

Free essay about the concepts of nature vs. nurture, culture and personality in s...

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



(Insert Institute)

(Insert Course)

(Insert Date of Submission)

Social Sciences, as a discipline, revolve around the developed concept of culture and interactions that emerge from said cultures. In a bid to understand societal norms, integrated studies are carried out to observe and analyze behaviors, ideologies, and life patterns to name but a few. As a result, different concepts have emerged and have in turn governed studies carried out with most theorists and researchers concurring on the emerging views. In other words, human interactions and behaviors are believed to evolve throughout life and do not just emerge in life. The gradual process through which afore mentioned characteristics evolve does not remain in a dormant state. Instead, different factors come into play and influence the direction to which a growing behavior turns. This paper aims at analyzing the concepts of nature and nurture with regard to societal interactions and in turn, determines which is significant in social sciences and psychology as fields of study.

It is important to note that social sciences draw from different subjects to reach concrete decisions with regard to a given society. The need for this is evidenced in “ The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences” where Lamont and Molnar state that, “ Because we are covering a vast intellectual terrain, our goal is not to provide an exhaustive overview but to inform the reader about various trends across a range of fields”(169) In socialization, people from diverse backgrounds merge. Studies such as history and anthropology (Lamont and Molnar 169) aid in studying such populations as

self concept emerges from socialization. How one perceives one's self can be altered by socialization, the degree to which this takes place can only be measured through the future outcomes.

According to Eagly and Wood, " Nature refers to biological structures and processes and nurture refers to socio-cultural influences" (1). The fact that children are begotten from the coupling of a man and a woman, is evidence enough that there will be a genetic inheritance of the couple's behavior by the child. At the same time, an environment can shape one's behavior in the sense that, ideologies taught from childhood will be expounded into adulthood as it is rare for a mature brain to have different views upon maturity. This however is dependent on the nature of said concept and the extent to which a person is exposed to the same. With regard to this, both nature and nurture are bound to have an impact in the norms observed within a society.

As stated before, the debate finds its groundwork in the argument that behaviors and attitudes are designed by one's genetic makeup or environment through inheritance and acquisition respectively. However, the extent to which both factors contribute to an individual's behavior is what specialists are pondering on in both the societal and psychological fields. In his book " The Great Brain Debate: Nature or Nurture?" Dowling corresponds with this when he points out that " these are extraordinarily contentious issues, not because most people today do not agree that we are a mixture of nature and nurture, but because we are not sure how much each contributes to the final product" (165)As aforesaid, the debate merely covers the power of each notion on the development of a person while at the same time tries

to determine which of the two outdoes the other.

The importance of nature and nurture lies in the “ causation of sex differences and similarities in traits, abilities, behavioral tendencies, and attitudes and beliefs” (Eagly and Wood 2) These are the basics that form societal functioning while at the same time ensuring the cohesiveness of the people within a given community. For instance, with regard to sex and gender, communities allocate certain responsibilities to a certain gender and regard the counterparts to said gender unable to perform the same. How a person will perceive these notions will depend on background and upbringing. To understand the role of nurture and nature in this case there is need to consider a case with hypothetical characters.

A man might inherit a high the physical stature and bodily strength from his father while the mother’s strong genes play a role in high immunity or physical appearance. These factors represent the nature attribute of said person and will in turn place said individual at a respected level due to good looking features and physical strength. However, if born into poverty, society might have a different view of the person. Nurture or the environment comes into position here. Without the means to hire help in the household can subject the child to household chores, and will in turn lead to the child growing up with the mentality that a man doing house chores is the norm. A research documented in “ The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences” found that, “ occupational roles are activated in the process of perceiving a specific person, they become nested within the prior, automatic categorization of that person as male or female, and take on a slightly different meaning as a result” (Lamont and Molnar 176) In other words, the

society already has set expectations on the basis of gender such as in the household and the workplace. A good example in this case is the stereotype of women belonging in the kitchen. With the aforementioned example, the man, though born to the male gender, might opt to participate in household chores going against the set societal standards. This again raises the issue of the role of nature and nurture in the functions of the society.

With regard to culture, sociological factors play a major role as they determine in which customs one grows into adulthood. The environment determines the culture and in turn brings in the nurture aspect of the debate. According to Lamont and Molnar, “ people adapt to their environment through cognitive categorization and stereotyping” (170) This is better explained by the proverbial saying of doing what the Romans do when in Rome. In addition, one cannot change the people, ideologies, or expectations of a society with which they interact. Instead, it is expected to modify one’s beliefs and expectations with the foreign ones with the goal of cohesiveness. It can be argued that with an adult it is harder to make the adaptations in comparison to children who are still in the learning stages. However, adults have been found to possess levels of understanding that in turn allow proper reasoning and sound decision making (Dowling 137).

Cultures can depict nature such as in the ideas related to food consumption. With food being the main source of nutrients and a major determinant of a person’s health, proper food intake will be beneficial to an unborn child and a pregnant mother. However, poor consumption will have adverse effects on the two. With this in mind, cultures have associated certain foods with a specific group of people such as pasta being a staple food among Italians

(Eagly and Wood 6). If for instance, a culture forbids a mother from taking provisions that would otherwise be beneficial during pregnancy, nature can be obstructed through early pregnancies or low birth weights.

