

Theory of Mind in Nonhuman Primates

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**Abstract:**

Social life demands complex strategies for coordinating and competing with others. In humans, these strategies are supported by rich cognitive mechanisms, such as theory of mind. Theory of mind (i.e., mental state attribution, mentalizing, or mindreading) is the ability to track the unobservable mental states, like desires and beliefs, that guide others' actions. Deeply social animals, like most nonhuman primates, would surely benefit from the adept capacity to interpret and predict others' behavior that theory of mind affords. Yet, after forty years of investigation, the extent to which nonhuman primates represent the minds of others remains a topic of contentious debate. In the present chapter, we review evidence consistent with the possibility that monkeys and apes are capable of inferring others' goals, perceptions, and beliefs. We then evaluate the quality of that evidence and point to the most prominent alternative explanations to be addressed by future research. Finally, we take a more broadly phylogenetic perspective, to identify evolutionary modifications to social cognition that have emerged throughout primate evolutionary history and to consider the selective pressures that may have driven those modifications. Taken together, this approach sheds light on the complex mechanisms that define the social minds of humans and other primates.

**Keywords:** Theory of mind, mentalizing, mental state attribution, mindreading, perspective-taking, social cognition, cognitive evolution, human evolution, comparative cognition, primates

## **Section 1: What is Theory of Mind?**

Humans are remarkable within the animal kingdom for many reasons, but our extreme sociality and intricately complex social lives are some of the most prominent and unique features of our species (Richerson & Boyd, 2020; Sterelny, 2019; Tomasello, 1999). The ability to communicate, cooperate, teach, and make moral judgments are deeply ingrained within our complex cultural systems, and rely on the capacity to reason about the minds of others (Premack & Woodruff, 1978). This cognitive skill, termed theory of mind (or mind-reading, mentalizing, mental state attribution), is defined as the ability to ascribe mental states to others. As humans, we are able to understand that others have mental states such as desires, goals, perceptions, and beliefs, that guide their actions and that can be different from our own (Baillargeon et al., 2016; Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Wimmer & Perner, 1983). This ability has profound impacts on the ways in which we interact with others, as it allows us to interpret, predict, and manipulate the behavior of others. By using theory of mind, we are able to teach our children, foster communication between nations, and identify cultural boundaries based on shared and differing belief systems.

It has long been believed that theory of mind is a capacity unique to humans. A prominent hypothesis suggests that humans' exceptional mentalizing abilities are responsible for other unique features of human sociality, and that the absence of theory of mind in our closest phylogenetic relatives, the nonhuman great apes, explains the absence of hyper-sociality in these species (Boyd, 2006; Byrne & Bates, 2007; Hammerstein, 2003; Herrmann et al., 2007). As a result, for more than 40 years researchers have investigated the extent to which non-human primates and other animals are able to reason about the minds of others.

Research into animal theory of mind contributes unique insights into its evolutionary origins and the cognitive mechanisms that support it (Krupenye & Call, 2019). Studies of humans' closest relatives, chimpanzees and bonobos, clarify which foundations of human theory of mind are shared and were likely present 6-9 million years ago in our common evolutionary ancestor, and which traits are unique to our species. Research on more distantly related taxa helps us to infer the cognitive phenotypes of more basal ancestors (Krupenye, 2020), and broad phylogenetic comparisons can identify cases of convergent evolution and point to socioecological pressures that are consistently associated with pronounced social cognitive skills and likely drove their evolution (Emery & Clayton, 2004; MacLean et al., 2013).

Animal research can also answer questions about the cognitive underpinnings of theory of mind that are intractable when studied in humans alone. For example, human research suggests that theory of mind may depend on language (Lohmann & Tomasello, 2003; Milligan et al., 2007; Pyers & Senghas, 2009), but only research in nonhumans can fully determine whether theory of mind can operate in its absence (because even preverbal human infants and nonverbal human adults may possess some incipient features of language not shared by nonhumans). Similarly, animal research can shed light on the extent to which human culture and socialization shape theory of mind (Heyes & Frith, 2014; Liu et al., 2008). Exploring whether nonhuman animals have theory of mind can also determine how much it depends on or is simply enhanced by secondary mechanisms like inhibitory control and memory (Carlson et al., 2002; Powell & Carey, 2017). For example, the discovery of theory of mind abilities in animals with more limited inhibitory control or memory capacities would help to reveal the minimum cognitive requirements for the emergence of theory of mind. Finally, research with nonhuman primates can help to elucidate the cognitive architecture of theory of mind by identifying the relationships between its various evolutionary precursors. Capacities that arose earlier in primate evolution (i.e., those shared across a wider range of related taxa, with an older common ancestor) may also arise earlier in human development and provide the foundation for later-evolving and later-developing capacities. Thus, exploring theory of mind in nonhuman animals contributes insights into both the evolutionary precursors as well as the proximate, mechanistic underpinnings of this capacity (Krupenye, MacLean, et al., 2017; Meunier, 2017).

In the ensuing sections, we first provide some historical context for research into primate theory of mind. Next, we survey the diversity of experimental research that has been conducted over the last four decades. We evaluate the quality of this evidence, in light of persistent disagreements in interpretation, and we highlight the most prominent alternative explanations to be tested. Finally, we address the evolutionary origins of human theory of mind before pointing to important future directions. Together, these investigations illuminate how richly nonhuman primates can peer into others' minds, and how their remarkable social intelligence evolved.

## **Section 2: The History of the Study of Theory of Mind**

Despite substantial variation in social systems (Kappeler & Schaik, 2002; Shultz et al., 2011), primates are, by and large, deeply social species. In many primate taxa, social life is hugely dynamic, involving regular competition and cooperation with groupmates. Individuals build stable relationships, including coalitionary alliances, that complicate competition and shape health and fitness (de Waal, 1982; Foerster et al., 2015; Gilby et al., 2013; Silk et al., 2010; Snyder-Mackler et al., 2020). In such a context, it is evident that primates would benefit from a detailed understanding of the minds of others. Wild primates also engage in apparent acts of deception that *might* reflect rich capacities like theory of mind, providing an impetus for exploring the underlying mechanisms in experimental contexts (Whiten & Byrne, 1988). Given primates' obvious social sophistication, it is no wonder that experimental psychologists have long been curious about the cognitive mechanisms that support their complex sociality.

Intriguingly, the study of theory of mind as we know it today began in 1978 not with humans but with chimpanzees. The term was first used when Premack and Woodruff historically posed the question "Does the chimpanzee have a theory of mind?" (Premack & Woodruff, 1978), and it was responses to that seminal paper that catalyzed work on theory of mind in both comparative and developmental psychology, including the emergence of classic tasks like the false belief task (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Dennett, 1978; Pylyshyn, 1978; Wimmer & Perner, 1983). This original study explored whether chimpanzees could identify the image of a correct solution after observing a scene of a human encountering a problem, like a broken heater or a desired but inaccessible food item. A decade later, Povinelli and colleagues (1990) demonstrated that chimpanzees were able to discriminate between a knowledgeable and ignorant informant to successfully find hidden food (Povinelli et al., 1990). This finding, however, was hotly debated, and in 1993, Celia Heyes offered convincing alternative explanations for the theory of mind abilities previously reported in nonhuman animals (Heyes, 1993). Although there was anecdotal evidence that wild nonhuman primates engaged in behaviors, such as deception, that could be supported by mentalizing capacities, there came to be wide consensus by the 1990's that theory of mind was unique to humans (Anderson et al., 1996; Byrne & Whiten, 1988; Cheney & Seyfarth, 1990; de Waal, 1982; Heyes, 1998; Kummer et al., 1996; Leavens, 1998; Povinelli et al., 1990, 1991, 1994; Povinelli & Eddy, 1996; Tomasello & Call, 1997; Whiten & Byrne, 1997).

