

Contemporary Threat Assessment and Management in Schools

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What is threat assessment and management?

- Identify, assess, and manage those at risk for intended or targeted violence toward others.



Since Jan. 1, 2018

- 1 school shooting a week
 - At least one person shot
 - Occurred on school grounds
 - Age K through college
 - Included gang violence, fights, and domestic violence
 - Included accidental discharge if first two criteria met



Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Parkland, FL, February 14, 2018

- 17 killed
- 17 injured



Santa Fe High School, TX, May 18, 2018

- 10 killed
- 10 injured



- More than 215,000 students have witnessed gun violence in U.S. since Columbine in 1999



Are schools dangerous?

- No, they are exceedingly safe
- The probability since 1999 is 1:614,000,000 that a public school student will be killed by a gun in school on any particular day



What is more dangerous at school than being shot?

- Interscholastic sports
- Traveling to and from school—especially with other adolescents, no seat belts
- Catching a potentially deadly disease in school



Why does it feel so threatening?

- We relinquish control of our children when sent to school
- “*My kid could be the one*”
- Availability bias: the personal and emotional overrides probability statistics; “the awareness heuristic”
- News coverage disproportionate to likelihood of risk



Isn't the world a more dangerous place?

- No
- Risk is not increasing, but our *awareness* of risk is increasing
 - Instant and global
 - Social media, internet platforms, immediate news feeds
 - Conflict and violence draws our attention and sells: reader views = higher advertising revenue

Some facts

- Far more kids are shot outside of school (19 a day) than while attending school (60 per year)
 - David Ropeik, Harvard Instructor, [How Risky Is It, Really?](#)



Prevalence of threats and violence in secondary schools

- 12% reported being threatened; 9% carried out their threat (Nekvasil & Cornell, 2012)
- Students who frequently threatened were 14-23 times more likely to report attacking someone (Singer & Flannery, 2000)
- 7.8% report being in a physical fight



- 6% threatened or injured with weapon (Kann et al., 2016)
- Lethal acts rare: 0.86 violent deaths per 100,000 (CDCP, 2015)
- 0.3% of all homicides in US occur in school (30 people a day intentionally killed by a firearm in U.S.)



Mass murder is increasing in the United States

- Despite a continued decrease in violent crime over the past 30 years
- Key studies
 - Harvard Public Health
 - FBI
 - Mother Jones database and M. Follman



However, it is very rare

- 3-4% of homicides in US involve more than one victim (1976-2000)
- Number of mass murders in US between 2000-2012 (four or more victims) was one tenth of one percent (0.1%) of all murders (excluding 9/11)



Formal mental disorder diagnosis is not a specific predictor of any type of violence, including targeted violence

- 46% lifetime prevalence of any mental disorder in U.S. adults
- 9% lifetime prevalence of personality disorder in U.S. adults
 - Kessler et al., 2005, National Comorbidity Study and Replication



Access to firearms increases lethality risk

- Register all firearms
- Regulate who cannot possess a firearm
- Require competency in use of a firearm



There may be a **hot zone** for the contagion effect

- During **two weeks** after a highly publicized mass murder, there will be an increase in the frequency of mass murders, then a return to base line.
- Towers et al., PLoS One, 2015
 - Mass killings with firearm, 4+ deaths
 - School shootings, 4+ deaths
 - Average temporary probability increase lasts next 13 days
 - doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0117259

Lankford & Tomek, 2017

- Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior
- Same data set as Towers et al., 2015
- Simulated data sets generated
- Random effect, **no contagion**
- But copycat phenomenon may exist



But contagion and copycat are different

- **Contagion**: brief time frame (days or weeks), imitation of the act
- **Copycat**: longer time frame (months or years), identification with the actor
- Copycats aggregated over time may lead to a **cultural script**, e.g, the Columbine effect (Mother Jones: 88 plots since 1999 in US; 75% thwarted)



Copycat Effect in Germany

- One third of German cases (1999-2010) were inspired by Columbine high school massacre in April, 1999.



A Cultural Script

- “cultural scripts”—prescriptions for behavior— a schema
- that point the way toward an armed attack as a model for problem solving,
- particularly for altering the shooter’s reputation from that of a loser, socially marginalized, to that of a notorious antihero;
- a masculine solution to lessen an inferior social position.



University of Texas, August 1, 1966, 11:25
am



Victims and Weapons

- Mother and wife killed previous night; then 13 strangers the next day from the Texas Tower
- 32 injured
- 6 mm Remington bolt-action rifle
- .35 caliber Remington pump rifle
- .30 caliber M1 carbine
- Sawed-off 12 gauge Sears shotgun—observed by boy
- 9 mm Luger pistol
- Galesi-Brescia pistol
- .357 magnum Smith & Wesson revolver
- 700 rounds of assorted ammunition
- Knife



Elapsed time in Texas Tower

- Approximately 90 minutes



Risk factors for Whitman

- Witnessed assaults of mother by father
- Beaten by father; stimulated hatred and fear
- Firearms throughout home
- US Marine sharpshooter (lethality risk)
- Adolescent antisocial history—provocations, threats, theft
- Anxiety disorder; depressive disorder
- Chronic amphetamine abuse
- Somatic symptoms: intense headaches
- Easily enraged; assaults his own wife
- Compulsion to succeed; obsessional thoughts of violence
- Homicidal-suicidal intent
- Separation of parents in May, 1966
- Father withdraws financial support; wife divorcing him
- Glioblastoma in the hypothalamus 2 cm on autopsy



Do these risk factors predict a mass murder?

- No



1964

1964

TIME

The Psychotic & Society



CHARLES WHITMAN

1964

Is violence homogeneous?

