

Leo Montada  
Hans Werner Bierhoff (Editors)

# Altruism in Social Systems



**Hogrefe & Huber Publishers**  
Lewiston, NY · Toronto · Bern · Göttingen · Stuttgart

## Studying Prosocial Behavior in Social Systems

Leo Montada and Hans Werner Bierhoff

People live in social systems. We spend most of our time with members of primary social systems (with family members, friends, classmates, colleagues, neighbors) and in settings (living quarters, classrooms, kindergarten, playground, bars, clubs, public transportation, hospital, homes for the aged, churches, stores, and so forth) that are characterized by specific interaction rules and social roles. There are specific norms, requirements, possibilities, resources, and restraints to be found in all systems and settings that also offer rules of understanding that once more provide orientations for making decisions. Prosocial behavior has rarely been studied in long-term existing social systems or with special attention to the impact of specific settings.

Most research has been done experimentally with subjects who did not know each other before. Of course, the psychological laboratory is a setting, too, and field experiments are also conducted in settings (subway stations, supermarkets, freeways, shopping lanes, etc.). But whenever prosocial behavior was studied experimentally, aspects of the settings were considered rather casually, not systematically.

In the experimental approach, prosocial behavior has mainly been analyzed as situationally determined behavior. It is possible to influence the subject by varying the costs of helping, the attractiveness of a needy person, causal explanations for the existence of a predicament (e.g., by pointing out that the misery was self-inflicted, or that it was externally caused), the responsibility of potential helpers (e.g., by varying the number of bystanders or the information about their competences), or the empathy for the victim (e.g., with the instruction to imagine the victim's feelings). Cognitions, motives, and normative orientations that are relevant for prosocial behavior have been conveyed or aroused via experimental arrangements of situations, or via instructions.

Since situational variations do affect people differently in strength or direction, research was extended to include personality dispositions. For example, Wilson (1976) demonstrated that the bystander effect (inhibition of a prosocial response when there are many passive witnesses to an accident) was only obtained for safety-oriented subjects and did not occur for esteem-oriented subjects. Therefore, the pattern of results was characterized by a strong person x situation-interaction indicating that the emergency was perceived differently by subjects depending on their personality. However, this approach was rarely realized in a conceptually convincing way (Heckhausen, 1980).

Besides situations and persons, behavior is influenced by factors that are inherent in social systems or settings. This third type of determinant has rarely been investigated so far though it is questionable whether the situational and personal factors that were found would be valid across different social systems or whether there might be variables in each social system that have an additional impact or that

are interacting with situational and personal determinants: Is the frequently observed bystander effect only true when witnesses do not know each other, or is it lacking in primary social systems? Is physical attractiveness equally as important in familial relationships or friendships as it is in interactions between strangers? We do not know.

### The Prevalence of Experimental Research

The experimental approach is given credit because of the widespread opinion that it is the royal road to test causal hypotheses. This assumption may be considered too precipitated as long as the effects of possibly confounded or interacting variables are not controlled. Randomized allocation of subjects to experimental groups will only prevent a confounding of experimental variables with person variables. Interactions and confoundings with aspects of the social system and the setting are not at all controlled by this procedure. The generalizability of results remains open to question as long as an experiment has not been replicated with samples of various populations (possibly characterized by different person variables or different distributions of person variables), in various settings and social systems.

The contradictory results of two studies on the relationship between sex-role orientation and helping in emergencies might serve as an example. Senneker and Hendrick (1983) showed in a laboratory experiment that high instrumentality, which is considered to be a stereotypically masculine trait, is positively related to speed of helping in an emergency. The emergency was staged in the context of a group discussion via headphones. The victim was simulated by prerecording the symptoms of a person who chokes on food. In a later study, nearly the same procedure was employed (Tice & Baumeister, 1985). The results indicated that instrumentality was negatively related to likelihood of intervention. Since the study was conducted in the laboratories of different universities, it is likely that the social settings at these universities were different. In addition, numerous other system variables might be different at the two places. As a consequence, it is impossible to elucidate why the contradictory results occurred.

The interpretation of experiments is always dependent on the successful implementation of experimental manipulations which cannot be confirmed in advance. Therefore, a negative result might logically be due either to wrong predictions or to inappropriate operationalizations implying an unsatisfactory validity or reliability of the procedures employed. This ambiguity excludes any direct inference from negative experimental results to the disconfirmation of a theory (Stegmüller, 1986; Witte, 1989). Therefore, the main advantage which was attributed to experiments seems to be overrated. The conceptual interpretation of experimental data is not less fallible than data from other sources of empirical evidence are.

In general, it seems appropriate to introduce explicitly the notion of social system for a fuller understanding of experimental results. The responses of subjects can only

be interpreted meaningfully if the social system is taken into account which guided the subjects' interpretation of the experimental situation.

The fate of theories is not so much dependent on the results of specific single experiments but on the cumulative knowledge derived from several empirical sources (e.g., observation of real-life behavior, examination of demographic statistics, unstructured interviews), if not on the availability of alternative paradigms (Kuhn, 1962; Stegmüller, 1986).

### The Problem of Ecological Validity

Ecological validity is an additional issue. Do experimental manipulations represent real-life conditions? Wilson (1976) pointed out that a tape-recorded procedure used in many studies on emergency intervention may sound hollow and fake. In such a case, the research is not on responses to real-life emergencies but on responses to imagined real-life emergencies. While Wilson (1976) took this problem seriously and abandoned a prerecorded simulation of the emergency, in many other studies on emergency intervention the problem of perceived authenticity of emergency is not discussed. Only in a few studies (Borofsky, Stollak, & Mess, 1971; Shotland & Heinold, 1985) do the experimental procedures seem to have the same or nearly the same impact on observers as real life emergencies.

Ecological validity would present a very difficult problem if aspects of social systems were to be investigated experimentally. Systemic factors cannot easily be simulated experimentally: How, for instance, could the quality of existing social relations be simulated adequately, or the role expectancies toward each other, the status of interacting subjects, or the burning out of personnel working in social or medical services? These are all important factors in offering or accepting help.

Offering and granting help, as well as requesting and accepting help is influenced much more by the structure of a social system, the norms, the expectations grown out of previous interactions, and the relationships between all concerned than it could possibly be "simulated" in laboratory or field experiments that are usually characterized by short-term, singular, chance contacts. In the normal experimental situation, it is not necessary to fit the decision about whether or not to help, or whether or not to accept help into an existing, normatively alleged or habitual social structure.

*Though scepticism is in order as far as the possibility of a simulation of social systems in experiments is concerned, systemic views have often guided experimental research.* It is worth keeping this in mind. Attempts have been made to induce social responsibility, to reach diffusion or a focusing in the attribution of responsibility, to establish reciprocal obligations, to vary the social status of the needy, to evoke social prejudices against victims, to create anonymity or publicity for the required help or care, and so on. This indicates that researchers have always been aware of the significance of systemic factors. It is questionable though, whether these systemic factors could be simulated adequately enough for research to be ecologically valid,

or whether the investigation has to be done within the systems directly in order to deal with the typical network of factors, their interaction, and their relative impact in a real-life situation.

We do not want to present a taxonomy of social systems (cf., Bronfenbrenner, 1979) or of dimensions for describing them (cf., Witte, 1989). In the following, we will only point out the theoretical and practical importance of this perspective and illustrate it by giving a few examples of ongoing research.

### Sympathy and Prosocial Activities

There is a large body of literature emphasizing that sympathy (empathy) for the needy is *the* motive for altruistic activities (cf., Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). There is growing agreement that empathy is the act of feeling another person's affective experiences. Hoffman (1976) distinguished several levels in the development of empathy, from a more egocentric affection to a mature sympathetic distress that is an other-centered concern based on a developed role-taking capacity that enables the subject to consider the problems and stressors of others within the framework of their life situation. In a similar vein, Batson (cf., Batson et al., 1987) distinguished between personal (not sympathetic) distress and (true) empathy (distress resulting from a true concern for others) as two qualitatively distinct emotions with different motivational consequences (cf., Batson et al. in this volume).

One of the questions to be addressed in the context of the present volume is whether there are systematic variations in empathy that depend on the social context and the social system, beside personality differences, developmental changes, and situational variations (cf., Silbereisen et al., in this volume, who discuss cultural differences in prosocial motivations). We are not aware of empirical studies explicitly designed to demonstrate the moderation of empathic responses by specific kinds of social context and social relationship. But it is easy to derive hypotheses from existing theories to interpret differences in prosocial commitments within a given social context and relationship.

