Helping and Altruism

What is helping?
- Pro-social behavior:
  - A behavior performed with the goal of benefiting another person
- Altruistic behavior:
  - A prosocial behavior that does not benefit the helper in any way (the behavior may even pose some risk to the helper)
  - Involves sacrifice

Evolutionary explanations
- Kinship selection
  - Preferential helping of genetic relatives, so that genes held in common will survive
  - Can't explain why people help non-relatives
- Reciprocal altruism
  - Helping other people increases the likelihood that they will help you
- Cooperative groups
  - Helping ingroup members more than outgroup members increases the chances that your group will survive

Social exchange
- Helping behaviors are motivated by maximizing rewards and minimizing costs
- People will help whenever the rewards are greater than the costs
- Assumes that there is no true altruism – egoism is what drives helping behaviors

The Empathy-Altruism hypothesis
- Daniel Batson
  - Altruism most likely to occur when one is able to empathize with the sufferer
- Empathy-altruism hypothesis:
  - When we feel empathy for a person in need, we will experience an altruistic motivation to help; when we don’t feel empathy, any motivation to help will be egoistic and motivated by social exchange concerns

The Empathy-Altruism hypothesis

[Diagram showing the decision-making process of helping, including emotional response, type of motive, and satisfaction of motive]
The Empathy-Altruism hypothesis

- Toi & Batson (1982)
  - IV1 - Half of participants had been told to try to put themselves in Carol’s shoes. Half had been told to be objective and not be concerned with how she felt. (High and low empathy)
  - IV2 - Half told that Carol would be in their section of psychology, thus they would see her everyday. Half told never see her again. (High or low cost)
- DV - Percentage who helped

But...is it pure altruism?

- Avoid anticipated guilt
- Get rid of bad feelings
- Empathic joy
- The debate is still raging...

The Empathy-Altruism hypothesis

- The altruistic personality?
  - Some personality variables associated with helping behavior:
    - Empathy toward others
    - Collectivist rather than an individualist orientation
    - High levels of moral reasoning
    - Parental influence

Parental influence

- Be careful about rewarding helping
- Discipline techniques that promote empathy
- Be a model
  - Provide an example of behavior to imitate directly
  - Models teach kids that helping is valued and rewarding
  - The behavior of models makes kids think and become more aware of the standards of conduct

Whom do we help?

- Similar people
  - Increased attraction
  - Increased empathy
  - Kinship selection
- Members of in-groups
- Attractive people
Whom do we NOT help?

- Stigmatized people
  - Shaw, Burrough, & Fink, 1994
  - “Helping and Stigma” study

Whom do we NOT help?

- When a person’s need for help is attributed to controllable factors:
  - We hold the person responsible
  - We feel angry or irritated
  - We are less likely to help

Mood and helping

- We are more likely to help when we are in a good mood

Isen and Levin (1972) dime study

- Men and women are more likely to help when given a dime.

Good moods lead to helping: Reasons

- Helping may enhance or prolong an already positive mood

Bad moods and helping

- When negative moods make us more likely to help others:
  - Helping is a method to escape a negative mood
- Extremely negative mood cause people to focus so much on themselves that they become inattentive to others
Latané & Darley

**Bystander Effect:**
- The effect whereby the presence of others inhibits helping
- The more bystanders, the less likely the victim will be helped

**Diffusion of responsibility:**
- The belief among bystanders that others will or should take responsibility for providing assistance to a person in need

Darley & Latané (1968)

**seizure study**

- **Size of the group**
  - 2, 3, 6
  - "...I could really use some help so if somebody here er help er uh uh uh (choking sounds) ... I'm gonna die er er I'm gonna die er help er er seizure (chokes, then is quiet)."

- # of people attempting to help in 5 minutes

Percentage of people who helped the victim

Step 1. Must notice or pay attention to the emergency

- More people → less likely to notice
- Darley & Batson's (1973) Good Samaritan study

Darley & Batson (1973)

- Seminary students were instructed to deliver a lecture across campus on:
  - The good Samaritan Parable
  - Some other Parable
- Students were told to leave immediately and:
  - Hurry, or you will be late...
  - You should get there right on time...
  - You will get there early...
- On their way they pass a man moaning in a doorway who looks in distress
Step 2. Interpreting the situation correctly as an emergency

- Ambiguity
- Social comparisons
  - rely on others to interpret information
- Pluralistic ignorance:
  - people mistakenly believe that their own private attitudes and judgments are different from those of others, even though everyone’s public behavior is identical

Pluralistic Ignorance

- When you think an emergency might have occurred, you calmly look around to see how everyone else is reacting
- The catch is that they are all calmly looking to you for the same reason
- The end result can often be that people assure themselves that there is no emergency

Latané & Darley (1970)

- Subjects sat in a room with another subject, actually a confederate filling out surveys (or alone)
- At some point, smoke starts pouring into the room through a vent
- The confederate (when present) is trained not to respond

Latané and Darley (1968) smoke study

- Percentage of participants who responded within 6 minutes

Other Findings

- There was no effect of parable type.
- Those who didn’t help typically said they were in such a hurry that they didn’t even notice the man.
Step 3. Assume responsibility to help
- Diffusion of responsibility
- More likely when people feel anonymous
- If in an emergency, point to someone and say “You, with the blue shirt, help me!” NOT “Somebody help me”

Step 4. Decide how to help
- At times, special skills are required
- If skills present, direct help
- If not, indirect help

Step 5. Deliver the help
- Costs and benefits
  - Potential costs
    - Being afraid of making a fool of yourself, especially when there is an audience
    - Being afraid of making the situation worse
    - Being afraid of putting yourself in danger

5 Stage Model
- 1. Notice the Event
- 2. Interpret the Event as an Emergency
- 3. Assuming Responsibility
- 4. Knowing How to Help
- 5. Deciding to Implement Help

**Failure at any step means no help.**

After today’s lecture...
- Explanations for helping behaviors
  - Evolutionary, social exchange, altruism-empathy hypothesis
- Who we are likely to help/not help?
  - Attractiveness, similarity; stigma, responsibility
- Bystander effect
  - Diffusion of responsibility; pluralistic ignorance
- 5 steps of responding to an emergency