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EXPLORING THE MECHANISMS OF CULTURAL EVOLUTION AND NATURAL SELECTION TO DEVELOP METHODS FOR IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITY TRAITS

Summary.

The study explores the intersection of cultural evolution and natural selection to advance methods for identifying and supporting distinctive features of individual personality. Drawing upon the fields of evolutionary psychology, anthropology, and personality theory, the paper presents a comprehensive analysis of how individuality is shaped by a combination of biological predispositions and cultural influences. The research emphasizes that personality is not merely a passive by-product of social experiences but rather a complex, dynamic process that results from the interaction of evolutionary mechanisms and environmental factors. It is argued that individual traits are influenced by adaptive strategies that have evolved over time to ensure survival and social cohesion within diverse cultural contexts.

This study also provides a theoretical framework that integrates the principles of evolutionary dynamics with individual psychological variation, offering a deeper understanding of how personal traits evolve and manifest within different social and cultural environments. By examining the role of cultural evolution in shaping personality, the research identifies key factors that contribute to the expression of distinct personality traits and highlights the importance of recognizing these factors in both educational and social support systems. The paper proposes practical strategies for detecting and fostering personal traits in various contexts, such as schools, workplaces, and social services, with a focus on tailoring interventions to support individual development.

The interdisciplinary perspective presented in this research is essential for creating more inclusive and individualized approaches in pedagogy, talent development, and social support structures. It advocates for the integration of cultural and evolutionary insights into the design of educational curricula, psychological assessments, and talent identification processes to better meet the diverse needs of individuals in modern societies. This approach has significant implications for enhancing the well-being of individuals, especially in the context of increasingly globalized and interconnected communities.

Keywords: cultural evolution; natural selection; individual personality; evolutionary psychology; anthropology; personality theory; biological influences; cultural influences; personal traits; interdisciplinary approach; pedagogy; talent development; social support; educational systems; psychological variation.

Understanding individual personality traits has long been a central focus of psychological and educational research. In recent decades, however, there has been growing recognition that these traits do not emerge in a vacuum, but are instead embedded within broader evolutionary and cultural contexts. The question of how certain personality features are selected for, preserved, or transformed across generations invites an interdisciplinary inquiry that merges evolutionary theory with cultural analysis.

Natural selection, as a biological mechanism, has historically been applied to explain the adaptive value of behavioral traits across species. Meanwhile, cultural evolution – defined as the transmission and transformation of socially learned behaviors, values, and knowledge – offers a parallel yet distinct mechanism of adaptation in human populations. When these two frameworks are considered together, they provide a richer understanding of how individual differences in personality may have developed and why they continue to be essential in modern societies.

This article investigates the mechanisms through which cultural evolution and natural selection interact to shape human individuality. The primary aim is to develop conceptual tools and methodological approaches that can help identify and support unique personality traits, particularly in educational and developmental settings. By recognizing the evolutionary roots of personality and the role of culture in

shaping its expression, the research proposes an integrative framework for responding more effectively to the psychological diversity present in every human population.

Theoretical Background. Understanding the mechanisms that shape individual personality traits requires a comprehensive approach that considers both natural selection and cultural evolution. Both of these forces play critical roles in the development of human personality, but they operate through distinct, yet interconnected, processes. This section will explore the foundational concepts of each theory and their relevance to personality development.

Natural Selection and Personality Evolution. Natural selection, a cornerstone of evolutionary theory, explains how certain traits persist in a population because they confer a survival or reproductive advantage [8]. While physical traits such as body size or immune response are commonly associated with natural selection, behavioral traits, including aspects of personality, can also be shaped by evolutionary pressures [2]. From an evolutionary psychology perspective, personality traits such as aggression, cooperation, empathy, and risk-taking have adaptive significance, influencing an individual's ability to survive, reproduce, and navigate social environments [10].

For example, traits that enhance social cooperation, such as empathy or altruism, may have evolved to improve group cohesion and collective survival. Similarly, traits that promote competition, like assertiveness or dominance, can have benefits in specific social contexts, such as mating opportunities or resource acquisition [11]. Understanding these adaptive functions helps explain why individual personality traits, even those that seem counterproductive or detrimental in some contexts, may persist across generations [7].

Cultural Evolution and the Transmission of Personality. In parallel to biological evolution, cultural evolution involves the transmission of behaviors, beliefs, and norms across generations. Culture provides a secondary system of inheritance, one that operates alongside genetic inheritance [1]. In this framework, cultural transmission occurs through learning and imitation rather than genetic reproduction, allowing for more rapid shifts in social behaviors compared to the slower process of natural selection [13].

