

It is easy to concentrate on what divides us in a world of Trump, Brexit, and populist politics. Every single day, commentators either on social media or newspapers describe how different our identities are and how incompatible we are. However, what if all these discourses are just small differences. What if we all are genetically destined to be similar either in our relationships with others, our friendships and even in our cultures?

Let us have a look at our evolutionary road map and gain knowledge about the mutual humanity that brings us all together irrespective of our citizenship, gender, religion or race. Taking the perceptions of Professor Nicholas A. Christakis from his social science laboratory; Professor Christakis studied how our past evolution has shaped our present and he observed the psychological cornerstones of all humans in the society throughout history.

Humans come already-made with a blueprint for social behavior.

We do not have to use words to understand ourselves. When Christakis was a young boy, he was one of the only Greek children to arrive on the Turkish island of Büyükada. Irrespective of this, Christakis and his younger brother immediately made new friends and they spent their long summer on the island with the local boys. They even used pinecones as a form of weapons to wage war against the rival groups. A few years later, this different-cultural group of friends was reflected on by the author.

The author who is a researcher of social behavior concluded that these friendships formed during his childhood were as a result of the mental manual of social skills, instincts, and tendencies which directs the behavior of all human being in the world. Therefore, there is a universal blueprint for social behavior that is present in our genes.

These instincts assist us in forming societies which can be as small as a group of Turkish and Greek schoolboys united together for adventure or as big as sovereign states that consist of hundreds of millions of people. This universal of social tendencies was called social suite by the

author which includes the capacity for love and friendship, as well as teaching and learning from others.

Unfortunately, the social suite also consists of a tendency to favor your own “group.”

A study conducted in 2011 showed that children aged 5 years wearing a red T-shirt liked and considered other children that also wore red T-shirts and they discriminated against children wearing different colors. This bias even happened when the children were told that the colored shirts were given at random. Studies like these show us that humans have an attraction for “likeness” irrespective of how small we see the likeness.

Even though we identify people similar to us, we do not consider all of them to be the same. Every one of us is born with the skill to grow and identify Individual human identities. Consider the universal human practice of using personal names. Even though this might seem insignificant, identifying individuals is the core of other human traits like love and friendship. If we had no way to discriminate between two people, we will have no way of choosing one person over the other or returning back the favors our friends do for us.

The fortunes of shipwreck survivors demonstrate the social suite in action.

The nature versus nurture argument is almost as old as science. It is very hard to explain whether a behavior is due to genes or environment. Sadly, social behavior is no different. This leads to the question of how can we be certain that the social suites of human behaviors are really inbuilt evolutionary adaptations, instead of impulsive responses to the situation we find ourselves in?

To be sure, we would have to carry out life-long experiments where humans were brought up in an environment without any previous society or older people and study how these unlucky guinea pigs associated with each other. However, such experiments are not possible due to ethical reasons. Nevertheless, shipwrecks can be used as a substitution for such experiments.

The survivors of shipwrecks for example mostly find themselves on deserted islands without any human society or infrastructure.

Let us consider two ships that crashed in 1864 the Invercauld and the Grafton on different sides of Auckland Island off the coast of New Zealand. None of the group knew about the others present at the other side of the Island and their tactics for survival were different. The Grafton survivors showed almost all the social suite of behaviors with everyone helping each other out from the point their ship sank. For instance, the Captain's Mate would have died if the rest of the crew didn't work together to pull him out of the water with ropes.

On the other hand, the survivors of the Invercauld left the weakest man to die within a few days of coming ashore. The fate of the Invercauld survivors reduced further. The men split up and left the weak and the sick and they even ate a person. By the time they came to rescue them, only three out of 19 survivors were remaining.

As for the Grafton community, they continued as they have started by working together and helping each other survive. They did not only remain as a group, but they also left no one behind which showed their close social bonds. They even had a makeshift setup while waiting for their rescue to come. They engaged in teaching and learning which is an essential social suite behavior. This devotion to social behavior paid off at the end and all the men that survived to the shore made it out of the Island alive.

These two different communities evidently show the evolutionary advantage of the social suite in helping one chance of survival. Additionally, it appears that some humans have a blueprint for social behaviors such as cooperation, teaching, and helping others, which guides their behavior even when they are in places outside of their normal environments.

In terms of relationships, love is universal – and monogamy is beneficial.

