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Examining Juvenile Delinquency Contributors through Life-Course and Strain Theory

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Criminal Justice

East Tennessee State University

In Partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Criminal Justice

by

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December 2013

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Keywords: strain theory, life-course, juvenile crime, juvenile delinquency, contributors to juvenile crime

ABSTRACT

Examining Juvenile Delinquency Contributors through Life-Course and Strain Theory

by

Caitlin Burns

For years the causes of juvenile delinquency have drawn a lot of attention from the scientific community and have become a widely studied concept in research literature. Causes of juvenile delinquency have become an important aspect of criminological study because with the knowledge of what contributes to delinquency, the scientific community can possibly slow down the continuous act of offending, also known as continuity, through implementation of prevention strategies. Criminological theory is used to define and help understand why certain contributors are the foundation for juvenile delinquency, along with the continuity of crime for an adolescent but also what factors contribute to a decrease in criminal activity, known as desistance. Some predictors of juvenile delinquency that researchers have focused on are the individual characteristics such as peer influence, family environment, parenting styles, school environment, and community structure (Shreck, Fisher, & Miller, 2004).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	5
Chapter	
1. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
School Environment as a Contributor to Juvenile Delinquency.....	10
Family Environment as a Contributor to Juvenile Delinquency.....	15
Peers as a Contributor to Juvenile Delinquency.....	18
Desistance in Juvenile Life-Course.....	21
Summary.....	23
2. BIOGRAPHIES OF JUVENILES.....	27
Alex and Derek King.....	27
Contributors to Crime	32
Kipland Kinkel.....	35
Contributors to Crime	42
Erik and Lyle Menendez.....	44

Contributors to Crime	49
Barry Loukaitis.....	51
Contributors to Crime	54
3. APPLICATIONS OF CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORIES.....	56
Background of Discussed Theories.....	56
Life-Course Theory.....	58
General Strain Theory.....	60
Applying Theories to the Life of the Juveniles in Question.....	62
Applying Components to the Life of the Juveniles in Question.....	68
4. CONCLUSION.....	74
REFERENCES.....	76
VITA.....	80

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For years the causes of juvenile delinquency have drawn a lot of attention from the scientific community and have become a widely studied concept in research literature. Causes of juvenile delinquency have become an important aspect of criminological study because with the knowledge of what contributes to delinquency, the scientific community can possibly slow down the continuous act of offending, also known as continuity, through implementation of prevention strategies. Continuity is an idea that has been the focus of much research over the past several years in criminology with the hope of finding ways to prevent adolescents from living a life of crime (Jang, 1999). Criminological theory is used to define and help understand why certain contributors are the foundation for juvenile delinquency, along with the continuity of crime for an adolescent, but also what factors contribute to a decrease in criminal activity, also known as desistance. Some predictors of juvenile delinquency that researchers have focused on are the individual characteristics such as peer influence, family environment, parenting styles, school environment, and community structure (Shreck, Fisher, & Miller, 2004). Within the current literature, unfortunately, there is not a lot of research being conducted on what causes an individual to desist from crime, but a few predictors that lead to desistance have been studied to give the scientific community some idea of why adolescents offend early in their life but stop later on. These predictors of desistance include; individual characteristics and the effects they have on the individual such as, marriage and family, familial environment, school environment, and incarceration. (Mulvey et al., 2010). Whether it is finding ways to prevent adolescent crime or ascertaining what causes any youth to commit crime, it is important to make sure and try to prevent adolescents from living a life of crime later.

Due to the research findings many criminals begin their careers at an early age (Sampson & Laub, 2003); therefore, criminal interventions should occur early on in the life of the adolescent. When this occurs, intervention can be effective in determining the factors that contribute to a juvenile's criminal career, such as school environment, relationship with parents, and peer group. With this knowledge scientists, psychologists, and law enforcement officials can potentially create interventions or programs to prevent juvenile delinquency by counteracting the negative influences that occur through these factors and the affects these influences may have on the individual thereby limiting the number of juveniles living a criminal life-course. Based on current literature studies, it is theorized that a majority of criminals began their careers at an early age of adolescence (Vitulano, Fite, & Rathert, 2010). Criminal behavior is a result of the interaction between an adolescent and his or her family, school, peers, and situational factors with which a youth comes in contact and if these interactions do not produce the type of relationship the adolescent feels he or she needs, he or she are more likely to seek that social interaction someplace else (Vitulano et al., 2010). Each individual has different situational factors that may lead to delinquency such as strain in relationships with positive stimuli (Agnew, 1992), and any influences in the adolescent's life that are beyond his or her control such as concepts defined by Moffitt as etiology roots that are traced to childhood risk factors like difficult temperament, low verbal IQ, puberty, and poor self-control (Sampson & Laub, 2003). With studies conducted by researchers such as Moffit and Sampson and Laub, the scientific community may have a better understanding of how an individual's school environment, home environment, and peer group can influence his or her decisions to participate in criminal activity. With Robert Agnew's strain theory, the scientific community can increase its knowledge of juvenile life-course crime trajectories and also find ways to remove the negative strain and

stimuli in the individual youth's life. Several factors are thought to be correlated with juvenile delinquency and are responsible for the presence of negative stimuli in an adolescent's life that can potentially lead to a life course of crime, but it is hypothesized that a juvenile's home environment, school environment, and peer group are the most prominent factors present because they can cause negative strain and influence adolescents to commit delinquency; therefore, this assumption makes these three contributors major factors to a juvenile's life-course of crime (Agnew, 1992; Brisman, 2012, Cullen & Agnew, 2006, Farrington, 2003; Hay, 2001; Heide, 1992; Jang, 1999; Kirk, 2006; Laub, 2004; Mulvey et al., 2010; Sampson & Groves, 1989, Sampson & Laub, 2003; Schreck et al., 2004; Tyler, Johnson, & Brownridge, 2008; Vitulano et al., 2010; Warr, 1998; Welsh & Farrington, 2007; Wright & Beaver, 2005).

In the present paper the role a juvenile's home and school environment have on his or her criminal life-course are examined along with the influence of his or her peer group has on each juvenile's decision to participate in delinquent activities. Not only does the concept of the paper focus on what trajectories in an adolescent's life may potentially lead to a life-time criminal career but also the emphasis on general strain in a juvenile's life that can have negative effects and cause delinquency. This study examines the life of six juveniles who have been convicted of murder in order to assess if any, or all, of those factors contributed to their crimes. The strain of negative influences these trajectories create in life-course criminology is discussed in relation to juvenile crime. Also, different criminological theories are examined in order to provide support for the assumption that these influences led to a life-course of crime. In life-course criminology two aspects are usually the focus of each study, trajectories or causes that lead to juvenile life-course and desistance, or the end of criminal activity. These are important in determining whether certain factors can lead an individual away from crime, just as there are factors that can

lead to crime. In order to implement preventative measures causes of juvenile delinquency must be examined as well as desistance. Two criminological theories, Agnew's General Strain Theory and Sampson, Laub, and Moffit's Life-Course Theory, are applied to each individual juvenile. Also, the three factors that are hypothesized as being contributors to a juvenile's criminal life-course, specifically, peer group, family home environment, and school life, are examined with respect to each individual juvenile to see what affect, if any, they have on each adolescent. Each individual was impacted differently by the components examined, but in the end, desistance was the same result for all of them, incarceration.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Agnew's study (as cited in Brisman, 2012), *Why do Criminals Offend? A General Theory of Crime and Delinquency*, he asserted that all major theories of crime possess some relevance and that a "complete explanation of crime (55)" must integrate criminological concepts, describe the relationship between them, and explain how they work together to affect crime (Brisman, 2012). Agnew (as cited in Brisman, 2012) explains the issue of why criminals offend, and with his help, this study discusses what influences juveniles to participate in delinquent activities, and with the help of Sampson and Laub and Moffitt, also how strain in an adolescent's life affects decisions that could potentially lead to a criminal life-course (Brisman, 2012). Normally, life-course theory and general strain theory are not linked together but in this instance, these two different theories are linked in order to prove what trajectories in a juvenile's life could lead to a lifetime criminal career. Agnew (1992) stated that crime is multifaceted and therefore has a potentially vast range of factors that contribute to it, but in order to establish the ending point of crime, we must look at the point it initially occurs. The best way to do that is to focus on the causes of delinquency among juveniles and examine different concepts to find ones that work in order to implement preventative strategies that lead to desistance and save an adolescent from a life-course of crime.

This chapter is divided into four subsequent sections. The first section addresses the issue of a juvenile's school environment and how that particular environment can contribute to crime, while the second section examines the family home environment and how relationships with parents, whether positive or negative, can influence and individual's decision to participate in

crime. The third section goes on to outline the influences that an individual's peer group or lack of a peer group has on a juvenile's decision to commit crime, and the last section looks at what factors can lead to desistance so that juveniles can be spared from living a criminal life-course.

School Environment as a Contributor to Juvenile Delinquency

Over the past several years criminologists have studied juvenile delinquency and its causes, along with what prevention strategies can be implemented in order to help juveniles desist from crime and avoid a life-long criminal career. There are several known contributors to juvenile delinquency, but the one that has shown the most significance is an adolescent's commitment to school and the social environment that an individual develops while in this particular atmosphere. The purpose of examining contributors to juvenile delinquency and the strain of negative stimuli surrounding the adolescent is so that the scientific community can decipher what causes juvenile delinquency and what can be done to assist youth in desistance so that the trajectories that lead to life-course crime can be flagged and prevented. The focus of juvenile delinquency literature has been on three distinct contributors as causes to juvenile delinquency, an adolescent's school environment, familial environment, and peer group. All three aspects of a juvenile's life are important and they all have a role to play but they also play off each other. A youth's school environment will be examined first because it seems to be a centralized theme for every adolescent. Agnew (1992) would agree that school is a major contributor to juvenile delinquency because it is a social interaction that can provide positive or negative strain in the youth's life and also provide the individual with an initial reason to pursue delinquent activities if negative strain or relationships is the result. Agnew addressed the significance of an adolescent's school environment on his or her decision to participate in delinquent activities because "Strain theory is distinguished from social control and social

learning theory in its specifications of (1) the type of social relationship that leads to delinquency and (2) the motivation for delinquency” (Agnew, 1992, 48). Both of these specifications can be found through things like bullying others or being bullied. When an individual is being bullied or even is doing the bullying, negative social relationships occur and these types of relationships can provide motivation for delinquency. School is important because adolescents can use school as a go to place in order to get away from the struggles at home, or school can have the opposite effect and provide a negative relationship for the youth because they have no friends or they are constantly being picked on. An individual’s school can provide positive and negative social relationships and provide the juvenile an opportunity of social control by selecting the type of friends and peers with whom they want to hang around. This sense of social control allows juveniles to create social relationships that they may be missing at home. But just like positive social relationships are created at school, so are relationships that are not necessarily the best for the individual, like choosing friends who are deemed as dangerous and act recklessly. One reason why some adolescents may not have a positive relationship with school is because how they are treated by others, such as being bullied, which may foster their negative attitude towards their school and less commitment to it. If an individual is not treated how he or she expected to be in a particular situation, then strain occurs and with that negative stimulus present bad decisions can be made in order to find relief from that strain (Agnew, 1992). When strain is present an individual will want to find ways to alleviate the strain that has occurred, which can lead to bad decisions being made, and causing delinquency to happen in order for that present strain to disappear. Strain can be defined as any aspect that impacts and individual’s life in a negative way, such as how badly the individual is doing in school, puberty and other physiological changes, parental relationship issues, and other situations that are beyond the

individual's control (Agnew, 1992). These situations can increase stress and vulnerability in the juvenile's life, so in order to gain back some control of his or her life he or she may act upon impulse and participate in delinquency. School should be a place that provides adolescents with positive social interactions, but that may not always be the case, and when negative interactions occur delinquency can be a result. With this being the case, school becomes a starting point for delinquency if the social interactions a juvenile develops while in this environment turn out any way other than expected.

Finding contributors to juvenile delinquency is important but different stages of adolescence can determine at which developmental stage youth are more likely to become delinquent. In 1999 Jang studied the different stages of adolescent development to ascertain if there was a significant difference between a juvenile's delinquent behaviors at one age as opposed to another age. Jang found that the literature on adolescent development shows that the period of late adolescence to early adulthood is full of changes and transitions in social and psychological status (Jang, 1999, 644). These changes and transitions are very likely to have influence and be reflected on the adolescent's relationships with immediate social environments such as family, school, and peers, which shows that delinquency is age-variant (Jang, 1999). Jang's examination of the literature focuses on the youth's family, school, and peers because they are the three most important and influential social environments for adolescents. Juveniles spend most of their time in one or all three of these social environments. Therefore, their development primarily takes place in these settings, and the development of social relationships come from the people associated with each of these environments (Jang, 1999). This is important because it helps researchers and other criminologists know and understand which stages of adolescents are more likely to produce delinquent tendencies. Jang relies heavily on

Thornberry's (1987) interactional theory to specify the age-varying effects of family, school, and peers on delinquency during adolescence (Jang, 1999, 646). There are three stages of adolescence that are used to examine the concept of age-varying delinquency and they are as follows; early adolescence (ages 11-13), middle adolescence (15-16), and later adolescence (18-20) (Jang, 1999, 646). During middle adolescence, commitment to school shows a greater impact on the individual's behavior compared to early adolescence (Jang, 1999). This could be because in middle adolescence individuals are experiencing physical changes such as puberty, which they may not feel comfortable discussing with their parents, so they will turn to other individuals who are experiencing the same changes for guidance. One of the best places for interacting with individuals their own age is at school. One reason for the increased effects of wanting to do better in school and participate in more school activities, which shows the youth's commitment to school, on delinquent behavior is the indirect effect of the adolescent's association with peers rather than his or her attachment to parents (Jang, 1999). This is important because, depending on the particular stage an individual is in, peers can ultimately distinguish how much delinquent activities that individual adolescent or group of adolescents potentially participate in. The total effects of the influence of school increase between early and middle adolescence and then gradually decrease as the youth moves towards later adolescence (Jang, 1999). Jang's study is important because it helps show that adolescents are affected by their school environment, home environment, and peers, and at different stages of adolescence, youth may potentially be more susceptible to delinquent activities. Now that it has shown when these occurrences happen, preventative measures can be implemented to avoid a life-long criminal career.

