

# T W O

## Inner - City Killers: The Traditional Worry

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*Mama, just killed a man, put a gun against his head,  
pulled my trigger, now he's dead.  
Mama, life had just begun...  
but now I've gone and thrown it all away.  
Mama... didn't mean to make you cry.  
If I'm not back again this time tomorrow,  
Carry on, carry on,  
As if nothing really matters.  
—Queen, *Bohemian Rhapsody*.*

Americans have a particular image of the violent inner-city kid. The stereotypical profile is that of a black male between twelve and twenty-four, heavily involved with drugs and gangs. Just like the kids in *West Side Story* who felt misunderstood because of their poverty-stricken and abusive inner-city backgrounds, the inner-city killers are typically thought to kill because they are poor and lack the resources available to middle-class Americans. But is this all there is to the story? Many kids are poor and don't commit murder. What are the particu-

lar characteristics and motivations that lead an inner-city kid to kill as opposed to committing lesser crimes? How do they differ from the “new” breed of white suburban kids who kill? Although we do not always know how to stop the killing of the inner-city youth, we at least feel we have some understanding of their underlying motivations for killing. This understanding has led us closer to finding ways to salvage inner-city kids from gangs and a life of crime. As we saw in chapter one, the main reason that inner-city kids murder is due to gang-related activities or drug trafficking. There is generally a specific target they have in mind, such as a drug dealer selling on their turf or someone honing in on their girlfriend (or boyfriend). The motivation of the inner-city and suburban kids for killing is different. Inner-city killers *usually* do not just open fire randomly with no specific target in mind. Even those who kill innocent bystanders do so by accident or because they are a bad shot. On the other hand, the main purpose of suburban school killers is to murder as many people as possible for the sole sake of killing. One could argue that drive-by shootings by gang members are similar to the school shootings in that they appear to have no other motive except to kill people. Yet this is not the main reason gang members participate in drive-by shootings. It is either to kill a member of another gang or an individual or group who has gotten in their way. Drive-by shootings also serve the purpose of initiating members into the gang to show they are tough and to program them to initiate violence.

Is this a question of race? Many times people substitute the word “black” for “inner-city,” thinking that the two terms are synonymous. But put black kids in the same middle-class suburban setting and they act in the same way as the white suburban killers.

After the Springfield, Oregon shooting by Kipland Kinkel, a newscaster asked an inner-city black student his opinion about why Kinkel had opened fire at school. The teen looked puzzled and said, “I don’t know, man, what that kid did was crazy. Black kids would never open fire randomly at a school like those

crazy white kids. What’s wrong with them?” While it is fairly true that inner-city kids may kill for more *utilitarian* reasons than the school shooters we have seen in recent years, it is not true that black kids would not shoot randomly at school in the same manner that the recent white shooters have done. It is true that we have not seen a black student in the past couple of years randomly shoot students at school, despite the fact that African American males outnumber whites as homicide perpetrators in the general population. Yet, put a black kid in the same isolating milieu as the suburban school killers and he too might act in the same destructive manner. This is what happened in a Virginia Beach in 1988.

Nicholas Elliot, a black sixteen-year-old male, was one of twenty-two blacks in a private Christian academy of more than five hundred students. Nicholas had learning problems and was quite shy. His mother was hoping the private Christian setting would help him overcome his problems. Unfortunately, Nicholas was taunted and teased by classmates and exchanged racial slurs with them. On December 16, 1988, Nicholas came to school with a semiautomatic pistol and two hundred rounds of ammunition and entered a classroom. He opened fire on students and teachers who ran for cover. Luckily, his gun jammed before he could accomplish a mass shooting but his rampage left one teacher dead and another seriously wounded. He was charged as an adult. At his trial, the psychiatrist who evaluated Nicholas testified that he was a “pressure cooker” who was unable to express his feelings and exploded after being tortured by classmates.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly this is not what people have in mind when they think of the suburban school killer. We have an image of the middle-class white kid who is a picked-on nerd. However, we must realize that suburban killings are not a black or white issue. What contributes most to the making of a suburban juvenile killer is the teen’s social milieu, not race. In order to contrast the social milieu of the inner-city and suburban killer, I will start by introducing two cases of inner-city killers from my work as an expert witness. These two killers fit the typical

profile that we associate with violent juveniles in the inner-cities. The first, Xavier, was only twelve years old when he killed his victim.

