



## Piliavin (1969) ~ Good Samaritan: An Underground Phenomenon

### Extended Answer Exam Questions

1. The Social Approach explores the influence of factors in our social environment. Describe how Piliavin used the New York Subway to investigate helping behaviour. (4 marks)

Piliavin used the Subway experiment to explore the concept of bystander behaviour, to see if people would help someone in need. They staged a situation where a confederate would play the victim and collapse in a carriage on a moving train. The victim was either playing the part drunk with a brown paper bag or ill/frail with a white cane. The victim collapsed in a 'critical area' and if help was not provided they had another male confederate acting as a model who would intervene. Two female observers recorded the rate of helping and whether factors such as age or gender influenced the likelihood of help. Piliavin found that in 95% of cases spontaneous help was received and 90% of the helpers were male. They were able to conclude that theories such as diffusion of responsibility and bystander apathy did not occur. This suggests that people are more helpful in real life emergency situations than first thought.

2. In the Social Approach many researchers use experiments to investigate behaviour; some in artificial conditions in the laboratory and some in real life situations. With reference to both Piliavin and Milgram evaluate the use of field and lab experiments. (8 marks)

Field experiments such as Piliavin et al are conducted in natural environments where the researchers investigate behaviour in real life settings. For example, Piliavin explored helping behaviour by studying people travelling on the New York subway. An advantage of this is that people are more likely to display natural behaviour which adds validity to the findings; the real life setting gives the experiment high ecological validity. However, a weakness of this method is that they cannot replicate this in exactly the same way and find consistent or similar results, which means that reliability is low. For example, it would be highly unlikely to get the exact same findings from Piliavin's study if it were to be repeated again. In contrast laboratory experiments have much more control over the independent variable and are conducted in artificial settings to control extraneous variables. For example Milgram was able to manipulate the presence of the legitimate authority

figure in the lab, and used controlling verbal prods to encourage participants to continue with the experiment. An advantage of this method is that reliability is high as the researchers have lots of control and can standardise procedures for all participants making it a fair test. However, as the experiment is conducted in an artificial environment there is a greater risk of demand characteristics where people change their natural behaviour to act how they assume the researchers want. This lowers the ecological validity of the findings.

