alone and then communicated with each other about the display.

If deindividuation or diffusion of responsibility leads to group risk-taking then one would expect the same amount of risk-taking to occur in each of the three different types of groups described above. According to these two theories it is the mere presence of others that produces group risk-taking. The composition of the group and the communication within the group should have little effect on risk-taking.

On the other hand, Rettig suggests that various characteristics of the communication process within a group can lead to higher risk-taking. If the communication process within the group is an important factor in the risky shift then the composition of the group should also influence risk-taking. A group of strangers with

diverse backgrounds and different ethical perspectives may be more influential in eliciting risk-taking than a preformed group of people who share similar backgrounds and a more homogeneous ethical perspectives.

In an open field setting, the members of a preformed group may view themselves as a familiar unit with somewhat similar backgrounds. They tend to have a history of common past experiences, a continuous relationship and plans for future encounters. These groups have developed internal norms which guide their actions and make them conform to what the group views as appropriate. On New York City streets the norms of preformed groups cause them to be rather conservative when dealing with unfamiliar and potentially dangerous situations. When confronted by the unusual display of dollar bills these groups may be expected to act cautiously. They may be less likely to engage in unusual forms of risk-taking and may be less likely to take the money than groups formed specifically for the purpose of interpreting the strange situation.

In the present study uncertainty and/or temptation aroused by the unusual display of dollar bills may cause one or more members of a preformed group to interact with strangers outside the group in order to understand the display. If this occurs the cautious norms of the group may be altered by the pro-risk opinions of other bystanders. The preformed group which originally acted

as an isolated unit, may now be influenced by the heterogeneous population of strangers on the streets. Under these circumstances a preformed group may become less conservative and more willing to engage in ethically risky behavior.

In the present study, newly formed interacting groups (i.e., heterogeneous groups of strangers) form when pedestrians who were originally alone temporarily associate with each other in order to understand the display and/or justify taking the money. The members of these groups are originally strangers who spontaneously begin to interact with each other when confronted by the unusual display of dollar bills. Curiosity and/or temptation motivate them to communicate with others who appear to be interested in the display of dollars. Characteristically, these groups do not have a history of common past experiences, and do not plan to have future associations. They form spontaneously, and develop momentary norms by communicating with each other. Their communications are usually oriented towards defining the situation so as to justify their taking the money by soliciting the approval of others who are similarly motivated. After a brief encounter, these momentary interacting groups spontaneously disband and move on.

Judgments among strangers forming a heterogeneous group may elicit more risk-taking because their comments are designed to explain the display so as to justify

taking the money. In a public urban setting pedestrians who interact with strangers are exposed to approval or disapproval from a highly diversified population of city-dwellers. In the present field study it is this general population of pedestrians which will provide negative sanctions if a person's risky choice is seen as inappropriate.

When applied to ethical risk-taking one would expect heterogeneous groups of strangers to be more willing to take risks than homogeneous preformed groups since the group discussion is specifically geared toward the taking of money. The decisions of heterogeneous groups of city-dwellers are based on diverse sources of information and a wide range of opinions. Pedestrians in heterogeneous groups may feel more secure and less threatened with a risky decision because the diverse opinions of strangers similarly motivated converge on the appropriateness of the behavior in question. Since the risky behavior will take place in public, pedestrians wishing to take money may feel that they must negotiate the approval of strangers that make up the momentary heterogeneous group on the streets before actually taking the money.

When the concepts and theories mentioned above were applied to the present field study, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 6: Individuals in groups will be more likely to take the money than individuals who are alone.

Hypothesis 7: Newly formed interacting groups of strangers will be most likely to take the money. Preformed groups that interact with strangers will be more likely to take the money than preformed groups that don't interact with outsiders.

CHAPTER 3

EXPERIMENTAL METHOD

I. Experiment I

A. Subjects. The proposed study utilizes subjects in a crowded urban field setting (42nd Street between 5th and 6th Avenues) in New York City. During the day the population in that area is extremely heterogeneous, and the sidewalks are crowded with people from a wide variety of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds.

Pedestrians (potential subjects) became part of the experiment when they noticed the experimental display (described in the apparatus section) which was located in an alcove at the edge of the sidewalk at 33 West 42nd Street. Operationally, pedestrians became subjects when they turned their head in the direction of the display and looked at it long enough to have noticed it. The final decision as to whether or not a potential subject looked at the display was made by the experimenter and three independent raters after analyzing video tapes of the subjects' responses.

B. Apparatus. A display consisting of 10 large and 12 small cardboard boxes was placed in a large alcove (13' x 18' x 10') with an opening at the sidewalk of 42nd Street. The boxes were arranged so that they appeared to be a delivery of appliances (i.e. refrigerators, washers,

dryers and other products). The floor of the alcove was higher than the sidewalk creating a 3' high ledge at the edge of the sidewalk that bordered the alcove.

One of the larger boxes was placed against the center of the back wall of the alcove. It contained a hidden video camera on a tripod and a portable video cassette recorder. The box with the hidden camera had a small hole cut out at the top of the side that faced the sidewalk. The hole was just large enough (6" x 6") so that the lens of the camera would have a wide-angle view of the sidewalk in front of the display.

The top of the camera box was covered with a tinted see-through sheet of plastic 30 inches wide. From the outside of the box, the plastic appeared glossy, black and opaque. Neither the camera nor the hole in the box could be seen through the tinted plastic that covered the box. The tinted plastic allowed just enough light to penetrate through the hole in the box so that the video camera could obtain a clear picture of the sidewalk in front of the display. Two other large boxes were covered with the same tinted plastic so that the box with the camera would not appear too conspicuous.

About 6 feet in front of the box with the hidden camera was a custom-made display that was constructed of plywood and plexiglass. In the experiment, this display (the money box) was used to present one-dollar bills and signs to pedestrians on the sidewalk in front of the

alcove. The money box, which presented the experimental stimuli to the public, was placed near the center of the ledge that bordered on the sidewalk (See Figure 1 on page 5). It was held firmly in place by several cardboard boxes that were jammed between the sides of the money box and the walls of the alcove. These small cardboard boxes stabilized the position of the money box and they also made it more difficult for curious pedestrians to climb into the alcove. All of the cardboard boxes on the ledge that bordered the sidewalk were filled with paper and/or wood so that they appeared heavy and full to probing pedestrians who tampered with them.

The money box was specially designed so that an accurate record of the experimental situation could be obtained. The back of the box was 30" wide and 48" high and was made of 1/4" plexiglass. The one-dollar bills were taped to the plexiglass with masking tape. The plexiglass in the back of the box allowed the hidden camera to obtain a good view of people passing in front of the display. In addition, it enabled the camera to accurately record the number of one-dollar bills taken by each subject. The top and front of the box were left open so that people on the sidewalk could easily reach in and take the dollars.

The height of the box was 48" leaving enough room to place a sign above the display of dollar bills. The signs were hand-made using large red block letters on

white paper. The size, shape and spacing of the letters used in the different signs was matched as much as possible. The letters were large enough so that a person with normal vision standing in the street, at the edge of the sidewalk (10' - 15' from the display) would easily be able to read them. The signs were placed behind the plexiglass at the top of the box. They were positioned as high as possible so that even when a crowd formed around the display the people at the edge of the crowd were able to see the signs clearly.

The plywood floor of the money box was raised 2 inches in order to create a hollow compartment within which a hidden shotgun microphone was placed. The microphone was connected to the video cassette recorder with a wire that was completely hidden from view. Small boxes were used to cover the trail of the wire from the money box to the box with the hidden video equipment. The hidden microphone was used to record conversations among pedestrians that gathered in front of the display of dollar bills.

The proportions of the money box were designed so that subjects would only be able to see the one-dollar bills when they entered the view of the hidden camera. The dimensions of the sides of the money box were determined by: a) the angles of the hidden camera's field of view; b) the distance between the camera and the money box (approximately 6 ft.; and c) the width of the money

box (30"). Given these factors the two wooden sides of the money box had to be 29" deep in order to block the pedestrian's view of the money until they entered the camera's range.

The camera's field of view included a large area of sidewalk in the shape of a triangle with the widest point being 20 feet at the curb (parallel to the edge of the street). On the sidewalk along the curb there was a row of three outdoor trees in large planters. This stationary characteristic of the environment had several advantages. The row of trees served as an environmental border for the experimental situation. Beyond the trees there was a large six lane street (42nd Street) which was constantly filled with passing cars. The trees blocked the view of the money box from people on the opposite side of the street. Another advantage of the trees was that they narrowed the path of pedestrians on the sidewalk at the point where they entered the camera's field of view and brought them closer to the display of one-dollar bills.

The researchers unobtrusively observed people's reactions to the money box from an area that could not be seen from the sidewalk near the experimental situation. A hidden television monitor situated in an enclosed compartment of an underpass was used to observe the subject's behavior. The same alcove that had a large opening facing South onto the sidewalk where the money

box was presented to the public, also had a smaller opening facing East into the underpass of a large building (i.e. 33 West 42nd Street). This wide underpass is a block long and connects 42nd Street with 43rd Street. A television monitor was shielded from view by being placed in an enclosed compartment that was constructed within the underpass. The hidden compartment was large enough so that two researchers were able to observe the experimental situation on the monitor without being seen.

A cable was used to connect the hidden camera in the alcove to the monitor in the underpass. The cable was placed along the floor and extended along the wall of the underpass that led from the alcove to the compartment that contained the monitor. In order to conceal it from view, a long row of small boxes was placed on top of the cable. In addition, the side opening of the alcove facing the underpass was completely closed off by placing large 6' high refrigerator boxes on top of the 3' ledge of the alcove.

It is important to note that the experiment required interfusing the pre-existing physical environment (i.e., alcoves, ledges, trees, walls and other environmental characteristics) with the custom-made apparatus used in the study. For this reason, the location of the experiment was carefully selected to achieve optimal compatibility with the experimental apparatus. In

addition, the structure and dimensions of the custom-made equipment used in this experiment were tailored to complement and operate in concert with the stationary characteristics of the physical environment.

C. Procedure. Each of the two experiments took place on five days within a two week period. On each day of the experiment the the experimenter set up the entire display as described in the apparatus section. The boxes and equipment were arranged in exactly the same manner each time the experiment was set up.

First, the cardboard boxes that were part of the display were put in place. Then the money box was placed at the center of the opening to the alcove and a cardboard cover was placed over the box. In order to avoid attracting attention while setting up the video equipment, the alcove was temporarily closed off by placing several large cardboard boxes on top of the boxes that were part of the display.

Once the camera, tripod and video cassette recorder were in place, the specially designed cardboard box (described in the apparatus section) that was used to hide the camera was placed over the recording devices. In addition, all of the wires that connected the hidden camera in the alcove to the concealed monitor in the underpass of the building were covered with small cardboard boxes.

1. Sign manipulation: conditions and trials. The experiment consisted of five different conditions that were produced by placing signs above the display of dollar bills

The five different conditions were presented in the following order. On the first day of the experiment (Monday 8/12/85) the sign above the display said, "Do Not Take Any Money. Donations For Cancer Care." The next day (Tuesday 8/13/85) the sign above the display stated, "Do Not Take Any Money." Two days later (Thursday 8/15/85) there was no sign above the display. The following week (Tuesday 8/20/85) the sign above the display stated, "Take One Dollar. Take Only One." Two days later (Thursday 8/22/85) the sign above the display said, "Take One Dollar For Your Response. Take Only One" In this condition (the Survey condition) a sheet of paper that said, "SURVEY: are New York City Streets Safe___or Dangerous___(check only one)" was placed on top of the one-dollar bills and three pencils on long strings were hung from the top right side of the money box.

Each condition was presented to the public on a different day during the week (i.e., Monday through Friday) so that subjects who passed by more than once a day would not see different signs above the display. In addition, the five days in which the different conditions

Even though each condition was presented on a different day, the experimenter thought it would be preferable to present conditions that prohibit taking before presenting conditions that sanction taking. The order of presentation described above was introduced because the experimenter anticipated that conditions that sanctioned taking would be more likely to attract attention and cause people to return to the display than would conditions that prohibited taking.

