

Prof Dr Joan Silk

Department of Anthropology, University of California, USA

“How do monkeys choose allies and exchange partners?”

Social challenges may have driven the evolution of intelligence in primates and other taxa. In primates, the social intelligence hypothesis is supported by evidence that primates know a lot about their own relationships to others and also know something about the nature of relationships among other individuals (third-party or triadic relationships). Knowledge of third-party relationships is likely to play an especially important role in coalitions, which occur when one individual intervenes in an ongoing dispute involving other group members, by helping individuals to predict who will support or intervene against them when they are fighting with particular opponents, and to assess which potential allies are likely to be effective in coalitions against their opponents. Here, I review the results of several studies of recruitment behavior which were designed to evaluate how monkeys choose coalition partners, and what these choices reveal about their knowledge of the nature of relationships among other group members.