9 Prosocial Behaviour

Hans W. Bierhoff

KEY CONCEPTS

altruism
diffusion of responsibility
empathy
exchange fiction
fear of embarrassment
helping
implicit modelling of 'nothing has happened'
inclusive fitness
interpersonal guilt
just-world belief
kin selection
negative-state-relief hypothesis
norm of reciprocity
norm of social responsibility
number effect
personal norm
prosocial behaviour
prosocial personality
reciprocal altruism
volunteerism

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Prosocial behaviour may range from small favours to great deeds. It may take merely a moment, or it may be a long-term endeavour. It may be done without much conscious thought or weighing up the pros and cons. It may be under the control of situational forces or may express the personality of the donor. The findings of studies on prosocial behaviour seem to be ambiguous: on the one hand, people are committed to helping victims of disasters; on the other, there are many examples of people not helping a victim in urgent need. The factors which ultimately determine the choice of the onlooker – to be either an unresponsive bystander or a 'Good Samaritan' – are topics dealt with by the social psychology of prosocial behaviour. This chapter looks first at situations when onlookers of emergencies intervene, and when they fail to do so. Next, it reviews explanations of prosocial behaviour from different theoretical perspectives. These range from the most general explanation in terms of principles of evolution to more specific explanations, including moods, personality characteristics and true altruism. This chapter also considers the importance of the relationships between people, social norms and values. Finally, we discuss why being helped is not always appreciated by the help-recipient.

Introduction

The Indian Ocean tsunami which dominated the news in late December of 2004 evoked an unprecedented outpouring of sympathy and a willingness to help all over the world. For example, charities across Europe launched appeals to help the victims and raised an unprecedented amount of money to ease their suffering. In a TV interview an expert from Oxfam explained this great helpfulness by the heartbreaking emotions that were triggered by the catastrophe and the fact that, although the disaster happened far away, it affected many European tourists.

Plate 9.1 *The Indian Ocean tsunami of late December 2004 evoked an unprecedented willingness to help all over the world.*

At the same time, reports of indifferent reactions to helpless victims are quite common. The most famous example is that of Kitty Genovese, who was killed by a psychopath in New York City in 1964. Because the appalling circumstances in which she was murdered attracted huge public attention, the terrible event was reconstructed in detail by a *New York Times* journalist (Rosenthal, 1964). It was late at night when Kitty was on her way home and parked her car at a railway station close to her apartment. On the way from the car park to her apartment she was attacked by a man who stabbed her. Unable to run away, she was attacked twice more before her assailant finally killed her. Many neighbours witnessed the incident. Interviews with 38 witnesses showed that they were not really indifferent, although they didn't help the victim. On the contrary, they followed what was going on with great attention. The entire assault lasted 35 minutes, definitely long enough either to call the police or to intervene directly. A witness finally called the police who arrived quickly at the scene of the crime, but they were too late. The murderer was arrested soon afterwards. During questioning he indicated that he was aware of possible onlookers of the crime but that he was convinced they wouldn't intervene.

This true story is only one example of numerous incidents in which urgently needed help was not given. Although the murder of Kitty Genovese took place more than 40 years ago, not much has changed in the meantime: passive onlookers are still a problem today. Thus, we are confronted with contrasting behaviours. On the one hand, people are very willing to support victims of the tsunami disaster; on the other hand, we can provide a long list of examples of people not helping a victim in dire need. The psychology of prosocial behaviour deals with the factors which ultimately determine the choice of the onlooker – to be an unresponsive bystander or to take action.

HELPING, PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND ALTRUISM

What is prosocial behaviour?
What role does the situation play in determining prosocial behaviour?

Today's altruist may be tomorrow's passive bystander; it all depends on the social situation. This is the message of Latané and Darley (1969, 1970) who were the first to investigate systematically the causes of bystander passivity. You may be the great hero after saving a child from drowning when you are the only witness. Next week, however, you may be the apathetic bystander among many others who does nothing to help a woman being harassed by a man.

Prosocial behaviour may have costs as well as benefits. Put yourself in the shoes of one of the witnesses who observed the attacks on Kitty Genovese described in the introduction. What are the potential costs that *you* would have to consider in deciding whether to help or not? Witnesses may worry about getting into danger and sustaining injury, about being embarrassed if they misperceive the situation or cannot offer effective help. They may also be concerned about the possibility of being overtaxed by the demands of the situation, or about possible material losses like damage to their belongings or missing an appointment. In contrast, the benefits helpers might gain include easing their conscience, feeling good after helping, increasing their self-esteem, earning social approval or even fame. Empirical research has indicated that rewards increase the likelihood of helping, whereas incurred costs decrease it (Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner & Clark, 1981).

PIONEER

Bibb Latané (b. 1937) received his PhD from the University of Minnesota in 1963. His research on the unresponsive bystander began in response to the public outcry and debate following the murder of Kitty Genovese. Together with John Darley he worked out the first decision-making model of the intervention process and coined the term 'diffusion of responsibility' as an explanation of the reduced willingness to help among groups of onlookers of emergencies. Latané also developed further the idea of the social impact of the number of persons on people's feelings and behaviour in his social impact theory.

The relevance of rewards became quite clear in some newspaper headlines after the tsunami disaster. On 1 January 2005, the *Daily Express* headline read: 'Thank you Britain for saving our lives', while the *Guardian* headline of 31 December 2004 proudly proclaimed: 'UK leads aid drive as the horror goes on'. As we will show, our definition of prosocial behaviour includes cases where people are rewarded for helping. In contrast, the term altruism is reserved for prosocial behaviour which is primarily motivated by unselfish compassion.

Definitions and examples

The terms helping, prosocial behaviour and altruism are frequently used interchangeably. To clarify the discussion, it is useful to attach

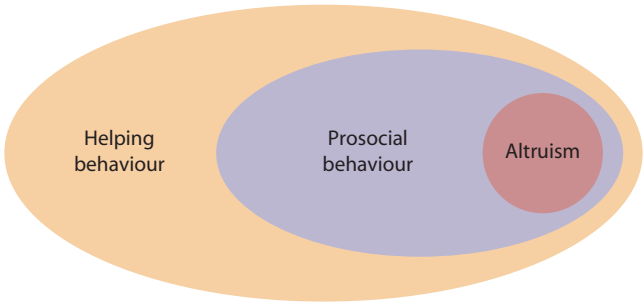


Figure 9.1 *Relationship between the concepts of helping, prosocial behaviour and altruism.*

somewhat different meanings to each of the three terms. 'Helping' is the broadest term, whereas the meaning of 'altruism' is much more narrow (cf. Schwartz & Howard, 1981, p. 190). The overlap among the three terms is illustrated in Figure 9.1.

helping refers to actions intended to improve the situation of the help-recipient

prosocial behaviour refers to helping that is not motivated by professional obligations and that is not based on an organization (except charities)

Helping refers to actions intended to improve the situation of the help-recipient. The definition of ***prosocial behaviour*** is narrower because 'helping' is not considered as 'prosocial behaviour' if the act is motivated by professional obligations, or if help-givers or help-recipients are organizations. However, there is one exception to the last constraint: charities are organizations whose goal is to promote the well-being of people in need (e.g., the elderly). To support a charity means that the helper uses an agent to increase the efficiency of the help that she intends to give. For example, if you wanted to help victims of the tsunami you might rely on charities like Oxfam or the Red Cross in order to get basic medical supplies to the affected parts of Asia.

altruism refers to prosocial behaviour that has the ultimate goal of benefiting another person

Finally, the term ***altruism*** has an additional constraint, namely that the ultimate goal of the helper is to benefit another person. The ultimate goal of prosocial behaviour might well be to receive social approval or to reduce one's own distress when witnessing an emergency involving another person. However, the term altruism is reserved for cases where the helper tries to improve the welfare of another person *as an end in itself*. In practice, prosocial behaviour is often based on a mixture of more selfish (egoistic) and more selfless (altruistic) motivations (Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley & Birch, 1981).

An example of helping that would not be considered prosocial behaviour is a cabin-crew member who helped a passenger with her luggage, because this behaviour was performed in the line of duty. An example of prosocial behaviour is someone helping a neighbour to fill out an insurance form. Since this person helped without any professional obligation to do so, the behaviour would be considered prosocial, even if the helper expected her neighbour to reciprocate with a comparable favour in the future. Finally, a

Plate 9.2 *Helping refers to actions intended to improve the situation of the recipient, e.g. an elderly person.*

classic example of altruism is found in the parable of the Good Samaritan. As recorded in the New Testament, Jesus told the story of a man who was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the road he was attacked and seriously injured by thieves. Several other people who came that way did not stop to help. Finally, a Samaritan saw the helpless victim and was immediately moved by compassion: he 'went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him' (Luke 10:34, King James version). In this quotation from the Bible, the motivational force behind the altruistic behaviour of the Samaritan is called 'compassion'. We will return to the role of compassion later when we discuss Batson's (1991) theory of altruistic behaviour. The people who helped save Jews during the Nazi terror in Europe provide further examples of true altruists. Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List* recounts the true story of the dramatic rescue of more than 1,000 Jews from Nazi Germany by German industrialist Oskar Schindler. He took great personal risks and invested both time and money to find ways to help Jews escape from the Nazis. He was a hero, and an altruist.

