

THE STUDENT VIEW

The weekly column written by local high school students

Will the Nature vs. Nurture Debate Ever End?

By LISA HAGEN

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Are we genetically programmed or are we just influenced by our social surroundings and experiences?

This controversy is usually overlooked but has grown to become a heated debate. Psychologists have extensively studied personality and are split by whether our traits are determined by heredity or the environment.

Although both sides have proven to have valid examples, scientists are motivated to discover the biggest contribution to individual personalities.

In a search to separate these different influences, psychologists Thomas Bouchard, David Lykken and Auke Tellegen composed a study to determine how much genetics actually contributes to a person's behavior.

Their famous study - "Are you a natural?" - is characterized by the studying of pairs of identical twins. The experimenters were able to compare two identical twins who were separated at birth and grew up in different environments.

After an intense process of scales, tests and inventories on different aspects and functions of the subjects' lives, the results showed that not only did the twins share very similar appearances but also their personalities were closely related.

To the psychologists' surprise, genetic factors determine a person's characteristics more than environmental influences. Psychologists still argue about Bouchard's discovery because he did not account for the external influences of the twins' environment that do, in fact, affect people's behaviors.

Although this experiment has been replicated with similar results, we cannot neglect the experiences that shape who we become.

Our parents and the people with whom we affiliate ourselves inexplicably influence us. We may have been born shy, but if you hang out with generally outgoing people, you will eventually become more personable around other people whether or not you try to resist that external change. One powerful force that is controlled by our social settings is the idea of conformity.

Social norms are unwritten rules that have inexplicably dictated the way in which society behaves. Although they have no validity for ex-

Daniels Student Earns Hornbeck Scholar List

WESTFIELD - Mary Luker, a University of Denver (DU) Daniels College of Business undergraduate student from Westfield, made the Hornbeck Scholars List for the spring quarter of the 2008 and 2009 school year.

The dean's list honors those undergraduate students who have achieved a quarterly grade point average of 3.75 or above while taking at least 15 credit hours.

The Hornbeck Scholars List recognizes those undergraduate students who, in a given quarter, have earned a 4.0 grade point average while taking between 12 and 14 credit hours. The Hornbeck Scholar honor is named in memory of Stanley Kuhl Hornbeck, a distinguished DU graduate elected to a Rhodes Scholarship in 1904, the first year of Rhodes Scholarship eligibility for American students.

Westfield Residents Graduate Kent Place

WESTFIELD - On Saturday, June 6, the Class of 2009 graduated at the 115th Kent Place School Commencement. Among the sixty-six members of the Class of 2009 are Westfield residents Elizabeth Schoenbach, Katherine Sheridan and Morgan Bunting.



WESTFIELD REPRESENTED... From left to right, Westfield residents Elizabeth Schoenbach, Katherine Sheridan and Morgan Bunting graduate from Kent Place.

Morgan graduated with distinctions in mathematics and music. Morgan served as co-president of Chamber Singers and played four years of soccer. Morgan received performing arts recognition during Class Night.

Elizabeth received the Kathryn H. Faber Prize during Class Night. Liz was a four-year varsity basketball player and senior captain. As co-president of the Roots Club, she led the first cultural fashion show at Kent Place.

Katherine received the Pat Conley Award during commencement and graduated with distinctions in English, history, mathematics, science and Spanish. A National Merit Commended Student, Kate was a member of the varsity lacrosse, soccer and winter track teams, serving as captain of soccer and lacrosse. Kate was also a member of the school's yearbook, campus tour guides and served as a peer educator.

isting, people adhere to these norms because an overwhelming majority of their peers follow them. Therefore, to avoid the disapproval and incongruity in society, people will conform in order to obtain "normalcy."

Solomon Asch was one of the first psychologists to create a formal study to observe and understand the phenomenon of conformity. Based on group consensus, people will willingly abandon their answers or choices in order to fit in with the rest. Manipulated by the pressures of being wrong, 75 percent of the participants agreed at least once with group consensus despite their knowledge that what they were saying was in reality wrong.

The people who changed their answers may generally be independent, but when it comes to being in front of a group, our personalities are sometimes hindered by the desire to fit in with the norm.

Although this is constantly debated and challenged by new experiments, there will never be any true answer. Our personality is driven by so many extreme forces that it is safe to say that it is influenced by both genetics and the environment.

Villanova Announces Dean's List Recipients

AREA - Every year, the dean of each college at Villanova University honors students with established outstanding academic records. To qualify for the dean's list in the Villanova School of Business, one must be a matriculated full-time student and earn a semester grade point average of 3.5, with no

Westfield Community Band Concludes Season, 7/16

WESTFIELD - The 97th season of the Westfield Community Band, under the direction of Thomas Connors, will conclude on Thursday, July 16. The evening will have a special pre-concert feature starting at 7:10 p.m. of Sax Forte, a saxophone quartet highlighting the soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones.

The Westfield Community Band will take the stage at 7:30 p.m. for its final outing of the summer. Continuing the saxophone theme, one of Sax Forte's musicians will headline a selection first made famous by the film *Casablanca*, "As Time Goes By," by Herman Hufeld.

Another highlight for the evening includes "Inglesina 'The Little English Girl'" by Davide della Cese. Composed in 1897 by Italian composer Davide della Cese, while serving as resident bandmaster at Bitonto, Italy on the Adriatic Coast, it is considered one of the great Italian grand marches of all time. The work is reminiscent of an Italian opera overture.

Additional selections for the evening include "Toccata for Band" by Frank Erickson, "Selections from *My Fair Lady*" by Frederick Lowe and audience favorite "The Stars and Stripes Forever" by John Philip Sousa.

The next concert in the park will be the Westfield Community Swing Band "Nostalgia" on July 23.

Mindowaskin Park is located next to the Westfield Municipal Building at 425 East Broad Street in Westfield. The event is free to the public; audience members are encouraged to bring blankets or chairs. In the event of inclement weather, the concert will be held in the Westfield Community Room in the Westfield Municipal Building.

Villanova University Announces 2009 Graduates

AREA - More than 1,500 students graduated from Villanova University during a commencement ceremony held on May 17, in Villanova Stadium.

The following local residents were among the students from Villanova University who received undergraduate degrees during the university's 166th commencement:

Daniel Johnson of Cranford, who earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering; Abigail McDevitt Lewis of Westfield, who earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in

Humanities (Cum Laude); Christopher MacDonald of Westfield, who earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics; Michelle Lynn Morawski of Westfield, who got a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology; Andrew Petrozziello of Cranford, who received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science; Matthew Taeschler of Mountainside, who earned his Bachelor of Science degrees in Economics and Business Administration/ Finance (Cum Laude).

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