### XAVIER\*

*I never thought I would catch a charge this serious. In my head, I can't believe I shot the dude. I never thought of myself as someone who would kill and I never thought I would have to go to jail.*

—twelve-year-old African American boy who shot a man during a drug deal.

The first time I laid eyes on Xavier, he was sitting in a juvenile detention center in Nashville, Tennessee convicted of murder. He was only twelve years old. He had killed a man in cold blood by shooting him several times through the head at close range. One impulsive act, just to prove to himself and his “friends” that he was becoming a man. In reality, all he proved was that he was capable of robbing himself of a childhood. But after getting to know Xavier, I realized that his childhood had been taken away many years before. I was called in as an expert by the public defender to evaluate Xavier and determine if he was mentally able to stand trial and understand the charges against him in light of his youth.

Except for his extreme youth, Xavier is typical of an inner-city killer. He is African American and grew up in a housing project in Nashville; much of his life was spent out on the streets. Literally: he was staying out in the streets all night by the time he was eight years old. He had seen death many times before the night that put his young life on hold in a jail cell. At nine years old, he told me that he saw a man “shoot a dude in a car.” He watched a man robbed in a nearby neighborhood and saw another “dude” come by and shoot him. Finally, a third time, he saw a man shot on the sidewalk in front of him. These

\*Names changed

acts of violence filled him with curiosity rather than fear. After the third shooting, he and a friend went back to see what was going on. I asked Xavier what was going through his mind when he witnessed these shootings. He shook his head and said “it was crazy.”

Xavier’s family life was very similar to that of the typical inner-city killer. His father left the family when Xavier was three years old and had little to do with his son after he was gone. His mother, Doris, used fairly excessive discipline with Xavier. She would whip him and his six siblings until she left marks on their bodies. (It’s important to note here that it was the *excessive* force that Doris used to discipline her kids, not the fact that she had chosen to use corporal punishment that was the problem. I will discuss this difference and its effects on kids in later chapters). Doris married a man who was also physically abusive, but only to her and not to the kids. When Xavier was ten, he threw a chair at his stepfather and another time tried to stab him with a knife to get him to stop hitting his mother. There was little supervision in the household and frequently Xavier would stay out all night and get into trouble. Xavier accumulated several auto theft charges, the first at the tender age of eight. He never spent any time in juvenile detention but was released each time to the custody of his mother.

Xavier’s school life was also a dismal failure. He switched schools thirteen times between kindergarten and sixth grade. Since kindergarten, Xavier had missed one and a half years of school due to truancy and suspensions for fighting. He was supposed to go for psychological counseling through school for his bad temper. However, his mother took him once and never took him back. Although Xavier never admitted to me that he was part of a gang, there was a lot of suspicious behavior that made it look as if he were involved. He was using drugs and was assisting older teens and adults with their drug trafficking. It is quite typical for older gang members to enlist help from the younger kids since they are less likely to be searched by police or have charges pressed against them. I recently saw an inner-city kid for therapy who had been a “bail

bondsman” for drug dealers. This kid explained that he would hold the drug money for the dealer and if the dealer was jailed, he would turn over the money for his bail. In return, this boy said that he received compensation in the form of gifts, including a pair of one hundred dollar tennis shoes that he proudly showed me.

Like my patient, gang activities were a normal part of Xavier’s life. As noted in the first chapter under Inner-City Killers, sometimes it is tradition for generations of the same family to be involved in the gang culture. Xavier’s family was heavily into gang activities and his uncles had a long history of belonging to gangs and dealing drugs. This lifestyle was familiar to Xavier and did not strike him as a problem.

### **Interview With Xavier**

On a cold January evening in 1997, Xavier, like many of his acquaintances in the Nashville housing projects, was smoking crack cocaine and drinking. He went with his seventeen-year-old “friend,” Rickie, to pick up another friend, Brad, and his girlfriend and go riding around. However, the main purpose of this ride was to meet up with one of Brad’s customers who regularly bought drugs from him. The buyer was a forty-year-old electrician, Lawrence, who apparently did not like the quality of the drugs Brad was selling and refused to pay. Yet he still took the drugs and went back to his car to leave. Offended that they had been stiffed, the two older teens started arguing over who would shoot Lawrence. What happened next is unclear. I went to interview Xavier in a maximum security juvenile detention center in Nashville to find out what part he had played in the murder.

