Nature vs. Nurture

Narrator

Socialization, the process by which we learn to conform to our society's norms, values and roles, plays a key part in shaping who we are. Parents, family, teachers, clergy, and peers all contribute to our socialization.

During this lifelong process, we develop a changing, yet enduring personal identity called "the self." Nature, including our genetic make up and DNA, can influence our sense of self. So to can nurture, which includes the types of socialization we experience. But which one has a bigger impact? Nature or nurture?

This is a question that has caused a great deal of discussion between sociologists and psychologists.

Farnoosh Massoudian
Brookhaven College

The nature versus nurture debate is...when we talk about the nature side, the questions is how much of this person has to do with the genetic background, with what they've inherited from their parents.

When you look at the nurture factor, we're looking at the environmental factors. We're looking at, umm, at an individual and asking the question: how much of who they are, umm, is a result of the environment they grew up in.
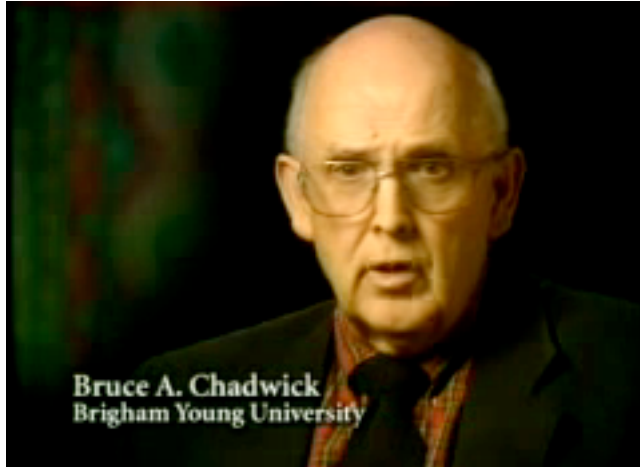

Narrator

The nature versus nurture debate has been going on for a number of years. One proponent of the nature argument was Sigmund Freud.

Bruce A. Chadwick
Brigham Young University

Freud and the early psychologists came out of the Darwinian tradition, and they felt human behavior was determined by instincts, and that these instincts were biologically determined. It wasn't until you got into behaviorism of the 1920s, behavior psychology, that people started saying, 'oh no no,' uh, it is learning and environment that makes an individual behave as they do.

Bruce A. Chadwick
Brigham Young University

Narrator
On the nurture side of the debate, sociologists champion the symbolic interaction theory of Charles Cooley and Herbert Mead.

Bruce A. Chadwick
Mead, and Cooley and the other symbolic interactionists help us to understand the importance of social definition, that it isn't a biological definition totally, but a social definition, that if you have people who react to you, that you are bright and talented or whatever, you'll behave as though you are bright and talented. So, if your teachers and your parents all say 'Gosh, you're smart. You do good in school,' you're gonna do well in school.

End