

POSTER

GROOMING TECHNIQUES OF CHIMPANZEES AT GOMBE: AN ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE BASED ON FILMS BY EIBL-EIBESFELDT AND OTHER PRIMATOLOGICAL DATA

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ABSTRACT

Research on the behaviour of free-living chimpanzees spans more than 60 years. However, little is known about the frequency and duration of their grooming techniques and how they might change over time. Archival film footage can therefore be a valuable source of research. The Austrian ethologist Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt documented the behaviour of chimpanzees in Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania in the 1980s. This material, representing a link between the early days of chimpanzee research and modern scientific approaches, was systematically quantified using a video-coding system. Eleven different types of grooming were observed, recording the parts of the body being groomed, and the use of their hands and mouth. Changes in the frequencies of social grooming patterns and the preference for the parts of the body being groomed were identified compared to early pioneering work. Unexpectedly, the pattern of social scratch, which is thought to traditionally be absent in Gombe, has been identified. One instance of substrate grooming was observed, which to our knowledge has not been recorded in Gombe. Besides the already known behaviours, possible low-frequency variants or precursors of grooming patterns have been recorded. These examples in this study show that some of these ethological categories are non-exhaustive and their extractions from archival material are limited. A comparison between the grooming behaviour of the two long-term study sites, Gombe and Mahale Mountains National Park, which are only 150 km apart, shows similarities and traces of all the behavioural grooming patterns that are considered cultural in Mahale.