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# Measuring Helping Behavior Across Cultures

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# Measuring Helping Behavior Across Cultures

## Abstract

This chapter focuses on some of the special challenges and difficulties in conducting cross-cultural research. In particular, it describes some of the problems my colleagues and I have faced in our own research: a series of studies in which helpfulness toward strangers was assessed in 36 cities across the United States and 23 large cities around the world. We conducted independent field experiments in each city to measure helping in various situations, such as seeing if passersby would alert a pedestrian who dropped a pen, offer help to a pedestrian with a hurt leg trying to reach a pile of dropped magazines, assist a blind person to cross the street and retrieve a lost letter. The results of these studies are discussed, including some ways they exemplify both what can be learned from cross-cultural research and the "noise" or uncertainties one can expect to encounter in this learning process.

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## Introduction

Two images: First, as a six year old boy growing up in New York City, I am walking with my father on a crowded midtown street. The rush of pedestrians suddenly backs up before me as people narrow into a single lane to avoid a large object on the sidewalk. To my astonishment, the object turns out to be a human being lying unconscious against a building. My father quickly points to a bottle in a paper bag next to him. Not one of the passing herd seems to actually notice the man--certainly, none make eye contact – as they robotically follow the makeshift detour. My father, who I look up to as a model loving, caring man, explains that the poor soul on the sidewalk "just needs to sleep it off." When the prone man suddenly begins to ramble senselessly, my father warns not to go near. "You never know how he'll react." I later came to see these two teachings – "There's nothing you can do" and "Try not to get involved" – as my anthems of urban survival.

Next, fast forward several years to a market in Rangoon, Burma (now Myanmar). I had spent the previous twelve months travelling in poor Asian cities, but even by those standards this was a scene of misery. Besides the inconceivable poverty, it is sweltering hot, ridiculously crowded and the wind is blowing dust everywhere. Suddenly, a man carrying a huge bag of peanuts calls out in pain and falls to the ground. I then witness an astonishing piece of choreography. Appearing to have rehearsed the scene many times, a half dozen sellers run from their stalls to help, leaving unattended what may be the totality of their possessions. One puts a blanket under the man's head, another opens his shirt, a third questions him carefully about the pain, a fourth gets water, a fifth keeps onlookers from crowding too close, a sixth runs for a doctor. Within minutes, the doctor arrives, and two other locals join in to assist. The performance could have passed for a final exam at paramedic school.

Rousseau once wrote that "cities are the sink of the human race." But as these experiences in New York and Rangoon made clear, no two cities are the same. Places, like individuals, have their own personalities.

In what cities is a needy stranger more likely to receive help? What sort of community teaches a citizen to withhold altruism toward strangers? As grown up social psychologists, my colleagues and I have spent much of the past decade trying to test these questions systematically. Our studies have produced significant data, TO which I will turn later. What we have learned more than anything, however, is how difficult it can be to measure cross-cultural differences in real-life social behaviors meaningfully. Moving from the anecdotal observations of a traveler to the scientific generalizations of a social researcher may be a bigger leap than one imagines. This chapter focuses on some of the difficulties we have encountered in our research. I do this with two intentions: first, to prepare other researchers for some of the problems they may face when measuring real life social behavior across cultures, pointing out at the same time the many difficulties that researchers face when gathering meaningful data. This is what is meant by cross-cultural field research being a noisy discipline. The second intention is to show that there is a silver lining to this noise. You may find that what does not work in your research can be as informative as what does.

### Problem One. Measuring Helping

Our first problem was to develop field measures that would reflect helpfulness toward strangers in different locales. Our challenge was not only to identify behaviors that would be valid indicators of helpfulness but to identify a sample of behaviors that would be sufficiently representative of such a broad concept as helpfulness. This problem is not, of course, limited to cross-cultural research. Psychologists usually pay considerable care to achieving representative subject samples. We are often not as attentive, however, to creating multiple measures that span the full meaning of the variables we study. This is certainly the case in studies of helping behavior. With few exceptions, we found, helping field studies have used convenience samples of one or two helping behaviors. One study, for example, might measure helping by the number of people who are willing to fill out a questionnaire while another might measure helping by how many of them assist a person who collapses on the street. The term "helping" covers a lot of ground. Without carefully considering the sampling of measures, it is difficult to generalize to a wider range of helping behaviors.

