

TALK

DEVELOPMENT OF AGONISTIC BEHAVIOR IN WILD INFANT CAPUCHIN MONKEYS (*SAPAJUS XANTHOSTERNOS*)

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ABSTRACT

Agonistic behavior, which includes threat, aggression, and submission, is fundamental to regulating social interactions in primates. Understanding how these behaviors emerge and develop is essential to explaining the dynamics and organization of primate social groups. However, little is known about the ontogeny of agonistic behavior in wild primates, especially in endangered species like *Sapajus xanthosternos*. This study investigated the development of agonistic behavior in yellow-breasted capuchin monkeys, an endemic species of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest. Drawing on 290 hours of focal video observations, we analyzed eight juveniles (4 males, 4 females) from birth to 36 months, using The Observer XT software. We tested whether (1) agonistic behavior increases with age, (2) sex differences emerge in emission and reception of agonistic events, and (3) agonistic acts occur more frequently during interspecific than intraspecific interactions. Results show that threats occurred from early infancy, and agonistic behavior increased notably during the first year. Males exhibited a significant peak at 12 months, while females peaked later at 24 months and received more agonism overall. Most interactions were intraspecific. These sex-specific developmental trajectories suggest early differentiation in social roles and competitive strategies. Understanding the ontogeny of conflict behaviors in non-human primates offers critical insights into the evolutionary roots of human aggression, dominance, and negotiation. By tracing the roots of these behaviors in a closely related species, we gain a deeper understanding of how core elements of human social conflict may originate and develop throughout early life.