Journal Article Questions

# Chapter 6: Modern Biosocial Perspectives of Criminal Behavior

Article 1: Beaver, K. (2013). The familial concentration and transmission of crime. Criminal Justice and Behavior, 40(2), 139–155. Retrieved from

http://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/P5GsNCHZkgitC3ee9xNk/full

Research has revealed that crime tends to concentrate in families and that it also tends to be transmitted across generational lines. The current study expanded on this line of research by examining the familial concentration and transmission of crime in a sample of sibling pairs. Analysis of data drawn from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) revealed that 5% of all families accounted for more than 50% of all criminal arrests. Additional analyses revealed between-sibling similarity and intergenerational transmission in being arrested, being sentenced to probation, being incarcerated, and being arrested multiple times. Structural equation models (SEMs) were also estimated to examine the mechanisms that might account for the familial concentration and transmission of crime. These SEMs provided evidence indicating that the concentration and transmission of crime was due, in part, to genetic factors as well as mating patterns.

Questions that apply to this article:

1. What does the author identify as a “major drawback” of the previous studies on sibling similarity and criminal/antisocial behavior?

2. Overall, do you think this study advanced the understanding of the transmission of crime? Explain.

Article 2: Gesch, B. (2013). Adolescence: Does good nutrition = good behaviour? Nutrition and Health, 22(1), 55–65. Retrieved from

http://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/xvvq5P98Mus9wF4pUqAh/full

Adolescence is often associated with exploring boundaries, rapid growth, hormones and pimples. A stable feature of this turbulent age is that these young people are highly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Adolescents account for disproportionate proportion of police-recorded crimes, and this seems to be a cross-cultural phenomenon. Furthermore, disaffected young people often have limited routine access to healthy foods and make poor food choices. These people form a large proportion of the prison population and there are concerns that insufficient attention is paid to their health. Hence their diet tends to be poor compared with international standards of dietary adequacy, which typically are set to protect the heart but not for optimal brain function. Thus, it has been posited that a poor diet may be a modifiable causal factor in antisocial behaviours. We tested what happened to the behaviour of violent young adult prisoners (18–21years) when nutrients missing from their diets were reinstated. We used food supplements as an analogue of a better diet because it provided the possibility of a placebo control. On a random basis, where neither the volunteers, prison staff nor researchers in the prison knew who was getting which type, 231 volunteers were given either placebo or real capsules containing broadly the daily requirements of vitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids. The number of proven offences committed by each prisoner was monitored before and while taking supplements. The result was that those who received the extra nutrients committed significantly (26.3%) fewer offences compared with placebos. Those consuming real supplements for at least 2 weeks committed 37% fewer (highly statistically significant) of the most serious offences, such as violence. These findings have been replicated by the Dutch Ministry of Justice; their double-blind study reported a 48% difference between groups. If these studies are widely replicated—and they need to be—we may have a simple and humane means to help reduce and prevent a significant proportion of violence and antisocial behaviour. This should also work in the community, because it is not about where you eat but what you eat. Indeed, criminal justice systems are often over-represented with ethnic minorities, but providing a more nutritious diet is never going to be discriminatory to these young people. The only risk is better health.

Questions that apply to this article:

1. What is the purpose of this article?

2. What policy implications might come from this information?