An individual's school environment cannot only cause increased delinquent activity involvement, but it can also provide signs as to the individual's lack of commitment to positive

stimuli. Tyler et al. (2008) stated that poor school performance has been linked to high-risk behaviors. This could be a result of an individual spending more time and focusing more on other activities outside of school, such as spending more time with peers and seeking their approval and acceptance. If a positive social relationship, like school, is pushed aside for a less than positive relationship, like the one with their peers, then sometimes the lines of what is right and what is wrong get crossed, if the peer group has a negative impact on the adolescent. There are several ways to help adolescents focus more on school and improve their dedication to their academics. In turn, by making their school environment more positive this can lead to better decision-making and whether or not to participate in delinquent activities. In order to make school a more positive environment for all adolescents and hopefully increase their commitment to school, prevention strategies need to be implemented. There are several school-based programs effective in preventing delinquency and later offending (Welsh & Farrington, 2007). After-school programs can help increase an adolescent's school experience by getting him or her more involved and more active in school activities. In doing so, youth are more likely to spend more time at school, leaving less time with negative influences from peers. A positive school environment can also help improve commitment to school and performance in the classroom. There are four types of school-based programs that have proven to be effective in preventing delinquency: school and discipline management, classroom or instructional management, reorganization of grades or classes, and increasing self-control or social competency using cognitive behavioral or behavioral instructional methods (Welsh & Farrington, 2007). If schools were to implement these types of programs and increase the handling of bullying, then adolescents would have a more positive attitude about school and a better environment, and this can prevent delinquency and any participation in delinquent activities.

Family as a Contributor to Juvenile Delinquency

An adolescent's decision to participate in delinquency is not only influenced by his or her school environment but also by his or her family relationships and home environment. Research has shown that family structural conditions and familial social processes such as poor supervision, erratic and/or threatening discipline, and weak parental attachment are strong predictors of adolescent delinquency (Sampson & Laub, 2003). An individual's family has a huge impact on the decisions that he or she makes because juveniles spend most of their time around the members of their family. In other words, how parents treat their children can affect how an adolescent acts and how he or she turns out. Sampson and Laub agree with Moffitt's way of thinking and use some of his literature in order to show the relationship among adolescents and the relationships they form as contributors to juvenile delinquency and life-course crime. "When a child's vulnerability is compounded with negative family conditions, life-course persistent offending is most likely to occur" (Sampson & Laub, 2003, 575). Parents have always been a major part in shaping a child's life. If adolescents do not consistently have a positive relationship with their parents or guardian, the deficit can create strain in the individual's life, which in turn that can lead to bad decision-making. Furthermore, if a positive attachment to parents does not exist within the home, then juveniles may search for that positive attachment in others and a stronger social bond with those individuals that they receive the attachment from. Agnew (1992) stated that delinquency can be caused by negative relationships, especially with parents, and without positive social interactions adolescents can potentially use the negative relationships they form as a basis for making decisions, which can lead to bad choices, and if with the wrong crowd, delinquency. With that being the case, juveniles have no positive social relationships to help with desistance, ultimately, leading to a life-course of crime. Not only do

Sampson and Laub and Moffitt explain contributors to juvenile delinquency, but Agnew also takes a different perspective on what contributes to juvenile delinquency and later life-course crime if the situation is not prevented. Strain theory focuses on relationships and positive stimuli and the effects these relationships have on the juvenile. If the adolescent has positive relationships, then those relationships help the individual achieve positively valued goals, but if his or her relationships are negative then the youth does not have help achieving positive goals (Agnew, 1992). The best way to achieve positive goals is to have a strong support system and a positive relationship with his or her parents. If an adolescent does not have a positive relationship with his or her parents then he or she tend to lack the ability to have self-control and cannot think about the consequences of actions. Without the backbone of a strong family relationship, adolescents may not understand that the actions they participate in with their peers is unacceptable and delinquent. Family stability has a major impact on a juvenile's decisions and how he or she chooses to act. Marital and family disruption may decrease informal social controls and positive social relationships and increase delinquency (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Parents are there to guide adolescents with life's decisions and what choices should be made. How an adolescent's parents react to his or her behavior will help the adolescent determine which actions are appropriate and which ones are inappropriate, therefore, avoiding delinquent activities in the future. Wright and Beaver (2005) stated that parents who effectively monitor and supervise their children and who recognize and effectively respond to their child's antisocial behavior would instill self-control in that child. In this manner, parents help to instill self-control in their children through a constant interactive relationship, giving adolescents the ability to consider the consequences of their actions, which could potentially persuade them away from delinquency. Parents who fail to engage in positive social relationships with their children

through parental management techniques may subsequently fail to help their children develop the ability to resist situational temptations (Wright & Beaver, 2005).

Parenting affects delinquency not simply by affecting self-control but also by affecting the types of peers with whom adolescents associate and the extent to which delinquent values are positively or negatively reinforced by parents (Hay, 2001). How an adolescent is treated at home affects every other part of his or her life. The ways in which parents socialize their children can help them develop self-control. The effects of parenting styles, if they are not positive, can induce low self-control in the child and as a result increase delinquent activities (Wright & Beaver, 2005). Self-control can be developed in adolescents whose parents actively monitor their children's activities and provide constant supervision. When parents monitor their youth, parents can apply the proper punishment for inappropriate actions. Once punishment is applied the adolescent will learn self-control in order to avoid further punishment. Wright and Beaver (2005) stated that there are three factors that are consequential to an adolescent's self-control. These factors are parental withdrawal, parental affection, and family rules. Parental withdrawal is how unfairly the child is being treated by his or her parents such as if the punishment is much harsher than the action, or his or her parents do not spend time with him or her. Parental affection is how often the parents show love, affection, caring, or adoration towards their child, and family rules consist of the amount of rules and regulations parents display in their home for their children to follow. When a juvenile is provided with a good stable relationship with his or her parents, instead of a relationship where the parents are withdrawn from the adolescent, then he or she will have no desire to seek out parental attention or approval because it is already given to them, therefore, decreasing the possibility of delinquency. If juveniles are constantly shown adoration from their parents, they will seek ways to please their parents and that will result in more positive

decision-making. A household needs to have boundaries and rules set for children to follow, which are both challenging and strict but also provide a little bit of leeway so as to allow a child to make his or her own decisions. If this is the case, the children will have no desire to act out because they are controlled but they get to make their own decisions. Rules provide children the option of choices. They can choose to make the decision that they deem right with no consequences and receive praise from their parents or they can make the wrong decision and face the consequences and punishments but also they face the disappointment of their parents. Parents who constantly show adoration, caring, and supervision towards their children provide a safer home environment and potentially decrease juveniles' participation in delinquent activities. There are ways to prevent juvenile delinquency within the family. Welsh and Farrington in 2007 stated that at the family level, general parent education in the context of home visiting and day care as well as parent management training programs are effective in preventing delinquency and later offending. Providing a safe home environment for adolescents and parental management training programs are extremely important because when it comes to juvenile delinquency youth need to feel like they have a stable environment consisting of love that comes from within the household by their parents and provides the adolescent with a positive social relationship.

Peers as a Contributor to Juvenile Delinquency

Research literature has been provided to show that there are factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency, and an adolescent's peer group has been proven to be one of those contributors. Choosing the right group of friends is important to juveniles because it helps youth form social interactions. The decision on what kind of peers to choose comes from previous positive or negative relationships with other aspects of their life such as school and family. If an individual has a positive school environment and a great relationship with his or her parents, then

he or she is more likely to choose friends who have a positive effect on him or her and less likely to choose delinquent friends. Vitulano et al. in 2010 identified the risk factors for child delinquency, and showed that prior research has identified delinquent peer affiliations as one of the strongest predictors of childhood delinquency. Agnew (1992) provided evidence that peers contribute to delinquency by stating that delinquency is most likely to occur when (1) the adolescent is not attached to parents, school, or other institutions; (2) parents and others fail to monitor and effectively sanction deviance; (3) the adolescent's actual or anticipated investment in conventional society is minimal; and (4) the adolescent has not internalized conventional beliefs. These four aspects are gateways to delinquency because if these occur in the life of the juvenile then delinquency could possibly be the result. Agnew (1992) believed that delinquency resulted from associations with others who (1) differently reinforce the adolescent's delinquency, (2) model delinquent behavior, and/or (3) transmit delinquent values. The stronger an adolescent's bond is to his or her parents and school, the more likely he or she is to view delinquent activities and the peers associated with those activities as bad influences. If adolescents do not have a positive relationship with their parents or a strong bond with their school, they could possibly find other outlets to seek positive relationships like through their peers. The presence of negative relationships with others, as stated by Agnew (1992), creates strain and in order to alleviate the present strain adolescents seek out positive relationships such as through peers, and as a result leading juveniles to view delinquency as a desirable or at least a justifiable form of behavior. If adolescents do not have positive relationships with their parents, then the actions of their friends will be looked at as positive actions because they will not have anyone else to reinforce the idea that some actions their friends take are inappropriate or result from bad decision-making. Parents still have a strong influence on their children at early

adolescence, but the impact of delinquent peers as the locus of interaction and social influence shifts from the family to peer networks during middle adolescence (Jang, 1999). A large number of research literatures has examined the effects of peers on individuals' criminal behavior because crime is learned through intimate social groups (Kirk, 2006). Youth tend to act based on how they see others act because they are at a very impressionable age, so it is necessary for adolescents to have a positive relationship with their parents and a strong bond with their school so that they can see positive decisions being made consistently and learn from those around them. The older an individual becomes the less likely he or she is to be as impressionable by others as he or she would be in adolescence. According to Jang (1999), the final stage of adolescence is when the association with delinquent peers has a strong direct influence on delinquent behavior. Warr (1998) stated that the following measures of peer influence, the amount of time that adolescents spend with their friends, their exposure to delinquent friends, and how much of a commitment they have to their friends peaks in the middle-to-late teens, which can lead to more peer influence and delinquent behavior at this age. Peer influences on an individual's decision to participate in delinquent behaviors exist in late childhood to early adolescence (Vitulano et al. 2010). Adolescents tend to imitate the actions of the people they are around the most and if that happens to be delinquent individuals then they are setting themselves up to make bad decisions. The older adolescents become, the more likely they are to seek refuge from their parents with their friends and in doing so create stronger ties and social interactions with their friends over relationships with their parents. Adolescents spend a great deal of time with their same-age peers, which coincides with the importance that they place on the value of their peer affiliations, so the peer group appears to have much more influence during adolescence than at any other point in the life course (Schreck et al., 2004). "Engaging in behaviors similar to

peers can occur through different processes. A child can select peers based on prior similarities of important attributes and behaviors and/or peers can influence and encourage children to engage in similar behavior, including delinquency” (Vitulano et al., 2010, 315). Delinquency is an act or acts that occur out of opportunity and moment and is not something that an individual thinks about before he or she commits the act, which leaves little regard for the consequences. “Peer delinquency can be contributed to impulsivity, allowing the individual to act without thinking past the current task” (Vitulano et al., 2010). If parents can maintain a positive relationship with their children during adolescence, those individual adolescence will choose peers with the same kind of parental connections and avoid those who participate in delinquent activities.

Desistance in Juvenile Life-Course

Research has been conducted on juvenile life-course crime and what contributes to delinquency, and results have shown that an adolescent’s school environment, family environment, and peer group lead to delinquency. Researchers like Agnew (1992), Jang (1999), Kirk (2006), Schreck et al. (2004), Tyler et al. (2008), Vitulano et al. (2010), Warr (1998), and Welsh and Farrington (2007) have provided ample results to defend these concepts and have also studied desistance and how it contributes to a juvenile’s life-course of crime. Just like trajectories of juvenile delinquency are studied so are the trajectories that lead to an adolescent’s decrease in criminal activity. If the factors that lead to desistance can be studied, then the scientific community can better understand why youth ultimately stop offending. The vast majority of serious adolescent offenders desist from criminal behavior, and future work focusing on the mechanisms of this change could provide valuable information for both intervention and policy

(Mulvey et al., 2010). Aging out of crime is the norm for even the most serious delinquents, and that is why desistance is important to examine.