Plate 9.3 *Oskar Schindler (shown here in the film) took great personal risks and invested both time and money to help Jews escape from the Nazis.*

Plate 9.4 *Bob Geldof's organization of emergency aid for the starving people of Africa is a public example of prosocial behaviour.*

Whereas many acts of prosocial behaviour take place in private, other acts of prosocial behaviour take place in public. Consider, for example, emergency aid for the starving people of Africa, organized by Bob Geldof in 1985 (Live Aid), in 2004 (Band Aid 20) and again in 2005 as Band 8. There are, in fact, numerous examples of generosity which show that prosocial responses need not be without personal gain. For example, pop stars like Dido and Robbie Williams might profit indirectly from sacrificing their time and money for people in need, because their prosocial behaviour could promote their records. In addition, many people will admire their unselfishness.

In general, prosocial behaviour may result either from the ultimate goal of benefiting oneself (i.e., egoistically motivated behaviour) or from the ultimate goal of benefiting another person (i.e., altruistically motivated behaviour). In this chapter, the main focus is on the middle-level term prosocial behaviour, which includes egoistically and altruistically motivated helping behaviour. We use the term altruistic behaviour only to emphasize the fact that a particular behaviour serves the ultimate goal of benefiting another person.

SUMMARY

We have noted that helping others can have costs as well as benefits. We have also seen that it is important to distinguish the general class of helping behaviour (which can include behaviour performed due to professional obligations) from more specific prosocial behaviour, and from altruism, which is motivated by compassion. In the following sections we consider the psychology of the unresponsive bystander and theories of prosocial behaviour. Besides evolutionary explanations, psychological theories refer to individualistic approaches including moods and emotion, prosocial personality and compassion. In addition, interpersonal explanations contrast exchange and communal relationships. Cultural explanations refer to social norms of fairness and humanitarian values. Finally, from the perspective of the help-recipient, we consider the issue of whether aid is experienced as supporting or threatening.

WHY DON'T PEOPLE HELP?

Why does the presence of* more *onlookers lead to* less *helping in emergencies?

The question 'Why don't people help?' arises whenever we are confronted with incidents such as the murder of Kitty Genovese, who could have been saved if only one witness had intervened during the first half hour of the attack. Laypeople and experts alike explained the neighbours' failure to intervene as due to their 'apathy'. As we shall see, this explanation of what happened is false. Ingenious experiments that were stimulated by the incident show

that in many cases the power of the situation is much stronger than that of personal characteristics of those involved.

When more is less

Numerous studies indicate that the willingness to intervene in emergencies is higher when a bystander is alone than when he or she is in the company of other bystanders (Latané & Nida, 1981). In one of the first experiments to show this effect, Darley and Latané (1968) systematically varied the number of bystanders (see Research close-up 9.1, below, and 14.1, p. 305). The results illustrate the ***number effect***: the likelihood of intervention is reduced by the sheer number of bystanders.

number effect refers to the reduced likelihood of intervention in groups of bystanders: the larger the number of bystanders, the less likely any one bystander will be to intervene and help

In a second experiment (Latané & Rodin, 1969) students heard that a woman working in an adjacent office had fallen over and was moaning in pain. This incident lasted 130 seconds. In one condition the student was alone. In the second condition another student (a confederate of the experimenter) was also present, but

RESEARCH CLOSE-UP 9.1

The impact of bystanders on helping in an emergency

Darley, J.M. & Latané, B. (1968). Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *8*, 377–383.

Introduction

If several people are witnesses of an emergency involving another person, each of the witnesses is aware of the fact that others could intervene. This awareness is the basis of diffusion of responsibility: each of the witnesses believes that full responsibility is not focused on him or her but is shared with the other witnesses. As a consequence, individual helpfulness will be reduced. Thus, we can derive the hypothesis that witnesses of an emergency who are aware of other witnesses but do not see or hear them will help less the more witnesses are present. This occurs because, as the number of witnesses increases, the process of diffusion of responsibility is likely to intensify.

Method

Participants

Seventy-two students (59 female, 13 male) participated in the experiment.

Design and procedure

The experimenter explained that the aim of the study was to find out what kind of personal problems college students had in an urban environment. A discussion via an intercom was planned in order to guarantee the anonymity of the participants. Each participant sat alone in a cubicle. There were more such rooms located along a long corridor.

Three conditions were compared: two-person, three-person and six-person groups. In the two-person group only the participant and the future victim were apparently present. In the three-person group participants believed that one additional discussant was present. In the six-person group, the presence of four additional persons was simulated. In all conditions the participant was actually the only person present, while the presence of the other participants was simulated by pre-recorded contributions to the discussion. The plan was that in the first discussion round each participant would talk in turn. In the next round each participant would comment on what the others had talked about. The length of each contribution was limited because the microphone was on for about 2 minutes. As a consequence, only one participant could be heard over the intercom at any given time.

The first discussant, who was the future victim, talked about the difficulty of adjusting to life in New York City. He also mentioned that he was prone to seizures. When he talked again at the beginning of the second round he started choking and his speech became increasingly incoherent and louder. After 70 seconds it was evident that the person had collapsed. The intercom connection with the victim broke down after 125 seconds. The experimenter recorded the time from the beginning of the fit until the participant left the cubicle to intervene. If no participant attempted to intervene, the experimenter waited 6 minutes before terminating the experiment. Afterwards the participants filled out a questionnaire on their thoughts and feelings during the emergency and several personality scales including social desirability and social responsibility. They were fully debriefed, and given support to handle any emotions which might have been aroused in the experimental setting.

Results

All students who tried to help the person having the seizure reacted within the first 3 minutes. At any given time after the beginning of the epileptic fit the intervention rate of participants in the two-person groups was highest, followed by the intervention rate of participants in the three-person groups. Level of helpfulness was lowest in the six-person group. The strong effect of the conditions on helpfulness is revealed by the percentage of participants who intervened before the intercom

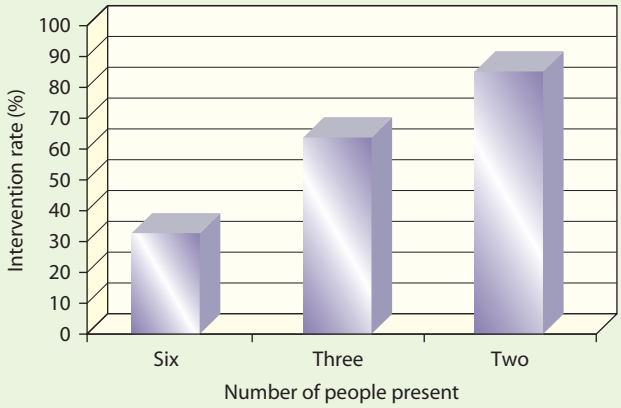


Figure 9.2 *Helping as a function of number of people present (from Darley & Latané, 1968).*

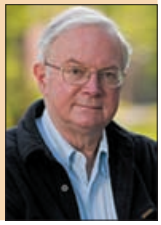
connection with the victim was cut off (see Figure 9.2). Eighty-five per cent of participants who assumed they were the only witness of the breakdown intervened. Compare this with the 62 per cent intervention rate of participants who thought that one additional student was aware of the emergency and the 31 per cent intervention rate of participants who assumed that they were among five potential helpers.

Discussion

The results confirm the hypothesis that there would be less help in larger groups of onlookers. As expected, the awareness that four others could intervene on behalf of the victim in the six-person group (which included both the participant and the victim) reduced helpfulness much more than the awareness that one or two onlookers of the emergency could offer help.

PIONEER

John M. Darley (b. 1938) earned his PhD from Harvard University and has spent most of his academic career at Princeton University. Among his first publications were studies on fear, social comparison and affiliation. Together with Bibb Latané (see p. 178), he developed the psychology of the unresponsive bystander. Their article on 'Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility' has become one of the most highly cited articles in social psychology. He has also contributed to applied social psychology and public policy by his studies on energy conservation and on the legal system.



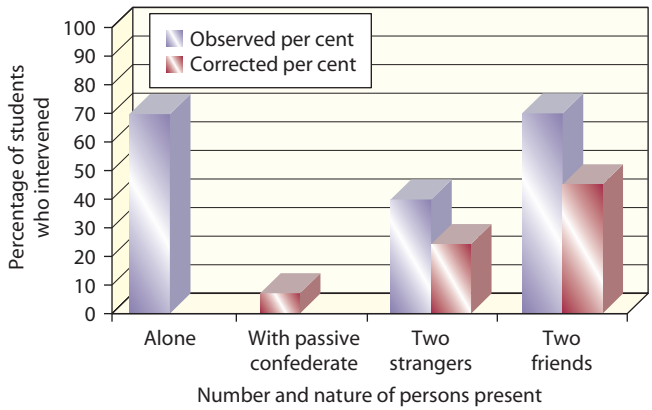


Figure 9.3 *Effect of a second bystander (confederate, stranger or friend) on emergency intervention (from Latané & Rodin, 1969).*

was instructed to be passive. In the third condition two strangers were present at the time of the accident, and in the fourth condition two friends were present. Although two people could have intervened in the third and fourth condition, in only 40 per cent of dyads of strangers and 70 per cent of dyads of friends did at least one student intervene. The *individual* likelihood of intervention was calculated according to a special formula as 22.5 per cent for strangers and 45.2 per cent for friends.[1] These corrected intervention rates are lower than in the alone-condition, but higher than in the passive-confederate condition (see Figure 9.3). Additional analyses indicated that friends intervened faster than strangers within the 130 seconds of the emergency.