What features of sexual relationships are universal? Not until recently, the author thought kissing was universal. Actually, he was wrong. For example, the Tsonga people of Mozambique

do not kiss one another. The Tsongas felt this act was strange and why would two people want to exchange saliva which carries germs. This made the author think about; what are the different traits of sexual relationships that are present among all cultures?.

The answer is quite simple, love.

According to scientific terms, love is described as the strong emotional connection to one's partner which is more than the feelings of an ordinary sexual nature. It is believed by some experts that the love developed among couples was as a result of an evolutionary accident. According to them, humans initially only felt an emotional attraction for their children. Over time, this love for their offspring reached their partners. This process is called exaptation which is the process where one evolutionary adaptation is repurposed into another.

The evolution of human romantic love is similar to the evolution of that amongst birds. It is believed that birds grew their feathers to keep themselves warm first, later these were repurposed to assist them to fly. This is similar in humans, they felt love for their offspring first and later they felt love for their sexual partners too. The evolutionary explanation for romantic love maybe that it assisted the family to stay together during the periods of pregnancy and child-rearing, thereby improving their offspring's survival.

Remarkably, it is just the last two thousand years that monogamy has taken over polygyny as the most common form of romantic relationships. How can this change be explained? It is believed by the anthropologists that monogamy has specific benefits in society. For example, in a monogamous community, every man can have a partner. On the contrary, in a polygynous society, most men are left without wives. Most importantly, these men without wives have no hope of having a family or children of their own tend to invest less in their future.

Due to this, they are more likely to engage in antisocial behavior like violence, theft, and rape. These bad behaviors weaken society as a whole, lessening its resources and making the society less productive. Evidence of such behavior can be seen in countries like China where sex-selective abortion practices have produced a skewed gender ratio, leading to a higher number of men than women. Evidence shows that these 'leftover' young men, tend to live more violent lives and die younger than their married counterparts.

Friendships assist people through rough times and are expressed in various ways.

On the 17th of December 2015, a 15-year-old Zavien Dobson was sitting on his porch with three of his friends in Tennessee, when a car came towards them and shot them. Zavien didn't feel reluctant. He threw himself on top of his female friends and he died. All thanks to him, all his friends survived this irrelevant attack. Due to Zavien's sacrifice, the author started wondering who do you feel love for our friends?

Evidence also indicated that friendship is a universal element of almost all human societies. Also, it occurs that most of the cultures share the same core significance of friendship namely, affection, trust, and mutual aid. Another universal trait of friendship seems to be the embracing of our vulnerability. For example, you may not see any issue with being teased by your friend due to the fact that you trust them that they mean well.

However, not all friendship traits are universal. In the United States, for instance; important features of friendship include sharing personal information and constantly socializing with each other; these features are not common in all cultures. Physical contact is seen as an expression of friendship in some other parts of the world. For example in the year 2005, many Americans were shocked to see the US President George W. Bush holding hands with Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. However, to the Saudi Arabians, this was a natural sign of friendship.

Definitely, friendship appears in different forms and sizes. However, regardless of its different expressions around the world, why do humans take part in it at all?

It is believed by experts that, the skill to develop and sustain friendships gave our forefathers an evolutionary benefit. During the early years of human societies, lack of food, poor weather, illness, and injuries were the threats affecting humans and their offspring's chances of survival. It was essential to have relationships with people if you wanted to survive these threats just in case you need assistance in times of need. There needed to be someone who they could rely on who was not expecting something in return.

Therefore, you needed real friends, which is still the situation in today's world. For instance, in poorer American communities; people are more likely to use their friends for their childcare, loans and house repairs than the middle-class communities.

Technological advancement has paved up new ways of studying cooperative behavior.

Amazon launched software in 2005 that made them hire up to thousands of part-time workers in order to finish their minor online work. This huge platform is called Amazon Mechanical Turk which allows companies to hire workers, record the tasks they do and pay them with respect to the task completed. Before long, it was understood by social scientists that they could use the Turk system to set up artificial "communities" of users and see how they would react to it, whether individually or as a group, to the works set up by researchers.

This huge online platform created a way to explore the social suite of behaviors for the author and his laboratory. He and his team learned whether the users of Turk would show these social behaviors online or whether this new environment would make them act in new ways.

The author studies were revealing when it came to one of the most unique human characteristics of all which is cooperation. In one of his studies, his team created 40 different social networks and Turk users were randomly selected into each one. Also, each an everyone in the network had a unique set of neighbors. The researchers gave one person from each group of the network a sum of money each round. The researchers told them they could keep the money for themselves or give it to their neighbors.

