

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 400 FIRST DEGREE  
PRISONERS IN MICHIGAN PRISONS

by

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A THESIS

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Michigan  
State College of Agriculture and Applied Science  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology

1946

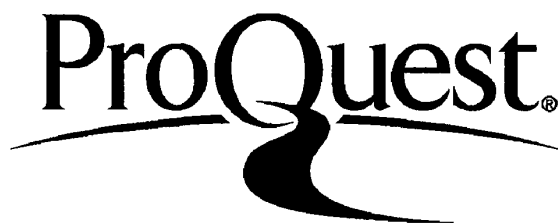
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## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

The author wishes to express his appreciation to Dr. Richard Myers, formerly of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Michigan State College, for his helpful assistance in planning this research project; to Sydney Moskowitz, Parole Eligibility Examiner of the Department of Corrections (Michigan Bureau of Pardons and Paroles), for his co-operation in making available the case-record folders of the 400 inmates on whom this study was conducted; and to Mr. Christ<sup>OPHER</sup> Sower of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology for his assistance in reading and criticizing the final draft of this thesis.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

America is the most murderous country in the world. Criminal statistics have repeatedly borne out the fact that the incidence of homicide in the United States far exceeds that of any other country in the world. Frederick E. Venn<sup>1</sup> states that the average rates of homicide vary from a high of 7.2 per hundred thousand of population in the United States to a low of 0.2 per hundred thousand of population in Switzerland. The average rates of homicide in a number of countries were given as follows:<sup>2</sup>

TABLE I

Homicide Rate, by Countries (1910 - 1922)  
Per Hundred Thousand of Population

United States, 1911 - 1921	7.2
Italy, 1910 - 1920	3.6
Australia, 1911 - 1920	1.9
South Africa, 1912 - 1918	1.8
New Zealand, 1911 - 1922	0.9
Ireland, 1911 - 1919	0.9
Spain, 1911 - 1917	0.9
Norway, 1910 - 1919	0.8
Holland, 1911 - 1918	0.3
Switzerland, 1911 - 1920	0.2

There is at the present time an almost universal recognition of this fact among sociologists and criminologists,

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick E. Venn, "Murder," The Independent, Vol. CXIII, (Nov. 8, 1924), p. 361 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 361.



but there is as yet no unanimity of opinion regarding the causative factors involved in this highly complex social phenomenon. That homicide is directly associated with the high incidence of crime in general there can be no doubt, but the search for specific causes goes on, and has enlisted the efforts and interests of an increasing number of physicians, psychiatrists, criminologists and research workers in these closely allied fields of endeavor.

Frankel,<sup>3</sup> Brearley,<sup>4</sup> Venn,<sup>5</sup> Dublin and Bunzel,<sup>6</sup> Calvert,<sup>7</sup> Jesse,<sup>8</sup> Cassity,<sup>9</sup> Dearden,<sup>10</sup> Catton,<sup>11</sup> and Abrahamsen,<sup>12</sup> to mention only a few, have concerned themselves with the various aspects of criminality as it relates to murders, and have published the results of their findings. The need for additional research, however, still appears to exist, and it is safe to say that at the present time many conclusions concerning the causative factors

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- 3    Emil Frankel, "One Thousand Murderers," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXIX, No. 5 (January-February, 1939).
  - 4    H. C. Brearley, HOMICIDE IN THE UNITED STATES, University of North Carolina Press, 1932.
  - 5    Frederick E. Venn, "Murder," The Independent, Vol. CXIII, (November 8, 1924).
  - 6    Louis I. Dublin and Bessie Bunzel, "Thou Shalt Not Kill; A Study of Homicide in the United States," Survey Graphic, Vol. 24, (March, 1935).
  - 7    E. Roy Calvert, "Murder and the Death Penalty," The Nation, Vol. CXXIX, (October 16, 1929).
  - 8    F. T. Jesse, MURDER AND ITS MOTIVES, 1924.
  - 9    J. H. Cassity, "Personality Study of 200 Murderers," Journal of Criminal Psychopathology, (1942), No. 3
  - 10    Harold Dearden, THE MIND OF THE MURDERER.
  - 11    Joseph Catton, BEHIND THE SCENES OF MURDER.
  - 12    David Abrahamsen, CRIME AND THE HUMAN MIND, Columbia University Press, 1944.

involved in the homicide problem remain tentative. It would seem that any careful studies in this area would perform the valuable function of supporting or challenging the findings and interpretations of previous studies, thus finally leading to sound and well established generalizations.

Criminological researches fall naturally into three groups: First, those which are concerned with the problem of treatment; second, those which are concerned with the problem of prevention; and third, those which are concerned with the problem of causation. Michael and Adler <sup>13</sup> have stated that the complex phenomena relating to criminal behavior permits and demands the consideration of items in isolation. This thesis represents such a study. It is primarily focused on the third aspect of criminological research mentioned above, namely that of causation. It is not the writer's intention to establish an over-all theory of criminal behavior by means of deductive logic, but rather to specifically determine what social characteristics appear to be significant causative factors among the first degree prisoners in Michigan prisons, to the end of inductively arriving at important generalizations regarding the nature of criminal behavior of first degree murderers.

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<sup>13</sup> Jerome Michael and Mortimer Adler, CRIME, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCE, New York, Harcourt Brace & Co., 1933, p. 63.

## CHAPTER TWO

## METHOD

Michael and Adler <sup>1</sup> have concluded that empirical scientific research in criminology cannot be undertaken at the present time, for the following reasons:

1. The subject matter of criminology is criminal behavior, and criminology is, therefore, a dependent science.
2. Criminology depends in large part upon the subject matter of psychology and sociology, and these subject matters have not yet been developed as empirical sciences.
3. Since no theory or analysis has been developed in the fields of psychology and sociology, scientific research is not yet possible in these fields.
4. The possibility of scientific research in psychology and sociology depends upon radical changes in the methodology in these fields, and is in part due to misconceptions or inadequate conceptions of scientific method by psychologists and sociologists. Scientific research in criminology has been similarly handicapped.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael and Adler, op.cit., pp. 390-391

In spite of the fact that a properly scientific research in criminology cannot be executed until a theory or an analysis has been constructed, Michael and Adler have stated that:

"This does not mean that exploratory researches prior to the existence of a theory are not useful but merely that they are essentially different from scientific researches which occur after a theory exists. It also means that exploratory research cannot by itself create a science; at the most the descriptive knowledge and the isolated generalizations which exploratory research produces provide the raw materials which may be more or less useful in the making of an analysis and in the development of a set of general propositions to be tested by scientific research..." 2

Further insight into the value of criminological research, and of the methods used, may be gained by a study of the function of statistics.

"The function of statistics is, then, to focus attention on matters needing investigation and explanation..."

"The value of criminal statistics in society's struggle with crime may be compared with that of the balance sheet in a corporation's struggle for profits. Neither the balance sheet nor the profit and loss statement show why the business has been successful, yet no corporation would think of operating without them... Similarly, criminal statistics are the indispensable tools of knowledge for any community that is attempting to reduce its crime and improve its administration of criminal justice." 3

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<sup>2</sup> Michael and Adler, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> REPORT ON CRIMINAL STATISTICS, No. 3, U. S. Government Printing Office, April, 1931, p. 132.

Statistics provides a basis for evaluating probable relationships objectively, but the need for improving the original data of sociology and criminology before applying statistical analysis must be emphasized. The data must not only be valid but they must be capable of yielding statistical inferences. This capacity depends upon a number of factors - such as the fairness of the sampling, the size of the sampling, the homogeneity of the sampling, et cetera.

Assuming that the raw data of criminological research are valid and that the products of statistical inference from such data are also valid, we can now pass to the second condition involved in the interpretation of the findings. This second condition involves the use of control or comparison groups. Since the aim of criminological research is to differentiate classes of individuals, it is important therefore that the data obtained by investigations be capable of being so interpreted that answers to the specific questions of differentiation can be given. For this reason control or comparison groups must always be employed.

In summary, then, it is safe to say that the failure to employ properly constituted control groups or properly selected comparison groups is a failure to satisfy the basic condition upon which the significance of the findings of these criminological researches rests.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is to study the social characteristics of first degree prisoners in Michigan prisons,

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<sup>4</sup> Michael and Adler, op. cit., p. 103 ff.

and to determine in what ways and to what extent they differ from other selected population groups in respect to age, nativity, education, intelligence, and a wide variety of other personal, social, economic and other types of characteristics and relationships.

The source material for this study consists of the case-record folders of four hundred first degree offenders now in Michigan prisons at Jackson, Marquette, Ionia, and the Detroit House of Correction. All of these prisoners have been convicted of murder in the first degree, and have been sentenced to life imprisonment.

A detailed record concerning each of these inmates is maintained by the Department of Corrections, under the Bureau of Pardons and Paroles, and these individual records have very generously been made available for the purpose of this study. No information has been withheld which would in any way contribute to the present survey, and the writer wishes to express his appreciation to all members of the department who assisted him in any way during the course of the survey.

The records pertaining to each prisoner are kept in individual folders, and a great many sources of information are contained therein. The following were of particular value in this study; Social History Sheet, official report of the inmate's previous criminal record (familiarily known as the "dope sheet"), Report and Recommendation of Psychiatrist,

Report and Recommendation of Medical Department, Report and Recommendation of Educational Director, and a brief summary of the legal proceedings involved in each particular case.

These documents contain specific and authoratative information pertaining to the nature of the offense, the court proceedings, the previous criminal record of the offender, the social background of the individual, the nature of his family relationships, his personal characteristics, and the economic status of the individual. Information concerning the inmates' prison adjustment and conduct, and reports of examinations by psychiatrists and sociologists are also included in the case-record folder of each individual, as well as official correspondence, and other miscellaneous sources of information.

The first step in this research project was a careful analysis of several of the case-record folders to determine the nature and extent of the information contained therein. On the basis of the information which was obtained from this analysis, a schedule sheet was prepared for systematic reception of the data. Great care was taken in the preparation of the schedule sheet, and an attempt was made to make the categories as objective and as scientific as possible. The breakdown of the age category, for example, was made to coincide with that of the United States Census. This method was used so that the age groups of the first degree offenders in Michigan prisons could be compared to those of the general

population in Michigan, in respect to age, race, nativity, sex and other characteristics. A similar procedure was followed for each of the other categories. In cases where ambiguity might exist the categories have been defined. This method assures a more accurate transmission of the data from the case-record folders to the schedule sheets, and results in a greater degree of statistical accuracy.

After the schedule sheet had been prepared, the case-record folder of each prisoner was carefully studied and the information relating to each of the separate categories was then transferred to the schedule sheet. The next step after the completion of the schedules involved the transmission of the data from the schedule sheets to IBM cards. This was made possible by the use of a previously determined coding system, and the mechanical sorting and computation which was made possible by this procedure proved a great time-saver, and increased the speed and efficiency of the tabulating tremendously. The statistical data thus obtained was then used in preparing the various tables which appear throughout this study.

This survey includes four hundred persons in the State of Michigan who have been convicted of first degree murder and subsequently sentenced to life imprisonment in this state. On August 1, 1946, there were five hundred and ninety-five first degree offenders in Michigan prisons; the earliest record available concerns a man sentenced on



December 23rd, 1886, and the most recent in July, 1946.<sup>5</sup>

All of the men included in this survey were sentenced to life imprisonment between the years 1921 and 1946. Of the 400 men, 59 received their sentences during the years 1921 to 1929, 249 during the years 1930 to 1939, and the remaining 92 from 1940 to 1946. This does not include all of the first degree offenders who were sentenced during this period, however, although it does include the great majority of them.

The possibility of including all life term prisoners in this study was considered, but the idea was abandoned to permit a more homogenous group; one in which more uniform statistical procedures could be used, and in which the statistical inferences drawn therefrom would be more valid.

Since the aim of criminological research, as we have already seen,<sup>6</sup> is to differentiate classes of individuals, control or comparison groups have been used frequently throughout this study. The function of these control groups is to point out in what ways, and to what extent, the criminal group under consideration differs from the general population of the same age group, sex, race, economic status, etc.

At least one control or comparison group has been used for each specific category (age, race, occupation, etc.)

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to the first degree offenders, there were 73 second degree "lifers" as of the same date, August 1, 1946.  
<sup>6</sup> For more detailed information concerning criminological research see CRIME, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCE by Michael and Adler, New York, Harcourt Brace & Co., 1933, p. 103 ff.

appearing on the schedule sheet, and in most instances several different comparison groups have been employed.

Coincident with the gathering of the data and the editing of the schedules, the writer has made a survey of criminological literature, particularly that relating to first degree offenders. Comparatively few studies relating to this type of crime have been made, but several studies closely related to the problem were discovered. These articles and other sources of information helped to give direction to the present study. Of particular value was the study made by Emil Frankel, Director of the Division of Statistics and Research, New Jersey State Department of Institutions and Agencies. This research project, "One Thousand Murderers," covered commitments to the New Jersey State Prison over a period of years and was presented to the American Prison Congress in Philadelphia in October, 1937. This article was later published in the Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Emil Frankel, "One Thousand Murderers," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXIX, No. 5 (January, February, 1939).

## CHAPTER THREE

## THE LAW GOVERNING FIRST DEGREE OFFENDERS IN MICHIGAN

The mandatory penalty for persons convicted of first degree murder in the State of Michigan is solitary confinement at hard labor in the state prison for life.

The present law relates back to the Revised Statutes of 1846, and reads as follows:

Section #16708 Murder; first degree, acts deemed; penalty. Section 1. All murder which shall be perpetrated by means of poison, or lying in wait, or any other kind of wilful, deliberate, and premeditated killing, or which shall be committed in the perpetration, or attempt to perpetrate any arson, rape, robbery or burglary, shall be deemed murder of the first (1st) degree, and shall be punished by solitary confinement at hard labor in the state prison for life.<sup>1</sup>

The law further defines murder as the unlawful killing, with malice aforethought, expressed or implied, of a human being by a person of sound mind and memory and discretion.

It is interesting to note that the law disregards a crime committed by an insane person, or by an idiot, or by a child under the age of fourteen years. The insanity issue may be raised during the interval, between the indictment and the sentencing of the offender. The statutes in the penal codes of all the states provide that an insane person cannot be tried, incarcerated, punished, or executed.

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<sup>1</sup> THE COMPILED LAWS OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN--1929, Vol. III, Ch. 153, Section #16708.

Although the law makes a clear distinction between insane and sane offenders, with borderline cases - those who are mentally abnormal without being legally insane - the law has made little or no progress.

In this connection the Briggs Law in Massachusetts, which went into effect in September, 1921, and has since been amended, has been notable for sorting out mental defectives. Every defendant who has been indicted by the grand jury for a capital offense or arrested more than once for the same offense or who has been convicted of a felony must be examined by the Department of Mental Diseases. The Department appoints two psychiatrists to examine the defendant and report on his mental condition. This report is available to the court, the district attorney, the counsel for the defense, and, under a recent (1929) amendment, to the probation officer. If a psychosis is present, the court arranges for the commitment of the offender to a mental institution until his recovery. In case no mental illness is present, the jury accepts the findings of the impartial experts.<sup>2</sup>

A similar law was enacted in Michigan in 1939, and it is felt that this legislation has been without doubt the most effective step taken toward solving the problem of expert psychiatric testimony in criminal cases.

Another problem confronting the penal authorities - and one on which there is still great controversy - is the question of capital punishment, particularly for those who

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<sup>2</sup> David Abrahamsen, op. cit., p. 187.

have been convicted of the greatest crime which exists in our society, the taking of a human life.

Concerning this question, Roy Calvert has stated that the efficacy of any punishment as a deterrent is determined by its certainty, and not by its severity. He points out that over a hundred persons are executed yearly in America, compared with fourteen in England and Wales - the rate in America being three or four times as high in proportion to the population. It is the higher percentage of convictions in England which is largely responsible for the much lower murder rate as compared with that of the United States.

Calvert reports that the British Home Office issued a detailed analysis in 1922 of the murder figures over a four-year period. Of 390 cases of supposed murder known to the police, in 288 cases arrests were made involving 313 persons and in eighty-three of the remaining cases the supposed murderer committed suicide. Of the 313 persons arrested, seventy-six were sent to insane asylums as guilty but insane. Seventy-four were convicted of lesser offenses such as manslaughter, and five were extradited or dealt with in other ways. Of the remainder, ninety-four were sentenced to death, of whom fifty-five were executed and thirty-nine had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment; only sixty-four persons were discharged.

In the United States, on the other hand, during the period 1912-1919, in the states of New Hampshire, New York,

Indiana, Vermont, Virginia, Massachusetts, Ohio, Pennsylvania, California, Kentucky, Connecticut and Utah there occurred 19,777 homicides, but of the murderers only 475 were sentenced to death, of whom 349 were executed.<sup>3</sup>

"Although for various reasons....," Calvert concludes, "these figures in the two countries are not comparable, they are sufficiently suggestive."<sup>4</sup>

Trends in penology have changed radically in the last century, and the emphasis today is not only on the segregation of criminals for the protection and well-being of society, but also on the ultimate rehabilitation of each offender so that he may once again take his place in free society. Due to the magnitude of the crime, and the extent of maladjustment and social disorientation present in a large percentage of offenders, the rehabilitation of prisoners convicted of murder is a difficult and challenging task. It is made more difficult by the public opinion often directed against parole procedures; opinion which is too frequently ill-informed and hasty, and not aware of the factors involved or of the calibre of the parole personnel. It is evident, therefore, that the enlightenment of the public toward the necessity of parole for exceptionally deserving persons - and a greater respect for the abilities and judgment of members of the parole board - should go hand in hand with the education of the prisoners. This is the goal toward which we should strive.

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<sup>3</sup> E. Roy Calvert, "Murder and the Death Penalty," The Nation, Vol. CXXIX (October 16, 1929) p. 406 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 406.

In general, prison education must advance in five directions:

1. Fundamental academic education, designed to give the inmate the knowledge and skills necessary for everyday living.
2. Vocational education, aimed at the development of the capacity for getting and holding a job.
3. Health education, emphasizing personal and community hygiene.
4. Cultural education for the better use of one's leisure, and the development of aesthetic satisfactions.
5. Social education, aimed at training in ability to live and get along with others.<sup>5</sup>

On January 1, 1936, there were 785 "lifers" in Michigan prisons; of whom 549 (70%) were convicted of murder. Of these, 506 were convicted of murder in the first degree. A breakdown of the "lifers" by crimes for which they were committed is as follows:

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<sup>5</sup> Wood and Waite, CRIME AND ITS TREATMENT, The American Book Company, New York, 1941, p. 589. (Adapted from THE EDUCATION OF ADULT PRISONERS, by Austin H. MacCormick, New York, 1931. p.12)

TABLE II

"Lifers" in Michigan Prisons January 1, 1936  
by Crimes for which Committed<sup>6</sup>

Crimes	Total Male	Total Female	Total Lifers	Total Inmates
Murder - First degree	487	19	506	509
Murder - Second degree	40	3	43	182
Rape	59	-	59	171
Bank Robbery	6	-	6	42
Robbery Armed	94	-	94	1309
Assault to Kill	13	-	13	61
Assault to Rob	4	-	4	166
Habitual Criminal*	60	-	60	-
Total .....	763	22	785	2440

\* See Act #328 of the Public Acts of 1931.

It will be seen from the above report that murderers constitute a great majority (70%) of the "lifers" in Michigan prisons, and represent a major problem; not only in terms of the financial burden on the state, but in terms of the rehabilitation which will be required before these prisoners can again assume their place in society. Only a very small percentage of the murderers, however, are ever allowed to return to society; a few being released by commutation of sentence by the governor, and others being released by court order. Equally rare are the cases where a first degree prisoner is

<sup>6</sup> MICHIGAN STATE PRISONS - Statistical Report, State Welfare Department, 1936, p. 37.



allowed a new trial, given a lesser sentence after being convicted of a lesser offense, and eventually securing his freedom at the expiration of his term. But for the vast majority of first degree offenders the sentence of life imprisonment means that he will spend the rest of his natural life in prison.

The distribution of first degree murders among the state prisons in Michigan in 1941 was as follows:<sup>7</sup>

TABLE III

Distribution of First Degree Murderers  
Among the State Prisons in Michigan - 1941

	Number	Per Cent
Southern Michigan Prison at Jackson	371	65.2%
Branch Prison at Marquette	169	29.8%
Detroit House of Correction (female)	21	3.7%
Detroit House of Correction (male)	1	.2%
Michigan State Reformatory at Ionia	6	1.1%
Total .....	568	100.0%

The assignment of a first degree offender to one of the prisons mentioned above is determined by a number of factors, including the age of the prisoner, his previous criminal record, the escape risk which he represents, his vocational needs and skills, his need for special medical

<sup>7</sup> Unpublished data from the Central Statistical Department, Bank of Lansing Building, Lansing, Michigan.

care, et cetera. In general the very young offenders are incarcerated in the Reformatory, and the most hardened criminals, and those who are believed by the prison authorities to be the greatest escape risks, are confined in the Branch Prison at Marquette. Female offenders are detained at the Detroit House of Correction and live in bungalow type dwellings, which is a relatively new innovation in penal administration.

