

Story stimuli used in the experiment. Stories were divided, based on consensus of participants' responses, into sets of 16 HIGH, MEDIUM, and LOW ambiguity stories. HIGH ambiguity implied that there was a roughly even split of dispositional and situational responses for that particular story. LOW ambiguity implied that most participants gave them same response for that story (regardless of whether the most popular response was dispositional or situational). Again—ambiguity is independent of whether the most popular response for each story type was dispositional or situational. Each story's category membership is noted, as well as its numerical position in our original story database.

High ambiguity stories: (59% of participants chose one answer)

HIGH: 12. Daniel is walking on a busy street when he notices that the man in front of him drop a \$20 bill. The man who dropped it doesn't notice and keeps walking, but other people on the street see the event unfold. Daniel rushes up to the man to return the bill.

Daniel returns the money because...?

He is honest

Other people were watching him

HIGH: 14. Dylan works at a fast food restaurant and is told he'll be fired for not turning out orders fast enough. Dylan starts trying to go faster, but one day in his haste he drops a hamburger roll on the floor. Nobody sees, so he quickly picks it up and serves it to a customer.

Dylan served the dropped hamburger roll because...?

He is unsanitary

Nobody saw and it was faster

HIGH: 15. Megan has to stay late at work and is late for her son's baseball game. When she gets into the elevator, she sees a group of people running to make it in. She could hold the elevator, but instead she presses the button to close the door and go.

Megan did not wait for the group of people to get to the elevator because...?

She is selfish

The game is almost over

HIGH: 16. Laura is to perform a solo without music in her middle school choir concert and she is terrified, so her teacher tells her to practice at home as much as possible. She does not mess up in any of the rehearsals, so she never practiced the music at home, but then at the concert she forgets the words for the first verse and her choir teacher has to pass her the music.

Laura forgets the words because...?

She is a nervous person

There was a large crowd

HIGH: 17. Alie is a fourth grader that has trouble reading. One day she reads a book to her friend during recess that her teacher thinks is above her level. Her teacher asks if her parents had read that book to her before at home and Alie says yes, they have read it together multiple times.

Alie is able to read the book at recess because...?

She has become a better reader

She memorized it

HIGH: 18. Emily went shopping on Newbury Street and was flabbergasted by all of the sales at her favorite store. She knew she needed to save money for her rent the next month, but she also needed to buy clothes for her new job so she ended up spending more than she had budgeted for.

Emily bought so much because...?

She is a spendthrift

It was on sale

HIGH: 20. Rhonda is named the employee of the month at her office, and is given baseball tickets for a Thursday night. She rarely drinks, but goes to the baseball game with friends who like to get drunk. Rhonda ends up having a little too much beer to drink and phones in sick the next day.

Why did Rhonda miss work?

Rhonda is irresponsible

There was a lot of peer pressure

HIGH: 27. After a three-day weekend, Danielle becomes disoriented about the days of the week, and completely forgets to go to her Wednesday morning doctor's appointment, thinking that it is only Tuesday.

Why does Danielle miss her appointment?

She is forgetful

The long weekend messed things up

HIGH: 28. June's boyfriend dumped her, so her girlfriends come to cheer her up with movies and a big box of chocolate. They forget that June is mildly allergic to chocolate. When they present her with the chocolates, she rolls her eyes and sarcastically says "thanks, guys. That was real thoughtful."

June is rude to her friends because...?

June is not an appreciative person

The chocolates are dangerous to her

HIGH: 29. Maldini is a novice skier who has been skiing all day in negative degree weather, and his hands and fingers have become numb. He comes in to a ski-lodge to warm up with some hot chocolate, but before his hands warm up, he drops his beverage and it spills all over the ground.

Why does Maldini drop his hot chocolate?

He is clumsy

The weather is cold

HIGH: 33. Norman is a Division 1 college football player who suffers a concussion in a game. The doctor makes him stop playing football and warns him that if he hits his head again, he will have to wait longer to start playing football again. On a crowded subway, Norman is sitting and someone's bag knocks him in the head. Norman starts cursing at them.

Why does Norman curse?

He has a short temper

He wants to play football again

HIGH: 36. Jared is a trumpet player in his city's professional orchestra. He has a difficult solo in the upcoming program, but taking care of his new baby interrupted his practice time. In the dress rehearsal, Jared messes up his passage and the conductor takes away his solo and gives it to the other trumpeter.

