

AN EGG TODAY? OR A HEN TOMORROW? DELAY DISCOUNTING FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY REWARDS IN CAPUCHIN MONKEYS

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Delay discounting is considered one of the features distinguishing humans from other animals since people tolerate much longer delays than animals when facing the choice between a small immediate reward and a large delayed reward. However, this comparison is questionable because animal studies used food rewards whereas human studies mostly used monetary rewards, and the latter may be valued differently from primary rewards, as people are more impulsive over food than over money. Capuchin monkeys tested with an adjusting delay procedure (Experiment 1) showed a tolerance to delay significantly higher than that of tamarins and marmosets and not significantly different from that of apes and spider monkeys. Interestingly, capuchin females showed a greater tolerance for delay than males, possibly because of their less opportunistic foraging style and/or particular pattern of courtship. To assess whether capuchins, as humans, are more impulsive with primary than with secondary rewards we are comparing, for the first time in non-human primates, capuchins' intertemporal choices for food and for tokens exchangeable for food (Experiment 2). Overall, this study will allow a reliable comparison between human and non-human primates and will shed light on the evolutionary origins of human self-control. Funded by ISTC-CNR and American Society of Primatologists.

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