# Application of Moffitt's Life-Course-Persistent Theory to Travis Bickle

Jas Lundie

Department of Social Sciences, Clayton State University

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[redacted]

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## Brief Summary

*Taxi Driver* (1976) follows Travis Bickle, a lonely, insomnia-ridden former Marine who works nights as a taxi driver in New York City. As his isolation grows, he becomes obsessed with Betsy and increasingly disturbed by the crime and people around him. He begins training with guns and develops violent fantasies, eventually deciding to "clean up" the city. After abandoning an attempted political assassination, Travis targets Iris, a young prostitute's pimp, Matthew. This leads to a violent shootout in a hotel. Travis survives, and the film ends with society seemingly viewing him as a hero, despite the disturbing path that brought him there.

## Personality of Main Character

Travis Bickle is lonely, obsessive, and becomes an increasingly aggressive person. At the beginning of the movie, he appears chill, nonchalant, and indifferent. He is 26 years old, has some education, and was honorably discharged from the Marines. He has trouble sleeping and decides to become a taxi driver, working about 12 hours a day, six days a week. Although he is constantly around people through his job, he spends most of his time alone and struggles to create meaningful relationships. This shows that Travis is not completely antisocial, because he does socialize with his friends at the diner, but he has difficulty developing deeper connections with people.

Travis also has an obsessive personality. He begins following Betsy and becomes fixated on her after developing an interest in her. After their date goes wrong, he does not understand why she is offended and continues trying to contact her. He becomes irrational and describes her as cold and distant. Instead of moving on, he continues thinking about her and allows the

situation to influence his view of relationships. Another major part of Travis's personality is independent but misguided . After leaving the Marines, he does not seem to have a clear direction for his life. He spends his time working, thinking, and observing the city. Eventually, he begins working out, changing his diet, and training with guns. This gives him something to focus on and recalls some of the discipline he had while in the military. However, he is now doing this without an institution or authority to guide his decisions. As a result, he increasingly relies on his own thoughts and beliefs.

Travis's personality becomes more irrational, aggressive, and violent as the movie progresses. He begins viewing New York as dirty and corrupt and develops the belief that someone needs to "clean up" the city. His thoughts gradually turn into violent fantasies, and he begins preparing himself to act on them. His fixation on Iris also gives him a sense of purpose because he believes he can help remove her from her situation with Matthew. Overall, Travis's personality is shaped by loneliness, obsession, and lack of direction. He does not begin the movie as an extremely violent person. Instead, his personality gradually changes as he spends more time alone with his thoughts. Without clear goals or people challenging his thinking, his frustrations and obsessions become increasingly extreme, eventually leading him to believe that violence is the way to give his life meaning.

## Theory & It's Application

Moffitt's Life-Course-Persistent (LCP) theory suggests that antisocial behavior can begin early in life and continue into adulthood. The theory assumes that these behaviors can develop from a combination of individual and environmental factors and become more consistent over time. Although *Taxi Driver* does not provide much information about Travis Bickle's childhood,

it is possible to infer that some of his social and behavioral difficulties may have existed before the events of the film. His decision to join the Marines could have provided him with structure and direction, but after his honorable discharge, he appears to struggle without that structure. He becomes increasingly isolated, obsessive, and irrational as he tries to create his own sense of purpose. His lack of direction may reflect a continuing pattern of difficulty adjusting to society. However, because the movie does not explain Travis's childhood behavior or the circumstances of his discharge, connecting him to Moffitt's LCP theory remains inferred.

## Conclusion

Moffitt's Life-Course-Persistent theory provides a partial explanation for Travis Bickle's behavior. The theory can be connected to Travis through the possibility that some of his difficulties may have existed before the events of the movie and continued into adulthood. Travis is not completely antisocial because he socializes with his friends at the diner and attempts to form relationships with Betsy and Iris. However, he struggles with maintaining healthy relationships and finding direction after leaving the Marines. However, because the movie does not show Travis's childhood or provide evidence of early antisocial behavior, the LCP theory only partially explains his actions and requires some assumptions about his past.