The present distribution of first degree offenders is believed to be approximately the same as that represented by the above table.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

#### Age

It has been shown that commitments for major offenses in Michigan vary with the age group; well over half of the commitments for the predatory crimes of robbery, burglary and auto theft, for example, are constituted by young people under twenty-five years of age, mostly males. Moreover, an unusually large percentage of commitments for predatory crime is constituted by youths under 20 years - amounting in the case of auto theft to 33.4 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the commitments for rape, other sex crimes, homicide, assault, and miscellaneous offenses extend decidedly more into the older groups. Homicide extends fairly evenly throughout the various age groups and does not seem to have an appreciable margin of predominance in any one group, as was found in the predatory crimes where youth seemed to have an exceptionally high rate. Moreover, it will be noted that 75.0 per cent of the homicide cases were attributed to men under 40 years of age, while 96.4 per cent of the auto thefts were committed by men in the "under 40" age group.

Another view of the same matter is seen from a census report on prisoners received in State and Federal

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<sup>1</sup> MICHIGAN STATE PRISONS, Statistical Report, State Welfare Department, 1936, p. 35.

prisons and reformatories over a five year period from 1926-1930. The report lists the median ages of the prisoners, by offenses. The median ages were lowest for robbery (23.2 - 23.9 years), burglary (23.6 - 23.7 years), larceny (23.6 - 24 years), and having stolen property (23.2 - 24.4 years); while the median age for homicide was found to be much higher (30 - 30.6 years). The highest median ages were for violating liquor laws (34.1 - 38.6 years) and for violating drug laws (33.7 - 35.3 years).<sup>2</sup>

An awareness of the age factor in criminal behavior, and particularly of the percentages of commitments for the various age groups, is certainly fundamental to an understanding of the whole problem of crime. Moreover, a knowledge of the age distribution for specific crimes gives one a clue as to the causative factors involved.

Frankel, in his survey of "One Thousand Murderers," found the age distribution to be very similar to that reported in the census study mentioned above. Frankel found the average age of the murderers to be 32.5 years; the foreign-born having a slightly higher average (35.0 years) than the negroes (32.5 years), and the native-born having the lowest average (29.6 years). The specific rates for the different age groups are as follows:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A. E. Wood and J. B. Waite, CRIME AND ITS TREATMENT, American Book Company, New York, 1941, p. 231.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from "One Thousand Murderers" by Emil Frankel, Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXIX, No. 5 (January-February, 1939) pp. 684-685.

TABLE IV

Age Distribution of 1,000 Murderers In  
New Jersey Prisons

All Ages	100%
Under 20 yrs.	7.9
20 - 24	18.9
25 - 34	37.3
35 - 44	21.4
45 - 54	9.6
55 - 64	4.0
65 and over	0.9

"It is very significant," Frankel commented, "to note that all these individuals convicted - whether native or foreign born or Negro - were in the prime of life."

The age distribution of the 400 first degree offenders in Michigan was found to be as follows:

TABLE V

Age Distribution of 400 First Degree  
Murderers in Michigan Prisons

All Ages	100%
15 - 19 yrs.	9.5
20 - 24 yrs.	21.0
25 - 34 yrs.	35.5
35 - 44 yrs.	22.0
45 - 54 yrs.	8.3
55 - 64 yrs.	2.8
65 and over	1.0

These figures would seem to bear out the findings of Frankel and others, that murderers, as a group, are older than members of the general prison population. Further evidence supporting this belief may be gained by an analysis of the most recent data concerning the ages of new commitments to Michigan prisons. Of the 1,112 inmates committed to Michigan prisons between July 1, 1945 and December 31, 1945, 302 (27.1%) were between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, inclusive. This was the model age group, followed in order by the 20 - 24 year group with a percentage of 21.7, and the 25 - 29 year group with a percentage of 13.0. While 27.1 per cent of the new commitments during the last six months of 1945 were in the 15 - 19 year age group, only 9.5 per cent of the four hundred murderers were in that age bracket at the time they were committed to prison; a clear indication that murderers fall within the higher age brackets - over one-third of them in the 25 - 34 year age group. Nearly 70 per cent (69.6%) of the four hundred murderers in the present study were 25 years of age or older.

### Sex

Crime is predominantly a male activity, the sex ratio for crime being approximately 20 to 1, as between males and females. Wood and Waite have pointed out, however, that this ratio is somewhat modified by the fact that female offenders are more likely to be sentenced to other institutions than State and Federal prisons and reformatories, and also more subject to probation.<sup>4</sup> The jail population, at the last Federal census of the jail population in 1933, showed a slightly greater proportion of females; the males being only 13.7 times more numerous than females. This would indicate a reluctance on the part of officials to place female offenders in State and Federal prisons and reformatories, as Wood and Waite have indicated above.

During the calendar year of 1936 women were represented by 7.3 per cent of all arrests, according to information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation,<sup>5</sup> and statistics for juvenile delinquency indicate a similar sex distribution - the ratio being 148 for boys and 28 for girls (that is, the number of children dealt with per 10,000 children of the same sex and of juvenile court age). These figures were issued by the Children's Bureau, and are based on returns from thirty juvenile courts.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A. E. Wood and J. B. Waite, CRIME AND ITS TREATMENT, American Book Co., New York, 1941, p. 236.

<sup>5</sup> UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS, Vol. VIII, No. 1, p. 38.

<sup>6</sup> Wood and Waite, op. cit., p. 236. (Quoted from JUVENILE COURT STATISTICS for year ending Dec. 31, 1934, Children's Bureau Publication, No. 235, p. 7)

A study of female offenses reveals some very interesting facts. What the more frequent offenses committed by women are can be seen by their rates of commitment per 100,000 of the female population 15 years of age and over. In 1935 the highest rates for female offenses were as follows:<sup>7</sup>

Sex offenses. . . . .	1.3
Disorderly conduct . . . . .	.8
Drunkenness . . . . .	.8
Homicide. . . . .	.7
Drug law violations . . . . .	.6

The county and city jail population, during the first six months of 1933, shows the distribution of female offenders to be similar:<sup>8</sup>

Disorderly conduct and drunkenness. . . . .	46.9
Vagrancy . . . . .	10.8
All sex offenses . . . . .	13.4
Larceny . . . . .	6.5
Violating liquor laws . . . . .	6.3
Assaults . . . . .	4.0

The arrest data published by the Federal Bureau of Investigation again indicate that homicide is not an infrequent crime among women - 1.8 per cent of the arrests of women during the first quarter of 1937 were for this cause, while only 1.4

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<sup>7</sup> Wood and Waite, op. cit., p. 237. (Quoted from PRISONERS IN STATE AND FEDERAL PRISONS AND REFORMATORIES, 1935, p.11.)

<sup>8</sup> COUNTY AND CITY JAILS, 1933, p. 47, U. S. Bureau of the Census.



per cent of the male arrests were for homicide. Moreover, J. Edgar Hoover states that 'while only 7 per cent of the criminals arrested last year (1938) were women, nevertheless an average group of 1,000 female criminals commit more murders, assaults, larcenies and drug violations than an average group of 1,000 male criminals.'<sup>9</sup>

On the basis of the above statistics it seems evident that the sexes manifest important differences both as to the amount and types of crime which they commit. Male crime is predominantly that of predatory violence, larceny and commercial fraud. The commitments for females, on the other hand, are predominantly for sex offenses, with larceny a close second. As has been stated before, the relatively high homicide rate for females is surprising. "In 1935," according to Wood and Waite, "a larger proportion of female offenders (9.6 per cent) were committed to Federal and State prisons and reformatories for homicide than was the case for male offenders (5.7 per cent)." "These figures," they conclude, "would seem to warrant a study of the woman murderer as a conspicuous type of female offender."<sup>10</sup>

Only twelve of the four hundred murderers in the present study were females. This figure represents only three per cent of the total, but it is interesting to note that females comprised 26.0 per cent of the victims of these murders; females being the victims of 104 murders. Although the percentage is

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<sup>9</sup> Wood and Waite, op. cit., page 237. Footnote #26.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 237-238.

not known, a great many of these murders were the result of jealousy and the triangle love situation. The number of common-law wives who were murdered was also surprising, indicating that sexual promiscuity and moral laxity associated with this type of relationship might have some bearing on the murder situation.

## Race

Criminologists have long recognized the fact that crime among the negroes is considerably higher than among the whites. Bonger has summed up the negro crime situation in an excellent manner in the following statement:

"...Crime among the negroes is significantly higher than among the whites. It is three or four times higher among the men, and four or five times higher among the women. To me, this appears to eliminate the idea that actual criminality among the negroes is no greater than among whites..."<sup>11</sup>

Bonger also points out that for the first three quarters of 1938 there were arrested, per 100,000 population over the age of 15, the following numbers of foreign-born whites, native whites, and negroes: 164 foreign-born whites, 444 native whites, and 1,175 negroes.<sup>12</sup> Bonger also states that the criminality of negroes in the Northern States is considerably higher than in the Southern States, actually three to one. The explanation, Bonger believes, lies in the fact that negroes and whites occupy entirely different situations in the community.<sup>13</sup> This would seem to bear out the belief that crime is the result of dynamic cultural processes, rather than of inherent criminal tendencies on the part of the negro race, which many believe to be the true cause.

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<sup>11</sup> W. A. Bonger, *RACE AND CRIME*, Columbia University Press, 1943, p. 43. (Translated from the Dutch by Margaret Mathews Hordyk.)

<sup>12</sup> Bonger, *op. cit.*, Quoted from *UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS FOR THE UNITED STATES AND ITS POSSESSIONS*, IX, 1938, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Bonger, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-45.

The study of "One Thousand Murderers" made by Frankel, and frequently referred to in this thesis, found that the number of negro commitments for murder far exceeded the proportion of negroes to be found in the general population. This analysis is presented in detail below:

"The nativity and color analysis of the one thousand murderers considered in this study shows that 70.3 per cent were white (32 per cent native born and 38.3 per cent foreign born) while 29.7 per cent were negroes. (The 1930 United States census shows 65.5 male native born white, 15 years and over, 29.4 per cent foreign born and 5.1 per cent negroes)." <sup>14</sup>

It will be seen from the above data that the native whites were relatively low in commitments (32 per cent commitments as against 65.5 in the general population), the foreign born whites relatively high in commitments (38.3 per cent commitments as against only 29.4 in the general population, and the negroes exceptionally high in commitments (29.7 per cent commitments as against only 5.1 per cent of the general population).

Another trend which Frankel noticed, when comparing commitment rates for the period 1915-1924 as against the rate for the period 1925-1934, was a slight decrease for all individuals in the latter period. The decrease for the foreign born was quite marked (from 4.44 to 2.09), and approaches that for the native born. The native white rate showed a slight

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<sup>14</sup> Emil Frankel, "One Thousand Murderers," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXIX, No. 5 (January-February 1939), p. 683.

increase in the latter period - from 1.59 to 1.65; while the negro commitment rate for murder, which was already six times that of whites in the period 1915 - 1924, has further increased in the ten years following - from 19.73 to 22.03. No explanations for these changes were made by Frankel.<sup>15</sup>

TABLE VI

Murder Commitment Rates in New Jersey From  
1915 to 1934; By Nativity and Color

Nativity and Color	Murder Commitments - Average Annual Rate Per 100,000 Male Population 15 yrs. and Over of Specified Nativity and Color	
	Period 1925-1934	Period 1915-1924
All individuals	2.95	3.21
Native born white	1.65	1.59
Foreign born	2.09	4.44
Negro	22.03	19.73

Further evidence supporting the fact of the greater criminality of the negroes appears in the 1923 census survey, a portion of which is presented in the following quotation:

"Negro males formed 31.0% of the prison and reformatory population, on January 1, 1923, and 23.6% of the commitments between January 1 and June 30, 1923. Whereas, in the general population 18 years of age and over in 1920, negro males comprised only 9.0%...While the

<sup>15</sup> Emil Frankel, op. cit., p. 683.

percentage of male negroes was about three times as large among prisoners present January 1, as among the population, and over twice as large among commitments as for the population, the percentage of negroes among the female prisoners was more than four times as large for those present January 1, and five times as large for commitments, as for the female population." 16

A great many other studies of negro criminality have been made, and the results show a striking similarity to those which have been presented in the foregoing pages. Various interpretations have been offered to account for the disproportionate crime rate of the negro. Among the reasons assigned have been inherent racial differences (which is a much disputed point), his difficulty in securing redress for wrongs except by violence, his low economic status and concomitant lack of education, ignorance, his inability to engage effective criminal lawyers, and the generally low social status which confronts him at every turn. There can be little doubt that these factors play the predominant role in negro criminality. In other words, the explanation lies primarily in the social and cultural milieu in which the negroes as a race have been forced to live because of the caste system.

The results of the present study show that the crime rates for the negroes are uniformly higher than the rates for the white inmates. These differences have been

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16 PRISONERS, 1923, U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1926, p. 59.

discussed in greater detail in Chapter VIII (Criminal Experience), and also in Chapter VII (Broken Homes), where the criminal records of negro and white inmates, from broken and unbroken homes respectively, have also been discussed in detail.

### Physical Condition

There is some evidence to indicate that murderers, as a group, differ in certain physical and sociological characteristics, not only from the general population, but from the general prison population as well. Hooton, for example, after a careful study of 281 negro first degree murderers, makes the following statement:

"Taking them by and large, the first degree murderers, within their total group, are much more clearly distinguished in the sum total of physical and sociological features than might be expected. Evidently they are not only older and more robust men, but also more largely derived from the rural areas, and in general, more ignorant than the total Negroids..."<sup>17</sup>

Frankel, after making an extensive investigation of the characteristics of murderers, states that:

"...It is very significant to note that all these individuals convicted - whether native or foreign born or negro - were in the prime of life..."<sup>18</sup>

The average age of the 1,000 murderers in Frankel's survey was 32.5 years, which is slightly higher than the average age of the prison population in general. In this respect, at least, murderers would appear to differ from the general prison population, and substantiate Hooton's statement that murderers are older and more robust men.

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<sup>17</sup> E. A. Hooton, CRIME AND THE MAN, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1939, p. 311.

<sup>18</sup> Emil Frankel, op. cit., p. 684.



With regard to the physical make-up it has been asserted that there was a relation between endocrine dysfunction and criminality. Except for certain sexual offenses, such as overt homosexuality, where it cannot be denied that an imbalance of the sexual hormones may exist, it is at the present time hard to establish a relation between criminal behavior and the function of the endocrine glands. In this connection it is important to point out the relationship between the endocrine dysfunction and the specific crime of murder. Frankel has made the following observation:

"It is well known that homosexual inclinations may be accompanied by sadistic or masochistic tendencies. These are sexual expressions of hostile impulses in which sexual gratification takes place as a result of hurting someone or being hurt. These perversions play a great part in many sexual offenses and in many cases of murder."<sup>19</sup>

Additional evidence supporting the belief that glandular imbalance has a definite relationship to criminal behavior has been furnished by Schlapp. After the examination of 20,000 convicts, M. G. Schlapp suspected that over one-third of them suffered from glandular imbalance.<sup>20</sup>

Of equal importance, however, seems to be a possible connection between psychosomatic disorder and the origination of crime, a problem to which relatively little attention has been paid.

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<sup>19</sup> David Abrahamsen, CRIME AND THE HUMAN MIND, Columbia University Press, New York, 1944, p. 122.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted from Michael and Adler, CRIME, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCE, Harcourt Brace and Co., New York, 1933, p.108.

Dr. Abrahamsen, in describing the psychosomatic phenomenon, comments as follows:

"We may say that each bodily disease or bodily defect may tend to produce a change in the mental attitude of a person. This inclination may disappear when the disease vanishes, but it may also develop further, particularly in the case where the disease leads to physical inferiority. Here lies a psychosomatic problem.

"Of special interest are those homicides which occur as a result of a physical disease or deformity of the body. The dynamic connection between the homicide and the acting person may be difficult to trace because of the complex picture made by the elements involved, but the ascertaining of such a connection is eased if the perpetrator becomes consciously aware that the mental attitude is changed by his body disease or defect. The degrees in which a person apprehends that he is different from his fellows, if he is at all conscious of it, vary all the way from the most vaguely comprehended to full realization.."21

Several murders in which the elements of bodily disease or bodily deformity, and the concomitant feeling of inferiority, plays an important role were discovered in the present study. These murders will be discussed briefly in Chapter IX, (MURDER AND ITS MOTIVES).

The importance of these factors in inducing criminal behavior should not be under-estimated. The precise weight to be given to each of these factors, however, can be determined only after a careful analysis of each individual case.

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21 David Abrahamsen, op. cit., p. 170.

In many cases the murderer will acknowledge his deep awareness of his mental or physical inferiority, and the part which this feeling subsequently played in the development of anti-social attitudes and behavior. Although there are many known cases of murder where the factors of bodily disease or bodily deformity have been the direct motivating drives, it is believed that the psychosomatic type of murder (i.e., a murder in which a change in the mental attitude of the individual is brought about as a result of his bodily defect or deformity) is much more frequent, and this was found to be true in the present study.

In an investigation Cyril Burt <sup>22</sup> found that 70 per cent of his delinquents suffered from ill health or bodily weakness, the conditions being one and a quarter times as prevalent among them as among non-delinquent children in the same community. In conclusion, he stated that in 10 per cent of the boy's cases and in about 7 per cent of the girl's cases their physical conditions were the main reason for the children's criminal behavior. The number of children included in the study was not stated.

Johannes Lange, as well as many others, believes that the natural constitution with which a person is endowed at birth is of tremendous importance in determining whether or not he later develops criminalistic tendencies, but he is also aware of the many environmental influences which

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<sup>22</sup> THE YOUNG DELINQUENT, p. 249 (Quoted in CRIME AND THE HUMAN MIND, by David Abrahamsen, p. 43).

work hand in hand with the hereditary ones. Lange summarizes this point of view in the following statement:

"...the biologist, and even more the doctor who has to deal with the individual criminal, cannot help again and again seeing fate in crime, stronger than the free-will of the individual. The natural tendencies one is born with, the surrounding world he grows up in, these are essentially destiny, and it is also destiny by which environment, with its countless influences, works to form natural tendencies into one whole.

"Consequently, in dealing with the individual criminal the doctor will always consider his natural tendencies first, that unalterable material which so often breaks down all efforts to help and which forces one to consider criminal conduct as so many various symptoms of an abnormal constitution." <sup>23</sup>

"The most significant evidence of hereditary influence," according to Dr. Abrahamsen, "was assumed established by Lange's investigations of twins."<sup>24</sup> Lange secured the Bavarian prison records of 13 identical and 18 fraternal twins. Of the 13 sets of identical twins, 10 had a criminal record for each twin, and the remaining three had one twin criminal and one noncriminal. Of the 18 fraternal twins, three were found to have a criminal record for each twin, and 15 had one twin criminal and one noncriminal. According to Lange, the results showed that criminalistic tendencies were inherited.

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<sup>23</sup> Johannes Lange, CRIME AND DESTINY, (Translated by Charlotte Haldane), Charles Boni, New York, 1930, pp. 21-22.

<sup>24</sup> David Abrahamsen, op. cit., p. 39.

Rosanoff <sup>25</sup> has also concluded that hereditary elements play an important role in establishing criminal behavior. In 1934 Rosanoff investigated 1,008 pairs of twins. He found that in 97 pairs one member was criminal, in 107 pairs one was a juvenile delinquent, and in 136 pairs one member showed behavior problems.

The origin of crime as to hereditary or environmental elements may be so complicated that one hardly can say where the two types of factors belong. In the case of an illegitimate child, for example, it is impossible to determine whether his being illegitimately born prompted his crime or whether he violated the rules of society because nobody cared about him and gave him adequate care. Or, in the case of the children born of a feeble minded father, we have no way of determining the relative influence of their heredity and their environment in the event that they become offenders. We are justified, then in stating that nobody can say where heredity starts or environment ends.

Biological science today maintains that heredity determines what a person can do, while environment decides what he does. Because of the very nature of the personality some characteristics are determined by heredity, others by environment, and others by both.

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<sup>25</sup> A. J. Rosanoff, L. M. Handy, and I. Rosanoff, "Criminality and Delinquency in Twins," Journal of Criminal Laws and Criminology, (January-February 1934), 925.