- No



Two modes of violence

- Targeted or intended violence (predatory)
- Emotional or reactive violence (affective)
 - Substantial scientific research since the mid-twentieth century involving animal and human subjects
 - Behavioral, physiological, neuroimaging, neuropsychological, psychological, and biochemical differences
 - Reliable and valid measurement instruments

Emotional or reactive violence

- Also known as affective or impulsive violence
- The most common violence among people
- A reaction to an imminent threat
- Accompanied by intense anger and/or fear
- Preceded by intense autonomic arousal
- Driven by the emotional centers of the brain
- Purely defensive
- One goal: make the threat go away
- Often preceded by direct verbalized threats



Targeted or intended violence

- Also known as predatory or instrumental
- Tactical planning
- Purposeful, opportunistic
- Emotionless; no autonomic arousal
- Often involves research and preparation
- End point of a pathway to violence
- Directed by the higher cortical areas of the brain
- Purely offensive: no imminent threat
- Many goals: power, dominance, revenge, sex, money, ideology
- Usually no direct threat beforehand







Annie Le, Sept. 8, 2009, Yale University— affective violence and sexual homicide



Fact Pattern

- 24 yo PhD student in pharmacology
- Disappeared Sept. 8, body found Sept. 13
- Body upside down inside wall with bra pushed up and underwear pulled down
- Blunt force trauma; bloody clothes hidden
- Death by traumatic asphyxiation (strangled)
- Raymond Clark, 26, lab technician, pled guilty, admitted to fact of attempted sexual assault; no motivation information
- Sentenced to 44 years in prison

Johanna Justin-Jinich, May 6, 2009,
Middletown, CT—predatory violence and
stalking



Fact Pattern

- 21 yo Wesleyan student
- Met Stephen Morgan at NYU during summer, 2007
- Emails and meals on few occasions together
- Began to harass her, saying she was not that attractive and Jewish people are greedy
- Did not attempt to press charges against him
- Kills her with 7 rounds from 9 mm pistol while wearing a wig and eyeglasses as she worked in a CT coffee shop **2 years later**
- Eluded police, then surrendered



Fact Pattern

- Wrote in journal the day of attack, “I think it okay to kill Jews, and go on a killing spree at this school...Kill Johanna. She must die.”
- Told father day before he was moving to R.I.
- Cleared out most of belongings in guest bedroom
- Churchgoing family, privileged upbringing, prep school, unblemished stint in US Navy, then adrift
- Found NGRI in 2011, paranoid schizophrenic



Scientific Foundation

Meloy, J.R. (2006). The empirical basis and forensic application of affective and predatory violence. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry.40:539-547.

www.DrReidMeloy.com



The Threat Assessment Paradox

- We will never know who would have committed an act of targeted violence if we had not intervened.

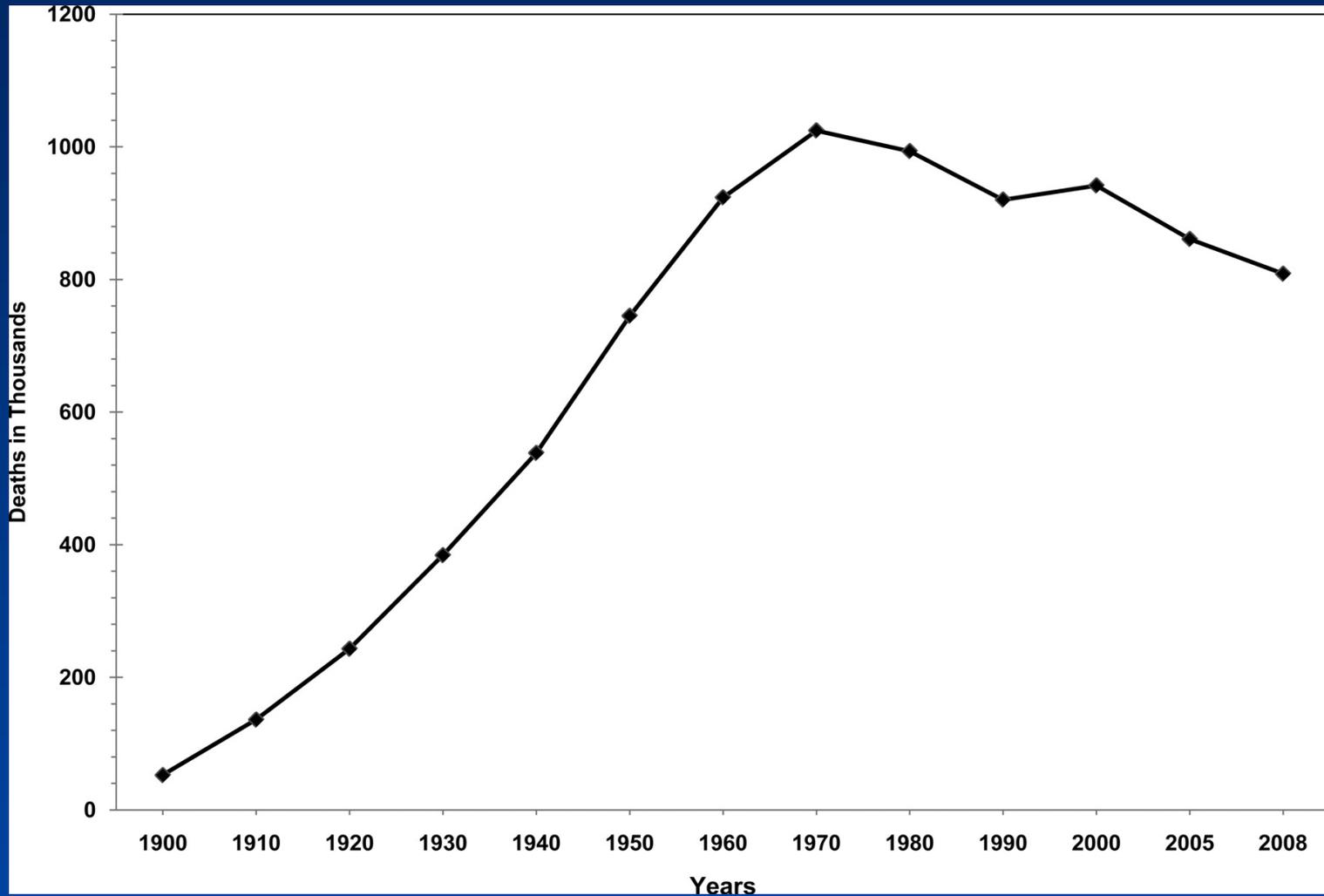


Medical corollary

- Heart attacks cannot be individually predicted, but risk factors are known, and subjects with such risk factors can be treated with various effective interventions, such as statins, other meds, exercise, diet, etc.



Deaths attributable to cardiovascular disease (United States: 1900–2008).



Writing Group Members et al. *Circulation* 2012;125:e2-e220

Threat Assessment and Management

- We are not trying to predict future behavior, but instead are managing behaviors of concern in the present.