On each day of the experiment one condition was presented to the public between the hours of 10-12 a.m. A two hour video tape continuously recorded the events that took place. The 10-12 a.m. time range was selected to avoid the crowds that form during "rush hours" (8-10 a.m. and 4-6 p.m.) and "lunch hours (12-2 p.m.). The "peak hours" were also avoided because the same people tend to pass by every day during the week.

Each condition was presented to the public during a two hour period between 10 and 12 a.m. The number of trials within the two hours varied depending on the condition.

Each trial began when the experimenter exposed the display of 15 one-dollar bills to the public and it ended when the last dollar was taken. In conditions that prohibited taking the money there were fewer trials (1-3 trials) because it took longer for the money to be taken. During conditions that sanctioned taking the money there

trials) because it took longer for the money to be taken. During conditions that sanctioned taking the money there were more trials (4 trials) because the money was taken in a relatively short period of time.

Before and after each trial in the experiment the money box was covered with a large piece of cardboard in order to avoid attracting the attention of people passing by. In addition, a waiting period was introduced to deter people from lingering with the anticipation of obtaining money. At the end of each trial, the experimenter waited 10-20 minutes before placing another 15 dollars on the back of the money box. A cardboard screen was used to shield the experimenter from view as he taped the fifteen dollar bills to the plexiglass at the back of the money box. After all the dollar bills were in place, the box was covered with the cardboard cover.

Before each trial the experimenter stood next to the covered money box with the cardboard cover and waited until there was nobody in front of the display. The experimenter then inconspicuously removed the cardboard cover and quickly exited through the mall into the compartment with the hidden television monitor. The experimenter then used the monitor to observe the pedestrians and to listen to the conversations that took place in front of the money box.

2. Video ratings and reliability checks. The video tapes of the five experimental conditions were rated by a panel of three independent judges. The three raters sat behind a long table and observed the video tapes on a 25" television monitor. While viewing the tapes the raters were not told which experimental condition was being rated.

Within the experiment a subject was defined as a pedestrian who looked at the money box. During the rating procedure the experimenter would point to a subject, identify the subject, give the subject a number, and then the three raters would independently rate the subject on various categories (e.g., grouping, number of dollars taken, etc.). This identification system was introduced by the experimenter to insure that each of the three raters was rating the same subject. In order for this method of rating to be valid, it was necessary for the experimenter to establish interrater reliability between himself and the three raters with regard to the categories of "looking" vs "not looking" and "taking" vs "not taking." A high level of interrater reliability between the experimenter and the three raters insured that the experimenter could identify the lookers and takers with the same degree of accuracy as the raters. After reliability was established the experimenter could independently point out and number the lookers and (takers). When the experimenter pointed

to and numbered a subject (i.e., looker) each of the three raters could easily identify and independently categorize the person on several other dimensions.

The interrater reliability for the "looking" and "taking" categories was established before the ratings of the videos of the actual experiment took place. A practice tape (which was produced during a trial run of the experiment) was used during the training process. The three raters together with the experimenter were trained to discriminate between pedestrians who were "looking" and those who were "not looking." Pedestrians who looked at the money box while passing the display were categorized as "looking" and those who did not were categorized as "not looking" (see Appendix A for details).

The training process continued until there was 100% agreement among the experimenter and the three raters for fifty pedestrians (with regard to "looking"). With regard to "taking" the judges and the experimenter achieved 100% agreement without training. The plexiglass on which the money was taped made it simple to determine which subjects took money (i.e., takers) and which subjects did not (i.e., not takers).

The three raters were then trained to categorize subjects on a number of different dimensions using the trial video tape. For all of the subjects in the experiment the raters had to determine whether the

subjects were alone or part of a group when they confronted the money box. If the subject was part of a group, the raters had to choose among three types of group categories; a) preformed group, b) preformed group that interacts, or c) new interacting group.

A "preformed group" was defined as two or more individuals who appear to have interacted with each other prior to seeing the money box and have arrived at the display together (see Appendix A for further details). Subjects were placed in this category if they were part of a preformed group that did not interact with outsiders.

Subjects were categorized as a "preformed group that interacted" when one or more members of a preformed group interacted with a stranger(s) about the display. Within this study a preformed group is viewed as a unit. Therefore, even if only one member of this group interacted with an outsider, the entire group (i.e., each member) is placed within the "preformed group that interacts" category. An interaction is defined as a communication that appears to have been reciprocated (i.e., responded to) at least once.

A "new interacting group" was defined as one or more individuals (i.e., strangers) who come to the display alone and then interact with each other about the display. If a preformed group interacts with an individual(s) who has (have) come to the display alone,

then the individual(s) are categorized as a member of a new interacting group (while members of the preformed group are placed within the "preformed group that interacts" category).

After training the raters the experimenter began the actual rating procedure. During each trial, the experimenter first numbered all of the takers and then numbered all of the non-takers who looked at the display. The experimenter assigned identification numbers to the takers (beginning with the number 1) in the order that they took the money. For each subject, raters were asked to check the appropriate categories on a score sheet that was provided by the experimenter (see Appendix B).

The score sheets contained the subjects' identification numbers, and four categories for rating groups (i.e., alone, preformed group, preformed group that interacted, and new interacting group) The raters also recorded the number of dollars taken by each of these subjects.

When all of the takers in the trial were rated, the experimenter continued to assign identification numbers to subjects that were non-takers (i.e., lookers). Starting with the beginning of the trial, the lookers were numbered in the order they entered the screen on the video monitor. They were followed until they left the screen. The experimenter pointed out subjects who returned after leaving the screen and he and the raters

continued to follow these subjects through their last appearance on the monitor. After rating each subject, the tape was rewound to the point where that subject had entered the screen. Then the next subject to enter the screen was numbered, followed and rated. These steps were repeated until all of the subjects had been categorized by the raters.

3. Post experimental questionnaire. The experimenter non-systematically selected a few of the subjects in the experiment for a post-experimental interview. An attempt was made to select people (based on their physical appearance) from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Interviews were conducted with several subjects who took the money, as well as, with some of the subjects who did not.

The experimenter selected subjects for interviews after observing their behavior on the television monitor. After selecting a subject, the experimenter instructed a female research assistant to follow the subject as the person walked away from the display. When the subject was at least 200 feet away from the display, the research assistant casually introduced the interview by saying, "Excuse me (Sir/Ms) could I ask you a few questions about that display of dollar bills?" If the subject agreed, the research assistant informally began asking several questions about the subject's perception of the money box. Subjects were asked about the meaning

and purpose of the display. The post-experimental questionnaire is displayed in Appendix C.

The subjects' responses were recorded on a small hand-held mini cassette recorder. If any of the interviewers inquired about the money box or the interview, they were told that the money box was part of a study on human behavior. If subjects wanted more detailed information, they were given the experimenter's telephone number and told that the specific purpose of the study would be revealed after the study was completed.

II. Experiment II

A second experiment was performed to determine whether the results of the first experiment were reliable. Studies that take place in field settings are subject to many uncontrolled variables that may produce unreliable results. In the current investigation these factors may be compounded by the strangeness of the experimental display.

The present study also utilized video techniques for recording human behavior in a field setting (i.e., the "hidden" video camera, and the "rating" of video tapes by a panel of judges). The accuracy of these techniques and their application in the current investigation needed to be assessed through further study.

Experiment 2 was a replica of the first experiment, performed during the two weeks that followed the first experiment.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

I. Interrater Agreement

The video tapes of experiments 1 and 2 were analyzed separately by a panel of three judges who independently rated and categorized the subjects' behavior from observations of the tapes. Details of the rating procedure are described in the procedure section. The degree of consistency among the three raters' judgments of the behavior was assessed for each of the rating categories. The subjects were categorized in the following manner: a) whether they were alone or part of a group and the type of group they belonged to (i.e., preformed, preformed that interacted with strangers, or new interacting groups); b) the amount of money that was taken by the takers; c) the type of response that was given in the Survey condition (see Appendix B).

For each category, the agreement among the raters' judgments was determined by calculating the percentage of cases in which the raters categorized the subjects in the same manner. Consistency among rater's judgments was calculated in two ways; a) the percentage of agreement among all three raters, and b) the percentage of agreement between two of the three raters.

The results indicate that the percentage of agree-

ment among all three raters was high, ranging from 95% to 100% (see Table 1). Very high agreement was found in two categories, the number of dollars taken (which was assessed in all conditions) and the type of response in the Survey condition (i.e. whether they took more than one dollar and whether or not they responded to the survey question; see Appendix B). In both Experiment 1 and 2 there was 100% agreement among the three raters for these categories. There was also high agreement among the three raters for the group categories, that is, whether a subject was categorized as being alone, in a preformed group, in a preformed group that interacted or in a new interacting group (96% in Experiment 1 and 95% in Experiment 2).

In analyzing the results of this study the experimenter only used the data of a subject if there was agreement among all three raters in categorizing the subject. Since the percentage agreement among the three raters ranged between 95% and 100%, practically all of the data were utilized. The reason for restricting the data in this fashion was to eliminate the possibility of including subjects who were not categorized properly in the analysis. If all three raters were not in agreement it suggested that a particular subject was difficult to categorize. Restricting the data in this manner produces more conservative and accurate results.

Table 1

The Percentage of Agreement Among The Three
Raters On Various Rating Categories
(in Experiments 1 and 2)

Category	Total No. Subjects Rated	Agreement of 2 out 3 Judges	Agreement of all 3 Judges
<u>Type of Grouping</u>			
Experiment 1	1,721	100%	96%
2	2,097	100%	95%
<u>Number of Dollars Taken</u>			
Experiment 1	113	-	100%
2	112	-	100%
<u>Type of Response in the Survey Condition*</u>			
Experiment 1	46	-	100%
2	44	-	100%

*See Appendix B

II. The Percentage of Subjects Taking Dollars Under Different Sign Conditions

For each condition the percentage of subjects (i.e., pedestrians who looked at the display) who took the money was calculated. The percentage of takers in each of the five conditions in Experiments 1 and 2 are presented in Table 2. Regardless of what condition they were in, few subjects took any of the money (see Table 2).

Very little taking occurred when there was no sign to define the purpose of the display or to indicate the appropriate response. This result indicates that Hypothesis 1 was confirmed. Hypothesis 1 states that when the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended without any indication of ownership, purpose or meaning (i.e., the No Sign condition) only a very small percentage of the people who notice the display will take any of the money. In the No Sign condition 4.1% (n=268) of the subjects took money in Experiment 1 and 7.4% (n=243) of the subjects took the money in Experiment 2). The percentage of subjects that took money in the No Sign condition was smaller than the percentage of subjects that took money in sanctioned conditions and slightly larger than the percentage of subjects that took money in prohibited conditions in both Experiment 1 and Experiment 2.

The results indicate that less taking occurred in conditions that prohibited taking. In the Do Not Take condition the percentage of subjects who took the money

Table 2

Percentage Of Subjects Who Took Money
(by Condition and Experiment)

	Condition						
	Donation	Do Not	No Sign	Take One	Survey		
Experiment 1	.2% (n=653)	a < 2.3% (n=431)	ns	4.1% (n=268)	a < 29.4% (n=216)	ns	21.3% (n=153)
Experiment 2	.2% (n=1075)	a < 3.7% (n=347)	c <	7.4% (n=243)	b < 15.7% (n=223)	ns	21.1% (n=209)
Total	.2% (n=1728)	a < 2.9% (n=778)	b <	5.7% (n=511)	a < 21.3% (n=376)	ns	21.2% (n=425)

n = the total number of subjects (i.e., takers and non-takers) in each condition

a = differences below the .001 level of significance

b = differences below the .01 level of significance

c = differences below the .05 level of significance

ns = non-significant differences

was 2.3% (n=431) in Experiment 1 and 3.7% (n=347) in Experiment 2. Hypothesis 2 states that when the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states "Do Not Take Any Money," a smaller proportion of the people who notice the display will take the money than in the No Sign condition. The results displayed in Table 2 indicate that hypothesis 2 was confirmed. The percentage of subjects who took the money in the Do Not Take condition was smaller than the percentage of subjects who took the money in the No Sign condition in both Experiment 1 and Experiment 2. The differences between the percentages in these two different conditions was almost significant in Experiment 1 ($Z=1.36$, $P<.18$, two-tailed test) and was significant in Experiment 2 ($Z=2.03$, $P<.02$, two tailed test). When the data from Experiments 1 and 2 are combined the difference between the total percentages is also significant ($Z = 2.51$, $P<.01$, two tallied test).