This problem OF generalization is further complicated by a lack of attention to systematic taxonomies of helping behaviors. Without such a classification scheme, it is difficult to gauge where on the spectrum any arbitrarily selected helping behavior resides and, consequently, to determine which other helping behaviors to which it might be related. To our good fortune, Pearce and Amato (1980) have developed an empirically-derived three-dimensional model of helping that lends itself to operational definition. Their model poses a threefold structure of helping: (1) **doing** what one can, (direct help) vs. **giving** what one has (indirect help); (2) **spontaneous** (informal) help vs. **planned** (formal) help; and (3) **serious** vs. **non-serious** help. These three dimensions correspond, in order, to: (1) the type of help offered; (2) the social setting in which help is offered; and (3) the degree of need of the recipient.

We developed five field experiments that attempted to fill Pearce and Amato's three-dimensional space (see Levine, Martinez, Brase, & Sorenson, 1994, for a description of how these five measures fit into Pearce and Amato's taxonomy). Each of these studies was carried out in main downtown areas, during primary business hours, on clear summer days. Multiple trials of each measure were conducted in each city, targeting a relatively equal number of male and female pedestrians.

**Retrieving a dropped pen.** The experimenter (a neatly dressed college age male), walking at a moderate pace, would reach into his pocket and "accidentally," without appearing to notice, drop his pen behind him, and continue walking. In each city, we observed the number of occasions a passing pedestrian helped the experimenter retrieve the pen.

**Hurt leg.** Walking with a heavy limp and wearing a large and clearly visible leg brace (the ugliest ones we could find), the experimenter "accidentally" dropped, and then unsuccessfully struggling to reach down for, a pile of magazines. What proportion of approaching pedestrians offered assistance?

**Blind person crossing the street.** An experimenter wearing dark glasses and carrying a white cane acted the role of a blind person needing help getting across the street.<sup>1</sup> We measured the percentage of instances in which help was offered.

**Change for a Quarter.** With a quarter in full view, the experimenter approached a pedestrian passing in the opposite direction and asked politely for change for a quarter. We observed how many pedestrians in each city stopped to check for change.

**Lost Letter.** A neat hand-written note, "I found this next to your car," was placed on a stamped envelope addressed to the experimenter's home. The envelope was then left on the windshield of a randomly selected car parked at a meter in a main shopping area. How many of these letters arrived at the address?

Our first studies were done in the early 1990's, when we and our students visited 36 cities of various sizes spread across every region of the United States. The results did nothing to dispel my childhood impressions of New York. Combining the results of the five experiments, New York City came out dead last. Thirty-sixth out of thirty-six. (A sixth measure of helping, per capita contributions to United Way for each city, was also counted in these earlier studies.) Overall, we found that small and medium-sized cities in the southeast were the most helpful and large northeastern and West Coast cities were the least helpful. For complete results, see Levine, et al. (1994) and Levine (1997).

Far and away the best predictor of helping was population density. Density was more closely tied to the helpfulness of a city than even characteristics like crime rates, the pace of life, economic conditions or environmental stressors like noise and air pollution. Overall, people in more crowded cities were much less likely to take the time to help. New York City was Exhibit A. Crowding brings out our worst nature. Urban critics have demonstrated that squeezing too many people into too small a space leads to alienation, anonymity, de-individuation and social isolation. Ultimately, people feel less responsible for their behaviors toward others – especially strangers. Previous studies have shown that city dwellers are more likely to do each other harm. Our U.S. results indicate that they are also less likely to do them good, and that this apathy increases with the degree of city-ness.

## **Problem Two. Translating Behavior across Cultures**

But is the city dweller's reluctance to help strangers limited to the United States? It was no surprise to find that densely packed cities like New York do not measure up to the communitarian standards of their smaller and calmer counterparts in the Southeast and Midwest. As the first author's experience in Rangoon showed, however, we sometimes find pockets of village cohesiveness in the most citified of places. How do big city dwellers from other countries compare on our helpfulness experiments? How does New York – the penultimate U.S. city – measure up to large cities worldwide?

To answer these questions, over the next several summers more than 20 adventurous students ran our five helping experiments in large cities in countries around the world. In all, we conducted almost 300 trials of the blind person episode, dropped over

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<sup>1</sup> The canes, and training for the role, were provided by the Fresno Friendship Center for the Blind.

400 pens, approached some 500 people in each of the hurt leg and asking for change episodes, and lost almost 800 letters. (In the United States, these experiments were conducted in New York City.)

