

# CASE STUDY

## WAYNE

Wayne, raised in an upper-middle-class household in South Florida, was intelligent but also a risk taker, even at an early age. He was charismatic and made friends easily; even his teachers tended to like him, despite his sometimes deviant behavior. In high school, he engaged in many delinquent activities but nothing too serious. Although he had some encounters with police, it was usually for underage drinking or minor offenses, so he was never officially arrested. This is quite common, especially among teenage males.

This pattern took a more serious turn in college, when he was apprehended by police for a couple of incidents. However, these were also relatively minor, such as public intoxication, and even for these incidents, either charges were dismissed or he was never officially charged. But that is what it took to wake him up to the risks he was taking that could possibly jeopardize his future career. He wanted to be a lawyer, and he realized it would be difficult to get into law school, let alone be approved by the state bar association, if he had a criminal record. He was also potentially risking losing the respect of and strong bonds he had with family and friends.

So he realized around his junior year that he had to keep his nose clean and refocus his efforts on school, which he did. He eventually made the grades and test scores needed to gain entry into one of the top-tier law programs in the country, in Washington, DC—perhaps the best place to study law in our nation, given the opportunities and resources of that area. He did fantastically in law school and then moved back to Florida, where he became a respected and effective assistant district attorney. After a few years, he joined a private practice for a while, and within

about 10 years he started his own law firm, where he has continued to be successful.

We shall see in this chapter that most individuals in society grow out of teenage tendencies to engage in delinquent or criminal behavior, largely due not to the fear of going to jail but, rather, the fear of losing positive aspects of their lives that they have worked hard for, such as bonds with friends and family and, often most important, a great career.

We will follow up on Wayne at the conclusion of this chapter as a reminder to apply some of the theoretical models and concepts to explaining his change in behavior.

These so-called informal elements of deterrence (e.g., family, friends, employers) are the ones that matter most for the vast majority of society—namely, the ones who have much to lose. And it is these types of considerations that the more traditional versions of Classical School/deterrence theory do not specify or take into account. Thus, the more modern versions of deterrence theory, such as rational choice theory, are far more robust and valid. But first, we will examine the rebirth of research in deterrence theory, which led to an evolution of theorizing and testing that resulted in the formation of these more fully specified explanations of criminal offending.

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### THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Why do you think Wayne did not have to serve a jail term and yet seemed to stop breaking the law?
2. Can you think of someone you know personally who committed minor delinquent/criminal acts when he or she was younger but eventually grew out of offending, as Wayne did?