

# THE SOCIAL APPROACH

## Assumptions:

- 1) Behavior is influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others
- 2) Behavior is influenced by social situations and settings

Reductionist!!

Social psychology is interested in studying individuals in a social context, such as family, friends, institutions, and wider society. Social behavior may involve activity within a group or between groups.

The strengths of the social approach include:

- It is highly applicable to real-life situations because of how it attempts to incorporate reality when studying behavior.
- Social psychology also emphasizes objective measurements
- However, there are some limitations of the social approach, which include:
  - Many studies conducted under the social approach break ethical guidelines, mainly deception and informed consent, because of how demand characteristics and social desirability biases work (if participants knew they were taking part in an experiment, they would change their behavior and the findings would be inaccurate)
  - The social approach also often disregards the role of individual differences when looking at behavior and social interaction

## CORE STUDY #1: MILGRAM 1963 (OBEDIENCE)

### Aim:

- To investigate how obedient individuals would be to orders received from a figure of authority, specifically when this obedience would result in harm to an innocent individual (**destructive obedience**) via an electric shock.
- **Destructive obedience - obedience that has the potential to cause psychological or physical harm to another person.**
- **Obedience - following a direct order from a person or people in authority.**

### KEY TERMS:

- **Agentic state - when we give up our free will to serve as an "agent to authority"**
- **Autonomous state - when we act of our own free will and choose whether to e.g. be obedient or not.**
- **Agentic shift - moving from an autonomous state to an agentic state**

### Background:

Milgram came from a European Jewish family, and so was profoundly affected by the atrocities committed by soldiers and ordinary people against Jews in Nazi Germany during the Second World War.

These Nazi soldiers, when put on trial, claimed that they were "just following orders". This sparked Milgram's curiosity as he was interested in whether extreme social situations could cause normal people to exhibit destructive obedience and cause harm to another innocent individual.

- Before his study, Milgram asked his psychology students and other professors at Yale University how many people would deliver a fatal shock to an innocent man on command. **They all agreed that less than 3% would deliver a maximum voltage.**

### Method:

#### *Participants*

- 40 men between the ages of 20 and 50 years old from the area of New Haven
- Volunteer sample: recruited through a newspaper advertisement promising a small sum of \$4.50 for participation, **regardless of the outcome of the experiment**
- 40% were white-collar workers, the rest were from a range of background

#### *Design*

- A laboratory setting, conducted at Yale University
- Independent measures design
- Best described as a controlled observation; it is technically not a true experiment because strictly, the IV does not exist
- **Obedience operationalized as the maximum voltage given**
- DV: maximum voltage given - level of obedience
  - Body language and comments made by the participants were also recorded
- IV: does not exist BUT could be argued that the prods given by the experimenter were the IVs

#### *Procedure*

- Conducted in a modern laboratory at Yale University - this location was chosen to make the entire thing seem legitimate
- The participants arrived individually into the lab where they were introduced to a confederate who they thought was another participant.
- The confederate was a likable, 44-year-old Irish-American accountant called Mr. Wallace

