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**Inherent Risk**

**&**

**Hereditary  
Predisposition**

**in  
Psychology**

**By Avary Kupradit**

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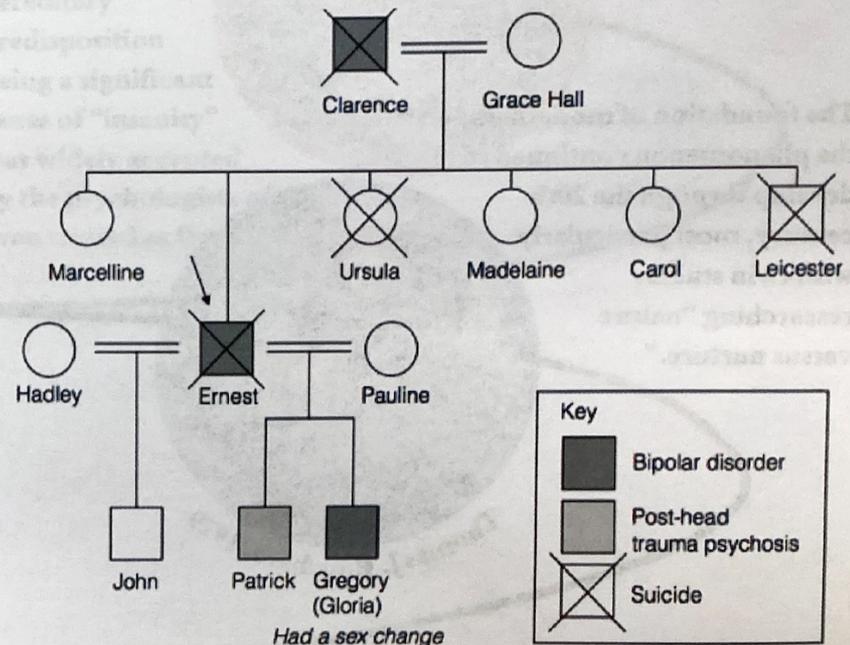
# Inherent Risk

In psychology, inherent risk refers to the natural, underlying level of psychological risk or vulnerability that exists in a person without any mitigating factors in place, which helps to understand the fundamental susceptibility to negative outcomes.

Risk Level	Characteristics
Mild	Concerning behavior, no threats
Moderate	Vague, but present threat
Elevated	Clear distress, vague threat
Severe	Disturbed behavior, vague but consistent threat
Extreme	Dysregulation, consistent & specific threat

# Hereditary Predisposition

A hereditary predisposition in psychology is an increased likelihood of developing a certain psychological trait or disorder due to genetic factors; which can then interact with external factors such as environment, living conditions, and trauma.



# Origins

Thomas Arnold, 1782

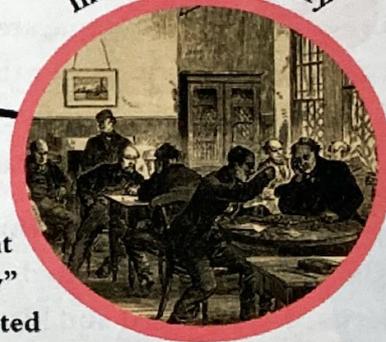


If diseases of the body can be hereditary, then it's reasonable to assume that diseases of the brain may also be hereditary.



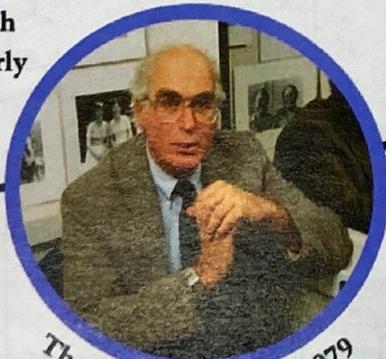
The idea of there being a link between psychology and genetics dates as far back as the late 1700's, mainly through observation and critical reasoning.

Into the 19th century



The idea of hereditary predisposition being a significant cause of "insanity" was widely accepted by the psychologists of the time, even treated as fact.

The foundation of modern understandings of the phenomenon continued to develop through the 20th century, most particularly with twin studies researching "nature versus nurture."



