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# The Neglected 95%

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## *Why American Psychology Needs to Become Less American*

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*This article proposes that psychological research published in APA journals focuses too narrowly on Americans, who comprise less than 5% of the world's population. The result is an understanding of psychology that is incomplete and does not adequately represent humanity. First, an analysis of articles published in six premier APA journals is presented, showing that the contributors, samples, and editorial leadership of the journals are predominantly American. Then, a demographic profile of the human population is presented to show that the majority of the world's population lives in conditions vastly different from the conditions of Americans, underlining doubts of how well American psychological research can be said to represent humanity. The reasons for the narrowness of American psychological research are examined, with a focus on a philosophy of science that emphasizes fundamental processes and ignores or strips away cultural context. Finally, several suggestions for broadening the scope of American psychology are offered.*

**Keywords:** international, cultural psychology, second psychology, universals, philosophy of science

As part of a field devoted to the study of human behavior, cognition, development, and relationships, and to the amelioration of mental health problems, American<sup>1</sup> psychology produces research findings that implicitly apply to the entire human population, the entire species. Psychological studies, journals, and textbooks in the United States describe the nature of social, emotional, and cognitive functioning, with the assumption that the processes described apply to all human beings (Rozin, 2006).

In order for this assumption to be legitimate, it would seem necessary for it to be based on studies of diverse sectors of the human population. Yet a striking feature of research in American psychology is that its conclusions are based not on a broad cross-section of humanity but on a small corner of the human population—mainly, persons living in the United States. Recently the population of the United States reached 300 million persons (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007). The current world population is about 6.5 billion persons (Population Reference Bureau [PRB], 2006). Consequently, by concentrating primarily on Americans, psychological researchers in the United States restrict their focus to less than 5% of the world's total

population. The rest of the world's population, the other 95%, is neglected.

In this article I make a case for turning greater attention in American psychology to this neglected 95%. I argue that research on the whole of humanity is necessary for creating a science that truly represents the whole of humanity. I further argue that American psychology can no longer afford to neglect 95% of the world given that many of the problems psychology can potentially address are worse among the neglected 95% than in American society.

Others have observed that psychological research is dominated by Americans (Cole, 2006; Denmark, 1998). For example, Sue (1999) asserted that "Americans are the largest producers of psychological research. The overwhelming subject of the research is Americans . . . [Nevertheless,] theories and principles are developed that are mistakenly assumed to apply to human beings in general; that is, they are assumed to be universal" (pp. 1072–1073). However, the present article contains the first empirical analysis of the degree of American and international representation in major journals of the American Psychological Association (APA).

Several other content analyses of major APA journals have been conducted with other goals. For example, Robins, Gosling, and Craik (1999) analyzed four major APA journals for trends in the representation of four schools of psychology (psychoanalysis, behaviorism, cognitive psychology, and neuroscience). Another analysis examined gender representation in journal articles in four areas of psychology, coding for sex of first author and of participants (Gannon, Luchetta, Rhodes, Pardie, & Segrist, 1992). Graham (1992) analyzed African American representation

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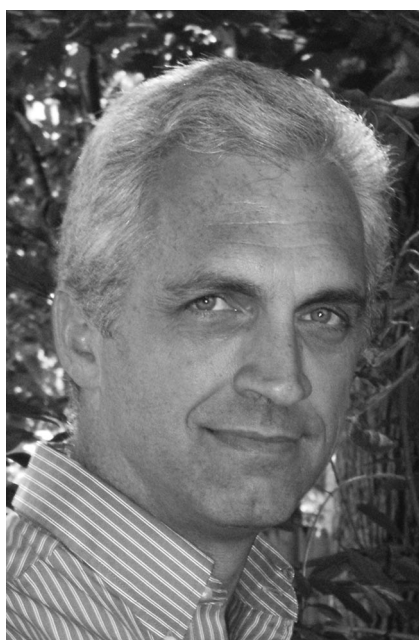
I wish to thank the following people for their comments on various drafts of the article: Peter Arnett, Esteban Cardemil, Steve Heine, Lene Jensen, Reed Larson, Laura Padilla-Walker, Paul Rozin, Richard Shweder, Jennifer Tanner, Niobe Way, and James Youniss.

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term *American* in this article to refer to people living in the United States. I am aware that some object to the use of this term to refer only to the United States, as people who live in Canada, Mexico, Central America, and South America are also, in a sense, Americans. However, *American* is commonly used to refer to the United States, including in the title of this journal, and I chose to follow that established usage here rather than use the more awkward "people living in the United States."

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in six APA journals over a 20-year period, and McLoyd and Randolph (1985) conducted a similar analysis focusing on African American children. However, the present article is the first to analyze major APA journals for international representation.

Two previous studies have analyzed international representation in PsycLIT abstracts. Bauserman (1997) examined the national affiliations of first authors in all PsycLIT abstracts for 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, and 1994. In all years, United States-affiliated authors were the majority, but the percentage of American first authors declined from 70% in 1975 to 54% in 1994. Using a similar approach, Adair, Coelho, and Luna (2002) assessed the national affiliations of first authors in PsycLIT abstracts for the years 1990, 1994, and 1998 combined. Their results were very similar to Bauserman's (1997) most recent year, with 55% of first authors having an American affiliation.

The focus of the present article is on the degree of international breadth in major APA journals. I recognize that a great deal of psychological research is occurring in other countries, as the analyses by Bauserman (1997) and Adair et al. (2002) attest. However, my thesis is that the mainstream of American psychology has so far been largely oblivious to international contributions and remains an insular enterprise, with unfortunate consequences for the science of psychology. To support this thesis I examine not only first authors but other authors, samples, and editorial boards in a range of major APA journals.

I begin by presenting an analysis of six top APA journals to demonstrate the narrow focus of research psychology in the United States. Then I present an overall demographic profile of the world's current population and projections for the world's population by the end of the 21st century. This profile shows how different the majority of the world's population is from the Americans who are

the main focus of American psychological research and highlights what needs to be learned about the psychological functioning of the majority. Next, I present some reasons for American psychology's narrow focus. Finally, I propose some suggestions for drawing greater research attention to the neglected 95%.

