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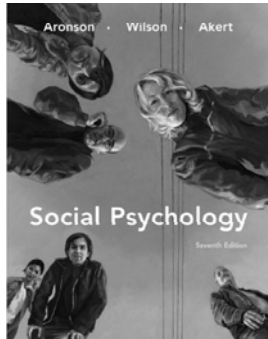
Social Psychology

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Prosocial Behavior: Why Do People Help? Chapter 11

“If you want others to be happy,
practice compassion.
If you want to be happy,
practice compassion.”
–The Dalai Lama

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Basic Motives Underlying Prosocial Behavior: Why Do People Help?

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Prosocial Behavior

Any act performed with the goal
of benefiting another person.

Altruism

The desire to help another person even
if it involves a cost to the helper.

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Evolutionary Psychology: Instincts and Genes

- Any gene that furthers our survival and increases the probability that we will produce offspring is likely to be passed on from generation to generation.
- Genes that lower our chances of survival, such as those causing life-threatening diseases, reduce the chances that we will produce offspring and thus are less likely to be passed on.

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Evolutionary Psychology: Instincts and Genes

Evolutionary Psychology

The attempt to explain social behavior in terms of genetic factors that evolved over time according to the principles of natural selection.

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Evolutionary Psychology: Instincts and Genes

Darwin realized early on that there was a problem with evolutionary theory:

How can it explain altruism?

- If people's overriding goal is to ensure their own survival, why would they ever help others at a cost to themselves?
- Genes promoting selfish behavior should be more likely to be passed on—or should they?

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Evolutionary Psychology: Instincts and Genes

Kin Selection

The idea that behaviors that help a genetic relative are favored by natural selection.

- People can increase the chances their genes will be passed along not only by having children but also by ensuring that their genetic relatives have children.
- Thus natural selection should favor altruistic acts directed toward genetic relatives.

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Evolutionary Psychology: Instincts and Genes

- Survey research found that people reported that they would be more likely to help genetic relatives than nonrelatives in life-and-death situations, such as a house fire.
- Anecdotal evidence from real emergencies is consistent with these results.

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The Reciprocity Norm

Norm of Reciprocity

The expectation that helping others will increase the likelihood that they will help us in the future.

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Learning Social Norms

Nobel laureate Herbert Simon (1990) argued that it is highly adaptive for individuals to learn social norms from other members of a society.

The best learners of a society's norms and customs have a survival advantage, because a culture learns things like which foods are poisonous and how best to cooperate.

The person who learns these rules is more likely to survive than the person who does not.

Consequently, the ability to learn social norms has become part of our genetic makeup.

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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.

Social exchange assume that people in their relationships with others try to maximize the ratio of social rewards to social costs.

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Social Exchange: The Costs and Rewards of Helping

Helping can be rewarding in a number of ways:

- The norm of reciprocity can increase the likelihood that someone will help us in return.
- Helping someone is an investment in the future, the social exchange being that someday, someone will help us when we need it.
- Helping can also relieve the personal distress of a bystander.
- By helping others, we can also gain such rewards as social approval from others and increased feelings of self-worth.

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Social Exchange: The Costs and Rewards of Helping

The other side is that helping can be costly:

- Physical danger
- Pain
- Embarrassment
- Time

Basically, social exchange theory argues that true altruism, in which people help even when doing so is costly to themselves, does not exist. People help when the benefits outweigh the costs.

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Empathy and Altruism: The Pure Motive for Helping

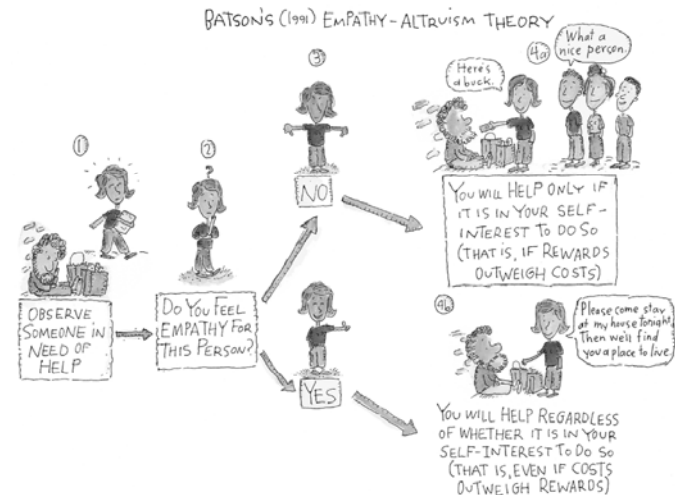
Empathy

The ability to put oneself in the shoes of another person and to experience events and emotions (e.g., joy and sadness) the way that person experiences them.

Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis

The idea that when we feel empathy for a person, we will attempt to help that person purely for altruistic reasons, regardless of what we have to gain.

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To sum up, we've identified three basic motives underlying prosocial behavior:

1. Helping is an instinctive reaction to promote the welfare of those genetically similar to us (evolutionary psychology).
2. The rewards of helping often outweigh the costs, so helping is in our self-interest (social exchange theory).
3. Under some conditions, powerful feelings of empathy and compassion for the victim prompt selfless giving (the empathy-altruism hypothesis).

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

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Individual Differences: The Altruistic Personality

Altruistic Personality

The qualities that cause an individual to help others in a wide variety of situations.

Surprisingly, studies of both children and adults indicate that people with high scores on personality tests of altruism are not much more likely to help than those with lower scores.

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Individual Differences: The Altruistic Personality

Individual differences in personality are not the only predictors of how helpful someone will be.

We need to consider several other critical factors as well, such as:

- situational pressures that are affecting people,
- their gender,
- the culture in which they grew up,
- even their current mood.

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Gender Differences in Prosocial Behavior

Consider two scenarios:

- In one, someone performs a dramatic, heroic act, like storming the cockpit of United flight 93 to fight the terrorists.
- In the other, someone is involved in a long-term helping relationship, such as assisting a disabled neighbor with chores around the house.

Are men or women more likely to help in each situation?

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Gender Differences in Prosocial Behavior

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- In the other, someone is involved in a long-term helping relationship, such as assisting a disabled neighbor with chores around the house.

Are men or women more likely to help in each situation?

The answer is no.
 Males are more likely to help in the first situation.
 Females are more likely in the second.

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Cultural Differences in Prosocial Behavior

People in all cultures are more likely to help anyone they define as a member of their **in-group** than those they perceive in **out-groups**.

In-Group
 The group with which an individual identifies as a member.

Out-Group
 Any group with which an individual does not identify.

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Cultural Differences in Prosocial Behavior

1. In many interdependent cultures, the needs of in-group members are considered more important than those of out-groups, and consequently, people in these cultures are more likely to help in-group members than members of individualistic cultures are.
2. However, because the line between “us” and “them” is more firmly drawn in interdependent cultures, people in these cultures are *less* likely to help members of out-groups than people in individualistic cultures are.
3. Thus to be helped by other people, it is important that they view you as a member of their in-group—as “one of them”—and this is especially true in interdependent cultures.

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Cultural Differences in Prosocial Behavior

A particular cultural value that strongly relates to prosocial behavior is *simpatía*.

Prominent in Spanish-speaking countries, *simpatía* refers to a range of social and emotional traits, including being:

- Friendly
- Polite
- Good-natured
- Pleasant and
- Helpful toward others

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The Effects of Mood on Prosocial Behavior

Effects of Positive Moods:

Feel Good, Do Good

84% of people who found coins researcher left in mall pay phone slots helped a man pick up papers in one study.

Only 4% of those who did not find coins helped.

When people are in a good mood, they are more helpful in a variety of ways.

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The Effects of Mood on Prosocial Behavior

Being in a good mood can increase helping for three reasons:

1. Good moods make us look on the bright side of life.

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2. Helping others can prolong our good mood.

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The Effects of Mood on Prosocial Behavior

Being in a good mood can increase helping for three reasons:

1. Good moods make us look on the bright side of life.
2. Helping others can prolong our good mood.
3. Good moods increase self-attention.

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The Effects of Mood on Prosocial Behavior

Negative-State Relief:

Feel Bad, Do Good

One kind of bad mood clearly leads to an increase in helping—feeling guilty. People often act on the idea that good deeds cancel out bad deeds.

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The Effects of Mood on Prosocial Behavior

Negative-State Relief:

Feel Bad, Do Good

Since feeling happy leads to greater helping, it might seem that sadness would decrease it. Surprisingly, sadness can also lead to an increase in helping, at least under certain conditions. When sad, people are motivated to do things that make them feel better. To the extent that helping is rewarding, it can lift us out of the doldrums.

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The Effects of Mood on Prosocial Behavior

Negative-State Relief:

Feel Bad, Do Good

Negative-State Relief Hypothesis

The idea that people help in order to alleviate their own sadness and distress.

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Situational Determinants of Prosocial Behaviors: When Will People Help?

