



WEIRD Psychology

By Kelly Berg

Psychology is WEIRD, but is it weird enough? You might be thinking that this lesson is going to be about some strange aspect or branch of psychology, but that's not it at all! WEIRD is actually an ACRONYM (an ABBREVIATION formed from the initial letters of other words and pronounced as a word)! When we talk about psychology being WEIRD, what we are actually referring to is the fact that most BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE THEORY is built on research that intensely examines a very narrow sample of human VARIATION. In this case, WEIRD stands for WESTERN, EDUCATED, INDUSTRIALIZED, RICH, and DEMOCRATIC.

Spell ABBREVIATION Spell INITIAL Spell VARIATION

What are we talking about today? WEIRD PSYCHOLOGY

In this case, WEIRD is not a word, but an _____. ACRONYM

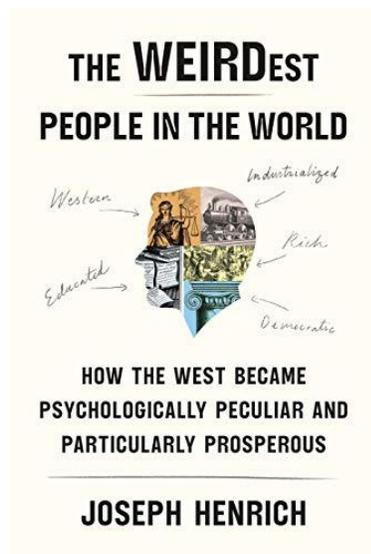
What is an acronym? AN ABBREVIATION FORMED FROM THE INITIAL LETTERS OF OTHER WORDS AND PRONOUNCED AS A WORD

What is mostly built on research that intensely examines a very narrow sample of human variation? BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE THEORY

What does WEIRD stand for? WESTERN, EDUCATED, INDUSTRIALIZED, RICH, AND DEMOCRATIC

Can you give me an example of another acronym?

How would you define industrialized?



Behavioral science is defined as the scientific study of human or animal behavior, and PSYCHOLOGY, as well as PSYCHOBIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY, and COGNITIVE SCIENCE are several of its different branches. In 2010, in an issue of BEHAVIORAL AND BRAIN SCIENCES, JOE HENRICH, PH.D., an ANTHROPOLOGIST, and psychologists STEVEN HEINE, PHD and ARA NORENZAYAN, PHD, reviewed a database of behavioral and social science studies. Their findings revealed that people from WEIRD (remember, when I say weird, I mean western, educated, industrialized, rich, and

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democratic) societies represented as much as 80 percent of the study participants.

Spell DEFINED Spell SCIENTIFIC Spell REVIEW

What is defined as the scientific study of human or animal behavior? BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

Tell me two of the branches of behavioral science. PSYCHOLOGY, PSYCHOBIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY, AND COGNITIVE SCIENCE

How many years ago was this review published? 2019 - 2010 = 9 YEARS AGO

In which publication was the review published? BEHAVIORAL AND BRAIN SCIENCES

According to the lesson, Dr. Henrich is an _____? ANTHROPOLOGIST

Name one of the psychologists who contributed to the review? STEVEN HEINE, PHD, ARA NORENZAYAN, PHD

What percentage of study participants did they find were WEIRD? 80 PERCENT

It turns out that most of the study PARTICIPANTS are college students (which explains why they are WEIRD) and the fact that they are oversampled might be SKEWING our understanding of human behavior. We've said that WEIRD subjects make up 80 percent of study participants, but they make up only 12 percent of the world's population. They are not only not representative of humans as a species...by many measures they are OUTLIERS (people or things situated away or detached from the main body or system).

Spell PARTICIPANTS

Spell EXPLAIN

Spell DETACHED

Most of the study participants are what? COLLEGE STUDENTS

Because they are oversampled, they might be what? SKEWING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

How much of the world's population do non-WEIRD subjects make up? $100 - 12 = 88$ PERCENT

What word was used meaning people or things situated away or detached from the main body or system? OUTLIERS

What is another example of an outlier?

