

ACCOUNTING FOR SOCIAL COMPARISON WHEN CONSIDERING PRIMATE WELL-BEING

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Activities which give opportunities for interaction and control to primates benefit their psychological well-being. Such activities might include positive reinforcement training for husbandry or other purposes, cognitive testing, or the provision of environmental enrichment devices. These activities are widely used at primate centers as a part of the primates' enrichment. While most evidence indicates that these activities are beneficial to the primate given the enrichment, we know less about what the effects of this enrichment are on others within their social group. Recent research on social comparison in primates indicates that, for some species, seeing another individual receive a better outcome leads to the underbenefitted individual rejecting rewards which were previously accepted. In most studies, negative responses have been obtained in the context of food rewards, which are commonly used in enrichment activities. Additionally, while primates' responses to social comparison in experimental studies are more focused on outcomes than the process required to achieve those outcome, it is possible that their perception of rewards may generalize to attention from a caregiver or control over the environment. These findings imply that it may be stressful for some primates to observe others receiving better outcomes, including in the context of enrichment. Thus, it is possible that activities which are enriching for one primate are actually detrimental to their group mates. I will discuss the contexts in which social comparisons are currently known to occur, how this might impact enrichment practices, and what might be done to promote all animals' welfare equally.

Keywords: social comparison, inequitable outcomes, enrichment, psychological well-being