In discussing the physical and hereditary factors involved in the crime of murder, it should also be pointed out that some physiological states tend to expose the individual to crime; they therefore have a bearing on its perpetration. As the child approaches puberty, for example, when sexual conflicts may prompt anti-social tendencies, he may be more exposed to the risk of committing crime than when he is mature. It is a well known fact that the problem of crime is largely the problem of youth; it is also at this period that the young must recognize and accept the influence of social factors.

In the present study of 400 murderers several were found which could definitely be attributed to sexual conflicts existing in adolescence. This situation, and the concomitant emotional immaturity and instability, is common particularly in the 15-19 years age bracket, and also in the 20-24 years age group, and occasionally higher.

I will cite the case of a 15 year old murderer - I shall call it Case #209 - where a young offender became infatuated with a 27 year old teacher in his school, but not in his class. He stated that she ran around freely with many young men in the small Michigan community where he lived, and that he became jealous. She had frequently given him rides after school so that he could visit some traps which he had set. One afternoon he states that he was determined to have intercourse with her, whether she was willing or not. He asked her if she would give him a ride to his trap line, and

on the way - when she refused his request for intercourse - he attacked her and killed her.

In another murder - Case #508 - a 16 year old offender approached a young girl and asked her to have intercourse with him. When she refused, and threatened to tell her mother, he shot her and hid her body in a railroad culvert.

Probably no factor relating to the physical condition of the individual at the time of the commission of murder is of greater importance than alcoholism. The weight of evidence supporting this statement is very great. The intimate connection between intoxicants and crime is shown by Aschaffenburg in his famous book, CRIME AND ITS REPRESSION.

Aschaffenburg says about this: 'There can be no more distinct explanation as to the immediate cause of the assaults when recalling that two-thirds of all fights take place in or in front of public houses.'<sup>26</sup> Out of 1,116 assaults studied, 66.5 per cent were committed in taverns, 7.7 per cent in living quarters, 8.8 per cent in the streets, 7.8 per cent in places of work, while the place was unknown in 9.2 per cent of the cases.

Dr. Abrahamsen reports that Baer <sup>27</sup> has obtained records from 49 penitentiaries, 50 prisons and penitentiaries for women, and 21 houses of correction and reformatories for both sexes. He found that of 30,000 prisoners in 41 male

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<sup>26</sup> Gustav Aschaffenburg, CRIME AND ITS REPRESSION, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1913, p. 78.  
<sup>27</sup> David Abrahamsen, op. cit., p. 123. (Original source not given)

prisons, 49.9 per cent were drunkards, while of 2,796 female prisoners, 18.1 per cent were drunkards.

Another enlightening study has been made by Gray and Moore.<sup>28</sup> They examined 1,637 prisoners in the Massachusetts State Prison of whom 1,086 (66.3 per cent) were regarded as alcoholics. Of these 68.6 per cent had alcoholic relatives, 62 per cent had alcoholic parents, and 26.1 per cent had alcoholic siblings. Of the alcoholic prisoners, 34.8 per cent claimed to have been intoxicated at the time of their crime, and this was supported by other evidence in 22.8 per cent of the cases.

A similar finding has been reported by Halpern in his study, A DECADE OF PROBATION, in which 5,755 cases were investigated over a ten year period, and alcoholism was seen to be a contributing factor in 22.6 per cent of the cases.<sup>29</sup>

As to the effect of alcohol, Dr. Abrahamsen says that it can be estimated only when the criminal act is the direct consequence of alcoholic intoxication, and that intoxication from alcohol or a drug is a condition which leads the individual to perform acts in which the deliberation is either inhibited or abolished. This is shown by the fact that the highest instance of assault is found in alcoholic

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<sup>28</sup> M. G. Gray and Merrill Moore, "Incidence and Significance of Alcoholism in the History of Criminals," Journal of Criminal Psychopathology, III, (October, 1941) No. 2, 316.

<sup>29</sup> Irving W. Halpern, A DECADE OF PROBATION (A Study and Report for the Court of General Sessions of New York City, 1936, p. 60.



offenders, while in the general group crimes against property tend to be most prevalent.

Considering the personality of the alcoholic offender, one may say that the alcoholic person is socially sensitive and one may also be justified in saying that in most cases he is one who has felt a state of insecurity from his earliest childhood. Thus, it appears that he derives his insecurity from his environment which may be conducive to alcoholism - as a method of "escape."

In the course of their upbringing, as Dr. Abrahamsen and others have stated,<sup>30</sup> alcoholics may be frustrated. This produces aggressive inclinations in which criminal leanings and the abuse of alcohol are developed side by side. In fact, there are many particular factors in the causation of alcoholism lending support to the belief that alcoholics may belong to the 'neurotic character' - in some alcoholics the personality difficulties pertain to the sphere of sexual adaptation, while in others the family situation is the most difficult.

A few illustrative cases from the present study will clarify this particular type of individual.

The following facts are quoted from the record of a 68 year old man whom we shall refer to as Case #378:

"...During the prison interview the subject pleaded guilty to killing his wife. He stated that his wife

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<sup>30</sup> David Abrahamsen, op. cit., p. 124.

had been running around with other men for the past three years previous to the offense. She asked the subject to take out more life insurance which he refused to do, and then she threatened him with a shot gun...He stated he had been drunk for a period of two weeks before the killing and that he lost his temper...She influenced all the children against him, he stated... On the father's side drank three whiskies a day...

"His problem has resulted from marital conflict which was brought about by his drinking and his inability to solve his problems in a rational manner due to his emotional instability. Further confusion through continuous drinking and a state of jealousy...Medical report: Senile. I.Q. - 78, M.A. (mental age) 11-8 (11 years and eight months)...."

The following information is taken from the file of an inmate whom we shall refer to as Case #355:

"...His work on the Great Lakes kept him away from home practically all the time until he was married, and necessarily brought him into contact with a fairly rough class. He began to drink at 17, and drank a little until he got married. His disappointment in marriage led to heavier drinking...He says he was so drunk at the time of the crime that he remembers nothing of what occurred... Emotionally unstable. Impulsive...."

In the above case, the inmate stated that he had lost his job as a switchman on the Pere Marquette Railroad because of the complaints of the victim. During a drunken spree he induced a drinking companion to help him "get" the man who had wronged him. They proceeded to get some 2 x 4 clubs, and in

the darkness they followed their victim by the light of the lantern he was carrying and killed him. Both men are now serving life sentences, which is the mandatory penalty for offenders found guilty of first degree murder in the State of Michigan.

It is very evident that alcoholism played an important role in these cases, and cases similar to these are very frequent. Although alcoholism apparently acts as a precipitating factor in a very large percentage of murders,<sup>31</sup> the personality structure and the conflicts which are present within the individual should in no way be ignored; for in most cases alcoholism is merely a form of compensation resorted to because the individual could no longer tolerate his frustrations or live on the same level with his surroundings. In the two cases just cited - #355 and #378 - alcoholism acted as an escape mechanism from a marital situation which had become intolerable to the individual concerned; the alcohol further acting to reduce the individual's restraint to such a point that he readily yielded to a criminal impulse, with the murder resulting.

The above situation is characteristic of a very large number of murders, and although the social background and individual characteristics of the murderers vary with

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<sup>31</sup> John H. Cassity, "Personality Study of 200 Murderers," Journal of Criminal Psychopathology, 11 (1942), No. 3, 296-304 found that alcohol as a precipitating factor was present in 50 per cent of the total cases. Hartvig Nessen ALKOHOL OG FORBRYDELSE, Oslo, 1933, p. 20 found that of those who committed murder, 60 per cent were intoxicated.

each individual case, the basic pattern is the same.

It is interesting to note that alcoholism apparently has greater significance in the crimes of first offenders, for in the case of recidivists they would have undoubtedly become recidivists without the use of alcohol.<sup>32</sup>

The last factor to be discussed under the general subject of physical condition is that of venereal disease. In the Glueck study - 500 CRIMINAL CAREERS - it was found that 26.6% (118) of the 444 men on whom this information was available were suffering from venereal diseases.<sup>33</sup> On the basis of observations of the prevalence of social diseases made in Boston by Dr. Richard C. Cabot,<sup>34</sup> the Gluecks concluded that the incidence of diseases in the prison population was not unduly high. Dr. Cabot's observations included 8,000 males over 18 years of age. These males were in local hospitals, and a careful questioning revealed that 35% gave a history of gonorrhoea, and 11% a history of syphilis at some period of their lives.

While the presence of venereal disease does not in itself indicate or induce criminal behavior, it indicates sexual promiscuity, a low standard of living, a general laxity of moral restraints, some social maladjustment, etc. - traits

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<sup>32</sup> Hartvig Nissen, op. cit., Quoted by David Abrahamsen in CRIME AND THE HUMAN MIND, p. 122.

<sup>33</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, p. 153-154.

<sup>34</sup> Dr. Richard C. Cabot, "Observations Regarding the Relative Frequency of the Different Diseases Prevalent in Boston and Its Vicinity," THE SHATTUCK LECTURE, 1911, p. 33.

which are found more frequently in the lower socio-economic levels of society from which an unduly large proportion of the criminal population is derived.

Of the four hundred inmates included in the present survey, it is known that at least 11.1 per cent had a venereal disease at the time of their commitment to prison, and an additional 18.7 per cent had a history of venereal disease at some period of their life. There were many instances, however, in which this information was not available, and it is believed that if a more detailed study could be made of this factor the incidence of venereal disease, and the number of individuals with a history of venereal disease, would be considerably higher. Comparable statistics as to the incidence of venereal disease in the general population in Michigan are not available.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

#### Marital Status

A very extensive study of prisoners, including their marital status, was made by the Census Bureau in 1923.<sup>1</sup> A total of 11,118 prisoners were included in the survey, which covered all commitments to prisons and reformatories during the period from January 1 to June 30, 1923. An analysis of the results of the survey indicate that the divorced male prisoners were about six times as numerous, in porportion to the general population, as were the married or widowed, and nearly three times as numerous as the single; while the single were over twice as numerous as the married and widowed. In view of the large number of prisoners in the survey, the reliability of the source, and the wide disparity between the percentages found in the prison population as compared to the general population, the results would appear to be very significant. It was pointed out, however, that the high percentage of divorced prisoners probably represented, in large part, a result of their arrest and conviction for former offenses, since the laws of most states list "conviction for a felony" or "imprisonment in the penitentiary" as grounds for divorce. In the year 1923 it is reported that there were 810 divorces due to these causes.

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<sup>1</sup> PRISONERS, 1923 - U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1923, p. 82 ff.

The detailed statistical breakdown is presented in the following table:<sup>2</sup>

TABLE VII

Total Commitments to Prisons and Reformatories (Male)  
in the United States  
From January 1 to June 30, 1923;  
By Marital Status, Color and Nativity

Marital Condition	Per cent Distribution			Per 100,000 Pop. 15 Yrs. of Age and Over of Same Sex, Race and Nativity		
	Native White	Foreign- born White	Negro	Native White	Foreign- born White	Negro
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	42.6	30.2	124.6
Single	54.9	52.7	51.6	60.3	61.6	183.1
Married	38.5	41.0	43.1	28.4	18.1	82.3
Widowed	3.2	4.4	3.8	31.7	21.9	74.2
Divorced	3.4	1.9	1.5	208.3	128.3	224.8
Unknown	----	----	----	----	----	----

Another extensive study - also conducted by the Census Bureau - indicates that the ratio of commitments for divorced prisoners per 100,000 of the general population was 201.9 for males and 24.1 for females, as contrasted with a total commitment ratio of 48.4 for males and 3.4 for females.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 82

Taking the divorced prisoners by sex and five year groups, the highest ratio (642) was found for males between 20 and 24 years of age.<sup>3</sup>

Hooton, after studying 281 cases of first degree negro murderers, came to the following conclusion:

"...Inspection of the sociological characteristics of first degree murderers shows that they are derived in disproportionately large numbers from the States of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Texas. They are very low in previous convictions, are deficient in single men, are unduly high in widowers (11.15 per cent) and those who have been divorced or separated from their wives..."<sup>4</sup>

An extensive study has been made of the marital conditions of the 400 first degree prisoners involved in the present survey. The marital status of these inmates, at the time of the commission of the murder, was as follows:

Single	146	36.5%
Married	106	26.5%
Divorced	37	9.3%
Separated	40	10.0%
Widowed	19	4.8%
Living in Common-law relationship	52	13.0%

The true significance of the above figures lies in the comparison of the marital condition of the inmates with that of the adult males in the general population. In 1940 61.9 per cent of the males in Michigan (15 years of age and over) were married, as against 26.6 per cent of the inmate

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<sup>3</sup> Michael and Adler, CRIME, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCE, Harcourt Brace and Co., New York, 1933, p. 128. Quoted from PRISONER'S ANTECEDENTS, U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1926.

<sup>4</sup> E. A. Hooton, CRIME AND THE MAN, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1939, p. 310.



population; 32.2 per cent of the Michigan male population were single, as compared to 36.5 per cent of the first degree offenders; 4.2 per cent of the males in the general population were divorced, while 9.3 per cent of the prison group were in that category.<sup>5</sup> The Census report does not include statistics on those who are separated, or those living in common-law relationships. It is assumed that the majority of those living in common-law relationship are classified by the census as "single," and that those that are separated are classified as "married." Assuming these conditions to be true, the inmates are unduly high in single men (49.5% as against 32.2% in the general population); while the married men were low, (36.5% as against 61.9% in the general population). The divorced men were likewise unduly high, with an inmate percentage of 9.3 as against a rate of only 1.7 per cent in the general population. Rates for the widowed men were approximately the same, 4.8 per cent of the inmates being widowed, and 4.2 per cent of the males in the general population falling in this group.

The results of the present study are in general agreement with the findings published by the Census Bureau, namely, that the prison population in general (and first degree offenders, as a group) is made up of unduly high proportions of single males, and males who have been divorced. It is also believed that the number of males who are separated from their wives, and those who are living in a common-law

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<sup>5</sup> STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES, 1943, U. S. Government Printing Office, 1944, p. 42.

status, far exceeds the number of males in these categories to be found in the general population, if this information were available.

The writer believes the unduly high proportion of divorced males to be found in the prison population is indicative of the general maladjustment of these individuals; this maladjustment extending to all phases of the inmate's life. In an attempt to verify this hypothesis, the criminal records of all white males have been studied, and the criminal rates of the married men have been compared with similar rates for the single men, as well as those who have been divorced or separated from their wives. The criminal careers of the men who were separated or divorced (at the time of the present offense) were found to be much more extensive than the criminal careers of either the married men or the single men, and the careers of the married men were found to be less extensive in all of the categories which were studied.

In order to get a true picture of the situation, only white inmates were studied. This was done so that that factor of racial discrimination, which plays such an important part in negro criminality, could be eliminated. In order to make the group even more homogeneous, only inmates from unbroken homes were included in the study, thus eliminating the possible effect of an unwholesome home environment upon the criminal careers of the inmates involved.

The results of this study are presented in the following table:

TABLE VIII

Criminal Experience of White Inmates from Unbroken Homes; by Marital Status (First Degree Murderers in Michigan Prisons-1946)			
	Marital Status*		
	Married	Single	Divorced and Separated
	Per Cent	Per Cent	Per Cent
Juvenile record	7.7	26.7	16.0
Adult record (misdemeanors)	19.2	28.3	36.0
Adult record (felonies)	25.0	31.7	60.0
Investigations	21.2	41.7	48.0
Time served previously	27.0	41.7	56.0

\* Included in the table were the following: Married (52); Single (60), and Divorced and Separated (25).

It should be noted that in nearly all cases the rates for divorced and separated inmates are more than twice as high as are the rates for married men, and that the rates for the single men (with the exception of the first category, "juvenile record") fall midway between the two groups just mentioned. In view of these findings, there can be little doubt that a high degree of statistical correlation does exist

between marital status and crime. The interpretation of such a relationship, however, is not the purpose of this survey. One thing is certain, however, and that is the high degree of maladjustment which appears to characterize a certain percentage of the prison population. This lack of integration is probably caused by many factors, chief of which are the following: broken homes, inferior intelligence, bad associates, lack of recreational and vocational opportunities, lack of parental supervision and understanding, alcoholism, racial discrimination, gross personality defects, cultural conflict, etc. In other words, in the case of most criminals there appears to be an alteration in the balance between what society demands and what the individual is able to achieve, resulting in types of behavior which are not approved by society. Associated with this type of behavior one finds many of the factors mentioned above, the relative importance of each factor in the total personality pattern varying with each individual case.

### Marital Relations

It is conceivable that the factor of marital relations is of great importance in influencing an individual's behavior relative to criminal activity; good marital adjustment between the husband and wife serving as a deterrent to a criminal career, and incompatibility and marital discord having the opposite effect. In some cases extreme marital discord has been the direct cause of crime, including a great many cases of murder, and in other cases it has been a significant contributing factor.

Of the 400 inmates included in the present study, 106 were married, 40 were divorced, and 52 were living in common-law relationships. The marital relationship of 60.3 per cent of this group was found to be bad; that is, there was continual friction in the home, and in many cases actual separation had taken place between the two partners. Marital relations were found to be fair in 22.5 per cent of the group of 198 inmates, and even though there may have been occasional quarrels or friction, home ties still remained more or less normal. In only 17.2 per cent of the cases could the marital relations be considered good. This information was obtained from the Social History Sheets, and in most cases was obtained from interviews held with the inmate at various times. In many cases this information is verified by at least one other source of information, usually a relative.

### Children

It is a well known fact that children add stability to the marital relationship in a great majority of cases. In the present study an attempt has been made to determine the relationship between the number of children in the family, and the extent of the criminality of the father. It was found that inmates with two children had less extensive criminal records than inmates with only one child; while inmates with three or more children had criminal records which were less extensive than either of the other two groups. We might conclude from this that children do add stability to the marriage, and deter the father from engaging in criminal activities.

There were 102 inmates who had children. Of this number 49 had one child, 29 had two children, and 24 had three or more children. The following table shows the extent of criminality of each of these three groups, as measured by the number of inmates who had juvenile criminal records, the percentage of each group that had been convicted of felonies, etc. Although the number of inmates involved is not large enough to permit an extensive statistical analysis, the results are sufficiently suggestive.

TABLE IX

The Relation Between the Number of Children in the Family  
and the Criminal Record of the Father  
(White Inmates Only)

(First Degree Murderers in Michigan Prisons - 1946)

	Number of Children*		
	One	Two	Three or more
	Per Cent	Per Cent	Per Cent
Juvenile record	14.6	10.3	4.2
Adult record (misdemeanors)	30.6	24.1	16.7
Adult record (felonies)	40.8	44.8	25.0
Investigations	36.7	27.6	16.7
Time served previously (as an adult)	24.5	37.9	25.0

\* 49 inmates had one child; 29 inmates had two children, and 24 inmates had three or more children.

It will be noticed that the inmates with three or more children had rates which were consistently lower than the rates for men who had either one or two children. There is no explanation for the unduly high rate for the men with two children in the last category, "time served previously." The men with two children were also slightly high in the third category, men who had an adult felony record. With the exception of these two inconsistencies, the rate differentials between the three groups would appear to be significant. Because of the small number of men involved, however, the findings are less valid than they would otherwise be.

## CHAPTER SIX

### EDUCATION, INTELLIGENCE, AND MENTAL DISORDERS AND DISEASES

#### Education

All studies that have been made on the subject of the education of prisoners indicate that, as a group, they are poorly educated. Wood and Waite,<sup>1</sup> in discussing the subject of the education of prisoners, have made the following comment:

"...prisoners, as a group, are under-educated. That is, the great majority of them have dropped out of school between the fifth and eighth grade, and a considerable proportion of them are illiterate. As the most informed authority in this field states the matter,

" 'Conservative estimates, however, indicate that adult prisoners as a group lack education of all types. Of the total of 120,000 prisoners, about 20,000 cannot read a newspaper or write a simple personal letter. About 12,000 cannot do more than scrawl their names. Over 70,000 cannot pass a test covering the work of the sixth grade in the public schools; they lack the formal education of a twelve-year-old child. Over 70,000 have never received organized training for an occupation, and about that number are unskilled workers. Nearly 40,000 have vocational training that is inadequate in terms of their intelligence rating.'

"Such facts would seem to be a sufficient challenge to our penal authorities...."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wood and Waite, CRIME AND ITS TREATMENT, American Book Co., New York, etc., 1941, p. 581.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from Wood and Waite from "Education in the Prisons of Tomorrow," by Austin H. MacCormick, in the ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE, Vol. 157, Sept., 1931, pp. 72-73.



