

CHAPTER 11 OUTLINE

Introduction

The introduction details the stories of several individuals who perished while saving others during the 9/11/2001 attacks.

I. Basic Motives Underlying Prosocial Behavior: Why Do People Help?

- **Prosocial behavior** is any act performed with the goal of benefiting another person.
- **Altruism** is the desire to help another person even if it involves some personal cost to the helper.
- Two basic questions that people have asked are whether helping is an inborn tendency or one that must be taught, and whether people ever help without receiving some benefit in return.

A. Evolutionary Psychology: Instincts and Genes

- **Evolutionary psychology** is the attempt to explain social behavior in terms of genetic factors that evolved over time according to the principles of natural selection.
- Darwin recognized that altruistic behavior posed a problem for his theory: if an organism acts altruistically, it may decrease its own likelihood of surviving to pass on its genes.

1. Kin Selection

- **Kin selection** is the idea that behaviors that help a genetic relative are favored by natural selection. Helping a kin member may decrease one's own probability for survival/passing on one's genes, but kin share the same genes, so saving a kin member may pass on one's own genes. Self-reports from people (Burnstein, Crandall, & Kitayama, 1994), and anecdotal evidence from real emergencies (Sime, 1983) show that organisms help more the more closely another is related to them.

2. The Reciprocity Norm

- The **norm of reciprocity** is the expectation that helping others will increase the likelihood that they will help us in the future. Sociobiologists suggest that, as humans were evolving, those who were the most likely to survive would be those who developed an understanding with the neighbors based on this norm; they would have been more likely to survive than either completely competitive or completely cooperative people.

3. Learning Social Norms

- Simon (1990) suggests that those who are the best learners of societal norms have a competitive advantage. Thus people are genetically programmed to learn social norms and one of these norms is altruism.
- The claims of evolutionary psychologists are still being debated. For example, the theory has difficulty explaining why complete strangers sometimes help each other.

B. Social Exchange: The Costs and Rewards of Helping

- *Social exchange theory* argues that much of what we do stems from the desire to maximize our rewards and minimize our costs. Like evolutionary psychology, it is a theory based on self-interest; unlike it, it assumes that self-interest has no genetic basis.
- Helping can be rewarding in three ways: it can increase the probability that someone will help us in return in the future; it can relieve the personal distress of the bystander; and it can gain us social approval and increased self-worth.
- Helping can also be costly; thus it decreases when costs are high. Social exchange theory presumes that people help only when the rewards outweigh the costs. Thus social exchange theory presumes that there is no pure altruism.

C. Empathy and Altruism: The Pure Motive for Helping

- Batson is the strongest proponent of the idea that people often help purely out of the goodness of their hearts. He argues that pure altruism is most likely to come into play when we experience **empathy** for the person in need; that is, when we are able to experience events and emotions the way that that person experiences them. Batson's **empathy-altruism hypothesis** states that when we feel empathy for a person, we will attempt to help purely for altruistic reasons, that is, regardless of what we have to gain. If we do not feel empathy, then social exchange concerns will come into play (see Figure 11.1).
- In a study by Toi and Batson, (1982), students listened to a taped interview with a student who had ostensibly broken both legs in an accident and was behind in classes. Two factors were manipulated: empathetic vs. non-empathetic set, manipulated by instructions given to Ss; and the costs of helping, manipulated by whether or not the injured student was expected to be seen every day once she returned to class. The dependent variable was whether Ss responded to a request to help the injured student catch up in class. As the empathy-altruism hypothesis predicted, people in the high-empathy condition helped regardless of cost, while those in the low-empathy condition helped only if the cost of not helping was high (Figure 11.2).
- The empathy-altruism hypothesis has been much debated, with some researchers arguing that empathy increases the cost of not helping and thus increases the likelihood of helping because it lowers people's distress at seeing someone they care about suffer.

II. Personal Qualities and Prosocial Behavior: Why Do Some People Help More Than Others?

A. Individual Differences: The Altruistic Personality

- An **altruistic personality** consists of the qualities that cause an individual to help others in a wide variety of situations.
- It turns out that there is little evidence of consistency in altruism; for example, Hartshorne and May (1929) found only a .23 correlation between different kinds of helping behaviors in children, and several studies have found that those who scored high on a personality test of altruism were not much more likely to help than those who scored low. People's personality is clearly not the only determinant of helping. Instead, it seems to be that different kinds of people are likely to help in different situations.

