

A study on the nature vs nurture debate



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The influence of inborn and biological factors contrasting aspect of environmental issues has been applied to many areas of psychology and development. The debate concerning nature and nurture has become a central and enduring feature within developmental psychology. It addresses whether it is ones innate biological nature that influences the behavioural traits or its life experiences and nurture from their social environment. Modern psychologists recognise that origins of human behaviour cannot be referred to in black and white terms. More recent psychological research focus on how both biology and environment interact to create the different psychological experiences. Social development involves a number of areas with temperament, personality, gender development and aggression used in this piece. In the past psychologist have tried to isolate environmental and biological aspects. Studies of feral children, adoption and twins have become important due to the ability to separate the perceived influence in natural settings.

Reports of feral children look on children who have been separated from their parents and raised as part of a family of mammals such as wolves and monkeys. The reliability of such information has been doubted but Ward (2002) argues that documented behaviour strongly supports the idea that upbringing is entirely responsible for a large number of traits found in human population. Social behaviour in these children brought about issues such as a complete lack of awareness of feelings for the others, no emotional control, lack of attachment patterns and no moral value led beliefs. Even though there is strong evidence to suggest for the environmental argument feral children research does not allow us to discount biological and genetic traits.

It is suggested that everyone has different inborn characteristics and the extent to which they demonstrate themselves is highly dependable on the environment in which a child is raised (Nazli 1995).

The researchers have used the study of twins and adoption assesses the extent to which genetic factors play a part in areas of social development. Using identical who have been raised apart by different adoptive families biologically identical individuals can be observed in different environment. A number of factors have shown that twins being subjected to different experiences they is still a strong similarity between the twins behaviour and temperament (Gross et al 2000). However if nature and nurture determine social development one would expect identical twins being genetic replicas of one another to show exactly the same temperament. Feldmen (2001) argues that due to twin studies being natural experiment there are many control factors that affect the validity of the experiment for example when twins are adopted by different families the biological mothers wishes still and interests of the children are still taken into account. This usually results in the twins growing apart but in similar environments.

Thomas and Chess (1982) produced early work on temperament that cites influences from both nurture and nature. They looked at a number of key angles of temperament including activity levels, inhibition, anxiety, persistence, control and emotions. From this they developed three temperament types into which babies can be categorised. As these could be identified in babies they suggested that they were all result of biological factors. Long term temperament was seen as a dependent on the nature and demands of the environment in which a child finds them in.

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John Bowlby was born in 1907 was a psychoanalyst like Freud and believed that mental health and behavioural problems could be attributed early in childhood experience. Psychodynamic theory suggests relationship problems with parents could be the later cause of problems later in life. Bowlby thought that a child's mother or main care giver acted as both ego and super ego. Bowlby took up Freud's views on the importance of maternal care and the ethological concept of imprinting to produce a new theory. Lorenz's study (1935) of imprinting showed that precocial species imprint and follow the first moving object. He mentioned that this happens within a critical period and it's for survival value. Bowlby took up this study into his theory and suggested that attachment forms to those who respond to child signals and there is a window period for it to take place on both humans and animals and in humans is between 6 months to 3 years. Disruption of this attachment will have developmental consequences which maybe physical, emotional and intellectual. Bowlby mentioned that maternal deprivation may lead to lack of guilt and regard for the consequences of their actions.

In the learning theory through classical conditioning babies learn to associate their care-giver with food. Food is an unconditioned or primary reinforcer. According to behaviourists behaviour is not innate but learned. Learning can be due to association being made between and behaviour can be altered by patterns of reinforcements reward and punishment. The care-giver is a secondary reinforcer the baby feels secure when the caregiver is present because of the association they have with food. According to this theory babies become attached to people who satisfy their physiological needs. Dollard and Miller (1950) proposed the further adaptation of the

learning theory account of attachment, based in part on operant conditioning but with exclusion of a mental state. They suggested that human infants when hungry feel uncomfortable and enters a drive state so the caregiver becomes the source of reward every time they feed the infant.

Harlow (1959) studied learning using rhesus monkeys; he separated them from their mothers and raised them in cages on their own. The baby monkeys were given baby blankets but every time it was removed they became distressed. To Harlow blankets was an association of their mothers and this suggested to Harlow that attachment was not bases with the association of food.

