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Qualitatively Assessing Background Factors of Criminal Captive-takers

Erin E. Grinnan

Dissertation submitted to the
College of Education and Human Services
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Counseling Psychology

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Abstract

Qualitatively Assessing Background Factors of Criminal Captive-takers

Erin E. Grinnan

Captive-taking is an inclusive category of criminal behavior that encompasses kidnapping, hostage situations, and certain acts of terrorism within both domestic and international contexts. To date, the existing research examining the individuals that commit captive-taking events and their backgrounds has been minimal. Gaining a deeper understanding of these individuals and their backgrounds may better prepare the individuals that are charged with intervening in captive-taking events including law enforcement, military personnel, and psychologists who assist in negotiation procedures.

This dissertation is drawn from a pilot study consisting of interviews with seven, incarcerated individuals convicted of captive-taking. The purpose of this dissertation was to qualitatively assess background factors among a captive-taking sample within a medium-high security, state correctional facility and to determine if those factors fall under two common theories that have been used to describe characteristics of other violent offender populations. Consensual qualitative analysis was employed to draw conclusions from the interview transcripts about background factors of these individuals.

Analysis yielded a total of 52 domains related to the backgrounds of these individuals, which were then grouped into 12 core ideas. Cross analysis was carried out with weighted labels being assigned to each of the domains/core ideas based on the frequency that each appeared across the seven transcripts. The results presented represent the subjective experience of individuals charged with captive-taking. Limitations, strengths, and future directions are also discussed.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my beautiful, kind, and thoughtful mother, Kim Cooper. It was your voice, encouragement, and example that kept me going when I was ready to give up. You are my hero, Mom. I love you to the moon and back.

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To my sweet PaPaw. I wish you were here for this. You were the hardest working man I’ve ever known. I know you would be proud of me and all I’ve accomplished.

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Table of Contents

Abstract…… ii

Dedication…… iii

Acknowledgments…… iv

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review..... 1

General Strain Theory..... 2

Types of Strain. 4

Categories of Strain. 5

Factors Influencing Strain. 8

Detrimental Characteristics of Strains..... 9

General Strain Theory and Criminal Behavior 11

Moral Disengagement..... 13

Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement. 15

Moral Disengagement, Aggression, and Criminal Behavior. 20

Captive-Taker Characteristics..... 23

Summary..... 28

Chapter 2: Methods. 30

Participants..... 30

Procedures..... 32

Interviews. 32

Perpetrator-Motive Research Design. 35

Data Analysis..... 37

Chapter 3: Results..... 45

Blocks. 45

Domains and Core Ideas. 45

Cross-Analysis. 60

Chapter 4: Discussion 66

In Support of Existing Literature 67

Divergence from Existing Captive-taking Literature 71

Relationship to Extant Theories of Criminal Behavior..... 72

In Support of General Strain Theory..... 72

In Support of Moral Disengagement. 75
Cultural Considerations 77
Limitations 79
Strengths 81
Future Directions 82
References 83

Table of Figures

Figure 1: General Strain Theory…….4

Figure 2: Moral Disengagement……19

Table of Tables

Table 1: Core Ideas and Corresponding Domains…….....46

Table 2: Domain and Core Idea Definitions and Examples……...51

Table 3: Cross Analysis for Domains and Core Ideas……...62

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

Captive-taking encompasses multiple types of criminal acts, including kidnapping, hostage situations, and acts of terrorism. Broadly defined, captive-taking is an event in which one or more persons are held against their will with actual or implied force (Vecchi, Van Hasselt, & Romano, 2004). "A captive-taking situation could result from a crime, an altered murder-suicide, or an act of terrorism in which a ransom is sought or a political agenda is promoted" (Rogan, Hammer, & Van Zandt, 1997, p. 5). Captive-taking events can be further differentiated by considering the motivation of the perpetrator. Vecchi and Van Hasselt (2008) described two types of barricaded captive-taking situations, hostage and crisis situations. A barricaded hostage situation is one in which one or more captives are taken for instrumental, or rational reasons, in order to influence the actions of a third-party. This type of event may occur in the context of other criminal acts, such as robbery. Whereas a crisis situation can be described as one in which the captive is taken for expressive, or emotional reasons, with the intent to harm the captive. These events are not only dangerous for those involved but also pose a threat to law enforcement agents who are charged with intervening. Additionally, captive-taking events cause significant emotional trauma to the victims.

Captive-taking is a growing problem both inside and outside of the United States. In recent years, captive-taking situations have gained attention in the media due to the prevalence of such occurrences during the Global War on Terrorism and the increasing violence surrounding the drug cartels in Mexico. Since the mid-1990s, hostage taking and kidnapping have dramatically increased as a preferred tactic of political terrorists (Yun & Roth, 2008). These captive-taking events directly impact US citizens, as they are often popular targets for these organizations. In regards to the Mexican drug cartels, the Council for Law and Human Rights in

Mexico estimated that an average of 49 kidnappings per day occurred, for a total of 17,889 in 2011 alone; reportedly, this is a 32 percent increase from the previous year (as cited in Cari, 2012). Additionally, captive-taking events can occur outside of organized crime and impact many individuals. This type of captive-taking may occur within workplaces, private homes, and sometimes even within schools.

While research has examined captive-taking to some degree including motivation and factors related to captive-takings in the context of the workplace and domestic violence situations, there has been very little research involving background factors associated with the population of individuals who engage in captive-taking behaviors (Booth et al., 2009). It remains unclear as to who these individuals are that commit this type of crime or how their past experiences may impact their criminal behavior. Previous research involving various criminal populations has found that examining background factors and characteristics of the individual can provide insight into the criminal behavior (Logan, Walker, Staton, & Leukefeld, 2001; Matejkowski, Cullen, & Solomon, 2008). Gaining insight into the lives of these individuals can provide valuable information to law enforcement agents and other individuals working with captive-takers. Additionally, this research can provide psychologists with information regarding risk and protective factors that may contribute to criminal behavior in adulthood.

General Strain Theory

Strain theory gained popularity in the 1960s when it began dominating the literature on deviance and delinquency; however, this theory fell out of favor in the 1970s when researchers identified several limitations in its ability to predict deviant behavior (Bernard, 1984; Cole, 1975). Since the 1970s, strain theory has been revised several times in an attempt to increase its applicability. Many deviance researchers continue to believe that strain theory has a central role

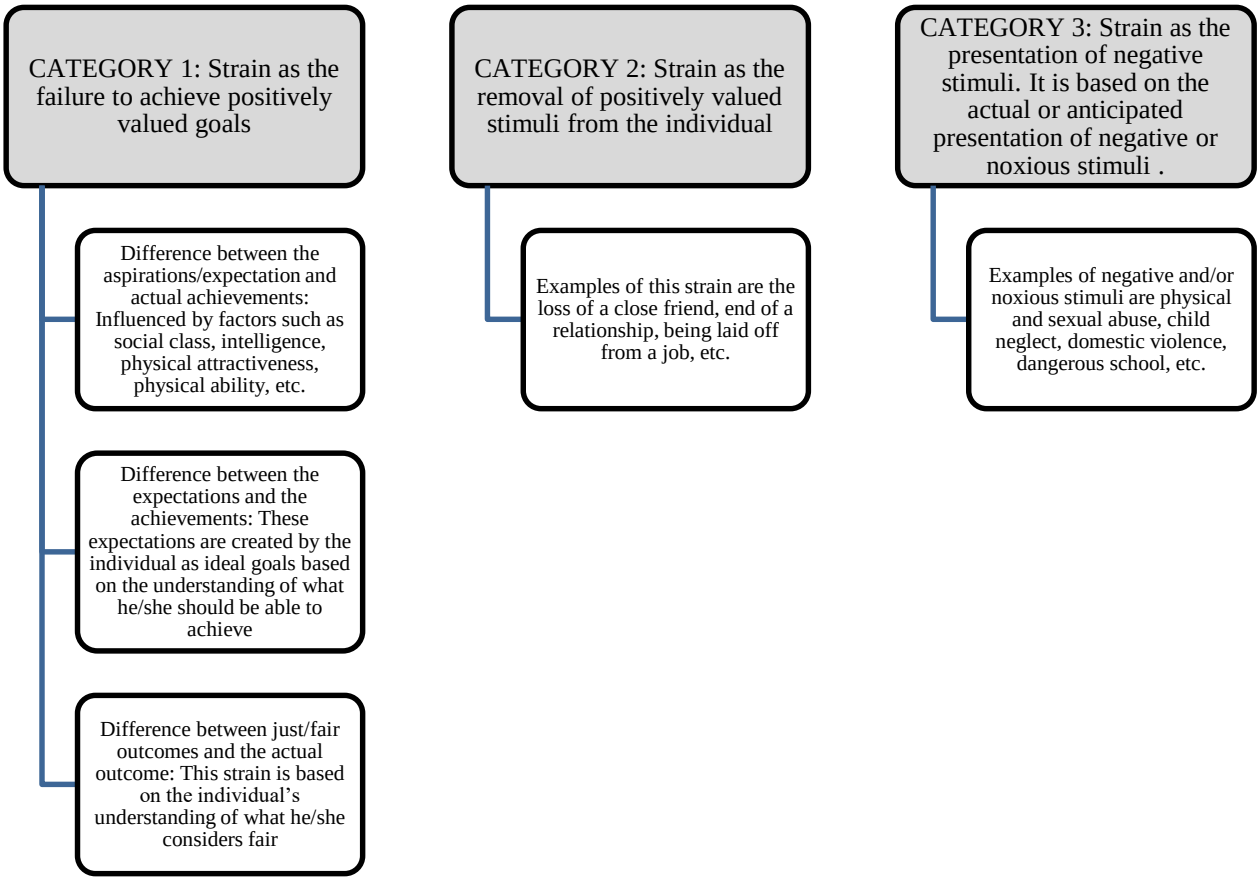
to play in the explanation of crime and delinquency (Agnew, 1992; Eitle & Turner, 2002; Hay & Evans, 2006; Ostrowsky & Messner, 2005). Strain theory is the only theory of deviance that has an explicit focus on negative relationships and the impact of such relationships on deviant behavior (Agnew, 1992). In the current literature, the most popular version of this theory is Agnew's General Strain theory.

General strain theory is a social-psychological theory of deviance and crime that focuses on the individual and his or her interactions with the immediate social environment (Agnew, 1992). The research on general strain theory tends to focus on adolescents and delinquent behavior; however, there is evidence that this theory also has applicability to adult criminal populations (Agnew, 1992). This theory has a major focus on negative relationships and the impact of those relationships on the individual. Agnew (1992) described negative relationships as any relationship in which the individual is treated in a way that is not acceptable to that individual. It is the individual's interpretation of the relationship as a source of negativity that leads to strain. A strain, in terms of this theory, can be described as a condition that is disliked by an individual that leads to emotional damage and/or behavioral consequences. Causes of strain are unique to each person; however, there are key components of negative relationships that are applicable to a greater population. General strain theory identifies three primary categories of strain including actual or anticipated failure to achieve goals, actual or anticipated removal of positively valued stimuli, and actual or anticipated presentation of negative stimuli (Agnew, 1992).

Common emotional outcomes of these types of strain are feelings of anger and frustration (Agnew, 2001). Research suggests that it is the negative affective states that drive individuals to criminal behavior. General strain theory focuses particularly on the role of anger, frustration,

and hostility. This theory suggests that negative affect compels the individual to corrective action, often leading to the use of delinquent behaviors to achieve goals (Agnew, 1992). Essentially, crime is a coping mechanism that allows the individual to reduce the pressure created by the presence of negative relationships.

Figure 1: General Strain Theory



Types of Strain. General strain theory describes two primary types of strain: objective strain and subjective. The type of strain that occurs will impact the emotional and behavioral consequences, with some strains having greater and longer lasting impact. Objective strains refer to events or conditions that would be viewed unfavorably by the majority of individuals

(Agnew, 2001). These occurrences will be viewed as negative by all regardless of individual characteristics. Examples of objective strains are situations or relationships that deplete the individual of having basic needs met. On the other hand, subjective strain impacts the given individual in a unique way. The concept of subjective strain suggests that not all individuals who undergo a similar occurrence will view it as a negative event or experience the same consequences (Agnew, 2001). These situations impact the individual in a unique way that is dependent on personality characteristics and situational factors. These two types of strain can occur at the same time, compounding the emotional consequences of the experience.

Objective strain creates varying levels of subjective strain depending on individual characteristics (Agnew, 2001). "A range of factors may influence the subjective evaluation of objective strains, including the individual's goals, values, identities, personality traits, and prior experiences" (Froggio & Agnew, 2007, p. 82). Individuals who experience multiple objective and subjective strains tend to experience greater negative consequences (Agnew, 2001). According to General Strain Theory, subjective strains are more likely to be related to criminal behavior since they are more likely to generate the negative emotions that are related to crime (Froggio & Agnew, 2007).

Categories of Strain. Objective and subjective strains will fall into one of three categories depending on the type of negative relationship present. There are three primary negative relationships that lead to strain including preventing achievement of a goal, removing positively valued stimuli, or threatening some form of negative stimuli (Agnew, 1992). Each of these negative relationships is capable of producing strain and behavioral and emotional consequences related to strain. The type of strain and the resulting reaction will vary based on

characteristics of the affected individual and characteristics of the situation that created the strain.

When an individual is prevented from achieving a positively valued goal he or she may resort to alternative methods to achieve this goal. These alternative methods may include delinquent behaviors if other routes are blocked. There are specific types of strain related to failure to achieve positively valued goals. The specific types of strain that are created include: disjunction between (1) aspirations and expectations/actual achievements, (2) expectations and actual achievements, and (3) just/fair outcomes and actual outcomes (Agnew, 1992). An example of this type of strain is an individual being unable to achieve financial security or educational achievements. Each of these types of strain can lead to a variety of internal and external consequences. For example, research has supported the idea that when a disconnection between expectations and actual achievements exists it can create strain that is existentially based (Agnew, 1992). "Gaps between existentially based expectations often lead to increased motivation to reduce such gaps, with deviance being commonly mentioned as one possible option for this reduction" (Agnew, 1992, p. 52).

The removal of positive stimuli can create strain as the individual attempts to prevent the loss of a positive stimulus, manage the loss of a positive stimulus, or obtain an alternative source for that positive stimulus (Agnew, 1992). An example of this type of strain may be removal of a positive role-model or loss of a supportive relationship in adolescence. Delinquent behaviors are often the result of this type of strain: specifically, aggressive, criminal behaviors have been connected to this particular type of strain (Agnew, 1992). In 1973, results of a study by Bandura suggested that eliminating or reducing positive reinforcement often resulted in an increase in

aggressive behavior. It is important to note that this particular type of strain may be linked to violent offending.

While removal of positive stimuli can create strain, the presentation of negative or noxious stimuli can also be detrimental. Several forms of negative stimuli have been implicated in general strain theory. The most severe types of negative stimuli, such as child abuse and neglect, criminal victimization, physical punishments, negative relations with parents and peers, adverse school experiences, and various stressful life events, have been implicated in later criminal behaviors (Anderson & Anderson, 1984; Berkowitz, 1982, 1986; Hawkins & Lishner, 1987; Healy & Bonner, 1969; Lauritsen, Sampson, & Laub, 1991; Rivera & Widom, 1990; Straus, 1991; Short & Strodtbeck, 1965). Each of these negative stimuli can create strain and various other consequences. Research has demonstrated that noxious stimuli can lead to delinquency when the individual attempts to escape or alleviate the negative stimuli, or seek revenge (Berkowitz, 1990; Van Houten, 1983; Zillman, 1979).

