

Nature vs nurture in psychology essay sample

[Environment](#), [Nature](#)



The Nature Nurture debate within psychology discusses the extent in which heredity (genetic) and the environment separately affect and influence the individual. Some psychologists argue that nature (heredity) is the most significant and influential on an individual. "Heredity is the passing on of physical or mental characteristics genetically from one generation to another." Nature argues that people are born with set characteristics that develop; changing over time and that the affect that the environment has on the individual's behaviour is insignificant. Nurture looks at individuals learning through experiencing and applying themselves, which can be altered by changing the environment. "Environment is the surroundings in which a person lives or operates". Nurture also claims that given the right environment any person can achieve any life goal and or ambition within their own physical limit capability. As a young child / infant, psychological attributes and differing behaviour occurs as an outcome of learning.

It is known that there are certain physical characteristics that are determined by genetics. Things such as colour of hair and eyes and disease etc. are all part of the genes we inherit. Genes heavily influence other physical characteristics such as height, life expectancy, weight, etc. but nurture (environment) also has a significant impact on these physical characteristics. This has led to the speculation as to whether characteristics such as behaviour, personality and mental ability are set before we are born, or can still be changed as we are growing up.

Unlike many other areas of psychology one is unable to use measures to control and understand the key traits of personality in a person. There is also no way to be able to differentiate, which changes are due to changes in the <https://assignbuster.com/nature-vs-nurture-in-psychology-essay-sample/>

personality states or which are due to changes in the environment. It becomes difficult when trying to determine the effects of nature or nurture on any individual because there is not shared understanding on what personality is.

Personality is not measureable currently with any theory as there is no single series of tests that can be agreed on by the majority of psychologists.

Although there is currently no single series of tests the most accepted theory as to define how personality can be measured and defined is the big five factor theory. " there is a growing consensus that personality can be adequately described by five broad constructs or factors..." (Gross, 2001: McCrae and Costa)

In order to separate and define which personality traits in a person are caused by the environment in which a person is placed (nurture) and which are caused by heredity (nature) there must be an agreed definition and measure of personality. Given there isn't one it has become difficult and hard to find the evidence as to which traits from which factor.

Both nature and nurture are significant in forming a personality. According to recent studies formed by a range of psychologists show that only around less than 50 % of personality is constructed from the genetic aspect (nature) of the individual. It is suggested that genetics play a more important role in determining the personality traits like learning and skills etc than the way people are raised (environment) within the individual.

It is very problematic to find one that can be questioned to find the effects of the environment and genetics on one's personalities. The only single way to do so is to get identical twins to compare their personalities to non-identical twins. Comparing the personalities of identical twins who were separately brought up is helpful in identifying the key traits in the individual's personality, as this allows one to develop heritability estimates. The difficulty with non-identical twins who were raised separately is that they still shared a womb, and have some contact with one another after being separated usually after birth. Another problem is that genetically identical twins like to be unlike one another and diverse. One of the most significant influences in the individual's life and environment (nurture) is their other twin. This means that the connection is not strong enough between the data to tell which aspects of personality are affected by nurture (environment) and nature (genetics).

According to the university of Edinburgh's research studies, Professor Timothy Bates states that " Previously, the role of the family and the environment around the home often dominated people's ideas about that affect psychological wellbeing. However, this work highlights a much more powerful influence from genetics". Professor Bates also stated " If you think of things that people are born with you think of social status or virtuoso talent, but this is looking at what we do with what we've got. " The biggest factor we found was self control. There was a big genetic difference in [people's ability to] restrain themselves and persist with things when they got difficult and react to challenges in a positive way." (The Telegraph, Nick Collins). Leading back once again to the suggested fact that nature has a

higher and more significant influence on the personality of an individual than nurture.

References

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/science-news/9267147/Its-nature-not-nurture-personality-lies-in-genes-twins-study-shows.html>. [Accessed 19 march 2014]. C. Grand, N. Benson, M. Layzan, J. Ginsburg & M. Weeks, 2011. The Psychology Book. 1st ed. Great Britain: Dorling Kindersley. Nature vs Nurture in Psychology, 2007, Simply Psychology, accessed 20 March 2014, . Personality Theories: Nature versus Nurture, 2011, Health Psychology Consultancy, accessed 22 March 2014, .