There are several reasons as to why someone may desist from crime, but they all seem to vary based on the individual. When measuring desistance, one factor needs to be considered because it is extremely important, usually overlooked, and has an effect on every criminal. Incapacitation needs to be considered when measuring and examining life-course trajectories and desistance (Sampson & Laub, 2003). Looking at desistance early on can be tricky because there are some important differences in adult criminal trajectories that cannot be predicted from childhood, therefore desistance must be examined at an early age and then again later on in the life of the individual. Adolescents who demonstrate low or moderate levels of offending do not escalate over time, and a sizable percentage of these offenders decrease their involvement in illegal activities markedly over this time period (Mulvey et al., 2010). Incarceration is important in desistance because it affects most criminals at some point in their criminal career, but there are some factors that are individual based. The main life events that encourage desistance in adulthood after the age of 20 in an individual's life consist of marriage, having and maintain a satisfying job, moving to a better area, and/ or joining the military (Farrington, 2003). In adolescence, higher education, marriage or parenthood, work, and community involvement inhibit deviant behavior and lead to desistance (Warr, 1998). Desistance is important because it allows researchers to examine whether certain factors like school environment, family environment, and peer influence can lead to a life-course of crime or are there such factors that upset that pattern. Warr (1998) stated that the most immediate relevance to desistance from crime is marital attachment and job stability because they show the most significant effects in reducing deviant behavior during adulthood, even among those with a history of delinquency in

childhood or adolescence. Strong attachment to a spouse combined with close emotional ties creates a social bond or interdependence between two individuals that, all else being equal, should lead to a reduction in deviant behavior (Warr, 1998). Marriage leads to stronger ties to family instead of peers and as a result leads to desistance because the number of delinquent friends an adolescent has is the strongest known predictor of delinquent behavior (Warr, 1998). Marriage becomes a desister because priorities become drastically different for an individual because he or she is no longer just responsible for his or her well-being but also the well-being of another individual. Warr (1998) stated that marriage encourages desistance from crime because it disrupts or dissolves friendships that existed prior to being married because more time is spent with spouse and family instead of friends. Desistance does not consist of just marriage, but also aging out of crime, incarceration, and even death. The older an adolescent becomes the more likely he or she is to desist from crime because he or she ages out of the juvenile tendencies he or she had at a younger age. Other obligations become more important because those obligations become the center of focus and require more time, leaving less time for delinquency and delinquent friends. Desistance is important to study because it provides the scientific community with reasons why an individual stops committing crimes, and those reasons can lead the way towards prevention.

Summary

Laub stated in 2004 that a staple of life-course research is examining how events that occur early in life can shape later outcomes. The question of what contributes to an individual's decisions to commit delinquency is constantly being studied, and through research it has been found that juveniles are affected by their school environment by examining how attached they are to school, their family environment through the type of relationship created with their

parents, but also by their peers through influence. In general, violent behavior results from the interaction of individual, contextual (family, school, and peers), situational, and community factors (Laub, 2004). There are other factors that contribute to delinquency but school, family, and peers have been deemed the most important because of the types of relationships they produce with the individual. Research has shown that the lack of commitment an individual has to his or her school, a negative relationship with his or her parents, and the type of peer group he or she associates with results in increased delinquent activities. “As stated in *Causes of Delinquency* by Travis Hirschi, delinquent is viewed as relatively free of the intimate attachments, the aspirations, and the moral beliefs that bind most people to a life within the law” (Laub, 2004, 12). Without the intimate social bonds of school and family, adolescents seek those bonds in other places such as peers and activities that in turn can result in the choosing of the wrong friends and the wrong activities to participate in. If an individual has a high commitment to his or her school work and school activities, then there is a decrease in time for participation in delinquent activities. Adolescents who have a positive relationship with their parents and are constantly supervised create strong social bonds with their family and, therefore, lack the desire to conduct themselves inappropriately, and participation in delinquent activities is near to nonexistent, but those that do not have a strong bond to family or a strong commitment to school, look to friends as a way to search for that positive environment that they do not get from school or home. Kirk (2006) stated that family, peer, and neighborhood effects all have been given prominent focus in criminological research because they appear to be the main contributors to juvenile delinquency. Family, school, and peers are the most important social environments for adolescents because they spend most of their time in these environments and their development takes place primarily through the development of relationships with people associated with these

environments (Jang, 1999). These three factors aid in the decisions that determine participation in delinquency or withstanding it. An adolescent's decision to participate in delinquent behavior has to do with three important social institutions: attachment to parents, commitment to school, and association with delinquent peers (Jang, 1999). With that being said, if proper guidance from the school environment is present and there is proper supervision from parents; the likelihood of participation in delinquent activities is less because the individual's responsibility will be to his or her schoolwork and school activities, and then to his or her family as oppose to peers.

Delinquency can result from other sources beyond the adolescent's control, such as physical and physiological changes. The door to delinquent activities is more widely open to individuals during middle adolescence because they are having a lot of bio-psychosocial changes, such as puberty, that cause pressure and become a lot to internalize (Jang, 1999). When these changes occur, positive relationships with parents are important because that provides the individual with guidance on how to handle these specific changes. If youth are committed to school through activities, then they have an outlet for their stress that occurs when those physical changes take place, therefore, decreasing their participation in delinquent activities. From the literature that has been presented evidence has been provided that school, family, and peers affect an adolescent's decision about delinquency, and with that being discovered, the scientific community can implement prevention strategies. The idea behind studying criminal life-course in juveniles is to see what can be done to prevent further crime in juveniles. Early risk factors that are associated strongly with delinquency and alter criminal offending can be found at the individual, family, and environmental levels because each adolescent is in a different situation (Welsh & Farrington, 2007). The reason an adolescent's school environment, family environment, and peer influence are contributors to juvenile delinquency and life-course crime

are because adolescents are faced with these three environments daily, and they help mold them into who they become in the future. Sampson and Groves (1989) stated it best by saying that communities characterized by sparse friendship networks, unsupervised teenage peer groups, and low organizational participation from schools have higher rates of crime and delinquency than those communities that provide adolescents with proper supervisions and school activities. Criminal life-course for juveniles can be prevented through desistance but if that is not the case then actions need to be taken earlier on. One way to prevent a criminal life-course early on is through increased guidance counseling for adolescents who have a negative relationship with their parents. Also, parents need to offer positive reinforcement for good behavior and influences.

CHAPTER 3

BIOGRAPHIES OF JUVENILES

Alex and Derek King

On November 26, 2001, Terry King was savagely murdered in his home, and then his house was set on fire to cover up the scene. According to <http://www.nbcnews.com>, Terry was beaten to death by an aluminum baseball bat while he slept in the recliner in the living room. Police responded to a house on fire and once the fire was extinguished the coroner discovered that Terry King's body was still inside once the fire consumed the house. After extracting the body and completing a medical exam, the coroner concluded that the fire was set on purpose and Mr. King had been killed by blunt force trauma to the head (Montaldo, n.d).

Alex and Derek became the suspects because of their relationship that they had with their father, along with the hatred they felt for the man they called father. Terry's two sons Alex and Derek King immediately became the prime suspects. Derek, 13, and Alex's, 12, mother was not a part of their lives. She was an exotic dancer who abandoned them when they were approximately ages 6 and 7. After their mother left, Terry could not financially support the boys so he put them in Heritage Christian Academy in 1994. Derek moved in with the principal at Pace High School, Frank Lay, and his family, while Alex was sent to a foster family in 1995. In that same year, Alex was sent back to live with his father (Montaldo, n.d) The Lays could no longer handle Derek because he became disruptive and got involved in drugs and had an extremely unhealthy fascination with fire. The Lays felt that Derek would harm their other children, so they requested and arranged to have him sent back to live with his father. Derek's father had a difficult time managing his son when he was put back in his care. Derek disliked

living with his father and following the rules his father set, so he became angry and started to resent his father. In order to curb his anger Derek listened to aggressive music. This time when Derek became too much for his father to handle he was sent away to foster care while his brother, Alex, continued to stay with their father. Derek was diagnosed with ADHD and Terry took Derek off of his Ritalin because Terry felt it was more of a hindrance than helpful (Montaldo, n.d). The music that Derek began listening too was making him more aggressive, so his father removed the stereo and television from the house, further enraging Derek and creating even more resentment in their relationship (Montaldo, n.d). When Terry had to work or was busy, he would send Alex to stay with a family friend, Rick Chavis, who was later revealed as a sexual predator. Derek began acting out at his foster home and they sent him back to live with his father. A few days before the murder, Alex, 12, and Derek, 13, ran away from home, and they stated at trial, the reason they decided to kill their father was because they feared the punishment they would endure from running away (Montaldo, n.d). Both boys were gone for 10 days and returned right before their father was killed. It was never said if Terry ever went looking for his boys when they ran away, but he was notorious for farming his kids out to foster families constantly (Harviel, 2010). Not long after coming back home from running away, Derek was swinging the baseball bat that killed his father, with Alex urging him on (Montaldo, n.d).

Even after their father's death, Alex and Derek's hatred for their father lingered on through the trial. Not only did they kill their father but they also tried to slander his name and ruin his reputation by saying that their father physically and emotionally abused them (Morrison, 2009). Kelly Marino, the boys' mother, described Terry King as being strict, but gentle, loving, and devoted to his sons. There was never any proof that Terry ever abused his sons (Montaldo, n.d). Alex and Derek used that as a tactic to gain sympathy for their murder. When they did not

receive the sympathy from the jury like they anticipated, they then went to plan B, which was to say that Rick Chavis brain-washed them into murdering their father. The King boys enjoyed hanging out with Chavis, who had been a friend of Terry for years, because he allowed them to watch television and play video games at his house when they were over there (Morrison, 2009). Derek and Alex expressed no remorse for the crime and it never seemed to bother them that their father was even gone. Rick Chavis was tried for the murder of Terry King, but he was acquitted. Alex and Derek stated that the reason Chavis told them to say they killed their father in self-defense was that they were juveniles and would get off on the charge (Morrison, 2009). Why Alex and Derek hated their father so much is uncertain, but the murder was definitely done in cold-blood.

The idea to kill their father originated from Alex, but Derek alone performed the physical act of the killing. Alex was the brain behind the plan to kill their father, while Derek was the muscle and committed the act. Derek felt he was protecting his brother by killing their father because Alex told Derek stories of their father sexually abusing him while Derek was away, and ultimately Derek believed Alex's tales of torture (Harviel, 2010). Alex wanted to be with Chavis and had consistently written love letters to Chavis professing his love for him and he stated "before I met Rick I was straight, now I am gay" (Morrison, 2009). Alex wanted to be with Chavis and he felt the best way to accomplish that was to get rid of his father so he could not keep them from being together. Their decision to set fire to the house was an attempt to hide evidence, an idea they received from watching a television show (Morrison, 2009). A few days before they committed their crime, Derek begged his foster mother to let him stay and not go back to his father. "You can't send us back because my brother's going to kill him, we already have a plan" stated Nancy Lay when she testified what Derek had confessed to her (Morrison,

2009). The King Brothers plead guilty to the charge initially then changed their story. They admitted at the trial that they had beaten their father to death with a baseball bat before setting the house on fire as part of a plea (Montaldo, n.d). Derek King was sentenced to 8 years in prison and Alex King was sentenced to 7 years in prison because the jury felt that Chavis, even though acquitted, was the one responsible for the wielding the bat, and one of the jurors stated in an interview with CNN that “if it wasn’t for Ricky Chavis, Terry King would still be alive”. Alex King was released from prison in 2008 and Derek King was released in 2009.

On Monday, September 27, 2009, Dateline NBC aired an episode of Alex and Derek King being interviewed by Keith Morrison about the murder of their father. Derek King stated that “It blows me away. I mean, it’s just so shocking that I would do something like that.” Alex stated that he recalls very clearly what he went through and the price he paid for his mistakes. Alex and Derek confessed all in this interview. Derek stated that he made sure his father was asleep and then got the bat and hit him over the head. “I hit him once, and I heard him moan, and then I was afraid that he might wake up and see us, so I just kept on hitting him,” said Derek. Alex stated that even though Derek did all the hitting he gave him the idea to kill their father and to start a fire to cover it up. “My anger was so overwhelming that I just did what I thought was right”, said Derek to Keith Morrison. Prosecutor David Rimmer asked Alex King during the trial, while on the witness stand, if he had a sexual relationship with Ricky Chavis, and Dateline NBC wanted to know the answer to that question. Alex King admitted to both the court and Morrison that he had indeed had a sexual relationship with Ricky Chavis and that he believed he was in love with him. Keith Morrison wanted to know what happen to them after they were released from prison. Kathy Medico, who became a maternal figure for Alex while he was in prison, adopted him into her family. Kathy Medico was a journalism professor and heard of the

story about Alex and Derek King from one of her students, and she started to follow the trial (Morrison, 2009). Medico began looking into the case and later ended up writing a book about the case with her former student, now current reporter (Morrison, 2009). Alex King enjoys the life he has found in his new family and he admits that he is a very different kid now than when he went into prison. “It’s as though I was walking around dazed all the time, not processing, not registering the fact that what was around me was actually real”, said Alex King, “ and who would have though a moment of utter stupidity would have brought me to my senses”. While in prison Alex did some growing up. “It really hit me that my actions don’t affect me alone. They affect other people. And I really felt things for the first time,” stated Alex as he explained his terms of thinking while in prison. Keith Morrison asked Alex what the trigger was for him to murder his father. “I don’t really know. Maybe it was stress, you know. Maybe it was Ricky Chavis’s influence. Maybe it was, I don’t know, something else. I really can’t say”. During the trial the prosecution asked Alex to recall his description of the murder, and the jurors were horrified at the details. “And he was still trying to breathe and, um, made sort of like the person who has a slightly stopped up nose, so we continued to hit him because we did not want him to wake up and see us.”