- They were told the study aimed to investigate the effect of punishment on learning, which was not the real aim of the experiment (deception)
- The two were then asked to draw straws on who would be a 'teacher' and who would be the 'learner', but this draw was pre-decided and Mr. Wallace always received the role of the learner.
- The participants were given a sample 45V shock and were then shown Mr. Wallace being strapped into an electric chair.
  - The participants were told that the shocks were painful, but they were not fatal.
  - These shocks were not real, only the sample shock was. The confederate was to act as if the shock was real.
- The participants were then taken into an adjacent room where they were seated in front of an electric shock machine facing the wall, with the experimenter seated on a desk behind them.
  - This shock machine had voltages starting at 15V and then increasing in 15-volt increments to 450V. The machine also had labels that went from "slight shock" at 15V, to "Danger: Severe Shock" and "XXX" for the final two switches.
- The participants were told they had to read word pairs out to the learner. If he repeated them back correctly then they were to move on to the next pair, but if he was incorrect, then the participant was instructed to deliver an electric shock, going up by 15V each time for every wrong answer.
  - The participants were also told to count no response as an incorrect answer
- Until 300V was reached, the learner stayed silent when the participant administered the shocks
- At 300V, the learner began shouting for help and for the participant to stop administering the shock.
- After 300V, the learner stopped responding completely and did not answer any of the questions or react when a shock was administered.
  - The sudden lack of response was tailored so that it seemed as if the learner was incapacitated or dead
- If, and when, the participants hesitated to shock the learner or looked to the experimenter for guidance, a series of prods were used in a specific order each time the participant refused to continue:
  - "Please continue"
  - "The experiment requires that you continue"
  - "It is absolutely essential that you continue"
  - "You have no choice, you *must* go on"
- These prods were usually effective and caused the participant to turn back around and continue delivering shocks.
- The procedure was said to be complete when the participant delivered the maximum 'XXX' 450V shock, or when they refused to continue.
- At the end of the study, the participants were taken to a different room where they were interviewed. One of the questions was how painful they thought the 450V shock was on a scale of 1 (not at all painful) to 14 (extremely painful).
  - The mean average estimate of the painfulness of the shock was 13.42, showing that the participants still carried out the order even though they were fully aware of the pain they were causing.

Throughout the study, the participants were watched through a one-way mirror by different researchers (covert observation in a controlled lab setting). Verbal comments and body language were recorded. At the end of the experiment the participants were debriefed on the deception that had occurred: they were told the true aim of the study, and then were shown Mr. Wallace, alive and unharmed, to ensure the participants left in a slightly less distressed mental state.

#### Results:

- 65% of the participants delivered the maximum voltage 'XXX' shock of 450V. Compared to the 3% stated by professionals, this is an extremely high number.
- All of the participants gave the 300V shock and 35% stopped sometime after that and did not deliver the maximum shock.
- A mean of 368V was given by all of the participants

#### *Body language and verbal comments*

- 14 out of 40 men displayed nervous laughter and smiling
- Almost all of the participants displayed signs of stress such as sweating and stuttering
- One participant had a stress response so severe that he started seizing and the procedure had to be stopped.
- After the procedure was complete, most of the participants displayed visible signs of relief such as wiping their brows and sighing. A very small minority of participants appeared calm throughout the experiment (damn, psychos)
- Comments included: "I don't think I can go on with this...I don't think this is very humane"

- ★ In a different condition, the learner mentioned having a heart condition, and though obedience rates dropped, this decrease was barely significant, with 63% of the participants still delivering the maximum shock. This was despite the learner protesting, saying things like "Let me out! My heart is bothering me!" and "I want to quit! My heart!". Comments from the participants in this condition included "I'm gonna chicken out...I can't do that to a man, I'll hurt his heart".

#### Conclusions:

- Individuals are much more obedient to authority than we might reasonably expect. This seems to be true for the majority of people.
- Despite high levels of obedience, people find the experience of carrying out destructive acts under the orders of authority figures triggers feelings of stress. This is due to a conflict between two important social phenomena: the need to obey those in authority and the need to avoid harming others.

#### Evaluation:

A strength of this study is that it is highly replicable. This is because it was conducted in a controlled laboratory environment at Yale University with standardized procedures such as using the same voltage machine and stooge for each participant and

using a sample shock of 45V for each participant. This means another researcher can simply get another group of participants and repeat the procedure exactly and compare and test the results for accuracy. This allows the findings of the study to be tested, therefore increasing the validity of the study.

**Another strength of this study is that it is highly reliable.** This is because the participants were not told the true aim of the study (they were told the aim was to "investigate the effects of punishment on learning"), and so could not change their behaviors to be more socially desirable. The participants were also given sample shocks of 45V, so they thought the experiment was real, and so produced real responses. This increases the validity of the study.

