

To What Extent is Violence Innate

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Defining Violence and the Nature-Nurture Debate

World Health Organization has defined the word violence, and it states that violence is any use of power or force, which is physical in nature, intentionally. To threaten a person or a group of people, which is likely to result in death or an injury or harming a person psychologically (Organization, 2002). Violence can be thought of as an act that disturbs the normal course of life and introduces chaos and disturbance, which would shock and hurt people. There are always two sides to the coin. People have argued that violent behavior is innate and that a person is born with the tendency to cause violence. There are also people who tend to take a different stance on this topic. To them, violence has more to do with the environment and surroundings of a person. They purport that it is the community and people that a particular person meets and communicates with that cause a person to behave like that. People with brain disorders have the tendency to be violent and belligerent, which may be due to some injury or some traumatic experience a person went through in his or her childhood. It also has to do with the dilapidated environment a child grew up in that made him angry and aggressive, which would ultimately lead him to violence and crime.

Neurological Injury and Violent Behaviour

One of the factors that can be argued is that the tendency for a person to act in a violent manner is attributed to the fact that people with severe head injuries can disturb brain functions. The injuries have an adverse effect on the functioning of the brain. For instance, people who went to war sustained brutal injuries and damage to the head and acted in a violent way when they returned home from war. The research was conducted on the veterans of the Vietnam War, where the researchers compared the soldiers who suffered injuries in their heads and soldiers who did not sustain any two hundred seventy-ninety on any part of their heads. 279 soldiers were compared, and the researchers found that the veterans with head injuries tended to be more violent and belligerent than those who suffered injuries in other parts of the body or veterans who did not sustain any injury (Grafman et al., 1996). The prefrontal cortex in the brain is used for controlling a person's reaction to surrounding factors. For instance, when someone provokes you, the natural response of a person is to retaliate. There is an urgent need to stop the person from bullying you. If a person is not strong enough to do anything about it, he still feels angry and furious about the whole situation. The part of the brain that controls the person from acting in a violent way from the provocation of different people is the prefrontal cortex. Whenever something makes us annoyed or furious, there are neurons that are present in the prefrontal cortex that kicks in the brain and helps the person to gain control over his or her emotions and tends to make a person think in a rational and thoughtful way (Miller and

Cohen, 2001). It allows the person to think about the implications and ramifications of the act. It gives consciousness to a person in these kinds of situations. In this study, the veterans were given different forms to fill out and submit. After doing the survey, it was found that soldiers who suffered injuries in the head, especially in the area or close to the prefrontal cortex, tend to act in a belligerent and violent way. They developed the tendency to be more aggressive than they were before the war. The researchers said these veterans were more inclined to be hostile than the soldiers who did not suffer any injury in the head or who suffered injuries in the head but not in the areas close to the prefrontal cortex. Another study was done by Swedish researchers, and it had to do with a specific chemical in the brain that causes a person to exhibit aggressive behavior. 28 men were examined who had a past history of violence, murder, robbery, etc. The researchers were trying to know the percentage of two chemicals in the brain: 5-HIAA and HVA. 5-HIAA is a chemical substance that is created when serotonin breaks. Another chemical substance is HVA, which is created when dopamine metabolizes. The inclination to be aggressive and excited is proliferated due to dopamine, whereas serotonin is responsible for controlling dopamine. The people who were examined found themselves having a high level of HVA and a low percentage of 5-HIAA. This abnormality in the chemistry of the brain can be due to different consumption of drugs, which leads to a person being more hostile (Soderstrom et al., 2001). There are times when drug abuses also affect the functionality of the brain and cause a person to act differently than others (Tupin, 2002). Also, abuses that are suffered during childhood have an adverse effect on the brain, and it takes a lifetime to heal (Teicher, 2000).

Genetic and Environmental Influences on Aggression

There is an ongoing debate over the influences and causes of aggressive and hostile behavior exhibited by people. The question is whether nature has something to do with why we act or is the environment that causes us to be more like our surroundings. People say that both have an equal impact on our behavior. Researchers studied 184 people, and they were divided into two groups. The first group was admitted to violent activities such as murder and injuries, and the second group was admitted to nonviolent acts, which were concerned with drug abuse and scams. Each of the 184 people was admitted to the group considering their past history and background. The parameters measured by the researchers were age, history of drug consumption, crimes, and other brain disorders. The study showed that both the factors, i.e., environment and genetics, played an important role in the behavior of a person (Reif et al., 2007). However, we cannot put the blame for every violent behavior shown by an individual on genetics and nature. If this were the case, then the human race would not be able to survive all these years, and the civilizations that were developed would not have continued as they did. The environmental conditions in which a person is brought up are very important in terms of his or her personality and the way he or she behaves. If there is something deplorable a person went through during his or her childhood, then it has severe implications, and those incidents have a great influence on his or her life. Some researchers claim that hyperactivity in children is due to the surroundings of the children's families. It makes them