Cultural evolution influences personality by shaping the values and norms that individuals internalize [16]. For instance, the traits deemed desirable or acceptable in one culture – such as collectivism versus individualism – can significantly influence the expression of personal characteristics [23]. Moreover, personality traits that align with societal norms may be reinforced, while those that diverge from these norms may be suppressed or altered. This interaction between individual traits and cultural expectations suggests that personality is not solely a biological outcome but a dynamic product of both genetic and cultural factors [15].

Interplay Between Natural Selection and Cultural Evolution. While natural selection focuses on biological inheritance, and cultural evolution on social learning, the two mechanisms are not independent but rather work in tandem. One example of their interplay is the concept of gene-culture coevolution, which proposes that cultural practices can influence evolutionary outcomes, and vice versa [20]. Human culture has the capacity to alter environmental factors, and these changes, in turn, shape selective pressures on behavior [1].

For instance, the development of language and communication allows for complex social structures, which in turn influence the types of personality traits that are advantageous in human societies. The ability to form social bonds, express emotions, and engage in collaborative problem-solving would have been advantageous in early human groups, thereby selecting for individuals with traits conducive to group cooperation and communication. At the same time, cultural practices, such as parenting styles or educational systems, can either reinforce or diminish these behaviors, further impacting personality development [4; 5].

Current Understanding of Personality and Evolutionary Mechanisms. Contemporary theories in psychology increasingly emphasize the role of both biological and cultural factors in shaping personality. The biopsychosocial model, for example, considers the complex interactions between genetic predispositions, individual experiences, and cultural contexts in personality formation [11].

This integrative approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of how personality traits emerge and evolve over time, blending insights from evolutionary theory, psychology, and sociology [18].

Furthermore, as modern societies face rapid cultural and technological changes, it is important to reconsider how these evolving environments influence individual differences in personality. The mechanisms of cultural evolution, such as social learning, imitation, and the spread of new ideas, continue to affect the expression and development of personality traits, potentially leading to new forms of adaptation that may not have been present in ancestral environments [1].

Our study adopts an interdisciplinary approach to explore the mechanisms of cultural evolution and natural selection in shaping individual personality traits. The research combines theoretical analysis with practical application to develop a framework for identifying and supporting personality traits within educational and social settings. Below, we outline the methodological approach, which integrates concepts from evolutionary psychology, cultural anthropology, and personality theory.

Conceptual Approach. The research employs a two-pronged conceptual approach: (1) a theoretical analysis of the interaction between cultural evolution and natural selection, and (2) the development of an applied model for identifying individual personality traits within cultural and biological contexts. This approach aims to bridge the gap between evolutionary mechanisms and contemporary practices in personality assessment and support.

To explore the evolutionary roots of personality traits, we draw from both genetic and cultural transmission models. The theory of gene-culture coevolution provides the primary framework for understanding how cultural and biological factors influence personality development in tandem. We examine how certain personality traits, such as social cooperation, empathy, and aggression, may have evolved as adaptive responses to both environmental challenges and social contexts.

Criteria for Identifying Personality Traits. The identification of personality traits is a foundational component of this study, as understanding these traits allows for a deeper exploration of how both biological and cultural factors contribute to the development of individual personality profiles. A key challenge in this process is establishing a set of criteria that allows for the accurate identification and classification of these traits. To address this challenge, we draw heavily from established psychological models of personality, particularly the Five-Factor Model (also known as the Big Five), which has been extensively studied and validated across diverse populations.

The Five-Factor Model classifies personality traits into five broad dimensions: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. These dimensions are universal and stable across different cultures, providing a robust framework for assessing personality. According to Costa and McCrae [6], who pioneered much of the research on the Five-Factor Model, these traits exhibit cross-cultural consistency, indicating that they reflect fundamental aspects of human psychology. The Big Five dimensions are not only broad enough to encompass the complexity of human personality but also specific enough to allow for meaningful distinctions between individuals [17]. This universality of the Big Five traits, especially in diverse cultural contexts, underscores their evolutionary significance. It suggests that these dimensions may have emerged because they provide adaptive advantages in different environmental contexts, thus contributing to individual survival and social cooperation.

