

ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND AGGRESSION.

- Antisocial acts are those that show a lack of feeling and concern for the welfare of others (Baron and Richardson 1994)
- Aggressive behaviour is viewed as the most disturbing form of antisocial behaviour.
- Aggressive behaviour can be subdivided –
 - ❖ Antisocial aggression – All behaviour that is intended to inflict physical or mental harm on an individual who does not want to be so treated – (Penrod 1983)
 - ❖ Pro-social aggression – Police action
 - ❖ Sanctioned aggression – Self defence
 - ❖ Aggression can be overt behaviours or covert feelings that are not always acted upon.
- Societies need people not to behave in an antisocial way – therefore laws, sanctions, police, and rewards.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF AGGRESSION – SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY – BERKOWITZ (1989) and BANDURA (1965)

Most behaviour (including aggressive behaviour) is learned. It is claimed that aggressive behaviour is learned either through direct experience or by observing others.

Learning by direct experience – If a child pushes another child and as a result gets something they want, the action is reinforced and is more likely to occur in similar situations in the future. (Skinner – Operant reinforcement)

Learning by vicarious experience – observational learning occurs when a child sees a role model behaving in a particular way and reproduces that behaviour.

Social Learning theorists emphasise that for behaviour to be imitated, it must be seen as rewarding in some way.

The likelihood of a person behaving aggressively in a particular situation is determined by:

- Their previous experience of aggressive behaviour both their own and that of others
- The degree to which their aggressive behaviour was successful in the past
- The current likelihood of their aggressive behaviour being rewarded or punished
- Other cognitive, social and environmental factors operating at the same time e.g. very noisy situations may increase hostile behaviour and fear of retaliation may decrease it

THE BOBO DOLL EXPERIMENT – BANDURA et al (1963)

Aim: To discover whether children learn aggression

Procedure: Bandura et al divided 66 nursery group children into three groups. All three groups watched a film where an adult model kicked and punched a Bobo (blow-up) doll.

- In condition one the adult was rewarded by a second adult.
- In condition two the adult was told off by another adult.
- In condition three the adult was neither rewarded nor punished (control).

The children were then allowed to play in the room with the Bobo doll while experimenters watched through a two-way mirror.

Results:

- Children in condition one behaved most aggressively
- Those in condition two behaved least aggressively.
- However an important distinction must be made between learning and performance. –
- All the children learnt how to behave aggressively but those in condition two did not perform as many aggressive acts until later when they were offered rewards to do so, they then quickly showed that they had learned (acquired) as many aggressive techniques as the children in condition one.

Conclusion:

Aggressive behaviour can be learned.

Social learning model of aggression (P257)

EVALUATION OF RESEARCH:

- Bandura exaggerated the extent to which children imitate the behaviour of models.
- ❖ Children are likely to imitate aggressive behaviour towards a doll
- ❖ But less likely to imitate aggressive behaviour towards another child.
- Bandura continually failed to distinguish between real aggression and play fighting and it is likely that much of the aggressive behaviour observed by Bandura was only play fighting. - Durkin (1995)
- The Bobo doll is of interest to young children because it has a weighted base and so bounces back up when it is knocked down. Its novelty value is important. Its fun!
- ❖ Cumberbatch (1990) reported that children who were unfamiliar with the doll were five times more likely to initiate aggressive behaviour against it than children who had played with it before.
- There is the problem of demand characteristics. The participants guessed what they were supposed to do
- ❖ Durkin (1995) “Where else in life does a 5 year old find a powerful adult actually showing you how to knock hell out of a dummy and then giving you the opportunity to try it out yourself?”
- ❖ The Bobo doll experiment provided cues which invited the participants to behave in certain predictable ways.

EVALUATION OF SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY:

- This approach is important. Much aggressive behaviour is learned. It has been found that children who watch violent programmes on television are more likely to behave in an aggressive way.
- Social Learning Theory can account for cultural and individual variation; it can also explain why we behave aggressively in some situations and not others.
- ❖ For example, a child might find it a useful strategy to shout at a friend in the playground, but the same behaviour in class would be sharply discouraged. The child learns when aggression is appropriate and when it is not. This is called **context – dependent learning.**
- Despite all this there are reasons for arguing that Bandura’s approach is limited in scope.

- ❖ Aggressive behaviour does not depend only on observational learning. The cross cultural evidence demonstrates that aspects of aggression are innate and twin studies have provided important evidence of genetic factors, (The closer the genetic relationship the higher the correlation of aggressive behaviour) although it is possible that twins reared together have learned aggression in their homes.

How might children be exposed to aggressive models?

- ❖ Television – See media influences
- ❖ Strength of influence determined by,
 - How real is the story?
 - Do the viewers identify with the aggressor – Heroes are more powerful than villains.
 - Aggression identified with revenge is more powerful than other types of aggression.
 - Justified aggression is more powerful than unjustified aggression.
 - Unsuccessful aggression, aggressor punished tends to inhibit aggression.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF AGGRESSION – DE-INDIVIDUATION

- **DEINDIVIDUATION:** Hogg and Vaughan (1998) define it as: ‘a process whereby people lose their sense of socialised identity and engage in unsocialised, often anti social behaviours.’
- One explanation offered for unruly mob behaviour is that the loss of identity that occurs when you are part of a crowd means that individuals feel less constrained by norms of social behaviour, and more able to behave in an anti-social way. Also less chance of getting caught and having to take responsibility.

Evidence

Mann 1981 reported the baiting crowd

- 10 out of 21 incidents of suicides where the watching crowd baited the potential suicide to jump.
- These incidents occurred when a large crowd were some distance from the jumper and it was at night – all features that produce a state of de-individuation.

Milgram – participants gave higher levels of shock when they could not see their victim.

Zimbardo’s (1973) prison study

- The guards were de-individualised because they wore uniforms and were given reflective sunglasses. They behaved aggressively
- However, the prisoners also wore uniforms. They were further de-individualised by wearing stockings over their heads and being referred to by a number rather than a name.
- The prisoners didn’t behave aggressively but they did conform to the role of being a prisoner. This suggests that de-individuation results in high levels of conformity rather than aggression per se, as the prison guards were also conforming to a role.

De-individuation of the victim – The baiting crowd may have behaved differently if the identity of the jumper was clear. We dehumanise potential victims of state violence by terminology that we use, Theatre of war, victims are referred to as targets, Collateral damage, ethnic cleansing. (Video Hutus and Tutsi’s)

Evaluation

The major difficulty with using de-individualisation as an explanation for aggression is the fact that it did not always lead to aggression.

- There are circumstances where de-individualisation may even lead to higher levels of pro-social behaviour.
- Wearing a nurse's uniform leads to a loss of identity and adopting the norms for that uniform. Whereas wearing the uniform of a soldier might lead one to adopt more aggressive behaviours. De-individuation can increase conformity to certain social norms.

