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FR INQ Human/Nature

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Journal Assignment #4

**First Entry:** I have always had ideas and thoughts about humans, where we came from, and why we do the things we do. Before this course I had only skimmed the surface of human nature, now I have a much better understanding of the subject because of the class discussions, reading and videos.

In the article “What Makes Us Human?” by Katherine Pollard, I took a lot of interest in reading about the distinctive DNA that makes humans so advanced. HAR1, FOXP2, AMY1, HAR2 and other sequences are the evolutionary parts that makes humans appear so drastically different and ‘superior’ to animals. It seems so hard to grasp how and why these changes occurred in homo sapiens giving us speech, self-awareness, exceptional hand dexterity and many other specific features. My perspective has changed in the sense that I am able to better appreciate where we came from and all the amazingly hard and extensive work people have done to help all humans better understand who we are.

The video we watched on the Dover school district and the debate on whether ‘intelligent design’ should be a part of the science curriculum was probably my favorite part of the class so far. It was amazing to me how defensive and deceptive the people of Dover acted in the conflict of evolution vs. creation. I am a strong believer in evolution so to me it seems so irrational to believe in creation. But those who believe in creation feel strongly that the bible word for word ‘is’. The video gave me better insight of the beliefs of those who believe in creation. I do not spend my time hanging around churches or people who preach the bible so I didn’t ever take the time to hear what they had to say. Through the video I have heard many different opinions and they help me explore my own mind and thoughts. I think that I need to hear many perspectives and information from many different sources to help me better understand in any instance why I believe the things I do and why in my mind they are what ‘is’.

**Second Entry:** Sapolsky states that “genetic influences are often a lot less powerful than is commonly believed.” I believe that our society does rely a little too heavily on the influence that genetics may have on our actions. I think that genetics are almost like a ‘scapegoat’ for human behavior. For example, if a person were to assault another an outside source may say, “He had a genetic disposition to violence.” But there is no excuse for that behavior; genes are just being blamed for it. I believe it is true that genes play a role in human behavior but not a large enough role to influence a person to take action against their will. A possible ‘aggressive’ gene that has been passed down from a grandfather to a father to a son does not mean that the son is going to act the same way the grandfather did. The environment plays a key role in determining someone’s behavior or actions. If a chemical imbalance exists in your brain then you may be more likely to be depressed, but with support from your family and friends in your environment you may be able to overcome this disposition. In my life I believe that I myself have used ‘genetic hyping’ to justify certain actions. My dad is a super neat freak, doesn’t like messes and clutter, always wants thing a particular way and gets very stressed in many social situations. I unfortunately have very similar traits to my dad, but I realize now through my own personal growth that I do not have to be so uptight and through support from others in my environment I was able to let go. I sometimes think that I blamed my ‘OCD’ behavior on my dad and his genes, but the truth is even though I have an internal urge to clean-up, I can control myself, the genes and chemicals in my brain do not control me like a robot, I control me. Overall I believe that both genes and our environment play a role in the development of who we are. Personally, I think that the environment plays a bigger role than genes. The question of which factor has a bigger impact on humans and their actions is something that will probably never be known or agreed upon.