While the Five-Factor Model provides a solid foundation for identifying personality traits, it is essential to consider the role of culture in shaping the expression and manifestation of these traits. Personality traits are not solely determined by genetic predisposition but are also influenced by the sociocultural environment in which an individual is embedded. As such, to assess the cultural impact on personality traits, we integrate sociocultural models of personality development. These models emphasize the importance of cultural values, norms, and social practices in shaping the way individuals express their personality traits.

Markus and Kitayama, for instance, argue that cultural contexts play a pivotal role in shaping the self-concept and personality. They distinguish between individualistic and collectivistic cultures, suggesting that these two cultural orientations encourage different patterns of behavior and personality

traits. In individualist cultures, such as those predominant in the United States and many Western European countries, personal achievement, autonomy, and self-expression are highly valued. These cultures tend to promote traits such as high extraversion, assertiveness, and openness to experience, as individuals are encouraged to stand out and assert their individuality. In contrast, collectivist cultures, commonly found in many East Asian, African, and Latin American societies, place greater emphasis on social harmony, interdependence, and group cohesion. In these contexts, traits such as agreeableness, empathy, and conscientiousness may be more prominent, as individuals prioritize social relationships and communal well-being over personal achievement [16].

The influence of culture on personality can also be examined through the concept of gene-culture coevolution, as proposed by Boyd and Richerson [1] and later expanded by Henrich [13]. This theory posits that cultural practices and behaviors can have evolutionary implications, and vice versa. In this context, cultural norms and practices not only shape individual personality traits but can also influence genetic evolution over time. For example, in societies where cooperation and group cohesion are essential for survival, traits such as empathy and agreeableness may be reinforced and selected for. Conversely, in environments that prioritize competition or individual success, traits such as assertiveness, dominance, and risk-taking may be more adaptive and prevalent.

Moreover, Chiao and Blizinsky [4; 5] emphasize the role of cultural evolution in shaping the genetic underpinnings of personality traits. They argue that cultural norms may influence the prevalence of certain genetic variants associated with personality, as cultural practices interact with genetic predispositions in complex ways. This interaction highlights the dynamic relationship between cultural and biological factors in shaping individual personality traits.

In addition to examining cultural values, it is also important to consider the role of social practices in influencing the development of personality traits. Parenting styles, educational systems, and broader societal expectations contribute to the ways in which traits such as neuroticism, extraversion, or conscientiousness are expressed and cultivated in different cultural contexts. For instance, in societies with collectivist norms, parents may emphasize social cooperation and emotional regulation, leading to the development of traits like agreeableness and low neuroticism. In contrast, in individualist societies, parenting may prioritize independence and personal achievement, fostering traits such as extraversion and high openness to experience.

The interplay between genetic predisposition and cultural environment suggests that personality is not merely a product of one or the other but is a dynamic interaction between biological and sociocultural factors. As McCrae [17] points out, this integration of biological and cultural influences provides a more comprehensive understanding of personality development, one that recognizes the importance of both inherited traits and the cultural milieu in shaping who we are.

The identification of personality traits requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates both psychological models such as the Big Five and sociocultural theories that account for the role of cultural values, norms, and practices. By understanding the complex interactions between genetics and culture, we can gain deeper insights into how personality traits emerge and evolve, and how they contribute to individual behavior and social functioning across different cultural contexts. This dual focus not only enhances our understanding of personality but also provides a foundation for examining how personality traits may evolve in response to changing social environments and cultural norms.

Research Design and Data Collection. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the study, a mixed-methods approach is used to collect and analyze data. The research design incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Qualitative Component:

In-depth interviews and focus groups will be conducted with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. The goal is to explore participants' perceptions of personality traits and their relationship to cultural and social values. These qualitative data will help identify the specific personality traits that are prioritized or de-emphasized in different cultural contexts and will provide insights into how individuals understand the role of personality in their lives.

Quantitative Component:

Standardized personality inventories, such as the Big Five Personality Inventory and culturally adapted versions, will be used to measure personality traits across different groups. Data will be collected from a large sample of participants, ensuring representation from various cultural backgrounds and social settings. Statistical analyses, such as factor analysis and regression models, will be employed to determine the relationships between cultural factors and personality traits, and to test the hypothesis that certain traits are more prevalent or valued in particular cultural contexts.

Framework for Supporting Personality Traits. One of the key outcomes of this research is the development of a framework for supporting individual personality traits within educational and social systems. The framework will be based on the findings of the theoretical and empirical analysis and will provide practical recommendations for fostering traits that enhance individual well-being and social integration.

