

## Reports of junk DNA's 'demise' were based on junky logic and dubious definitions

*The following is an excerpt.*

Magnificent organisms capable of composing symphonies, calculating quantum energy levels and dunking basketballs are built from DNA molecules containing 90 percent junk.

At least that was the prevailing biological wisdom until last September. Previous studies of the human genome — the catalog of all human DNA and the genes made from it — showed that most DNA was junk, with no biological importance for the survival of the species. [But then came a report in \*Nature\*](#) from the ENCODE project (for ENCyclopedia of DNA Elements). It proclaimed that 80 percent of the human genome could be assigned a “biochemical function.” News reports heralded the demise of “junk DNA.”

Since then, though, some scientists have begun to analyze the ENCODE papers the way ENCODE analyzed the genome, and have reached an entirely different conclusion. Not only is most of the genome junk, it seems, so is the ENCODE analysis. It uses a questionable definition of function and commits various logical fallacies in applying it, contend Dan Graur of the University of Houston and several collaborators.

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