I drove to see Xavier armed with a number of psychological tests, many of which weighed a ton. After checking into a hotel, I met up with his attorney who escorted me across the river to the juvenile detention center. It was a beautiful day in March and incredibly warm. I remember the feel of the wind

blowing in my face as I crossed a bridge over the river to my destination. Looking at the center, I wondered what it was like for Xavier, being locked up and unable to enjoy even the simple freedom of a walk outside. I quickly reminded myself that he had been accused of murder, after all, and despite his hardships had chosen his fate. Lawrence the electrician wouldn’t be feeling any warm breezes ever again.

As we walked, his attorney informed me that Xavier was reserved but warmed up once he got to know someone. He described him to me as a “sweet kid,” who easily charmed adults.

Apparently, he had even captured the heart of a popular politician who had advocated for him not to be transferred to adult criminal court because of his young age. This tactic did not work, however, as Xavier was later charged as an adult and transferred to criminal court.

After some time spent checking in and making sure we were expected, we went upstairs to a library in the detention center. In a room to one side sat Xavier. I quickly noted his appearance. He was around my height, five feet five or six and had a slim muscular build. In fact, his growing body was a concern to his attorneys who were afraid that by the time his case went to trial, his adult-like features would get little sympathy from the jury. He did not disappoint me with his charm. Soon after we were introduced, Xavier reached down to pick up a pencil I had dropped and handed it to me while flashing a smile.

The first thing Xavier did after we were alone to talk was to hand me a note. I asked if I might keep it to read later to which he replied, “No, I would like it back.” I scanned the letter to glean the highlights. Basically Xavier felt he had “learned his lesson from being held so long in juvenile.” He wished he had “listened to my mother and not hung out with older boys who got into trouble.” I have seen many notes and promises like this from kids like this before. Many of them have given me the party line about how they have learned their lesson and will never get in trouble again. With no interven-

tion, I wondered how they would manage that on their own, especially if they were put back into the same milieu that had gotten them into trouble in the first place. Many inner-city kids I have evaluated often give me the same excuses for their crimes that Xavier did that day. It usually involves a parent (usually their father) not being there for them. "This thing (the murder charge against him) is half-way my father's fault. He should have been there for me. We had seven kids in our family and we had no role model." It sounded like a canned speech he had heard many times before. I imagined that another of his peers in detention had probably coached Xavier on lines to use to make a good first impression at the evaluation. In between stock speeches, however, it did seem that Xavier spoke honestly about his situation and feelings of despair. He answered most of my questions to the best of his ability and genuinely seemed to like the attention.

On the day of our meeting, his mother was supposed to show up to help me with some history on her son but as the morning wore on, there was no sign of her. Finally, she called and said her ride had fallen through and she would have to come the next day. I wondered what kind of parent would miss an appointment so important to her son's murder trial. Apparently this was one of many disappointments that Xavier had suffered as a result of his mother's neglectful behavior. Xavier's eyes filled with tears as he heard this news but he kept his head down so I would not see him crying softly. After a few moments, he laughed nervously and giggled whenever he seemed to feel uncomfortable. His nervousness continued as he told me about the murder. The following is an excerpt of our conversation:

Dr. Smith: So describe to me what happened the day of the shooting.

Xavier: I met Rickie a couple of weeks before the shooting. He knew some of the other guys I knew, some of the younger ones. I would steal cars with the

younger kids. The older guys mainly sold dope and drank.

Dr. Smith: What happened after that?

Xavier: Well, we were smoking cocaine and drinking and stuff. I was drunk and high. There were four of us who got in a car. One was a girl. I stayed in the car with her. We were just riding, you know. We pulled over and the other two (the older teens, Rickie and Brad) jumped out of the car. Rickie went over to him (the victim, Lawrence after he had tried to leave with drugs that he had not paid for) and shot him. The girl took off running. I guess that dude was trying to take drugs from Rickie.

Dr. Smith: What was his name, the man who got shot?

Xavier: I don't know. I think it was... don't know. At the shooting, Brad was yelling "I'll do it" and Rickie was saying, "no, I'll do it." Finally, Rickie took the gun and fired the first shot. After the first shot, I got out of the car because I was high and drunk. I took the gun from Rickie and all the other dudes there said to shoot him again. He was bleeding. He was not moving. I did shoot him. I got back in the car. We drove to Brad's girlfriend's mom's house. Brad just kept saying after the shooting that I was so young, they would let me go. Later, he said, "Man, I killed somebody." I said nothing. I forgot all about it. The next day, Rickie shot himself in the leg.