overactive and unable to focus on things, causing constant fidgeting (Schmitz, 2003). Children living in deplorable conditions are usually more inclined to act in the way mentioned above. There was research that was done pertinent to this topic, that families who are poor or the way the families bitterly treat their young ones cause these behaviors to prevail. The children become more belligerent and aggressive because of the poverty and hostility shown towards these children by their guardians or parents. The research showed that there is more than a 50% chance of children being involved in criminal activities when they are abused by their parents or neglected in some way (Holmes et al., 2001). In the article "Behavioural Epigenetics: How Nurture Shapes Nature," the author states that environmental factors shape the personality of a person. The author claims that the environment and surroundings include every single thing that occurs to a person throughout his life. These factors can be social interactions, nourishment, exposure to substance abusers, etc. (Powledge, 2011). When a child sees his father in an alcoholic state and shouting and beating his mother, he subconsciously acts in a similar manner when he becomes an adult. When a child is brought up in a place where crime and violence are happening every day, he or she tends to adopt those traits and try to act like those who he or she sees in his or her surroundings.

Childhood Trauma and Learned Violence

Trauma has a lot to do with the kind of behavior a person exhibits during his lifetime. Childhood trauma primarily has more significance and plays an important role in shaping the personality of a child. The traumatic experiences include physical punishments that a child is subjected to by his parents or guardians. There are many children who experience bullying in their schools or children being neglected by their parents. A child needs attention from his parents, and when he or she does not receive that level of attention and care, he or she acts in a different way than those children whose parents gave the love and attention that is required by a child. There are more or less 1 in every 8 documented crimes that are violent in nature in America because of infantile offenders (Fox et al., 2015). But of these offenders, only 10%, or even less than that, offenders are more likely than not capable of committing 50% of serious and violent juvenile acts (Loeber et al., 2017). This portion of offenders is known as SVCs. Research was conducted on these people, and astonishing facts were discovered. The majority of these people were the victims of childhood trauma, physical abuse, and neglect. Further research has shown that people who were subjected to violence, neglect, or physical and mental abuse were more often than not involved in committing violence and disturbing the fabric of society than those people who did not go through that experience (Goodnight, 2017). Sometimes, times people are in a relationship, and their partners have a tendency to beat them. This also has an adverse effect on the personality of that person. The constant shouting and beating traumatize people, and it shapes the way they live. Bullying makes a person anti-social, and that also leads a person to act in a way that is contrary to normal behavior. Childhood trauma affects the development of a child's brain and thought processes (Perry, 1997). The veterans experience traumatic events during the war that come to haunt them when they return to their families and friends. They act in a completely different way than they had before going to war. There are numerous cases of war

veterans who experienced post-traumatic disorder. The soldiers suffering from post-traumatic disorder experience nightmares and recollections from their times in the war. They begin to hallucinate about different events of the war. There are many documented suicide cases of veterans. The soldiers were unable to control their thoughts and were always suffering from anxiety, which caused disturbance among their families and friends. They come to the point of suicide. Individuals who are born in poverty and who have no resources tend to be involved in criminal activities. Impoverished societies have an impact on where an individual grows up. The parents are not well-educated and tend to be violent towards their children (Straus, 1994). They beat their children and forced them to work. These events and circumstances have an adverse effect on a person's mentality. With no resources and money to eat and live, people from a very young age get involved in petty crimes, and that ultimately leads to more violent crimes (Hampton, 1999). The individual's circle of friends then includes only perpetrators and offenders. Sometimes trauma completely and permanently renders a person incapable of dealing with the challenges and obstacles of life (Van der Kolk, 1989).

Conclusion on Environmental Causes of Violence

The tendency to commit violence has very little to do with the genes of an individual's parents. It has everything to do with the kind of environment a child is brought up in and the events and circumstances he or she goes through. The traumatic experience, physical and mental abuse, and the community shape a person. A person born in poverty and child labor is more likely to get himself or herself involved in petty crimes. When a child is neglected, he or she finds solace in drugs and alcohol, which ultimately leads to a life of crime and violence. The traumatic experiences the soldier goes through during the war affect the functionality of the brain. They become more aggressive and anxious about their surroundings. If a person is violent and has a tendency to commit crimes, it does mean that his children are born with anger, hatred, and violence. It all boils down to the surroundings and environment of a child, the things he or she is exposed to, and the events that transpired in their childhood or when they were teenagers. These people need our help, and it is incumbent upon every member of society to help them recover from their respective traumas. It was not their fault that they were born in abysmal and dilapidated conditions. It is the society that failed them, and it should bend over backward to help them in any way possible and prevent the circumstances that morph an innocent child into an angry, belligerent, and violent creature.

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