If they choose the second option, the neighbor would receive a double gift. This means that their neighbors would be better off and they will remain poorer. Also, they were told that their neighbor can choose to give them back the money in the second round meaning the amount would be doubled. By constructing the study in this way, each network had a choice of cooperating and making more money or not cooperate and make less.

Therefore, what did Turk users choose?

Cooperation was the norm in those networks where the members donated to their neighbors. However, in the groups where each person kept the money to themselves, defection was the norm. This indicates that although cooperation appears to be a natural human behavior, it is delicate and will perish under certain circumstances.

A lot of other species show the same social tendencies and behaviors that humans show.

Humans share a lot of similarities with animals. Up until 1964, scientists were confused about how to fix the damaged caused to the heart valves by cardiovascular disease. Not until Alain Carpentier, a French surgeon tried changing the human valves with valves from pigs. Amazingly, his idea worked and it is still used today. Our organs are very similar to those of pigs. However, what if animals are similar to us in more subtle ways?

As science develops, we are constantly faced with a painful truth that the same animals we consume and experiment on might have the same characteristics of our social suite. For example, evidence shows that; elephants have friends, gorillas have their own language and rats feel compassion.

Are you not still confused? Then think about the parallels between capuchin monkeys' social behavior, and human own. These primates of South Americans put their fingers inside other monkeys' mouths so they can bite them gently, thereby showing the human trait of accepting vulnerability in front of one's friends.

Observations like these show that we share many traits with other animals. However, how did this happen?

The question can be answered by a process called evolutionary convergence. This explains the occurrence where different species get to the same evolutionary adaptation separately. For example, birds and bats evolved differently to have a flight. Similarly, humans and other species like elephants, whales, and apes have all evolved separately to have similar social traits such as cooperation, ability to recognize individual identity and even social learning. The reason this

convergence is because all of these species including human species share almost the same environments.

Definitely, we don't share the plains of Savanna or oceans, however, our social environments are the same.

Animals such as humans, elephants, and apes have evolved in the presence of other same species, which they needed to live and interact with in order to survive. This means that those that were more social and those that showed traits like cooperation, trust and friendship adapted well to their environment.

Therefore, they are more likely to pass down these social genes to the next generation. Also, the most social of their offspring had a greater chance of survival. This natural selection kept going on until an optimal social behavior developed. This optimal behavior consists of the social suite which has been developed separately by different species across the world.

Humans conquered an aggressive planet through culture and genetics.

The human race is everywhere in the world. As us being a species, we have homes almost everywhere across the world, from the freezing temperatures of the Arctic to the humid Amazonian rainforests. However, how did our genetics help us survive these inconstant environments? Our genes have helped us survive by providing us with the ability to develop culture.

According to an evolutionary sense, culture is known as the knowledge that is transferred from one person to another within a group that affects an individual's behavior. Also, culture itself is an evolutionary adaptation in which natural selection has developed our genes to develop culture. Our genetics can increase our lives; for example, giving us various opportunities for information to be passed from one generation to the other.

The human also exhibits various psychological characteristics that seem to be made for culture; for instance our desire for conformity between individuals and our ability to imitate older people's

behavior. For example, young children have been found to be constantly mimicking an adult performance irrespective of how that trivial the behavior might be.

Furthermore, another essential feature of human culture is similar to the process of natural selection which can evolve and become more improved to the environment to which it must react. In the exact way that genetic mutations lead to survival benefits, better notions may be put in place instead of the mediocre ones; thereby becoming one's ongoing culture,

However, culture isn't just made for survival, it is more critical.

Think about many European adventurers that lost their way in faraway places. They mostly perished due to their lack of cultural knowledge of their environment. Their clothes tore, their equipment was irrelevant and their food as water supplies reduced. They sometimes become cannibals in extreme cases where these adventurers got lost together. Therefore, these Europeans were like the fish out of the water, they did not have adequate information about their environment to survive

Due to this same reason, the explorers who made it out alive were the ones that talked to the local people and natives of the environment who could help them find food, water, cook deadly plants and those that have an idea of medicinal qualities. The knowledge these natives have about their culture showed that they knew how to survive and could share this helpful information.

Blueprint: The Evolutionary Origins of a Good Society by Nicholas A. Christakis Book Review

Irrespective of where we come from, every human being in this world shares an essential set of social tendencies and preferences called the social suite. The ability to be able to live, cooperate, learn and form relationships with each other are all part of the social suites. These characteristics have become the core of survival. However, the success of humans is also influenced by our culture. We have the tendency to perish without it.

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