The three unique types of strain have been identified and consequences discussed; however, it is important to note that a single event can create multiple strains. Additionally, an individual who experiences one type of strain is likely to experience additional strains in the future. When multiple strains impact a single individual the likelihood that he or she will experience negative emotions and consequences increase. One type of negative emotion that is associated with experiencing multiple strains is anger (Agnew, 1992). Anger often leads to delinquency when the individual is motivated to seek revenge. Anger can also lead the individual to a justification for aggressive or delinquent behavior that would be associated with revenge-type behavior, making it easier for the individual to complete this type of action.

Factors Influencing Strain. There are four primary facets of strains that are of particular concern when considering the potential for negative consequences. These factors include the magnitude or size of the strain, how recent the strain occurred, the duration of the strain, and if there were multiple strains, how clustered in time those strains occurred (Agnew, 2001). The greater the severity of these factors, the more likely it will be that negative consequences will arise, effecting the impacted individual. It is difficult to predict the severity of these factors as there are no standard measures for the components that influence strain. Additionally, any data gathered in regards to the circumstances contributing to a strain are often self-report from the individual.

There has been a great deal of research examining the impact of these factors on the individual. Avison and Turner (1988) found that strains that occurred more recently are of greater consequence when compared to older events. This is not to suggest that negative events of the past will have no consequences to the individual; however, events in the more recent history are more likely to lead to criminal behaviors. Similar to stress theory, the literature examining the duration of strainful events suggests that events of a longer duration can lead to more negative psychological outcomes (Folger, 1986; Pearlin, 1982). Negative psychological events may include anger, aggression, or hostility which may lead to criminal behaviors. Additionally, the research suggests that when multiple strainful events have occurred closely clustered will have a greater impact on negative outcomes (Thoits, 1983). Events closely clustered in time do not allow the impacted individual to recover or develop appropriate coping strategies.

The factors that influence the strainful event and the consequences that arise can also be impacted by the individual and his or her internal processes in addition to the external factors

described above. Agnew (1992) suggested that some additional factors that must be considered include initial goals, values and identities of the individual, individual coping resources such as temperament, intelligence, creativity, problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and conventional social support. Agnew (1992) emphasized the importance of the social environment and its impact on the individual's ability to cope with strainful events in an effective manner. When the social environment is unsupportive and detached the individual is placed under greater strain and is more likely to engage in delinquent coping. Individual differences play a key role in reactions to strainful events.

Detrimental Characteristics of Strains. Multiple characteristics of strains have been addressed in the literature as having an impact on the individual's reaction to the strainful event. When strainful events are seen as unjust, high in magnitude, or low in social control, research suggests that the outcome will be more damaging to the individual and in turn the consequences will be greater (Agnew, 2001). The presence of these detrimental characteristics increases the likelihood of criminal coping behavior.

A strainful event can be described as unjust when that event was committed with intent and in a voluntary manner and that action violated a social justice norm (Agnew, 2001). Unjust events can also be described as unfair and lead to negative affect. Some research has suggested that negative emotions, such as anger, can increase the likelihood of violent crime (Agnew, 1985; Berkowitz, 1993; Mazerolle, et al., 2000; Piquero & Sealock, 2000). When strains are viewed as unjust events criminal coping is a potential outcome. Anger leads to criminal coping in several ways. "Anger energizes the individual for action, creates a sense of power or control, and creates a desire for revenge or retribution, which leads individuals to view crime in a more favorable light" (Agnew, 2001, p. 327). Anger has the ability to block cognitive processes that

promote noncriminal coping. Additionally, anger may reduce the acknowledgement of consequences related to criminal behavior (Agnew, 2001).

Strainful events that are high in magnitude are those events that are of a greater duration or frequency, have a greater degree or amount of strain, or occurred more recently. One example of this type of strain would be physical abuse of an individual that occurs repeatedly throughout childhood and adolescence. Additionally, strains can be viewed as high in magnitude if the individual's values, needs, or goals are threatened or violated (Agnew, 2001). Strain that is high in magnitude often leads to a decreased awareness of the consequences of criminal coping. When strain is high in magnitude criminal behavior becomes a likely response.

Two additional characteristics of strain that increase the likelihood of criminal coping are low social control and increased pressure or incentive to engage in criminal coping. Low social control can be defined as an individual's inability to conform to society. This process of nonconformity is likely to reduce the cost of criminal coping; essentially the individual has no alternative coping mechanisms and nothing to lose (Agnew, 2001). The consequences are minimized. The incentive to engage in criminal coping is likely to arise when this type of coping is modeled by trusted others or is reinforced by others (Agnew, 2001). Criminal coping often takes shape as violent offending. "Violent coping reduces feelings of injustice, reduces the likelihood of further disrespectful treatment, and allows the victim to protect or enhance their identity/status" (Agnew, 2001, p. 337).

These detrimental characteristics of strain must be acknowledged as they can have profound consequences. When these characteristics are present, research has demonstrated that criminal behavior is a likely response. Furthermore, violent offending is a potential outcome

when a strain is high in magnitude, unjust, or the individual has low social control or incentive to engage in criminal behavior.

General Strain Theory and Criminal Behavior

A great deal of research has suggested that delinquency or criminal behavior may be a method for alleviating strain (Agnew, 1992, 2001; Brezina, 1996; Hays & Evans, 2006). Researchers have examined the potential for strain to lead to criminal behavior in both adolescent and adult populations; however, strain theory has yet to explain why some individuals will turn to criminal behaviors while others will overcome the strain. Agnew (2001) posited that individuals who possess characteristics conducive to criminal coping are at an increased risk of committing crimes, but only when the type of strain experienced is also conducive to criminal behavior. Research has demonstrated a clear link between certain types of strains and the potential for delinquent behaviors including theft, aggression, drug use, and other violent offenses.

General strain theory has become a popular theory in the field of criminology. Initially, strain theory gained popularity with many criminologists because it was believed that blockage of a goal, a type of strain, was the primary circumstance leading to criminal behaviors (Agnew, 2001). Agnew (1997) contended that while goal blockage types of strain can lead to criminal behavior, there are specific types of goal blockage that should be focused on to a greater extent. The types of goal blockage that appear to be most closely linked to crime are "the failure to achieve monetary, autonomy, and 'masculinity' goals" (Agnew, 2001, p. 325).

Brezina (1996) examined the coping responses of adolescents under strain. Results of this study were suggestive of relief from strain and negative affectivity associated with the strain when delinquent behaviors were carried out. Delinquent behaviors are problematic; however,

this study indicated that adolescents who respond to strain with delinquency tend to experience fewer lasting negative emotional consequences due to strain when compared with those individuals who do not respond with delinquent behaviors. While negative emotional consequences may be reduced, it is unclear what the long-term outcome would be for individuals who turn to delinquent behavior as a coping mechanism.

A great deal of research has focused on the impact of environmental factors on strain and criminal coping. Several studies found that adolescent crime is significantly related to a variety of environmental factors including criminal victimization, parental abuse and neglect, family conflict, and negative experiences at school (Agnew, 2001; Agnew & White, 1992; Berkowitz, 1986; Brezina; 1996; Eitle & Turner, 2002). Life hassles, negative life events, and negative parental relationships have been linked to delinquent behavior (Agnew & White, 1992). All of these strains have the potential to lead the individual to criminal coping; however, certain types of strains have been linked to criminal behaviors while others appear to have low potential for delinquency. Agnew (2001) stated that:

> Types of strain more strongly related to crime, include: failure to achieve core goals that are not the result of conventional socialization and that are easily achieved through crime; parental rejection; supervision/discipline that is very strict, erratic, excessive given the infraction, and/or harsh; child neglect and abuse; negative secondary school experiences; work in the secondary labor market; homelessness, especially youth homelessness; abusive peer relations, especially among youth; criminal victimization; experiences with prejudice and discrimination based on ascribed characteristics, like race/ethnicity. (p. 320)

Young adulthood brings about additional challenges that can lead to strain. Ostrowsky and Messner (2005) suggested that the strains that develop in young adulthood tend to be related to new roles acquired in this phase of life. Several studies have supported this idea and found that crime in adulthood is often related to marital problems, unemployment, and failure to achieve economic goals (Agnew et al, 1996; Baron & Hartnagel, 1997; Cernkovich, Giordano, & Rudolph, 2000; Colvin, 2000; Uggen, 2000). Furthermore, Eitle and Turner (2002) found that recent exposure to violence in the community along with a history of receiving traumatic news, direct victimizations in the community, and associations with criminal peers increase the risk for young adult criminal offending. Additionally, Broidy (2001) found that when strain leads to anger the likelihood of criminal or delinquent behaviors is significantly increased.

A link between strains and criminal offending in adolescence and adulthood has been established through several studies (Agnew, 2001; Agnew & White, 1992; Agnew et al, 1996; Cernkovich et al., 2000; Colvin, 2000). To date the research has not identified the specific criminal behaviors that may arise, though research has suggested that violent offending is a likely outcome. Agnew (1992) emphasized the relationship between strain, anger, and delinquency. His general stain theory suggests that increased anger and hostility caused by strain are often dealt with through violent offenses (Agnew, 1992). Captive-taking is a violent offense that has yet to be examined in terms of general strain theory.

Moral Disengagement

Social cognitive theory posits that moral agency is a self-regulatory process (Bandura, 1991). This process works to uphold the moral standards that are developed throughout the lifespan. Moral standards are constructed through several processes, including observation of parents or other guardians, evaluation of social reactions to one's own conduct, and direct

guidance from trusted others. Once these standards are developed they serve as a guide for one's behavior, and they also work to discourage any behavior outside of the norm. "In this self-regulatory process, people monitor their conduct and the conditions under which it occurs, judge it in relation to their moral standards and perceived circumstances, and regulate their actions by the consequences they apply to themselves" (Bandura, 1999, p. 193). Individuals operate within the established moral standards in order to promote self-worth and personal satisfaction and avoid negative repercussions.

Behavior that falls outside of the established set of moral standards brings about consequences, such as self-censure or disapproval. Additionally, acting outside of the established moral standards may bring about external sanctions. External sanctions include judgment by others or being ostracized for acting outside of the social norm. It is the anticipation of such consequences that keeps behavior in line with the previously developed moral standards. "The social cognitive theory of moral agency proposes that the reason that most people refrain from transgressing (from moral standards) most of the time is that they have internalized society's standards of conduct. Therefore, acts of wrongdoing risk not only external sanctions but also internal sanctions" (Shulman, Cauffman, Piquero, & Fagan, 2011, p. 1619). However, selective activation and disengagement of the established controls will allow for different types of conduct within the same moral standards (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996).

When an individual attempts to justify behaviors that violate moral standards in order to avoid internal sanctions, this process is referred to as moral disengagement. "By cognitively reconstruing an antisocial act to make it seem less wrong or even not wrong, one can circumvent, or disengage, the internal emotional checks that usually prevent misconduct" (Shulman et al.,

2011, p. 1619). Moral disengagement is the process that protects an individual from the internal and external sanctions that arise from the violation of moral standards. Moral disengagement has been studied extensively in relation to the perpetration of a variety of crimes, ranging from those committed by juvenile offenders to the most heinous of offenses such as genocide (Bandura, 1991, 1999; Kiriakidis, 2008; Shulman et al., 2011; White-Ajmani & Bursik, 2013). The process of moral disengagement is facilitated by a variety of mechanisms that are unique to the individual, the situational context, and the cognitive process that facilitates disengagement.

Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement. The mechanisms of moral disengagement can be divided into three distinct categories based on the cognitive process that facilitates the disengagement. The first group of practices operates through the cognitive transformation of harmful conduct into acceptable conduct. These processes are the most effective psychological mechanisms for disengagement of self-sanctions (Bandura et al., 1996). This group of moral disengagement mechanisms includes moral justification and euphemistic labeling. "Moral justification is the process whereby detrimental conduct is made personally and socially acceptable by portraying it in the service of valued social or moral purposes" (Bandura et al., 1996, p. 365). Aggressive behaviors are rationalized and justified as a way of protecting one's reputation or honor. This process is common practice in cultures that value a code of honor, including military culture and Southern culture (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994). The aggressor does not have to contribute his or her behavior to a violation of moral standard, thus accruing internal self-sanctions, but instead is able to cognitively transform the aggressive act into a socially acceptable act of protecting one's honor. "Through moral justification of violent means, people see themselves as fighting ruthless oppressors, protecting their cherished values, preserving world peace, saving humanity from subjugation, or honoring their country's commitments"

(Bandura, 1999, p. 195). The act of moral justification protects from both internal and external sanctions, and assures the individual that he or she is operating within the limits of the established moral standards.

An additional moral disengagement mechanism that operates through the cognitive transformation of violations of moral standards is euphemistic language. Euphemistic language involves masking a reprehensible behavior by changing the way in which one talks about the designated behavior. This process can make harmful conduct appear more respectable while reducing personal responsibility for the act. Bandura et al. (1996) stated that people will behave much more aggressively when the aggression is given a "sanitized label" than when the behavior is referred to as aggressive. One population that uses a great deal of euphemistic labeling is military personnel. Bombings of a village may be referred to as "air strikes," making the act sound less threatening and devastating. Civilians killed in such an attack will then be labeled "collateral damage." This serves as a sort of psychological protection for those involved in carrying out these attacks. Essentially euphemistic labeling, or sanitizing euphemisms, is an effective strategy for allowing unpleasant or aggressive behaviors to take on a very different appearance. While this may serve a productive purpose for populations such as military, it is detrimental to those who commit criminal activity because it can result in a propensity to commit more crime due to minimization of previous behavior. The language used can have a profound effect on how the behavior "appears."

Another set of disengagement practices operates by obscuring or minimizing the role that one plays in the harm of others. Displacement of responsibility can be described as a process in which people view their actions as originating from the social pressures or direction of others rather than as something for which they are personally responsible (Bandura et al., 1996).

Displacement of responsibility allows the individual to complete an immoral action without feeling that she or he is personally responsible for the action. When an individual feels that she is not responsible for her actions, she will be more likely to commit behaviors outside of what would be considered moral behavior. Bandura (1999) suggested that one example of displacement of responsibility is demonstrated in socially sanctioned mass killings, such as those committed by Nazi soldiers upon defenseless captives. If behavior is dictated by another individual or an individual in a position of power, self-condemning reactions are not required as the individual is not responsible for the reprehensible behavior. This process was demonstrated most famously in Milgram's (1974) study examining individuals' obedience to persons in positions of power. This study demonstrated that many individuals will commit harmful acts on others when pressured by persons of authority. Displacement of responsibility reduces responsibility, which in turn removes any internal sanctions that may arise from committing harmful acts.

Diffusion of responsibility is closely related to the concept of displacement of responsibility; however, diffusion of responsibility most often occurs through the division of labor in a group situation (Bandura, 1999). People behave more cruelly when there is a certain amount of responsibility that can be consigned onto a group than when they hold themselves personally accountable for their action (Bandura, Underwood, & Fromson, 1975; Zimbardo, 1969, 1995). Group decision making and collective action are mechanisms that contribute to the weakening of moral control. "When everyone is responsible, no one really feels responsible" (Bandura, 1999, p. 198).

Disregarding or distorting the consequences of a behavior is an additional mechanism of moral disengagement that operates through obscuring or minimizing the harm that one causes.

