

Variability in infant helping and sharing behaviors across the second and third years of life:

Differential roles of target and socialization.

THE GIST: At around 2 years old, children can share and help. We were curious how these prosocial behaviors arise depending on who children are helping and the parent's encouragement of the behavior. We observed infants from different races and socioeconomic backgrounds as they interacted with either their parents or random experimenters at the ages of 1-2 and 2-3. Overall, infants showed a preference towards helping and sharing with parents, and this preference seemed stronger with older children between the ages of 2 and 3.

THE TAKEAWAY: Children have a special connection with their parents. Most children learn about the world and start socializing with their parents— learning kindness, helping, and sharing from their example— and that history can shape children moving forward. Parents can provide that foundation of love and trust as children learn the skills to help others. It is interesting exploring children's selective helping as they continue develop new behaviors and do things more intentionally.