Reply to Godfrey et al.: Outside the box

We thank Godfrey et al. (1) for their comments comparing the possible diet of *Hadropithecus* with that of *Paranthropus boisei* (2, 3). We wrote: “Indeed, the only known haplorrhine primate with a similar carbon isotope composition is the extinct grass-eating baboon *Theropithecus oswaldi,*” which explicitly excluded *Hadropithecus* and other Malagasy strepsirrhine primates from the comparison as they are only very distantly related to modern apes and humans. Molecular and morphological approaches indicate that the strepsirrhine-haplorrhine divergence occurred before the Eocene (4, 5).

Although certain morphological convergences between the taxa may exist, it is far from certain that this implies similar diets. For instance, we noted that despite the craniodental similarities of closely related *P. boisei* and *Paranthropus robustus,* there is growing evidence from microwear and stable isotopes that their diets diverged. As for *Hadropithecus,* it is possible that its moderately high δ¹³C values reflect consumption of CAM rather than C₄ plants (which we suggest dominated *P. boisei* diets), because the former are highly abundant in the unique spiny forests of Madagascar (6). *Hadropithecus, P. boisei,* and *T. oswaldi* may well have consumed dissimilar foods despite some similarities in their δ¹³C values. Further refinement of the estimates of diets of these and all fossil primates will be a challenge but will provide further constraints on our understanding of primate evolution through time. In the meantime, we prefer to eschew inferring diet for one extinct species from the inferred but unknown diet of another fossil taxon, especially one that is very distantly related and inhabited a very different environment.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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