
The Sadistic beast: Luis Garavito

Luis Garavito, a man who was convicted of killing one hundred and thirty eight children and admitted to the murder of over four hundred children across Colombia, murders which caused a broken nation to unite to catch the sadistic man behind them. He was known for his gruesome and horrific crimes which lead him to getting his nickname "The Beast." Garavito was born and raised in Colombia and came from an impoverished family who had very little, Colombia was known to be a country which had poor economic status and in a unemployment uproar, leaving many people homeless. Since Garavito was the eldest out of his seven siblings, he was often left to provide for himself and earn money to survive in such a poor country. Soon after, he moved out at the age of 16 Garavito turned towards crime at such a young age to earn money in a poor nation. He suffered many hardships during his childhood such as being sexually and emotionally abused by his father and neighbors. His father had been very dominate towards Garavito, leaving him unable to turn towards anyone for solitude and guidance all through his childhood.

Throughout the span of all his killings, Garavito showcased many characteristics of a person with Psychopathy those being the lack of feeling remorse and empathy (Lyon and Welsh, 2017, P.124). This lack of normal human emotion may be the result of a traumatic childhood and prolong suffering rendering him unable to feel emotions and ultimately compassion for anyone. Garavito's childhood is said to have had a big impact on him , Lyon and Welsh state that "Parent-child interactions play a significant role in the genesis of chronic antisocial behavior" (Lyon and Welsh, 2017, P.77). In making this comment, Lyon and Welsh paint the picture of how Garavito's childhood relationship with his parents played a significant role in his conditioning to, in due course, become an offender. His inability to create a positive interaction with his parent as a child ultimately lead him to commit crime, his insecurities bestowed upon him by his coercive and unpleasant upbringing are said to be the root of his offending. There are many ideas as of to what could have been the causes of Garavito's link to offending, however, this paper will analyze and go into depth with two main theories. Psychopathy and Patterson's Coercion theory are theories that are fit to be the foundation and the stepping stones in to Garavitos crime filled life and will help get a better understanding of his true roots that led him to offending.

Theory #1: Psychopathy

Psychopathy is usually assessed according to the PCL-R checklist which was created by the Canadian psychologist Robert D. Hare, also a checklist in which Garavito has almost all the

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traits listed. The clinical description and key research of the symptoms of Psychopathy which are Interpersonal, Affective, Behavioral are credited towards Hervey Cleckly. The theory of Psychopathy revolves around these three symptoms and evaluating individuals who possess these symptoms. The link between crime and psychopathy is widely dependent on which symptom an individual showcases since each symptom has its own unique characteristics which leads to different behavioral patterns. As Patrick describes "There is a broad agreement that interpersonally psychopathic individuals are dominant, forceful, arrogant, and deceptive" (Patrick, 2007, P. 92). The interpersonal symptoms usually lead to crime involving the impersonation of someone else, this is usually used as a tactic for the psychopath to gain the trust of the individual they are trying to lure or manipulate. Individuals who possess the Affective symptom of Psychopathy are known to "lack the range of emotions that color the human experience- for example, they seem incapable of feeling love, anger, sadness, or fear the way the rest of us do" (Cleckly, 1941/1976; Hare, 1993).

The link to crime involving individuals who have this symptom are usually ones where the crimes are the most horrific. Since the individual is unable to feel any sort of emotion such as remorse or empathy, they do not fully recognize or realize the extent of what they are doing and ultimately do not care about who they are hurting. The last symptom of Psychopathy is Behavioral. Individuals who have this symptom usually showcase a key characteristic of impulsivity, as Hare discloses, "Their lives are characterized by constantly shifting goals and occupations, and activities" (Hare, 1993). They also exhibit a need for excitement, a need to increase their stimuli as described Lyon and Welsh, "They are easily bored and often exhibit thrill-seeking behavior" (Lyon and Welsh, 2017, P.125). All of these symptoms are the roots and foundation of psychopathy and ultimately explain the reason as of too why individuals who are psychopaths are criminal offenders.