In some crowd situations, de-individuation actually leads to decreased conformity, (Unlike the Zimbardo study) - it could be argued that individuals are conforming to the norm of the crowd - unruly behaviour that manifests its self in different ways. In other crowd situations, such as a rock concert, the norm would be different and so would the behaviour of the crowd. Deindividuation means one tends to relinquish personal control.

Can de-individuation be used to explain the apparent aggressive, violent and selfish behaviour of a crowd?

- ❖ A study of football hooliganism by Marsh et al (1978) found that what might appear to be a de-individuated undisciplined mob on match days can actually consist of several different groups, each with their status.
- ❖ By serving an apprenticeship of ritualised aggression over a period of time, young supporters can be 'promoted' into a higher group and can thus continue a 'career' of football violence.
- ❖ Marsh discovered that in most cases this behaviour is highly ritualised, rather than physically violent e.g. it is common after a football match to chase rival supporters who are threatened with shouts of what aggressive actions will take place when they are caught, but on most occasions the aggression remains verbal.
- ❖ It is therefore clear that within this crowd there are clear individual roles and norms rather than a 'sub human response'

THE EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSORS ON AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR A number of environmental factors have been identified as triggers for aggression.

Temperature

- Baron and Bell (1976) studied the effects of heat on aggression by seeing how willing participants were to give electric shocks to another person.
- Temperatures within the range 92-95 degrees F generally increased the level of aggression.
- However, extreme heat led to a reduced level of aggression towards another person who had provided a negative evaluation of the participant. In those conditions, the participants were very stressed. If they had given shocks to the other person, they would have had to deal with that person's angry reactions and they felt unable to deal with the added stress.
- Naturalistic study – Baron and Ransberger (1978) showed that incidences of violence could be related to high air temperatures. They used collected data on incidents of group violence in the US as well as the corresponding weather reports. They found that when the temperature was moderately hot, around 84 degrees, violence was highest, when temperatures got hotter, aggression declined.

- This confirms the finding that temperature can act as a stressor leading to the response of aggression.
- However, other evidence does not support the notion that aggressive behaviour declines when the heat becomes extreme.
- Anderson (1989) considered the effects of temperature on various forms of aggressive behaviour, such as assault, rape and murder. There was a steady increase in all of these aggressive acts as the temperature rose, with no indication of any reduction in extreme heat.
- Field research indicates higher murder rates in southern Italy and USA than in the north of those countries. Moghaddam argues that these regions differ in much more than temperature, other factors may be responsible for the high murder rates.
- Studies have claimed to find a link between hot summer months and increases in violent crime. People are out more in the summer – extra contact may be responsible. American homicide rates peak in late summer and Christmas both times when there is increased social contact. We also through heating, live in fairly constant temperatures.

NOISE:

- Glass et al (1969) arranged for 60 undergraduates to complete a number of cognitive tasks e.g. word searches,
 - ❖ 4 conditions: loud or soft noise played at random (unpredictable) or fixed (predictable) intervals. There was also a no noise condition.
 - ❖ During the task physiological arousal was measured using the galvanic skin response (GSR, a measure of autonomic arousal or stress). After the task participants were asked to complete four puzzles. Two of them were insoluble. Frustration was measured in terms of the length of time that participants persisted in these tasks.
 - ❖ Participants did adapt to the noise. In the predictable noise condition, participants made fewer errors, had lower GSR and had higher task persistence than those in the random noise condition. Those in the no noise condition made even fewer errors.
- This suggests that random noise has the greatest effect but even predictable noise creates some stress. Glass et al suggested that this is because we can ‘tune out’ constant stimuli while still attending at a pre-conscious level, but unpredictable stimuli require more continued attention, and this reduces our ability to cope with stress. Therefore noise, in itself, is a stressor. And such stressors may lead to aggression as described the frustration-aggression hypothesis.
- Experiments suggest that under circumstances where noise may increase arousal, aggression is increased. When noise does not increase arousal, or when the individual is not predisposed to aggress, noise appears to have little effect on aggression.
- Evans looked at the effects of the noise generated by a new airport in Germany. He compared children (7&8 years old) who lived in the increased noise area with children living in quiet conditions.
 - Children tested for blood pressure, stress hormones, quality of life. 6 months before the airport started to operate, and 6 & 18 months after.
 - Children in the noise condition experienced significant increases in blood pressure, stress hormones and reported deterioration in life style.

CROWDING AND OVER CROWDING:

- It is often argued that people will tend to behave in an aggressive way when there is overcrowding.
- Loo (1979) studied the behaviour of young children in a day nursery. The overall level of aggression went up as the number of children in the day nursery increased.
- In similar fashion, there are more acts of aggression and riots in prisons with a high density of prisoners than in those with a low density (McCain et al 1980).
- Freedman suggests that the physiological arousal of a crowd heightens the mood you are in. In some situations a crowd may be associated with enjoyment, as in a rock concert, or pro-social behaviour as in a peace gathering. However, if you are not enjoying yourself you might feel stressed, or behave anti-socially.
- There is also the possibility of de-individuation in a crowded situation
- Higher densities of people may lead to less liking for people and places, and greater withdrawal. This effect appears to be stronger for men.
- Research has shown that crowding may create more aggression in males than females. Stokols (1973) studied same sex groups of 8 in small and large rooms. Males rated themselves as more aggressive in the small rooms, the opposite was true for females.
- Three conceptual ideas that might explain why crowding might increase aggressive behaviour –
 - 1) Stimulus overload – When the amount of stimulation overloads our sensory capacity, negative effects occur.
 - 2) Behavioural constraint – High density situations reduce our behavioural freedom (Traffic queues) If the high density is stopping us from doing what we want aggression might follow.
 - 3) Ecological model – high densities mean to few resources for everyone (January sales)
- Some studies have shown that cities contain more stressful environmental features e.g. increased temperatures, overcrowding and noise. Urban dwellers repeatedly report being affected by these physical factors than do rural dwellers. Some studies have noted the stressful nature of urban life, few have demonstrated the more relaxing nature of rural life.

ALTRUISM

Altruism definition: ‘Helping behaviour that is voluntary, costly to the altruist and motivated by something other than the expectation of material or social reward.’ Walster and Piliavin (1972) Altruism is therefore different from helping in that there is a regard for the interest of others, without apparent concern for one’s self interest.

One of the major problems for psychologists is determining what is truly altruistic and what might be better explained in terms of egoism.

