

1 **Abstract**

2 Researchers investigating the evolutionary roots of human culture have turned to comparing
3 behaviours across nonhuman primate communities, with tool-based foraging in particular
4 receiving much attention. This study examined if natural extractive foraging behaviours other
5 than tool selection differed across nonhuman primate colonies that had the same foods
6 available. Specifically, the behaviours applied to open the hard-shelled fruits of *Strychnos*
7 spp. were examined in three socially separate, semi-wild colonies of chimpanzees (*Pan*
8 *trogodytes*) that lived under shared ecological conditions at Chimfunshi Wildlife Orphanage,
9 and were comparable in their genetic makeup. The chimpanzees (N=56) consistently applied
10 six techniques to open these fruits. GLMM results revealed differences in the number of
11 combined technique types to open fruits across the colonies. They also showed colony
12 differences in the application of three specific techniques. Two techniques (full biting and
13 fruit cracking) were entirely absent in some colonies. This study provides empirical evidence
14 that natural hard-shelled fruit-opening behaviours are distinct across chimpanzee colonies,
15 differences that most likely have not resulted from ecological and genetic reasons.

16 **Key words:** chimpanzee, extractive foraging, hard-shelled fruits, culture, social learning.

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26 **Introduction**

27 To augment the understanding of the origins of human culture, scientific research has paid
28 particular attention to wild nonhuman primate communities and their extractive foraging
29 behaviours, such as using tools for cracking nuts or harvesting insects (Whiten et al. 2001;
30 Biro et al. 2003; Schoning, et al. 2008). The traditional approach here has been the method of
31 exclusion where specific behaviours present in one primate community, but absent in others,
32 have led researchers to claim socially learned traditions in nonhuman primates (Whiten et al.
33 2001; Whiten et al. 1999; Schoning, et al. 2008; van Schaik et al. 2003; van Schaik and Knott
34 2011). Critics, however, argue that such reports of population-specific foraging behaviours
35 remain inconclusive because geographically distinct populations are likely to have different
36 food resources and tools available, making it impossible to fully exclude ecological
37 explanations (see Tennie et al. 2009; Geleff 2004; Laland and Janik 2007). While a recent
38 study has reported that chimpanzee communities living in the same area of the Taï Forest in
39 the Ivory Coast selected tools of different materials to open nuts (Luncz et al. 2012), research
40 is still needed to determine whether the actual behaviours underlying natural foraging, other
41 than tool selection, differ across nonhuman primate communities that have the same food
42 available. This study represents an attempt to do so by comparing a range of techniques for
43 opening the hard-shelled fruits of *Strychnos* spp. (commonly called monkey fruit or bush
44 orange) in three socially separate chimpanzee colonies living in a shared environment.

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46 Experimental studies investigating captive nonhuman primates have provided evidence that
47 techniques used to obtain food from artificial feeding devices can be socially transmitted (e.g.
48 Bonnie et al. 2006; Horner et al. 2006; Dindo et al. 2008). Novel techniques that are seeded
49 into social groups have been found to spread with robust fidelity (Horner et al. 2006; Whiten
50 et al. 2007; Hopper et al. 2011; Dindo et al. 2008; Crast et al. 2010; van de Waal 2013).

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51 While such behaviours seem to be socially acquired, they may not be representative of
52 foraging in the wild. Field experiments are a recent development whereby experimental
53 criteria are applied to attempt to control for ecological conditions when studying wild
54 nonhuman primates. Biro et al. (2003) and Gruber et al. (2009) reported socially acquired
55 tool-based foraging techniques in chimpanzee groups for experimentally induced nuts and
56 honey traps, respectively. van de Waal et al. (2010; 2013) and Kendal et al. (2010) found that
57 wild vervet monkeys and lemurs, respectively, showed socially learned solutions to ‘two-
58 action’ puzzle tasks. While these findings show that neighbouring primate communities can
59 differ in the methods applied to extract the same food, observational studies on semi-free-
60 ranging nonhuman primates are still lacking.

