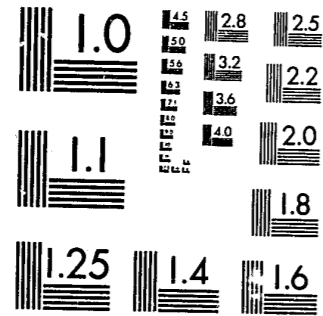


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Introduction

In recent months the State of California has been shaken by the specter of deadly violence ranging from political assassinations to mass cult murder-suicides. Citizens are struggling for answers to explain these apparently inexplicable events. And yet these flamboyant, sensational cases are only the dramatic tip of the iceberg. Almost unnoticed is the fact that the incidence of violent death has been climbing rapidly upward over a period of years. And that this increase has been occurring among the segment of our population who would seem to have the most to live for, fifteen to twenty-four year olds, young Californians on the threshold of their lives.

In 1966 there were 193 young Californians ages 15-24 who were victims of homicide. By 1975 this number had climbed to 624, more than a three-fold increase. The dramatic rise cannot be explained away simply on the basis of population increase, as the following table indicates:

Homicide Deaths and Rates, Ages 15-24
California, 1966 and 1975

Homicide Victims	1966	1975	% Increase
Deaths	193	624	223
Population	2,821,600	3,878,092	37
Rate (per 10 ⁵)	6.8	16.1	137

Although these data are based upon victims of homicide, there is a well-documented demographic similarity between victims of homicide and perpetrators of homicide. As a general rule people kill persons who are similar to themselves with regard to age, race, sex, socioeconomic status and other demographic variables (Tinklenberg and Ochberg, 1981). As such we can safely assume that the dramatic increase in

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the homicide victim rate for juveniles reflects an increase in the number of youths who are committing homicide. There also appears to have been an increase in adolescents committing parricide (murder of a close relative) and felony murders, which are typically perpetrated against people in an older age group (Tinklenberg and Ochberg, 1981; Wolfgang, 1981). Thus, homicide has moved from being a relatively unimportant cause of death for young people to a major one, and this change has been reflected in the number of articles concerned with youthful violence.

In this paper, we will be reviewing the seventy or so articles and relevant essays which speak directly to the problem of murderous youth. This review will concern itself with three areas of analysis:

- (1) methodological and philosophical issues involved in the study of juvenile homicide;
- (2) the perpetrators, with emphasis on etiology and interpsychic dynamics; and
- (3) the issues of prediction, prevention, and intervention.

I. Methodological and Philosophical Issues Involved in the Study of Juvenile Homicide

In the only other comprehensive review of the literature on juvenile homicide (Solway et al., 1978), the authors discussed the numerous methodological shortcomings of the existing studies on murderous youth. They were:

- (1) Very few studies provide information as to the ethnicity of the murderer.
- (2) No study has attempted to compare systematically, murderous youth with suicidal youth, or murderous youth with homicidal adults; no study has in any rigorous way attempted to differentiate murderous youth from other delinquent youth, or even other psychologically disturbed youth.
- (3) Studies were usually based on a sample size of less than ten, and frequently less than three or four.

- (4) Although often rich in clinical detail, none of these studies attempted to relate their findings to any conceptual model (such as social learning theory), other than a psychoanalytic one (Solway et al., 1981).

In addition, we were impressed by other methodological/philosophical problems which affected these studies:

- (1) The fact that virtually none of these studies employed any kind of control group, and none used a control group of normal adolescents. This, combined with the small sample sizes employed, makes generalization to homicidal youth in general extremely tenuous.
- (2) The subjective and biased nature of most of the studies. Typically, the subjects under analysis were adolescents being treated by a psychiatrist (the author). The "results" were thus often inseparable from the author's own subjective and idiosyncratic perspective, further hampering the ability to generalize.
- (3) The extreme lack of a systematic method of analysis coupled with an insistence by many of these authors on developing their own unique typology of youthful murderers. This makes the comparison of these studies to each other extremely difficult.
- (4) As one other critic noted (Braucht, 1980), these studies fail to develop a research model which integrates individual and environmental dynamics.

Consequently the body of literature on juvenile homicide is not only small, but fraught with shortcomings that make comparison--let alone generalization--difficult and risky. Nonetheless, we shall attempt to delineate factors common to the homicidal youths under study, but the reader is forewarned to view the results with caution.

II. The Perpetrators

A. Etiology/Motivation

1. Psychological Explanations

There is some debate in the literature (although this is usually implicit) as to whether or not homicidal youth can be considered to have a conscious motivation in the commission of their crimes. This difference of opinion relates to the type of crime (for example, felony murders versus parricides), and to whether or not youthful killers are different from adults who kill. Most of the studies under review here deal with the murder of intimates, which makes etiology (the causative events leading up to the murder) difficult to separate from motivation (the reason given by the murderer to explain his or her actions). This section will concentrate on etiology, followed by a brief discussion of motivation.