The theory of the unresponsive bystander: Threefold inhibitions

Several processes in combination may contribute to the social inhibition of prosocial behaviour. The theory of the unresponsive bystander highlights three inhibition processes:

1 ***Diffusion of responsibility***: A single bystander feels that the responsibility for intervening is focused on him or her. With other bystanders present, each bystander perceives less responsibility, because it is diffused across all others present; this reduces the motivation to act prosocially on behalf of the victim.

diffusion of responsibility cognitive appraisal which divides responsibility among several onlookers or bystanders. As a consequence, each individual member in the group feels less responsible than when alone. When there are several bystanders present in an emergency, the responsibility of any one of the bystanders is reduced

2 ***Implicit modelling of 'nothing has happened'***: Emergencies take place rarely and, if they do occur, are quite unique in character: bystanders are not sure how to respond. Because bystanders hesitate and try to figure out what should be done, they become – unintentionally – models of passivity for one another. This modelling process defines the appropriate response in the situation: do nothing. Thus, a social definition of the situation emerges which reduces the bystander's tendency to act; passivity is then established as the social norm.

implicit modelling of 'nothing has happened' because bystanders in emergencies are overwhelmed by the sudden and unexpected event, they initially hesitate to provide help. When they see that other bystanders are doing the same, they each reach the false conclusion that the other bystanders interpret the event as harmless. This is sometimes called 'pluralistic ignorance'

3 ***Fear of embarrassment***: A third factor which presumably reduces the willingness to help is embarrassment. The presence of other bystanders elicits feelings of uneasiness because the others would be observers of a potential intervention. The resulting social anxiety inhibits intervention especially in situations in which bystanders are in doubt about whether they will be able to intervene successfully, because they believe they lack the ability to act in an appropriate manner. An alternative term is 'evaluation apprehension'. Potential helpers may also fear embarrassment at misconstruing a situation as an emergency when it is not. Rushing in to break up a fight leaves you feeling foolish if it turns out that two people were just kidding around.

fear of embarrassment the stressful experience of a person whose behaviour in a situation is observed by bystanders. Especially when the situation is unfamiliar, social anxiety is elicited which reduces the tendency to help victims of emergencies. Related terms are 'audience inhibition' and 'evaluation apprehension'

Latané and Darley (1976) investigated these processes in an experiment which measured prosocial behaviour across five conditions. At one extreme, no inhibitory factors were present: the participant was alone while seeing on a monitor a person receiving an electric shock and then falling on the floor. At the other extreme, social inhibition was strongly manipulated. The participants assumed that a second witness was present during the incident, making it likely that diffusion of responsibility would occur (cf. Darley & Latané, 1968). In addition, two communication channels were switched on. The participant could also see the other witness, who responded passively to the emergency and thus provided a model of inaction. The participant also had two monitors in front of him, one showing the victim and one showing the other witness. This presumably increased the participant's social anxiety because he knew his responses were being observed. Thus the participant was under the combined influence of all three factors: diffusion of responsibility, implicit modelling of 'nothing has happened' and fear of embarrassment. Under these conditions helping should be minimal. The experimental hypothesis was straightforward: helping would decrease the more processes of social inhibition were 'switched on'. The results confirmed this prediction (see Table 9.1).

Table 9.1 *Emergency intervention as a function of number of inhibitory influences on the bystander (from Latané & Darley, 1976)*

Condition	*Number of inhibitory processes*	*Level of helping*
1: Alone	0	high
2: Mere awareness of other witness	1	intermediate
3 and 4: Mere awareness plus one communication channel switched on	2	low
5: Mere awareness plus two communication channels switched on	3	very low

Statistical comparisons indicated that level of helping was significantly different between rows.

Social inhibition of prosocial behaviour in the general public clearly constitutes a social problem. Thus, it is important to learn how it might be avoided. Might it help to inform the public about the findings of studies on this topic in order to influence such negative behavioural tendencies? One experiment studied whether information on the unresponsive bystander would be effective in reducing the indifference typically shown by onlookers of emergencies. The theory of the unresponsive bystander was explained to students during a 50-minute lecture. The lecturer used research examples to illustrate each of the three inhibition processes. Later, in an apparently unrelated study, students who were accompanied by a passive confederate were confronted with the helpless victim of a bicycle accident. Compared with a control group of students who did not hear the lecture but who encountered the victim of the bicycle accident, the experimental group offered more help (Beaman, Barnes, Klentz & McQuirk, 1978). Mere knowledge of the social processes that contribute to the unresponsive bystander led students to respond in a more responsible way. Therefore, informing the public, making them aware of the problem of the unresponsive bystander, may reduce the negative impact of this problem on our society.

Another measure that can be taken against unresponsive bystanders is to increase their competence in providing help, because competence reduces fear of embarrassment. For example, people who have just completed a first-aid course will presumably stop when they encounter a person in need of help. If onlookers believe that they are competent and able to perform well, the presence of other onlookers may even serve as an incentive for them to intervene (Schwartz & Gottlieb, 1976). High competence shifts the balance of costs and rewards by adding rewards for intervention and eliminating costs. Confirming these

arguments, many studies show that people who feel competent provide more help than people who feel less competent (Bierhoff, 2002a).

'Sorry, I'm in a hurry!'

The theory of the unresponsive bystander does not exhaust the range of inhibiting conditions that may be present in real life. As we have noted, intervening on behalf of a helpless victim is dependent on the level of cost that the helper incurs. Ironically, this proposition was confirmed in an experiment whose participants were students in a theological seminary (Darley & Batson, 1973; see also Research close-up 2.2, p. 26). Some of the students were told that in the second part of the study they would talk about professional problems, and others were expected to talk about the parable of the Good Samaritan. They were instructed to go to another building where they were expected by an assistant. As they left, the experimenter indicated that they would be either late ('Oh, you're late: they were expecting you a few minutes ago'), on time ('The assistant is ready for you, so please go right over') or early ('If you would like to wait over there, it shouldn't be long').

On their way, students encountered an apparent victim slumped on the floor. It was not clear what had happened to him. Figure 9.4 illustrates the percentage of these theology students who offered help. The instruction to the students had a slight effect on prosocial behaviour – those who were instructed to think about the parable tended to help more. But the time-pressure manipulation exerted a much stronger influence than the content of the message. In general, participants were less helpful when they were in a hurry.

Time pressure can exert a profound dampening effect on prosocial responses (see also Batson et al., 1978; Macrae & Johnston, 1998, Experiment 2). In our interpretation of the Kitty Genovese incident we mentioned several factors that might increase the costs of intervention. Time pressure is another factor that inhibits prosocial behaviour by increasing its costs or disadvantages.

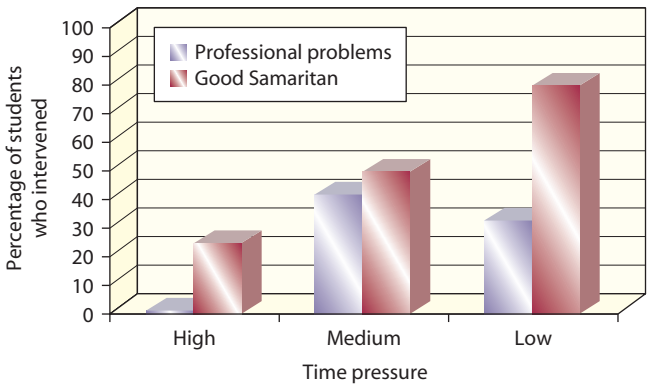


Figure 9.4 *Effect of message and time pressure on prosocial responses in an emergency situation (based on Darley & Batson, 1973; Greenwald, 1975).*

SUMMARY

Part of the answer to the question 'Why don't people help?' is that other people are around. Responsibility is diffused across all bystanders who observe an emergency. This leads people to be passive and to model this inaction to others. The presence of others also reduces helping because it increases embarrassment. Finally, people may fail to help because they lack competence, or they may simply be under time pressure.

WHY DO PEOPLE HELP ONE ANOTHER?

Are people more likely to help close family members than unrelated others?
Do people help more when in a good mood?
What are the main characteristics of the prosocial personality?
Why do people sometimes need a 'cover story' before they donate money?
Which social norms foster and hinder prosocial behaviour?

In this section we deal with the main theories of prosocial behaviour. These can be easily classified into two categories according to their level of analysis, namely evolutionary theories and psychological theories. Psychological theories can be further differentiated into individualistic, interpersonal and cultural approaches. As we shall see, these theories complement one another and together offer a comprehensive theoretical explanation of prosocial behaviour.

The evolutionary approach

Scientists from the fields of social and biological science have recognized that prosocial behaviour has strong biological roots, meaning that it is not an exception but a rule in social life (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin & Schroeder, 2005). Evolutionary psychology is a branch of psychology which focuses on the adaptive value of preferences, feelings, attitudes and behaviour. It is based on Charles Darwin's original ideas about natural and sexual selection which were developed further through new insights of biologists like William Hamilton, Robert Trivers and others. The fact that evolutionary psychology refers to genetic determinants of behaviour does not mean that environmental influences are ignored or considered less important, because learning processes moderate any evolutionary adaptation. What an individual does in a specific environment is not pre-programmed by genes but is the result of a complex interplay of the shared human genetic make-up,

individual traits, social learning and perception of the immediate social circumstances (Buss, 2004).