Thomas J. Bouchard, 1979

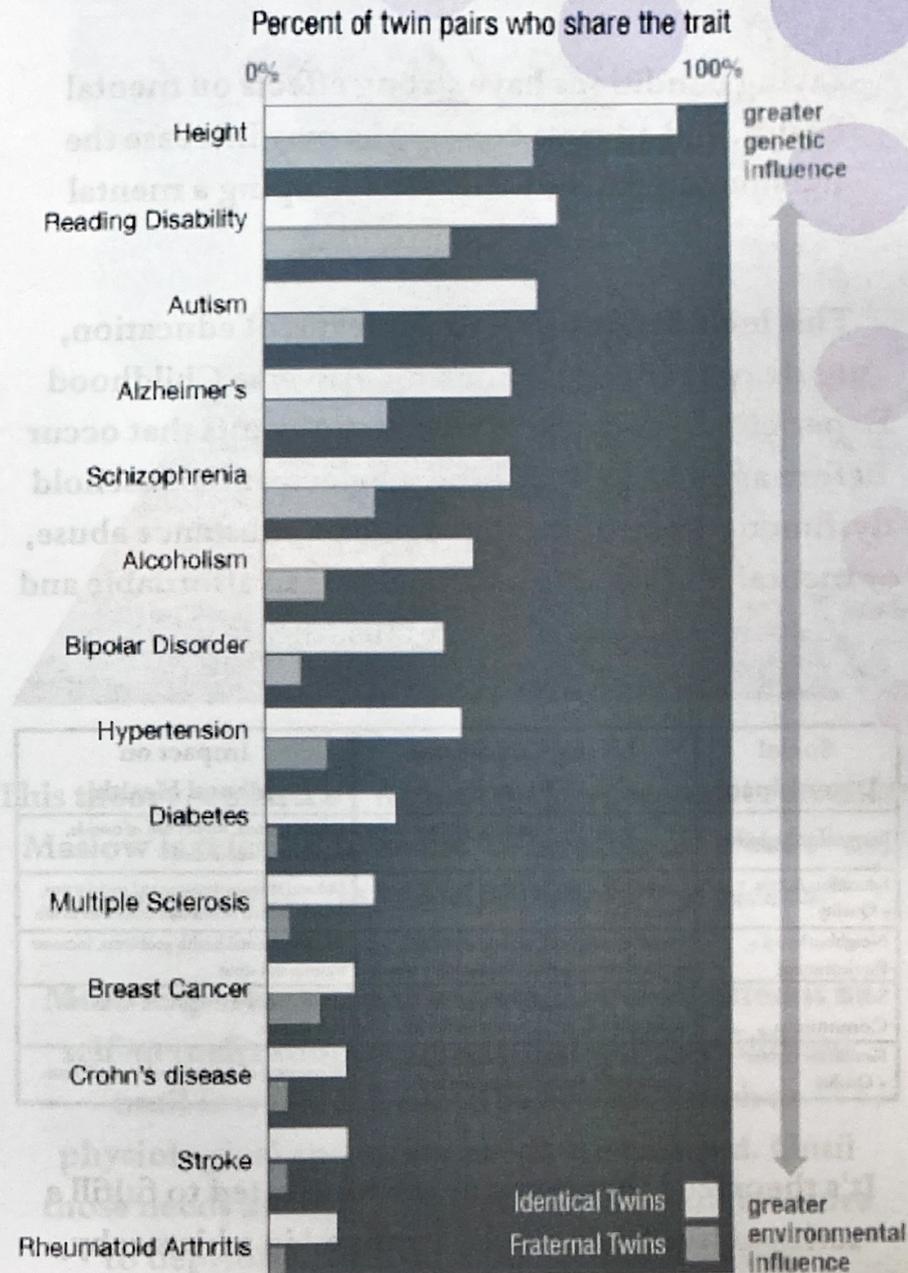
# Nature vs. Nurture

*The phenomenon of hereditary predisposition pertains to a poignant subject of controversy within the world of psychology—the “Nature vs. Nurture” debate.*

Nature ideology states that one’s mental condition can be attributed to inherent nature alone, while nurture ideology states that mental condition is influenced primarily through lived experience.

“Twin Studies” were often used to study Nature vs. Nurture. Within these studies, psychologists would compare monozygotic twins, or identical twins, who shared an environment or grew up separately, with dizygotic twins, or fraternal twins, under the same conditions to understand the relative influence of genetics versus environment on various traits.

