

## Genes for Crime

The statement a “gene for crime?” is an excellent way to state reality. The question mark is saying “I don’t know exactly what made that person commit the crime, maybe it is a little environmental learning and a little genetics. This is a whole different statement than a gene for crime with no question mark. There are too many situations when genetics research gets “leaked” to the press. Some people in society pick up the newspaper and see things like “a gene for homosexuality” (Hamer et al. 1993) a “gene for crime” (P90) or a “gene for alcoholism” and think this is the truth. Some become attached to this so-called truth and suffering entails. Sometimes it is the newspaper running with a story before it has all the right information and sometimes it may be science “leaking” as to get more money for research because they are SO CLOSE, whatever that may mean.

I have found that looking at reality from both sides is beneficial. The known and the unknown, nature and nurture, environmental and genetic – all have to be examined. Not either or. Eysenck's theory of personality and crime is very much like both sides at the same time. He believes “criminal behavior is the result of an interaction between certain environmental conditions and features of the nervous system. He believed that a comprehensive theory of criminality must allow for an examination of the psychoneurology makeup in the unique socialization history of each individual. Statements that crime is caused by social conditions such as poverty, poor education, and unemployment are as inaccurate as hereditary and biological explanations. Crime cannot be understood in terms of environment alone.” (H Eysenck, 1973 p171.)

It is never just one thing that makes an event happen, it is many. Just as a flower needs the right soil, sunlight, and rain to happen. A crime also needs also, more than just a bad gene. Example: The high strung person looking for drugs has no money, so he robs a woman of her pocketbook. The perpetrator may have a high metabolism he inherited from his family. He has trouble calming down so he starts using drugs. These are all chemical and biological effects. Then he learns and thinks drugs are helping him with his anxiety and becomes addicted, hence, needing to steal to support his drug habit. So he has the learned side and the chemical side. To me this is not a hypothetical situation but as we know everyone is not like me. Maybe some are less biological and more learned and maybe were the opposite. I feel either way it is a little of both.

Along with Eysenck's Theory stating that it is both biological and environmental, Dr. Pert has been doing some amazing research on Chemical Communicators and especially the Receptors. Dr. Pert like many other scientists only studied from "the neck up" but she has discovered these receptors are on the surface of every cell in your body. Peptides are amino acids "strung along like a necklace"(P 178). They are not only in the brain, they are found all over the body. This is important because they mediate intercellular communication throughout the body. They are also the biochemical correlates of emotions. So, I ask myself, are they mental or physical? Dr. Pert says, "they are both. That is what is so interesting about emotions - they are the bridge between the mental and the physical" (P 179.). I have to agree with Dr. Pert, it is your whole being not just "from the neck up" that has to be studied.

Research on molecular genetics has been doing some wonderful experimentation. I feel some research is absolutely needed, it is human nature. Man wants to know something. Man also has to believe in nothing or believe in something that you cannot see. Why else would he keep on researching? If he knew everything he would not have to search at all. Isn't the unknown wonderful! A man with all the genes for crime and all the receptors for crime may never commit a crime. Where a perfectly normal person (whoever that is) may kill seventeen people. The truth is we will never know. As to a gene for crime, I am not too worried about it. That is also in man's nature. All we can do as a human is to keep it to a minimum by being kind to others and directly showing healthy, appropriate examples of living.