We observe more prosocial commitments toward members of ingroups as compared to members of outgroups (cf., Bierhoff, 1980), in close relationships as compared to distant relationships (cf., Lerner & Whitehead, 1980), in urban contexts toward strangers than in nonurban contexts (cf., Korte, 1981), and so forth. The hypothesis seems plausible that we feel more sympathy toward relatives and friends than towards strangers or enemies. This is corroborated by theories and by evidence about the development and socialization of empathy, which does not grow in every social environment. Conceived as a generalized disposition, it is furthered in families in which interactions are characterized by a climate of warmth and love (cf., Staub, 1979).

Another question we want to point to is whether different prosocial motivations exist (e.g., empathy, normative obligations, perceived injustice) that vary in impact depending on the social context (cf., Montada, 1990). We do not believe that every

prosocial motivation is based on empathy or sympathy. At least an empathic and a normative orientation have to be distinguished conceptually (Rushton, 1976). Again, it is natural to assume that prosocial commitments in close relationships are more frequently motivated by love and sympathy/empathy, and that prosocial acts toward strangers are mostly motivated by normative obligation and perceived injustice. However, this is not to be considered a general rule: Even risky prosocial activities in favor of strangers, such as rescuing persecuted people in a totalitarian state, might be motivated by empathy (Oliner & Oliner, 1988), and prosocial acts in close relationships, like donating a kidney to a close relative, might be motivated by feelings of moral obligation (Fellner & Marshall, 1981). Hoffman (1987) tried to integrate these two basic orientations and argued that empathy/sympathy and normative views are combined in moral affects such as empathic anger, guilt feelings, or empathic injustice.

### Normative Influences on Prosocial Behavior

One of the effects of experimental research on prosocial behavior was a discounting of the importance of general social norms. The taxonomy of the current literature done by Pearce and Amato (1980) has revealed that the largest number of studies by far fall into the categories of doing small favors for strangers, emergency interventions, and requests to participate in research. It is in these types of studies that norms have not proven themselves to be particularly useful. This might be quite different for other categories which are typical for interactions in social systems such as donating, caring, and doing volunteer work (cf., Piliavin & Libby, 1987).

Many interactions in social systems are structured normatively. There are commonly valid rules and taboos, there are reciprocal expectations, claims, and obligations among the holders of social roles, there are rights and obligations based on tradition or on contracts, or associated with social positions. Prosocial behavior, too, is often determined by currently accepted formal and informal norms.

There are general ethical principles like "Love your neighbor as you love yourself". There are human rights that are the basis for claiming welfare and protection against crimes. There are laws that demand that help be given to people in danger. There are contractual titles for help in cases of illness, catastrophes, or unemployment; there are legally protected demands, for instance, upon the family for (reasonable) support of needy members, there are informal norms like the norm of reciprocity that claims help in return for received help, or the norm of solidarity claiming social responsibility for all members of a community.

Many of the normative rules do not prevail universally, that is they neither prevail in all societies nor in all subcultures, communities, and settings of a society. For example, there are different normative rules for business and the family, different families have different rules, and so forth. So far, most research on the normative influences on prosocial behavior has been done without considering variations across social systems. Even rather "commonly" valid norms such as the norm of reciprocity or the norm of social responsibility are not considered obligatory in all

social contexts. There is evidence that indebtedness on the basis of the norm of reciprocity varies across social systems, and that the norm of social responsibility varies, for instance, with the role relationships and the objectively existing or perceived dependency of the help recipient.

The results of many studies indicate that the readiness to help is a function of perceived dependency as well as causal attributions of the dependency. If a dependent other is perceived as being responsible for his/her dependency (e.g., because of his/her negligence), social responsibility is less frequently aroused than in cases in which the dependent other is a victim of circumstances that he or she cannot control (Barnes et al., 1979; Schopler & Matthews, 1965; Schwartz & Fleishman, 1978). A person who is at fault for being in a predicament that requires help will generally receive less help than the one who is a victim of uncontrollable circumstances (Berkowitz, 1969; Horowitz, 1968). The attribution of causation and responsibility for neediness is a crucial predictor of prosocial commitment (cf., Montada & Schneider, in this volume).

However, there are some factors that moderate those relationships. The more freedom of choice the helper has, the more favorably he or she seems to perceive the coresponsibility of the needy (Horowitz, 1971). In addition, the inferences of the potential helpers with respect to the ability of the help recipients to help themselves are important, because people tend to help victims who seem to be lost without help even when the victims are responsible for their misfortune (Gruder, Romer, & Korth, 1978).

#### *Normative Barriers Against Helping*

We know that social norms are not generally powerful, that their impact on behavior depends on family background, socialization experiences, causal attributions of observed neediness, and so forth. Therefore, Schwartz has distinguished between social and personal norms. How social norms become influential in building up personal norms, defined as a feeling of personal moral obligation that is constructed in and specific to a given context and act (Schwartz, 1977), is not well understood yet. Piliavin's work on blood donation is one of the rare exceptions to evidence that communities have a good chance to build up personal norms in line with social norms if these have been made salient (Piliavin & Libby, 1987).

There are also normative rules that limit altruism. When altruistic acts touch others in their rights, those others might be protected by restraints against an "exaggerated" costly help: Available resources have to be distributed justly. Darley and Latané (1970) mention an "equal outcomes norm". In addition, Western societies have a norm of self-sufficiency which prescribes that people should take responsibility for their own well-being (Gruder, Romer, & Korth, 1978). The norm of self-sufficiency implies that help should only be provided if the needy have taken care of themselves in the first place.

The norm of self-sufficiency is only one example of norms that tend to inhibit prosocial behavior. We know of many more informal restrictions for altruism. Many of them concern the question: "Who are the needy who do not deserve help?" Justifications for not helping include the inference that the needy have caused their predicaments themselves, that they would not effectively use given help, or that they do not belong to one's own community of solidarity (in-group/out-group bias). Other restrictions are based on arguments such as "help is not useful" (e.g., because it creates dependency, or because it interferes with a necessary learning process), or help is not adequate, for instance, because the person in need rather wants or expects help from someone else.

The coexistence of several norms that might be applied to altruistic behavior poses serious problems for a satisfactory explanation of altruistic behavior. This is especially true, if the norms contradict each other (Darley & Latané, 1970). At this point the usefulness of a social systems approach should be emphasized. Social systems specify the meaning of norms and the occasions when they should be applied in a given social setting.

#### *Normative Aspects in Receiving Help*

We have empirical evidence showing that the recipients of public assistance do not always respond positively to the helper (Gross, Wallston, & Piliavin, 1979; Saxe & Dougherty, 1983). Why? The psychology of receiving help (see Bierhoff, this volume) points to the significance of normative rules in social systems in yet another way: Accepting help, for instance, will always be a problem if it establishes obligations (by the norm of reciprocity) that are not wanted, or if it results in a loss of social status and self-esteem (by applying the norm of self-sufficiency).

Negative responses of help recipients are likely to result from the inference that help implies the attribution of weakness and inferiority. This inference is especially likely if the helper is perceived as similar regarding his or her initial position (Fisher & Nadler, 1974; Fisher, Harrison, & Nadler, 1978), and if help refers to central areas of the self-concept (Nadler, Fisher, & Ben-Itzhak, 1983). Nadler and Fisher (1986) assume that negative consequences of receiving help can be expected if the help damages the self-esteem of the recipient of help. A threat to self-esteem is especially likely if the recipient of help has a high self-esteem in the beginning, and if the help is relevant for central areas of the self-concept, for example, performance and intelligence (cf., Krappmann & Oswald, in this volume).

Empirical studies indicate that recipients' reactions to aid depend on variables of the social system. For example, cooperative interdependence of helper and help recipient seems to counteract possible negative responses of the help recipient (Cook & Pelfrey, 1985). The very essence of cooperative relationships is the willingness to provide help in an attempt to pursue common interests. Therefore, the group goals and the functions of help for promoting common group interests must be taken into account. For example, crews of soldiers who work on a cooperative task constitute a

social system that makes it highly appropriate to help a co-worker who needs help in order to fulfill the task requirements.

In the same vein, the receipt of a certain amount of help is generally and normatively expected in a learning context: Teachers have the task to give support and to facilitate the learning process (Engler, 1988). In such a social context, granted help by an authority must not be detrimental to the students' self-concept. However, this is not generally true. Some students may interpret offered help as a sign that the teacher's valuation of their ability is rather low (Meyer, 1984). The issue of the responses of help recipients is further discussed in a later section.

