KRETSCHMER REVISITED

THE BODY-MIND CONNECTION

CENTRO HOSPITALAR
UNIVERSITÁRIO
LISBOA NORTE, EPE

HOSPITAL DE
SANTAMARIA

Hospital
PulidoValente

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B. Côrte-Real¹, A. Catarina Cordeiro¹, G. Andrade¹, P. Câmara Pestana¹, I. Duarte e Silva¹, T. Duarte¹, R. Saraiva¹, M. Gonçalves¹
¹Serviço de Psiquiatria e Saúde Mental, Hospital Santa Maria – Centro Hospitalar Universitário Lisboa Norte

Introduction

In 1921, the German Psychiatrist Ernst Kretschmer¹ wrote *Körperbau und Charakter* (translated to Physique and Character)², outlining the relationship between physical constitution and temperament. Kretschmer named three basic types of somatic constitutions: asthenic, athletic and pyknic.

Asthenic

Affinity to **schizoid** temperament
Predisposition to **schizophrenia**

PLATE 1. Asthenic type. Frontal (Schizoid personality)

Athletic

PLATE 3. Athletic type. Frontal (Schizothymia)

Pyknic

Affinity to **cycloid** temperament
Predisposition to **circular insanity** (nowadays known as bipolar disorder)

PLATE 5. Pyknic type. Frontal (Cycloid)

Pictures from the book *Physique and Character*

Explanations for this correlation have been gathered throughout the years. Recently, it has been found the **variation of dopaminergic activity in the amygdala** may, in part, explain the personality variants related to the body mass index.³

Methods

Phenotype data were collected from thirty-three patients with a schizoid or cycloid pre-morbid temperament hospitalized in our Psychiatric Ward. All the patients who had previously been on medication for their condition were excluded.

Also, a review of the literature was conducted, through the book “Physique and Character” (English translation of the second edition, 1925) and related papers found on the PubMed browser.

Bibliography

- 1- Kretschmer, E. *Physique and Character*. Oxford, England: Harcourt, Brace. 1925
- 2- Hoehne, K. ERNST KRETSCHMER (1888-1964). *American Journal of Psychiatry*. 1964, 121(2), 206–208.doi:10.1176/ajp.121.2.206
- 3-Yasuno F, Suhara T, Sudo Y, Yamamoto M, Inoue M, Okubo Y, Suzuki K. Relation among dopamine D(2) receptor binding, obesity and personality in normal human subjects. *Neurosci Lett*. 2001 Mar 2;300(1):59-61.

Results

Of the nine pyknic patients, 7 had **cycloid** temperament and all of those had the diagnosis of **bipolar disorder**.

The two remaining patients, with **schizoid** temperament, had the diagnosis of **schizoaffective disorder** and **psychotic disorder due to the use of recreative drugs**.

Three out of the four patients with athletic constitution had **schizoid** temperament and the diagnosis of **schizophrenia**.

The 4th Patient had **cycloid** temperament and was diagnosed with **bipolar disorder**.

In the asthenic group, seventeen patients had **schizoid** temperament and had the diagnoses of **schizophrenia** (11), **persistent delusion disorder** (2), **severe depressive episode with psychotic symptoms** (1), **late-onset psychosis** and **psychotic disorder due to the use of recreative drugs**.

The three patients with **cycloid** temperament had the diagnoses of **unipolar depression**, **schizoaffective disorder** and **bipolar disorder**.

Discussion and Conclusion

Even with the modern changes in lifestyle, namely improved health care since pregnancy, increase in sedentarism, and radically different eating habits, Kretschmer's investigations based on the mutual relations between phenotypes, psychological dispositions and psychiatric morbidity can be reproducible. Acknowledging as a limitation the size of our sample, we aim to repeat the analysis with a broader one, to examine if the results remain supporting Kretschmer's findings.

PHYSIQUE

CÆSAR : Let me have men about me that are fat ;
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights ;
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look ;
He thinks too much : such men are dangerous.
ANTONY : Fear him not, Cæsar ; he is not dangerous ;
He is a noble Roman, and well given.
CÆSAR : Would he were fatter ! . . .
Julius Cæsar—SHAKESPEARE.

From Part I of the book *Physique and Character*