

SOCIAL GROUPING AND INTERGROUP BIASES IN RHESUS MACAQUES

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Aggression and conflict in human primates often occurs between groups distinguished by some social parameter, such as race, ethnicity, and religion. At the proximate level, the cognitive capacity to divide the world into “us” and “them” seems to be critical for human intergroup relations. To date, little has explored whether this proximate mechanism is shared with other primates. In particular, do they share a human-like preference for their own ingroup? Here, we explore whether one non-human primate species, the rhesus macaque (*Macaca mulatta*) spontaneously establishes human-like preferences for their own social group. Experiments 1-3 demonstrated that macaques spontaneously distinguish between ingroup and outgroup members in a vigilance task. Experiment 4-5 show that macaques transfer these group preferences to arbitrary stimuli associated with members of their own and other groups. Finally, Experiments 6-7 developed a new procedure to measure intergroup attitudes in this species. The logic of this measure is that monkeys should habituate, or lose interest, in those sequences that involve consistently valenced information and stay interested longer in inconsistent sequences. We found that macaques habituated more quickly to sequences that associated ingroup members with positive stimuli or outgroup members with negative stimuli than the opposite pairings, indicating that macaques share a human tendency to evaluate ingroup members positively and outgroup members negatively. The present results provide strong evidence that human intergroup attitudes are not simply the result of human-specific cultural training and experience; instead, our findings suggest that such proximate mechanisms are shared widely across the primate order.

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