

An interesting article by Victoria Horner, Darby Proctor, Kristin Bonnie, Andrew Whiten, Frans de Waal: "Prestige Affects Cultural Learning in Chimpanzees" in [PLoS ONE](#), 2010, 5(5) freely available [here](#).



In Group 1, more prestigious model A was trained to deposit tokens into the spotted receptacle while less prestigious model B was trained to use the striped receptacle. In Group 2, the model and receptacle assignments were reversed.

Abstract: Humans follow the example of prestigious, high-status individuals much more readily than that of others, such as when we copy the behavior of village elders, community leaders, or celebrities. This tendency has been declared uniquely human, yet remains untested in other species. Experimental studies of animal learning have typically focused on the learning mechanism rather than on social issues, such as who learns from whom. The latter, however, is essential to understanding how habits spread. Here we report that when given opportunities to watch alternative solutions to a foraging problem performed by two different models of their own species, chimpanzees preferentially copy the method shown by the older, higher-ranking individual with a prior track-record of success. Since both solutions were equally difficult, shown an equal number of times by each model and resulted in equal rewards, we interpret this outcome as evidence that the preferred model in each of the two groups tested enjoyed a significant degree of prestige in terms of whose example other chimpanzees chose to follow. Such prestige-based cultural transmission is a phenomenon shared with our own species. If similar biases operate in wild animal populations, the adoption of culturally transmitted innovations may be significantly shaped by the characteristics of performers.