
THEORIES OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

AJITABH KUMAR

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

EVOLUTIONARY THEORIES OF ALTRUISM

- **Natural Selection and Genetic Basis**
- **Evolutionary** theory explains altruism as behavior that evolved to enhance **survival** and **reproduction** of **genes**.
- **Natural selection** favors traits that increase an organism's fitness and ability to pass on genes.
- Altruistic behaviors can be advantageous when they benefit individuals who share **similar** genes.
- **Genes** promoting altruism may **persist** in populations if they increase **inclusive fitness**
- **Inclusive fitness** encompasses both an individual's own reproductive success and that of genetic relatives.

DEVELOPMENTAL AND LEARNING PERSPECTIVES

- **Cognitive Development and Moral Reasoning.**
- **Cognitive development** theory explores how moral reasoning and prosocial behavior evolve with age.
- **Piaget's** stages of cognitive development influence children's understanding of morality and fairness.
- **Kohlberg's** stages of moral development describe progression in ethical reasoning.
- **Preconventional** morality focuses on avoiding punishment and gaining rewards.
- **Conventional** morality emphasizes conformity to social norms and fulfilling duties
- **Postconventional** morality involves abstract ethical principles and universal human rights.
- Perspective-taking abilities develop gradually, enabling more sophisticated prosocial decision-making.

SOCIAL LEARNING AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

- Social learning theory emphasizes the role of **observation** and **imitation** in acquiring prosocial behaviors.
- Children learn altruistic behaviors by observing and imitating role models (parents, peers, media figures)
- **Reinforcement** and **punishment** shape the likelihood of future prosocial actions.
- **Vicarious** reinforcement occurs when children observe others being **rewarded** for helping.
- Prosocial behavior increases when children are exposed to **positive examples** and receive praise for helping.
- Cultural norms and values influence the types of prosocial behaviors that are modeled and reinforced
- Media exposure can impact prosocial tendencies through portrayal of helping behaviors and their consequences

KIN SELECTION AND HAMILTON'S RULE

- **Kin selection** theory proposes altruism evolved to benefit **genetically** related individuals
- **William** Hamilton formulated Hamilton's rule to predict when **altruism** is **evolutionarily favorable**.
- Hamilton's rule states altruism evolves when **$rb > c$** .
- **rb** represents the **genetic relatedness** between **individuals**.
- **rb** denotes the **benefit** to the . of the altruistic act.
- **c** signifies the **cost** to the **altruist**.
- Altruism becomes more likely as genetic relatedness increases.
- Examples of kin selection include parental care and helping behaviors among siblings.

RECIPROCAL ALTRUISM AND COOPERATION

- **Reciprocal altruism** theory explains altruism between **unrelated individuals**.
- Proposes altruistic acts occur with the **expectation** of **future reciprocation**.
- Requires **repeated** interactions and the ability to **recognize** and remember **individuals**.
- **Tit-for-tat** strategy emerges as an evolutionarily stable strategy in repeated interactions.
- **Cooperation** can evolve when the long-term benefits outweigh short-term costs.
- Examples include **food sharing** among vampire bats and grooming behaviors in primates.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE AND EMPATHY-BASED MODELS.

- **Cost-Benefit Analysis in Prosocial Behavior.**
- **Social exchange theory** views social interactions as exchanges of resources.
- Individuals engage in prosocial behavior when perceived benefits outweigh **costs**.
- Costs include **time, effort, and potential risks** associated with helping.
- Benefits encompass **social approval, reciprocity, and improved self-image**.
- Decision to help involves weighing immediate costs against potential future rewards.
- Factors influencing cost-benefit analysis include **mood, time pressure, and social norms**.

MOOD REGULATION AND HELPING BEHAVIOR

- Negative state relief model suggests people help others to **alleviate** their **own negative** emotions.
- Helping behavior serves as a **mood-enhancing mechanism**.
- Individuals in negative moods are more likely to engage in **prosocial acts**.
- Helping others can distract from personal distress and provide a sense of **accomplishment**.
- Model explains increased helping behavior following experiences of **guilt** or **sadness**.
- Critics argue this perspective does not account for all instances of altruism.

EMPATHY AS A MOTIVATOR FOR ALTRUISM.

- **Empathy-altruism** hypothesis proposes empathy as the **primary motivator** for **altruistic behavior**.
- Empathy involves **understanding** and **sharing** the **emotional state** of another person
- Hypothesis suggests truly altruistic actions stem from empathic concern for others' well-being.
- Empathic concern leads to helping behavior without **expectation** of **personal** gain.
- Research demonstrates increased helping behavior when **empathy** is induced experimentally.
- Critics argue apparent altruism may still be **motivated** by **self-interest** or **mood enhancement**.