Dr. Smith: On purpose?

Xavier: No, by accident, I think. That night, after the shooting, I smoked a cigarette, used cocaine, and drank. I woke up the next day and Rickie said, "do you remember what happened?" I said no.

Dr. Smith: What was going through your head once you were charged with the murder?

Xavier: I was twelve. Usually, they [the police] would let me go. I did not know what murder was. I knew it was killing someone. I could not believe they would not let me go. I thought it was another petty case. I did not think about it. I thought they would let me go home. Brian had told me they would not keep me. I thought they would smack my hand and let me go like they always did. I guess I was wrong. I went to court and they did not let me go. I was young so I thought everything was a game.

Dr. Smith: Have you ever thought about the man who died?

Xavier: No, not for one day. If I thought about it, I would get mad and I am afraid I would hurt myself or somebody else. I tried not to think again.....

After we finished our interviews, Xavier took some psychological tests that gave me more insight into his psychological profile. I gave him an IQ test and like many underprivileged kids (or those who do not regularly attend school) he had performed better on tests that involved spatial skills than those that required verbal ability. I noticed that he had actually dropped twenty-three IQ points on my test from a previous test he had taken at age seven. I also gave him the Rorschach Inkblot Test (which I mentioned in the first chapter when discussing Duane, the seventeen-year-old who later committed murder). From the Rorschach results, I learned that Xavier tended to mask his true feelings when he is in a situation where he does not know what is expected of him. His responses to the pictures showed very morbid and aggressive feelings. His anger can even lead him to think others are out to get him and he reacts by lashing out.

I asked Xavier to make three figure drawings for me including a male, female and a self portrait. When interpreting

drawing tests, a psychologist assigns the pictures a score that indicates the child's level of emotional disturbance. (I will discuss the meaning of figure drawings at more length in the chapter on girls who kill). Xavier's scores showed him to have a level of disturbance that warranted further investigation. One interesting note here is that when looking at figure drawings by suburban killers, I have noticed that they often have a much higher level of emotional disturbance than the inner-city killers. One possible explanation for this is that for inner-city kids, violence and aggression are part of their culture but for suburban killers, they are not. Suburban killers may see aggression and violence on television or in movies but their day-to-day existence is not one in which they are in fear for their lives the way an inner-city kid might. Because of this, a kid in the suburbs who kills has to do a one-hundred-and-eighty degree turn to become a killer, whereas for many inner-city kids, murder is seen as part of the landscape and does not require one to be as atypical.

Xavier's drawings are shown in Figure 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3. His male figure, but not the female one, has hands, symbolizing that he believes men have more power than women who are defenseless against the world. This is not surprising given the physical abuse he witnessed his mother going through at the hands of his stepfather. I quickly sized up how Xavier felt about others—they are objects to him, with interchanging personalities. In Figure 2.1 and 2.2, notice that the male and female drawings have no facial features. People are nameless, faceless beings that can be exchanged for one another. He was not able to answer any questions about his drawings such as how old they

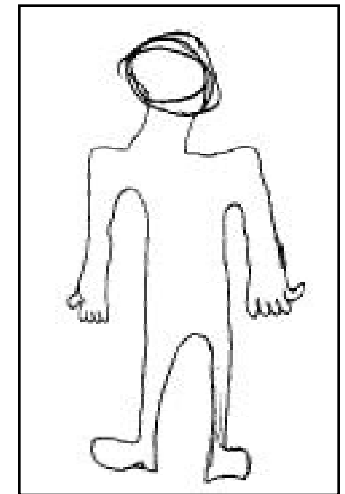
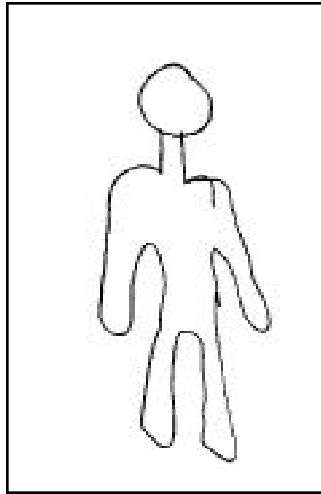


Fig 2.1 Male figure drawing by a 12-year-old inner-city killer.

were or what they enjoyed. This fit in with what he had told me earlier about his mother. He knew nothing about her—where she went to school, if she went to school or even where she is currently living. Shortly after he went to juvenile, she had moved and left no forwarding address.

