

Current evolutionary and anthropological perspectives

But Cross-Cultural Evidence Suggests Variation

- The large cross-cultural economic games project: “Our results show that people in larger, more complex societies engage in significantly more third-party punishment than people in small-scale societies.” (Marlowe et al., 2008)

- Key implication:
 - Third-party punishment increases with population size and complexity.
 - Small-scale societies exhibit substantially lower levels.
 - This challenges the universality implied in early strong reciprocity models.

Table 1. Summary of study populations. (Study populations ordered by local group size. 1, Marlowe; 2, Barrett; 3, Henrich; 4, Bolyanatz; 5, Gurven; 6, Tracer; 7, McElreath; 8, Camillo Cardenas; 9, Lesorogol; 10, Ensminger & Gwako; 11, Gwako; 12, Barr.)

ethnic group	nation	local group population	ethnic population	MAO	local population	ethnic population	economic base
Hadza ¹	Tanzania	33	1000	5.65	1	1	foraging
Shuar ²	Ecuador	100	47 000	19.33	2	7	horticulture
Yasawa ³	Fiji	104	2500	5.00	3	2	horticulture
Sursurunga ⁴	PNG	215	3000	10.31	4	3	horticulture
Tsimane ⁵	Bolivia	230	6500	3.91	5	4	horticulture/foraging
Au ⁶	PNG	242	8000	30.67	6	5	horticulture/foraging
Isanga ⁷	Tanzania	1500	45 000	31.00	7	6	agriculture
Sanquianga ⁸	Columbia	1900	n.a.	23.87	8	n.a.	fisheries
Samburu ⁹	Kenya	2000	147 000	18.93	9	8	pastoralism
Maragoli ¹⁰	Kenya	3067	197 000	33.04	10	9	agricultural
Gusii ¹¹	Kenya	3580	1 300 000	41.00	11	10	agricultural
Accra ¹²	Ghana	2 000 000	5 000 000	26.15	12	11	wage work

Current evolutionary and anthropological perspectives

But Cross-Cultural Evidence Suggests Variation

- The large cross-cultural economic games project: “Our results show that people in larger, more complex societies engage in significantly more third-party punishment than people in small-scale societies.” (Marlowe et al., 2008)
- Key implication:
 - Third-party punishment increases with population size and complexity.
 - Small-scale societies exhibit substantially lower levels.
 - This challenges the universality implied in early strong reciprocity models.

Current evolutionary and anthropological perspectives

Ethnographic Evidence: Third-Party Punishment Often Rare

- From Fitouchi & Singh (2023): “Third-party punishment often appears rare if not absent” in many small-scale societies.
 - They further report: “We document rare instances of third-party punishment... (6.6% of offenses)” among the Kiowa.