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Environment: Rural versus Urban

Suppose you are walking down the street one day when you see a man suddenly fall down and cry out with pain. He rolls up his pants leg, revealing a bandaged shin that is bleeding heavily. What would you do?

When this event was staged in small towns, about half the people who walked by stopped and offered to help the man.

In large cities, only 15% of passersby stopped to help.

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Environment: Rural versus Urban

Other studies have found that people in small towns are more likely to help when asked to find a lost child, give directions, and return a lost letter.

Helping has been found to be more prevalent in small towns in several countries, including the United States, Canada, Israel, Australia, Turkey, Great Britain, and the Sudan.

But why?

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Environment: Rural versus Urban

1. Perhaps people who grow up in a small town are more likely to internalize altruistic values.
2. Alternatively, the immediate surroundings might be the key and not people's internalized values.

Urban Overload Hypothesis

The theory that people living in cities are constantly being bombarded with stimulation and that they keep to themselves to avoid being overwhelmed by it.

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Environment: Rural versus Urban

According to **urban overload hypothesis**, if you put urban dwellers in a calmer, less stimulating environment, they would be as likely as anyone else to reach out to others.

Research has supported the urban overload hypothesis more than the idea that living in cities makes people less altruistic by nature.

A review of dozens of studies found that when an opportunity for helping arises, it matters more whether the incident occurs in a rural or urban area than where the witnesses grew up.

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Residential Mobility

It is not only where you live that matters, but how often you have moved from one place to another.

People who have lived for a long time in one place are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors that help the community.

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Residential Mobility

Living for a long time in one place leads to:

- greater attachment to the community,
- more interdependence with neighbors, and
- greater concern with one's reputation in the community.

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The Number of Bystanders: The Bystander Effect

Bibb Latané and John Darley (1970) are two social psychologists who taught at universities in New York at the time of Kitty Genovese's prolonged murder, when 38 witnesses failed to call police.

Paradoxically, they thought, it might be that the greater the number of bystanders who observe an emergency, the less likely any one of them is to help.

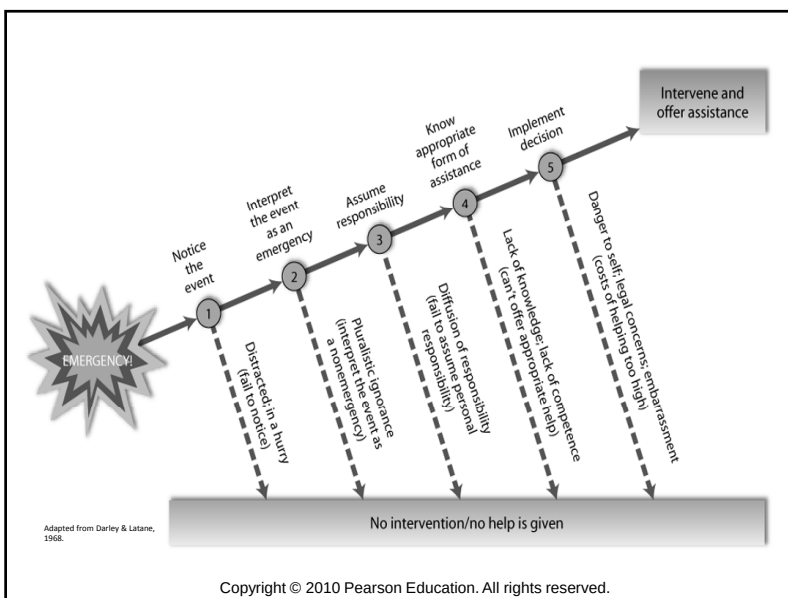
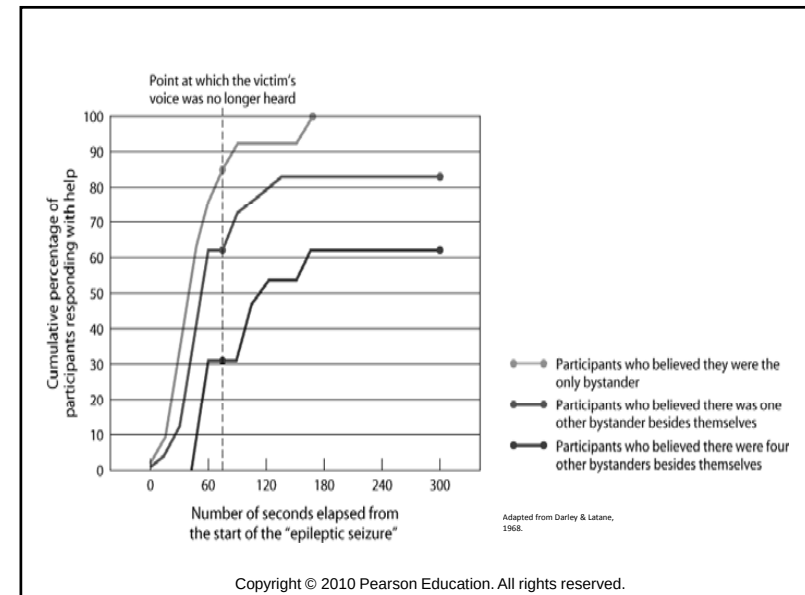
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**The Number of Bystanders:
The Bystander Effect**

