

# Nature vs. Nurture

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover personality development and socialization through the definition and discussion of:

1. Nature Vs. Nurture
2. Socialization and Personality
3. Freud's Model of Personality
4. Watson's Behaviorism

## 1. NATURE VS. NURTURE

There has been a longstanding debate within social science of **nature versus nurture**, with respect to personality development and change throughout the life course. 'Nature' refers to your biology: your biological instincts to survive and reproduce. 'Nurture,' then, is the idea of society's cultural standards of parental care.



## THINK ABOUT IT

Which of these factors is more important in developing our personalities and determining the people we become? We're dealt a biological deck of cards at the start. We get a set of genetic propensities, and we have biological impulses, of course, but these interact with society and are mediated by society in culturally specific ways.

### IN CONTEXT

Nurture--the cultural, social side of the debate--can also be shown to influence a person's personality. This is illustrated in the example of children who have been neglected in their childhood.

There is the case of Genie, who was kept chained to a high chair in a room until she was 13. When she was discovered at the age of 13, she could barely speak, only knowing about 20 words, could barely walk, and she was devoid of all of the things that really make people human.

When people are deprived of social interaction, culture, and society, they really can't become human. That is the essence of your biology. Somebody who, at the age of 13, has the cognitive

development of a one-year-old is an example of what happens when we're deprived of nurture. This is what happens when nurture is absent in personality development.



#### TERM TO KNOW

#### Nature Vs. Nurture

The classic debate over whether human behavior is best explained by biological programming or social and cultural influence.

## 2. SOCIALIZATION AND PERSONALITY

When you're in the company of others, you learn how to live among others. You learn how to live in groups. This is called **socialization**. Socialization is the lifelong process of learning one's culture and of internalizing the norms and behaviors that are considered appropriate of adults in the society.

You go through socialization throughout your life. You don't simply become socialized once when you're a child, and that's it. It's true that the bulk of socialization occurs as a child, but every life stage has its own elements to learn, in order to get on successfully in that life stage. Therefore, socialization doesn't stop after childhood.

Through socialization, people develop **personalities**. When you interact with people, you try out personalities and define them. Slowly but surely, you crystallize into your own personality, which encompasses your stable, behavioral characteristics, such as your ingrained ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

➞ **EXAMPLE** In another lesson, you'll see how personality and the sense of self can only develop through social interaction. Recall the example of Genie, the child who was deprived of social interaction when growing up; she wasn't able to go through socialization and develop her personality.



#### TERMS TO KNOW

#### Socialization

The lifelong process of learning one's culture and of internalizing the norms and behaviors considered appropriate of adults in society.

#### Personality

An individual's stable behavioral characteristics such as their ingrained ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

## 3. FREUD'S MODEL OF PERSONALITY

Sigmund Freud developed one of the most famous theories of personality ever advanced, called **Freud's model of personality**. Freud's model incorporates elements of both nature and nurture. Freud theorized that our brains and our minds have three parts: the superego, the ego, and the id.

- **The id.** The id represents your biological impulses. It is your unconscious and basic impulses, the self-centered aspect of your personality that is completely concerned with satisfying your biological desires. The id operates at an almost unconscious level.

- **The superego:** The superego represents the collective norms and values of society and works to temper, or work against, the id. The superego is the internalized cultural norms that you receive from society through socialization. It represents society and social influence. It's that voice in your head that says, "no I shouldn't do that because it is wrong."
- **The ego:** In the middle is the ego, which balances the two competing forces of the id and the super ego. It balances your internal, subconscious, carnal desires--the id--with the cultural norms of society--the superego--because you can't exist by simply satisfying all of your biological desires and doing everything you want, being self-centered all of the time. Society couldn't function like that.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** Biologically, you might want to have sex with any number of people, anytime you want. However, you can't do that because there are cultural norms, values and expectations surrounding sexual conduct. These two competing forces, representing the id and the superego, negotiate with the ego. The ego negotiates for you to follow the culturally sanctioned pathways to sexual satisfaction (the superego) that the id might not necessarily want to follow.



#### TERM TO KNOW

#### Freud's Model of Personality

Freud argued that personality consisted of three elements: 1) Id - our basic biological impulses; 2) Superego - the internalized cultural norms of society; 3) Ego - the element that balances the id and the superego.

## 4. WATSON'S BEHAVIORISM

Another theory of personality was developed by psychologist John Watson, known as **Watson's Behaviorism**. Watson theorized that all of our actions, thoughts, and feelings are learned behaviors. As learned behaviors, they are not in some part lodged in our basic biology, as Freud theorized.

Watson is firmly on the side of nurture with respect to personality development, because he theorized that all actions, thoughts, and feelings are learned behaviors. How do we learn them? We learn them socially. Watson unified this idea in a theoretical approach called behaviorism, which held that all of our thoughts, behaviors, and feelings can be explained by interaction with our environment--they are learned behaviors. You don't need to waste time speculating on the internal state of your mind and mapping some strange internal consciousness like Freud did with the id, the ego, and the superego, because it doesn't matter. All of behavior is environmentally rooted in the environment in which you learn it.



#### TERM TO KNOW

#### Watson's Behaviorism

The idea that all of our ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving are learned behaviors rather than preprogrammed biological propensities.



#### SUMMARY

Today you learned about **personality development and the idea of socialization**, all contextualized

within the **nature vs. nurture** debate. You also learned about **Freud's model of personality** and **Watson's theory of behaviorism**. Good luck!

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Zach Lamb.



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### **Personality**

An individual's stable behavioral characteristics such as their ingrained ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

### **Socialization**

The lifelong process of learning one's culture and of internalizing the norms and behaviors considered appropriate of adults in society.

### **Watson's Behaviorism**

The idea that all of our ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving are learned behaviors rather than preprogrammed biological propensities.