## **How Well Do Major APA Journals Represent the Human Population?**

In order to investigate the thesis of this article empirically, I analyzed six premier APA journals: *Developmental Psychology* (DP), *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (JPSP), *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* (JAP), *Journal of Family Psychology* (JFP), *Health Psychology* (HP), and *Journal of Educational Psychology* (JEP). These journals were chosen to represent diverse areas of psychology. Each journal is considered to be the flagship APA journal in its area. In taking this approach of using premier APA journals to represent various areas of psychology, I followed the approach established in several previous journal analyses on other topics, including African American representation (Graham, 1992), gender bias (Gannon et al., 1992), and representation of psychological "schools" (Robins et al., 1999). Most of the journals included in the present analysis were used in these previous analyses as well. The previous analyses included four to eight journals, and the present analysis includes six.

The focus of this article is on the current status of American psychology, so the main focus of the journal analysis was on the most recent five-year period, 2003–2007. However, in order to discern if there has been any trend in recent decades, I also analyzed the journals for the years 5, 10, and 15 years prior to the 2003–2007 period: 1998, 1993, and 1988. Overall, the journal analysis covered a total of 4,037 articles over a 20-year period.

Each article was coded for national institutional affiliation of authors and national locations of samples. Also, for each journal, the national institutional affiliations of editors and editorial board members were recorded. For the most part, codes were grouped by region: Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. The United States was a separate category, because the focus of the analysis was on the extent to which the major APA journals are predominantly American. There was also a category called "English-speaking countries" for a group of countries with strong cultural and historical ties to the United States: the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Israel was coded as a separate category because it does not fit well into any of the other categories.

In the coding of the samples, articles that included samples from more than one country were coded as one for each country. If an article included multiple studies from one country, they were coded once for sample rather than separately for each study.

All empirical articles were included, but not commentaries, rejoinders, or introductions to special issues or special sections. For review articles, national institutional af-

filiations of authors were recorded but not nationalities of samples.

National institutional affiliations were recorded for the editors of the six journals and for editorial board members (sometimes called “consulting editors”). These affiliations were available on the home page of each journal’s Web site.

### Results of the Journal Analysis

The results of the analysis for 2003–2007 are shown in Table 1. The table is divided into 3 sections: first authors, other authors, and samples. For each section of the table, the total is shown in the first column, followed by the U.S. results. The next column shows the results for four English-speaking countries: the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. These are followed by the results for Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Israel.

The results indicate that the United States dominates the current content of many APA journals. Among first authors, overall, 73% were based at American universities; the percentage of first authors who were affiliated with American universities ranged across journals from 65% (*JPSP*) to 85% (*JFP*). An additional 14% of first authors were from the four English-speaking countries (not including the United States), and 11% were from Europe. The world outside of the United States, the English-speaking countries, and Europe was represented by only 2% of first authors. Only 1% of first authors were from Asia, 1% were from Israel, and there were virtually none from Latin America, Africa, or the Middle East. The pattern for other authors (second authors and beyond) was similar. Seventy-four percent of other authors were American-based, 13% were from the English-speaking countries, and 11% were from Europe. Only 1% of other authors were from Asia, 1% were from Israel, and virtually none were from Latin America, Africa, or the Middle East.

The analysis of the samples also showed a pattern of American dominance. Sixty-eight percent of the samples were in the United States, 14% were in the English-speaking countries, and 13% were in Europe. Three percent were in Asia, 1% were in Latin America, and less than 1% were in Africa or the Middle East. One percent were Israeli.

When the years 1988, 1993, and 1998 were included along with 2003 and 2007 to investigate the possibility of a trend, little change was found over the past 20 years.<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 shows the pattern for first authors for each of the six journals over this time period and for all six journals combined. Chi-square tests showed no significant differences in the proportion of American first authors in the various years for *JAP*, *JFP*, *HP*, or *JEP*. There was a modest downward pattern in the proportion of American first authors for *DP*,  $\chi^2(4, 499) = 10.23$ ;  $p < .05$ ; *JPSP*,  $\chi^2(4, 908) = 25.54$ ;  $p < .001$ ; and all six journals combined,  $\chi^2(4, 2,545) = 24.38$ ;  $p < .001$ . The pattern was nearly identical for other authors and for samples (not shown; data are available from the author upon request).

The focus of the journal analysis was on national affiliation of authors and samples, but the American sam-

ples for the most recent year (2007) were also analyzed for their ethnic composition, because given the ethnic diversity of the United States it may be possible to study people of a wide variety of cultural backgrounds without leaving the country. However, the samples in the United States were found to be predominantly European American (see Table 2). All but 23% of the American samples were majority European American. Typically, results were not analyzed by ethnic group. In the majority (60%) of American samples in *JPSP* in 2007, the ethnicity of the sample was not even reported (cf. Rozin, 2001). In the other five journals, the percentage of articles for which ethnicity was unreported ranged from 7% to 24%.

In the course of the journal analysis, I observed that for *JPSP*, the samples were typically not just Americans but American undergraduate psychology students at research universities, narrowing further the range of humanity being studied. I calculated this systematically for the most recent year, 2007, and found that in 67% of American studies published in *JPSP*, the samples consisted of undergraduate psychology students. The percentage of psychology student samples in non-American studies was even higher, 80%. Consequently, although *JPSP* had the highest percentage of non-American samples of any of the six journals in the analysis, this figure is misleading, because when *JPSP* studies took place in a country other than the United States, the samples typically included only a very narrow, unrepresentative portion of the country’s people.

In addition to the examination of journal authors and samples, I examined the institutional affiliations of current (2007) editors and editorial boards. All nine editors of the six journals were based at American universities (*JPSP* has three editors; the other journals have one each). As shown in Table 3, 82% of associate editors were American-based, and nearly all the others were from other English-speaking countries (7%) or Europe (7%). Similarly, among editorial board members/consulting editors, 82% were American-based, and nearly all the others were in English-speaking countries (11%) or Europe (6%).

At this point some may object, are these not journals of the American Psychological Association? Yes, but there is no mention in any of their journal guidelines that the content of the journal is intended to be primarily or solely American. If this is indeed the case, then perhaps some name changes are in order: *Developmental Psychology of Americans*; *Journal of Abnormal American Psychology*; *Journal of the Personality and Social Psychology of American Undergraduate Introductory Psychology Students*; and so on. However, it seems doubtful that many American psychologists would be truly satisfied with such a permanently limited science. If the goal of APA journals is to promote psychology as a human science and not just a science of Americans, their content and their editorial leadership should reflect this.

