

The fundamental arguments of nature versus nurture philosophy essay



Nature is generally considered the part of a person that is a genetic inheritance, the fundamental identity that determines the choices someone will make. Nurture is the environmental factor to someone's development: his or her socioeconomic standing, privileges, disadvantages, opportunity, access, etc. The blank slate, or *tabula rasa*, theory presented by John Locke during the 17th century states that everyone is born with nothing and is shaped by his or her environment; in other words, Locke's theory supports the nurture side of the nature versus nurture debate. On the other hand, one's genetic disposition to intelligence determines how one will interact with the environment. These two sides propose that they each hold the ultimate verdict to a person's personality and all of the psychological aspects that go along with it. Of course, both the idea of nature and the idea of nurture contribute to the human psyche but they do so at varying degrees in each individual: that is to say, one may feel the effects of nature more persistently than the effects of nurture and vice versa. Because of the inconsistent nature of clinical psychology, there is no absolute value for one's percentage of influence being that of nature or nurture but there are instances in which there is no denying that each theory plays a role in human development.

A study of leadership suggested that varying degrees of socioeconomic status, perceived parental support, and perceived conflict support determined how much genetic or environmental influence affected someone's leadership position; " these findings are consistent with the conceptual argument proposing that the presence of adversity and conflict allows for a greater influence of genetic differences in capabilities related to

leadership” (Zhang et al.). That is to say, depending on the environmental stresses involved, the genetic aspect of the debate took more or less control. A study dealing with low-income mothers’ perception of their children’s obesity revealed that most of the mothers believed that because of their children’s genetic heritage, no matter what diet, the children could not lose weight; on the other hand, the mothers, with equal force, blamed themselves and/ or other environmental factors on their children’s weight problems (Hughes et al.). Despite the fact that the mothers’ first argument logically disproves their second argument, the mothers have a vested interest in both aspects of the nature versus nurture debate. They are very unsure as to what degree they have made mistakes and to what degree genetics has influenced their children’s weights. The science is not all there but, for now, it is safe to assume that both sides of the debate carry different percentages of the weight.

“ We all know of cases of people brought up in horrendous circumstances who somehow transcend these to display compassion and tenderness... Conversely, people brought up in seemingly balanced households may be capable of the most horrific crimes” (Gaba). Without delving too deeply into clinical psychology, Gaba has made a sizable case for the nature aspect of the debate. Oprah Winfrey stands to be a great example of the rags to riches fable. She was not only a poor, black Mississippian but she had also been sexually abused in addition to getting into trouble as a teen (Walker). Oprah is now one of the most prominent figures in today’s society, easily reaching the millions, if not billions, with her successful television and business career. In his autobiography, Stephen Fry describes his stealing compulsion despite

coming from an upper-middle class family. At boarding school he would take money from other students even though his parents set up a deal with a local shop owner where Stephen could take as much money as he liked (Fry). His environment provided him with non-thieved money yet Fry's nature caused him to develop kleptomania.

Psychological studies veer off into the impact of environment. " The increasing recognition of genetic propensity to mental health disorder suggests that the advent of genetic therapies in the not-too-distant future may eventually provide alternative biological means of treatment" (McVicar, Clancy). In other words, because mental health is a part of the nature piece of the debate, the drugs used to facilitate the mental illness are the environmental aspect. In this case, nurture controls nature. The relationship between an individual and his or her environment is a cause towards that person's mental stability and there are many instances of environmental influences on physical as well as psychological health (McVicar, Clancy). On the other hand, some environments bring forth mental instability for some people. Homelessness tends to wreak havoc on the mind and may bring about a psychological disorder that could have been at bay under a different environment. Mental illness is a source of complication for the nature versus nurture debate because certain people's genetic dispositions will cause them to develop psychological disorders no matter what the circumstance while others experience trauma which causes them to develop mental disorders while still others inherit genetics that will see them through any difficult episode.

There was a study that addressed the environmental and genetic impacts on alcohol, cannabis, and nicotine dependency: the control was Vietnam-era twins from the United States and the researchers concluded that alcohol and nicotine dependency were based primarily on genetic factors but that cannabis dependency was a mixture of genetic and environmental influence (Xian et al.) The contributors of this study fully recognized that their findings do not cross over to different cultures or different time periods within the history of the United States. They do, however, mention that they had a large sample that was pretty much consistent throughout their observations. This simply shows that human science and understanding of the mind is so very complex that it will take an indefinite amount of time to fully understand the human condition on a scientific level.