- Consider a child who clears snow off a neighbour’s drive, and is then given money as a reward.
- How can an observer know if the child’s behaviour was altruistic or egoistic?
- Social learning explanations of altruistic behaviour suggest that,
- Young children tend to be motivated by materialistic rewards (extrinsic motivation),
- Older children by social approval (also extrinsic)

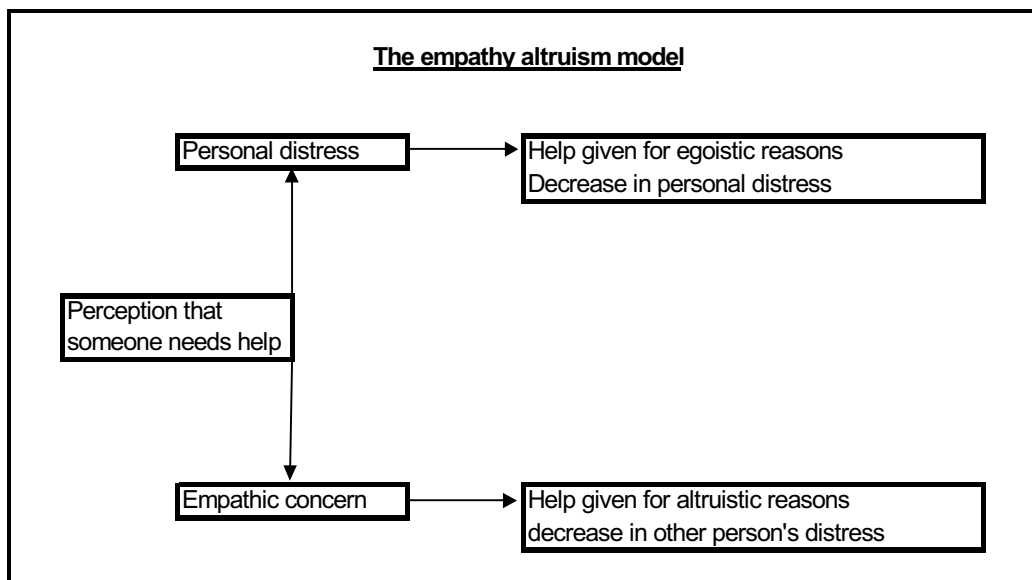
- Adolescents by intrinsic motivation (e.g. it makes them feel good about themselves) for helping.
- From this perspective, people who are motivated by the desire for extrinsic rewards are less likely to help others (such as strangers) when these rewards are less likely. – Grusec (1991)

BATSON'S EMPATHY-ALTRUISM HYPOTHESIS (1991) According to this altruistic or unselfish behaviour is motivated mainly by empathy. He claimed that there are two main emotional reactions that occur when we observe someone in distress:

Empathic concern: a sympathetic focus on the other person's distress, plus the motivation to reduce it (compassionate, soft hearted, tender)

Personal distress: concern with one's own discomfort, plus the motivation to reduce it (worried, disturbed, alarmed)

Empathetic concern requires perspective taking, the observer must see the victim's perspective in order to empathise with them. If this does not happen we feel only personal distress, hence any actions we take are based on egoistic motives and are therefore not altruistic in nature.



RESEARCH: BATSON et al (1981)

Procedure:

- Female students observed a student called Elaine receiving up to ten mild electric shocks.
- Participants were then told they were either,
 - ❖ Very similar to Elaine – High empathy group, or
 - ❖ Very dissimilar to Elaine – low-empathy group, personal distress group.
- In another version all the students received a placebo drug that actually had no effects and were given misleading information about the drug, so that they would interpret their reactions to Elaine as either empathic concern or personal distress.
- Elaine then said that she had a childhood fear of electrical shocks. The students were then asked whether they would take the remaining electric shocks instead of Elaine.

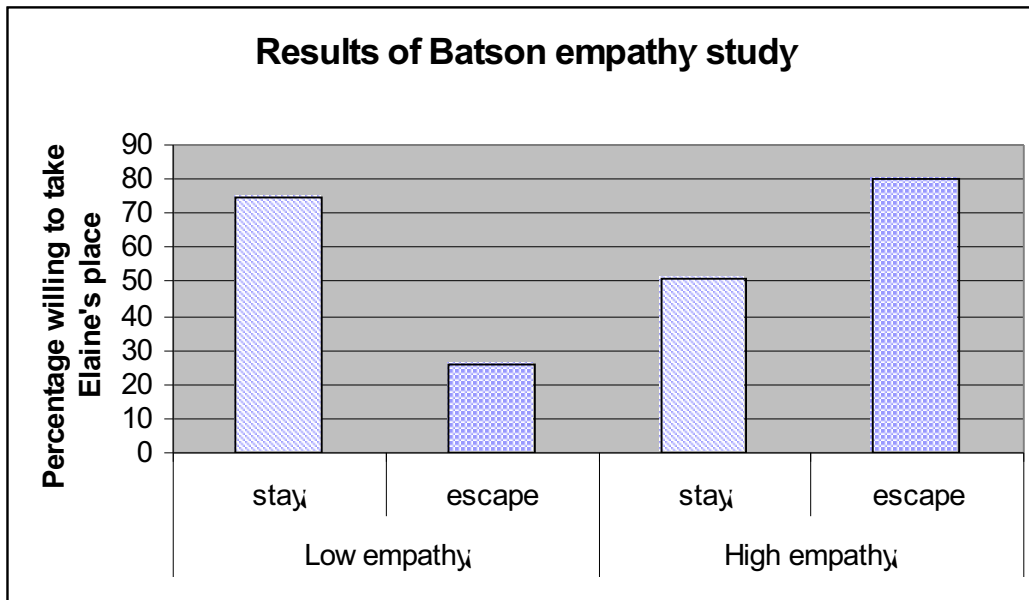
- Some of the students were told they were free to leave the experiment if they wanted. The other students were told that they would have to stay and watch Elaine being shocked if they refused to take the shocks themselves.

Results:

- Most of the students in the two groups who felt empathetic concern offered to take the remaining shocks regardless of whether they could easily escape from the situation.
- In contrast, most of those who felt personal distress offered to take the shocks when escape was difficult, but far fewer did when escape was easy.

Conclusion:

- Those feeling personal distress were motivated to help by fear of social disapproval if they did not help, rather than by any real desire to help Elaine.
- Those feeling personal distress that had the opportunity to leave and lessen the distress did so.
- Batson et al argues that the students feeling empathetic concern helped Elaine for unselfish reasons.