<sup>2</sup> The years 2003 and 2007 were used (along with 1998, 1993, and 1988) rather than the data from the entire 2003–2007 period in order to make the data points comparable for the chi-square analyses.



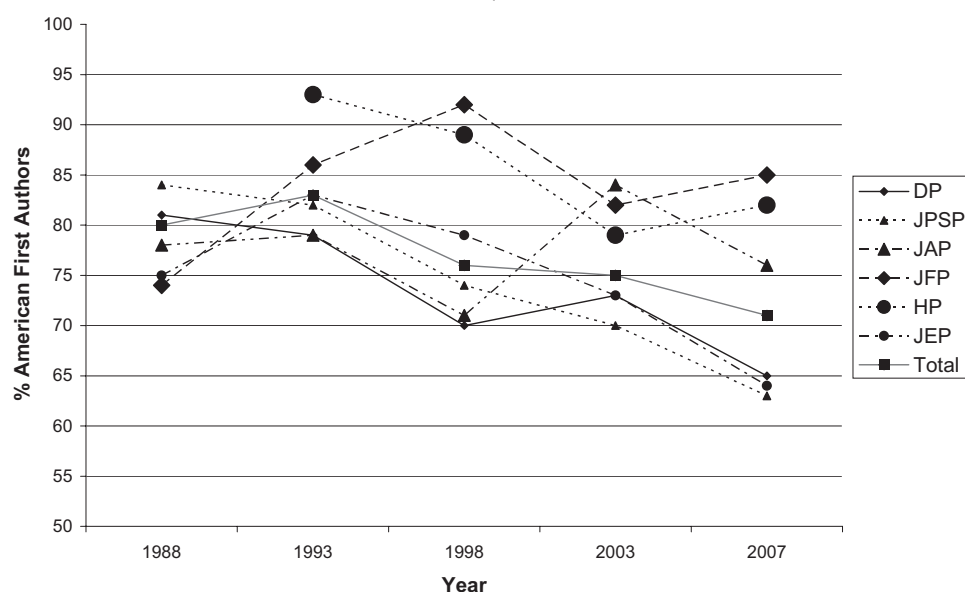
**Table 1**  
National Affiliation of Journal Content, 2003–2007

Journal	Total	United States	English-speaking countries	Europe	Asia	Latin America	Africa	Middle East	Israel
First authors									
<i>Developmental Psychology</i>	461	331 (72%)	78 (17%)	41 (9%)	3 (1%)	0	0	0	8 (2%)
<i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>	698	457 (65%)	92 (13%)	123 (18%)	9 (1%)	0	0	0	17 (2%)
<i>Journal of Abnormal Psychology</i>	354	275 (78%)	44 (12%)	32 (9%)	2 (1%)	0	0	0	1
<i>Journal of Family Psychology</i>	313	265 (85%)	24 (8%)	18 (6%)	2 (1%)	0	0	0	4 (1%)
<i>Health Psychology</i>	408	319 (78%)	64 (16%)	23 (6%)	0	0	0	0	2 (1%)
<i>Journal of Educational Psychology</i>	297	197 (66%)	44 (15%)	37 (12%)	13 (4%)	1	0	0	5 (2%)
Total	2,531	1,844 (73%)	346 (14%)	274 (11%)	29 (1%)	1	0	0	37 (1%)
Other authors									
<i>Developmental Psychology</i>	1,091	739 (68%)	212 (19%)	114 (10%)	18 (2%)	1	2	0	5
<i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>	1,495	1,026 (69%)	186 (12%)	229 (15%)	31 (2%)	2	0	0	21 (2%)
<i>Journal of Abnormal Psychology</i>	1,032	773 (75%)	139 (13%)	109 (11%)	6 (1%)	2	0	0	3
<i>Journal of Family Psychology</i>	756	625 (83%)	63 (8%)	55 (7%)	3	2	0	0	8 (1%)
<i>Health Psychology</i>	1,313	1,061 (81%)	156 (12%)	86 (7%)	6	0	0	0	4
<i>Journal of Educational Psychology</i>	607	408 (67%)	83 (14%)	79 (13%)	27 (4%)	4 (1%)	0	0	6 (1%)
Total	6,294	4,632 (74%)	839 (13%)	672 (11%)	91 (1%)	11	2	0	47 (1%)
Samples									
<i>Developmental Psychology</i>	466	299 (64%)	87 (19%)	51 (11%)	17 (4%)	5 (1%)	1	1	5 (1%)
<i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>	721	450 (62%)	84 (12%)	135 (19%)	30 (4%)	4 (1%)	4 (1%)	0	14 (2%)
<i>Journal of Abnormal Psychology</i>	334	243 (73%)	45 (13%)	38 (11%)	6 (2%)	1	0	0	1
<i>Journal of Family Psychology</i>	273	220 (81%)	21 (8%)	22 (8%)	3 (1%)	1	0	1	5 (2%)
<i>Health Psychology</i>	371	281 (76%)	57 (15%)	29 (8%)	2 (1%)	1	0	0	1
<i>Journal of Educational Psychology</i>	287	184 (64%)	41 (14%)	36 (13%)	20 (7%)	1	0	0	5 (2%)
Total	2,452	1,677 (68%)	335 (14%)	311 (13%)	78 (3%)	13 (1%)	5	2	31 (1%)

Note. English-speaking countries are the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Percentages are shown except when the percentage was less than one half of one percent.

**Figure 1**

Proportion of American First Authors in Six APA Journals, 1988–2007



Note. DP = Developmental Psychology; JPSP = Journal of Personality and Social Psychology; JAP = Journal of Abnormal Psychology; JFP = Journal of Family Psychology; HP = Health Psychology; JEP = Journal of Educational Psychology.

### Implications of the Journal Analysis

In sum, the analysis shows that the United States predominates in many of the most prominent APA journals. From 2003 to 2007, 73% of first authors, 74% of other authors, and 68% of samples were American, and the results were consistent across journals. It may be that some authors

affiliated with American universities were actually from other countries, but it could also be that some persons affiliated with universities outside the United States were actually American. In any case, this limitation of the analysis does not apply to the samples. Over the past 20 years, despite the rise of cultural psychology and the rise of globalization as a topic of scholarly study and public discourse, little change has taken place in the predominance of American content in APA journals.

