

[THEME MUSIC]

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Hello, and welcome to Sociological Studies. In this lesson, we're going to highlight a longstanding debate within social science, and that is the debate of nature versus nurture, with respect to personality development and development throughout the life course. Along with that, we're going to define personality; we're going to define socialization and discuss some theories of personality development offered by psychologists Sigmund Freud and Watson.

Well, for starters, "nature" refers to our biology-- our biological instincts to survive, reproduce-- these things. Nature is equated with our biology. And "nurture," then, is this idea of parental care, of cultural standards of parental care, of culture, broadly, of society. Which of these factors, then, is more important with producing who-- our personalities, and the people we become?

Well, we're dealt a biological deck of cards, at the start. We have biological impulses, of course, but these interact with society and are mediated-- our biological impulses are mediated by society. For instance, there's appropriate times to eat. There's appropriate people to have sex with, or not to have sex with, that are determined by culture. So there's always an interplay between biology and culture.

To really show the influence of nurture, the culture, social-- that side of the debate-- to really show that influence on personality, we can point to children who have been neglected in their childhood. In the case of Jeannie, she was kept chained to a high chair in a room until she was 13. When she was discovered, at 13, she could barely speak-- only knew about 20 words-- she could barely walk, and she was devoid of all of the things that really make us human.

So when we're deprived of social interaction, culture, and society, we really can't become human. That is our biology, right there. Somebody who, at 13, has the cognitive development of a one-year-old. This is what happens when we're deprived of nurture.

So I want you to keep these examples in mind, these examples of these children who are neglected, as we go through and talk about nature/nurture. Any time you see theories of personality development, or any time we're going to be talking about the role of society with respect to the self, remember what happens when that is absent. It's an important foil or counterpoint to keep in mind.

When we're in the company of others, we learn how to live among others. We learn how to live in groups. And as

we do this, 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.

And we go through socialization all throughout our lives. It's not like we just go through one bout of socialization when we're children, and then that's it. We do the primary bulk of socialization as children, but, then again, every life stage has its own things you need to learn, in order to get on successfully in that life stage. So socialization doesn't stop after childhood.

Through socialization, then, we also develop personalities. When we interact with people, we try out personalities and define them. Slowly but surely, we crystallize into our own personality, which is an individual's stable, behavioral characteristics, such as their ingrained ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

In another tutorial, we'll really see how personality can only develop through social interaction. The sense of the self only develops through social interaction. Again, recall that example of the children who are deprived of social interaction when they're growing up; they don't get to go through socialization and develop personalities.

I want to turn, now, to one of the most famous theories of personality ever advanced. And that is Freud's theory of personality. And Freud theorized that, really, our brains and our minds-- we have three parts, here. We have the superego, the ego, and the id.

And Freud's model is really great, because it incorporated elements of both nature and nurture, as we'll see here, now. The id represents our biological impulses. The id is rooted in our biology. It's our unconscious, basic impulses. And it's our self-centered aspect of our personality that is completely concerned with satisfying our biological desires. So this operates at almost an unconscious level.

Then we have the superego, which represents the collective norms and values of society and works to, then, temper-- and works against-- the id. So the superego is the internalized cultural norms that we have gotten from society through socialization. It represents society and social influence.

And then we have this ego, in the middle. The ego balances the two competing forces. It balances our internal, subconscious, carnal desires-- the id-- with the cultural norms of society, because we can't run around satisfying all our biological desires, doing everything we want, self-centered all of the time. Society couldn't function like that.

So we have the superego, then, working against that, and the ego is really this part of us that negotiates these two competing desires. So, to take an example-- like we already talked about-- biologically, you might want to run around, have sex with any number of people, anytime you want. But you can't do that, because we have cultural norms and values and expectations around sexual conduct.

So these two forces, then, are negotiated with the ego. You follow the culturally sanctioned pathways to sexual satisfaction that the id might not necessarily want to follow. So this is how these parts of us interact.

The second theorization of personality we're going to look at was offered by psychologist John Watson. And Watson is my kind of psychologist, because he theorized that all of our actions, thoughts, and feelings are learned behaviors. As you see right away, when we theorize the things as learned behaviors, we're not lodging them in our basic biology, as Freud did.

He's firmly on the side of nurture, then, with respect to personality development, because he's theorizing that all of our actions, thoughts, and feelings are learned behaviors. And how do we learn them? Well, 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. So we don't need to waste time, running around, speculating on the internal state of our 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 our behavior is environmentally rooted in the environment we learn it. All behaviors are learned. So Watson, then, is more on the side of nurture.

Well, I hope you enjoyed this discussion of personality development, of personality, of the idea of socialization, all contextualized within the nature/nurture debate. Have a great rest of your day.