

**Outline and evaluate two or more research studies relating to human altruism and/or bystander behaviour.**

Altruistic behaviour is seen as the desire to improve the welfare of another person rather than the anticipation of some reward or for any other reason that is related to the person offering help (Meyers, 2010). Batson et al (1991) created the empathy-altruism hypothesis, which explains that altruistic behaviour is a consequence of empathy. Empathy is the feeling of emotional response that is consistent with another person's emotional condition, resulting in feelings of sorrow, concern or compassion for the other person. Therefore seeing another person in distress will create motivation to help alleviate that person's distress. Batson's model included the components of perspective taking, which is the ability to take another person's point of view leading to empathic concern, empathic concern, which is the feelings of compassion for a welfare of another person who is suffering, and personal distress, which is the emotional reaction rather than altruistic concerns for the other person.

Research into this area was conducted by Fultz et al (1986), they investigated the possibility that expectations of negative social evaluation is a prerequisite for the empathy-altruism model of helping. Empathy was again manipulated with participants being asked to imagine how the other person felt or simply to observe the other persons behaviour. The possibility of social evaluation was also made into a high public and low anonymous condition. It was found that social evaluation doesn't increase help in the high-empathy condition however helping was higher in the low-empathy condition. In the low-empathy group although helping was much higher it was lower with the anonymous group than with the public group. This suggests that people do not help when empathy is aroused for egoistic reasons, however without empathy the egoistic factors people get are due to whether or not they will help.

There has been plenty of research for the empathy-altruism hypothesis. Studies by Fultz et al (1986) showed doubt on the people who show empathic concern help others in order to escape social disapproval studies like this contradict the underlying assumptions that human nature is self-serving. Also most of the studies used to support the empathy-altruism model are concerned only with helping over a short term rather than investigating the long term commitment to altruistic behaviour found in lots of people

There may be other explanations for this behaviour, such as demand characteristics, without bringing complexities of perspective taking and empathetic concern. Kruger (2003) compared the influence of altruistic factors with egoistic factors in order to predict whether people would have risky rescue behaviour. Reciprocal altruism and kinship where the strongest predictors of rescue intentions. This support the idea that some altruistic mechanisms, such as empathic concern, may only work within a genetically selfish system. Kruger's explanation for this was that because people's ancestors lived in small kin groups mechanisms that may have been restricted to kin may now be generalized to non-kin.

Cialdini et al (1997) believed that individuals help, not because they feel more empathic concern for another person, but because they feel more at one with them, for example they perceive something of themselves in that other person. This could be because they are related or part of the same group. Cialdini et al stated that the same conditions which

lead to empathic concern also lead to a state of oneness. This indicates that empathy-associated helping is not selfless, but is routed with the desire to help that part of the person that is recognised within the individual helping. An increase in empathy is related to increases in the presence of the self in the other. Empathy-associated helping can no longer be seen as completely altruistic.

Latane and Darley (1968) came up with the cognitive model of bystander behaviour. This model explains diffusion of responsibility, which is when only one person is present that person is responsible for giving help, but when there are two people available responsibility is divided, and if there is ten bystanders then responsibility should be diffused between all of them. Support for the idea of diffusion of responsibility comes from Latane and Darley's research (1970) and also the idea of social loafing (Meyers 2010) which states that the more people that are present the less effort each person makes. Pluralistic ignorance (Meyers, 2010) explains how when a person makes a decision whether to help or not to help them, they look to see what other bystanders are doing. If a person defines the situation as an emergency and helps, people are likely to follow and help. If no one offers to help then a person will assume that it is not an emergency and do nothing. Each bystander looks at the behaviour of others as a guide to their own behaviour.

Latane and Darley also came up with the decision model in 1970 which was made up of five stages to explain why bystanders at emergencies sometimes do and do not offer help. At each stage in the model the decision "no" results in no help being given while the decision "yes" makes the individual closer to giving help. Latane and Darley suggested that helping responses may be inhibited at any stage of the process. These inhibitions and stages they affect are stage one, the bystander may not notice the situation, stage two the situation may be ambiguous and not readily interpretable as an emergency. Therefore the bystander may try to interpret the situation by observing the behaviour of bystanders, stage three here the person may avoid taking the responsibility by assuming that another person will, stage four if the person wants to take responsibility for helping they may not want to as they are not trained or competent to do it. Lastly stage five competent people may not help in an emergency because they perceive that it is against their interests to do so.

A further study by Darley and Latane (1968) looked at the effect of an emergency on helping behaviour. They sat male students seated in cubicles connected by intercom system, they had volunteered to take part in a discussion on college life, there was three conditions: the students where led to believe that they were either 1) alone with one participant that later would be heard to have an epileptic seizure, 2) with two other participants, one of which would be heard having a seizure, or 3) with four other participants, one of which would be heard having a seizure. The findings showed that help was less likely and slower to happen when participants believed that when potential helpers were present, and people were significantly more likely to help if they perceived themselves to be alone. This supports the concept of diffusion of responsibility. In a more natural environment Latane and Darley (1970) found that when a person dropped some books in a lift, the probability of receiving help decreased with the number of people present; 40% were offered help when there was one other person, 15% when there was six others. Not all the studies conducted in a natural environment have found that large numbers are little help. Bickman (1972) has shown that the more the ambiguous

the situation the less likely it is that someone will get help, Latane and Nida (1981) found that the helping response is prevented when situations are manipulated to increase their ambiguity. People who have the responsibility or are trained are more likely to help. Maruyama et al (1982) found that increasing personal responsibility leads to an increase in helping. Bryan and Test (1967) showed that people were more likely to help a response in distress if the behaviour has been previously modelled to them, this finding is interesting as it is inconsistent with the notion that the presence of others inhibit helping. There are multiple studies around altruism and bystander behaviour. The research shows that people are less likely to provide assistance in the presence of others, unless helping behaviour is demonstrated for them. The research also shows that altruism can be inherently selfish, in that we only help others when it is of benefit to us.

### **References**

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### **Feedback**

Well done. This essay has plenty of information, and it is clear you understood the topic well. I can see you've tried to critically evaluate the material, however you need to focus on the key points and use the references to support these, rather than list the studies. You need to synthesise the material better so that your argument flows more clearly – I wasn't really clear what your overall point was. You could also link the two sets of literature together much more closely.

You've answered the question neatly, and you have a reasonable introduction and conclusion. A little more effort in combining the material into general points would go a

long way to improve your grade. I would have liked a more evaluative component throughout, in future try and explain why the material you present is important for your points. You do attempt this in places, and I'd like to see more of that. Make sure you use up to date material, while the classic studies are always essential, it is good to see how well the material translates into the current climate.

**Mark: 65**