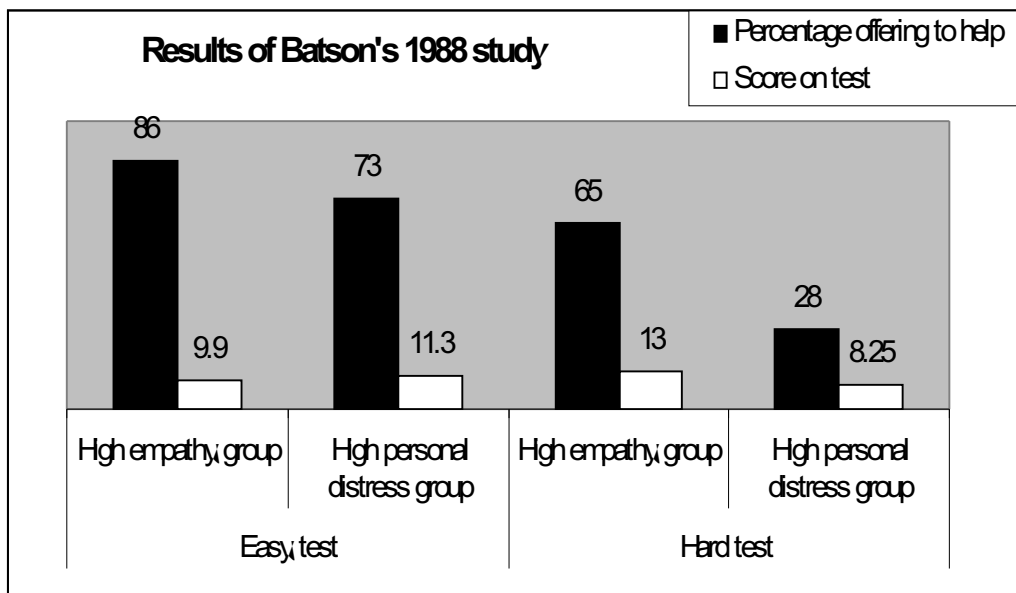


EVALUATION OF RESEARCH:

There are other possibilities e.g. they might have wanted to avoid self-criticism or social disapproval.

- In order to test this possibility Batson carried out a modified version in 1988.
- ❖ Female students were told that they would only be allowed to take some of the shocks for Elaine if they did well in a mathematical task. Half were told that the test was easy and half that it was hard (It was in fact the same test for both).
- ❖ Someone who was motivated to help Elaine only to avoid social disapproval and self criticism might well offer to help but then deliberately perform poorly on the mathematical task. The task labelled hard would offer additional opportunity to escape helping.
- ❖ When the test was easy there was little difference between the numbers of participants offering to help.

- ❖ When the test was hard the students feeling empathetic concern volunteered to help Elaine and did very well on the mathematical task. Their refusal to take the easy way out suggests that their desire to help was genuine i.e. they were motivated by empathy-altruism. Whereas the low empathy group offered little help and did poorly on the test.
- ❖ This indicates their use of the test as an excuse.
- The study was intended to test the empathy-altruism hypothesis, mechanisms other than empathy may have played a part, including fear of social disapproval, or even the demand characteristics of the experimental situation. The students might easily have guessed that the experimenter was interested in their level of care for the other person and behaved in a way that they thought was socially acceptable.
- There is an ecological validity argument about the experiment. How often do people find themselves in this situation in real life?



EVALUATION OF HYPOTHESIS

- The basic assumption that altruistic behaviour depends on empathy is supported by most of the evidence obtained by Batson and his colleagues.
- One limitation is that it is hard to be sure that people are offering help for altruistic reasons rather than simply to avoid the displeasure of others, to avoid the feelings of guilt associated with not helping, or to experience pleasure when the other person has received help.
- Batson pointed out, genuine concern for others is 'a fragile flower, easily crushed by egotistic (self centred) concerns.'
- The evidence for the hypothesis is limited. It concentrates on short term altruistic behaviour whereas in real life altruism can be long term.
- ❖ E.g. providing almost non-stop medical care for an ageing relative can last for years and it is not clear whether the same processes are involved.

THE NEGATIVE STATE RELIEF MODEL – CIALDINI et al 1987

- This suggests that when we are experiencing negative states (such as sadness or guilt), we are motivated to alleviate this condition by helping others - this is personally rewarding and thus eliminates the negative state. Helping is therefore egoistic
- People learn during childhood that helping others in need is a positive behaviour that will make them feel good about themselves.
- According to this view, therefore, the motivation for helping is egoistic, depending on the anticipated emotional consequences – This is in direct contrast to the empathy-altruism hypothesis
- E.g. we may see someone begging for money when we are out Christmas shopping. This might make us feel guilty so we hand over a pound and this makes us feel better.
- The model also includes the notion that helping is most probable when the rewards for helping are high and the costs low. People in an unpleasant mood are more likely to help than those in a neutral mood when helping is easy and very rewarding (e.g. it reduces their unpleasant mood)

RESEARCH:

- Cialdini carried out a study in much the same way as Batson. Participants were again given instructions designed to create high or low empathy conditions and then put in to a situation where they might help another person who was receiving electric shocks.
- ❖ This time, however, just before the request was made, the researchers offered either -
 - a) **A surprise monetary ‘bonus’**
 - Or
 - b) **Heaped lavish praise on the participants.**
- ❖ According to the empathy-altruism hypothesis, **highly empathetic participants should help regardless of any attempts to elevate their mood by any other means.**
- ❖ Cialdini and colleagues found that when participants were given the surprise **‘bonus money’** there was **no difference** between the likelihood of **high-empathy and low-empathy participants helping. Helping was low for both groups.**
- ❖ Those **high empathy participants who received unexpected lavish praise**, however, **were still motivated to help** when later requested to do so.
- ❖ This study demonstrates that **under some conditions**, experiencing a **mood lifting event** (in this case receiving money) **may lessen our motivation to relieve our negative state by helping others.**
- ❖ However, it also demonstrates that sometimes people experiencing empathy help primarily to relieve another person’s suffering.

Evaluation:

- ❖ In another study by the same researchers (Cialdini et al 1987) participants who were led to believe that they had been given a mood fixing drug (they hadn’t) were less motivated to help presumably because they believed that helping would not improve their current mood state.
- ❖ The model is rather limited. It suggests that empathy only leads to altruistic behaviour for the selfish reason that it makes us feel better.

- ❖ Both Batson and Cialdini agree that when we see someone in need of help we feel sad – the difference between the two is why we help –
 - Batson – we help because the victim needs help – then we feel better about ourselves.
 - Cialdini – We help to feel better about ourselves.
 - ❖ Cialdini’s research seems to lend support for both hypotheses.
 - ❖ Support for negative-state relief comes from research in 1987 (Cialdini) – found that when a person feels empathy for someone in need they also feel sadness. When they manipulated each of these variables separately they found that increased sadness produced more helping, whereas increased empathy did not.
- The two hypotheses conflict with each other,
- Empathy-altruism suggests that altruistic behaviour exists,
 - Negative-state relief suggests that any helping is for egoistic reasons.
 - ❖ Batson suggests one way to explain these conflicting ideas (Help for egoistic or altruistic reasons) we are more likely to feel empathy towards someone with whom we are closely attached.
 - ❖ This can be explained in terms of kin selection – we help members of our own kin because they carry similar genes.
 - ❖ Research by Batson has shown that –
 - ❖ We are more likely to help others when their similarity to us is stressed. – Altruistic reasons.
 - ❖ On the other hand we may feel only distress when there is no close attachment – in these conditions we may reduce the stress by helping or leaving – Egoistic reasons

- EXPLANATION OF BYSTANDER BEHAVIOUR** – Darley and Latane (1968) proposed two possible processes that might explain the reluctance of others to get involved in situations like the Kitty Genovese incident.
- Diffusion of responsibility. Blame for not helping is spread between the observing groups. The more people present the less effort each individual makes to help.
 - Pluralistic ignorance. Each bystander looks to the behaviour of others as a guide to his or her own behaviour when making a decision whether or not to help.
 - ❖ If one person defines the situation as an emergency and helps, we are likely to follow and give assistance. If no one offers to give help, then we may conclude that the situation is not an emergency and do nothing. In effect,.
 - ❖ In the Kitty Genovese case, since no one was seen to be intervening, this tended to define the situation as one not requiring intervention from anyone.

