

There are different kinds of psychiatric disorder which might result in violent acts.

Severe mental illness sometimes results in the commission of extreme and savage crimes "where murder seems to stem direct from madness".⁶ However, these categories of crime, although including tragic and sometimes appalling cases, are relatively small.⁷

The psychotic, a person experiencing disordered thought or delusional thinking, may commit violent crime. However, to "equate crime in a broad sense, or even the isolated act of murder as a criminal act, with the psychotic individual would . . . be inappropriate."⁸ On the other hand crimes of violence are often committed by psychopaths, that is unsocialized people who act impulsively, are unable to feel guilt or to develop significant loyalties or to learn from experience.⁹

Most often the violent criminal is one who suffers from a personality disorder of an antisocial type¹⁰ and whose behaviour is the result of learned experience. Probably such a criminal was antisocial as a child. "Serious antisocial behaviour does not begin for the first time in adulthood, but is almost invariably preceded by antisocial behaviour in childhood".¹¹ The typical antisocial child gets along with no one. It is aggressive and has a high rate of psychiatric symptoms. It has difficulties in relationships with its family, its peers and later in school and in the community. Antisocial children "are the most common group of psychiatrically disturbed children treated or untreated; [they] suffer during childhood; except for childhood psychoses they appear to have the worst prognosis of any childhood psychiatric disturbance; and cannot be successfully treated either for the stage before the symptoms emerge or for the stage after the symptoms have appeared."¹²

Psychiatrists are aware that there are many causes for mental and emotional disorders. "For anyone who has examined the problem of juvenile delinquency and adult crime, it becomes obvious that crime is a bio-psycho-social phenomenon. No one who wishes to gain an insight into the causes of social maladjustment, and, one of its consequences, juvenile delinquency and crime, can afford to neglect any one of the three terms of this expression."¹³

The witnesses who appeared before us emphasized that it is essential to consider the possible effects on the future behaviour of the child of such things as physical inheritance, nutrition, smoking, alcohol and drug or chemical consumption by the mother during pregnancy, premature birth and procedures used at the time of birth which might be damaging to the infant. All of these physical influences are likely to have an effect on the future of the child. It was pointed out to us that criminals often are physically unhealthy people. The vicious criminal, contrary to popular belief, is not a fierce looking monster. "Most often he is a narrow-chested, odd looking individual with bad teeth or no teeth at all,"¹⁴ evidence of the deprivation he has suffered as a child.