Bowlby study of 44 juvenile thieves was done to test the maternal deprivation hypothesis to see whether frequent early separations were associated with a risk in of behavioural disorders. In particular affectionless psychopathy, Bowlby used this term to describe individuals who have no sense of shame or guilt they lacked social conscience. He wanted to know if it was true that such individuals were likely to have experienced disrupted early childhood. The participants in this study were 88 children ranging from 5 to 16 who had been referred to child guidance clinic. Forty four of the children had been referred to the clinic because of stealing and Bowlby identified 16 these thieves as affectionless psychopath. The other 44 of the children had not committed any crimes there were emotionally maladjusted, but did not display antisocial behaviour. None of this control group was diagnosed as affectionless psychopaths. Bowby found that a large number of the thieves diagnosed as affectionless psychopaths had experienced early prolonged separation from their mothers and only 17% of the other thieves

were not classed as affectionless psychopaths had experienced such separation. In the controlled only 4 % had experienced frequent early separation from their mothers. These findings suggest that there is a link between early separation and later social emotional maladjustment. In its most severe form maternal deprivation appears to lead to affectionless psychopathy. In its severe form it leads to antisocial behaviour in this case theft these findings support maternal deprivation hypothesis.

Bowlby's theory on imprinting on non humans research by Lorenz supports view that imprinting is innate because the goslings imprinted on the first moving object they saw whether it was a goose or Lorenz himself. This process is likely to have evolved in many species as a means of protection of the young to enhance their survival. On attachment failure it mentions that once the period pass it is difficult to form attachment Hodges and Tizard found that children who had formed no attachment later difficult with peers. If attachment did evolve as Bowlby suggests providing an important biological function, then we would expect attachment and care-giving behaviour to be universal. Tronic et al (1992) study in Zaire where family groups even breastfeed and look after each other's infant, despite this the infants at six months still have to have one primary attachment with their mother. Monotropy and hierarchy Bowlby suggests that infants form multiple attachments but as a form of hierarchy with one attachment giving special importance in social development. Schaffer and Emerson observed that strongly attached infants had mothers who responded instantly to their demands and the ones who were weakly attached to their mothers failed to interact with them. The results in Harlow's study the monkeys got attached to

unresponsive wire mother and they all ended up maladjusted adults. They had difficulties in reproduction and were poor parents. Bowlby's theory of attachment has been very influential in academic circles. Hospitals now allow parents to stay with their child to prevent attachment disruption. Social service supports parents who are struggling rather than removing children into foster care. Day care facilities now have a key worker to provide substitute care giver in the absence of a working parent.

The evidence is correlational which means that we can only say that deprivation and affectionless psychopathy are linked not that one caused the other. The data on a separation were collected retrospectively and may not be reliable parents may not have accurately recalled separation during infancy. They may have over-or under -estimated the frequency. In addition, how do we know whether these children experienced deprivation or whether they had good substitute emotional care during their separation from their main care-givers. Multiple attachment most psychologists hold that attachments are equally important (Rutter, 1995) in multiple attachment model there are no primary or secondary attachment. Prior and Glaser (200) conclude from a review of research that the evidence still points to the hierarchical model as suggested by Bowlby's concept of monotropy. Maternal deprivation hypothesis suggest that quite serious consequences for even a small amount of separation. Some psychologists believe that these can be a result of privation than of deprivation and Bowlby failed to distinguish between the two. Bowlby's WHO report was used politically remove the few women positions for returning from war. Bowlby's theory suggests that even temporary separation between child and mother has damaging effect and it

has led many women to feel guilty for leaving their child. One of Bowlbys theory suggests that there are continuities between early attachment and later social behaviours. However such development can be explained without Bowlbys theory an innately trusting and friendly personality could be the prime factor in securing attachment and the prime factor forming close relationships. Nachmias et al (1996) found no association between early temperament and attachment strength

The diversity of ethical and moral behaviour reflects the diversity of human societies. What is ethical and moral behaviour for one maybe unethical and immoral for another. Ethics are moral codes laid down by professionals it could be argued that Bowbys study was unethical as it discriminated against women, making them to feel guilty for not being at home looking after their children. Bowlbys study on the attachment theory heavily relied on the study of animals which are in normal sense completely different from humans.