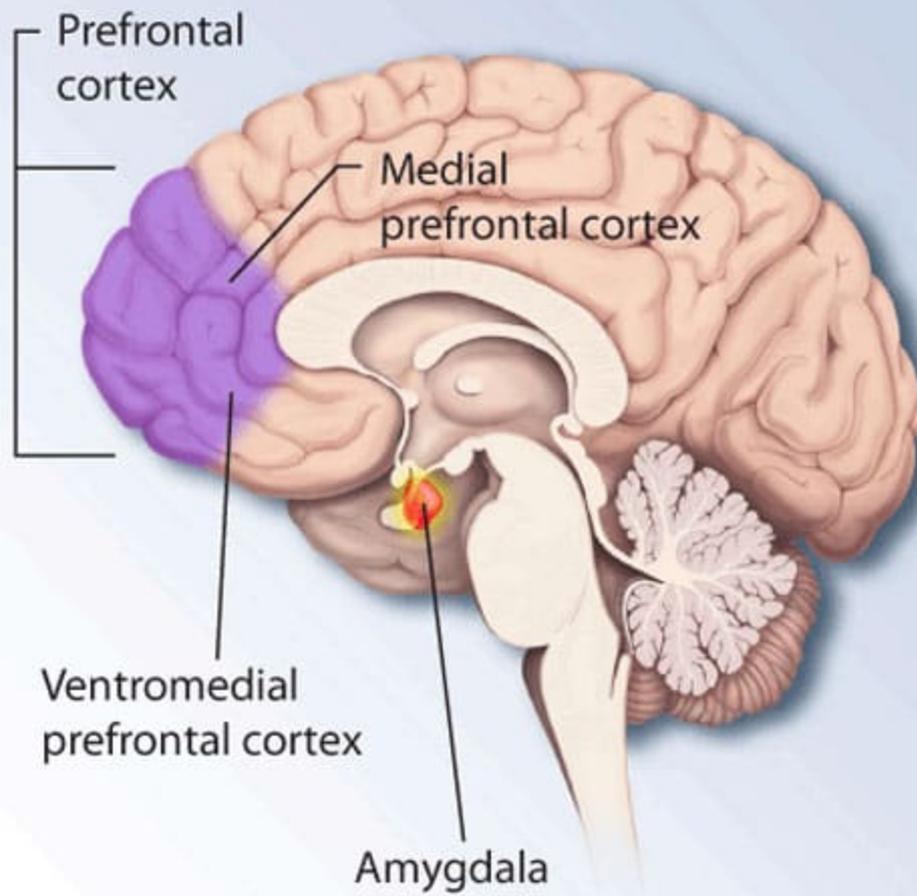
Prevention does not require
prediction



Public Health Model—TATM examples?

- Primary prevention—reduce general risk factors in the environment
- Secondary prevention—focus on addressing individuals at risk
- Tertiary prevention—manage their risk



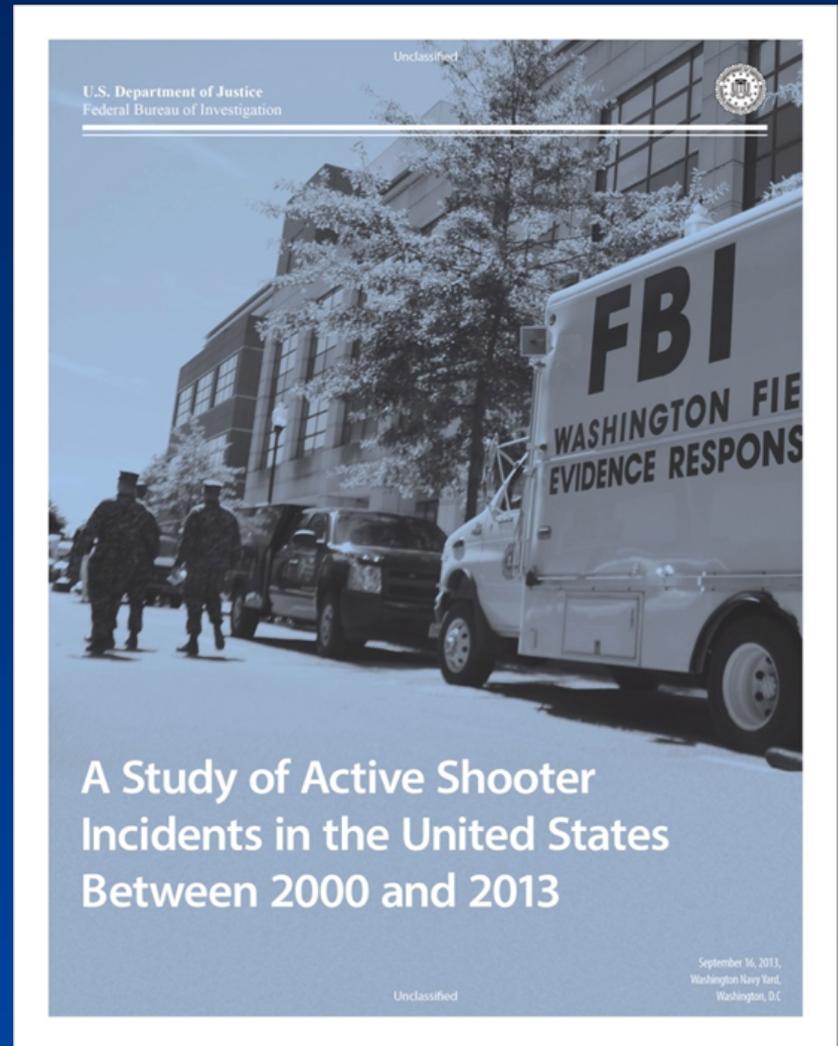


Neurobiological model

- All members of our society are the **amygdala**: See Something, Say Something
 - “threat sensor” in limbic system: fast, but not discerning
- Threat Assessment Teams are the **prefrontal cortex**:
 - The organizing, executive portion of the brain: a little slower, but thoughtful and discerning

