

What's in a face?

Wouldn't the life of a police officer be so much easier if you knew exactly how a criminal would react just by looking at their facial features? According to Richard M. Phelan, a personologist, that is well within the realms of reality.

Presented with a book on 'personology', or how to read physical traits of the face to predict aspects of someone's personality, I immediately screwed up my face and thought, 'here we go, how on earth can you predict someone will be likely to commit a particular crime,' then I looked at my face and realised my nostrils were higher than the tip of my nose, thus, of course, meaning I will be a bit sceptical, in the world of personology anyway.

However, author Richard M Phelan, a personologist himself and author of the book *Face Reading, how to read traits of the face, a quick visual handbook*, says the 'science' does work and people should test it out for themselves, "you'll be amazed how accurate it is". He believes it would be an invaluable tool for police officers when dealing with the public, criminals, colleagues and loved ones.

If you, like me, have never heard of personology, also known as 'face reading', it is the study of reading inherited genetic traits which, those who 'believe' believe will help us understand human behaviour, communicate much better and also understand more about ourselves and our relationships.

Mr Phelan says this can help give officers the tools they need to know exactly how the person they are talking to will react, avoid misunderstandings and understand mood swings as well as how, say some criminals, could be diverted into more positive behaviour.

The theory of personology can be traced back to the late Judge Edward V Jones in the US during the 1930s, after noticing

particular traits in the people that came before him in court. Mr Phelan says: "He noticed the physical traits first in lawyers doing the work, some had a particular physical trait and were forceful and direct and some had a dent around the temples and were very tactful. He then noticed that the offenders who came into the court had physical traits associated with different crimes."

"There are many applications but police officers would be able to identify what type of person they are looking at and why they have carried out a certain crime and how best to deal with that person."

This was later validated by Robert Whiteside, a newspaper editor turned researcher in San Francisco, who set up tests on 1,050 people. He claimed the results were 92 per cent accurate, and went on to carry out around 15,000 profiles one-to-one, some in criminal investigation and in the penal system, such as San Quentin prison in the US.

Mr Phelan says he is able to understand a whole host of personality traits about an individual just by looking at their face and identifying some of the 68 common physical traits in personology. But the study does not only look at facial and physical traits, it also takes into account around 20 environmental factors which tell you more about a person.

"Personology looks at positive traits and traits that can get out of control, there are no negative traits," says Mr Phelan. So protruding lips, mouth and chin can be an indication of high impulsiveness and close-set eyes a sign of someone with low tolerance. In personology, if these traits are combined and left to get out of control, they could result in someone who reacts violently if handled in the wrong way. But, all traits are considered as positive, it is just if they are left unchecked and unsupported that they can be directed in the wrong way.

How is it useful to police officers? Well, Mr Phelan says: "There are many applications but police officers would be able to identify what type of person they are looking at and why they have carried out a certain crime and how best to deal with that person."

The groups of 68 traits are grouped into five trait areas, physical traits, such as thickness of hair and leg length, auto expression traits, found in the area from the nose to the bottom of the chin, action traits, found at the top, rear and side of the head, feelings and emotions traits, top part of the face, particularly the eye area and thinking traits, mainly in the forehead area.

Some traits are considered to be environmental and are down to a person's own way of thinking, life style and environment.

Mr Phelan says if you have a child brought up in a deprived environment who has a trait to be restless and a bit of a risk-taker, they can divert their energies into something like joy riding. But if their 'traits' are spotted early on their

energies could be channelled into something positive like sports.

The worry here is that if personology is relied upon as an exact science, then it could potentially pigeonhole or stereotype certain groups of people. For example, if a certain physical trait is more common to a minority ethnic group, the narrower eyes in many Chinese people, would indicate they are more likely to be analytical under the system. Is that really fair or accurate? Mr Phelan reiterates that is not the aim of personology to group people with negative traits, and traits cannot be 'bad,' only good if they are directed the right way and help people to understand one another.

But, as the book suggests, you should not take a personologist's word for it, you should go out and test the theory. I, in a rather fool-hardy and risk-taking manner, after all I have a long ring finger, took photographs of my bosses; head of my department, Metin Enver, chairman Paul McKeever and vice-chairman Simon Reed for analysis..

I learn that my immediate boss has a very good imagination, handy for a communications manager who has to look at campaigns and strategies, due to his long forehead, and a bump in the same area means he also has the ability to concentrate well and is patient, also handy for working in an open-plan office. He is also considered sceptical, so is likely to screw his face up whilst reading this. Simon Reed's photo provoked the response, "He likes to be on

the move, he does not like to sit still," as I recount this to the vice-chairman I realise he is half way down the corridor before I have finished my sentence. This, apparently, is indicated by the long space between the bottom of his nose to his chin. He is a people friendly person.

Finally, our chairman, Mr McKeever, is considered to be forward thinking as much of his head is out in front of his ears, personologists actually have measuring tools for this purpose. He is also likely to be the sort of person who fights for an issue because he will be fairly tenacious judging by the distance from his nose to his mouth area, according to Mr Phelan. Added to this, he has a dry sense of humour, I do hope so, but I take the opportunity to ask Mr Phelan what kind of careers my traits are suitable for.

Can you spot any of the following traits in your colleagues?

The face:

- Sharp or fine features: tendency to be picky/fussy, called the clinical look, generally more tidy
- More blunt/rounded features: Less picky/fussy, prone to be untidy and lax about surroundings
- Narrow or slim face: Not naturally confident, builds confidence through knowledge, always wants to learn more
- Wide face: High self confidence, acts on limited knowledge, will tend to

bluff way through situations

- Shorter lower face from nose to chin: mentally motivated, think before taking any action, may appear slow to be motivated due to calculating the cost
- Longer lower face from nose to chin: Physically motivated, will strive into action and make decisions based on experience of the past, not knowledge
- Hair: Generally the finer hair indicates someone who is more sensitive and who likes quality and the coarser the hair the less likely they are to be upset and prefers quantity to quality
- Head: Round or oval shaped forehead: conservationist, homemaker, likes working with people and likes to look after things. A square-shaped forehead is a constructionist shape and generally likes a challenge, starting new projects but not everyday chores.
- Ears: Protruding ears that stick out can indicate an acquisitive person, instinctively asks why. Hears everything, tends to accumulate and hoard things, and lives in clutter, good money saver
- Flat looking ears against the side of the head: Low acquisitiveness, tendency to spend money easily, can be wasteful

For more information click on: www.facereading.tv

Imaginative: Metin Enver, head of communications



People-friendly: Simon Reed, vice-chairman



Forward thinker: Paul McKeever, chairman

