Basic research in a natural setting: Auditing or social comparison behavior as a function of class rank.
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Previous findings (D. F. Hake et al; see record 1973-31236-001) on social comparison behavior established in a laboratory setting were extended in the present study to a natural setting. Cumulative points earned on assignments by 21 undergraduates were entered in an apparatus that Ss used one-at-a-time to check their scores in a room adjoining the classroom. Cumulative points were changed weekly over a 7-wk course. Automatically recorded buttonpress responses by the Ss (audit responses) allowed access to self-, other person, and standard scores (i.e., scores indicating A, B, and C grade levels). Self-scores were audited most consistently and standard scores were checked more than any other S's score. Ss in middle positions with respect to point totals emitted more self-, coactor, and standard audits than Ss in the high or low ranks. The middle position provided the most information about availability of the major reinforcer (being ahead), because in the middle position an S's cumulative score had a greater chance of fluctuating over all 3 positions.