61 An alternative factor often overlooked in social learning research is the impact of group
62 demographics. Nonhuman primates of different age and sex groups may differ in tool use
63 (Inoue-Nakamura and Matsuzawa, 1997; Boesch and Boesch 1984; Lonsdorf 2005; Fessler
64 2002; Gruber, et al. 2010). For example, immature chimpanzees often omit important stages
65 of nut cracking with stones (Inoue-Nakamura and Matsuzawa 1997), and acquisition of
66 expertise is a gradual process of adjusting techniques based on observing adult models
67 (Inoue-Nakamura and Matsuzawa 1997; Lonsdorf et al. 2004; Corp and Byrne 2002; Boesch
68 and Boesch 1984). Furthermore, several reports have documented that female chimpanzees
69 use tools more often and that they forage more efficiently than males (McGrew 1979; Pruetz
70 and Bertolani 2007; Lonsdorf et al. 2004; Gruber et al. 2010). Studies also suggest that
71 primate sex-specific foraging behaviours may both be socially-mediated (van de Waal 2010;
72 Agostini and Visalberghi 2005) and offer evolutionary advantages (McGrew 1979; Pruetz
73 and Bertolani 2007; Fessler 2002). Such findings indicate that group demographics may play
74 an important role in the social-acquisition of foraging behaviours. Therefore, in the current
75 study, group demographics received particular attention.

76 Since research on population-specific foraging has focused almost exclusively on tool
77 use (Whiten et al. 2001; Schoning et al. 2008; van Schaik and Knott 2011), a range of
78 naturally challenging foraging tasks have been overlooked. Opening a hard-shelled fruit
79 without a tool, for instance, is of special research interest. It is likely to be a challenging task
80 for primates, as success here depends upon strategies that combine physicality and cognition,
81 in this way sharing features with tool use (Stokes and Byrne 2001). Further, chimpanzee
82 populations from West to East Africa process hard-shelled fruits, as do other wild primates
83 throughout the world (e.g., aye-ayes, sakis, uakaris, capuchins, baboons, orangutans, and
84 bonobos: Koops et al. 2010; Matsumoto-Oda and Kasagula 2000; Lucas et al. 2011; van
85 Lawick-Goodall 1973; Mackinnon 2006; Sterling et al. 1994; Rosenberger and Hartwig
86 2011). This widespread consumption implies that comprehensive analyses of the opening
87 techniques involving hard-shelled fruits can provide a valuable contribution to the literature
88 spanning primate learning strategies alongside social and physical cognition.

89 The present study approach was to provide an overall analysis of the techniques
90 chimpanzees use to open the hard-shelled *Strychnos* fruits and how they utilise these
91 techniques, by comparing age and sex groups across three chimpanzee colonies at
92 Chimfunshi Wildlife Orphanage, Zambia. *Strychnos* fruits are among the most shared fruits
93 between female chimpanzees and their infants at some sites in the wild (Nishida and Turner
94 1996). The current study ruled out potential ecological influences by comparing socially
95 separate colonies with the same specific foods available, living under equal ecological
96 conditions. It is also important to note that the chimpanzee colonies were originally formed of
97 orphans from different places in Africa, housed by arrival date, not (phylo-)geographical
98 background. Based on previous findings suggesting some forms of social learning for
99 foraging (Luncz et al. 2012; Gruber et al. 2009; Horner et al. 2006; Whiten et al. 2007), we
100 hypothesised that chimpanzees of different social colonies would apply different feeding

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101 behaviours that did not require tools, independent of available resources, group composition
102 and phylogeny.

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104 **Methods**

105 **Subjects and colonies.** Subjects were 56 chimpanzees at Chimfunshi Wildlife Orphanage
106 (CWO), Zambia: 17 adult and adolescent males, 24 adult and adolescent females, 6 juvenile
107 males (4-8 years of age), and 9 juvenile females (5-8 years of age). They were members of
108 three stable, multimale-multifemale colonies with natural fission-fusion dynamics. Colonies
109 1, 2 and 3 included 27, 18, and 11 subjects, respectively. Table S1 shows the subject
110 representation for age and sex groups per colony, as well as overall colony composition
111 (Colonies 1, 2 and 3 comprised 45-50, 24 and 13-14 chimpanzees, respectively, during the
112 recording periods).

