NAME OF PRESENTING AUTHOR: Rosa Cheesman

EMAIL ADDRESS OF PRESENTING AUTHOR: rosa.cheesman@kcl.ac.uk

LOCATION OF PRESENTING AUTHOR: Europe

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TITLE:
Genetic associations between non-cognitive skills and educational outcomes: The role of parental environment

FULL AUTHOR LIST:
Perline Demange¹,²,³, Jouke Jan Hottenga¹, Abdel Abdellaoui⁴, Margherita Malanchini⁵,⁶, Ben Domingue⁷,⁸, Eveline de Zeeuw¹,³, Kaili Rimfeld⁵, Elsje van Bergen¹,³, Thalia Eley⁵,⁹, Robert Plomin⁵, Dorret Boomsma¹, Gerome Breen⁵,⁹, Michel Nivard¹, Rosa Cheesman⁵

AFFILIATIONS:
¹Department of Biological Psychology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands
²Amsterdam Public Health Research Institute, Amsterdam University Medical Centers, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
³Research Institute LEARN!, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands
⁴Department of Psychiatry, Amsterdam UMC, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
⁵Social Genetic & Developmental Psychiatry Centre, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College London, UK
⁶Queen Mary University of London
⁷Graduate School of Education, Stanford University
⁸Center for Population Health Sciences, Stanford University
⁹NIHR Maudsley Biomedical Research Centre; South London and Maudsley NHS Trust, UK

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ABSTRACT:
Background: Accumulating evidence suggests that parents' genetic variation indirectly influences offspring education via the home environment. No research has assessed contributions of parental genetic variation linked to non-cognitive versus cognitive skills, or compared indirect parental genetic effects across outcome measures, cohorts and analytical methods.
**Methods:** We define the non-cognitive and cognitive heritable contributions to educational attainment using GWAS-by-subtraction, and construct non-cognitive and cognitive skills polygenic scores in British and Dutch cohorts (UK Biobank, TEDS and NTR). We estimate indirect effects of the polygenic scores on educational outcomes using: siblings (all cohorts; N=47,459), adoptees (UKB; N=6407) and parent-offspring trios (NTR; N=2534). Outcomes include achievement (teacher reports and standardized test scores) at ages 12 and 16, and adult attainment.

**Results:** Indirect effects of non-cognitive and cognitive skills genetics on offspring education are similar, explaining ~40% of the total effect of each polygenic score on average. Childhood standardised tests show less influence of parents’ non-cognitive genetics than other outcomes (e.g. NTR: $\beta=0.01$ for CITO scores, $\beta=0.13$ for adult attainment). The sibling method gives higher estimates of indirect genetic effects than other approaches, particularly for the non-cognitive polygenic score (e.g. UKB: adoption $\beta=0.02$; sibling $\beta=0.16$). This likely reflects population stratification and assortative mating.

**Discussion:** Heritable non-cognitive and cognitive skills are both involved in how parents create environments that shape offspring education. Estimates of indirect genetic effects are somewhat sensitive to choice of outcome measure, and to patterns of bias affecting particular methods.

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