

The Genetic Bases of Behaviour

The set of instructions which make up an organism is called its genotype. However, the genotype can express itself in different ways depending on the characteristics of the environment within which development takes place. The end result of a genotypes expression within a particular environment is called the phenotype. Different phenotypes can therefore develop from the same genotype if they develop within different environments. E.g. if identical twins were to be raised, one in an environment where food was plentiful and one in an environment where food was scarce, the phenotype (the body size which developed) could differ quite considerably.

Summary:

- Psychologists are interested in the possible genetic basis of psychological characteristics
- What is passed on in the genes is the genotype, while how this expresses itself in a particular environment is the phenotype. Both genes and environment influence development
- The selective breeding of animals has manipulated genotype in animals. Research into human characteristics has used family studies, adoption and twin studies.

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