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The evolution of misbelief

Ryan T. McKay and Daniel C. Dennett

To appear in Volume 33, Number 1 (2010)

Grandparental investment: Past, present and future

David A. Coall, University of Western Australia, and Ralph Hertwig, University of Basel

What motivates grandparents to their altruism? We review answers from evolutionary theory, sociology, and economics. The answers exist side-by-side, with little theoretical integration. Regardless of their motives, can grandparental acts of altruism enhance kin's welfare? Evidence from natural-fertility populations suggests that grandmothers especially can improve grandchildren's survival chances and welfare. The impact of grandparental investment in industrialized societies, however, has received little attention. We found few studies that investigated its impact in low-risk family contexts. Under circumstances of duress, evidence obtained suggests that grandparents could provide support that safeguards their grandchildren. We discuss research and policy implications.

With commentary from DC Broadfield; Cox; HA Euler; E Fantino & S Stolarz-Fantino; TW Fawcett, P van den Berg, FJ Weissing, JH Park & AP Buunk; D Friedman & M Hechter; M Gurven & E Schniter; R Hames; CA Hoppmann & PL Klumb; BR Huber; R Kaptijn & F Thomese; KL Kramer; RD Lee; RL Michalski; A Pashos; R Sear & TE Dickins; BI Strassmann; M Voracek, US Tran & ML Fisher

The weirdest people in the world?

Joseph Henrich, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan, University of British Columbia

Broad claims about human psychology and behavior based on narrow samples from Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) societies are regularly published in leading journals. Are such species-generalizing claims justified? This review suggests not only that substantial variability in experimental results emerges across populations in basic domains, but also that WEIRD subjects are in fact rather unusual compared with the rest of the species – frequent outliers. The domains reviewed include visual perception, fairness, categorization, spatial cognition, memory, moral reasoning, and self-concepts. This review (1) indicates caution in addressing questions of human nature based on this thin slice of humanity and (2) suggests that understanding human psychology will require tapping broader subject pools. We close by proposing ways to address these challenges.

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