The least amount of taking occurred in the Donations condition. The percentage of subjects taking money in the Donations condition was only 0.2% in both Experiment 1 (n=653) and Experiment 2 (n=1075). Hypothesis 3 states that when the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states, "Do Not Take Any Money Donations for Cancer Care," a smaller proportion of the people who notice the display will take the money than in the No Sign condition. This hypothesis was also

confirmed (see Table 2). The difference between the percentages in the No Sign condition and Donations condition was highly significant in both Experiment 1 ($Z=3.39$, $P<.001$, two-tailed test) and Experiment 2 ($Z=5.70$, $P<.001$, two-tailed test).

In conditions that sanctioned taking a larger proportion of the subjects took the money than in conditions that prohibited taking or in the ambiguous No Sign condition. In the Take One condition the percentage of subjects that took the money was 29.4% ($n=216$) in Experiment 1 and 15.7% ($n=209$) in Experiment 2. Hypothesis 4a states that when the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states, "Take One Dollar - Take Only One," a larger proportion of the people who notice the display will take the money than in the No Sign condition. This hypothesis was confirmed by the results presented in Table 2. The difference between the percentages in the Take One condition and the No Sign condition were significant in both Experiment 1 ($Z=7.76$, $P<.001$, two-tailed test) and Experiment 2 ($Z=2.86$, $P<.01$, two-tailed test).

The most taking was expected to occur in the Survey condition. Hypothesis 5a states that when the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states, "Take One Dollar For Your Response...", a larger proportion of people who notice the display will take the money than the Take One condition. The results indicate

that this hypothesis was not confirmed. In Experiment 1 the percentage of subjects who took the money was 21.3% (n=153) in the Survey condition and 29.4% (n=216) in the Take One condition. The results of Experiment 1 contradicted hypothesis 5a and were nearly significant ($Z=-1.75$, $P<.08$, two-tailed test). In Experiment 2, the results were consistent with hypothesis 5a (21.1% of the subjects took the money in the Survey condition and only 15.7% took the money in the Take One condition) but were not quite significant ($Z=1.46$, $P<.16$, two-tailed test). When the data from Experiments 1 and 2 are combined there are no differences between the total percentages of these two conditions. The reason for this inconsistency is not clear.

The results of the different sign conditions are depicted graphically in Figures 2, 3 and 4. In these Figures the percentage of Subjects who took the money in different conditions is plotted against the degree of situational ambiguity. In the No Sign condition the degree of situational ambiguity is high because there is nothing to indicate the purpose of the display or the appropriate response. The Take One condition and the Do Not Take condition are moderately ambiguous since the sign indicated the appropriate response but did not indicate the purpose or meaning of the display. Situational ambiguity is low in the Survey condition and

Figure 2

Percentage of Subjects Who Took Money Under
Different Levels of Situational Ambiguity
(Experiment 1)

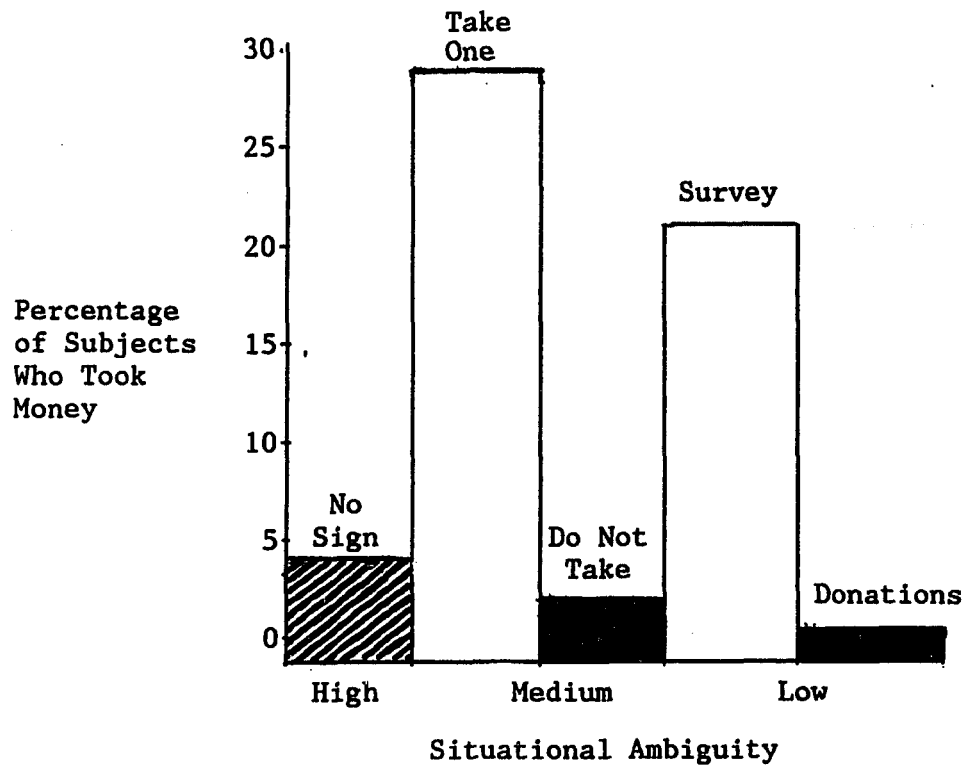


Figure 3

Percentage of Subjects Who Took Money Under
Different Levels of Situational Ambiguity
(Experiment 2)

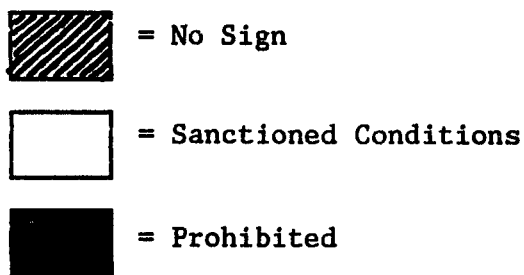
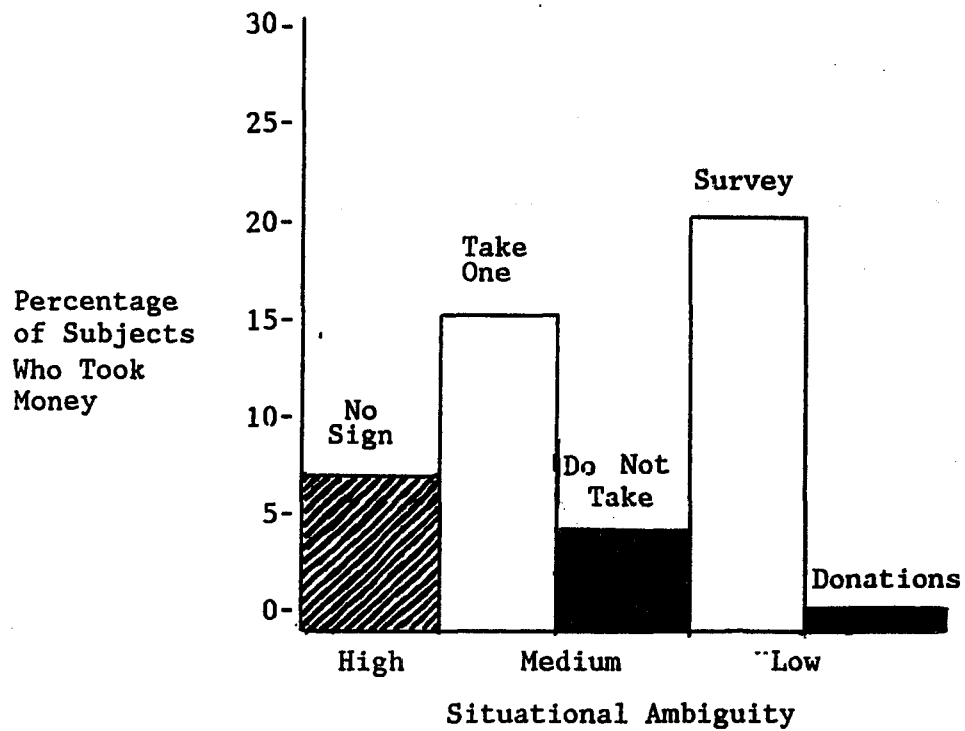
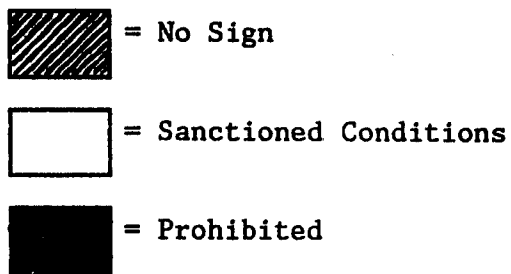
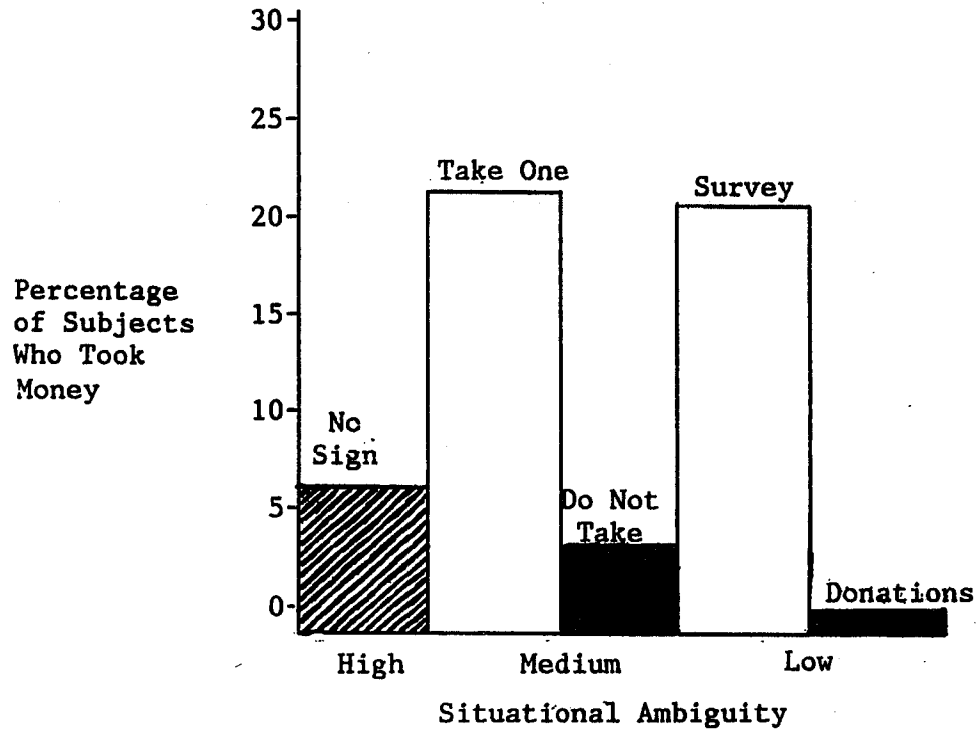


Figure 4

Percentage of Subjects Who Took Money Under
Different Levels of Situational Ambiguity
(Experiment 1 and 2 Combined)



the Donations condition because the sign above the display indicates the purpose of the display, as well as, the appropriate response.

In general, as the definition of the situation became clearer, the percentage of subjects taking the money increased or decreased depending upon whether the behavior had been sanctioned or prohibited by the sign above the display (see Figure 2, 3 and 4). In conditions in which the signs prohibited taking the percentage of subjects taking money decreased as the degree of situational ambiguity decreased. For prohibited conditions the pattern of results was similar in Experiment 1 and 2. In conditions in which taking was sanctioned the results of Experiment 1 were slightly inconsistent with the results of Experiment 2 (i.e., in the Take One condition). When the data from the two experiments are combined there is no difference between the Take One and Survey conditions (see Figure 4). Despite this inconsistency, the percentage of subjects taking money in sanctioned conditions was always greater than the percentage of takers in the ambiguous No Sign condition.

III. Obeying Signs

In the conditions that sanctioned taking (Take One and Survey conditions) most of the subjects that took money obeyed the signs. Hypothesis 4b states that when

the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states, "Take One Dollar. Take Only One," a majority of the people who take the money will take only one dollar. The results confirmed this hypothesis. In the Take One condition, where the sign above the display said, "Take One Dollar - Take Only One," 80% of the takers (n=45) took only one dollar in Experiment 1 (74.3% n=35 in Experiment 2).

