

PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT: GENES OR EXPERIENCES?

In Personality Development courses students usually learn in-depth information about personalities and you will gain a better understanding about those around you and also more about who you are and how you got to be that way.

Usually course starts with a basic introduction of personality. It then goes on to look at theories of personality development, the stages of development theories, key researchers in personality psychology, and the main influences on personality development. Students also delve into looking at basic personality traits, including values, beliefs, and nature versus nurture. They learn about own personality and how they can use that information in career choices and to make changes.

How Do Personalities Develop?

Within the field of psychology, personality has been studied for many years. Psychologists have been conducting research in the field by engaging in experiments, case studies, self-reported research, and clinical research. As early as the mid-1700s, researchers began making evaluations and trying to learn more about personality.

Over the years, various people have conducted research into personality development, and each has his or her own ideas regarding it. Some viewpoints share similarities, and all attempt to explain why people are the way they are and how they got that way.

The results of all this research include such theories as:

- ✓ type theories, the psychological differences and classifications of people;
- ✓ psychoanalytic, our interactions with other mechanisms;
- ✓ behaviorist, which looks at what impacts our personality from the outside;
- ✓ social cognitive, involving the process of thinking and judging;
- ✓ humanistic, which looks at our "free will" to do things.

The mission of each research method is to learn as much as possible about how personalities develop, with some of the findings building off of prior theories.

Multiple Theories in Psychology

Throughout this article, you will be introduced to the multiple theories that exist in the field on personality psychology. Some of the more popular ones, such as personality type, you may be more familiar with than others. It is still important to learn about some of the other theories out there.

There are three main influences on personality development that we are going to look at in this lesson. Those are heredity, environment, and situation.

1. Heredity: This refers to the influences on your personality that you are born with. They are in your genes and there is not much you can do to change these traits. They can include your temperament, which helps to determine how you react to situations and how easygoing you are. In kids, it may affect how well they get along with others. Genetics, of course, also determines how someone looks.

2. Environment: Our environment is the nurturing aspect of our lives. It is the type of environment in which we live and grow up. Environment would include home, school, work, or other places that you spend a lot of time. Environmental factors also include such things as languages, religion, etc.

3. Situations: These are the experiences that each individual person goes through. The various things that people experience will leave imprints on and help to develop his or her personality. Everything from divorce, death, trauma, and even happy times fit into the "situations" category of shaping one's personality.

You have most likely at some point in your life heard someone say that people are a "product of their environment." This means their personality has been greatly influenced by the three things we just looked at. They were born with particular traits [distinguishing qualities in one's character], and their living situation and any impacting situations they experienced all helped to create who they are.

When it comes to personality development, people have traits that represent the type of person they are.

Conclusion: Genes or Experiences?

Many people wonder if one's personality primarily comes down to nature versus nurture. This is a debate that has waged for quite some time. Is someone's personality determined more by genes and heredity or childhood experiences and situations?

The *nature vs. nurture* debate is one that does not have a clear winner.

Researchers believe there is no way to tell which influences personality more.

They go hand in hand to help develop someone's personality.