Kin selection and reciprocal altruism The evolutionary approach to prosocial behaviour is based on inborn or genetic tendencies. This raises the interesting question of how the process of natural selection could favour a gene that increases the tendency of an individual to help others. Prosocial behaviour can be understood as the result of natural selection if it increases rather than decreases an individual's (or his or her relatives') chance of reproducing. The theory of ***kin selection*** assumes that 'kindness-to-kin genes' (Miller, 2001) have evolved. Another issue is that prosocial behaviour is part of a giving-and-receiving cycle, called ***reciprocal altruism***, which may promote the survival of the individual, thus contributing to his or her reproductive success.

kin selection theory developed by William Hamilton that natural selection favours those individuals who support their relatives. To provide help to relatives enhances inclusive fitness

reciprocal altruism theory that people will support another person if they expect that he or she will respond prosocially. The repayment of the favour in the future is anticipated. Prosocial behaviour is embedded in a cycle of give and take

inclusive fitness the sum of an individual's own reproductive success in passing on genes through the procreation of offspring (= direct fitness) and the effect of his of her support on the reproductive success of his or her relatives, weighted by their genetic relatedness coefficient (= indirect fitness)

We consider kin selection first. The reproductive success of an individual (that is, his or her ***inclusive fitness***) is dependent on the distribution of his or her genes in the next generation. Inclusive fitness is the sum of two components. The first is an individual's own reproductive success – direct fitness. The second is the proportion of the reproductive success of relatives that is elicited by the helping behaviour of the individual – indirect fitness (Hamilton, 1964). For example, the genetic relatedness between siblings is .50. Therefore, one's own genes can be favoured by increasing the survival chances of brothers or sisters. In terms of reproductive success, two children of a brother count the same as one's own child.

Empirical evidence supports the theory. For example, people indicate that they are willing to help a brother (genetic relatedness .50) more than a nephew (.25), who in turn may expect more help than a cousin (.125). An acquaintance (.00) is least likely to receive help (Burnstein, Crandall & Kitayama, 1994). These results are more pronounced for scenarios which describe life-threatening situations than for everyday scenarios (when help is useful but not a life-or-death matter). Because life-threatening emergencies are directly threatening to the survival of the help-recipient, they constitute the more crucial test of the theory of kin selection.

What about friends? Why do they help each other? In this case the theory of reciprocal altruism developed by Trivers (1971) applies: this explains prosocial behaviour on the basis of reciprocity among non-relatives. The principle of reciprocal altruism is illustrated by the following example: it makes sense for Tania to lend fellow student Stephanie her lecture notes, if she expects to be helped by Stephanie when she herself misses a lecture.

Whereas evolutionary psychologists have described reciprocal altruism as part of the shared genetic make-up, social scientists have identified reciprocity as a universal cultural norm. Gouldner (1960) proposed that the ***norm of reciprocity*** includes two prescriptions: (1) people should help those who have helped them and (2) they should not injure those who have helped them. He assumed that the norm of reciprocity is a universal element of all human cultures. In support of this idea, cross-cultural evidence on giving and receiving help indicates that reciprocity is found in all cultures (Johnson et al., 1989). The frequency of giving and receiving aid is also highly correlated in all cultures studied.

norm of reciprocity the norm that we should do to others as they do to us. Reciprocity calls for positive responses to favourable treatment but negative responses to unfavourable treatment. Prosocial reciprocity occurs when people help in return for having been helped

Prosocial reciprocity is threatened by cheating. Cheaters may exploit any prosocial tendencies which are based on the assumption that the helped person will repay the favour in the future. To avoid becoming the victim of cheats, we therefore tend to limit reciprocal altruism (and in the same vein, the norm of reciprocity) to certain circumstances and preconditions. These include a high level of trust between the parties involved (Yamagishi, 1986), but also stability of group membership, longevity of the group and a high degree of recognizability among group members (Buss, 2004).

The individualistic approach

Like the evolutionary approach, the individualistic approach explains altruism in terms of individual tendencies to be helpful. These tendencies are not, however, necessarily assumed to be genetically determined (although they can be), but rather are acquired by social learning (for reviews see Bierhoff, 2005; Kochanska & Thompson, 1997). There are basically two types of individualistic theories of prosocial behaviour: one explains it in terms of feeling states, whereas the other assumes that prosocial behaviour is determined by enduring personality characteristics. Individualistic approaches examine how you feel and who you are in order to predict your likelihood of behaving in a prosocial manner.

Moods and emotions People's feelings fluctuate during their daily activities. They feel delighted after passing an exam, but disappointed when rejected by a friend. The intensity of feelings varies from more subtle 'background' moods to stronger emotions which may interrupt day-to-day activities. Both moods and emotions are described as varying from positive to negative affect. For example, love is a positive emotion, whereas guilt is a negative emotion.

Current mood may colour someone's willingness to respond prosocially to the needs of others. Empirical studies show that helping is fostered by a *positive mood*. For example, children who are in a happy mood share more with others than children in a neutral mood (Rosenhan, Underwood & Moore, 1974). The positive relationship between good mood and helping was confirmed in a meta-analysis by Carlson, Charlin and Miller (1988), based on 61 positive mood vs. neutral mood comparisons. In the examined studies (including student and non-student samples), positive mood was induced by a variety of methods, including success on

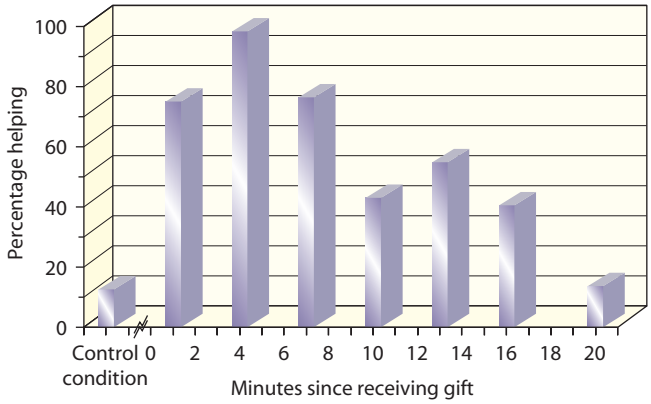


Figure 9.5 *Percentage of helpful participants depending on time elapsed between mood induction and request for help (based on Isen et al., 1976).*

a task, finding a small amount of money, thinking about a happy experience and receiving a free gift. The mean amount of time that elapsed between the positive mood induction and the request for help was about 4 minutes. This meta-analysis yielded a significant coefficient of $d = .54$, generally considered to indicate a medium-size effect which is relevant in daily life.

The effects of good mood on helping are, however, relatively short-lived, as shown in a field experiment in the USA. Participants in the study received a packet of stationery as a gift at home (Isen, Clark & Schwartz, 1976). Shortly afterwards they received a telephone call that was obviously a wrong number. Participants were asked to help the caller by making a phone call. The telephone rang 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16 or 20 minutes after the first contact. As illustrated in Figure 9.5, the request was highly successful if it was made 1, 4 or 7 minutes after the presentation of the gift (on average, 83 per cent of the participants made the phone call). With a time delay of 10, 13 or 16 minutes, the response rate decreased to about 50 per cent. Finally, 20 minutes later only 12 per cent of the participants made the phone call – a response rate that comes close to the results in the control condition, where no gift was received.

These results can be explained in terms of the affect-as-information model developed by Schwarz (1990). The model assumes that people follow a 'How do I feel about it?' heuristic in the sense that they use current mood as a piece of information that is integrated into their overall judgement. For example, if a person is asked to evaluate another person, he or she might simply refer to his or her feelings about the other person and then make the judgement.

From this perspective, feelings carry an informational value which may substitute for careful analytic reasoning. Specifically, positive feelings may inform the person that the current environment is a safe place (Schwarz, 1990). The affect-as-information model simply implies that actors take their mood as an index of the safety of the given situation. Since prosocial responses are suppressed by danger signals (Cacioppo & Gardner, 1993), we can infer from being in a good mood that the situation is not dangerous; this inference may encourage prosocial behaviour.

Forgas (2000) points out that positive and negative moods do not exert equal influences. The effects of a positive mood seem to be stronger and more consistent than the effects of negative moods. From an evolutionary perspective, it might be argued that *bad mood* signals problems and possibly danger (Schwarz, 1990). Thus when a person is in a state of high self-focus, bad mood undermines altruistic intentions by increasing the perceived cost of intervention (cf. Underwood, Froming & Moore, 1977).

A cursory look at the literature on negative feeling states and prosocial behaviour shows that the results are contradictory. For example, the induction of guilt feelings by a transgression (e.g., cheating on a test) increases prosocial behaviour (Freedman, Wallington & Bless, 1967), whereas participants who are induced to feel sad hesitate to help other people (Thompson, Cowan & Rosenhan, 1980). In their meta-analysis, Carlson and Miller (1987; see also Miller & Carlson, 1990) found that the effects of negative mood on helping were variable. In some studies, negative mood enhanced the level of prosocial behaviour, whereas in others the opposite effect occurred. The results are clearer, however, when effects of sadness and guilt are separated (Carlson & Miller, 1987). Sadness is associated with a low willingness to help others, while ***interpersonal guilt*** is associated with a high level of prosocial behaviour.

interpersonal guilt negative feelings about oneself which result from the knowledge that one is responsible for the distress of others or for damage done to them

negative-state-relief hypothesis idea that prosocial behaviour is a mood-management technique. During socialization people have learned that prosocial behaviour is self-reinforcing. When they feel bad they employ prosocial behaviour to improve their feeling state

One possible explanation of the influence of guilt on helping is that participants try to compensate for their negative feelings by doing good deeds. This ***negative-state-relief hypothesis*** (Cialdini, Kenrick & Baumann, 1982) assumes that negative affect is accompanied by a drive to reduce unpleasant feeling states, and that prosocial behaviour is one of several techniques which the individual might employ to attain this end. But the negative-state-relief hypothesis does not explain why guilt leads to very high willingness to help, while sadness does not.