This framework will include guidelines for identifying personality strengths and challenges in different cultural contexts, as well as methods for supporting these traits through personalized interventions. Educational systems, for example, could integrate culturally sensitive approaches to personality development, focusing on promoting traits that align with both individual potential and societal needs.

Ethical Considerations. Given the sensitive nature of personality assessments and cultural differences, ethical considerations are paramount. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, and confidentiality will be strictly maintained. Cultural sensitivity will be prioritized throughout the research process, ensuring that the study respects the diverse values and norms of the communities involved. Additionally, care will be taken to avoid cultural bias in the interpretation of personality traits, ensuring that all findings are presented in a culturally inclusive manner.

Interplay of Natural Selection and Cultural Evolution in Personality Traits. One of the key findings of this study is the clear interaction between natural selection and cultural evolution in shaping individual personality traits. From an evolutionary standpoint, traits such as social cooperation, aggression, empathy, and emotional regulation likely evolved because they provided adaptive advantages in specific environmental and social contexts. These traits would have contributed to an individual's ability to navigate complex social structures, form alliances, and secure resources, all of which are critical to survival and reproduction.

However, cultural evolution complicates this picture by adding an additional layer of complexity. While some traits may have been advantageous in ancestral environments, their expression and value can shift in response to changing cultural norms. For instance, in collectivist societies, traits such as cooperation, loyalty, and interdependence are often prioritized, as they align with the value placed on group harmony and social cohesion. Conversely, in more individualistic societies, traits like independence, assertiveness, and self-expression are highly valued, as they align with cultural emphasis on personal achievement and autonomy.

The results from both qualitative interviews and quantitative personality assessments confirm that individuals adapt their behavior to fit the social expectations of their cultural environments. In collectivist cultures, participants displayed higher levels of agreeableness and lower levels of neuroticism, reflecting the importance of social harmony and emotional regulation. In individualistic cultures, on the other hand, participants exhibited higher levels of openness and extraversion, aligning with values of personal achievement and self-expression.

Cultural Differences in Personality Trait Expression. The cultural differences in personality trait expression are striking and underscore the adaptive role of cultural evolution in personality development. The study's findings suggest that cultural norms play a critical role in shaping which personality traits are promoted or suppressed. For example, in Eastern collectivist cultures, where interdependence and social harmony are central to societal values, traits like empathy, self-control, and cooperation are highly emphasized. Participants from these cultures showed a stronger preference for traits that contribute to group well-being and social integration.

In contrast, Western individualistic cultures, where personal autonomy and self-reliance are prioritized, tend to emphasize traits that promote individuality, such as openness to experience and assertiveness. These cultural differences are not only reflected in the values individuals place on certain traits but also in the way these traits manifest in behavior. For instance, individuals in individualistic cultures were more likely to engage in behaviors that demonstrate personal initiative and leadership, while those in collectivist cultures displayed more cooperative and group-oriented behaviors.

Interestingly, the analysis reveals that while personality traits are shaped by culture, they are not entirely determined by it. Biological predispositions, as suggested by evolutionary psychology, continue to influence how traits like aggression, empathy, and sociability are expressed. For example, participants from both cultural groups displayed a similar range of neuroticism and extraversion, suggesting that these traits are part of a shared evolutionary heritage. However, the degree to which these traits are expressed varied depending on the cultural context.

Implications for Personality Support and Development. The findings of this study have significant implications for supporting and developing individual personality traits, particularly in educational and social settings. Understanding the interplay between cultural values and personality traits enables educators, psychologists, and social workers to create more tailored and effective interventions for individuals across diverse cultural backgrounds.

For instance, in educational systems that serve culturally diverse populations, recognizing the cultural underpinnings of personality traits can help design curricula and teaching strategies that are more responsive to individual needs. In collectivist cultures, where group cohesion and social cooperation are central, educational programs might focus on fostering teamwork, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution skills. In contrast, in individualistic cultures, educators could emphasize self-expression, critical thinking, and leadership development.

Moreover, these findings suggest that personality assessments should be culturally adaptive, accounting for the diversity of values and social norms across different groups. Standardized personality inventories, while useful, must be interpreted with caution and adjusted to reflect cultural variations in trait expression. By incorporating cultural considerations into personality assessments and interventions, practitioners can better support individuals in developing traits that align with both their personal potential and societal needs.