On the issue of drug abuse, the government likes to bombard the television with antidrug campaigns that endorse the environmental influence as the main perpetrator in the case of evil drug use. Conversely, alcohol advertisements are out there on full display, usually showing that drinking is a very natural state of socialization. The study of nicotine, alcohol, and cannabis dependency would support alcohol and discourage the use of drugs. If drugs are an environmental cause, they can therefore be more easily combated because one's environment is more easily controlled than one's genetic inheritance. If drinking and smoking, i. e. nicotine use, are genetically controlled, they are much more difficult to wane out of society. Those in favor of the legalization of marijuana, or, at the very least, comedians, like to argue that drug use is generally less harmful to other people because alcohol is major factor of death by car. Both alcohol and drug

abuse are harmful to the individual, most can agree to that, but if drug abuse is, indeed, less harmful to the outside world, alcohol is the more harmful of the two substances. Here is the problem with the nature versus nurture debate: if humans are genetically predisposed to like alcohol but they are environmentally enticed to take pleasure in drugs, which is the lesser of two evils? Nature cannot be controlled; people are stuck with the hereditary cards they have been dealt. On the same note, nurture is around at all times, it will have an influence no matter what the case. People who are introverts will stay introverts if they keep to their cabins millions of miles away from human contact. If some introverts are introduced into society at as quiet intellectuals, some will choose to stay, some will choose to go. There are two different paths and which path one will take is dependent on one's emotions which are directly connected to genetics. This argument likes to run circles around itself until there is no telling which way is up.

Environment pressure cannot be overlooked simply because genetic bias is the basic groundwork for one's behavior. " Environmental experiences come into contact with, and influence individuals... some individuals may possess genetic risk and protective factors that exacerbate, or partially insulate them from, the effect of negative environmental experiences" (Petrill). The key word here is experience. At the first touch of experience, one's genetic impulses take control. Babies do not automatically latch on to their mothers' breast for milk but through genetic imperative and experience do they become more accustomed to their environment and learn different techniques by which they may derive their food. Some would argue that music is a genetic inheritance but because of time and effort involved in

mastering scales, finger patterns, rhythmic beats, and all of the other skills required to be a master of music, the environmental concept of experience definitely outweighs the genetic basis for music inheritance. It takes roughly 10, 000 hours, or 10 years, to truly be an expert in any given field (Gladwell).

Wisdom is the fundamental basis for knowledge. Young people who endlessly fill their heads with historical, scientific, philosophical, theological, and other types of knowledge do not have the experience to back up their findings whereas the older someone ages, the more likelihood there is that his or her wisdom will be deemed more valid simply because he or she possesses more experience. Masters teach pupils for a reason; there will be a day when the student usurps the master but that is because the student has enough experience to do so.

“ Reinforcement theory is the process of shaping behavior by controlling the consequences of the behavior” (Cengage). Instead of using physical punishment as a form of reinforcement, parents will try to encourage their children to stop throwing large jars of liquid pickles at the local grocery store in return for an ice cream sandwich. The child is genetically predisposed to throwing a temper tantrum, looks around his environment, sees jars of pickles, and throws them to the ground screaming in sordid agony about not being able to finish watching his favorite television show three times over that day. The mother then introduces another environmental factor, in this case the ice cream bar, to stop the effects of the double-teaming of the effects of nature and nurture. She is unable to control his demented wailing and so chooses to try even further reinforcement therapy by offering a life-time supply of ice cream for the next seven days. He accepts because now <https://assignbuster.com/the-fundamental-arguments-of-nature-versus-nurture-philosophy-essay/>

the environmental stimulus he is now receiving is stronger than his genetic malfunction earlier that minute. This just goes to show that for each individual, that nature versus nurture debate is extraordinarily inconsistent within the span of a human life but also inconsistent within just a few seconds. There is no scientific way to determine how much influence nature or nurture has within one human mind but there is evidence to suggest that both exist in their metamorphic forms.