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Interactions between adult males and adolescent males in wild chimpanzees

When adolescent male chimpanzees begin to leave their mothers and follow certain adult males of the community, their future reproductive success depends on successfully establishing themselves in the adult male group and attaining a high social rank. Adolescents can learn essential adult behavior by associating with or observing adult males; any adolescent that is able to quickly learn such behaviors and form positive associations with adult males could have significant advantages. By following their fathers adolescent males could learn essential adult male behavior and benefit from more positive interactions such as grooming and playing. In addition, the adolescent may experience less aggression if their father is more tolerant of their presence and/or if their father serves as a buffer between the aggression of unrelated adults and the adolescent. Fathers could in turn benefit from helping their male offspring survive and successfully reproduce within the group. For this project, the affiliative and aggressive interactions between the adult males and adolescent males were extracted and quantified from long term behavioral notes of the Kasekela chimpanzee community located in Gombe National Park, Tanzania. These interactions will be evaluated to determine whether adolescent males preferentially associate and interact with fathers over unrelated adult males. These results will help resolve debate regarding the importance of kin selection in vertebrates as well as test the prevailing belief that primates do not distinguish paternal kin.



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