

Introduction

"Cruelty and violence, both individual and organized, are part of the bondage of *homo sapiens*."¹

It has always been a mystery why some individuals behave in such a cruel and such a violent way that they transgress the laws of the society in which they live. Is violent, aggressive behaviour the result of innate tendencies in human nature? Or is it a response to experiences and environment? In the past most informed people believed that aggression with cruelty was an innate part of man's nature. In recent years many social scientists have come to the conclusion that it may be the result of a learning process.

An inquiry of this kind would be of little value if it had already been proven that violent criminal behaviour is mainly transmitted by genes. Since this has not been done we have assumed that there may be a number of causes of such behaviour and that it may often be the result of a learning process which begins from the moment of birth and perhaps even before birth. The reasons for human behaviour are always complex. They may not be due either to genetic heritage or the environment, but rather to the interaction between the two.

Violent criminals do not stalk the land unattended: they are usually accompanied by a history of personality disorders that prevent certain children from achieving an acceptable sense of values in the early learning process. This may contribute to the development of a criminal.

It is clear that man under certain circumstances has the capacity to act violently and aggressively. "Potentialities for aggressive behaviour exist within the brain of *Homo sapiens*, but in order to be expressed in overt behaviour they must be appropriately stimulated by the cultural environment."² It seems that "violence is largely a learned response."³ The total environment in which a child grows affects its behaviour. If this environment is sufficiently undesirable, it can accommodate the kind of learning process leading to behaviour which is antisocial and perhaps eventually violently criminal.

Criminal behaviour, for the purposes of this study, has been confined to violent antisocial behaviour. We have recognized the importance of patterns of behaviour. In some cases juvenile delinquency is the prelude to a generally criminal way of life. It may in that way be considered as a link in the chain between childhood experiences and later violent criminal behaviour.

There is an association between persistent delinquency or crime and personality disorder.⁴ The consideration of such disorder is, therefore, essential to this study. "If one looks for a link between prenatal experience, birth experience and early childhood experiences on the one hand and criminal behaviour on the other, one of the links is through personality disorder, through mental illness, on to serious criminal behaviour."⁵