However, at the turn of the century, research with chimpanzees (as well as macaques and corvids) began to accumulate evidence consistent with the possibility that some species are

sensitive to some mental states of others (Bugnyar & Kotrschal, 2002; Emery & Clayton, 2001; Flombaum & Santos, 2005; Hare et al., 2000; Tomasello et al., 2003). This drastic change was spurred by the introduction of competitive elements into experimental paradigms, with the realization that competition is central to primate social life and may be particularly motivating (Hare, 2001; Hare & Tomasello, 2004). The impressive success of competitive paradigms led some to wonder whether complex social cognition might be specific to the competitive domain in primates (Lyons & Santos, 2006). However, with increasing demonstration of primates' capacity to flexibly cooperate (e.g., Melis et al., 2006; see Mayerhoff, Saldaña, & Brosnan, this volume), in more recent years researchers have called for enhanced effort to examine the versatility of primate theory of mind and whether capacities demonstrated in competitive contexts can also be deployed in cooperative ones (Schmelz & Call, 2016). Thus, there are important and sometimes subtle considerations that require attention when investigating theory of mind capacities in nonhuman animals. Motivation on a task can greatly shape performance, as can the context of an experiment (e.g., cooperative versus competitive paradigm). Researchers exploring theory of mind must be sensitive to how intuitive the set-up is for the study species, recognizing that the same set-up will not always be effective across species. Finally, it is critical to create a paradigm that can avoid alternative explanations, like those we will discuss in section 4.

Today, research on primate theory of mind is characterized by a continued effort to adjudicate amongst a growing array of lean and rich theoretical accounts, and to precisely characterize the cognitive representations that support primate social cognition (Krupenye & Call, 2019; Martin & Santos, 2016). Owing to the introduction of novel methodologies (Kano et al., 2017; Marticorena et al., 2011), there is also renewed interest in the most sophisticated dimensions of mentalizing, such as understanding of false beliefs, which we will address in the next section (Martin, 2019). Additionally, some researchers are beginning to examine theory of mind in the natural contexts in which it may have evolved (Crockford et al., 2012, 2017), and in a greater range of species (Krupenye & Call, 2019).

### **Section 3: Evidence for theory of mind in lemurs, monkeys, and apes**

In the present section, we survey evidence for theory of mind across primate taxa (see also Table 1). Theory of mind is likely composed of a large suite of interrelated cognitive

capacities that can be parsed in many different ways. For the purposes of the present exposition, however, we organize our review around particular mental states, restricting our scope to primates' understanding of others' cognitive states (see Brooker, Webb & Clay, this volume, for discussion of affective perspective-taking). We first detail evidence consistent with the possibility that primates see others as goal-directed intentional agents before examining, in turn, their sensitivity to what others can perceive, what others know, and what others believe. In the present section, our aim is to describe existing evidence, reserving deeper discussions about cognitive mechanisms and alternative explanations for Section 4.

[ Table 1 here ]

### *Section 3a: Sensitivity to others' goals and intentions*

Agents typically act in pursuit of desired outcomes, or goals. Understanding that others are goal-driven can aid in flexibly predicting their actions across social and nonsocial contexts (Buttelmann et al., 2012; Tomasello & Call, 1997). All primates, including our most distant relatives, the strepsirrhines (lemurs, galagos, and lorises), seem capable of recognizing and discriminating amongst familiar agents (Boysen & Berntson, 1986; Lewis et al., 2021; Marechal et al., 2010; Palagi & Dapporto, 2006; Pokorny & de Waal, 2009; Pokorny & de Waal, 2009). Do they also track agents' goals? Although we currently lack sufficient research in strepsirrhines, other primates (haplorrhines: monkeys and apes) have shown sensitivity to agents' goals across a wide array of tasks.

Lemurs, monkeys, and apes are capable of copying the goal-directed actions of others (Buttelmann et al., 2007; Horner & Whiten, 2005; Schnoell & Fichtel, 2012; Van de Waal et al., 2015; Voelkl & Huber, 2000; Van de Waal & Whiten, 2012). Furthermore, capuchin monkeys (*Cebus apella*) have demonstrated a willingness to help an experimenter satisfy her goals, by repeatedly providing an out-of-reach object that the experimenter was trying to obtain (Barnes et al., 2008; Drayton & Santos, 2014). Both capuchin monkeys and Tonkean macaques (*Macaca tonkeana*) also distinguish whether an experimenter intends to give them food but is unable to or is simply unwilling to (Canteloup & Meunier, 2017; Phillips et al., 2009). Monkeys are also able to differentiate helping versus hindering agents, and whether the actions of others are intentional

or accidental (Anderson et al., 2013; Anderson et al., 2013; Brügger et al., 2021; Costes-Thiré et al., 2015; Kawai et al., 2014, 2019; Wood et al., 2007). In addition, violation-of-expectation paradigms have further clarified marmosets' (*Callithrix jacchus*) and rhesus macaques' (*Macaca mulatta*) sensitivity to others' goals. Marmosets expect the actions of other agents, but not a black box, to be goal-directed (Burkart et al., 2012; Kupferberg et al., 2013), and Rochat et al. (2008) demonstrated that macaques expect agents to pursue the most efficient routes to their goals.

Furthermore, research with nonhuman great apes has determined that they, too, are sensitive to the goals and intentions that guide the actions of others. For example, chimpanzees are able to determine when an agent is unwilling versus unable to give them food (Call et al., 2004). In this study, chimpanzees produced more begging, assertive, and coercive behaviors and left the testing room earlier when a human experimenter was unwilling to give them food than when the experimenter was purely unable to give them food. In addition, great apes are able to complete the failed actions of others, discriminate when an action is intentional versus accidental, detect cues of agency, distinguish helpers from hinderers, imitate rationally, and both anticipate and help facilitate the outcomes of others' goal-directed behaviors (Buttelmann et al., 2007, 2012, 2017; Josep Call & Tomasello, 1998; Kano & Call, 2014; Krupenye et al., 2018; Krupenye & Hare, 2018; Melis et al., 2011; Melis & Tomasello, 2013, 2019; Myowa-Yamakoshi et al., 2012; Myowa-Yamakoshi & Matsuzawa, 2000; Michael Tomasello & Carpenter, 2005; Uller, 2004; Warneken et al., 2007; Warneken & Tomasello, 2006; Yamamoto et al., 2009, 2012). The aggregation of this research over the past three decades confirms that many monkey and ape species are able to track the goals and intentions of others. However, debate remains about whether primates use a bona fide understanding of mental states to do so, or more basic principles of rational action (e.g., Gergely & Csibra, 2003). Future work must also confirm whether these skills extend to strepsirrhine primates or are unique to haplorrhines.