Wood and Waite clarify the above statistics by saying that,

"...it would be erroneous to infer that this educational lack is the sole reason for men becoming criminals. It is not so simple as that. Many prisoners are highly educated, and are probably more proficient in crime on account of that fact. Education is a tool that cuts in many directions, its value depending on the use that is made thereof. What one does with one's mental equipment depends on social attitudes that have their roots outside the formal educational process. Nevertheless, our faith in education as a solvent of social problems is not wholly unfounded, especially if the educational aim is conceived to include capacity for making adjustment to one's total life situation. This means far more than knowing how to do things; it involves the ability to get along with others, and fundamental attitudes of unselfishness. It would be comparatively easy to teach prisoners the skills required by our culture. But to instill in them more wholesome social attitudes will tax to the utmost our intellectual and moral resources. Our achievements in both the simpler and more difficult aspects of this problem are gravely lacking."<sup>3</sup>

Further evidence concerning the generally inadequate educational status of prisoners has been presented by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck in their famous study, 500 CRIMINAL CAREERS. This book is basically a follow-up study of 510 men who left the Massachusetts Reformatory during the years 1911-1922, and the main objective was to determine what percentage of the men had been "reformed," in the sense of refraining from the commission of other criminal acts after their release from the

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<sup>3</sup> Wood and Waite, op. cit., pp. 581-582.

Reformatory. The important fact established in the book was that eighty per cent were not reformed, but went right on committing crimes after their discharge. In addition to the above fact, the book contains a wealth of information concerning the social and economic background of the offenders, their family backgrounds, personal characteristics, education, and a great variety of other detailed information.

The Gluecks have reported the educational status of these Reformatory inmates as follows:

"The education of our young men was on the whole not of an extent calculated to take them far in legitimate competition in the modern urban, industrial community...

"...of our Reformatory group, but 4.6% continued in school throughout the ninth grade, while 92% of the children in the eighth grade in the year 1922 in Boston public schools entered the ninth grade. In the year 1910, however, which is much nearer the time when our Reformatory group attended school, 53% of Boston public school children entered the ninth grade." <sup>4</sup>

The following chart presents in greater detail the educational achievement of the 454 Reformatory inmates about whom reliable information was available:<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, 500 CRIMINAL CAREERS, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1930, p. 133.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 132.

TABLE X

Educational Achievement of 454 Massachusetts Reformatory Inmates	
Grade reached	Reformatory Group (Percentages)
Never attended school . . . . .	2.4
5th grade or less . . . . .	42.6
6th to 8th grade . . . . .	45.8
9th grade . . . . .	4.6
High School (one or more years) . .	4.4
Completed High School . . . . .	.2

The Gluecks concluded, on the basis of the above findings, that the schooling of the Reformatory group was far less than that of the general population as represented by Boston public-school children, and the results of other studies have been in agreement with this conclusion.

One of the most extensive statistical studies ever made of prisoners was undertaken by the United States Census Bureau, and the results of the study were made available in 1926 in a publication entitled PRISONERS' ANTECEDENTS. Over 19,000 prisoners were included in this survey. As regards the educational background of these inmates, it was estimated that the ratio of commitments per 100,000 of the adult population was 42.7 for the illiterate as against 27.3 for those able to

read and write; and that the ratio of prisoners with a college education was 14.3 per 100,000, this being the lowest for the literate group.<sup>6</sup>

Because of the very large statistical sample used in the above study, and the reliability of the source, the validity of the data could scarcely be questioned, nor its significance ignored. The degree of differentiation which is illustrated by the census survey appears to be conclusive evidence that the educational background of the prison population in general is below that of the general population.

Of the 395 inmates on whom this information was available, 23 (5.8%) had had no formal education; 103 (26.1%) had completed the fifth grade or less; 166 (42.0%) had completed six to eight grades in school; 86 (21.8%) had attended high school; only 9 (2.3%) had completed high school, and only 8 inmates (2.1%) had attended college. It should be pointed out that this information was furnished by the inmate in most instances, and is not verified from other sources.

Comparable statistics for the general population are not known.

Significant differences were found between the educational achievements of the negro inmates as against those of the white group. In the negro group, only 17.1 per cent of the inmates had continued beyond the eighth grade; while 30.8 per

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted from PRISONERS' ANTECEDENTS, (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1926) by Michael and Adler, CRIME, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCE, N.Y., Harcourt Brace & Co., 1933, p. 128.

cent of the white inmates had continued their education beyond this grade. This reflects the general lack of educational opportunities among the negroes, and is also associated with the lower socio-economic status which has been forced upon the negro race.

## Intelligence

Probably more studies have been made of criminal intelligence than of any other criminological factor. Tulchin,<sup>7</sup> Goddard,<sup>8</sup> Richmond,<sup>9</sup> Zeleny,<sup>10</sup> Dearden,<sup>11</sup> Murchison,<sup>12</sup> and a great many others have concerned themselves with this particular aspect of crime, and although the results of these surveys have shown considerable variance in the percentage of criminals found to be mentally deficient, most studies which compare criminal groups with non-criminal groups show that the percentage of persons testing feeble-minded is considerably higher for the criminal population. The outstanding study reporting contrary results is that of Carl Murchison,<sup>13</sup> and some of the techniques which Murchison used have been questioned.<sup>14</sup>

A complete and thorough review of the literature on the intelligence of criminals has been made by Professor Zeleny<sup>15</sup> who reviewed over three hundred studies and summarized results of one hundred and sixty-three. These one hundred and sixty-three studies represent the total of 61,999

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<sup>7</sup> Simon H. Tulchin, INTELLIGENCE AND CRIME, University of Chicago Press, 1939.

<sup>8</sup> Henry H. Goddard, FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS, ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES, The Macmillan Co., 1915.

<sup>9</sup> Frank C. Richmond, "The Criminal Feeble-Minded," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXI, No. 4, (February, 1931).

<sup>10</sup> Leslie D. Zeleny, "Feeble-Mindedness and Criminal Conduct," American Journal of Sociology, No. 38, (1933).

<sup>11</sup> Harold Dearden, THE MIND OF THE MURDERER, London, 1930.

<sup>12</sup> Carl Murchison, CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE, Worcester (Mass.), Clark University Press, 1936.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> By Tulchin in INTELLIGENCE AND CRIME, pp. 5-6.

<sup>15</sup> Leslie D. Zeleny, op. cit., pp. 564-76.

criminals, and it was felt that additional studies would not materially change the percentage found feeble-minded.

Of the 61,999 criminals 18,613, or 30 per cent, were reported feeble-minded. Professor Zeleny pointed out, however, that the variability among the studies was large - ranging from 5.5 per cent reported feeble-minded among the inmates of a workhouse in Missouri, to 100 per cent feeble-minded among delinquent women in a New York institution.

Zeleny also noticed that the more recent studies showed a decrease in the percentage of delinquents found feeble-minded. The median percentage of those found feeble-minded for several five-year periods was found to be as follows:<sup>16</sup>

	1911-15	1916-20	1921-25	1926-30
Median percentage feeble-minded	49.2	30.0	27.1	28.0
Quartile deviation	20.9	9.9	8.65	5.8

The significance of the decrease in the percentage of delinquents found feeble-minded in each succeeding five-year period was not indicated, however.

The hypothesis of the above study was that

"...the results of testing criminal intelligence have not been corroboratory due to variable types of interpretation of test results, and that investigations in apparent disagreement will reveal similar results when interpreted in the same manner."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Tulchin, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

<sup>17</sup> Zeleny, op. cit., p. 573.

In conclusion, Zeleny stated that feeble-mindedness is associated with delinquency and criminality to a slight extent. If 2.1% of the non-criminal population, as represented by the draft, are feeble-minded, then 3.8% of criminals in general are feeble-minded; for men the percentage would be 3.2% - and for women 5.9% feeble-minded.

Concerning the intelligence of the 1,000 murderers, studied by Frankel, he states that:

"The median mental age of a total of 722 murderers was found to be 11.0 years, that of 233 native born 12.7 years, that of 245 foreign born white 10.5 years, and that of 244 negroes 10.6 years."<sup>18</sup>

The percentage of murderers of each mental age group was found to be as follows:<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Emil Frankel, "One Thousand Murderers," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXIX, No. 5, p. 685.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 685 (partial table only).



TABLE XI

Mental Ages of 722 Murderers  
in New Jersey Prisons

Mental Age	Total
All mental ages	100%
Under 9 years . . . . .	7.9
9 years and under 10 . . . . .	18.4
10 years and under 11 . . . . .	24.4
11 years and under 12 . . . . .	16.2
12 years and under 13 . . . . .	10.8
13 years and under 14 . . . . .	9.2
14 years and under 15 . . . . .	5.1
15 years and under 16 . . . . .	2.6
16 years and under 17 . . . . .	2.6
17 years and under 18 . . . . .	2.0
18 years and over . . . . .	0.8

The results of this study reveal that slightly more than one-half (50.7%) of the 722 murderers included in the survey had a mental age of less than eleven years. While uniform reports\* on the mental age of the general population are not available, with the exception of army records, it is considered very doubtful that the number of adults in the general population with a mental age of less than eleven years would exceed ten per cent. A reliable investigator <sup>20</sup> as to the prevalence of feeble-mindedness in the general population believes that the percentage of mentally deficient individuals

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\* Several studies have been made on the mental age of the general population, but the results have not been uniform in all respects. This lack of uniformity is caused mainly by the fact that different methods of measurement were used.

<sup>20</sup>F. Kuhlman, OUTLINE OF MENTAL DEFICIENCY. Quoted from "The Criminal Feeble-minded" by Frank C. Richmond, Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXI, No. 4 (February 1931), p. 544.

he found in the school population (5.08%) corresponds closely with the percentage existing in the general population.

Concerning the percentage of feeble-minded among criminals and delinquents, competent investigators have determined that the ratio is 13 to 50 times greater than that of the general population. For example, in the Reformatory of Minnesota an average of 29% was found;<sup>21</sup> among delinquent boys in New York State 20% to 25%, and Anderson, after an extensive investigation of the matter, concluded that 27% to 29% of all prisoners are mentally deficient.<sup>22</sup>

Terman has defined feeble-mindedness in the following manner:

"A feeble-minded person is one who is incapable because of mental defect (deficiency) existing from birth or from an early age of competing on equal terms with his normal fellows; or of managing himself or his affairs with ordinary prudence."<sup>23</sup>

Richmond states that the proportion of feeble-minded among criminals and delinquents seems to increase progressively as the age-scale ascends. Richmond feels that this is a logical and reasonable conclusion, because as age increases, the burdens, duties and obligations of a social and economic life become multiplied and more complex; hence the feeble-minded with their deficiency of intelligence resulting in

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 544.

<sup>22</sup> V. V. Anderson, Mental Hygiene, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 177. Quoted from "The Criminal Feeble-minded" by Frank C. Richmond, p. 544.

<sup>23</sup> Frank C. Richmond, "The Criminal Feeble-minded," p. 542.

impairment of reasoning power and judgment tend to fall more numerous into the ways of crime and delinquency. Richmond summarizes his views by saying that,

"Our data not only corroborate these conclusions, but lead to the conviction that feeble-mindedness is one of the outstanding factors, second only to broken homes, in the production of criminals and delinquents. The basic causes of the characterological defects or moral degeneracy exhibited in anti-social behavior are embedded in the mental organization of the criminal. While science has not yet been able to specify or identify the exact qualitative or quantitative dimensions and relationships of these perverted mental phenomena, clinical observation tends to show that feeble-mindedness as classically understood is a contributory cause in the dysfunction of a very great many criminally disposed minds. So much so that it may be truthfully said that the Criminal Feeble-minded are a scourge to society..."<sup>24</sup>

The opinions of the following authorities should be added to the weight of the evidence already presented:

"On the basis of the foregoing method,\* the intelligence distribution of the 466 persons upon whom reliable data on that point could be obtained was as follows: normal, 154 (33%); dull, 112 (24.1%); borderline, 104 (22.3%); feeble-minded, 96 (20.6%). Comparable statistics of the general male adult population of Massachusetts are not available..."

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<sup>24</sup> Frank C. Richmond, "The Criminal Feeble-minded," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXI, No. 4, (February 1931) pp. 544-45.

\* The method referred to is that used by L. M. Terman (Terman, THE MEASUREMENT OF INTELLIGENCE, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1916, p. 79), in which the categories are defined as follows: I.Q. of 90-100, normal intelligence; 80-90, dullness; 70-80, borderline deficiency; 50-70, feeble-mindedness; 20-50, imbecility.

"In an unpublished study recently made by the Psycho-Educational Clinic of Harvard University, however, of 3,638 school children in three Massachusetts cities, the following distribution of intelligence grades was found: normal and super-normal, 2,872 (79%); dull, 511 (14.1%); borderline, 199 (5.9%); feeble-minded, (1.5%)...

"It will be seen that the Reformatory population contains a considerable excess of dull, borderline, and feeble-minded groups."<sup>25</sup>

"The mental age of those sent to the penitentiary\*\* is low. The majority of the white offenders have a mental age of 11.5 and under and in the negro prisoners we find the majority of offenders are in the mental age bracket of 10 and below..."<sup>26</sup>

"The National Committee for Mental Hygiene reports mental abnormality in 59% of 608 Sing Sing cases; in 70.6% of 3,451 Texas penitentiary cases, and in 85.8% of 226 Texas county jail cases; in 58% of 502 New York police department cases and in 69% of New York Juvenile Court cases; and in 46% of 1,000 Boston Municipal Court cases."<sup>27</sup>

The great majority of studies, as we have seen, indicate that the intelligence of the criminal population is appreciably less than that of the general population. The evidence is so great, in fact, that the burden of proof lies with those whose opinions are to the contrary.

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\*\* The Virginia State Penitentiary.

<sup>25</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, 500 CRIMINAL CAREERS, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1930, p. 156.

<sup>26</sup> James A. Shield, "Twelve Thousand Criminals," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXVIII No. 6, (March-April, 1938), p. 810.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted from CRIME, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCE by Michael and Adler, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1933, p. 121.

The relationship existing between crime and intelligence is a complex one, however, and cannot be easily explained. Some of the factors involved in this particular aspect of criminology have been described in an excellent manner, and will be reviewed briefly. The first factor concerns the concept of "social age," as explained by Brearley. In a study of the personality traits of murderers, Brearley concluded that certain types of persons are unusually liable to commit homicide when provocations arise. Reconciling the two points of view, the psychiatric and the sociological, Brearley formulated the concept of "social age." The second factor is that of individual security. Shield states that security is the most important factor in an adult's life, and reasons that people become criminals because (as a result of their mental deficiency) they are not able to attain it. The third factor is that of responsibility. Goddard states that those who are born without sufficient intelligence to know right from wrong "will ever be a fertile source of criminality." These concepts, which are presented to give the reader a better comprehension of the many factors involved in the very complex problem of crime and its treatment, are summarized briefly in the following excerpts.

"As individuals grow from infancy to adulthood, they normally pass through several fairly definite stages of social behavior. At one period they may be exhibitionistic; at another sadistic; at a third, lacking in emotional control. In early childhood

the egoistic drives or urges seem to predominate; later more altruistic motives have a place....

"A person's sociological age depends, accordingly, not upon his physical or mental development but upon his relative maturity in dealing with his associates, especially upon his emotional control in social situations. If, however, he behaves as mature adults should, his sociological age is much higher. Those persons who are exceptionally mature in their social behavior may be classed as superior in respect to sociological age.

"If in the future it should become possible to learn a person's approximate sociological age in somewhat the same way that his mental age can now be roughly estimated from an intelligence test, it might be of inestimable value in revealing potential criminals."<sup>28</sup>

"The most important factor in an adult's life is his security. For one to get along in the present day civilization he must have social security, economic security, emotional security and, if married, conjugal security...

"The above may be considered as a pattern of life so outlined and controlled as to give satisfaction to the development of one's ego which, of course, is essential to one's useful stability. Criminal conduct is made more possible when the normal ego development mechanisms lose control and the individual drive for a healthy security is interrupted by an attempt to secure this security by a short cut, - crime against property and person. Short cuts are taken by those who do not have the equipment and the capability to take the longer and normal way of accomplishment. Thus

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<sup>28</sup> H. C. Brearley, HOMICIDE IN THE UNITED STATES, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1932, pp. 94-95.

crime is an attempt to satisfy the ego. We, of course, have eliminated the mentally sick in this discussion."<sup>29</sup>

"Environment will not, of itself, enable all people to escape criminality. The problem goes much deeper than environment. It is the question of responsibility. Those who are born without sufficient intelligence either to know right from wrong, or those, who if they know it, have not sufficient will-power and judgment to make themselves do the right and flee the wrong, will ever be a fertile source of criminality. This is being recognized more and more by those who have to do with criminals. We have no thot of maintaining that all criminals are irresponsible. Altho we cannot determine at present just what the proportion is, probably from 25% to 50% of the people in our prisons are mentally defective and incapable of managing their affairs with ordinary prudence...

"The hereditary criminal passes out with the advent of feeble-mindedness into the problem...The so-called criminal type is merely a type of feeble-mindedness, a type misunderstood and mistreated, driven into criminality for which he is well fitted by nature. It is hereditary feeble-mindedness and not hereditary criminality that accounts for the conditions. We have seen only the end product and failed to recognize the character of the raw material."<sup>30</sup>

The intelligence quotient was available for 387 of 400 first degree prisoners involved in the present survey. The range of distribution was found to extend from a low of 32 to a high of 126; the median being in the group with an

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<sup>29</sup> James A. Shield, "Twelve Thousand Criminals," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXVIII, No. 6 (March-April, 1938), p. 806.

<sup>30</sup> Henry H. Goddard, FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS; ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1916, pp.7-8.

intelligence quotient of 84. The mode was found to be 80; with twenty-five individuals listed in this group, while twenty-two individuals were found to have an intelligence quotient of 73.

The intelligence distribution of the four hundred inmates, by races, is presented in the following table:

TABLE XII

The Intelligence Quotients of 400 First Degree  
Offenders in Michigan Prisons; by  
Races

Intelligence Quotient	White		Negro		Others	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
30-39	1	-*	-	-	-	-
40-49 Imbecile	1	-	5	4.4	1	7.1
50-59	5	1.9	10	8.8	-	-
60-69 Feeble-minded	26	10.0	24	21.1	6	42.9
70-79 Borderline deficiency	48	18.5	23	20.2	2	14.3
80-89 Dullness	62	23.9	24	21.1	3	21.4
90-99 Normal	41	15.8	22	19.3	1	7.1
100-109	41	15.8	3	2.6	1	7.1
110-119	25	9.7	2	1.8	-	-
120-129	9	3.5	1	-	-	-
Unknown	8	-	4	-	1	-
TOTAL	267	100%	118	100%	15	100%

\* Indicates less than 1%, except in the case of the last category, "unknown;" the "unknown" were eliminated from the percentages.

The system of classification which was used in the above table is that of L. M. Terman. It will be seen from



the above data that 146 (37.7%) of the inmates could be classified as normal or above normal; 89 (23.0%) dull; 73 (18.9%) borderline, and 79 (20.4%) feeble-minded. The Gluecks', using the same method of classification, found that of the 466 inmates on whom this information was available, 33 per cent were normal, 24.1 per cent were dull, 22.3 per cent were borderline, and 20.6 per cent were feeble-minded. The very close similarity between the results obtained in the two studies should be noted.

Throughout the course of this survey the writer has felt the importance and the necessity of presenting the data on the negroes separately from that obtained on the white inmates. Because of the great importance of the low cultural status of the negro, and the evident relation between his inferior status and all other aspects of his life, important differences between the white inmates and the negro inmates have been found in every phase of this research. This difference between the two races is again evident from an analysis of the data presented in the intelligence table. Of the negro group, 23.7 per cent were found to have an intelligence rating of 90 or above, while 44.8 per cent of the white inmates came within this category. There can be little doubt that cultural differences are primarily responsible for this wide disparity.

### Mental Disorders and Diseases

In the preceding pages we have seen that, in comparison to the general population, the prison population may be regarded as having an unduly high proportion of mentally defective individuals. Further researches will have to be made, however, to determine more accurately the relative proportions of mentally defective to be found in the two groups.

In addition to the high incidence of mentally defective individuals in the prison population, there is every reason to believe that the incidence of mental disorders and diseases is also high in the general prison population. This is particularly true of murderers, where rates up to 50% have been found.

Emil Frankel, reporting on the psychiatric condition of 721 murderers admitted to the New Jersey State Prison, states that the following psychiatric conditions were found:<sup>31</sup>

TABLE XIII

Psychiatric Condition of 721 Murderers  
Admitted to New Jersey State Prison

Diagnosis	Number	Per Cent
All individuals	721	100.0
No psychiatric condition	383	53.1
Chronic alcoholic	135	18.7
Constitutional defective	109	15.1
Psychotic	48	6.7
Psychopathic	41	5.7
Epileptic	5	0.7

<sup>31</sup> Emil Frankel, "One Thousand Murderers," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXIX, No. 5 (January-February, 1939), pp. 685-686.

