**Module 12
Environmental Influences on Behavior**

**Cultural Influences**
Variations Across Cultures
Variations Over Time
Culture and the Self
Culture and Child-Rearing
Developmental Similarities Across Groups

**Evolutionary Psychology: Understanding Human Nature**
Natural Selection and Adaptation
Evolutionary Success Helps Explain Similarities
An Evolutionary Explanation of Human Sexuality

**Gender Development**
Gender Similarities and Differences
 The Nature of Gender
The Nurture of Gender

**Reflections on Nature and Nurture

Preview Question 1: To what extent are our lives shaped by early stimulation, by parents, and by peers?**

**Parents and Peers**Parents and Early Experiences
We have looked at how genes influence our developmental differences. What about the environment? How do our early experiences, our family, our community and our culture affects these differences?

**Experience and Brain Development**Early postnatal experiences affect brain development. Rosenzweig et al. (1984) showed that rats raised in enriched environments developed thicker cortices than those in impoverished environment.

**Experience and Faculties**Early experiences during development in humans shows remarkable improvements in music, languages and the arts.

**Brain Development and Adulthood**Brain development does not stop when we reach adulthood. Throughout our life, brain tissue continues to grow and change.

**How Much Credit (or Blame) Do Parents Deserve?**Parental influence is largely genetic. This support is essential in nurturing children. However, other socializing factors also play an important role.

**Peer Influence**Children, like adults, attempt to fit into a group by conforming. Peers are influential in such areas as learning to cooperate with others, gaining popularity, and developing interactions.

**Nature, Nurture, and Human Diversity**
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**Preview Question 2: How do cultural norms affect our behavior?**

**Cultural Influences**Humans have the ability to evolve culture. Culture is composed of behaviors, ideas, attitudes, values and traditions shared by a group.

**Variation Across Culture**Cultures differ. Each culture develops norms – rules for accepted and expected behavior. Men holding hands in Saudi Arabia is the norm (closer personal space), but not in American culture.

**Variation Over Time**Cultures change over time. The rate of this change may be extremely fast. In many Western countries, culture has rapidly changed over the past 40 years or so.
This change cannot be attributed to changes in the human gene pool because genes evolve very slowly.

**Preview Question 3: How do individualist and collectivist influences affect people?**

**Culture and the Self**If a culture nurtures an individual’s personal identity, it is said to be individualist, but if a group identity is favored then the culture is described as collectivist.

A collectivist support system can benefit groups who experience disasters such as the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan.

**Culture and Child-Rearing**Individualist cultures (European) raise their children as independent individuals whereas collectivist cultures (Asian) raise their children as interdependent.

**Developmental Similarities Across Groups**Despite diverse cultural backgrounds, humans are more similar than different in many ways. We share the same genetic profile, life cycle, capacity for language, and biological needs.

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**Preview Question 4: What are some ways in which males and females tend to be alike and to differ?**

Based on genetic makeup, males and females are alike, since the majority of our inherited genes (45 chromosomes are unisex) are similar.
Males and females differ biologically in body fat, muscle, height, onset of puberty, and life expectancy.

**Gender Differences in Aggression**Men express themselves and behave in more aggressive ways than do women. This aggression gender gap appears in many cultures and at various ages.
In males, the nature of this aggression is physical.

**Gender and Social Power**In most societies, men are socially dominant and are perceived as such.
In 2005, men accounted for 84% of the governing parliaments.

**Gender Differences and Connectedness**Young and old, women form more connections (friendships) with people than do men. Men emphasize freedom and self-reliance.

**Biology of Sex**Biological sex is determined by the twenty-third pair of chromosomes. If the pair is XX, a female is produced. If the pair is XY, a male child is produced.

**Sexual Differentiation**In the mother’s womb, the male fetus is exposed to testosterone (because of the Y chromosome), which leads to the development of male genitalia.
If low levels of testosterone are released in the uterus, the result is a female.

Sexual differentiation is not only biological, but also psychological and social.
However, genes and hormones play a very important role in defining gender, especially in altering the brain and influencing gender differences as a result.

**Preview Question 5: How do nature and nurture together form our gender?**

**Gender Roles**Our culture shapes our gender roles — expectations of how men and women are supposed to behave.
Gender Identity — means how a person views himself or herself in terms of gender.

1. **Gender Roles: Theories**Social Learning Theory proposes that we learn gender behavior like any other behavior—reinforcement, punishment, and observation.
2. Gender Schema Theory suggests that we learn a cultural “recipe” of how to be a male or a female, which influences our gender- based perceptions and behaviors.

**Nature, Nurture, and Human Diversity**

**Reflections on Nature and Nurture**