Why does interpersonal guilt exert such a strong influence on prosocial behaviour? Prosocial behaviour following a transgression can be understood as reparation. It is possible that this special meaning of prosocial behaviour in the context of a transgression explains the very high level of helpfulness of persons who feel guilty. In general, guilt feelings contribute to the maintenance of personal relationships (Baumeister, 1998; Estrada-Hollenbeck & Heatherton, 1998). Guilt is primarily aroused after hurting a relationship partner (e.g., friend, colleague). It functions like a warning signal, indicating that the person must compensate his or her partner (e.g., repair damage that they have caused) in order to restore the relationship. Guilt feelings motivate actions (e.g., reparation, apologies, compensation) which help to restore the threatened relationship and strengthen social bonds (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Guilt is a complex emotion and there are several types of guilt, but interpersonal, situation-specific guilt is a *prosocial emotion* that functions positively to restore personal relationships (Baumeister, Stillwell & Heatherton, 1994).

The prosocial personality Studies of the influence of ***prosocial personality*** focus on personality attributes associated with increased levels of prosocial behaviour. More specifically, empathy, social responsibility, internal locus of control, just-world belief and esteem enhancement have been identified as the key personality factors which explain individual differences in response to other people in need. We consider each in turn.

prosocial personality the set of personality attributes (e.g., empathy, social responsibility) that contribute to willingness to help others. An alternative term is 'altruistic personality'

It seems that personality influences on prosocial behaviour are more influential when situational pressures to help are weak and when the costs of helping are high. When situational pressures are strong, they dominate personality influences; when costs are low, prosocial behaviour is performed as a routine action under the control of situational demands (Eisenberg & Shell, 1986). Evidence concerning the prosocial personality has been obtained in laboratory studies, quasi-experimental studies and field studies.

The overall pattern of relationships between prosocial personality and prosocial behaviour is quite robust (Penner et al., 2005). For example, in a laboratory study of emergency intervention, the correlation between social responsibility and prosocial behaviour was $r = .34$ (Staub, 1974). Social responsibility includes moral fulfilment of the expectations of others and adherence to social prescriptions (Bierhoff, 2002b). Social responsibility and prosocial behaviour correlated .38 in the study by Bierhoff, Klein and Kramp (1991); in their study, the highest single correlation between helpfulness and personality disposition was for ***empathy*** ($r = .48$). Empathy is the most obvious prosocial trait. It is a tendency to experience an emotional response that is congruent with the emotional state of another person. Empathy is based on taking the perspective of the other person (see Individual Differences 9.1).

empathy tendency to experience an emotional response that is congruent with the emotional state of another person. It results from adopting the perspective of the other and compassionately understanding his or her emotions

Research has found a third aspect of the prosocial personality, namely, that those who help express stronger agreement with statements of the internal locus of control scale (Rotter, 1966; see Individual Differences 9.1) than non-helpers (Bierhoff et al., 1991; Oliner & Oliner, 1988). The fourth and final personality variable involved in prosocial behaviour is belief in a just world, defined as the generalized expectancy that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get (Lerner, 1980; see Individual Differences 9.1). ***Just-world belief*** correlates positively with helping when it is possible to solve the problem completely (e.g., giving £5 to a person who is hungry and wants to buy a hot meal). In contrast, when it is not possible to solve the problem completely (e.g., you hear of someone who needs to raise half a million pounds for experimental medical treatment), strong belief in a just world is a negative predictor of

just-world belief generalized expectancy that people get what they deserve. Undeserved suffering of others threatens belief in a just world and motivates attempts to restore it. These include reducing the victims' suffering by helping or derogating the victims, depending on whether help can effectively be given or not

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES 9.1

Do you have a 'prosocial personality'?

The prosocial personality encompasses empathy, social responsibility, internal locus of control and just-world belief. To administer the tests, use a 6-point scale with the endpoints 1 (strongly disagree) and 6 (strongly agree).

Empathy is measured by items like:

1. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.
2. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
3. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.

These empathy items refer to compassion and perspective taking (Davis, 1994). They express a concern with the welfare of others, whose fate is emotionally moving. In several studies helpers consistently expressed higher empathy than did non-helpers (Bierhoff et al., 1991; Davis, 1994; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1991; Penner, Fritzsche, Craiger & Freifeld, 1995).

Social responsibility is measured by the Social Responsibility Scale (Berkowitz & Daniels, 1964), which includes items like:

1. I would never let a friend down when he expects something of me.
2. In school my behaviour has gotten me into trouble. (Negative)
3. When given a task I stick to it even if things I like to do better come along.

Interviews with rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe revealed that the rescuers were characterized by a higher degree of social responsibility compared to a control group of people who did not help Jews (Oliner & Oliner, 1988). This result was replicated in a study of first-aiders who intervened on behalf of traffic accident victims (Bierhoff et al., 1991).

Internal locus of control is measured by statements like:

1. Trusting in fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.
2. What happens to me is my own doing.
3. There really is no such thing as 'luck'.

People who agree with such statements believe that their world is predictable and controllable by their own actions. These convictions may contribute to their willingness to provide help to victims. Empirically, social responsibility and internal locus of control correlate positively. Both social responsibility and internal locus of control presuppose that people see a clear link between their own behaviour and its effects.

Just-world belief is measured by the following items (Dalbert, 1999):

1. I think basically the world is a just place.
2. I believe that, by and large, people get what they deserve.
3. I am confident that justice always prevails over injustice.

Its influence on prosocial behaviour depends on what problem faces the victim (Miller, 1977b).

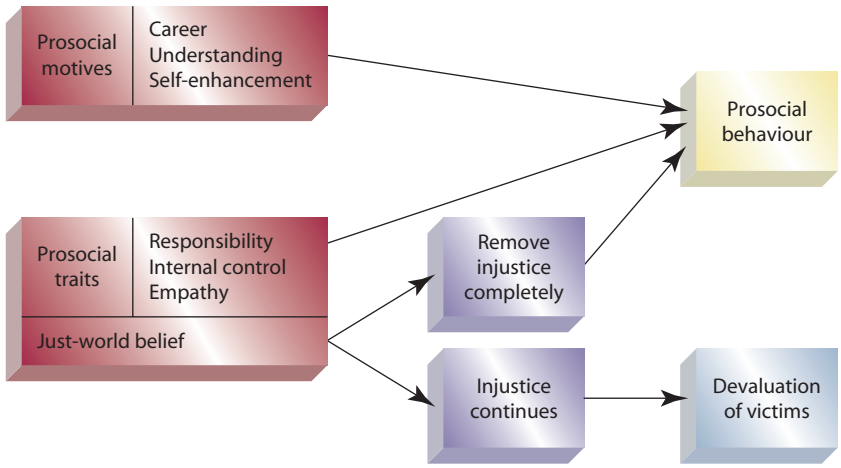


Figure 9.6 *Model of prosocial personality. (based on Batson, 1991)*

helping (Miller, 1977b). Instead, people tend to restore their belief in a just world by devaluing the victim (Hafer, 2000). For example, in the Kitty Genovese case, derogation of the victim might have focused on blaming her for walking alone at night.

Whereas much research is devoted to spontaneous prosocial behaviour, less is known about voluntary work and regular, longer-term commitment in general. ***Volunteerism*** refers to unpaid work in an organizational context. It represents 'voluntary, sustained, and ongoing helpfulness' (Clary et al., 1998, p. 1517) and is usually dependent on planning and individual capabilities. Figure 9.6 illustrates the combined influence of prosocial traits and motives on helpfulness.

volunteerism regular commitment to prosocial behaviour in an organizational context

The enduring motivation underlying volunteer work is measured by the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998). It is based on the functional approach to attitudes which was originally developed by Katz and Stotland (1959; see Chapter 6, this volume). In this approach it is assumed that actions serve certain functions (e.g., to acquire knowledge, to express one's values). The VFI measures six orthogonal dimensions which tap the following functions:

1. Understanding ('I can explore my own personal strengths').
2. Protective ('By volunteering I feel less lonely').
3. Values ('I feel it is important to help others').
4. Career ('I can make new contacts that might help my business or career').
5. Social ('My friends volunteer').
6. Enhancement ('Volunteering makes me feel important').

Omoto and Snyder (1995) examined the question of why people get involved in long-term helping. In a large survey of AIDS volunteers they found that some people were more motivated by altruistic reasons, whereas others were more motivated by egoistic ones. Besides the motivation to volunteer, these researchers also assessed prosocial personality. They found that egoistic motives (career, understanding and self-enhancement) – but not altruistic ones – were positively related to length of service in an AIDS organization for at least one year. Thus, the 'better' motives are not always the ones that determine who will stay the course. In another study on long-term helping by AIDS volunteers, however, Penner and Finkelstein (1998) found that altruistic motives were the best predictors of length of service in AIDS organizations. This relationship was stronger in males than females. Because 90 per cent of the males in this study were gay, it was probably easier for them to identify and empathize with the primary beneficiaries of their care. This result shows that altruistic concerns can be salient and more predictive of helping under certain conditions.

Plate 9.5 *Altruistic motives have been found to be the best predictors of length of service in AIDS organizations.*

The study of volunteers in charities illustrates the influence of enduring motives on satisfaction and regular commitment. These results have important practical implications. They suggest that

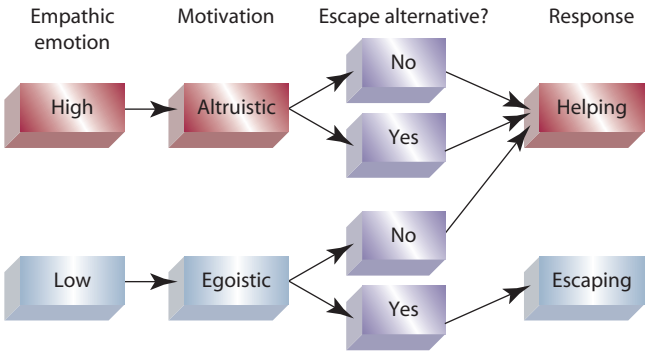


Figure 9.7 *Empathy–altruism hypothesis (based on Batson, 1991).*

volunteers may be motivated by various concerns and that either altruistic or egoistic motives, or indeed both, may play a prominent role in maintaining commitment in the long run.

