

Impact of heredity and the environment on child behaviour



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

- Rachel Price

Choose a specific area of psychology such as addictive behaviour, intelligence or personality traits. Evaluate the impact of heredity and the environment on this area.”

There are a number of different approaches to psychology and each of these makes different suggestions about what aspects of psychology are worth studying and what underlying models or images can be developed to understand what people are like (Gross, 2009). These models or images then provide alternative views of psychology which can be used to explain the nature of a person’s development, the causes of abnormality and the preferred methods of study and treatment (Gross, 2009). This assignment will look at how some of these different approaches to psychology can help to discuss the impact of heredity and the environment can have on children’s behaviour. Firstly, this discussion will consider from some perspectives why heredity might be considered to have a stronger influence on children’s behaviour than environment. It will do this with reference to temperament theories, twin studies and perspectives that children who are born pre term can have behavioural difficulties. Secondly, it will explore how environment might be considered to influence children’s behaviour. It will do this with reference to social constructivist and social integrationist studies such as Bandura’s theory of social learning and studies of attachment and parenting style. In conclusion it will identify the key points of this argument and summarise them.

Different theoretical perspectives on psychology include biological and cognitive approaches, behaviourism, constructivism, and social constructivism (Davy, 2012). Each of these takes a different standpoint on the relative influence of heredity and environment on the psychology of individuals. Behaviourism is a theory of learning which is based on the idea that all behaviours are learnt through conditioning, where conditioning occurs through peoples interactions with the environment (Davey, 2012), In contrast, the Biological approach (often referred to as biopsychology or physiological psychology) studies psychological functioning by examining biological processes such as brain function, bio chemistry and hereditary (Davy, 2012), Constructivist and Social constructivist approaches dismissed the view of scientific psychology where individuals can be studied in an objective manner when on their own in isolation and instead they attempt to identify how interactions can help construct knowledge(Davy, 2012). Davy (2012) suggests that the behaviour of children has been researched by psychologists from all perspectives, but with different emphasise. One theoretical perspective that support the suggestion hereditary might be considered to have a stronger influence on child's behaviour is temperament theories. Goldsmith *et al* (1987) research suggests that although there are numerous theories on children's temperament and behaviour, the majority agree that temperament refers to early appearing individual differences in behavioural tendencies that have a child's nature. Soon after birth children show a variation in behavioural dimensions that are considered to be temperamental such as attention/persistence, sociability etc (Goldsmith *et al* , 1987). Temperament theories suggest that such differences have a biological or constitutional foundation to a child's behaviour (Saudino, 2005). <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-heredity-and-the-environment-on-child-behaviour/>

Another approach that offers suggestions that genetics play a part in a child's behaviour is the nativist approach, which use twin's studies to support this suggestion. Twin studies that use parent ratings (most frequently used measure of temperament in infancy and childhood) offer suggestions of evidence of the genetic influences on a child's behaviour and temperament (Saudino, 2005). Cyphers, Phillips, Fulkner and Mrazek (1990) research on the temperament of twins during the transition from infancy to early childhood, which analysed data in which one twin's score was predicted from that of its co-twin, which as a result showed direct results that genetics and heritability had on the twins temperament. The results of the research showed that the predictions of the co twin's behaviour were found to be correct in eight out of the nine temperament scales that were used in the research and supports the biological approach and a link between a child's genetics and their behaviour (Cyphers, Phillips, Fulkner and Mrazek, 1990). Research that uses twin studies to offer evidence of the link with a child's genetics and their behaviour consistently find that MZ twins are more similar in behaviour than DZ twins across a wide variety of temperament dimensions including emotionality, activity, shyness, sociability, attention/persistence, approach, adaptability, distress, positive affect and negative affect (Saudino, 2005). Saudino and Chemys (2001) research into parental ratings of temperament in twins also found that MZ twins showed similar behavioural styles. Bhutta, Cleves, Casey, Cradock and Anand (2002) research suggests that children who were born preterm are at risk for reduced cognitive test scores and their immaturity at birth is directly proportional to the mean cognitive scores at school age. Preterm-born

children also show an increased incidence of ADHD and other behaviours (Bhutta, Cleves, Casey, Cradock and Anand, 2002).