### *Indebtedness and the Norm of Reciprocity*

The common norm of reciprocity states that an act of helping - from a simple favor up to a costly commitment - establishes a claim for help in return. This might well be one of the reasons why requesting help as well as accepting it will be considered problematic and costly in certain cases (Greenberg, 1980; Nadler, 1987). Indebtedness is born out of previous help received by another person who was not obligated to help, and the recipient of help had no justified claim for it.

Indebtedness fits into a social system that might be described adequately by exchange theories: On a long-term basis, a balanced account of input and output might be expected by all who are involved in the interaction (Adams, 1965). Of course, this is not true in all social communities. Relationships that are characterized by love and friendship are not likely to depend on this type of exchange. Romantic love is marked by the wish to do all and everything for the beloved (Rubin, 1970). If the balance of exchanges were to become an issue in close relationships, this might be considered a sign of the end of love and romance.

Another category that does not fit in an exchange model is the relationship that is characterized by charitable love. Think, for instance, of the parents of a physically or mentally handicapped child: Many parents are caring for their child affectionately without ever expecting compensation. Of course, burdening help may be compensated by love. Yet, there are many cases of long-term care and support that cannot be interpreted easily by applying a model of interaction based on theories of exchange.

### *Feelings of Guilt and Prosocial Behavior*

The impact of social norms on prosocial behavior is also evidenced by inspecting the effects of feelings of guilt. Feelings of guilt motivate altruism. This has often been proven experimentally (Cunningham, Steinberg, & Grev, 1980; overviews are provided by Rosenhan, Salovey, Karylowski, & Hargis, 1981; Tobey-Klass, 1978). Different theoretical interpretations of those results were suggested pointing to the significance of social systems: (1) Feelings of guilt call for just compensation that can be achieved through altruistic acts (Berscheid & Walster, 1967). The systemic

relevance consists of the fact that justice can only be an issue in social systems, and that perceiving injustice implies social comparisons. (2) Feelings of guilt result from a violation of internalized social norms that can be atoned through prosocial behavior (Bierhoff, Kloft, & Lensing, 1988). (3) If the public self has been tainted through faulty behavior, altruistic acts are an adequate way to rehabilitate oneself, at least when they are done publicly (Isen, Horn, & Rosenhan, 1973). Helping behavior after transgressions may be an effective strategy of impression management (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Mummendey, 1990).

Attributed guilt as a cause of altruistic behavior is also evidenced in applied settings. For example, in juvenile jurisdiction, altruistic acts are enforced as atonement for a misdeed (e.g., work in a welfare organization). In general, the importance of restitution for misdeeds as a means of (re-)socialization is grossly underestimated by current jurisdiction in many countries (Brickman, 1977).

It has been reported repeatedly that survivors of catastrophes or crimes such as Hiroshima (Lifton, 1967) or the concentration camps (von Baeyer et al., 1964), and that prisoners of war who were released prior to others (Lifton, 1954), could not enjoy their rescue and liberation but developed feelings of guilt instead, when they thought of the dead or of their companions who were still suffering. They had feelings of guilt even though they had not behaved in a faulty way but had just been lucky.

But being lucky is not always enjoyable. We enjoy lucky events only if we can share them with people whom we feel close to and whom we love. If we cannot share our luck with them we might prefer that they were in the better situation instead of us. If own unshared luck means a forced end of togetherness and closeness with them, it will not be appreciated even if together with them we would suffer a hard fate. Existential guilt in an extreme form induces a readiness for altruism one can only expect in very close relationships. There we would like to grant priority of rescue to a loved one if he or she were to be persecuted. Help, even at the risk of our own life, would be no question. We may assume that in these cases love and sympathy are the motivational forces.

In other cases, perceived injustice may dispose to prosocial commitments. Hoffman (1976) and Montada, Schmitt, and Dalbert (1986) used the concept of existential guilt within a broader framework to describe feelings of injustice experienced by people living in relative wealth and security when they think about the disadvantaged. Existential guilt feelings might result when own advantages are not perceived as justified compared to the disadvantages of others. Whether or not they arise depends on views of the principles of justice (e.g., equity, equality, need), on attitudes toward the disadvantaged, and/or on attributions of causality and responsibility for the existence of disadvantages (Montada & Schneider, 1989). Existential guilt motivates prosocial commitments indicating the importance of two systemic factors: justice and solidarity (Montada et al., 1986). The impact of perceived justice or injustice is outlined in the next section.

## Justice and Prosocial Behavior

What does justice have to do with prosocial behavior? Fairness of outcome is not only evaluated with respect to own outcomes but also with respect to outcomes of others. For example, people as observers might infer that acquaintances are treated fairly or unfairly by their employer.

One of the first experimental demonstrations of the motivating influence of perceived injustice on helping was reported by Miller (1977). Subjects were offered the opportunity to decide whether they were willing to work as experimental subjects. The offered pay was one of the experimental variables: one, two or three dollars for one hour. In addition, the subjects in the \$1 condition and part of the subjects in the \$2 condition were informed that for each hour in which they worked as subjects one additional dollar would be paid to a family who had huge financial problems and needed the money urgently. This would mean in fact that the pay was divided between subjects and the needy family. Signing up for participation could therefore be considered a prosocial act.

The results of the study by Miller (1977, Experiment 1) indicate that students were highly motivated to participate in the \$2/\$1 condition (meaning two dollars for the subject, one dollar for the needy family). These subjects offered much more of their time than subjects in the \$2/\$0-condition and the \$3/\$0-condition who worked only for themselves. The undeserved suffering of others that could be alleviated in the \$2/\$1 condition motivated an effort of subjects to support the needy.

This experiment revealed another interesting result. In the \$1/\$1 condition, the willingness of the subjects to sign up for experimental hours was extremely low. Subjects in this condition could alleviate the undeserved suffering of the family by signing up for more work; however, only a few of them did. Two dollars was considered as a fair payment for subjects at the university in which the study was conducted. Presumably, they were deterred by the low personal income (one dollar), which they perceived as unfair. They were not willing to work on the basis of an offered share that they did not consider fair to themselves.

This pattern of results is congruent with the assumption that people respond within specific normative structures with which they are familiar. In a first appraisal of what was appropriate, they made sure that their personal gain was normatively justified. In a second appraisal, they made efforts to alleviate undeserved neediness of others. This point was made clear by Austin (1977) who wrote: "We are taught to behave fairly toward others, yet we are exhorted to 'make something of yourself' and are judged according to how much wealth we have accumulated ... (p. 291)." Therefore, the question what is the relationship between justice and prosocial behavior has no simple answers. Several norms of fairness - especially those for oneself and those for victims of injustice - should be considered.

Miller's study (1977) dealt with a distribution problem of rewards. Distributive justice refers to the question of the fairness of the allocation of goods or resources. In contrast, retributive justice refers to the adequacy of atonement for guilt. Finally,

procedural justice concerns the question whether the procedures used for distributive or retributive decision making are fair.

Distributive justice has been the main focus of equity theory (Adams, 1965) and exchange theories in general (e.g., Homans, 1961). Only recently, two facets of distributive justice were distinguished (Brickman, Folger, Goode, & Schul, 1981): While microjustice refers to the allocation of rewards to individual receivers, macrojustice speaks to the fairness of reward distributions in groups of people or the society. In general, the adherence to principles of microjustice is based on the assessment of individual inputs or attributes (e.g., performance, need) by a diagnostic device. In contrast, principles of macrojustice specify the minimal conditions that must be observed for the whole distribution of goods in a group or the society. The specification of minimal incomes is a case of macrojustice. Obviously, the focus is not on the individual but on the general principles for the distribution of scarce resources and the treatment of the socially and economically weak. The very nature of macrojustice implies that it might also be designated as system justice because the principles of macrojustice address the functioning of a social system as a whole.

People have different opinions about which distribution of scarce resources is fair in each individual case, and they may have different beliefs or views about just allocations in general: Some, for instance, prefer the equality principle which claims equal shares for everybody. Others prefer the equity principle or the need principle. While the equity principle states that members of a group should allocate rewards in proportion to the contribution of each person, the need principle refers to the claim that allocations should take individual needs into account. Individual preferences for these fairness principles may depend on the specific situation and the social context: In business contexts, the equity principle is favored more frequently than in teams and in close relationships where many people prefer the equality or the need principle (Bierhoff, Buck, & Klein, 1986; Deutsch, 1975; Schmitt & Montada, 1982).

