Bounded Helping: How morality and intergroup relations shape children’s reasoning about helping

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Abstract:
Why we help and care about others has preoccupied philosophers at least since Aristotle and has received systematic empirical attention since the 20th century. Although developmental work has shown how children’s abilities and dispositions influence their prosocial reasoning, we know very little about who children might want to help and why they might not want to help others. The research presented in this book takes important steps to incorporate the influence of group behavior and social context into the developmental study of helping. Results show that children (8-13 years) strongly value helping others, but view helping group members as more obligated than helping non-group members. Furthermore, children take into account that helping offers an opportunity to present oneself favorably. The results also show that empathy influences children’s intention to help and stimulating children to take into account how a recipient of help feels, overpowers group bias in the intention to help.