Empirical Evidence

In 1996, there was a study done by Ralph C. Serin which was used to determine how large the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend is. The sample size consisted of eighty one offenders which were followed for a maximum of sixty seven months and an average of thirty months. They were accordingly split up into groups according to the PCL-R checklist, the groups consisted of people who were identified as psychopaths, non-psychopaths and a mixed group. The data that was collected yielded that the general recidivism rate for the entire sample was fifty seven percent. People who were classified as non-psychopaths had a recidivism rate of forty percent, the mixed group had a rate of fifty one point two percent, and the group classified as psychopaths had a recidivism rate of eighty five percent. Further results showed that the violent re-offense rate was ten percent for those classified as non-psychopaths, seven point three percent for the mixed group and twenty five percent for those who were classified as psychopaths. This study provides evidence supporting the claim of how people who are

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identified as psychopaths and carry the main symptoms of psychopathy which are stated in the PCL-R are more likely to commit crimes than people who are not identified as psychopaths and do not carry these symptoms.

Theory #2: Patterson's Coercion Theory

A coercive childhood is one that no parent would want their child to have, and furthermore to have a relationship with their child that relies on coercive tactics to communicate with their child. Unfortunately for Luis Garavito that is what his entire childhood consisted of, leading everyone to believe that due to his harsh and coercive upbringing, it provoked and assisted him towards committing crime. The basis of Patterson's Coercion theory stems from this idea as Bor and Sanders explain, "A number of studies have identified parental coercive behaviours (hitting, shouting and scolding) as one of the most important risk factors for future psychopathology, including the emergence of antisocial behaviour" (Bor and Sanders, 2004, P.738). This theory explains the importance of children learning proper social behavior and ways to communicate with others in their family environment as very crucial. Failure to learn these social skills which are needed to help live a better life, have a better job, and better relationships will result in the individual being rejected by society. The inability to form normal relationships with others or maintain jobs usually results in individuals catering towards delinquency instead of trying to improve as individuals, making this the link to crime that a coercive childhood may lead to. Another aspect of focus is focusing on the early stages of delinquency that a child exhibits and the family environment the child is in as Patterson and Dishion state, "Coercion theory argues that early-onset delinquents are raised in families characterized by inept or poor parenting strategies and a generally negative environment, where parental supervision and discipline are inconsistent, unduly harsh, or both" (Patterson, 1982, 1986; Patterson & Dishion, 1998). This leads back to the Coercion theory's main point which is that those children who exhibit early-onset delinquency usually determines the life course for that person.

Empirical Evidence

In 2007, there was an 18 year longitudinal study done by David M. Fergusson and Michael T. Lynskey that supports the idea of the Patterson's Coercion theory. This study was done in aims to present proof that coerciveness during childhood leads to juvenile delinquency and difficult adjustment periods during adulthood. The sample of data was from a birth cohort of one thousand two hundred and sixty five children who were from New Zealand. The data was collected at age eighteen and the reports of their exposure to coercive treatment was gathered, they also assessed measures of psychosocial adjustment which included juvenile offending, substance abuse behaviors, and psychiatric disorder. The results showed that the young people who had reported exposure to coercive actions showed a higher rates of juvenile offending, substance abuse, and mental health problems. This study lead to three major conclusions which

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Fergusson and Lynskey state, " (1) Those exposed to harsh or abusive treatment during childhood are an at-risk population for juvenile offending, substance abuse, and mental health problems; (2) Much of this elevated risk arises from the social context within which harsh or abusive treatment occurs; (3) Nonetheless, exposure to abuse appears to increase risks of involvement in violent behavior and alcohol abuse" (Fergusson and Lynskey, 1997).