This mechanism of moral disengagement is particularly effective when an individual carries out harmful activities for reasons of personal gain. Not only may the individual minimize the behavior itself, he may actively attempt to discredit evidence of any harm caused by his actions. This mechanism can be particularly effective in carrying out behaviors that can have injurious effects on the victim. When the perpetrator is not faced with the consequences of his actions the behaviors are more easily carried out. Bandura (1999) explained that there are less consequences for the maltreatment of others when the damage is not witnessed firsthand.

The final set of moral disengagement practices operates on the view of the victim(s) of immoral behavior or criminal acts. When the victim is viewed in a more negative fashion the blame is removed from the perpetrator and placed onto the victim. Dehumanization is the process whereby the perpetrator rids the victim of human qualities or attributes inhuman qualities to them (Bandura, 1999). When human qualities are removed from the victim there are no longer any characteristics connecting the victim and the perpetrator, not even the most basic qualities that make us human. Dehumanization of the victim reduces self-condemnation by depriving the victim of human qualities such as feelings, hopes, and concerns (Bandura et al., 1996). When human qualities are not removed from victims of crime it becomes difficult for the perpetrator to avoid empathetic reactions or feelings. Humanization has the profound ability to incite empathy and a sense of connectedness (Bandura, 1999). If the victim is viewed as possessing human qualities, thus evoking feelings of empathy from the perpetrator, self-condemnation for criminal acts is a likely outcome for the perpetrator. Experimental studies have demonstrated that when people are given power, they treat dehumanized individuals much more cruelly than humanized individuals (Bandura et al., 1975).

Blaming the victim of an immoral action is an additional way to avoid self-censure. Attribution of blame is the moral disengagement process whereby people view themselves as an injured party that is driven to commit an aggressive act towards another after being provoked (Bandura et al., 1996). The premise of attribution of blame is that the victim brings suffering on herself through her own behavior. This can be done by attributing certain characteristics to the victim or by attributing characteristics to the circumstances surrounding the immoral action. By placing blame on the victim, the behavior is justifiable and commendable (Bandura et al., 1996). This reduces the need for feelings of guilt and may even allow the moral disengager to feel exonerated for their actions (Bandura et al., 1996).

Figure 2: Moral Disengagement

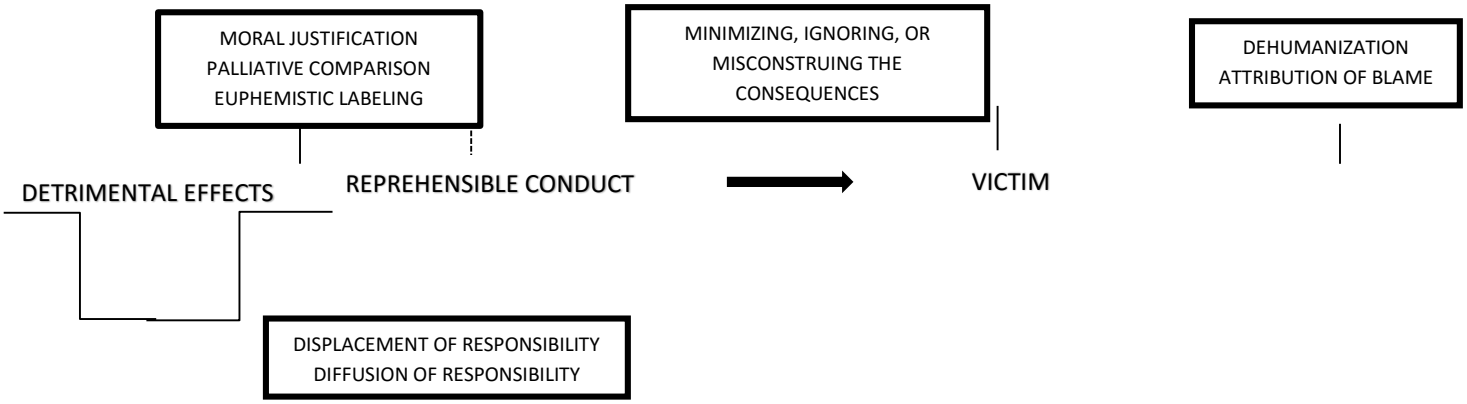


Figure 2: Mechanisms through which moral self-sanctions are selectively activated and disengaged from detrimental behavior at different points in the self-regulatory process (Bandura et al., 1996).

The mechanisms of moral disengagement introduced lead to reduced self-condemnation and reprimand when moral standards are violated. Acts that repetitively violate moral standards require the use of these mechanisms over and over again. The more these mechanisms of moral disengagement are used, the more familiar they become. Initially, milder forms of aggressive

behavior will create some discomfort; however, routinized use of mechanisms of moral disengagement will begin to reduce that discomfort, allowing the individual to tolerate acts that were once viewed as abhorrent. Being morally disengaged eventually leads to an increase in aggressive behaviors.

Moral Disengagement, Aggression, and Criminal Behavior. The connection between moral disengagement and increased aggressive behaviors has been well established in the literature (Bandura et al., 2001; Bandura et al., 1975; Paciello et al., 2008; White-Ajmani & Bursik, 2013). While a great deal of research has suggested that moral disengagement is a static, trait-like factor, recent evidence has suggested otherwise. Moore (2008) and Paciello et al. (2008) argued that moral disengagement should be treated as a state-like factor that is dependent on the individual's experience over time and the immediate, short-term social context. Additionally, moral disengagement is not a process that occurs instantaneously. Moral disengagement practices gradually progress. Initially, mildly aggressive behaviors will be tolerated with some discomfort and self-censure. As more of these aggressive acts are committed the level of moral disengagement increases, eventually leading to more aggressive acts being tolerated with little to no self-censure occurring. This gradual progression through moral disengagement slowly diminishes self-condemnation that would usually occur after the completion of an aggressive act (Paciello et al., 2008). This process begins operating in the early years of life and often becomes quite sophisticated by the time adolescence is reached; however, similar to criminal behavior, moral disengagement tends to decline throughout adolescence and young adulthood (Bandura et al., 1996).

Individuals that frequently experience moral disengagement appear to exhibit a unique set of characteristics that lead to more aggressive and delinquent behavior (Bandura, 1999;

Bandura et al., 1996; Shulman et al., 2011). The lack of internal sanctions being imposed after committing aggressive or delinquent behaviors reinforces the transgressive behavior. Bandura et al. (1996) found that the more practiced an individual was at moral disengagement, the less guilt would be experienced. In addition, individuals who are high on moral disengagement tend to be angered more easily and their aggressive behavior tends to result in more injuries than those individuals who engage in more moral behaviors and self-regulation practices (Shulman, et al., 2011). In addition to increased anger and injurious behavior one study found that "high moral disengagers were also less prosocial, less troubled by anticipatory feelings of guilt, and more prone to resort to vengeful ruminations and irascible reactions" (Bandura et al., 1996, p. 371). Ultimately, a continued pattern of moral disengagement leads to repetitive engagement in antisocial behavior. Shulman et al. (2011) also established that moral disengagement is predictive of antisocial behavior later in life.

Research has demonstrated that moral disengagement tends to decline over time in a similar fashion as criminal behavior. It is thought that this type of behavior often declines with age as individuals develop alternative strategies for coping and become more apt at predicting consequences. Paciello and colleagues (2008) identified four developmental trajectories of moral disengagement. A significant number of individuals will fall into the "nondisengaged" group. These individuals exhibit a relatively low level of moral disengagement that declines in late adolescence. The "normative" group is made up of individuals with a moderate level of moral disengagement in adolescence, followed by a decline in late adolescence. Paciello et al. (2008) referred to the third group as the "later desister" group (p. 1298). These individuals have a particularly high level of moral disengagement in adolescence that peeks between age 14 and 16, followed by a steep decline in late adolescence. Those individuals that were most likely to

demonstrate aggressive and violent behavior tended to be “chronic moral disengagers” (Paciello et al., 2008, p. 1299). Chronic moral disengagers were individuals who had a pattern of high levels of moral disengagement beginning in early adolescence and continuing into young adulthood (Paciello et al., 2008). Some research has shown that chronic moral disengagers are temperamentally different than others who occasionally disengage. Individuals who are quick to anger or ruminate on negative events are most likely to frequently engage in moral disengagement (Bandura et al., 2001). These individuals are also more likely to commit crimes.

The majority of research examining the connection between moral disengagement and criminal behavior has focused on juvenile populations, though some research has suggested that it has applicability to adult populations as well. Bandura et al. (1996) found that moral disengagement impacts delinquent behavior directly and indirectly through influencing prosocial behavior, level of guilt, and proneness to aggressive behavior. Using moral disengagement practices negatively impacts prosocial behaviors while increasing aggressive behaviors. This study also demonstrated that proneness to moral disengagement is predictive of both felony and misdemeanor assaults and thefts, regardless of age, sex, race, religious affiliation, and social class (Bandura, 1999). Results of a study by Shulman et al. (2011) suggested that not only is moral disengagement correlated with offending, it is also predictive of offending. This study demonstrated the link between moral disengagement and antisocial behavior. Given the evidence of greater antisocial behavior among those prone to moral disengagement, it is likely that moral disengagement also predicts ongoing antisocial behavior throughout the lifespan (Shulman et al., 2011).

Extensive research has demonstrated that moral disengagement often contributes to both large-scale and smaller scale criminal behaviors (Bandura, 1999; Bandura et al., 1996; Keen,

1986; Kelman & Hamilton, 1989; Rapoport & Alexander, 1982; Reich, 1990; Shulman et al., 2011). Bandura (1999) described how the process of moral disengagement leads to the perpetration of crimes ranging from minor thefts, to gang violence, to mass killings.

Captive-Taker Characteristics

Individuals that commit captive-takings have largely been neglected in the research on violent criminals. While the lethality risk of captive-taking has been acknowledged by law enforcement, this area has yet to receive considerable research (Booth et al., 2009). Researchers have only just begun to scratch the surface of what makes the captive-taker a unique criminal population when compared with other violent perpetrators. Some early studies have examined characteristics of individuals who commit captive-takings in the context of domestic violence (Booth et al., 2010) and workplace violence (Booth et al, 2009). The majority of research in this area has examined captive-taking events that co-occur with robberies or during the course of hostile events within a correctional setting (US Department of Justice, 2002).

Daniels and colleagues (2015) carried out two distinct studies using a data set gathered from a pilot study using Perpetrator-Motive Research Design, a standardized research design developed for use with criminal offenders (Vecchi, Van Hasselt, & Angleman, 2013). It is this data set that will again be analyzed for this dissertation. Using qualitative methodology, seven interviews with individuals with a current conviction of captive-taking were analyzed for motive and modus operandi. The first study by Daniels et al. (2015) examined captive-taker motives from the perspective of the convicted individual. The results of this study yielded a total of 23 micro-motives of captive-takers. This information is useful to law enforcement agencies and other individuals, such as psychologists, who may be charged with intervening on captive-taking events or providing services to this group of offenders.

The second study by Daniels et al. (2015) examined the techniques, tactics, and procedures (otherwise known as *modus operandi*, or MO) of individuals who commit captive-takings. Across the seven transcripts a total of 35 core ideas were identified. These core ideas provide insight into how offenders operate while carrying out a crime (Daniels et al., 2015). Again, this information is useful to law enforcement agencies in that it provides information that may contribute to the prevention of such crimes. Additionally, having a better understanding of how criminals operate during the commission of a crime may assist in the identification, apprehension, and prosecution of these criminals (Daniels et al., 2015).

Research to date has also identified some common traits of captive-takers. Booth and colleagues (2009, 2010) completed two studies in which they examined three types of variables related to captive-taking events in the context of the workplace and in domestic violence situations. Situational variables, victim variables, and subject variables were examined for each of the captive-taking events. These studies provided an initial look at who the individuals are that commit captive-takings.

Booth et al. (2009) examined captive-taker characteristics in the context of workplace violence. All cases were obtained through the Hostage Barricade Database System (HOBAS), a postincident data collection system that stores data regarding barricaded hostage, barricaded crisis, suicide, kidnapping, and attempted suicide incidents (Flood, 2003). This study involved the analysis of 15 cases, with a total of 24 perpetrators of workplace violence with captive-takings. In terms of subject variables, there were many similarities compared with perpetrators of domestic violence captive-takings. The majority of the perpetrators were single (29.2%), Caucasian (45.8%) males ranging from age 22 to 50 years old. Also the majority of the subjects had prior arrest records (70.8%) with most of those criminal offenses being violent in nature

(58.3%). The demographic information from this study closely resembles the data obtained in the study examining captive-takings in the context of domestic violence. Unique to this group of captive-takers was the fact that the majority of subjects did not have a history of substance abuse (75%) and they did not use substances during the incident (83.3%). This finding is contrary to the findings of other studies regarding perpetrators that commit captive-takings (Greenberg & Barling, 1999; NWNL, 1993). Additionally, this group of perpetrators had a much lower rate of mental illness when compared with the perpetrators from the domestic violence captive-taking study; however, it is possible that mental illness may have been underreported or undiagnosed in this sample. Approximately 83% of the cases in this study did not involve perpetrators with a history of mental illness. While this study provides an additional portrait of the captive-taking perpetrator, it fails to address deeper characteristics that may be related to this population.

Booth et al. (2010) examined the above variables across 56 cases of captive-taking in the context of domestic violence. Again, cases were gathered from HOBAS and situational, subject, and victim variables were analyzed. Several common offender characteristics emerged in this study. Offenders in this study were most often single (34%), White (63.4%) males ranging from age 33 to 44 years. Additionally, 75% of the offenders had a prior arrest history with 50% of those previous arrests being for the perpetration of violent offenses. It is likely that this is an underestimate of violent offenses, as 20% of the prior arrest reports did not indicate the type of offense committed. The majority of perpetrators (63%) had a previous history of polysubstance abuse, while 53.6% of the perpetrators used at least one substance during the captive-taking incident. Previous treatment for mental health issues in an inpatient or outpatient setting was also relatively common (40%) among the perpetrators. From these data a profile of individuals

who commit captive-takings begins to emerge; however, we must consider the possibility that this data is more descript for individuals who act out in domestic violence situations.

Beyer and Beasley (2003) attempted to provide a more comprehensive look at individuals convicted of nonfamily child abductions who murdered their victims. This study was limited to a very specific group of captive-takers, but examined background factors in addition to demographic variables. Participants of this study were identified through HOBAS and the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program. Additional participants were identified through the review of prison records at the state and federal levels. All participants were convicted of murder and had abducted their victims. All victims were under the age of 18. When it was determined that a case met these criteria, investigative reports, offense records, autopsy reports, confessions, and all other relevant documents were reviewed. Following the review of the records, individual structured interviews were conducted with the perpetrators within the prison. Prisoners were interviewed using a standard interview protocol, with interviews lasting 6-8 hours. All 25 participants in this study were male. Similar to the other articles discussed, the majority of perpetrators were Caucasian (76%). The majority of the perpetrators were single (60%) at the time of the offense. Approximately 72% of the perpetrators interviewed were under 30-years-old, which is consistent with other studies examining child abductors (Boudreax, Lord, & Dutra, 1999; Hanfland, Keppel, & Weis, 1997) but differs from other captive-taking populations. Overall, the offenders had very little formal education with 40% having less than a high school education.