This is where we first experienced the cross-cultural researcher's paradox: You sometimes learn more from your mistakes than your successes. One of our most noteworthy findings was that our measures of helping often did not translate cleanly across cultures. Cross-cultural researchers are well aware of the problem of translating concepts from one language to another. We learned about the difficulty of meaningfully translating behaviors between cultures.

Two experiments in particular – the asking for change and the lost letter situations – simply did not have the same functional meaning in many countries as they had in the United States.

The lost letter experiment was the most troublesome. This experiment entails leaving stamped, addressed envelopes in a visible location on the street, and then observing the percentage of these letters that get delivered. The first problem we encountered was people literally running away from the letters in some cities. In Tel Aviv, in particular, where unclaimed packages have all too often turned out to contain bombs, our experimenter found people actively avoiding the suspicious looking envelopes. In El Salvador, our experimenter was informed about a scam going around in which people were intentionally dropping letters; when innocent samaritans picked one up, the con man told them they had lost the letter, that it contained money, and demanded the money back. Not surprisingly, very few letters were returned in El Salvador.

Then, in many underdeveloped countries, we found that local mailboxes are either unattended or non-existent. As a result, mailing a letter in these places requires walking to a central post office, rather than simply going to the letter box on the corner or in front of one's home, as is the custom in countries like the United States. In Tirane, Albania (where we eventually gave up our attempts to gather data), the experimenter was warned not to bother sending a letter, because it probably wouldn't arrive anyway. Postal unreliability is also a factor in some more affluent nations. In Italy not too many years ago, there was a widely publicized scandal when it was discovered that the post office had dealt with an impossible backup of undelivered mail by dumping truckloads into empty fields. ("But it only happened in Rome," one Italian loyalist admonished me.) And most problematic of all, in several countries we found that letters and postal communication are peripheral to many residents' lives. Really, what did we ethnocentric Americans expect to find in a country like India, with a 52 percent illiteracy rate?

The asking for change experiment also encountered a variety of translation problems. In this situation, the experimenter would ask a pedestrian passing in the opposite direction for a quarter (in the United States) or its equivalent in other countries. Between monetary inflation and the use of pre-paid telephone cards, however, we learned that the need for particular coins has become virtually extinct in many countries. In Tel Aviv, for example, no one seemed to understand why a person would need small change. In Calcutta, our experimenter had difficulty finding anyone with small value bills and coins – a general shortage which occurs all over India during some festival seasons. In Buenos

Aires, we wondered how to score the response of a person who replied, "I don't even have for myself."

In a few cities, people were afraid to transact money with strangers. For example, in Kiev, RUSSIA, where pickpockets are rampant, visitors are warned to never open their purse or wallet on the street. In El Salvador, experimenter Carlos Navarette had the misfortune to run into "a youth gang war where rocks were being thrown at each other. They stopped traffic along the street. When the cops came five minutes later, rounds were fired into the air as the gangs dispersed. Some of the adults then started taunting the young members of the "maras," calling them sissies and telling them how fed up they were at all of the problems that the youth were causing." So much for the asking for change experiment in San Salvador.

In the end, we limited our cross-national comparisons to the blind person, hurt leg and dropped pen experiments. Even these, we found, occasionally suffered in translation. In the hurt leg scenario, for example, we learned that a mere leg brace was sometimes insufficient to warrant sympathy. In Jakarta, INDONESIA, for example, experimenter Widyaka Nusapati reported that it is "not usual to help someone with a subtle leg injury. Perhaps if the limb was missing." In the blind person situation, we found that some cities, such as Tokyo and parts of the United States, have installed auditory tones on traffic lights so that visually impaired people will know when the light turns green. (I might add that in Tokyo, unlike New York, a green light means that it is safe to cross the street). And, in a paradoxical twist, the experimenter in some cities – like Tokyo – felt so compelled by the surrounding norms of civility that he found it nearly impossible to fake blindness or a hurt leg to attract well-meaning helpers. As a result, the data for Tokyo were dropped from our final list.

## Results

But even with these difficulties, our experimenters ran the three experiments successfully in 23 different countries. What we found suggests a world of difference in the willingness of urbanites to reach out to strangers (see Table 1). In the blind person experiment, for example, five cities (Rio de Janeiro, San Jose, Lilongwe, Madrid, and Prague) helped the pedestrian across the street on every occasion, while in Kuala Lumpur, Kiev and Bangkok help was offered less than one-half the time. If you have a hurt leg in downtown San Jose, Calcutta or Shanghai, our results show that you are more than three times as likely to receive help picking up a dropped magazine than if you are on the streets of New York City, Kiev or Sofia. If you drop your pen behind you in New York City, you have less than one third the chance of seeing it again than if the same thing happens in Rio de Janeiro.