When Morrison caught up to Derek King he was living in a very remote part of the Southwest. Morrison asked Derek what he thought about his new found freedom. “It’s kinda like when Scrooge, on a Christmas carol, woke up on Christmas Day. He finally realized when he, you know, how close he was and what his life could be like, and when he woke up that morning, had had a second chance.” When asked who he blames for what happened, Derek states that “I really don’t want to focus on it. And I’ve tried to put it behind me. And it was horrible.” Keith Morrison asked him what his feelings were about the trial and the verdict. “I was in a state of

shock. I didn't feel anything. It was like the reality of the situation sunk in." Morrison asked Derek what happened to all his anger. He stated "I don't know what triggered the murder; I don't blame my father because he did his best. This is one of those things I want to study, that I want to understand, so I can move on past it." Derek ended the interview with this statement, "I've realized what I've done. And if I had a chance to do everything over again, I would never have done it. But we can't change the past. If I dwell on, and if I beat myself up over it, I'll always feel guilty. And I'll always feel the shame, if I'm always saying, well, always considering myself a convict, an ex-con, a murderer. If that's what I always define myself as, I'll never become more than that." Alex and Derek have learned to move past their problems and have proven to be better people because of the mistakes they have made and are now moving on with their lives outside of prison.

Contributors to Crime

In the case of Alex and Derek King, Agnew (1992) said it best, if an individual is not treated how he or she is expected to be treated in a situation, then strain occurs and with that strain bad decisions can be made in order to relieve that strain. Research literature that has been found has shown that there were a lot of contributors to Alex and Derek King's decision to commit murder, but what appeared to have the most influence on their decision are their school environment, their family environment, and their peer influence. According to C.S. Harviel, a writer for Yahoo News, stated that in an interview with Connie Chung, the life of Alex and Derek King was revealed to provide some insight into their actions for the crime they committed. Once their mother left them at a young age, Alex and Derek's father was responsible for raising four boys alone, all of which were put into foster families, but only Derek and Alex were sent back to their father. The other two boys stayed in the foster system (Morrison, 2009). That extra

strain financially and mentally took a toll on their father and he sent Derek and two of the other boys to foster families because he could not handle all of them. He kept Alex with him but he was constantly at work and never spent time with Alex. C.S. Harviel stated that Terry King was not abusive towards his boys but he was an extremely hard worker and at times would take Alex with him to his print shop all day, leaving Alex absent from school. Terry was not a very nurturing father and moved frequently leaving Alex without a stable home environment and at times he would leave Alex with a friend of his, Rick Chavis. Derek spent 8 years with the Lays and enjoyed living with them, but the older he became the most complacent and aggressive he became, leaving his foster family with the decision to send him back to his father (Montaldo, n.d). Even though Derek attended school regularly in the 8 years he was with his foster family, he never had stability in his life because he was constantly being moved around from one environment to another. As for Alex, he attended school off-and-on when he was not at the shop with his father or spending time with Rick, so he never had the positive influence and stability that school provided. In an interview with Keith Morrison of Dateline NBC, Derek King stated that he has a lot of aggression and rage towards his father for giving him up when he kept his brother and for being removed from his only stable environment of his foster family that he had come to know. Then when he moved back home Rick and Alex told him that their father was abusive and that the only way to get away from their father was to kill him. Rick became a huge figure in the boys' lives because he became the only positive adult figure and peer they had in their lives. He allowed them to smoke pot at his house and play video games, and provided them with a "safe place" away from their father. Alex and Derek trusted Rick because he showed them love and affection, although it was a perverse kind of love, that they never received at home. Alex and Rick began a sexual relationship once Alex turned 12 years old, providing him with

what he would describe as “ a loving connection” that he never had from anyone else, even thought it was wrong. If Alex and Derek had consistently attended school and had a more positive atmosphere away from Rick, then they would not have needed to seek the positive relationship with him that they did. Terry King was a hard-worker and worked constantly, leaving little time to spend with his boys, but he always provided them with clothes, food, and a place to lay their heads. If Terry King had been a constant guardian for his boys and provided a more stable home environment with more supervision and affection, then they would not have harbored so much resentment for their father or sought comfort from Rick Chavis and the influence he provided. Alex and Derek were easily influenced because they bonded to the first person who paid them any attention and provided them with stability that they had been missing for years. If they had a positive upbringing by their father, then their crime would have never happened in the first place.

Alex and Derek King are prime examples of desistance because of the five individuals studied in this paper they are the only ones who did not receive life sentences for their crime. They have been released from prison and they have each been living with a family that they became close with while they were in prison. In the interview with Keith Morrison of Dateline NBC, they stated that the families that they would be living with were ones that wrote to them and became their visitors while they were in prison. Alex remained in Florida with professor of journalism Kathy Medico and her family, while Derek moved away to a more isolated place to live with Dan Daley so that he could grieve and plan his future. No other criminal activity has been committed by Derek King since he has been released from prison in 2009, and in his interview with Dateline, he stated that he received counseling in prison along with therapy to help him through the grieving process of what he did. Alex King was released from prison in

2008 and has not committed any other crime until 2011. According to North Escambia County arrest records, Alex was arrested in February of 2011 for a violation of probation of leaving the scene of a hit and run accident, no one was severely injured. This is the first incident that has occurred since his release in 2008. Desistance from a life of crime seems to be positive for Derek King, but as far as Alex King it is hard to say based off this one incident whether he has desisted from crime or not, only time will tell.

Kipland Kinkel

May 21, 1998, was a sad day for Thurston High, when Kipland Kinkel opened fire and emptied 48 rounds into his classmates, after killing his parents at home the night before (Ramsland, n.d). Katherine Ramsland, The Oregon Court of Appeals, and The Oregon Law Review provide extensive details from the act to the trial and then the sentencing.

The whole idea to kill his parents came the day before when he was expelled from school for bringing a loaded pistol and he was terrified of his father and what his father would say. Kinkel always felt like he was never appreciated and could not live up to his older sister's achievements, so to avoid the shame and disappointment that his mother and father would have, he decided he had no choice but to kill his parents (Ramsland, n.d). Kinkel decided after he took his parents' lives he would go to his school and shoot his classmates that made him feel worthless and tormented him on countless occasions and then commit suicide. After Kipland Kinkel killed his parents, he spent the night in his house with their bodies and then the following day he booby-trapped his house with bombs, stole his parents' car, and then drove the 20 minutes up the road, the next morning, with a semiautomatic rifle and a Glock pistol (Ramsland, n.d). He had the intentions of unloading as many rounds into his classmates as he could. Kinkel had a

knife strapped to his leg and pepper spray in his pocket when he went into his school to make sure he was prepared at all cost for his mission. He was very meticulous in his planning of this event (Ramsland, n.d). Several months prior to the event, Kinkel started arming himself with all kinds of guns and explosives and unbeknownst his parents, he had a small library of books on how to make bombs (Ramsland, n.d). Even the kids at his school started to consider him as an expert on bomb making. The persona that Kipland wanted to portray to others was that he was fearless. Other kids started to view him as dangerous and he enjoyed the fact that others feared him. Kipland began participating in more risqué activities and had unusual behaviors before his rampage, like he felt weak and small and wanted to find activities that would empower him. He had a poorly-managed temper and he participated in some antisocial activities, such as throwing rocks at cars and claiming he blew up cats and even some cows (Ramsland, n.d). He started hanging out with kids who enjoyed stealing, petty theft, and enjoyed playing with explosives as much as he did (Ramsland, n.d). He started listening to Marilyn Manson songs that portrayed the idea that there was no salvation, and he felt that when he was caught at school and expelled that that would be another disappointment for his parents (Ramsland, n.d).

Kipland Kinkel was not raised in a bad home nor did he have a bad home life, in fact both of his parents were school teachers and they provided a nice home for their children out in the country (Ramsland, n.d). Kinkel's parents were strict on him and had high expectations for both of their children because they wanted their children to excel and be the best that they could. Kipland had a slightly different upbringing than his sister, who was 6 years older than he (Ramsland, n.d). Where Kip's sister was raised in the same home her adolescent life, Kip's parents moved him around from home to home (Ramsland, n.d). His parents traveled to Spain for a year long sabbatical when he was younger and he was put into a non-English speaking school,

which put him at a disadvantage (Ramsland, n.d). Kip found himself not being able to participate in sports as well as his sister because he was extremely clumsy on his feet and he felt like a disappointment because both of his parents were star athletes. He started to feel like he was disappointing his parents when he grew up watching them praise his sister's every move and he could not live up to her expectations (Ramsland, n.d). Kip was frightened of his father because like him his father also had a bad temper. Kip always felt inferior to everyone because he was not the ideal image he thought his parents wanted in their children. Over the years Kip became depressed and started taking Prozac (Ramsland, n.d). He never felt like anything he did pleased his parents, and all of his actions were fueled by the fact that Kip could not face the disappointment that he felt he was to his parents any longer. Even though he was 15 at the time of the murders, Kip was tried as an adult. He tried for an insanity defense but later dropped that defense and pled guilty to four counts of first-degree murder and 24 counts of attempted murder. Kipland was sentenced to 112 years in prison without the possibility of ever getting paroled.

According to the Court of Appeals of the State of Oregon, Kipland Kinkel was charged with a numerous counts of aggravated murder and attempted aggravated murder, which resulted out of incidents where he shot and killed his parents and then, the following day, fired semiautomatic weapons while at his high school, killing two and injuring nearly two dozen students (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 2002). The criminal court entered judgment in accordance with the agreement and sentenced the defendant to over 100 years imprisonment. Kipland Kinkel was indicted on four counts of aggravated murder, 25 counts of attempted aggravated murder with a firearm, one count of attempted aggravated murder, six counts of assault in the first degree with a firearm, 18 counts of assault in the second degree with a firearm, and other felony offenses, for a total of 58 criminal charges (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 2002). In the winter of

2000, Oregon Law Review did an evaluation of the Kipland Kinkel case and they discussed his issues with mental health. The first sign of Kipland Kinkel's mental illness was when he wrote on top of his Spanish worksheet "I will hunt you down and put a hole in your head. With explosives. You hear me. Power to the shampoo", and "you must die" next to it (79 Or. L. Rev. 1081). One day in class, Kinkel's Spanish teacher wrote him up because he blurted out in class "God damn this voice inside my head." The Kinkels' housekeeper of 7 years quit because she was afraid and uncomfortable around Kipland because of his collection of knives and his habit of setting objects on fire. The housekeeper continuously told Kipland's parents about his activities and all they would say was "Thank you for telling us" (79 Or. L. Rev. 1081). The school counselor reassured one of Kipland's teachers, after he gave the class a speech on bomb making, that his father knew all about his obsessions and that there was nothing to be concerned with (79 Or. L. Rev. 1081). Kip's mother told another teacher that she made Kip memorize the Lord's Prayer as a punishment for his issues. His parents showed a shocking lack of consideration that maybe Kip had a mental health illness that required psychiatric treatment. The Oregon Law Review article stated that when detectives searched the Kinkels' house they found explosives, fireworks, bomb-making books, several hundred rounds of ammunition, guns, knives, a sword, pipe bombs, wires, and electrical components for assembling bombs, a hand grenade, and hunting, gun, and knife catalogs. Detectives also found excerpts from Kip's journal that read: "The only reason I stay alive is because of hope. I don't understand any fucking person on this earth. Some of you are so weak, mainly, that a four year- old could push you down. I am strong, but my head just doesn't work right. There is a kid above all others that I want to kill. I want nothing more than to put a hole in his head. Oh God, I am so close to killing people. Why aren't I normal? Help me. No one will" (79 Or. L. Rev. 1081). Kip took money to school to buy a gun

from another student and when he got caught, he was arrested and expelled. His father picked him up from the police station and told him, “You disgust me”. Kip claimed that in that moment the three voices in his head commanded him to “get your gun, shoot him, shoot him,” “look at what you have done you stupid piece of shit, you’re worthless,” and “kill him, shoot him- you have no choice” (79 Or. L. Rev. 1081). So when Kip and his father returned home, he shot his father in the back of the head and did the same to his mother when she arrived home later. After killing his parents he left a note on the coffee table that read: “I have just killed my parents! I don’t know what is happening. I love my mom and dad so much, I’m so sorry. I am a horrible son. I wish I had been aborted. I destroy everything I touch. They were wonderful people. It’s not their fault or the fault of any person, organization, or television show. My head just doesn’t work right. God damn these VOICES inside my head. I wish I made my mother proud. I am nothing! What have I become? I am so sorry” (79 Or. L. Rev. 1081). Kip tried to slit his wrist when he was in custody and begged the police officers to kill him because he wanted to be dead. The Oregon Law Review article stated that the first time he ever got treated for his mental illness was when he was in custody.