113 The largest colony (Colony 1) and middle-sized colony (Colony 2) lived in 77 and 65
114 hectare (ha) enclosures, respectively. The smallest colony (Colony 3) lived in a 25ha
115 enclosure from August 2010 and in a 2ha enclosure before that. Only one subject, an adult
116 male, was recorded opening fruits (6 fruits) in the 2ha enclosure. The enclosures contained
117 naturally developed fruit groves, grasslands and forests in the miombo woodland. Walls,
118 trees, and fencing meant that the subjects could not observe chimpanzees that lived in the
119 other colonies, at any times.

120 Colony formations took 2-5 years and ended 5-18 years before data collection. Each
121 colony was composed of a mixture of wild-born chimpanzees and chimpanzees born at CWO
122 (see Davila-Ross et al. 2011). The colonies were organised by the arrival dates of the wild-
123 born chimpanzees, not by their (phylo-)geographical background. Thirty-eight of the colony

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124 chimpanzees were presumably wild-born and brought individually or in pairs to CWO, often
125 from African countries that do not have wild chimpanzee populations. Twenty-four of them
126 (Colony 1: 13 chimpanzees; Colony 2: 6; Colony 3: 5) were brought from countries where
127 wild chimpanzees live (e.g., Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda). If they were born there, then the
128 subspecies representation for these individuals would be 42-65% for *Pan troglodytes*
129 *schweinfurthii* and 31-42% for *P. t. troglodytes* across the three colonies (Wilson et al. 2008;
130 Tutin et al. 2008). As we do not know with certainty if these chimpanzees were born in these
131 countries, this estimation on subspecies representation was only presented to show that each
132 colony very likely includes a mix of subspecies and that no apparent sign for phylogenetic
133 differences could be found across the colonies.

134 ***Strychnos* fruits, feeding sessions, and data collection.** The fruits from *Strychnos* spp.
135 (Figure S1) weighed approximately 335g (range: 200-460g) and had a diameter of 8.5cm
136 (range: 7.0-9.7cm), based on means calculated for five fruits. The *Strychnos* plants do not
137 naturally grow in the chimpanzee enclosures (nor have they been planted there). Instead, the
138 fruits were provided to the chimpanzees by their keepers. All fruits were bought from local
139 farmers. Fruits were randomly distributed among the colonies, such that all three groups were
140 provided with quantities of fruits proportional to group size, and were overall comparable in
141 size, firmness, colour and ripeness (some ripe and some less ripe). It is, therefore, unlikely
142 that the hard-shelled fruits differed in ways that could have explained differences in feeding
143 behaviours across colonies. These fruits were being given to the chimpanzees of CWO before
144 the present study began, at least since 2005. To the authors' knowledge, no human had ever
145 shown or taught the subjects how to open hard-shelled fruits on any prior occasions.

146 In each of the enclosures, feeding took place within an (approximately) 20 square
147 meter area, close to the enclosure fences which allowed unobstructed viewing from as close
148 as 1-2 meters to the chimpanzees. The feeding areas of Colonies 1 and 2 were roughly 200

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149 meters from each other, with the miombo woodland separating them, while the feeding area
150 of Colony 3 was about 1.5 kilometres further away. Each feeding area consisted of mainly
151 dried ground, resulting in a hard surface with little grass and sporadic trees. The chimpanzees
152 could, therefore, see their own colony members during feeding.

153 Feeding sessions were video-recorded with the objective of including as many
154 subjects as possible. Recordings were made in 2007 (June-August), and in 2011 (August).
155 Two subjects were video-recorded both as juveniles and as adolescents during the two
156 recording periods. To avoid pseudoreplications, only the adolescent data were included, as
157 this was the age group from which most data were obtained for both subjects. The
158 chimpanzees were fed *Strychnos* fruits 2-7 times a week during the study period. Feeding
159 sessions took place for all colonies between 11:30am and 1:30pm each day, and video
160 recordings were made from just outside the fence at the feeding sites.

