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Here Is a Human Being: At the Dawn of Personal Genomics

Misha Angrist

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> The first in-depth look at personal genomics: its larger-than-life research subjects; its entrepreneurs and do-it-yourselfers; its technology developers; the bewildered and overwhelmed physicians and regulators who must negotiate it; and what it means to be a "public genome" in a world where privacy is already under siege

In 2007, Misha Angrist became the fourth subject in the Personal Genome Project, George Church's ambitious plan to sequence the entire genomic catalog: every participant's twenty thousand–plus genes and the rest of his or her 6 billion base pairs. Church hopes to better understand how genes influence our physical traits, from height and athletic ability to behavior and weight, and our medical conditions, from cancer and diabetes to obesity and male pattern baldness. Now Angrist reveals startling information about the experiment's participants and scientists; how the experiment was, is, and will be conducted; the discoveries and potential discoveries; and the profound implications of having an unfiltered view of our hardwired selves for us and for our children.

DNA technology has already changed our health care, the food we eat, and our criminal justice system. Unlocking the secrets of our genomes opens the door not only to helping us understand why we are the way we are and potentially fixing what ails us but also to many other concerns: What exactly will happen to this information? Will it become just another marketing tool? Can it help us understand our ancestry, or will it merely reinforce old ideas of race? Can personal genomics help fix the U.S. health care system?

Here Is a Human Being explores these complicated questions while documenting Angrist's own fascinating journey—one that tens of thousands of us will soon make.

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