In addition to the demographic information, Beyer and Beasley (2003) also analyzed background factors of the perpetrators. In regards to employment the offenders were largely employed in lower level, unskilled jobs. Only 36% of the perpetrators reported a history of

psychiatric disorders. This is similar to other research in that it is likely an underestimate due to underreporting. Of those that did report a psychiatric diagnosis the disorders ranged from anxiety disorders to attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder to mood disorders. There was no specific diagnosis that was represented more than others in this study. In relation to psychiatric disorder, 20% of the participants did report a history of animal abuse/torture. This is significant as research has suggested that animal cruelty in childhood is linked to violent criminal behavior in adulthood (Kellert & Felthous, 1985; Ressler, Burgess, & Douglas, 1988). Familial factors were also examined with 60% of the interviewed perpetrators reporting that their home environment was relatively stable; however, 24% reported a chronically unstable home environment. Also 24% reported that at least one parent was incarcerated at some time during childhood. A significant portion (28%) of the individuals that were interviewed for this study reported that they were sexually abused as a child. In terms of their own criminal history, 40% reported prior arrests. Additionally, almost half (48%) of the offenders acknowledged that they had a juvenile offense record. This study expanded on the previous captive-taking literature as it examined background factors in addition to demographic data; however, this study focused on a very specific captive-taking sample and cannot be generalized to other groups of perpetrators incarcerated for captive-taking events.

Other researchers have examined captive-taking in the context of acts of terrorism (Fuselier & Noesner, 1990; Lee, 2013; Yun & Roth, 2008). The research regarding captive-taking in the context of terrorism differs from the research previously discussed in that the majority of this research focuses on the motivation of the terrorists. Fuselier and Noesner (1990) did identify characteristics related to the terrorist captive-taker. Similar to other captive-taking research, the majority of these individuals are young males with very limited formal education.

Additionally, they often reside in economically deprived regions and have limited employment opportunities. To date there is limited research examining the backgrounds of these individuals.

Summary

There is a great deal of information regarding individuals that commit captive-takings that remains unknown. Researchers have only begun to scratch the surface in terms of who these individuals are. While prior research has provided an initial portrait of perpetrators of captive-takings, more information is required. A deeper examination of the background of these individuals can provide valuable information to law enforcement and other individuals called to intervene in captive-taking situations. The purpose of this dissertation was to qualitatively assess common background factors among a captive-taking sample with a current conviction of kidnapping or hostage-taking at a large, medium-high security, state correctional facility and to determine if those factors fit within two common theories that have been used to describe characteristics of other violent offender populations.

Agnew's general strain theory (1992) was one of the guiding theories in this dissertation. General strain theory posits that strainful events often lead to criminal offending when other coping mechanisms are unobtainable (Agnew, 1992). Additionally, this theory suggests that violent offenses are a likely outcome when strainful events lead to feelings of anger and there is not an appropriate outlet (Agnew & White, 1992). Because captive-taking is a violent offense and previous research on individuals who commit these crimes suggests that these offenders often have a history of dysfunction, general strain theory appears to be a good fit for this dissertation. Background factors of individuals convicted of captive-taking were qualitatively examined to determine if there was a pattern consistent with general strain theory.

Bandura's theory of moral disengagement served as an additional guiding theory in this dissertation. The connection between moral disengagement and aggressive behaviors has been well established in the literature (Bandura et al., 2001; Bandura et al., 1975; Paciello et al., 2008; White-Ajmani & Bursik, 2013). To date there is no existing literature examining a link between moral disengagement and captive-takers. Moral disengagement has been used to describe various other violent offenses, including acts of genocide. Again, the background factors of individuals convicted of captive-taking were examined in an attempt to determine whether these violent offenses could be explained through the theory of moral disengagement.

Chapter 2: Methods

This dissertation used data that was previously gathered during a pilot study conducted by the FBI. The following sections provide a detailed description of the data collection process and how the existing data set was analyzed for the purpose of this dissertation. The data collected in the pilot study were reanalyzed for the purpose of this dissertation. The purpose of this study was to qualitatively assess common background factors among a captive-taking sample with a current conviction of kidnapping or hostage-taking at a large, medium-high security, state correctional facility and to determine if those factors fall under two common theories that have been used to describe characteristics of other violent offender populations.

Participants

Potential participants were identified through the examination of adult criminal records at a large, state prison. By selecting a site and then screening potential participants the travel cost and time requirements were significantly decreased. The interview team was able to conduct multiple interviews in one location (Vecchi et al., 2013). Incarcerated individuals serving sentences at a medium-high security, state correctional facility in the Southwestern United States with a current conviction of kidnapping or hostage-taking were identified and offered the opportunity to participate in the current research.

A total of eight individuals were selected for participation in the study. Participants were selected based on meeting the requirement of currently serving a sentence for a conviction of kidnapping or hostage-taking and being willing to provide information regarding the event that led to that conviction. Informed consent was obtained from the individuals included in the study. All participants were males, ranging from age 26 to 54 (M=36.4). Of the eight participants three were Caucasian, three were Hispanic, and two were Native American. While this sample was

relatively small, the participants were quite diverse in terms of culture and in regards to the crimes they committed.

For this dissertation, transcripts from seven of the eight participant interviews were analyzed. The eighth participant was excluded from this analysis because the event that led to the kidnapping conviction was not substantial enough to be included in this study. This participant was convicted of kidnapping following an event in which he displayed a weapon and told another individual not to leave the room before fleeing from the scene. The motivation for this behavior was not to acquire a hostage and the kidnapping charge was not the primary conviction in this case. The aim of this dissertation is to examine background factors of those that fall under the perpetrator category of "captive-taker;" therefore, this transcript was excluded from the data analysis for this dissertation.

While all participants had a current conviction on kidnapping, each had additional charges including dangerous crimes against children, engagement in organized crime, theft, armed robbery, burglary, aggravated assault, murder in the second degree, and murder in the first degree. Participants committed captive-taking within several different contexts, ranging from a domestic violence situation to a barricaded workplace captive-taking. The circumstances of the kidnapping varied based on events leading to the crime, victimology, and conclusion of the crime.

Hill and colleagues (2005) recommended a sample size of 8-15 participants when using consensual qualitative research (CQR), with more participants being preferential when the sample is heterogeneous; therefore, the sample size was low for research using the methodology. For the purpose of this dissertation it was not feasible to recruit more participants for this study. It is very difficult to gain access to potential research participants that are currently incarcerated.

Permission would have to be granted first through the correctional facility and then willing participants who meet the research criteria would need to be identified. Additionally, it would be very costly in terms of travel to complete interviews. The time commitment required for further data collection would not be feasible for this dissertation.

Procedures

Prior to completion of the pilot study associated with this dissertation a protocol was submitted for approval through the Institutional Review Board of the FBI. The researchers obtained permission to carry out the pilot study described below. An additional protocol was submitted and approved through the Institutional Review Board at West Virginia University prior to the re-analysis of the data set for this dissertation.

Interviews. This section will provide information about the standardized interview protocol that was utilized while interviewing the participants for the pilot study. A semi-structured interview method was used in this study. Specifically, the *Captive-Taker Motivation Protocol* was completed with each identified participant. Vecchi and colleagues (2013) described the development of this protocol in detail in their article. This protocol was derived from subject-matter experts (SMEs) with extensive knowledge regarding captive-taking. The SMEs included individuals in law enforcement, the military, academics, and government agencies. Each SME was asked to provide 20 questions that they would like to ask individuals who commit captive-taking that would help him or her do their job better. A master list of questions was then compiled with duplicate questions being removed. The questions were then grouped into categories and headings were created. The protocol draft was redistributed to the SMEs for revisions and feedback (Vecchi et al., 2013).

The interview protocol was refined and simplified after the completion of several mock interviews. Mock interviews were carried out with individuals from law enforcement, military, and psychology backgrounds serving as the interviewers and individuals with experience interacting with these type of offenders serving as the subjects. The interview team was able to practice the interview, gain familiarity with the interview process, and practice the set-up of recording equipment. These mock interviews allowed for further refinement of the protocol and established the interview team roles (Vecchi et al., 2013). Additional simplification of the protocol was carried out during the interviews that make up the data set for the present study.

The final version of the Captive-Taker Motivation Protocol contains 13 primary sections, containing both open- and closed-ended questions. The primary sections and sample items are as follows:

1. Execution. Tell me about the abduction and capture operation.
2. Planning & Preparation. Tell me how you learned about and selected targets.
3. Holding. Tell me if there was a concern about the captive escaping and what measures were used to prevent it.
4. Victim Treatment. Tell me if any behavior by the captive made you feel closer to the captive.
5. Victim Behavior. What did you do in order to obtain the captive(s)'compliance?"
6. Event Outcome. Were the goals achieved by taking the captive(s)?
7. Interactions with Authorities. What authorities were involved?
8. Situational Introspection. During the incident, describe the most difficult/frustrating time and the most exciting/rewarding time.
9. Background. Describe growing up with respect to your family.

10. Media. Tell me how the media reports affected your actions and did you use them for your benefit?
11. Negotiations and Use of Third Party Intermediaries (TPIs). Did you or your group communicate with someone to achieve demands?
12. Group/Organizational Involvement. Have you ever been involved with any gang, group, or organization related to or involved in captive-taking?
13. Attitudes toward Government. What type of government and country is most likely to pay ransom?

All participants were queried on each of the sections when applicable, sections would not be utilized if they did not pertain to that particular offender and his crime. Interviews had an average duration of four hours. Breaks were taken throughout the interview process in order to limit the impact of fatigue on the interviewers and the interviewee (Daniels et al., 2015). During these breaks the interview protocol was reviewed to ensure that all areas of the interview were addressed and all applicable questions were asked. Federal research guidelines for the treatment of human subjects were followed (Vecchi et al., 2013). For the purpose of this study the primary interview domains that were analyzed included demographic information, psychological factors, childhood factors, past violence history, and group/organizational involvement.

The pilot study interviews were completed by teams consisting of six members filling a total of seven roles. At the outset of the interview, each member had an assigned role that they were to carry out throughout the interview. The following are the roles of team members (Vecchi et al., 2013):

Team leader. This person was in charge of logistics, obtaining informed consent from the participants, and managing the data collection process.

Guardian. The guardian sat with the participants during breaks and conversed with them.

Primary interviewer. The primary interviewer asked the majority of the open-ended questions after establishing rapport with the participant.

Secondary interviewer. This individual also sat in on the interview and was responsible for ensuring that all questions and follow-up questions had been asked. It was important that this person also established rapport with the interviewee.

Primary observer. The primary observer watched the interview on a TV monitor in an adjacent room and observed nonverbal behaviors of the participant, with special notice of changes in behavior, speech, emotions, etc.

Secondary observer. This person also watched the interview on a TV monitor, and wrote answers to all questions. He or she also served as a back-up to ascertain that all questions were asked and answered satisfactorily.

Logistician. The logistician managed the equipment and recording procedures.

Perpetrator-Motive Research Design. Data collection was carried out using Perpetrator-Motive Research Design (PMRD; Vecchi et al., 2013). Perpetrator-Motive Research Design is a 12-step, standardized method of interviewing criminal offenders. The interview protocol is a semi-structured interview process containing questions developed by SMEs and was discussed in the previous section. The steps of PMRD include: (1) defining the need for research, (2) defining the stakeholders, (3) identifying the offender population, (4) obtaining authorities and access, (5) developing and refining protocols, (6) employing protocol training, (7) developing subject dossiers, (8) conducting a pilot test, (9) retooling the protocols and process, (10) collecting data for the larger study, (11) analyzing the data, and (12) developing and

deploying deliverables. The present dissertation included steps 1 through 9, 11 and 12. Step 10 will be completed at a later date.

Steps 1 through 6 of the PMRD process were carried out prior to the initial offender interviews. These steps can be viewed as a preparation phase, with steps 1 through 4 serving as the preliminary phase and steps 5 and 6 serving as secondary preparation (Daniels, Angleman, & Grinnan, 2015). During the preliminary preparation, the need for this research, whom the research may benefit, and operational definitions were established. Captive-taking was deemed an important area of study as it has major implications domestically and internationally (Vecchi et al., 2013). Additionally, the individuals that are called upon to intervene in these situations (i.e., law enforcement agents, intelligence officials, crisis negotiators) are put in significant danger and victims of such crimes often experience significant, negative consequences (Booth et al., 2009); therefore, efforts to reduce the risk of captive-taking events are needed. With the target population identified and the need for this research established, access to convicted individuals within a large, state correctional facility was requested. This request was granted and an IRB was submitted and approved, through the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Secondary preparation began. Development of the interview protocol was carried out by the researchers and SMEs as described in previous sections.

The remaining steps (steps 7-12) of PMRD make up the data collection and analysis process (Daniels et al., 2015). Following completion of the preparation phase and the identification of potential participants, subject dossiers were compiled (Vecchi et al., 2013). The dossier for each participant consisted of several components including demographic and background information, case information, psychological/medical data about the subject, pre-trial reports, news reports and media coverage, and corrections files (Daniels et al, 2015; Vecchi

et al., 2013). These dossiers were used to familiarize the interview team with the participants and the crime committed, while also allowing the team to take note of any deception that may occur throughout the interview. It was important for the primary interviewer to have as little bias towards the participant as possible; therefore, the primary interviewer did not have access to the full dossier prior to the interview. Instead, a "facesheet" with only the most vital information was provided to this team member (Vecchi et al., 2013). Step 8 of this process was conducting the pilot study. This is where the participants of the present study were interviewed. That process is described in the Interview section above.

Following completion of the pilot interviews the protocol has undergone final revisions as necessary in preparation for the next phase, which will be collecting data for the larger study. That step was not included in this dissertation. The final steps (11 and 12) of the PMRD process include data analysis and distribution of deliverables (Daniels et al., 2015).

Data Analysis

This dissertation employed qualitative methodology. Qualitative methods were deemed appropriate for this study due to the limited existing research examining captive-takers and the qualitative nature of the archival data that was used. Qualitative methods have been shown to be useful in exploratory phases of research (Hill, 2005; Morrow, 2007; Nelson & Quintana, 2005). Because there is little known about this population an initial exploration of the subjective experiences of these individuals can provide information regarding areas that will require further inquiry in future research. Additionally, qualitative methods allow for examination of complex phenomena through the use of interviews that do not constrain the amount and depth of data that is collected (Hill, 2005; Morrow et al., 2001).

Specifically, interviews were analyzed using consensual qualitative research (CQR; Hill et al., 2005). Consensual qualitative research was initially developed by Hill and colleagues (1997) as a strategy used for investigating the experiences of clients and counselors in psychotherapy sessions. This method of investigation was updated by Hill and colleagues in 2005 and has been applied to various domains of psychology. Consensual qualitative research method has been used in other studies examining aspects of captive-takers and should be considered a viable data analysis method (Daniels et al., 2015; Daniels et al., 2007). This method of data analysis was appropriate for this dissertation as it allowed for in-depth examination of the subjective experience of the participants (Hill et al., 2005). Gaining a deeper understanding of the participants' experience of their own background was the goal of this study. Additionally, this method allowed for several researchers to examine the data set which in turn reduced the potential for researcher bias to interfere with the results.

Consensual qualitative research is a four step process that allows for members of a research team to independently analyze data and then come together with the other team members to review their findings (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). The four steps of CQR included blocking data from transcripts, coding of the blocks in order to develop content domains, condensing the domains into core ideas, and conducting a cross-case analysis (Daniels et al., 2015; Daniels et al., 2015). Consensual qualitative research is reliant on the use of semi-structured interviews employing open-ended questions that allow for consistent data collection across participants in addition to more in-depth exploration of individuals' experiences (Hill et al., 2005). This is consistent with the PMRD method that was used to collect data that was analyzed for this dissertation.