B. Gender Differences in Prosocial Behavior

- Eagly and Crowley (1986) did a meta-analysis and found that men are more likely to help in chivalrous, heroic ways, and women are more likely to help in nurturant ways involving long-term commitment.

C. Cultural Differences in Prosocial Behavior

- It might seem as though people with an *interdependent view of the self*, who come from collectivist cultures, would be more likely to help a person in need. However, people everywhere are less likely to help a member of an **out-group**, a group with which the person does not identify, than a member of an **in-group**, the group with which the person identifies and feels he or she is a member. Cultural factors come into play in determining how strongly people draw the line between in-groups and out-groups. People in collectivist cultures may draw a firmer line between in-groups and out-groups and be more likely to help in-group members and less likely to help out-group members than people from individualistic cultures, who have an *independent view of the self*.
- **Simpatía** in Latino and Hispanic cultures refers to a range of friendly social and emotional traits. Levine et al. (2000) found that people in cultures that value simpatía were more likely to help in a variety of nonemergency helping situations (Table 11.1).

D. The Effects of Mood on Prosocial Behavior

• One reason that personality alone cannot determine helping is that helping depends on a person's current mood.

1. Effects of Positive Moods: Feel Good, Do Good

- People who are in a good mood are more likely to help. For example, Isen and Levin (1972) did a study in a shopping mall where Ss either found or did not find a dime in a phone booth. As the person emerged from the booth, a confederate walked by and dropped a sheaf of papers; 84% of those who found the dime helped, compared with 4% of those who did not find the dime.
- North, Tarrang, & Hargreaves (2004) found that people are more likely to help others when in a good mood for a number of other reasons, including doing well on a test, receiving a gift, thinking happy thoughts, and listening to pleasant music.
- Good moods can increase helping for three reasons: (1) good moods make us interpret events in a sympathetic way; (2) helping another prolongs the good mood, whereas not helping deflates it; (3) good moods increase self-attention, and this in turn leads us to be more likely to behave according to our values and beliefs (which tend to favor altruism).

2. Negative-State Relief: Feel Bad, Do Good

- When people feel guilty, they are more likely to help. For example, Harris et al. (1975) found that churchgoers were more likely to donate money before, rather than after, confession (while still feeling guilty as opposed to after feeling their guilt absolved).
- Sadness will lead to helping under certain conditions. Cialdini's **negative-state relief hypothesis** says that people help in order to alleviate their own sadness and distress; it exemplifies a social exchange approach. According to this theory, people in a sad or distressed mood will be more likely to help but in a way unrelated to the cause of the bad mood.

III. Situational Determinants of Prosocial Behavior: When Will People Help?

A. Environment: Rural versus Urban

• People in rural areas are more helpful. This effect holds over a wide variety of ways of helping and in many countries. One explanation is that people from rural settings are brought up to be more neighborly and more likely to trust strangers. An alternative hypothesis, posted by Milgram, is the **urban-overload hypothesis**, the idea that people living in cities are likely to keep to themselves in order to avoid being overloaded by all the stimulation they receive. The evidence supports the latter hypothesis, finding that where an accident occurs matters more in influencing helping than where potential helpers were born, and that population density is a more potent determinant of helping than is population size.

B. Residential Mobility

- People who have lived in one place for a long time are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors.
- This effect can arise quite quickly even in a one-time laboratory setting. Oishi et al. (2006) found that participants who had worked with a group member on four tasks were more likely to help a struggling group member than those who had switched to a new group after each task.

C. The Number of Bystanders: The Bystander Effect

- Latané and Darley are two social psychologists who were working in New York at the time of the Kitty Genovese murder (described in Chapter 2). They hypothesized that, paradoxically, it might have been the large number of bystanders (38) who witnessed the murder that led to a failure to help.
- In a laboratory study, participants sat in separate booths and communicated over an intercom. As they listened, one of the other participants ostensibly had a seizure. The experimenters manipulated how many other participants the subject believed there were. The more other people the Ss believed were

present, the less likely they were to help and the slower they were to do so (Figure 11.3) (Darley & Latané, 1968). The **bystander effect** is the finding that the greater the number of bystanders who witness an emergency, the less likely any one of them is to help.

