

Assignment 3



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Your full September 16, Essay Temperament of a person depends both on biological/genetic factors as well as environmental/cultural factors. We cannot hold only one aspect responsible for the cause of variation in temperament in different individuals. This is also explained by the nature versus nurture debate which juxtaposes the two concepts of nature and upbringing and their contribution in the development and makeup of personalities. Nature is imparted by DNA and nurture is done with the intrusion of environmental, social and cultural patterns. This mini-paper discusses cross-cultural studies on temperament and how cultural differences cause variations in personality.

Garstein et al. studied the development of temperament across four cultures and found different temperaments in infants and adults in every culture (55). They found that Japanese and Russian infants were known to have “ the highest and the second highest levels of fearfulness, respectively”; while, U. S. and Polish infants received “ relatively lower ratings from their caregivers” (55). Super et al. (136) also studied cross-cultural differences in temperament in children belonging to seven western cultures and found that the participants “ showed both general tendencies and culture-specific patterns” in their behavior. McCrae et al. studied the nature versus nurture debate and agreed with the fact that, along with biological factors that are responsible for the makeup of personality, “ the intrinsic maturation of personality is complemented by the culturally conditioned development of characteristic adaptations” (173). Similarly, Wood and Eagly studied cross-cultural difference of men and women in non-industrial societies, and found that they showed different attitudes towards “ the economic and social structural aspects of societies” (699). These studies strengthen the idea that

culture differences are equally important to study if we want to understand the variations in temperament globally.

I have personally experienced that my friends belonging to different cultures have different temperaments which includes the level of happiness and sorrow they express; fright or boldness they show; and, anger or patience with which they handle things. For example, three of my friends who belong to Europe get panicked over little things; while, two of my friends belonging to Asia laugh over even big problems. My European friends are way too liberal about their lifestyle, like coming back home late in the nights and staying in apartments other than their parents'. On the other hand, my Asian friends come back home no later than 6 pm no matter how busy they are. They prefer living in the same houses as their parents' and like to stay under their supervision. When I see these differences in behavioral patterns of my friends and when I discuss this thing with my professors and elders, I cannot stop myself from believing in the idea that this has much to do with cultural backgrounds.

Hence, I believe that cross-cultural differences play an equal role as biological factors in the development of temperament. When one is brought up in a specific culture, that culture imparts in his personality many traits that are an asset of that culture only, and these traits get shown when people meet others individuals belonging to other cultures.

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