A psychologist interviewed Kipland Kinkel before his trial regarding his mental health at the time of the murders. Psychologist Dr. Orin Bolstad was an expert witness at Kip’s trial and his testimony was used to assess his illness. The court asked Dr. Bolstad when Kip said he started hearing voices and how did they first occur. Dr. Bolstad stated “He indicated that he first starting hearing voices when he was 12 years old”, and “they first occurred when he got off the school bus one day” (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 1998). Dr. Bolstad said “Kip mentioned that the voices stated ‘you need to kill everyone, everyone in the world.’ He said it scared the shit out of him, and he was confused and seemed like something was seriously wrong.” “Kip said he then

ran into his bedroom and cried because he was scared and he said the voices told him that he was a stupid piece of shit and that he wasn't worth anything" (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 1998). Dr. Bolstad asked Kip where he thought the voices came from and he said "Well, I had some theories. I was an atheist or an agnostic, I'm not sure. Maybe it was the devil. I also thought that the government might have put a chip in my head" (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 1998). Kip proceeded to tell Dr. Bolstad that he hears three voices, one is an authoritative voice that tells him what to do, another one is the voice that tells him he is no good, and the last one just repeats what the other to tell him, over and over again. Dr. Bolstad told the court that Kip admitted that he never told anyone about the voices that he heard and when asked why he did not tell anyone, he stated "I was afraid and thought hearing voices would mean I was mentally ill" (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 1998). The second time Dr. Bolstad recorded that Kip heard the voices was when he was in sixth grade after getting a school referral in mail. "When my parents saw the referral, they went off, they got really angry, they were yelling at me. I went to my room, and the voices came after me, saying the same thing, 'stupid shit, you can't do anything right'" (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 1998). Dr. Bolstad stated that hearing voices is a psychotic symptom and it is most commonly associated with schizophrenics, but you also see it with other disorders like bipolar or extreme forms of depression. It is a serious mental illness" (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 1998). Kip became extremely comfortable with the band Nine Inch Nails because they wrote a song about someone hearing voices and Kip felt that he could relate. Kip admitted to Dr. Bolstad that he tried several things to get rid of the voices inside his head from distractions to drugs and alcohol but nothing seemed to work. Dr. Bolstad got Kip to open up about the events that led to the killings and what the voices were saying. After the argument with his father the voices just set him off. "My dad was so mad at me for getting expelled from school and told me that I

disgusted him because I was 15 and already had two felony convictions on my record. That was when the voices started. In the car ride home the voices were saying ‘you have to kill him, shoot him.’ And they got louder and louder. Next the voices said ‘kill him, shoot him’, so I did. I had no choice” (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 1998). Dr. Bolstad told the court that he asked Kip why he did not refuse the voice and Kip said, “I don’t know. They were getting louder and louder. I had to be right there. Like the time I held the scissors, because the scissors were in my hand” (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 1998). Dr. Bolstad asked, “Any thoughts just before the shooting?” Kip answered, “I said to myself, I had no choice. They kept saying it to me. It didn’t seem real.” When Kip was asked what his thoughts were after the shooting he said, “I hate everybody, myself especially. I hated the voices most of all. Voice B kept saying to me, ‘Look at what you’ve done now, you stupid shit’” (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 1998). After he killed his mother, Dr. Bolstad told the court, that Kip told him that the voices told him to kill everyone and that he had no choice, to go to his school and kill everybody. “I argued with them and told them to shut up. They ignored me,” stated Kip about the school shooting. He said when he was walking into school he saw three kids in front of him and he heard a voice say, “Shoot them now,” while another voice said “wait, wait.” Then he heard that dominant voice come back and say, “Look at what you’ve already done, and it’s their fault. You have no other choice” (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 1998). The court moved on to ask Dr. Bolstad about Kip’s journal writing, so that they could better explain his state of mental illness. Dr. Bolstad stated that Kip’s writing was so small, almost microscopic, and it completely filled the entire page, just like patients who are manic. “I would characterize a lot of his writings as projection. He projects his own negative feelings onto other people. The hate that he feels for himself, he projects that onto other people.” Dr. Bolstad stated that, “I think Kip is capable of at times looking coherent, looking cognitively

nonimpaired,” when questioned about Kip’s stability (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 1998). Kip was characterized as the next Unabomber and with that being said the prosecution asked Dr. Bolstad if he should be treated like the previous Unabomber. Dr. Bolstad stated, “Oh, I personally disagree with that. I think he should have been in a mental hospital, because I think he’s profoundly mentally ill” (State of Oregon vs Kinkel, 1998). Dr. Bolstad was unsuccessful in convincing the jury that Kipland Kinkel was in fact mentally ill and needed to be treated in a hospital. So instead Kip received over 100 years in prison.

Contributors to Crime

What causes a child to commit murder? There are many speculations, and with the current research literature that is available, that question will no longer remain unanswered. In 2012 Katherine Ramsland wrote an article for Tru TV.com crime library about school killers and she examined Kipland Kinkel. She interviewed a child psychologist, Jonathan Kellerman, who has this to say, “Good predictor of dangerousness in children is the combination of a certain temperament with a chaotic environment.” Having a chaotic environment can create strain in an adolescent’s life and Agnew’s strain theory helps explain why a juvenile would become delinquent. While Katherine Ramsland examined Kipland Kinkel she found three prominent contributors to Kipland’s decision to commit his crimes, and those consisted of his negative school environment, his unstable family environment, and his peers (Ramsland, n.d). Kipland’s school environment began extremely unstable because he was dyslexic and was not as good of a student as his older sister, so he felt he was a disappointment to his parents. Then when he was younger, he lived in Spain for a year while his parents were there on a sabbatical, so he was forced into a non-English speaking school where he was at a disadvantage with the other children, making him feel inferior and powerless. Once he and his family moved back to the

states, he was bullied at school constantly, leaving his commitment to school little to none at all (Ramsland, n.d). He started to sell firearms to kids at school as a way to empower himself by making the other kids think he was dangerous and fearless. Katherine Ramsland stated that before he killed his parents and then opened fire at his school, he had been expelled for having a loaded pistol in his locker. School should be a positive safe place for children but for him it just brought on more stress when he got home. Kip's father was a very strict man with a lot of expectations for his children, so when he got expelled from school for having the loaded gun he feared his father and the punishment that he would receive once he got home (Ramsland, n.d). He always felt like he lived in his sister's shadow because he felt he was never as good athletically as his sister and his parents nor was he as smart. He always felt like a disappointment (Ramsland, n.d). Because both of his parents were teachers, he constantly moved around and did not have a stable home early on in his life. His father was known to have a temper and he was quick to show judgment. Kipland feared his father and that fear drove him to become more aggressive and he started playing around with explosives as a way to express hi feelings (Ramsland, n.d). Kipland had a lot of peer influence because he began to hang out with older kids who were already into delinquent activities like petty theft. He chose them because it made him feel powerful. The kids at his school made him feel worthless and weak because he was bullied and he wanted to find a way to show his classmates that he was not weak. He studied book after book in the library about firearms and explosives and considered himself dangerous (Ramsland, n.d). He began listening to heavy metal music like Marilyn Manson and began to relate to his music and the words of his songs, especially the ones about being "God". Kip felt like a disappointment at home and then he began to feel that way about school because he had a crush on a girl at his school but she did not reciprocate the same feelings leaving him feeling

unwanted (Ramsland, n.d). Not only did he not receive the proper help he needed for his mental illness at home, but also he did not receive the proper help from school officials when he was being bullied. To gain a sense of power over his situations he killed his parents because the voices in his head told him to and then he opened fire on the kids at school who bullied him (Ramsland, n.d). Kip never planned on making out of his situation alive, he tried to commit suicide, but failed at it, so he was arrested in the end for the crimes he had committed. The only desistance from a criminal life-course for Kip was incarceration because he received life sentences without the possibility of parole. If Kipland was properly medicated for his mental illness, he could potentially function as a normal individual outside of prison, but that is definitely something that will never happen, but he does prove to be an example of Agnew's strain theory. Kipland is a good example of what factors contribute to juvenile delinquency and a life-course of crime.

Erik and Lyle Menendez

Sunday, August 20, 1989, Jose and Kitty Menendez were relaxing in their Beverly Hills mansion alone, when two men entered their home and shot them dead. According to www.crimeandinvestigation.com and an interview with Barbara Walters, Erik and Lyle talked about their life and the murder of their parents and both boys talked about what a life in prison is like.

Erik, 17 and Lyle, 21 were both out for the night, or so people thought, but a neighbor girl was outside waiting on her boyfriend when she witnessed two men pull up in the Menendez driveway and go into the house (Crime, n.d). The witness identified the men as looking like Erik and Lyle and stated that they got something out of the trunk of their car before entering the

house. Erik and Lyle shot their parents with a 12-gauge shotgun loaded with ball-bearing sized pellets (Crime, n.d). Jose was shot twice, once in the right arm and left elbow and then the second shot was in his head that blew open his skull and killed him. Kitty had tried to jump up off the couch and run, but she was shot in her right arm and right calf making her fall to the ground, but she managed to get back to her feet (Crime, n.d). Her sons shot her again in her right arm, left breast, which pierced her lung, and her left thigh, which broke her leg because she was shot from such close range. Kitty was still not dead so she attempted to crawl away from her attackers but she was not very successful (Crime, n.d). After this happened, the boys ran out of ammunition and had to run to the car to reload. When they returned, Kitty was still alive and they killed her with a blow to the left cheek that shattered her skull. In total, Kitty had been shot four times in the head and 10 times in her body (Crime, n.d). Right before they decided to leave, for good measure, they shot both victims in the left knee and collected all the shell casings. Erik and Lyle then drove up the road to a canyon so that they could dispose of the weapons and casings and along the way stopped at a gas station to throw away their clothes (Crime, n.d). After all of this was done, they decided to go by tickets to a movie to form their alibi. What surprised the authorities was that nothing was stolen from the house and that made them think that the victims knew their killer, and that is when Erik and Lyle became suspects. They were brought in for questioning and immediately were given a gunshot residue test. The questioning interrogation lasted a total of 20 minutes when Erik started crying uncontrollably. Lyle was very calm and methodical in his answers while being interrogated, but Erik was extremely distraught (Crime, n.d). To draw attention away from themselves they started to tell authorities stories about what they had done that day and that they came home after and found their parents dead. Authorities let the boys go and decided to pursue other suspects, so Erik and Lyle held the conventional

funeral services. A few days after the funeral Erik and Lyle went on a massive shopping spree and charged about \$90,000 to Jose's American Express card. The boys collected their father's insurance money of about \$650,000 and they were splurging on expensive cars, clothes, and trips (Crime, n.d). On October 31, 1989 Erik visited with his psychotherapist and admitted that he and his brother had killed their parents (Crime, n.d), but the therapist was bound by patient confidentiality so he could not report it to the authorities. Two days later, Erik and Lyle returned to the therapist and Lyle freaked out when he found out Erik had told the therapist and he threatened the therapist's life not to say anything. When the therapist was threatened, he was no longer bound to patient confidentiality, but he decided not to go to the police but to continue to counsel the boys. What alerted authorities back to the boys as suspects was the fact that they had been on some massive shopping sprees at their parents' expense. Finally on March 26, 1990, both boys were arrested and tried for the first degree murder of their parents with special circumstances, and both boys pled not guilty (Crime, n.d). The first trial was a mistrial because the jury was deadlocked and no verdict could be made. The second trial got postponed several times and finally began on August 23, 1995, and lasted until March 6, 1996. Erik and Lyle were both found guilty of first-degree murder with special circumstances and guilty of conspiracy to commit murder. Both Erik and Lyle received two consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole (Crime, n.d).

Erik and Lyle were not brought up in a bad or destructive home, in fact the very opposite. Their father was born in Cuba and was a well-known football player. He moved with his family to America when he was 16 years old. Kitty and Jose met in college at Southern Illinois University (Crime, n.d). Jose became a CPA and Kitty was an elementary school teacher until Lyle was born, then she was a stay at home mother. Jose began working for an international

accounting firm and moved his family to New Jersey (Crime, n.d). Jose was a very domineering man and felt that his boys should excel at some sport and both boys chose tennis. Both boys were extremely talented and practiced every day. The Menendez home was a very stressful place and the boys developed bad tempers and began stuttering (Crime, n.d). Their teachers felt that Erik and Lyle were immature for their ages and had some learning problems, but Jose would not hear of it. Jose was impossible to please and very controlling of his family and he had strict rules for his family like what they could eat, whom the boys could associate with, and what they were allowed to read (Crime, n.d). They had to be accountable for their actions every minute or every day. By age 14, Lyle was still playing with stuffed animals and was still wetting the bed. Friends and family members stated that the brothers were quiet and kept to themselves (Crime, n.d). Erik and Lyle started to show perverse and violent behavior when Erik was 12 and Lyle was 15. Erik looked up to Lyle and wanted to do everything his brother did. When Lyle was 17, Jose got a job in California as president of an entertainment production company (Crime, n.d). Lyle went to New Jersey to attend Princeton, and was there for a year before he was expelled for plagiarizing his admissions essay. Erik moved to California with his parents. Jose moved Lyle home to California and then both boys started stealing from their friends' parents and started getting arrested. Jose would hire the best lawyers he could find to keep his sons out of jail (Crime, n.d). Erik and Lyle grew up not having any real responsibilities because their parents took care of everything.

Barbara Walters interviewed Lyle and Erik Menendez on 20/20 on June 28, 1996. Not only did Barbara Walters get a sit down with these two brothers, but so did Larry King on CNN Live. This interview was looking at what has happened since the murder of their parents. Erik Menendez's wife, Tammi, was present for the interview. Tammi married Erik in prison after his

conviction and sentence of life without parole. Larry King asked Tammi, “how did you and Erik start. She stated that she began writing Erik when the first trial was going on. “I was watching the first trial. My heart went out to him. I really supported him, and I felt sorry for what he was going through (King, 2004). And I wanted to reach out and say I supported him,” stated Tammi Menendez. Larry King asked Erik and Lyle about the abuse that occurred at their home. Erik stated, “At one point, I just started screaming, you know, I started saying stop, it hurts, it hurts.” Lyle mentioned that he told his mother about the abuse from their father, “I told her to tell dad to leave me alone. And he keeps touching me.” Erik said that was when he realized that he had to do something. “I had to give him a message, on my knees, until he started to have an orgasm.” “He just said that it was our secret we should keep it just between us,” said Lyle about his relationship with his father (King, 2004). The abuse seemed to be a precursor to murder of Jose and Kitty Menendez. “We just burst through the doors and I started firing and then I ran around and shot my mom,” Lyle stated during his interview with CNN. Erik decided to tell his portion of what happened. “I just fired as much as I could and emptied every shell I had. I was firing as I went into the room, I just started firing” (King, 2004). When CNN and Larry King decided to air this interview with Erik, Lyle, and Tammi Menendez, they showed excerpts from the trial that helped viewers understand the abuse that Erik and Lyle suffered. An unidentified female asked Erik how long from the time he was six, when his father started molesting him, how long the abuse and molestation went on. Erik stated that it lasted for 12 years. Lyle told the woman that “I just told him I didn’t want to do this and that it hurt me” (King, 2004). Erik stated from that point on “I felt very depressed and very lonely because I had lost my dad’s love.” The unidentified woman asked Erik what he thought was happening between him and his father. “I thought my dad was going to come up to my room and have sex, at any moment, and I thought they were

going to kill us” (King, 2004). The woman asked Erik if he loved his mom and dad, and he replied that yes he did. “On August 20th, 1989, did you and your brother kill your mother and father?” and Erik confessed that they did kill their parents, and the reason they killed them was because they were afraid for their lives. Erik and Lyle had two trials, the first one resulted in a mistrial and the second trial the judge tried to make a fair verdict that would not be reversed on an appeal which led to the their sentence of life without parole (Menendez Trial, 2002).

