



PART IV

Outstanding Conceptual and Measurement Issues



So far, while we have indicated some of the problems that derive from the use of arbitrary metrics – which include most tests developed according to Classical Test Theory – and shown how these can be ameliorated by deploying appropriate forms of IRT, and while we have hinted at some of the problems which arise from the adoption of what might be called “arbitrary measures” in personal and programme evaluation, we have said little about problems which stem from the adoption of an inappropriate conceptual framework for thinking about, and assessing, individual differences.

Although these problems will be addressed at some length in the chapters in this Section, the nature of those problems can perhaps be indicated by asking “Where would biologists have got to if they had sought to summarise all the variation between animals in terms of 1, 2, or 16 “variables” analogous to e.g. “intelligence”, “educative and reproductive ability” or the 16PF (examples of such variables might be ‘dogginess’, or ‘crabbiness’, or ‘aggressiveness’), the variance in environments in terms of, say, 10 variables (such as ‘succorance’ or ‘animal vs vegetable’), and then study the effects of the variance in the environments on the animals using multiple regression techniques?”





In the first chapter in this Part, Jim Flynn summarises his remarkable book *Asian Americans: Achievement beyond IQ*. Our main reason for including this is that his work highlights the importance of numerous personal and environmental variables typically neglected by psychologists.

The second chapter develops this discussion, showing first that failure to develop an alternative framework for thinking about and assessing individual differences results in widespread failure to develop and utilise human talents and, indeed, to endless unethical procedures and decisions in education and human resource management, not to mention unscientific and unethical conclusions in research.

However, since this problem was highlighted by none other than Spearman almost a century ago, one is obliged to address the question of why the topic has been neglected.

At that point, one is not merely led to consider the external social forces which, as Flynn says, so much determine behaviour, but actually to re-think the very framework psychologists deploy to try to understand behaviour. The transformation is as great as that which Newton introduced into physics. Before Newton, if things moved or changed direction it was because of their *internal* properties: they were *animated*. After Newton, it was mainly because they were acted upon by a network of *external* forces which could nevertheless be mapped, measured and harnessed.

It is argued that psychologists have not merely largely neglected these external forces, it is these forces which have mainly contributed to their failure to develop a more appropriate framework for thinking about and assessing individual differences ... and this neglect is contributing in vitally important ways to the network of forces that are heading our species toward extinction at an exponentially increasing rate.

The final chapter in this Part of our book returns to the question of the problems involved in establishing the validity of a test which claims to measure meaning making ability, looks in more detail than we did in the General Introductory Chapter at the occupational predictive validity of the RPM, and briefly outlines an alternative way of thinking about individual differences grounded in the mid-career work of David McClelland.

