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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](#) or justify [divorce](#).
- The most debated issue pertaining to the nature theory is the existence of a "gay gene," pointing to a genetic component to sexual orientation.
- An April, 1998 article in LIFE Magazine, "Were You Born That Way" 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.

The nature versus nurture debate is about the relative importance of an individual's innate qualities ("nature", i.e. nativism, or [biological empiricism](#), innateness) versus personal experiences ("nurture") in determining individual differences in physical and behavioral traits. The philosophy that humans acquire all or most of their behavioral traits from "nurture" is known as *tabula rasa* ("blank slate").

In recent years, both types of factors have come to be recognized as playing interacting roles in development. So several modern [psychologists](#) consider the question naive - representing an outdated state of [knowledge](#). The famous psychologist Donald Hebb is said to have once answered a journalist's question of "which, nature or nurture, contributes more to personality?" by asking in response, "which contributes more to the area of a rectangle, its length or its width?"

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