Most of the subjects who took the money in the Survey condition also obeyed the sign. Hypothesis 5b states that when the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states "One Dollar For Your Response...", the majority will take only one dollar and will respond to the question. The results confirmed this hypothesis. When the sign above the display stated, "Take One Dollar for Your Response - Take Only One" (with the survey question that said "check only one") 72% of the takers (n=46) in Experiment 1 and 73% (n=44) in Experiment 2 took only one-dollar and gave only one response.

IV. Group Data

When the results of different sign conditions were combined, the data indicated that only people in groups that interacted with strangers were more likely to take the money than people who remained alone (partially confirming hypothesis 6). Hypothesis 6 states that individuals in groups will be more likely to take the

money than individuals who are alone. In general, individuals who remained alone were not likely to take the money (see Table 3). Only 3.5% (n=1236) of the subjects who remained alone took any of the money in Experiment 1 and 3.3% (n=1485) in Experiment 2. The type of group (i.e., whether or not individuals interacted with strangers) was found to be an important factor in determining whether or not subjects took the money (confirming hypothesis 7). Hypothesis 7 states that newly formed interacting groups of strangers will be most likely to take the money. In addition, hypothesis 7 states that preformed groups that interact with strangers will be more likely to take the money than preformed groups that don't interact with outsiders. When the group data are separated into preformed groups, preformed groups that interacted and newly formed interacting groups, the results indicate that the latter two groups (groups that interacted with strangers) were more likely to take the money than individuals that were members of preformed groups. The responses of preformed groups were very similar to the responses of individuals who remained alone in that they were much less likely to take the money than the other two groups. The percentage of subjects in preformed groups who took money was only 5.1% (n=334) in Experiment 1 and 1.7% (n=424) in Experiment 2. These percentages were not significantly different from the percentage of takers who remained alone.

Table 3

The Percentage Of Subjects Who Took Money
(by Group Category and Experiment)

	Group Category						
	Alone		Preformed Group	Preformed Group that Interacted	New Interacting Group		
Experiment 1	3.5% (n=1236)	ns	5.1% (n=334)	< a	47.8% (n=23)	ns	63.3% (n=60)
Experiment 2	3.3% (n=1485)	ns	1.7% (n=424)	< a	43.5% (n=23)	ns	65.0% (n=60)
Total	3.4% (n=2721)	ns	3.2% (n=758)	< a	45.6% (n=46)	< c	64.2% (n=120)

n = the total number of subjects (i.e., takers and non-takers) in each group category

a = differences below the .001 level of significance

b = differences below the .01 level of significance

c = differences below the .05 level of significance

ns = non-significant differences

Newly formed interacting groups were the most likely to take the money. In newly formed interacting groups the percentage of subjects who took money was 63.3% (n=60) in Experiment 1 and 65% (n=60) in Experiment 2. Preformed groups that interacted with strangers were almost as likely to take the money as newly formed interacting groups. The differences between the percentage of takers in these two different types of groups was not significant in Experiments 1 or 2, but was significant when the data from both experiments was combined ($Z=2.18$, $P=.03$, two-tailed test).

The percentage of takers in preformed groups that interacted with strangers was 47.8% (n=23) in Experiment 1 and 43.5% (n=23) in Experiment 2. The difference between the percentage of takers in preformed groups that interacted with strangers and preformed groups that did not interact with outsiders was significant in both Experiment 1 ($Z=7.37$, $P<.001$, two tailed test) and Experiment 2 ($Z=10.14$, $P<.001$, two-tailed test). These results indicate that interacting with strangers was associated with taking the money (see Table 3).

The pattern of the group effect (displayed in Table 3) appears to be similar within different sign conditions (see Tables 5 and 6 in Appendix D). The findings displayed in Tables 5 and 6 show that for each condition the percentage of takers in groups that interacted with strangers was generally greater than the percentage of

takers in preformed groups or in the alone category (with the exception of a few cells where the number of subjects is extremely small, that is, less than 10).

There was insufficient data to support or refute the proposition that as the riskiness of taking the money increases, individuals in groups would be more likely to take the money than individuals who remained alone. This notion could have been evaluated by examining the proportion of group-taking to individual-taking among different experimental conditions (see Tables 5 and 6 in Appendix D). However, the group by condition interaction was not testable because of the small number of subjects in several cells of these tables.

V. The Amount of Money Taken

Data on the amount of money taken indicates that takers who interacted with strangers took larger amounts of money than takers who did not interact with strangers (see Table 4). The mean amount of money taken by takers who remained alone and takers who were member of preformed groups was smaller than the mean amount of money taken by takers who were members of newly-formed interacting groups and takers in preformed groups that interacted with strangers. The differences among the four means was significant in both Experiment 1 ($F_{3,1} = 4.785, P < .004$) and Experiment 2 ($F_{3,1} = 3.896, P < .01$).

The mean amount of money taken by takers in preformed groups was not significantly different from the

Table 4

The Mean Number of Dollars Taken
(by Group Category and Experiment)

	Group Category			
	Alone	Preformed Group	Preformed Group That Interacted	New Interacting Group
Experiment 1	1.21 (n=43)	1.35 (n=17)	2.27 (n=11)	2.61 (n=38)
Experiment 2	1.45 (n=49)	1.29 (n=7)	2.50 (n=10)	2.54 (n=39)

n = the total number of takers (i.e., subjects who took money)
in each group category.

mean amount of money taken by takers who remained alone. The mean for takers in newly formed groups was approximately the same as the mean in preformed groups that interacted with strangers. In both Experiment 1 and 2 interacting with strangers was associated with taking more money.

CHAPTER 5DISCUSSION

The present study investigated how people in a public urban environment reacted to ambiguous situations which had moral implications. How did pedestrians respond to ambiguous situations which offered a potential for financial gain and/or the risk of moral censure? Most people responded to situational ambiguity in several ways. They either interacted with others in an attempt to interpret the situation, searched the immediate environment for cues to understand it better, or they became unresponsive and avoided the situation altogether.

In this study the overwhelming majority of subjects did not take any money. Most of the pedestrians who noticed the display remained unresponsive and continued on their way. The signs that were presented in different conditions appeared to have relatively little impact on most subjects' behavior. Even when the signs above the display sanctioned taking a dollar the majority of subjects disregarded the display.

The responses of subjects who did take money can largely be explained on the basis of group formation. Most of the subjects who took the money appeared to be influenced by conversations that took place with other pedestrians (i.e., strangers) whom they met for the first

time in front of the display. The discourse of these newly formed groups were oriented towards interpreting the situation in a way that would justify and enhance taking the money.

I. Groups

Most pedestrians who were tempted by the unusual display of dollar bills perceived that taking the money involved elements of risk. Even when the signs above the display sanctioned taking the money many subjects appeared to be suspicious about the display. The uncertainty and risk aroused by the display often caused subjects who were interested in the money to interact with others about the display.

Three different theories about group behavior predict that individuals in groups are more likely to take risks than individuals who are alone: a) deindividuation, b) diffusion of responsibility and c) ethical risk-taking in groups (Rettig, 1966; 1987). Both deindividuation and diffusion of responsibility imply that social interaction is not necessary for group risk-taking to occur. On the other hand, Rettig suggests that the communication process plays an important part in ethical risk-taking in groups.

In order to increase our knowledge about ethical risk-taking in groups, three different types of groups were identified and studied: a) preformed groups b) preformed groups that interacted with strangers and c)

newly formed interacting groups of strangers. If deindividuation and diffusion of responsibility were operating in this study, one would expect little or no differences in risk-taking among these three different types of groups. On the other hand, if social interaction and communication are important for ethical risk-taking to occur then one would expect differences among the three types of groups.

The results indicate that the type of communication is an important factor in ethical risk-taking in groups. In the present study individuals in groups that interacted with strangers were much more likely to take the money than individuals in preformed groups or individuals who remained alone. Furthermore, individuals in groups that interacted with strangers were more likely to take larger amounts of money than individuals in preformed groups or loners. Hypothesis 6 which stated that individuals in groups would be more likely to take the money than individuals who remained alone was only confirmed with regard to those groups that interacted with strangers. The percentage of takers in preformed groups was not significantly different from the percentage of takers who remained alone.

Pedestrians in newly formed interacting groups of strangers were most likely to take the money and they took the largest amounts of money (confirming hypothesis 7). Pedestrians in preformed groups who interacted with

strangers outside the group were almost as likely to take the money as pedestrians in newly formed interacting groups.

These findings indicate that social interaction among pedestrians who were strangers resulted in a greater amount of ethical risk-taking. Within the context of the present study, communication appears to be necessary for group risk-taking to occur. Furthermore, the composition of the group within which the communication takes place also seems to be an important factor. Information and judgments from strangers appear to have influenced subjects to take money.

Pedestrians who are tempted by the display of dollar-bills sometimes begin to interact with other pedestrians who also appear to be tempted. Interacting with strangers facilitates the development of temporary norms which accentuate the potential gain of the situation. Communicating with strangers allows each newly formed interacting group member to negotiate the acceptability of taking money. These dialogues often result in an enhanced value of the possible benefits and a reduction of the anticipated censure. The following encounter which was video taped during the No Sign condition exemplifies these concepts.

A man and a woman who eventually took money, met for the first time when they stopped in front of the display. They observed the display from a distance and then

approached it. At first they suspected that the money wasn't real. As they continued to interact the authenticity of the money was mutually confirmed.

S1. No, they're real!

S2. Now who would do a thing like this? I seen it for sometime now.

S1. And you didn't take one?

S2. No, I'm scared to take one.

Several other pedestrians gathered in front of the display (8 people all together). They discussed possible reasons for the display but couldn't figure it out. The crowd got larger.

S3. What's this all about?

S2. I don't know.---Nobody knows.

S4. It's free; take the money!--Go ahead and take it!

Some of the people in the crowd were still apprehensive and looked at each other to see if anyone would disapprove. No one disputed the man's suggestions to take the money. A few subjects moved closer to the display. The man continued to coax them.

S4. Go ahead;---Take it!--Take it!

Finally, they all started grabbing the money and quickly left. A few subjects began laughing as the crowd quickly dispersed.

Individuals who interacted with strangers sought information about the meaning of the display and

the consequences of taking the money. In many cases the communications of pedestrians who did not know each other suggested that the proprietor of the display was not present, that the purpose of the display was not clear, and that taking the money would not lead to negative consequences. Furthermore, these interactions were often oriented towards justifying taking the money. The following statement which was recorded during the post experimental interviews demonstrated how one subject justified taking a dollar (during the Take One condition). The subject justified taking a dollar to other pedestrians near the display.

I got there first and everybody started to come. So I said, "Take One."---Everybody was watching me and they said, 'But its something (suspicious)!' I said, its nothing! It says take one.---You're not stealing.

In another interview a statement made by a subject in the Survey condition showed how he was influenced by others and illegitimately took more than one dollar.

I seen the sign. It said to take one dollar and be honest;--But I seen people taking three and four dollars instead of one so I went over there and took two myself. I seen people grabbin so there must have been nothin wrong...If there would have been anything wrong I wouldn't have gotten involved. It looked like it was free (i.e., others had indicated that it was acceptable to take more than one).

The approval of strangers made subjects more likely to take the money. In addition, the comments of strangers often confirmed the value of the money. In the

following statement (recorded during the post experimental interviews) a subject describes how another subject justified taking more than one dollar (in the Take One condition) by enhancing the value of the money.

This guy took two of them. He said he was broke--he had just spent his last two dollars. He said, I seen that money there so now I got two dollars for the day. He said, 'I'm going to check the daily news it might be a lucky buck. (f the numbers on the dollar match the numbers in the daily news game, this subject could have won thousands of dollars.)

The following video taped encounter demonstrates how a newly-formed group of strangers interacted about the display before taking all of the money. In this example, interacting with others led them to take the money even though the sign above the display said, "Do Not Take Any Money."

A young man in a suit and tie (S1) approached the display. Another man in a tee shirt who saw him staring at the display approached it from the opposite side (S2).

S2. What is this?

S1. Its probably some kind of test to see how long that shit will last up there. ---I'll take all of it.