Latané and Darley (1970) found that in terms of receiving help, there is no safety in numbers. Dozens of other studies, conducted in the laboratory and in the field, have found what they found: The greater the number of bystanders who witness an emergency, the less likely any one of them is to help the victim.

This is known as the bystander effect.

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Noticing an Event

- Darley and Batson (1973) demonstrated that something as trivial as being in a hurry can make more of a difference than what kind of person someone is.
- Surprisingly, they also found that the seminary students who were the most religious were no more likely to help than those who were the least religious.

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Interpreting the Event as an Emergency

- The next determinant of helping is whether the bystander interprets the event as an emergency—as a situation where help is needed.
- If people assume that nothing is wrong when an emergency is taking place, they will not help.
- When other bystanders are present, people are more likely to assume that an emergency is something innocuous.

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Interpreting the Event as an Emergency

Pluralistic Ignorance

Bystanders' assuming that nothing is wrong in an emergency because no one else looks concerned.

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Assuming Responsibility

Sometimes it is obvious that an emergency is occurring, as when Kitty Genovese cried out, "Oh my God, he stabbed me! Please help me! Please help me!"

Even if we interpret an event as an emergency, we have to decide that it is *our* responsibility—not someone else's—to do something about it.

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Assuming Responsibility

Diffusion of Responsibility

The phenomenon whereby each bystander's sense of responsibility to help decreases as the number of witnesses increases.

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Knowing How to Help

Suppose that on a hot summer day, you see a woman collapse in the street. No one else seems to be helping, and so you decide it is up to you.

- But what should you do?
- Has the woman had a heart attack?
- Is she suffering from heatstroke?
- Should you call an ambulance, administer CPR, or try to get her out of the sun?

If people don't know what form of assistance to give, obviously they will be unable to help.

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Deciding to Implement the Help

Even if you know exactly what kind of help is appropriate, there are still reasons why you might decide not to intervene:

- You might not be qualified to deliver the right kind of help.
- You might be afraid of:
 - Making a fool of yourself,
 - Doing the wrong thing, or
 - Placing yourself in danger

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The Nature of the Relationship: Communal vs. Exchange Relationships

Communal relationships are those in which people's primary concern is with the welfare of the other person (e.g., a child), whereas *exchange relationships* are governed by concerns about equity—that what you put into the relationship equals what you get out of it.

How does helping occur in communal relationships?

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The Nature of the Relationship: Communal vs. Exchange Relationships

In exchange relationships, we expect our favors to be repaid pretty quickly.
 ("What have they done for me lately?")

People in communal relationships pay less attention to who is getting what than people in exchange relationships do.

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The Nature of the Relationship: Communal vs. Exchange Relationships

Does this mean that people are more helpful toward friends than strangers?
Yes—under most circumstances.

An interesting exception:

We are less likely to help a friend in important areas than we are in areas we don't care as much about.

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How Can Helping Be Increased?

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Increasing the Likelihood that Bystanders Will Intervene

- Simply being aware of the barriers to helping in an emergency can increase people's chances of overcoming those barriers.
- People who know about bystander effects can realize that if they don't act, perhaps no one will.

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Positive Psychology and Prosocial Behavior

- A new field called positive psychology has emerged that focuses on people's strengths and virtues, instead of mental disease.
- The social psychological approach is to investigate the conditions under which people act in positive (e.g., helpful) and negative (e.g., unhelpful) ways.
 - For example, people will help at a cost to themselves when they feel empathy toward a person in need. When they do not feel empathy, they will help only when it is in their self-interest.

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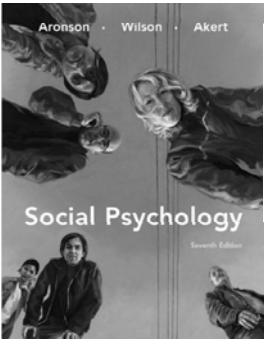
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