Understanding the Development of Children’s Altruistic Behavior: Children as Natural Helpers

Dr. Karin Machluf
Assistant Professor of Psychology
Children are not inherently selfish or pure altruists - they are opportunistic altruists.
Altruism & Prosocial Behavior

- **Prosocial Behavior**: Defined as any behavior that an individual engages in to benefit another (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006).

- **Altruism**: prosocial- but at a cost to oneself

- **Not homogenous**: (Tomasello, 2009)
  - Helping
  - Cooperating
  - Sharing/Donating/Giving

  Infancy and Early Childhood ➔ Childhood ➔ Adulthood
Infants and toddlers start off as particularly helpful and altruistic.
Maybe child notices *helplessness*

What about when the child sees that the adult *is not helpless* (just really... clumsy)
Maybe, the child was just *bored*

What happens when child has other options, such as toys?
Children begin to share and help before adults begin reinforcing (i.e., rewards, compliments) such behaviors.

In fact, rewarding behaviors actually decreases helping or sharing behaviors!
Childhood is a little more complicated

Ultimatum Game
Childhood is a little more complicated

Ultimatum Game
Decisions, Decisions

Ultimatum Game
 Ultimatum Game

Child Ultimatum Game video- V5
Children are prosocial, and they will incur cost to punish!
Ultimatum Game may be testing fairness and social reaction to fairness
To Test Altruism, Need a New Task

Recipient is not present

Unilateral; recipient can only accept.

Dictator Game
Dictator Game

- Giving to someone who is not in front of them!

Giving Across Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Mean Number of Stickers Donated out of 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4- year olds</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- year olds</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9- year olds</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dictator Game

You may be thinking, “That’s pretty Impressive!”
Even though no recipient, the Experimenter in the Room
Hold That Thought…

Number of children who gave zero stickers in an anonymous dictator game!

Non-Giving across Age

- 4-year olds: 25
- 6-year olds: 12
- 9-year olds: 5
Vary Recipients

Giving Across Various Recipients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Stickers Shared with Recipients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Friend: 70%
- Non-friend: 50%
- Stranger: 30%
Examine Individual Differences

- Differences among Socio-Economic Status (SES)

Giving Across Age and SES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Lower SES</th>
<th>Higher SES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-year olds</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-year olds</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-year olds</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean Number of Stickers Donated out of 10
Examine Individual Differences

- Number of children who gave zero stickers when separated by SES

**Non-Giving across Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Lower SES</th>
<th>Higher SES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-year olds</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-year olds</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-year olds</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: Red - Lower SES, Yellow - Higher SES
Unnatural Experimental Setting- What about real life giving?
Insight from Adult Research

Frequency of Donations Across Conditions

- **Given $20**
- **Asked to Split**
- **Dictator Game**
Adults can be pretty... non-altruistic
What about Children?

- Anonymous – I left the room!
- 3-, 4-, and 5- year olds
- Played games to *earn* their resources (stickers)
- Modified Dictator Game- situation where they *could* donate

- Three recipient groups:
  - Non-genetic in-group - classmate
  - Non-genetic out-group – child from another school
  - Genetic in group- family member
To Donate or Not to Donate?

Non-Giving Across Age Groups

Number of Children (out of 35)

- Donated at Least One: 21 total
- Donated Zero: 14 total

Younger Children
- Donated at Least One: 14 total
- Donated Zero: 7 total

Older Children
- Donated at Least One: 7 total
- Donated Zero: 7 total
Younger children donate more than older children. Family get more than anyone.

Age Group $F(1,16) = 7.73, p<.05, \eta^2_p = .326$
Better than Adults!
But older children are already donating less than younger children!
Conclusions

- We are neither selfish or altruists.
- We are both!
- We are MUCH more altruistic when others are present
- We are MUCH less altruistic when no one is around and we believe no one will know
- We are more altruistic to people we know and ESPECIALLY to family members!
- We are least altruistic to people we don’t know
Thank you!

Dr. Karin Machluf
Assistant Professor of Psychology

For a Copy of this Presentation and the References of this work, please email me at kxm5600@psu.edu
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Let’s start with the first set of slides
Quotations are commonly printed as a means of inspiration and to invoke philosophical thoughts from the reader.
This is a slide title

- Here you have a list of items
- And some text
- But remember not to overload your slides with content

Your audience will listen to you or read the content, but won’t do both.
BIG CONCEPT

Bring the attention of your audience over a key concept using icons or illustrations
White
Is the color of milk and fresh snow, the color produced by the combination of all the colors of the visible spectrum.

Black
Is the color of coal, ebony, and of outer space. It is the darkest color, the result of the absence of or complete absorption of light.
In two or three columns

**Yellow**
Is the color of gold, butter and ripe lemons. In the spectrum of visible light, yellow is found between green and orange.

**Blue**
Is the colour of the clear sky and the deep sea. It is located between violet and green on the optical spectrum.

**Red**
Is the color of blood, and because of this it has historically been associated with sacrifice, danger and courage.
A picture is worth a thousand words

A complex idea can be conveyed with just a single still image, namely making it possible to absorb large amounts of data quickly.
Want big impact?

Use big image
Use charts to explain your ideas

Blue  Green  Yellow
Or use Diagrams to explain complex ideas

Sample text

Sample text

Sample text

Diagram featured by http://slidemodel.com
And tables to compare data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
89,526,124

Whoa! That’s a big number, aren’t you proud?
89,526,124$
That’s a lot of money

185,244 users
And a lot of users

100%
Total success!
Our process is easy

- first
- second
- last
Let’s review some concepts

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- Light grey **#979cb8**
- Blue **#01abcf**
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