Principles of macrojustice may also be applied differently depending on the social context. For example, minority rights are considered more seriously today than decades ago (cf., Sampson, 1981). It is well known that women or ethnic minorities are underrepresented in career professions. There are efforts to change this through new rules on the allocation of scholarships and jobs that will provide some privileges for the heretofore underrepresented groups.

Issues of procedural justice have a great significance because many procedures are used again and again. Therefore, the fairness of procedures is a fundamental question for social institutions and society as a whole. Procedural rules specify how to negotiate fairly when there are different conflicting opinions among those who are concerned or affected. Results of such negotiations will be considered relatively fair as long as the issue has been argued according to the rules of procedural justice (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tylor, 1990).

Procedural justice rules refer, for instance, to objectivity and impartiality: Judges should show complete objectivity and impartiality in discussing the evidence

presented by the plaintiff and the defendant. In addition, the internal consistency of the procedure and the use of unequivocal if-then rules are important ingredients of a just procedure. The stability of social systems is at least in part based on the fairness of the procedures employed for conflict resolution. Therefore, procedural fairness is closely related to the perceived legitimacy of a social system (Luhmann, 1975).

Entitlements may be based on rules of distributive and procedural justice. In addition, they may be derived from other social norms (e.g., the norm of reciprocity), from contracts, promises, traditions, or from social roles that describe the rights and the duties of their holders.

What does all that have to do with helping behavior? A key issue is whether or not another person is perceived as an unfairly disadvantaged victim. In general, observers' responses to injustice are in many cases influenced by the same variables as participants' responses (Austin, 1977). Therefore, the situation of victims of injustice should easily be understood by observers and their empathy should be triggered by the suffering of victims. A two-step model may describe the responses of observers:

1. If we perceive an individual as being treated unfairly, we consider this an unjust disadvantage.
2. We will be motivated to compensate the disadvantages, at least, if we ourselves had benefited by the unfair treatment of the victim. Independently from outcomes for ourselves, perceived injustice will motivate us to protest in favor of the disadvantaged and to claim a just redistribution or a compensation. If nothing else, we will be motivated to console the victim, or to support him or her emotionally.

Prosocial behavior is not limited to acts such as sharing or caring, but also includes political protest to claim justice, giving support in carrying through the entitlements of the disadvantaged, and perhaps supporting endeavors to change the social and economic system. Political protest may focus on issues of distributive justice, or procedural justice, or both. For example, people who want to support political refugees might be concerned about the decision procedures used by the authorities or about the amount of financial support granted.

The third facet of justice mentioned above is retributive justice. Retributive justice, too, is related to prosocial behavior. How? A legal penalty that is sentenced by court as expiation is a good example. Does it mean to act prosocially to rescue an imprisoned inmate, or to support those financially who were sentenced to a fine? People will tend to do this when they consider a penalty to be unjust. However, if a penalty is considered legitimate and deserved, people will not intervene prosocially for the benefit of convicts except in the sense of resocialization.

The same passive response may be observed when a disadvantage is considered to be a deserved punishment imposed by a deity, or to be a just compensation for a previously very lucky fate, or to be a consequence of negligence or an avoidable mistake by the disadvantaged themselves. In these cases, the disadvantages will not

be considered to be undeserved, and people will not be motivated to act altruistically. Instead, they might sometimes even experience satisfaction.

Justice and fairness are related to comparison processes that are labeled referential comparisons or ego-other comparisons (Austin, 1977). Our reference groups are those who are similar to us with respect to achievements, neediness, or status, birth, gender, and so forth: Are they also receiving similar shares or similar positions? Quite another comparison is the one with dissimilar others. Downward comparisons are often experienced as self-enhancing (e.g., to people with lower status): They may motivate prosocial behavior if the cause of the status difference is perceived as being of doubtful legitimacy. It is interesting to note that the perceptions of satisfaction and fairness do not necessarily correspond (Brickman, 1975). While self-enhancing comparisons elicit satisfaction and contentment, they may also raise the question of a possible injustice (cf., Montada & Schneider, in this volume).

Allocations are generally accepted as just if the rules of procedural justice have been observed. Societies differ in this respect (the legal system of different countries, for instance, diverge widely; cf., Sheppard, 1985), and there are conflicts in every society that are carried through as political conflicts, as legal trials in court, or as labor disputes. There are also many cases in which the disadvantaged are supported by individuals who belong to more advantaged groups that experience the disadvantages as unjust. Quite often, it has been university students who have engaged in combat for more justice though they belong to the higher and more privileged strata of the population (cf., Keniston, 1970).

### Social Conventions in Defining Situations

How is an emergency situation defined? What kind of help is appropriate? Who is responsible, authorized, or obligated to help? These are some of the questions which arise in everyday situations. Although the answers to these questions are controversial, social conventions and schemata are available which determine the definition of the situation and what is considered as appropriate behavior.

Some examples may illustrate the problems involved. A woman beats up a child. What is going on here? Is the child mistreated, and does it need protection? Who is the woman? Is it the mother who punishes her child rightly trying to save her child from future mistakes or dangers? A young man runs obviously almost exhausted up a road. Should we invite him to ride with us in the car? Or is he in training and testing his performance limit? A boy has problems with solving a math task. Should we intervene and offer our help, or should we let him attempt again on his own? A physically handicapped person has difficulties in getting on a train. A stutterer has difficulties in completing a sentence. When is help welcome, and when is it discouraging or even implying a defeat for the impaired person? When is help a sign of overprotection, when is it necessary protection, when a gratifying support? These examples also illustrate the fact that the same prosocial act will be interpreted differently depending on the reference system.

The bystander effect (Latané, 1981) may be referred to as an example for ambiguities in the subjective definition of a social situation. Observers of an emergency who are uncertain whether help is necessary, needed, or wanted, may hesitate to intervene when they perceive that other bystanders do not intervene, and, thereby, implicitly define the situation as harmless or as a social situation in which discretion is the appropriate response. The mere presence of other bystanders may, of course, also result in a diffusion of responsibility that will contribute to an inhibition of helping responses (Bierhoff & Klein, 1988).

Observers of emergencies may not be sure whether it is appropriate that they give help, or whether help is appropriate at all. Helpers can easily expose themselves to ridicule, make themselves look foolish, and they might be criticized and even blamed if they intervene in inappropriate situations. Passive bystanders define the situation in a way which interferes with spontaneous help. In addition, potential helpers may also fear that the passive bystanders - especially those who arrive at a later time at the place where the emergency occurred - might attribute responsibility to them inferring from the offered help that the helper was responsible for the emergency and for the victim's plight (Cacioppo, Petty, & Losch, 1986): Bystanders who arrive later may tend to hold the person who helps the victim responsible for the damage. This special type of audience inhibition is another example of the subtlety of definitions of the situation and their repercussions on intentions and actions.

The meaning attached to interpersonal situations as well as their labeling will determine prosocial activities. Help might be understood as part of a cycle of reciprocity or as one-sided assistance. For example, the helper may define his or her financial support as "altruism" while the help recipient may define the support as "advance against wages" (cf., Gergen & Gergen, 1983). Given this ambiguity of meaning attributed to social transactions, it is likely that the actors will negotiate about the meaning they should attach to their encounter. In many instances, the definition of the situation is more or less dependent on what the interaction partners agree upon. The broad spectrum of meaning that is implicit in many social situations offers the possibility to define the situation in accordance with desired goals, internalized norms, or social rules. Participants in social interaction try to define the situation according to their social motivation and their goals in terms of impression building. In general, people prefer definitions of the situation that enhance esteem (Mummendey, 1990). Because receiving help is perceived as a possible threat to self-esteem, the help recipient is caught in a dilemma. Although support is needed urgently, he or she fears the negative consequences of help in terms of inferiority, dependency, and helplessness (Nadler & Fisher, 1986). The experience of receiving help may resemble the experience of public failure. Therefore, face-saving strategies of the help recipient are to be expected, such as downward comparisons (Wills, 1981). Help recipients who strive to maintain their positive self-image should be inclined either to minimize the amount of help received or to define the help received on the basis of the norm of reciprocity. In contrast, help recipients whose self-esteem is chronically damaged should be willing to accept one-sided help more easily because the implied definition of the situation corresponds with their low self-

esteem (Nadler & Fisher, 1986). The price of such a strategy might well be the development of feelings of inferiority, helplessness, and hopelessness (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978; Alloy, Abramson, Metalsky, & Hartlage, 1988).