### *Section 3b: Sensitivity to others' perception*

Understanding another's perspective requires not only recognizing her motivations but also constructing a model of the world as she knows it. Agents come to know their world on the basis of perception and inferences, which ultimately produce knowledge and beliefs. The capacity to understand what other individuals can see, hear, and otherwise perceive is therefore a



fundamental building block for theory of mind. Sensitivity to others' perception has been examined through a variety of methodologies in primates.

First, members of all groups of primates have been shown to gaze-follow — that is, to orient to the target of another's gaze. Gaze-following can aid in the detection of mates, food, predators, and competitors (Krupenye, 2020; Ruiz et al., 2009; Sandel et al., 2011; Shepherd & Platt, 2007; Tomasello et al., 1998). Gaze-following is therefore a highly adaptive behavior potentially underlain by a variety of cognitive mechanisms, from true understanding of the nature of seeing to less sophisticated mechanisms like reflexive orienting produced by attention-grabbing gaze cues (Rosati & Hare, 2009). In the last decade, comparative cognition research has aimed to compare and contrast the underlying cognitive mechanisms of gaze-following across primates.

Several lemur species spontaneously follow the gaze of others, which suggests that gaze-following has deep evolutionary roots in the primate order (Ruiz et al., 2009; Shepherd & Platt, 2007; but see Anderson & Mitchell, 1999). Monkeys and apes are also able to follow and understand the gaze of others, in ways seemingly richer than lemurs. Several species of monkey and every great ape species gaze-follow geometrically and around barriers, and check back with an individual if they cannot pinpoint the target of their gaze (*Monkeys*: Amici et al., 2009; Bettle & Rosati, 2019; Goossens et al., 2012; Goossens et al., 2008; Scerif et al., 2004; Spadacenta et al., 2019; Tomasello et al., 2001; *Great apes*: Bräuer et al., 2005; Call et al., 1998; Okamoto et al., 2004; Okamoto-Barth et al., 2007; Povinelli & Eddy, 1996; Tomasello et al., 1998, 1999, 2007). Interestingly, lesser apes, the gibbons, also follow gaze but in one study did not check back with the actor (Horton & Caldwell, 2006; Liebal & Kaminski, 2012). Other nonprimates, like dogs, goats, corvids and tortoises, follow others' gaze as well, indicating either extremely deep evolutionary roots or multiple instances of convergent evolution (Bugnyar et al., 2004; Kaminski et al., 2005; Met et al., 2014; Schloegl et al., 2007; Téglás et al., 2012; Wilkinson et al., 2010).

In addition to gaze following, lemurs have been shown to respond to other coarse cues of attention and social orientation. They preferentially choose a food item that a competitor is oriented away from over a food item that is in the competitor's clear line of sight, and steal food from competitors who cannot see them (Bray et al., 2014; Sandel et al., 2011). However, lemurs do not seem to be sensitive to what others can hear, and do not integrate information about what others can hear and see, unlike other haplorrhine species (Bray et al., 2014). The authors suggest

that this difference in sensitivity between the visual vs. auditory domains may be due to an absence of persistent social cues in this task and an inability to mentally represent the perceptually significant features of the apparatus, the mental state of the experimenter, or both. Therefore, although lemurs are able to respond appropriately to basic cues of attention and social orientation, there is no evidence that they possess a richer understanding of others' perspectives.

However, monkeys and apes have demonstrated more nuanced sensitivity to the visual and auditory perspectives of others as compared to lemurs. In competitive tasks they are able to exploit this information to their advantage (Canteloup et al., 2016, 2017; Hare et al., 2000a; Melis, Call, et al., 2006; Santos et al., 2006). Monkeys, gibbons, and great apes conceal their approach or the visibility of food, and selectively choose a food item that is not visible to their competitor (Bräuer et al., 2005; J. Burkart & Heschl, 2007; Canteloup et al., 2016; Hare et al., 2001, 2006; Karg et al., 2015; Melis, Call, et al., 2006; Sánchez-Amaro et al., 2020). For example, Hare and colleagues (2006) demonstrated that in a competitive food choice paradigm, captive chimpanzees preferentially chose to approach a food item from which an experimenter was facing away as compared to one they were facing. Chimpanzees similarly chose to approach a food item that was behind a barrier and not visible to the experimenter versus a food item placed in front of the occluder and thus visible to the experimenter (Hare et al., 2006). Monkeys and apes also selectively choose a reward that is not audible to a competitor over one that is noisy to access, and integrate information about what a competitor can see and hear; that is, they show a preference for a silent reward only when the competitor cannot already see them (Melis et al., 2006b; Santos et al., 2006). In addition, monkeys and great apes consider a recipient's orientation for communication, positioning themselves within a recipient's visual plane before beginning a gesture or collaborative act, or selecting auditory versus visual communication depending on whether the recipient was oriented toward or away from them (Anderson et al., 2010; Aychet et al., 2020; Botting & Bastian, 2019; Bourjade et al., 2014; Josep Call & Tomasello, 1994; Canteloup et al., 2015; Grueneisen et al., 2017; Hattori et al., 2006, 2009; Hostetter et al., 2001; Kaminski, 2011; Kaminski et al., 2004; Leavens et al., 2004; Liebal et al., 2004; Maille et al., 2012; Tempelmann et al., 2011). Chimpanzees also understand that an agent's choices will reflect his preferences only when he can see (Eckert et al., 2018). Thus, a large body of research suggests that haplorrhine primates are able to track *what* others can

perceive. Interestingly, to date, no work has provided evidence that primates understand *how* that object looks from another's perspective (Karg et al., 2016).

### *Section 3c: Sensitivity to others' knowledge*

Further research suggests that monkeys and apes are not just sensitive to others' perception and attentional states; they may also grasp that attention leads to knowledge, or "seeing" leads to "knowing." This includes comprehending both when an actor is knowledgeable about the state of something in the world and also when an actor is ignorant (Kuroshima et al., 2002, 2003). Rhesus macaques, chimpanzees, and bonobos consider whether an object is familiar or unfamiliar to an agent when inferring whether that object is likely to be the target of the agent's excited attention (Drayton & Santos, 2017; MacLean & Hare, 2012). Monkeys also expect an agent to reach for an object in a place where the agent saw it hidden, and even to track the object's location if the hiding places are rotated (Arre et al., 2019, 2021; Drayton & Santos, 2018; Horschler et al., 2019; Marticorena et al., 2011). These findings suggest that monkeys may expect agents to maintain, and dynamically update, representations of objects even when those objects are not currently visible. Similarly, several studies suggest that chimpanzees can track where others have seen food hidden. Chimpanzees were more likely to approach, or search for, a hidden food item when their conspecific competitor was ignorant or misinformed about the placement of the food item than when he was knowledgeable about its location (Hare et al., 2001; Kaminski et al., 2008). Critically, chimpanzees were also more likely to approach a hidden food item when their knowledgeable competitor was switched out for a new, ignorant competitor, suggesting that their ascriptions of knowledge or awareness are agent-specific (Hare et al., 2001). Finally, a field experiment with wild chimpanzees demonstrated that chimpanzees were more likely to vocalize, apparently to inform an approaching groupmate about the presence of a snake, if their groupmate had not yet seen the snake as compared to if she was already knowledgeable about its presence (Crockford et al., 2012, 2017). This finding suggests both that chimpanzees' social cognition operates in natural conspecific interactions, and that it can serve prosocial ends. However, it remains unclear whether nonhuman apes are able to differentiate between knowledgeable and ignorant informants (Call et al., 2000; Kuroshima et al., 2002, 2003;

Povinelli et al., 1990, 1991, 1994). This collection of evidence indicates that at least some monkey and ape species maintain a relatively rich sensitivity to others' knowledge.

