

Nature vs Nurture – The Big Debate

There are many ways of explaining why certain people do things in certain ways. For example, biologists think that people behave as they do because they are controlled by nature. This is known as **Nature theory**. Humans are compared to animals and seen to act on **instinct**.



Sociologists believe that people behave as they do because they are taught how to behave. For example, the sociologist Michael Haralambos states, 'Human beings learn their behavior and use their intelligence whereas animals simply act on instinct.' This is known as **Nurture theory**. Nurture means the way you are brought up. It is also a reference to **socialization**, the lifelong process by which we learn our culture, values, norms and how to behave.

Task 1

Write down a list of things that you were taught by other people about how to behave eg. how to speak etc.

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Sociologists reject nature theories for two particular reasons. If people behaved as they do because of nature, they would all act the same as each other. The following reasons show why people do not all act the same:



1. **History**: people acted differently in the past from the way that they do today. They had different ideas and different beliefs.
2. **Anthropology**: this is the study of different human societies. Wherever you go in the world, people act differently from the way they do in Britain.

Social behaviour and culture

Sociology is the study of human groups and social life in modern societies. Sociology recognises that as members of society we have to learn social behaviour and this is done through a variety of social institutions and social groups right throughout our lives.



Task 2 Create a spider diagram/brain dump about what makes us human. You could include some thoughts about the questions below:

WHAT MAKES US HUMAN?

- Are we meant to live alone?
- What would a person be like if they grew up without human contact?
- What would a person be like if they were then introduced into a society?
- Do we need a society in which to survive?
- Can someone be truly human if they grew up without human contact?
- Are we ruled by our instincts? (An instinct is something that we do without thinking. It can be defined as a complex, unlearned pattern of behaviour that is universal in a species).

Task 3

Watch the video and complete the following tasks. Write a short paragraph for each bullet point:

- Summarise the experiences of **one** of these children.
- Compare how, as children, we behave and how these children behave.

Challenge question

How do these cases link to the nature vs nurture debate?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nv3ocntSSUU>

Sorry about the adverts, just skip through them. The whole video is just less than 15 minutes.

It should have become clear that humans, more than most other animals, are dependent upon other humans for the most basic needs such as food and shelter.

We do not arrive in this world equipped with a collection of instincts inherited from our parents that will enable us to survive in a potentially hostile environment.