Personalities will in most cases originate from societal ideologies and expectations. In some cases, an individual's personality will come from nurture in the form of inherited family traits. These ideas have governed the field of sociology as experts seek to attribute observed personalities to either the environment or genetic makeup of an individual. In "The Nature-Nurture Debates: 25 Years of Challenges in Understanding the Psychology of Gender" Eagly and Wood argue that though sociology has accepted nature's role in human behavior, it is done so with a strong need for clear evidence of the same (8). In addition, the role of a human being's biological make up in character determination has been further disputed Dowling (147) who argues that the human brain capacity can be altered by nurture in the first years of life.

It can be argued that nurture also plays role in personality development from childhood and at times in adulthood. Also included in the characterization of a society, the environment encompasses cultures and general expectations that ought to be followed by all members. This means that one would be shaped by the surroundings in which they find themselves. However, the extent to which this can happen is solely dependent on the quality of inherited genes and the disposition of the received natural elements.

Dowling writes that, "another bit of evidence comes from the discovery of a gene defect in a large multigeneration family that has an inherited speech and language disorder. The affected family members have problems with

articulating speech sounds, identifying speech sounds” (62) This is a clear expression of nature’s role in personality in the sense that with the mentioned inhibitions, the family is bound to be secluded in what the public considers ordinary. It is also possible that though surroundings would have helped a person develop certain traits, the inhibition of abnormal genes will inhibit this and restrain said persons’ traits in specific boundaries.

With the family being the basic institution of society, all mentioned factors are dependent on the family to which a child is born. As aforementioned, the family will determine the type of genes passed down to children. At the same time, the family will determine the culture in which children are brought up while at the same time molding personal traits of all its members. It is therefore safe to conclude that as far as social sciences are concerned the family is a vital unit in all studies. This is especially so as family is the only factor that remains constant in an individual’s life. In addition, all the discussed concepts can impact the family depending on the degree of exposure. A good instance is in the theoretical case mentioned above. While the man grew up doing household chores, he might be forced by cultural expectations to forego such habits and instead adapt those considered acceptable for men.

In psychology, the main debate lies in whether or not psychological traits are elements of the genetic material encompassed in a person or the environment and what said person learns in life. There are two major approaches to the debate with the biological advancements leaning towards heredity while that of behaviorists’ putting more weight on the environment (Lamont and Molnar 185). Though the debate began during the times of

Plato, psychologists are yet to determine a difference in concepts of nature and nurture with regard to culture and personalities.

Different theories have emerged in the field of psychology in an attempt to explain the society as it is and the outcomes found in tests carried out in sociology. As a result, existing theories have been modified to fit in the debate and new ones have emerged in a bid to explain the views of theorists. In his research dubbed " Media Effects Theory and the Nature/Nurture Debate: A Historical Overview and Directions for Future Research" Sherry states that, " many current psychologists (e. g., developmental, cognitive, neuropsychologists) now embrace a compromise position that stresses that development is a result of the interaction between nature and nurture" (92) While in previous years the cognitive development was solely attributed to the childhood years in which brain development takes place (Dowling 57), the role of the environment to which one is exposed has gradually been accepted by psychologists (Sherry 92).

The nature vs. nurture argument is yet to find a satisfactory stand with which theorists from the different fields of social sciences will concur. The roles played by both sides of the argument are however important in the understanding of functioning at the family level and that of the nation made up small cultural groups. On this note, the importance of the family in developing said cultures and personalities among individuals cannot be stressed further. This is so because aside from forming the immediate surroundings in which an individual is brought up, the ties each family member forms with the outside world will in turn join the rest of the family to the same. A good example is in the case of marriages where one family joins

another and personalities change to fit the new statuses while marriage is in itself a culture in many populations.

In conclusion, nature and nurture are both important in the functioning of cultural ethics as well as those of a family. In turn, the ideas play significant roles in social sciences as they aid in understanding events and observed behaviors among a studied populace. In addition, while different sides have developed on the ideology, it is evident that both play equal if not similar roles in the functioning of a people. From the interactions to the attitudes that develop among groups, it is evident that despite the different genes possessed by people in said groups, correlations still take place. At the same time, the genetic makeup of each individual is different but the fact still remains that they are all human. This means that they can coexist in a given natural habitat and even ensure the survival of each other. Therefore, it is more of nature and nurture rather than a competition between the two.

Works Cited

Dowling, John E. *The Great Brain Debate: Nature or Nurture?* Washington: National Academies Press, 2004. Print.

Lamont Michele & Molnar Virag. " The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences." *Annual Reviews Sociology* (2002): 167-195. Print.

Sherry, John L. " Media Effects Theory and the Nature/Nurture Debate: A Historical Overview and Directions for Future Research." *Media Psychology* vol. 6 (2004): 83-109. Print.

Eagly Alice & Wendy Wood. " The Nature-Nurture Debates: 25 Years of

Challenges in Understanding the Psychology of Gender." Perspectives on Psychological Science XX(X) (2013): 1-18. Print.