Application of Theory #1: Psychopathy

One of the most well-known traits of Psychopathy is the ability to lie profusely using the superficial charm they possess to get what they want or to gain the trust of the individual they are wanting something from. As Lyon and Welsh describe, "Psychopaths are masters of impression management" (Lyon and Welsh, 2017, P.123), thus showing how deceitful and manipulative they can be. This was a trait that Luis Garavito displayed and in fact counted on in order to lure his victims away, he was known to impersonate people in order to gain the trust of the victims. He was known for dressing up as a priest, farmer, homeless man, and an elderly man, he also changed his disguises often to avoid suspicion. Once he would find his victim he would use these disguises to gain the trust of these boys and then would make them walk with him until they were tired and easier to handle, ultimately raping and killing the victim. Luis Garavito also possesses the psychopathic characteristics of not being able to feel any range of human emotions such as remorse or empathy which was eminent throughout his killings, as well as one of the reasons he had gotten his nickname "The Beast." Garavito was known to commit horrific crimes as Benecke describes "The children were tied up, tortured, raped, and killed by at least one cut in the lateral part of the neck, or by decapitation" (Benecke, 2017). He also used a sharp object to stab the buttocks of the victim and would insert sharp objects into their anus, he would also go as far as to sever the testicles of the victim and place them in their mouths. The severity of his murders show the lack of remorse and empathy Garavito felt for these victims, he showed no signs of sadness towards committing these crimes but instead repeated these various actions to all of his victims.

Application of Theory #2: Patterson's Coercion theory

Garavito had one of the worst childhood's that any person could have, he was all alone with no shoulder to rest on or anyone to turn to. The effects of his troubled childhood surely played a role in him being a psychopathic killer. The basis of Patterson's Coercion theory being that children who are raised with coercive tactics used by their parents are more prone to a future of offending which was showcased in the case of Luis Garavito. All throughout his childhood he was raised while being emotionally and sexually abused by his father, a person who is supposed to be providing comfort and sanctuary, was the one who was ultimately destroying his own son's life. Since Garavito was often left to provide on his own, he was not taught the basic

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social skills needed to live a pro-social life, he often moved job to job and town to town. As he got older he began to turn to alcohol as his escape and began to abuse it aggressively and was often thought to be under the influence of alcohol while committing these murders. This was due to the fact of detectives finding lots of liquor bottles near the crime scenes of the victims he had killed.

Conclusion

Throughout this case of Louis Garavito we have seen how far a boy from Colombia who lived an unhappy life would go to seek pleasure in the most sadistic way. Whether he was born a psychopath or became one due to his troubled childhood and environment, the extent of his crimes and the families he has ruined will never change. Although he showed many characteristics of Psychopathy such as the lack of normal human emotions, he did not show all of them. Garavito was known to be a very good liar and used his charismatic charm to weasel his way out of his wrongdoings but did not show this trait when he was apprehended. Instead of shifting the responsibility of these murders on to someone else as psychopaths are known to do, Garavito had done the exact opposite. He confessed to the murders he was being accused of and instead admitted to killing more than what he was accused of, he also helped the police find the body by showing them where he had killed them.

Luis Garavito also did not show a characteristic that was eminent in Patterson's Coercion theory which was that children who face coerciveness in their childhood become antisocial which Garavito was not. Luis Garavito had a girlfriend and was known as very kind and helpful when described by his friends. His girlfriend in a statement told police that Garavito actually bonded and played with her child very well, even though it was not his child, all characteristics that should not be present according to Patterson's Coercion theory. For future research regarding these theories, integrating these two theories may help understand offending better. Patterson's Coercion theory looks into how the child is raised and which ways of parenting leads to offending and Psychopathy describes the symptoms that a Psychopath possesses. By combining these two they may be able to fill in the unknown gaps in each theory or they may be able to give better reasoning as of too why one theory may lead to another. If these two were connected they can focus on how the state of a child's childhood may result in them gaining Psychopathic symptoms which will lead them to violent offending in adolescence. They can get more out of combining these two theories instead of keeping them separate.

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