S2. Yeah--that sounds good.

A third young man approached (S3) them and began to interact with them about the display.

S3. What is stopping you really, when you think about it---right now.

S1. I don't know.

S3. There's nobody here---right.---Its there it says, "Do Not Take Any Money.---So what is it?--Like a piece of art.---Like an artist is saying if there's a sign people won't do it. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven...fifteen bucks. If you have no money in your pocket fifteen dollars is a lot---cause I've been there.

S2. Right.

S1. No shit.

A fourth man (S4) approaches and observes them.

S1. I'd like to take all that shit.

S3. (Laughing) See you won't!---You know why?---Cause the sign says, "Do Not Take Any Money."

S1. No its not because of the sign, ---because its obvious some other people have taken it (he points to the extra tape on the board with the dollars taped to it). Other people said, "fuck it" and just took it.---I'll just take it because its there.---Its real money! (He feels one dollar).

S3. Oh yeah---yeah---yeah (laughing) S3 leaves the others without taking any money. And the fourth pedestrian (S4) begins to interact.

S1. I could use a few dollars for breakfast.

S4. Hey---who's watching this?

S1. I don't know---we've been standing here for a long time.---I could use a few dollars for breakfast.

- S4. What's that?---sixteen dollars over there?
- S1. Let me tell you, if I take it, I'm not just taking one dollar. I'm not going to have someone chase me and bust me over just for one dollar!
- S2. Yeah (nods and slaps his hand in agreement).
- S4. (Pointing to the sign) it's just that it says, "Do Not."
- S1. You know what you should do;--take down the fuckin sign!---And then! (he reaches for the sign but cannot remove it).

A young boy approached and observed the encounter.

- S4. What if one of those people down the streets comes over and does something?

They all look around cautiously.

- S1. No---not on 42nd Street! I'm going to take five dollars! (he begins taking the money)
- S4. Yeah---and leave man!
- S2. Fuck this! (as he grabs a few dollars).
S4 and the young boy join in and quickly grab a few dollars and leave.

The post experimental interviews also revealed that subjects were more likely to take the money after they communicated with strangers. The following statements were made by a woman who took a dollar in the No Sign condition.

I think I would have left it there if I had been by myself....I did take one---By that point several people had stepped up and they were all taking the dollars....They said, 'Is this for real? Is this a joke?' and then we looked at each other. I think we had similar reactions.---And then we said, Oh---they must mean for us to take it.'---So

we took it!---And by that time other people were going---grab! grab! grab!

In the present study, interacting with strangers produced more risk-taking. Individuals who remained alone were less likely to take the money than individuals in groups that communicated with strangers. During the post experimental interviews several subjects who took the money indicated that they would not have taken it if they were alone.

- S1. If I was the only person there I would be more worried about taking it.--But since there were all those people there I didn't worry.(This subject was in the Survey condition).
- S2. My first instinct was to protect my pocketbook because I had my wallet stolen in a crowd before.--But then I said to someone, 'Do you know what's happening? They said, 'Well if you answer if the streets of New York are safe or not you get a dollar bill.'--And I saw a person with a dollar bill coming out of the crowd.(This subject took a dollar after interacting with others during the Survey condition).
- S3. If there was absolutely no one there what-so-ever then I would have gone right by.--Because I would know there was something (risky) about it. (This subject took a dollar in the Take One condition).

Pedestrians who remained alone did not use others to help them understand the unusual display of dollar bills. For these individuals the situation remained ambiguous and risky.

Most of the subjects who remained alone appeared to ignore or avoid the display. The unresponsiveness of

these subjects seemed to stem from normative standards that govern behavior on New York City streets. The cautionary norms on city streets suggest that individuals should not get involved with public events that appear ambiguous, unusual, or risky.

Pedestrians who remained alone were more likely to disregard the display even when the sign above the money condoned taking a dollar. These individuals appeared to ignore the potential for gain presented by the display of dollar bills. Some of them may have focused on the possible negative consequences (real or imagined) and thereby accentuated the perceived riskiness of the situation.

Subjects who remained alone did not obtain information about the situation from other pedestrians around the display. Many of these subjects may have had suspicions about the display that could have been alleviated if they had interacted with others. Some suspected that the money was not real or that the situation was a trap. Other subjects suspected that pedestrians near the display were involved in some way. Many subjects felt that they were being observed and would be approached if they took any money. Since subjects who remained alone did not communicate with one another about the display their suspicions were not disconfirmed and their confusion was not relieved. Had they interacted with other

pedestrians near the display they may have realized that these individuals were not involved with the display.

The members of preformed groups (who did not interact with strangers) responded in a manner that was similar to individuals who remained alone in that they were not likely to take any money. The cautionary norms which caused pedestrians to remain unresponsive appeared to operate within these pre-established groups. Communication within preformed groups did not appear to alter the cautionary norms which caused them to avoid the display of dollar bills. It also did nothing to enhance the value of the money. Interaction within these groups probably reaffirmed the conservative standards that govern city streets.

II. Unresponsiveness to Situational Ambiguity

Previous studies have shown that situational ambiguity causes a lack of responsiveness to emergency situations and that bystanders are more likely to be unresponsive when other people are present (Lastane and Darley, 1970; Clark and Word, 1972; 1974). The results of the present study demonstrate that situational ambiguity may also result in unresponsiveness in situations where the subject may benefit by responding.

In the present study, subjects could have gained money by responding to the display of dollar bills. Nevertheless, the percentage of subjects who took the money was always small. Even when the sign above the

display of dollar bills sanctioned and/or legitimized taking a dollar the majority of subjects did not take any money. In the most ambiguous condition (the No Sign condition) the percentage of subjects who took the money was extremely small (4.1% in Experiment 1 and 7.4% in Experiment 2). These results indicate that in a public urban environment situational ambiguity leads to a lack of responsiveness even when pedestrians may obtain financial rewards by responding. This finding confirms Hypothesis 1, which states that when the display of dollar bills is left unattended without any indication of ownership, purpose or meaning (i.e., No Sign condition) only a small percentage of the pedestrians who notice the display will take any of the money.

Post experimental interviews reveal at least three possible explanations as to why most subjects do not take any of the money: 1) The lack of responsiveness which characterizes urban pedestrians; 2) the perceived riskiness/ ambiguity of the situation (even when the signs sanction taking the situation may still appear ambiguous and/or risky); and 3) the integrity and honesty of urban pedestrians. It is also possible that a combination of these three factors may have led to the small percentage of subjects who took the money.

The lack of responsiveness which characterizes urban pedestrians was recorded on the video tapes. The tapes showed that almost all of the pedestrians who looked at the display continued on their way without stopping.

During the course of the experiment there were long periods of time when no one even stopped to stare at the display. Most subjects turned their heads toward the display of dollar bills, looked directly at it for a few seconds, and then turned their heads back in the direction they were walking. Some subjects looked twice without stopping. It was obvious that these subjects had noticed the display but did not want to get involved. The lack of responsiveness evident on the video tapes made the behavior of many pedestrians appear mechanical. They responded like robots who could not stop or be distracted on their way to a pre-programed destination.

The lack of responsiveness that characterizes urban pedestrians was also evident when subjects who disregarded the display were asked to respond to the post experimental questionnaire. Many of them refused to respond, claiming that they were in a hurry, had an important appointment, were not interested or didn't want to get involved. Some subjects totally ignored the research assistant who was politely attempting to interview them.

Some of the unresponsive subjects in the No Sign condition may have felt that it would be too risky to get involved with the unusual display of dollars. Subjects who had not interacted with strangers appeared to be more concerned with the risks and consequences of taking the money than subjects who had interacted with other

pedestrians. Their concern and/or suspicion was evident in the following statements made during the post experimental interviews:

- S1. "I thought it was definitely a trick."
- S2. "Nobody would give money away free."
- S3. "Nobody put money up there for nothing---they put it up for a reason."

Fear and suspicion were also evident in some of the statements recorded by the hidden microphone in front of the display:

- S1. I think its a set up!
- S2. I'm scared to take one

In the No Sign condition there was nothing to indicate whether or not taking the money was appropriate. Under these circumstances some subjects may have relied on their own integrity and moral principles to guide them. This was evident in a statement made by an older gentleman who did not take any money.

"I couldn't---it does not belong to me. I thought it was there for exposure; for people to have a look....It's no business of mine--it's dishonesty to take anything that doesn't belong to you. You probably could be prosecuted."

Although most pedestrians were totally unresponsive to the display of dollar bills, a few subjects appeared to be somewhat interested. These people stopped abruptly, stared from a distance or approached the display and then moved on. Their facial expressions and behavior often indicated that they were confused, suspicious

and/or curious. A few of the pedestrians stared at the display; left the scene and returned a short time later to continue to scrutinize the situation. Sometimes they would return with other people, show them the display and assess their reactions. In some cases these subjects began to interact with other pedestrians who were also intrigued by the unusual display. Video taped interactions revealed that many of these subjects thought the display was ambiguous. Pedestrians who began interacting with strangers sometimes tried to reduce the ambiguity by attributing meaning and purpose to the unusual display. Some subjects also searched for the owner of the display and tried to determine whether or not it was being watched. Subjects in groups which spontaneously formed in front of the display were more likely to take the money.

In the No Sign condition several subjects stood and watched the display from a distance before approaching it and taking the money. These subjects often had puzzled looks on their faces. Pedestrians who were also perplexed by the display seemed to recognize confusion on the faces of other pedestrians (i.e., strangers) who were staring with awe at the unusual display of dollar bills. Many of these subjects briefly interacted with each other in an attempt to understand the display. In this manner groups spontaneously formed and inquisitively discussed

the display of money. The dialogues within these groups often influenced subjects to take the money.

Some subjects were tempted to take the money but were afraid to take it until others convinced them that it was not dangerous. The best example of this was a brief interaction between two strangers in front of the display.

S1. Help yourself to it!

S2. I don't want to get locked up!

S1. Nobody's going to lock you up.--Take one!

Then S1 took a few dollars and thereby became a model for S2 who also took a few dollars. Then they quickly left together.

Some of the subjects appeared curious and seemed to be standing around waiting for something to happen. While some of the subjects were tempted to take the money, no one wanted to be the first. They waited for someone to make the first move and then cautiously took some of the money themselves. Some subjects actually coaxed others into taking the money first. For example, one young man said to a stranger who was looking at the display, "Go ahead---be welcome---its for anyone who wants to go for it!" In another trial, an older man coaxed a crowd of eight people. He stood in front of the display and repeatedly said, "Its free!---Take the money.---Go ahead!" He continued to coax the crowd until

finally they all chaotically grabbed the money together and then quickly dispersed.

The ambiguity of the situation in the No Sign condition caused individuals who were originally strangers to affiliate with each other about the display. Statements made during the post experimental interviews suggest that the display of dollars in the No Sign condition was very ambiguous. Some of those statements were as follows:

- S1. "...As a matter of fact, I was advising him---don't touch it---don't touch it, because it's there for a purpose. I don't know what it is, but it's there for a purpose."
- S2. "When I first saw it I didn't take it right away---It really shocked me that it was there because it's not the ordinary thing you would see when walking down the street. I felt unsure about what it was."
- S3. I was surprised to see money in the street---and the people don't want to take it---why?---I was surprised. I've never seen this before. This is the first time I see money like this on the street---I want to know why?...I think it's a funny thing---It can happen in New York cause it's a funny city laughter)."

In the No Sign condition the meaning and purpose of the display were unknown. The ambiguity of the situation was uncomfortable and this caused some pedestrians to create their own interpretation of the situation. Sometimes pedestrians discussed the meaning and purpose of the display with pedestrians whom they didn't know in

an attempt to understand it better. These dialogues often produced interpretations which legitimized taking the money. During the post experimental interviews subjects were asked what they thought was the meaning and purpose of the display. Some of the subjects thought the money was left there to help poor people (or anyone that needed it).

- S1. I thought maybe somebody had a lot of money and was putting it up there for poor people to walk by and if they wanted the money to just be glad to go up and take it...I needed a few dollars for lunch today so I said why not.
- S2. I thought the money was there for anyone who comes along and needs it; to take it...to help yourself to it. If you need it take it. I guess it's there for the taking...
- S3. For people that are homeless---for people that need it.
- S4. I told him there must be a reason for this here, because I see boxes with refrigerators and everything. They must be making contributions like to the salvation army or something like that---I don't believe you should touch it.

