

ENGLISH 102
FINAL EXAM
SPRING 2003-04



+ E. Murphy

Do Parents Really Matter?
by
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1. Once, parents were given all the credit--and all the blame--for how their children turned out. Then researchers told us that heredity determines who we are. The latest take: parents can work with their children's innate tendencies to rear happy, healthy kids. It's a message many parents will find reassuring--but it may make others very nervous.
2. David Reiss, M.D., didn't want to believe it. The George Washington University psychiatrist had worked for more than 12 years on a study of adolescent development--just completed--and its conclusions were a surprise, to say the least.
3. What Reiss and his colleagues discovered, in one of the longest and most thorough studies of child development ever attempted, was that parents appear to have relatively little effect on how children turn out, once genetic influences are accounted for.
4. The only member of the research team who wasn't surprised by the results, Reiss recalls, was Robert Plomin, Ph.D., a researcher at the Institute of Psychiatry in London. Plomin is a behavioral geneticist, and he and others in his field have been saying for years what Reiss has just begun to accept: genes have a much greater influence on our personalities than previously thought, and parenting much less. The work of behavioral geneticists has been the focus of considerable controversy among psychologists, but it has been mostly ignored by parents, despite ample attention from the media. That may be because such coverage has rarely described just how genes are thought to **wield** their influence. Behavioral geneticists don't claim that genes are **blueprints** that direct every detail of our personality and behavior; rather, they propose that heredity reveals itself through complex interactions with the environment. Their theories are far more subtle, and more persuasive, than the simple idea of heredity as destiny. It is by participating in these very interactions, some scientists now say, that parents exert their own considerable influence--and they can learn to exert even more.
5. As behavioral geneticists understand it, the way heredity shapes who we are is less like one-way dictation and more like spirited rounds of call and response, with each phrase spoken by heredity **summoning** an answer from the environment. Scientists' **unwieldy** name for this exchange is "evocative gene-environment correlations," so called because people's genetic makeup is thought to bring forth particular reactions from others, which in turn influence their personalities. A baby with a sunny disposition will receive more affection than one who is difficult; an attractive child will be smiled at more often than a homely one. And the qualities that prompt such responses from parents are likely to elicit more of the same from others, so that over time a self-image is created and confirmed in others' eyes.

6. Even as genes are calling forth particular reactions, they're also reaching out for particular kinds of experience. That's because each person's DNA codes for a certain type of nervous system: one that feels alarm at new situations, one that craves strong sensations, or one that is sluggish and slow to react. Given an array of opportunities, some researchers say, children will pick the ones that are most suited to their genes. As they grow older, they have more chances to choose--friends, interests, jobs, spouses--decisions that both reflect and define personality.
7. In order for genes and environment to interact in this way, they need to be in constant conversation, back and forth. Since parents usually raise the children to whom they have passed on their genes, that's rarely a problem: they are likely to share and perhaps appreciate the qualities of their offspring. And the environment they provide their children with may further support their natural abilities: highly literate parent's might give birth to an equally verbal child, then raise her in a house full of books. Developmental psychologists call this fortunate match "goodness of fit." But problems may arise if nurture and nature aren't on speaking terms--if a child's environment doesn't permit or encourage expression of his natural tendencies. That may happen when children's abilities don't match their parents' expectations; when their genetically-influenced temperament clashes with that of their parents; or when their environment offers them few opportunities to express themselves constructively, as is often the case with children who grow up in severe poverty. Research has shown that a poor person-to-environment match can lead to decreased motivation, diminished mental health, and rebellious or antisocial behavior.
8. One intriguing implication of behavioral genetic research is that children are in many ways driving their own development, through the choices they make, the reactions they elicit, even the friends they pick. But parents are crucial collaborators in that process, and that means that their role in shaping their children may actually be larger than it first appears. How a parent responds to a child's genetically-influenced characteristics may make all the difference in how those traits are expressed, says David Reiss. In his formulation, the parent-child relationship acts as a sort of translator of genetic influence: the genes provide the basic plot, but parenting gives them tone and inflection, accent and emphasis. He calls this conception of gene-environment correlation "the relationship code," and says that it returns to parents some of the influence his study would seem to give to genes. "Our data actually give the role of parents a real boost--but it's saying that the story doesn't necessarily start with the parent," says Reiss. "It starts with the kid, and then the parent picks up on it."
9. Stanley Greenspan, M.D., a pediatric psychiatrist at George Washington Medical School and author of *The Growth of the Mind* is actively applying the discoveries of genetics to parenting. Genes do create certain general tendencies, but parents can work with these by adapting their actions to the nervous system of the child," says Greenspan. He believes that the responses children "naturally" elicit may not be in their best interests--but that parents can consciously and deliberately give them the ones that are. "You have to pay attention to what you're doing **intuitively**, and make sure that is what the kids really need," he says.