Active Shooter Incidents in the United States 2000-2013

FBI



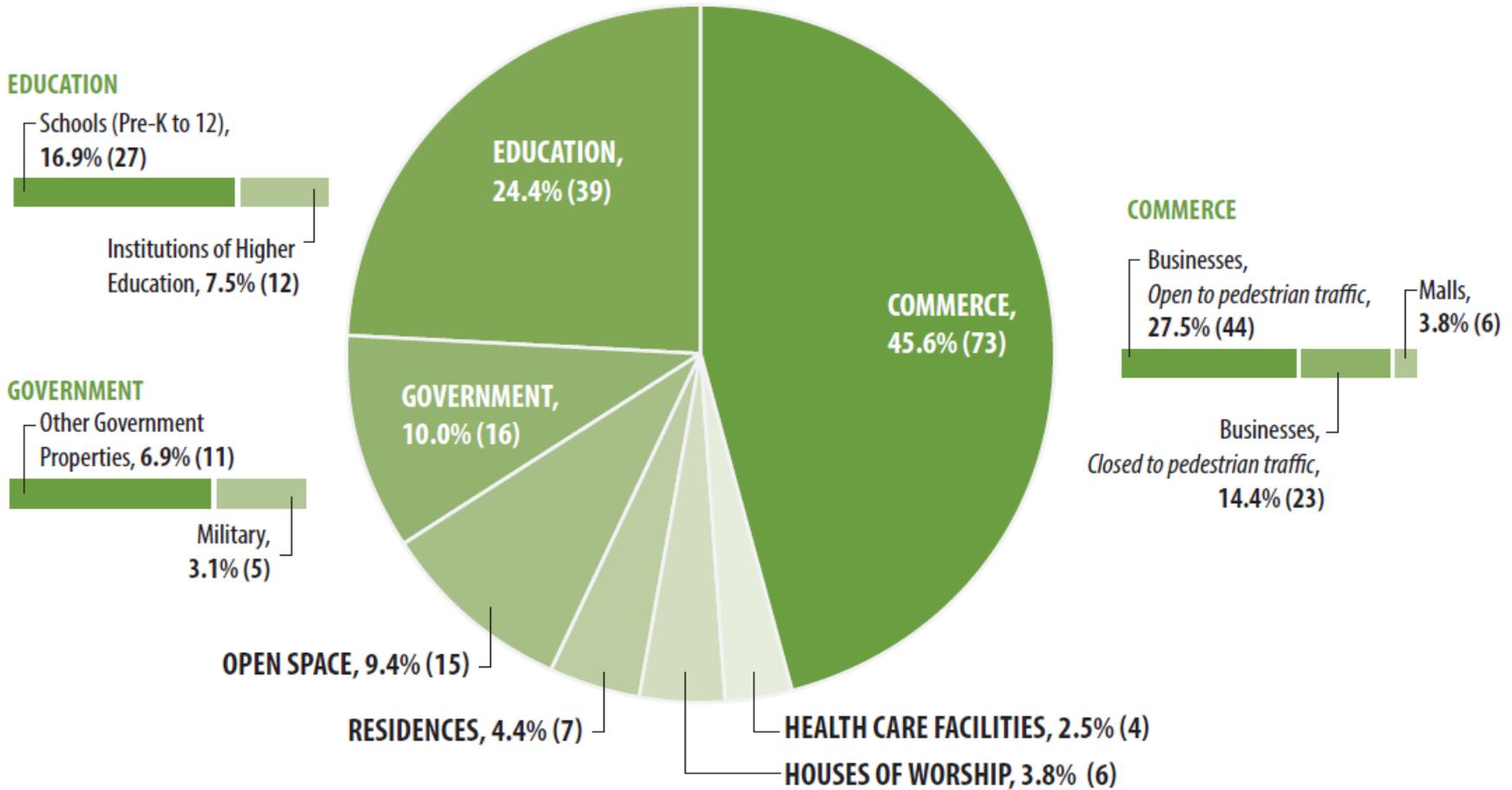
FBI Active Shooter Study 2014

- “An individual(s) killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area.”
- 11.4 incidents annually (N=160; 1,043 casualties)
- 6.4 2000-2006
- 16.4 2007-2013
- **150% increase**
- **Almost half in commercial settings (46%)**
- **Length of time <5 minutes**
- Consistent with Harvard public health study



U.S. Active Shooter Incidents from 2000 to 2013

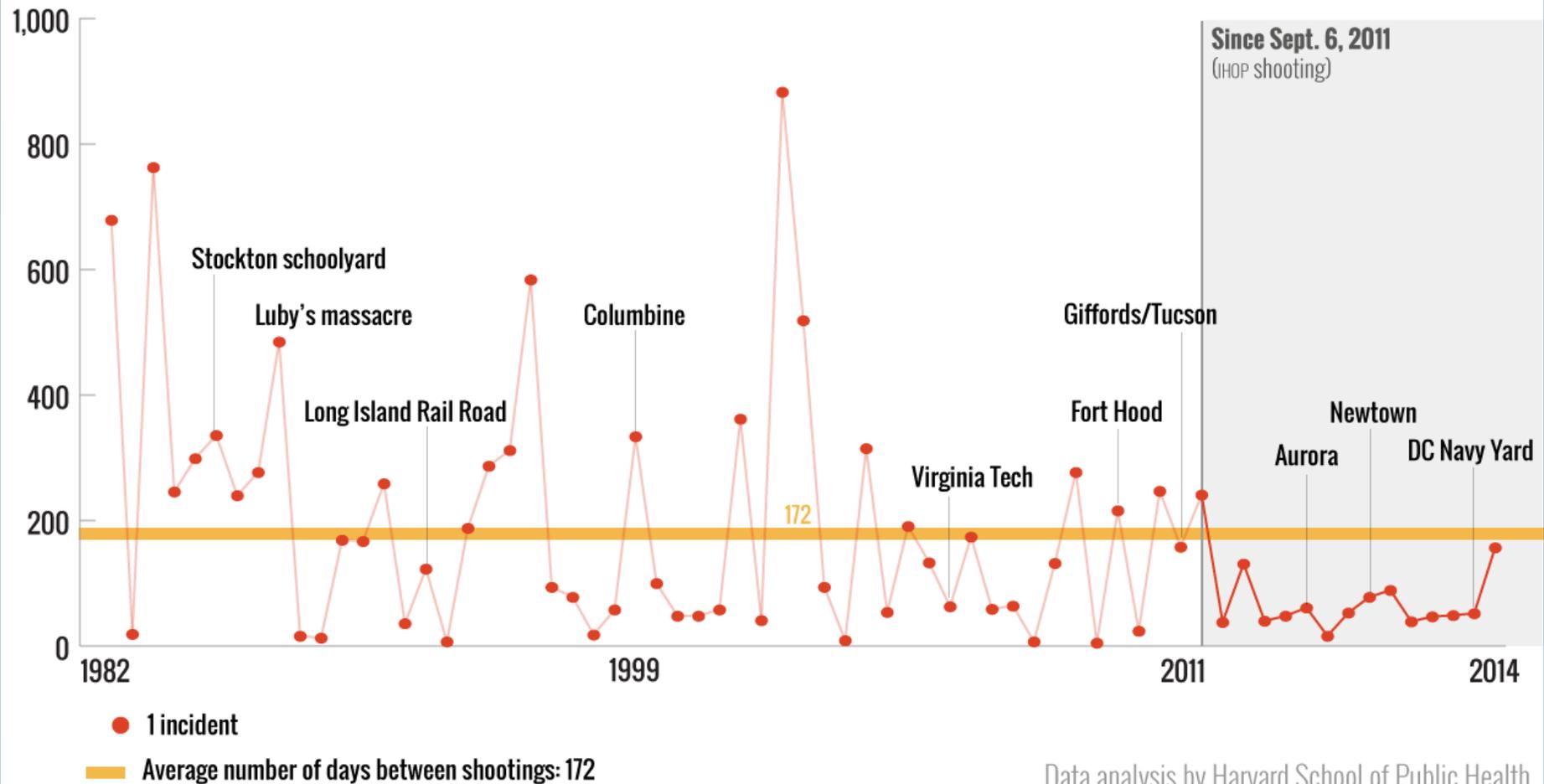
A Study of 160 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 - 2013:
Location Categories