Prior to this dissertation each original video and audio media type of the eight pilot interviews were inventoried and identified using coded and/or encrypted identifications, then delivered to the FBI Behavioral Science Unit[1] using secure means. The recorded interviews (audio and/or video) were sanitized (deleting or altering classified information, such as inserting pseudonyms) to facilitate further analysis at West Virginia University. The sanitized versions of the video and audio tapes were securely transported to West Virginia University for data analysis.

Next, each video/audio was transcribed verbatim in a word processing format by graduate students at West Virginia University. These individuals were required to agree in writing to keep the contents of the interviews confidential and signed the appropriate nondisclosure forms and a Research Team Non-Disclosure Agreement. Additionally, all electronic copies of the transcriptions were password protected on computerized media. All video and audio media compact flash cards, paper copies of the transcripts, and other materials associated with the interviews were secured in locked storage containers at West Virginia University. The transcribing process entailed one student completing the initial transcription of an interview using Microsoft Word. Upon completion a second graduate student then listened to the interview while simultaneously reading the transcript. The *track changes* function was used to follow any changes made to the original transcript. Discrepancies were then addressed with the original transcriber and the checker listening to the recording together and coming to a consensus on what was said. If a consensus could not be reached or it could not be determined what was said then that segment of the transcript was recorded as "[inaudible]" (Daniels, Amores, Haist, Chamberlain, & Bilsky, 2011). Additional measures were taken to protect the identity of

[1] The Behavioral Science Unit is now the Behavioral Research and Instruction Unit.

participants in that all names of individuals and places were given pseudonyms. The transcripts that were generated from this process were used as the data set for this dissertation.

The primary investigator bracketed her personal biases and assumptions regarding the research topic prior to initiation of data analysis. Addressing biases and assumptions is important in the research process as these biases have the potential to interfere with the rigor of qualitative research (Hill et al., 2005). Biases and expectations were acknowledged and addressed throughout the research process, due to the potential to negatively impact data collected in a qualitative study and the subsequent analyses. The goal of bracketing was to insure that results of this study were not influenced by my own expectations.

As I have completed research involving captive-taking populations prior to this study, I was able to identify several potential biases and expectations that have developed through that work. While the previous research focused on the motivation of captive-takers, background information was not excluded from that study. This initial introduction to the potential impact of background factors on captive-taking behavior shaped my research expectations for this dissertation. I identified several potential biases and expectations that I documented and tracked throughout the data analysis process.

These biases and expectations included: a.) individuals who commit captive-taking likely had multiple negative experiences in childhood and adolescence; b.) individuals who commit captive-taking may have engaged in delinquent behaviors during childhood and adolescence; c.) parental figures were likely dysfunctional; d.) abuse and neglect in childhood may lead to adult criminal behavior; and e.) the lack of positive role models in childhood or adolescence may lead to deviant behavior. These biases developed through research on captive-takers, as well as other offender populations.

A research team composed of four graduate students trained in CQR completed the data analysis process. The research team consisted of three women and one man, all of which have an interest in the psychology of criminal populations. All members of the research team were Caucasian and from a middle-class background. Due to the homogeneity of the research team in regards to cultural backgrounds, the need for bracketing was further emphasized. It is likely that the backgrounds of the research team led to biases directed at the experiences of the participants in this study. Each member of the research team was required to complete the bracketing process prior to the data analysis process. The biases identified by each member of the research team were addressed in a roundtable discussion prior to the initiation of data analysis. The biases of each member were tracked throughout analysis in order to reduce the potential impact of the identified biases on the overall results of this qualitative study. Bracketing assisted in tracking any cultural biases that had the potential to interfere with the analysis process. While every attempt was made to prevent the research teams' cultural biases and expectations from impacting the analysis process, it is likely that the data was influenced by researcher biases.

The biases identified by the other research team members were similar to those identified by the primary researcher. All members had previous exposure to literature regarding background factors of criminal populations. Based on the existing literature regarding criminal populations and the background factors of these individuals, the research team had an overall expectation that the participants in this study would endorse multiple, negative background factors related to family, socioeconomic status, and limited educational and employment opportunities. These biases and expectations were discussed throughout the analysis process.

After all audio recordings of interviews with participants were sanitized and transcribed each member of the research team read through the first transcript independently and highlighted

any information that referred to either positive or negative background factors of the individual. The highlighted text made up the blocks that would later be analyzed. When all members had completed the blocking process, one member of the research team collected all blocked transcripts from the team. This member then transferred all highlighted blocks into a spreadsheet, creating the master list of blocks to be coded. The team members were then asked to generate domains or codes for each block. According to Hill et al. (2005) the codes should correspond as closely as possible to the interviewee's description, without the researcher having any assumptions or reading into what the interviewee is describing. For example, a possible code name describing a negative background factor could be "parental substance use" or "physical abuse by a parent." Alternatively, a potential code name for a positive background factor could be "supportive mentoring relationship" or "positive educational experience."

Prior to completion of the analysis of the transcripts it was difficult to predict the nature of the background factors that were described. When coding of the first transcript was completed by all members, the team reconvened to discuss the created codes. Each domain was discussed until a consensus was reached on the code name and definition. This process led to the creation of the initial codebook that was used for coding of subsequent transcripts. Codes that most accurately represented the phenomena described were used to generate the codebook. With each additional transcript analysis, the codebook underwent revisions. New domains were created, definitions were altered, and some domains were combined to create more inclusive domains.

It should be noted that the development of core ideas took place concurrently with the development of the domains. While Hill et al. (1997) described the generation of core ideas as a separate stage of the four-part analysis process, these steps were integrated throughout analysis

in order to reduce the time required to complete analysis and to streamline the analysis process. The team noted that many of the domains could be clustered into a larger category, representing a core idea. These core ideas represent a higher-order classification of the qualitative data (Thompson et al., 2012).

Research team members continued to work independently to complete the blocking and initial coding for each transcript. However, the research team members continued to meet following the coding of blocks for each transcript. Blocks that received less than 75 percent agreement were discussed until a consensus could be reached regarding the coding. Alternatively, those blocks with 75 percent or greater agreement were not discussed. This process continued until all transcripts had been coded and no additional codes were generated. The point at which no further codes were generated was referred to as saturation. Throughout this process there were several revisions to the original domains and codes. No additional codes were created after the fifth transcript was coded.

Cross-analysis represents the final stage of data analysis within CQR. At this point in the analysis process the data are compared and contrasted across participants (Ladany, Thompson & Hill, 2012). Labels are assigned to each of the core ideas representing the frequency of each core idea across all participants (Ladany et al., 2012). The term *General* was applied to a core idea when 6 or 7 of the participants mentioned it. If 4 or 5 participants endorsed a core idea, it was labeled *Typical*. If a total of only 2 or 3 participants endorsed a core idea, it was labeled *Variant*. Daniels et al. (2010) encouraged the use of the label of *Unique* for those core ideas appearing for only one participant. It is likely that these unique core ideas may make a significant contribution to the overall analysis.

An auditor was also utilized throughout the data analysis process. The auditor was an individual who was also trained in CQR and was familiar with this area of research. The auditor's responsibility was to check the accuracy of the work of the research team and make sure all definitions of each domain accurately described the raw data being analyzed (Hill et al., 2005). Following the completion of the coding into domains and core ideas, the analysis was sent to the auditor for review. The auditor was required to provide detailed feedback regarding the data analysis process. Ultimately, it was the auditor's responsibility to provide validation for the data analysis. The auditor would insure that each of the coded blocks matched the definitions provided in the codebook. Additionally, the auditor provided alternative solutions and conceptualizations of the data, as opposed to simply conferring with the research team. The auditor provided continuous feedback regarding the composition of the codebook. At times definitions would undergo revisions based on that feedback.

Following feedback from the auditor the research team members met to discuss the suggestions and work to reach a consensus on how to proceed. When the auditor provided alternative solutions to the data the team would either choose to accept the alternative or would choose to reject the alternative. If a consensus could not be reached between the auditor's alternative solutions and the research team the auditor was called upon to assist in reaching a resolution. Each party would be given the opportunity to state the reasoning and then the team and auditor would work together until a consensus was met. Throughout this process approximately 50 percent of the auditor's suggestions were accepted.

Chapter 3: Results

Results of this dissertation will be presented in order of the CQR analysis, beginning with a discussion of the blocks that were initially generated followed by information regarding domains and core ideas that were generated throughout analysis. Lastly, this chapter will address the cross-analysis between the seven transcripts that made up the data set for this dissertation.

Blocks

As described previously, blocks were generated when any member or members of the research team highlighted text from the transcript that described a positive or negative background experience. Throughout the analysis process a total of 368 blocks of data were collected across the seven transcripts. A total of 18 blocks were dropped from analysis during the coding process. These blocks were dropped after the research team collectively determined that there was not enough information provided in the block to contribute to the overall data set. For example, the following block was dropped from transcript 4 data analysis, "I: And you were physically and emotionally abused? P: Oh yeah." The research team chose to drop this block as it did not provide any additional information to the data set. A total of 350 blocks made up the final data set. The total number of blocks for each transcript ranged from 29 to 86 (mean = 50).

Domains and Core Ideas

The process of creating domains and core ideas was carried out concurrently. Following the blocking process, each block of text was coded, or given a domain name. The process of creating domains is described in the analysis section of this dissertation. Thompson, Vivino and Hill stated (2012, p. 103), "The goal of developing a domain list…and then assigning the raw data into these domains is to provide an overall structure for understanding and then describing each individual participant's experiences." With the coding of the 350 blocks a total of 43

domains were created. The domains were then clustered into core ideas, a category containing domains that represent similar phenomena. Table 1 provides a list of all domains and the clustered core ideas.

Table 1 Core Ideas and Corresponding Domains

Core Ideas	Corresponding Domains
Negative Experience as a Minor	Exposure to violence Feeling outnumbered Socioeconomic instability Physical punishment Victim of sexual assault Criminal activity
Positive Experience as a Minor	
Religion	Religious affiliation
Substance Use	Substance use as a minor Substance use as an adult Substance use treatment Substance use by a family member Substance use by friends Overdose
Family	Admiration for family Feeling of abandonment Family instability Parent has been/is incarcerated Sexual abuse within the family Negative role models Offender married Friction with significant other Death of a loved one Domestic violence Has children
Friends	Close relationship with friends Negatively influenced by friends

Table 1, Continued

Education	Dropped out of high school Received good grades/scores Received poor grades Conduct issues Received GED College education
Employment	
Mental Health	Diagnosed mental disorder Family history of psychological issues/treatment Treatment
Street Life	Lived on streets Selling drugs Gang involvement Committed crime
Physical Altercation	
Weapons	History of obtaining weapons

Core ideas represent a group of one or more domains that are theoretically related. In some cases, core ideas did not have any corresponding domains; therefore, the core idea represented both a domain and core idea. A total of 12 core ideas were generated, with three of these core ideas also representing a domain (52 total core ideas and/or domains). The first core idea that was generated was *Negative experience as a minor*. This core idea represents blocks in which the interviewee described an unfavorable event outside of the family environment that has impacted his life and occurred prior to the age of 18. One participant described a negative experience in his childhood stating, "P: I was hit by a car. I: How old were you when that happened? P: I was 4. And I was in a coma for like 3 months…" This is just one example of a negative event that was quite impactful for this individual. This core idea had a total of six domains associated with it including, *Exposure to violence, Feeling outnumbered, Socioeconomic instability, Physical punishment, Victim of sexual assault,* and *Criminal activity*.

Related to the previous core idea, an additional code was generated titled *Positive experience as a minor*. It was initially used to represent a block in which the interviewee discussed favorable events that had a positive impact on his life. The block that this domain represented was later dropped from the analysis, as it was determined that the block did not have enough information to be included. This core idea/domain was not coded throughout the analysis. During the interviews the seven participants did not describe events that had a positive impact on their lives. This core idea remained within the data set, as the lack of this code being used represents an important phenomenon.

The core idea *Religion* was used to code blocks that discussed religion in any context. The domain under this core idea was titled *Religious affiliation* and was coded when the interviewee endorsed belonging to a specific religious group. For example, one participant reported, "Even at the time of my crime, every one of them. I still say I'm a Christian. You know I know that sounds crazy. Because I do read the Bible, I believe in God, and I am hoping to go to heaven…" This individual clearly states that he belongs to one, specific religion. The *Substance use* core idea was used to represent blocks in which the interviewee discussed substance use either in the context of self or others. This core idea was present in all of the analyzed transcripts. One interviewee stated, "I've experimented with drugs, I'm not a drug addict, I don't like drug." This was coded under the *Substance use* domain as it is a general statement regarding substance use that does not clearly fit into the more specific domains. There were a total of six, specific domains falling under this core idea including, *Substance use as a minor, Substance use as an adult, Substance use treatment, Substance use by a family member, Substance use by friends,* and *Substance use overdose*.

There were two core ideas that addressed the impact of interpersonal relationships: *Family* and *Friends*. The core idea of *Family* was most frequently coded across all seven participant transcripts. This may in part be due to the fact that this core idea had a total of 11 domains, more than any other core idea. The domains of *Admiration of family, Feelings of abandonment, Family instability, Parent has been/is incarcerated, Sexual abuse within the family, Negative role models, Offender Married, Friction with significant other, Death of a loved one, Domestic Violence,* and *Has Children* all fell under the core idea of *Family*. The breadth of the *Family* core idea demonstrates the large impact that family environment has on the background of any given individual. The sixth core idea was titled *Friends* and represented blocks in which the interviewee discussed friendships. Two domains, *Close relationships with friends* and *Negatively influenced by friends*, fell under the core idea of *Friends*.

Education, the seventh core idea, was coded in all seven transcripts. This core idea was coded each time a participant discussed his educational history. The range of education level and experiences were broad across participants. While some participants reported college educations, others described more limited educational experiences. The domains representing this core idea include *Dropped out of high school, Received good grades/scores, Received poor grades/scores, Conduct issues, Received GED,* and *College Education*. Additionally, all participants discussed *Employment* to some degree. *Employment* represents both a core idea and a domain. There was a great deal of variability across the transcripts in terms of the discussion regarding employment. While some participants discussed the type, amount, and details of employment, others simply mentioned that they had at one time held a job. It should be noted that the majority of participants were employed in non-skilled, entry level positions. The core idea *Mental Health* was coded when the participant discussed mental health in any context. For

example, one individual reported, “P: I’ve got psychological problems. I: Psychological? Alright, what’s that? What do you...? P: I mean, those are pretty personalized, but they say I got psychological problems.” Again, the *Mental Health* core idea appeared across all seven transcripts. This core idea contained three domains including *Diagnosed mental disorder, Family history of psychological issues/treatment*, and *Treatment*.

The three remaining core ideas are related in that these codes represent and are linked to aspects of criminal behavior. The core idea of *Street Life* was coded each time the participant discussed some aspect of street life. Four domains fell under this core idea: *Lived on streets, Selling Drugs, Gang involvement,* and *Committed crime*. These codes were used when the participant discussed behaviors occurring prior to the captive-taking event. For example, one participant discussed his involvement with gangs stating, “I went to elementary over there, but at that time I wasn’t into gangs and shit. I wasn’t really like…until I got into the 7th, 7th grade and shit, I, I, I was like you know introduced to, to the real gangs and shit. I was like, whoa.”

