

Sources of personality development essay



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BUSTER**

Why are you the way that you are? Are we the sum of all our experiences and actions and thus not fully ourselves until our final hours? Are we predetermined to feel the way we do and act the way we act due to inherited qualities of our ancestors? Are you the one in thirty people have the capacity for psychopathy; would you even know if you were? The debate over whether nature or nurture defines who we are affects many aspects of life, including the treatment of serial killers and psychopaths, and recognition of emotional and mental disorders, the acceptance of homosexuality, and even media regulation. The nature theory states that only a person's genes develop their personality, while the nurture theory states that personality is developed only because of the impact of society (human).

This debate has been a controversial issue since the beginning of sociology, the study of society and its impact on the humans that live in it (Stolley), and it will remain controversial due to the inability of humans to comprehend all of the intricacies of human nature and the origin of life. Some believe that without authoritative laws and regulations, people are either inherently altruistic or spiteful because of human nature and evolution, while others believe people are only products of their environment and society and that taught societal mores can either corrupt or create productive members of said society. If the belief that people are inherently savage and evil is correct, then it must also be true that a person's genes are the sole component in their personalities. An example of this theory is evidence supporting the idea that serial killers are inherently evil, according to scientific studies. In a study by Dr.

Richard Davidson, people with violent tendencies showed to have different brain activity than people with normal tendencies. The subjects in the study had been convicted of murder and aggressive or antisocial disorders, and showed significantly different activity than is considered normal. Areas of the brain controlling “ negative and violent emotions... the impulse of emotional outbursts... responses to conflict... (and) reactions to fear” (Begley) were considerably different than most humans with normal behavioral patterns. This data provides support for the nature theory, backing up the idea that emotional disorders are developed from birth. In addition, though the majority of serial killers lack education, they still possess wit and cleverness, and tend to be highly intelligent. Even though they lack schooling, a major component of nurture, serial killers tend to naturally have components that make them ideal for being a killer.

The “ warrior gene” is associated with high risk behaviors that is said to be possessed by soldiers, police officers, and psychopaths. The development of psychopathic behavior though is most likely due to a combination of genetics and an abusive upbringing. Also, twins have strikingly similar behaviors, even when reared apart. Identical twins share 100% of their DNA and fraternal twins share 50% of their DNA (Powell), and are created in the same womb simultaneously, providing optimal conditions for determining if DNA is the ultimate factor in personality development. When brought up together, they often exhibit very similar traits. In one case where two identical twins were brought up apart, they still exhibited very similar traits (Powell), providing evidence that DNA is the main contributor to peoples’ personalities.

Although there is evidence supporting the nature theory, many sociologists today believe that personality is developed through society one is placed in. For example, reaction to narcotics would be the same all over the world if DNA provided personality. Instead, alcoholics in eastern Bolivia and Oaxaca, Mexico are not as aggressive alcoholics Americans and many eastern Europeans are. If it was human nature that regulated how people acted under the influence of alcohol, it would be the same everywhere and not vary regionally (Powell). In addition, alcoholics among the Kaingang Indians in Brazil are very violent while drinking, which is typically expected in that specific culture (Powell). This study provides examples of society directly effecting human behavior.

Also, research shows violent video games make children that play them consistently more violent. An experiment was conducted in which two groups of teens played two types of video games, one purely adrenal and the other violent. Brain scans were taken of the teens directly after game play. The results showed decrease in brain activity in the areas that involved self-control, inhibition, and attention in the brains of the children playing the violent game, but not the adrenal one (Video).

The results of the game were tested on children with and without behavioral disorders, with the effects being generally the same on both. This proves that the games are the cause of brain activity change that could potentially be permanent, providing evidence for the nurture theory. Furthermore, children that have been brought up outcast from society prove to show behavioral differences from children brought up in normal conditions. Scientists have studied cases in which children brought up in potentially

damaging environments have been tested. The results consistently showed lack of basic human responses (Stolley). After being involved in specific efforts to regain social skills, these children gained better behaviors (Stolley).

When brought into the normal world, children are able to regain healthy conduct. In both of these cases, the environment children and teens were brought up in greatly affected their personalities. For many people, acceptance of the idea that DNA is the reason for behaviors could go against their morals or beliefs, and for others this takes away the ability to blame certain behaviors on society. On the contrary, the belief that society is the main contributor to a persons' behavior may put negativity on their own actions and not allow them to blame it on their genetics.

There is sufficient evidence supporting both sides of this argument, each in its own categories. In many cases, nature may be the dominant provider, while in other situations, the environment may shape the way a person acts. Both arguments are valid in their own respective ways, but the theory of nurture has stronger evidence to back it up. As society evolves, the way people act and develop evolve along with it. Due to this evidence, it can be concluded that the most important factor in human personality and actions is the society and environment in which it is placed.