

POD Forecast

Must We Be Perpetually Afraid & Paranoid?

Privately, does everyone have a Mr. Hyde, yet in public personify the essence of respectability as Dr. Jekyll? How shocked are we when we see how easily we can be duped? As citizens, must we be perpetually afraid and paranoid of everyone we meet?

The literature is replete with examples of the deception that surrounds sexually psychopathic serial killers. Those close to Ted Bundy, for instance, were absolutely amazed when Bundy was first arrested as the prime suspected in the murders of several college coeds. “They have the wrong guy” remarked an acquaintance who was also an attorney. Bundy would finally admit to over thirty of the most sexually sadistic crimes in the history of sexual psychopathy.

A friend of John Wayne Gacy offered to extend to Gacy employment upon his parole for a sexual indecency charge he felt was wrongly visited upon his friend; the same Gacy who would eventually have over thirty bodies discovered buried in the crawlspace of his home.

Ed Gein, ostensibly a gentle Wisconsin farmer, gained the trust of neighbors who often asked him to watch their children. This was the same man who would fashion furniture coverings and trinkets out of the skin and bone he ripped from victims. Gein became the postmodern *archetypical boogeyman* inspiring such film classics as *Psycho* and characters such as Leatherface in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. But, who knew at the time a monster resided behind his gentle and slow-witted persona.

The psychology of deception is fully engaged in sexually psychopathic serial crime as predators appear to be one thing yet turn out to be another.

Deception is not new to forensic psychology. For example, it is important to understand *malingering* as a deceptive strategy. In the DSM (the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—the manual used by clinical psychologists) malingering is defined as *the intentional production of false or grossly exaggerated physical or psychological symptoms, motivated by external incentives such as avoiding military service, avoiding work, obtaining financial compensation, evading criminal prosecution, or obtaining drugs* (2002). A defendant may intentionally fake a mental illness or may be exaggerating the degree of symptomatology.

What about *competency to stand trial*? In such cases, a forensic psychologist is appointed by the court to examine and assess the individual who may be in custody or recently released on bail. Based on the forensic assessment, the psychologist recommends whether or not the defendant is competent or incompetent to stand trial.

If the defendant is considered incompetent to proceed, a report will include recommendations for the interim period during which an attempt at

restoring the individual's competency to understand the court and legal proceedings, as well as participate appropriately in their defense, will be made. If the individual is deemed incompetent to stand trial and if competence is not regained after a suitable period of time, he or she may be involuntarily committed, on the recommendation of the forensic psychologist, to a psychiatric treatment center until such time as a panel of clinical forensic psychologists and psychiatrists agree competency has returned.

What about the perpetrator's state of mind at the time of the offense? Was he or she impaired? Should he plead not guilty by reason of insanity? In these cases, the presiding judge may appoint forensic psychologists or psychiatrists while defense attorneys are busy locating their own "hired guns" to tip the verdict in their favor.

Once found guilty, can the person's *state of mind*, *past history of abuse*, or *mental illness* be used to mitigate the sentence? This may be absolutely true relative to his medical history, family history of abuse, violence, or trauma that may have triggered a *violent brainmark*—soon to be addressed in the lab manual *Brainmarks* accompanying this text. Might the person re-offend upon release? Would the person be a good candidate for rehabilitation? Is rehabilitation possible for a person who has never been habilitated? Forensic psychology has evolved into an important branch of neuropsychology—psychology at the tissue level—sure to become one of the most important disciplines in history as it attempts to peer deep within the brain to tease away the pretzel of sexually psychopathic serial crime.