Other than Americans, the most substantial contributors to journal content were investigators from other Western countries, specifically the four other English-speaking countries and the countries of Europe. Furthermore, editors were exclusively American, and associate editors and editorial board members were overwhelmingly (more than 80%) based in the United States, with nearly all others based in other English-speaking countries or Europe. Overall, of the world's current population of 6.5 billion people, journal content was contributed almost exclusively by investigators representing the United States, the other English-speaking countries, and Western Europe, with a total population of about 800 million, only 12% of the world's population (PRB, 2006).

This is actually a conservative estimate of the narrowness of the content of APA journals, as many cultural groups within the United States were underrepresented in American samples. Because the United States receives many immigrants from around the world, an American psychologist could study a wide range of the world's cultural groups without ever traveling elsewhere, but few

**Table 2**  
Ethnicity of U.S. Samples, 2007

Journal	Percentage of U.S. samples that were majority European American
Developmental Psychology	82
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	83
Journal of Abnormal Psychology	88
Journal of Family Psychology	76
Health Psychology	67
Journal of Educational Psychology	60
Total	77

Note. The table shows the percentages of 2007 articles in each of the six journals for which American samples were majority European American. However, in each journal the ethnicity of some American samples was unreported, as follows: Developmental Psychology, 24%; Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60%; Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 22%; Journal of Family Psychology, 9%; Health Psychology, 19%; Journal of Educational Psychology, 7%.

**Table 3***National Affiliation of Associate Editors and Editorial Board Members/Consulting Editors (2007)*

Journal	Total	United States	English-speaking countries	Europe	Asia	Latin America	Africa	Middle East	Israel
Associate editors									
<i>Developmental Psychology</i>	11	8 (73%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	0	0	0	0
<i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>	19	12 (63%)	3 (16%)	3 (16%)	0	0	0	0	1 (5%)
<i>Journal of Abnormal Psychology</i>	9	9 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Journal of Family Psychology</i>	5	5 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Health Psychology</i>	8	8 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Journal of Educational Psychology</i>	5	5 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	57	47 (82%)	4 (7%)	4 (7%)	1 (2%)	0	0	0	1 (2%)
Editorial board members/consulting editors									
<i>Developmental Psychology</i>	67	60 (90%)	5 (7%)	1 (1%)	0	1 (1%)	0	0	0
<i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>	221	166 (75%)	32 (14%)	22 (10%)	0	0	0	0	1
<i>Journal of Abnormal Psychology</i>	73	63 (86%)	10 (14%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Journal of Family Psychology</i>	73	69 (95%)	4 (5%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Health Psychology</i>	6	6 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Journal of Educational Psychology</i>	96	77 (80%)	8 (8%)	7 (7%)	2 (2%)				2 (2%)
Total	536	441 (82%)	59 (11%)	30 (6%)	2	1	0	0	3 (1%)

Note. English-speaking countries are the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Percentages are shown except when the percentage was less than one half of one percent.

American researchers study these groups (Sue, 1999). Furthermore, in all the journals, even when the authors and samples were from outside the United States, the cultural context of the sample was rarely even mentioned. Like the American authors, the authors from other countries appeared to operate on the assumption that the national and cultural origin of the study did not matter, because any human beings could be taken to represent all human beings.

### The United States and the World: Demographic Contrasts

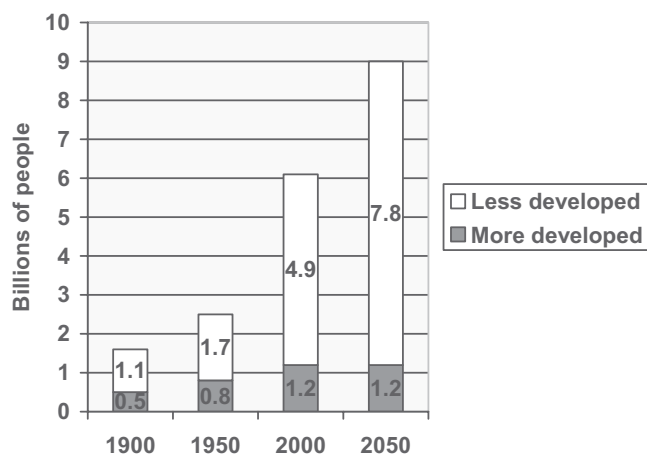
But is this a valid assumption? Are human beings across the world similar enough that one need only study them in one part of the world in order to make generalizations about the entire species? In this section of the article, I provide an initial response to this question by examining demographic contrasts between the lives of people in the United States and other economically developed countries and the lives of people in the rest of the world.

A frequent contrast made by demographers is between the "developing countries" that comprise the majority of the world's population and the economically developed countries that are part of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), including the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. The current population of OECD countries is 1.2 billion, about 18% of the total world

population (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2006). In the next half century, the population of OECD countries is expected to remain stable or decline slightly, whereas the population for developing countries is expected to increase by over 50% owing to higher birth rates. As Figure 2 shows, by 2050 world population is forecast to surpass 9 billion, and nearly all the increase will take place in the least economically developed parts of the world.

The contrast of the United States and other OECD countries compared with the rest of the world is stark not only with respect to population but with respect to other key areas, including income, education, and health. With respect to income, nearly half the world's population lives on less than \$2 per day, and 80% of the world's population lives on a family income of less than \$6,000 per year (Kent & Haub, 2005; UNDP, 2006). At the extremes are the OECD countries, where 9 of 10 persons are in the top 20% of the global income distribution, and sub-Saharan Africa, where half of the population is in the bottom 20%. Furthermore, the gap between rich and poor nations is growing. Although there has been substantial economic growth in OECD countries in the past two decades and many countries in Asia have experienced exceptionally high economic growth, there has been little economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, or Latin America. In fact, 54 countries in these regions declined in per capita income during the 1990s (Kent & Haub, 2005).

**Figure 2**  
*Population in Various World Regions, 1900–2050*



Note. Reprinted from "Attaining Global Health: Challenges and Opportunities" by S. C. Ratzan, G. L. Filerman, & J. W. LeSar, 2000, *Population Bulletin* (Vol. 55, p. 7). Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau. Copyright 2000 by Population Reference Bureau.

