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The long-standing controversial debate of ‘nature versus nurture’ within entrepreneurship has profound implications across multiple disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and economics. This was a core theme invoking weekly discussions into several topics surrounding the identity of an entrepreneur and their key traits throughout the module. At the heart of the debate and in the context of entrepreneurship, researchers explore whether humans are innately predisposed at birth to certain attributes developed for entrepreneurial success. However, this belief is challenged by the view that entrepreneurial traits are instead the product of an individual’s life experiences combined with external environmental factors that shape and govern such attributes. This critical reflection will examine the dynamic interplay between the ‘nature versus nurture’ debate on entrepreneurial traits and characteristics. The analysis will combine components of academic theories, personal experiences, and insights from the module content itself. My reflection on entrepreneurship adopts the belief that elements from nature and nurture work together simultaneously complementing one another, rather than working independently.

Before undertaking this entrepreneurship module, I had the preconceived belief that entrepreneurial traits were predominantly determined by nature i.e., individuals are born entrepreneurs, not made. My perspective took the assumption that entrepreneurship was innately attributed to an individual defined by certain skills and characteristics which they either possessed or did not including risk tolerance, innovation, and creativity. This narrow-minded belief governed my perspective of entrepreneurial success which was attributed almost entirely based on innate qualities. However, throughout this module, my preconceptions have since evolved and reshaped to appreciate the fluid and dynamic nature of entrepreneurship which evolves with environmental factors. This module has challenged my fundamental understanding of what an entrepreneurial identity is by incorporating real-life case studies from guest speakers within the live sessions to offer a first-hand insight into an entrepreneur’s journey.

The notion that entrepreneurs have ‘born’ characteristics can be supported by the research analysis conducted by [Shane and Nicolaou \(2013\)](#). Their study which compared identical twins found evidence that genetic factors have a significant influence on entrepreneurial success from a biological standpoint. Individuals are genetically predisposed to certain traits associated with entrepreneurial success including risk-taking, and resilience. The idea that entrepreneurial traits are innately predisposed can be further supported by a study from [Rauch and Frese \(2007\)](#) who examined several empirical studies to determine a link between certain personality traits and entrepreneurial success. The researchers demonstrated that key personality traits including creativity were positively correlated with greater success in entrepreneurship. The perception that individuals with a trait for creativity were more likely to experience entrepreneurial success was reinforced by ‘Jerrel Jackson’ who we had the pleasure of meeting in week 3. His innate trait for creativity was naturally inherent from a young age. This ultimately encouraged Jerrel to pursue a career in marketing and advertising before later embarking on his entrepreneurial venture supporting child development through education. This case study captures how certain individuals such as Jerrel who have a natural tendency for creativity can experience entrepreneurial success by exploiting certain traits ingrained within them and subsequently pursue an entrepreneurial journey.

On a personal level, I can resonate as my innate trait for creativity from a young age led me to explore new market trends before ultimately introducing a vegan-Chinese cuisine within my parent’s restaurant in 2016. The success of this launch has been unimaginable and extremely popular amongst the local community with vegan sales now accounting for an astonishing 38% of total revenue. The restaurant has since won ‘Best Chinese Restaurant in Devon’ for 4 consecutive years and is also highly recognised for our range of vegan selections. My innate desire for creativity was instilled from a young age through



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my enthusiasm for problem-solving. This reinforces the notion that some individuals may be born with innate traits that increase the likelihood of entrepreneurial success. However, that is not to say that creativity cannot be honed over time as an acquired skill set. Research by [Fuentelsaz \(2022\)](#) offers an alternative perspective by highlighting the importance of the ‘nature’ side of the debate. Under the right environment, individuals can in fact learn and develop certain traits that may not necessarily be predisposed at birth.