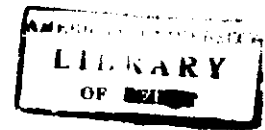
10. A baby with a sluggish temperament, for example, won't respond as readily to his parents' advances as a child with a more active nervous system. Disappointed at their offspring's lack of engagement, parents may respond with dwindling interest and attention. Left to his own devices, the baby may become even more withdrawn, failing to make crucial connections and to master developmental challenges. But if the parents resist their inclinations, and engage the baby with special enthusiasm, Greenspan has found that the child will change his own behavior in response.
11. For those traits that could easily become either assets or liabilities, parenting may be especially critical to the outcome. "The same temperament that can make for a criminal can also make for a hot test pilot or astronaut," says David Lykken, Ph.D., a behavioral geneticist at the University of Minnesota. "That kind of little boy--aggressive, fearless, impulsive--is hard to handle. It's easy for parents to give up and let him run wild, or turn up the heat and the punishment and thereby alienate him and lose all control; but properly handled, this can be the kid who grows up to break the sound barrier." Lykken believes that especially firm, conscientious, and responsive parents can make the difference--but not all behavioral geneticists agree. David Rowe, Ph.D., a University of Arizona psychologist and author of *The Limits of Family Influence*, claims, "much of the effort of 'superparents' may be wasted, if not harmful."
12. But with optimism worthy of Garrison Keillor, advocates of parental influence insist that genes aren't the end of the story. "The old idea is that you tried to live up to a potential that was set by genes," says Greenspan. "The new idea is that environment helps create potential." His view is supported by recent research that suggests a baby is born with only basic neural "wiring" in place, wiring whose connections are then elaborated by experience. Both sides will have to await the next chapter of genetic research, which may reveal even more complicated interactions between the worlds within and without. In the long-running debate between genes and the environment, neither one has yet had the last word.

Adapted from: Paul, Annie Murphy. *Psychology Today*. Jan.-Feb. 1998.

GLOSSARY

1. **wield (para.4)**-control, command, hold and use, manage with the hands or otherwise.
2. **blueprints (para.4)**-photographic print of plans in white on a blue background.
3. **summoning (para.5)**-demanding the presence of, calling upon to appear, calling together by authority for action or discussion.
4. **unwieldy (para.5)**-slow or clumsy of movement, difficult to use or manage, owing to size or weight or shape.
5. **intuitively (para.9)**-without conscious reasoning.

ENGLISH 102
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SPRING 2003-2004



READING COMPREHENSION

ALLOCATED TIME: 3.HOURS

NAME: _____

SECTION: _____

Student ID# _____

INSTRUCTOR: _____

I. MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS- (20 PTS.)

Circle the CORRECT answer:

1. According to paragraph 3, Reiss's study found that
 - a. Parents had nothing to do with how their children turned out.
 - b. Genetic influences played a secondary role in how children turned out
 - c. Adolescent development accounted for most of the changes in a child's personality.
 - d. A child's personality was more influenced by genes and less by parents.

2. According to paragraph 8, parents
 - a. Have no influence on a child's development.
 - b. Have a negative influence on a child's development.
 - c. Could improve genetic influences.
 - d. Could remove or change a child's genes.

3. Which of the following statements is correct according to the passage?
 - a. All behavioral geneticists agree that only parents determine whether a child will become a criminal or an astronaut.
 - b. Parenthood is not important at all in determining how children will turn out.
 - c. Well-adjusted kids are the result of effective interactions between their genetic disposition and environment.
 - d. Heredity is the only factor that determines how children will turn out.

4. In her conclusion, the author
 - a. Clearly supports the genes theory over the environment one.
 - b. Points out the need for further research to support either the genes or the environment theory.
 - c. States her belief about a compromise between nature and nurture.
 - d. Reveals her negative view of parental influence over the environmental one.

II VOCABULARY: Follow the directions for the following questions. (20 Pts.)

Write synonyms for the following words:

1. 'reassuring' (Para.1) (4pts.)

2. 'sluggish' (para.10) (4pts.)

3. Find a phrase in paragraph 4 with the same meaning as 'important effect' (6 pts.)

4. The word 'dwindling' (para.10) means: (6 pts.)

- a. Exciting
- b. Boring
- c. Decreasing
- d. Growing

III COMPREHENSION AND RHETORICAL QUESTIONS (60 PTS.)

1. According to paragraph 7, what are the consequences of a mismatch between a child's genetic tendencies and the environment surrounding him/her? Explain using your own words. (10 pts.)

2. Paraphrase the following sentence:

“... the qualities that prompt such responses from parents are likely to elicit more of the same from others, so that over time a self-image is created and confirmed in others’ eyes”(para.5) (12 pts.)

3. What is “the relationship code”(para.8)? Explain using your own words. (10 pts.)

4. According to para 11, what kind of qualities does Lykken find advisable in parents? Quote your answer from the passage. (5 pts.)

5. Using your own words, reflect on the title and write a thesis statement for this essay. (10 pts.)

6. Name two types of concrete support used in the passage. (8 pts.)

a. _____ Para _____

b. _____ Para _____

7. The passage is primarily (5 pts.)

- a. A description of the process of development in children.
- b. A causal analysis of why children develop in certain ways.
- c. A comparison of the behavior of parents and that of their children.
- d. A narrative of the number of studies done on behavioral genetic research.

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ESSAY TOPICS

Choose ONE of the following topics and write a well-organized and concise essay of 5-6 paragraphs. Be sure to give a title, underline your thesis, and include at least 4 or 5 support paragraphs with topic sentences to explain your thesis. DO NOT choose a topic that you have already done in class.

1. "Being brought up in a strict household is like living in a military school." Write a description/illustration essay to develop this similarity further.
2. What are some causes and effects of teenage rebellion?
3. Compare and contrast the roles that parents and genes have on child development.
4. Are traditional sex roles changing in the Arab world? Discuss in a cause/effect analysis essay.
5. Compare and contrast two technological devices used today.

over.