A similar contrast between rich and poor countries exists regarding education. In OECD countries, virtually all children obtain primary and secondary education, and 50% go on to tertiary education (college or other postsecondary training). In developing countries, 1 in 5 children does not complete primary school, and only about half enroll in secondary school (UNDP, 2006). Tertiary education is only for the wealthy elite. Furthermore, in virtually every OECD country, educational attainment among females is higher than among males, whereas in virtually every developing country the educational attainment of females is lower than that of males, and the gender gap increases from primary to secondary education and from secondary to tertiary education (UNDP, 2006). Although the gender gap in education is shrinking in all regions of the world, it remains substantial at the secondary and tertiary levels. For example, in India, with a population of over 1 billion people, only 39% of girls enroll in secondary education, compared with 59% of boys (PRB, 2000).

Physical health is another key area in which there are sharp contrasts worldwide. Life expectancy in developing countries rose from 41 years in 1950–1955 to 63 years in 2000–2005 but remains well below the life expectancy of 76 years in economically developed countries (PRB, 2004). According to United Nations figures, 17% of children in developing countries are malnourished, compared with less than 1% in OECD countries (UNDP, 2006). In turn, the World Health Organization estimates that malnutrition is the underlying cause in more than half of deaths among children under age 5 (Kent & Yin, 2006). Malnutrition makes children more vulnerable to infectious diseases that are responsible for the majority of child deaths in developing countries. Many infectious diseases that have been

virtually eliminated in wealthy countries, such as malaria, tuberculosis, and pneumonia, still kill millions of children every year in developing countries (Kent & Yin, 2006). Among adults, HIV/AIDS is rampant in southern Africa, where HIV prevalence rates among adults exceed 20% in some countries (PRB, 2004, 2006).

### **Implications of the Demographic Contrasts**

What are the implications of these demographic differences for psychology? Most important, they raise the question of whether American psychology can truly be considered a human science if it focuses primarily on an unusual 5% of the human population, with occasional inclusion of an additional 7%. Such narrowness in research psychology cannot be justified by the requirements of science. On the contrary, no other science proceeds with such a narrow range of study. It is difficult to imagine that biologists, for example, would study a highly unusual 5% of the world's crocodile population and assume the features of that 5% to be universal. It is even more difficult to imagine that such biologists would be aware that the other 95% of the world's crocodile population was vastly different from the 5% under study, and highly diverse in habitat, eating habits, mating practices, and everyday behavior, yet show little or no interest in studying that 95% and continue to study the 5% exhaustively while making universal claims. An outside observer would regard such a science as incomplete, to say the least, and would wonder why there was such intense focus on that unusual 5% while the other 95% was neglected. Yet in studying human beings, whose environmental, economic, and cultural differences make them more diverse than any other animal species, this is what American psychologists do.

Nor can it be argued plausibly that issues of income, education, and physical health are the business of other fields, not psychology. Psychology's domain includes cognition, behavior, mental health, social relations, and individual development. All of these are likely to be affected by income, education, and health. For example, low incomes affect behavior, as much of daily activity is oriented toward survival, and mental health services are unlikely to be available to those who need them (Sen, 1999). Education affects cognition, and education has been found to have a wide range of influences on individual development, such as women's decisions about when to marry and how many children to have (Kent & Haub, 2005). Poor physical health raises the risk of mental health problems such as depression and influences social relations because a person in poor physical health may be dependent on the care of others (Lopez & Guarnaccia, 2000; UNDP, 2006).

Furthermore, the demographic differences between OECD countries and developing countries reflect important cultural differences that have psychological implications. Partly because of the strenuous demands of daily life, cultures in developing countries tend to value interdependence over independence (Kitayama, Duffy, & Uchida, 2006; Schlegel & Barry, 1991). Families in developing countries not only tend to be larger, they also tend to be part of a cultural milieu emphasizing family obligations



and mutual support (Kagitcibasi, 2007; Nsamenang, 1995; Shweder et al., 2006). Gender roles in cultures in developing countries tend to be more strictly delineated than those in OECD countries, and after early childhood, males and females often live in largely separate spheres (Gilmore, 1990; Kent & Haub, 2005). These and other findings of the range and importance of cultural variations in human populations have been reported for years, often by American psychologists (e.g., Greenfield et al., 2006; Heine & Norenzayan, 2006; Kitayama & Cohen, 2006; Miller, 2006; Rogoff, 2003). Yet, as the above journal analysis shows, this current still has a limited presence in the mainstream of the dominant APA journals.

The diversity of the human population with respect to income, education, and physical health, and the corresponding range of cultural variations, presents the challenge of representing this population adequately in the science of psychology. It would seem difficult to argue that American psychological findings, based mainly on an unusual 5% of the world's population, can be generalized to the rest of the world. As cultural psychologists have pointed out, the available evidence, in fact, indicates quite the contrary (Jensen, in press; Shweder et al., 2006; Valsiner, 2007). There may be principles of psychology that apply to many, most, or all human beings, irrespective of their national or cultural contexts and irrespective of income, education, or physical health. However, it is often assumed in American psychology that this question of generality has been answered, whereas in reality it remains open and largely unaddressed.

## Why the Neglect?

The journal analysis presented in this article indicates that research in major APA journals is concentrated on a narrow range of the world's human population, principally Americans. It is narrow in developmental psychology, even though developmental psychology has made much in recent years about the importance of "context" (Lerner, 2004) and even though the contexts of development differ greatly depending on where a child happens to have been born (Shweder et al., 2006). It is narrow in clinical psychology, even though studies have demonstrated variations in rates of mental illnesses in different cultures (Stout, 2004) and variations in cultural interpretations and responses to mental illness (Lopez & Guarnaccia, 2000). It is narrowest of all in social psychology, with its focus not just on Americans but on Americans who are undergraduates in introductory psychology courses at research universities (Rozin, 2001, 2006). It is narrow even in family psychology, despite immense differences worldwide in family composition, roles, and values (Shweder et al., 2006), and in health psychology, despite immense differences worldwide in rates and types of health risks (Kent & Haub, 2005). It is narrow, too, in educational psychology, even though the length and content of education vary greatly by country and culture (UNDP, 2006).

Why is American psychological research so narrow? As noted above, it cannot be justified by appealing to the requirements of science. Instead, American psychology's

narrowness may be driven principally by two influences: the abundance of research resources in wealthier countries and—especially—psychology's dominant philosophy of science.

## ***The Rich Get Researched: Imbalances in Resources for Psychological Research***

As this article has made clear, dramatic differences exist worldwide in economic resources, OECD countries being much wealthier than the rest of the world. Consequently, it should not be surprising if wealthier countries have more economic resources to support scientific research, including research in psychology. The United States, the country with by far the largest yearly gross domestic product (GDP) in the world (UNDP, 2006), produces the most psychological research because a portion of its abundant resources go to universities, government agencies, and foundations that support such research.

