

ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF CELLULAR TELEPHONE USE ON IMPROMPTU HELPING BEHAVIORS

With the development of the cell phone individuals can now connect with others from virtually anywhere. While seemingly convenient, cell phone use may have unforeseen negative effects, such as a disconnect from one's social surroundings or a disregard for those in one's immediate space. In an attempt to examine the possible negative consequences of cell phone use, a helping scenario was created in which a confederate "unknowingly" dropped a pen in front of a participant as he or she was walking toward the confederate. Individuals targeted were walking in San Francisco, California, some speaking on cell phones (N=57), and some not speaking on cell phones (N=57). Results indicated: (a) those speaking on a cell phone and those not speaking on a cell phone were equally likely to notice the confederate's need for help; (b) those speaking on a cell phone were less likely to offer help than those not speaking on a cell phone; however, (c) when help was offered to the confederate, those speaking on a cell phone and those not speaking on a cell phone offered the same degree of help. These findings indicate that there are social consequences to consider in regards to cell phone use.

Katie Elizabeth Heaton
May 2009