RESEARCH: THE EPILEPTIC SEIZURE STUDY – DARLEY AND LATANE (1968)

Procedure: They used male students seated in cubicles connected by an intercom system. They had volunteered to take part in a discussion on college life. During the interview one of the participants would be heard to have an epileptic seizure.

Condition 1 - Student plus fit victim.

Condition 2 - Student plus one other participant, plus fit victim.

Condition 3 - Student plus four other participants, plus fit victim.

Results:		
Group size	% responding at any point	Average response time (s)
1	100	52
2	85	93
5	62	166

Two other interesting findings emerged.

- The participants who believed that there were five other bystanders denied that this had an effect on their behaviour. This suggests that people are not fully aware of the factors determining whether or not they behave in a pro-social manner.
- Those participants who failed to report the emergency were not apathetic or uncaring. Most of them had trembling hands and sweaty palms. Indeed they seemed more emotionally aroused than those who did report the emergency.

Evaluation:

- This study does lack ecological validity. It was performed in a laboratory setting and the likelihood of people being in booths connected by a walkie - talkie system discussing college life is remote.
- It is hard to apply these results to face to face bystander effects.

BYSTANDER EFFECTS IN A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT. Latane and Darley (1970) found that when a person dropped 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 passenger, but only 15% when there were six others.

Evaluation: Not all studies carried out in a natural environment have found that large numbers mean little helping.

PILIAVIN et al (1969) Bystander effects in the natural environment

Aim - to investigate the effects on helping of the type of person who is in need.

Method - During a seven and a half minute journey on a busy New York subway train the 'victim' collapsed on the floor and remained there until someone helped.

They looked at the effect on help offered of

- (a) The victim appearing ill or drunk and
- (b) The race of a person (black or white).

The major findings are as follows -

- Those appearing to be ill were more likely to be helped than those appearing to be drunk
- The race of the 'victim' had little effect on the helping
- The expected diffusion of responsibility effect did not occur.
- Piliavin suggested that in lab studies participants could hear but not see the 'victim' whereas in this study participants could both see and hear the 'victim'. Participants could also see what bystanders were actually doing.
- One of the intriguing questions that came out of this study was: Do we help someone in distress because of the type of person we are or because of the type of person the victim appears to be?

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERSON IN NEED

Piliavin et al (1981) has shown that:

- We are more likely to help those who are perceived to be similar to ourselves. (Kin selection)
- We are more likely to help those we perceive as less able to help themselves e.g. children and elderly people
- We are more likely to help those to whom we are physically attracted
- We are less likely to help those who are not attractive, particularly those who are disfigured (unless we are disfigured ourselves)
- We are less likely to help those whom we perceive as responsible for their own plight.
- Men are more likely to help a member of the opposite sex, despite consistent findings that women generally show more empathy than men. (Eagly and Crowley 1986)

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POTENTIAL HELPER

Bierhoff et al (1991) explored the idea of their being a helping personality. They compared the characteristics of those who witnessed a traffic accident and provided first aid with those who did not provide help.

COMPONENTS OF THE HELPING PERSONALTY – BIERHOFF et al (1991)

THOSE WHO HELPED	THOSE WHO DID NOT HELP
Had high internal locus of control	Had low internal locus of control
Held belief in 'just' world	Held less belief in 'just' world
Felt socially responsible	Felt less socially responsible
Possessed ability to empathise	Possessed less ability to empathise
Were less egocentric	Were more egocentric

Locus of control – Individual differences in how we see the world and our ability to control it – Two extremes,

- 1) Internal locus of control – People who attribute events that happen to sources within themselves. These people tend to cope well with stressful situations.
- 2) External locus of control – People who attribute events to external sources, they are largely out of their control. Life happens to them. They handle stressful situations in a fatalistic way. They tend to suffer stress related illness and are less active in coping.

Helping may also be related to skills and training, we are more likely to help if we feel we can be successful.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITUATION

Milgram (1970) proposed a stimulus overload theory

- people from cities are so familiar with emergency situations that they treat them as everyday occurrences – these situations are less likely to attract interest and so people do not help.
- People from small towns do not witness emergencies very often, so when they occur their novelty is more likely to attract attention and help.
- ❖ Supported by numerous studies that show that small town people are more likely to help in an emergency.
- ❖ Milgram (1977) proposed that city dwellers may decline to help out of respect for the emotional and social privacy of others, as physical privacy is hard to achieve.

Latane and Darley's Cognitive Model (1970) They formulated a five stage model to explain why bystanders sometimes do and sometimes do not offer help. Latane and Darley argued that helping responses may be inhibited at any stage of the process. The model is active – cognitive **SEE P273 CARDWELL FOR MODEL**

EVALUATION OF THE MODEL

Several studies support the existence of these decision making stages.

Shotland and Huston (1979) have identified five characteristics which lead us to perceive that an event is an emergency requiring our assistance.

- Something happens which is sudden and unexpected
- There is clear threat of harm to the victim
- The harm will persist or worsen if no one intervenes
- The victim is helpless and needs outside assistance
- Some form of effective assistance is possible

Rickman (1972) has shown that the more ambiguous the situation, the less likely it is that help is offered e.g. Latane and Nida (1981) found that the helping response is inhibited when situations are manipulated to increase their ambiguity.

THE AROUSAL: COST – REWARD MODEL – PILIAVIN et al (1981) This theory suggests that when people come across someone in need they work their way through three stages before they respond or walk away:

STAGE ONE Physiological arousal

- When we see someone in distress we become physiologically aroused.
- The greater the arousal in emergencies, the more likely it is that a bystander will help.
- Gaertner and Dovidio (1977) found a strong correlation between the speed at which participants responded to an ‘emergency’ in a laboratory, and their heart rate.

STAGE TWO labelling the arousal

- Physiological arousal does not automatically produce specific emotions.
- Our cognitions about that arousal play a critical role in determining the actual emotion that we feel. Seeing someone in distress leads to either personal distress or empathic concern.
- Piliavin believed that physiological arousal was more likely to be labelled by bystanders as personally distressing, especially if they did not have a close personal relationship with the person in need of help.

STAGE THREE evaluating the consequences of helping

- Whether one helps or not depends on the outcome of weighing up the costs and benefits of helping.
- The costs may include: effort: helping may be physically demanding and time e.g. one may be late for an appointment.
- These factors are weighed against the benefits of helping such as: social approval e.g. thanks from the victim and crowd (if there is one), self esteem e.g. feeling that one is a kind person. It is argued by
- Piliavin argues that such a cost/benefit analysis is performed to reduce negative emotional arousal (egoistic) and in addition to the above factors the costs of not helping must also be assessed. These include: disapproval e.g. no rewards from victim or crowd, damaged self-esteem e.g. feelings that one is not a kind person.

