

**068-S**

**NEW METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO CUMULATIVE CULTURE: HOW AND WHY DO HUMANS DIFFER FROM OTHER ANIMALS?**

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It has been acknowledged for some time that the cultural behaviours exhibited by nonhumans (including primate species) appear less complex than human cultures. Human culture has been described as “cumulative” in the sense that modifications to behaviour accumulate over generations, resulting in behaviours with cultural histories. In contrast, cumulative aspects of culture have proven difficult to identify in nonhumans - and two important debates surround this issue. Firstly, there is still disagreement over whether cumulative culture is absent in nonhumans, or simply rare. Secondly, there has been a great deal of speculation over the reasons for the greater complexity of human cultures compared with those of other closely related species, such as chimpanzees. Such proposed differences include observational learning mechanisms, teaching, normativity and conformity. In recent years, the topic of cumulative culture in general, and these two debates in particular, have attracted a great deal of attention from researchers from a wide range of disciplines. New approaches have been developed, including experiments, with both human and nonhuman primate subjects, which attempt to simulate cumulative cultural transmission under controlled conditions. Likewise novel theoretical perspectives have been developed, as a result of mathematical models of cumulative culture. The new approaches have provided valuable insights, and theories that previously represented the prevailing view are currently being challenged. The aim of this symposium is to bring together researchers involved in this recent research, with a view to generating discussion to advance these debates.

Keywords: cumulative culture; diffusion experiments; social learning; transmission experiments