Family dynamics. Most of the authors are in agreement when it comes to the family dynamics and backgrounds characteristic of homicidal youths. In general, one could say that the home conditions of murderous youths are, as one author put it, "extremely unfavorable" (Bender, 1959). These families have been portrayed by many authors as chaotic, disorganized, rife with marital conflict, divorce, and economic insecurity, isolated from the community, and pervaded by verbal and physical violence (Adams, 1974; Carek and Watson, 1964; Corder et al., 1976; Duncan et al., 1958; Duncan and Duncan, 1971; Evseeff, 1976; Haizlip, Corder and Ball, 1976; Hellsten and Katila, 1965; King, 1975; McCarthy, 1978; McClearly, 1975; Marten, 1965; Patterson, 1943; Scherl and Mack, 1966; Sendi and Blomgren, 1975; Smith, 1965; Sorrells, 1979).

In addition to the general kind of deprivation experienced by being a member in such a family, the adolescent murderer-to-be is described by many authors as the direct recipient of actual physical abuse. Duncan and Duncan (1971)

described the "extreme parental cruelty" directed towards the homicidal child. Miller and Looney (1974) found that the parents were "inexplicably violent" towards their child. Russell (1965) noted that one or both parents were "cruel and punitive." The family histories of the murderous youths studied by Satten et al. (1960) were characterized by "extreme parental violence." The same pattern of severe and undeserved physical abuse on the part of the parents towards the child who later kills has been observed by many other authors (Adams, 1974; Corder et al., 1976; Easson and Steinhilber, 1961; King, 1975; Sadoff, 1971; Scherl and Mack, 1966; Sendi and Blomgren, 1975).

The relationship between husband and wife has not been extensively discussed in the literature. However, those descriptions which do exist portray a marital relationship characterized by "open hostility" (Hellsten and Katila, 1965). Intra-spousal violence was also observed (King, 1975; Patterson, 1943; Sadoff, 1971; Sargent, 1962; Tanay, 1976). Also indicative of the quality of the marital relationship is the observation in several studies of the divorce or separation of the natural parents of the child who kills (Easson and Steinhilber, 1961; McCarthy, 1978; Russell, 1965; Solway et al., 1981). However, it would appear from the literature that many of these parents remarry; divorce has not been shown to be more common among these families. In fact, more crucial to the etiology of adolescent homicide may be the fact that most of these parents remain in a marital relationship fraught with violence and conflict. Tanay (1976), in his study of adolescents who committed parricide, described such marital relationships as "sado-masochistic."

Several of the studies on homicidal youth found psychopathology to be common among one or both parents (Corder et al., 1976; Kaufman et al., 1963; Mercir, 1975; Otsuka et al., 1967; Stearns, 1965). Alcoholism of one or both parents (usually the father) has also been a prominent feature (Corder et al., 1976; Duncan and Duncan, 1971; Hellsten and Katila, 1965; Mercir, 1975; Patterson, 1943; Russell, 1965; Sargent, 1962).

In terms of the parent-child relationship, the most frequently mentioned feature was the relationship between the youthful murderer-to-be and his or her domineering, overprotective, seductive mother (Corder et al., 1976); Easson and Steinhilber, 1961; Evseeff, 1976; Patterson, 1943; Russell, 1965; Scherl and Mack, 1966; Sendi and Blomgren, 1975; Tooley, 1975; Weiss et al., 1960). Although overprotective, domineering, and seductive, the mother is also frequently portrayed as fundamentally egocentric, cold, and only superficially interested in her child's emotional needs (Hellsten and Katila, 1965; Russell, 1965; Satten et al., 1960; Smith, 1965). That such a combination of superficial interest, dominance, and seductiveness, coupled with a fundamental lack of real caring would produce a relationship characterized by extreme ambivalence is not surprising (see, especially, Easson and Steinhilber, 1961; Marten, 1965; Sadoff, 1971). In this vein, several authors have described the mother-child relationship as one in which the adolescent was used mainly as an object for the regulation of the parent's own tenuous self-esteem (see, especially, McCarthy, 1978).

In the literature, this over-controlling, depriving mother is usually associated with a father often described as either absent (meant literally or figuratively) or brutally rejective (Easson and Steinhilber, 1961; Patterson, 1943; Russell, 1965; Scherl and Mack, 1966; Smith, 1965). Such fathers have also been portrayed as weak and withdrawn, dominated by their wives. Typically, they are uninvolved in the family, except as punishing agents--when they can be, and usually are unpredictably brutal towards their child (Hellsten and Katila, 1965; Scherl and Mack, 1966). And, as noted earlier, many of these fathers are alcoholics or drug abusers.