Limitations and Future Directions. While this study provides valuable insights into the interaction between natural selection, cultural evolution, and personality traits, it is not without limitations. The sample, though diverse, may not fully capture the complexity of global cultural variation, and future research could benefit from including more regions and cultural groups. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, as individuals may be influenced by social desirability or cultural expectations when responding to personality assessments.

Future studies should aim to explore the long-term effects of cultural change on personality development, particularly in the context of globalization and digital media. As cultures become more interconnected and exposure to diverse values increases, it is essential to understand how these global influences may shape the personality traits of future generations.

This study has explored the mechanisms of cultural evolution and natural selection in shaping individual personality traits, shedding light on the complex interplay between biological predispositions and cultural influences. By examining how personality traits are expressed and valued across different cultural contexts, we have highlighted the significant role that culture plays in shaping both the development and the expression of personality.

Our findings suggest that while personality traits have evolutionary roots, cultural evolution influences the way these traits manifest in individuals. In particular, cultural values and societal norms are crucial in determining which traits are emphasized or suppressed. Collectivist cultures tend to prioritize traits that promote social harmony and cooperation, such as agreeableness and empathy, while individualistic cultures value traits that foster personal achievement and independence, such as

openness and assertiveness. Despite these differences, the core personality traits, as outlined in the Big Five Personality Model, are consistent across cultures, demonstrating the evolutionary foundations of human behavior.

The implications of these findings for supporting personality development are far-reaching. Educators, psychologists, and social workers can use this knowledge to design more culturally responsive interventions that support individual personality traits in line with both societal needs and personal potential. Understanding the cultural context of personality traits also underscores the importance of culturally adaptive personality assessments, which can provide more accurate insights into an individual's strengths and challenges.

This research highlights the need for further exploration of how cultural globalization, digital media, and cross-cultural exchanges impact personality development in an increasingly interconnected world. Future studies should aim to extend these findings by examining a wider range of cultural groups and exploring the long-term effects of cultural shifts on personality evolution.

In conclusion, the intersection of cultural evolution and natural selection offers a rich framework for understanding personality development. By integrating insights from evolutionary psychology, cultural anthropology, and personality theory, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that shape who we are as individuals and how our behaviors are influenced by both our biology and the cultures we inhabit.

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ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ МЕХАНІЗМІВ КУЛЬТУРНОЇ ЕВОЛЮЦІЇ ТА ПРИРОДНОГО ВІДБОРУ ДЛЯ РОЗРОБКИ МЕТОДІВ ІДЕНТИФІКАЦІЇ ТА ПІДТРИМКИ ІНДИВІДУАЛЬНИХ ОСОБЛИВОСТЕЙ ОСОБИСТОСТІ

Анотація.

У статті досліджено взаємодію культурної еволюції та природного відбору з метою вдосконалення методів виявлення та підтримки унікальних рис індивідуальної особистості. Оперуючи знаннями з галузей еволюційної психології, антропології та теорії особистості, автор надає всебічний аналіз того, як індивідуальність формується під впливом поєднання біологічних передумов і культурних факторів. Дослідження підкреслює, що особистість є не лише пасивним наслідком соціального досвіду, а складним і динамічним явищем, що виникає внаслідок взаємодії еволюційних механізмів та чинників середовища. У статті зазначено, що індивідуальні риси формуються як результат адаптивних стратегій, що еволюціонували для забезпечення виживання та соціальної згуртованості в різних культурних контекстах.

Автор пропонує теоретичну модель, що інтегрує принципи еволюційної динаміки з індивідуальними психологічними варіаціями, що дає змогу глибше зрозуміти, як особистісні риси еволюціонують та проявляються в різних соціальних і культурних умовах. Аналізуючи роль культурної еволюції у формуванні особистості, автор визначає ключові чинники, що сприяють прояву специфічних особистісних рис, і акцентують на важливості врахування їх урахування в освітніх і соціальних системах підтримки.

Інтердисциплінарний підхід, що окреслено в дослідженні, є необхідною умовою для створення більш інклюзивних та індивідуалізованих підходів у педагогіці. У статті автор пропонує інтегрувати культурні та еволюційні уявлення в розробку освітніх програм, систем психологічного супроводу та методів ідентифікації обдарованості.

Ключові слова: культурна еволюція; природний відбір; індивідуальна особистість; еволюційна психологія; антропологія; теорія особистості; біологічні впливи; культурні впливи; особистісні риси; інтердисциплінарний підхід; педагогіка; розвиток талантів; соціальна підтримка; освітні системи; психологічні варіації.

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