His ability to empathize with others is quite primitive and he does not see people as possessing qualities that make them unique. It is no wonder that he feels it is unfair that he spend time locked up for killing someone: since people have no worth, why should he be held accountable for taking a life that had no significance in the first place? Although Xavier showed little capacity for empathy with others, he does so for far different reasons than many of the suburban killers. He does not possess the grandiosity and high self-esteem that many of the



**Fig 2.2** Female figure drawing by a 12-year-old inner-city



**Fig 2.3** Self-portrait drawing by a 12-year-old male killer.

suburban killers seem to have. Rather, his lack of awareness of other people seems to be a survival technique that he has learned as a way of coping with his immediate environment. As you will see in later drawings by rural and suburban killers, their self-esteem and sense of entitlement are quite high. They are outraged if people make threats to their excessive self-esteem. The suburban killer feels he or she is special and therefore entitled to be idolized and becomes outraged when he or she is not. Xavier, on the other hand, probably suffers more from low self-esteem and a feeling that he is unwanted and does not even expect more. This feeling of rejection is shown in Figure 2.3, Xavier's self portrait. He drew himself with a sad down-turned face because he is locked out of his home. There are bars on the window and doors indicating that he could not get in even if he wanted to. The twenty-three on his shirt is the number of his sports idol, Michael Jordan. Xavier talked about his hero for a few minutes prior to my departure; his face had a wistful look—as if he desired to be someone important like Michael Jordan. Perhaps he felt deep in his heart that he could never measure up. But no amount of excuses can make up for the life that he took. He looked lost as I got up to leave the room, like a little kid who knew that he had been caught with his hand in the cookie jar. But, of course, it was worse than that.

Despite his having shared personal information with me, as I left the juvenile detention center, I wondered if Xavier even remembered my name. After I completed my report, I turned it in to Xavier's attorneys and waited to hear when I would testify about my results. The trial never materialized. Xavier had already been transferred to adult criminal court and almost two years after the murder, his attorneys managed to plea-bargain the case. Xavier received a sentence of fifteen years in jail. I shudder to think what he will be like when he hits the streets at the age of twenty-seven.

**ANTHONY\***

My next case involves a fourteen-year-old inner-city killer I met in a Tennessee juvenile detention center, a boy who murdered the boyfriend of a girl he was “messaging around with.” Anthony told me that he had shot the man in “self-defense.” However, after listening to his story, I quickly realized that this murder was not an isolated incident; Anthony had been charged with attempted murder before, also in the name of “self-defense.” Apparently, he had never had much regard in general for the sanctity of human life. Because of his age, I was asked to evaluate Anthony for his upcoming transfer hearing. A transfer hearing determines if the child will be tried in adult court. Most of the time in juvenile cases, the court will order a psychological evaluation to determine if a child meets the conditions for transfer to the adult criminal system. In many states, cases that involve youth above a certain age (thirteen or fourteen) who are charged with murder or serious assault offenses may be tried in adult court without a decision from the juvenile court. However, Anthony was to be evaluated for his upcoming transfer trial. Generally, these forensic evaluations focus on what risk the child poses to others and whether or not the youth can be successfully rehabilitated in the juvenile justice system.<sup>2</sup>

The day I was to meet and test Anthony at the juvenile detention center, I arrived early. Looking around the parking lot, I realized there was no place to park up front and ended up way out on the side of the building. You have to really wonder why it is that our criminal and juvenile court systems are so overcrowded. As I got out of the car, several thoughts ran through my head. Are people really committing that many more crimes than they were twenty or thirty years ago? Or is it that we now treat everything that was once benign as a crime? Should we really lock up kids who have committed “crimes” that we would never dream of locking up an adult for, like

truancy or running away? I brushed these thoughts from my mind and tried to stay focused on what kinds of tests would be helpful in my understanding Anthony’s personality. After all, he was in detention for murder, not for a victimless crime. I pulled several boxes of test materials and my briefcase from the car and proceeded into the building.