Why wasn't Jared prepared?

He's not good at managing his responsibilities

His new baby interrupted him

HIGH: 38. Germaine is a painter that lives in a loft with other artists. One night he stays up late painting watercolors, and leaves them out to dry in the kitchen. In the morning, the others move them so they can eat breakfast. When they do so, the paint drips and Germaine's paintings are ruined. When Germaine wakes up and realizes, he is upset and decides not to pay his month's rent, figuring that it is fair.

Why doesn't Germaine pay rent?

He is spiteful

The paintings were ruined

HIGH: 42. Carlos is walking quickly along a busy city street carrying grocery bags from the store. Someone bumps into him and knocks one of the grocery bags to the ground. Carlos mutters "idiot" under his breath before bending down to pick up his spilled groceries.

Carlos cursed at the person because?

He has a short fuse

His groceries fell on the ground

HIGH: 44. Madeleine plays on her school's varsity basketball team and averages 4 points per game. During a tense game, she is fouled and steps up to the free throw line. During this game, the lights in the arena have been intermittently dimming due to a disturbance in the school's electric supply. She misses both throws.

Madeleine missed the throws because?

She is a bad free throw shooter

The poor lighting made it hard to see the basket

HIGH: 46. Bob recently lost his job and has only \$100 dollars left in his bank. On poker night with his friends, he decides to use his last \$100 to play. After a few hours of playing they all decide to take a short break. Knowing that he's losing, Bob decide to swaps his cards for a better hand during the break.

Why did Bob cheat?

Because he's a cheater

Because he's struggling financially

Medium ambiguity stories: (77% of participants chose one answer)

MED: 1. After a long day at work, Melanie comes home to enjoy dinner with her family. The phone rings during dinner and when she picks it up, she realizes that it is a telemarketer and immediately hangs up.

Melanie hung up on the telemarketer because...?

She is a rude person

It was dinner time

MED: 3. Kevin is a cross-country runner and before his race his coach told him that he was the best one on the team and he was sure Kevin would win. Kevin ended up running a personal record and winning the race.

Kevin won because...?

He is a fast runner

His coach encouraged him

MED: 4. Mr. Tremlett's students have scored higher than average on standardized tests consistently for the last three years. This year though, the math curriculum changed drastically by adding several more topics, and his students tested below average.

Mr. Tremlett's students scored below average because...?

He is bad at handling more work

There is too much material to teach

MED: 7. Mike likes to cook, and throws great dinner parties. One particular night, he splurges by buying fancy ingredients from a pricy grocery store he doesn't usually shop at. Everyone who came his party enjoyed the meal.

Mike's food was good because...?

He is a good cook

The ingredients were high-quality

MED: 8. Stefan often comes home late and drunk from parties. One night, despite quietly entering his dark apartment, he trips over the cord for his lamp, causing it to fall and break, waking up his roommate who was already asleep.

Stefan broke the lamp because...?

He is an inconsiderate roommate

It was dark in the apartment

MED: 9. One day, Yvonne takes her class of kids to the park and one girl falls off the slide so she has to give her first aid. Meanwhile, another child runs away and Yvonne doesn't notice.

Why doesn't Yvonne notice the child run away?

She is bad at keeping track of the kids

She was busy applying first aid

MED: 11. Brendan wakes up late and has to run to catch his bus. On the way he sees an elderly woman drop her groceries and helps her pick them up. He walks them to her car, which is a block away in the wrong direction, and when he finally makes it to the bus stop, he sees that it has just left.

Brendan misses the bus because...?

He is altruistic

He was late to the stop

MED: 13. Joan works at a health insurance office and decides whether to deny or approve insurance for medical procedures based on very strict guidelines determined by past medical history. One day, a client calls Joan to complain that her son would die if his medical procedure wasn't approved. Seeing that he has poor medical history, Joan denies the claim.

Joan denies the claim because...?

She is heartless

The rules did not allow it

MED: 22. Arielle is a crossing guard at an elementary school. When she was a child, her best friend was hit by a car. If a child tries to cross the street at her school when it is not

safe, Arielle will scold the child. One day, she yelled at a boy so loudly that he cried and complained to his parents at home.

Why did Arielle yell at the child?