In week 5 of the module, we discussed creativity and whether this is an innate or nurtured characteristic. One fundamental concept from the presentation that left a lasting impression on me was the framework of divergent and convergent thinking. The former revolves around the idea that creativity is a non-linear process that involves exploring several possibilities and ideas that invoke thinking ‘outside the box’ and exploring new perspectives. The latter however narrows down the focus to a few ideas by adopting a systematic and logical approach. It was clear that individuals are not necessarily defined by one or the other but rather can combine both thinking processes together. This is because, under a supportive environment, a convergent thinker could be encouraged to explore alternative possibilities thereby inspired to incorporate more creative approaches when problem solving. Creativity in this scenario is therefore stimulated by environmental factors which develop and strengthen an individual’s trait for creativity i.e., nurtured. From my personal experience, the nurture debate does hold a significant weight towards the trait of creativity. During the early stages of my life through primary socialisation, I recall my parents regularly encouraging creative thinking and providing an environment in which I could freely explore this through arts and crafts. Therefore, in this scenario, the environment in which an individual is brought up is also a key factor for consideration since certain entrepreneurial traits can be fostered by environmental conditions. This has helped inspire me to adopt a divergent thinking approach when forming ideas to examine multiple avenues when it comes to critical thinking and determining an optimal solution. Upon further reflection, I have realised that this process is a learned behaviour rather than automatically instilled at birth. Connecting this to my home discipline of Economics, the concept of ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ coined by Robert Merton (1948) is a behavioural bias that supports the belief that entrepreneurial traits are nurtured and developed over time.<sup>1</sup> This process stems from the idea that parents may create the belief or expectation that their child is creative and consequently provide the resources to express their imagination. As a result, this may create a feedback loop that ultimately reinforces and fulfils the parent’s initial belief to form a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Before undertaking this module, I held the preconceived notion that certain entrepreneurial traits including ‘resilience’ were innately predisposed. I adopted the view that some individuals are naturally more equipped to endure adversity and characterised by a relentless perseverance to overcome any failures or setbacks. This outlook however was formed on an oversimplified basis of a person’s character and their entrepreneurial success which I associated predominantly based on fixed attributes. However, as the course content progressed, my understanding of an entrepreneur’s identity was reshaped to recognise the fact that resilience is not solely an innate predisposed trait. Rather, environmental factors are also a significant consideration particularly given their influence and development of entrepreneurial traits. This analysis will examine the ‘nature vs nurture’ debate of the entrepreneurial trait ‘resilience’ by incorporating academic theory, module content, and a personal first-hand experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology. [Access link](#)



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Resilience can be defined by an individual's ability to recover from setbacks and failures as well as mental perseverance. From an entrepreneurial context, this attribute is widely considered a key trait for entrepreneurial success when overcoming uncertainty and recovering from failures. Research by [Feder et al. \(2009\)](#) examined the factors that affect an individual's ability to rebound from times of hardship. Their study investigated how certain genetic predispositions can influence an individual's level of resilience. The findings indicated that individuals who display lower levels of cortisol reactivity could have a biological advantage for naturally better handling stress. My early hypothesis that resilience was an inherent trait was guided by narratives that emphasised entrepreneurs as being 'born' individuals. This created the preconceived notion that successful entrepreneurs have intrinsic qualities that distinguish them from the majority. This module has offered a fresh perspective to my interpretations of entrepreneurial identities and the process in which they are developed. With the help of real-life case studies, engaging in-class discussions, and weekly reflection blogs, I was able to truly appreciate the importance of environmental factors that shape certain entrepreneurial traits including resilience. Research by [Masten \(2001\)](#) describes resilience as being an attained feature that is not specifically reserved for certain individuals but rather developed throughout a person's experience and acquired. This outlook conforms with my evolved understanding of the idea that when given the opportunity, resilience can be nurtured over time.

Furthermore, in week 4 of the module, we were fortunate to have a truly enriching session delivered by the guest speaker Pat Tissington describing his unique journey from failures to successes. His extraordinary journey provided an opportunity to listen first-hand to an entrepreneur's own story discussing not only his accomplishments but also the many failures he encountered. The setback of rejections was a true testament to his relentless resilience to continue moving forward. Pat spoke candidly about his trials and tribulations during his journey demonstrating to us that adversity is often the pillar on which success and progress are built. This case study revealed that entrepreneurial characteristics including resilience can be cultivated and strengthened with experience as was the case with Pat who built resilience based on his failures. In the context of behavioural economics and linking back to my home discipline, the entrepreneurial trait resilience can be influenced beyond environmental factors. More specifically, cognitive biases may also explain the relationship between resilience and risk aversion which are closely interrelated with one another. Risk aversion is a key factor guiding certain entrepreneurial behaviours and decision-making processes as it determines the extent to which an individual is willing to endure uncertainty and the potential losses that may arise. Due to the prospect theory coined by Kahneman and Tversky (1979), individuals value losses and gains differently.<sup>2</sup> Due to our disproportionate perspectives on losses and gains, the psychological pain of losing is twice that of the pleasure of an equivalent gain. Therefore, more risk-averse individuals will be less willing to take risks due to uncertainty and the pain of losing. Those with higher levels of risk aversion are more likely to embark on entrepreneurial ventures despite the associated risks with failure. Ultimately, resilience is reinforced through repeated failures and setbacks as a person may become increasingly desensitised to adversity.

