The aim of my observational study is to see how monkeys interact with one another...

On a genetic level monkeys (being primates) are distantly related to humans, but out of all primates apes are a humans closest relative in the animal kingdom, with monkeys being an evolutional stepping stone for humans. On a genetic level, the closest member of the great apes species to humans is the chimpanzee. Therefore, analyzing apes and monkeys may have relevance when looking at humans.

I expect the apes or monkeys that I analyse to interact similarly to humans, but in a much simpler way. I think that apes and monkeys will interact in a simpler way compared to humans because there is an obvious lack of language, as monkeys and apes don’t have vocal cords in order to verbally communicate. Even though monkeys and apes lack language I still think they will form relationships with each other in a similar way to humans. I also expect to notice a difference in interaction when I compare one species of monkey or ape to another.

Population/Sample

Due to a lack of funding for my study and the lack of monkeys and apes having a natural habitat in the United Kingdom I was not able to observe monkeys or apes in there natural habitat. The nearest population of monkeys or apes I could get access to was the monkeys and apes at London Zoo. Observing caged monkeys and apes decreases the validity and representativeness because the zoo animals may be behaving differently in the zoo from what they would in there natural environment. On the other hand the observation will be reliable, as the animals are in cages you can go

back to the zoo any time you want and observe the same animals, making it easy to repeat.

While I am at the zoo I will look around the primate section and choose two monkeys or apes from different species to analyse. If there is more than one monkey or ape in a cage of the same species I will randomly select one monkey or ape to record the behaviour of.

Procedure

When I arrived at London Zoo I located the primates section and located some species of monkey and ape that I could include in my sample. While I was in the zoo I was working with another student, so that we could increase the reliability of the investigation. We increased the reliability by observing the same apes and then compared the results that we got to make sure they were accurate (inter-observer reliability). The monkey species I decided to take my sample from was the Cheeked Gibbon monkey. The first monkey that I chose to observe was a White Cheeked Gibbon (Hylobates Leucogenys). We, me and my partner, then sat down in front of the Gibbons' cage and began to record the behaviour of the monkey, for forty minutes in total.

The equipment that I used to record the behaviour was a stop watch, a pen and a behaviour recording sheet (a computerised version of the behaviour recording sheet follows in the appendices section). I began by starting the stop watch and ticking the correct boxes of behaviour depending on the behaviour displayed by the monkey and I carried this out until the forty minutes were up.

The second monkey that I chose to observe the behaviour of was a Buff Cheeked Gibbon (Hylobates gabriellae). I carried out the same method of observation for the Buff Cheeked Gibbon as I did for the White Cheeked Gibbon. After all the data had been collected I compared it to my partners' data and found that my results were almost perfectly accurate.

The behaviours that I chose to analyse and included in my behaviour recording sheet were as follows:

* Grooming / scratching

* Climbing

* Non-aggressive play

* Aggressive play

* Eating

* Excreting

* Resting / sleeping

* Swinging

* Walking

* Vocalisation

Results

My results varied greatly between the two types of Gibbon I observed. Below are some charts in which I have recorded my data so that it is easily understandable.

White Cheeked Gibbon

I deleted the behaviours that were behaved no times on my observation results sheet from my charts, as it would have been ambiguous to include them.

Buff Cheeked Gibbon

I deleted the behaviours that were behaved no times on my observation results sheet from my charts, as it would have been ambiguous to include them.

Conclusions

I am unable to draw any firm conclusions from my results. I am unable because the monkeys didn’t actually interact with each other. From this I could conclude that monkeys don’t interact in any way like humans do, but from other knowledge I know that this is not true. The fact that the animals were in cages also affected my results. The first monkey I observed was obviously affected by this, and this is probably a reason why my findings were inconclusive.

I predicted that monkeys and apes would interact in a similar way to humans; from my results I have found that they do not, but I think my results are biased because my sample was of animals in captivity (which affected

their behaviour. I also predicted that there would be a difference in the way different types of monkey and ape interacted; I proved this correct with my results. However this may only apply to monkeys in captivity, they could act differently in their natural environment

Evaluation

There aren’t very many strengths about this study. The study was reliable as it can be easily repeated. However, there were a lot of weaknesses; it has a low ecological validity as it is not very true to real life. The study is also unrepresentative as the findings cannot be generalised. Another good thing about my study is that inter-observer reliability was present meaning that, even though my results were not representative, they were accurate because I compared them to someone else’s.

To improve my investigation I could have observed animals in their natural environment, also I could have carried it out covertly in order to get more accurate results and prevent demand characteristics. I could have also observed a closer relation to the human species (e. g. chimpanzees).