• Latané and Darley (1970) developed a step-by-step description of how people decide whether to help in an emergency (Figure 11.4). The five steps are:

1. Noticing an Event

• In order for people to help, they must notice that an emergency has occurred.
• Sometimes very trivial things, such as how much of a hurry a person is in, can prevent them from noticing someone else in trouble. Darley and Batson (1973) showed that seminary students who were in a hurry to give a sermon on campus were much less likely to help an ostensibly injured confederate groaning in a doorway than were those who were not in a hurry. They also found that helping was not predicted by personality scores or by the topic of the sermon (half were about to lecture on the parable of the Good Samaritan).

2. Interpreting an Event as an Emergency

• The next determinant of helping is whether the bystander interprets the event as an emergency. Ironically, when other bystanders are present, people are more likely to assume an emergency is something innocuous. This **pluralistic ignorance** occurs because people look to see others' reactions (informational influence); when they see that everyone else has a blank expression, they assume there must be no danger. This was demonstrated in a study by Latané and Darley (1970) where Ss were sitting in a room when white smoke began pouring out of a vent. The more other participants there were in the room, the less likely anyone was to seek help and the longer they took to do so. For ambiguous events, then, people in groups will gain false reassurance from each other and convince each other that nothing is wrong.

3. Assuming Responsibility

• The next step that must occur if helping is to take place is for someone to take responsibility. When there are many witnesses, there is a **diffusion of responsibility**, the phenomenon whereby each bystander's sense of responsibility to help decreases as the number of witnesses increases. Everyone assumes that someone else will help, and as a result, no one does, as happened with the Kitty Genovese murder.

4. Knowing How to Help

• Even if all the previous conditions are met, a person must know what form of assistance to give. If they don't, they will be unable to help.

5. Deciding to Implement the Help

• Finally, even if you know what kind of help to give, you might decide not to intervene because you feel unqualified to help or you are too afraid of the costs to yourself.
• Markey (2000) examined helping in an Internet chat room situation; when the chat-room group as a whole was asked to provide some information about finding profiles, the larger the group, the longer it took for anyone to help. However, when a specific person was addressed by name, that person helped quickly, regardless of group size.

D. The Nature of the Relationship: Communal versus Exchange Relationships

• Much research examines helping between strangers, but most helping occurs between people who know each other well.

• *Communal relationships* (see Chapter 10) are those in which people's primary concern is with the welfare of the other, whereas *exchange relationships* are governed by equity concerns. One possibility is that rewards are equally important in the two different types of relationships, but the nature of the rewards is different. Clark and Mills (1993), however, argue that the nature of the relationship is fundamentally different, such that those in communal relationships are less concerned with rewards.

- Generally we are more helpful towards friends than strangers, and we are more likely to help a partner in a communal relationship than a partner in an exchange relationship; the exception occurs when the other is beating us in a domain that is personally important and thus threatens our self-esteem; in this case, we are more likely to help strangers than friends.

IV. How Can Helping Be Increased?

- An important note is that people do not always want to be helped—if being helped means that they appear incompetent, they will often suffer in silence, even at the cost of failing at the task.

A. Increasing the Likelihood that Bystanders Will Intervene

- Simply being aware of the barriers to helping can increase people's chances of overcoming those barriers. Two recent incidents on college campuses are cited as examples. Also, Beaman et al. (1978) had students listen either to a lecture about Latané and Darley's work or to one about an unrelated topic; two weeks later, in a different context, they encountered a student lying on the floor while a confederate lounged by, apparently unconcerned. Those who had heard the bystander intervention lecture were more likely to help.

B. Positive Psychology and Prosocial Behavior

- Martin Seligman, a prominent clinical psychologist, has brought interest to the field of positive psychology after becoming disconcerted by clinical psychology's focus upon disease rather than health. Social psychology has not concentrated solely on negative behaviors but on positive ones as well.

C. Increasing Volunteerism

- Many people engage in volunteer work; the United States has the highest rate (47%; Ting & Piliavin, 2000). However, even in the U.S., more than half the population is not engaged in volunteerism. How can the rate of volunteering be increased? Some schools and businesses require service work; however, the *overjustification effect* suggests that those who volunteer for a requirement will be less likely to see their helping as intrinsically motivated and may volunteer less in the future; research suggests that this is in fact the case. To encourage volunteerism, one must be careful to make sure that people feel that volunteering is their free choice and not an externally imposed requirement.