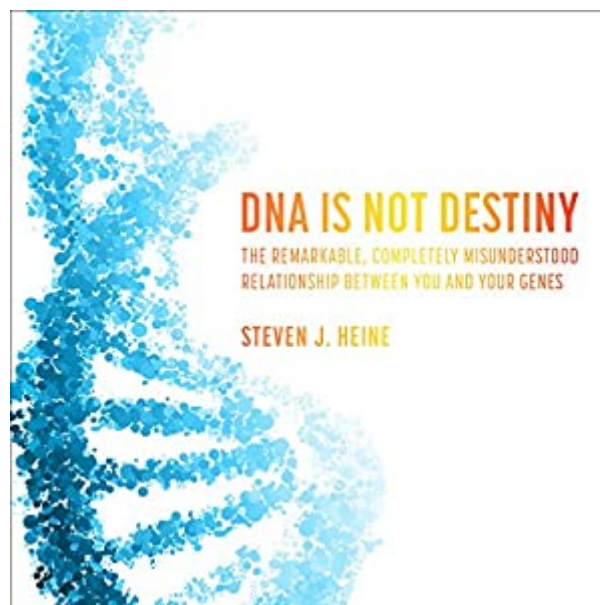




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# DNA Is Not Destiny: The Remarkable, Completely Misunderstood Relationship Between You And Your Genes



## Synopsis

Around 250,000 people have had their genomes sequenced, and scientists expect that number to rise to one billion by 2025. Professor Steven J. Heine argues that the first thing we will do on receiving our DNA test results is to misinterpret them completely. Despite breathless (often lightly researched) media coverage about newly discovered "cancer" or "divorce" or "IQ" genes, the prospect of a DNA test forecasting how your life is going to turn out is vanishingly small. In *DNA Is Not Destiny*, Heine shares his research - and his own genome sequencing results - to not only show what your genes can actually tell you about your health, intelligence, ethnic identity, and family, but also highlight the psychological biases that make us so vulnerable to the media hype. Heine's fresh, surprising conclusions about the promise, and limits, of genetic engineering and DNA testing upend conventional thinking and reveal a simple, profound truth: your genes create life - but they do not control it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A must read, book. Starts with the science of heritability and gradually adds other factors to show that DNA is not destiny

A very valuable source of information before you consider your DNA testing for personal health and especially family planning. An eye opener for considerations to use DNA testing for understanding genealogy. The Kindle version I bought on May 17, 2017, compared to the audio version, has a

small and insignificant gap in text on page 223 after the sentence that reads "For example, 23andMe ... two disorders with devastating health outcome." Hopefully, the book editor will correct this minor issue that does not make me return the book. Apart from the content that is very educational for me, I am especially enjoying the audio version while looking or sometimes not looking at the text. I am a very slow reader in general and especially in English, which is my second language, so another very significant benefit for me is being able to see and hear new words, English phrases, and terminology in correct pronunciation. The audio version also allows me to move through the book faster and thus better maintain continuity of my understanding of this new and very challenging subject for me. In short, I am experiencing a very pleasant and illuminating activity. Many thanks to author Steven J Heine, the narrator if a different person(?), and all who contributed to this book. The enlightenment that its readers will experience will help them better handle intellectually and emotionally such challenging issues as GMO foods, personal health, family health, as well as health of our society and mankind. Well done!

There is not much to add that the subtitle of this just-released 2017 book fails to express:

“The Remarkable, Completely Misunderstood Relationship Between You and Your Genes.” So if you want to shed all that unnecessary anxiety you might have about your genes -- and understand the relationship between you and your genes and ENVIRONMENT and EXPERIENCE -- Steven Heine, a Distinguished University Scholar and Professor of Social and Cultural Psychology at the University of British Columbia, takes you on an interesting, informative, debunking and conversational tour. Heine rips apart the direct-to-consumer, for-profit DNA marketing industry as the scam that it is. He submitted his own DNA swabs to different corporations and the corporations returned remarkably dissimilar results. (One showed he had Chinese ancestry. Well, he might, right?) Don't waste your money. He also takes apart the hysterical media hype of the DNA-Causes-This-du-jour “discoveries” breathlessly hyperventilated by the corporate mass media (with the connivance, of course, of the sources, that is, media-hungry publish-or-perish academic scientists who haven't bothered to wait for replication or confirmation of their tentative first experimental results -- which is not exactly the scientific method or medical protocol.) In short: DNA ain't destiny. Heine also faults biology education, noting that if one's understanding of genetics is based on foggily recalled memories of Gregor Mendel's pea plant experiments and, say, the genes for blue eyes or height or Huntington's disease or cancer, one will completely misunderstand genetics as reported in the mass corporate media and/or fall for the