In the above group it is interesting to note that among the pre-psychotic, the alcoholic comprises 18.7 per cent, while the constitutional defective comprise 15.1 per cent. The frankly psychotic comprised 6.7 per cent of the total. Psychopathic and psychotic individuals were found more frequently among the murderers than among the general male prison population. Among 855 persons charged with all offenses were found 2.6% of psychopathic and psychotic individuals, while among 721 murderers were found 12.4% coming from these two categories.<sup>32</sup>

It is highly probable that the incidence of mental disorders among murderers is even higher than indicated in Frankel's study, for many offenders who cannot be definitely "typed" as having psychosis are obviously suffering from deep-seated mental disturbances, and these mental disturbances are specific factors in the commission of the crime of murder. Dr. David Abrahamsen, a psychiatrist now at Columbia University, states that the term 'neurotic character' will cover a large group whose 'neuroses' consist in engaging in anti-social behavior rather than in neurotic manifestations. Dr. Abrahamsen concludes that "because of their anti-social tendencies, most of them are sooner or later incarcerated." In a further discussion of this type of offender, Dr. Abrahamsen states as follows:

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 686.

"...Considering the psychodynamics underlying their acts, we will see that the underlying conflict in the neuroses or in the neurotic characters are basically the same, the struggle between the id and the ego. One may assume that there is at an early date a separation of the ego which allows a great amount of id impulses to be expressed, and this may take place even if part of the ego is socially adjusted. This underlying conflict expresses why this neurotic character is always at odds with himself and with society and always unconsciously craves punishment. That is why he is rebellious against himself and against society. Keeping this make-up in mind, one will see that many of those individuals whom we call sex perverts, pathological liars, hobos, wanderers, alcoholics, narcotic addicts, swindlers, and marriage wreckers are, in fact, either neurotic characters or are closely allied with them..."<sup>33</sup>

In an attempt to discover which mental diseases contribute most to crime, Ellen Pilcher, University of Michigan Graduate student, found the following distribution of mental diseases among 455 murderers in five hospitals\* for the criminally insane:<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> David Abrahamsen, CRIME AND THE HUMAN MIND, Columbia University Press, 1944, p. 108.

\* Lima State Hospital, Ohio; Fairview State Hospital for the Criminal Insane, Waymart, Pennsylvania; Bridgewater State Hospital, Bridgewater, Massachusetts; Central State Hospital for the Criminal Insane, Waupun, Wisconsin; and Ionia State Hospital, Ionia, Michigan.

<sup>34</sup> Ellen Pilcher, "Relation of Mental Disease to Crime," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXI, No. 2, (June-1930) pp. 225-226.

TABLE XIV

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Distribution of Mental Diseases Among 455 Murderers  
in Five Hospitals for the Criminally Insane

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(Crimes Against The Person -- Murder)

Dementia Praecox . . . . .	225
Paranoid Condition . . . . .	59
Moron, Feeble-minded and Mentally defective. .	40
Manic-depressive . . . . .	33
Psychopathic personality . . . . .	29
Alcoholic . . . . .	24
Senile . . . . .	20
Epileptic Psychoses. . . . .	7
Cerebral Syphilis. . . . .	5
General Paralysis. . . . .	5
Cerebral Arteriosclerosis. . . . .	4
Psychoneurosis . . . . .	3
Encephalitis Lethargica. . . . .	1

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TOTAL . . . . . 455

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE FAMILIES FROM WHICH THE PRISONERS COME

#### Nativity

Much data is available concerning the nativity of prisoners, and the relation between nativity and crime. In order to study this relationship it is necessary to make the following breakdown of the nativity groups, and then attempt to analyze and evaluate the sociological factors involved to determine, if possible, why certain of these nativity groups contribute disproportionately large numbers to the prison population. The following nativity groups were studied:

1. Native-born sons of native-born parents.
2. Native-born sons of foreign-born parents.
3. Native-born sons of mixed parentage.
4. Foreign-born sons of foreign-born parents.

Although all studies on the subject of nativity and crime have not been in complete agreement, the great weight of evidence seems to indicate that native-born sons of foreign-born parents contribute considerably more than their share to the criminal population, and the same situation apparently exists for the foreign-born sons, but to a lesser degree.

Native-born sons of native parents apparently contribute to criminality in a percentage which more nearly

approximates the percentage of native-born sons of native parentage present in the general population. Native-born negroes, however, contribute to the criminal ranks a proportion which is far in excess of their numbers in the general population; this disproportion being more marked than that of any other nativity group.

No attempt will be made in the present study to evaluate in detail the many sociological factors involved in the complex question of nativity and crime. It is important to realize, however, that nativity does have a bearing on criminality, and that this relationship is capable of scientific evaluation and study. The purpose of this thesis is to study the social characteristics of first degree murderers in the State of Michigan, and to determine which of these characteristics appear to be of significance in relation to the specific crime of first degree murder. The explanation of the relationships existing between these factors, or of the relative significance of each social characteristic in terms of causation is not the purpose of this research.

The nativity and color analysis of the one thousand murderers considered in Frankel's study reveals the following information:

TABLE XV

Nativity and Color of 1,000 Murderers in New Jersey Prisons <sup>1</sup>		
	1,000 Murderers	General Population 15 Years of Age and Over *
Total	100%	100%
Native-born white	32.0	65.5
Foreign-born white	38.3	29.4
Negroes	29.7	5.1

\* Taken from the United States Census, 1930.

Stated in another manner, the murder commitments for the respective nativity groups for the ten year period from 1925 to 1934, expressed in terms of the annual rate per 100,000 of the male population 15 years of age and over, were as follows: All individuals, 2.95; native-born whites, 1.65; foreign-born whites, 2.09; and negroes 22.03.<sup>2</sup>

With reference to the disproportionately large number of foreign-born white prisoners, as against the native white, in proportion to population, it should be noted that the percentage of urban population is considerably larger for the foreign-born than for the native-born. As a rule, much more

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Emil Frankel, "One Thousand Murderers," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXIX, (January-February, 1939) pp. 683-684.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 683.



lawbreaking occurs under urban conditions than in rural surroundings. Not only are opportunities and temptations to commit crime more numerous in the cities, but many acts which are harmless in the country are prohibited in the cities. Consequently, the excessive number of foreign-born in prisons is accounted for to a great extent by the tendency of immigrants to settle largely in the cities.<sup>3</sup>

Harold Ross, in his article entitled "Crime and the Native Born Sons of European Immigrants," also believes that the factor of rural or urban environment as a cause of crime is of greater importance than nativity.<sup>4</sup>

Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, in their study of Massachusetts Reformatory inmates, found that the native-born sons of foreign-born parents were unusually high in number. They summarized their data by saying:

"Clearly our figures bear out the proposition that the native-born sons of foreign-born parents contribute considerably more than their share to the criminal ranks. There are two and a half times (53%:22%) as many persons native-born of foreign or mixed parentage in our Reformatory group as are found in the general population; ..."<sup>5</sup>\*

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<sup>3</sup> PRISONERS, 1923 (Crime Conditions in the United States as Reflected in Census Statistics of Imprisoned Offenders), Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1926, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> Harold Ross, "Crime and the Native Born Sons of European Immigrants," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2 (July-August, 1937) pp. 202-209.

<sup>5</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

\* Figures for the general population taken from ABSTRACT OF THE CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1910, p. 581.

This situation is attributed largely to the conflict of traditions and ideals between the foreign-born parents and their native-born children, a conflict which increases their sense of insecurity which in many cases is already present because of bad housing conditions, economic hardship, lack of educational, recreational, and vocational opportunities, and a generally poor home and community environment. Clifford R. Shaw has described this situation in an excellent manner in *BROTHERS IN CRIME*.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the factors mentioned above, criminal associates were found by Shaw to be of great significance in criminogenesis, as well as the general pattern of criminality which seemed to be prevalent in the entire community.

A detailed study of the nativity of the 400 Michigan murderers, including the nativity of their parents, has been made by the writer. Of the 400 prisoners, 323 (80.8%) were native-born, and 77 (19.2%) were foreign-born. A more detailed study of the subject will be made in the following pages, the analysis again being made by racial groups.

Of the group of 400 inmates, 267 (66.8%) were white, 118 (29.5%) were negro, and 15 (3.8%) were members of other races.

Native-born white inmates, of which there were 205, accounted for 76.8 per cent of the white group; while the remaining 62 inmates (23.2%) were of foreign birth.

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<sup>6</sup> Clifford R. Shaw, *BROTHERS IN CRIME*, Chicago, 1938.

In Michigan, in 1930, the foreign-born whites made up approximately 18.1 per cent of the total white population, and the native-born whites approximately 81.9 per cent.\* It will be seen that the foreign-born white inmates made up a slightly larger percentage of the prison group than their numbers in the general population would warrant, the rate being approximately five per cent higher than the percentage of foreign-born in the general population.

The distribution of the native-born white inmates, by states, is as follows:

TABLE XVI

Distribution of Native-Born White Murderers in Michigan Prisons; By States	
Michigan	106
Pennsylvania	15
Ohio	13
New York	10
Illinois	9
Missouri	9
Kentucky	7
Tennessee	5
Indiana	5
West Virginia	3
Massachusetts	3
Georgia	2
Texas	2
Maryland	2
Minnesota	2
Other States	12
Total	205

\* Adapted from 1930 census figures.

It was stated at the beginning of the chapter that the native-born sons of native-born parents contribute to the ranks of criminals a percentage which is approximately equal to the percentage of this group to be found in the general population. In the present study 61.4 per cent of the white inmates were in this category, as against 62.1 per cent in the general population, as stated by the 1930 United States Census.

The percentage of native white inmates who had foreign or mixed parentage was approximately the same for the prison inmates as it was for the general population, the rates being 38.6 and 38.0 per cent respectively.

In 1930 approximately 18.1 per cent of the white population in the State of Michigan were foreign-born, while of the 267 white inmates involved in the present survey 23.2 per cent were found to be foreign-born. The total number of foreign-born inmates, including all races, was 77. The distribution of these foreign-born inmates, by country of birth, is as follows:

TABLE XVII

Distribution of Foreign-born First Degree Murderers  
in Michigan Prisons;  
by Country of Birth

Country of birth	Number of Inmates	Per Cent	General* Population (Michigan)
Canada	13	16.9	23.9
Italy	10	13.0	5.1
Poland	10	13.0	14.0
Mexico	9	11.7	1.1
Russia-Ukrania	7	10.0	4.0
Austria-Hungary	5	6.5	5.6
Greece	4	5.2	1.2
Turkey in Asia (incl. Syria, Armenia)	3	4.0	1.0
Belgium	2	2.6	1.6
Jugoslavia	2	2.6	1.9
West Indies	2	2.6	-
Other countries	10	-	-
TOTAL	77		

\* Adapted from 1940 U. S. Census, Population, Second Series, (Michigan), p. 27. (Figures for 1930 used in table).

The nativity of the negro inmates presents a most interesting study. Of 118 negroes, 96 (83.5%) were southern-born; 89 of the inmates had southern born fathers, and in 95 instances the fathers were southern-born. This would seem

to warrant further detailed study of the southern-born negro as a slayer. The negroes comprise only 4.0 per cent of the general population in the State of Michigan, yet 29.5 per cent of the 400 murderers involved in the present study are negroes, 83.5 per cent of whom were southern-born. This is one of the most remarkable discoveries of the present research project. In view of the generally low educational status of the negro inmates, and the concomitant lack of vocational opportunities, cultural advantages, etc., this would appear to be conclusive evidence that cultural elements play a major role in negro criminality. Also involved in this situation is the cultural conflict between the extreme racial attitudes of the South and the comparative tolerance which the negro encounters in the North. This conflict in cultural standards between the North and the South further adds to the negroes' sense of insecurity and bewilderment. A third factor is the contrast between the rural environment in which most of the southern-born negroes were reared, and the highly industrialized cities of the North in which most of these negroes settle. These factors, together with the prejudicial attitude of law enforcement officials, combine to create for the average negro an extremely unfavorable and inferior status.

The following table shows the birthplace, by states, of the southern-born negro inmates, as well as of their parents.

TABLE XVIII

Place of Birth of Southern-born Negro Inmates and their Parents; by States			
State of Birth	Number of Inmates	Number of Fathers	Number of Mothers
Georgia	29	25	25
Alabama	17	17	18
Mississippi	10	14	10
South Carolina	7	10	7
Missouri	7	2	9
Tennessee	4	5	6
Louisiana	4	3	3
Kentucky	4	2	2
North Carolina	3	2	4
Florida	3	3	3
Arkansas	3	2	3
Texas	3	3	3
Virginia	2	1	2
Total	96	89	95

It is quite probable that if a comparison were made of the criminal rates of negro and white inmates from the same socio-economic level the disparity between the two races would be greatly lessened. A general comparison of the negroes and the whites is a comparison not only of races, but also of different economic and cultural groups. If a valid comparison is to be made, it would be necessary to compare negroes of a specified economic status with whites of the same economic status; or negroes of a certain educational and cultural status with whites of the same status. There is nothing in this discussion of the frequency of crimes of negroes that proves any racial, as contrasted with cultural, differences between whites and negroes.

### Family Crime Record

It is in the home that the child receives his first impression of social conduct. Here he notes the behavior of the father towards the mother and vice versa, the conduct of the siblings, and the teachings of what is right and wrong. True education of the child consists in proper training, and this training must start from the earliest possible moment in order to make him fit for society.

"External activities," Dr. Abrahamsen says, "have been stressed in all discussions about the treatment of juvenile delinquency, while one has been inclined to forget the perhaps most important ingredient of the child's total situation - his home.

"There is no doubt in my mind that it is in the home that the child receives his first impression of social conduct ....and the teachings of what is right and wrong."<sup>7</sup>

Considering, then, the great importance of the home in training children and developing in them wholesome social attitudes, the role of the parents in child training becomes very important. If the parents are respected members of the community, and law abiding citizens, the chances are very good that the children will develop similar attitudes of respect for the rights and property of others. If the reverse is true, however, the chances that the children will develop wholesome social attitudes are greatly lessened. We must think of criminal activity as being a deviation from the norm, and that the

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<sup>7</sup> David Abrahamsen, op. cit., p. 139.



processes which result in systematic criminal behavior are fundamentally the same as the processes which result in systematic lawful behavior. In other words, it would be just as normal for a child from a criminal family to develop criminal tendencies as it would for a child brought up in a non-criminal family to develop a respectful attitude toward the law. In both cases the child's pattern of behavior is determined to a large extent by that of the members of the family, particularly his parents.

Systematic criminal behavior is determined in a process of association with those who commit crime, and the chance that a person will participate in criminal behavior is determined roughly by the frequency and consistency of his contacts with the patterns of criminal behavior.<sup>8</sup>

Concerning the history of family criminality among inmates of the Massachusetts State Reformatory, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck discovered that in 207 families (51.5%) of the 402 families upon which this information was available, there was discovered a court record for various offenses, including drunkenness. In 118 families in addition (29.4%), there were delinquencies, such as drunkenness and immorality, which were apparently not recognized officially by police or courts. Thus of the group of 402 families there were only 61 families (15.2%) in which it could definitely be stated that careful investigation had disclosed no known delinquency.

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<sup>8</sup> From a lecture by Dr. Richard Myers, Michigan State College, April 2, 1946.

"In other words," the Gluecks concluded, "in 302, or 75.1 per cent, of the 402 families in which it was possible to obtain information as to the criminal conduct the records covered offenses more serious than those of mere drunkenness."<sup>9</sup> \*  
(No automobile-regulation violations have been included.)

An analysis of the total 207 instances of officially recognized criminality of members of the families of Reformatory graduates indicates that in 82 cases (39.6%) the delinquency was that of one sibling only, in 51 (24.8%) it was that of one or both parents and one or more siblings, and in 9 instances (4.3%) it was that of near relatives only.<sup>10</sup>

In the present study of four hundred first degree murderers in the State of Michigan, a family criminal record was discovered in 41 (15.5%) of the 264 white families on whom this information was available. Of the 41 cases of known family criminality, 20 cases involved siblings, and 15 cases involved two or more members of the family.

Concerning the negro families, a record of family criminality was discovered in 10 (8.7%) of 115 negro families. Of the 10 families, the criminal record was that of siblings in 5 instances, and that of the father in 3 instances.

The above figures represent information given by the inmate during the course of an interview, usually at the prison, and in most instances are not verified by official

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<sup>9</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, 500 CRIMINAL CAREERS, p. 111.

\* Quotation italicized.

<sup>10</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, op. cit., pp. 111-112.

records. These figures, therefore, probably do not present a true picture of the situation. It is believed that if authentic police and court records were available, the incidence of family criminality would be found to be much greater.

The case-record folders of the four hundred murderers contained much detailed information concerning the criminal record of the inmates, however, while no attempt was made to compile authentic records pertaining to family criminality, other than the information which was furnished by the inmate at the time of the prison interview. An analysis of the criminal records of the inmates, for example, reveals that 164 (41.5%) of the 395 prisoners upon whom this information was available, had been convicted of at least one felony prior to the time of their conviction for murder. These data were obtained from official police records, and probably represents a reasonably accurate picture of the criminal history of the inmates.

The data on family criminality which were obtained in the present study are not complete, and should therefore be brought to the reader's attention only because it plays such an important part in the criminal careers of many individuals concerned in this study. In other words, it is just one factor involved in the complex study of criminogenesis. In studying the histories of four hundred murderers this factor was found to be significant in a great many cases, while in other cases it had little or no significance. It is believed

that much more research is necessary before the precise weight of this factor can be determined.

### Broken Homes

The broken home has frequently been stressed by criminologists, as well as many other workers in closely related fields, as a very important cause of crime. The present study bears out the belief that the incidence of broken homes among prisoners far exceeds that of the general population, and even though the precise weight of this factor in a complex, partly imponderable, social-economic situation cannot be given, the significance of this broken home situation in the causation of crime is certainly very great.

The Catholic Charities Probation Bureau in the Court of General Sessions in New York City made social studies of 3,053 criminals during the period from January 1, 1925, to November 1, 1926. Because of the absence of either or both parents, 1,440 or 48.1 per cent were products of broken homes. The removal of the missing parent, generally the father, was due to death, separation, or divorce, desertion, or hospital or institutional confinement (occasionally imprisonment), and it was upon the mother, therefore, that the care of the children devolved in nearly all instances.

Because such a large proportion of offenders proved to be products of broken homes, the Gluecks, in evaluating the importance of this factor, stated that it is reasonable to conclude that this condition constituted an important contributing factor in their delinquent careers.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, 500 CRIMINAL CAREERS, pp. 117-118.

Similarly, a very high percentage of broken homes was found in the Gluecks' study of over five hundred ex-inmates from the Massachusetts Reformatory. The number of broken homes was so large that they concluded that the rate was far greater than the incidence of this "disintegrative factor of family life" in the American population in general.<sup>12</sup>

If divorce rates are correctly interpreted as indices of the extent of family disorganization, home life in the United States is certainly far more unstable than in Europe. H. C. Brearley believes that this difference may partly explain the greater incidence of crime in the United States. In 1919, for example, Great Britain had one divorce granted for every 96 marriages performed; in 1920 in France there was one divorce to every 21 marriages, in Germany one to 24, and in Sweden one to 33; in 1921 in Canada, a nation very much akin to the United States, there was one divorce to every 161 marriages, while in the United States there was in 1922 one divorce for every 7.6 marriages.<sup>13</sup>

Dr. David Abrahamsen, well known and able psychiatrist who has studied a great many criminals from the psychiatric-psychologic point of view, believes that the broken home situation is a very serious matter, especially for the adolescent - particularly when associated with other forms of maladjustment.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 116

<sup>13</sup> H. C. Brearley, HOMICIDE IN THE UNITED STATES, University of North Carolina Press, 1932. (Statistics quoted from C. A. Ellwood, SOCIETY AND MODERN SOCIAL PROBLEMS, p. 149)

"Much of juvenile crime," he states, "arises not only from problems of the personality per se, but also from problems of how to conceive, to react, and to adapt to each new situation in life. Such adaptation is more difficult for the youngster than for the adult, for besides the sudden physiological growth is the instability among the organs of the various systems of the body.

"...In dealing with youthful offenders, one finds in addition to emotional and social instability a perplexity within themselves concerning their drives and ideas. The young fellow suddenly discovers emotions and strivings which contradict themselves and produce conflicts and dissatisfactions, resulting in insecurity. This insecurity gives rise to ambivalent feelings. The individual has love and hate simultaneously for his immediate surroundings. It is natural to assume that such ambivalence may occur more frequently in adolescence than at any other time of a man's life.

