

A killer at thurston high

[Life](#), [Adolescence](#)



As with any tragedy, the circumstances surrounding Kip Kinkel's murderous rampage leaves one basic question to be answered: Why? Why would a young man choose to kill his parents, whom he claimed to love, in cold blood? And why would he then go to school thirteen hours later and commit what appear to be random murders? It is likely that one can never truly understand what would possess someone to commit such heinous crimes. However, through the application of certain psychological principles, it is possible to form a hypothetical explanation for his actions.

If one were to subscribe to a psychoanalytic view of what caused Kinkel's violent display of hate, the case can easily be made that his hatred for himself, as expressed in journal entries found in his room, caused him to subconsciously transfer his feelings for himself onto his parents (Frontline). It is not a far reach to speculate that he may have felt that, ultimately, his parents were to blame for his problems. Had it not been for them, he would never have been born.

This theory is supported by his written confession, which he left at the scene of his parents' murder, in which he stated " I wish I had been aborted." In this same letter, he states that he loved his mom and dad " so much" (Frontline). This further lends credibility to the idea that while he felt love for his parents outwardly, he subconsciously harbored blame towards them because they were, essentially, the source of his suffering because they were the responsible for his existence. Unfortunately, his inner turmoil manifested itself in a violent explosion of emotions, and he committed murders for reasons that even he could not explain.

Another common theory that one could consider is that to some extent, Kinkel's behavior can be attributed to peer influence, which would fall under the category of behavior modeling. According to the chronological time table provided on the PBS Frontline website, Kinkel had no obvious behavioral problems during his elementary school years.

Although he struggled greatly in school, several sources stated that he worked very hard to attempt to keep up with his classmates. It would seem that once he entered middle school, he began to associate with young people who were less than upstanding citizens. It is possible that by acting out, he was gaining acceptance from his peers, as opposed to feeling inferior because of his learning disability. It is important to note that many of his offenses, particularly during his middle school years, involved friends. Judging from his behavior, one can easily infer that Kinkel is not a leader, but a follower.

It is likely that, at least in the beginning, he very seldom initiated criminal behavior, but rather blindly followed his friends down whatever path they chose. This may have likely set the stage for further misbehavior. While his friends were not found to have any involvement in the murder of Kinkel's parents or classmates, they did attribute to his delinquent attitude and fostered his fascination with guns and other deadly weapons. So, in his attempt to conform to his friends' ideas and behavior, he himself adopted their ways.

His delinquent behavior evolved from so called "victimless" crimes, for instance, the ordering of mail order bomb books, shoplifting, etc, to increasingly violent acts. As the chronological timeline found on the <https://assignbuster.com/a-killer-at-thurston-high/>

Frontline website clearly illustrates, it was not until after the relatively minor incidents occurred that his crimes became violent. Throwing rocks off of the highway overpass, though it could have potentially caused great injury, was not a blatantly violent crime. However, approximately three months later he was suspended from school for violent assaults against his classmates.

One of the biggest controversies surrounding cases of teenage violence in America is deciding to whom the blame belongs. Some may posit that the child's parents are to blame; after all, they are the ones ultimately responsible for their children. Others may blame the advent of violent video games, citing that young minds do not possess the discernment to know the difference between reality and fantasy.

Still others will claim that the media is responsible; given that most young adults have unlimited access to television, explicit CD's and internet websites, they are likely over stimulated with inappropriate material. From a psychological viewpoint, we would define the aforementioned opinions as a tendency toward cognitive heuristics, more specifically, the principle of availability. That is to say, Kinkel may have drawn on scenarios that he had either witnessed or heard about in order to rationalize his behavior.

It is also possible that the idea to open fire on his classmates was in some way influenced by the influx of school shootings around the nation. In theory, the fact that his solution to his problem was to go on a murderous rampage so shortly after other school shootings, lends credence to the idea that he was influenced by coverage of other shootings.

Judging from Kinkel's actions, writings, and confessional utterances, he suffered from a very low self-esteem. Although some people naturally have a healthier self-image than others, a humanistic view of psychology dictates that negative experiences can contribute to a person's low self-worth. As described on the Frontline website, Kinkel struggled with school from the very beginning. Because he started school in Spain, and spoke only English, he was at a great disadvantage.

Not only did he miss out on an academic level, but also on a social level. Even after returning to the United States, he continued to struggle in many areas of schooling. Having to repeat the first grade likely affected his self-esteem. Also, by all accounts, he continued to struggle with language problems. In an interview, his sister admits to teasing him about his deficiency.

It is likely that his classmates may have done the same. Once he was diagnosed with a learning disability, and given the appropriate help, he apparently began to improve academically. However, one can conclude that his feelings of low self-worth did not completely dissipate. This may explain why he chose the friends that he did, which ultimately lead to participating in criminal activities.

It has become a commonly accepted notion in the United States that puberty is the cause of many abnormal behaviors in young people. To some extent, it is a reasonable claim; as a child matures into a teenager, they will likely push for more independence and individuality. Changing hormones can attribute to some peculiar behavior, but in itself is not an excuse for even minor criminal behavior, let alone murdering ones parents and classmates. However, as Frontline reports, Dr. Orin Bolstad, a psychologist who <https://assignbuster.com/a-killer-at-thurston-high/>

specializes in juvenile killers, stated that Kinkel's behavior is consistent with an early onset of schizophrenia.

This form of schizophrenia manifested itself through several delusional beliefs, as well as the apparent voices that told Kinkel to commit the murders. It is also important to note that the theory that his violent behavior was caused by a biological factor, in this case a chemical imbalance, is substantiated by the fact that the use of Prozac seemed to calm some of his erratic behavior. One can even tie the biological aspect of his illness to the humanistic aspect by recognizing that the voices that Kinkel claimed to hear, voices that may have been his subconscious thoughts manifested, were dangerous to his self-image. According to Kinkel, the voices told him he was worthless, which would be consistent with his low self-esteem.

Of all the psychological aspects that can be used to analyze Kinkel's behavior, perhaps the hardest to address is society's role. Are young people being desensitized to gun use through culturally accepted displays of violence? Are guns too readily available to young people? In Kinkel's situation, the answer is obviously that yes, guns were made way too available. Although his father apparently took great care in trying to teach him that guns are a responsibility, he did allow the teenager to purchase a firearm.

This likely sent a message to the young man that it is ok to own a gun. In fact, it was after his father allowed him to purchase a firearm that he continued to buy more from friends. Once he was caught with possession of a firearm on school property, he claims he did not want his parents to have to be ashamed. So, in an attempt to solve this problem, he decided to kill

his parents. His solution to the problem is not unlike the plots of many action-adventure movies, thus lending credibility to the culturally inspired aspect of his crime.

In conclusion, it is impossible to know exactly what caused Kip Kinkel to murder his parents in cold blood. Nor is there any real explanation as to why he would then drive to school and open fire on an entire cafeteria of students. Although modern psychology can, to some extent, offer a glimpse into the diseased mind, it can not afford us a clear and scientific answer as to why people do the things they do. One thing is certain in Kinkel's case: he is a deeply disturbed individual.

When the judge handed down the one- hundred-eleven year sentence, he confirmed what many psychologists already knew: there is no hope of rehabilitation for a young man who committed such heinous crimes. Even if medication and therapy could alleviate the symptoms of his disease, the knowledge of the pain that he caused will be with him until the day he dies. Such is the tragic ending of a very tragic situation.

Works Cited

1. " The Killer At Thurston High." PBS: Frontline. (January 2000). 20 November 2006. < <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kinkel/>>