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Something else weird (just the regular use of the word weird, here), is that it turns out that psychology is DISPROPORTIONATELY American, and English-speaking especially, even compared to other fields of scientific study. 70 percent of all psychology CITATIONS (quotations from or references to a book, paper, or author, especially in SCHOLARLY works) originate from research INSTITUTIONS in the United States. When you compare that with a field like CHEMISTRY, where that number is only 37 percent, it seems very high. Additionally, English-speaking countries make up the top 4 countries for psychology citations.

Spell ESPECIALLY Spell CITATIONS Spell SCHOLARLY

Psychology is _____ American. DISPROPORTIONATELY

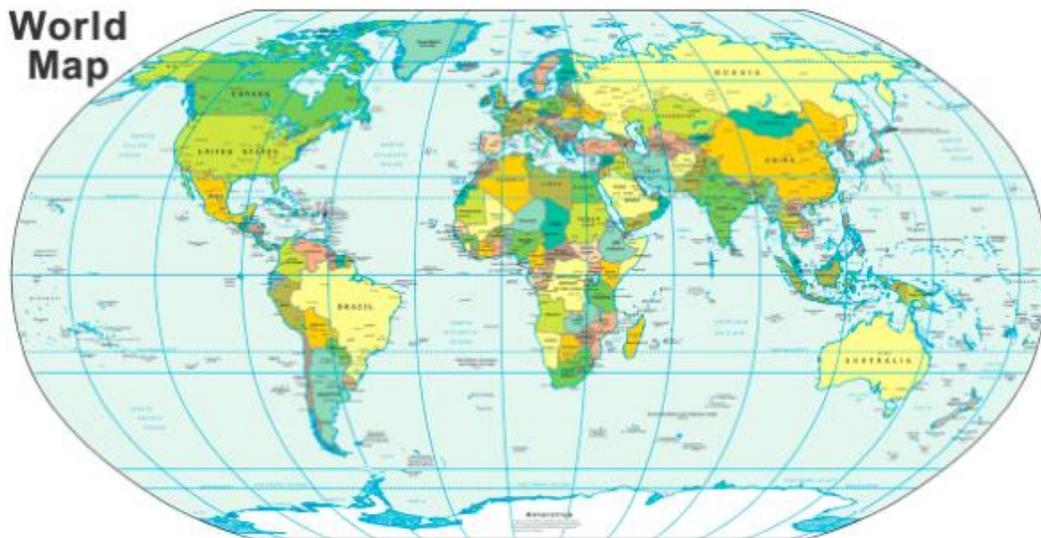
What percentage of psychology citations originate from research institutions outside of the US? $100 - 70 = 30$ PERCENT

A citation is a quotation from or in reference to what? A BOOK, PAPER, OR AUTHOR, ESPECIALLY IN SCHOLARLY WORKS

Which field has only 37 percent of its citations coming from research institutions in the US? CHEMISTRY

Name three other English-speaking countries.

What is a country you would like to visit? Why?



VAKT: Let's find the countries you just listed on the map! Point to each of them! If up is down, to the right is west, left is east, and down is south, let's go through them again and you show me with your pointed arm which direction they each are from us here in the USA!

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It turns out that WEIRD subjects are outliers on a range of MEASURABLE traits that do vary. These include social behavior, MORAL reasoning, VISUAL PERCEPTION, sense of FAIRNESS, COOPERATION, SPATIAL reasoning (the capacity to think about objects in three dimensions and to draw conclusions about those objects from limited information) as well as performance on IQ tests and ANALYTICAL abilities. Not only do they exhibit differences from Americans not university-educated, they are even different from previous generations of their own families.

