

TALK

**EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR IN WILD BRAZILIAN
CAPUCHIN MONKEYS (*SAPAJUS LIBIDINOSUS* AND *S.*
XANTHOSTERNOS)**

**Juan Caixeta Mendes Ribeiro^{1,2*}, Jaroslava Valentova², Patrícia Izar², Jean-Baptiste Leca^{3,4},
Solimary García-Hernández⁵, Leonardo Cezar², Nayara Teles², Irene Delval^{2,3}**

¹Institute of Biosciences, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

²Department of Experimental Psychology, Institute of Psychology, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

³Department of Psychology, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, AB, Canada, Lethbridge, Canada

⁴School of Natural and Engineering Sciences, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, India

⁵Graduate Program in Ecology, Institute of Biosciences, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

*juancmribeiro@usp.br

ABSTRACT

Humans and other primates exhibit a rich and diverse sexual repertoire that extends beyond reproduction, serving social functions, such as bonding, conflict resolution, and status negotiation. Among infants and juveniles, non-reproductive sexual behavior (SB) contributes to obtaining skills essential for adulthood. This study explores the natural development of SB in free-ranging capuchins (*Sapajus libidinosus* and *xanthosternos*) from two populations, in the Atlantic rainforest and a wooded savannah in Brazil. We examined 392 hours of video recordings of 16 individuals (8 males, 8 females) during their first three years of life, collected via the ‘animal-focal’ method. Videos were sorted into behavioral classes (e.g., SB, playing, agonism) and those containing SB were transcribed by two raters using a literature-based ethogram. We quantified behavior frequencies, direction, pre-context and preferred partners. Results reveal early sexual behavior dimorphism, evidenced by differences among males and females in rates of SB, emission and reception, preferred partners. Sociosexual behaviors occurred mostly during play activities, underlining this context as critical for learning adult social dynamics. Females performed sexual behaviors at much lower frequencies than males. Interestingly, although females reproduce earlier and initiate courtship displays as adults, their juvenile SB was less frequent and varied. Understanding how sexual behaviors emerge during early life in non-human primates offers valuable insight into the flexibility of primate (including human) sexuality and its development. These findings provide comparative perspectives on the evolution of sexual behavior, shedding light on how early social interactions might shape (or not) reproductive strategies in both capuchins and humans.