Others thought it was an advertisement or a publicity stunt.

- S5. ...What is this---propaganda---is it an advertisement---What is it a coca cola advertisement or what?

Several subjects thought it was a game or a ploy for a television show.

- S6. I though it was definitely a trick---something like candid camera.

S7. I thought it was the Daily News Game where they put the numbers in the paper---they give out dollar bills with the secret number on it and you get thousands of dollars if you get the right number on it.

While some subjects may have acted on the basis of their perceptions about the display most subjects appeared to be totally unresponsive. The majority of subjects disregarded the display and continued walking. During the post experimental interviews one subject vividly described New Yorkers' lack of responsiveness in the following statement.

---But New Yorkers' they just have a certain personality to them that nothing gets in their way. They don't realize---and thats why there's a box full of money out there and all these people walked by and nobody saw it.

III. Sign Conditions

When the unusual display was left unattended without a sign to indicate the purpose, meaning or the appropriate response (No Sign condition) only a very small percentage of subjects took any money. In the No Sign condition it is difficult for the individual to define the situation because the display produces an unfamiliar situation with no proprietor and no contextual cues to communicate its meaning.

Situational ambiguity may sometimes be reduced by presenting a sign which introduces meaning into the situation. In the present study signs were introduced (in some conditions) to add meaning to the situation and

to reduce the degree of situational ambiguity. In addition, signs were used to indicate whether or not taking the money was appropriate.

The results indicate that although signs did have an effect on some pedestrians' behavior, the impact of the signs was limited. Hypotheses 2-5 basically suggest that people will tend to be influenced by the signs that were placed above the display. These hypotheses suggest that as the situation becomes less ambiguous, the percentage of subjects taking the money will increase when the signs sanction taking and decrease when the signs prohibit taking. This assumption was confirmed by the results. The findings indicate that when the sign reduced the ambiguity of the display, the percentage of subjects who took the money increased or decreased depending upon whether the signs sanctioned or prohibited taking. The Do Not Take condition and the Take One condition are considered moderately ambiguous. The signs indicate the appropriate behavior but do not explain the purpose of the display. In the Donations condition and the Survey condition the meaning and purpose of the display, as well as the appropriate response are relatively clear. These two conditions are considered low in situational ambiguity because they are both situationally and behaviorally defined.

A. Signs that prohibit taking.

The results indicate that in conditions with signs which prohibited taking a smaller percentage of subjects took the money than in the more ambiguous No Sign condition. In the Do Not Take condition, the percentage of takers was slightly smaller than in the No Sign condition. These findings confirmed the second hypothesis. Hypothesis 2 states that when the display of dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states, "Do Not Take Any Money," a smaller proportion of the people who notice the display will take the money than in the No Sign condition. Although hypothesis 2 was confirmed, the percentage of subjects who took the money in the Do Not Take condition was only slightly smaller than the percentage of subjects who took the money in the No Sign condition. Apparently the sign in the Do Not Take condition was still very ambiguous because the purpose of the display was not known. It appears that defining behavior without stating a reason or explanation is only slightly less ambiguous than a situation with no explanation at all.

In the Do Not Take condition, the unusual display of dollar bills provoked some interesting comments from pedestrians passing by. Many of the comments indicated that the display was still very ambiguous. Pedestrians who stopped in front of the display had puzzled looks on their faces and some looked around for clues as to the

meaning of the display before continuing on their way.

Several statements made during the post experimental interviews also suggest that pedestrians were perplexed by the display of dollars with the "Do Not Take" sign. The following statements suggest that the display was ambiguous:

- S1. Well first of all it's not something you usually see out here on the streets of New York. You'll place something down and say do not take and if it's something really valuable, pretty sure people will take, they will go for it...It's just that you don't see things like that. Especially with money---when you see money you don't see money laying around outside on the streets like that. Especially around here in this type of area.
- S2. You don't see things like that---like I told you. You don't see anything at all like that...I don't know it's weird.
- S3. Everybody--the other guy that was there he walked past it twice---I stood there looking at it. I was trying to figure out what the purpose of it was...
- S4. I was curious as to why it was there. I said they really don't expect this sign--- not on 42nd Street where there's all kinds of bums and derelicts, anybody who will do anything for a dollar across the street.

Only a very small percentage of the pedestrians who looked at the display took any money, and they usually spent a relatively long time deciding to take it. During that time they usually searched the immediate area for clues about the meaning and purpose of the display. Since they could not find any clues on their own, they

often interacted with other bystanders about the display. Some of these interactions were rather long, with subjects apparently wavering between taking the money and not taking it.

These subjects discussed what the possible risks and consequences would be and most were unable to come to a conclusion even after a discussion. Those subjects who were tempted by the display appeared tense, anxious, and unsure about whether or not they should risk taking the money.

Several subjects thought that someone might be watching the display, but they were not sure who was watching or how it was being watched. The typical behavior of these subjects was to look down the sidewalk, across the street, at the tops of nearby buildings, in parked cars, and in the alcove behind the display.

Fear and suspicion was especially evident in subjects who had not interacted with strangers. Statements made during the post experimental interviews also revealed that many subjects thought taking the money would be risky.

- S1. They were scared---you don't know what purpose people have for doing anything today---you know. The whole thing could have been booby-trapped. You might touch a dollar bill and get a shorted electric shock.---Anything could have happened.
- S2. Somebody watching it---a cop or somebody...I wouldn't have touched it period---cause I was scared anyway.

S4. They were like no man don't touch that money---like there was a cop hanging around that was going to pick them up.

In the Do Not Take condition subjects who actually took the money appeared to be tense, suspicious, and/or scared. Many of these subjects spent a long time deciding whether or not to take it. Although discussions in groups that formed in front of the display were able to relieve some of the tension and fear, most subjects who took the money still appeared to be somewhat nervous and concerned. When they finally did take it they either: a) took the money very slowly and cautiously and left quietly and quickly; b) grabbed a handful and ran; and/or c) cursed, yelled or laughed hysterically while grabbing the money.

The display in the Do Not Take condition seemed to present a challenge to some subjects. These subjects were curious to see what would happen if they took the money and if they would get away with taking it. For these subjects the display of dollars stimulated a sense of excitement and suspense and became an opportunity for thrill-seeking. The following sequence of events which was recorded on video tape in the Do Not Take condition demonstrates some of these behaviors. In addition, the encounter demonstrates how pedestrians in a newly formed group negotiated the acceptance of other group members and reduced the perceived riskiness of the situation.

Two youths who did not know each other approached

the display. They look at it as if they were confused. A woman also approached.

S1. It must be a joke man!

S2. It must be something---there must be something to it.

S1. I mean for what---I mean nobody's watching it.

S2. Why do they have it sitting there like that?---I don't understand. (laughter)

S3. Looks like someone took some of the dollars
already---there's tape without money.

S2. Its tempting right?!---

Another male youth approached the display and asked...

S4. What's this?---What's this?

S2. Don't touch the money (laughter)---I don't understand it.

S4. Don't touch the money.

S2. Its a joke---Its a trick!

Four more youths approached the display. A small interacting crowd formed. They discussed taking it. Some said take it---some said don't. They offered different suggestions about why it was there. One or two of them look at the boxes to see if they could find a clue to the meaning of the display.

Finally, one youth said:

S5. If everybody takes the money they won't be able to catch us!

S6. No! Don't touch the money---Stop! No!

S5. Yes! lets do it.

S6. Go ahead!

In a frenzy - laughing and shouting---the six youths all attacked the display together. Ripping off as much money as they could, they grabbed a hand full of dollar bills and then ran away.

The least amount of taking occurred in the Donations condition where the percentage of takers was extremely small (.2% in both Experiments 1 and 2). Hypothesis 3 states that when the display of dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states, "Do Not Take Any Money, Donations for Cancer Care," a smaller proportion of the people who notice the display will take the money than in the Do Not Take condition. In the Donation condition the purpose and meaning of the display was relatively clear. The results confirmed hypothesis 3.

Many of the statements that were made during the post experimental interviews indicated that the meaning and purpose of the display were clear.

S1. I know what the meaning of it was ---I can read it. It says for Cancer Cause.

S2. When I read it, I figured the money was up there for people who donate.

S3. Cancer research---they need money.

S4. I was going along with the sign. The sign said 'for cancer care' and it just caught my eye that they would leave money on display like that with no one to watch it. I didn't understand the boxes. It said it was for cancer care and I believed what the sign said.

Taking money from charity is morally prohibited by society. In the Donations condition, many of the statements that were made during the post experimental interviews also expressed the subjects' moral convictions. Some of the statements that demonstrated their honesty or integrity were as follows:

- S1. I'm not a thief. I work everyday.---I got kids. I really do not steal from anybody. No matter what--you know what I mean. You're not supposed to steal from people, and at my age---I'm 65 years old---I've been honest all my life. I never stole anything in my life--- and then its for a good cause...so why take something thats going to help people. Even if its not going to help people you're not supposed to take it. Am I right or wrong!?
- S2. Why would I take any money. I never take money thats not mine. I earn my money. I work hard for it. I wouldn't have taken it even if it was wrong or right---anything that I don't earn, I don't want!
- S3. Certainly there's a cause that I believe in.---So I wouldn't have done it for that reason. If they just had been taped up there and there hadn't been a sign I still don't think I would have taken it.
- S4. I don't like to take money from other people.---I don't like to steal. I couldn't take it.
- S5. Why would I take it.---I'm an honest person, but you get a lot of people down here that are not going to let it stay there...I would never touch anybody elses money.

In the Donations condition most pedestrians who looked at the display did not stop and continued on their

way. A few people stopped and stared for several seconds before moving on but, there was very little interaction about the display, and pedestrians did not linger very long.

An extremely small percentage of the pedestrians who looked at the display took the money and no one donated any money. Although, most pedestrians did not take the money themselves, they may have thought that others would and therefore did not feel it was safe to donate. Apparently, subjects did not want to become involved with the display in the Donations condition. Subjects may have interpreted the display as a solicitation and did not want to contribute. The video tape showed a continuous stream of hundreds of pedestrians hurrying by the display without stopping.

B. Signs that sanctioned taking.

Under conditions that sanctioned taking money a larger percentage of subjects took the money than in the ambiguous No Sign condition. Hypothesis 4a states that when the display of dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states, "Take One Dollar, Take Only One," a larger proportion of the people who notice the display will take the money than in the No Sign condition. Hypothesis 4a was confirmed by the results in both experiment 1 and experiment 2.

The sign in the Take One condition sanctioned taking the money by indicating the appropriate response.

Although the sign indicated the appropriate behavior, the meaning and purpose of the display remained unknown. In this condition the situation was still somewhat ambiguous and unusual. Pedestrians in New York City do not normally encounter dollar bills on display with a sign that says, "Take One Dollar."

Many people in New York City may also be suspicious about "getting something for nothing." The display in the Take One condition presents an uneven exchange which breaks the norm of reciprocity. Some pedestrians may not have felt comfortable about taking a dollar without giving something in return. Others may have felt that if they took a dollar they would be asked for something in return. For pedestrians who considered taking a dollar, the ambiguity surrounding the display probably amplified these concerns. The following statement made by a gentleman during the post experimental interviews expressed these concerns:

"At my age I've learned not to expect anything for nothing. Maybe its just putting myself into an embarrassing situation---cause that is what I thought---right off---putting myself into an embarrassing situation."

Although a larger percentage of the subjects took the money in the Take One condition than in the No Sign condition, the percentage of takers was still relatively small. The small percentage of takers suggests that many subjects may have felt that the display was somewhat

ambiguous or risky. Some of the statements made during the post experimental interviews support this view. The following statements indicated that the display appeared ambiguous.

- S1. I don't know what to think about it. I want to know what the heck its all about.
- S2. I don't know---I was confused because I was wondering if its counterfeit...I couldn't figure out the purpose.
- S3. I couldn't understand it.---Uh---I was puzzled---I says 'what kinda business is this?'