The attempts of help recipients to repair their damaged social image are impaired by role restraints and social conventions that require them to accept the benevolence of helpers and to respond with gratitude. The expression of gratitude is almost equivalent to the acceptance of a social definition of the encounter that emphasizes the inferiority of the help recipient (Baumeister, 1982). This is especially true when help is received in nonemergency situations and when it has long-lasting implications. This evidences that the definition of the situation has important consequences for feelings of personal inadequacy and the development of an impaired public image of the help recipient.

### Social Factors Hindering Help

The influence of systemic factors for helpful behavior is not only revealed by fostering helping behavior but also by hindering it. There are many cases of failure to help that leave us astounded, or incredulously, even outraged: cases of child battery that neighbors have known about for a long time without anyone intervening, crimes observed by many witnesses who neither intervened themselves nor called the police, accidents in which many people could have helped but nobody did, persecution of political opponents in totalitarian systems who received no help. It is not always indifference or a lack of compassion in individual bystanders but frequently factors in the social system that have to be identified as causes of bystander apathy.

There are various social barriers that hinder helping behavior or make it more difficult, although the personal motivation to help may exist. Helping behavior is prohibited explicitly during exams and competitions and will be avenged by exclusion or disqualification of the helper. Another obvious case of a barrier is the legal prohibition to help criminals to hush up their criminal offense. This is another case of a normative barrier as we mentioned it above.

Totalitarian systems in history as well as in our times prohibit(ed) giving help to the politically or racially persecuted under the threat of capital punishment. The rescue of Jews in Nazi-Germany has triggered much research and has revealed many interesting facts which are of general importance. Oliner and Oliner (1988) have carried out a large-scale project concerning the personality of rescuers, while others investigated historical and societal aspects (cf., Baron, 1987). Thinking about social barriers that hindered people in helping the persecuted leads to several hypotheses, such as fear of the factual risk for oneself and for those one felt responsible for (e.g., one's own family) and prejudices against Jews - an attitude that was nourished for a long time by propaganda. Such prejudices were the basis for blaming the Jews for having caused their fate themselves, blaming them for not having left the country in time, and so forth - arguments that help to deny one's personal responsibility to help effectively. Another strategy was the attribution of responsibility for help to others,

the churches, for example, since they were considered to have the moral obligation as well as more resources, better organizational networks, and so forth.

An interesting positive case, reflecting a widespread lack of social barriers, is the mass rescue of Jews in Denmark during the German occupation. Several systemic factors were suggested to explain this event. During the first years of occupation, the Danish administration was still functioning in providing some possibilities. The neutral neighboring Sweden had offered to admit Jews from Denmark. And above all: The degree of integration of Jews into the Danish society was rather high, as indicated by marriages between Jewish and Christian people. These familial bonds as well as friendship were considered to be a basis for the motivation to rescue the Jews (cf., Baron, 1987).

Turning back to our times, we are witnessing brutality and negligence within and outside of our societies (maltreatment of children, battered women, trading of girls, political repression, torture, and genocide, starvation and epidemics in the developing countries). It is worthwhile to search for the social barriers against helping in these cases. In democracies, fear of repression can be excluded as a plausible reason. Is it indicated to attribute the apathy of witnesses of terrible disasters and unimaginable distress to internal factors such as lack of empathy and social responsibility? Concerning the attribution on internal factors one has to be careful.

1. Empathy and social responsibility are also partly socially organized or reflect societal realities. We only want to give two indications. The more the state represents a welfare system, which takes charge of duties of social welfare, the more every single person is relieved of social responsibility (cf., Braun & Niehaus, in this volume). When the government builds up social and medical services, a social security system, and so forth, and when the state supports the developing countries, the individual citizens can consider their contributions as settled by paying taxes.

2. Moreover, in every society ideologies exist that convey knowledge about social reality. In Western industrial societies the achievement (equity) principle of justice is predominant; a "belief in a just world" (Lerner, 1980) is widespread at least among those people who have been successful and who live in security (they justify their own relatively privileged existence by this belief). A positive view of the achievement principle of justice brings about explanations of why some people are not well off, and the belief in a just world motivates to accept these arguments: Aren't those who are not well off to be blamed themselves for their needs? How should things get better in the developing countries if the high birth rates are not controlled?

As already mentioned above, the attribution of self-responsibility is also a widespread ideology in our societies determining the individual citizen's willingness to help. The claim for help is lost for those people who have not responded to previous help in the sense of self-help and insofar do not deserve help. For instance, the delinquent or the drug addict who was helped once and who had a relapse afterwards are examples of such cases. (In addiction research, the concept of co-addiction has been suggested with a distinct negative connotation in order to describe the addict's partners who repeatedly iron out the faults caused by the addicted). Those ideologies

also influence widespread public opinions regarding the decision on when help is useless and not deserved.

Specific rules about who is responsible for whom and in which cases of neediness help is expected may represent a further barrier against spontaneous help. Parents and teachers are responsible for helping their children and students, the present care takers are responsible for the handicapped, in case of sickness, the doctors are responsible, and so forth. Responsibility rules not only determine who is responsible but also who is authorized, and, insofar, put up a barrier against spontaneous willingness to help by bystanders. Every offer to help from nonresponsibles can be experienced as interference. The right to help is judicially restricted in cases in which special abilities are required and in which inexpert help could lead to dangerous consequences.

Social barriers make help completely impossible only in exceptional cases, but someone who helps has to reckon with sanctions, criticism, or irony. The social barriers come into effect by corresponding internal barriers, which are experienced as fears; for example, fears of criticism, sanctions, or disgrace.

## Specific Social Systems

### *Tracing the Field of Research*

What is altruism? The defining characteristics that are frequently mentioned are: The willingness to help or to assist without having a normative obligation and without expecting payment or benefits at a later time. Thus, altruism refers to a motivation that is usually defined in a negative way in the sense of the exclusion of obligations and own benefits: Positively defined, it means acting only in the needy person's interest.

Thus, altruism is defined in more narrow limits than the behavioral definition of help and assistance. Accordingly, many actions of helping and supporting are not altruistically motivated. By convention, no act of professional and paraprofessional helpers (doctors, fire-department, social workers, police) is classified as altruistic if it is performed within the limits of role expectations and role obligations. Of course, help by those people may go beyond their duty, and it may be motivated by sympathy and love or by beliefs about justice. One can act beyond duty in terms of risks, loss of time, loss of wages, and so forth.

A professional role is considered a kind of contract. In general, contracts that specify supportive behavior are not altruistic as long as the services and the benefits are well-balanced (Bierhoff, 1990).

Yet, the limits are fluid. There are paraprofessional helpers who receive little or no payment, except for maybe the gratitude of those whom they try to help. Of course, it is certainly possible that in these cases motives that are not altruistic will also come into play: public recognition, satisfying attachment to a community, the

solidarity among colleagues, rewards in another world, redemption from guilt, and so forth.

If one wanted to eliminate every selfish motive of the helper, one could only declare those actions as altruistic that are carried out without reward as well as anonymously, which means that the help recipient, others, or the public would not get to know who the helper was. In addition, help should not correspond to a personal norm, because the compliance with the norm could be based on the motive of avoidance of guilt feelings. Finally, the helper should also not be guided by hopes for reward in another world.

Such strict requirements for the establishment of true selfless altruism would make the construct useless for the description of the empirically observable state of affairs. Not every possible selfish background motive can be assessed validly. Thus, we define helpfulness as behavior that aims at a termination or reduction of an emergency, a neediness, or disadvantage of others and that primarily does not aim at the fulfillment of own interests. A further defining criterion is: The behavior has to be carried out voluntarily, which means that the helper should not be forced, urged, or obliged by an external agency or a contract. Such a broad definition of altruism can only serve to keep the field of research within limits: Professional, contractual, and "role bound" helping behavior were and are not the typical issues of research, because obligations exist in those cases. Yet, altruistic motives are not excluded from professional and contractual behavior, and a person may go beyond the existing social obligations.

Moreover, at times it might be rather difficult to meet one's professional duties. Wills and Hahn (in this volume) review research on physicians' reactions to patients evidencing characteristics of "problem patients" that may interfere only with the practitioners' willingness to meet their professional responsibility.

### *Personal Roles Implying Prosocial Commitments*

Social systems have specific structures. In order to analyze helping behavior in a systemic context, those specific structures have to be analyzed beforehand. Useful examples are families, friendships, and classes.