### *Section 3d: Sensitivity to others' beliefs*

Agents not only know (or don't know) things that they have (or have not) perceived. They also have beliefs about states of the world, which may or may not reflect reality. Because another agent's beliefs can be dissociated from one's own knowledge, understanding others' beliefs has long been seen as a core feature, and litmus test, of a metarepresentational theory of mind (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Dennett, 1978; Pylyshyn, 1978; Wellman et al., 2001). A false belief is an epistemic state that is in conflict with reality (e.g., believing that there are crayons in a box when in reality the contents are chocolate candies). It is characterized as a core feature of theory of mind because it requires the simultaneous representation of two conflicting states – one's own, which aligns with reality, and another's, which does not. The canonical test for the capacity to comprehend others' false beliefs is the change-of-location false belief task. This task typically involves an actor placing an object in one location and then turning away from the object or leaving the scene. In the absence of the first actor's gaze, a second actor moves the object to a different location, and therefore the first actor's belief (that the object remains in its original location) becomes false (Dennett, 1978; Wimmer & Perner, 1983). Studies tend to ask, through various verbal or nonverbal metrics, whether participants can correctly predict that the actor will search for the object in its original location, even though participants know that it is no longer there (Clements & Perner, 1994).

Early research on false belief understanding in nonhuman primates found no clear evidence that macaques or great apes were sensitive to the beliefs of others. For example, in violation of expectation paradigms, although monkeys expected an agent to search for an object where she had seen it hidden, they did not expect the agent to search for the object in that location if it was moved at all while the agent was not present (Horschler et al., 2019; Marticorena et al., 2011). Martin and Santos (2014) also found no evidence that monkeys automatically represent others' beliefs in a task in which human children appear to do so: monkeys did not require longer attention to process events that violated an agent's false beliefs (Kovacs et al., 2010; Martin & Santos, 2014).

Great apes have also struggled on a variety of false beliefs tasks, all of which were action-based tasks centered around food. In one of the first studies to test false-belief understanding in nonhuman great apes, Call and Tomasello (1999) presented apes with a hidden reward task. Apes watched a human “hider” hide a reward in one of two identical containers. A human “communicator” also watched this hiding process and helped the participant by placing a marker on the container that held the reward. However, in the crucial false belief condition, the “communicator” saw the original hiding action but then left the area, and did not see the “hider” switch the location of the container with the reward. Therefore, the “communicator” held a false belief about the location of the reward, and placed the marker on the incorrect container. If the apes understood the “communicator’s” false belief, they should have chosen the other container (without the marker). However, apes continued to follow the marker, leading the authors to conclude that they did not understand false beliefs. Krachun and co-authors (2009) devised a similar competitive paradigm where chimpanzees and bonobos watched an experimenter hide a reward in the presence of a human competitor, and the competitor reached effortfully toward the location where she believed the food to be (Krachun et al., 2009). Apes tended to follow the reaching cue, even in the false belief condition where it was directed at the incorrect location (see also (Krachun et al., 2010).

In tasks involving competition with conspecifics, results are more ambiguous. Hare and colleagues (2001) found that chimpanzees were more likely to acquire food when competing with a misinformed competitor (who had witnessed the food’s initial baiting but not its subsequent relocation) than a knowledgeable one. Chimpanzees were also marginally - though nonsignificantly - more likely to enter the testing arena to compete at all when the competitor was misinformed rather than knowledgeable (Hare et al., 2001). However, these findings were paralleled in conditions in which the competitor was ignorant (i.e. when the competitor did not know that a food reward had been hidden at all). As a result, it is difficult to determine whether chimpanzees actually tracked the competitor’s belief that the food remained in its initial location, or only the competitor’s ignorance of the food’s final location. In a similar food competition task in which chimpanzee participants took turns choosing cups with food rewards, chimpanzees preferentially targeted food whose location their competitor was misinformed about (Kaminski et al., 2008). However, they also preferentially targeted food that their competitor had an incidentally true belief about (the partner had seen the food hidden but had not seen it

temporarily removed and placed back in the same location). At the time, the authors concluded that chimpanzees could identify when their competitor had become (at least temporarily) ignorant and were potentially applying the same strategy of exploiting ignorance even in false belief conditions (see also Horschler et al., 2019). A more recently proposed alternative is that chimpanzees succeeded on the false belief condition and failed on the incidental true belief condition for different reasons: they tracked their competitor's false beliefs but were overwhelmed by the additional cognitive demands of the incidental true belief condition, in which it is necessary to reconcile contrasting mental states (an initial attribution of knowledge and a later attribution of ignorance) with identical content (food is in location 1) (Durdevic & Krupenye, 2021). In the incidental true belief condition, if chimpanzees failed to correctly update their representation, they would likely be left with an incorrect (more recent) representation that their competitor was ignorant.

Although early work led many to conclude that humans have a unique capacity to represent the false beliefs of others, recent evidence (in paradigms that do not involve food) raises the possibility that some nonhuman primate species do in fact share this capacity. Several eye-tracking studies have now shown that great apes and Japanese macaques (*Macaca fuscata*) visually anticipate that an actor will search for an object where he falsely believes it to be (Hayashi et al., 2020; Kano et al., 2019; Krupenye et al., 2016). Although there are some questions about the reproducibility of similar paradigms in human infants, to date these primate findings appear to be robust (Kano et al., 2020). These studies capitalized on novel methodological tools, in combination with highly engaging third-party social stimuli. Although it remains to be directly tested, the authors have argued that the use of socially dynamic stimuli may be fundamental to eliciting high engagement and reproducible results (Kano et al., 2020). Using a chemogenetic neuronal manipulation to block neuronal activity in the medial prefrontal cortices of Japanese macaques, Hayashi and colleagues (2020) further demonstrated that the medial prefrontal cortex, a key component of humans' social brain network, supports primates' capacity to predict agents' belief-based actions. Finally, Buttelmann et al. (2017) provided evidence that apes can act on their representations of others' beliefs: apes provided different help in response to an experimenter's action depending on whether that action was informed by a true or false belief. Although the evidence in monkeys remains particularly mixed, a growing body of work now suggests that at least some primates may represent others' beliefs.

#### **Section 4: Interpreting the evidence: Do primates have a theory of mind?**

As section 3 demonstrated, there is substantial evidence, particularly in monkeys and apes, consistent with the possibility that these animals track a variety of mental states. However, pinning down the mechanisms, and precisely specifying the representations that support this apparently sophisticated capacity remains a challenge, with persistent and staunch disagreement about how to interpret the evidence. Since the first comparative tests of theory of mind, alternative explanations for positive evidence have abounded, as have experimental efforts to test them.