How do these "family variables" result in a child who goes on to commit murder? Although debate exists in this area, there is consensus on several points.

Perhaps the most controversial hypothesis is one crystallized by Sargent (1962), in which he described children who kill as the result of a "family conspiracy:"

...sometimes the child who kills is acting as the unwitting lethal agent of an adult (usually a parent) who unconsciously prompts the child so that he can vicariously enjoy the benefits of the act (Sargent, 1962).

In the cases illustrated by Sargent, we find the typical picture of mother attachment and related father-hatred. In most of these cases, the mother has openly disparaged her abusive, alcoholic mate in front of the child, eventually "prompting" him or her to murder the father (or father-figure). Sargent cites as evidence for his hypothesis the fact that the surviving parent, "despite feelings of guilt...acted as though the deaths of their spouse had relieved them of a burden." Likewise, Johnson and Szurek (1952) felt that the homicidal child was encouraged (usually unconsciously and covertly) to act out the parents' "own poorly integrated and forbidden impulses." Along similar lines, Tooley (1975) found that the two young murderers he studied were "closely in tune with their mothers' unconscious needs and wishes...each small assassin was intuitively aware that the mother found her large families a burden, and they enjoyed a special relationship with her because of their willingness in several ways...to act out for her." Other authors disagree, feeling that rather than being the "favored" child in the family, the youngster selected to act out these unconscious impulses of the parent has been "scapegoated" (Johnson and Szurek, 1952; Easson and Steinhilber, 1961).

Similarly, Tanay (1976), in his paper on "reactive parricide," maintained that the murder was "an adaptive response to the family situation." In such cases, the entire family lived in fear and dread of the killed parent, a sadistic person whose death "led to a general improvement in the family life and quite often open relief and even rejoicing."

Related to this were the families observed by Easson and Steinhilber (1961), in which parents were rather overt in their expectations that their sons

would eventually commit violence. Many of these boys had collections of weapons, which their parents allowed them to keep, despite the boys' repeated threats of violence. This pattern was also noted by Sendi and Blomgren (1975).

Other authors take a different view, seeing such families as basically functioning as models of violence. As Silver et al. (1969) noted, children who experience violence learn to behave violently in the future. This seems logical, especially in the families described here, where violence is routinely used to handle interpersonal conflicts. Adams (1974) stated that "experiences with violence in early childhood...seem to lead the child in the direction of violence himself or herself."

Other authors point out that not only do parents in such families model the use of violent behavior, but the very nature of their depriving and exploitative relationships with their children results in the build-up of murderous aggression within the child. Certainly, the brutality inflicted on such children would be enough to inspire hatred in anyone. Adams (1974) saw parents precipitating their child's homicidal behavior in part through "nagging and ridicule." Duncan and Duncan (1971) saw the "mutual provocation" of child and parent as leading to the formation of the desire to kill. The incredibly strong feelings of pent-up rage induced in the child by the parents' treatment of them has been observed in several studies (King, 1975; McCarthy, 1978; Marten, 1965; Michaels, 1961; Miller and Looney, 1974; Patterson, 1943). As Sadoff (1971) noted in his study of two cases of parricide:

Most striking was the cruel and unusual relationship between victim and assassin. In both cases, the parent-victim mistreated the child excessively and pushed him to the point of explosive violence.

Since the child is usually unable to voluntarily leave this intolerable relationship, murder may be the "only way out," a notion supported in several studies (Adams, 1974; Duncan and Duncan, 1971; Malmquist, 1971; Scherl and Mack, 1966; Solway et al., 1981; Tanay, 1976).

Still other authors, operating out of a psychoanalytic perspective, explain the predisposition to commit homicide in Freudian terms. Some of these writers see all murders perpetrated by juveniles as a symbolic expression of parent-hatred, the result of a frustrated and incomplete psycho-sexual development. McCarthy (1978), for example, believes that the intense and symbiotic relationship between mother and child results in a "narcissistic" personality, with the child swinging from "infantile omnipotence" to "self-hatred, low self-esteem, and incredible rage." This can result in the "acting-out" of this rage, which is meant for the parents but directed at others. The homicide involves "projecting" this hated introjected parent-figure onto the victim--thus, killing the hated parent symbolically (McCarthy, 1978). Similarly, Miller and Looney (1974) see adolescent homicide as either the symbolic murder of a hated parent, or as the symbolic killing of the adolescent's "bad self," which the murderer has "projected" onto the victim. Similar interpretations have been advanced by several other authors (Patterson, 1943; Russell, 1965; Smith, 1965; Solway et al., 1981; Wittman and Astrachan, 1949).

