A2 PSYCHOLOGY DEBATES

NATURE - NURTURE DEBATE
The nature-nurture debate in psychology refers to the extent that behaviour/ability is due to:

- **Nature**: genetic inheritance, biological processes & brain activity.
- **Nurture**: experience & learning from environment

- **Interactionist view**: this considers the relative contribution of both inherited & learnt factors on behaviour
**NATURE**

• Behaviour is due to **hereditary factors**: some may be evident from birth:
  Eg; reflex actions or mental disability

Or, behaviour may be ‘**pre-programmed**’ and emerge through **maturation**:
  Eg; language acquisition, intelligence

* Reductionist & Determinist*
NURTURE

• Mind is regarded as ‘blank slate’ (tabula rasa) at birth

• Behaviour results from interactions with the environment:

• Eg; Aggression

  Eg; Abnormality such as phobia

* Reductionist & Determinist
STRENGTHS OF STUDYING NATURE-NURTURE

• Can help to identify behaviours that are inherited & learned (or relative contribution), & lead to appropriate or useful interventions:
  Eg;

• Can discover inherited causes & reject claims about inappropriate upbringing by parents.
  Eg: Autism (Ethical & useful)
WEAKNESSES OF STUDYING NATURE-NURTURE DEBATE

• Reductionist: Too simplistic to divide behaviours into either nature or nurture
  • Eg: Social learning of aggression (Bandura)

• Determinist: Claims that a behaviour is inherited may fail to account for the effects of environment
  • Eg: Genetic link to schizophrenia (Gottesman & Shields, 1972)