

IQ is mostly inherited, new research suggests

How smart you are doesn't depend on how your parents raised you, a new study concludes.

Their reading to you, talking with you at the dinner table and taking an active interest in your life could make you happy. And that's important. But it won't make you smarter, says Kevin Beaver.

As a criminologist, he studies the causes of crime and ways to prevent it. Beaver works at Florida State University in Tallahassee. His research team wanted to know if different parenting styles influenced a child's intelligence. After all, Beaver notes, "intelligence has been linked to crime."

Previous research has suggested different types of parenting could affect a child's IQ. Short for intelligence quotient, IQ is a score that measures human intelligence.

But those earlier data hadn't separated out the effect of genetics on IQ. Beaver's team wanted to know: Are children's IQ scores really affected by how their parents raised them? Or are those scores just a reflection of what genes a child inherited?

To find out, the team pored over information from a study of more than 15,000 U.S. middle- and high-school students. It's called the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

Beaver's group was especially interested in results from a group of about 220 students who had been adopted. The parents who raised them had not passed on any genes to them. So if there was a link between the students' IQs and the way their parents raised them, the researchers should see it most clearly in the adopted students' scores.

But no such link emerged. Whether students reported their parents cared about them and did things with them — or reported that they did not — it had no impact on their IQ. This means a person's IQ is largely the result of the genes we inherit from our biological parents.

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