clever marketing schemes of the direct-to-consumer DNA testing which are oversimplified and overhyped even as the cost of genetic testing has dropped considerably. That is, one would misunderstand genetics AND underrate the role of EXPERIENCE and ENVIRONMENT in shaping who one is and to misunderstand the ability of humans to change behavior and goals in order to shape and reshape one's human future. Heine starts with the science of heritability and explains how dozens, hundreds, thousands of individual genes interact with each other and with EXPERIENCE and ENVIRONMENT -- to cause just about everything. Understanding the single on/off genes as in Mendel's pea plants and some diseases breathtakingly oversimplifies the overwhelming, vast majority of complex, intricate interactions among genes which create life but which do NOT create life's destiny. Heine also worries that the term DNA has become too much of an inaccurate deterministic shorthand in ordinary conversations about non-biological, medical or botanical subjects: "The DNA is baked in to the system or hard-wired into the process as examples. The author introduces the concept of "predictable biases," including "switch-thinking, essentialism, fatalism, determinism, and negativity dominance and others that shape the way we think about information we receive. If you didn't hear of those biases in high school or college biology or philosophy or English, this book fills an important gap about understanding our own thinking, whether about genetics or anything else. The text is like a conversation with a friend who is a more able peer, and Heine also makes generous use of his own, quite interesting psychological experiments to explain concepts. And he frequently uses references from pop culture to introduce or explain stuff. The way you wish your HS or college biology teacher would have. In short, DNA creates life but DNA does not control life | let alone control YOUR life. YOU control your life. Read this book to "deconflict" your mind from the hysterical media misinformation and marketing and foggily recalled biology classes about DNA -- and its interactions with both EXPERIENCE and ENVIRONMENT.

Amazing. Thought-provoking. Quotable.

For the record: This book is written by a "distinguished University scholar of Social and cultural psychology," and not a geneticist/ biologist. Not even an anthropologist for that matter. So, if this person were an anthropologist, I could say that he could at least have training in something that was

tangentially related to the topic at hand. But, this guy is not even close. All I can say is that I'm glad that I read this book on the library's dime and did not spend my own money reading it. I can give you a few examples of the silliness just taken from the one chapter that I did read to make a decision to not complete this book. And that would be chapter 6. Race and Ancestry. He spends a lot of time worried about a book that Nicholas Wade wrote a few years back that it appears that he didn't even read all that carefully. (Nicholas Wade actually is trained in Natural Sciences, for the record.)<sup>1</sup> (p. 156) The author mentions that is silly to speculate that there may be some genetic reason that there are fewer Chinese Nobel prizes, and notes that in the 15th century they were far ahead of the West in scientific progress. The only problem is that the things that they did at that time were very simple and developed over about 1700 years. They are not comparable to targeted and focused research and development. And so a genetic explanation cannot be precluded based on an inapt comparison.<sup>2</sup> (p.160). The author states that: "In some, the genetic variation among humans fails each biological test of being a race. That is why social scientists and geneticists are largely united (contra Nicholas Wade) in the view that there is not a sound biological basis to the concept of race. Rather, race is typically understood as a social construction-- a product of what we learned growing up." This really is very difficult to believe for reasons that are too long to get into in one single review. I'll give three in the interest of brevity.<sup>a</sup> It's not equally likely that a Jewish business will have black employees as a black business will have Jewish employees. And that's just the reality. Africans do not go into Chinese cities and take care of issues of development assistance. Chinese people do go to Africa to offer development assistance.<sup>b</sup> When people talk about organ donors and bone marrow transplant donors, they do mention that there are certain critical shortages that can only be solved intraracially. Not interracially.<sup>c</sup> If the author had given a fair treatment of Nicholas Wade's book, he might have noticed that it doesn't take a large number of genes to make a dramatic difference. Witness copy number variants of monoamine oxidase inhibitors. And the relationship to violence and criminality. I will leave it to the readers to find out what is the racial variation and what is found among people in prison. Verdict: Not recommended.

EXCELLANT! EXCELLANT! EXCELLANT!

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