In recent years, Celia Heyes has proposed that many (human and nonhuman) social cognitive tasks, particularly those employing spontaneous nonverbal metrics (e.g., gaze, reaction time), may not be measuring anything like mental state representation at all (Heyes, 2014a, 2014b, 2017). Instead, they might be measuring submentalizing. Submentalizing describes a constellation of low-level, domain-general mechanisms, such as “the processes that mediate involuntary attentional orienting, spatial coding of response locations, object-centered spatial coding of stimulus locations, retroactive interference, and distraction” (Heyes, 2014a). Many of these processes are akin to perceptual cueing effects and, collectively, Heyes argues, they can account for a great many experimental results. Since these processes can help us to anticipate outcomes, including in social settings, they may constitute fundamental mechanisms that feed into true mentalizing. However, on their own, they do not involve the representation of mental states, or of anything social. Heyes has challenged researchers studying theory of mind to control for the influence of submentalizing with inanimate control conditions. For example, in video-based eye-tracking tasks, the human or conspecific agent can be replaced by an inanimate shape. Inanimate control conditions should mirror the perceptual features of experimental conditions but minimize the sorts of agency cues that are necessary for proper mentalizing. Provided that they elicit comparable levels of attention, submentalizing predicts that inanimate controls will yield comparable performance to experimental conditions, if experimental results indeed derive from domain-general mechanisms.

Several studies speak against the argument that submentalizing alone can explain primates' performance in theory of mind tasks (Kano et al., 2017). For example, Kano and Call

(2014) showed that great apes visually anticipate the goal-directed reaching behavior of a human hand but not an inanimate claw, after first observing the hand or claw interact with objects in the same way (Kano & Call, 2014). Second, Krupenye et al. (2017) implemented an inanimate control that was closely matched to a previous eye-tracking false belief experiment (Experiment 2 of Krupenye et al., 2016; Krupenye et al., 2017): instead of a human agent observing an object and returning to search for it, apes watched a green shape exhibiting matched movements in an animated version of the same scene. Although apes showed similar attention to both versions, the control did not elicit the successful anticipatory looking that was documented in the original experiment. Similar results were recently reported with human infants (Surian & Franchin, 2020). Although future work, particularly in other taxa, should continue to control for submentalizing, existing findings (including others discussed in more detail by Kano et al., 2017) suggest that submentalizing alone cannot account for performance on theory of mind tasks, at least in apes.

However, other alternative explanations persist. Over the last few decades, the dominant debate in the animal theory of mind literature has concerned whether animals are really reading minds, or just reading behavior (Heyes, 2015; Penn & Povinelli, 2007). The problem stems from the fact that mental states are often inferred based on observed behavioral cues (e.g., an agent's facial orientation is a cue to what she can see). However, organisms might also learn rules, or associations, linking behavioral cues to outcomes that frequently follow them (e.g., that agents tend to pursue objects within their unobstructed line-of-gaze). In experiments in which behavioral cues are available, it is impossible to determine whether subjects are responding to those cues alone or are additionally inferring from them a bona fide mental state, or at least what Whiten has called an intervening variable (an abstraction that commonly links a variety of behavioral cues to a variety of predicted future behaviors) (Whiten, 1996, 1994, 2013).

Researchers have gone to a variety of lengths to control for individual behavior rules or behavioral cues (see, e.g., Table 1 of Hare, 2011). For example, some studies have presented primates with identical behavior across conditions, except for subtle differences linked to mental states, in an effort to minimize behavior-reading explanations (e.g., Drayton & Santos, 2017; MacLean & Hare, 2012). Others have dissociated particular cues, such as 'line of gaze', from particular mental states, such as seeing, by using mirrors in clever ways: showing that chimpanzees selectively beg for food from experimenters who can see them, including in cases



in which the experimenter can see the subject through a mirror but has her back turned to the subject so that her line-of-gaze is actually directed away from the subject (Lurz et al., 2018). In several other studies, the agent was removed entirely in an effort to exclude all available cues (Bugnyar et al., 2016; Schmelz et al., 2011; Schmelz et al., 2013).

The strongest test of mindreading, called the goggles test, was proposed by Heyes (2015, 1998) who was inspired by Novey (1979), and it has since been promoted by a number of scholars (e.g., Penn & Povinelli, 2007; Whiten, 2013). Heyes (1998) noted that an unusually powerful way to exclude behavior-reading explanations would be to engineer a scenario in which behavioral cues are kept constant, and subjects are likely able to solve the task only if they can project onto an agent a novel mental state that they themselves have only just experienced (Heyes, 1998). The paradigmatic example involves two sets of identical goggles. Both appear to be opaque but, through experience, subjects learn that one is in fact transparent. Mindreading subjects who then witness an experimenter wearing the goggles should determine whether the experimenter can see by projecting onto the experimenter the subject's own experience of seeing or not seeing through those same goggles. Heyes argued that, because the goggles do not differ in appearance, they are distinguished only by the subject's internal mental experience of them, and that this, rather than any behavioral cue, is the only available information the subject can use to correctly predict the experimenter's actions.

This paradigm has been successfully adapted for apes in two studies (see also related work with human infants: Meltzoff & Brooks, 2008; Senju et al., 2011). Karg and colleagues (2015) presented chimpanzees with a competitive setting (similar to Hare et al., 2006; Melis, et al., 2006), in which subjects could approach either of two compartments to steal food from a human competitor. From the subject's perspective, the lids of the two compartments appeared to be opaque but, from the competitor's perspective, one was actually transparent. In an initial phase, the lids were raised so that subjects could view them from the same perspective as the experimenter, allowing subjects to experience their divergent occlusive properties. In the test, chimpanzees preferentially stole food from the opaque container; that is, they used their self-experience with the perceptual properties of the two containers to determine how best to exploit the competitor. In an anticipatory looking eye-tracking study, Kano and colleagues (2019) similarly showed that great apes apply their self-experience with the occlusive properties of a barrier (i.e., opaque or see-through) to predict whether an agent will behave as though he can see

through that same barrier. Excitingly, in this study, apes responded differentially to the exact same video stimulus depending on whether they had previously experienced the barrier in real life as opaque or see-through. Some researchers have argued that the goggles task can be solved non-mentally if subjects integrate the information they learn about the occlusive properties of the experimental substrate (i.e., that it does or does not obstruct line-of-gaze) with existing behavior rules (rather than by projecting their experience of seeing or not seeing onto the agent) (Henley & Povinelli, 2020; Lurz, 2009; Perner, 2012); others have challenged this deflationary account (e.g., Heyes, 2015). In either case, the goggles task remains the strongest identified nonverbal test of mindreading currently on the market, and it is one that at least great apes have passed.

The broader body of work has been interpreted in contradictory ways. Some scholars have emphasized that no single experiment provides unequivocal evidence of mindreading (e.g., Penn & Povinelli, 2007). Others have argued that, although it is challenging to control for all possible alternatives in any one experiment, positing a common mindreading capacity is more parsimonious than the diverse suite of behavior rules that would be necessary to explain primates' success across the full range of theory of mind tasks (e.g., Tomasello & Call, 2008). Whereas we think that researchers should continue their efforts to adjudicate amongst mentalistic and nonmentalistic explanations of primate social behavior, we also want to relay a key point made by Barrett (2018): that the mechanisms underlying mindreading or behavior-reading in primates remain underspecified. The key task moving forward then, at least for the cognitivist, is to precisely characterize the representations that support primate social cognition and the mechanisms that compute, store, and utilize those representations (see, e.g., Butterfill & Apperly, 2013; Krupenye, 2020; Martin & Santos, 2016; Penn et al., 2008; Phillips & Norby, 2019).

