

## Bad decision: Did your genes make you do it?

Studies have picked out groups of genes associated with intelligence, academic achievement, criminal activity and other life outcomes. It now seems possible to chart your children's lives before they ever emerge into the world.

The implications are staggering. Knowing what kind of person a child is likely to become — a kind of scientific prejudice — could easily lead to discrimination. Kids with genes linked to low intelligence could be shunted into inferior schools, and adults with genes linked to criminal activity could be subjected to extra-judicial police scrutiny.

This kind of thinking can be termed “genetic determinism” — the idea that our genes conclusively shape our behavior — and it also wreaks havoc with our notions of morality and free will. If our genes are guiding our behavior, does that mean we're not responsible?

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[S]tudies of identical twins, the gold standard for determining the influence genes have on given traits, have suggested that our DNA is probably responsible for around half of things linked to intelligence and behaviors like educational achievement and criminal activity. That's far higher than one or 16 percent, but the conclusion is clear: Genetic determinism doesn't seem to be scientifically possible.

Why not? There are just too many genes, and they interact with each other and with the environment in too many ways. We can't simply look at a handful and divine the future.

**Read full, original post:** [Can We Blame Our Genes for Our Decisions?](#)