Contributors to Crime

Erik and Lyle Menendez seemed to have the picture perfect life, from good parents, to future opportunities, and even money but their life proved to not be as it seemed. Crime and Investigation Network (www.crimeandinvestigation.co.uk) did a show about the lives of Erik and Lyle to discover what happened to lead up to the murder of their parents. Research literature shows that Erik and Lyle’s decision to murder their parents was in fact due to their commitment or lack thereof to school, family, and little to no peers. Both Erik and Lyle were academically average growing up but never really excelled in school as their parents wished they would have (Crime, n.d). When time for them to be looking into colleges the father would not settle for anything other than Princeton University. Lyle, was suspended after his first year at Princeton for plagiarism on his admissions essay and faced disciplinary probation for ruining school property. Lyle was underachieving academically at Princeton and his father forced him to come work for him, but then later got fired for hardly ever showing up or when he did he was late (Crime, n.d). Both boys had driving violations of driving with suspended licenses. Their father and their mother threatened to cut them out of their will if they did not straighten up. Jose Menendez was a very domineering and controlling man who was physically and sexually abusing both Erik and Lyle (Crime, n.d). He demanded perfection academically and athletically from both boys and he

would publicly humiliate them if they were anything less than perfect. Jose was very hard to please and extremely vicious towards his boys and he controlled everything about their lives from what they ate, who they associated with, and what they read. Erik and Lyle were held accountable for their actions every minute of every day. Their home life began to stress them out so they developed a stutter, teeth grinding, and stomach pains, and even continued to wet the bed in their early to mid-teen years (Crime, n.d). Erik and Lyle developed extreme tempers in their mid-late teens and resentment towards their parents. They had a lot of friends their father approved of but they could not keep them because they began to rob and steal from their friends' parents' houses and sell their items for money. Eventually Erik and Lyle formed a strong brotherly bond because they were all each other had. Both boys developed perverse and violent tendencies in their teens. Even though they had constant supervision at home and in the private schools they attended, they did not have a positive relationships with their parents or with school because of all the stress associated with having to excel and be perfect. Erik and Lyle did not have a positive peer group to turn to in order to form positive social experiences because they could not maintain friends due to their delinquent actions. Not only did Erik and Lyle have a negative relationship with their parents, but they also did not have a positive social relationship with school because they had a hard time committing to school because all they wanted to do was play tennis. With that being the case, their decisions to commit their crime stemmed from negative family relationships, peers, and lack of commitment to school leaving the boys on track to a life-course of crime. Now that their parents are long gone, the only form of desistance from crime that Erik and Lyle have is incarceration and their marriages. Both boys got married while they were in prison and found religion, but their future outside of the prison walls does not look very promising. Erik's appeal was denied and Lyle's petition for a new trial was recently

rejected. It seems that their desistance from a life-course of crime comes in the form of an 8x8 cell (Menendez Trial, 2002).

Barry Loukaitis

February 2, 1996, Barry Loukaitis opened fire in his junior high school, killing three people. The state of Washington and www.murderpedia.org talked about Barry's life and the crimes he committed. Barry walked into his school wearing a trench coat looking like a gunslinger from an old western movie, and he had two concealed pistols with him along with 78 rounds of ammunition and a high powered rifle (Blanco, n.d). When Barry walked into his algebra classroom and opened fire, his first victim, Manuel Vela, died instantly. Another classmate fell down with a bullet to his chest and then Barry shot his teacher in the back when she was turned around facing the board (Blanco, n.d). A 14 year-old girl was shot in the arm, and Barry took hostages until another teacher put a stop to the rampage and subdued Barry until authorities arrived (Blanco, n.d). Barry was arrested the same day and sent to jail to await trial. In June of 1996 the court decided that Barry should be tried as an adult rather than a juvenile, even though he was 15 at the time. Loukaitis's defense attorney was pushing for an insanity defense and had a psychiatrist meet with Barry to determine his mental health (Blanco, n.d). He pled insanity to all charges and claimed they were caused by his mood swings (17007-1-III State of Washington vs. Barry Loukaitis, 1999). The psychiatrist determined that Barry felt like he was superior to others and that at times he thought he was God, and these feelings led him to hate others for not being able to measure up to what he was or wanted them to be. Barry Loukaitis was convicted of two counts of first degree murder, one count of second degree murder, one count of first degree attempted murder, and 16 counts of aggravated kidnapping on September

24, 1997. He was sentenced to two life sentences plus an additional 205 years without the possibility of parole (17007-1-III State of Washington vs. Barry Loukaitis, 1999).

Barry Loukaitis grew up into a normal suburban family, but his home environment was not always a peaceful one. A few years before the rampage, Barry's mother filed for divorce from his father because his father was having an affair (Blanco, n.d). From that point on Barry's family became very dysfunctional. Barry's mother, Jo Ann, was a very domineering and controlling woman and after she separated from her husband and filed for divorce she became distant from her family and depressed, and often times she talked about committing suicide. Jo Ann began talking about her and Barry committing a double suicide together, but Barry convinced his mother not to go through with it but counseling her into channeling her feelings onto paper. Barry was diagnosed with hyperactivity and was on Ritalin but he was also depressed, which was triggered by all of his home instability and present in three generations of the Loukaitis family (Blanco, n.d). Barry was being bullied at school and being called names by the kids that he shot in his class. Barry's deteriorating health condition and the fact that he was being bullied pushed him over the edge and caused him to commit his crimes. Before that though, Barry started listening to violent music and became increasingly fascinated with Stephen King. He started to live his life according to characters in Stephen King novels and movies. Barry modeled his rampage after Stephen King's character, Charlie Decker. Barry was extremely sick and needed help that was not provided (Blanco, n.d).

Barry Loukaitis was suffering mentally and his father, Terry Loukaitis, said he started to see a look in his son's face, a look of 'cold-fury' and it made him extremely frightened. "He was a completely different person. I was shocked, horrified" (Miller, 1996). Barry's father testified that "I didn't know what to think. It was like the whole thing was a nightmare. It was as if all of

this stuff that had been boiling up inside of him all of a sudden started coming out” (Miller, 1996). After Barry was arrested, the police told Terry that there was nothing wrong with his son, but when Terry saw his son he knew that something was extremely wrong. “He was scary,” stated Terry Loukaitis at his son’s hearing to determine if he is to be tried as an adult or juvenile (Miller, 1996). During the hearing JoAnn Loukaitis also took the stand and stated that when Barry was in sixth grade he used to be bright, happy, and popular and had a flair for writing. She stated that, “He was really friendly; he was outgoing. He was in student council, and he had friends that came over a lot” (Miller, 1996). The following fall when he started seventh grade he started to change into a recluse. JoAnn understood what Barry was going through because she has been dealing with depression also and her marriage had fallen apart, resulting in fistfights and cursing. “He just totally isolated himself,” she said. “It was like all of the sudden he didn’t like people; he didn’t trust people; he thought all people were bad” (Miller, 1996). Those feelings intensified a couple of weeks before the shootings because JoAnn had filed for divorce and revealed her plan to Barry, to kill herself in front of her husband and his suspected lover. Barry said, “Mom, don’t do that, just write about it. That way you will get it off your chest. I don’t want you to die” (Miller, 1996). When he started taking lithium for his depression, he started to be like his old self again. Barry’s psychiatrist stated, “Barry Loukaitis was one of the strangest kids I’ve ever met” (Miller, 1996). In previous testimony for the defense, a psychiatrist and a psychologist said’ “Loukaitis was mentally ill and wouldn’t have resorted to violence if he’d been treated properly” (Miller, 1996). Psychologist Mark May said that he was suffering from depression brought on by his troubled home life and psychiatrist Julia Moore diagnosed Barry as having a bipolar personality disorder. One psychiatrist that testified at Barry’s trial stated that Loukaitis thought his classmate, Manuel Vela, was a gang member (Associated Press,

1997). Loukaitis stated that people like that should die because Barry thought that Vela would have no future and thus had nothing to lose by killing him. Loukaitis felt that though what he would do would not be right, that this person didn't deserve to live and he would be the one to kill him. A psychiatrist at the trial said, "It's very rare for murder to make sense, and I don't think we're in disagreement that he has a psychiatric disorder" (Associated Press, 1997). Even though proof had been provided on behalf of Barry's mental health, he was tried as a sane individual and was charged with three counts of aggravated first-degree murder and one count of first-degree assault (17007-1-III State of Washington vs. Barry Loukaitis, 1999).

Contributors to Crime

Author Juan Ignacio Blanco wrote about the Barry Loukaitis trial and what lead up to the moments of his shooting rampage on www.murderpedia.org. Barry Loukaitis is the prime example of how school, family, and peers or lack thereof contribute to juvenile life-course of crime. Barry was relentlessly bullied at school by two of his victims. He began to hate school because he felt he was superior to other kids and he disdained them for not measuring up to his standards of what a person should be. Barry was constantly teased, harassed, and had his head stuffed in the toilet daily (Blanco, n.d). One instance he was held down by one student while another urinated on him. He began to feel school failed him when the bullying was not stopped and the other students continued to call him names (Blanco, n.d). Barry did not really have any friends to turn too because he never felt any could meet his requirements and expectations so he was a bit of a loner. His friends became the characters in Stephen King novels because he felt he could relate to them and wanted to live his life like they lived theirs. Shortly before the shootings Barry's family began to fall apart. His father was caught having an affair so his mother and father separated then divorced (Blanco, n.d). His mother who was known for being controlling

and domineering became depressed and withdrawn from her son and she constantly contemplated suicide and talked about a double suicide for her and Barry (Blanco, n.d). He had to take on the role as the parent and take care of his mother, at the same time he dealt with the feelings of rage and aggression towards his father. Barry was diagnosed as clinical depressed not long after that, which tended to run in the family (Blanco, n.d). He asked his mother to stop talking about committing suicide and seek help while his relationship with her became strained. At the time of the murders, Barry stated to be under psychosis and he felt like he had no future so he had nothing to lose (17007-1-III State of Washington vs. Barry Loukaitis, 1999). He lacked positive parental guidance, supervision, and parental relationships in his life. In the case of Barry Loukaitis, desistance is a foreign concept because incarceration is the only type of desistance to keep him from continuing his life-course of crime. His insanity plea was rejected because the court felt that he knew what he was doing at the time and his actions were meticulously calculated. All other appeals have been denied up to this point (17007-1-III State of Washington vs. Barry Loukaitis, 1999).

CHAPTER 4

APPLICATION OF CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORIES

Background of Discussed Theories

What is a theory? According to dictionary.com it is defined as a coherent group of tested general propositions, commonly regarded as correct, that can be used as principles of explanation and prediction for a class of phenomena. Theories do four things: 1) describe an event, 2) explain why this even occurred, 3) predict what is going to happen in the future because this event happened, and 4) help you control future phenomenon that may occur from this particular event. This is extremely important for the criminal justice field because it helps researchers prevent and reduce future crime that may occur (Lilley, Cullen, & Ball, 2010). Most criminologists would agree and say that criminological theory started with Beccaria and Hobbs during the Classical school. The main belief of the Classical school was that everyone is rational in thinking and can make rational choices (Lilley et al., 2010). Some would agree with that concept and say no further research is needed because everyone is born to do bad things. From the Classical school perspective came the idea that everyone is a rational being and we all have the free will to choose what we do, choosing right or wrong (Lilley et al., 2010). The choices we make are based on our ability to internalize the consequences of our actions if they are wrong decisions and the ability to rationalize the rewards for the decisions that we make that are right. One implication of the Classical school was the fact that the focus of the Classical school philosophy was to punish the offender and punishment was strictly just for punishment to reduce crime, regulations were not important (Lilley et al., 2010). The Classical school later turned into the Neo-classical and became all about rational choice theory. Neo-classical was not much different from Classical

school in the sense that people had free will and could make rational decisions like whether they should engage in crime or not. There were four crime prevention attempts that came out of the Neo-Classical phase (Lilley et al., 2010). These consisted of increasing necessary effort to commit crimes, increase the risks of committing crimes, decrease the rewards that are associated with crime, and lastly, create a way to make offenders feel guilt and shame for the crimes they have committed (Lilley et al., 2010). This was all fine and good but the only thing they fixed was moving crime from one place to another and an increase in finding ways to get around the new prevention strategies. When these did not work neo-classical criminologists were content with incapacitation and incarceration because it would keep offenders out of society, sometimes permanently. From neo-classical came positivism, where researchers realized that punishment alone was not a deterrent and that something else needed to be done, so Italian school became the focus (Lilley et al., 2010). The Italian school phase was mostly biophysical concepts and that everything came from the brain and different parts of the brain were responsible for different decisions and crimes that people chose to commit (Lilley et al., 2010). From there the history of criminological theory goes to Lombroso and the “Criminal Man” to Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck to modern biological theory (Lilley et al., 2010). The next phase was the Chicago school from around 1920 to about 1930s and that brought on research by criminologists such as Burgess and his concentric zone theory, Shaw and McKay’s social disorganization theory, then to Durkheim and Merton’s anomie theory along with Agnew’s strain theory (Lilley et al., 2010). Much more recently than those theories mentioned are Agnew’s general strain theory along with control theory and Sykes and Matza’s broken bond theory (Lilley et al., 2010). The most influential criminological theories used to date and the back bone of most current day research studies on juvenile delinquency are Gottfredson and Hirschi’s general theory of crime, Sampson and Laub’s

life-course theory, and Agnew's general strain theory (Lilley et al., 2010). Gottfredson and Hirschi lead the pathway to Sampson and Laub's life-course criminology theory and Agnew's strain theory, which currently dominate the research in the field of criminology.