Connected with the above notion is the idea that the family dynamics described earlier result in a poorly-developed ego, which has insufficient "strength" to "resist" being overwhelmed by primitive feelings of hostility and rage (Bender, 1959; Bolman, 1974; Bromberg, 1951; King, 1975; Miller and Looney, 1974; Malmquist, 1974; Sargent, 1962; Smith, 1965; Woods, 1961).

Finally, there are a few authors who, as one critic put it, "seem to have their own diagnostic axe to grind" (Smith, 1965). One of these is Woods (1961), who cites the presence of an electroencephalographic phenomenon known as the 6-and-14-per-second dysrhythmia as being related to the commission of homicide by adolescents. The dysrhythmia "does not in itself cause violence, but serves as a biologically determined stress on an already impoverished ego." However, Woods does not provide figures for the incidence of this EEG phenomenon in normal adolescents, weakening his hypothesis, to say the least. In a similar vein, Michaels

(1961) found that "murderous aggression" among the boys he studied was related to the presence of enuresis and epilepsy, which he maintained was characteristic of an "impulsive psychopathic character." However, Michaels declined to speculate on how these phenomena were related. Epilepsy and enuresis in homicidal youth were also noted by Bender (1959) and Easson and Steinhilber (1961), without further comment. Finally, McCleary (1975) sees adolescent violence and murder as the result of a failure to resolve the "seven crises of adolescent meaning."

2. Sociological Explanations

As noted earlier in the section on methodology, there is almost total separation between psychological and sociological explanations for violent youth. The majority of papers reviewed here employ the psychological approach and have been discussed in the previous section. We will not turn to those authors who incorporate or emphasize sociological factors.

The most thorough and influential writer in this area is undoubtedly Marvin E. Wolfgang. His 1970 report to the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare is the most successful attempt to present a comprehensive overview of the sociology of youthful violence, and it bears scrutiny in some detail. The following are the most relevant points Wolfgang makes toward a sociological etiology of youthful violence:

- (1) The Meaning of Youth. First of all, Wolfgang notes that because of the "baby boom" of the 1950s, there are not more young people than ever before. Because of the electronic media, shared values and norms among the young are more cohesive than previously as well, creating a "youth subculture" which, among other things, leads to the rapid spread of norms and values supporting violence. In addition, the period of time spent in "pre-adulthood" has lengthened, accompanied by rapid social change and a paucity of good adult role models.
- (2) Socialization into Violence. Wolfgang discusses many of the social forces which tend to promote and legitimize violent behavior in the youthful

population.

- (a) "Legitimized violence." Our society has several kinds of violent behavior which have official and/or popular approval. The use of physical force "by parents to restrain and punish children is permissible, tolerated, and encouraged." War between nations is still accepted as a problem-solving mechanism, with the young bearing the burden of the fighting. The police and national guard, not to mention "the less visible and more silent cadres of guards in prisons, mental institutions, banks, parks, and museums..." offer repeated exposure to the official use of legitimized violence. Such examples socialize the young "to the functional utility of violence."
- (b) "Masculinity." The traditional masculine role, although it may be "starting on its way out in our culture," still promotes and even requires (especially, according to Wolfgang, among the "lower classes") "...adolescent 'rehearsal' of the toughness, heavy drinking, and quick aggressive response to certain stimuli."
- (c) "The Mass Media." Wolfgang states that "violence is a dominant theme in fiction, theater, television, and other mass media. The sheer frequency of screened violence, its intensity as well as context, and the myriad forms it takes, cannot be claimed to instill firm notions of nonviolence in the children and youth who are witnesses...we play dangerous games with the socialization process and its adult products" (emphasis in original).
- (d) "Automobile Advertising." Automobiles have special appeal to adolescent males, and automobile advertising "evokes many of the attributes of aggression, particularly male aggression...these advertisements can hardly be denied as 'invitations' to violence." Wolfgang believes that such "invitations" form another legitimization of violence, and contribute to the fact that automobile accidents are the leading cause of death among the young.

- (e) "Guns." It is not clear how many American youths own firearms, "...but the appeal to masculinity is again present, and the general awareness of young males about guns in our culture forms yet another part of the socialization into violence."
- (f) "Criminogenic Forces of the City." The forces that generate conditions conducive to crime and violence "are stronger in urban communities than in rural areas." The anonymity of city life allows greater "freedom to deviate." Blacks, especially, "are the recipients of urban deterioration and the social-psychological forces leading to legal deviance." Especially for the young, "the discrepancy between perceived legitimate opportunities and occupational and educational aspirations is presumed to promote frustration, shared by others, and a search for illegitimate means...the theoretical leap to violence is not far... ." Furthermore, the prejudicial treatment traditionally afforded blacks by the police and courts has eroded the legitimacy and efficacy of their authority.
- (g) "The Subculture of Violence." In the cities, and especially within the ghettos, generations of poverty and prejudice have produced, according to Wolfgang, a "subcultural normative system" which "designates that in some types of social interaction a violent and physically aggressive response is either expected or required by all members sharing in that system of values." Wolfgang sees this "subculture of violence" as part of a "tradition of lawlessness, of delinquent or criminal behavior..." characteristic of generations of urban poverty (cf Wolfgang, 1981).

