

Will I really be the same person as my parents? Will we possess the same personalities? Does the environment we grow up in make us the people we are today? As we know, we are part of our parents. We inherit many of our qualities from our parents, but that does not mean that we are the same people. We may possess many of our parent's traits but we are individuals. Each and every person experiences the world in different ways. Personally, there are times I have viewed the world as a terrible, depressing place. I have gone through bad experiences that have left major impacts on my mental state of mind; but why do bad experiences have to define your future? They simply do not. I believe if we dwell on negative memories then we are not able to move forward with our lives.

When I entered high school I realized how much my family life had deteriorated. Everything seemed to fall apart after 8th grade; my parents divorced, we lost our house, our dog died, my mom was dating a twenty-five year old, and my dad stopped working. During all this time I was mad at the world, why did I keep going through these bad experiences with my parents? Why were they always so selfish? I started to worry that their personalities and dysfunctions would be passed down to me. In fact, I am still worried. I started fearing this once I realized how anxious my mom and dad are and how I tend to get very anxious as well. I wonder if anxiety is inherited or if I feel this way as a consequence of trauma. I have read that having parents with anxiety disorders greatly increases the odds for their child to suffer from an anxiety disorder as well (www.calmclinic.com). Some people suffer from anxiety disorders that are caused by chemical imbalances (my.clevelandclinic.org). Chemical imbalances are known to be associated with mental health issues. My father suffers from chemical imbalances in his brain, which causes anxiety and other social disorders. The interesting part of my dad's disorders is that his biological father was said to be neurotic. It is very possible that my dad inherited his father's mental illness.

Just like my Dad's traits were passed down from his own father, some of his will be passed down to me. Traits are passed through DNA. Our DNA is the code that entails how our body functions. Part of our DNA is inherited from our parent's genes. A gene is a stretch of DNA that codes for a protein, which in turn codes for a trait. Sometimes the nature of genetics provides us with personality traits that are parallel to our family members.

The inheritance of genes and traits frightens me. The thought of being the same as my parents causes mental consternation for me; I constantly question if my personality traits are inherited from my parents. It is clear that there are obvious differences between my parents and me, but in other ways we are quite similar. We all worry excessively and suffer from anxiety. Part of my personality stems from the two of them genetically; there is no way of escaping that fact. However, I wonder just how much of our personalities are affected by genes. In The New Yorker I came across an article from 1995 titled, *Double Mystery* written by Lawrence Wright. In the article I read that a Swedish adoption agency conducted a study in 1982, showing that the rate of crimes committed by adopted children was 2.9 percent when neither their biological nor their adoptive parents had committed a crime; the percentage rose to 6.7 percent if their adoptive parents were criminals and rose to 12.1 percent if their biological parents were criminals. However, if both sets of parents were criminals then the chance of the child being a criminal was 40 percent. This proves that genetics and environment have a large effect on certain behaviors (Wright 57). If you grow up in an environment that was based off of crime then that is what you would know as you grow older. You would be familiar with seeing and experiencing crime and you would probably acquire certain behaviors you witnessed. Just like any environment, you learn how to live within it.

I constantly ask myself: what makes us individuals? Is it genes or the environment? I have come to the conclusion that it is both. Genetic makeup does play a big role in developing your personality but your environment is just as important, if not more. Each and every person comes from a different background. People grow up with different religions, beliefs, and families. Each of these factors contributes to a person's personality. For example, studies show that children that grow up playing violent video games are more likely to have violent and disruptive behaviors than other children (www.TeenInk.com). This concludes that environment and experiences can affect the way a child behaves. Nature vs. Nurture is a popular topic that has been argued for years. Nurture is often questioned by asking if you were born without a personality. This means that it will be the experiences and people in his or her life who will shape the kind of person they will become. John Locke, a British Philosopher, believed that each individual was born with a "Tabula Rasa," meaning a blank slate. Locke believed that when you are born you have a blank slate and as you grow, you experience and develop these slates (www.TeenInk.com). I believe that we are born with a blank slate when it comes to experiences but we are also born with genes and traits that later help to shape us into individuals. Of course, nature does have a large effect on us; we often show the same qualities as other family members. It is clear that both, nature and nurture, define our personalities.

