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CHILD HELPERS

A Multidisciplinary Perspective

David F. Lancy
Utah State University



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Abstract: In most of the worlds' distinct cultures, children – from toddlerhood – eagerly volunteer to help others with their chores. Laboratory research in child psychology supports the claim that the helper “stage” is biologically based. This Element examines the development of helping in varied cultural contexts, in particular, reviewing evidence for supportive environments in the ethnographic record versus an environment that extinguishes the drive to be helpful in WEIRD children. In the last section, the benefits of the helper stage are discussed, specifically the development of an ability to work and learn collaboratively.

Keywords: child, helper, developmental stage, ethnographic studies, lab experiments

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