

Nature vs nurture: behaviourism and biological theories



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

3. 1 Nature vs Nurture debate from a Behaviourism and Biological perspective

Which is more significant in human development: Nature or Nurture? This is still an ongoing debate in the field of developmental psychology. Let us define the meaning of nature and nurture in the perspective of the Nativist (Nature) and the Empiricists (Nurture).

According to the Nativist, Nature is the influence of our hereditary factors. It is innate characteristics that we are born with like our physical traits and intelligence. Nativist believed that all behaviour said to be present from conception and the genes give the blue print which are present from birth or pre-wired to come out later with age. Studies that support nature:

E. g. Language Acquisition (Chomsky, 1968) – Chomsky supported language is the result of innate cognitive structures in the mind. – Biologically based on born brain mechanism -Making sounds and understanding grammar are predisposed to children.

While from the point of view of Behaviourism, Nurture is influenced by the environmental factors like social relationships, early experiences, and cultures. Behaviourism can argue that an individual's behaviour is shaped by the environment. It is the result of interactions with the environment that created the impact of who we will be. They believed that we like a sponge that filled up by life experiences gained from interacting with our environment.

E. g. Little Albert Classical conditioning of fear- phobia acquisition. The study gave evidence that the environment can be manipulated to create a phobic response & behavioural change.

In the research study of Aggression hostility – it described how aggressive children think and behave in ways that lead other children to respond to them in a hostile manner. This underlines the child's not conforming to view of the world. Thus, aggressive children tend to experience aggressive environments partly because they elicit aggressive responses (Anon., n. d.)

Behaviourism suggest that behaviour is often a result of the interaction between nature and nurture. An individual's attribute may cause certain reactions in other people. Although Nativist and Behaviorist have shown the validity in their theories, there is significant evidence that would prove that nature and nurture has the same significant influence or impact in a person's behavior. I believed that there must have certain interactions to learn in reaching their biological potential. Although we are pre-determined by our genes; nurtured will shape us to reach our full potential and be who we want to be.

4. 1

The Cognitive Development theory is how a person acquires and builds knowledge of themselves and their world. Jean Piaget, Swiss Development psychologist and a genetic epistemology put forward the theory of cognitive development. His theory states that our intellectual process changes fundamentally, because we make every effort to make sense of the world

through our intelligences and life experiences. Piaget was interested in how intelligence itself changes as children grow (Gross, 2010).

Piaget stated that schemas are the major component of intelligent behaviour which is a way of managing experience; they are mental illustrations that sort out knowledge. To attain an essentially balanced equilibrium, these schemas adapt through a continuous process of “assimilation” where we adapt our new experiences to fit into existing schemas, and accommodation in which the process of changing existing schemas to fit new experiences comes in.

Piaget suggested that we are born with a simple intellectual structure on which all future learning is built and cognitive development can be divided into four stages.

Sensorimotor 0-2 years– This stage is where a child or baby starts applying discovery using his/her senses and motor skills. The main achievement during this stage is object permanence.

Pre-operational 2 -7 years –They see the world from their own standpoint and cannot appreciate that other people might see things differently and they cannot put themselves in other people’s shoes (Gross, 2005)

Concrete operations 7 - 11 years – Children can carry out actions requiring logic reasoning. The child is only able to execute mental actions on tangible objects and not in abstract terms.

Formal operations are where the child demonstrated intelligence plausibly.

Piaget's theory suggested that children should not be taught certain concepts until they have reached the appropriate stage of cognitive development. (McLeod, 2009) Although Piaget's theory of cognitive development taken place was not accurate, he was in fact the first psychologist to even look at how children see the world and this resulted in a vast amount of further study into the area.

Kohlberg's Moral Development

Morality is the distinction between good and bad. Jean Piaget proposed a theory of moral development based on stages that children undergo this development at a certain age. The first stage in Piaget's moral development is known as pre-moral judgement where children have no understanding of morality. The second stage is called moral realism where children have the understanding of rules and morals. And the final stage is the moral relativity, this is where the children starts to realise that rules can be changed by a consensus.

