

MOUNTING AND SOCIAL PLAY IN JUVENILE MALE JAPANESE MACAQUES

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Compared to other macaque species, Japanese macaques stand out because they exhibit a number of unusual sexual behaviors. To date, research describing and explaining such atypical sexual behavior has largely focused on adult Japanese macaques (e.g., same-sex mounting in adults). In contrast, our current research, conducted with Japanese macaques from Arashiyama, has focused on describing and explaining male-male mounting in juvenile Japanese macaques. The study had two specific aims. First, we compared the frequency of juvenile male-male mounting in Japanese and two closely related species of macaques (i.e., Tonkean and Long-tail). These comparisons revealed that such mounting was significantly more common in Japanese macaques. Second, we examined whether juvenile male-male mounting in Japanese macaques served a sociosexual function by facilitating social play. Juvenile male-male interactions beginning with mounting were compared to those beginning with alternate forms of physical contact such as biting or grabbing. From the mounting position, mounters exhibited increased success in delivering bites to the shoulder, which is the primary play target in this species. Also, mounting appeared to enhance the acquisition of a mountee's attention and likelihood of initiating play. Finally, play following mounting was associated with less biting as well as a more equitable exchange of bites and grabs between play partners. These findings indicate that juvenile male-male mounting facilitates social play and are consistent with observations of adult same-sex mounting in Japanese macaques, which suggest such mounting is generally associated with prosocial interactions.

Keywords: play signals; play fighting; cooperation; precocial sex