**A weakness of this study is that it is not generalizable.** This is because it used a small sample size of only 40 men from the area of New Haven, 40% of which were white-collar workers. This means that the results cannot be applied to other genders or people from different parts of America, who have different professions. The sample was also collected through volunteer sampling via a newspaper advertisement, so the sample is not representative of those who don't read or can't afford the newspaper. This reduces the validity of the study.

**Another weakness of this study is that it breaches multiple ethical guidelines.** This study breaches the guidelines of deception, the right to withdraw, and protection from physical and psychological harm. The participants were deceived as they were not told the true aim of the study and were told it was to "investigate the effect of punishment on learning". They were also given a real sample shock of 45V so they thought the experiment was real and that they were hurting another human being, leading to a breach of the ethical guideline of protection. The participants also had stressful reactions, with one participant having a full-blown seizure due to emotional stress. The participants were under the impression that they were hurting and killing another person, which would have had severe psychological impacts. The prods used by the researcher breached the ethical guidelines of withdrawal, with one of the prods being "You have no choice, you must go on". Since the participants were getting paid for participating, they would have also felt financially obligated to complete the experiment. This reduces the validity and credibility of the study.

#### Issues and debates:

- **Application to daily life:** The findings of this study can be applied to daily life to explain behaviors of people like the Nazis in the 1930s, and the Rwandan Genocide in 1994 by applying the conclusion of the study that normal citizens will obey figures of authority and carry out destructive obedience when placed in morally straining situations.
- **Individual and situational explanations:** This study supports the situational explanation of obedience as it states that the situation a person is placed in can cause them to exhibit obedience. For example, the experiment was conducted at Yale University (authenticity) and the experimenter wore a grey lab coat (authenticity, uniform = authority figure) so the participants were more likely to obey.

#### CORE STUDY #2: PILIAVIN 1969 (SUBWAY SAMARITANS)

##### Aim:

Investigate bystander behaviors in a naturalistic setting. They also wanted to investigate the effect of 4 factors on bystander helping:

- 1) The type of victim (e.g. drunk/sick)
- 2) The race of the victim (black/white)
- 3) The behavior of a model
- 4) The size of the group of bystanders

##### Hypothesis:

Piliavin argued that when the group of bystanders was larger, bystander helping would decrease due to a social phenomenon known as diffusion of responsibility. This is when an individual does not feel personally responsible or obligated to help a victim when a large group of people is present because there are so many others who could intervene instead of them. So, the larger the group, the less likely it is for the victim to receive help because everyone is thinking that someone else will intervene instead of them.

- **Diffusion of responsibility - a person is less likely to take action in an emergency where there are others there also able to help. In a large group, the perceived sense of individual responsibility towards those in need is 'diffused' or reduced to the extent that people feel little obligation to intervene. An explanation for the bystander effect.**

##### Background:

The study was inspired by the horrific murder of a woman called Kitty Genovese. She was killed in 1964 in front of a residential apartment building in the early hours of the morning. What made the incident so disturbing (apart from the murder) was the fact that 38 of the residents in the apartment building were either ear or eye (or both) witnesses to the incident, and did nothing to intervene (none called the police, none ran outside to help).

Piliavin was interested in investigating the bystander effect and bystander helping in a real-life setting after this event, mainly because they wanted to see why people refrain from helping, and if some people are just more likely to help than others.

## Method:

### Participants

- 4450 people (roughly) of all races and genders
- Passengers on the train from Harlem to the Bronx between the times of 11 am and 3 pm from the New York Subway
- Unsolicited opportunity sample
- 55% of the participants were white
- The mean number of people in the carriage was 43, and in the critical area (the area where the incident took place) it was 8.5
- Design
- Covert naturalistic observation with 2 female researchers observing the incidents
- Field experiment as the IV is still manipulated by the researcher
- 4 IVs:
  - The race of the victim (black/white)
  - The type of victim (drunk/ill)
  - The behavior of a model (the model was close/distant and helped early/late, no model)
  - The size of the group of bystanders (the naturally occurring number of participants in the train car)
- The DV was operationalized as:
  - In quantitative terms: the time taken for the first passenger to help, as well as the total number of passengers who helped.
  - In qualitative terms: verbal remarks made by the passengers during each incident
- The race, gender, and location in the carriage of each person who helped were also recorded.