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014

More Frequent Mass Shootings Since 2011

Days since previous mass shooting



Campus Attacks: targeted violence affecting institutions of higher education

- US Secret Service
- US Dept. of Homeland Security
- US Dept. of Education
- FBI
- Drysdale, Modzeleski & Simons (available online)
- April, 2010



A brief review:

- Directed assaults in US IHEs
- 1900-2008
- Specific or random target selected prior to or at the time of assault based on victim profile or pre-existing relationship
- Lethal force used or present ability to do so
- N=272 incidents (all open source)
- 59% since 1990 (tracks closely increased enrollment in IHEs)



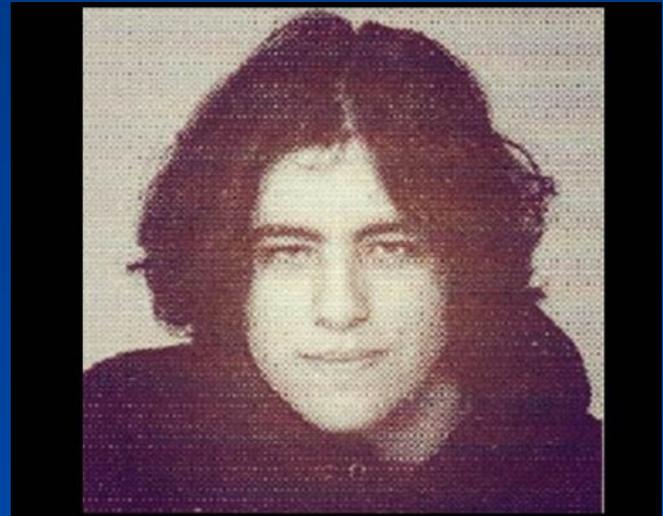
Incident timing and location

- Greatest frequency in October and April
- But did occur throughout the year
- 19% off campus (but affiliated with campus)
- 97% in one location (despite intense coverage of bifurcated killings or “moving” attacker)
- 30% in student dorm rooms or apartments (of those on campus)
- 25% office or instructional area (of those on campus)



Santa Monica, June 7, 2013

- John Zawahri, 24
- History of mental disorder, including WIC 5150
- History of criminality as juvenile
- Kills 5 (bifurcated: family > strangers)
- Finally killed by police at Santa Monica College (attended 2010)
- “Pseudocommando”
 - 1300 rounds, military gear
 - Multiple weapons
 - Goal-directed to college
 - Fired 70 rounds in library
 - 13 minutes elapsed time



Demographics of Perpetrators

- 94% male
- Ages 16-62 (Mean = 28)
- 60% current or former students
- 11% current or former employees
- 20% indirectly affiliated
- 9% no known affiliation



Weapons Used

- 54% firearms
- 21% knives
- 10% combination
- 5% strangulation
- 10% blunt object, firebomb, poison, vehicle, no weapon



Victims

- 281 deaths, 247 injuries
- 190 students killed
- 72 employees killed
- 26% perpetrators committed suicide



Factors that motivated attack

- **Intimate relationship** **33.9%**
- Retaliation for specific action 13.7%
- Refused advances or obsession 10.1%
- Response to academic stress 10.1%
- Acq/Stranger sexual violence 9.7%
- Psychotic actions 7.9%
- Workplace dismissal 6.2%



Pre-incident data

- 73% specific targets and triggering event
- 21% random target(s)
- 29% engaged in:
 - Stalking/harassing behavior
 - Verbal or written threats
 - Aggressive acts



Others observed concerning behaviors in 31% of cases:

- Paranoid ideas
- Delusional statements
- Changes in personality or performance
- Depressed mood
- Suicidal ideation
- Nonspecific threats
- Bizarre behavior
- Increased isolation
- Interest in or acquisition of weapons

