**Proximate and Ultimate Questions in the Amboseli Baboon Research Project**

**Discussion Guide**

**Before Class**

Listen to Season 1, Episode 1 of The Animal Behavior Podcast, in which Matthew speaks with [Susan Alberts](https://sites.duke.edu/albertslab/), who co-directs the [Amboseli Baboon Research Project](https://amboselibaboons.nd.edu/), a long-term longitudinal study of wild baboons.

While listening, take some notes. Especially consider the questions below, and record your answers. Bring these answers to class with you.

1. Susan Alberts defines behavior as the “set of responses an organism makes to its environment.” What do you like about this definition? How/why would you change it?
2. The Amboseli Baboon Research Project has been ongoing for approximately 50 years. Brainstorm a few specific questions about animal behavior that might be possible to answer with data collected across such a long time period that wouldn’t be able to be answered from a shorter term study. Susan talks about this in minutes 18:30-21:00, but try to give examples that are different from what she mentions.
3. Matthew and Susan discuss one well known result from the Amboseli Baboon Research Project: offspring are more likely to survive if they are born to more socially connected mothers. Do some creative thinking – why do you think this might be so? What possible behaviors or mechanisms could result in this pattern? For an extra challenge – what sort of data would you need to collect to be able to test your ideas?

**During Class**

* Review your reactions to Dr. Albert’s definition of behavior. Together with your partner, think about how you would change this definition, or why you would not change it. Prepare to discuss with the class.
* One of the key ideas to take away from class today is that articulating scientific questions is a learned skill. Review your ideas about questions that you might need a long term data set to answer. Explain your thinking to your partner. Together, you and your partner should come up with one possible question to present to the class. Be ready to explain why you think this is an interesting and addressable scientific question.
* Listen to this clip as a class: 16:12-18:20. As a student, you may not know yet if you are organism focused or question focused, you might be neither or you might be both. Does one of these approaches resonate more with you? Why or why not?
* What were your reactions to Susan’s comments about integrating the local community and/or about the role of women in primatology?