Empathy-based altruism: Does true altruism exist?

Surely most of us would agree that altruistically motivated helping is somehow more worthy than egoistically motivated helping. The distinction between both types of motivation rests upon the question of whether the ultimate goal of the prosocial behaviour is to increase the helper's own welfare or to increase the welfare of another person (Batson, 1991).

Several lines of research converge in their findings that motivation to help is either egoistic or altruistic. The first evidence comes from the World Values Survey, which assessed kinds of motivation for doing unpaid voluntary work in 33 countries with a total of 13,584 respondents. A factor analysis of responses indicated the existence of four predominantly egoistic motivations and five predominantly altruistic motivations (van de Vliert, Huang & Levine, 2004). The four egoistic motivations were: 'time on my hands, wanted something worthwhile to do', 'purely for personal satisfaction', 'for social reasons, to meet people' and 'to gain new skills and useful experience'. The five altruistic motivations were: 'a sense of solidarity with the poor and disadvantaged', 'compassion for those in need', 'identifying with people who are suffering', 'religious beliefs' and 'to help give disadvantaged people hope and dignity'. Further analyses indicated that the distinction between egoistic and altruistic motivations was an almost universal finding in the cross-national comparisons.

Carefully designed experiments have tried to decide conclusively when prosocial behaviour is motivated altruistically or egoistically. The basic idea is to confront people with a victim and offer them the opportunity to leave a distressing situation. If people are egoistically motivated, they might prefer the 'escape' alternative because it allows them to reduce any negative arousal elicited by the presence of the victim. In contrast, people who are altruistically motivated are not as likely to leave the situation since their desire to alleviate the suffering of the victim would still exist after having left. Because the altruistic motivation is equated with empathy, this assumption has become known as the empathy–altruism hypothesis (Figure 9.7).

Batson and colleagues (1981) tested the empathy–altruism hypothesis in a classic experiment (see Research close-up 9.2). The results confirmed the hypothesis that altruistically motivated people will help even when it is possible to leave the situation, but egoistically motivated people only help when leaving the situation is made difficult. The pattern of results is typical of the findings of several experiments conducted by Batson and co-workers (summarized by Batson, Fultz & Schoenrade, 1987).

Further research on the empathy–altruism hypothesis is based on the distinction between two feeling states which might be aroused by perceiving a person in need (Batson, 1991). On the one hand, feelings of personal distress may arise in the observer. Personal distress is defined as a self-oriented vicarious emotion, which is described by adjectives such as 'alarmed', 'grieved', 'upset' and 'disturbed'. This unpleasant feeling state can be reduced by helping. It is also possible to reduce personal distress by leaving the situation, because the escape reduces the impact of the victim's suffering on the non-helper. The other feeling state that may follow from perceiving the other person's need is termed empathic concern. It is described by adjectives such as 'sympathetic', 'moved', 'compassionate', 'warm' and 'soft-hearted'. Studies that have *measured* empathy in this way have found results consistent with the experimental studies that *manipulated* empathy. Toi and Batson (1982) found that participants who were high on self-reported relative empathy (empathic concern minus personal distress) were willing to help a person in need even if they had an escape option. In contrast, participants who expressed more personal distress than empathic concern were quite helpful when no escape option was available, but their willingness to help decreased substantially if an escape route was available (see also Bierhoff & Rohmann, 2004).

How could the empathy–altruism hypothesis be explained from an egoistic perspective? One possibility is the negative-state-relief hypothesis, which would argue that compassionate people feel sad when they watch others suffering. The altruistic response of compassionate people would be motivated by the goal of relieving their own sadness (rather than helping the victim for her own sake). This interpretation is, however, not very convincing because empirical studies have shown that mood management related to sadness is not the decisive factor that motivates compassionate people to act (Batson et al., 1989). An alternative interpretation is based on the perception of 'oneness', which is defined as a 'sense of shared, merged, or interconnected personal identities' (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce & Neuberg, 1997, p. 483). This interpretation implies that people help similar others (see Research close-up 9.2, p. 190) due to their own self-interest (see the section on the evolutionary approach, above). People derive cues for genetic commonality from kinship, similarity and closeness, cues which are identical to the conditions mentioned by Batson (1991) as factors that elicit true altruism.

Cialdini et al. manipulated closeness by designing scenarios in which the person who needed help was a near-stranger, acquaintance, good friend or close family member of the potential helper. Participants indicated the amount of help they would offer by choosing one of seven alternatives (from no help at all to a very substantial amount of helping). They also rated the extent of 'oneness' they felt with the needy person. In one study the situation portrayed a person who was evicted from her apartment, while the second study concerned two children whose parents had died

RESEARCH CLOSE-UP 9.2

The empathy–altruism hypothesis

Batson, C.D., Duncan, B.D., Ackerman, P., Buckley, T. & Birch, K. (1981). Is empathic emotion a source of altruistic motivation? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *40*, 290–302.

Introduction

To derive the hypothesis of the study, a distinction is first drawn between egoistically and altruistically motivated helping. Egoistic helping serves the ultimate goal of benefiting the helper; altruistically motivated helping serves the ultimate goal of benefiting the help-recipient. Next, the assumption is made that people who are motivated either way will not differ in their helpfulness as long as it is difficult to leave the situation, although the assumed motivation for helping is different. People who are egoistically motivated are assumed to be low in empathy: they help in order to reduce their personal distress. People who are altruistically motivated are assumed to be high in empathy: they help because of their compassion for the victim. In addition, they may anticipate feeling guilty if they don't help.

These different motivations were predicted to lead to sharp differences of responses in a situation in which it is easy for the onlooker to leave without helping. Here, altruistically motivated people will help as much as in the first situation because leaving without helping would still leave them with feelings of compassion and guilt. In contrast, egoistically motivated people are likely to leave the situation without helping, because that is all that is needed to reduce the unpleasant feeling of personal distress.

Method

Participants

Forty-four female students took part in the experiment. In each of the four conditions of the experiment the data from 11 participants were analysed.

Design and procedure

In the experimental scenario observers watched 'Elaine', a confederate of the experimenter, as she seemingly took part in a learning experiment. The observers were told that Elaine would receive random electric shocks as part of the experiment, which was supposedly designed to study learning under stressful conditions. When, after the second trial, it became obvious that Elaine was having great difficulty in continuing the experiment, the experimenter asked the observer whether she was willing to take over Elaine's role. In one condition it had been made clear in the instructions that the observer could leave the laboratory immediately if she wished (easy-escape condition). In the other condition, the participants believed that they had to stay and observe eight further trials with Elaine suffering if they were not willing to help her (difficult-escape condition). The observer's altruistic motivation (high empathy) was induced by informing her that Elaine expressed similar values and interests, whereas an egoistic motivation (low empathy) was induced by telling the participants that Elaine was dissimilar to her with respect to values and interests.

Results

The results are summarized in Figure 9.8. Level of helping was lower towards a dissimilar Elaine in the easy-escape condition than in all other conditions ($p < .05$ for all comparisons).

Discussion

The results confirm the empathy–altruism hypothesis and provide evidence that true altruism exists. Participants led to believe that Elaine was similar to them (i.e., they were led to empathize with her) helped at the same level whether escape was easy or difficult. However, those participants led to believe that Elaine was dissimilar to them (i.e., they did not empathize with her) helped mainly if it was difficult for them to leave the experiment.

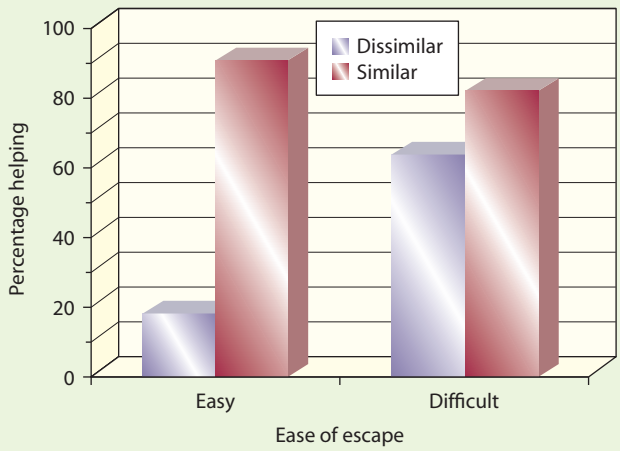


Figure 9.8 *Percentage of participants who helped Elaine depending on similarity and ease or difficulty of escape (from Batson et al., 1981).*

PIONEER

C. Daniel Batson (b. 1943) has spent most of his academic career at the University of Kansas after earning his PhD from Princeton University in 1972. He is widely known for the development of the empathy–altruism hypothesis, which is based on the assumption that people are driven by two motivational systems: an egoistic one and an altruistic one. He developed an experimental paradigm which represents a huge step towards disentangling these two motivational systems. Batson is also widely cited for his work on religious experience.

in an accident. Results indicated that relationship closeness intensified feelings of empathy and feelings of oneness, which both correlated significantly with prosocial behaviour ($r = .45$ and $r = .76$, respectively, in Cialdini et al., 1997, Study 1). In the final step of the analysis, which took into account the combined effects of feelings of empathy and feelings of oneness on prosocial behaviour, feelings of oneness had greater weight than empathy for the prediction of prosocial behaviour.