A very few of the authors on juvenile homicide attempt to relate some of their findings to environmental considerations. In his discussion of "kids who kill," Sorrells (1979) maintained that "kids who kill come disproportionately from communities in which there are abundant indications that life is not valued highly." Sorrells cites such facts as high infant mortality and poverty-level incomes as indications of a "bleak and hopeless" life, where children "must internalize the

implicit message that life is not valued highly." Other authors have noticed, mainly in passing, that many homicidal youths came from "lower class" families or were subjected to "economic insecurity" (Corder et al., 1976; Duncan and Duncan, 1971; Haizlip, Corder and Ball, 1976; Patterson, 1943; Tinklenberg and Ochberg, 1981). Steinmetz and Straus (1973), in support of Wolfgang's ideas on "socialization into violence," maintain that "almost all beating, slapping, kicking, and throwing things is carried out by normal Americans in the course of their home life," making the family a "cradle of violence." And the violent content of many television programs has been cited as a contributing factor in youthful violence by several authors (Joy, Kimball and Zabrack, 1977; Schmideberg, 1973; Somers, 1976; Sorrells, 1977).

3. Miscellaneous Etiological Factors

Three other factors have been discussed as important in the etiology of at least some juvenile homicides. No study has dealt specifically with any of them, but all have been mentioned to some extent and merit some note. They are the role of alcohol and drugs, the role of guns, and the effect of school performance.

- (1) The Role of Alcohol and Other Drugs. Writers vary in the extent to which they feel alcohol and/or other drugs help to produce a mental state conducive to homicide, but drugs--especially alcohol--are obviously a contributing factor. Corder et al. (1976) found that youths involved in murdering a relative or close acquaintance were often abusing alcohol or drugs before and/or during the murder. Duncan and Duncan (1971) found that the victim was often intoxicated at the time of the murder, this helplessness contributing to his or her death. Malmquist (1971) noted increased use of drugs just prior to the commission of the crime by the young killers he studied. Estimates of the percentage of youths who were intoxicated at the time of the murder vary from a low of 25% (Mercir, 1975; Sorrells, 1977) to the highest estimate of 68% made by Tinklenberg and Ochberg (1981).

- (2) The Role of Guns. As we already noted, Wolfgang (1970) cited the availability of firearms as a factor contributing to the incidence of youthful violence. This ease of obtaining lethal weapons has also been cited in a few other papers (Easson and Steinhilber, 1961; Seiden and Freitas, 1979; Sendi and Blomgren, 1975; Sorrells, 1977; Weiss, 1976). The only figure on the percentage of juvenile homicides committed with firearms was that of Tinklenberg and Ochberg (1981), who came up with slightly over 50%.
- (3) The Role of Educational Difficulties. Several authors in this field have alluded to the fact that many of the homicidal juveniles experienced rather severe problems in school (Bromberg, 1951; King, 1975, Mercir, 1975; Solway et al., 1981; Stearns, 1965; Tinklenberg and Ochberg, 1981). The only author to explore the exact nature of the relationship between poor academic performance and homicide was King (1975). In his study of nine youths who had committed homicide, King found that:

The violence in these youths seemed related to a serious difficulty in mastering reading, language skills, social symbols, comprehension generally, and, possibly, a consequent over-reliance upon feeling to fathom the world. Unable to cope, they become alienated, reactive, violent, and homicidal. The assumption that the homicidal act served the same purpose for all these youths seems to be borne out--it is a way of trying to cope (1975).

B. Personality Descriptions/Psychological "Types"

Besides attempting to discover the etiology of homicidal youth, most authors attempt to describe the mind of the youthful killer. As with the work on etiology, most of the writings on this subject are subjective, clinically-oriented, impressionistic and anecdotal.