Beside formal social roles, there are what we call personal social roles. As is true for formal social roles, personal social roles are stable patterns of interaction that are guided and motivated by reciprocal (normative) expectations. Usually, the holders of a personal social role have specific abilities and/or resources to meet the role requirements. Personal social roles grow in the family, in primary groups, in work settings, and so forth. As examples, we focus on prosocial roles in the family, in friendship relations, school classes, and on personal prosocial roles saddled upon formal social roles.

Work done by parents for their children is usually not considered as altruism. It seems to be taken for granted, although the encumbrances may be very high, even when children are physically and mentally normally developed. Issues of research

are only cases of nonfulfillment of normal standards: the neglect or battery of children (Engfer, 1982).

In the context of the family, the only studies of altruism concerning work done by - grown up - children for their parents, especially in the case of taking sick or frail parents in their own family and taking over their care. Filial responsibility is the key term under which a considerable amount of research has been documented (Schmitt & Gehle, 1983). This altruism in the family differs fundamentally from the typical experiment on altruism in many aspects, and it cannot be experimentally simulated. Only some aspects shall be mentioned.

In predicting actual commitments, a long list of variables have been used, including some aspects of the familial system and the biography of the relation between helper and help recipient in which affections and dislikes, mutual expectations and demands, and self-concepts as well as concepts of the parents play a role. Helping behavior will be more or less obligatory or else a matter of course according to familial expectations and norms. Help will be given more or less voluntarily depending on previous relations, and it will be more or less problematic and strainful. Willingness to help is not a single action, as is the case between unfamiliar people, but is a long-term commitment like, for example, the long-term engagement to take over the care of a mother suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Therefore, prosocial commitments resemble the taking-over of a social role that implies an integration within the whole net of roles a person has (cf., Braun & Niehaus, in this volume). This specific personal role seems to be predicted by such factors as quality of the relation toward the parents, the previous prosocial activities, the available resources, the abilities and possibilities, the previously experienced affection and support, the expectations of the parents and other family members, the family's solidarity, the parents' authority, and so forth. These factors seem to be more important than "classic" variables such as costs of helping and feelings of empathy (cf., Montada et al., in this volume). It is interesting to note that prosocial commitments are best predicted by factors that are typical for roles as is evidenced in the chapter of Montada et al. The motivation, however, to support parents might be a unique one, as is argued by Cicirelli (this volume) who expands the attachment concept to the relation adult children have to their parents.

It is assumed correctly that one is more willing to help friends than strangers. Yet, there are exceptions that bring to light interesting structural characteristics of the system of friendship. There are friendship relationships (as well as partnerships) between unequally strong or unequally competent people in which one person has the role of the helper and the other person holds the role of the help recipient. This can be unproblematic. If a situation suggests a reversion of this relation, there may be several reasons for the help recipient to react reservedly toward help offers. Help could change the habitual relation (the personal roles) in the long run. Both the person who hitherto has had the role of the helper and the help receiver may not be interested in the change of roles that such an action might bring about. Yet, if one of them wishes a change in the relation of roles, he/she might engage in concrete interactions that do not correspond to the previous pattern.

The classroom, too, is a specific setting that allows for the development of personal positions and roles. Without knowledge about the network of positions and roles, offering and rejecting help as well as begging for it or claiming it could result in social problems and conflicts. The research done by Krappmann and Oswald (in this volume) provides quite a lot of examples. Offered help can even be regarded as impudence, for example, when, even in an actual emergency, a person who offers help will not be accepted as helper by the recipient. Several reasons for this are likely, for instance, the evaluation of the motives, of the competence, as well as of the previous and future encounters. The helper's motives could be assumed to be selfish and self-enhancing, it could be supposed, for example, that the helper tries to impress the needy person favorably, or tries to induce an obligation or dependency in the help recipient (Greenberg, 1980). As a general rule, we should keep in mind that offered help has to fit into the existing network of personal roles defined by reciprocal normative expectancies.

Personal roles may also be saddled up to formal social roles. We would like to illustrate this by pointing to the personal role of a helper that might be associated with several professional roles that do not formally imply the provision of help. While nearly every role allows for a surplus taking of a personal role as a helper, there are some roles offering relatively frequent occasions for help, emotional support, counseling, and so forth. Nestmann (in this volume) describes barkeepers and cabdrivers as informal helpers. Meanwhile, the customers' expectations about getting help and support from these role holders seem to be widespread to the extent that they became normative at least in the sense of factual frequency.

### *Impact of Prosocial Behavior on Social Systems*

Helpful behavior is not only dependent on characteristics of existing social systems, the reciprocal statement is also true: Help contributes to the formation, change, and eventually to the stabilization of systems. This thesis can be explained most easily from the recipients' point of view and their interpretation and evaluation of help.

As stated above, received help that was needed is usually accepted with joy, thankfulness, and relief, and the helper is usually evaluated positively by the help recipient. That people are attracted by those from whom they derive benefit is a key assumption in both balance theory (Heider, 1958) and the exchange theories (Secord & Backman, 1964) of social attraction. Attraction increases the willingness to help in turn, so that a relation of mutual attraction and willingness to help can be started by a first instance of help.

Yet, there are exceptions to this rule indicating that aspects of social structure have to be taken into account. Received help can be seen as obligation that puts oneself under strain and that restricts the pursuit of one's own interests in future interactions, especially if the obligations cannot be compensated by an unproblematic repayment. In several investigations (e.g., Bierhoff, 1980; Greenberg, 1980) it has been evidenced that helpers were evaluated positively, if the possibility to reciprocate existed. Other investigations (Fisher et al., 1982; Gergen & Gergen, 1971) have

shown that help recipients prefer to regard help as an adequate repayment, to which the helper or giver was obliged and to which the help recipients believed they were entitled.

Yet, this does not have to be that way. In order to ward off responsibility, such a way of thinking is useful, but one does not want to ward off obligation toward every person. Whether responsibilities are warded off or not characterizes the kind of relationship that exists or is desired. Children regard presents from their parents as a sign of affection, not as an obligation that puts them under strain, and - without feeling obligated - they reciprocate this affection, not the presents. In other social systems, a materialistic payment could not just be returned by affection.

Analogous to the different rules for just distributions in different social systems (Deutsch, 1975; Schmitt & Montada, 1982; Törnblom & Foa, 1983), the rules for social exchange also differ depending on the kind of system. In economic relations, it is expected that financial payments or credit will be repaid by material goods or service rendered. Nobody would think that affection was an adequate repayment for received material goods. In the context of human development and learning (families, schools, universities), it is not expected that the various investments are repaid. The only expectation is that the developmental and educational goals strived for will be achieved. Exchange is not expected in the dyads involved, but is established very implicitly through the future achievements that may be relevant for society and through an implicit contract between the generations. In contexts characterized by affection and personal concern, the application of the exchange model is problematic, too. Whereas every investment could be considered to be reciprocated by affection, the investments are not carried out under the assumption of an exchange in these systems, but as an expression of affection.

In general, it is expected that help will be neither offered nor accepted readily if it is not congruent with the existing relation, and if a change of the relationship in an undesired direction is inferred from accepting help. Therefore, the altruistic encounter is embedded in a complex network of social systems variables.

As already stated, damages in self-esteem caused by help are expected if the helper is similar to the help recipient (according to social status), if a service in return is not easily possible, if the help recipient's independence seems to be threatened, or if an obligation to a service in return exists (summarized by Bierhoff, in this volume). If the self-esteem is threatened, the needy person has negative affects, evaluates the helper negatively (e.g., concerning his/her motives), evaluates help negatively (e.g., its appropriateness), tends not to ask for help and to refuse offered help, and tends to achieve self-help if possible. If a person whom one does not like, or whom one does not consider attractive, offers help, it is incongruent with one's own image of that person, except if one assumes that the person acts out of hidden selfish motives.

However, whether or not offers to help, requests for help, and received help will have implications on self-esteem depends on several factors, which characterize the existing social system and the existing relationships. It makes a difference whether or not a social system is organized according to principles of an exchange theory, or

according to principles of solidarity and social responsibility, whether or not self-interest is the dominant motive, or whether it is mutual love and affection.

From a practical viewpoint, the question arises how help should be given. What is the appropriate model of helping that minimizes negative implications, and, at the same time, encourages self-help? Four models of helping and caring have been described by Brickman et al. (1982). These models make assumptions with respect to the responsibility attribution for the causation of the problem, as well as with respect to the responsibility for the solution of the problem.

