

A chef's Nature versus Nurture Questions that stir the pot

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Questions for my Professor, Doctor Amanda Gibson, Ph.D.

In an age where our spit can unlock ancestral secrets and our genome whispers tales of who we might become, the age-old debate of nature versus nurture finds itself reinvigorated by commercial DNA tests like 23andMe. I've been a premium member of 23andme.com for over ten years and ethically self-disclose my work with Doctor Dean Ornish at the Preventive Medicine Research Institute (PMRI) to continue to share we are not stuck with our genes – over 500 of them can be changed (Bland, 2021; Lippman et al., 2024; Ornish, 2022; Wider et al., 2023). This isn't just academic banter anymore, it's personal, predictive, and powerful. As we stir this bubbling cauldron of genetics, personality, and environment, we must ask: are we decoding destiny, or simply reading tea leaves in double helix form? With every SNP (single nucleotide polymorphism) flagged for traits like neuroticism or risk-taking, and every childhood memory still echoing in the neural architecture of our minds, the lines between what we are born with and what the world shapes grow blurrier—and more electrifying to explore.

Questions related to new DNA analysis and personality cataloging

1. To what extent can DNA testing services like 23andMe predict core personality traits, and how do these genetic insights compare in reliability to environmental influences like childhood trauma or education?
2. If a specific personality trait—like introversion—is found to be highly heritable through genome-wide association studies, what does that mean for psychological interventions like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)? Are we just polishing the DNA chrome, or can nurture still override nature?

3. Should commercial genetic testing companies be held accountable for how they present findings about personality traits, given the risk of genetic determinism and self-fulfilling prophecies?
4. Recent research has linked certain gene clusters (like DRD4) to sensation-seeking behavior (Modestino et al., 2022). Could we one day tailor parenting techniques or therapy styles based on a child's genetic personality profile? Or is that ethically dicey?
5. How do epigenetics blur the line between nature and nurture in personality development, and are there any known epigenetic factors that 23andMe-type platforms currently track?
6. With the rise of AI-driven genetic analysis, is there a risk of reducing personality to code—losing the nuance of experience and environment? Are we headed for a "genetic horoscope" era of psychology?
7. If someone discovers through a DNA service that they carry genes linked to neuroticism or aggression, should that affect their mental health treatment plan—or is that still too speculative to be clinically relevant?
8. How should we interpret the heritability of personality in twin studies versus direct-to-consumer genetic reports? Are we dealing with two different beasts, or can these sources be synthesized meaningfully?
9. Could genetic predispositions identified by 23andMe, or any DNA service, be used in hiring, military selection, or education one day? What safeguards should psychologists advocate for now?
10. In light of 23andMe findings, do you believe Freud's theory of personality development would have changed if he had access to genetic data? Or would he have stubbornly blamed it all on Mom?

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