

Case study: psychopathic genes



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Many people are afraid of the concept of death and what happens after life. But, many aren't aware of the people that take life from others. Killers roam our streets but, aren't easy to spot. They blend in with our looks and sometimes personalities. It is only possible to tell by their actions, for example when they have committed a gruesome crime. Little is known about psychopaths, many assume they are inspired, pressured or forced into doing what they do. Many of the killers have hard time in their life, as do normal people, but their problems accumulate, which add up to their emotions and do the "unthinkable" as we refer it to. As in the case of Marybeth Tinning who murder her 4-month daughter with a pillow mentions "after the deaths of my other children ... I just lost it." However, there has been study and theories to show that psychopathic traits can be found in genes. Daniel M. Blonigen and his crew took 626 pairs of 17-year-old male and female twins from the community. And resulted with this

Psychopathic traits were indexed using scores on the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire. Symptoms of internalizing and externalizing psychopathology were obtained via structured clinical interviews. Structural equation modeling was used to estimate genetic and environmental influences on psychopathic personality traits as well as the degree of genetic overlap between these traits and composites of internalizing and externalizing. The Twin analysis revealed significant genetic influence on distinct psychopathic traits (Fearless Dominance and Impulsive Antisociality). Moreover, Fearless Dominance was associated with reduced genetic risk for internalizing psychopathology, and Impulsive Antisociality was associated with increased genetic risk for externalizing psychopathology.

So, studies have been done to show that both genetic and environmental factors play a role in a variety of behaviors in humans.

What is a psychopath? Many people don't know much about psychopaths or what it is. They know them by the way the media portrays them to be. O. Lilienfeld says that there are three big myths that are untrue; one is that all psychopaths are violent. Researched by psychologists such as Randall T. Salekin, indicates that psychopathy is a risk factor for future physical and sexual violence. Second, all psychopaths are psychotic. In contrast to people with psychotic disorders ...psychopaths are almost always rational. They are well aware that their ill-advised or illegal actions are wrong in the eyes of society but shrug off these concerns with startling nonchalance. Third psychopathy is untreatable. Although psychopaths are often unmotivated to seek treatment, research by psychologist Jennifer Skeem of the University of California, Irvine, and her colleagues suggests that psychopaths may benefit ...from psychological treatment. The real term for psychopath is Antisocial Personality Disorder, psychopathy and sociopathy are generally considered subsets of ASPD, it was given by American Psychiatric Association, it's the term used for a personality disorder characterized by an abnormal lack of empathy combined with strongly amoral conduct but masked by an ability to appear outwardly normal. The main characteristics of a psychopath are the lack of sympathy / remorse for others, even including love ones. Other characteristic features: superficial charm, self-centered & self-important, need for stimulation & prone to boredom, deceptive behavior & lying, conning & manipulative, little guilt, cruelty to animals, callous with a lack of empathy, living off others or predatory attitude, poor self-control,

promiscuous sexual behavior, early behavioral problems, disregard for safety, impulsive lifestyle, irresponsible behavior, blaming others for their actions, short term relationships, juvenile delinquency, breaking parole or probation, and variety of criminal activity. There are two types of psychopath that are easily distinguished.

The two types of psychopath are Fearless Dominance and Impulsive Antisociality. Beth Terrel quoted Professor Dr. Stephen Benning from Vanderbilt University. The two seem to be different in their own ways but are still psychopaths. The fearless dominance is often a paradoxical mix of charm and nastiness, cool and calm under pressure, the FD type is not easily rattled. They lack the same kind of anticipatory anxiety that most people have so, instead of thinking they do it. Fearless Dominance is associated with a number of things our society considers desirable or good: high verbal I. Q., high performance, and economic success. The FD type is often charming and socially influential. He or she relishes directing other people's activities and basking in their admiration. The FD type is sexually adventurous and often takes risks. It's not that they can't feel fear or anxiety; it's just that it takes a much more extreme situation to elicit those emotions. FD types live for the thrill, the excitement, the adrenaline rush. The Impulsive Antisociality type is an aggressive, unorganized, and a suspicious person. An IA types doesn't generally make plans, and they don't think society's rules are worth following. They often abuse drugs, and like the FD type they often are extremely sexually active. It's not the thrill that motivates the IA type, it's the relief of boredom, alienation and because of the need to do something. They are extremely reactive and have a lot of

raw, aggressive energy. Usually, they have a long history of antisocial behavior, such as brawling and vandalism. These are the two types of psychopaths.

