

Psychology: nature versus nurture

[Psychology](#)



Psychology: Nature versus Nurture Due Introduction Since the very beginnings of mankind and the development of civilizations people have been trying to determine what guides human behaviors. Why do we behave the way we do? Feel as we do? Think as we do? In response any numbers of theories have been introduced to explain the nature of human thoughts and emotions. Many within the psychological community believe wholeheartedly that human emotion is really an illusion; the reality is that our actions are dictated by genes, hormones, and biological imperatives that influence our behavior, unconsciously. However, others, disagree, they believe that the majority of behaviors and emotional reaction seen in people are learned behaviors encouraged by our environments (Cherry 1). The origin of human emotions is one of the singularly most interesting and intriguing aspect of psychology. It is a fascinating topic and one that is not surprisingly a topic of heated and persistent debates. History In the simplest terms those scientists that believe fully that all manifestation of human emotion and its uniqueness from person to person is due solely to the same genetic variations that allow for differences in hair and eye color? These psychologists are referred to as “nativists.” “Empiricists” on the other hand believe that emotion behaviors are learned and re-expressed throughout their lives, which essentially means that our environment alone determines our temperament and outlook (McLeod 1). Throughout the years the proverbial lines in the sand have been drawn for generations between these two sides, and it would remain that way for some time. However, in more recent years research has led to a “middle ground” interpretation. In other words, it is not a matter of just one or the other; in fact, it is a matter of “how much” is controlled by genetic predisposition and “how much” is controlled by our learned and living

<https://assignbuster.com/psychology-nature-versus-nurture/>

environments? Discussion One of the most intriguing topics on the subject of human emotions and their nature and origins are the experiments performed by Harry F. Harlow in the late 1950s to prove that more than biological imperatives and inborn instincts controlled the motivations for emotional expression. The experiment focused on one of the most intimate and loving of all relationships, those between a mother and her child. Harlow was determined that more than the biological need for food and beverage was present; and not a relationship that encourages the infant to “love” the mother because she provides the means for its survival. Harlow felt that it was not true. He, also, knew that he would never be allowed to perform emotional bond experiments on human beings so he opted to use Rhesus monkeys, a distantly related primate species. Several infant monkeys were removed from their mothers within hours of giving birth. The offspring were put into isolation. Inside the space they were offered to “surrogate mothers” one made of hard mesh and wire and the other was the same except covered in soft terry cloth. Both had a light to create warmth. In different stages of the experiment the wire mothers would be outfitted with a nipple that would provide the infants only option for sustenance. If the naturalists were right then the infant should favor the mother that provides the food, essential for its survival. However, time and time again, regardless of which surrogate had the nipple, the infants would feed, but would spend more time cuddling and clinging to the softer mother. This proved, as far as Harlow was concerned, that the need for comfort and emotional support was more important to the offspring than the basic necessities of survival (Vicedo 1-16). His research with these “motherless primates” was not concluded with the earliest experiments. He continued to observe them as they moved into <https://assignbuster.com/psychology-nature-versus-nurture/>

adulthood. They began to manifest some strange and unusual behaviors. As a group they were known to isolate themselves, hold themselves, and rock back and forth. The females that became mothers themselves showed the most disturbing behavior. They proved to be very poor mothers. They were not supportive or comforting to their offspring, often become extremely abusive with them. In many cases the mothers actually killed their own offspring (Vicedo 1-16). This lent to a very important and significant reality. These primates never learned how to be good mothers, never learned to give comfort because they were not recipients of comfort in their youth. This verifies that much of the "love" we experience as children is relevant to how we will then be reflected in the love, or lack thereof, they show or do not show to their own offspring. This lent incredible credence to the empirical perspective on the issue. Conclusion In the end the greatest lesson learned has to be that the human brain, human emotions, and the human experience is so much more complex, fascinating, and confusing than I had imagined. As yet, we as a species do not yet understand ourselves as well as we would like to think. When one takes psychology courses some might expect all of the answers and secrets to the human experience to be revealed. That is simply not the reality of the world; we are still learning to understand how "we" work. There are those that fall on either extreme of any issue and those that somewhere in the middle; scientific compromise, so to speak. Ultimately, we are a fascinating biochemical machines and have amazing emotional potentials, but as yet, we remain an unending mystery to ourselves. Work Cited Cherry, Kendra. "What Is Nature Versus Nurture?." Psychology. About, n. d. Web. 2 Dec 2013. . McLeod, Saul. "Nature Nurture in Psychology." Simply Psychology. 2007: 1. Web. 2 Dec. 2013. . Vicedo, M. "<https://assignbuster.com/psychology-nature-versus-nurture/>

The evolution of harry harlow: from the nature to the nurture of love.”

History of Psychology, 2010 21(2), 1-16. Dec. 2013 .