Ample research funding may be part of the explanation, but there are limitations to it. First, it does not explain why there is so little representation in APA journals from European countries, which have a combined population and GDP larger than that of the United States, or the virtual absence of representation from countries such as Japan or South Korea, wealthy countries that are members of the OECD. There is, in fact, an immense amount of psychological research taking place in countries around the world (e.g., Arnett, 2007; Gergen, Gulerce, Lock, & Misra, 1996; Stevens & Wedding, 2004), and most of it is published in English, but it rarely penetrates the APA journal system and is largely ignored by American psychologists. As Denmark (1998) observed, "The vast majority of [American] psychologists and their students have extremely limited knowledge concerning the work of their international counterparts. In contrast to other disciplines, psychology is a rather provincial discipline dominated by the United States" (p. 465).

Although a great deal of psychological research is taking place worldwide that is ignored by American psychologists, it seems likely that more psychological research is produced in the United States than in any other country given the United States' extensive and well-funded university system and the funding available through federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF). However, even if this is true, it would not explain why American psychological researchers seeking explanations of *human* functioning would study only Americans given that Americans live so differently than the majority of the human population. The primary explanation for the narrowness of American psychological research lies elsewhere, in psychology's dominant philosophy of science.

## ***Psychology's Search for Human Universals***

From its beginnings, psychology has modeled itself mainly after the natural sciences (Cahan & White, 1992; Rozin, 2001, 2006). Nineteenth-century psychological researchers in the United States and Europe mostly believed that the study of human beings could be pursued using the same

scientific methods that had achieved such marvelous results in fields such as biology, chemistry, and physiology. The primary method was experimental, and the goal was to control the experiment so that the distracting variables of real life could be stripped away in order to reveal the essence of the phenomenon. In the experimental setting, studying phenomena such as sensory perception and reaction times, it did not matter who the research participants were or how they lived outside of the laboratory. The goal was to identify human universals, the fundamental processes and principles that comprise human psychological functioning.

In the course of the 20th century, as psychological research became more extensive, the methods used in American psychology became more diverse. The questionnaire, once held in contempt as a method of dubious scientific merit, became respectable; in fact, it became one of the most common methods used in psychological research. Observations also became acceptable as a method, as long as they were recorded and coded in a systematic way. However, the essential philosophy of science underlying psychology remained—and remains today—with its emphasis on identifying fundamental processes and principles and its relative neglect of the cultural context of the people being studied (Norenzayan & Heine, 2005).

From the beginning, there was also a “second psychology” that offered an alternative to the experimental approach (Cahan & White, 1992). This second psychology advocates research attention to the psychological consequences of diverse cultures, contexts, and circumstances, using a wide range of approaches rather than strictly experimental methods. It has had numerous prominent proponents in the history of psychology, including Wilhelm Wundt, John Dewey, and Lev Vygotsky.

More recently, the role of “second psychology” has been filled by cultural psychology, which highlights the cultural basis of human psychological characteristics (Shweder et al., 2006). Cultural psychology has emerged as a widely known and important field of study within psychology in the past 10 years. Nevertheless, as the journal analysis presented in this article has shown, mainstream APA journals continue to reflect very little of the immense cultural variation that exists worldwide. The emphasis of the dominant philosophy of science in American psychology remains on investigating fundamental processes and principles, resting on the assumption—rarely stated, and rarely actually tested—that people anywhere can be taken to represent people everywhere and that the cultural context of their lives can be safely ignored.

In fact, in recent years the zeitgeist of research psychology has moved even more strongly in this direction with the growth of cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and behavior genetics, all of which search primarily for universal processes and principles rather than emphasizing cultural context and variation. In a demonstration of this trend, Robins et al. (1999) examined changes in the subject matter of four top APA journals (*American Psychologist*, *Psychological Bulletin*, *Psychological Review*, and *Annual Review of Psychology*) and found that from the late 1960s to the

late 1990s, behaviorism fell while cognitive psychology rose dramatically to a position of dominance. The number of researchers studying neuroscience also increased sharply.

## The Need for a Broader Psychology

Clearly, there are many who are content with American psychology’s dominant philosophy of science and see more reason to celebrate it than to question it. Still, the questions persist: Is a focus on 5% of the world’s population sufficient for portraying the psychological functioning of the human species? Even if we conclude that major APA journals encompass 12% of the world’s population rather than 5%, because some journal content involves authors and samples from other English-speaking countries and some countries in Western Europe, is this enough for a psychological science of all humanity? On the contrary, I contend that, as the demographic analysis in this article has shown, the lives of the majority of the people in the world are simply too different from the lives of people in the United States and similar countries to be encompassed by a psychology that focuses overwhelmingly on the latter. Furthermore, I contend that this narrow focus in American psychological research fails to illuminate sufficiently the psychology of *even the Americans who are mainly studied*. I will explain what I mean by providing examples in each of the areas of psychology for which a journal was included in the analysis: developmental, social, clinical, family, health, and educational psychology.

Within developmental psychology, peer relations are a common topic of study. Findings from various studies show that peer relations rise in importance from childhood to adolescence (du Bois-Reymond & Ravesloot, 1996; Richards, Crowe, Larson, & Swarr, 2002). Adolescents are said to be especially responsive to the opinions, models, and social pressures of their peers. However, the studies reporting these findings are based entirely on samples in the United States and other Western countries, where peer relations in childhood and adolescence are structured by age-graded schools. Yet compulsory age-graded educational institutions are a recent historical development, only about 100 years old. Furthermore, as noted earlier, in a substantial proportion of the world today, half or more of children have left school by adolescence and spend their days mainly with adults or in mixed-age groups (Schlegel, 2003). This difference in daily contexts would be likely to diminish the importance and influence of peers in adolescence. In East Asian countries, peer influences in adolescence are often minimized for a different reason, intense educational pressures (Lee & Larson, 2000). In order to have a full understanding of peer relations in adolescence, it would seem important to study this topic in its many variations in cultures around the world. Even for peer researchers studying mainly Americans it would be informative to know that heightened peer influence in adolescence is not universal but is dependent on conditions of an American peer environment that is unusual historically and internationally.