Fox reported that there are three genes that may play a strong role in determining why some young men raised in rough neighborhoods or deprived families become violent criminals. One gene called MAOA that played an especially strong role has been shown in other studies to affect antisocial behavior, said sociology professor Guang Guo, who led the study. “ I don’t want to say it is a crime gene, but 1 percent of people have it and scored very high in violence and delinquency,” Guo said in a telephone interview. The other two genes are called the dopamine transporter 1 (DAT1) gene and the dopamine D2 receptor (DRD2) gene, which are also associated with bad behavior, but only when the boys suffered some other stress, such as family issues, low popularity and failing school. Guo said “ These results,.. link molecular genetic variants to delinquency, significantly expand our understanding of delinquent and violent behavior, and they highlight the need to simultaneously consider their social and genetic origins.” Three examples of genes that have a role in psychopaths.

An article Child Psychopaths, the author back fires by saying that it’s the parents fault, they are the ones that created a psychopath. Psychologist Lonnie Athens takes the approach that antisocial behavior results from a series of evolutionary stages. He came up with the idea that people become violent through a process that he calls violentization, which involves four stages: brutalization and subjugation, belligerency, violent coaching, and criminal activity. First, this person is a victim of violence and feels powerless

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to avoid it. Then he is taught how and when to become violent and to profit from it. Then he acts on that. If a person from a violent environment does not become violent, it is because some part of the process is missing. He connects a serial killer's, Gary, actions were formed from violence and lack of empathy by the instability and brutalization of his family life. But, there is evidence to say that environmental influence isn't the key to a full developed psychopath and there is still genetics that contribute to these actions.

Young children can be spotted for some psychopathic symptoms. Some mental health professionals say they can recognize early markers in kids as young as toddlers for what may later develop into psychopathy. Experts also emphasize that not all children who appear to be at risk for psychopathy go on to become psychopathic adults. Studies show that a significant portion of children who show psychopathic traits – often referred to among researchers as “callous-unemotional traits,” which include not being concerned about others' feelings and not feeling bad or guilty – as early as the preschool years have the same traits when they are teens. And adolescence is a time when they are more likely than other kids to exhibit extreme behavior problems, aggression and delinquency. These teens with significant CU traits are then more likely to become psychopathic adults.

Other studies resulted with some brain malfunctions when doing something they shouldn't be doing so, they won't feel remorse or have fear like a normal person would. Scientists interviewed hundreds of prison inmates, to learn about what makes them tick, and which parts of the brain lead them to live an emotionally disconnected and often violent life. They resulted with faulty wiring in the limbic system (the brain's emotional center) and the

amygdala (which generates fear) make psychopaths able to do horrendous things and feel nothing, and never fear danger or consequences. They also believe that genes contribute 50 percent of the puzzle and life experience the other 50 percent (Heatherturgeon). Meaning environmental factors still play a role.

In another study done by Dombek stated “ available data regarding the causes of psychopathic personality suggests that both nature and nurture are at work there as well.” He interviewed prison inmates and did a Psychopathy Checklist, asked about thier history of their abuse experience, and a few other questionnaires. He resulted with this:

Our findings indicate that a history of child abuse or neglect relates positively but weakly to global psychopathic features. Abuse is unrelated to the core affective and interpersonal traits of psychopathy but relates preferentially and moderately to the impulsive and irresponsible lifestyle or externalizing features of psychopathy. Dissociative experiences do not significantly mediate this relationship. Our findings call into question etiological models positing that early abuse and neglect shut off affective responding, thereby resulting in individuals who possess the cold and callous features of primary psychopathy.

So, abuse was not found to predict psychopathy as a whole, but an abuse history did predict a certain feature of psychopathy; namely the tendency to be impulsive.

So, what can be the cure for such genes or the process to prevent such horrific crimes from psychopath? It's also possible for some kids with CU

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traits, particularly the youngest ones who have the greatest capacity to change, to simply grow out of them. CU traits are most reliably assessed starting at age 4, but even 2 year old can exhibit signs that they are lacking “early empathy,” says Paul Frick, chair of the department of psychology at the University of New Orleans who studies youth behavior problems (Stenson).