

Nature versus nurture : a question of behavior essay

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Nature versus Nurture : A Question of Behavior The development of living things has been an area of research and scientific discussion for centuries.

Originally the debate centered on how environment and genetics contribute to the physical attributes of living organisms. The debate in recent decades has shifted the focus from physical attributes to personality and behavior. Cognitive development is now an aggressively pursued field of research.

Philosophers, psychologists, and scientists alike explore, research, experiment, and discuss the determining factor of human behavior – nurture or nature. Nature refers to the innate abilities, personality, and patterns of behavior that a human being is born with. These characteristics are biological and encoded into an organism's DNA. For example a baby is born with the ability to cry when it is hungry. This is an innate behavior is not learned. Nurture refers to the those environmental factors which shape an individual's personality, abilities, and behavior. These behaviors are learned.

Parents are the major environmental factor that can influence a child's behavior. If behavior is truly determined by nature or more specifically genetics then no amount of environmental factors can change the predetermined nature of an individual. In an extremists view, genetics can be used to sort out “ bad” and “ good” individuals.

Therefore society spends money, time, and energy only on individuals that have the potential to be good. In the opposite approach, if nurture or

environment is the factor that determines a person's personality and behavior then any individual placed within the right environment has the ability to be good. The nurture viewpoint believe that all behavior is learned and therefore all bad behavior can be unlearned.

Animal and human experimentation, including naturalist observation, of biological processes have shifted the accepted belief that genetics play a more important role than environment. These studies make it clear that environment is the major factor but not the only influence which contributes to personality and behavior. Modern geneticists are quick to point out that cognitive behavior of an individual is developed through a complex combination of genetics and environment. In the end the nature versus nurture debate will never fully be answered.

Behavior is dependent on the complex and not entirely understood interaction of both nurture and nature- two are terminally intertwined making a positive result in either direction impossible.