Dear Dr. Caroline Schuppli,

I am a first-year student in the master program Early Childhood Research at Leipzig university. I got to know your research field, interests and current studies when I was preparing my workshop on Group Differences/Culture for our seminar Comparative Development given by our research associate Sarah DeTroy. As Sarah was giving me some advice on the workshop outline and knowing how much I’m fascinated by this topic, she told me about you. After she briefly introduced what you are currently working on, I became very curious and wanted to read your papers in order to get to know more about your research interests. I admire how many cool ideas you’ve come across and the effort you put into wild observations. I can’t imagine how challenging it must have been for you, when it comes to recording, coding or just simply getting it all start with.

I’ve read quite lots of papers by you and other colleagues. Here, I would like to arise some questions and thoughts regarding three of your papers. To start with, the objects you chose for testing the novelty in wild and captive orangutans seem very interesting and you gave the justifications for choosing the plastic flowers and the Swiss flag. However, I’m a bit confused about the rationale behind picking the orangutan doll as one of the novel items (Forss, Schuppli, Haiden, Zweife, & Van chaik, 2015). I understood why it was necessary to represent somehow familiar images to the orangutans, but wouldn’t it be more innovative to expose them to an object like a human baby doll instead? Also, according to your box plot (p. 9) on the comparison between the orangutans’ reaction to the familiar and new items at Zürich Zoo, the mean of the exploration on the orangutan toll is comparatively higher than any other items. I’m hereby wondering, if this really counts as their novelty since I’d assume that the doll representing an orangutan might have been very familiar to the tested objects, or even some of them might have mistaken it as a real orangutan. How would it be different if it was a human doll rather than a doll of the same species as the tested objects?

Moreover, this one can be a very detailed question about the paper on the social learning by observations in young orangutans in the wild by Schuppli et al. (2016). You mentioned that begging is also considered as a sign of social learning besides foraging and building a nest (p. 88), I’m wondering why that is. Finally, I really found it super stimulating to read the article on the aggressive behaviors in female orangutans (Marzec et al. 2016), but I have two questions. My first question is coming from the relations between Ekko and Kondor, Guapo and Sidony: has sexual assault in orangutans or in chimpanzees ever observed? The second question is regarding the information given in the discussion session (p. 9): why fatal attacking has not yet found in opposite sex in wild orangutans? Does this imply that they are somehow civilized in a way to take care of more fragile population – females, just as how humans are?

Although I only pointed out my questions on three of your papers, I’m fully attracted by almost all the research you have done. I believe that we really have common interests in this academic field. I’d be thrilled if you would spear a bit of your time to talk about your fantastic work with me any time that it’s convenient for you!

Also, it would be a great pleasure of mine to get involved in the research and work you do during my studies or some time afterwards. If there are any possibilities for that, I’d love to know about it!

I have attached my CV to give you more information about me.

I’m looking forward to your reply!

All the best,

Mikeliban Mulati