These results, however, contradict the empathy–altruism hypothesis only on the surface. It is difficult to conceptualize empathy as a feeling state that does not involve a feeling of oneness. High empathy naturally co-varies with strong feelings of oneness. Therefore, to partial out feelings of oneness from empathy is equivalent to neutralizing empathy as a predictor of prosocial behaviour.

A different line of research has distinguished between personal distress and situational empathy in the study of children's prosocial behaviour. Eisenberg and colleagues (1993) showed that empathy (or sympathy) – and not distress – is positively related to prosocial behaviour in children. This evidence is more in line with the empathy–altruism hypothesis than with the negative-state-relief hypothesis. Eisenberg et al. used a 'baby cry helping task'. While the child (i.e., the participant) was sitting in a room with the experimenter, the sound of a crying baby could be heard through a speaker in the room. The experimenter explained that the baby was in another room and tried to calm the baby by talking to him or her via a microphone. In addition, the child was encouraged to do the same. Finally, in order to offer an 'escape' option, the child learned that it was possible to switch the speaker on or off. Then the experimenter left the room, and the baby crying episode was repeated while the children's facial and behavioural responses were videotaped. Raters assessed the extent of situational distress from the child's facial reactions. They also rated the child's tone of voice for expression of comfort and irritation, and the researchers timed how long the child talked to the baby. Results indicated that facial distress was negatively correlated with time spent talking to the baby, whereas no significant relationship was found with tone of voice. This study again rules out personal distress as a cause of helping, because *more* facial distress was associated with talking to the baby for *less* time.

The interpersonal approach

The type of relationship (from superficial to more intimate) influences whether help is provided or not, and the contrast between exchange and communal relationships appears crucial.

Exchange vs. communal relationships Interpersonal relations may be close or superficial. In close relationships (such as between friends), but not in superficial ones, people emphasize solidarity, interpersonal harmony and cohesiveness (see Chapter 10, this volume). In addition, in close relationships rewards for successful performance of a task are distributed according to the equality norm, whereas in superficial relationships rewards are distributed according to the contributions of each person to the task (on the basis of the equity norm; cf. Bierhoff, Buck & Klein, 1986).

Clark and Mills (1993; see also Clark & Grote, 2003) have contrasted exchange and communal relationships. Examples of *exchange relationships* are those between strangers or acquaintances, whereas *communal relationships* refer to relationships between friends, family members or romantic partners. In exchange relationships people strive for maximal rewards, whereas in communal relationships people are concerned with the other's welfare. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that in exchange relationships people are motivated by egoistic motives, whereas in communal relationships they are motivated by the desire to alleviate the suffering of the victim.

In accordance with this description, empirical studies show that people in exchange relationships respond positively to repayments for given benefits and keep careful track of individual inputs into joint tasks (Clark, 1984). For communal relationships a different pattern of results emerges. In a study by Clark, Mills and Powell (1986), students were led to believe that another student might need their help. Students who were in a communal relationship with the other student paid more attention to the other's need when no opportunity to repay was expected (in comparison with students who were in an exchange relationship). In contrast, when they expected that the other person would have an opportunity to reciprocate in kind in a later part of the experiment, the participants kept track of the needs of the other person with equal care in exchange and in communal relationships. This pattern of results suggests that people in communal relationships are more helpful than people in exchange relationships if no mutual give-and-take is expected (see also Clark, Ouellette, Powell & Milberg, 1987).

We mentioned that people in exchange relationships strive for positive consequences. They firmly believe that they must decide according to their self-interest and that doing otherwise would be foolish (Miller, 1999). This widely shared assumption of the appropriateness of economic thinking in exchange relationships is likely to restrict prosocial behaviour unless people can (be made to) believe that prosocial behaviour is actually in their own best interests. We call this 'trick' an exchange fiction.

The exchange fiction To organize one's life in terms of economic exchange would seem to be highly rational and to fit with the widely shared view that self-interest rules the world. Indeed, accounts of behaviour in terms of self-interest and rational choice are the dominant lay theories that people use in explaining their actions (Miller, 1999). Lay people tend to believe that it would be a waste of time not to pursue one's self-interest; they also fear ridicule if they fail to act in their own interest.

This emphasis on rational choice has negative implications for donations to charities. Recall the example of the high level of donations after the tsunami disaster in South Asia. Such donations are not fully compatible with the image of a self-interested person that many lay people have of themselves. Holmes, Miller and Lerner (2002) assumed that such people need a 'cover story' in order to donate money to charities. They need to explain their generosity as behaviour which actually serves their own self-interest. Although they may want to do what their compassion with the victims tells them to do, they hesitate because they prefer to give a reason for their monetary transactions (even gifts to charity) which is based on their self-interest.

exchange fiction people need a cover story in order to donate money to charities. To fulfil this need, people are offered something in exchange for their donation which – although it is low in value – creates the impression that a generous contribution is also a rational exchange

Holmes et al. (2002) assumed that the ***exchange fiction*** would be especially compelling if people were confronted with charity collections which serve high-need victims, for example a collection to establish 'a training and remedial program for handicapped and emotionally disturbed children' (p. 146). They confirmed the effectiveness of the exchange fiction in high-need situations. Passers-by were approached by a representative of a charitable organization in a field experiment. Simply asking for a donation of at least $1 (standard solicitation) resulted in an average donation of 41 cents per person. In contrast, when the exchange framing was induced by offering a candle, on average $1.85 was donated. The passer-by was told that the candle was available for a bargain price of $3 which was said to be $1 lower than the normal store price. This information presumably induced a cognitive reframing of the request (i.e., shifting it from a 'charity' context into an 'exchange' context; cf. Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004).

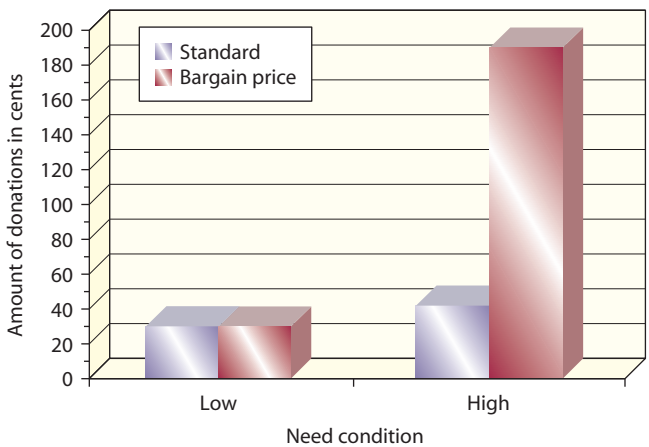


Figure 9.9 *Donations as a function of solicitation form and level of need (from Holmes et al., 2002, Exp. 2).*

One might argue that people in the bargain-price condition were still acting rationally because they bought the candle. But the results in the low-need condition tell a different story. In this condition, people were told that the money was needed to buy equipment for the local softball team. Here people gave on average about 30 cents in response to both appeals (see Figure 9.9). Therefore, the offer of the candle per se did not generally increase contributions. Only when the money was for children in high need, which presumably elicited compassion, did the offer of the candle have a positive effect on generosity. The exchange fiction seems to be a reliable technique for increasing people's willingness to donate money to charities that seek to help the especially needy.

Culture and society

People are rule followers (Messick, 2000). Social rules which are applied in specific social settings are internalized as the result of social learning. Once acquired, they are incorporated in a self-reinforcement system (Bandura, 1997). Social behaviour is influenced by factors that are inherent in cultural settings. There are cultural norms, values and rituals that are shared by the whole community; there are reciprocal expectations among the holders of social roles; and there are rights and obligations based on tradition and general ethical principles, such as the Declaration of Human Rights, which mould the attitudes of people in society (Doise, 2002).

Social institutions can promote prosocial values by means of interventions that encourage children to cooperate with one another by teaching them social skills such as perspective taking, fair play and concern for others (Battistich, Schnaps, Watson, Solomon & Lewis, 1997).

Social responsibility One of the most important 'do's' that children learn is described by the ***norm of social responsibility***, which prescribes that individuals should help other people who are dependent on their help. Berkowitz (1978) assumed that prosocial behaviour is a direct function of how responsible people feel in a social situation. Earlier research had indicated that people worked harder on behalf of their partner the more dependent the partner was. Researchers assumed that perceived dependency elicited the norm of social responsibility, which in turn motivated prosocial responses. But prosocial activities require sacrifices, which can be avoided by passing the responsibility to others; and as we have seen, the presence of other people diffuses responsibility (see Berkowitz, 1978).

norm of social responsibility prescribes that people should help others who are dependent on them. It is contrasted with the norm of self-sufficiency, which implies that people should take care of themselves first

Normative beliefs are learned during the socialization process. In an attempt to integrate cultural rules with individual feelings,