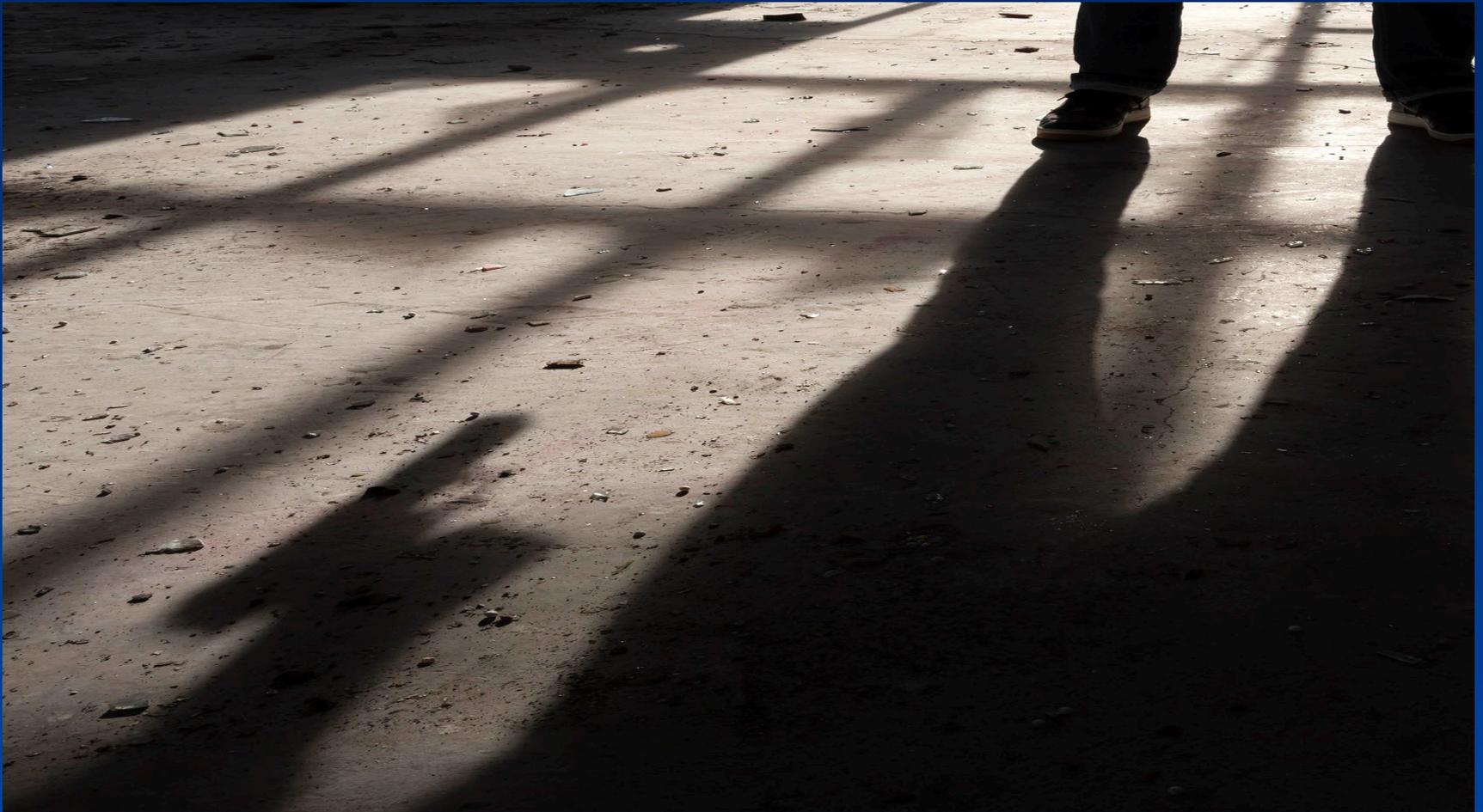


What are implications for threat assessment and management?

- Attack will be with a firearm
- Specific and known victim
- Usually one victim
- Primary motivations: intimacy, retaliation, or refusal of advances (>50%)
- A triggering or precipitating event
- Current or former student



Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters in U.S. 2000-2013



- James Silver, Ph.D., J.D.
- Andre Simons, SSA, FBI
- Sarah Craun, Ph.D.

- Behavioral Analysis Unit 1
- CIRG
- FBI, Quantico
- June, 2018

Subjects

- 63 active shooting cases: killing or attempting to kill multiple people in populated area
- Drawn from 160 cases in Phase I study
- Phase II addressing what they did pre-attack to attempt to infer why they did it.
- Primary source material, including interviews with collaterals and case files
- Interrater reliability: independent coding, then discussion and consensus with third reviewer



Demographics

- 12-88 years old, mean age 37.8
- 13% adolescents
- 63% white, 10% asian, 16% black
- 44% employed, 38% unemployed
- 70% single or divorced
- But all lived with another and/or had significant interactions with others
- 35% criminal histories, 5% adult violent felons
- 62% history of abusive, harassing, or oppressive (bullying) behaviors
- There is no “profile” of an active shooter



Planning and Preparation

- Planning—full range of considerations for attack
 - 12% <24 hours
 - 9% 13-24 months
 - 62% >one month
 - Known connection to attack site, 73%
- Preparing—actions taken to secure means for attack
 - 52%, 24 hours to a week
 - 33%, 8 days to two months
 - 40% purchased a firearm legally for the attack



Multiple stressors within the year (average 3.6)

- 62% mental health—but only 25% dx (psychosis n=3)—usually mood dx
- 49% financial strain
- 35% job related
- 29% conflicts with friends/peers
- 27% marital problems
- 22% drugs/alcohol
- 22% conflict at school
- 2% none



Observable concerning behaviors, average 4.7, in past year

- 62% mental health
- 57% interpersonal interactions
- 56% leakage
- 54% quality of thinking or communicating
- 46% work performance (n=24)
- 42% school performance (n=12)
- 35% threats/confrontations
- 33% anger
- 33% physical aggression
- 21% firearm behavior
- 19% violent media usage



How soon were they noticed?

- Over half of attackers (56%) showed at least one concerning behavior 25 months before



Who noticed?

- Schoolmate 92%
- Spouse/domestic partner 87%
- Teacher/school staff 75%
- Family member 68%
- Friend 51%
- Average 3 different groups



What did they do?

- 83% communicated directly to subject
- **54% did nothing**
- 41% communicated to law enforcement



79% had primary grievance: loss, humiliation, anger, blame

- 33% adverse interpersonal action
- 16% adverse employment action
- 10% general hatred
- 44% experienced a precipitating event which accelerated pathway behavior



Targeting

- One third random (37%)
- One third targeted (27%)
- One third both (37%)
- Target dispersion is threat-enhancing characteristic (specific to general animus)



Suicidality

- 48% suicidal ideation or behavior prior to the attack
- Most in year before the attack



Threats

- Direct threats/confrontations
 - 55%, usually direct confrontation if targeted
 - 65% made no direct threat
- Leakage
 - 56% leaked their intent
 - 88% of adolescents leaked their intent
 - ***No bystanders reported instances of leakage to law enforcement***

Legacy tokens

- 30% created such material to claim credit and communicate conscious motive before attack



Are there accelerating patterns of risk
in targeted violence?



Warning Behaviors (Meloy, Hoffmann,
Guldimann & James, Behavioral Sciences & Law,
2012; 30:256-279)

- Pathway
- Fixation
- Identification
- Novel aggression
- Energy burst
- Leakage
- Directly communicated threat
- Last resort behavior



Gestalt Psychology

- How can I read these words without my vowels?