### **Section 5: The evolution of theory of mind**

As we described earlier, another major goal of animal theory of mind research is to reconstruct its evolutionary history and identify selective pressures that may have driven its evolution (Krupenye, 2020). In this section, we will address these issues in turn. By comparing theory of mind abilities across primates, as we have done in Section 3, we can identify traits that are widespread and that were likely present in a basal common ancestor – and we can also

identify those that likely appeared in a later common ancestor and are only found in the narrower range of species that descended from it. Before attempting to chart the evolutionary history of theory of mind within primates, we first note that biases exist in sampling effort, with greater experimental attention to the capacities of species more closely related to humans, and that future work should broaden its phylogenetic focus to further test this preliminary model and to fill gaps in our understanding.

That being said, current data suggest that primates from all major clades (strepsirrhines, platyrrhines, cercopithecoids, and hominoids) share a coarse sensitivity to social cues, like gaze direction. Limitations among strepsirrhines hint that the most basic foundations of theory of mind may have been primitive heuristics that allowed our ancestors to respond adaptively to the visual orientation of conspecifics and predators (Bray et al., 2014; Sandel et al., 2011). These capacities were likely present in an ancestor common to all major primate clades that lived about 77 million years ago (Steiper & Young, 2006).

It is unclear whether that ancestor had any appreciation of others as goal-directed agents, as research into this capacity is limited in strepsirrhines. However, by 43 million years ago, the common ancestor of platyrrhines, cercopithecoids, and hominoids appears to have possessed this appreciation in some fundamental sense. There is evidence from members of all descendent clades that they treat others' actions as goal-directed. This common ancestor may also have had a richer capacity for perspective-taking than earlier ancestors (e.g., Burkart & Heschl, 2007; Defolie et al., 2015), although the evidence for this is particularly plentiful among cercopithecoid and hominoid primates who share a common ancestor that lived 30 million years ago. By this time, our common ancestor was likely capable of tracking, in some sense, what others could see (e.g., Flombaum & Santos, 2005; Hare et al., 2000), and what they could know (e.g., Drayton & Santos, 2017; MacLean & Hare, 2012). It is also possible that this ancestor may have represented something about what others believe, although the evidence in cercopithecoids is even more mixed (e.g., Hayashi et al., 2020; Martcorena et al., 2011) than in hominoids (e.g., Buttelmann et al., 2017; Kano et al., 2019; Krupenye et al., 2016). Among hominoids, whose ancestors lived closer to 20 million years ago, there is also more substantial evidence to support the view that these animals' representations may be mentalistic (e.g., Kano et al., 2019; Karg et al., 2015; Lurz et al., 2018), although complementary experiments have not been performed in other primates. Human theory of mind, of course, is defined by numerous features and capabilities not

demonstrated in other species, such as *explicit* representation of others' mental states, understanding of *how* things look from another's perspective, and the capacity to structure cooperation around a shared mental framework of common goals (for a more full list, see Krupenye, 2020). Further work will be necessary to determine how closely the social cognitive abilities of our closest relatives, chimpanzees and bonobos, approximate those of humans. However, our phylogenetic reconstruction suggests an elaboration of social cognition throughout primate evolutionary history, with the most notable differences occurring between strepsirrhines and haplorhines and, presumably, between nonhuman apes and humans.

What drove the evolution of social cognition? Although it is possible that some capacities arose through evolutionary mechanisms beyond natural selection, or as byproducts of selection on other related traits, several adaptive hypotheses have been put forward. These hypotheses are largely of three varieties, proposing that cognitive and brain evolution were driven by selective pressures for navigating either foraging challenges (ecological intelligence hypothesis), social challenges (social intelligence hypothesis), or a combination of the two (cultural intelligence hypothesis) (Reader et al., 2011). Within each family of hypotheses, variants further specify whether these selective pressures are thought to have driven increases in overall brain size and general cognitive skill as a whole, or whether they selected for elaboration of specific brain structures or cognitive capacities.

Given the high metabolic costs of brain tissue, adaptations to diet and gut morphology may help to meet those costs and release evolutionary constraints on brain size and cognitive capacities (Aiello & Wheeler, 1995; Pontzer et al., 2016; Wrangham, 2009). Foraging challenges may also directly select for cognitive adaptations, because certain feeding strategies (e.g., finding sparse and ephemeral resources like fruits) may demand particular cognitive abilities (e.g., spatial cognition and memory) (Clutton-Brock & Harvey, 1980; Milton, 1998; Rosati, 2018). Comparisons across primate species provide support for the role of feeding ecology in shaping the evolution of brain size and general cognitive capacities: species with more demanding ecologies tend to have larger brains and better performance on inhibitory control tasks (DeCasien et al., 2017; MacLean et al., 2014; Powell et al., 2017).

However, research also provides evidence that the challenges associated with navigating the social world – competing (and coordinating) with groupmates for reproductive opportunities – may confer adaptive benefits to the most socially savvy and select for social-cognitive

adaptations (Byrne & Whiten, 1988; Byrne & Bates, 2007; Dunbar & Shultz, 2007; Humphrey, 1976; Jolly, 1966). Distantly related taxa that exhibit complex social systems—such as primates, cetaceans, and corvids—appear to have convergently evolved sophisticated social cognition (Emery & Clayton, 2004). Among closely related taxa in at least two lineages, species with more complex social systems also perform better on social cognitive tasks than those with less complex social systems (Bond et al., 2003; MacLean et al., 2008, 2013; Sandel et al., 2011). Observational anecdotes (Byrne & Whiten, 1988; de Waal, 1982) and controlled experiments (reviewed above, see also: Cheney & Seyfarth, 2007) also point to a number of potential adaptive functions of social cognition, in competition, deception, communication, and coordination. Although more work will be needed to probe the adaptive origins of theory of mind, research to date points to a mixture of ecological drivers enabling brain expansion and social factors selecting for social cognitive skill.

## **Section 6: Future Directions**

Comparative cognition has seen countless advances in theory of mind research since its inception over four decades ago. Clever experiments have demonstrated that a range of species are sensitive to others' goals, perception, and beliefs. Studies have begun to clarify underlying mechanisms, determine the phylogenetic origins of specific traits, and identify selective drivers of social cognitive evolution. Despite such progress, as we have shown here, open questions abound, as do disagreements about how best to interpret existing evidence. In this final section, we point to what we see as particularly fruitful avenues for future research.

One fundamental priority should be honing our (lean and rich) hypotheses about the mechanisms that support primate social behavior. Central to this effort will be specifying the cognitive representations that primates generate when tracking others' perspectives, clarifying the extent to which their representational formats are innate or constructed through processes of learning and development, and determining how they are generated in real-time, encoded in memory, and deployed in prediction and decision-making. To date, a range of representational formats have been hypothesized, from awareness relations (Martin & Santos, 2016) to belief-like states (Butterfill & Apperly, 2013) to propositional attitudes, offering testable predictions for future work.

