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Individual Differences in Replication failures

The centennial year of the birth of Hans Eysenck should remind us of the vital role played by individual differences in personality, cognitive abilities and the like; as he stated in 1965 (p. 8):

"Individuals do differ...and it seems to me that psychology will never advance very far without a recognition of the complexities which are produced by this fact of personality."

Also, as was highlighted in the title of Eysenck's 1977 book, 'Psychology is about People', whole person variables are just as important as cognitive mechanisms or neural processes. In particular to ignore important individual differences (e.g., arousal and emotion regulation) is a sure-fire way to ensure non-replication of psychological studies. Indeed, to ignore these individual differences is rather like a chemist using equipment with varied and unknown electrochemical properties to conduct what otherwise looks like elegant experiments. If these experiments do not replicate what is to blame? In psychology, individual characteristics affect behaviour in most situations – even purely experimental ones where there is, almost always, interaction with another human being who is a salient stimulus.

We should take Eysenck's warning seriously: Psychology shall not advance very far if we continue to ignore basic facts of human psychology. It is futile lamenting failures of replication if studies do not even recognise the importance of the individual features of the participants taking part in them.

It is surely to be regretted that many psychologists seem not the least interested in such basic psychological reality.

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