A taxonomy of psychological mechanisms that underlie helping behavior

**Föreläsare**  
Arvid Erlandsson, Linköpings universitet

**Titel**  
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Rum 357, Frescati Hagväg 14, plan 3.

**Ansvarig avdelning**  
Personlighets-, social- och utvecklingspsykologi.

**Presentation/abstract**  
Why do we engage in costly helping behavior such as donating money to charity or signing up for volunteer work? Even if limiting ourselves to human helping, this question can surely be investigated from many very diverse perspectives such as evolutionary psychology or neuropsychology. Here, we are however primarily interested in the conscious psychological processes (e.g. emotions, thoughts and beliefs) that can be experienced by humans when they are faced with helping situations, and that can increase or decrease the likelihood (or magnitude) of helping behavior.

Based on existing literature about helping motives, I will tentatively suggest a taxonomy including six distinguishable psychological mechanisms: (1) Emotional reactions elicited by need situation, (2) Perceived impact of helping, (3) Perceived moral obligation to help, (4) Perceived attractiveness of beneficiary and/or requester, (5) Anticipated consequences (for oneself) if helping, and (6) Anticipated consequences (for oneself) if not helping.

Each of the mechanisms have been linked to specific situational antecedents and dispositional tendencies, and also shown to predict helping behavior. After introducing the taxonomy, I will present own experimental research that directly or indirectly can be linked to the psychological mechanisms.