There is a marked tendency for these authors to develop psychological typologies which becomes somewhat confusing for two reasons. First, no two typologies are quite the same, making comparison and evaluation quite difficult. Secondly, some authors base their typologies on the presumed psychological state of the young killers (e.g., psychotic versus neurotic), whereas others utilize the

type of murder committed (e.g., parricide versus killing of a stranger) as the basis for distinguishing differences between kids who kill. We shall first look at the attempts to make distinctions on the basis of psychological condition:

1. Typologies Based on Mental States

The only comprehensive effort at developing and testing a psychologically-based typology was that of Solway et al. (1981). These authors found three types of juvenile murderers emerging from the previous literature: (1) the psychiatrically-disturbed and/or intrafamilial murderer; (2) the criminal, or psychopathic-like murderer; and (3) the innocent killer. The authors administered a number of psychological tests to a sample of 18 youths--three of whom had committed intrafamilial killings, eleven who had killed friends or acquaintances, and four who had murdered strangers. The results were then compared to test results of a normal juvenile population (not a control group), as well as test results for a sample of adult murderers. Overall, their attempt was not successful: "...it was difficult to discriminate our sample from a normal sample of adolescents." Test results did reveal a "paranoid orientation," but "the mean profile, nevertheless, resembled the profiles of violent juveniles in general." The authors offered three explanations for the absence of expected differences: (1) that the adolescents were responding defensively; (2) individual profiles within the heterogeneous sample combined to modify any possible differences; and (3) the subjects were, in fact, normal (Solway et al., 1981).

Other authors have delineated typologies which remain untested. Bolman (1974) characterized youthful killers as (1) accidental murderers, (2) youths who have a lack of modification in their "infantile aggression," and (3) psychotic. Haizlip, Corder and Ball (1976) described three psychological "types: as (1) the impulse-ridden personality, (2) unsocialized behavior in the mentally retarded, and (3) the psychotic. Kaufman et al. (1963) differentiated between the "schizophrenic delinquent" and youths with an "impulse-ridden character disorder." Sendi and Blomgren (1975) found that juveniles who had only

attempted homicide were "organic impulsive;" those who had actually committed murder were "psychotic regressive." Sorrells (1979) discovered that the youthful killers he studied fell into three groups: (1) the non-empathic, (2) the pre-psychotic, and (3) the neurotically fearful. The non-empathic are essentially psychopathic, unable to experience compassion for others. The pre-psychotic resort to homicide as a desperate "cry for help." The neurotically fearful see everything in their environment as life-threatening, and can over-react to threatening stimuli (Sorrells, 1979).

Many authors have noted (with some alarm) the lack of empathy present in many of the juvenile murderers under their observation--demonstrated, among other things, by a total lack of remorse for their crime (Hellsten and Katila, 1965; McCarthy, 1978; Mercir, 1975; Sargent, 1962; Sorrells, 1979; Szymusik et al., 1972; Tanay, 1976; Tinklenberg and Ochberg, 1981; Wittman and Astrachan, 1949). This quality seems to include those young killers labeled as "impulsive" and "psychopathic." The most complete attempt to analyze this "type" of murderer was that of Miller and Looney (1974). These authors described "three basic types of murder syndromes:" (1) high risk: permanent (total) dehumanization; (2) high risk: transient (partial) dehumanization associated with episodic dyscontrol; and (3) low risk: transient dehumanization associated with episodic dyscontrol requiring consensual validation. "Dehumanization" refers to the "ability" of the murderer to see the victim as a "nonperson"--an "object" which can thus be eliminated without remorse or guilt. "Episodic dyscontrol" refers to a psychological state in which a "weak ego" is overwhelmed by affects and breaks down, allowing for acting out of violent impulses (Miller and Looney, 1974).

The extent to which homicidal youth are psychotic is the subject of some debate, although many studies show at least some juvenile murderers to be

severely impaired (Bender, 1959; Weiss, Lamberti and Blackman, 1960; Bolman, 1974; Corder et al., 1976; Easson and Steinhilber, 1961; Foodman and Estrada, 1977; Haizlip, Corder and Ball, 1976; Kaufman et al., 1963; McCarthy, 1978). However, whether or not the psychosis existed before the murder, as opposed to being triggered by the killing, is unknown, as most of the youths do not come under observation until after the commission of the crime. Indeed, other authors believe such youths are "borderline personalities" or are "pre-psychotic," the murder setting off a psychotic break (Marten, 1965; Sadoff, 1971; Sendi and Blomgren, 1975; Sorrells, 1979).

Other authors shy away from a diagnosis of psychosis, characterizing youthful murderers as "neurotic," and often refining this designation to "narcissistic" (McCarthy, 1978; Otsuka et al., 1967; Russell, 1965; Wittman and Astrachan, 1949). Finally, other writers, although they may note "affective coldness" (such as Miller and Looney's "dehumanization"), do not find any evidence (or at least, they do not report any) of psychosis or neurosis in their subjects (Duncan and Duncan, 1971; Hellsten and Katila, 1965; King, 1975; Miller and Looney, 1974; Patterson, 1943; Sargent, 1962; Scherl and Mack, 1966; Schmideberg, 1973; Smith, 1965; Solway et al., 1981; Stearns, 1965; Szymusik et al., 1972; Tanay, 1976). However, it should be noted that many of these "studies" are seriously lacking in detail, making their observations somewhat unreliable.

