

Genetics of criminal and anti-social behaviour, John Wiley and Sons, Chichester. 1996, 283 pp., £55.00

This book is a collection of papers and transcripts of discussions which took place at a multidisciplinary meeting in London during 1995. I assume the title is deliberately provocative; therefore, I approached the book with a mixture of scepticism and curiosity. My scepticism was based on the idea that behaviour results from environmental influences, despite the knowledge, from my own clinical practice, that certain chromosome deletion syndromes predispose to characteristic behaviour patterns. I was relieved to find that the authors of papers were able to present their data on twin studies, adoption studies, neurotransmitters, anthropology and the law in ways that allow the strengths and weaknesses of different

methodologies to be considered. Since the book is a collection of papers, there is inevitably a change of direction, style and emphasis but this is outweighed by the value of collecting together information from different disciplines. The book satisfied my curiosity about what is happening in this field of study. This is a brave attempt to analyse a field fraught with both controversy and heterogeneity.

I have wondered who will buy this book. I cannot see it on the shelves of the majority of clinical geneticists. It is a book for specialists but, because of its nature, will appeal to specialists from a wide range of disciplines. In addition, I would be happy to recommend it to most libraries of academic institutions. I do not know if another multidisciplinary meeting is planned but I wonder what progress will have been made by the year 2000 or 2005?

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