

IMITATION AND SOCIAL BONDING IN TUFTED CAPUCHIN MONKEYS

A. Paukner¹, P.F. Ferrari², E. Visalberghi³, S.J. Suomi¹

¹National Institutes of Health, Poolesville, MD, USA, ²Universita di Parma, Parma, Italy, ³CNR, Rome, Italy

Presenter's Email: pauknera@mail.nih.gov

When being imitated, humans are reported to increase rapport, liking and empathy towards the imitator. In the present series of experiments, we tested whether tufted capuchin monkeys (*Cebus apella*) respond similarly to being imitated – that is, show a behavioral preference for an imitator. Group-housed captive capuchins (N=10) were separated into a single cage and given a baited plastic ball. One experimenter imitated the monkeys' object-directed actions, the other performed contingent but non-matching actions. Results show that monkeys significantly preferred the imitator over the non-imitator after imitation (measured in looking time, proximity, and social interactions). Matching of behaviors may therefore promote affiliation in non-human primates, and lead to increases in group cohesion and decreases in aggression. This study was approved by the Animal Care and Use Committee, NICHD, and complied with the Animal Welfare Act. Funded by the Division of Intramural Research, NICHD, and TECT-ESF (project SOCCOP).

Keywords: imitation recognition, visual preference, proximity, token exchange