
Helping during the Coronavirus pandemic

— HUL261: Tutorial —

Quick recap

Prosocial behaviours versus **altruism**

When do we help someone? The bystander effect and the diffusion of responsibility (Latané & Darley, 1970)

Whom do we help? The role of social categorisation: helping ingroup versus outgroup members (Levine et al., 2005)

Why do we help others? Kin selection, norm of reciprocity, social norms, empathy, cost-benefit analyses

The COVID pandemic



How young volunteers are helping the needy in Mumbai during the coronavirus crisis.



Migrant workers and daily wage earners have been severely hit by the lockdown



Salvation Army
Meals on Wheels
Save the Children
Khalsa Aid
Ventilator Project



Salvation Army meals Image: Block (2020)

Can the social identity approach help us understand such instances of helping?

Recall: **personal identity** and **social identity**

Individual characteristics and **demographic characteristics** are important predictors of prosocial behaviours.

But events like pandemics are marked by **rapid increase in instances of solidarity (as well as hate)**: analyses focusing on the individual level- considering stable individual characteristics- fall short of explaining such changes (Ntontis & Rocha, 2020).

The COVID pandemic and common fate

Pandemic-like events tend to be **collectively experienced**:

Plague was the concern of all of us.... Thus, for example, a feeling normally as *individual* as the ache of separation from those one loves suddenly became a feeling in which all *shared alike* and – together with fear – the greatest affliction of the long period of exile that lay ahead. (Camus, *The Plague*, 1947, p. 61, emphasis added)

Image from: *Together Apart: The Psychology of COVID-19* (2020)

The pandemic was a **collective event**: at least in the initial few months, COVID was a threat to all of us regardless of our caste, class, religion, race, nationality, etc.

Initial conceptualisations of the pandemic, though vastly varied, shared a sense of common fate among all humans: all of us are under threat from a common entity- the virus (“We are all in this together”).

It created a sense of **common fate** among us: being in a situation where the same fate befalls all of us becomes a source of an **emergent shared social identity** which promotes giving support and help to others (Drury, 2018).

When and why do we help in a pandemic? The role of shared social identity

Threats make social identity salient and increase solidarity, cooperation and norm compliance within the group (Dovidio et al., 2020).

At the beginning of the pandemic, our identities as humans or as Indians (or Brits, Americans, etc.) were much more salient and contributed to the large-scale solidarity seen at the beginning of the pandemic.

As the pandemic progressed, do you recall any **changes to salient social identities** and their implications for helping?

Threat consolidates group boundaries and increases exclusion between groups (Dovidio et al., 2020).

For 'us' to exist, there has to be 'they'.

Are 'they' a source of threat?

When not: Ingroup favouritism but not outgroup derogation

When 'they' are perceived as a threat: e.g., Asian-Americans in the US

Balancing ingroup solidarity with outgroup exclusion: how inclusively or exclusively do we define our ingroup? (Dovidio et al., 2020)

What is the source of the threat? Is it within the nation or outside it?

Recategorizing them >>>> Decategorizing them (Gaertner et al., 1993)

References

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