We may have witnessed traumatic experiences in our childhood due to the environments we grew up in. Our minds tend to dwell on these negative memories from the past. Why do we spend time worrying about our pasts? In The New York Times article, "Praise is Fleeting" the author, Alina Tugen states, "Bad emotions, bad parents and feedback have more impact than good ones. Bad impressions and bad stereotypes are quicker to form and more resistant to disconfirmation than good ones" (Tugen). It is hard to disregard a negative memory when it has changed you in some way and we tend to remember them more because they leave a bigger impact in our minds (Tugen). A question I ask myself is, "why do we dwell on the past?" Personality plays a big part. Some people are more prone to obsessively thinking about their past (www.psychcentral.com). We must learn to accept our past and move forward. I have realized that negative experiences help people learn how to overcome obstacles. If life was simple and easy it would be boring, we would not have to work towards goals. There would be nothing interesting about humans if we were handed a perfectly simple life.

My life has had plenty of struggles and it is hard to forget the experiences I have been through. A major thing I remember about my childhood is my parents fighting. I blur out parts of my childhood. I still hear the noise and fighting sometimes; I know it will take awhile for the pain to leave my body. It is nice knowing that I am independent and I am able to make my own life choices; that is something I really enjoy about my parents. At one point, my sister and I were kicked out of my mom's house. I learned how to forgive and make the best of my situation and environment. I am thankful that I had time to live with another family. I no longer dwell on this memory, but take it as a learning experience that helped me to find things about myself that I never knew existed.

A habit I never knew existed until recently is my nervous habit. A nervous habit is defined as a habit that is an activity that is acquired, done frequently, done automatically, and difficult to stop (www.cherrypedrick.com) For the most part, all individuals have a nervous habit, which are usually innocuous and done without a purpose. It is interesting to me as to why we develop these habits; they serve no apparent social function (www.cherrypedrick.com). I believe we start to feel so much anxiety that our bodies start developing habits that we are not aware of, these nervous habits are where we drive our anxiety into a relief. Psychological trauma is a key

factor for our bodies creating a habit. I know that when I am uncomfortable in a situation I tend to crack my fingers or play with something in my hand. Frequently, nervous habits relieve anxiety, stress, or boredom (www.cherrypedrick.com). Trauma can change a person, and I have definitely acquired certain new traits about my self. Some I like, others I despise. I dislike the fact that I get uncomfortable so easily. I believe I have created these habits because of my parents constantly fighting and the fact that my father cheated on my mother. I grew up around a self-conscious mother who feared the way she looked constantly. Growing up I remember my mom taking deep breaths, trying to calm herself from her anxiety. I see now that I have taken on her deep breaths and worry.

Undeniably, we do attain our own unique personalities. Our genes, no doubt, provide us with certain traits whether we like it or not. We all inherit qualities from our parents, but that does not mean that we are our parents. The environment you grew up in provides you with certain personal qualities. Some environments are filled with negative experiences that provide us with life long lessons. Bad experiences provide us with strength to grow in life. We all interpret experiences in different ways; some people may accept the past they lived while others may despise what they lived through. I believe that we must understand that the world is full of bad things and that we cannot live perfect, simple lives. It is not possible to live a life without any negative experiences. It is up to you as to how you choose to handle your experiences, you can feel self-pity or you can look at it as a learning process.

When I look back on my life I realize how I really did not have it that bad. People go through much worse than I did and that is what I keep in mind. I feel sorry for myself at times and then I remember what could be worse. So my parents got divorced, what has that taught me? It has taught me that I should not get pregnant at age sixteen. It has taught me that you should really get to know your husband before you marry him. It has taught me that marriage is not for everyone. It has taught me that you must work together in a healthy, caring way. It has taught me to handle my money carefully and not make rash decisions. I have learned a lot from my parents. I have also learned that when you have a family you cannot be selfish and only worry about yourself. I have learned that you must care for others. I have learned that I will create a functional living environment for myself. I have learned that you have to listen to others' feelings. I have learned that I hate "I hear you" because you do not really hear me. I have learned I am different from my parents because I do hear other peoples' feelings and I accommodate their needs. I grew up in a dysfunctional environment that taught me life-long lessons. I learned a lot about myself through the experiences I went through. The environment I grew up in led me to become an independent, open-minded, and optimistic person. I take these experiences and grow each day. Each day as I grow, I realize that I am an individual and I have the power to create the life I want.

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