In social psychology, one area of interest has been gender roles and gender stereotypes. Research in social psychology has shown that people conform their own behavior and attitudes to perceived gender roles and interpret the behavior of others on the basis of gender stereotypes (Swim & Sanna, 1996; Twenge, 2001). However, as with most research in social psychology, this conclusion is based largely on studies of American undergraduates taking introductory psychology courses at research universities. Even if it could be generously allowed that such samples can be taken to represent American society, it would be impossible to stretch this assumption to all humanity, because there are dramatic differences worldwide in gender roles. In the United States and other Western countries, gender roles have changed dramatically in recent decades, becoming less strict as girls and women have moved into areas that were previously the province of males almost exclusively, such as sports, higher education, and politics. In contrast, gender roles remain much stronger in developing countries, where girls have less access to secondary and tertiary education than boys do and women have a restricted range of occupational opportunities and lower political participation than men do (UNDP, 2006). Thus, research in social psychology on gender roles has examined this topic with respect to samples that represent only a small and unusual population and could be enriched by examining the enormous range of variance that exists internationally.

In clinical psychology, marital relations are a common topic of research. This research often focuses on marital distress and how to ameliorate it. The samples of these studies published in major APA journals are primarily American. Here again, however, the American model of marriage is highly unusual historically and internationally. In most places in most times, marriage has been regarded as a practical arrangement for structuring adult life, and the marriage brought together not just two individuals but two families of which the individuals were part (Hatfield & Rapson, 1996). However, in the United States and the rest of the West today, the primary basis of marriage is romantic love. Consequently, the emotional and sexual intimacy demands placed on marriage are exceptionally high. In contrast, in many parts of the world, including the two most populous countries, India and China, marriage remains primarily a practical arrangement, often arranged by the parents or at least undertaken with their involvement and approval (Stevenson & Zusho, 2002). Research on the broad range of marriage forms around the world would provide a more complete portrayal of the nature of marriage. For American psychologists, greater familiarity with worldwide marriage forms would provide deeper awareness of the exceptional intimacy demands of modern American marriages and the sorts of challenges and problems these demands entail.

Of all the areas assessed in the journal analysis presented earlier in this article, the narrowness of family psychology is perhaps the most surprising and perplexing. Even more than in the other journal areas, articles on family psychology are overwhelmingly by American au-

thors on American samples. The studies focus almost exclusively on the standard American nuclear family form, consisting of a mother and (sometimes) father and one or more children. Yet the family forms experienced by most of the people of the world are much different than this one (Shweder et al., 2006). The size of the domestic unit people live in varies widely in cultures around the world and often includes 3–4 children as well as extended family members. Sibling care of infants is widespread, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. Infants are frequently fostered out to other family or community members after weaning, especially in Micronesia and West Africa (DeLoache & Gottlieb, 2000). Grandmothers are heavily involved in child care in many parts of the world, and grandparents frequently live within the household in Asian cultures. These variations make for wide variations in the socialization environments children experience and in the nature of relations between family members. A full understanding of family psychology can be promoted through broader research on diverse family forms around the world. American psychologists will have a deeper understanding of American family life if they can see American family relations as only one variation within a broad range.

In health psychology, HIV/AIDS has been intensively researched in the past decade, including topics such as the psychological factors related to adherence to medications, perceptions of HIV risk, and the effectiveness of coping interventions for persons who are HIV-positive. However, virtually all of the research published on HIV in health psychology involves American samples. This is striking, given that 98% of the world's AIDS deaths take place in southern Africa (PRB, 2004). Furthermore, patterns of HIV infection are much different in the United States, where persons with HIV are predominantly gay men, than in southern Africa, where persons with HIV are predominantly heterosexual women (Lamptey, Johnson, & Khan, 2006). The HIV pandemic is an enormous crisis in southern Africa, with millions of persons dying yearly from the disease and leaving millions of AIDS orphans, and it may be that psychological research could provide insights toward the amelioration of the crisis. Even for American psychologists interested primarily in HIV/AIDS as it takes place in the United States, understanding the variations in HIV infection patterns worldwide may provide insights into the specifically American forms of those patterns.

Finally, in educational psychology, research has focused on such topics as the relation of different teaching approaches to academic performance. Virtually all of the American research on this topic has focused exclusively on American schools, yet the structure and content of schools vary vastly worldwide. For example, Asian schools place a strong emphasis on rote learning (Stevenson & Zusho, 2002), and European schools have not just one comprehensive high school but different types of secondary schools leading to different occupational paths (Alsaker & Flammer, 1999). By examining how children in different cultures respond to different types of structures and requirements, psychologists could enrich the understanding of how children learn. For American psychologists, investi-



gating the variations that exist in schooling worldwide would lead to a broader understanding of the American system's strengths and weaknesses and inspire ideas on how to improve it.

## Proposals for a Broader and More Cultural Psychology

Although the focus of this article has been on the narrowness of American psychological research and on American psychology's neglect of the vast majority of the world's population, there are indications that the overall field of psychology is growing more international (Cole, 2006). Cultural and cross-cultural psychology have grown in the past two decades to become distinct and well-known fields within psychology (Berry, Dasen, Poortinga, & Segall, 1999; Shweder et al., 2006; Valsiner, 2007). Major APA journals may be narrowly American, but APA has made organizational efforts to recognize international contributions through awards such as the International Humanitarian Award and the Award for Distinguished Contributions to the International Advancement of Psychology. APA also has an Office of International Affairs, a Committee on International Relations, and a growing International sector (Division 52) and has long been involved in the International Union of Psychological Science, which has 70 member countries and sponsors projects that foster international collaborations among psychologists. There have been recent APA task forces on international issues such as terrorism and ethno-political conflict (Stout, 2004).

Still, as the analysis presented in this article has shown, cultural and international concerns remain marginal to the mainstream of American psychological research. Journal representation in mainstream APA journals is dominated by American researchers, and consequently the topics researched are primarily those that pertain to people in the United States and other Western countries. Furthermore, although in some respects American psychology is becoming more international, the most rapidly growing research areas are cognitive psychology and neuroscience (Robins et al., 1999), which largely disregard cultural considerations in pursuit of universal processes and principles. At a time when globalization is intensifying and international contacts in many fields are accelerating (Arnett, 2002), the zeitgeist in psychology seems headed in the opposite direction, turning away from recognition of international diversity. At a time when there are numerous daunting international problems that psychological science could address, such as religious fundamentalism, terrorism, international ecological crises, war, the HIV pandemic, and growing poverty, the main thrust in American psychology continues to be a research focus on processes and principles that goes forward as if none of these issues existed (Cole, 2006).