EVALUATION OF THE AROUSAL: COST – REWARD MODEL

- The model suggests that the motivation for helping is to remove personal distress.
- Considerable support for the claim that people are both subjectively and physiologically aroused by the distress of others.
- These reactions appear quite early developmentally and appear across many different cultures leading to the suggestion that this is a biologically inherited capacity (Manstead et al 1995)
- There is support for the claim that arousal increases the likelihood of helping in an emergency although there is less agreement about the nature of emotion that arises from this arousal and its specific motivating properties.
- Piliavin believed that bystanders help because of personal distress. On the other hand Batson et al (1981) have argued that when bystanders believe they are similar to the victim, and identify with them, they are more likely to help out of empathetic concern rather than out of egotistic need to reduce their own distress.
- More recent developments of this model acknowledge the mechanistic nature of the earlier model, and have suggested that, contrary to the belief that helping must be due to purely egoistic reasons, ‘true altruism’ – acting with the goal of benefiting another – does exist and is part of human nature. (Piliavin and Chang (1990)

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- Comparisons of different cultures concerning their prosocial behaviour typically focus on the individual versus the communal cultures.
- Cultural perspectives in prosocial behaviour place it within a much larger moral system that binds people together in social relationships. (Miller and Bersoff, 1994).
- An example of the role that prosocial behaviour or more specifically helping behaviour plays in the establishment of social relationships can be found in the Chinese custom of *guanxixue* (*guan-shee-shwe*) meaning 'doing favours for people' (Moghaddam, 1998)
- ❖ *Guanxixue* (*guan-shee-shwe*) - Exchange of gifts, favours and banquets; the cultivation of personal relationships and networks of mutual dependence (Yang 1994)
- ❖ Through this individuals can create extensive social networks involving many others who are morally obligated to them. (Owing a favour, rather than prosocial behaviour for altruistic reasons)
- A cultural perspective of prosocial behaviour, therefore allows us to see that helping and being helped involved much more than just instrumental benefits. (E.G. at xmas we give gifts of similar value because of tit for tat values rather than altruistic reasons)
- Culture also provides the rules and norms concerning when it is appropriate to seek and offer help. If the objective of prosocial behaviour was simply to maximise benefits, then we would expect people to seek help and take it whenever it is offered.

FACTORS INVOLVED IN SEEKING AND GIVING HELP

Liking –

- Miller and Bersoff (1988) investigated the importance of liking on perceived responsibilities to help someone in need.
- The study varied the type of relationship involved (e.g. helping a child, sibling or colleague) and compared the reactions of Indian and American adults.
- American participants were less likely to take responsibility for helping someone they didn't like, compared to someone they did like.
- Indian participants' - Liking had no impact on perceptions of their moral responsibility to help in any of the relationships under consideration. They were as likely to help those they did not like as those they did.

Gender –

- Cultural rules governing gender relations may also determine how likely it is that individuals seek help. These may account for the fact that in most cultures, women seek help more than do men (Moghaddam, 1998)
- Cultural rules allow women to present themselves as 'in need' whereas males concerns for 'toughness' and 'independence' may prevent them from seeking the help of others.

Communal versus individualistic –

- Nadler (1986) compared Israeli urban dwellers (Individualistic) with those living on a kibbutz (Communal), in terms of whether they would be willing to seek help.

- Those who had been raised communally were more likely to help than those raised individualistically in a city.
- In order to test whether these results really were the product of individualistic or collectivist experiences Nadler (1993) compared these two groups with recent immigrants to Israel,
- One group from the US (deemed individualistic) and one group from the Soviet Union (deemed collectivist).
- Kibbutz dwellers most likely to seek help. The participants from the US city dwellers were less likely to seek help and the Soviet immigrants were least likely to seek help because in Russia you only asked for help from those people you felt close and intimate.

GENDER DIFFERENCES WITHIN CULTURES

Giving help –

- Girls been – more helpful – variety of different tests of prosocial behaviour
- Research findings in this area are not always consistent. Why might this be?
- Differences in prosocial behaviour between the sexes can be attributed to differences in the social roles typically adopted by men and women. (social learning theory)
- Eagly (1987) suggests that the uneven distribution of men and women in particular social roles is determined by gender role differences.
- Because of these differences in gender role behaviour, men are more predisposed to occupations where a certain amount of risk taking is the norm.
- One might assume, therefore, that men are more likely to intervene in dangerous situations,
- Supported by research (Piliavin et al 1969).
- Men appear to be more helpful than women. In a meta analysis of 99 different studies, 62 per cent of the studies found males were more helpful than females.

Seeking help –

- Cultural rules governing gender relations may also determine how likely it is that individuals seek help.
- These may account for the fact that in most cultures, women seek help more than do men (Moghaddam, 1998)
- Cultural rules allow women to present themselves as ‘in need’ whereas males concerns for ‘toughness’ and ‘independence’ may prevent them from seeking the help of others.
- Glick and Fiske (1996) coined the phrase ‘benevolent sexism’ to describe the stereotypical protective attitude that many men have towards women, which contributes both to the higher percentage of males offering help and the higher percentages of females seeking help.

URBAN – RURAL DIFFERENCES

- One of the enduring assumptions about increasing urbanisation is that it interferes with the natural patterns of living together that characterise people in smaller communities.
- Early research appeared to confirm this assumption. People living in rural areas of Massachusetts were more likely to help callers who had dialled a wrong number or to mail apparently lost postcards than were people living in the city of Boston
- More recent studies – suggest that population density (i.e. population per square mile) is a better predictor of helping than population size. These results may be explained in two ways:
- Diffusion of responsibility – higher densities would indicate a higher diffusion of responsibility and therefore lead to less individual responsibility for helping.

The information-overload hypothesis –

- Milgram 1970. People from cities are so familiar with emergency situations that they treat them like everyday occurrences
- Residents restrict their attention to personally relevant events and so the needs of strangers may go unnoticed.
- People from small towns, do not witness emergencies very often
- Novelty is more likely to attract attention and help.
- The claim is supported in numerous studies

THE MEANING OF HELPING IN DIFFERENT CULTURES

- Fiske (1991) suggest that the meaning of ‘helping’ behaviour may vary between cultures. Collett and O’Shea (1976) had foreigners ask directions to non-existent sites and two that did exist.
- In Tehran (Iran) they were frequently given directions to non-existent sites, but this did not happen in London.
- Thus in Iran, the format of helpfulness was preserved, even though the directions were not particularly helpful.
- Collett and O’Shea conclude that in some collectivist cultures, foreigners may be treated differently to locals because they are seen in some way more important and worthy of help.
- In conclusion, it is worth noting the conflicting results from laboratory and field studies of helping behaviour.
- Lab studies (particularly those involving American participants) tend to emphasise that people go out of their way to avoid seeking help from others.
- Field studies (particularly those involving Asian cultures) emphasise that people go out of their way to seek help.
- Difference in type of research may give us a false impression of cultural differences in pro-social behaviour
- Cultural influence may not be the only factor –
- American lab studies may produce demand characteristics where the participants go out of their way to accomplish the task without help.