Evidence to demonstrate the influence of the environment on behaviour is provided by research on attachment Bowlbys attachment theory These attachment representations influence children's cognitions, feelings, and behaviour in subsequent relationships and interactional settings; having an overall effect on the style in which an individual relates to others (Bowlby, 1982). Greenberg, Speltz, Deklyen, & Endriga,(1991) suggest that in proportion there is a widespread number of insecure attachment in children with early-onset conduct problems (conduct disorder is a psychological discord that is diagnosed in childhood and presents itself through a persistent or repetitive pattern of behaviour in which the basic rights of others and a lack of behaviour that relates to the children's development and social skills) Insecure-disorganised attachment is common in conduct-problem samples (Green, Stanley, & Peters, 2007) and shows a robust link with antisocial behaviour (Fearon, Bakermans-Kranenburg, Van IJzendoorn, Lapsley, and Roisman, 2010). Disorganised attachment is marked by an absence of coherent strategies for attachment related resolution of distress, and often results in chaotic and bizarre child behaviour (Main & Solomon, 1986). Parenting can have a significant and well established impact on the early childhood socialization process which includes children's peer behaviour (Belsky 1984). Parenting during early childhood has been shown to have a significant impact on a child's social development, such as social engagement, cooperation and social competence (Landry, Smith, Swank, & Guttentag, 2008). Parenting that is negative , hostile and unsupportive can

be damaging for children's social outcomes, hostility and un supportiveness in the parent child relationship are suggested to be associated with less social competence and an increase in social aggression in early and middle childhood (Brannigan *et al.* , 2002). This suggestion supports the social learning theory which suggests that children who experience hostile exchange with their parents learn maladaptive social responses and that children may as a result respond disruptively in peer situations based on prior negative experiences with their parents (Russell, Pettit and Mize, 1998). Disruptive peer behaviour during early childhood can restrict the development of social ability needed to help children develop later relationships with peers (Crick *et al.* , 2006). Banduras social learning theory (1977) suggest that children's behaviour is learnt from the environment through a process of observational learning. Children observe the people around them and the way they behave, which was shown by Banduras Bobo doll experiment that investigates if social behaviours can be learnt from observation and copying behaviour. The experiment suggests that children observe and then encode behaviour (Bandura, 1961). Children raised in institutions are known to be at great risk for developmental delays and disorders, which include mental health disorders (MacLean, 2003). Bos *et al* research Bucharest Early Intervention Project(2011) into psychiatric outcomes in young children with a history of institutionalization also offer suggestions that the environment can effect children's behaviour. Young children with a history of being in institutional care often show poor attention, hyperactivity, difficulty with regulating emotions, elevated levels of anxiety and increased rates of attachment disorders (Ellis, Fisher and Zaharie, 2004) They are also at increased risk for a quasi-autism syndrome, <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-heredity-and-the-environment-on-child-behaviour/>

a pattern of features similar to autism(Rutter *et al* , 2007). The results of the research showed that children in the institutionalized group demonstrated significantly higher levels of emotionally withdrawn reactive attachment disorder (RAD) than children in the community comparison sample.

Institutionalized children also scored significantly higher than the community sample on indiscriminately social/disinhibited RAD. The differences in signs of both types of RAD were large and statistically significant

Traditional behaviour-genetic models that make suggestions about children's behaviour do not discuss the comparisons of the effects of differing environments on individuals who vary on genetically influenced characteristics. For example, in twin and adoption studies the degree of biological relatedness between individuals and not specific markers of genetically linked characteristics in the two individuals, is the primary focus, whereas variations in environments are rarely researched (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington and Bornstein , 2000). Elam *et al* (2014) research on adoptive parent hostility and children's peer behaviour problems looked at 361 sets of adoptive children, and included research on adoptive mothers and fathers and the children's biological mothers. The research looked at the links of birth mother low behavioural motivation and toddler low social motivation, as well as adoptive parent child hostility and children's disruptive peer behaviour. The research showed that birth mother low behavioural motivation was linked to a toddler's low social motivation as well as adoptive mother/father hostility and a link between adoptive mother/father hostility resulting in reports of disruptive behaviour. Knafo, Israel, and Ebstein's (2011) research on the joint contribution of genetics and the parenting

environment to children's prosocial development (Prosocial behaviours are those intended to help other people Eisenberg et al., 2006). The results of the twin study suggested the importance of both the environment and genetics in explaining individual differences. More in depth

<http://b2ess.nus.edu.sg/publications/knafo2011heritability.pdf>

<http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/bul/128/3/490/>

Conclusion approx 200

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