Consequently, there is a need for steps that will broaden the scope of American psychological research so that it is more cultural and international. There are many important contributions that are being made by psychological research on Americans, including in cognitive psychol-

ogy and neuroscience. However, there is a need to broaden American psychological research so that it encompasses not only Americans and other Westerners but people around the world. Research on fundamental processes and principles should be balanced by more research that recognizes the extraordinary diversity in the lives of the world's human population and the resulting diversity in human psychology. Toward that end, I offer the following suggestions.

1. *All APA journals should be encouraged to include associate editors and consulting editors who are non-American.* With the editors of APA journals being exclusively American, and associate editors and consulting editors overwhelmingly American, it would not be surprising if scholars from outside the United States interpreted this predominance as a sign declaring "Americans only." Opening the positions of associate editors and consulting editors to more non-Americans would be an important signal that the journals welcome international contributors. Furthermore, non-American associate editors and consulting editors would be likely to bring a perspective that would call into question the assumptions made by contributors from the United States and require more attention to cultural context. It may be helpful if some proportion of associate editors and consulting editors were from outside the West, so that they were not all drawn from English-speaking and European countries that are most demographically and culturally similar to the United States.

2. *APA journals should invite special issues edited by non-Americans and including all non-American authors, on a regular basis.* This, too, would provide a signal that the journals wish to encourage and promote international content. It would give non-Americans an opportunity for visibility and editorial leadership. Perhaps this would no longer be necessary if the journals reached a point where they were regularly including a substantial proportion of international content, but right now it is necessary to highlight and encourage international contributions. Non-American editors of special issues may also be likely to choose topics that are rarely addressed in APA journals but are important in other parts of the world.

3. *APA should revive the editorial mentor program designed to assist international psychologists in preparing their manuscripts for APA journals.* Learning to submit successful papers to APA journals requires not only scientific excellence but cultural knowledge of the expectations and customs of the APA system. APA should reestablish a program in which international scholars can obtain advice and assistance on submitting papers to APA journals from volunteer American psychologists who are well-versed in the APA system. Former editors of APA journals would be ideal candidates for this role.

4. *Undergraduate programs in psychology should require psychology students to take at least two courses in anthropology or (where available) cultural psychology. Undergraduate psychology majors should be encouraged to spend at least one semester abroad.* One reason research in American psychology is so narrow is that the training of American research psychologists is so narrow, at both the



undergraduate and graduate levels. Taking courses within psychology, students rarely have occasion to question the assumptions and the philosophy of science that underlie most psychological research. Graduate programs in psychology are already too long to make additional requirements feasible, but requiring two undergraduate courses in anthropology or cultural psychology would be an effective way of encouraging psychology majors—the graduate students and researchers of the future—to think critically about philosophies of science in psychology. In contrast to psychology, anthropology has a strong tradition of emphasizing that researchers must be faithful to the cultural context of the people they study. Exposure to this alternative philosophy of science would be likely to be carried back by students to their education and training in psychological methods, with fruitful results.

Spending a semester abroad may have similar effects. Although it can be useful and illuminating to read about the lives of people in different cultures, experiencing life in a different culture may be even more vivid and influential in expanding students' scope of thinking and understanding about the basis of psychological functioning. Exchanges with non-Western countries should be especially promoted, as the impact on an American student of living in a non-Western country is likely to be substantially greater than the impact of living in another Western country.

5. *Major American funding agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation should create programs funding international research as well as graduate student fellowships and faculty research sabbaticals abroad.* To a large extent, research funding drives research agendas, and in American psychology, NIH is the 800-pound gorilla of research funding. NIH funds a wide range of scientific research besides psychology, and in its funding of psychological research the underlying philosophy of science is drawn from the natural sciences. Consequently, research grants funded by NIH are overwhelmingly oriented toward the identification of psychological processes and principles assumed to be universal, with little attention paid to cultural context.

However, if the goal of NIH funding in psychology is to advance psychology as a human science, modification of its funding guidelines should be made to promote greater international research, so that psychological science would be undertaken on a broader range of the human population. This could be done by creating programs within NIH that would be explicitly devoted to funding research outside the United States. The NSF has funded a small amount of international research in recent years, but like NIH, most of its funding of psychological research is focused mainly on decontextualized American research. NIH and NSF programs could also be created to promote international psychological research by funding graduate fellowship stipends and faculty sabbaticals for research in non-American and preferably non-Western countries.

## Conclusion

What is American psychology, and what do American psychologists want it to be? Is it mainly an enterprise of,

by, and for Americans, with an occasional contribution from another voice among the most privileged in the Western world? If this is what American psychology is, is it enough for American psychologists?

On the basis of the analysis presented here, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this is indeed what American psychology is. There may be many who will defend this focus. The dominant philosophy of science in American psychology from its beginnings to the present has been the pursuit of fundamental processes and principles, modeled after the natural sciences and based on the assumption that cultural context is a variable best ignored or stripped away through the application of the scientific method. Clearly, many researchers have found and continue to find value in this approach.

However, others will object that the restricted focus of American psychology makes it an incomplete science, a field that cannot truly be said to represent the human population. It does seem dubious that American psychology can claim status as a human science if its focus is on only 5% of the human population, with an occasional nod to an additional 7%. The conditions of life that people around the world experience are wonderfully (and sometimes terribly) diverse, in terms of population density and growth, income, education, and health, as well as in ways of life and in cultural frameworks for understanding human relations and human existence. This should be exciting and challenging to researchers in psychology because of the immense opportunities it opens up for learning more about the nature of human psychological functioning.

Whether we are content for American psychology to remain a mainly American field is a question that merits careful consideration. Hopefully, a greater awareness of just how American it is will enable us to decide more explicitly whether or not we wish for it to remain that way. It is worth noting that American psychology is still young, barely more than a century old. The 20th century was a time of remarkable advances in psychological research. Across a wide range of areas in psychology, fruitful theories were proposed, and research identified many processes and principles of psychology. Although most of this research took place by and on Americans, it provided an important basis of data and information on many different topics. The central challenge for American psychologists in the 21st century is to cross our borders as never before, not only geographically but intellectually, in pursuit of making psychology a fully human science.

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