Overall, the two most helpful cities were from Latin America – Rio de Janeiro and San Jose, Costa Rica. As a rule, in fact, we found that cities with strong Hispanic/Latino cultures tended to be among the most helpful; the other three Hispanic/Latino cities that we tested (Madrid, San Salvador and Mexico City) were also all above average. Considering that several of these cities suffer from long-term political instability, high crime

rates and a potpourri of other social, economic and environmental urban stressors, this is a noteworthy finding.

Table 1  
Where do People Help?

City, Country	Overall Helping Index			Blind Person		Dropped Pen		Hurt Leg	
	Rank	Z-scores	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	1	1.66174	93.33	1	100	1	100	4	80
San Jose, Costa Rica	2	1.52191	91.33	1	100	7	79	1	95
Lilongwe, Malawi	3	1.14903	86.00	1	100	2	93	13	65
Calcutta, India	4	.91598	82.67	6	92	16	63	2	93
Vienna, Austria	5	.79946	81.00	12	75	6	88	4	80
Madrid, Spain	6	.68293	79.33	1	100	9	75	14	63
Copenhagen, Denmark	7	.56641	77.67	15	67	4	89	8	77
Shanghai, China	8	.49650	76.67	17	63	9	75	3	92
Mexico City, Mexico	9	.42658	75.67	6	92	17	55	4	80
San Salvador, El Salvador	10	.35667	74.67	6	92	4	89	20	43
Prague, Czech Republic	11	.37997	75.00	1	100	17	55	9	70
Stockholm, Sweden	12	.17023	72.00	18	58	3	92	11	66
Budapest, Hungary	13	.10031	71.00	15	67	8	76	9	70
Bucharest, Romania	14	-.06282	68.67	6	92	14	66	19	48
Tel Aviv, Israel	15	-.10943	68.00	10	83	13	67	16	54
Rome, Italy	16	-.43570	63.33	12	75	21	35	4	80
Bangkok, Thailand	17	-.59883	61.00	23	42	9	75	11	66
Taipei, Taiwan	18	-.73866	59.00	21	50	15	65	15	62
Sofia, Bulgaria	19	-.87849	57.00	11	80	12	69	23	22
Amsterdam, Netherlands	20	-1.11154	53.67	18	58	19	54	17	49
Singapore, Singapore	21	-1.50772	48.00	21	50	20	45	17	49
New York, USA	22	-1.74077	44.67	12	75	22	31	22	28
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	23	-2.04374	40.33	20	54	23	26	21	41

Note. Overall Helping Index is the average of the z-scores for each of the three situations. For the other measures, scores represent the percentage of help received in each country. A rank of '1' indicates most helpfulness.



### **Problem Three. Identifying Universal Predictors**

One of the goals of research like ours is to discover patterns in cross-cultural differences. Are there characteristics of cultures that predict and explain differences in our dependent variables? We examined a number of possible predictors: population size, economic factors (for example, gross domestic product, per capita power), cultural values (for example, individualism-collectivism, emphasis on *simpatico*, Hofstede's (1991) characteristics of culture) and the overall pace of life. (See Schwartz (1994) and Triandis (1996) for excellent discussions of cultural values and their measurement).

We found some trends but all had their exceptions. Helping rates tended to be higher in countries with lower economic productivity (lower GDP's, less purchasing power per citizen), in cities with a slower pace of life (as measured by pedestrian walking speeds), and in cultures which emphasize the value of social harmony. This city "personality" is consistent with the *simpatico* hypothesis. Communities where social obligations take priority over individual achievement tend to be less economically productive; but show more willingness to assist others. This trend did not, mind you, hold for all of the cities in our study. Pedestrians in the fast-paced, first-world cities of Copenhagen and Vienna, for example, were very helpful, while their compatriots in economically struggling Kiev were not helpful at all. These exceptions make clear that even people with a fast pace of life, and a focus on economic achievement, are capable of finding time for strangers in need. And a slow pace of life is no guarantee that people will invest their saved time in practicing social ideals. In both fast and slow places, people either make the time to help or they don't.

