



## THE NATURE-NURTURE DEBATE

Is it genes or environment which makes a person what they are?

The *genotype* of an individual is their **genetic constitution**. This is essentially what their chromosomes make them. Their *phenotype* is the result of interaction between their inherited characteristics and the environment. To investigate the differences between the two (i.e. whether it is genes or environment which cause certain characteristics), many studies of the approach try to separate the two to find out the causes of certain characteristics and behaviours.

We say that what we inherit is the '**nature**' aspect, and that which is learned from the environment is '**nurture**'. Nature concerns the influence of genes, among other biological structures, on an individual. This includes the effects of neurotransmitter functioning, brain structure and function, genetic makeup and other similar biological structures.

Nurture is more concerned with environment, so anything *other than* the biological aspects. This includes the style and environment of upbringing and growing up, schooling experience, social influences, position within a family and other similar issues. An example might be children who watch more violent TV are more likely to act aggressively.

*The nature-nurture debate is discussed in more detail in M7 Twin and Adoption Studies. See the Methodology section to locate these notes.*

Mega Lecture