On a personal level, the notion of resilience being an acquired skill honed over time resonates strongly with my own experience. In 2019, I took the bold decision to convince my parents to transform their long-term rental property into an Airbnb. After seeing the lucrative returns associated with short-term rentals, I was inspired to realise the gains. Although this idea seemed promising at first, the reality soon proved to be far more challenging than I ever anticipated. The shift into short-term rental posed significant risks including the unpredictability of income since no bookings were guaranteed as well as potential

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<sup>2</sup> American Psychological Association. [Access link](#)



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damages from unknown guests. During the first six months, the property suffered a substantial loss with little to no incoming bookings despite costly monthly overheads. As weeks passed with an empty calendar, I recall the sleepless nights pondering whether I made a catastrophic mistake. Despite the challenges posed during this time, I gained a valuable lesson: resilience is not an innate trait but rather one that is cultivated over time. In the face of hardship, I began targeting key areas that required urgent improvement. This included better marketing strategies to make the property more attractive and also ensure greater reach to potential travellers. Although these improvements did not yield immediate results, I remained persistent during adversity. Gradually, I began to see the property gain traction in the months following it and positive reviews from guests which helped establish the brand's reputation. Today, the property maintains a high occupancy rate all year round and is a testament to the rewards of resilience and adaptability. My parent's role in moulding certain entrepreneurial traits was evident in the supportive environment in which they promoted perseverance. This taught me an invaluable lesson in which entrepreneurs are not innately born to withstand resilience but rather the lessons of failures provide an important stepping stone for developing resilience in the face of adversity.

Looking back at my journey throughout this module, I have developed a greater appreciation for the dynamic interplay between nature, nurture, and the environmental elements that play an important role in guiding entrepreneurial traits. This module has allowed me to realise and transform my understanding of how entrepreneurial attributes are acquired. My initial beliefs were deterministic and formed on the basis that entrepreneurial qualities were innate. However, this change in outlook developed from engaging with guest speakers, academic theories, and my personal experiences discussed throughout the module. Hearing the journeys of live entrepreneurial speakers allowed me to recognise that entrepreneurial traits are cultivated through a continual learning process and honed over time. This process is constantly changing and influenced by environmental interactions rather than formed on the sole basis of genetic predispositions. One of the most invaluable takeaways I internalised is that entrepreneurial traits such as resilience can be fostered through exposure to certain conditions and environments. Understanding that entrepreneurial characteristics are learnable has a profound impact on education and inspiring entrepreneurs who realise that they too can develop these traits through targeted action and learning. More widely, educators can provide an environment that encourages creativity, risk-taking, and failure to inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs. This insight holds significant importance to me personally as a student and entrepreneur.

Recognising that entrepreneurial traits are an acquired skill set with time rather than innate qualities has pivoted my mentality to accept failures as opportunities for growth. As I consider my future ahead, the lessons and knowledge acquired from this module will serve as an important guide on how I navigate challenges and opportunities. This includes recognising the fluid nature of entrepreneurial traits to aid a growth mindset of lifelong learning whilst also supporting others in their entrepreneurial journeys. This critical reflection has illustrated the environmental considerations in nurturing certain entrepreneurial traits through intentional efforts. This was demonstrated in the case of Pat Tissington who provided first-hand insight into how resilience is governed by life experiences rather than intrinsic ones. Such case studies confirmed my personal experiences further reinforcing entrepreneurship as a journey of continual discovery. This module has encouraged me to adopt a more holistic view of entrepreneurship as a dynamic progression. In conclusion, this module has fundamentally transformed my perspective of entrepreneurial traits which I now recognise as constantly evolving and not static. This has inspired me to appreciate my growth potentials as I embark on my entrepreneurial journey in which these insights will be applied to ensure that I continue growing as not only a student but an entrepreneur also.



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