

Do genes exist?

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Although 'genes' are still thought of as the basic units of inheritance, new research has shown that scientists themselves cannot agree on what constitues a gene. This lack of consensus is so great that the concept of a gene is redundant argues Dr Karola Stotz, lead researcher on the Representing Genes project. The results from the project were announced at a media friendly workshop organised by Egenis, the E.S.R.C. Centre for Genomics in Society, at Exeter University on 13th May.

Prof Paul Griffiths, of the University of Queensland who also worked on the project said " The reality of genome structure today challenges the conventional picture of the gene in the same way that the reality of particle physics challenges the traditional picture of matter. The $\hat{a} \in \tilde{p}$ particles $\hat{a} \in TM$ of the quantum world can lack such apparently essential features as having mass or being in some particular place. In the same way, just about any of the normal expectations we have when we hear the word $\hat{a} \in \tilde{g}$ gene $\hat{a} \in TM$ is violated by some important class of DNA sequences.

Physicists changed their concept of a particle in response to the strange world that quantum physics revealed. Just so, in the $\hat{a} \in \tilde{p}$ post-genomic $\hat{a} \in TM$ world scientists continue to talk about $\hat{a} \in \tilde{g}$ genes $\hat{a} \in TM$ but often mean something quite at odds with the picture of the gene found in school textbooks. $\hat{a} \in ?$

Source: ESRC Centre for Genomics in Society



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