**What is Nature vs Nurture?**

You got your green eyes from your mother, and your freckles from your father. But where did you get your [thrill-seeking personality](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/dispomim.cgi?id=601696) and [talent for singing](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/dispomim.cgi?id=159300)? Did you learn these from your parents or was it predetermined by your genes? While it's clear that physical characteristics are hereditary, the genetic waters get a bit more murky when it comes to an individual's behavior, intelligence, and personality. Ultimately, the old argument of nature vs. nurture has never really been won. We do not yet know how much of what we are is determined by our DNA and how much by our life experience. But we do know that both play a part.

It has been reported that the use of the terms "nature" and "nurture" as a convenient catch-phrase for the roles of heredity and environment in human development can be [traced back to 13th century France](http://htpprints.yorku.ca/archive/00000014/00/Silence.htm). Some scientists think that people behave as they do according to genetic predispositions or even "animal instincts." This is known as the "nature" theory of human behavior. Other scientists believe that people think and behave in certain ways because they are taught to do so. This is known as the "nurture" theory of human behavior.

Fast-growing understanding of the human genome has recently made it clear that both sides are partly right. Nature endows us with inborn abilities and traits; nurture takes these genetic tendencies and molds them as we learn and mature. End of story, right? Nope. The "nature vs nurture" debate still rages on, as scientist fight over how much of who we are is shaped by genes and how much by the environment.

**The Nature Theory - Heredity**   
Scientists have known for years that traits such as eye color and hair color are determined by specific genes encoded in each human cell. The Nature Theory takes things a step further to say that more abstract traits such as intelligence, personality, aggression, and sexual orientation are also encoded in an individual's DNA.

* The search for "behavioral" genes is the source of constant debate. Many fear that genetic arguments might be used to excuse [criminal acts](http://www.popularmechanics.com/science/research/2002/11/criminal_genes) or justify [divorce](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/1433340.stm).
* The most debated issue pertaining to the nature theory is the existence of a "[gay gene](http://hamp.hampshire.edu/~kebF92/genetics.html)," pointing to a genetic component to sexual orientation.
* An April, 1998 article in LIFE Magazine, "[Were You Born That Way](http://cs.clark.edu/~bio/BIOLOGY162/Assignments&Questions/WereYouBornThatWay.pdf)" by George Howe Colt, claimed that "new studies show it's mostly in your genes."
* If genetics didn't play a part, then fraternal twins, reared under the same conditions, would be alike, regardless of differences in their genes. But, while studies show they do more closely resemble each other than do non-twin brothers and sisters, they also show these same striking similarities when reared apart - as in similar studies done with identical twins.