Physical Altercation is an additional core idea that was kept separate from the category of *Street Life* because of context. This core idea was used to code blocks in which the participant discussed a physical altercation in which he was either the perpetrator or victim. One participant described his experience with physical altercations reporting:

> I've only been in, I think, four fights, three, four fights. Well, a couple that weren't even fights. They were just, you know, sock somebody in the head. And they said, ‘oh I really don’t want no problems, and you leave them alone. You know, you don’t stomp people like that, you just say, okay, just letting you know, just leave me alone. You're stressing your point, ya know. There has been a couple that were pretty bloody. I've been

whooped a bunch of times, by no means of the imagination a tough guy. I've been whopped and whooped good too.

This core idea excluded incidents of domestic violence. The final core idea of *Weapons* was coded when the participant discussed weapons outside of the context of the captive-taking event. This core idea was used when weapons were discussed in a historical context and contained one domain, *History of obtaining weapons.* Table 2 presents each of the core ideas and domains, providing detailed definitions and examples for each.

Table 2

Domain and Core Idea Definitions and Examples

Number	Code Name	Definition	Example
1.0	Negative Experience as a Minor	Perpetrator describes an unfavorable event that impacted him prior to age 18.	Exactly, you would have, maybe gone to law school? That's the difference between me and you, how I was raised and conditioned. You know, you cope better than I do. You cope better than I do. You know what I mean. If I had half of your coping skills, [laughing] I probably wouldn't even be here.
1.1	Exposure to violence	Perpetrator witnessed or took part in a violent act as a minor; may include disputes within the family	I: He was physically abusive to you… P: And my mother and my sister… I: And your mother. Did you witness that? P: Oh yeah. See, we had tried to get away, but there wasn't no women's places in its own… For battered wives syndrome or halfway houses. You know even when I ran away and they caught me a couple times they took me right back to the house.
1.2	Feeling outnumbered	Perpetrator was not a part of the majority	So I grew up around a lot of Native Americans being the only white guy around all blacks and Indians. I started swinging at a pretty, pretty young age I had no choice, ya know.

Table 2, Continued

Number	Code Name	Definition	Example
1.3	Socioeconomic instability	Financial strain is experienced, which may or may not have contributed to basic needs being unmet.	I grew up hard, I grew up poor.
1.4	Physical punishment	Perpetrator experienced physical punishment such as being spanked, hit, whipped, etc.	Man, you know…shit, I remember she grabbed the electric cord, electric cord, man, and fucking would hit your ass. I mean, she wouldn't fucking beat you, you know what I mean, but she'd beat you…
1.5	Victim of sexual assault	Perpetrator was a victim of sexual assault as a minor; the assault may or may not have been carried out by a family member	Throughout the early part of my childhood, I was molested by a scumbag, my uncle. My dad ended up working him pretty good but the country folks, they ain't like today, where everything's instantaneous you know, if people are molested it is all straight to the cops.
1.6	Criminal activity	Perpetrator participated in criminal activity as a minor; these crimes may or may not have led to problems with the legal system.	Some of them were strangers. Like people that my mom knew, and when on one occasion my mom had some fool in the house and that mother-fucker molested me. I4: How old were you when that happened? P: I had to be 7 years old, 'cause I remember…
2.0	Positive experience as a minor	Perpetrator describes a favorable event that impacted him in a positive way prior to age 18	NO EXAMPLE

Table 2, Continued

Number	Code Name	Definition	Example
3.0	Religion	Perpetrator discussed religion in some context.	I2: How about religion? P: Religion? Metaphysicists I2: What is that? P: I manipulate the forces of energy that convert the universe.
3.1	Religious affiliation	Perpetrator belongs to a religious group or takes part in religious activities.	We were Christian-based, we went to church.
4.0	Substance use	The use of substances is discussed. (May include alcohol)	That's it. My drug of choice was weed and ecstasy that was my main thing. Crack and heroin wasn't my thing.
4.1	Substance use as a minor	Perpetrator discusses personal use of substances prior to age 18.	You know I smoked weed and shit when I was 12. I liked it.
4.2	Substance use as an adult	Perpetrator discusses personal use of substances after age 18.	I4: Sixteen years old, first time. Then how long did you, did you use heroin a long time? P: I'm still using heroin. I: You still use it? P: Once in a while, yeah.
4.3	Substance use treatment	Perpetrator has been treated for substance use in an inpatient or outpatient mental health facility	I: ...Did you ever receive any treatment for substance abuse? S: Absolutely. Absolutely. I was in a 90 day in-patient treatment when I was in Nebraska. And I completed it successfully. Yeah I have used drugs in my life but it hasn't been a predominant factor. I can't sit here and say, "oh it was drug addictions that made me do it". I'd be a freakin' liar. It might have had some contributing factors because of the lifestyle, you know.

Table 2, Continued

Number	Code Name	Definition	Example
4.4	Substance use by family member	Perpetrator reports that a family member previously used and/or currently uses illicit substances.	My twin, she smokes. Smokes weed. You but, that's it. Before she was obsessed with drugs. Coke, g, and everything, and I told her this is not the thing you want to do. I was trying to tell her this is not what she wanted to do. Trust me, I know from experience.
4.5	Substance use by Friends	Perpetrator reports that his friend(s) previously used and/or currently uses illicit substances.	S: I learned from my friends. I: From your friends, so you picked it up at school, or? S: Just smoking. Smoking weed, that's the only thing I picked up from my friends.
4.6	Overdose	Perpetrator reports that he overdosed on a substance leading to hospitalization	P: Um…I got out messing with this fucking, fucking um…I OD'd six times, man. I4: You OD'd six times? P: Yeah. 'Cause I was drinking a lot of beer, man. I'd be drinking and drinking, and I would be like, man, I want to smoke a rock now, man. After I'm like fucked up. 'Cause I would be doing, you know, that shit. And that shit don't do shit for me, so I'm like, man.
5.0	Family	Perpetrator discusses his family.	What specifically? She was like a nagging mother. You know. Always thinking that she was judgmental, and she was always critical about certain things or ways that I conducted myself or that I dressed or that I communicated with others
5.1	Admiration of family	Perpetrator expresses positive regard for a family member	I loved my father, you know, I love him with all my heart. Even now. He's an awesome, awesome person you know, morally and spiritually, he is a wonderful, wonderful person.

Table 2, Continued

Number	Code Name	Definition	Example
5.2	Feelings of abandonment	Perpetrator discusses feeling rejected by his family or specific member of his family	There are few times in my life where love is the dominating emotion. That was with my dad, my brother, my sister, that's it. I didn't get it from anywhere else. It just wasn't there to be had. My aunts and uncles, my dad's brothers and sisters, treated me different than they did my brother because they looked at me like, "oh that is just Wanda's son." They didn't look at me like Vernon's son even though that is my dad and he's raising me. I looked at me as Vernon's son. They looked at me as Wanda's son, the woman who dogged out my stepdad. So they treated me different.
5.3	Family instability	Perpetrator describes the family structure as volatile or unpredictable; may include parental divorce, an absent parent, or frequent structural changes within the immediate family	I was her protector. I was the whole family's protector. Until the point where I couldn't do it anymore, I had to think about myself. I couldn't rely on my family, my other family I mean we tried, but he would always come and get us. He would always uh, enforce his reign of terror wherever we sought refuge.
5.4	Parent has been/is incarcerated	Perpetrator's parent/guardian has a history of incarceration	I: Tell me what you know about your biological dad? S: He's in trouble before. He's been in and out of jail.
5.5	Sexual abuse within the family	Perpetrator reports that members of his family were sexually abused or were perpetrators of abuse	See…and then there was this other um, see where my grandfather was molesting my sisters.

Table 2, Continued

Number	Code Name	Definition	Example
5.6	Negative role models	Perpetrator reports that family members were negative role models; examples include family members participating in gang activity, the selling of illegal drugs, or other illegal activities.	I think the course had to be laid out. You know I mean, you know, this shit had to happen. It was this trip because like you said, all my uncles, like, the ones that I looked up to, the, the uncles…you know, I was tellin' homey that I got two or three uncles they, that they're dope fiends and shit. Straight dope fiends. And um they were the role models that I chose to look up to, you know what I mean?
5.7	Offender Married	Perpetrator is currently married or was married at the time of the captive event occurred	I'm married still. I'm still with my wife. I've been married for 20 years. We separated for a lot, a lot of years. I'm Christian all the way. And when I first got here, there was a time when I first got to prison, I didn't want her to suffer through this with me.
5.8	Friction with significant other	Perpetrator describes relationship strain; may include frequent arguments, disagreements, etc.	Look! I told Geri, I said, "Man, man I wanted them to shoot me in front of you so that would be the last fucking memory you had about us. That way you'd be fucking traumatized, bitch." And I, I, you know I loved her, but it was a- I: Right. P: fucked up, kind of like twisted love, you know what I mean?
5.9	Death of a loved one	Perpetrator states that a close family member or partner died	I4: Now you're in a, in any kind of relationship now? A girlfriend, wife…? P: She died on me, man. I: Who? Your girlfriend? P: Yeah, man. When I was over there in jail in ninety-, you know, right here early in November, man. It was a trip. She just fuckin' died, man.

Table 2, Continued

Number	Code Name	Definition	Example
5.10	Domestic Violence	Perpetrator admits to acts of domestic violence against his partner or was a victim of domestic violence	She became a like, 'cause me, me and her relationship deteriorated um in '93, and I came in the first time. I went to, to jail for, for domestic violence. And I remember we were shooting dope, man, together. That was like the worst. That was like the worst we've ever gotten, while we were fucking shooting dope together. And I had told her, "I hate you, man." You know what, for all the shit we've done to each other. Cheated on each other.
5.11	Has Children	Perpetrator has biological children.	I: How was your relationship with your kids? P: We're the three musketeers. That's why it was so hard.
6.0	Friends	Perpetrator discusses friendships	NO EXAMPLE
6.1	Close Relationship with Friends	Perpetrator has supportive friendships	The only real place where I got a little love when I got older was my friends. And I had a close-knit group of friends.
6.2	Negatively Influenced by Friends	Perpetrator reports that friends negatively influenced his behavior by engaging in illegal activities or corrupt behaviors	You know, me and my brother, Oscar and a couple of other guys. Oscar, his dad was the king pin I was telling you about that introduced me to the world of drugs and drug trafficking, you know, on a large scale. So I looked up to him, that was my role model.
7.0	Education	Perpetrator discusses educational history	I have the equivalent to an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree in criminal law and so I have studied theology and I educated myself.
7.1	Dropped out of high school	Perpetrator did not complete high school	I completed the 10th grade. That's as far as I went

Table 2, Continued

Number	Code Name	Definition	Example
7.2	Received good grades/scores	Perpetrator reports that he performed well in school	As and Bs. Work wasn't hard for me. Teachers would tell mom, you know "he's a good student he gets As and Bs" and all it is is, you know (unclear)…
7.3	Received poor grades/scores	Perpetrator reports that he received poor grades in school	I4: When you were in school, were you a pretty good student? P: Not really. I: You like uh, C's, D's? P: C's and D's.
7.4	Conduct Issues	Perpetrator reports that he was reprimanded in school; this may include expulsion, suspension, or detention	I: Did you ever get expelled? P: Oh yeah I got in fights and all that stuff. Absolutely. I got in more fights that you could count. It was almost every day or an every other day thing
7.5	Received GED	Perpetrator reports that he received a GED	I: You completed the 10th grade? And then I think I heard, you are were working on your GED or you got your GED? P: I got have my GED.
7.6	College Education	Perpetrator reports that he attended college, participated in college courses, or received a college degree	I'm one of the exceptions, I went to school. I got a college degree. I'm not a dummy. I'm not an idiot. I understand the value of an education, that's why I went to school.
8.0	Employment	Perpetrator discusses previous employment	Yeah, I worked with my uncle at the SWAP meet. I worked there. I worked at a Subway. I worked at a…
9.0	Mental Health	Perpetrator discusses mental health	I: What do you suffer from of? P: I've got psychological problems. I: Psychological? Alright, what's that? What do you...? P: I mean, those are pretty personalized but they say I got psychological problems.

Table 2, Continued

Number	Code Name	Definition	Example
9.1	Diagnosed mental disorder	Perpetrator reports that he has a diagnosed mental disorder; may include DSM-IV or DSM-5 diagnoses, self-reported disorders	I: Steve you mentioned, you said that you were referred to as schizophrenic, when were you clinically diagnosed with it? At what age? S: At 12. Yes. I religiously take medication.
9.2	Family History of Psychological Issues/Treatment	Perpetrator reports that someone in his family has/had a mental disorder; may include DSM-IV or DSM-5 diagnoses, self-reported disorders, or history of suicide	I: Is there any history of psychiatric illnesses in your family? S: Um, my dad and my sister committed suicide. I: Do you know of any depression? Bipolar? S: Bipolar and schizo, big time.
9.3	Treatment	Perpetrator reports that he is/has received mental health treatment; this may include individual therapy, medication, etc.	I4: Now what pills did the doctor prescribe for you to take? Do you remember? P: Well, they were supposed to give me my fuckin' Prozacs to take, man.
10.0	Street Life	Perpetrator discusses aspects of street life	NO EXAMPLE
10.1	Lived on Streets	Perpetrator reports that he was homeless	I left home at 15, a couple months shy of 16. I got emancipated at 16 as an adult so I could go work and got a job. I quit school for year. But I was pretty much taken advantage of as a young kid 15,16 living on the streets.
10.2	Selling Drugs	Perpetrator reports that he engaged in the illegal distribution of illicit substances	No, my, my family wouldn't give me none of that shit. We used to sell that shit. We used to sell heroin too, man. You know, back in 1983.
10.3	Gang Involvement	Perpetrator reports that he engaged in gang related activities or was an active member of a gang	I4: Now how old was that that you remember doing something with gangs over here? P: That was about…fuck, man. [Pause] I was already like I'd say 5th…5th grade. 4th or 5th grade.

Table 2, Continued

Number	Code Name	Definition	Example
10.4	Committed Crime	Perpetrator describes committing a crime in adulthood that is unrelated to his current conviction	Yeah. So I was re-arrested. Was taking washers and dryers for some change. I didn't want to run into houses.
11.0	Physical Altercation	Perpetrator discusses being involved in a physical altercation; may participate as the instigator or victim; does not include domestic disputes	I got along, I had to fucking fight with the neighbors going to school and back.
12.0	Weapons	Perpetrator discusses weapons	No, I mean I always carried me personally I carried brass knuckles and a butterfly knight, but that's about it, you know what I mean?
12.1	History of Obtaining Weapons	Perpetrator discusses having weapons in his possession at some time in the past	I: Why did you have a gun? S: I always have a gun I: You always have a gun? S: I've had a gun since I was 15 years old.

Cross-Analysis

For the final stage of analysis, the data were compared across the seven participants. During cross-analysis the core ideas and domains were tallied for each individual and then assigned a label to represent the frequency in which each domain or core idea occurred across the transcripts (Ladany et al., 2012). The *General* label was applied to a core idea or domain when six or seven of the participant transcripts contained a block with a given code. A total of ten core ideas and/or domains received the *General* classification. The codes *Physical punishment, Substance use, Admiration for family,* and *Employment* were represented in the analysis of all seven transcripts. The core ideas/domains *Negative experience as a minor, Exposure to violence, Substance use by a family member, Family instability, Has children,* and *Diagnosed mental disorder* were also given the label of *General* and occurred in six out of seven transcripts.