Still, as a general rule, we found that countries that emphasize social responsibilities over personal achievement, and have a slower pace of life, tend to be more helpful to strangers on the street. We are reminded of the Kelantese people of the Malay Peninsula, who embrace slowness as a cornerstone of morality. Haste in their corner of the world is considered a breach of ethics. The Kelantese are judged by a set of rules for proper behavior known as *budi bahasa*, or the "language of character." At the core of this ethical code is a willingness to take the time for social obligations, for visiting and paying respect to friends, relatives and neighbors. Any hint of rushing smacks of greed and over concern with material possessions. Most importantly, it shows an irresponsible lack of attention to the social obligations of the *budi bahasa*. Violators threaten basic village values concerning interpersonal relations and village solidarity. They are gossiped about, considered less refined (*halus*), and are often suspected of trying to hide something (Levine, 1997).

### **Problem Four. Isolating Variables in the Real-World: Helping versus Civility**

We also learned that all helping is not alike. In particular, there may be a difference between helping and civility. In places where people walked fast – hastily, as the Kelantese might say – they were often less likely to act civilly even when they did offer assistance. In New York City, helping often appeared with a particularly sharp edge.

During the dropped pen experiment, for example, helpful New Yorkers would typically call back to the experimenter that he had dropped his pen, then quickly move on in the opposite direction. On the other hand, helpers in laid-back Rio de Janeiro – the land of *amanhã*, where slowness and *simpatico* are ways of life – were more likely to return the pen personally, sometimes literally running to catch up with the experimenter. In the blind person experiment, helpful New Yorkers would often wait until the light turned green, then tersely announce to the experimenter that it was safe to cross, and then quickly walked ahead. In the friendlier cities, helpers were more likely to offer to walk the blind person across the street, and sometimes asked if he then needed further assistance. One of our experimenters' problems in these friendlier places, in fact, was how to separate from particularly caring helpers.

In general, it often seemed as if New Yorkers were willing to offer help only when it could occur with the assurance of no further contact, as if to say "I'll meet my social obligation but, make no mistake, this is as far as we go together." How much of this is motivated by fear and how much by simply not wanting to waste time is hard to know. But in more helpful cities, like Rio de Janeiro, it often seemed that human contact was the very motive for helping. People were more likely to help with a direct smile and to welcome the "thank you."

Perhaps the most vivid example of uncivil helping occurred on one of the measures we discarded, the lost letter experiment. In many cities, I received envelopes which had clearly been opened. In almost all of these cases, the finders had then resealed it or remailed it in a new envelope. Sometimes they had attached notes, usually apologizing for opening our letter. Only from New York did I receive an envelope which had its entire side ripped and left open. On the back of the letter the helper had scribbled, in Spanish: "**Hijo de puta irresposable**" – which, translated, makes a very nasty accusation about my mother. Below that was added a straightforward English-language "F\_\_\_ You." It is interesting to picture this angry New Yorker, perhaps cursing my irresponsibility all the while he was walking to the mailbox; yet, for some reason, feeling compelled to take the time to perform his social duty, for a stranger he already hated. Ironically, of course, this rudely returned letter counted in the helping column for New York's score. A most *antipatico* gentleman, Brazilians would say.

Compare this to Tokyo, where several finders hand-delivered the letters to the address. Or, consider a note we received on the back of a returned letter from the most helpful city in our earlier study of U.S. cities, Rochester, New York:

Hi. I found this on my windshield where someone put it with a note saying they found it next to my car. I thought it was a parking ticket. I'm putting this in the mailbox 11/19. Tell whoever sent this to you it was found on the bridge near/across from the library and South Ave. Garage about 5 P.M. on 11/18.

P.S. Are you related to any Levines in New Jersey or Long Island?

L.L.

### **Problem Five: Attributing Meaning**

Do our data mean that New Yorkers are less kind people – less caring on the inside – than city dwellers in more helpful places? Not at all. The New Yorkers we spoke to gave many good reasons for their reluctance to help strangers. Most, like me, had been taught early on that reaching out to people you don't know can be dangerous. To survive in New York, you should avoid even the vaguely suspicious.

Some also expressed concern that others might not want unsolicited help – that the stranger, too, might be afraid of outside contact or might feel patronized or insulted. Many told stories of being outright abused for trying to help. One woman described an encounter with a frail, elderly man with a red-tipped cane who appeared unable to manage crossing an intersection. When she lightly offered assistance, he barked back, "When I want help I'll ask for it. Mind your own f---ing business." "I've never forgotten that man," the woman remarked. Other told of being burned once too often by hustlers. One non-helper commented how "most New Yorkers have seen blindness faked, lameness faked, been at least verbally accosted by mentally ill or aggressive homeless people. This does not necessarily make one immune or callous, but rather, wary."