Lawrence Kohlberg was born on October 25, 1927 in Bronxville, New York. Kohlberg, a psychology professor at Harvard University, devoted his life to research in moral reasoning and development. He studied under Piaget and embraced his idea of stages and moral realism. Both Piaget and Kohlberg share the same point of view that moral development means a change in how children reason regarding moral issues. He believed and demonstrated through research that people progressed in their moral reasoning through stages that could be classified into three levels.

The Pre-conventional level is where a child interprets good and bad behaviour in terms of the authority of who make the rules. In the first stage of this level the child thinks of morals in consequences of disobedience to avoid punishment and the second stage is categorised by a view that good conduct means acting in one's best interest.

It consists of two stages. Stage 1 Obedience and Punishment Orientation – includes the use of punishment to refrain from misbehaving and to continue to follow the rules. An example is when we obey the traffic rules to avoid getting a penalty.

The stage 2 Individualism and Exchange – is where the person's action of judgement of is based on how it satisfies the needs of the doer.

The second level is Conventional level which represents children who sustain the rules of the group that he belongs and see them as important. The child starts to comprehend social rules and understand more objectively the view of right and wrong and what is acceptable and what is not.

Finally, the Post-conventional stage is considered by seeking towards independent moral principles that goes beyond the influence of others. The first stage of this level is an understanding of social empathy and real interest in the welfare of others.

Kohlberg's study depends on moral reasoning in responding to abstract problems as compared to everyday situations.

The focus of my evaluation is about the second stage of the Pre-conventional level. This is about Individualism and Exchange. The concern <https://assignbuster.com/nature-vs-nurture-behaviourism-and-biological-theories/>

or intention is still self-centred in outlook; however, it shows a growing capability to see things from another person's perception. Action is evaluated right if it benefits in satisfying one's needs. The behaviour is driven by egotism and rewards. For instance, a person steals money from another person because he needs that money to buy food for his hungry children (University of Wyoming, 2017). This example is showing a concern for others but justifying the wrong action, in which right behaviour is defined by whatever the individual believes to be in their best interest. Thus, concern for others is not based on fidelity or innate respect, but rather a "You do a favor for me and I'll do a favor for you.; If you do something for me" attitude. Moral thoughts about theoretical scenarios may not adequately reflect moral thought about practical circumstances.

Kohlberg's perspective has given significant perception in the understanding of moral development in different stages. The significant flaws that some psychologist found in the theory do not just take into any account the established contribution of the theory in different areas particularly in the field of education. The field of compromise indicate progress in the intellectual development influence to our perception of moral judgement. But, the application of the said theory, just like any sensitive studies must be applied with caution. The existing shortcomings give rise to compelling doubts as to the applicability of the theory of moral development cross culturally. Although the theory may be seen to be comprehensive, in the light of the existing shortcomings, the theory remains insufficient. Thus, an integration of various other factors like culture, religion compassion and

others may provide a broader and complete picture to our understanding of moral development.

References

Anon., n. d. <http://www.scribd.com/document/290795442/Psychosexual-Stages>. [Online].

Anon., n. d. <http://www.slideserve.com/tirza/debate-nature-and-nurture>. [Online].

Chomsky, 1968. s. l.: s. n.

Gross, R., 2005. Psychology. In: *The Science of Mind and Behaviour*. s. l.: Hodder and Stoughton.

Gross, R., 2010. In: *Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour*. s. l.: Hodder Education Publisher.

kohlberg, 1971. s. l.: s. n.

Kohlberg, L. & G. C., 1971. *The adolescent as a philosopher: The discovery of the self in a postconventional world..* s. l.: Daedalus, 1051-1086..

McLeod, S. A., 2009. *Jean Piaget*. [Online]

Available at: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html>

[Accessed 16 3 2017].

Rayner, W. &, 1920. s. l.: s. n.

University of Wyoming, 2017. <http://www.uwyo.edu/aded5050/5050unit4/kohlberg.asp>. [Online].

Vozzola, E. C., 2014. *Moral development: theory and applications*. Routledge.. s. l.: s. n.