Volume 25 Issue 18
Originally issued as C2



Global Journal of Human-Social Science: C
Sociology & Culture
Volume 25 Issue 2 Version 1.0 Year 2025
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

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The second chapter, titled “Sociology and Psychology are Not Sciences”, claims that neither sociology nor psychology is qualified for true sciences. I attempt to justify this.

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GJHSS-C Classification: *LCC: BF713, HM1106*



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Nature versus Nurture

Volker W. Thürey

Abstract

In the first chapter, titled “Genes or Environment”, I explore the question of whether the environment can influence certain human traits. I demonstrate that two common arguments put forward by sociologists and psychologists are flawed.

The second chapter, titled “Sociology and Psychology are Not Sciences”, claims that neither sociology nor psychology is qualified for true sciences. I attempt to justify this.

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I. Genes or Environment

There are two common arguments to ‘prove’ that the environment influences people. Both are incorrect.

The first argument is that some traits in identical twins differ, for instance, one twin is heterosexual, and the other is homosexual. This is taken as ‘proof’ that the environment has an effect. However, it is not necessarily true since there is another possible explanation.

Before I go further, I want to make a brief digression. I say something about the idea of a proof, which once I have read somewhere. A valid proof of anything requires showing that only one possibility remains. This is why proofs are rare in the real world. Just because someone believes that there are no other possibilities doesn’t mean there aren’t any.

Proofs are generally made in a mathematical context.

For example, the ancient Greek mathematician Euclid wrote a proof showing that the set of prime numbers is infinite. To prove this, he assumed the opposite, that the set of prime numbers is finite. Then he derived a contradiction. As a result, it remains only one possibility, i.e. the set of prime numbers is infinite.

Back to identical twins.

I have to show that there is another explanation for their differences. It may be that certain traits seemingly appear to result from happenstance. This idea is not just theoretical; for instance, the sex of a child is determined by chance.

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The apparent randomness of some traits could be caused by the complex interactions of many genes.

If genes operate in this way that is, if they involve some element of chance, then it is highly probabil that identical twins have differences. The environment does not need to be involved to explain this.

The second argument for the influence of the enviroment is based on the fact that some physical changes at someone’s body arises later in life. Sometimes, years may pass before these changes occur. For instance, a boy typically begins to grow a beard at the age of 14 or 15. This is genetically determined. Nobody claims it can be prevented. The idea of a newborn baby with a fully grown beard would be terrifying!

If certain traits or physical characteristics change, some take this as a ‘proof’ for the influence of the environment. This is more a sign that some sociologists and psychologists are not actual scientists.

The traits of a living being are determined by its genes. For me, it seems impossible that the environment can change them. So far, there is no proof that one can change the behavior; and there is not a single exampel. The change of someone’s behavior can always be explained by the individual’s own will.

Scientists have coined the term ‘epigenetics’ to study the potential influence of the environment on genes, but the invention of a word alone proves nothing.

We are products of evolution. Therefore, ‘everything’ has to be compatible with Darwin’s theory. I do not see how evolution would have created a mechanism through which the environment can directly alter the genes.

Someone’s character is determined exclusively by the genes; i.e. it is fixed. The subsequent activities of a person depend only on their will.

A catchy slogan is: “Some are born as murderers”.

Of course, training and exercise can result in changes. There is an Irish proverb: “Even if you train a pig to run fast, perhaps it will become the fastest pig in the world, but it will never be a racehorse”.

Indeed, the environment has some influence on animals; for example, researchers have discovered that the sex of sea turtles depends on the temperature of the sand. But even this can ultimately be regulated by the genes, too.

Also, human beings learn a great deal from others. The best example is the language. Children up

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to about the age of ten learn a language perfectly, even if it is very complicated, without knowing any grammatical rules. Unfortunately, this ability tends to diminish in adulthood. The Germans have a fitting word: 'Muttersprache' (mother language). The English refer to someone who has learned a language from early childhood as a 'native speaker'.

At the end of the second world war, it sometimes happened that children were seperated from their parents. They were called "Wolfskinder" (wolf's children). (It is only a name since wolves, like all mammals, are very caring animals). Even though none of the 'wolf's children' ever actually lived with wolves, this group serves to draw attention to certain other individuals. In very rare cases, it does happen that children are raised by animals. Some survive, but not without suffering heavy mental damage.

Young wolves learn all what they need as a wolf. But for humans, it is not enough. For instance, children who are raised by animals do not learn how to speak. They remain mental cripples.

II. Sociology and Psychology are not Sciences

In this chapter, I justify the claim that sociology and psychology are not true sciences at all. Setting aside the arguments in the first chapter, I pose a rhetorical question: How it is possible that someone who has neither studied sociology or psychology, nor has read a single book on either subject (I am referring to myself) could publish in a professional journal of sociology or psychology? This would be unthinkable in mathematics, a field in which I have a profound knowledge.

In the following argument, I assume that humans have developed through evolution, that is, I assume that Darwin's theory is true, although it is not provable in a strict sense.

In nearly all human societies, homosexuality exists.

A legitimate question arises: Why do homosexual people exist at all, given that they do not reproduce? The answer is that human communities are more stable and peaceful if some members are homosexual. For a heterosexual man, a homosexual man poses no threat since he knows that the other man is not interested in his wife. The same logic applies among women. Life during the Stone Age was so tricky that reproduction only occured within a coperative group. Children require a stable community to grow up in, which means that social behavior was essentiel. It was important to see others as allies and not as rivals. Rituals such as common dancing or making music together helped to foster this sense of unity. A book worth reading that addresses this topic is [1].

I assume that the genes which are responsible for homosexuality are not only at the homosexual persons, but also at other members of the group.

The above argument is not originally mine; I read it somewhere.

Now I will attempt to justify that homosexuality cannot be developed through education. The key insight is that any kind of sexuality is a highly complex behavior, and therefore, it has to be fixed in the genes. There must have been a point in the past when the development of homosexuality was beginning to emerge. For 'homosexual genes' to form, the carriers of these genes would have had to be prevented from passing them on if they were not homosexual. This seems to be nearly impossible.

Another possibility is that these genes arise of their own volition. This would only happen if it provides an advantage in the struggle for survival.

All statements here are subjective; they represent my personal opinions.

Acknowledgements

I thank Lydia Ramachandran for a careful reading of the paper, and David Searle and Rolf Baumgart for support.

References

[1] William H. Calvin: The River That Flows Uphill (2001)

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