- Although many of the studies of gender differences appear to contradict the popular gender stereotype that women are more helpful than men, we should guard against accepting this conclusion without reservation.
- Most studies concentrate on the help given to strangers in short-term encounters, and largely neglect the longer term help offered to friends and family members
- Research on gender differences in helping behaviour, therefore, does not represent all forms of helping equally.
- (Willis 1992) Lab studies tend to lack the social context of help seeking. With a limited time period, anonymous fellow participants, there would seem little point in trying to develop a social relationship in such a context. However, in the real world people actively seek the help of others to extend their social relationships (Moghaddam 1998).
- Research has generally supported the assumption that people in rural communities are more inclined to act pro-socially in some circumstances
- Milgram's information-overload hypothesis may only be valid, therefore, if additional factors are also taken into account. One of these concerns the strength of the in-group favouritism shown by members of smaller communities (which would, therefore make them less likely to help an outsider).

MEDIA INFLUENCES ON PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR. The late 50's and early 60's produced a growing concern over the portrayals of violence on television and its effect on the audience, particularly children. The majority of literature has focused on the effects of viewing violent behaviour, there has been a substantial number of studies that have provided evidence for the development of prosocial behaviour. These studies have demonstrated that children imitate forms of prosocial behaviour such as altruism, helping, when exposed to who display such behaviours.

FIELD EXPERIMENTS

Concerns about ecological validity have stimulated researchers to employ field experiments. In the typical field experiment, the investigator presents television programmes in the normal viewing setting and observes behaviour where it naturally occurs. The investigator typically controls the television diet of the participants by arranging a special series of programmes. – Good ecological validity but loss of control, cannot eliminate other factors.

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR STUDY - Stein and Freidrich (1972)

- Presented 97 preschool children with a diet of either ‘prosocial’ or ‘antisocial’ or ‘neutral’ television programmes during a four week viewing period.
- The antisocial diet consisted of 12 half hour episodes of Batman and Superman cartoons. The prosocial diet consisted of 12 episodes Mr Rogers’ Neighbourhood (a programme that stresses such themes as sharing possessions and co-operative play). The neutral diet consisted of children’s programmes that were neither violent nor prosocial.
- The children were observed through a 9 week period, which consisted of 3 weeks viewing baseline, 4 weeks of television exposure and 2 weeks of post viewing follow up.
- All observations were conducted in a naturalistic setting while the children engaged in daily school activities.
- The observers recorded various forms of behaviour that could be regarded as prosocial (helping, sharing, co-operative play) or antisocial (i.e. pushing, arguing and breaking toys).
- The overall results indicated that children who were judged to be initially somewhat aggressive became significantly more so as result of viewing Superman and Batman cartoons. Moreover, the children who had viewed the prosocial diet of Mr Rogers’ Neighbourhood were less aggressive, more co-operative and more willing to share with other children.

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR STUDY Sprafkin, Liebert and Poulos

(1975) studied 6 year olds. 3 groups

Group 1 – watched an episode of Lassie, in which a boy was seen to risk his life in order to rescue a puppy from a mine shaft.

Group 2 – saw a different episode of Lassie, in which no helping was involved.

Group 3 – saw an episode from a comedy programme.

After watching the programme, all of the children had the chance to help some distressed puppies. However to do so they had to stop playing a game in which the might have won a big prize.

Group 1 – spent an average of over 90 seconds helping the puppies.

Groups 2&3 – spent an average of less than 50 seconds

This showed they imitated specific acts they had seen.

Evaluation:

Hearold (1986) reviewed more than 100 studies on the effects of prosocial television programmes and children’s behaviour.

Conclusion –

- Such programmes generally do make children behave in more helpful ways.
- The beneficial effects of prosocial programmes on prosocial behaviour were on average almost twice as great as the adverse effects of television violence on aggressive behaviour.
- However, helping behaviour was usually assessed shortly after watching a prosocial television programme. It is not altogether clear whether prosocial television programmes can have long term effects on children's prosocial behaviour.

See also 4 dormitories

Evaluation of pro-social studies

- From their review of studies that had used this approach, Lovelace and Huston (1983) – television extracts that contained only a pro social message were effective in producing pro social behaviour – clear and unambiguous message
- However there are a number of problems with this idea.
 - (1) Finding programmes that have only pro social messages is difficult. – not like real life viewing
 - (2) There is therefore a reliance on segments to demonstrate the pro social message and this lacks ecological validity as most viewers watch whole programmes rather than only pro social segments.
 - (3) If segments are used they become artificial and contrived and cannot be generally applied to children's behaviour in real life situations.
- Many of the effects that have been produced by these interventions have been very short lived – It seems that pro social behaviour does not last very long after the segment has been viewed. Questions overall media effects
- Conversely, O'Connor (1980) observational learning from film can produce beneficial longer-term changes in behaviour.
- This study looked at children who avoided playing with other children.
- They were shown a film of children playing happily together.
- Everyone who saw the film played more with other children afterwards and this effect seemed to last for a long time. What else would need to happen to aid this process?
- There is an artificiality with this approach which may not have consequences when transferred to a real life setting where children are subjected to pro and anti social behaviour in programmes and have to make a judgement for themselves about which type of behaviour they want to imitate.

MEDIA INFLUENCES ON ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Bandura et al (1963) – Bobo Doll Experiment showed that children who had viewed an aggressive model on film were more aggressive in their play than those who had not observed an aggressive model. Early studies such as this were criticized on the grounds that aggressive behaviour was not meaningful within the social context and that the stimulus materials were not representative of available television programming.

Evaluation – Ecological validity?

It is clear from experimental studies such as these that we can produce an increase in aggressive behaviour following a fairly brief exposure to televised violence, but the

question remains over whether the heightened aggression observed in the laboratory would spill over into everyday life. To investigate this it is necessary to study the impact of violence on the media in more natural settings. – Field and natural experiments

FIELD EXPERIMENT – The effects of exposure to aggressive films

Parke et al (1977) found similar heightened aggression among both American and Belgian teenage boys following exposure to aggressive films.

- Teenage boys living in a minimum security institution were presented with a diet of either aggressive or neutral films.
- This study included a one week baseline observation period, followed by one week of film viewing, and a one week post viewing observation period.
- There were four cottages involved. Two cottages contained boys with high levels of aggressive behaviour, two cottages contained boys with low levels of aggressive behaviour.
- One of each pair of cottages was assigned to the aggressive film condition, while the other two viewed the neutral films.
- Only the boys in the initially high aggressive cottage who saw the aggressive movies increased the levels their level of aggression. Those who were exposed to neutral films reduced their level of aggression.

