

Dynamic Duos - Nature vs. Nurture

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Although we were invited to write about what life is like together for couples who are both psychological scientists rather than about our research, in our case, research played such an important role in bringing us together that it is difficult to avoid it. As explained below, we represent a microcosm of the longest-running controversy in psychology: nature (Robert) and nurture (Judy).

Also, we probably are unrepresentative of other couples in this APS *Observer* series. We came together older and wiser after two previous marriages each, with our total of five children mostly grown and our careers well established. Although we have had some of the usual problems of academics in juggling work and home life, it is actually easier for us because we are a psychology couple working together in the same department. It helps us to understand and to be supportive of each other's accomplishments and problems. Although research does not suggest that assortative mating increases with subsequent marriages, it has worked for us. We share many interests such as reading, walking, dogs, music, and traveling, in addition to psychology.

We are currently wondering how it will be for us as Judy transitions toward retirement (Robert plans to retire feet-first). We hope that Judy's retirement will allow us to take even greater advantage of our home life, which is divided between very urban London and very rural Norfolk. Living in London and Norfolk makes it easy to maintain a balance between work and home life because London tempts us with excellent music, theatre, art and food, and Norfolk has unspoiled mile-wide sandy beaches perfect for walking. Having four children and five grandchildren living in London who frequently visit us in Norfolk also helps us keep our feet on the ground. Life in a small Norfolk village (about 200 people) gives us a sense of community that we have not felt before. One example is that although we are not religious we are on a committee to raise funds to restore the 14th century church next to our house. We also helped to raise money to become one of the first rural villages in England to have access to broadband, which brought our work and home lives closer together (not always a good thing in our increasingly 24/7 culture).

We met for the first time at a conference on temperament in London in 1980. We were surprised to discover that our talks at the conference were on the same topic and that we had come to this topic from opposite directions. Judy was one of the first psychologists to systematically study siblings. She was struck by differences in children growing up in the same family, including her own three children, which included a pair of fraternal twin boys who were as different as any two children could be. Robert talked about twin and adoption research, which had primarily been used to show that genetics is important for most psychological traits. However, this same research showed that children in the same family experience different environments, called non-shared environment. This conference was in the Ciba Foundation series (now Novartis), which produced books of proceedings that included talks as well as commentaries by participants. As a result, our initial affair was embarrassingly recorded for posterity with each of us commenting on how thrilled we were with the other's talk.

At that time, Judy was in Cambridge (the real one in England) and Robert was in Boulder, Colorado. After our previous marriages, we thought that 6,000 miles was about the right distance for a healthy relationship. But after meeting and visiting for a few years, we had a honeymoon year together in 1985-86 at the Center for Advanced Studies in Social and Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto. Judy's previous husbands were both academics so she worried about repeating the same mistake; Robert's previous wives were not academics and he worried about how life would be with an academic spouse. Freed from academic constraints, both writing books, our year in California made us confident that the third time would work for both of us.

In 1986 we decided to start a new life together at Pennsylvania State University in the interdisciplinary department of Human Development and Family Studies.

From our very different backgrounds, we recognized that research on nurture and nature needed each other. After a wonderful sabbatical year in Cambridge, we moved to England in 1994 to help Mike Rutter at the Institute of Psychiatry in London create an interdisciplinary center that would foster research on the developmental interplay between nature and nurture. We called it the Social, Genetic, and Developmental Psychiatry (SGDP) Center. The SGDP Center has expanded our nature-nurture dyad into a family of 25 faculty, which, by the way, includes two other couples — psychologists Terrie Moffitt and Avshalom Caspi and psychiatrists Peter McGuffin and Anne Farmer.

Do most psychology couples work on research together? We don't, although we tried. In the 1980s, we received research grants together to study non-shared environment, culminating in a book that we tried to write together called *Separate Lives: Why Siblings are so Different* (Basic Books, 1990). In part because our writing styles are so different, we ended up writing alternate chapters and agreed for the sake of our marriage not to write together again. During the past decade, our research has diverged. Judy has become more interested in the effects of family transitions on children's development, but with some genetic comparisons such as full siblings and half siblings. Robert has increasingly moved toward molecular genetics but with a focus on the interplay between genes and environment. We continue to have a major effect on each other's thinking and research in terms of bringing together nature and nurture.

We hope that we can be a poster couple for the resolution of the nature-nurture controversy in psychology.