### Procedure

- **Bystander - a person who is present, but may not be directly involved in a particular situation. 'Bystander apathy' or the 'bystander effect' refers to the actions of bystanders who don't help others in the event of an emergency.**
- 4 teams of student researchers on behalf of Piliavin were used in the study (2 male and 2 female)
- The two males and two females entered with each other from opposite sides of the train car
- The female students sat in the area adjacent to the critical area (CA) where the incident was taking place. They observed the passengers and recorded data for each trial
- The male confederates took the roles of the victim and the model
- Each trial was conducted on the same route from Harlem to the Bronx because it provided a 7.5-minute window for the experiment to take place.
- 70 seconds into the journey the victim would collapse and stay still on the floor until either someone helped them, or he would remain there until the next stop where the model would then help him up.
- The victim was played by different males during the study, but they all looked similar:
  - They were aged 26-35 years
  - 3 were white and 1 was black
  - They were dressed in identical clothes: jacket, old trousers, no tie, casual
  - 38/103 trials: victim smelled of alcohol, carried a brown paper bag holding a bottle of alcohol, and appeared drunk
  - Remaining 65/103 trials: victim appeared sober and carried a black cane
- The models were all white males aged 24-29 who were also dressed casually. When helping the victim, the model propped them up to a sitting position and stayed with them until the next stop
- Trials were split into the following conditions:
  - Critical early: model stood in the critical area and helped 70 seconds after the victim collapsed
  - Critical late: model stood in the critical area and helped 150 seconds after the victim collapsed
  - Adjacent early: model stood in the adjacent area and helped 70 seconds after the victim collapsed
  - Adjacent late: model stood in the adjacent area and helped 150 seconds after the victim collapsed
  - No model: the model did not help the victim at all and waited until the train had reached the next stop to help

### Results:

Trial	White victim		Black victim	
	Cane	Drunk	Cane	Drunk
No model	100%	100%	100%	73%
Model	100%	77%	—*	67%

\*No model trials for the black cane victim were conducted

- The majority of the helpers were male
- Over 80% of the victims received spontaneous help (i.e. before the model could help or when there was no model)
- In 60% of cases, more than one person helped
- Both black and white CANE victims were likely to receive the same amount of help, but there was evidence of some-race helping in the drunk condition
- Black drunk victims were found to receive less help overall

- Early model intervention (70 seconds) was found to trigger more helping behavior than late intervention (150 seconds)
- In 20% of the trials, passengers moved away from the critical area
- More comments were made when there was no help or when the victim was drunk
- The study found no evidence of the role of diffusion of responsibility.
- Large group: 7 people, small group: 3 people. The diffusion of responsibility theory would predict that the helping response in a group of 7 people would be slower than in a group of 3 people due to diffusion of responsibility. However, Piliavin found that in 7-person groups the time taken to help was much faster than in the 3-person group.

Piliavin proposed an alternative explanation for these findings: the cost-benefit model.

- **Cost-benefit model - involves a decision-making process in which a person weighs up both the advantages and disadvantages of helping. If it seems beneficial to help, then the person is likely to do so; if the risks are too great, they may refrain.**

#### Conclusion:

- In a natural setting, many people would offer spontaneous help to a stranger, even in a group situation
- The type of victim matters - someone using a cane will be helped more than a drunk person. This is because of the perception of responsibility, where the victim appears responsible for their situation. A drunk person would be less likely to be helped because bystanders feel that the victim brought the situation upon themselves.
- The gender of the helper - men are more likely to help than women
- People may be more likely to help members of their race, especially in the drunk condition - this is because the helper finds it easier to relate to the victim
- The longer an emergency continues, the less likely it is that anyone will help, and the more likely it is they will find another way of coping with arousal.

