

Dr Juliane Kaminski

Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig, Germany

“The evolutionary roots of human social cognition”

Human social cognition is in many ways outstanding compared to other species as humans have the ability in some situations to make inferences about other individuals' attention, visual access, goals, beliefs, desires and knowledge. These social cognitive capacities are widely referred to and summarized with the term “Theory of mind”. One goal in comparative psychology is to investigate to which degree the cognitive capacities underlying these human skills are uniquely human or shared at least to some degree with other species. This might help us to identify the selection pressures at work during the evolution of human social cognition. In a series of studies questions regarding animals' understanding of others' attention, visual perspective and knowledge state have been investigated. The results suggest that different animal species have a more flexible understanding of other members of their group than was formerly thought.

Contact details:

Max Planck Institute for evolutionary Anthropology
Deutscher Platz 6
04103 Leipzig
Germany

Email: Kaminski@eva.mpg.de

Phone: +49 (0)341-3550829