One of the models is called the compensatory model: It includes the assumption that the needy is not responsible for the causation of the problem but is held (co-)responsible for the solution of the problem. This pattern of attributions should reduce attributions of blame that might paralyse the initiative of the victim, and should enhance self-helping efforts. The compensatory model constitutes a certain definition of the situation that is assumed to foster victim's independence and perceived control. These models of helping delineated by Brickman et al. are useful to characterize the social system in which needs and provisions of help occur.

## References

- Abramson, L.Y., Seligman, M.E.P., & Teasdale, J.D. (1978). Learned helplessness in humans: Critique and reformulation. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 87*, 49-74.
- Adams, J.S. (1965). Inequity in social exchange. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology (Vol. 2, pp. 267-299)*. New York: Academic Press.
- Alloy, L.B., Abramson, L.Y., Metalsky, G.I., & Hartlage, S. (1988). The hopelessness theory of depression: Attributional aspects. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 27*, 5-21.
- Austin, W. (1977). Equity theory and social comparison processes. In J.M. Suls, & R.L. Miller (1977), *Social comparison processes* (pp. 279-305). Washington, D.C.: Hemisphere.
- Von Baeyer, v., W., Haefner, H., & Kisker, K.P. (1964). *Psychiatrie der Verfolgten*. Berlin: Springer.
- Barnes, R.D., Ickes, W., & Kidd, R.F. (1979). Effects of perceived intentionality and stability of another's dependency on helping behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 5*, 367-372.
- Baron, L. (1987). The holocaust and human decency: A review of research on the rescue of Jews in NAZI occupied Europe. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations, 13*, 237-251.
- Batson, C.D., Fultz, J., & Schoenrade, P.A. (1987). Distress and empathy: Two qualitatively distinct vicarious emotions with different motivational consequences. *Journal of Personality, 55*, 19-39.
- Baumeister, R.F. (1982). A self-presentational view of social phenomena. *Psychological Bulletin, 91*, 3-26.
- Berkowitz, L. (1969). Resistance to improper dependency relationships. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 5*, 283-294.
- Berscheid, E., & Walster, E. (1967). When does a harm-doer compensate a victim? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 6*, 435-441.
- Bierhoff, H.W. (1980). *Hilfreiches Verhalten*. Darmstadt: UTB.
- Bierhoff, H.W. (1990). *Psychologie hilfreichen Verhaltens*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Bierhoff, H.W., Buck, E., & Klein, R. (1986). Social context and perceived justice. In H.W. Bierhoff, R.L. Cohen, & J. Greenberg (Eds.), *Justice in social relations* (pp. 165-185). New York: Plenum.
- Bierhoff, H.W., & Klein, R. (1988). Prosocial behavior. In M. Hewstone, W. Stroebe, J.P. Codol, & G.M. Stephenson (Eds.), *Introduction to social psychology* (pp. 246-262). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bierhoff, H.W., Kloft, A., & Lensing, L. (1988). Hilfreiches Verhalten in Abhängigkeit von Vergehen und positiver Verstärkung. In H.W. Bierhoff, & L. Montada (Eds.), *Altruismus - Bedingungen der Hilfsbereitschaft* (pp. 154-178). Göttingen: Hogrefe.
- Borofsky, G.L., Stollak, G.E., & Messe, L.A. (1971). Sex differences in bystander reactions to physical assault. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 7*, 313-318.
- Brickman, P. (1975). Adaptation level determinants of satisfaction with equal and unequal outcome distributions in skill and chance situations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 32*, 191-198.
- Brickman, P. (1977). Crime and punishment in sports and society. *Journal of Social Issues, 33*, 140-164.
- Brickman, P., Folger, R., Goode, E., & Schul, Y. (1981). Microjustice and macrojustice. In M.J. Lerner, & S.C. Lerner (Eds.), *The justice motive in social behavior* (pp. 173-202). New York: Plenum.
- Brickman, P., Rabinowitz, V.C., Karuza, J., Coates, D., Cohn, E., & Kidder, L. (1982). Models of helping and coping. *American Psychologist, 37*, 368-384.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cacioppo, J.T., Petty, R.E., & Losch, M.E. (1986). Attributions of responsibility for helping and doing harm: Evidence for confusion of responsibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*, 100-105.
- Cook, S.W., & Pelfrey, M. (1985). Reactions to being helped in cooperating interracial groups: A context effect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49*, 1231-1245.
- Cunningham, M.R., Steinberg, J., & Grev, R. (1980). Wanting to and having to help: Separate motivations for positive mood and guilt-induced helping. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 38*, 181-192.
- Darley, J.M., & Latané, B. (1970). Norms and normative behavior: Field studies of social interdependence. In J. Macaulay, & L. Berkowitz (Eds.), *Altruism and helping behavior* (pp. 83-101). New York: Academic Press.
- Deutsch, M. (1975). Equity, equality and need: What determines which value will be used as the basis of distributive justice. *Journal of Social Issues, 31*, 37-149.
- Eisenberg, N. & Miller, P. (1987). Empathy and prosocial behavior. *Psychological Bulletin, 101*, 91-119.
- Engfer, A. (1982). *Bedingungen und Auswirkungen harten elterlichen Strafen*. Unpublished Dissertation, Trier: University of Trier.
- Engler, U. (1988). *Hilfesauchendes Verhalten in Leistungssituationen: Der Einfluß von Personen- und Situationsvariablen*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Bielefeld.
- Fellner, C.H., & Marshall, J.R. (1981). Kidney donors revisited. In J.P. Rushton, & R.M. Sorrentino (Eds.), *Altruism and helping behavior* (pp. 351-365). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Fisher, J.D., & Nadler, A. (1974). The effect of similarity between donor and recipient on recipient's reaction to help. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 4*, 230-243.
- Fisher, J.D., Harrison, C.L., & Nadler, A. (1978). Exploring the generalizability of donor-recipient similarity effects. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 4*, 627-630.
- Fisher, J.D., Nadler, A., & Witcher-Alagna, S. (1982). Recipient reactions to aid. *Psychological Bulletin, 91*, 27-54.

- Gergen, K.J., & Gergen, M. (1971). International assistance from a psychological perspective. *1971 Yearbook of world affairs* (Vol.25, pp. 87-103). London: Institute of World Affairs.
- Gergen, K.J., & Gergen, M. (1983). The social construction of helping relationships. In J.D. Fisher, A. Nadler, & B.M. DePaulo (Eds.), *New directions in helping, Vol. 1*, (pp. 143-163). New York: Academic Press.
- Greenberg, M.S. (1980). A theory of indebtedness. In K.J. Gergen, M.S. Greenberg, & R.H. Willis, (Eds.), *Social exchange. Advances in theory and research* (pp. 3-26). New York: Plenum.
- Gross, A.E., Wallston, B.S., & Piliavin, I.M. (1979). Reactance, attribution, equity, and the help recipient. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 9*, 297-313.
- Gruder, C.L., Romer, D., & Korth, B. (1978). Dependency and fault as determinants of helping. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 14*, 227-235.
- Heckhausen, H. (1980). *Motivation und Handeln*. Berlin: Springer.
- Heider, F. (1958). *The psychology of interpersonal relations*. New York: Wiley.
- Hoffman, M.L. (1976). Empathy, role taking, guilt, and development of altruistic motives. In T. Lickona (Ed.), *Moral development and behavior* (pp. 124-143). New York: Holt.
- Hoffman, M.L. (1987). The contribution of empathy to justice and moral judgment. In N. Eisenberg & J. Strayer (Eds.) *Empathy and its development* (pp. 47-80). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Homans, G.C. (1961). *Social behavior: Its elementary forms*. New York: Harcourt.
- Horowitz, I.A. (1968). Effect of choice and locus of dependence on helping behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 8*, 373-376.
- Horowitz, I.A. (1971). The effect of group norms on bystander intervention. *Journal of Social Psychology, 83*, 265-273.
- Isen, A.M., Horn, N., & Rosenhan, D.L. (1973). Effects of success and failure on children's generosity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 27*, 239-247.
- Keniston, K. (1970). Student activism, moral development, and morality. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 40*, 577-592.
- Korte, C. (1981). Constraints on helping behavior in an urban environment. In J.P. Rushton, & R.M. Sorrentino (Eds.), *Altruism and helping behavior* (pp. 315-329). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Kuhn, T.S. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Latané, B. (1981). The psychology of social impact. *American Psychologist, 36*, 343-356.
- Leary, M.R., & Kowalski, R.M. (1990). Impression management: A literature review and two-component model. *Psychological Bulletin, 107*, 34-47.
- Lerner, M.J. (1980). *The belief in a just world: A fundamental delusion*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Lerner, M.J., & Whitehead, L.A. (1980). Verfahrensgerechtigkeit aus der Sicht der Gerechtigkeitsmotiv-Theorie. In G. Mikula (Ed.), *Gerechtigkeit und soziale Interaktion* (pp 251-300). Bern: Huber.
- Lifton, R.J. (1954). "Home by Ship". Reaction patterns of American prisoners of war repatriated of North Korea. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 110*, 733- .
- Lifton, R.J. (1967). *Death in life. Survivors of Hiroshima*. New York: Random House.
- Luhmann, N. (1973). *Vertrauen*. Stuttgart: Enke.
- Luhmann, N. (1975). *Legitimation durch Verfahren*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.
- Meyer, W.-U. (1984). *Das Konzept von der eigenen Begabung*. Bern: Huber.
- Miller, D.T. (1977). Personal deserving versus justice for others: An exploration of the justice motive. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 13*, 1-13.
- Montada, L. (1990). Predicting prosocial commitment in different social contexts. In P.M. Oliner et al. (Eds.), *Embracing the other: Philosophical, psychological, and historical perspectives on altruism*. New York: University Press (in press).