#### Evaluation:

A strength of this study is that it has high ecological validity. This is because it was done in a naturalistic setting on a New York train subway train from Harlem to the Bronx, which is a natural setting for incidents like the trials to occur in. Because of this, the participants would be more likely to display natural reactions, producing accurate data. This increases the validity of the study.

Another strength of this study is that it is highly reliable. This is because it was done as a covert, naturalistic observation in a natural setting on a train from Harlem to the Bronx, and so the participants were not aware of the experiment taking place and so could not change their behavior to seem more socially desirable. The study also made use of standardized procedures, having the victims all dress identically and having the model help after a fixed time in each trial. This increases the reliability and validity of this study.

A weakness of this study however is that it breaches the ethical guidelines of informed consent, withdrawal, and debriefing. This is because it was conducted in a naturalistic setting as a covert observation on a train where there was only a 75-minute window to complete the study. Because of this, the researchers could not ask for the informed consent of the participants, and since the participants were not aware they were taking part in an experiment, they were unable to withdraw from the study. Since the participants entered and exited the train car so quickly, it was also impossible to debrief them. This reduces the credibility and validity of the study.

Another weakness of this study is that it lacks generalisability. This is because it was conducted in a New York subway on a train from Harlem to the Bronx between 11 am and 3 pm. This means that though the sample size was large, it only encompassed residents of New York City and people who used public transportation during working hours. The results can therefore not be generalized to the wider population of people who, for example, cannot afford or do not use public transportation, or people who are from different areas of the world. This reduces the validity of the study.

#### Issues and debates:

- **Application to daily life:** the findings of this study can be used to educate people about bystander intervention. To try and combat stereotypes, children can be educated on this matter and be taught to help those regardless of their appearance/diffusion of responsibility.
- **Individual and situational explanations:** The study supports the situational explanation of bystander helping because of the natural setting it was done and the social situation that was created to investigate helping. However, it could be argued that the individual explanation also plays a role in helping behavior as since the sample size was large and varied, it may have been a shared personality type across participants that made them help/not help.

### CORE STUDY #3: YAMAMOTO 2012 (CHIMPANZEE HELPING)

#### Aim:

To investigate helping behavior in chimpanzees:

- To investigate whether chimpanzees can understand the needs of conspecifics.
- To investigate whether chimpanzees can respond to those needs with targeted help.

- **Conspecific** - a member of the same species. In this study, 'conspecifics' refers to other chimpanzees.
- **Targeted helping** - targeted helping is considered to be linked to the cognitive capacity for empathy. Among nonhuman animals, only some great ape, cetacean, and elephant species demonstrate this form of helping behavior. By definition, animals are expected to understand others' needs.

### Background:

Based on the knowledge that humans can display altruistic behaviors, and to see whether animal species, specifically chimpanzees, can do the same. The ability to offer targeted help stems directly from the theory of mind (ToM).

- **Altruism** - acting helpfully towards others without obvious benefit to oneself. An example of this might be chasing after a stranger to return their wallet, which involves no guarantee of reward.
- **Theory of Mind (ToM)** - the ability to recognize that others have distinct feelings, beliefs, knowledge, and desires from our own is known as having a theory of mind. Theory of mind is often linked to empathy (the ability to sense other people's emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling).

### Method:

#### *Participants*

- 6 chimpanzees (of which 5 were used) were housed socially at the Primate Research Institute at Kyoto University, Japan
- These chimpanzees were put in mother-juvenile pairs:
  - Ai (mother) & Ayumu (juvenile)
  - Pan (mother) & Pal (juvenile)
  - Chloe (mother) & Cleo (juvenile)
- Each chimpanzee had previously been a part of other studies investigating behavior in a similar setting to the current study.

