

# [Nature -vs- nuture](https://assignbuster.com/nature-vs-nuture/)

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Nature VS Nurture Teacher               Nature VS Nurture All the time we find ourselves asking why a particular boy excelled in the academics or why this girl turns out to be a homosexual. We then speculate as to the explanation and we say that the boy’s parents were also smart or that the girl used to study in an all-girls school. Yet how exactly do we know which traits are hereditary and which ones are only brought about by the environment? Little do we know that we are merely making guesses for the truth is we do not exactly know the truth behind the nature versus nurture issue of psychology.
History
The history of the issue of nature vs. nurture began with Sir Francis Galton, the British psychologist who coined the term “ nature versus nurture” after his travels in Africa, studies of heredity and the reading of his cousin Charles Darwin’s masterpiece Origin of Species in the 1860s. Through Darwin’s book, Galton realized that his passion was to study and determine the variations in human ability, which led to the writing of his book Hereditary Genius in 1869. This ultimately led to his views and thoughts in eugenics and his efforts at advocating human breeding restrictions to stop the production of “ feeble-minded” human individuals and to improve the human race as a whole (“ Francis Galton,” 2012). His eugenics movement was based on Darwin’s theory which states that “ human abilities and personality traits, no less than the plant and animal traits… were essentially inherited” (“ Francis Galton,” 2012). This means that Galton may have been fascinated with the idea that certain human abilities are in fact inherited while most people would normally think that how we behave is largely a result of the environment we are in. The controversy created the issue and the lack of concrete evidence on both sides of the argument may have instilled more ardor and curiosity in Galton.
Moreover, in 1874, in his book English Men of Science: Their Nature and Nurture, Galton defined “ nature and nurture” in this way: “ Nature is all that a man brings with himself into the world; nurture is every influence that affects him after his birth” (“ Profile,” 2012; “ Nature versus Nurture,” 2012). Galton, through Darwin’s theory, favored nativism or the nature theory, and proved his stance using twin studies, stating that monozygotic twins exhibited a number of similarities whether or not they were raised together or in different places (“ Profile,” 2012). The stance of Galton on nativism was either supported or advocated by various other theorists and psychologists until there were basically two groups of psychologists – the evolutionary psychologists, who support the idea that man acts main based on his nature and instinct; and the cultural psychologists, who advocate the theory that man is what he is primarily because of his culture and environment (Snibbe, 2004).
In 1911, a 13th century manuscript entitled Silence was discovered to have used the terms “ nature” and “ noreture,” which means “ nurture” in the discussion of the factors that shape the human personality (“ Nature versus Nurture,” 2012). This proves that even hundreds of years before Galton used the term and sensationalized the issue, it could have already been discussed by medieval scientists and psychologists.
Nowadays, twin studies – or the studies of how genetically-identical twins would react in different environments – serve as the basis of many succeeding theories on nature and nurture (“ Nature versus Nurture,” 2012).
Most Essential Characteristics of the Issue
One essential characteristic of the nature versus nurture issue is its implication on the biology of the human being. The human being’s biological make-up includes his genes, intelligence, levels of creativity and his intelligence, which are obviously inherited from his parents. This particular characteristic of the issue has its significance in the studies of intelligence, like how much of our intelligence comes from our parents and how much of it comes from our education? Moreover, this particular characteristic also sheds light on the origin of personality as well as behavior. Experiments on the issue deal with questions like why is it that attractiveness seems to be perceived similarly, or why do most people base use their appearance as the basis of their self-esteem? Certainly different people have lived and have been influenced by different environments but their similarities in behavior may have been astounding. Gender studies are also another subject on which the issue of nature versus nurture can be applied, because although men and women were raised in several parts of the world, they bear similarities to individuals of the same gender (Kearl, 2010).
Another essential characteristic of the issue is its implication on the environmental and cultural factors. For example, in homosexuality studies, there has always been a debate on how far the environment or the genes can influence one’s gender preference. There are also claims that although certain individuals have been born of the same family lines, factors like clothing and geography of their locations somehow influence their behavior (Kearl, 2010).
Evaluation
Aside from the implications of the nature versus nurture issue on the biology and the environment of the individual, the issue also has profound influences on one’s beliefs. For example, is one’s system of morality, belief in God, or attachment to religion something innate or something only brought about by observations of one’s immediate environment? Is there an answer to this or shall we just content ourselves with what the Scriptures say like, “ The secret things belong [only] to the Lord our God” (Deut. 29: 29, New International Version), and do we simply accept God’s words as “ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” (Is. 55: 8). Indeed, it is very difficult to know which of our ways are influenced primarily by our nature and which ones by nurture. Perhaps, only God knows. Nevertheless, God is more on the side of nature when He said in Genesis 1: 27 that “[He] created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them.” Although this statement may have been a religious allegory, still God implies here that whether or not the environment affects us, God’s nature is within us, or that there must be something in us that is naturally the same. Nevertheless, in religion, we are still confronted with the issue about sin. If it is true that God’s nature is within man, then why does man continue to do evil? Is the capacity to do evil also in the genes, thus making God seem to have a twofold nature? Or is evil learned by man?
Conclusion
The issue of nature versus nurture is one which at best still practically remains as a conundrum to both laymen and experts. One can conclude that the only thing that remains certain is that this issue encompasses not only science and culture but also religion. The best thing we can therefore do as human beings is perhaps continue our research on the controversies surrounding nature versus nurture. Moreover, we can also have symposiums between evolutionary psychologists and cultural psychologists, like what was initiated by the American Psychological Association in 2004. These are gatherings where the issues of nature and nurture are not only clarified but also understood in each other’s context. In the recent conference, one cultural psychologist has concluded that “ evolutionary psychology can examine the evolved human potential for culture, whereas cultural psychology can show how that potential is transformed to yield a functioning psychological system” (Snibbe, 2004).
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