The post experimental interviews also revealed that many of the subjects were suspicious about the display and/or felt that it would be risky to take the money. Most of these subjects became more at ease when they discussed taking the monay with other bystanders in front of the display. Some of the statements which involved suspicion or risk were as follows:

- S1. It looked too phoney. You know---when you go walking down on 42nd Street and see all this bunch of money that says take one---I was skeptical.
- S2. You got to take your chances you know. If somebody's watching that's it...I just looked around first---then I just took my chances. I read the sign so the sign said take one.
- S3. I thought somebody was watching from across the street. But I didn't take anything because there's got to be something to it---There's got to be a gimmick to it.---You don't get nothing for free---especially in New York City!

- S4. I'm still puzzled. I don't know. I thought reaching in something would happen. That's what I thought---like maybe something would fall down and hit me. I thought there was some catch but I just couldn't figure out what... Something embarrassing would happen....
- S5. The unknown is always risky! Like I said before, I'm a very cautious person and the fact that I believe that no one gets anything for nothing---I would dare say that it would be risky because I did not know what I would have to give for this dollar that I was going to get. I am giving myself---putting myself into an embarrassing situation. They could play a trick on me if they wanted to.
- S6. I thought it was trap at first. Its just very unusual when somebody leaves money out and have a sign---to leave money out like that. If it was in something....
This looked more like a trap. It looked too open for somebody to just leave money out like that.

The majority of subjects in the Take One condition did not stop to respond to the unusual display of dollar bills. Most pedestrians who looked at the display ignored it and continued on their way. A few pedestrians stopped briefly to look at the display but did not take any of the money. These subjects usually had puzzled looks on their faces and a few of them laughed as they left the scene.

Some subjects who did take the money also appeared to be confused by the unusual display of dollar bills. Conversations recorded by the hidden microphone revealed that subjects in the Take One condition thought the

display of dollars was very ambiguous. The following conversation demonstrates some of the confusion and suspicion created by the display. It also demonstrates how a newly formed group of strangers, although suspicious at first, eventually accentuates the potential gain of the situation. In addition, it shows how some subjects promoted taking a dollar and negotiated the acceptance of other bystanders in front of the display.

S1. Take One?

S2. It says "Take One Dollar." They must be no good.

S1. Why?

S2. Why would they want to put it there for people to take one dollar?

(They each take one dollar and examine them very carefully)

S3. Just take one?

S2. Yeah, but I think you better keep it aside to make sure that it is not counterfeit.

S3. I don't know---but I'm taking one!

S4. Take one dollar.---Why?

S5. It looks real!

In another trial the unusual display shocked one man who came to the display alone and then began talking to himself:

Look at this!---What is this gag?---Who the hell did this? Who the hell did this!?---Look at this!

This man backed away from the display and continued to stare at it in awe. A crowd eventually formed and interacted about the display. After a brief discussion people began taking money. When several other people took a dollar, the man approached the display and took one for himself.

In the Take One condition the display of dollar bills lacked an explanation. The following video taped conversation demonstrates the way some subjects attempted to derive the meaning and purpose of the display.

S1. What is it a game?

S2. What's this for?

S1. I don't know.---Candid Camera maybe.

S3. Take only one---what do we do with it?
Take one dollar.--Take only one.

S2. That's weird isn't it?

The ambiguity of the Take One condition caused many subjects to create their own ideas about the meaning and purpose of the unusual display of dollars. The following comments recorded during the post experimental interviews show the way in which some of the subjects interpreted the meaning and purpose of the display:

S1. I think it was just somebody who wanted to give away some money---somebody who has money---somebody rich maybe.

S2. When I first it I thought it was advertisement for something.---And I was looking around for the meaning of the advertisement---and I couldn't believe that somebody was just giving away money---just like that!

- S3. Why? What is it research? To see if people are crazy---to see what bothers people or see what people think---some kinda research. I don't know---what does it mean?
- S4. I was kind of cautious to take one because I thought maybe it was some kind of trick. I though it was counterfeit at first....Opportunities like that doesn't come along too often.---And I was going to use it as a good luck charm or something like that.
- S5. Its some trick or something---giving money away. Like scattering it on the street to see who will pick it up and who will not....It might be counterfeit money or something else....
- S6. I thought it was weird---I thought it was a joke.---At first I thought it was play money.---Then I looked at it good and I read the sign and it said 'Just take one,' so I just took one.
- S7. I couldn't figure out what is the purpose; but I thought someone won (the lottery) and just put it there.---Thats one theory. The other theory is that someone is just trying to have some fun. It definitely had a meaning---but I would really like to know what the meaning is!
- S8. Maybe these are the lucky bucks.
---Check it out in the newspaper.
---I'm serious man!
- S9. This is T.V. bloopers or what-not.
Practical jokes so I'm going to take one to be honest.

Although subjects who took a dollar in the Take One condition appeared puzzled and confused, they were less tense and less anxious than subjects who took money in the No Sign condition or in the conditions that prohibited taking. They were probably less apprehensive about

taking the money because the sign above the display sanctioned taking a dollar. If anyone questioned their taking a dollar, they could refer to the sign which legitimized their behavior. The following conversation recorded in front of the display exemplifies this notion.

S1. What happens if you take it?

S2. I don't know!

S1. I'm taking a dollar.---They told me to take one (referring to the sign).

S2. I don't believe this!

The interactions among takers during the Take One condition were generally very brief. Subjects who were tempted by the display in this condition did not need much social support to convince them that taking was acceptable. They did not linger very long before deciding to take the money. Most of them appeared relatively calm while taking the money and left the scene in a casual manner. Some subjects appeared to be relieved when nothing happened after they took a dollar. A few subjects appeared to be amused by the display and the opportunity to get a free dollar. These subjects leisurely left the display smiling or laughing as they went on their way.

It was expected that the greatest amount of taking would occur in the Survey condition (hypothesis 5a) since the sign indicated the purpose and meaning of the display, as well as, the appropriate response. Hypothesis

5a states that when the display of dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states, "Take One Dollar For Your Response...", a larger proportion of people who notice the display will take the money than in the Take One condition. Although, this hypothesis was not confirmed in Experiment 1 it was confirmed in Experiment 2. In Experiment 1 the percentage of takers was highest in the Take One condition. In Experiment 2 the percentage of takers was highest in the Survey condition. The reason for the lack of consistency in the results is not clear.

In the Survey condition the sign above the display of dollars indicated meaning and purpose of the display, as well as, the appropriate response. In the Survey condition taking a dollar is sanctioned and legitimized by introducing a request for reciprocity (i.e., "One Dollar For Your Response"). This condition was designed to legitimize taking and to be relatively unambiguous. Most of the post experimental interviews indicated that although there was still some ambiguity about the display the meaning and purpose were relatively clear:

S1. When I walked up and I saw a packard--or whatever--that said, 'Do you think the streets of New York are safe or not,' and then it says you get a dollar bill for your response. Ya--it was quite clear I guess you just had to check one of the boxes...I thought that there must be someone behind it, because dollar bills don't just fall from the sky.---I thought it was an advertisement company.

- S2. When I first read it I thought it was some kind of a joke (laughter).---But, uh, I think it was for a safety factor after I thought about it. I wasn't ever going to check it---then I says well let me do it.---What I read, its saying if the place is safe or not---but then I said gee, it must be a gimmick. It kept on hitting if it was a gimmick.---Then after a while I says no it may not be a gimmick.---It was complete and to the point---you know.
- S3. It said it was a survey. I assumed at face value its a survey.
- S4. I guess it was some way to see to get peoples most honest decision.---Are the streets safe or are they really dangerous? (i.e., the survey question)
---You're making a survey---maybe it will help somehow so the streets get better.

Although the Survey condition was designed to be relatively unambiguous, most pedestrians in New York City are not accustomed to seeing surveys administered in this fashion. This may explain why most pedestrians did not respond to the display of dollars in the Survey condition. In the Survey condition only 21% of the people who noticed the display took any money (in both Experiment 1 and Experiment 2).

Most of the subjects in the Survey condition were unresponsive to the display of dollar bills. In this condition, as in the other conditions of the study, the majority of people who noticed the display appeared to be disinterested. They looked directly at the display as they passed by and continued on their way along the sidewalk.

Those pedestrians that did interact with the display did so with relatively little reservation. Most subjects who took a dollar approached the display, read the sign, took only one dollar and responded to the survey question. Although subjects were more likely to take a dollar when they saw others taking them, the interaction among these subjects was brief and limited to a few words or at most one or two sentences.

The subjects who interacted with the display were generally serious and orderly, and waited their turn on lines that formed in front of the display. Occasionally someone would try to cut in front of the line. When a subject tried to cut the line, other subjects who were on line would scold the person and order him/her to wait their turn. The following conversation was recorded in front of the display when a man tried to cut in front of the line.

S1. Wait in line! Wait in line.

S2. Come on.---Wait on line.

S3. Get in line.

S4. How the hell do you get on line?

S5. Your out of luck.---They're all gone!

In some cases the lines were so long that the dollars were all taken by the people at the front of the line, leaving many people at the back of the line disappointed. Many people lingered to discuss the display after all the money was taken.

The spontaneous formation of lines was a reflection of the structured arrangement presented to the public in the Survey condition. In this condition the sign gave specific instructions about how to respond and also provided a legitimate frame of reference. This relatively well defined situation produced social organization among those pedestrians who wished to participate. In fact, many pedestrians who waited on line to respond to the display behaved in a regimented manner. Their organization broke down when there was no more money left on the display. Those remaining became a disorganized crowd that lingered around the empty display. Pedestrians that who lingered after the money was gone interacted with each others quite freely and appeared to be at ease.

C. Unresponsiveness Despite Sanctions.

Although introducing signs did alter some pedestrians behavior, the effect of the signs was limited even in conditions that sanctioned taking. When the signs above the display condoned taking a dollar most of the subjects did not take any money. Although the signs indicated the purpose, meaning and appropriated response the display still may have appeared somewhat unusual because it was left unattended. Most pedestrians on New York City streets have never encountered a display of dollar bills left unattended with only a sign to indicate how they should respond under these circumstances urban pedestrians may become unresponsive.

As stated before, explanations have been presented as to why the majority of pedestrians passing the display do not take the money: 1) the lack of responsiveness which characterizes urban pedestrians; 2) the perceived riskiness/ ambiguity of the situation; and 3) the integrity and honesty of urban pedestrians. The results indicate that in conditions that sanctioned taking the first two explanations (i.e., urban unresponsiveness and perceived risk) are the most appropriate explanation. The third explanation which suggests that subjects were unresponsive because of their desire to be honest and to maintain their integrity does not seem to be viable when taking is sanctioned by the sign above the display. Taking the money when the sign above the display promoted taking could not have threatened the subjects' integrity. This is especially evident in the Survey condition where subjects who took a dollar could easily legitimize their behavior by responding to the questionnaire. Even in the survey condition, only 21% of the subjects took money in both Experiment 1 and Experiment 2. This indicates that 79% of the subjects in this condition were unresponsive to the display of dollars.

D. Obeying Signs

In conditions that sanctioned taking most subjects remained unresponsive to the display of dollar bills. The signs which requested that Subjects take a dollar were ineffective in that the majority of pedestrians who

noticed the display did not respond. On the other hand, the relatively small proportion of subjects that did interact with the display tended to obey the signs.

The results indicate that in the conditions that sanctioned taking (Take One and Survey conditions) most of the subjects that took the money obeyed the signs. Hypothesis 4b states that when the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states, "Take One Dollar. Take Only One," a majority of the people who take the money will take only one dollar. The results confirmed this hypothesis. In the Take One condition, where the sign above the display said, "Take One Dollar - Take Only One," a high percentage of the subjects who took the money (i.e., takers) took only one dollar (80% in Experiment 1 and 74% in Experiment 2).

Conversations recorded by the hidden microphone during the Take One condition demonstrate that some subjects directed others to obey the sign.

- S1. Is it real---your kidding me?
- S2. What the hell is the gimmick on this thing?
- S3. What?
- S2. Take only one!
- S3. You can take a dollar.
- S4. You can only take one!

In another trial one of the subjects was contemplating taking more than one dollar, but decided to obey the sign.

Take one dollar---take one. I suppose you can't take two?---You only take one. You better just take one.

