Genetics as reason of violent criminal behavior

Education, Learning

It is argued that violent criminal behaviors are the unfortunate results of genetic transmissions of mental and psychological problems from one generation to another. Research in neurochemistry and advanced technology has supported this notion by indicating that various violent behaviors and emotional disorders result from disruption of the normal activity of the brain. The disruption of the normal activities of the brain, results from altered gene and various environmental factors that lead to violent behaviors. Despite the claims that have often been made, humans do not have an instinct to kill nor a special aversion to it. Instead, as this paper maintains, the propensity to kill results from a subpersonal level due to genetics.

Each one of us is a product of genetics, the predisposition of nongenetic constitutional proclivities and aversions, of motives and compromises determined by our interpersonal and somatic experiences. Research showing a family connection to criminality often attracts extensive media attention. The news coverage of research on a Dutch family found to have had a genetic mutation that seemed to predispose its males to aggressive behavior sounded like reports of pathological families in the early part of the century. Although journalists will consistently quantify, showing that family patterns do not settle the debate over root causes, they tend to promote the theories of scientists who believe that genetic predisposition is an underlying basis of violent behavior.

Research guided by Charles Darwin’s (1809-1882) theory of evolution, hypothesized that aggression associated with violent behaviors, like most forms of aggressive behaviors, an innate characteristic of the human species. Darwin believed that at any particular point, the features of every

life form, from the smallest microbe to the largest mammal which includes human beings are the result of changes brought about over several generations through a process of “ natural selection (Wright, 2014)..” Natural selection happens because, in every species, there is a genetically influenced variability among people in terms of behavior and appearance.

People whose inherited characteristics help them in adapting their environment through eluding predators, withstanding the elements, and finding food and water are the most likely to survive and mate successfully procreate and mate, thus passing on their genetic heritage to the next generation. The genes of those without adaptive characteristics are more likely to die out along with unfortunate individuals who carried them.

While considering the evolutionary roots of crime, psychologists have maintained that people have inherited genetic propensities for aggression from early ancestors and that violent behaviors have helped human species in adapting and surviving during thousands of years of changing environmental demands. Others have maintained that the aggression is adaptive even today, still required in making sure that human species survive.

Evolutionary theories note that all through the history of mankind, males have been more active compared to a female individual in terms of survival associated activities like hunting for food, finding and fighting for mates, and protecting close relatives and territory. So, it does not come as a surprise that compared to females, human males, are considered more aggressive and still retain the physical as well as hormonal features essential in

displaying aggression. These aggression-related features have survived because they have been seen to work out.

The book by Barabara Oakley “ Evil Genes: Why Rome Fell, Hitler Rose, Enron Failed, and My Sister Stole My Mother’s Boyfriend” provides explanations on the impact of genetics in our neurobiology and the way in which genes have effects on peoples habits towards sociopathy and selfishness. The argument that the author brings forward proposes that some people may be inclined to take advantage of others or be “ born bad” due to personality disorders that were present during birth.

Even though the Y chromosome theory, was for the most part media hype, research on the genetic influence of chromosomes is promising. Since males only have a single x chromosome, in any case, that chromosome is a mutated gene, men tend to be stuck with dysfunctional copy, while women have a backup copy safeguarding against this problem. The MAOA gene, found in the x chromosome is said to result in aggressive behavior in cases of abnormal versions of the gene (Baum, 2013).

The protein in the MAOA assists the body in metabolizing and taking control of the chemical messenger known as neurotransmitters. For the people who cannot make the MAOA protein, they are exposed to the suffrage of borderline intellectual disability, the lack of impulse control, violent behavior and aggression. Often, human beings can inherit some form of a gene that is less effective in producing the MAOA protein hand has been associated with violence.

For instance, a recent study discovered that a variant of the MAOA gene that is less effective in producing proteins leads to increased possibility of violent behaviors, but this only happens when the person has undergone childhood abuse or maltreatment. And even though still in their childhood stages as a legal defense, genetic influences are currently being introduced as mitigating circumstances in cases involving murder, with different outcomes.

An example is the case of a convicted murderer Abdelmalek Bayout, who stabbed and killed a man and had his sentence reduced in court because he had a low-activity MAOA gene (Farisco, & Petrini, 2012). He had his sentence reduced from 12 to 9 years, even though he was still considered responsible for the behaviors he committed, the mitigating circumstance of having an aggressive gene was important during the sentencing.

Therefore, genes have a connection with antisocial behavior and empathy, but these featuring characteristics relate to the environment. The DNA of some people may make them look for dangerously exciting environments, which results in the reinforcement of the genetic effects. Genes alone, however, do not determine behavior, but instead, it is a combination of genetics and life events and circumstances that might contribute to violent behavior.

Genes are often used in explaining frequent and troubling contradictions of violent behaviors. Why do some people, despite extreme challenging childhood experiences, become productive, even celebrated members of society, while others who had every advantage and opportunity, turn out badly? Based on the literature review above, it can be concluded that

genetic contributes to violent behaviors at an approximate rate of fifty percent. On the other hand, environmental factors also account for the other fifty percent of the unexplained cases involving violent behavior.

Acts of murder, rape, serial killings and destruction caused on people; family violence, gangs wars; and even terrorist activities are examples of violence that arise from intergroup rivalry, from the need to have a higher status to striking fear in others. Currently, the age-old habit of human beings to divide into status-differentiated groups like victors and vanquished or interpersonal violence continue to lead others to believe that in an era of weapons of mass destruction, the same genetically influenced behaviors that have long ensured the survival of human species will eventually lead to its demise.