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[Our Female Ancestors Made Politics](#)

Female chimpanzees strike back male aggressiveness

In order to understand some of the deepest roots of our own behavior, scientists have no other option but observing the behavior of our closest relatives: the chimpanzees. In a study published in International Journal of Primatology, Dr Nicholas Newton-Fisher, lecturer in Biological Anthropology at the University of Kent, revealed for the first time that female wild chimpanzees will counteract the male aggressiveness through politics, forming coalitions. Newton-Fisher studied two years a group of eight adult males and 21 adult females of the East African chimpanzees in Budongo Forest, Uganda. Females were often severely castigated by aggressive males but after few months of observations, the researcher saw females retaliating in direct response to this aggression. In their counteracting actions, the females formed coalitions of two to six and retaliated with vocalizations, threatening gestures, and direct pursuit till physical attack, and on several occasions, were seen to solicit the support they then received. Despite more than 40 years of detailed behavioral studies made in chimps groups from a diverse array of populations across Africa, this is the first to signal this behavior, even if this conduct has been detected in captive chimp groups. "Female wild chimpanzees form coalitions as a strategy to counter male aggression. This strategy may reduce the incidence, severity or effectiveness of male aggression. Why they do this is still unclear but the levels and forms of cooperative retaliation that I observed among the chimpanzees in Budongo Forest may be because these females tend to be more gregarious than in other populations of East African chimpanzees, as other work studying the same population has suggested." said Newton-Fisher. "Also, the absence of similar reports from wild populations suggests that females may be able to form coalitions only under appropriate conditions - such as ecology, demography or local tradition. If groups of females are able to spend time together because of the way food is distributed in the habitat, then they are 'on-hand' to provide support and form coalitions. Whether they do this simply because they are present when another female is threatened by a male, or because they have previously formed a supportive relationship, are questions for future research."