When four or five participants endorsed a core idea or domain, it was labeled *Typical*. A total of 14 core ideas and/or domains were given this label. The core ideas/domains that received the *Typical* label included *Religious affiliation, Substance use as a minor, Conduct issues, Family history of mental health treatment, Mental health treatment, Victim of sexual assault, Criminal activity, Family, Negative role models, Domestic Violence, Negatively influenced by friends, Received good grades/scores, Received GED,* and *Gang involvement*.

If only two or three participants endorsed a core idea or domain, it was labeled *Variant*. This represented the largest category of core ideas/domain, with a total of 20 codes falling into this category. *Religion, Substance use as an adult, Death of a loved one, Dropped out of high school, College education, Mental health, Lived on streets, Selling drugs, Physical altercation, History of obtaining weapons, Feeling outnumbered, Socioeconomic instability, Substance use treatment, Feelings of abandonments, Offender married, Friction with significant other, Close relationship with friends, Education, Received poor grades,* and *Committed a Crime*, all received the *Variant* classification.

Daniels et al. (2010) encouraged the use of the label of *Unique* for those core ideas appearing for only one participant, yet deemed by the research team to be important. A total of five core ideas/domains received the label *Unique*. Those core ideas/domains that were represented in only one transcript include *Substance use by friends, Overdose, Parent has been/is incarcerated, Sexual abuse within family,* and *Weapons*. Table 3 presents the results of the cross analysis, with the number of statements made by each participant for each core idea and domain.

Table 3

Cross Analysis for Domains and Core Ideas

Number	Domain	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	n	Label
1.4	Physical punishment	1	5	4	2	3	2	3	7	General
4.0	Substance use	1	1	3	1	4	3	4	7	General
5.1	Admiration for family	3	4	5	2	2	3	1	7	General
8.0	Employment	1	2	3	3	3	3	2	7	General
1.0	Negative Experience	0	1	4	1	1	2	1	6	General
1.1	Exposure to violence	0	2	2	1	1	2	4	6	General
4.4	Substance use by family	4	2	0	1	2	4	2	6	General
5.3	Family instability	4	5	12	6	2	3	0	6	General
5.11	Has children	1	0	3	4	2	3	1	6	General
9.1	Diagnosed mental disorder	1	2	1	2	2	0	1	6	General
3.1	Religious affiliation	1	2	0	0	1	2	1	5	Typical
4.1	Substance use as a minor	1	3	7	1	0	1	0	5	Typical
7.4	Conduct issues	1	1	2	0	1	0	2	5	Typical
9.2	Family hx of mental health tx	0	3	1	3	3	1	0	5	Typical
9.3	Mental health tx	1	2	5	4	0	0	2	5	Typical
1.5	Victim of sexual assault	0	2	3	0	1	3	0	4	Typical
1.6	Criminal activity	4	0	0	0	2	1	3	4	Typical
5.0	Family	0	0	0	3	4	2	3	4	Typical
5.6	Negative role models	0	2	6	0	7	0	1	4	Typical
5.10	Domestic violence	0	1	4	0	2	0	1	4	Typical
6.2	Negatively influenced by friends	2	1	0	0	1	0	1	4	Typical
7.2	Received good grades/scores	2	3	0	1	1	0	0	4	Typical
7.5	Received GED	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	4	Typical
10.3	Gang involvement	0	0	4	3	6	0	2	4	Typical
3.0	Religion	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	3	Variant
4.2	Substance use as an adult	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	Variant
5.9	Death of a loved one	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3	Variant
7.1	Dropped out of high school	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	Variant
7.6	College education	0	2	0	1	2	0	0	3	Variant
9.0	Mental health	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	3	Variant
10.1	Lived on streets	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	3	Variant
10.2	Selling drugs	0	1	2	0	0	3	0	3	Variant
11.0	Physical altercation	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	3	Variant
12.1	History of obtaining weapons	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	Variant
1.2	Feeling outnumbered	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	Variant
1.3	Socioeconomic instability	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	Variant
4.3	Substance use treatment	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	Variant
5.2	Feelings of abandonment	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	2	Variant

Table 3, Continued

Number	Domain	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	n	Label
5.7	Offender married	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	Variant
5.8	Friction with significant other	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	Variant
6.1	Close relationship with friends	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	Variant
7.0	Education	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	Variant
7.3	Received poor grades	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	Variant
10.4	Committed crime	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	Variant
4.5	Substance use by friends	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	Unique
4.6	Overdose	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	Unique
5.4	Parent has been/is incarcerated	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	Unique
5.5	Sexual abuse within family	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	Unique
12.0	Weapons	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	Unique

Upon completion of the cross analysis it was noted that the core idea/domain *Positive experience of a minor* was not coded in any of the seven transcripts. This code was initially created to describe a block of text that was later dropped from the analysis due to limited content. This code remained part of the data set because its absence within the analysis represents an important phenomenon. There are several possible explanations for this code not occurring within the transcripts. For example, it is possible that the type of questions asked throughout the interview were not aimed at gathering positive experiences. This is not to say that the participants did not have any positive experiences to discuss within the interviews. It is more likely that the interview questions did not foster a discussion on positive aspects of the participants' backgrounds. Alternatively, it is possible that subjectively these individuals have difficulty identifying positive aspects of background due to an overwhelmingly negative experience.

Additionally, it was noted that the most frequently occurring core idea was *Family*; however, this core idea also had the most domains falling under it. This core idea represented the largest and most diverse category within the analysis. An example of this core idea is

represented by the following block in which the interviewee discusses his family's interests in a broad way stating, "And my dad's side of the family, uh they are all working class, don't do drugs, you know what I mean, the only thing they do is uh drink, you know what I mean, were into camping, three wheeling." The *Family* core idea had a total of eleven domains, while the next largest core idea had a total of six domains. Therefore, due to the breadth of this core idea it is not surprising that this was the most frequently coded core idea. This core idea contained both positive and negative domains. Overall, the most frequently occurring domain across the analysis was that of *Family instability*. The domain *Family instability*, appeared in a total of six out of seven transcripts. One interviewee discussed his family instability, reporting:

> At the time, man, I didn't know what was going on. Divorce was like, ssss, I didn't know, man. I was like, fuck. The whole world came to an end; you know what I mean? Your security is, you know, you know, what you gonna do now? …My dad's gonna leave…And um, so my mom, she had to go out there and hustle to, to get, you know, to deal with…you know what I mean. So that's when she started working at bars and shit and…

The *Family Instability* domain represented a total of 38 blocks of data, or 10.8 percent of the total blocks analyzed.

The domains and core ideas identified throughout the analysis process provide a great deal of insight into the background experiences of these individuals. While this is one of the first studies to utilize a systematic methodological approach, the results yielded coincide with previous research regarding background factors of individuals that engage in criminal captive taking. Furthermore, it is possible to employ existing theories of criminal behavior to explain

how these background factors may prime individuals for engaging in captive taking behavior later in life.

Chapter 4: Discussion

The purpose of this dissertation was to qualitatively assess common background factors among a captive-taking sample with a current conviction of kidnapping or hostage-taking at a large, medium-high security, state correctional facility and to determine if those factors fell under two common theories that have been used to describe characteristics of other violent offender populations. Prior to this dissertation, the majority of early studies examined characteristics of captive-takers through the examination of post incident data (Booth et al., 2009, 2010). Additional studies have attempted to gather data through interviews with specific kidnapping or captive-taking populations. One example of this is Beyer and Beasley's (2003) study in which they carried out interviews with individuals convicted of non-familial child abductions in which the offender was charged with homicide. While this dissertation is not the first study to examine characteristics of individuals who commit captive-takings, it is the first study to qualitatively assess background factors of this specific population. Results of this dissertation contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the backgrounds of captive-takers from the perspective of the offender. The results offer a unique contribution to the literature by examining psychosocial factors that potentially influence captive-taking behavior.

Results of this dissertation are based on interviews with seven men currently convicted of kidnapping or hostage-taking. Initially, a total of eight men were interviewed for the pilot study; however, following one interview it was determined that the situation was not a straightforward case of kidnapping. While the other participants had charges in addition to the kidnapping or hostage-taking charge, this individual was initially charged with aggravated assault with the kidnapping charge being added later. Therefore, this interview was not used in the analysis. The analysis of the seven remaining interviews generated a total of 43 domains. The domains

produced represent pertinent background factors of the captive-takers. Similar background factors were then grouped into core ideas (Hill et al., 1997).

In Support of Existing Literature

Based on the existing literature, many of the background factors identified in this dissertation were expected. For example, Booth and colleagues (2010) found that the majority of individuals involved in captive-takings in the context of domestic violence had a history of substance use. Additional studies involving captive-taking populations also identified substance use as a common background factor for this population (Greenberg & Barling, 1999; NWNL, 1993). Similar results were found in this study, with the majority of participants endorsing a history of substance use either as an adult or as a minor. For the participants in this study their history of substance use varied a great deal, with some subjects endorsing long histories of chronic use and others endorsing more intermittent, recreational use of substances. One participant discussed his history of use reporting that he first started using heroin at age 16 and continued to use in prison, while another participant reported that he had a history of experimenting with substances but never enjoyed using drugs. The *Substance use* core idea was present in all seven transcripts, suggesting that the use and/or abuse of substances has a significant impact on the backgrounds of these individuals.

The impact of the family system and environment on individuals who commit captive-takings has been documented in the literature. Beyer and Beasley (2003) reported that 24 percent of the participants in their study endorsed a chronically unstable family environment. In the current study, *Family instability* was the most frequently coded domain. In this study there were a range of circumstances included in the definition of *Family instability* including parental divorce, an absent parent, or frequent structural or environmental changes within the family unit.

All seven participants in this study endorsed an unstable family environment. In congruence with this finding, every participant in this study endorsed *Physical punishment* by a parent or guardian. Participants described a range of physical punishment, but many of these experiences bordered on, or may have been characterized as abuse. For example, one participant described his mother as the disciplinarian within the home and said that she would often beat him with shoes, belts, and electric cords. Alternatively, another participant described his father using spanking as punishment for stealing, fighting, or engaging in other delinquent behaviors as a child.

It has also been well documented in the literature that the majority of offenders are not married (Beyer & Beasley, 2003; Booth et al., 2009, 2010). It is possible that individuals who engage in captive-taking crimes are less likely to have a spouse due to the instability created by patterned criminal behavior which decreases the likelihood of a relationship resulting in marriage (Barnes et al., 2014). Only two of the seven participants in this study were married. Research would suggest that marriage can serve as a link to conventional society with a spouse representing a social control factor, thus decreasing the likelihood of married individuals engaging in violent crimes including captive-taking (Belle, 1987; Lo & Zhong, 2006; Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996).

Education and employment opportunities are often limited for individuals who engage in criminal activities (Beyer & Beasley, 2003; Fuselier & Noesner, 1990; Hanneken, 2007). The individuals interviewed for this study were no different. It was not unexpected that five out of seven offenders in this study reported either receiving a GED or dropping out of high school. The same proportion of individuals reported conduct issues in school including talking back to teachers and physical fights that often resulted in detention or suspension from school. For

example, one of the subjects discussed being expelled from elementary school. He stated that he was frequently punished in school for "fighting, or cussing out the teacher, or cussing out the principal mostly." Many of the interviewees reported similar experiences within the education system. Additionally, all seven participants discussed employment to some degree. The majority were employed in lower level, unskilled labor positions, which is consistent with the existing literature (Beyer & Beasley, 2003; Fuselier & Noesner, 1990). One participant discussed his employment history and experience stating:

> …landscaping, dishwashing, just a bunch of little …sorry-ass jobs, you know what I mean? No skills. Um, I wanted to get into the Job Corps, you know what I mean, and get a profession and shit but I never got around to it, man. I kept on getting busted. Going to jail.

The relationship between limited educational and employment opportunities in criminal behavior was present in this study.

Research has also suggested that a significant number of individuals who engage in violent criminal behavior, including captive-taking, have been diagnosed with psychiatric disorders; however, these disorders are often underreported and undertreated (Beyer & Beasley, 2003; Booth et al., 2009, 2010; Opitz-Welke, 2013). The majority of participants in this study did report a current psychiatric diagnosis, suggesting that mental health may be related to criminal behavior. This is not to suggest that all individuals with psychiatric diagnoses will commit violent crimes. However, research has demonstrated that for offender populations the existence of a psychiatric diagnosis contributes to the likelihood of multiple incarcerations (Baillargeon, Binswanger, Penn, Williams, & Murray, 2009). Unique to this study, the majority of the participants that reported a psychiatric diagnosis also indicated receiving some form of

mental health treatment. One individual in this study discussed his current diagnosis stating, "They say I'm like anti-social and bi-polar or whatever." During the interview he went on to say that he was prescribed psychotropic medications while in prison, but refused to take them. This individual's experience highlights one of the major barriers to providing mental health treatment to prisoners. Treatment adherence in prisons is often low and complicated by the fact that side effects and poor tolerance for psychotropic medications is not well managed (Geoffroy, Etain, Henry, & Bellivier, 2012; Van Dorn et al., 2011). Booth and colleagues (2010) found that less than half of the individuals in their study received mental health treatment; however, they did suggest that these results may have been low due to underreporting. Mental health diagnosis and treatment of offending populations continues to be a relevant area of research to be expanded upon within the fields of psychology and psychiatry.

Divergence from Existing Captive-Taking Literature

When results of this dissertation were compared with existing literature there were some unexpected results. For example, Beyer and Beasley (2003) found that 24 percent of the participants in their study reported that at least one parent was incarcerated at some time during the participant's childhood. Alternatively, while the individuals in this study reported a significant amount of family instability, only one individual reported that a parent had previously been incarcerated. This individual reported that his biological father was in and out of prison and he had very limited interactions with his father. It is possible that individuals in this study experienced other types of family instability outside of parental incarceration, such as an absent parent or a volatile family environment, that were more pertinent.

Due to the prevalence of family instability reported within this study it was somewhat unexpected that so few individuals endorsed sexual abuse within the family system. Extant

research has suggested that disturbed family environments in which sexual, emotional, and physical abuse are present are likely to contribute to delinquent behavior (Abei et al., 2015; Agnew, 2001). Only one participant discussed sexual abuse within his family system. He reported that his step-grandfather was charged with sexually abusing his sister and stated that this caused a significant amount of distress and estrangement within the family. It is possible that the offenders interviewed in this study underreported this type of abuse within the family system. Alternatively, it is possible that the other types of family strain reported were more prevalent and impactful for these perpetrators.

An additional factor which was not widely discussed by the participants in this study was weapons. The violent nature of captive-taking points to an extreme likelihood that the individuals participating in this study were exposed to weapons at some point in their development. Only one participant in this study reported exposure to weapons stating, "No, I mean I always carried, me personally I carried brass knuckles and a butterfly knight, but that's about it." It is important to note that this code was only used when the participants spoke of weapons use and obtainment prior to the event in which they are currently incarcerated for, as the aim of this study was to examine the backgrounds of captive-takers.

Overall, the results of this dissertation closely aligned with the limited existing research regarding backgrounds of captive-takers. There were few factors that fell outside of the expected background factors. While the majority of existing research in this area is qualitative in nature with a limited number of participants in each study, a pattern of contributing factors begins to emerge consisting of significant family strain, limited economical resources, few or failed educational and employment opportunities, few positive experiences in childhood and

adolescence, and participation in criminal activity as a minor (Beyer & Beasley, 2003; Booth et al., 2009, 2010; Fuselier & Noesner, 1990).

