

A102 Forensic Anthropology is WEIRD: Knowledge Production by Whom for Whom

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the current state of forensic anthropology research regarding the demographics of sample selection and knowledge production.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by highlighting the underrepresentation of certain global samples in recent forensic anthropological research and the discrepancy in impact between Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) and non-WEIRD publications. In addition, this research calls for better representation of samples and greater global collaboration.

Most forensic anthropologists and the populations they study are WEIRD. In their interventions in biological anthropology, Clancy and Davis contend that WEIRD, a euphemism for white (Western European-derived populations) both as scientists and subjects, skew the predominating narrative of the human condition.¹ How their framework specifically applies to forensic anthropology would benefit from further rumination. The researchers argue that the scientific enterprise of forensic anthropology is a WEIRD space unique within biological anthropology in that it: (1) is touted as an applied, practical, and “objective” tool that must operate within medicolegal systems; (2) is a subspecialty with board certification and accreditation standards; and (3) holds ancestry and race as core to its practice.

A bibliometric survey of publications over the past five years in the most relevant journals to the field yielded 793 articles. Information was collected from each article, including article type, category, authors and location, samples, and times cited. Articles originated from six academic journals: *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, *Forensic Anthropology*, *Forensic Science International*, *International Journal of Legal Medicine*, *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, and *Science & Justice*. Summary statistics were generated from the data to evaluate proportional differences in publications and samples of WEIRD and non-WEIRD groups. In addition, citation *h*-index values were calculated to evaluate the relative impact of each country's publications on the field of forensic anthropology.

Results from summary statistics found that 73% of authors originate from WEIRD contexts. In papers specifically studying ancestry, European-derived populations are included 81% of the time as a category for comparison to other groups, while only 12% do not include Europeans in their comparisons, reinforcing a historic tendency to measure all human variation against one particular norm (i.e., White or European). Furthermore, 49% of papers where ancestry estimation is not the main focus use White subjects solely or in part. Papers authored from WEIRD contexts receive significantly more citations, more than two times, than non-WEIRD counterparts. Differences in the *h*-index of countries show that the United States surpasses all other countries in research output by a large margin ($\Delta h \sim 2,000$), followed by other WEIRD countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy, and France.

This bibliometric study demonstrates the extensive nature of knowledge production of WEIRD contexts in forensic anthropology. By highlighting the gaps and underrepresentation of non-WEIRD research and samples, forensic anthropologists can begin to actively consider collaboration and new ways to achieve greater representation.

Reference(s):

1. Clancy K.B.H., Davis J.L. Soyent is people, and WEIRD is white: Biological anthropology, whiteness, and the limits of the WEIRD. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 2019; 48:169–186.

WEIRD, Ancestry, Knowledge Production