161 **Behavioural coding.** A fruit-opening technique was defined as a distinct method applied by
162 a chimpanzee to open a fruit using the mouth, hands and/or feet. Subjects may have used the
163 same technique more than once, as well as combined a range of techniques for each fruit.
164 Repeated as well as individually-shown behaviours were tallied as fruit-opening events. For
165 example, if a subject hit a fruit twice against the ground and then used a specific biting
166 technique once, three fruit-opening events were counted. The study included a total of 939
167 fruit-opening events (Mean = 17 events per individual) across 219 fruits (Mean = 4 fruits per
168 individual).

169 The behaviours were coded by one researcher using Windows Media Player. Inter-
170 coder reliability was evaluated with a second coder, based on 281 fruit-opening events (30%
171 of all events) for 29 subjects (Kappa = 0.91).

172 **Data analysis.** This study systematically examined fruit-opening behaviours by first
173 conducting an overall analysis, and then specifically compared chimpanzees across age
174 groups, sex groups, and the three colonies. As part of the overall analysis, we assessed
175 whether fruit-opening techniques were used in an organised manner. The applications of
176 opening techniques were measured during four consecutive and mutually-exclusive stages:
177 Initial opening (Stage 1), following initial opening, but before the first eating phase (Stage 2),
178 further opening a partially opened fruit (Stage 3), and following the first further opening
179 technique, but before additional eating phases (Stage 4). For descriptions and further details
180 on the stages and eating phases, see [Table S2](#).

181 Age, sex, and colony comparisons were primarily conducted using generalized linear
182 mixed models (GLMM). GLMM analysis examines the effects of predictor variables, while
183 controlling for the potential non-independence of response variables. Response variables
184 were the mean number of combined technique types to completely open a fruit and the
185 percent number of fruits opened with a specific technique. The predictor variables were age
186 groups, sex groups, and colonies. Subject ID was included as a random effect. GLMM
187 analyses were only performed on models where the improvement of the fit between the full
188 and null models showed statistical significance. GLMM analyses were conducted using the
189 programme R version 2.15 (R Development Core Team 2010) with the “lme4” package
190 (Bates et al. 2010).

191 **Results**

192 **Overall analysis of fruit opening.** We distinguished eight distinct fruit-opening techniques
193 applied by subjects, including: half biting, full biting, fruit cracking, hitting on object, hitting
194 on ground, peeling, stomping, and throwing (for further details on the techniques, see [Table](#)
195 [1](#)). The first six techniques were found consistently across all age and sex groups. Of the

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196 latter two techniques, only four instances of stomping and six instances of throwing were
197 observed, performed by two and one individuals, respectively. It is important to note that fruit
198 cracking was the only technique where fruits were used to open other fruits; specifically,
199 fruits were used as ‘hammers’ to strike against other fruits (see [Figure 1](#) and [Supplementary](#)
200 [video](#)).

201 In total, nineteen subjects put fruits (N = 26) aside after applying a fruit-opening
202 technique, to eat in the future ([Supplementary video](#)). For 8 subjects, it was clearly visible
203 that these fruits were cracked open, with the pulp visible (14 fruits).

204 [Table S3](#) provides an overview of the six most common techniques applied
205 throughout the four fruit-opening stages. The chimpanzees consistently used biting
206 throughout Stages 1-4 (Mean = 2.6 - 69.3% of techniques). Fruit cracking was present only in
207 Stages 1-3 (Mean = 13.2 - 19.9%). Hitting was primarily applied before the first eating phase,
208 in Stages 1-2 (Mean = 15.8 - 21.3%). In contrast, peeling was most frequently used after the
209 first or any additional eating phase, in Stages 3-4 (Mean = 9.7 - 18.3%).

210 **Fruit-opening techniques across age, sex and colonies.** GLMM analyses were first
211 conducted for combined techniques and then for specific technique types. For combined
212 techniques, collinearity between all GLMM predictor variables was low; the maximum
213 variance inflation factor (VIF) was 1.18. GLMM results showed that the chimpanzee colonies
214 differed significantly in the mean number of technique types combined to completely open a
215 fruit per subject ($P < .001$; see [Table 2](#)). Bonferroni corrected pairwise comparisons revealed
216 that chimpanzees in Colony 3 combined significantly more techniques than chimpanzees in
217 Colony 1 ($P < .001$) and Colony 2 ($P < .001$). No differences between sex and age groups
218 were found for combined techniques ($P > .05$; see [Table 2](#)).

