

In-Sight Publishing
Ask A Genius 133 – Gene Tweaks¹
Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner
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[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: With objective criteria, that you can count, say genes on a genome.

Rick Rosner: You that if you tweak a gene that influences the HGH (Human growth Hormone) someone makes during adolescence, say. Parents who want a big athletic kid might be able to tweak the HGH regulator and get a kid who's 6'4"/6'5" when otherwise that kid would've been 6'1". There's a genetic error that shows up in humans and other animals. It is the muscle suppressor gene.

That is sometimes absent. Then you get these super animals and babies. That have something like twice the normal amount of muscle because the suppressor gene is absent. You can Google like "double muscle animals" to see these crazy dogs, and crazy cows, and there's an Olympic athlete that has this condition. I haven't Googled it. Anyway, they have double the muscle of a regular person due to genetic error.

That would be fun for a lot of people and for a lot of ambitious parents to have a muscle baby that grows up to have a career in something athletic. Similarly, we may find out tweaks that may regulate the speed at which your brain shoots out dendrites for mental flexibility.

SDJ: There was a study a while ago about rats. I am probably misremembering this. They found a gene that codes for cortex size, complexity, and so on. I believe the gene also coded for the kidneys. They tweaked it. The question was, "How smart was it?" However, they [Laughing] couldn't find out. Do you know why?

RR: They died early.

SDJ: [Laughing] It exploded. It exploded [Laughing].

¹ Four format points for the session article:

1. Bold text following "Scott Douglas Jacobsen:" or "SDJ:" is Scott Douglas Jacobsen & non-bold text following "Rick Rosner:" or "RR:" is Rick Rosner.
2. Session article conducted, transcribed, edited, formatted, and published by Scott.
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For further information on the formatting guidelines incorporated into this document, please see the following documents:

1. American Psychological Association. (2010). Citation Guide: APA. Retrieved from <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/system/files/28281/APA6CitationGuideSFUv3.pdf>.
2. Humble, A. (n.d.). Guide to Transcribing. Retrieved from <http://www.msvu.ca/site/media/msvu/Transcription%20Guide.pdf>.

RR: [Laughing].

SDJ: [Laughing] **By the way, it also coded for the gonads. So I could imagine rats walking around with their testicles in wheelbarrows like Stan Marsh’s dad in *South Park* when he microwaved his testicles, put them in a wheelbarrow, and started walking around. So these multivariate - to use the term that they use - effects come for single changes. So the evolved complexes are staggering.**

But if you can know relative probabilities that are relatively safe, then why not? It seems reasonable.

RR: Yea. And eventually – by “eventually,” I mean the next 20 years, we will figure out most of the helpful gene tweaks, and anybody who has the wherewithal to grab some of the tweaks will. So if you’re reproducing now, and have any kind of—the idea that, I don’t know. People don’t think about the idea of genes surviving when they’re having kids. Somewhere encoded in us is the idea of our kids carrying something of us.

That is under the new era of gene tweaking. It’s not something that most people worry about, probably. It is part of that or kind of that whole deal where the future will kick our asses more than in the past.

[End of recorded material]

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