ERON (1984)

- They reported on a major longitudinal study.
- First of all, the amount of television watched and levels of aggressiveness were assessed in some young children.
- Then aggressiveness and the amount of television watched were reassessed in the same participants several years later.
- One of the findings was that the amount of television violence watched at a young age predicted the level of aggressiveness (measured by the number of crime convictions by the age of 30).
- This suggests that watching television violence may be one of the causes of aggressive behaviour.
- In addition there was evidence that children who were aggressive when young tended to watch more violent television programmes several years later.
- This suggests that more aggressive individuals choose to watch more violent programmes. Cause and effect?

BELSON (1978)

- What types of programme would have the most influence?
- He interviewed 1,565 13 – 17 year old boys living in London. These boys were interviewed on several occasions concerning the extent of their exposure to a selection of violent television programmes broadcast during the period 1959 – 1971.
- The level and type of violence in these programmes were rated by members of the BBC viewing panel.
- It was thus possible to obtain, for each boy, a measure of the magnitude and type of exposure to televised violence (realistic, fictional, etc.)

- When Belson compared the behaviour of boys who had a lower exposure with those with higher exposure, he found that the high-violence viewers were more involved in serious violent behaviour.
- Serious interpersonal violence is increased by the long term exposure to: (in descending order of importance)
 1. Plays or films in which personal relationships are a major theme and which feature physical or verbal violence – soap operas would feature here.
 2. Programmes in which violence seems to be thrown in for its own sake.
 3. Programmes featuring fictional violence of a realistic nature
 4. Programmes in which the violence is presented as being in a good cause
 5. Violent westerns.

See also Batman study

EVALUATION OF ANTI SOCIAL STUDIES

- Psychological research into media effects has tended to represent young media users as ‘the inept victims of products which ... can trick children into all kinds of ill advised behaviour.’
 - However, research that seeks to establish what children can and do understand about the media has shown that children can talk intelligently (and cynically) about the media
 - Comstock and Paik (1991) reviewed more than 1,000 findings on the effects of media violence. There are generally strong short term effects, especially with respect to minor acts of aggression. In addition, there seem to be rather weaker long term effects.
- 5 factors that tend to increase the effects of media violence on aggression:
1. Violence is presented as being an efficient way to getting what you want.
 2. The person behaving violently is portrayed as similar to the viewer.
 3. Violent behaviour is presented in a realistic way.
 4. The suffering of the victim is not shown.
 5. The viewer is emotionally excited while watching the violent behaviour.
- Many studies are limited to simple investigations which are characterised by elements of artificiality. Some take place in a lab or ‘natural’ setting where the researcher has conspicuously manipulated some aspect of the viewing environment. Research participants are shown specially selected or recorded clips, which lack the narrative meaning present in everyday TV productions.
 - The lack of a firm theory that might explain why the media would have such effects has led to the effects model being based on a variety of assumptions (e.g. passive viewers).
 - Each of these assumptions is problematical and has exposed the failure of the media effects commentators to embed their model in any coherent theory
 - Nearly all research on the effects of media violence has been carried out in the United Kingdom or the United States. As a result, we do not really know whether findings would be the same in other cultures.
 - Individual differences could play a part.
 - It may be that people with aggressive personalities are more drawn to such programmes and therefore the observed effects of television violence are an effect rather than a cause of aggressive tendencies.

- A second explanation is that only certain vulnerable individuals are affected by such violence. Most people can watch television without significantly increased aggressiveness.

Evaluation of the effects of viewing violence:

- There are moderating effects that could explain why the complex relationship between violence and the effect of viewing violent television programmes is often hard to establish.

Brown and Pennell (1998) were interested not in whether television influenced violent behaviour, but in the reasons why it sometimes did and sometimes did not.

- ❖ Groups of offenders and non-offenders were shown a violent film and then monitored over a 10 month period after the film. The results were as follows:
- ❖ More differences were found between offenders and non offenders than between violent offenders and non violent offenders in terms of film viewing preferences and reactions to violent films.
- ❖ Offenders spent longer watching violent video films, violent offenders were more likely than non violent offenders to prefer violent films.
- ❖ Ten months after viewing a violent video, twice as many offenders as non offenders recalled and identified with vindictively violent characters.
- ❖ The findings suggest that individuals from violent families are more prone to offending behaviour and having a preference for violent films.

Conclusion

- Media violence may be demonstrated to have an effect in some people, this is more the result of individual differences in the viewers than media violence alone.
- These differences include an individual's perception of and preference for violence, the level of the viewers moral development and family background

SOME POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR MEDIA EFFECTS

Cognitive printing

- Berkowitz (1984) suggests aggressive ideas in violent films can activate other aggressive thoughts in viewers through their association in memory pathways. Immediately after a violent film, the viewer is primed to respond aggressively because a network of memories involving aggression is retrieved.

Learning novel forms of behaviour

- It is widely believed that people are more violent because they learn to be violent from their parents, their peers and the mass media.
- **However**
- Bandura (1986) has argued that television can shape the forms that aggressive behaviour takes. Television can teach skills that may be useful for committing acts of violence, and it can direct the viewer's attention to behaviours that they have not considered.

Vicarious reinforcement and legitimations

- Bandura has also suggested that television might inform viewers of the positive and negative consequences of violent behaviour. Audiences can be expected to imitate violent behaviour that is successful in gaining the model's objectives in fictional and non fictional programmes.
- When violence is justified or left unpunished on television, the viewer's guilt or concern about consequences is reduced.

- It is not at all clear, however, what message is learned from viewing violence on television. In real life, violent people often evade punishment but on television most are seen to be punished so one could argue that television violence might reduce the incidence of criminal violence, since crime doesn't pay for most TV criminals.

PROBLEMS WITH THE EFFECTS MODEL OF MEDIA VIOLENCE

- The media effects model takes the problem of explaining violent behaviour backwards – beginning with the media content and using that to explain the behaviour of offenders.
- To explain violence in society, researchers should perhaps, begin with those who perpetrate it.
- Psychological research into media effects has tended to represent young media users as 'the inept victims of products which ... can trick children into all kinds of ill advised behaviour.' Gauntlett (1998)
- However, research that seeks to establish what children can and do understand about the media has shown that children can talk intelligently (and cynically) about the media - Buckingham (1996)
- Because effective studies of media effects require significant amounts of time and money, many studies are limited to much simpler investigations which are characterised by elements of artificiality.
- Some take place in a lab or 'natural' setting where the researcher has conspicuously manipulated some aspect of the viewing environment. Research participants are shown specially selected or recorded clips, which lack the narrative meaning present in everyday TV productions.
- The lack of a firm theory that might explain why the media would have such effects has led to the effects model being based on a variety of assumptions. Each of these assumptions is problematical and has exposed the failure of the media effects commentators to embed their model in any coherent theory.