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219 For the GLMM analysis on specific techniques, Hommel-Hochberg corrections were
220 applied for repeated comparisons and α levels were adjusted. Results for the frequently-used
221 techniques, with the exception of peeling, are presented in [Table 3](#). Peeling showed a non-
222 significant improved fit between the full and null models, and thus was excluded from
223 GLMM analysis. Collinearity between all GLMM predictor variables was low (maximum
224 VIF = 3.22). GLMM analysis revealed statistically significant differences across age groups
225 for hitting ($P < .001$) and tendencies of differences (Hommel-Hochberg corrections) in full
226 biting ($P = .048$) and fruit cracking ($P = .038$); see [Table 3](#). No age differences were found
227 for half biting ($P > .05$). Bonferroni corrected pairwise comparisons showed that juveniles
228 used hitting on objects ($P < .001$) and hitting on the ground ($P < .001$) significantly more
229 often than adults and adolescents. GLMM analysis (with Hommel-Hochberg corrections)
230 revealed that the sex groups tended to show differences in half biting ($P = .025$); see [Table 3](#).
231 No differences between sex groups were found for full-biting, fruit cracking, hitting on
232 ground or hitting on objects ($P > .05$). See [Table S4](#) for the use of specific techniques across
233 age and sex groups for each colony.

234 In addition, GLMM analysis showed that the colonies differed significantly from each
235 other in the percent number of fruits the chimpanzees opened by using half biting ($P = .001$),
236 full biting ($P < .001$), and fruit cracking ($P < .001$); see [Table 3 and Figure 2](#). Two of these
237 techniques were entirely absent in specific colonies. Full biting was not observed in Colony
238 3, but regularly occurred in Colonies 1 and 2 (produced by eleven and thirteen subjects,
239 respectively). Similarly, fruit cracking was absent in Colony 1, but was frequently observed
240 in Colonies 2 and 3 (produced by five and six subjects, respectively). Furthermore,
241 Bonferroni corrected pairwise comparisons showed that the chimpanzees from Colony 1
242 opened significantly more fruits with half biting than chimpanzees from Colony 2 ($P = .019$).

243

244 **Discussion**

245 The present study represents a non-experimental comparative assessment of the application
246 of natural foraging behaviours for opening hard-shell fruits across three chimpanzee colonies.
247 Analyses revealed fruit-opening differences across the three physically and socially separate
248 chimpanzee colonies in the number of combined techniques and the occurrence of three
249 specific techniques (half biting, full biting, and fruit cracking). Most strikingly, full biting and
250 fruit cracking were entirely absent in Colonies 3 and 1, respectively, yet present in the other
251 colonies. This study provides empirical evidence that behaviours underlying natural
252 extractive foraging, other than tool selection, can differ across primate colonies that have the
253 same foods available. The current findings thus supports previous findings on population-
254 specific foraging behaviours obtained from wild nonhuman primate communities, where
255 different resources were likely available (Whiten et al. 2001; van Schaik et al. 2003), and
256 where foraging behaviours have been measured under experimental conditions (Gruber et al.
257 2009; Biro et al. 2003; van de Waal et al. 2010).

258 Establishing whether asocial or social acquisition has occurred remains difficult in
259 field observations (Laland and Janik 2007). Here, the cross-colony differences in technique
260 application could not easily be explained as a result of asocial learning. If such learning had
261 occurred, then given the ecological similarity and comparable genetic composition, all
262 colonies should have exhibited similar fruit-opening behaviours. It is also important to note
263 that the three techniques which differed across colonies only involved the fruits and the
264 subjects' strength and skill. Thus, it appears that ecological factors do not account for the
265 cross-colony findings presented here.

266 Six opening techniques were used regularly by the chimpanzees. While *Strychnos*
267 fruit-opening behaviours have been reported (Gruber et al. 2010; Nishida and Turner 1996;
268 Boesch and Boesch 1990; McGrew 1999), the present work describes three techniques that,

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269 to the authors' knowledge, not been reported previously in chimpanzees, including fruit
270 cracking, stomping and throwing. The latter two strategies appeared to be idiosyncratic
271 techniques, observed only in three individuals (stomping by two, throwing by one). While the
272 chimpanzees were fruit cracking, they were occasionally observed switching the 'hammer
273 fruit' so that it became the fruit to crack open (see [Figure 1](#) and [Supplementary video](#)).
274 Observations also revealed some indication of food preparations, where nineteen subjects put
275 partially opened fruits aside, presumably to eat them later. These behaviours indicate further
276 flexibility in utilising hard-shelled fruits to extract food.