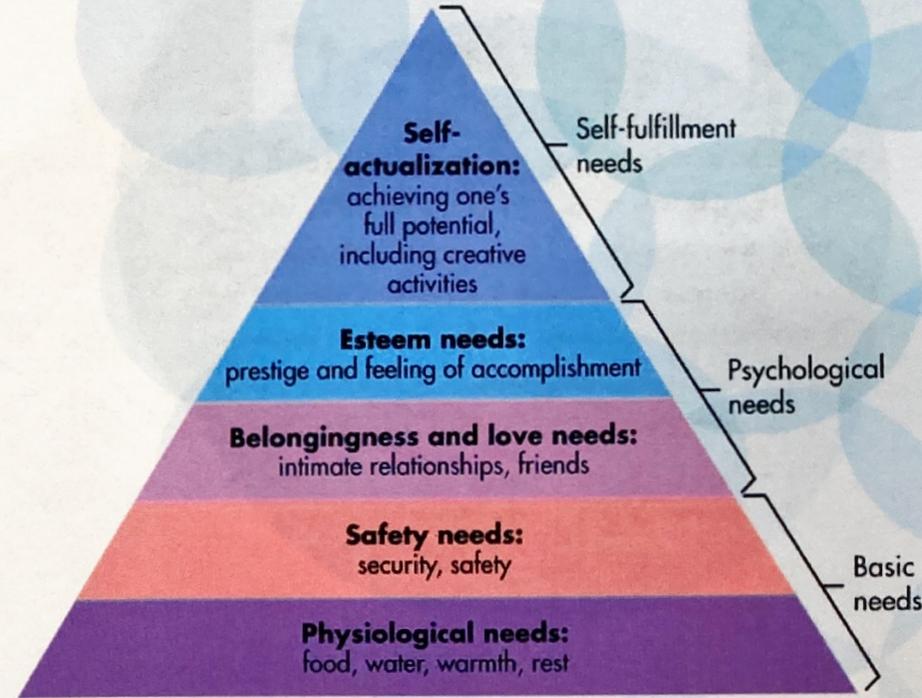
Many twin studies have been conducted through the years, but one of the most well-renowned twin studies conducted by Thomas J. Bouchard and his colleagues at the University of Minnesota in 1979, was the first to make the distinction between identical and fraternal twins. Interestingly, the researchers found that identical twins reared apart were equally likely to exhibit comparable traits as those raised in the same environment, indicating that genetic structure tends to have a stronger impact on mental condition compared to environmental elements, but other research shows that both factors play a significant role in the development of mental illnesses and disorders in different ways.



# Living Conditions and Mental Illness

Living conditions have strong effects on mental health, and adverse conditions may increase the likelihood of an individual developing a mental illness or disorder.

This includes poverty, lower levels of education, unsafe or inadequate housing, Adverse Childhood Experiences (potentially traumatic events that occur before age 18, such as abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction like domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental illness), and lack of access to affordable and effective means of healthcare.



This theory, coined by American psychologist Abraham Maslow is referred to as the “Hierarchy of Needs” or, most typically, “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.”

More important, complex needs such as esteem or self-actualization cannot realistically be fulfilled until lower level, more basic needs such as physiological and safety needs are ensured. Until those needs are met, it is well within human nature to deprioritize those more complex needs.

Social Determinant	Living Conditions & Factors	Impact on Mental Health
Economic Stability	Poverty, income inequality, job insecurity, food insecurity, debt.	Chronic stress, higher risk of suicide, depression, and anxiety.
Education Access + Quality	Lower levels, inconsistency, poor quality education.	Influences future income and social status, poorer mental health outcomes later in life.
Neighborhood + Environment	Unsafe housing, lack of basic amenities, polluted environment, community violence.	Worsen mental health problems, increase trauma and stress.
Social + Community	Discrimination, social exclusion, lack of social support, ACEs, family instability.	Exclusion and trauma are significant risk factors.
Healthcare Access + Quality	Lack of access to affordable and acceptable mental health services, inadequate insurance.	Worsening of mental health conditions.

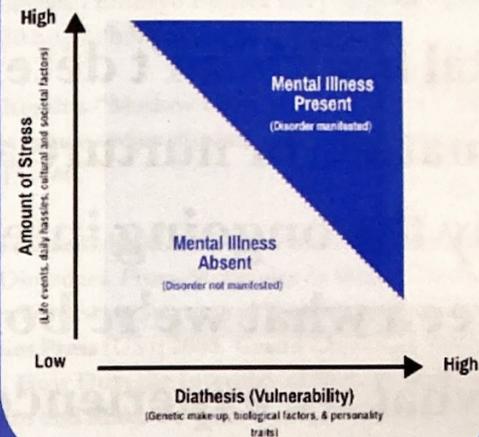
It’s theorized that humans are motivated to fulfill a series of five basic needs, arranged in a hierarchy, before achieving a sense of contentment.

# Hereditary Predisposition, Inherent Risk, & Living Conditions

Mental health is shaped by a complicated interaction between our genetics and the environment we grow up and live in. A hereditary predisposition doesn't guarantee that someone will develop a mental illness, but it does create what psychologists call inherent risk—a built-in vulnerability toward a variety of mental conditions. This kind of risk can come from differences in brain chemistry, nervous system reactivity, and emotional regulation.

Whether that vulnerability actually turns into a diagnosable condition often depends heavily on living conditions, which can either trigger symptoms or protect against them. Supportive, predictable environments can help keep inherent risk from becoming a problem, while stressful or unstable living situations can do the opposite.

## The Diathesis-Stress Model



Psychology often explains this interaction through the diathesis-stress model, which basically argues that mental health issues develop from the combination of a predisposition (the diathesis) and stressful life circumstances. Someone with a strong genetic vulnerability might remain stable in a calm, supportive environment, while another person with a moderate vulnerability might struggle in a more chaotic one.

# Conclusion

Mental health isn't determined by nature or nurture alone, but by the ongoing interaction between what we're born with and what we experience day to day. Living conditions can either amplify inherited risk or buffer against it. Both are important factors when considering the causes behind one's mental condition.

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