

Nature vs. Nurture Theory: Is It In Our Genes or Our Environment?

What is nature vs. nurture (definitions)?

In the context of the nature vs. nurture debate, “nature” refers to biological/genetic predispositions’ impact on human traits, and nurture describes the influence of learning and other influences from one’s environment. The debate over whether the strengths and weaknesses of people are the result of nature or nurture has, and somewhat continues to rage on between scholars and lay people alike. This debate has had significant social implications, particularly concerning what are thought to determine people’s ability to learn/intelligence (Lynch, 2016).

What is the nature vs. nurture? Who created the theory?

The initial use of the Nature vs. Nurture Theory was credited to psychologist Sir Francis Galton in 1869 (Bynum, 2002). However, it is unclear who initially described the impact of genes and biology versus environmental influences. Scientists, doctors, researchers, psychologists, behaviourists, and many others have debated these theories since Hippocrates was alive.

Around 400 B.C.E., Hippocrates described human behaviours as being biological, the result of four different body fluid types called humours.

Yellow bile

Blood

Black bile

Phlegm

In contrast, many centuries later, philosophers Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke independently thought that people are born as blank slates (i.e. "tabula rasa"), and that their eventual individual differences develop solely due to the result of environmental influences (Psychology Encyclopaedia, 2017; Duschinsky, 2012; Nesterak, 2015). Twentieth century behavioural psychologist John Watson shared a similar perspective, believing that the events that take place during early childhood have far more influence on what kind of adults we become compared to the effects of our genes (Haggbloom et al, 2002).

How does nature vs. nurture affect our genes?

Most conventional theories of nature vs. nurture consider the differences in humans a result of elements of both your genetic makeup and your environment.

What are examples of nature vs. nurture?

While certain physical traits like skin and eye colour and diseases like [sickle cell anaemia](#) and Huntington’s chorea have been found to be the result of direct genetic inheritance, virtually any pattern of thinking or behaviour can be understood from the perspective of a combination of nature and nurture. In the animal kingdom, domestication of many species is understood to be the result of encouraging domesticated behaviours (nurture), then having animals that most successfully adopt those behaviours breed with each other so it becomes part of their nature (Bouchard, 1994).

In humans, many studies in more than the past 20 years involve identical or fraternal twins who are separated at birth. The question of nature vs. nurture somewhat continues to be debated concerning human behaviour, intelligence, and in the development of personality traits (Psychology Encyclopaedia, 2017).

How does nature vs. nurture affect our mental and physical health?

It is understood that certain physical traits, as well as the susceptibility to most physical and [mental health](#) disorders tend to run in families. Specifically, whatever illnesses your parents, grandparents, siblings, and other biological family members have does not guarantee you will inherit them, but it does increase the likelihood that you may develop them.

On the other hand, it is understood that environmental factors often have a significant effect on whether or not you develop the health problems that run in your family. (You can change your gene expressions).