- Montada, L., Schmitt, M., & Dalbert, C. (1986). Thinking about justice and dealing with one's own privileges: A study of existential guilt. In H.W. Bierhoff, R. Cohen, & J. Greenberg (Eds.), *Justice in social relations* (pp. 125-143). New York: Plenum.
- Montada, L., & Schneider, A. (1989). Justice beliefs and emotional reactions toward disadvantaged and victimized people. *Social Justice Research, 4* (in press).
- Mummendey, H.D. (1990). *Psychologie der Selbstdarstellung*. Göttingen: Verlag für Psychologie.
- Nadler, A., Fisher, J.D., & Ben-Itzhak, S. (1983). With a little help from my friend: Effect of single and multiple act aid as a function of donor and task characteristics. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 44*, 310-321.
- Nadler, A., & Fisher, J.D. (1986). The role of threat to self-esteem and perceived control in recipient reaction to help. Theory development and empirical validation. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology, Vol. 19* (pp. 81-122). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Nadler, A. (1987). Determinants of help seeking behavior: The effects of helper's similarity, task centrality and recipient's self-esteem. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 17*, 57-67.
- Oliner, S.P., & Oliner, P.M. (1988). *The altruistic personality. Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe*. New York: Free Press.
- Pearce, P.L., & Amato, P.R. (1980). A taxonomy of helping: A multidimensional analysis. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 43*, 363-371.
- Piliavin, J.A., & Libby, D. (1987). Personal norms, perceived social norms, and blood donation. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations, 13*, 159-194.
- Rosenhan, D.L., Salovey, P., Karylowski, J., & Hargis, K. (1981). Emotion and altruism. In J.P. Rushton, & R.M. Sorrentino (Eds.), *Altruism and helping behavior* (pp. 233-248). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Rubin, Z. (1970). Measurement of romantic love. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 16*, 265-273.
- Rushton, J.P. (1976). Socialization and the altruistic behavior of children. *Psychological Bulletin, 83*, 898-913.
- Sampson, E.E. (1981). Social change and the contexts of justice motivation. In M.J. Lerner, & S.C. Lerner (Eds.), *The justice motive in social behavior* (pp. 97-124). New York: Plenum.
- Saxe, L., & Dougherty, D. (1983). Escalators, ladders, and safety nets: Aid to people in need. In A. Nadler, J.D. Fisher, & B.M. De Paulo (Eds.), *New directions in helping: Applied perspectives on help-seeking and -receiving, 3* (pp. 293-326). New York: Academic Press.
- Schmitt, M., & Gehle, H. (1983). *Interpersonale Verantwortlichkeit erwachsener Töchter ihren Müttern gegenüber: Verantwortlichkeitsnormen, Hilfeleistungen und ihre Korrelate - ein Überblick über die Literatur*. (Berichte aus der Arbeitsgruppe "Verantwortung, Gerechtigkeit, Moral" Nr. 17). Trier, Fb I - Psychologie.
- Schmitt, M., & Montada, L. (1982). Determinanten erlebter Gerechtigkeit. *Zeitschrift für Sozialpsychologie, 13*, 32-44.
- Schopler, J., & Matthews, M.W. (1965). The influence of the perceived causal locus of partner's dependence on the use of interpersonal power. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2*, 609-612.
- Schwartz, S.H. (1977). Normative influences on altruism. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology, Vol. 10*. (pp. 221-279). New York: Academic Press.
- Schwartz, S.H., & Fleishman, J.A. (1978). Personal norms and the mediation of legitimacy effects on helping. *Social Psychology, 41*, 306-315.
- Secord, P.F., & Backman, C.W. (1964). *Social Psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Senneker, P., & Hendrick, C. (1983). Androgyny and helping behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 45*, 916-925.

- Sheppard, B.H. (1985). Justice is no simple matter: Case for elaborating our model of procedural fairness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49, 953-962.
- Shotland, R.L., & Heinold, W.D. (1985). Bystander response to arterial bleeding: Helping skills, the decision-making process, and differentiating the helping response. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49, 347-356.
- Staub, E. (1979). *Positive social behavior and morality* (Vol. 2). New York: Academic Press.
- Stegmüller, W. (1986). *Die Entwicklung des neuen Strukturalismus seit 1973*. Berlin: Springer.
- Thibaut, J., & Walker, L. (1975). *Procedural justice*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Tice, D.M., & Baumeister, R.F. (1985). Masculinity inhibits helping in emergencies: Personality does predict the bystander effect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49, 420-428.
- Tobey-Klass, E. (1978). Psychological effects of immoral actions: The experimental evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 85, 756-771.
- Törblom, K.Y., & Foa, U.G. (1983). Choice of a distribution principle: Crosscultural evidence on the effects of resources. *Acta Sociologica*, 26, 161-173.
- Taylor, T. (1990). *People and the law*. New York: Academic Press.
- Wills, T.A. (1981). Downward comparison principles in social psychology. *Psychological Bulletin*, 90, 245-271.
- Wilson, J.P. (1976). Motivation, modeling, and altruism: A person x situation analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 34, 1078-1086.
- Witte, E.H. (1989). *Sozialpsychologie*. München: Psychologie-Verlags-Union.

## Practical Implications of the Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis: Some Reflections<sup>1</sup>

C. Daniel Batson, Laura L. Shaw,  
and Jacqueline K. Slingsby

Empathy is an other-oriented emotional response congruent with the perceived welfare of another person (Batson, Fultz, & Schoenrade, 1987; Hoffman, 1981). There is considerable empirical evidence that feeling empathy for someone in need can evoke motivation to help that person (Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Krebs, 1975). The empathy-altruism hypothesis (Batson, 1987, in press; Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley, & Birch, 1981; Batson, Dyck, Brandt, Batson, Powell, McMaster, & Griffitt, 1988) claims that this motivation is, at least in part, altruistic, that empathy evokes motivation directed toward the ultimate goal of benefiting the person for whom empathy is felt, not toward some subtle form of self-benefit. If valid, this empathy-altruism hypothesis seems quite important. It contradicts the general assumption in psychology that all motivation, including all prosocial motivation, is ultimately egoistic (Batson, 1990; Campbell, 1975; Wallach & Wallach, 1983).

Over the past decade, more than 20 experiments have been reported testing the empathy-altruism hypothesis against one or more egoistic explanations for the motivation to help evoked by empathy. Results of these experiments, reviewed by Batson (1987, 1990, in press), Batson et al. (1988), and Batson and Oleson (in press), provide remarkably strong and consistent support for the empathy-altruism hypothesis.

In this chapter, we shall not review again the evidence supporting the empathy-altruism hypothesis. (Interested readers are encouraged to consult the reviews just cited.) Instead, we shall tentatively accept this hypothesis as true and begin to explore its practical implications. If empathy-induced altruism exists, what is it good for? Before considering the practical promise of empathy-induced altruism, let us consider some practical problems.

### Practical Problems with Empathy-Induced Altruism

#### *It may be Harmful to Your Health*

Viewed from the perspective of personal survival and narrow self-interest, altruistic motivation is potentially dangerous. As the sociobiologists are fond of reminding us (e.g., Dawkins, 1976; Wilson, 1975), altruism may incline us to incur risks and costs

<sup>1</sup> Preparation of this chapter was supported by National Science Foundation Grant BNS-8906723, C. Daniel Batson, Principal Investigator.