2. Typologies Based on Type of Murder

Other studies on homicidal juveniles have employed classificatory schemes based on the type of murder committed--usually, but not always, derived from the relationship of the victim to the killer. The assumption involved in this line of reasoning is that different personality types are reflected in the choice of the victim.

Only one study actually attempted to compare three different groups based on the choice of victim, to determine which qualities differentiated them from each other. Corder et al. (1976) compared ten adolescents who committed

parricide with ten who killed a relative or close acquaintance versus ten charged with murdering a stranger. Those adolescents charged with murdering a stranger were found to be "incompletely socialized," with a need for immediate gratification. The victim in these cases was viewed "as an object or obstacle" interfering with this need. In addition, all of these murderers were characterized by a "history of impulse control problems," resulting in the "acting out of primitive impulses," and a long history of "aggressive behavior." These adolescents sound quite similar to the "high risk" murder syndrome of "permanent dehumanization and episodic dyscontrol" described by Miller and Looney (1974). Adolescents charged with murdering a relative or close acquaintance "appeared to show less marked but similar histories of difficulty with impulse control, aggressive behavior, and incarceration. However, the motives and circumstances surrounding these murders tended to show some indications of deeper, continued interpersonal conflict and symbolic meaning rather than the simple, primitive acting out observed in the adolescents charged with murdering strangers." Finally, the parricidal adolescents "probably had fewer alternative modes of reaction to stress" than the other two groups, "as indicated by fewer social outlets, fewer sexual outlets, and fewer instances of aggressive behavior or lapses of impulse control" (Corder et al., 1976).

Most other studies which fall into this section have focused on the parricidal adolescent. Duncan and Duncan (1971) found a gradual buildup of murderous aggression, coupled with "a sequence of circumstances progressively more unbearable and less amenable to the adolescent's control." This view--of parricide as the only way out of an intolerable situation--has been supported by other studies as well (Malmquist, 1971; Sadoff, 1971; Scherl and Mack, 1966; Tanay, 1976). There is little agreement, however, as to whether or not mental disturbances (and what kind of disturbances) are characteristic of parricidal adolescents.

In their study of a sample of California youth incarcerated for murder, Tinklenberg and Ochberg (1981) placed the youthful murderer's crimes into five categories:

- (1) Instrumental. This form of murder involved acts that were "planned, dispassionate, purposive, and motivated by a calculated decision to eliminate the victim." Such murders do not involve "anger, illness, or...the pressure of a dyssocial group."
- (2) Emotional. Murders in this category were "'hot-blooded,' angry or performed in extreme fear. They are impulsive, and usually occur among intimates." Such murders "are not the products of mental disorder nor of a criminal subculture, but rather of the usual human emotions in extreme degree."
- (3) Felonious. These are killings which were committed in the course of another crime, usually robbery. They are unintended and unpremeditated killings which occur because something goes awry during the robbery.
- (4) Bizarre. These crimes include those committed by the insane and the severely psychopathic. "These crimes may be associated with brain damage, mental retardation, psychosis, or serious personality disorder, and are characterized by irrational, excessive, and sometimes sadistic dimensions."
- (5) Dyssocial. These killings involve the approval of a subculture in which "criminal aggression is the norm." Gang killings, for example, fall under this category.

III. Prediction/Prevention

This is an area of great importance, which has as of this time received precious little attention. As Seiden and Freitas (1979) noted, "Any death at this early age is distressing, but deaths due to...homicide are even more tragic

since, as contrasted to other causes of death, they are unnecessary, premature, and preventable."

A. Prediction

Only two articles attempted to develop criteria for assessing the adolescent's potential for homicidal behavior, one by Duncan and Duncan and the other by Malmquist (1971). Duncan and Duncan (1971) listed seven criteria for the measurement of adolescent homicidal risk:

- (1) The intensity of the patient's hostile destructive impulses as expressed verbally, behaviorally, or in psychometric test data. This assessment should include a detailed history of the patient's past life experiences.
- (2) The patient's control over his own impulses as determined by history and current behavior, particularly in response to stress.
- (3) The patient's knowledge of and availability to pursue realistic alternatives to a violent resolution of an untenable life situation. An apparently progressive development of explosive emotion accompanied by an attitude of hopelessness may warrant immediate attention.
- (4) The provocativeness of the intended victim and the patient's ability to cope with provocation in the past and currently.
- (5) The degree of helplessness of the intended victim.
- (6) The availability of weapons.
- (7) Homicidal hints or threats, which warrant serious concern if they are specific in regard to victim, means, details of fantasy, or measures to ensure escape (Duncan and Duncan, 1971).

