Early Developmental Psychology

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Emotional Maturity

Nature and Nurture work together in complex ways to shape a person and their future outcomes. Engaging with Kellogg, Plomin, Rutter, Bale, and Maten & Barnes, this essay will describe how genetic and environmental influences contribute to childhood development and emotional maturity specifically. Next, this essay will examine some risk factors that negatively influence youth development, as well as some resilience factors that protect against these negative influences. Since resiliency factors represent how one handles inevitable adversaries, there is a correlation between the two. Finally, I will conclude that risk and resilience are equally impacted by genetics and environment; these two forces work together because the environment determines the degree to which genetic preconditions surface.

Genetic preconditions and the environment, also commonly referred to as nature & nurture, are regarded as the creators of a person. Nature is the predetermined, often permanent, genetic design of a person. Nurture is the highly influential figure(s), or lack thereof, and series of events which impact a person throughout a significant period of time. Discussions on which factor causes a greater affect on a person's outcome have always existed, famously dubbed "nature vs. nurture." In his essay "Genetics and Developmental Psychology,*"* Robert Plomin notes attempts of such studies as early as 1865 with the publication of *Mendel's Experiments on Plant Hybridization*; and the assumption of schizophrenia being a result of poor parenting, which was proven wrong after the data collected according to the twin studies in the 1960s (p. 342). Compared to genetic factors, the environment in which a person is situated is often grossly underrated. As the "extended phenotypes of individuals" (p. 346), the environment has just as much of an impact as genetics.

A number of risk factors and adversaries negatively affect children's development and emotional maturity. These adversaries may cause genetic predispositions to surface as a result of unstable environment. Many adversaries may be formed in the womb due to the parents' genetic mismatches, disregarding medical help, reckless actions such as smoking and drinking,

or the mother experiencing traumatic events. As Tracy L. Bale points out, these risk factors can significantly impact the developmental outcome of an infant and put future generations at risk. In her essay "Epigenetics and Transgenerational Reprogramming of Brain Development" Bale (2015) stresses the lasting impacts of such adversaries by focusing on their genetically transmutational properties. According to Bale, maternal stress "can influence the developing and maturing brain and thereby alter the original blueprint and establish a new one in a process known as reprogramming" (p. 332). Postnatal maternal stress can also play a significant role in the emotional development of an infant. Brain development can still be easily influenced by the quality of maternal care. Bale notes a study on rodents which show how postnatal maternal behaviours can affect the neurodevelopment of the offspring; the study concludes that the lack of proper care, such as grooming, can result in stunted behavioral and hormonal responses to stress in the offspring's adulthood (Bale, 2015). Aside from neglect, further adversaries throughout any stage during early childhood, such as an abusive household, can result in the child developing mood disorders; furthermore, in the case of DID, a series of traumatic events resulting in PTSD can prevent the proper development of a singular personality.

Twin and adoptee studies show the frequent correlation between gene-environment interactions. Underappreciated by behaviour genetics during the beginnings of its creation, these studies show the importance of the "huge individual variation in response to all manner of environmental stresses and hazards and it would be decidedly curious if genetic factors were not involved in such individual differences" (Rutter, 2003, p. 935). The impact of gene-environment interactions has on an individual's mental health is a given, which means that any genetic and environmental factors determine the future well-being of a person. As used above, schizophrenia is a genetic disorder which can trigger a number of other disorders due to its paranoiac tendencies; however, a schizophrenic person will benefit greatly from a strong support system surrounding them provided early on in life. The same goes for any other person

born with mental or physical differences, for them to develop a sense of strength against discrimination or traumatic events they may face in the future.

In response to the unavoidable risk factors, there are a number of resilience factors that help protect against adverse experiences as discussed above. Resilience factors are ways in which an infant can learn to process and respond to adversaries in a healthy manner. Some of these include supportive caregivers, positive influences outside of the household, ability to adapt to change and think clearly under pressure, healthy coping mechanisms to deal with stress, routines and rituals, problem solving skills, belief that life has meaning, etc. Many more unique resilience factors can exist from culture to culture, as different cultures have different beliefs and values when it comes to raising children. It is important to note that not all challenging events should necessarily be avoided. It is quite beneficial for a child to experience hardships, not as damaging as a traumatic event of course, to some extent in order for them to develop adaptive skills which will be put to use when they reach adulthood. A. S. Masten and A. J. Barnes use the example of immune systems in their "Resilience in Children: Developmental Perspectives" article. Masten and Barnes wrote "Growing up on a farm exposed to numerous microorganisms is protective for some allergies. Early exposure calibrates the immune system in ways that reduce later allergies, whereas later exposure to the same organisms can trigger an allergic reaction" (Masten & Barnes, 2018, para. 14) to emphasise the importance of timing as well.

For the healthy development of a person, mental and physical, both genetic and environmental, factors must be accounted for. Genetic predispositions may result in the development of hardships and turbulations throughout a person's life. However, a supportive environment can help determine the severity of their impact. We can safely presume that nature and nurture equally work in tandem to impact risk and resilience factors, and to influence the healthy development of an individual.

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