After entering, I was sent through a set of double doors which had to be opened by security. I waited patiently as I was buzzed through the first door and after it swung shut, was buzzed through to the second door leading into a small visitation area. I was given one of the small rooms and dropped my test equipment on the table. The first thing I noticed was the significant amount of graffiti carved into the back of the door of the visitation room. It had the words, “Larry Lives” carved across it. I wondered what kind of predicament Larry had gotten into that he would scrawl such a statement. Eventually, I looked up from my ruminations about Larry to see Anthony standing before me running a comb through his Afro. He had a comb and some hair sheen and raked it through his hair as he sat down. I thought it was odd that he was so concerned about his hair when he had been charged with murder. He gave me a slight smile and sat down. I told him the purpose of my visit: that I had been assigned by the court to evaluate him and that it would take awhile. He shrugged in a nonchalant manner, as if the evaluation meant very little to him, probably much the same look of indifference he displayed when he took a man’s life.

Anthony had little insight into how he came across to others. I could tell that he mainly watched my reaction to his responses and then looked for ways to convince me of his innocence. He would mutter to himself, “this is crazy,” whenever I would ask him a question he did not want to answer or if he did not understand what I was asking him. As I learned about Anthony’s early life through interviews with both him and his family, his childhood was strikingly similar to that of the anti-social personality described in Stanton Samenow’s book, “*Inside the Criminal Mind.*” Anthony was always in trouble and was frequently told by his grandmother and other relatives that

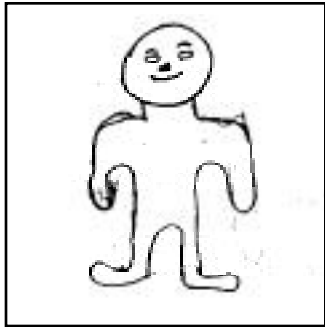


he “had a problem.” When I asked him why his family thought he had a problem, he shrugged and said, “I don’t know.” When I called his aunt, she told me that Anthony was constantly fighting as a young child, “He was always doing things without thinking. He was a mean little kid. He fought just to fight.” Criminals are easily bored and look for kicks and thrills as a way of alleviating their feelings of unrest. Anthony described his boredom with school and his constant need for something daring and exciting to do. Apparently, this included shooting at people. Before being accused of first degree murder, Anthony had been charged with second degree murder. “A dude came to my house about eight months ago. He thought I had done something to a car that was stolen (of course, Anthony denied he had anything to do with this stolen car). My older brother got a gun and I took it and shot at him. I think he got some buckshot in his leg. It was self-defense.” Anthony used this same line of reasoning to persuade me that the current charges of first degree murder against him were also false. He described the murder in a low, monotone voice. “He lived two doors down from me. His girlfriend knew my sister. He (the victim) was a friend (it is interesting that although Anthony described the victim as a friend, he did not know his name). He thought I was messing around with his girlfriend but I did not like her, she liked me.” In Clintonian style, Anthony went on to tell me that he had “only had oral sex with the girl.” In his mind, this act did not constitute having sex with her, therefore, the boyfriend had no right to be jealous. “He was an alcoholic, he talked smart and hit his girlfriend and threw chairs at her. He was violent when he was drunk. We went riding in his car. He was drunk. I was worried about my safety (my thought as he was saying this was if he was so worried, why did he get in the car?). He started talking about his girlfriend and asked me if I had sex with her. I told him she had let me feel her up. It was dark and he tried to hit me with something metal. I thought he was going to hurt me. I shot twice, the second shot hit him in the head. I did not mean to kill him. It was self-defense.” Rather than a murderer, Anthony tried to portray himself only

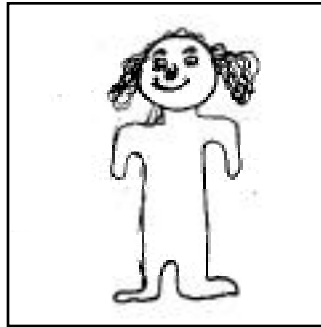
as an innocent victim. Dr. Samenow describes a child who becomes a criminal as “a master at offering excuses that sound convincing to parents, teachers, and others who hold him accountable. He aims to persuade others that he is not to blame, but is a victim of circumstance.”<sup>3</sup> There were too many loopholes in Anthony’s story for the murder to have been purely self-defense. Certainly, a kid who did not want any trouble would have thought twice before getting in a car (with a gun in his pocket) with a violent drunk man and then telling him in a matter-of-fact tone that he had “felt up his girlfriend.”

