**The benefits of social relationships in different primate societies**

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Group living for gregarious mammals is costly, leading to, for example, increased competition and risk of injury. But for group living to have evolved it must also provide benefits. Forming social relationships may help to negate some of the negative aspects of day-today group living. Female philopatry is common across mammals and social relationships are often heavily kin structured. Individuals who form strong social relationships gain fitness benefits such as enhanced personal or infant survival. However, in some species social relationships occur between unrelated competitive males and between co-dominant females and males. My research examines social relationships in these less common social structures and the benefits forming such relationships confers for the individuals involved. I examine how male macaques form strong social bonds despite their highly competitive regime. These bonds can act as a social buffer to negate the negative impacts of physiological stressors. Additionally, I examine female-male social relationships in vervet monkeys where females can out-rank many or all males in a social group. This leads to an unusual social dynamic and males to integrate into the female social network. Those who integrate are more likely to rise in rank which can translate into increased reproductive success. These studies show that unrelated individuals can still gain benefits from investing in social relationships and enhance their fitness despite their highly competitive lifestyles.