Alongside this effort, researchers should continue to take seriously, and directly test, the alternative explanations that have proliferated over the years. They should also seek to triangulate and conceptually replicate findings of theoretical significance, and to leverage both new and old methodologies to confirm existing findings and to seek novel frontiers. Tasks in which the goal is not to obtain food but rather to understand or engage in social interactions (e.g., Krupenye et al., 2016) could also help to elucidate primates' capacities, as a focus on food may inhibit the capacity to fully attribute mental states to others (Kano et al., 2017; Völter et al., 2019). Primate social cognition research would also greatly benefit from the addition of computational work to elucidate the mathematics behind theory of mind abilities. By building computational models, cognitive scientists can generate plausible and mathematically sound accounts of the computations involved in specific theory of mind processes (Baker et al., 2017; Lake et al., 2017; Ullman et al., 2009). Alternative models can be pitted against one another, producing sets of competing predictions, and experiments can be designed to adjudicate amongst competing models.

Correlational studies and cognitive test batteries, encompassing suites of social and nonsocial tasks, are another fundamental tool for understanding the mechanisms and broader cognitive architecture that support primate theory of mind (Krachun et al., 2019; Völter et al., 2018). Large test batteries can help to identify individual as well as species differences in cognitive performance and, through correlated variation, point to links between social and nonsocial capacities that are commonly involved in social cognitive tasks. Further, the administration of multiple rounds of such test batteries at various intervals across the participants' life span would also help to identify ontogenetic patterns of theory of mind development and to compare them across species. A better understanding of the developmental trajectories of theory of mind abilities across species would produce a clearer picture of the underlying mechanisms and their relationships to each other (i.e., which early mechanisms may support the development of which later ones). This would also aid in clarifying the unique developmental patterns that ultimately lead to differences in adult cognition and theory of mind abilities across species (Hare et al., 2012; Krupenye et al., 2017; Krupenye & Call, 2019; Wobber et al., 2010).

Finally, testing for theory of mind capacities in a greater number of nonhuman species would expand our understanding of both the phylogenetic origins of these capacities as well as

the selective pressures that shaped them across taxa (Krupenye & Call, 2019; Tomasello et al., 2001). To date, the vast majority of theory of mind research has focused on chimpanzees (and to some extent other great apes) and macaques, with other species receiving comparatively much less attention. When comparing samples across development, across species, or across populations within species, researchers should be mindful of the many factors that shape cognitive performance, from motivation to rearing history, life history stage, testing environment, and the suitability of the task (Leavens et al., 2019). Attention to such sources of variation can fuel more powerful tests as well as more judicious interpretations of research findings and the evolutionary and ontogenetic origins of differences across populations.

As we have alluded throughout this paper, there are many emerging frontiers and open questions in theory of mind research. How do primates understand false beliefs? Do primates know *how* something looks from another's perspective (level II perspective-taking), or only *what* another has perceived (level I perspective-taking)? Are primates conscious of their mental state representations, or do they just track them implicitly? Can primates embed mental state representations in higher levels of recursion (for example, tracking not just that agent 1 knows something, but also that agent 1 knows that agent 2 knows something)? Can primates track shared goals or common ground or engage in shared intentional mental frameworks to facilitate coordination (e.g., Heesen et al., 2020; Tomasello et al., 2005)? How did theory of mind evolve? With powerful new tools and myriad avenues for investigation, the future promises exciting discoveries that will move us ever closer to answering many of these questions, and ultimately to understanding the origins and psychology of theory of mind in humans and other primates.

















Theory of Mind Evidence	 <b>Strepsirrhines:</b> Lemurs, lorises, & galagos	 <b>Platyrrhines:</b> Monkeys of the Americas	 <b>Catarrhines:</b> Monkeys of Afro-Eurasia	 <b>Hominoids:</b> Nonhuman Great Apes	 <b>Hominins:</b> Humans
Sensitivity to others' goals					
Expect agents to pursue goals consistently		 Burkart et al., 2012; Kupferberg et al., 2013		 Kano & Call, 2014; Myowa-Yamakoshi et al., 2012	 Woodward, 1998
Expect agents to pursue goals efficiently			 Rochat et al., 2008	 Uller, 2004	 Gergely et al., 1995
Help others achieve their goals		 Barnes et al., 2008; Burkart et al., 2007; Drayton & Santos, 2014		 Buttelmann et al., 2017; Krupenye et al., 2018; Melis et al., 2011; Melis & Tomasello, 2013, 2019; Warneken et al., 2007; Warneken & Tomasello, 2006; Yamamoto et al., 2009, 2012	 Moll & Tomasello, 2004; Warneken & Tomasello, 2006
Complete others' intended (but failed) actions				 Myowa-Yamakoshi & Matsuzawa, 2000; Tomasello & Carpenter, 2005	 Carpenter et al., 2002; Meltzoff, 1995; Myowa-Yamakoshi & Matsuzawa, 2000
Exploit competitive reaches in object choice tasks			 Joly et al., 2017	 Hare & Tomasello, 2004; Herrmann et al., 2007, 2010	 Herrmann et al., 2007



<b>Copy goal-directed actions</b>	✓ Schnoell & Fichtel, 2012	✓ J. Burkart et al., 2012; Voelkl & Huber, 2000	✓ Van de Waal et al., 2015; Van de Waal & Whiten, 2012	✓ Buttelmann et al., 2007; Horner & Whiten, 2005	✓ Gergely et al., 2002
<b>Rationally imitate</b>				✓ Buttelmann et al., 2007; Horner & Whiten, 2005	✓ Gergely et al., 2002; Carpenter et al., 2005; Carpenter et al., 2005; Gergely et al., 2002
<b>Differentiate others' intentional versus accidental actions</b>		✓ Wood et al., 2007	?	✓ Call & Tomasello, 1998; Tomasello & Carpenter, 2005; but see Povinelli et al., 1998	✓ Call & Tomasello, 1998; Carpenter et al., 1998; Olineck & Poulin-Dubois, 2005
<b>Differentiate unwilling versus unable others</b>		✓ Phillips et al., 2009; but see: Drayton et al., 2016	✓ Canteloup & Meunier, 2017	✓ Buttelmann et al., 2012; Call et al., 2004	✓ Behne et al., 2005
<b>Differentiate helping versus hindering agents</b>		✓ Anderson et al., 2013; Anderson et al., 2013; Brügger et al., 2021; Kawai et al., 2014, 2019	✗ Kawai et al., 2019	✓ Herrmann et al., 2013; Krupenye & Hare, 2018; Russell et al., 2008; Subiaul et al., 2008	✓ Hamlin et al., 2007
<b>Sensitivity to others' perception</b>					
<b>Follow others' gaze</b>	✓ Ruiz et al., 2009; Sandel et al., 2011; Shepherd & Platt, 2007; but see Anderson & Mitchell, 1999; Itakura, 1996	✓ Amici et al., 2009; Burkart & Heschl, 2007; Spadacenta et al., 2019	✓ Anderson & Mitchell, 1999; Bettle & Rosati, 2019; Goossens et al., 2012; Goossens et al., 2008; Micheletta & Waller, 2012; Tomasello et al., 1998, 2001	✓ Bräuer et al., 2005; Call et al., 1998; Herrmann et al., 2010; Horton & Caldwell, 2006; Itakura, 1996; Kano & Call, 2014; Okamoto et al., 2004; Okamoto-Barth et al., 2007; Povinelli & Eddy, 1996, 1997; Tomasello et al., 1998, 1999, 2001	✓ Butterworth & Jarrett, 1991; Tomasello et al., 2007
<b>Follow others' gaze around barriers</b>		✓ Amici et al., 2009	✓ Bettle & Rosati, 2019; Goossens et al., 2012	✓ Bräuer et al., 2005; Okamoto-Barth et al., 2007; Povinelli & Eddy, 1996; Tomasello et al., 1999	✓ Moll & Tomasello, 2004