She is stern

The child could have been hit

MED: 23. Tyrone is involved in a pro-life organization that condemns abortion. Tyrone works as a newspaper editorialist, and he is assigned to finish an editorial about the pro-choice movement that supports abortion that his co-worker started but didn't have time to finish. Tyrone writes the article in support of abortion. He had the choice to change his topic, but he would have had to spend a lot of extra time doing so.

Why did Tyrone write an article that was pro-choice?

It wasn't right to change the article

There was a deadline

MED: 24. Marshall's boss is extremely cruel—he always insults him in meetings. One day, when Marshall thinks that his boss is about to criticize him in a tense meeting in front of his co-workers, Marshall says, "You know what? You're really a jerk," and storms out.

Why did Marshall insult his boss?

He doesn't like authority

The situation was tense

MED: 35. Liana is a vegan. One day she goes out to dinner and orders a pasta dish, checking with the waiter to make sure there is no meat or dairy in the entrée. The waiter assures her that there is not. When Liana is half-way done with her food, the waiter comes back, apologizing that the chef has just informed him that there was a touch of butter in the sauce. Liana throws her napkin on the plate, says she is never coming back to this restaurant, and leaves without paying.

Why did Liana cause a scene?

She is hot-headed

There was butter in the food

MED: 39. Helen is a chemist. One day she stays up all night helping a friend get over a bad breakup. The next day in lab, she is drowsy and doesn't pay very good attention to the chemicals that she is mixing. They explode and she burns her eye.

Why did Helen mix the wrong chemicals?

She doesn't take her job seriously enough

Her friend made her stay up late

MED: 43. Terry works in a menswear store. One morning, he notices a \$10 bill on the ground next to customers who are waiting in line. There is no-one else around, and the desk clerk does not see the bill. Terry waits till the customers leave the store, and then quickly picks up the bill while looking around to make sure that no-one saw him.

Terry picks up the money because?

He is dishonest

It had no owner

MED: 47. Marvin broke his ankle recently in an accident, and has been stuck at home, grumpy, in a cast. One day, as he's trying to limp over to the bathroom, his cat jumps in front of him causing him to trip and reinjure his ankle. As he's trying to get off the floor in pain, Marvin slaps his cat hard and yells "stupid animal!"

Why did Marvin hit his cat?

Because he's a cruel person

Because it caused him to fall and hurt his ankle

MED: 48. Linda is talking to her parents on her cell-phone, who are explaining why they are getting divorced, and she receives a call from a potential employer who wants to conduct a phone interview. She asks if she can call back in 15 minutes and continues to talk to her parents. During their conversation, Linda's cell-phone battery dies and she does not call back until several hours later, at which time she learns that she's lost the job.

Why did Linda lose the job opportunity?

Because she's doesn't honor her commitments

Because her parents are getting divorced

Low ambiguity stories: (90% of participants chose one answer)

LOW: 2. Ivana is a college student that found out her grandfather died of a heart attack before she goes to a lecture in a class that she hasn't been doing well in. In class, the professor calls on her but she does not know the answer and immediately bursts in to tears and runs out of the room.

Ivana cried because...?

She isn't smart

She was sad about her grandfather

LOW: 5. Becky is a college student who didn't start her research paper until the night before it was due, so she stayed up late finishing it and had no time to proofread it before she handed it in. When her teacher graded it, she found multiple grammatical errors.

Becky's paper was grammatically incorrect because...?

She is a procrastinator

There was no time to proofread

LOW: 6. Erin is applying to three jobs and she hears that she is more likely to get a job if she shows up to her interviews 10 minutes early. She shows up early to her first two interviews (jobs she prefers), but encounters traffic on the day of the third and arrives 10 minutes late.

Erin is late because...?

She is not a committed applicant

There was a lot of traffic in town

LOW: 10. Calvin loves to sleep in, so he always uses an alarm clock to wake up early in the morning and make his bed before work. One day he snoozes his alarm and when he wakes up he has to race to get ready for work and doesn't make his bed.

Calvin doesn't make his bed because...?

He is lazy

He had no time

LOW: 19. A man and his girlfriend walk into a movie theater and there are no seats open, so they ask a group of teenagers to move to the middle so that they can have two seats together. During the movie, the teenagers are talking a lot and the man politely asks them to stop. One of the teenagers says, "You didn't have to sit here" and rolls his eyes.

Why weren't the teenagers very polite?

