

PSYCHOLOGY

Can You Pick Out the Murderer?

Not From His Looks, is the Scientific Answer; But His Personality Differs From Those of Other Men

By JANE STAFFORD

YOU cannot tell a murderer by his looks. But there is a definite "murderer type" of personality.

Consider the faces of Clara Phillips and Winnie Ruth Judd, of Gerald Chapman, John Dillinger, Richard Loeb, and Guiseppa Zangara. They were all convicted of murder but there is nothing about their looks that would make you class them as murderers. Nor would you even classify their faces, with the possible exception of the foreign-born Zangara, as all belonging to one type or being different from the men and women you see in shops and on the streets or meet at the bridge table or sit next to at a show.

Psychiatric studies, however, are bringing to light facts about the personalities of murderers that show how they are different from other criminals as well as from law-abiding persons. Furthermore, these studies show that the personality of the murderer governs not only the actual crime but the manner of doing it and the choice of weapon.

The personality, in the psychiatric sense, is such an important factor leading to homicide that scientific knowledge of the murderer type will, it is believed, aid in apprehending the criminal, in preventing further offenses by indicating which criminals may be re-educated and safely paroled, and finally may prevent executing or sending to prison an innocent person.

Emotional Instability

Emotional instability is the prime feature of the murderer personality, Dr. John A. Larson of Chicago's Institute for Juvenile Research found. Dr. Larson has made a study of murderers in the Illinois correctional institutions and elsewhere and recently reported some of his findings to the American Psychiatric Association.

His study took into account all the facts about the physical, psychological, sociological and psychiatric status of the prisoners incarcerated for manslaughter, murder and assault to kill.

In addition he had information on their behavior while in jail and while on parole. He checked his findings by repeated examinations. On the basis of this knowledge of the prisoner, prediction was made as to what he would do when released on parole and these predictions—the prognoses, the doctor calls them—were carefully checked with observations of the paroled person's actual behavior.

The trait of emotional instability was found nearly four times as often in the murderer group as in the general prison population, Dr. Larson reported. The actual figures showed that 38.9 per cent., nearly four-tenths, of prisoners in jail for manslaughter, murder and assault to kill were emotionally unstable, whereas only 12 per cent., a little over one-tenth, of the general prison population belonged in this class. More abnormalities of personality were found in the homicidal group than in any other groups of offenders save the sex offenders.

Outbursts From Birth

"Many of the first offenders present the picture of an emotional instability characteristic of temper tantrums and explosive outbursts from birth," Dr. Larson said.

It is in this very group that there seems to be the best chance for re-education and Dr. Larson thinks that psychiatric treatment should be given such prisoners. In this group, the killing appears as an isolated offense. The prisoners may have had temper tantrums in childhood, but their misbehavior had never reached criminality before. Consequently Dr. Larson thinks that the outlook is good for their being law-abiding in the future. He pointed out that these findings in this respect are similar to those of Warden Lewis E. Lawes of Sing Sing.

The latter recently described one group of homicides as being white foreign born Italians, U. S. born Negroes, or U. S. born of Irish stock; from 27 to 31 years old; comparatively illiterate; unstable and with the kind of mind that makes the person have delusions,

generally of persecution; normal physically; good workers; and first offenders.

This description or classification is practically applicable to the group studied in the Illinois correctional institutions, Dr. Larson said. Here, too, most of the first offenders were good workers and with a few exceptions had good health.

A significant number of the murderers suffered from mental diseases; approximately a third of the prisoners suffering acute mental disorder were found in the murderer group. About 65 per cent. of the acute mental disease found occurred in the group of first offender murderers and accidental offenders.

Mental Deficiency Next

Next to emotional instability and mental disease, mental deficiency seemed to be an outstanding trait of the murderers.

"In this group, only a very few with superior intelligence by formal rating and social adjustment were found, in marked contrast to the group of embezzlers, confidence men, etc.," Dr. Larson stated. "Here there seem to be more mental defectives than in any other group excepting sex assaults."

In checking the group on the borderline of normal mentality, Dr. Larson found there were nearly as many such borderline individuals as ones with average intellectual equipment. This, he believes, may, with the exception of the foreign-born, account for another fact he learned, that the murderers had gone to school very little.

Distinctly more of the individuals in the murderer group had no education or their schooling was limited to the first four grades. There was also a significant difference between murderers and other prisoners in the percentage having high school or college educations.

Complications Cause Risk

Mental deficiency in itself is not a risk so far as the possibility of the person with below average mentality committing murder is concerned, Dr. Larson explained. But when the mental defective is also suffering from alcoholism or syphilis or both, then he must be considered a serious risk, whether or not he has other traits of the murderer's personality.