"In addition social obstacles may cause hardship upon the juvenile's development. The overcrowded home, the absence of recreational facilities, and the often remote possibility of acquiring contemporary acquaintances have a detrimental effect upon his social growth. Above all, the effect of a home broken either by separation, divorce, or death is perhaps a more serious matter for the adolescent than for the younger child, because such an uprooting takes place at a time when he is desperately in need of all the support he can obtain."<sup>14</sup>

In the present study, it was discovered that broken homes were present in 198 (50.1%) of the 395 cases upon which this information was available. In 68 instances (17.2%), the break in the home occurred at the age of three or before.

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<sup>14</sup> David Abrahamsen, CRIME AND THE HUMAN MIND, p. 130.

A table showing the incidence of broken homes among these four hundred inmates, and the age at which the break occurred, appears below:

TABLE XIX

Broken Homes Among 400 First Degree Murderers in the State of Michigan		
Age at which broken home occurred	Number of cases	Per Cent of total
At age of 3 or before	68	17.2
Between ages of 4-6 inc.	37	9.4
Between ages of 7-9 inc.	25	6.3
Between ages of 10-12 inc.	22	5.6
Between ages of 13-16 inc.	32	8.1
At the age of 17	14	3.5
Total	198	50.1

Although it has not been possible to obtain a "control group" of comparable statistics on this point with reference to the general population, it would certainly seem entirely reasonable to assume that no such large proportion of the adult population comes from broken homes.

Further evidence of the effect of broken homes on the criminality of the inmates will be discovered if we examine the criminal records of the prisoners from broken homes with the records of those from homes which were not broken. In preparing the criminal rate tables for the inmates from broken homes with those from unbroken homes, the negroes and whites



were separated. It was felt that the true significance of the broken home situation could best be obtained by this method, for two reasons; first, the generally higher criminal rate for the negroes would, to a great extent, obscure the significance of the broken home factor if the two races were combined in a single table, secondly, it was felt that the cultural and socio-economic status of the negro race is of greater importance in explaining their high criminal rate than is the broken home factor. By eliminating the cultural differential between the two races a truer picture of the significance of the broken home can thus be obtained.

The criminality rates were determined by studying the following indices of crime: juvenile criminal record, number of arrests for investigation, number of arrests for misdemeanors (as an adult)\*, number of arrests for felonies (as an adult), and time served prior to the present conviction for the crime of first degree murder. It was felt that the number of times an individual had been held for investigation, independent of the number of times he had actually been arrested or convicted, would be added evidence of his criminal inclinations. This belief was well founded, as an analysis of the data presented in the following tables will show.

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\* The age of 17 years and over was arbitrarily chosen for the "adult" status, even though many youths of seventeen are frequently dealt with by the juvenile court in some states.

TABLE XX

A Comparison of the Criminal Records of White Inmates from  
Broken and Unbroken Homes

	Broken Homes (112 inmates)		Unbroken Homes (152 inmates)	
	Number of Inmates*	Per Cent	Number of Inmates	Per Cent
I. Inmates with a Juvenile Criminal Record	21	18.9	25	16.4
II. Inmates Investigated One or More Times	39	35.5	50	33.3
III. Inmates with One or More Misdemeanor Conviction (as an adult)	43	38.4	37	24.7
IV. Inmates with One or More Felony Conviction (as an adult)	49	43.8	51	34.0
V. Inmates Who Had Served Time (as a juvenile only)	4	3.6	5	3.3
VI. Inmates Who Had Served Time (as an adult only)	34	30.3	39	25.7
VII. Inmates Who Had Served Time (both as a juvenile and as an adult)	16	14.3	10	6.6

\* In five instances the information was not available on all inmates. In these cases, involving from one to three inmates, the unknown were eliminated from the percentage.

TABLE XXI

A Comparison of the Criminal Records of Negro Inmates from  
Broken and Unbroken Homes

	Broken Homes (81 inmates)		Unbroken Homes (35 inmates)	
	Number of Inmates*	Per Cent	Number of Inmates	Per Cent
I. Inmates with a Juvenile Criminal Record	13	16.3	6	18.2
II. Inmates Investigated One or More Times	27	43.2	19	54.3
III. Inmates with One or More Misdemeanor Conviction (as an adult)	45	57.0	17	48.6
IV. Inmates with One or More Felony Convictions (as an adult)	40	50.0	16	47.1
V. Inmates Who Had Served Time (as a juvenile only)	2	2.5	1	3.0
VI. Inmates Who Had Served Time (as an adult only)	34	42.0	18	53.0
VII. Inmates Who Had Served Time (both as a juvenile and as an adult)	7	8.6	4	11.8

\* There were six instances in which the information was not available on all inmates. In these cases, involving either one or two inmates, the inmates on whom the information was not available were eliminated from the percentage.

A careful analysis of the two tables reveals some very interesting facts.

First of all, the generally higher percentages which appear in the negro table would seem to reflect merely the higher crime rate for the negro race, as compared to the white race. This difference is quite large in four instances, while in the remaining three cases the rates for the negro group and the white group are approximately equal.

The rates for the negro group seem to be excessively high in the following cases: for Item II (Inmates Investigated One or More Times) the negro group exceeds the white group by a wide margin, the rates being 43.2%:54.3% for the negroes, as between broken and unbroken homes respectively, and 35.4%:33.3% for the whites; for Item III (Inmates with One or More Misdemeanor Conviction, as an adult) the negro group exceeds the white group by an even wider margin, with rates of 57.0%:48.6% as against the white group rates of 38.4%:24.8%; for Item IV (Inmates with One or More Felony Conviction, as an adult) the negroes also exceed the whites by a considerable margin, the ratios being 50.0%:47.1% and 43.8%:34.0% respectively; Item VI (Inmates Who Had Served Time, as an adult only) shows a similar disparity between the two groups, with rates of 42.0%:53.0% for the negro group and 30.3%:25.7% for the white group, as between those from broken and unbroken homes within the two racial groups.

In the three remaining cases the rates for the two racial groups are approximately the same. Item 1, for example,

(Inmates with a Juvenile Criminal Record) shows negro rates of 16.3%:18.2% and white rates of 18.9%:16.4%. Similarly, Item V (Inmates Who Had Served Time, as a juvenile only) shows no significant differences between the groups, with percentages of 2.5%:3.0% for the negroes and 3.6%:3.3% for the whites, although the negro group has a slightly lower percentage in both instances. For the last category, Item VII (Inmates Who Had Served Time, both as a juvenile and as an adult,) there also appears to be very little difference between the two racial groups. The rates for Item VI are 8.6%:11.8% for the negro group and 14.3%: 6.6% for the white group.

In addition to the higher rates to be found in the Negro table, a second major difference appears between the two racial groups. Within the white group the criminality rates for inmates from broken homes are higher than the rates for inmates from unbroken homes in every instance. Within the negro group, however, even though the rates for the negroes are in most cases much higher than the rates for the whites, the uniformly higher rates for inmates from broken homes do not appear in the Negro table. The reasons for this are not known. It should be pointed out, however, that in a few cases the difference between the rate for the inmates from broken and unbroken homes is very slight (e.g., for Item 1 the rates are 16.3%:18.2%; for Item V the rates are 2.5% and 3.0%, etc.)

The explanation for the more nearly equal rates for the inmates from broken and unbroken homes within the negro group probably lies in the low cultural and socio-economic status of the negro race. Most sociologists and criminologists believe that the social status of the negro race is largely responsible for the much higher crime rate of the negroes. Assuming this to be true, the relative importance of the broken home situation among the negroes would be much less. Conversely, within the white group, where the low social status does not exist, the broken home would have greater significance as a causative factor in crime. For this reason, the table for the white inmates shows significant differences between those from broken homes and those from unbroken homes in all of the seven categories.

### The Educational Status of Parents

There can be little doubt but that the educational achievements of an individual's parents have some bearing on the ultimate educational attainments of the children, particularly when we consider the fact that educational opportunities for the children are in large measure determined by the financial status of the family.

In the present study, information regarding the educational status of the parents of the inmates was available in 341 cases. Of the 341 cases in which this information was available, 44 (12.9%) of the fathers and 59 (17.9%) of the mothers were illiterate. These percentages do not include foreign-born parents living outside of the United States who were literate in their native language. They do, however, include parents who immigrated to this country and who never became literate in the English language. In the case of 32 inmates (9.4%), both parents were illiterate. These extremely high illiteracy rates are closely associated with the unduly large number of foreign-born inmates (77 inmates, or 19.3%), and southern-born negro inmates (93 inmates, or 23.3%). These two groups represent 42.5% of the four hundred inmates studied in the present survey.

The negro group had the highest percentage of illiterate parents; of the 93 negro inmates on whom this information was available, 19 (20.2%) had illiterate fathers

and 19 (20.9%) had illiterate mothers. The literacy status of the mothers was available in 91 cases, out of a total of 118 cases. In 12 instances (13.2%) both the father and mother were illiterate.

Of the white inmates, 21 (8.9%) had illiterate fathers and 34 (14.3%) had illiterate mothers. This information was available in 236 cases and 238 cases respectively, out of a total of 267 white inmates. In 17 instances (7.2%) both the father and the mother were illiterate.

Of the fifteen inmates belonging to races other than the white and negro, four had illiterate fathers and six had illiterate mothers. Three inmates had both parents illiterate.



### Siblings

Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, in their famous study of ex-prisoners from the Massachusetts Reformatory, discovered that the prisoners came from "families appreciably larger than the average Massachusetts family."

The Gluecks found that the average number of persons per family in Massachusetts, according to the 1910 Census, was 4.6; while the average number of children in the families of the group of ex-prisoners was found to be 5.3 (with an average deviation of 1.9). This fact, taken together with the low economic level, poor neighborhood conditions, etc., was felt to be of true significance. They concluded, however, that the precise weight to be given to this factor of large families in criminal causation is impossible to determine.<sup>15</sup>

Of the 356 men on whom this information was available, 293 (84.7%) had two or more siblings, and 147 (42.5%) had five or more siblings. Although this information is not known for the general population in Michigan, it is very doubtful that the number of children per family would be nearly as large as that represented by the families from which these inmates come.

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<sup>15</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, 500 CRIMINAL CAREERS, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1930, p. 120.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

Associates

"Systematic criminal behavior is determined in a process of association with those who commit crime."<sup>1</sup> This is a fundamental sociological fact, and helps us to appreciate the importance of bad associates in the formation and continuation of criminal patterns, particularly in young people who do not receive adequate supervision from their parents.

Many sociologists have stressed the importance of this factor in the genesis of criminal careers. Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck reported that 95% of the 500 youths whom they studied (all of whom had been in the Massachusetts State Reformatory) had had bad associates prior to their sentence to the Reformatory.<sup>2</sup> Healy and Bronner state that "a large share of all delinquency among juveniles is a companionship affair."<sup>3</sup> The Gluecks also discovered that of the 495 cases on which the information was available, 293 (59.2%) were found to have been associated with one or more companions in the commission

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<sup>1</sup> Notes from a lecture by Dr. Richard Myers at Michigan State College, April 2, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, 500 CRIMINAL CAREERS, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> William Healy and A. F. Bronner, DELINQUENTS AND CRIMINALS: THEIR MAKING AND UNMAKING, Macmillan Co., New York, 1926. p. 179.

of the offense for which they were serving time at the Massachusetts State Reformatory.<sup>4</sup>

The importance of accomplices may be seen from an analysis of the 400 Michigan murders studied in the present survey, which reveals that 151 (37.8%) of the murders were with the aid of accomplices. The following case history illustrates a typical example of an individual who got into trouble mainly because of his associates. This situation, unfortunately, was found very frequently among the four hundred murder cases covered in this thesis, and it is safe to say that many young men are now serving life sentences for crimes in which they are non-participants; the actual shooting or killing having been done by another member of the gang in a moment of great fear, or by accident. In the eyes of the law, however, all accomplices are held equally guilty, and all must pay the awful penalty.

Case #364

He returned to Detroit with a friend, William M--, inmate #350, here on another charge, whom he met in the Lorraine County Jail while the subject served 23 days there (for larceny). He stole a car in Youngston, Ohio, to come there. He failed to find employment in Detroit and met K--, inmate #364, the accomplice in this case, through William M--. The three went around together and pulled several holdups before being apprehended in the present offense.

During his early youth the father drank intoxicants excessively....Lack of work in 1929 forced him out of a job for three years, during which time he was on relief.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

...Unemployment, together with unsatisfactory associates, are the causes of the present situation. He had nothing to do with the offense proper,...(although) he took part in the hold-up. A man was killed in the hold-up.

Inmate has an IQ of 118, comes from a broken home, and has Hungarian-born parents. He is single. Siblings all native born.

Inmate is truthful, co-operative, clean-cut, remorseful, and has a good social attitude at the present time. He is 22 years old.

The following excerpts from other case histories also reveal the great influence which bad associates have on individuals, particularly during the teen-age period when youths are so easily led, and adventure so much a part of their lives.

Case #532

He lived in a high delinquency area much of his life and this, added to the fact that he is so easily led, and his inability to find steady work, explain much of his criminal conduct.

Case #506

The father, who died eight years ago, had a criminal record, and the two older brothers have criminal records. ...There appears to be a strong pattern of delinquency,... and brutality on the part of the father...The boy left school at the age of 14, and there is a long history of association with a juvenile gang in a high risk delinquency area...

Case #272

...Immediate cause of his crime were poor associates and excessive drinking. A man was beaten and stabbed and killed in a drunken brawl. One accomplice...

The examples given above could be duplicated many times, and the importance of bad associates as a factor in promoting criminal activities is certainly very great. The exact weight to be given to this factor in the total crime picture, however, is difficult to determine. Like all other causative factors, it must be subjected to more detailed investigation and research before its relative significance as a causative factor in murder can be determined.

Perhaps no greater condemnation of the present method of handling youthful offenders could be made than that which was made by inmate #324, concerning his experience in a boys' industrial school. "If I was not a confirmed criminal when I entered the institution," he says, "I certainly was when I left. All that I ever learned about crime I learned while I was there."

### Social Mobility

The extent of social mobility, particularly in a highly industrialized society in which transportation facilities are so extensive and varied as they are in the United States, is extremely difficult to determine with any degree of accuracy. The effect which nomadism has upon the problem of crime can therefore only be estimated.

Wood and Waite believe that the shifting of populations under economic duress has an important bearing upon the problem of crime, and this belief is held by many sociologists. Wood and Waite state that:

"...economic development has uprooted the masses, leaving them without a sense of community, - that strong bulwark of stable behavior...Nomadism produces unstable minds without the inhibitions which come from stable community and family relationships. 'Free' labor in the modern world usually means insecurity and all the mental disorganization that goes with that concept. For many it is the open road to moral chaos."<sup>5</sup>

It is probable that migrants formed less than one-third of the adult native white population, while migrants formed nearly one-half of the native white prisoners committed to prisons and reformatories in 1923. Likewise for native negroes, migrants made up only about one-fourth of the adult native negro population as against about one-half

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<sup>5</sup> Wood and Waite, CRIME AND ITS TREATMENT, American Book Co., New York, 1941, p. 201.

of those committed to prisons and reformatories.<sup>6</sup> The study of 19,080 prisoners in THE PRISONERS' ANTECEDENTS confirms the above view of the migratory character of the criminal.<sup>7</sup>

In the present study an attempt has been made to measure the degree of social mobility manifested by the 400 first degree offenders. This was done by determining the length of time that the inmate had been in the State of Michigan prior to the commission of the offense for which he is now serving life. In other words, only the time which the inmate could definitely be considered to have lived in Michigan as a resident has been counted. Lengthy periods of absence from the state, i.e., for a year or more, were considered to have terminated the inmates residence in the state, and this previous time was not included in the calculations when the inmate re-entered the state.

Of the 398 inmates on whom this information was available, 46 (11.6%) had been in the state for a period of one year or less, 42 (10.6%) had been in Michigan from two to three years, 40 (10.1%) from four to six years, 35 (9.0%) for a period of from seven to ten years, 131 (32.9%) eleven years or over, and 104 inmates (26.1%) had been residents of Michigan all of their lives.

It should be pointed out that of the negro group of 118 inmates, 96 (83.5%) were southern-born, and only six inmates

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<sup>6</sup> PRISONERS, 1923, U. S. Bureau of the Census, p. 90.

<sup>7</sup> PRISONERS' ANTECEDENTS, U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1926, p. 13 (Table 6).

had lived all of their lives in Michigan, as against 97 life residents in the white group of 267 inmates. Because of this factor the mobility rate of the negroes, as measured by length of time in the state, was considerably greater than that of the white group. Considering the social mobility of the two racial groups from another point of view, we discover that 183 white inmates (68.8% of the total white group) had been in the state eleven years or more, including those who had always lived in Michigan, while of the negro group only 49 (41.9%) had been in the state for the same length of time. In spite of the fact that the method used to measure the extent of social mobility does not give us an adequate picture of the situation, the results do indicate the extent of the problem, and help us to evaluate this factor with respect to the other aspects of the total crime problem.



### Criminal Experience

There is some evidence to indicate that murderers, as a group, have less extensive criminal records than members of the general prison population. Brearley<sup>8</sup> states that of all persons committed in 1926 to state and federal prisons, 55.6 per cent were first offenders, but of those committed during the same period upon charges involving homicide 70.8 per cent were reported as first offenders.

Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck found that 433 (84.9%) of the 510 ex-inmates of the Massachusetts State Reformatory are known to have been arrested prior to the offense for which they were sentenced to the Reformatory; 47 (9.2%) are known not to have had any prior criminal record; 21 (4.1%) had no record in this country, but their possible criminal record in their native countries is not known.<sup>9</sup>

Other investigators have reported findings similar to those mentioned above. James Shield found that of 3,747 prisoners at the Virginia State Penitentiary on July 2, 1935, 26 per cent of the white males and 30 per cent of the colored males had previously served a penitentiary sentence. If the men who have served terms in reform schools and jails are added to the group, the percentage will be increased by 28.2

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<sup>8</sup> H. C. Brearley, HOMICIDE IN THE UNITED STATES, University of North Carolina Press, 1932, p. 85.

<sup>9</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, 500 CRIMINAL CAREERS, p. 140.

per cent, to a total percentage of nearly 60.<sup>10</sup> The Gluecks' state that in all but 39 cases - that is, in 92.5% of the group - conflict with the social authorities, particularly the legal, occurred when the youths were eighteen years old or less.<sup>11</sup> The last authorities who will be quoted, Healy and Bronner, conclude their statements about crime by saying that "The most evident facts concerning crime are first, its usual beginnings in early youth and, second, the frequency of recidivism."<sup>12</sup>

A high percentage of recidivism was found by the writer in the present survey of 400 Michigan murderers. Of the 395 inmates on whom this information was available, 41.5 per cent had been convicted of one or more felonies prior to the commission of the crime of murder for which they are now serving life sentences; 37.7 per cent had had previous misdemeanor convictions; 38.0 per cent had been held for investigation on at least one occasion; 17.2 per cent had juvenile criminal records, and 47.1 per cent had been incarcerated before. A detailed analysis of the criminal records of the 400 inmates appears in the table below:

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10 James Asa Shield, "Twelve Thousand Criminals," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Vol. XXVIII, No. 6, (March-April, 1938) pp. 808-809.

11 Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, op. cit., p. 143.

12 William Healy and A. F. Bronner, DELINQUENTS AND CRIMINALS; THEIR MAKING AND UNMAKING, p. 215.

TABLE XXII

Criminal Experience of 400 First Degree  
Offenders in Michigan Prisons\*

	Number of Convictions				Per Cent of Total
	One	Two	Three	Four or more	
Juvenile record	45	10	5	8	17.2
Adult record (misdemeanors)	61	37	22	29	37.7
Adult record (felonies)	71	51	18	24	41.5
Investigations	70	28	18	34	38.0

\* The data presented in this table represents only those inmates whose criminal activities are verified by police records. The figures, therefore, represent actual convictions, except of course the last category - "investigations."

It will be seen from the above data that a sizeable proportion of the 400 offenders had indulged in previous criminal activities. Comparable statistics for the general prison population in Michigan are not available, thus a comparison of the criminal records of the first degree offenders and other prisoners cannot be made at this time.

In connection with the criminal statistics already presented, it should be pointed out that the negro group showed higher percentages in each of the categories with the exception of the one on "juvenile criminal record." In this instance the rates were nearly identical, being 17.6% of the

white group and 17.4% for the negro group. For the other categories the percentages for the white and negro groups, respectively, were as follows: Adult record (misdemeanors), 30.7% and 54.3%; Adult record (felonies), 38.6% and 49.1%; Investigations, 34.2% and 47.5%; Time served previously (either as a juvenile or an adult, or both), 42.7% and 57.3%.