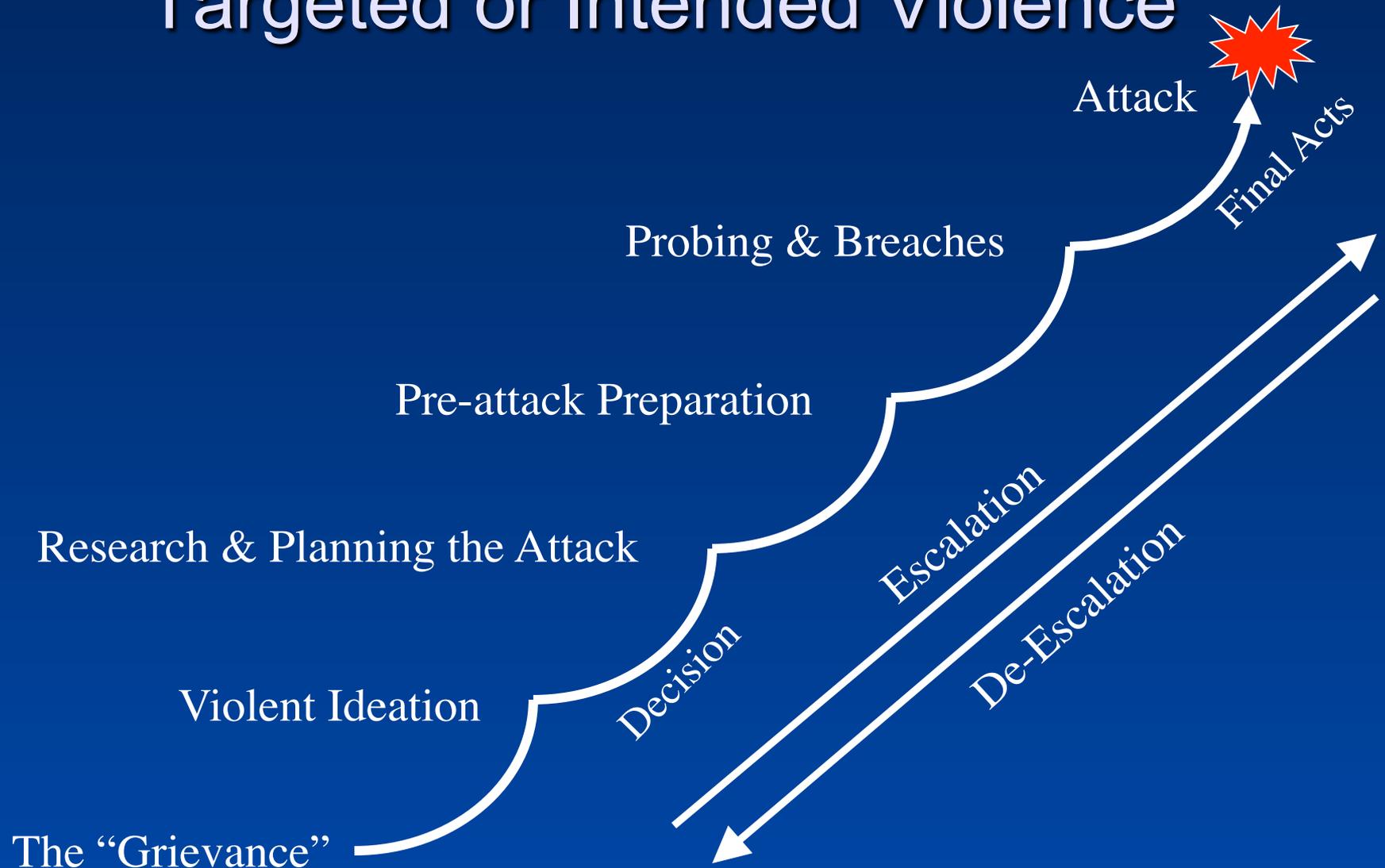


Pathway warning behavior

Any behavior that is part of research, planning, preparation, or implementation of an attack (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998, 1999; Calhoun & Weston, 2003)



Pathway to Targeted or Intended Violence



Adapted with permission from F.S. Calhoun and S.W. Weston (2003). *Contemporary threat management: A practical guide for identifying, assessing and managing individuals of violent intent.*

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Some pathways are becoming runways

- Meloy & Pollard, J Forensic Sciences, 2017
- There is a pathway, but shortened, eg, recruitment elements of ISIS and subsequent knife attacks
- Planning and partial preparation, then impulsive act



Fixation warning behavior

Any behavior that indicates an increasingly pathological preoccupation with a person or a cause (Mullen et al., 2009). It typically causes deterioration of social and occupational functioning.



The importance of *fixation* (Mullen et al., 2008, J Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology)

- Pathological fixations are obsessive preoccupations which result in deterioration of subject's intimate, social, and occupational life
- They focus upon a *person* or a *cause*



Frequency of Fixation Warning Behavior in Targeted Violence

- Public figure attackers in U.S. (n=18) 78%
- Western European attackers of politicians (n=24) 54%
- German public figure attackers (n=14) 100%
- German school shooters (n=9) 100%
- European individual terrorists (n=22) 100%
- U.S. and European lone actor terrorists (n=111) 77%
- Intimate partner homicide offenders (n=70) 93%
- School threateners (n=31) 16%
- North American lone actor terrorists (n=33) 57%



What is associated with “fixation”?

- Obsessively and irrationally pursuing a highly idiosyncratic personal grievance or cause

| | |
|---------------------------|----------|
| – Death or serious injury | 0.54 phi |
| – Attacker a loner | 1.0 |
| – Warning behaviors shown | 0.76 |
| – Definitely psychotic | 0.76 |
| – Definitely deluded | 0.76 |

- James et al., Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica, 116:334-344, 2007

Identification warning behavior

Any behavior that indicates a psychological desire to be a “pseudocommando” (Dietz, 1986; Knoll, 2010), have a “warrior mentality” (Hempel et al., 1999), closely associate with weapons or other military or law enforcement paraphernalia, identify with previous attackers or assassins, or to identify oneself as an agent to advance a particular cause or belief system.



Anders Breivik



- “Fixation is what one constantly thinks about; identification is what one becomes.”
 - TRAP-18 Manual



YouTube HQ, April 3, 2018

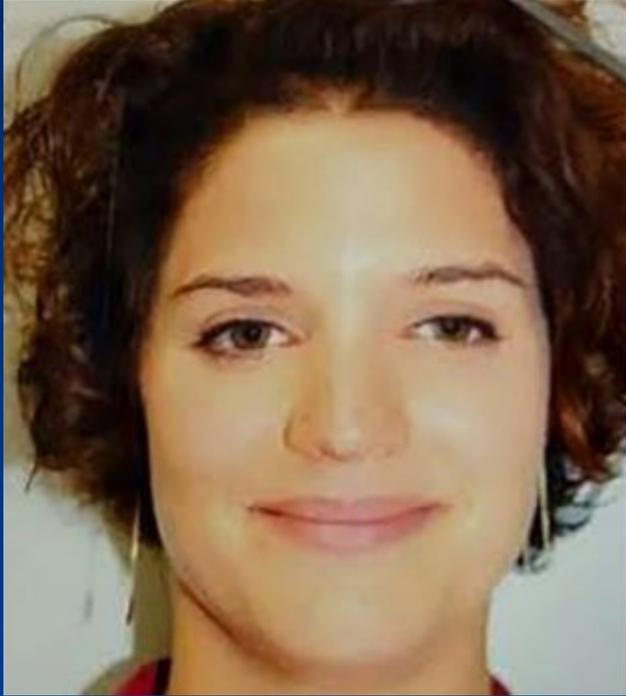


Novel aggression Warning Behavior

An act of violence which appears unrelated to any targeted violence pathway warning behavior which is committed for the first time. Such behaviors may be utilized to test the *ability* (de Becker, JACA, 1997) of the subject to actually do a violent act or a *behavioral tryout* (MacCulloch, Snowden, Wood & Mills, 1983).