Life-Course Theory

There have been theory after theory that explains different aspects of crime but the one that is most interesting is life-course theory. It first started with Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory of life-course, then Moffitt's version of the life-course theory and then Sampson and Laub combined both versions into their own life-course theory. Life-course theory and research focus on trajectories of transitions in an individual's life over time (Laub, 2004). These transitions can trigger delinquent or criminal behavior, so life-course is studied to find ways to help individuals internalizing those changes. Gottfredson and Hirschi focused on the continuity of crime in the life of adolescents, Moffitt focused on continuity or change in the life of adolescents, and Sampson and Laub focused their research on both continuity and change. The continuity of crime became known by the work that Gottfredson and Hirschi did and they developed the theory of social control, which emphasized the idea of social bonds (Laub, 2004). Gottfredson and Hirschi shaped the criminology field because their research was a turning point in deviancy research (Laub, 2004). Gottfredson and Hirschi did not agree with Moffitt's version on life-course because Moffitt believed that a group of life-course persisters continued at a high rate, like chronic offenders, as they age (Sampson & Laub, 2003). Gottfredson and Hirschi disagreed with Moffitt on the basis that they believed all criminal offenders would commit fewer crimes the more they aged. Sampson and Laub used Gottfredson and Hirschi's research as precursors to their own. Moffitt believes that life-course persisters have etiological roots that are traced to childhood, and include risk factors like difficult temperament, low verbal IQ, and poor self-

control (Sampson & Laub, 2003). Gottfredson and Hirschi take Moffitt's theory and expand on it and argue that there is one single factor that contributes to life-course crime over all ages. They argue with Moffitt by saying that crime declines with age for all offenders and that desistance is a general process that is universal (Sampson & Laub, 2003). Gottfredson and Hirschi used cross-sectional data on age and crime rather than on data following the same individuals over a substantial portion of the life-course (Sampson & Laub, 2003). Sampson and Laub's study that was conducted on the Glueck men showed that family structure and social processes like poor supervision, harsh discipline, and low parental attachment are strong contributors to adolescent delinquency. Moffitt (as cited in Sampson & Laub, 2003) disputes that position and states that a child's vulnerability is compounded by such negative family conditions, so that life-course-persistent offending is most likely to occur. For the most part, Sampson and Laub tend to follow the same life-course theory concepts as Gottfredson and Hirschi, but there is one thing that they disagree with them on. Gottfredson and Hirschi put a lot of emphasis on the stability of individual differences in low self-control but do not preclude a legitimate consideration of within-individual differences over the life course of the individual (Jang, 1999). Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory focuses on the relationship between low self-control and delinquency. They feel parents are the ones who are responsible for teaching their children self-control, so they link self-control to parental behaviors (Wright & Beaver, 2005). If a child has parents who practice bad parenting behavior, then that child is more likely to participate in delinquent activities. According to Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory, delinquency can be prevented if parents are taught how to instill self-control in their children. Sampson and Laub agree with this concept from Gottfredson and Hirschi but they also believe that individual differences affect a child's life course like their family, commitment to school, and their peer associations. One thing that both

Sampson and Laub and Gottfredson and Hirschi agree on is that there are trajectories and transitions in an individual's life that can contribute to desistance like marriage and family or they just simple age out. Life-course theory is what is constantly used today to explain life transitions and the effect they have on an individual.

General Strain Theory

Agnew started his own theory of crime and deviance in 1992 and called it general strain theory. Crime and delinquency are results and adaptations of societal stress and this stress comes from different individual factors like poverty and family environment, school environment, and peer associations, just to name a few. Agnew's strain theory has three types of strain that are used to describe juvenile delinquency. The first type of strain is not being able to attain positive goals that the individual has made for himself or herself and this can lead to delinquency if the individual responds in anger. The second type of strain consists of the loss of any and/or all positive stimuli within an adolescent's life, such as a strong relationship with his or her parents. Without positive influence and stimuli in a juvenile's life, then he or she may become angry and resentful and this could potentially lead to delinquency. The third type of strain is negative stimuli that can lead to aggression being present. The stress from these types of strain can be reduced and diminished if the negative stimuli are removed and goals that are set are made in a more rational manner and made so they are easier to obtain. Strain theory is distinguished from social control and social learning theory in that specification of 1) the type of social relationship that leads to delinquency and 2) the motivation for delinquency (Agnew, 1992). The reason general strain theory is important is because it focuses on the relationships that prevent the individual from achieving positive goals. Strain theory focuses mainly on negative relationships where the individual does not get treated how he or she wanted to be treated. Agnew says that

strain theory argues that adolescents are pressured into delinquency by negative affective states, most notably anger and related emotions that often result from negative relationships. Strain theory is distinguished by its focus on negative relationships with others and its insistence that such relationships lead to delinquency through the negative affect, especially anger, an individual sometimes encounters (Agnew, 1992). Agnew is not the only theorist about strain theory; there are also Merton, Cohen, Cloward, and Ohlin. Those four men argue that society and the American culture encourage individuals to pursue monetary goals and success and to move up from one socioeconomic status to another. Merton (1940), Cohen (1955), Cloward (1960), and Ohlin (1960) state that individuals who do not have the legitimate channels and ways to meet these goals made by society then commit crimes or deviant acts in order to obtain those goals illegitimately. Strain theory can also be described as the disjunction between aspirations and actual achievements. These goals are not future goals but more immediate goals. The three types of strain contribute to delinquency especially when these types of strain overlap each other in practice. Each type of strain increases the likelihood that individuals will experience one or more of a range of negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, anger, and disappointment (Agnew, 1992). Anger is the key emotion because it increases the individual's level of felt injury, but it also creates a desire for retaliation or revenge. Anger tends to lower an individual's inhibitions and energizes the individual and makes him or her more eager for action (Agnew, 1992). Each type of strain may create a predisposition for delinquency or function as a situational event that instigates a particular delinquent act (Agnew, 1992). Adolescents who are predisposed to delinquency through individual characteristics can be set off by any situational event where strain occurs and that can ignite a delinquent act.

Applying Theories to the Life of the Juveniles in Question

All six of these juveniles show signs that are defined by the general strain theory and/or the life-course theory. When looking at Alex and Derek King they are clear examples of life course theory and strain theory. Alex and Derek King are also examples of desistance. Further research is needed on what contributes to an individual desisting from crime due to societal causes, mortality, or incarceration. In their case they desisted from crime because of new found relationships in others. Kathy Medico and her family took in Alex and Derek established a relationship with his mother. Alex and Derek did not have a terrible childhood. They had a father who tried everything he could to do what was best for his sons and he was an extremely hard worker, but his sons resented him because he was strict and provided them with rules to follow, which they did not like. Alex and Derek's mother was not a prominent part of their life and abandoned them when they were younger. Their father did his best raising them but when they, especially Derek, became troubled and started acting out, he put them in foster care or in the care of someone else. Alex and Derek had no positive parental relationships that helped them cope and deal with their issues, nor did they have a stable home environment. One or both of them moved around from father to foster home and back constantly, leaving a gap of security in their lives. When Derek was in foster care, he was with a family that started to show him care, affection, and love, something he was not too used to, and when he got out of control they sent him back to his father to handle. From that point on, Derek resented his father because he could not provide him that family environment that he had received from his foster family. Alex was in a slightly different situation. When Derek got sent to foster care, Alex remained with his father, and when his father would have to work, Alex would stay with a family friend, Rick Chavis, with whom he formed a very special bond. Rick showed him care, affection, and love and did not

have rules that Alex had to follow. Alex became attached to Rick and his affection and it turned into love for the man. When Alex's father saw how close his son and Rick were, he told Alex that he could not hangout with Rick anymore and he put a stop to their relationship, which did not sit well with Alex. After Derek returned to his father's house, he and Alex became close and decided that they wanted to run away from their father so that they could be free to do whatever they choose without repercussions because they did not like living by their father's rules. Alex and Derek are perfect examples of life-course theory because their lives are affected by some of the same factors that contribute to a life-course of crime, such as lack of positive relationships from authority figures. When Alex found a positive relationship in Ricky Chavis, his father ended that because it was unhealthy. Alex wanted to be with Chavis and thought that the only way to fulfill that desire would be to get rid of his father for sabotaging the one loving relationship in his life. It was not challenging to get Derek to concur because he resented his father for the home life he could not provide for him. With Alex and Derek having no direct attachment of social bond to their father, it was easy to eliminate him from their lives and have no remorse. Now that Alex and Derek are out of prison, if they surround themselves with positive social bonds and relationships then they are less likely to reoffend, but once Chavis is released, what is to keep them from rekindling their relationship with him and going back down the path from before? Alex and Derek model strain theory because the strain of their situation proved to be intolerable, leaving them with no other choice. The strain in their lives resulted in them becoming very impulsive and unable to control themselves when it came to a particular goal they wanted to achieve, which in this case, for Alex, was to be with Rick Chavis, and Derek wanted to live by his own rules.

Kipland Kinkel is not much different from Alex and Derek King. Kinkel is also a prime example of Agnew's general strain theory and life-course theory. Kipland Kinkel came from a family environment where he constantly felt like he was a disappointment to his parents and that he could never make them proud. Kipland lived in his sister's shadow and his parents consistently showered her with praises and he began to feel left out. One contributor to Kipland Kinkel's delinquency was the lack of relationship with his parents and the lack of guardianship that was present. Kipland always felt pressure from his parents to do well at everything, and when he could not live up to their expectations he felt like he was a failure and that his parents constantly saw him as a failure. Kipland's parents were not adequately supplying or supporting his needs. They refused, at first, to take Kip to see a therapist but finally gave in. Kip always wrote his feelings in a journal about how much he hated himself and how lonely he was and all of that was because his parents never made him feel like he was good enough. Kip looked for ways to empower himself so he started studying and reading about explosives and buying weapons. Kipland was depressed and started hearing voices that told him that the delinquent activities he participated in were acceptable. Kipland's parents neglected him and made him feel inadequate and to avoid them being disappointed in him, he felt that the best way to handle that was to get rid of them. Strain theory and life-course theory fit perfectly with Kipland Kinkel because he lacked the normal protective system in his home environment, and lacked positive parental relationships so he looked for other ways to fill the gap his parents could not. Kip was not only mentally unstable but his home environment and his dangerous obsessions turned him into an extremely impulsive individual because the voices inside his head told him to react and he did instantly. If his parents had gotten him help and sought treatment from a mental health care provider, then Kip would not have felt insecure and worthless because the voices in his head

would have disappeared and allowed him to consciously think about the consequences of his actions before he committed the act. Impulsivity would not have been an issue if he had received treatment for the voices inside his head. Where Kip projected his feelings of himself on others, he could potentially be a problem of desisting from crime because he is so adamant about hurting others to make himself feel better because he felt he had no other choice.

Just like Alex and Derek King and Kipland Kinkel, the Menendez brothers are perfect examples of strain and life-course theories. Erik and Lyle were brought up in an extremely stressful home where everything had to be perfect. They were told daily by their parents what they could do, what they could not do, what they could eat, and with whom they were allowed to associate. Erik and Lyle never were held responsible for any of their indiscretions and thefts that they committed because their father always bailed them out. They lacked good parental supervision and guidance, and they did not have a good relationship with their parents. Erik and Lyle's parents had very high expectations for their children and believed they needed to excel at any or all sports. Erik and Lyle came from an extremely wealthy family and they had a vast inheritance upon their parents' deaths. Erik and Lyle claim emotional and sexual abuse from their parents and therefore they resented them for the control that they had over them. Their father was classified as a tyrant and would publicly humiliate them if they were anything but perfect. Both Erik and Lyle were extreme introverts and did not have many friends, and they were quiet and soft spoken. They started to have a problem with authority and wanted to do things that made them feel powerful. Because Lyle was the oldest, whatever he did, David had to do because he looked up to Lyle. Jose Menendez would browbeat his sons in order to obtain excellent grades and high level of performance in tennis. Agnew would say that the negative relationship that the boys had with their father is what caused their massacre. The lack of

relationship triggered the negative affect anger and with that came an inability to rationalize and internalize the consequences of what they were about to do. Moffitt would say that the negative family conditions were the contributors to their crime and acts of delinquency.

Barry Loukaitis is the embodiment of both life-course theory and strain theory. Barry was clinically depressed and had to take on the role of being a parent to his mother when his parents divorced. Barry was never really close to his father but he and his mother had a very strong relationship. When his mother started withdrawing and becoming distant from him, after the divorce, Barry lost that connection to his mother and their relationship diminished. Barry was bullied and terrorized at school every day and he had no social bonds giving him direction and a sense of belonging. He had developed mood swings and started seeking refuge in his violent music and his weapons. Moffitt would conclude that Barry's feeling of not belonging to his relationship with his parents, and especially his mother, contributed to his fallout and crimes. Barry was not mentally well and he never got the help he needed for his depression and psychosis. He felt that is he was God and superior to other kids and he hated them for not being as good as he. Barry was under the influence of his psychosis and it was distorting his thinking and not allowing him to internalize right from wrong. Barry's strain in his life was the negative relationships at school and at home. In order to feel empowered, he started participating in dangerous activities. Barry sought refuge in his Stephen King books and used that to create a new reality and in order to get the voices inside his head to stop he had to live his new reality, which he played out. Barry never received help or medication for his psychosis, which contributed to his crime. If Barry properly received psychological treatment and medication, then he may have been less likely to offend in the first place leading him away from a life of crime.