Along similar lines, Malmquist (1971), after studying twenty adolescents charged with murder, developed eight premonitory signs of homicidal aggression:

- (1) Behavioral Changes within 48 hours prior to the murder. The changes were usually related to shifts in mood or cognitive reflections. Most noticeable was a deep pessimism about themselves or their predicament.
- (2) A "Call for Help." This often involved muted threats of violence.

- (3) The Use of Drugs, which occurred in two ways. Barbiturates and tranquilizers were used to contain impulses and affects. This was not very effective, and several of the youths had increased their intake prior to the murder to two or three times the prescribed dosage. A second usage involved amphetamines and psychotomimetics, which may have stimulated their aggressive impulses.
- (4) Object Losses that related to homicide involved lovers, mothers, friends, and therapists. This loss may be either actual or perceived.
- (5) Threats to Manhood. This usually involved girlfriends who urged their boyfriends to commit murder as a way to "prove their manhood."
- (6) Somatization, Hypochondriasis, or a Recurrent Medical Problem. Headaches of increasing severity were the most common of these symptoms.
- (7) An Emotional Crescendo appeared in the form of an increasing buildup of agitation and energy, accompanied by motor restlessness and disturbed sleeping and eating patterns. Acute anxiety, panic, or a presaging of catatonic excitement were often in the clinical pictures.
- (8) Homosexual Threats--overt or covert--raised the homicidal index. This can involve incest, peer associations, or associations between the youth and an older man (Malmquist, 1971).

B. Prevention

Slightly more has been written about prevention than prediction, although only one article (Sorrells, 1979) was directed specifically towards this issue. In this article, the author outlined five areas of prevention:

- (1) Efforts at intervention should be guided by research and planning, to properly address the unique needs of any targeted community.
- (2) Agencies (the courts, juvenile justice system, health care, etc.) should coordinate their efforts in attacking problems in high-risk communities. Such problems include a high incidence of infant mortality, unemployment, and poverty.

- (3) All children entering state custody (i.e., foster care) should be screened for emotional problems.
- (4) Correctional programs should be relevant to the emotional problems of the children, especially with regard to helping them develop respect and empathy for others.
- (5) Families who have had children removed should be evaluated thoroughly, and children should not be returned to violent, chaotic families (Sorrells, 1979).

Adams (1974) has stressed the importance of utilizing the school system to detect and treat children who show signs of emotional disturbance as follows:

School systems should offer adequate mental health services, including both psychiatric and social casework, for problem children. Prompt and effective treatment could then be provided (for) emotionally disturbed children. Child-guidance clinics with competent staffs should be established in all large communities. Basic to the problem of prevention is extensive research on the physical, mental, emotional, and environmental elements contributing to child delinquency and especially those resulting in homicidal behavior.

This sentiment was also stated by Patterson in an earlier paper (1943).

Other contributing factors have been identified which suggest preventative measures. Several authors, noting the high percentage of homicides committed with handguns, have recommended handgun registration and/or restriction (Marten, 1965; Seiden and Freitas, 1979; Sendi and Blomgren, 1975; Tinklenberg and Ochberg, 1981; Weiss, 1970; Wolfgang, 1970). Other writers have noted that in at least some cases of juvenile homicide, the youths gave "warning signals" prior to the killing. This has prompted the suggestion that they be taken quite seriously as a cause for immediate intervention (Russell, 1979; Scherl and Mack, 1966; Smith, 1965; Tooley, 1975; Wolfgang, 1981). Other factors which have been given attention are televised violence (and the glorification of violence in the media in general) (Rubenstein, 1981; Schmideberg, 1973; Seiden and Freitas, 1979; Somers, 1976; Sorrells, 1977; Wolfgang, 1970); alcohol and drug availability and abuse (Clark, 1981; Tinklenberg and Ochberg, 1981; Weiss, 1976); and youthful unemployment and poverty (Seiden and Freitas, 1979; Sorrells, 1979; Wolfgang, 1970).

IV. Conclusion

Juvenile homicide has moved from being a relatively rare occurrence to one of the leading causes of death for young people. The gravity of this threat cannot and must not be underestimated. If unchecked, it not only threatens the life of our young people, but could set the stage for the imposition of draconian authoritarian measures incompatible with a democratic system.

Precious time is being wasted in trying, for example, to discover whether homicidal juveniles are "organic-impulsive" or "narcissistic." More research, of course, is indicated, and it should be of a higher quality than previous efforts, but we already know enough to begin taking action. In this regard, the focus of new research should be on prediction, prevention, and intervention. The school system seems to be the logical place for much of this to occur. In the long run, however, it is the quality of life, especially for minority youth, which must improve if we are to stem the rising tide of youthful killings.

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