Relationship to Extant Theories of Criminal Behavior

The majority of individuals in this study endorsed participation in criminal activity both as a juvenile and as an adult. This is in line with results from previous studies examining the background factors of captive-taking populations and also provides support for existing theories of criminal behavior (Agnew, 1992, 200; Bandura, 1999; Beyer & Beasley, 2003). It is probable that engaging in criminal behavior as a juvenile increases the likelihood of participation in violent criminal behavior in adulthood; however, the mechanism by which this occurs has not been identified. General strain theory posits that crime and delinquency are responses to negative interactions with the social environment (Agnew, 1992, 2001). Moreover, researchers have suggested that there is a threshold for criminal behavior and once this threshold is crossed the likelihood that additional criminal behavior will occur significantly increases (Bandura, 1999).

In Support of General Strain Theory. General strain theory is the only theory of deviance and criminal behavior that explicitly focuses on negative relationships and their impact on deviant behavior (Agnew, 1992). While this theory has primarily been used to describe juvenile delinquency, there is evidence that it also has applicability to adult criminal populations (Agnew, 1992). Results of this dissertation lend support to general strain theory and its pertinence to adult criminal populations. The participants interviewed for this research described negative relationships and the impact of those relationships across the lifespan. Agnew (1992, 2001) described three categories of strain that lead to feelings of anger and frustration including loss of something one values (e.g., divorce or death of a family member), receipt of something

negative (e.g., physical punishment), or failure to obtain something one desires (e.g., money, family). These categories of strains are well represented in the core ideas and domains generated in this dissertation. It is the anger and frustration created by these types of strain that often lead to criminal behavior. Agnew (1992) referred to this process as criminal coping.

Furthermore, Agnew (2001) described negative relationships in subjective terms, indicating that any relationship or experience could be considered negative if the individual is treated in a way that is not acceptable to that individual. The goal of this dissertation was to capture the subjective experiences of the participants in order to better understand their backgrounds. Subjectivity of strains was observed in the cross analysis of the results, again lending support to this theory. For example, one individual in the study described the devastation he felt when learning of his parents' divorce as a child. It was clear in his description of this event and the impact on the family that this individual would consider this event to be a significant source of strain. Alternatively, other participants mentioned parental divorce nonchalantly, indicating that this may not qualify as a strain in their subjective experience. This highlights the importance of considering subjective experience when using general strain theory to describe the potential for criminal behavior.

The participants interviewed in this study reported multiple strains ranging from negative experiences as a minor to substance abuse as an adult. Agnew (1992) posited that when multiple strains impact a single individual the likelihood that he will experience negative emotions and consequences increases. Research suggests that with this increase in negative emotion comes an increase in anger (Agnew, 1992, 2001). Anger can then lead to justification for aggressive or violent behavior. Furthermore, Agnew (1992) believed that strains that were related to removal of positive stimuli were more likely to be related to aggressive, criminal behavior or violent

offending. Many of the background factors described by the participants in this study would fall under Agnew's category of removal of positive stimuli including family instability in which a parent was absent, death of a loved one, and loss of a parent to substance abuse. Therefore, it is not surprising that these individuals engaged in violent offending and other criminal activities as general strain theory suggests that criminal offending is a mechanism of coping with negative emotions created by strain.

While the removal of positive stimuli was prevalent in the background descriptions of the individuals interviewed for this dissertation, the strain that appeared to be most detrimental to these individuals was the presentation of negative stimuli. The *Physical punishment* domain was present in every participant interview included in this dissertation suggesting that this type of punishment is likely to lead to strain. Many of the participants described abuse, neglect, poor parental relationships, and adverse school experiences, again lending support to the core components of general strain theory. Research regarding general strain theory has suggested that the most severe types of negative stimuli that have been implicated in later criminal behaviors include child abuse and neglect, physical punishment, negative relations with parents and peers, adverse school experiences, work in the secondary labor market, homelessness, and various other stressful life events (Anderson & Anderson, 1984; Berkowitz, 1982, 1986; Hawkins & Lishner, 1987; Healy & Bonner, 1969; Lauritsen et al., 1991; Rivera & Widom, 1990; Straus, 1991; Short & Strodtbeck, 1965).

Previous research has primarily supported the use of general strain theory in adolescent delinquency, though some research has attempted to apply this theory to adult, criminal behavior (Agnew, 2001). Based on the background factors endorsed by the participants in this study it is clear to see that these individuals experienced significant strainful events throughout their

development. The individuals in this study resided in unstable family environments where the use of substances was common, gang involvement was likely, and physical punishment was an expected outcome. The strains experienced by the individuals included in this study were high in magnitude, low in social control, and often unjust; hence, violent, criminal offending was a likely outcome (Agnew, 1992, 2001). While the presence and magnitude of strains are likely to make up a significant piece of the violent offending puzzle, Bandura's (1996) theory of moral disengagement may be the missing link between strain and offending.

In Support of Moral Disengagement. Social cognitive theory posits that moral agency is a self-regulatory process that works to uphold moral standards that are developed throughout the lifespan (Bandura, 1991). These moral standards are constructed through observation of parents and guardians, evaluation of social reactions to one's own behavior, and direct guidance from trusted others. Moral standards serve as a guide for one's behavior and also work to discourage any behavior outside of the norm. Hence, moral disengagement is the process whereby internal and external sanctions that arise due to violation of constructed moral standards are protected against (Bandura et al., 1996). It is possible that as strains occur and anger increases the individual's potential for violent behavior propagates. However, for this potential for violence to materialize without moral repercussion, moral disengagement must be part of the process.

Many of the participants in this dissertation endorsed a gradual introduction to criminal behavior beginning in childhood or adolescence and increasing across time. Additionally, they reported that as strains increased within the family environment, so too did the likelihood of engaging in activities such as drug use, street crimes, and gang involvement. It is possible that as multiple strains occur, aggression increases, and delinquent behavior results. This delinquent

behavior may represent a release of energy, which may be rewarding in that the individual experiencing the strain feels relief. This relief is a type of moral disengagement and reinforces delinquent behavior. Research has suggested that moral disengagement is a state-like factor that is dependent on the individual's experience over time and the immediate, short-term social context (Moore, 2008; Paciello et al., 2008). Moral disengagement practices gradually progress, with more aggressive behaviors having fewer internal consequences as more violations of moral standards occur (Paciello et al., 2008). The interplay between these two theories may explain the progression of criminal behavior that was documented in this dissertation.

Consider one of the participants within this study; as a child he observed his extended family taking part in gang-related activities. Additionally, he was exposed to a mother with a violent temper and he often suffered physical abuse at her hand. He was sexually assaulted as a child by one of his mother's lovers and received little to no protection from his primary guardian. As an adolescent he rejected school and was suspended several times. He had few social supports or opportunities. In the 7th grade he was initiated into a gang and saw those members as family. By this age he had experienced a plethora of strains and was already engaging in moral disengagement practices. Furthermore, his moral code was based on what he had been shown by his violent mother and members of the gang. To avoid moral repercussions this young man would practice moral disengagement with some regularity. With this increased practice of moral disengagement comes the increased likelihood of committing violent, criminal offenses (Bandura, 1999; Bandura et al., 1996). Paciello et al. (2008) reported that the individuals that were most likely to demonstrate aggressive and violent behavior tended to be chronic moral disengagers. Therefore, it is not surprising that the individual described above is now convicted of the violent, criminal offense of kidnapping.

Together Bandura's (1991) theory of moral disengagement and Agnew's (1992) general strain theory may provide some insight into how background factors of individuals have the potential to influence violent, criminal offending. It is unclear how these two theories may interact and why some individuals that experience significant strain do not engage in criminal activity. However, it is possible that those that experience strain and engage in criminal behavior tend to resort to moral disengagement practices more readily, which in turn may result in a tendency toward more criminal activity and perpetuation of the cycle. To date, there is no evidence to support this hypothesis. The background factors identified in this dissertation can conceptually be accounted for by the combination of these two theories.

Cultural Considerations

While the results of this study provide insight into the backgrounds of individuals who commit captive-takings and provide support for two existing theories of criminal behavior, it would be negligent to ignore the impact of culture on the results of this study. As previously discussed, the participants included in this study were quite diverse. Alternatively, there was a lack of diversity within the research team charged with analyzing the data for this study. The impact of the homogeneity of the research team must also be considered.

Hill and colleagues (1997) emphasized the importance of a larger sample size when using CQR to analyze data for heterogeneous samples. Though it was not possible at the time of this study to increase the sample size of participants included in the study, it is important that the potential impact of cultural factors be addressed. Previous research involving individuals who commit captive-taking has suggested that the majority of individuals who commit these crimes are Caucasian males (Booth, et al. 2009, 2010). The sample in this study was evenly divided between Caucasian and Hispanic participants, with one additional participant identifying as

Native American. The ethnic diversity of the participants led to varied family composition, values, and experiences described by the participants. It is possible that with a larger sample, culture specific background factors may have emerged within the data.

It is widely known that some cultures, including Hispanic and Native American, tend to be collectivist cultures. Collectivist cultures tend to emphasize the importance of goals that will benefit family and community, while individualistic cultures emphasize individual goals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Because the majority of the participants in this study were members of collectivist cultures, it is not surprising that the core idea *Family* was the most commonly ascribed. It is likely that family plays an invaluable role in the lives of these individuals. Membership to collectivist culture may also account for the tendency of participants to emphasize positive familial factors and minimize the negative characteristics. For example, one participant described his mother as addicted to drugs, neglectful, and promiscuous, while also emphasizing that his mother was a "good" person. This need to portray his mother in a positive light may be accounted for by his membership to a collectivist culture. Additional factors that may be influenced by culture include values related to education, employment, physical punishment, and community.

The cultural composition of the research team must also be considered. The research team consisted of five individuals, including the auditor. All members of the team were Caucasian, from middle-class families, and were currently enrolled in graduate-level, education programs. Based on these factors alone, it is likely that the research team members' backgrounds differed significantly from the backgrounds described by the participants in this study. Many of the participants described growing up in environments with limited socioeconomic resources, an experience that is not likely to be well understood by the research

team members. Additionally, the values of the research team are likely to differ from those of the participants; therefore, it is possible that these factors impacted the analysis of the data.

It was the research team who was charged with assigning descriptive labels to the experiences described by the participants. It is likely that the labels assigned were impacted by the cultural composition of the research team. For example, many participants described experiences in which their parent or guardian used physical force against them, which were then labelled *Physical punishment* by the research team. While the research team interpreted these events as physical punishment, with some of these events being considered abusive, it is possible that the individual describing these experiences may have viewed them as acceptable or even warranted. The extent to which the descriptive labels assigned were impacted by the interplay between cultural factors of the participants and research team is unknown; however, cultural factors must be considered when interpreting the results of this study.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this dissertation that should be considered. The use of data that was collected through a pilot study impacts the quality of information gathered. During the middle phase of the pilot data collection process, the interview protocol underwent some revisions. The extent to which these revisions altered the data collection and quality of data gathered is unknown. The data set analyzed for this dissertation was not collected with an intention of examining the background factors of these individuals. While the interview protocol did include questions related to the backgrounds of these individuals, it is likely that the data collected was somewhat limited. A protocol aimed at collecting background information would be best suited for a study of this nature. Obtaining supporting documentation, such as school records, would also lend further insight into the background of these individuals.

Additionally, the sample size was small with data being collected from a total of eight participants, with only seven of those participants being included in this dissertation. All participants were men, with the sample representing three of the six primary ethnic groups recognized by the US census (i.e., White, Black or African American, Asian American, Hispanic or Latino, Native American or Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander). While research does suggest that the majority of individuals who commit captive-taking events are male, it is likely that women that commit captive-takings would have displayed differences in background factors (Booth et al., 2009; Booth et al., 2010). Additionally, it is unclear if there are cultural differences that may exist within the captive-taking population. The sample size in this study was small, as most qualitative studies will have between six and 20 participants depending on the methodology (Hill & Williams, 2012). This dissertation employed consensual qualitative research methodology, which calls for eight to 15 participants (Hill et al., 2005). The heterogeneity of the participants is also suggestive of a need for a larger sample size as Hill et al. (2005) suggest that more participants are required when the sample is more heterogeneous. Therefore, a larger sample would have been more ideal for this study. Furthermore, the sample in this study is not representative of the 14 captive-taking contexts described by Vecchi and colleagues (2013). Results of this study do not accurately represent the array of captive-takers that have been described in the research, such as kidnappers, school hostage-takers, or hostage events in the context of domestic violence situations.

This is the first study to use general strain theory and the theory of moral disengagement in an attempt to describe the backgrounds of individuals who commit captive-takings. General strain theory has primarily been used to describe juvenile offenses, with limited support for its application to adult offenders (Agnew, 1992). There have been no suggested links between these

two theories to date and no existing studies that have attempted to relate these theories to one another. The exploratory nature of this study is limiting in and of itself.

Strengths

The major strength of this dissertation is that it examined an area that has yet to be addressed in the existing literature. The subjective experience of individuals that commit captive-taking crimes was recorded in this study, providing insight into the internal process regarding their backgrounds. Understanding the subjective experience of these individuals has implications for individuals who may be charged with working these individuals or intervening in captive-taking situations.

This dissertation has the potential to impact the fields of psychology and criminology by providing valuable information regarding a population of criminal offenders that has been largely neglected within psychological research. Teams that are charged with intervening in captive-taking events often have a psychologist on board. Information gained in this study may provide these psychologists with information that would contribute to perpetrator profiles that are used in negotiations. Similarly, the information that is gained in this study has the potential to assist police officers in successfully intervening in captive situations by providing a deeper understanding of the experiences of these individuals.

Outside of the context of active captive-taking scenarios, the results may also assist psychologists in gaining a better understanding of the experiences of individuals who commit captive-takings. Results of this study can aide psychologists working with this population in building rapport with these individuals, which may be the basis for more effective interventions. Results may also impact psychologists' work with individuals who have experienced significant strain in life. Individuals with multiple strains throughout life may be at an increased risk of

moral disengagement and criminal behavior. Interventions aimed at reduction of moral disengagement practices may be implemented in the treatment of these at-risk individuals.

Future Directions

Due to the limited sample size in this dissertation, a logical next step for research in this area would be to obtain a larger sample of individuals convicted of captive-taking and examine their background factors. The small sample size for this dissertation suggests that the background factors described in this study are unlikely to be an exhaustive list of factors that may contribute to violent offending. Developing a standardized protocol that is specific to obtaining information related to background factors would be beneficial to the data collection process. While Perpetrator-Motive Research Design (PMRD) is a standardized data collection protocol, its primary intention is not in gathering background data. Insuring the collection of comprehensive profile information would aide in determining the implications of background factors.

The limited application of general strain theory and moral disengagement to adult criminal populations also provides opportunities for further research. While there is some support for these theories in the extant research, there is room to grow this area. It would be particularly interesting to examine any areas of overlap between the two theories and their applicability to criminal offending. An examination of factors that lead individuals away from criminal offending following chronic exposure to strain or moral disengagement may also lend insight into the mechanisms underlying these theories. This dissertation only begins to scratch the surface of what is known of criminal captive-takers, their backgrounds, and the roles of these two theories in describing their tendency toward criminal behavior.

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