

# Biological physical anthropology (primates)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## **Biological/Physical Anthropology (Primates)**

Rainforest Chimps: Cooperative Hunters What issue or problem do the s) address? Through their observations of the behavior of chimps in the rainforests of the Tai National Park in the Ivory Coast, Boesch and Achermann address the issue that cooperative hunting and sharing played a role in the evolution of hominids, and were precursors of the social systems which characterize human life. They attribute this cooperative behavior to rainforest chimps, and contest the argument that cooperative behavior originated only after the change of habitat from the rainforests to the savannahs.

2. Why do you think this topic important to physical/biological anthropology?

This topic is of obvious importance in the ongoing debate on the theories of human evolution. The observation of cooperative hunting and food sharing behavior in rainforest chimps questions the generally accepted theory that hominid evolution is linked to the drying of the environment and the change of habitat from dense forests to open savannahs. It questions the theory that it was savannah life which led to the evolution of complex hominid behavior.

3. What specific evidence, facts and/or examples do the author(s) offer to support their argument?

Boesch and Achermann support their argument by citing their observations of the hunting and sharing behavior of the Tai rainforest chimps, and comparing this with Jane Goodall's observation of the savannah chimps at Gombe. Group hunting comprises 92% of rainforest chimps' hunting, while savannah chimps demonstrate only 36% of group hunting. Even in the event of group hunting, rainforest chimps coordinate their behavior 63% of the

time, while savannah chimps coordinate their group hunting behavior only in 7% of cases. Likewise, food sharing is more prevalent among the rainforest chimps than the savannah chimps. Again, the Tai chimps show nineteen different ways of tool usage and six different ways of methods of tool manufacture, in comparison with sixteen different uses and three methods of manufacture in savannah chimps.

4. Do the author address any contrary evidence or the opinions/work of others that run counter the author(s) claims?

The authors address the claim of anthropologists who state that it was the transformation of rainforests into dry, open savannahs, due to climate change, which began the process of hominization and the hypothesis that it was the difficulties of savannah life which resulted in the evolution of more complex behavior, and a hominid evolution distinct from that of rainforest primates. Boesch and Achermann counter the above claim by arguing that, to the contrary, it is rainforest chimps who demonstrate more complex skills in hunting and in the usage of tools and in the overall sophistication of their behavior.

5. What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of the author(s) argument?

The authors' arguments rest on the must-be-acknowledged strength of their documented, first-hand observation of rainforest chimps, in comparison with Goodall's documented observation of savannah chimps. The Tai chimps demonstrate more cooperative, coordinated hunting behavior, share their food more often, and are more dexterous in the manufacture and usage of tools, than their savannah counterparts. A perceived weakness in Boesch and Achermanns' stand, which they creditably concede and plan to redress, is the absence of their own data on savannah chimps.

6. What are your conclusions? Do you agree or disagree with the author?

Why?

Boesch and Achermann' argument that the process of hominization may have begun independently of the drying of the environment is definitely worthy of consideration, in the light of the conclusive evidence they present. The cooperative, coordinated hunting behavior of the rainforest chimps, their dexterity in tool usage and their widely prevalent food sharing habits all buttress the argument that sophisticated hominid behavior could have evolved in the rainforest, independent of adaptation to savannah life. More detailed study by the authors of the marked differences in hunting strategy between rainforest and savannah chimps is called for before a definitive conclusion can be reached.

Works Cited.

Boesch, Christophe and Boesch-Achermann, Hedwige. Dim Forest, Bright Chimps.

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