It wasn’t as if Anthony was blessed with a great deal of common sense. I wondered about his judgment after talking with him and administering some psychological tests. Like Xavier, Anthony was better at the tests that asked him to use his hands and spatial skills than he was at verbal expression or comprehension tests. Not that he was a genius at either. He tested as mentally retarded on the intelligence tests but I had a hunch that Anthony was not trying his best. It was obvious that he had a great deal of street smarts which meant that he could have been faking his poor test scores. Maybe he was not as unintelligent as the tests suggested. He may have known or sensed that if he was diagnosed as retarded, there was less of a chance he would be transferred to adult court. After I finished the intelligence testing, I talked to one his teachers from the juvenile center. She confirmed that he was doing class work at a higher level. His school records also showed that he had not been diagnosed with mental retardation, a good clue that he was not as low functioning as he portrayed himself.

The second time I met with Anthony, I had him so do some figure drawings and projective tests. I asked him to draw a man, woman and a picture of himself. Anthony looked slightly bemused by my request, a look that told me he was struggling to understand what significance these drawings would have to his eventual trial. His drawings were quite small, just like Xavier’s, indicating low self-esteem, despite the cocky self-assured image he tried to portray to me. In figure 2.4, you can see that he drew a picture of a man that was quite primitive;

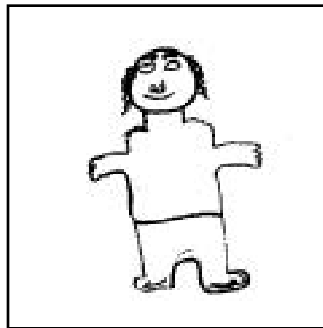


**Fig 2.4** Male figure drawing by a 14-year-old inner-city killer.



**Fig 2.5** Female figure drawing by a

unlike Xavier's pictures, he did show his figures with a face. This would suggest that he does view people as more than just objects, that they have features that distinguish them. He laughed as he drew the female picture. "I'm trying to draw your hair," he stated. Funny, to me the picture of the woman looked very much like a clown (see figure 2.5). I wonder if this is how he saw me. Both the male and female have no hands, indicating that he sees people as rather powerless in general. However, on his self-portrait, he drew himself some hands with a few fingers (figure 2.6). Perhaps he is the only one in his view who has the capacity to do anything. All of his figures were primitive looking, with little detail. His overall score on the figure drawings showed him, like Xavier, to have no serious emotional problems. However, further testing showed the truth. Other tests showed him to be depressed and have tendencies toward being aggressive. He felt rejected by father figures and depressed over not knowing his father. He also showed himself to have little understanding as to how to resolve conflict and to use maladaptive



**Fig 2.6** Self-portrait by a 14-year-old inner-city killer

ways to handle situations such as getting into trouble. He has little insight into his own part in escalating dangerous situations (such as telling a violent drunk man that he is messing with his girlfriend). Rather, his first answer to many situations is to act out with violence.

I recommended that Anthony be evaluated for a program that would incorporate group psychotherapy to teach him problem solving skills. He also would need cognitive therapy, a type of treatment that attempts to restructure the way a kid thinks. Many teens, like Anthony, who have traits that are deeply ingrained must first change their line of thinking about their environment and then learn to change these distorted thoughts. The distorted thought process goes something like this: "I must get what I want. Then when I do, either by stealing it or manipulating others to get it, I will try not to get caught. If I do, I will act innocent or furious at those in authority who think I should pay." In chapter four, I will discuss in further detail the distorted belief systems of violent kids.

I later heard that Anthony would be transferred as an adult to criminal court rather than tried as a juvenile. I wondered if he would make it in prison. He did not strike me as the kind of kid who would turn on himself and commit suicide. But there are many kids in our schools today who feel like they are committed to a jail sentence (without physically being in jail) and end their misery by taking their own lives. The next chapter will explain how suicide became a precursor to the more dangerous and infamous school killers we have seen in recent years.

### Notes

1. "Boy kills Teacher; Subdued after Gun Jams," Los Angeles Times (UPI), December 17, 1988, part 1 at 22. Also, "Elliott Not Eligible for Parole for 15 Years," UPI, b.c. cycle, December 13, 1989.
2. Grisso, Thomas (1998). *Forensic Evaluation of Juveniles*. Professional Resource Exchange, Inc.
3. Samenow, Stanton, E. (1989). *Before It's Too Late*. United States: Times Books, page 176.