<p><b>Check back with actor when target of gaze is unclear</b></p>		<p>?</p> <p>Burkart &amp; Heschl, 2006; but see Amici et al., 2009</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Goossens et al., 2008; Scerif et al., 2004</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Bräuer et al., 2005; Call et al., 1998; Horton &amp; Caldwell, 2006; Okamoto-Barth et al., 2007</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Scaife &amp; Bruner, 1975</p>
<p><b>Consider recipient's orientation for communication</b></p>		<p>✓</p> <p>Anderson et al., 2010; Defolie et al., 2015; Hattori et al., 2007, 2010</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Aychet et al., 2020; Bourjade et al., 2014; Canteloup et al., 2015b; Deshpande et al., 2018; Lamaury et al., 2019; Maille et al., 2012; Meunier et al., 2013</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Bania &amp; Stromberg, 2013; Botting &amp; Bastian, 2019b, 2019c; Josep Call &amp; Tomasello, 1994; Hostetter et al., 2001; Kaminski et al., 2004; Leavens et al., 2004; Liebal et al., 2004; Lurz et al., 2018; Poss et al., 2006; Povinelli et al., 1996, 2003; Tempelmann et al., 2011; Michael Tomasello et al., 1994; but see Theall &amp; Povinelli, 1999</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Liszkowski et al., 2008</p>
<p><b>Exploit information about what another can or cannot see in competition</b></p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Bray et al., 2014; MacLean et al., 2013; Sandel et al., 2011</p>	<p>?</p> <p>Burkart &amp; Heschl, 2007; but see Hare et al., 2003</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Canteloup et al., 2016, 2017; Flombaum &amp; Santos, 2005; Overduin - de Vries et al., 2013; Vick &amp; Anderson, 2003</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Bräuer et al., 2007; Grueneisen et al., 2017; Hare et al., 2000, 2001, 2006; Karg et al., 2015; Karin-D'Arcy &amp; Povinelli, 2002; Melis et al., 2006; Sánchez-Amaro et al., 2020</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Grueneisen et al., 2017; Melis et al., 2010</p>
<p><b>Exploit information about what another can or cannot hear in competition</b></p>	<p>✗</p> <p>Bray et al., 2014</p>		<p>✓</p> <p>Santos et al., 2006; but see Costes-Thiré et al., 2015</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Melis et al., 2006; Slocombe &amp; Zuberbühler, 2007; but see Bräuer et al., 2008</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Melis et al., 2010</p>
<p><b>Integrate information about seeing and hearing in competition</b></p>	<p>✗</p> <p>Bray et al., 2014</p>		<p>✓</p> <p>Santos et al., 2006</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Melis et al., 2006</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Melis et al., 2010</p>
<p><b>Exploit others' presumed inferences in competition</b></p>				<p>✓</p> <p>Schmelz et al., 2011</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Pillow &amp; Pearson, 2012</p>
<p><b>Consider information about what another can see in cooperation</b></p>				<p>✓</p> <p>Grueneisen et al., 2017</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Grueneisen et al., 2017</p>
<p><b>Use agent's visual orientation to make inferences about preferences</b></p>				<p>✓</p> <p>Eckert et al., 2018</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Luo &amp; Baillargeon, 2007</p>

Manipulate what others can see				✓ Grüneisen et al., 2017; Hall et al., 2017; Hare et al., 2006; Karg et al., 2015	✓ Grüneisen et al., 2017
Use personal perceptual experience to exploit others' perception				✓ Kano et al., 2019; Karg et al., 2015	✓ Meltzoff & Brooks, 2008
Consider <i>how</i> something looks from another's perspective				✗ Karg et al., 2016	✓ Moll & Meltzoff, 2011
<b>Sensitivity to others' knowledge and ignorance</b>					
Expect agents to search where they have seen something hidden			✓ Arre et al., 2019, 2021; Drayton & Santos, 2018; Horschler et al., 2019; Marticorena et al., 2011	✓ Kaminski et al., 2008	✓ Onishi & Baillargeon, 2005
Target food that a competitor has not seen hidden				✓ Hare et al., 2001; Kaminski et al., 2008	✓ Kaminski et al., 2008
Communicate differentially with knowledgeable versus ignorant others (presumably, to inform)				✓ Crockford et al., 2012, 2017	✓ Liszkowski et al., 2008
Consider agent's awareness of object when seeking the target of her attention			✓ Drayton & Santos, 2017	✓ MacLean & Hare, 2012	✓ Tomasello & Haberl, 2003 Tomasello & Haberl, 2003
Discriminate knowledgeable versus ignorant informants		?	✗ Povinelli et al., 1991	?	✓ Povinelli & DeBlois, 1992
<b>Sensitivity to others' beliefs</b>					
Experience interference from others' beliefs			✗ Martin & Santos, 2014		✓ Kovacs et al., 2010

<b>Expect agents to act consistently with false beliefs (violation-of-expectation)</b>			 Marticorena et al., 2011		 Onishi & Baillargeon, 2005
<b>Expect agents to act consistently with accidental true beliefs</b>			 Horschler et al., 2019, 2021	 Kaminski et al., 2008	 Kaminski et al., 2008
<b>Anticipate others' false-belief driven actions (anticipatory looking)</b>			 Hayashi et al., 2020 but see: Lorincz et al., 2005	 Kano et al., 2019; Krachun et al., 2009; Krupenye et al., 2016	 Clements & Perner, 1994; Grosse Wiesmann et al., 2017
<b>Differently help agents with true vs false beliefs</b>				 Buttelmann et al., 2017	 Buttelmann et al., 2009, 2014
<b>Target food that a competitor falsely believes to be elsewhere</b>				 Hare et al., 2001; Kaminski et al., 2008	 Kaminski et al., 2008; Krachun et al., 2009
<b>Differently interpret cues from agents with true versus false beliefs</b>				 Call & Tomasello, 1999; Krachun et al., 2009; O'Connell & Dunbar, 2003	 Call & Tomasello, 1999
<b>Account for others' true versus false beliefs in a change-of-contents choice task</b>				 Krachun et al., 2010	 Krachun et al., 2010; Perner et al., 1987

**Fig. 1:** Theory of mind capacities and precursors across primate clades. Evidence or lack thereof is organized around sensitivity to particular classes of mental studies, broken down by coarse varieties of evidence. A red X reflects negative evidence, a green checkmark reflects positive evidence, a yellow question mark indicates contradicting evidence (with positive evidence listed first, and negative evidence listed second), and empty cells reflect no evidence thus far. Contradicting evidence (yellow boxes) may also reflect clades where some species uniformly succeed and others do not. While we have attempted to aggregate all nonhuman primate evidence, human examples are illustrative but not comprehensive. Photo copyrights: Liran Samuni (bonobo image) and creative commons licenses (all other images).

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