Youth was another characteristic of the murderer group that Dr. Larson found in his study, but this, he pointed out, might be due to the fact that in spite of their youth murderers are committed to the penitentiary instead of to the reformatory.

The murderer type, then, is characterized by emotional instability, below average mentality, mental disease, lack of education and youth.

Dr. Larson's study revealed many other interesting, significant facts about murderers and how and why they commit their crimes, facts which add details to the picture of the murderer personality.

Isolated Offense

Murder is a single, isolated offense in the lives of most individuals. More than 60 out of every 100 murderers had never been arrested before.

More of the group of average intelligence seemed to be motivated by gain while those of the lower levels of mentality seemed actuated by instinctive drives, especially sex. In the latter group, perhaps because of less inhibitory powers, there were more explosive attacks.

"The choice of weapon and the actual manner of killing varies with the type of offense," Dr. Larson said. "The gun, knife and club were the most common, since most of the crimes were the result of explosive outbursts, but even in premeditated crimes the gun and knife represent the most convenient.

"The silencer, so often met with in fiction, actually was not used in any cases, and according to firearms experts is not practical.

"Poison seems to be more associated with women.

"In the relatively few cases on record the use of chloroform or ether in cases of homicide is usually limited to physicians."

Concealment Shows Motive

Dr. Larson's study also took into account the motives of the different crimes. Interesting information both on the subject of motivation and on the personality of the killer was gleaned from knowledge of how he disposed of the body and attempted to conceal the crime, Dr. Larson said.

In the case of murder following fights and in many killings associated with gang warfare or in cases when the murderer had some mental disease, an attempt was made to conceal the crime. In crime associated with gain there is

apt to be careful planning and execution and some attempt to make the crime offer a clue to persons other than the actual murderer or to make it appear a suicide. These very attempts, however, or some other little act will indicate the identity of the offender, Dr. Larson found.

Persons afflicted with premature old age or those with arteriosclerosis—hardening of the arteries to you—will often commit serious blunders due to their faulty judgment, Dr. Larson said.

Thus, the murderer of this type may, after getting his victim insured, shoot him in a way meant to simulate suicide and at the same time use a chloroform mask. But perhaps the bullets do not remain in the body as planned, but leave a wound of exit with hemorrhage. This is carefully mopped up and the body wrapped with tender care. Later, abandoning the idea of making the murder look like suicide, the criminal attempts to fasten the blame on possible burglars. But his various blunders give the police a clue, and they also give a clue to the psychiatrist, who can tell the police to look for a certain type of murderer, one suffering with arteriosclerosis or some other condition apt to impair his judgment.

Occupation a Clue

The occupation of the killer, perhaps not strictly part of his personality, nevertheless often furnishes a clue to the finding of the body. As examples, Dr. Larson pointed out the case of the Chicago sausage maker who tired of his wife and treated her body with caustic chemicals in the vat used in his business. Unfortunately for himself, a ring and a piece of bone were left undestroyed by the chemicals. Other examples he mentioned were the contractor who, also tiring of his wife, buried her head in a block of concrete; and the famous Paris catacombs case where the fertilizer for the underground-grown mushrooms was secured from the bodies of the dead. All went well here too, until a murder victim was ground up for fertilizer and some jewelry was left over.

Because of the importance of the murderer's personality both as a means of apprehending him and of telling whether or not he can be re-educated and safely paroled, Dr. Larson suggests that clues to his personality be gathered according to a definite modus operandi similar to the ones already employed by the police to get clues to the killer's identity. He described this method as follows:



PLEASANT LOOKING

Yet this young man, Martin J. Durkin, is now in prison for the murder of a Federal agent.

"The modus operandi, or a technical tool used in criminological investigation can be elaborated upon and modified to describe these offenders as well as the crime, and where necessary assist in the evaluation of the innocence or guilt of the alleged offenders, and also in prognosis. Whenever possible as accurate data should be secured as is scientifically available.

"This would mean, ideally then, that one cannot, as is often done, assume that the inmate is guilty because of a court conviction, since it is known that because of many factors men innocent of any crime, especially in this group, are found in prison."

Aid From Modus Operandi

"Aside from deception tests, practically never made use of officially in prison work, the modus operandi technique, properly utilized, could be of much service. The more scientific investigators make use of this method routinely in criminal investigation. This, in the analysis of the crime, is what the interview, so-termed factors, attitudes, and history are to the psychiatrist, analyst, sociologist or psychologist. Although usually made use of in the search for an unknown offender, because of personality traces left at the scene of the crime, interesting leads as to personality factors of the individual, subsequently identified, may be secured.

"Often the analysis of the modus

operandi secured from the scene of the crime may not agree with the personality of the one convicted who is subsequently proved innocent. In the majority of manslaughter and homicide cases the offender often claims self defense.