### Economic Factors

The economic status of the 400 inmates involved in the present study is believed to be lower than that of the average worker in the general population. Of the 400 men, 222 (55.5%) were common laborers, without any particular skilled or professional training; 24 were farm laborers; 15 were farmers; 28 were skilled workers; 19 men ran their own place of business; 3 were professional men, and 38 could be considered as professional criminals. Of this latter group, all of the men concerned had little interest in legitimate business, and made their living by illegitimate methods, such as bootlegging, running 'blind pigs,' etc. There were 51 inmates who had no occupation; but the reader should be reminded that most of the twelve women were included in this group.

In addition to the occupational data presented above, it was found that 127 inmates were unemployed at the time of the crime, 116 were steadily employed (that is, they had been employed at the same type of work for a year or more), and the remaining 155 inmates were irregularly employed, and at the time of the crime had held their jobs for less than one year. The economic status of 10.4 per cent of the 400 prisoners could be considered as dependent, 71.2 per cent as marginal, and 18.7 per cent as comfortable. Only those inmates who owned their businesses, or their homes or other property, and were not dependent upon their daily wages were

placed in this category. If an inmate apparently depended upon his daily wages for his livelihood, and had accumulated little or nothing to carry him through temporary periods of unemployment or other economic misfortunes, he was classified as marginal. Although this classification is an arbitrary one, and although no actual amounts of money were used in determining the various categories, this classification is believed to be a reasonably accurate portrayal of the relative economic situations of the inmates.

## CHAPTER NINE

### MURDER AND ITS MOTIVES

A homicidal act has not one but several motives, although only one may be conscious. Many psychiatrists stress that certain inner conflicts, frustration, and repeated disappointments are among the inner forces that may call forth an abnormal attitude or elicit an abnormal drive which may tend to steer the individual in an anti-social direction.

Dr. David Abrahamsen, an experienced criminal psychiatrist, states that criminal activities and mental pathologies "are like two plants that derive their nutrition from the same soil." He also feels that the frequency of gross mental abnormalities in criminals supports this analogy.<sup>1</sup> Even if the individual is not considered insane in the legal sense, he believes that the discovery of pathologic features in his personality indicates an underlying pathological process.

After studying many cases of homicide, Dr. Abrahamsen classified this type of crime according to the different basic elements which enter the homicide situation. The two basic types of homicide he refers to as symptomatic murder and manifest (essential) murder. Dr. Abrahamsen defines these two types as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> David Abrahamsen, CRIME AND THE HUMAN MIND, p. 157.

"...The murder is characterized by the acting person. It is safe to say that unconscious elements play an over-whelming part in homicide, and if uncovered, they will provide us with material enabling us to establish the dynamic connection between the killer's mind and his homicide. As the individual manifests his actual and potential traits in a certain pattern, so this very pattern is reflected in the homicide committed. Though circumstance and situation may give the murder a certain color, nevertheless the motivation which brought it about lends it a certain character which makes it possible to a large extent not only to classify the killer but also to distinguish between the different types of homicide. Adhering to the principle that some homicides are the result of inner conflict caused by some hate directed against some person in childhood calling forth guilt feelings and self-punishments or through another type of mechanism, we may consider them to be symptomatic or secondary or reactive, while other types of homicide appear to be primarily directed against society. We are justified in differentiating this type of crime in symptomatic and manifest homicide..."<sup>2</sup>

These two types of murder may be further subdivided as follows:

A. Symptomatic Murder.

1. Murder due to the Distorted Erotic Drive.
  - a. Jealousy murder.
  - b. Murder in the course of a sexual offense.
2. Murder due to the Aggressive Drive.
  - a. Alcoholic murder.
  - b. Surrogate (substitute) murder.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 161.



- c. Murder due to physical inferiority.
- B. Manifest (Essential) Murder.
  - a. Profit murder.
  - b. Murder from motives unknown (murder with unrecognized motives).

Each of these types of murder will be discussed briefly in the following pages, and several illustrative cases presented from the present study of first degree murderers in Michigan.

### Jealousy Murder

It is a well established fact that jealousy is a strong force in driving an individual to murder. Generally speaking, the background is frustrated love caused by a triangular situation, in which the psychological mechanism involved, that of injury to the person's self-esteem and prestige, plays an important part. The individual believes that he possesses the partner, and that he has a right to possess her. This makes him jealous, and by killing the partner his self-esteem is restored.<sup>3</sup>

The following excerpts are taken from the case-record folder of an inmate whom we shall refer to as Case #304, and represents a typical triangular situation, which in this instance is complicated by many other factors - marital maladjustment, lack of assimilation to American culture, mental instability, marginal mentality, limited education, etc.:

The inmate is serving life for the murder of his wife. Born in Russian Poland of Polish parents. Had a little schooling in the old country. Father a farmer - alcoholic.

Inmate is 46 years old. He has worked in mines in the upper peninsula, and foundries in Chicago and Muskegon. He married a 32 year old divorcee in 1927, poor marital relationship, frequent quarrels culminating in murder for which he is now serving life. States his wife kept a lover.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

Inmate was a mental patient at the Ionia State Hospital from 1932 to 1937 and has been under mental observation most of his time here in prison.

Social factors involved include poor marital adjustment, lack of assimilation of and adjustment to American culture, pattern of living outside the law as evidenced by his continued bootlegging activities; never fully came under influence of effective New World restraints.

Situation complicated by triangle affair, and inmate states his wife kept a lover.

IQ-80; no children; history of syphilis; one previous arrest.

### Murder In The Course of a Sexual Offense

Sexual elements play a larger part in homicide than is generally realized. This type of murder is usually committed in the course of rape or a homosexual act, and though this type is not infrequent, it is not as common as murder during a robbery or holdup or murder due to jealousy.

The following two cases, as well as Cases #209 and #508 cited in Chapter IV, illustrate this type of murder, and need little elaboration.

#### Case #576

This inmate is 17 years old....He murdered his six-year-old sister in an attempted sexual act.

Born in Michigan of native parents. Rural-urban environment. Father formerly school teacher but retired for past fifteen years. Economic conditions progressively worse since 1931 with irregular welfare contacts. The 72-year-old father is a strict disciplinarian; mother is thirty years younger.

Superior IQ-123.

Inmate had been living away from home for one and a half months, caring for an invalid, to escape the father's discipline. Father insisted that he continue school.

#### Case #179

This is a 64-year-old white man. IQ-78.

Claims to have started using morphine. Used morphine, cocaine, opium. Says he "went through hell" for about nine years up to the time of the present crime.

At time of crime admitted assaulting two other young girls, seven and eight years of age.

Killed a 5-year-old girl in the present offense, and cut out both breasts and sexual organs.

Physical characteristics:

1. History of epileptoid fits.
2. Physically he is of the glandular type, eunuchoid.
3. Wife diabetic for 10-12 years, sex contacts infrequent.

Comes from broken home, but home seems to have been pleasant after father's second marriage.

Mental age - 11 years 10 months.  
Emotional type, Pyknik.

Under influence of dope at the time of the offense.

Father died of Bright's disease; mother died of childbirth when inmate was four.

Many more examples of this type of murder were encountered in the present study. The cases just mentioned, however, illustrate the point which was mentioned earlier in the chapter - that a homicidal act has not one but several motives. The murderer has his own personality just as any other individual. A detailed investigation is therefore necessary for each offender, and one must realize that without an appreciation of the quality of the psychological features and the personality pattern, as well as other factors of a physical or sociological nature, it will be impossible to fathom the man behind the act and to correct his behavior. This is all the more important in the case of the murderer because of the enormity of his crime.

### Alcoholic Murder

Although alcoholism was not one of the specific factors studied in the present survey of four hundred Michigan murderers, the large number of murders which were committed under the influence of alcohol was very impressive. In fact, it is probably safe to say that the incidence of alcoholism as to causative or precipitating factor in murder is equal to, or greater than that of any other single factor. A further discussion of the importance of alcoholism as a causative factor in murder was presented in Chapter IV (Part IV).

The brief excerpts from the following cases indicate the prevalence of this factor in the murder situation.

#### Case #287

This man killed his uncle (by marriage) because a roomer at his uncle's home had informed the uncle of subject's intimate sex relations with his wife.

This man has a sixth grade education, and an IQ of 67; with a mental age of 10 years and four months. Inmate (a negro) is the product of Georgia-born parents. He was separated from his wife and two children at the time of the crime, but was living in a common-law relationship with another woman.

He is thoroughly egocentric and anti-social. Is a heavy drinker and claims to have been drunk at time of present offense. He is a primitive of average intelligence for his race. Antagonistic toward everyone involved in present incarceration.

History of gonorrhea, with syphilis on admission. Age 29, religiously illiterate.

## Case #350

Inmate is 27 years old, and a native of Canada. Factors contributing to his anti-social conduct have been bad associates in Detroit where he was associated with those who frequented cabarets..... the second strong factor is excessive drinking, and the third encephalitis.

## Case #272

Father born in Poland, mother born in Michigan.....Immediate cause of his crime were poor associates and excessive drinking. Started drinking at 16. For recreation got drunk; social life below average, due to sense of inferiority....

These examples could be multiplied many, many times.

In nearly all of these alcoholic murders, however, alcohol seems to be merely a symptom of some deep seated emotional disturbance or personality conflict. It is also apparent that the conduct of the individual at the time of the murder was not, in a great many instances, different from his conduct on many other occasions except in degree. This was pointed out in an earlier chapter, in which the distinction between first offenders and recidivists under the influence of alcohol was stressed. The recidivists, it will be recalled, in a great many cases would have committed the murder without the assistance of alcohol; while the first offenders would have been much less inclined to have perpetrated the act without the alcohol.

From a broad viewpoint, it will be found that the force which compels a person to commit homicide is frustration in sexual, economic or social strivings, the murder being instigated by rational and irrational motives. Many individuals

resort to alcohol as a means of "escape" from a situation which they can no longer tolerate. The lack of restraint which a person experiences while under the influence of alcohol leads him to commit acts which he would be less inclined to commit under normal conditions. Herein lies the tremendous importance of alcohol as a causative factor in homicide.



Surrogate (substitute) Murder

A surrogate murder is defined as murder of a person who serves as a substitute for the individual originally intended to be killed. Dr. Abrahamsen reports a murder of this type in which a taxi driver murdered a passenger because of the latter's resemblance to his father whom he hated. It is believed that this type of murder is relatively rare, however, and very hard to recognize.

No clearly defined murders of this type were found in the present study, but several homicides which are believed by the writer to have been prompted by similar mechanism were discovered. In murders of this type the individual's criminal act seems to have been directed against society; the individual bearing no particular animosity toward the victim of his crime, as was the case in the surrogate murder described by Dr. David Abrahamsen. In the murder described below, the perpetrator expresses an ingrained hatred against all authority and society, his criminal acts being approved by his ego and superego. He showed no repentance for his acts, and his only regret seemed to be that he had to be incarcerated. The individuals who were the victims of his hatred merely substituted for his hatred of all society.

## Case #561

This is a 20-year-old white youth, Italian-born, who recently became involved in the slaying of three aged farmers and the kidnapping of a fourth.

This man is serving four consecutive terms, three being for life (murder first degree) and one for 60-80 years for kidnapping.

Previous reports on this man were made by the examiner in 1941, when inmate was serving  $3\frac{1}{2}$  - 4 years for felonious assault. At that time it was my opinion that he was "definitely assaultive and potentially homicidal. I believe that he will eventually kill someone and that he constitutes a definite social menace. Easily irritated, explosive, unstable emotionally, vindictive, harbors resentment. His violent temper outbursts and assaultive trends may be due to some type of glandular dysfunction. Unfortunately the recommendation made by this examiner (a psychiatrist) as to placement in the Ionia State Hospital for the Criminal Insane was not followed. He was later discharged at the expiration of his maximum term. The three murders promptly followed.

"Those men needed killing," he says.  
"I have done my duty."

His previous history is unfavorable and indicates serious maladjustment since he was eleven years of age, although not many formal offenses are recorded. He has been in a juvenile detention home on at least four occasions for incorrigibility and served 10 months in a boys vocational school. He has a tenth grade education.

In general, the type of murderer described above usually becomes the habitual criminal, committing crimes as a profession, and with no apparent desire in legitimate activities. They are led by their own concepts of life, which are contrary to that of the law, and when organized into gangs they become criminals of the most vicious and dangerous type.

### Murder Due to Physical Inferiority

Many murders in which the element of physical inferiority, and the concomitant feelings of inadequacy or inferiority, which accompany the physical deformity or defect, were discovered in the present survey. This situation is apparently much more common than is generally recognized. Typical cases illustrating this factor in the murder situation are presented below:

#### Case #246

Born on farm in Missouri of Indian and Dutch stock. Inmate is 25 years old, and the oldest of six children. Father barely literate. Attended country schools and completed sixth grade,...did not like school.

Started drinking at the age of twenty-four and was drunk frequently...was always bashful until drunk...

He had been out of work since he landed in Flint in 1930 (three months ago). Has background of Christian denomination but never belonged to any church. It is suspected that his troubles have been due to a sense of inferiority. His eyes are crossed and he has very outstanding ears. He reports that he has always been very bashful and that he began getting into trouble after he started drinking. After he drank he lost his bashfulness.

Previous criminal record; in 1927 served four months in State Reformatory, Boonville, Missouri for larceny, and in 1929 was arrested for being drunk, and he paid a fine. Man is serving life for murder. A man was shot in a stick-up. Inmate was fairly drunk at the time.

Psychometric tests show MA-11-3, and an IQ of 69 (Simon-Binet Test). Defective intelligence. History of insanity in the family. Unstable and impulsive individual. Infantile responses. Bad eyesight. Psychopathic traits of long standing. Mentally clear. Defective judgment. History of gonorrhea.

## Case #375

This man has gross personality defects with feelings of inadequacy due to blind right eye (at age of three) and complete baldness (at age of 17). "The loss of my right eye, at the age of 3 or 4 years, and the loss of all my hair on my body and head, including my eye-lashes, when I was about 17 years old - cause unknown - have caused me untold misery."

Completed 9th grade at age of 16. Both parents born in Russia of Jewish extraction. He was raised by his own parents, and when nine years old family moved to Detroit. Home conditions good. When his father left for California in 1930 he operated the grocery store until 1933 when it was no longer profitable. He then operated a "blind pig" in the same building, selling liquor illegally.

Inmate is single. Had a common-law relationship for two months in Detroit. Admits frequenting houses of ill-fame a number of times.

He is classified as psychopathic personality, unstable, egocentric, marked feelings of inferiority. Man was killed in his "blind pig" during a brawl, and he was implicated and sentenced by a jury. Previous offenses; unregistered firearms, one year probation; one investigation; violation of State Prohibition Law, discharged.

(This man was released on a court order in 1945.)

These examples again illustrate the point which was made at the beginning of the chapter, and which should be emphasized repeatedly, and that is the proposition that the motives of murder are many, and the causative factors involved in a particular murder situation can be understood only after a careful and exhaustive examination not only of the physical, emotional, and environmental factors entering into the situation, but of the family from which the inmate comes, and the

relationship between the individual and the type of crime for which he is convicted.

### Profit Murder

Crimes of this sort are committed primarily against society. This type of murder differs from the one described under "surrogate murder" mainly because of the existence of other strong motives other than hatred against society, namely that of personal gain or financial profit. In the surrogate murder previously described, the individual apparently had no other strong motive other than that of hatred for society in general, and his three victims in particular.

The following example, taken from the present study of four hundred Michigan murderers, typifies the "murder for profit" type, and is indicative of the completely anti-social attitude of the perpetrators.

#### Case #531

This is a 22-year-old white man, sentenced 5/7/40 from Recorder's Court of Detroit for life for murder first degree. He is a first formal offender but has been in three juvenile corrective institutions between the ages of 11-17. His criminal career shows progression from breaking and entering, through robbery armed to murder.

Father born in Poland, is semi-literate and a factory worker. Mother; subject says his mother was born in Poland and is semi-literate. Single; two older sisters and one younger brother.

In 1938 he met (inmate #532) again, and after being layed off from his WPA job he began associating with inmate #532 and several ex-cons. He says before this he had been alone and had remained out of trouble because he realized he didn't know enough to break laws without being caught...

From the time he met inmate #532 (his accomplice in the present offense) until the time that he was arrested, inmate was associated with about a dozen other men and boys--none of them satisfactory associates. The subject says that he was involved in eight or nine holdups with various members of this group, and in these holdups the members of the gang involved obtained between \$40 and \$1,600. (Another member says the highest amount was \$2,700).

....Information from another member of the gang says that inmate was involved in almost every holdup, mainly because he was greedy for money and had absolutely no foresight, no compunction, and no nervousness.

....In holding up one of the grocery stores inmate shot and killed a man. (This occurred prior to the present offense).

During the early months of 1940 there was a period of comparative inactivity in these robberies, so inmate's accomplice, who worked in a used car lot, evolved the idea of murdering car owners in order to sell their cars. He and subject killed the two men mentioned in the subject's version of the present offense and sold their cars.

It is evident upon conversation with him that he is far more criminalistic than might be expected; that he has absolutely no compunction against killing or robbing. He is a cold blooded type of killer, apparently considered it romantic to be a criminal, and, according to information from another member of the gang, he would have murdered several other people if he had not been persuaded it would be too dangerous.

(Recommendation of Psychiatrist) "This is an egocentric psychopath....absolutely no regard for the rights or property of others or even their lives. Basically dishonest and anti-social. Is apt to become an institutional problem and will probably attempt to escape at

the first opportunity.\* I regard this man as needing the closest type of supervision that the Michigan prisons afford."

The motive of profit is present in a very high percentage of murders, the majority of the murders being committed during holdups or robberies. In many cases the murder is precipitated by some unusual or unexpected event occurring during the holdup, such as resistance on the part of the individual being robbed, or the arrival of other people at the scene of the crime. In these cases the murder is spontaneous - the chief objective of the criminals being a quick get-away to avoid capture. Accomplices to the robbery or holdup are equally guilty of the murder which followed, in spite of the fact that they had nothing to do with the actual killing.

An analysis of the motives of murder which were discovered in the present survey, together with the frequency with which they occurred in the four hundred Michigan murders under discussion, will be presented later in the chapter.

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\* An interesting sequel to this case occurred at the Southern Michigan Prison at Jackson, the inmate, together with one of his former gang members, attempted an escape over the wall. He was shot twice by one of the guards; one bullet passing completely through his head. Inmate survived, however, but is now permanently blind.



### Murder from Motives Unknown

Comparatively few murders occur in which at least one major motive is not uncovered during the course of investigation of the offender. There are instances, however, in which it is extremely difficult to discover the motives. The following example illustrates a murder of this type.

#### Case #595

This is a 16-year-old white boy. IQ-117. Reared on an isolated farm near a small village in Michigan. Parents were good moral people who lived by the letter of the law religiously. They did not believe in card playing, attending movies, the reading of comics, the reading of story books in general, dancing, etc. Inmate had been forced to introvert to a degree that was dangerous to himself and to a degree where many of his normal desires were dangerously suppressed. His personality, for this reason, has been warped.

Inmate shot and killed his mother, after lying in wait in the hay mow. He hid her body in the wood shed. Later the same day he killed his sister in the same manner, and hid her body, also. He then stole a car and attempted to get out of the state, but was apprehended.

It is to be noted that when the sheriff told inmate's 13-year-old sister that her mother had been murdered the sister laughed. The laughter was not caused by happiness....

He attended movies while at the Academy at S---, and rebelled against discipline while he was there. He stole money while at the school and he knew his parents had not been informed of the fact. Inmate had great fears. These fears alone were great enough to cause a dangerous warping of personality.

He did not like working on a farm and he did not like studying by correspondence, but

his mother had been a school teacher and she had pressed him to learn by correspondence study.

He does not mourn the death of his mother and sister, but cried when he described the shooting.

Emil Frankel, in his study of one thousand murderers in New Jersey, found that personal animosities are most often the causative factors culminating in murder. Other important causes were found to be violent passion engendered by brawls and altercations under the influence of alcohol, uncontrollable fits of jealousy, violent domestic quarrels, and murders during robbery, burglary, rape, and other crimes. He states that in many cases murder is the last act of a drama, the motives to kill having irresistably developed over a long period of time, while in others murder is the incidental act committed by individuals discovered or thwarted in the perpetration of another crime.<sup>4</sup>

An analysis of the four hundred Michigan murder cases reveals motives similar to those discovered by Frankel. A table showing the frequency with which various motives occurred appears below.

