



Book Review

Primate Psychology. Edited by *Dario Maestripieri*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, ix + 619 pp., 2003, \$65.00 (hardback).

What kind of book is this, that boldly proclaims it is about the *psychology* of primates? The answer comes in 16 chapters, beginning with the editor's introduction and proceeding through knowledgeable discussions of various aspects of social behavior from aggression to psychopathology. The approach is necessarily selective. Beyond the focus on social processes, the emphasis favors Old World primates and comparisons with human behavior. Most chapters draw heavily on the authors' own research.

Although this is no handbook of primate psychology, it is an important contribution to the field. Within its chosen perspective, the information is timely, abundant and offers plenty of food for thought. Any primatologist who is interested in primate social behavior and aspires to understand the basic psychology of monkeys and apes, really must become familiar with this book. Not everyone will like it, of course, but I suspect that most will find something new and exciting.

To this end (with apologies to authors for taking their words out of context), I present a brief quotation from each chapter that might intrigue, challenge or pique a potential reader's curiosity about its contents.

1. The Past, Present, and Future of Primate Psychology (Maestripieri)

... although it is undeniable that modern humans have altered their physical and ecological environment in a way that was unprecedented on this planet, it is also true that the social environment of modern humans still shares many important characteristics with the social environment of other primate species. (P 4)

2. Aggression (Higley)

... testosterone appears to be more directly related to motivation for competition and social status than to aggressive and violent behavior per se. (P 37)

3. Conflict Resolution (Judge)

...long-term relationships within primate societies are characterized by a continuous cycle of conflict, resolution, and aftermath until the next inevitable conflict. (P 41)

4. Sexuality (Wallen, Zehr, Herman, Graves)

Primate males do not radically differ from female primates in the role that gonadal hormones play in regulating their sexual behavior. (P 104)

5. Attachment (Maestripereri)

...there is no firm evidence for any primates that adult males establish a bond with a specific infant that can be classifiable as attachment, whether or not these infants are their biological offspring. (P 137)

6. Parenting (Fairbanks)

Males, like females, must weigh decisions about parental investment in one offspring against opportunities for producing more offspring. (P 154)

7. Social Development and Affiliation (Roney and Maestripereri)

...moderate to high rejecting experiences during infancy may favor the development of independence and assertiveness during adolescence. (P 175)

8. Comparing Cognitive Development (Bering and Povinelli)

In addition to whatever quantitative modifications may have occurred in the various cognitive systems that were present in the common ancestor of humans and chimpanzees, humans appear to have evolved additional, qualitatively new abilities (ones not found in other species). (P 205)

9. Social Cognition (Call and Tomasello)

There is no longer the luxury of saying that nonhuman primates either do or do not have a theory of mind, but we must now attempt to specify precisely what kinds of psychological phenomena they do and do not understand. (P 236)

10. Personality (Gosling, Lilienfeld and Marino)

...there is no inherent reason to accept the premise that some traits, such as morphological characteristics, are evolved by natural selection but that others, such as personality traits, are not. (P 286)

11. Emotions and Behavioral Flexibility (Aureli and Whiten)

...we can use the term *emotion* without implying the conscious feeling that humans associate with it." (P 291)

12. Nonvocal Communication (Parr and Maestripereri)

...the relation between the structure of signals and their meaning seems to be probabilistic rather than fixed, with important information provided by the social context. (P 348)

13. Nonlinguistic Vocal Communication (Owren, Rendall and Bachorowski)

... we argue that approaching communication with an emphasis on linguistically inspired constructs such as representation may be useful in certain cases but is a poor fit for some of the most ubiquitous vocalizations in both primates and humans. (P 360)

14. Language (Rumbaugh, Beran and Savage-Rumbaugh)

... it seems inevitable that the data obtained from the field of animal language research will serve to define language and to define the relationship between human and ape cognitive foundations for language acquisition. (P 396)

15. Brain Substrates for Communication (Hopkins, Pilcher and Cantalupo)

There is little evidence from brain stimulation studies that nonhuman primate vocalizations are controlled by cortical areas. (P 449)

16. Psychopathology (Troisi)

... the etiology of human psychiatric disorders involves genetic and environmental contributions for which there are no well-established counterparts among feral nonhuman primates. (P 457)

*William A. Mason
California National Primate
Research Center
University of California, Davis
One Shields Avenue
Davis, CA 95616
e-mail: wamason@ucdavis.edu*