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Upfront

**Hardwired to Help: Both humans and chimpanzees naturally
lend a hand. By Alana Conner Snibbe**

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Hardwired to Help

Both humans and chimpanzees naturally lend a hand

The helpfulness of chimpanzees like Alexandra and Annet, as well as of human infants, suggests that chimpanzees and humans evolved to be altruistic.



While economists and biologists scratch their heads over why people help others at their own expense, the subjects in a recent experiment scratched their heads for an altogether different reason – to groom their glossy coats. The subjects, young chimpanzees at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, showed for the first time that humans are not the only altruistic animals. Instead, in a series of experiments, the chimpanzees helped their caretaker without command, without reward, and at some cost to themselves – fitting the very definition of altruistic. Because chimpanzees are one of humans' closest evolutionary relatives, the studies' researchers, Felix Warneken and

Michael Tomasello, conclude that both people and chimpanzees' helpfulness is a hardwired biological tendency.

In their article in the March 3, 2006, issue of *Science*, Warneken and Tomasello similarly report that 18-month-old humans routinely helped a stranger reach his goals in a parallel set of studies. Because children this young have very little training in the art of giving aid, their actions provide even more evidence that humans have a natural yen for altruism.

"There are people out there who think you have to work against nature to create helpful, caring individuals," says Warneken, a Ph.D. student at the Max Planck Institute. "But this doesn't seem to be right. We have a biological

predisposition to be helpful and caring."

Scientists have long thought that humans are the only truly altruistic species, writes UCLA anthropologist Joan Silk in a commentary accompanying the research report. Indeed, humans' helpfulness is the fly in the ointment of two major theories of human behavior. Evolutionary theory, which assumes that life is about disseminating one's own genes, can't account for why people assist others who are not genetically related to them. And economics, which assumes that the point of existence is to

maximize profit and self-interest, can't figure out why people give away vast sums of time, money, and effort with no hope of personal gain.

Warneken and Tomasello, co-director of the Max Planck Institute, complicate this picture by showing that it isn't just humans who are reflexively helpful. In their experiments, chimpanzees saw their caretaker drop an object, such as a lid or a sponge. In half the trials – the experimental condition – the caretaker made it clear that she wanted the object by unsuccessfully reaching for it. For the other half of the trials – the control condition – she intentionally threw the object on the floor. The chimpanzees helped the caretaker by retrieving the object, but not all of the

The Enterprising Type

How the personalities of entrepreneurs and managers differ

time. They were more likely to help in the experimental condition, when the caretaker showed that she wanted the object, than in the control condition. "It's not like fetch with a dog," says Warneken. "The chimpanzees were sensitive to the person's goal."

The researchers also explored how 18-month-old human infants would act under similar conditions. Like the chimpanzees, human infants helped the experimenter pick up accidentally dropped objects, but not intentionally thrown ones. And they did so without being asked, praised, or rewarded. Unlike their hairy counterparts, however, the human infants were able to aid the experimenter with more complex tasks, like pointing out a second way to get inside a box into which he has dropped a spoon. Human infants were also quicker to help.

Combining these findings, Warneken concludes that "the common ancestor to chimpanzees and humans already had rudimentary helping skills. And so not much moral instruction is necessary to develop them."

So why haven't we all become saintly Nobel Peace Prize nominees? Warneken speculates that part of growing up is learning not to be helpful all the time: "It's not a good thing to be altruistic to everyone. You wouldn't want to be altruistic to a cheater, or to benefit someone who doesn't benefit the group. You become more selective and understand when it's appropriate to perform this behavior."

He also points out that our philanthropic urges are not our only tendency. We also have a strong selfish streak. "But at least under some circumstances," he adds, "we are automatically altruistic."

—Alana Conner Snibbe

"THE CORE IS PERSONALITY, A TEMPERAMENT THAT SIMPLY CAN'T stop." That's partly how Ashoka's CEO Bill Drayton defined "social entrepreneur" in an interview with *SSIR* (see our Spring 2004 issue).

Entrepreneurs do indeed have distinct personalities, conclude Hao Zhao of the University of Chicago at Illinois and Scott E. Seibert of the Melbourne (Australia) Business School. They report their findings in the March 2006 issue of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Using meta-analysis, a sophisticated technique that integrates the findings of many different studies, the authors compared thousands of entrepreneurs and managers on the "big five" factors of personality. Many psychologists think that these five factors – conscientiousness, openness to experience, extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness – are the basic ingredients of human temperament.

"What was most surprising," says Seibert, an associate professor, "is that we found differences between managers and entrepreneurs on four out of the five dimensions. This goes against the conventional wisdom of the field, which had concluded that personality does not contribute to whether people become entrepreneurs. We said that no one has done a really good job at this question, and so we wanted to provide empirical evidence, instead of just argument."

As Drayton's definition foreshadowed, the researchers found that entrepreneurs score higher than managers on conscientiousness, which reflects how motivated people are to achieve their goals. "The entrepreneur simply knows in a very deep way that 'I have got to change the whole society,'" Drayton says.

Entrepreneurs are also more open to experience, which means that they are more curious and creative, and are less neurotic, which means that they are less anxious and hostile and more self-confident and calm.

Entrepreneurs score lower on agreeableness than do managers, however, suggesting that they are less trusting, forgiving, and caring. "This reflects the fact that entrepreneurs are a little manipulative," explains Seibert. "It's not that they're always uncooperative. They just know how to act to achieve their goals."

Managers and entrepreneurs are equally extraverted. Previous research suggests that both groups are more extraverted than the average person, notes Seibert.

He recommends that although personality is hard to change, aspiring entrepreneurs could apply these findings to a "bootstrapping strategy": "If you know what works for entrepreneurs, try to model the behavior yourself," Seibert says. For example, because entrepreneurs are more conscientious, "you can try to do more of the things that conscientious people do – set moderately difficult goals, act responsibly and reliably, have strong moral character, do a lot more forward planning, and strive for feedback," he says.

He also notes that "while certain personality traits may increase your odds of becoming an entrepreneur, they do not determine whether you can be an entrepreneur." Personality comprises only a fraction of the ingredients that go into the making of an entrepreneur. Others include good connections, well-timed chutzpah, and that perennial predictor, dumb luck.

—Alana Conner Snibbe