

Great apes found to bond when watching videos together

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A pair of researchers affiliated with Duke University and the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology has found that great apes tend to bond with one another when they watch a video together. In their paper published in *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, Wouter Wolf and Michael Tomasello describe their work involving studying chimpanzees and bonobos as they watched videos together and how they behaved

afterward.

Most people have experienced the feeling of bonding with another person, or even several people, when watching a movie or TV show together. Until now, behavioral scientists have believed such feelings were restricted to humans. In this new effort, Wolf and Tomasello have shown that great apes have similar experiences.

The experiments involved seating pairs of chimps together in front of a television so that they could watch a video, and the researchers took measurements of bonding-type behavior after the video was over. They then compared the behavior they observed with a control group. They report that chimps that watched the videos together engaged in more bonding-type behaviors.

The videos watched by the chimps were of other chimps engaging in various activities—prior research had shown it was their favorite subject. And the chimps were encouraged to remain in place watching the [video](#) by feeding them grape juice. Bonding-type interactions were described as touching, how long they stayed in proximity with one another and how much they paid attention to one another. The researchers also used eye-tracking systems to show that the chimps were actually watching the videos. The researchers also paired up bonobos in the same fashion, and also human-[chimp](#) pairs. They report that in all instances, increased bonding was observed for those participating in the shared social events.

The researchers suggest their results show that great apes are capable of social bonding when participating in shared events. They suggest that such types of social bonding have deeper evolutionary roots than has been realized. They also suggest that their findings hint at what is lost as humans cease participating in shared [social events](#), preferring instead to engage privately in social media.

More information: Wouter Wolf et al. Visually attending to a video together facilitates great ape social closeness, *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* (2019). [DOI: 10.1098/rspb.2019.0488](https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2019.0488)

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