277 Despite exhibiting a range of flexibility, some of the techniques applied by the
278 subjects unfolded in an organised manner, with all techniques other than biting closely linked
279 to specific stages of the fruit opening process. Striking techniques (fruit cracking and hitting)
280 were primarily used to penetrate the fruit's outer shell prior to the first eating phase. These
281 powerful techniques gave way to peeling, a finer, dexterous behaviour used almost
282 exclusively after the first eating phase, which seems appropriate for removing the last shell
283 pieces. Previous field reports on primate feeding behaviours, including tool use, have
284 described similarly sophisticated levels of dexterity and organisation (Inoue-Nakamura and
285 Matsuzawa 1997; Russon 1998; Stokes and Byrne 2001; Byrne and Byrne 2001). Our results
286 also suggest that chimpanzees were displaying hierarchical mental construction – the capacity
287 to hold and integrate several cognitive, motoric or perceptual components to achieve the goal
288 (Stokes and Byrne 2001) – when opening hard-shelled fruits.

289 Interestingly, across all colonies, juvenile chimpanzees opened more fruits with
290 hitting techniques (i.e. on objects or the ground) than adolescent and adult subjects. Perhaps
291 young chimpanzees develop their own feeding methods for these hard-to-process foods to
292 compensate for the lack of adult/adolescent attributes, such as robust mandibular strength,
293 before acquiring adult/adolescent techniques. These findings contribute to the current

294 literature, where research on extractive foraging with tools has shown that immature
295 chimpanzees acquire feeding behaviours based on observing adult models (Inoue-Nakamura
296 and Matsuzawa 1997; Lonsdorf et al. 2004; Corp and Byrne 1991). Comparisons by sex
297 revealed that females tended to display more half biting than males, especially among the
298 adults and adolescents. These findings are consistent with field research showing sex-
299 differences in chimpanzee foraging behaviours (Goodall 1986; Lonsdorf 2005).
300 Consequently, it may be possible that such differences also extend to non-tool use foraging
301 conditions.

302 In summary, the current study examined natural, non-tool extractive foraging across
303 three separate chimpanzee colonies that had the same foods available and shared the same
304 environment conditions, as well as comparable phylogenetic backgrounds. From these
305 findings, we have concluded that chimpanzees may acquire their foraging behaviours from
306 within their social communities. Chimpanzees, like humans, live in complex social systems
307 and thus it is possible that learning specific foraging techniques and how to utilise them from
308 within the social group may have had an important role in shaping human culture among
309 early hominids. Previous field and captive studies have shown that primates are capable of
310 socially-mediated traditions (Dindo et al. 2008; Whiten et al. 2007; Reader and Biro 2010).
311 While such findings are important for expanding our knowledge of primate tool use and
312 social cognition, the current study, by observing large, semi-wild groups of chimpanzees,
313 provided a unique interface between field research and captive studies. Further, we believe
314 that studies of semi-wild primate groups are a valuable avenue of research to complement
315 existing methods in attempting to understand animal social learning and the evolution of
316 culture.

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473 **Figure Captions**

474 **Figure 1. Switching fruits while fruit cracking:** An adult male chimpanzee used the fruit cracking
475 technique, i.e., used one fruit as a ‘hammer’ to crack open another fruit (a, b), before visually
476 inspecting it. Then, he put the latter fruit away (c), placed the ‘hammer’ fruit into his left hand (d),
477 selected another fruit to use as a ‘hammer’ (e), and continued with the fruit cracking (f).

478

479 **Figure 2. Fruit-opening across colonies:** Significant differences were found for the number
480 of fruits opened with half biting ($P < .001$), full biting ($P < .001$), and fruit cracking ($P <$
481 $.001$) events measured for every subject across the three colonies.

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