

# Are We Genetically Inclined To Be Materialistic?

January 09, 2014

## *NPR:*

People tend to hate to lose stuff they already own. This trait, known as the endowment effect, is likely handed down to us by evolution, since it is visible cross-culturally as well as in non-human primates. However, new research suggests certain cultures place a brake on this evolutionary trait, whereas capitalistic societies put it on steroids.

A common complaint about the holiday season is that it's become too commercial. Selfishness and materialism are a part of human nature. At least that's what we thought. But in a recent experiment, researchers found a group of people with a very different kind of nature. NPR social science correspondent Shankar Vedantam explains what the Hadza tribe in Tanzania might have to teach us over the holidays.

If you look for items for sale on Craigslist or houses for sale in your neighborhood, you'll quickly notice something. Sellers often believe that things they want to sell are worth much more than the market is willing to pay. Psychologist Tom Wallsten at the University of Maryland sees this firsthand in his own neighborhood.

There's a house across the street from us that's been on the market for months now. No doubt it would sell if they would lower the price some. So these are people who feel their house is worth more than anybody's willing to pay for it.

Read the whole story: [NPR](#)