In the survey condition most of the subjects who took the money also obeyed the sign. Hypothesis 5b states that when the display of one-dollar bills is left unattended with a sign that states "One Dollar For Your Response...", the majority will take only one dollar and will respond to the question. The results confirmed this hypothesis. When the sign above the display stated, "Take One Dollar for Your Response - Take Only One" (with the survey question that said "check only one") a high percentage of the subjects who took the money (i.e., takers) took only one dollar and gave one response (72% in Experiment 1 and 73% in Experiment 2).

Conversations recorded during the Survey condition also showed subjects directing others to obey the sign and respond appropriately.

S1. It's very easy---all you got to do is grab a dollar and mark whether New York City streets are safe or dangerous.

S2. That's what it says.---That's what I intend to do.

S1. Good choice (looking at S2's answer). Now you get a dollar.

S2. Who's sponsoring this?

S1. I don't know.

In the Survey condition some subjects actually became angry when others did not obey the sign.

S1. Take One?---I'll take two! (takes two

dollars and leaves quickly as others respond in an angry tone).

S2. Only one!

S3. Only one, man! Take only one.

In conditions that sanctioned taking subjects who interacted with the display appeared to be compelled to obey the signs even though the displays were unattended. For these subjects the sign was the only clear and legitimate indication of what would be considered an appropriate response. The presence of other pedestrians or the thought that someone might be watching them may have made them more likely to comply.

In modern societies signs are often used to replace interpersonal communication. Most urban areas are filled with signs that communicate information, instructions, directions, restrictions and requests to the public. In larger cities one often finds a multitudinous amount of signs concentrated within a relatively small area. There are so many signs on the streets of large cities that pedestrians ignore most of them and focus only on a few that are important, relevant, and/or personally appealing. In conditions that sanctioned taking the signs were not very effective in luring subjects to the display. However, once subjects decided to interact with the display the signs had a strong impact on their behavior. When dealing with unfamiliar situations people often rely on signs for explanations and directions.

CHAPTER 6SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The present urban field study investigated pedestrians' reactions to ambiguous situations that had a potential for monetary gain and/or moral censure. More specifically, this investigation explored: 1) the unresponsiveness of urban pedestrians when they are confronted by situational ambiguity; 2) the ability (or inability) of signs to reduce situational ambiguity and alter pedestrians' behavior; and 3) how certain types of groups reduce unresponsiveness and promote ethical risk-taking.

In the most ambiguous condition (No Sign condition) fifteen one-dollar bills were presented to the public in an unusual display which was left unattended facing the sidewalk on a busy New York City street. The dollar bills were lightly attached to a large upright plexiglass board (with two wooden sides) which was open and accessible so that pedestrians on the street could easily take the money. In the No Sign condition there was no indication as to the display's owner, its purpose, or its meaning.

The meaning of the unusual display of dollar bills was altered by introducing various written signs which either sanctioned or prohibited taking money. It was

assumed that the risk associated with taking the money would be higher with signs that sanctioned taking.

Two high risk conditions were created by placing signs that prohibited taking the money above the display of dollar bills. In one of these two conditions the sign clearly stated, "Do Not Take Any Money" (Do Not Take condition). Although the sign indicated the appropriate response, the definition of the situation in this condition was till somewhat ambiguous because the meaning and purpose of the display were unknown. In the second condition the message written on the sign defined the situation as a charity campaign and also made it apparent to the subjects that taking the money would be socially unacceptable. In this condition the sign above the display state, "Do Not Take Any Money. Donations For Cancer Care" (Donations condition). Defining the situation in this manner introduces moral implications that strengthen the prohibition against taking the money and increase the perceived risk of negative consequences.

Two other conditions decreased the perceived risk of taking the money by introducing signs that sanctioned and legitimized taking the money. In one condition the display of dollars was left unattended with a sign that said "Take One Dollar. Take Only One" (Take One condition). The sign sanctioned taking the money, and indicated the appropriate behavior, but it did not explain the purpose or meaning of the display. Since the

situation was still somewhat ambiguous, people may have felt that taking the money involved an element of risk.

The second condition which sanctioned taking involved a sign that defined the situation as a survey campaign where taking a dollar was appropriate if the subject responded to a survey question. In this condition, the sign defined the purpose of the display and also indicated the appropriate response. The sign above the display of one-dollar bills stated. "Take One Dollar For Your Response. Take Only One" (Survey condition). Underneath the sign where the dollar bills were hanging was a survey response sheet. One would expect the least amount of risk (ambiguity) to be associated with taking the money in the survey condition because, in this condition taking the money is sanctioned and legitimized within an adequately defined situation.

The unique experimental display of dollar bills created an atmosphere of uncertainty and risk which may cause people to affiliate with others in an attempt to define the situation and determine the appropriate response. Previous studies on ethical risk-taking in groups indicated that, under certain circumstances, groups are more willing to take risks than are individuals. With regard to ethical risk-taking in groups, Rettig (1966, 1967) demonstrated that as group members communicate with each other they tend to focus on

and enhance the value of the benefits that can be gained from the situation.

In order to increase our understanding of the ethical risk-taking phenomenon, three different types of groups were identified and studied: a) preformed groups; b) preformed groups that interacted with strangers outside the group; and c) newly-formed interacting groups of strangers. A "preformed group" was defined as two or more individuals who appeared to know each other and arrived at the experimental display together. Subjects were categorized as a "preformed group that interacted" if they communicated with stranger(s) about the display. A "newly-formed interacting group" was defined as two or more individuals (i.e., strangers) who came to the display alone and then communicated with each other about the display.

Each condition of the experiment was video taped by a hidden camera. A panel of three independent raters viewed the video tapes and categorized subjects on several dimensions. The entire study was replicated.

In general the findings indicate that most city-dwellers were unresponsive when they were exposed to situations that are unusual, ambiguous or risky. In all of the different sign conditions the overwhelming majority of subjects did not take any money. The behavior of subjects who did take the money can mainly be explained on the basis of group formation. The dialogue

within these newly-formed groups appeared to have influenced subjects to take the money.

In the present study signs had a relatively small but significant effect on some pedestrians' behavior. The ability of the signs to reduce situational ambiguity appeared to be very limited. Even when the signs sanctioned and legitimized taking the money, only a very small proportion of the pedestrians who noticed the display took the money.

In conditions that sanctioned taking, signs did have a strong influence on pedestrians who interacted with the display of dollars. The majority of these subjects obeyed the signs and responded appropriately. Most subjects resisted the temptation to take more than one dollar and complied with the sign's request even though the display was unattended.

The situational ambiguity produced by the unusual display of dollar bills sometimes caused pedestrians who were interested in the display to interact with strangers in an attempt to clarify the situation. Pedestrians who were tempted to take the money tried to get information from strangers about the purpose of the display and the consequences of taking the money. In addition, they often sought the approval of strangers before taking the money.

These newly-formed groups were much more likely to take the money than individuals who approached the

display alone or individuals in preformed groups that did not interact with outsiders. Evidently, interacting with strangers facilitated the development of temporary norms which condoned taking the money.

The fact that pedestrians were motivated to interact with strangers indicates that the unusual display of dollars had a powerful impact on these subjects. Most people in New York City do not interact with strangers. The inhabitants of New York City streets are characterized by impersonal noninvolvement, distrust, and reserve. In the present study pedestrians who confided in strangers were compelled to break these norms. Unusual situations and unexpected events sometimes cause people to affiliate with strangers in an attempt to verify and understand the situation. Future studies should be performed to determine whether the results of the present investigation will generalize to other types of ambiguous and/or risky situations.

The present study took place in a single urban local in New York City. Whether the results of this study would generalize to other areas in New York City or to cities with different cultures merits further investigation.

APPENDIX ARATING CATEGORIESLookers (Subjects):

Pedestrians who notice the display. Raters should be guided by the following responses:

- 1) People who turn their heads towards the display while passing across half of the monitor screen.
- 2) People who stop and look or walk toward the display while looking at it.

Takers:

Lookers (i.e., subjects) who took one or more dollar(s).

Alone:

The individual appears to be walking or acting independently; no reciprocal interaction with others (i.e., no reciprocated communication). The person may speak as long as the communication is not reciprocated (i.e., nobody answers the person).

Preformed Group:

Two or more individuals who appear to have interacted with each other prior to seeing the display and arrive at the display together. Raters should use their own judgment and be guided by one

or more of the following characteristics of the people in the group:

- 1) Walking close to each other and/or striding together.
- 2) Looking at each other and/or turning towards each other.
- 3) Following each other.
- 4) Touching each other.
- 5) Calling each other by name.
- 6) People who arrive together and whose communication indicates that they have had prior interactions.

Interaction:

An interaction is defined as communication that appears to have been reciprocated (i.e., responded to) anytime prior to taking the money.

Preformed Group That Interacts:

When one or more members of a preformed group interacts with a stranger about the display. Within this study a preformed group is viewed as a unit. Thus, even if only one member of this group interacts with an outsider, the entire group (i.e., each member) is placed within this category. If the preformed group interacts with an individual (or individuals) who have come to the display alone, then these "individuals" are categorized as members of a new interacting group (while the members of the

preformed group are placed within the "preformed group that interacts" category).

New Interacting Group:

One or more individuals (i.e., strangers) who come to the display alone and then interact (i.e., have reciprocated communicated) with each other about the display.

APPENDIX B

Raters Score Sheet

Looking	Alone	Pre- formed	Pre- formed Interacts	Newly- formed	Expt- Cond- Trial
1					\$ \$
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					
25					
26					
27					
28					
29					
30					

Response Score Sheet For Survey Condition

For Takers in Survey Condition

Expt trial	Takes 1 \$ Responds	Takes 1.5 \$ No Response	Takes more Responds	Takes more No Response	Responds No Taking	Responds No Money	#
Subject	1						
	2						
	3						
	4						
	5						
	6						
	7						
	8						
	9						
	10						
	11						
	12						
	13						
	14						
	15						

APPENDIX CPOST EXPERIMENTAL QUESTIONNAIRE

(Interview Protocol)

Excuse me (Sir/Ms), I was wondering if I could ask you a few questions?

- 1) What do you think was the purpose or meaning of the display of dollar bills?
- 2) Did you feel that the situation was well-defined (had a clear meaning) or was the situation poorly defined (not clear, ambiguous)?
- 3) Did you take any money? What made you decide (to take or not to take) the money?
- 4) At the time, did you think that taking the money would be risky or dangerous?
- 5) Did other people have any influence on your (taking or not taking) the money?
What kind of influence?
- 6) Did you talk to anyone about the display of dollar bills?
Did you talk about taking the money?
- 7) Were you part of a group when you noticed the display?
How did being part of a group influence you?
- 8) Did you feel that someone was watching you?
How did you feel when they were watching you?
Did it make any difference in your behavior?
- 9) What brings you to this area?
- 10) Where do you live?
- 11) What do you do for a living?

APPENDIX D

Table 5

Percentage of Takers by Condition and Group
(Experiment 1)

Group Categories	Condition				
	Donations	Do not take	No sign	Take one	Survey
Alone	.001% (477)	0% (314)	0.5% (192)	18.6% (102)	14.6% (151)
Preformed	0% (140)	0% (82)	0% (47)	32.4% (34)	19.4% (31)
Preformed That Inter- acted	0% (2)	38.5% (13)	0% (2)	100% (1)	100% (5)
New Inter- acting Group	0% (3)	45.5% (11)	58% (17)	100% (12)	64.7% (17)

Note: (n) = total number of subjects (i.e., takers and non-takers) in each cell. The total number of subjects for each condition (i.e., when group categories are combined) may vary from the totals in Table 2 because the rating system used to categorized groups restricted the data.

Table 6

Percentage of Takers by Condition and Group
(Experiment 2)

Group Categories	Condition				
	Donations	Do not take	No sign	Take one	Survey
Alone	0% (779)	1.2% (243)	2.3% (174)	11% (154)	18.5% (135)
Preformed	0% (244)	0% (72)	0% (32)	32.4% (32)	19.4% (44)
Preformed That Inter- acted	0% (2)	50% (6)	33% (6)	33.3% (6)	100% (3)
New Inter- acting Group	.4% (5)	70% (10)	50% (20)	77.8% (18)	85.7% (7)

Note: (n) = total number of subjects (i.e., takers and non-takers) in each cell. The total number of subjects for each condition (i.e., when group categories are combined) may vary from the totals in Table 2 because the rating system used to categorized groups restricted the data.

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