They have a lot of attitude

They were forced to sit next to the couple

LOW: 21. Samuel goes to the laundr-o-mat on Sunday morning and there are no empty washers, so he dumps out another person's wet clothes to put his in. While his clothes are washing, he meets and starts chatting with a girl he thinks is attractive. After a bit, she steps out to get coffee. When it is time to put his clothes in the dryer, there are no empty dryers, but the clothes of the girl he was talking to have finished drying. He decides to wait until she comes back to use her dryer, rather than dumping them out.

Why doesn't he dump out her clothes?

He likes this girl

He is too polite to dump out clothes

LOW: 25. Sue is a member of the Parent Teacher's Association of her fourth-grader's school. They organize a bake sale, and Sue buys a carrot cake to donate to the sale. Sue overhears gossip about another mother who "didn't care about her child's school" because she brought Oreos. When the gossipers come and ask her whether she made her delicious cake, Sue responds that it is an old family recipe.

Why does Sue lie to the other mothers?

Sue is dishonest

Buying baked goods is frowned upon

LOW: 26. Chandler works at a retirement home and teaches the other seniors how to use email. He usually goes back to his room and takes his medicine right after class, but one day he stays late to help a struggling student and they begin talking about their families. He ends up taking his medicine two hours late and the doctor tells him not to be so irresponsible.

Why did Chandler forget the medicine?

He is forgetful

He got caught up in conversation

LOW: 30. Pablo is a wrestler who is trying to lose weight so he can wrestle in a lower weight class. He eats salads everyday for lunch and dinner. On his birthday, he refuses a piece of his mom's special birthday cake and eats fruit salad instead, saying he's never enjoyed the taste of rich foods.

Why doesn't Pablo eat cake?

He is unappreciative

The cake is too fattening

LOW: 31. Pam is a hairdresser that owns her own hair salon. One Saturday, the busiest day of the week at the salon, one of the other hairdressers doesn't show up for work. Pam is trying to attend to almost double the number of people, and ends up leaving dye in one customer's hair for too long—making it three shades darker than the now angry customer had wanted.

Why didn't Pam take out the hair dye on time?

She is inattentive

Pam had a lot of customers to deal with

LOW: 32. Lexie is a student in a class that meets in a lecture hall on the west side of campus. One day, the professor emails 15 minutes before class starts, saying that the lecture will be held instead on the east side of campus. Lexie doesn't get the e-mail and only realizes when she sees the note on the door of the usual lecture hall. When she walks in to class, the professor has already begun.

Why didn't Lexie make it to class on time?

She's a tardy person

The email did not arrive on time

LOW: 34. Geoffrey is a writer and publishes his first book. When he asks his close friends to read it, they all tell him that they love it. A month later, though, one of them

writes a scathing blog post about it. At his next book signing, a woman comes up and gushes about the book but Geoffrey rolls his eyes and says, “sure you do.”

Why is Geoffrey so inconsiderate?

He is ungracious

He was hurt by his friend

LOW: 37. Felix drives a city bus and on New Years, a pile of drunk adults come on his bus and start getting in a fight. Felix yells at them to stop. When they don't, he decides to pull over and make them get out. As he is pulling over, one of the adults throws a punch at the other. Felix is startled and he side-swipes a car parked on the side of the road.

Why did Felix crash the bus?

He is a bad driver

The fist fight distracted him

LOW: 40. John is an investment banker on Wall Street. Today has been a tough day as his company has lost \$3 million in a stock market crash. He is on his way home and notices a woman about to get into a cab in front of him. John jumps into the cab ahead of the woman and tells the driver his address.

Why did John take the cab for himself?

He is not a thoughtful person

His company had a big loss

LOW: 41. Brian is a seventh-grade teacher. One day, several students bring him a plate of cookies that they have baked. Brian takes the cookies with him to the staff room at lunch time. The other teachers comment on how nice the cookies look, and Brian shares all of his cookies with the other teachers. Ultimately there are none left for him to eat.

Brian shared the cookies because?

He is kind

The other teachers saw him

LOW: 45. Jerry took his road test three times before he passed. One day while at work he receives a call that his sister has been admitted to the emergency room. He immediately leaves his office, speeds to the ER and parks in the hospital lot. After his sister is released, Jerry walks back to his car and notices he has a ticket for taking up multiple parking spots.

Jerry received a ticket because?

He is a poor driver

There was no time to park