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<sup>4</sup> Emil Frankel, "One Thousand Murderers," p. 687 ff.

TABLE XXIII

The Motives Involved in 400 Cases of First Degree Murder in the State of Michigan, 1921-1946		
Motive	Number of Cases	Per Cent of Total
Profit	141	35.3
Non-family altercation	90	22.5
Family altercation	79	19.8
Other motives	53	13.3
Result of another crime	30	7.3
Resisting arrest	12	3.0

For the sake of clarity, the above categories will be briefly defined.

Any murder in which the motive of profit or personal gain was obviously present was included in the "profit" category. In order to gain a clearer picture of the incidence of the profit motive, all murders resulting from robberies and holdups were included in the "profit" category. This was an arbitrary decision, however, and the number of cases in the "result of another crime" category is therefore much lower than it would otherwise be. The latter category includes murders which resulted from rape, kidnapping, or felonies other than robbery or burglary.

The second category, non-family altercation, includes five cases of murder which were prompted by retaliation, without any altercation at the actual time of the killing.

The third item, family altercation, includes murders of common-law wives (which are rather frequent), and all other murders which involve members of a family, with varying degrees of kinship involved between the people concerned.

Cases involving motives other than those specifically mentioned in the table were placed in the fourth category, under "other motives." Included in this group are three cases of infanticide, several instances of "mercy" killings, and other miscellaneous types of homicide.

The last category, resisting arrest, includes all crimes in which the factor of "resisting arrest" was present, regardless of the original motive of the crime.

It should be pointed out that any combination of the above factors could be present in a single crime. A holdup, for example, has a single motive - that of profit. If a policeman is killed while attempting to arrest the men, both of the items - "profit" and "resisting arrest" - would be checked in this particular instance, in order to give a true picture of the total murder situation.

In the present study it was discovered that in 151 cases of murder, or 37.8 per cent of the 400 cases studied, the crime was committed with one or more accomplices. In 98

cases, representing 24.5 per cent of the total murders in the survey, the motive of the crime was profit, and one or more accomplices was involved. Accomplices were also present in nine cases of non-family altercation, and in six cases of family altercation.

Analyzing the motives by racial groups reveals some interesting comparisons between the negro group and the white group. Of the 400 murderers, 267 (66.8%) are white men, 118 (29.5%) are negroes, and 15 (3.8%) belong to other races. There were 141 murders in which the motive of profit was present. Involved in these murders were 106 (39.7%) of the 267 white men, 31 (26.3%) of the 118 negroes, and 4 (26.7%) of the members from other races. This indicates that an unduly large proportion of the "profit" murders are committed by white men. Most of these murders result from attempted holdups and robberies, while the negroes involved in the "profit" murders are more liable to waylay individuals in out-of-the-way places and rob them rather than attempt a holdup of a public place of business. Further evidence substantiating the belief that negroes are less liable to commit crimes in gangs will be seen from the fact that only 28 (23.7%) of the murders committed by negroes were with the aid of accomplices, while the rate for the white inmates was nearly twice as large, involving accomplices in 119 (44.6%) of the 267 murders.

The negro group, on the other hand, far exceeded the white group in the number of murders committed as a result of non-family altercation; 43 (37.3%) of the negro group and 42 (15.7%) of the white group being involved in this type of homicide. Five men from races other than white and negro were also involved in murders of this type, representing 33.3 per cent of the 15 men in this group. Because of the small number of men involved, however, the statistics involving men in the latter group have less significance.

The number of men involved in murders resulting from family altercation appears to be distributed equally among the three groups, white group being involved in 51 (19.1%) instances, the negro in 25 (21.1%), and the men from "other races" in three (20.0%) of the murders.

Comparing the results of the present study with the results obtained by Frankel in his survey of "One Thousand Murderers" in New Jersey, we find that the motives, and the number of men involved in each type of homicide, are quite similar in the two studies. Frankel found that 3.1 per cent of the murders resulted from the inmate's attempt to resist arrest, while the present study found that 3.0 per cent of the murders were from this cause. Similarly, Frankel discovered that 15.4 per cent of the 1,000 murders resulted from family altercation. The percentage for this factor, for 400 Michigan murders, was found to be 19.8. The remaining categories used by Frankel are not synonymous with those used by

the writer, and further comparisons are therefore difficult. Frankel, for example, found that 18.8 per cent of the murders resulted from other crimes. Since robbery and burglary were included in that category, and excluded in the same category used by the writer, the rate of 7.5 per cent found in the present Michigan study is of course much lower. Frankel also discovered that only 11.1 per cent of the 1,000 murders which he studied could definitely be defined as "premeditated," although in the legal sense all first degree murders are assumed to be of this type. It is not known how many of the murders in Frankel's study were first degree.<sup>5</sup>

Roy Calvert<sup>6</sup> has pointed out the different nature of homicide in the United States from that in England. In an official analysis covering all the convicted murderers in England over a thirty-year period it has been shown that 29 per cent of the murders were due to drink, quarrels, and violent rage, 30 per cent to jealousy, intrigue, and revenge. 10 per cent to extreme poverty and sexual passion, and less than 10 per cent to robbery or other mercenary motives. Nine out of every ten murders in England are committed by men, and two out of every three persons murdered are women; of the women murdered by men, 42 per cent are their wives and 38 per cent are their mistresses or sweethearts.

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<sup>5</sup> Emil Frankel, "One Thousand Murderers," p. 687 ff.

<sup>6</sup> E. Roy Calvert, "Murder and the Death Penalty," The Nation, Vol. XXIX, (October 16, 1929) p. 406.

In the United States, less than 20 per cent of the homicidal deaths recorded in the registration area in 1921 were women - "a clear indication," Calvert says, "of the different nature of the crime as compared with England."

Only twelve (3.0%) of the 400 Michigan murders were committed by women, but women were the victims in 104 (26.4%) of the murders.



## CHAPTER TEN

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There is no panacea for crime. In the great majority of murders which were studied in this survey it was apparent that in each case many factors - rather than any single one - were involved. The following case history represents an unusual situation in which a great many causative factors are to be found:

#### Case #506

Inmate is Michigan-born, 20 years old, single, the fourth of six children born of Polish immigrant parents. Home was broken by death of the father eight years ago. Father was excessively alcoholic, and had a criminal record. The illiterate mother has been employed for several years as a scrub woman, and she also is alcoholic. The two older brothers have criminal records.

There appears to be a strong pattern of delinquency, brutality on the part of the father, and a need for much intervention from many Detroit social agencies.

The boy left school when in the fifth grade at the age of fourteen, and there is a long history of association with a juvenile gang in a high-risk delinquency area. Inmate was sent to the Parental Home and Ford Republic, and to the Boys' Vocational School on two occasions. He escaped nine times from the detention home, several times from Ford Republic, and twice from the Boys' Vocational School.

For 18 months he had been employed by the WPA and the only other job he had had was working for a laundry for three weeks.

His recreation has been inadequate, and he admits "rolling drunks" since 1937 to get spending money in order to buy liquor. In

the present offense he killed a drunk after hitting him on the head and beating him.

Associated with his inferior intelligence (IQ-68) we find him to be assaultive, homicidal, with deep-seated conflicts and inferiority feelings on the basis of his stature, and undoubtedly some of his aggressive behavior is over-compensatory in nature. He is very anti-social and recidivistic.

Nearly all of the factors involved in the above case have been found to be present in an unduly high number of cases included in the present survey of 400 first degree murderers in Michigan prisons. Each individual case, however, has its distinctive pattern, and factors which appear to be of major importance in one instance may not be present at all in other murder situations.

The relative significance of each of the social characteristics in the over-all murder configuration may be determined by the use of control or comparison groups. These control groups, when carefully selected and scientifically used, are extremely valuable in differentiating classes of individuals, and therefore constitute one of the most useful tools of the social scientist. Control groups, as used in this study, serve two purposes; first, they indicate in what ways the group of 400 first degree murderers differs from the control group, and secondly, the degree of differentiation.

It should be pointed out, however, that a high degree of statistical correlation between social phenomena does not

necessarily indicate that the same phenomena are of the same importance from the standpoint of causation. "Correlation" and "causation" are not synonymous terms, and the social scientist should be cautious of attributing to his data greater causative significance than scientific analysis would warrant.

The purpose of this survey has been to study, by means of inductive investigation, the social characteristics of first degree murderers in Michigan prisons, and to determine how this group of murderers differs from other selected population groups. The degree of differentiation has in each case been determined by the use of carefully selected control groups, as stated above, thus making possible the establishment of scientific generalizations concerning the social characteristics of first degree murderers as a group.

The results of this study will be briefly summarized in the following pages.

Murderers as a group are older than members of the general prison population. An analysis of the ages of the 400 murderers included in the survey indicates that 35.5% of the group fall within the 25-34 year age bracket, and 22.0% within the 35-44 year group. It was also discovered that 21.0% of the inmates were between the ages of 20 and 24, and an additional 9.5% between the ages of 15 and 19. There is general agreement among criminologists that commitment rates for criminals in general are highest for the lower age

groups, that is, for those between 15 and 19 years, and for those between 20 and 24 years of age. These commitment rates vary slightly from year to year, but it is generally recognized that crime is largely a problem of youth, and the modal age is usually about 18 or 19 years. On the basis of this analysis, then, it is reasonable to assume that first degree murderers as a group are considerably older than the general prison population.

The crime of first degree murder was found to be predominantly a male activity. Only 12 (3.0%) of the 400 murderers were females. On the other hand, females were victims of 104 (26.0%) of these murders, which would indicate that the role of the female in the total murder situation is a very important one even though she is the actual murderer in a very small per cent of the 400 cases which were studied. Although the percentage is not known, a great many of these murders were the result of jealousy and the love-triangle situation. The writer was also impressed by the large number of murderers who were living in a common-law relationship at the time of the crime (52 inmates, or 13% of the total), and by the number of murders which resulted from family altercation (79, or 19.8%). Included in the latter category were those murders which were committed by inmates living in common-law relationship at the time of the crime, and whose victims were their common-law wives.

In view of the above findings, the writer believes that further studies concerning the role of the female in murder situations are indicated.

Probably the most significant result of this survey was the discovery of an extremely high murder commitment rate for negroes. Only four per cent of the general population in the State of Michigan are Negroes, yet 118 (29.5%) of the 400 murderers are members of the negro race. Moreover, of the 115 Negroes who were native-born, 96 (or 83.5%) were born in Southern states (see CHAPTER SEVEN - Nativity). This would indicate that the problem created by the northward migration of the negro is of great importance from the standpoint of crime rates, particularly the crime of first degree murder.

Because of the data presented above, the writer believes that the Southern-born negro warrants intensive study if murder rates are to be decreased. It is felt that the northward migration of negroes, from rural areas in the South to highly industrialized areas in the North, helps to create a social situation to which few negroes were able to adjust readily. The different status of the negro in the North further adds to his sense of bewilderment. Furthermore, the low social and economic status of the negro precludes the probability of receiving competent legal advice and counsel, and many cases of murder undoubtedly result from negroes "taking the law in their own hands." In conclusion, we may safely say that the importance of the negro slayer in

the total murder configuration is extremely great; since nearly one-third of the 400 murderers in this study were members of that race, as against only four per cent (4%) negroes in the general population in the State of Michigan.

Concerning the physical condition of first degree murderers at the time of the commission of their offenses, no factor was found to be of greater significance than alcoholism. Unfortunately, however, "alcoholism" was not included on the schedule sheet; therefore the incidence of alcoholism, particularly at the time of the commission of the crime, is not accurately known. It is estimated, however, that approximately 20 to 25 per cent of the murders were committed while the individuals were under the influence of alcohol.

Another physical condition which appears to be definitely associated with murder, is that of psychosomatic disorders. Several cases of murder were discovered in which bodily disease or bodily defect had produced a change in the mental attitude of the individual to such an extent that he had become morbid and anti-social, and had developed criminalistic tendencies to compensate for feelings of inferiority. This factor was found to be of great importance in several instances, but in terms of percentage would not be very great (approximately 5%).

The only other physical characteristic which appeared to be of significance concerned youthful offenders whose

physiological state (associated with sexual conflicts, etc. existing at puberty) apparently influenced the individuals to a considerable extent, and could definitely be considered an important part of the murder situation.

Certain family relationships were found to have considerable significance to the crime of murder. Concerning the marital status of the 400 murderers, an unduly high proportion of the inmates were single men (49.5%, as against 32.2% single males 15 years of age and over in the general population of Michigan, in 1940). The above figure includes those living in common-law relationship, since it is assumed that these individuals are classified by the census as "single." The divorced men were likewise unduly high, with an inmate percentage of 9.3%, compared to a rate of only 1.7% in the general population as recorded by the 1940 census. This latter category includes inmates who were "separated" from their wives at the time of the crime, since it is assumed that these inmates are classified by the census as "married." The married men, on the other hand, were unduly low in proportion to the number of married men in the general population (36.5%, as against 61.9% in the general population); and the ratio of widowed men was approximately the same as the ratio of widowed males in the general population (4.8% for the inmate population, and 4.2% for the general population).

Because of the above facts, it is apparent that marital factors are of considerable importance in the crime

of first degree murder. It is the writer's hypothesis that the unduly high proportion of single men, and men who are divorced or separated, is indicative of an over-all maladjustment on the part of the individuals concerned; a maladjustment which involves not only the marital relationship, but the social relationships of the inmates as well. This lack of orientation apparently affects several spheres of the individual's life, and criminal behavior, marital discord, etc. are merely the overt manifestations.

The above hypothesis is further supported by the following facts; divorced and separated males were found to have had much more extensive criminal experience than either the single men or the married men, with one exception (see page 52). The criminal experience of single men (as determined by the following indices - number of men with juvenile criminal record; number of men with adult records of felonies or misdemeanors; number of men who had been investigated one or more times; and men who had served time previous to the present offense), was found to be more extensive than that of married men, but less extensive than that of divorced or separated men. These rates, for the married, single, and divorced or separated men respectively, were as follows: Number of inmates with juvenile record, 7.7%, 26.7%, and 16.0%; those with adult record for misdemeanors, 19.2%, 28.3%, and 36.0%; those with adult record for felonies, 25.0%, 31.7%, and 60.0%; number of inmates who had been investigated one or more times, 21.2%, 41.7%, and 48.0%; and those who had served time previously, 27.0%, 41.7%, and 56.0%.



There is some evidence to indicate that the presence of children in the family tends to deter the father from crime. Of the 400 murderers studied in the survey, 102 (25%) had children; 49 had one child, 29 had two children and 24 had three or more children. The inmates with three or more children had criminal rates which were consistently lower than the rates for men who had either one or two children. Only 4.2% of the men with three or more children had a juvenile record, while 14.6% of the men with only one child were found to have had a juvenile record. Because of the relatively small number of men involved, however, these data are less valid than they would otherwise be.

The educational status of the inmates was found to be low. Of the 395 inmates on whom this information was available, 23 (5.8%) had had no formal education; 103 (26.1%) had completed the fifth grade or less; 166 (48.0%) had completed six to eight grades in school; 80 (21.8%) had attended high school; only 9 (2.3%) had completed high school, and only 8 (2.1%) had attended college. This information was furnished by the inmates in most instances, and is not verified from other sources.

Important differences were found between the educational achievements of the negro inmates as against those of the white group. In the negro group, only 17.1% of the inmates had continued beyond the eighth grade; while 30.8% of the white inmates had continued their education beyond this grade.

While comparable statistics for the general population are not available, it is considered very doubtful that the educational status of the general population would be found to be as low as that of the inmate group. One of the most extensive statistical studies of prisoners ever made was undertaken by the United States Census Bureau, and the results were made available in 1926. Over 19,000 prisoners were included in the survey. As regards the educational background of these inmates, it was estimated that the ratio of commitments per 100,000 of the adult population was 42.7% for the illiterate, as against 27.3% for those able to read and write; and that the ratio of prisoners with a college education was 14.3% per 100,000; this being the lowest for the literate group.<sup>1</sup> This data substantiates the hypothesis that the educational status of prisoners, including the present group of 400 first degree murderers, is lower than that of the general population.

An analysis of the intelligence quotient of the 397 murderers, on whom this information was available, reveals that 20.4% were found to have an intelligence quotient of 69 or below, which would place them in the feeble-minded category. Included in this group were 33 (12%) of the white inmates and 39 (34.3%) of the negro inmates, and seven inmates from other races. Only 124 (44.8%) of the white inmates were found to have an intelligence quotient of 90 or above

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted from PRISONERS ANTECEDENTS, (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1926) by Michael and Adler, CRIME, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCE, N. Y., Harcourt Brace and Co., 1933, p. 128.

(indicating a normal intelligence, or above normal), and only 32 (23.7%) of the negro inmates were in this category.

If 2.1% of the general population, as indicated by draft statistics, are feeble-minded, then it appears that an exceptionally high number of feeble-minded individuals are to be found in the group of murderers. Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, in their study of 500 Massachusetts Reformatory inmates, found that 20.6% were feeble-minded. The same classification was used by the Gluecks as was used in the present study. On the basis of these data, it seems highly probable that murderers as a group have a lower intelligence rating than do members of the general population. The burden of proof lies with those who question this hypothesis.

In addition to the high incidence of mentally defective individuals in the prison population, there is every reason to believe that the incidence of mental disorders and diseases is also high in the general prison population. This is particularly true of murderers, where rates up to 50 per cent have been found. There was no way in which to accurately determine the incidence of mental disorders and diseases in the group of murderers, but the writer was impressed with the very large number of inmates who were, according to psychiatric reports, suffering from mental disturbances. Moreover, for those who cannot be definitely "typed" as having psychosis it was obvious that there existed deep-seated mental disturbances, and that these disturbances were specific factors in the crime of murder for which they are now incarcerated.

Concerning the nativity of white inmates, no significant correlations were found, with the exception of the foreign-born, who comprised 23.2 per cent of the murder group as against only 18.1 per cent foreign-born in the Michigan male population in 1930. Native-born white inmates of native-born parents accounted for 61.4 per cent of the total murder group, compared to 62.1 per cent in this category in the general population. The percentage of native white inmates who had foreign or mixed parentage was approximately the same for the prison inmates as it was for the general population, the rates being 38.6 and 38.0 per cent respectively.

The broken home has frequently been stressed as an important factor in crime. Of the 395 individuals on which this information was available, broken homes were found to be present in 198 (50.1%) of the cases; the break occurring at the age of seventeen or earlier in all instances. Although it has not been possible to obtain a "control group" for this factor from the general population, it would be reasonable to assume that the incidence of broken homes among adult members of the general population would not be nearly as great as that found in the group of murderers.

In an effort to determine the effect of broken homes on the criminality of the inmates, a comparison was made of the criminal experience of inmates from broken and unbroken homes. In every instance, the crime rates of the inmates from broken homes were found to be substantially greater than the

crime rates of the inmates who came from homes which were not broken. In preparing the crime rate tables, it was found necessary to separate the negroes from the whites. It was felt that the higher crime rates for the negroes would obscure the significance of the "broken home" factor if the two groups were not separated, and this was found to be true. The negro rates were very much greater than the rates for the whites, and there appeared to be relatively little difference between the negro rates from broken homes and those from unbroken homes. In the white group, however, the differences between the two factors (broken and unbroken homes) appeared to be much greater. This would indicate that the broken home factor is of considerable significance for the whites, and much less so for the negroes. It is felt that the cultural and socio-economic factors are of such great importance for the negroes that other factors, such as the broken home, are forced into the background.

A high incidence of recidivism was found for the murder group. Of the 395 inmates on whom this information was available, 41.5 per cent had been convicted of one or more felonies prior to the commission of the crime of murder for which they are now serving life sentences. Moreover, 47.1 per cent had been incarcerated before. It is not known how this rate compares with that of the general prison population in Michigan.

The following motives were discovered to be present in the 400 murders: the motive of profit or personal gain, 141 cases (35.3%); non-family altercation, 90 cases, (22.5%); family altercation, 79 cases, (19.8%); other motives, 53 cases, (13.3%); result of another crime, 30 cases, (7.3%); and resisting arrest, 12 cases, (3.0%). It should be pointed out that any combination of the above factors could be present in a single crime. A holdup, for example, usually has but one motive, that of profit. If a policeman should be shot while the bandits were resisting arrest, both "profit" and "resisting arrest" would enter into the total murder situation.

Accomplices were involved in over one-third of the 400 murders (37.8%); this factor being more important for the white men than for the negroes. Of the negro group, only 23.7% were with the aid of accomplices; while accomplices were involved in 44.6% of the murders involving white men. This indicates that the races manifest important differences in the types of murder which are committed, and also in the motives behind these murders.

A more detailed explanation of any of the subjects discussed in the summary may be found by referring to the appropriate chapters in the thesis.

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