Sampson and Laub, along with Moffitt would state that the parental relationships that these juveniles had were inadequate and could not provide healthy environments for these individuals. Agnew would agree with them but he would also add that each juvenile's immediate social environment contributed to their delinquency. The strain for these five individuals was that these social environments how they thought they should be treated did not treat them. These juveniles developed negative effects from their various environments and these affects created pressure for corrective action and all of these cases lead to crime and delinquency. These juveniles were vulnerable from their social interactions and their lack of social ties that delinquency was an easy out and a way to form a social bond. Life-course theory is evident in each one of these cases because the individual characteristics for each juvenile are different, some have low self-control and high levels of impulsivity like Erik and Lyle Menendez and Alex and Derek King, the others have delinquent peer associations or activities. One thing that all of these juveniles have in common is that they all are in an unstable family environment and lack proper social relationships and parental relationships and did not receive help from anyone regarding family problems or mental issues. If each juvenile's parents had ingrained the ability of self-control into their child and taught him how to properly internalize the consequences of his actions, then he could have been saved from living a life of crime. Instead they externalize them and the result is crime and delinquency, which is a result of a lack of a proper positive parental relationship. Sampson, Laub, and Moffitt would all agree that these juveniles were affected by their parental influences and that they all lost their commitment to school and other social relationships because of internal fights that each juvenile was facing. Agnew would agree with the fact that the shift in parental relationships contributed to a negative affect and then caused delinquency and crime.

Applying Components to the Life of the Juveniles in Question

Looking back at the research that has been examined, all of these juveniles have been affected by their family environment, school environment, and peer group that led to or contributed to their life-course of crime. Even though Alex and Derek King are examples of desistance, they also display signs that their criminal activities were derived from one, two, or even all three of these factors. Terry King was a hard working father who just wanted to do his best for his son, but his determination turned into abandonment. Alex and Derek had a lack of parental supervision that provided them with instability. Even though they stayed with Rick Chavis when their father was working or unavailable, he never showed them discipline or parental supervision of any kind, taking away their opportunity of parental guidance. Not only did Alex and Derek King have a lack of parental supervision in their life but they also had no stable family environment. Derek, for example, went from foster home to foster home, back to his father's house and then from there spent every day with a sexual predator. Alex on the other hand spent more time at his father's house but that meant more time with Rick Chavis, who was not a proper role model or disciplinarian. Both Alex and Derek created resentment for their father when he disciplined them and set rules for them to follow, which was a big change from Chavis's home environment because they could do whatever they pleased without facing any consequences for their actions. Neither Alex nor Derek had a good relationship with their father and that resulted in them having no respect for their father as an authority figure. They acted on impulse and did not have the ability to internalize their action; they just acted out on their feelings at that particular point in time based on their fear of their father's punishment for them running away from home. Mainly their family environment affected Alex and Derek King but their peer group was also a contributor to the murder of their father. Alex and Derek had a very

small peer group that consisted of each other and Rick Chavis. Where Derek was the oldest, Alex did whatever he did and looked to Rick for approval for his actions. Both boys had an immense respect for Rick and they wanted to do whatever it took to be with him and please him because he set no rules for them, allowing them free reign to watch anything they choose and even smoke pot, which was something neither of them got to do when they were with their father. They misunderstood bad decisions, relationships, and friendship from a sexual predator as love and care. Kathleen Heide would say that Alex and Derek King committed parricide because they were antisocial children and had no proper authority figure in their life that helped them deal with the issues they faced daily, but also because in their eyes, their life had become increasingly intolerable and they felt they had no other choice or way out of their situation.

Now Alex and Derek King are prime examples for desistance because they were the only ones who have been released from prison. For Alex, Kathy Medico provided him with a stable family environment that he did not have when he was younger and at the time of the murder. She believed in him and allowed him to feel a sense of responsibility for his actions and that made him feel like he was worth something, and for Derek, he gained a positive relationship with his mother that he never had before and that connection made him want to be a better person and provided him with the stable family environment he never had. If stronger parental relationships had been present when the murder occurred, the parricide might not have ever happened. Alex and Derek King would not have committed parricide if they had a stable and positive family environment that instilled in them self-control, which would have controlled their impulsivity and prevented them from creating a relationship with Rick Chavis. If they had felt safe, secure, and supported in their home environment, then they would not have resented their father or his

rules as much and that would have prevented the parricide they committed. Alex and Derek King provide proof for the hypothesis that those three factors are contributors to life-course of crime.

Kipland Kinkel provides proof for all three factors as contributors to his life-course of crime. Kip is what Kathleen Heide would call an antisocial child who suffered from mental illness. His parents never abused him physically, but he definitely faced mental and verbal abuse from them. Kip is an ideal example of an individual who would commit parricide. His home environment was extremely stressful and became very intolerable. He always worried about disappointing his parents because he was afraid he could not live up to their expectations, like the ones they had for his older sister. Kip's parents were strict and demanded perfection in school and athletics. Kip did not have very good communication with his parents, which resulted in a lack of parental relationship present in his life. Not only did his parents not provide him with good relationships, they also neglected to provide him with a stable home environment. Where his sister lived in the same house most of her adolescent years, Kip was constantly moved around with his parents to different houses and countries within a year time. With all of the moving and lack of parental guidance, he began to rely on himself and he started to feel completely worthless. Kip had no self-esteem and lacked self-control, but all of that was a result of his mental illness that he avoided mentioning to people so that they would not think he was crazy. Not only was his home life intolerable and a contributor to his crime, but he also began hanging out with the group of friends that people deemed as dangerous. When he got caught, for things like theft, he felt cornered because he knew this would be another disappointment for his parents. At school he lived up to his reputation as being dangerous and he bought money to school to buy guns from his classmates. He began hearing voices inside his head that would tell him he was worthless and never could do anything right. He started to believe the voices inside his head and

when he committed murder he felt it was because he had no other choice because there were no other alternatives to avoiding his parents' disappointment anymore. Kathleen Heide would say that Kipland Kinkel suffered from child maltreatment because his parent never saw him any differently than they did his sister, and that put a lot of stress on him to fulfill her shoes, when in fact he was incapable of doing so. Kipland's parents never disciplined him properly for the times he did get in trouble; instead they would verbally abuse him and make him feel completely worthless, like the voices inside his head told him he was. He became depressed and felt the only way to get the voices inside his head to go away or stop was to listen to them, so he projected his feeling of himself onto his parents and killed them because, after all, that was what he wanted to do to himself from the beginning. At school he was bullied and he wanted to make sure that he was never bullied again. When the school failed to keep him safe he decided to take matters into his own hands because he felt like he had no other alternative, and the voices inside his head told him that he had no choice that he needed to kill those who are mean to him. He would constantly write down in his journals about the voices and how he wanted them to go away and all the things they said about him were true because that was how he viewed himself as worthless and never up to any good. Researchers would probably say that his mental illness was what caused him to commit parricide, but Kathleen Heide would disagree by providing proof that his family instability, poor choice in friends, and being bullied at school was what contributed to Kipland Kinkel's life-course of crime.

Just like Alex and Derek King, the Menendez brothers suffered from negative parental relationships also. Erik and Lyle Menendez would be classified, by Kathleen Heide, as both severely abused and antisocial. The Menendez home became extremely intolerable for Erik and Lyle because not only did they face sexual abuse by their father but they also suffered from

physical and verbal abuse as well. Jose Menendez was a perfectionist and he expected his sons to be perfectionist at everything especially sports. Their father provided them with parental supervision but to an unhealthy point. He was very controlling of his boys and never let them make decisions on their own. They always felt that they could not live up to his expectations that he had set for them. When Jose began to sexual abuse his sons, they went to their mother for help and she just turned them away and never provided them with the safety that they needed. Erik and Lyle's teachers told their parents that they felt they were a lot less mature for their age than other children in their class. Their father would verbally abuse them in front of their friends when they could not make the goals that he set for them. Both boys began acting out, like participating in theft with their friends and even drugs and alcohol. At early to middle adolescence they began wetting the bed and their fear for their father grew immensely. When they committed parricide, they did so as an alternative to get away from their father because they felt they had no other choice because no one was there to help them. They may have been driven by the monetary gain that they would inherit at their parents' death but evidence and research shows that they killed their parents as a way to end the abuse they suffered at home and a way to show their teachers that what they claimed was happening was really happening. They showed no remorse for their parents' death because they could not actually believe they had killed their parents. If Erik and Lyle Menendez had received help at school or from their mother when they made the claims of sexual abuse, their hatred for their parents would not have led them to parricide. The Menendez brothers had a lack of parental guidance and relationships that were positive that could help them with the issues they were facing on a day to day basis. The effects that positive parental relationships have on an individual can decrease their chances of living a life of crime.

Barry Loukaitis is a lot like Kipland Kinkel because he is the type of individual who suffered from a mental illness. Kathleen Heide would classify him as mentally ill and extremely antisocial with people but not necessarily a violent individual. When Barry's mother filed for divorce because his father was having an affair, she became depressed and suicidal. Barry had to step up and take on the responsibilities as a parent and start taking care of his mother. She started contemplating a double suicide involving her and Barry. Barry started counseling her on writing down her feelings and getting help. With all the changes in his life and new responsibilities, Barry became extremely depressed which caused him to become violent. Barry never had a good relationship with his father, and the relationship that he had with his mother became shattered when she became ill. She never spent time with him, or showed him love and affection, and she gave him adult responsibilities that he was not quite ready for. Not only was Barry's home life changing and unstable, he had a negative relationship with school as well. He was extremely antisocial so he did not have many friends but he was bullied constantly at school and he developed a lot of hatred for his classmates for the way they treated him. He started to get a "god" complex and thought that he was better than everyone and that he had to kill them because they were bad people. With his mental illness, Barry lost all sense of reality and could not tell what was real and what was false. He wanted his fantasies to become reality, so he started his murderous rampage. Aside from his negative parental relationships, he also had an unstable home environment, along with a negative peer relationship that came out of his negative relationship with school. Barry was neglected by everyone with whom he had a positive relationship, like his mother, his peers, and his teachers. If Barry had been given help for his psychosis and his depression, he would not have been sent over the edge to commit his

murderous rampage. His negative relationship with his parents and his lack of commitment to school and peers resulted in his life-course of crime.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

What if juvenile delinquency could be prevented? What if crime could be reduced over the life-course of an adolescent's life? This thesis intended on examining previous research on life-course crime of adolescents and increasing the knowledge of what contributes to desistance. It was hypothesized that a juvenile's home environment, school environment, and peer associations were the major contributors to life-course of crime in adolescents. Criminologists like Gottfredson, Hirschi, Moffitt, Sampson, Laub, and Agnew were studied to provide evidence that the hypothesis was indeed true. Authors like Agnew, Farrington, Hay, Jang, Kirk, Laub, Mulvey et al., Sampson, Schreck et al., Tyler et al., Vitulano et al., Warr, Welsh, Wright, and Beaver provided enough evidence to show that contributors to juvenile crime are family, peers, and school but they also enhanced my knowledge on the topic alone. Research has shown that not only are these predictors to life-course crime in adolescents but they can also be contributors to desistance.

Agnew's general strain theory was used to understand better what some predictors of juvenile life-course are. Strain theory has shown that negative social relationships are a main predictor along with social interactions that may produce any negative affect and cause anger, depression, or self-worthlessness. The reason it is important to examine strain theory in regards to adolescent delinquency and crime is because there are so many factors that are strains on an individual's life and if they are identified at an early age then prevention measures can be taken to ensure that that individual does not continue living a life of crime. Moffitt, Sampson, and Laub are important to this topic as well because they provide scientific research concerning at what

ages adolescents are more likely to commit a crime or desist and with that interventions can be put in place. Prior research has indicated that still more research needs to be done in order to fully understand the predictors of crime and delinquency and what the contributors of desistance are. Even though the idea of desistance is considered and studied, more research needs to be conducted in order to validate which factors contribute to desistance, and if desistance is even possible, other than through death or incarceration.

When studying individuals like Erik and Lyle Menendez, Alex and Derek King, Kipland Kinkel, and Barry Loukaitis the main focus of research needs to be on what life changes or transitions contributed to their criminal activity. If a common ground appears, like negative parental relationships, lack of supervision, lack of commitment to school and family, and more commitment to friends and criminal activities, then provisions need to be set in motion to improve those relationships and societal bonds for each individual. If the parents would have paid more attention to the needs of their child and focused on how their decisions affected their lives than these individuals would have been in a better state of mind. As a result of the lack of parental connections, impulsivity, low self-control, and mental health issues became a result in these individuals from the lack of ties to social bonds and relationships to positive stimuli and the lack of positive reinforcement for good attributes. When individuals have no positive commitment to or relationship with their parents, they will look for other means to fill that void, which most of the time can lead to more commitment to friends and an increase in criminal activity. If criminologists and the scientific community, alike, can enforce better policies and preventative strategies to protect juveniles from the negative social bonds that they receive at home, then the potential to save an individual from a life-course of crime is definitely a positive result.

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