Spell SUBJECTS Spell TRAITS Spell CAPACITY

WEIRD subjects are outliers on a range of _____ traits that do vary.
MEASURABLE

Tell me a few traits that vary among these WEIRD outliers. SOCIAL BEHAVIOR, MORAL REASONING, VISUAL PERCEPTION, SENSE OF FAIRNESS, COOPERATION, SPATIAL REASONING, PERFORMANCE ON IQ TESTS, ANALYTICAL ABILITIES

According to the lesson, not only do WEIRD subjects exhibit differences from Americans not university-educated, they are even different from what? PREVIOUS GENERATIONS OF THEIR OWN FAMILIES

Tell me the name of a university.

VAKT: Let's watch a video on WEIRD psychology! Search "The Hidden Biases in WEIRD Psychology Research" on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ho6OIPrD7sA>

So, it turns out that surveying college students in an Introduction to Psychology class, which is where most of these studies are done, fails to provide instant access to HUMAN NATURE. But yet behavioral scientists regularly publish BROAD claims about human behavior and psychology in top JOURNALS all around the world based on samples entirely drawn from WEIRD societies, and they seldom offer any CAUTIONARY notes about the source of data and the potential cultural BOUNDEDNESS (having bounds or limits) it may have. They assume (and often IMPLICITLY, or ABSOLUTELY) that these "standard subjects" are just as REPRESENTATIVE of our species as any other population. But are they justified?

Spell ACCESS

Spell IMPLICITLY Spell ABSOLUTELY

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Surveying students in an Introduction to Psychology class fails to provide instant access to _____. HUMAN NATURE

What do researchers seldom offer when they publish broad claims about human behavior and psychology drawn from WEIRD societies? CAUTIONARY NOTES ABOUT THE SOURCE OF DATA AND THE POTENTIAL CULTURAL BOUNDEDNESS IT MAY HAVE

What word was used meaning having bounds or limits? BOUNDEDNESS

What does 'cautionary' mean to you?

Research suggests that members of WEIRD societies, including young children, are some of the least representative populations that could be found for GENERALIZING about humans. Let's look at one example. LB KARASIK and colleagues have described how WEIRD children's motor-development patterns have become ENSHRINED in psychology, through test items, testing procedures, and norms, into the current understanding of UNIVERSAL 'STAGES' of motor development. Meaning that even when someone did conduct CROSS-CULTURAL research, the specific criteria came from examining WEIRD developmental pathways, and meant that these researchers had tools that were not well-suited to study these other children. Or, simply put, they were comparing the diverse children to WEIRD children, but on standards that had been set by the WEIRD children.

Spell CHILDREN Spell COLLEAGUES Spell UNDERSTANDING

Research suggests that members of WEIRD societies are some of the _____ populations that could be found for generalizing about humans. LEAST REPRESENTATIVE

What example was given for how WEIRD children might be different from non-WEIRD children? MOTOR DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

WEIRD children's motor development patterns have become enshrined in psychology, through test items, testing procedures, and norms, into what? THE CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSAL STATES OF MOTOR DEVELOPMENT They were comparing _____ children to WEIRD children. DIVERSE

Do you think it's fair to compare WEIRD children to diverse children? Or does it not matter? Why or why not?

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Our researchers need to be much less CAVALIER (showing a lack of proper concern) when addressing questions regarding human nature on data that comes from this thin and unusual slice of humanity. It's time to REORGANIZE the behavioral sciences STRUCTURALLY so that these challenges can be tackled! We need BROADER and CROSS-CULTURAL sampling, and while we are at it, let's get some spellers in those samples as well!



Spell CONCERN

Spell HUMANITY

Spell CHALLENGES

What word was used meaning showing a lack of proper concern? CAVALIER

How was the WEIRD slice of humanity described as being? THIN AND UNUSUAL

We need _____ and _____ sampling. BROADER, CROSS CULTURAL

Creative Writing: Do you think it is a problem that most study participants are WEIRD? Why or why not? If so, tell me another situation where this might be a problem and why? If not, explain why!



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<https://neuroanthropology.net/2010/07/10/we-agree-its-weird-but-is-it-weird-enough/>

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