"Briefly, the so-called modus operandi described in the monograph form by Atcherly, an English constable, and later perfected by Vollmer and statisticians, refers to a minute description and classification at the scene of the crime, and is based upon the assumption that the offender leaves traces of his personality behind. These 'clues' are significant and even no 'clue' is equally significant. Many officers speak of offenders who commit any type of crime and change from time to time. All offenders, and especially recidivists, leave telltale traces behind."

Dr. Larson cited his own experience in one case to show how this method actually works out.

"As an intermediate case-working chief investigator a few years ago, for many weeks the writer and his police colleagues were trying to locate a gang of auto thieves who combined joy-riding with drinking, with hold-ups, rape, and shooting scrapes with police officers. By the use of maps, plotting times of attack with places where the stolen cars and other evidence were recovered, it became possible to predict so that traps could be laid.

"Only through the carelessness and poor cooperation and intimidation of witnesses did these fail, although the identity of the offenders had been accurately established. After a frustrated hold-up and wounding of one of the gang in a duel with an officer, the crimes were temporarily stopped with the final arrest of the gangsters.

"In the study of the crime in cases of homicide, the manner of death, place, circumstances, apparent motives, secured objectively tell us much about the type of individual to look for, and this, coupled with all of the factors of a subsequent psychological analysis give much interesting data.

"The killing of jealousy, or in the heat of passion, fever of revenge or drinking, or due to delusions of persecution, differ from the mass murders, such as lynchings, sadistic or other sex crimes, from the 'ride' of the gangsters, to the killing of the squealer or stool pigeon found with a nickel in his hand or his lips sewed together, or torch killing, or the gangster 'spotting' of the victim to the cult murder and those of strikes, etc. No one factor in the personality integration is important alone, but each differs in every case depending upon the relative stability or extent of organization."

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SOCIOLOGY

Sterilization Wrong Approach To Feeble-minded Problem

STERILIZATION will not solve the problem of mental deficiency on either economic, eugenic or humanitarian grounds, in the opinion of Dr. Lionel S. Penrose, research medical officer of the Royal Eastern Counties Institution at Colchester, England.

The menace of the feeble-minded is a question of very moderate dimensions when put in its true proportion to other problems, Dr. Penrose points out in his recently-published book, *Mental Defect* (Farrar & Rinehart).

On the economic side, Dr. Penrose states that it might cost the state as much as four million pounds to provide institutional care for all the mentally defective in England who need it.

But it would be possible to cope with the whole problem of mental deficiency in that country by a comparatively small reduction in the hundred million pounds or so spent annually on the fighting forces.

Only 5 per cent. of the next generation of mentally defective persons would be prevented if all existing mentally defective parents were compulsorily sterilized, Dr. Penrose says.

"Furthermore, a large proportion of existing defectives never could have children because their mentality is of such low grade that they would never, in the ordinary way, find a mate," he states.

The only defectives whom it would

be worth while sterilizing are those of high enough mentality and complete enough physique to enable them to have offspring. But even these defectives can not, under present economic conditions, earn their own living. Sooner or later they drift into institutions and they would do so whether sterilized or not.

Of the slightly higher grade of defectives, those having a mental age of nine years or more, there is the serious difficulty of determining whether they are or are not defective. Many authorities consider this mental age the borderline. Undoubtedly these persons make poor parents, but even here the problem is solved by itself without recourse to sterilization, Dr. Penrose indicates. These persons generally come to the attention of the authorities because of behavior difficulty and as soon as they are thus discovered, they are put under institutional care.

Finally, Dr. Penrose questions the humanitarian views of those who advocate sterilization of mental defectives.

"At the back of the minds of many people is the notion that sterilization should be a punitive measure," he declares.

"It has been pointed out that the advocates of sterilization never wish it to be applied to their own class, but always to someone else.

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ETHNOLOGY

Snowshoes Not Indian; Originated in Asia

SNOWSHOES, commonly thought of as an Indian invention, really originated in Asia, Dr. D. S. Davidson, anthropologist at the University of Pennsylvania, told the American Anthropological Association at its meeting in Pittsburgh.

The archancestral Asiatic snowshoes, however, were pretty crude affairs, Dr. Davidson explained. They were of an awkward, round, "bearpaw" pattern, with irregular and unsystematic lacing. The highly evolved types used by the Indians, and now a favorite implement of winter sport, were evolved in North America, while the ski, originally a crude plank, was being refined and shaped on the other side of the ocean.

Lately, Dr. Davidson stated, there has been a new migration of the snowshoe, this time westward into Asia again. The natives on the other side of the Bering Sea have learned the use of the highly evolved snowshoe from the North American tribes.

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