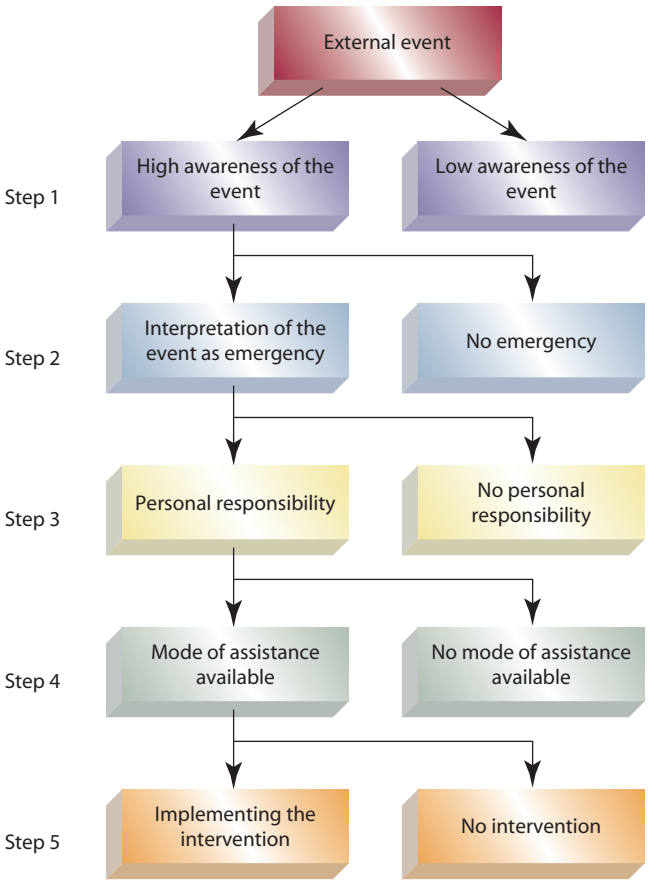


Figure 9.10 *Model of the intervention process (based on Latané & Darley, 1970).*

personal norm feeling of obligation to perform a specific action in accordance with personal values and normative beliefs

Schwartz (1977) coined the term ***personal norm***. Because individuals differ with respect to their social learning of cultural values and rules, each person is characterized by a unique cognitive set of personal values and normative beliefs.

How are prosocial actions instigated? Latané and Darley (1970) proposed a five-step process model of prosocial behaviour (Figure 9.10). The first step of the process occurs when the person becomes *aware* that something is happening. The next step includes *interpretation* of the event as an emergency and recognition of the other's need. The third step centres on the generation of a sense of *personal responsibility*. In the fourth step the person may *generate available modes of assistance*. The final step of the model refers to *implementing the intervention* (i.e., acting or not) depending on the result of the decision process.

Now let us consider an example in which people were asked to read schoolbooks aloud to blind children (Schwartz, 1977). Becoming aware of the plight of blind children and recognizing their unfulfilled needs represent the first and second steps of the model (although in this case it need not necessarily be seen as an 'emergency'). In step 3 people may accept personal responsibility for improving the situation of blind children. In step 4 people ask whether effective actions to deal with the problem are available (such as reading to blind children). If the answer is positive, a decision to read to the blind children (step 5) is likely.

Personal responsibility is based on social values. Schwartz (1994) defines values as beliefs that pertain to desirable end states, transcend specific situations, guide selection or evaluation of behaviour, people and events, and are ordered by relative importance. On the basis of data from 44 countries, Schwartz identified 10 types of social values (e.g., achievement, conformity, security). Two values are immediately relevant for prosocial behaviour: benevolence and universalism. Whereas benevolence (i.e., concern for the welfare of close others) gives prosocial behaviour in personal relationships a value basis, universalism (i.e., concern for the welfare of all people and for nature) includes social justice and prosocial commitments on a worldwide scale. The tsunami disaster is a case in point: people all over the world donated money presumably because their value system told them it was the right thing to do.

Fairness norms Individuals follow normative expectations about the level of rewards that they themselves deserve and the costs that are fair and reasonable for them. In addition, people subscribe to the belief in a just world (Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Lerner, 1980). As a result, fairness norms are applied to one's own and to others' benefits and deprivations. If we receive outcomes that fall short of our standard of personal fairness, this arouses an egoistic motivation. A genuinely altruistic motivation comes into play once our own egoistic aspirations, which are related to the perceived fairness of our own position in the social system (Miller, 1977a), are met. Obviously, it is hard to act altruistically if this jeopardizes one's own fair treatment. In contrast, people who perceive their own outcomes as fair seem to be very sensitive with respect to the perceived unfair treatment of others (cf., Hoffman, 2000).

SUMMARY

In this central part of the chapter we have answered the question: 'Why do people help one another?' The answer provided integrates evolutionary and psychological theories. The evolutionary approach explains why people are more likely to help those who are genetically closer to themselves, but also to help friends, who are not genetically related. The psychological approach shows that mood and personality affect prosocial behaviour, and that some forms of helping are motivated altruistically (and not egoistically). People are also more likely to help in communal than in exchange relationships, when they believe they are acting in their own interests, and when guided by norms of social responsibility and fairness.

CONSEQUENCES OF RECEIVING HELP

How do the perspectives of helpers and of help-recipients differ from each other?
What are the possible negative consequences of being helped?

It is important to understand the differing perspectives of help-givers and help-recipients. Being helped is not always appreciated, because it sometimes has negative connotations. Receiving help can define the help-recipient as somebody who *needs* help, and it can make them indebted to the helper. To be defined as a help-recipient is particularly irritating when the help-recipient does not feel in need of help. An old man who is helped across the road, for example, may feel annoyed because he felt perfectly capable of crossing the road himself. Even if the help-recipient is in need of help, he may resent the implications of the offered help. Because receiving help establishes a debt to the helper, the freedom of choice of the help-recipient is restricted, and this is likely to arouse reactance (i.e., a desire to restore one's freedom; cf. Brehm & Brehm, 1981, and Chapter 7, this volume). In general, these negative aspects of help are assumed to become less important the greater is the need for help.

Donors and recipients have different perspectives in the giving–receiving relationship (Dunkel-Schetter, Blasband, Feinstein & Bennett, 1992). The donor profits from the fact that giving help is regarded as a desirable and fair thing to do. Although costs (time, money and effort, for example) are incurred, the positive consequences of giving help may outweigh the negative consequences. On the other hand, the recipient wants to prevent the other person from thinking that he is unable to manage on his own. Because of the negative implications of weakness and inferiority associated with receiving support, help-recipients are vulnerable to receiving aid. For example, black people who received unsolicited and unnecessary help from a white peer expressed lower self-esteem than blacks who received no imposed help (Schneider, Major, Luthanen & Crocker, 1996).

SUMMARY

Receiving and being seen to receive help is not always a positive experience. Help-givers need to be sensitive to the perspective of the help-recipient, to give help only when it is needed and without it constituting a threat to the help-recipient's self-esteem.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- Helping behaviour (which can include behaviour performed due to professional obligations) can be distinguished from more specific prosocial behaviour, and from altruism, which is motivated by compassion.
- Prosocial behaviour has costs as well as benefits, so sometimes does not occur, even when it is desperately needed.
- Prosocial behaviour is less likely to occur when other people are around because responsibility is diffused across bystanders, who then model passive behaviour to each other. The presence of others also reduces helping because it increases embarrassment. People may also fail to help because they lack competence, or are under time pressure.
- The theories developed to explain prosocial behaviour complement each other and may be applied simultaneously to reach a full understanding of the determinants of a specific episode of help or passivity.
- The evolutionary approach helps to explain why people are more likely to help those who are genetically closer to themselves, but also friends, who are not genetically related.
- The psychological approach shows that people are more likely to help when in a positive mood, but also when they feel guilt and when they have attributes of the prosocial personality (especially a sense of social responsibility, empathy and internal locus of control).
- Longer-term helping (e.g., volunteering) is a function of both egoistic and altruistic motivations.
- There is support for the empathy–altruism hypothesis in cases where prosocial behaviour is performed even when the helper could easily have avoided doing so; in this case the underlying motivation appears likely to be true altruism.
- People are also more likely to help in communal than in exchange relationships, when they believe they are serving their own interests, and when guided by norms of social responsibility and fairness.
- Receiving help is not unequivocally positive. It can imply weakness and need. It is therefore important that help-givers adopt the perspective of the help-recipient, give help sensitively and only when it is needed, and are careful not to threaten the help-recipient's self-esteem.

Note

1 The formula for calculating the corrected individual likelihood of intervention is $P_I = 1 - \sqrt[N]{1 - P_G}$, where P_G is the likelihood that at least one person intervenes in the group, and N is the number of group members. On the other hand, it is possible to calculate the corrected group likelihood of intervention on the basis of the individual intervention rate by the formula $P_G = 1 - (1 - P_I)^N$.

Suggestions for further reading

Batson, C.D. (1991). *The altruism question: Toward a social-psychological answer*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. On the basis of a historical overview of the altruism question, the empathy–altruism hypothesis is developed and research presented in its support.

Bierhoff, H.W. (2002). *Prosocial behaviour*. New York: Psychology Press. Summarizes research from developmental and social psychology. In addition, areas of applications are discussed in some detail (e.g., first aid, voluntary work engagement in organizations and unpaid volunteer work).

Clarke, D. (2003). *Pro-social and anti-social behaviour*. Hove: Routledge. Presents a short and informative overview and contrasts prosocial behaviour with aggression.

Miller, G. (2001). *The mating mind: How sexual choice shaped the evolution of human nature*. London: Vintage. A fresh approach to evolutionary psychology emphasizing the mechanism of sexual selection.

Piliavin, J.A. & Callero, P. (1991). *Giving blood: The development of an altruistic identity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. An example of applied research on prosocial behaviour.

Schroeder, D.A., Penner, L.A., Dovidio, J.F. & Piliavin, J.A. (1995). *The psychology of helping and altruism*. New York: McGraw-Hill. The most comprehensive monograph on prosocial behaviour currently available.

Spacapan, S. & Oskamp, S. (Eds.) (1992). *Helping and being helped: Naturalistic studies*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. A collection of contributions examining prosocial behaviour in everyday life.