Over and again, New Yorkers told us they cared deeply about the needs of strangers, but that the realities of city living prohibited their reaching out. People spoke with nostalgia for the past, when they would routinely pick up hitchhikers or arrange a meal for a hungry stranger. Many expressed frustration – even anger – that life today **deprived** them of the satisfaction of feeling like good Samaritans.

To some degree, perhaps, these may simply be the rationalizations of uncharitable citizens trying to preserve their benevolent self-images. But the bulk of the evidence, in fact, indicates that helping tends to be less effected by the nature of people than it is by the characteristics of the environment. Studies have shown that seemingly minor changes in the situation can drastically affect helping – above and beyond the personalities or moral beliefs of the people involved. It is noteworthy that studies show the size of the place where one was raised has less to do with helping than the place one lives. In other words, Brazilians and New Yorkers are both more likely to offer help in Rio than they are in New York City.

### **Concluding Comments**

Cross-cultural social psychological research necessarily must deal with a multitude of variables. As noted earlier, it is definitely a noisy endeavor. Social behavior can be quite difficult to measure accurately and meaningfully. This is certainly the case when it comes to a complex behavior like helpfulness. On one level, our studies reinforce Pepitone's (1999) observations that there are multiple, distinct motivations underlying different helping behaviors and that it is, in essence, unlikely we will ever find simple explanations for cross-cultural differences. But back to that silver lining to the noise: The very complexity of the problem makes it very likely that you will encounter interesting and informative surprises

along the way. Like most great mysteries, we often learn more from what goes wrong than what too easily goes right.

Our studies are not without practical application. First, they provide tangible information about the quality of the helping environment in individual cities around the world. Second, as social indicators, they may be compared over time to mark trends in urban life throughout the world. Their greatest value, however, may be in the noise itself: Our results raise more questions than they answer. Are traditional cultures more helpful toward strangers than less traditional ones? Is there a certain type of individualist who is more likely to be helpful – prosocials who seek to maximize both their own and others' outcomes, with an emphasis on equality? What is the relationship between collectivism and communitarianism? Popenoe (1994), for example, distinguishes between individualistic cultures that value communitarianism (e.g., Sweden, Denmark) versus individualistic cultures that are more characterized by egoism (e.g., the U.S.A.). Is there a relationship between helping strangers versus helping friends and family?

No doubt there are cleaner and simpler approaches to research than studying cross-cultural differences. But it is the very challenges of cross-cultural research—the methodological complications, the seemingly endless levels of explanation, the multiplicity of confounding variables, the significance of the outliers—that make it so interesting and, ultimately, so rich with meaning. As Rube Goldberg once said, sometimes it is best to "Do it the hard way."

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Robert Levine is Professor of Psychology at California State University, Fresno. He has been a Visiting Professor at Universidade Federal Fluminense in Niteroi, Brazil, at Sapporo Medical University in Japan, and at Stockholm University in Sweden. He has received awards for both his teaching and research, including being named the university's "Outstanding Professor." Dr. Levine serves on boards of professional organizations in the United States, Germany, and Taiwan. His cross-cultural work has focused on such topics as helping behavior, the pace of life and psychological well-being. He has published articles in *Psychology Today*, *Discover*, *American Demographics*, *The New York Times*, *the American Scientist*, as well as many articles and chapters in professional journals and books. His book, *A geography of time*, was published in six languages. It was awarded the Otto Klineberg Intercultural and International Relations Award. His new book, *The power of persuasion: How we're bought and sold*, is currently in press.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. How does this chapter demonstrate research questions that grow out of personal experience? Can you think of other examples of this process, both in the literature and in your own personal experience?
2. What are some other ways you might measure helpfulness cross-culturally?
3. The author has tried to identify helping situations that apply across many cultures. Is it possible, however, that these same situations take on very different meanings across cultures?
4. These studies paint broad generalizations about cultures and countries. Is this kind of research simply an exercise in dangerous stereotyping?
5. How might you follow up these studies? What would be the next logical step to take?
6. Consider your own campus or your own community. How might you go about studying helping behavior in one or both of these settings?
7. Design a study that would focus on some aspect of helping behavior (the "dependent variable") that may be a direct result of some "independent variable", paying particular attention to the latter. In other words, what specific characteristics of a sample of cities or other settings would you want to test?