

Is the most essential feature of society mutual recognition or sufficient interaction?

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Abstract:

There is no society without interaction, and only when there is interaction can it be called a society. In the definition of society, overemphasizing identity and belonging, and placing the importance of identity and belonging above interaction, is a narrowing of society and is not in line with reality. There is not only mutual recognition and cooperation, but also contradictions and disputes, which is the normal state of society. Although there can be close relationships between different species of animals, this relationship is often not an equal relationship, and the content is usually incomplete, and only some aspects are similar to society. It is necessary to define the category of society strictly between the same species. As for whether a society can be passed on from generation to generation, this should only be the result of the development and evolution of the society, not whether the society is a necessary prerequisite of a society. A social group that has existed in history but has become extinct is also a form of society, and it cannot be assumed that it is not a society just because it has become extinct.

Keywords: society, interaction, identity, group recognition

In a recent paper (Moffett, 2024), Moffett proposes that society should be described in terms of a shared group identification rather than social interactions, and gives a specific definition of society: "groups beyond a simple, immediate family that have the potential to endure for generations, whose constituent individuals recognize one another as members, and that maintain control over access to a physical space". Moffett's above views are valuable in a comparative study of the specifics of society, but in terms of the definition of society, these views overemphasize group identity, resulting in the definition not being able to cover the multiple forms of existence of human society.

There is no society without interaction, and only when there is interaction can it be called a society; In addition, recognition is a subjective judgment, and evidence is required for recognition, and evidence comes from and only comes from social interaction, so social interaction is the most essential feature of society. Even if there is no mutual recognition, as long as there is sufficient interaction, it is also a form of social existence. For example, in human history, even if groups who disagree with each other often kill each other, and even if one group is eventually extinct, during the period of their coexist, it also constitutes the human society at that time (José Luis & Francisco 2023), but it is a sad form among various forms of human society.

Therefore, in the definition of society, overemphasizing identity and belonging, especially placing the importance of identity and belonging above interaction, is a narrowing of society and is not in line with reality. A social group that fully identifies with each other is only a special form of social existence, and this social form is often not stable for a long time (Sherif 1966); There is not only mutual recognition and cooperation, but also contradictions and disputes, which is the normal state of society (Putnam 2000, Hewstone et al. 2002). Mutual recognition and a sense of belonging are indeed conducive to the harmonious development and long-term continuation of society, but the

existence of contradictions and conflicts is also the normal state of society (Tajfel & Turner 1979). As for whether a society can endure for generations, this should only be the result of the development and evolution of the society, not whether the society is a necessary prerequisite of a society. A social group that has existed in history but has become extinct is also a form of society, and it cannot be considered that the group that once existed is not a society just because it is extinct. In addition, the definition of society in the target paper will lead to a perverse result: that is, different species can also constitute societies, which will overextend the scope of society. Although there is a close relationship between humans and certain animals (such as livestock, monkeys, gorillas, cats, dogs, etc.) (Haraway 2008), this relationship is more based on a master-slave relationship or a feeding relationship, which is an incomplete interaction and does not constitute a complete social system, but is only somewhat similar to society in some aspects (Waiblinger et al. 2006). It is therefore necessary to define the definition of society strictly within the same species. Therefore, I think it is very appropriate that Edward O. Wilson (1975), the mentor of the target paper author, confine the definition of society strictly within the same species.

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