#### *Design*

- Laboratory experiment at the Primate Research Institute at Kyoto University
- Independent variable: the ability of the chimpanzee to give targeted help in two conditions: the can see and cannot see conditions.
- Repeated measures design
- The dependent variable was operationally defined as the items offered by the participants to conspecifics.
- The entire procedure for each condition and each chimpanzee was recorded on camera and was used to produce quantitative data: the number of correct targeted offers per condition

#### *Procedure*

- The helper chimpanzee had to offer the recipient chimpanzee the correct tool.
- One task required a stick and the other straw.
- The recipient chimpanzee obtained a reward: a juice box.
- There were 7 objects in the helping chimpanzee's tray:
 

1. Stick	4. Chain
2. Straw	5. Brush
3. Belt	6. Hose
	7. String.
- First, the chimpanzee did condition 1 (can see).
- Next, the chimpanzee did condition 2 (cannot see).
- Then, they repeated condition 1 (can see) to check for order effects.
- There were 48 trials carried out in each condition of a random order of 24 stick and 24 straw use conditions.
- There were 2-4 trials per day.
- A trial started when the tray was presented to the helper chimpanzee.
- The trial ended when the recipient succeeded in obtaining the juice box or when 5 minutes had passed without receiving an object.

### Results:

#### *Can see condition*

- Object offer = 90% of trials. In the familiarisation phase, the object offer was 5%.
- 'Upon request offer' accounted for 90% of all offers.
- Except for Pan, sticks, and straws were significantly more frequently offered than the non-tools (78% - 97.4%).
  - Pan most frequently offered the brush, which may be due to experience.
- Chimpanzees were able to offer targeted helping based on their partner's needs
- Cannot see condition

- Object offer = 90% of trials. Upon request offers accounted for 71.7% of all offers.
- Cleo showed a significant increase in offering help in the 'cannot see condition' and this may be due to a carryover effect. This increased voluntary offer as the helper learned that they are expected to offer an object to their partner.
- Stick/straw was not offered more than the non-tools except for Ayumu who kept peeking through the hole. This shows that chimpanzees understood their partner's goals only when they could see.
- Second can-see condition
- 3 chimpanzees who had shown a significant decrease in tool selection in the first condition and a non-significant decrease in the cannot see condition were used.
- Object offer observed for 98% of trials. Upon request offers accounted for 79% of all offers.
- Significant decrease in the offer of stick/straw depending on the partner's situation. This confirms that flexible targeted helping with an understanding of the tool needed to complete the task was possible when chimpanzees could see the task for themselves.

### Conclusions:

- Chimpanzees will offer help to conspecifics who require it in the majority of cases, but usually as a response to a direct request rather than as a spontaneous act
- Chimpanzees rely on visual confirmation of conspecific needs to offer targeted helping.

### Evaluation:

**A strength of this study is that it is highly replicable.** This is because it was done in a controlled laboratory environment with standardized procedures at the Primate Research Institute at Kyoto University, Japan. This means that another researcher can simply get another group of mother-juvenile chimpanzees and repeat the procedure. This allows the findings to be tested for accuracy, increasing the validity of the study,

**Another strength of this study is that it is highly reliable.** This is because of the strict standardized procedures that were used, for example using the same 7 tools for all the chimpanzees, repeating the can-see conditions to eliminate order effects, and using a video camera to record data. This increases the reliability of this study.

**A weakness of this study however is that it lacks ecological validity.** This is because it was conducted in a standardized laboratory environment at Kyoto University, which is not a natural environment for chimpanzees to carry out targeted helping and communication. This reduces the validity of this study.

**Another weakness of this study is that it lacks generalisability.** This is because the study only used 6 chimpanzees for this study that were born and bred in captivity and socially housed at Kyoto University. The results can therefore not be generalized to the wider population of chimpanzees in the wild. This reduces the validity of the study.

### Issues and debates:

- **Application to daily life:** the findings of this study may be generalized to children in terms of development and education about helping others. If children and chimpanzees take the same developmental path, we could educate children about helping behaviors.
- **The use of animals:** there were 5 pairings and so the researchers used the minimum amount of animals they could for this study. They were socially housed at Kyoto University, an acceptable choice because of the chimpanzees' social nature. None of the chimpanzees were deprived of any necessary items, and none of them underwent aversive stimuli.