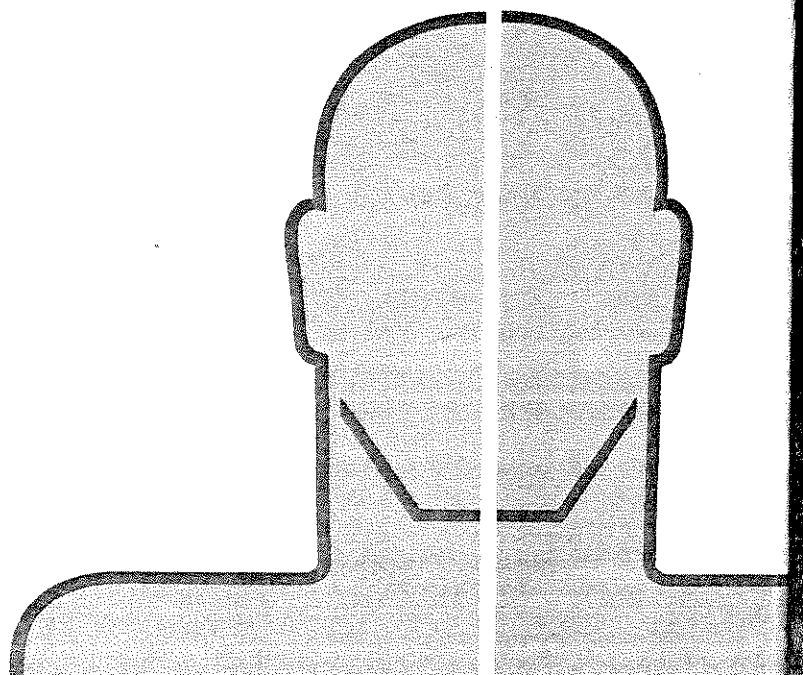


Genes,
Culture
and
Personality.

An empirical approach

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Preface

Of all the aspects of human biology to excite our fascination, few can be more significant than the diversity of human behavior. Even within a culture, our curiosity is captured by those differences that seem to make one person stand out from another — their individual styles of living, their preferences and their beliefs, their strengths and their weaknesses. Such differences are the raw material from which theories of personality are crafted.

Our book tries to analyze the genetic and environmental causes of these differences. Although studies of the genetic and environmental influences are no substitute for good physiological or psychological theories of individual differences, they do provide one important arena in which such models can be tested. For example, can we persist in a "social learning" theory of personality or social attitudes if it turns out that the only detectable effects of parents on their children are genetic rather than social? What are the predictions for the genetic analysis of age-dependent traits of different mechanisms for the acquisition and transformation of information about the world? Is there a relationship between the pattern of genetic and environmental causation of individual differences and the evolutionary and sociobiological significance of the traits for the species? We are still a long way from being able to answer all these questions, but one thing is clear: there is absolutely no point whatever in beginning to speculate about such issues unless we have a clear idea of what is actually happening in the real world of personality and attitude differences.

The main purpose of the book is to give the reader a clearer idea of the state of knowledge, and ignorance, about the causes of individual differences in personality and attitudes, a good feeling for the kinds of data on which such inferences are based, and a sense of the methods of data analysis that are appropriate for answering basic questions about the role of biological and cultural inheritance in human populations. As a consequence, parts of the book are more technical than is often the case, there are many more tables and more than usual caution in circumscribing our less than certain conclusions. By providing much of the original data, we have allowed the reader

scope to develop and test his/her own ideas and models and to retrace our steps, at least in some of the simpler cases.

The contract for this book was signed almost fifteen years ago! We were just completing a twin study in London and thought that our results were of sufficient simplicity and interest to justify a book. Why the delay? There are three main reasons.

The first is our growing interest in social attitudes in addition to personality. Initially we were surprised that genes might play any part in the determination of something so obviously "cultural"; then we were pleased that, beyond the contribution of genetic effects, social attitudes did indeed still display all the hallmarks of cultural inheritance; now we are surprised again that the cultural effect may still evaporate into the genetic consequences of assortative mating. Faced with such a consistently developing story, which the reader can reconstruct in the later chapters, any attempt at summary would have been premature.

The second reason for delay has been the rapid explosion of theory and method over the last fifteen years, to which we also have had to devote some time. The publication of Jinks' and Fulker's paper on fitting biometrical-genetic models to human behavior was a landmark in 1970. When we first applied these methods to adult personality, the results seemed fairly straightforward and the models described by Jinks and Fulker carried us a long way. The more we became involved in new data, however, the more it became clear that other issues needed further theoretical work, including mechanisms of cultural inheritance, sex limitation, mate selection, developmental change, social interaction and trait covariation. Throughout the 1970s, continuing to the present time, we, and many others in the United States whose contributions we cite, recognized the deficiencies of the classical genetic models when applied to human behavior and did our best to develop theoretical models that had explanatory and heuristic value. Most of these ideas do not find their definitive expression in this book, because here we are concerned more especially with the substantive issues of personality and attitudes rather than theory and model-building for its own sake.

The final cause for delay was the completion and publication of other large twin studies, which played such a crucial role in refining some of our early notions based on the smaller sample of London twins and relatives. The large Australian study is still yielding fruit, of which the work described here is only a first sample. We are conscious, even as we write, that new studies are being done that will transcend the ones we describe for their subtlety and creativity.

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