Larossi Abballa



Novel aggression

- Larossi Abballa, a 25 year old French citizen of Moroccan descent, killed a police officer and his wife on June 14, 2016 in their home in Magnanville, France. The prosecutor said that Abballa appeared to be operating on a general order from al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State, to kill “miscreants at home with their families” during Ramadan. Immediately following the killings, he started a live Facebook chat explaining his behavior while the couple’s toddler son wandered in the background. He was subsequently killed by the police when they entered the home.



Novel aggression

- “The first time Larossi Abballa appeared on the radar of French terrorism investigators, the only act of violence they could pin on him was killing bunnies. He had joined a small group of men, all bent on waging jihad, on a trip to a snowy forest in northern France five years ago, when he was 19. There, they videotaped themselves slaughtering the rabbits, bought so the men could grow used to the feel of killing” (Callimachi, New York Times, June 22, 2016, p A1).



Fixation and Identification are key warning behaviors

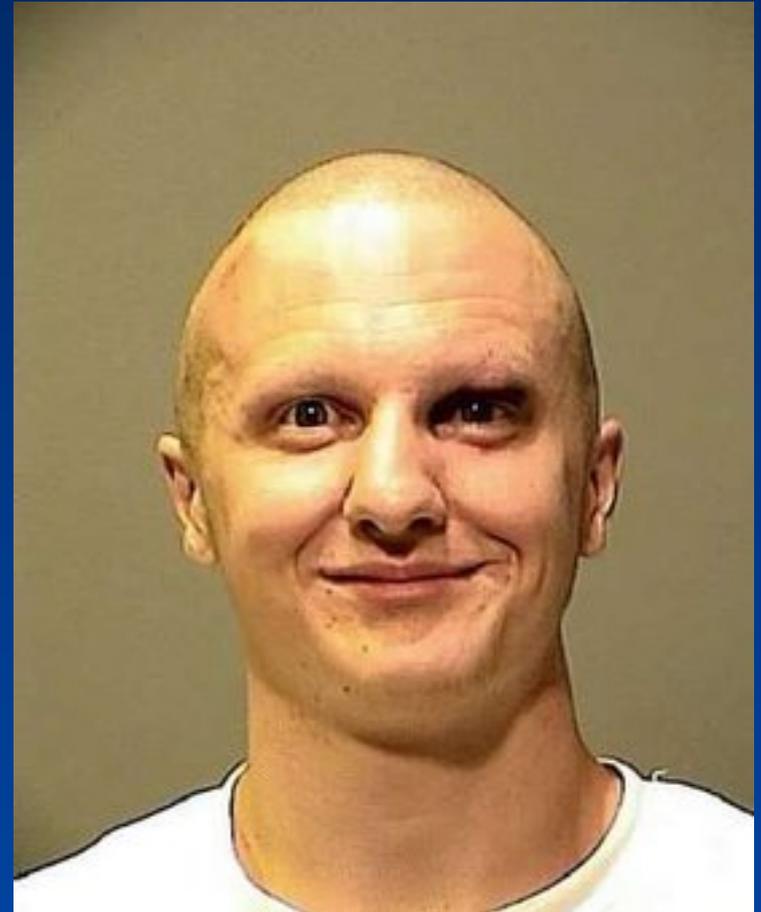
- “It kept going around, floating round my head, day after day after day. And then after awhile *I became that thought you know, I was going to do it.*”
 - David Copeland, neo-NAZI lone terrorist, UK, 1999 mounted three attacks
- From preoccupation to self-identity
- Research suggesting evolution from fixation to identification will distinguish (with a medium effect size) POCs without intent from attackers: our North American study (Meloy, Goodwill, Meloy, Martinez, Amat & Morgan)

Energy burst warning behavior

An increase in the frequency or variety of any noted activities related to the target, even if the activities themselves are relatively innocuous, usually in the hours, days or weeks before the attack



Jared Loughner



Tucson, Arizona
January 8, 2011

Energy Burst: accelerating final acts

January 7-8, 2011

- 11:35 pm January 7, drops off 35 mm film at Walgreen's
 - 12:29 am checks into Motel 6
 - Searches web for "assassins" and "lethal injection"
 - 02:19 am returns to Walgreens, picks up photos, makes a purchase
 - 02:34 am makes a purchase at Chevron store
 - Leaves telephone good-bye message with friend: "Peace out."
 - 04:12 am posts to Myspace photo of Glock 19 and words, "Goodbye friends."
 - 06:12 makes purchase at Walmart and
 - 06:21 makes purchase at Circle K
 - 07:04 attempts to purchase ammo at Walmart
 - Walmart associate: "He was frustrated, rude, ...angry when I didn't have any 9 mm ammo...Just walked off...Working here you see a lot of people like that."
- 

Energy Burst: accelerating final acts

- 07:27 at second Walmart, purchases 9 mm full metal jacket ammo and diaper bag (backpack style)
 - 07:30 stopped by fish and game officer for running a red light
 - Cried and said, “I’ve just had a rough time.”
 - Composed self, thanked officer, shook officer’s hand when given just a warning
 - Said he was going home
 - 08:00 (approx) returned home
 - Removed black bag from vehicle
 - Confronted by father
 - “He was acting strange... Just didn’t want to communicate”
 - Took off on foot down the street with a backpack
 - Father chased him on foot
 - 09:41 returns to Circle K, gets a cab,
 - 09:54 cab driver and Loughner enter Safety to get change because Loughner insists
- 

Energy Burst: accelerating final acts

- 10:10 Loughner opens fire at Rep. Giffords' Meet and Greet
- Killing 6 and wounding 13 people
- Witness: "He was kind of hopping up and down as he was shooting. His face was very animated."
- Two photos released are Loughner holding a 9 mm Glock next to his crotch and buttocks while wearing a red G string
- Came to mass murder with 31 rounds in pistol, two 15 round loaded magazines in pocket, buck knife, and his driver's license, credit card, and money in a plastic bag; wearing ear plugs, black beanie, black hoodie



Leakage warning behavior

The communication to a third party of an intent to do harm to a target through an attack (Meloy & O'Toole, Behavioral Sciences and the Law, 29:513-527, 2011).

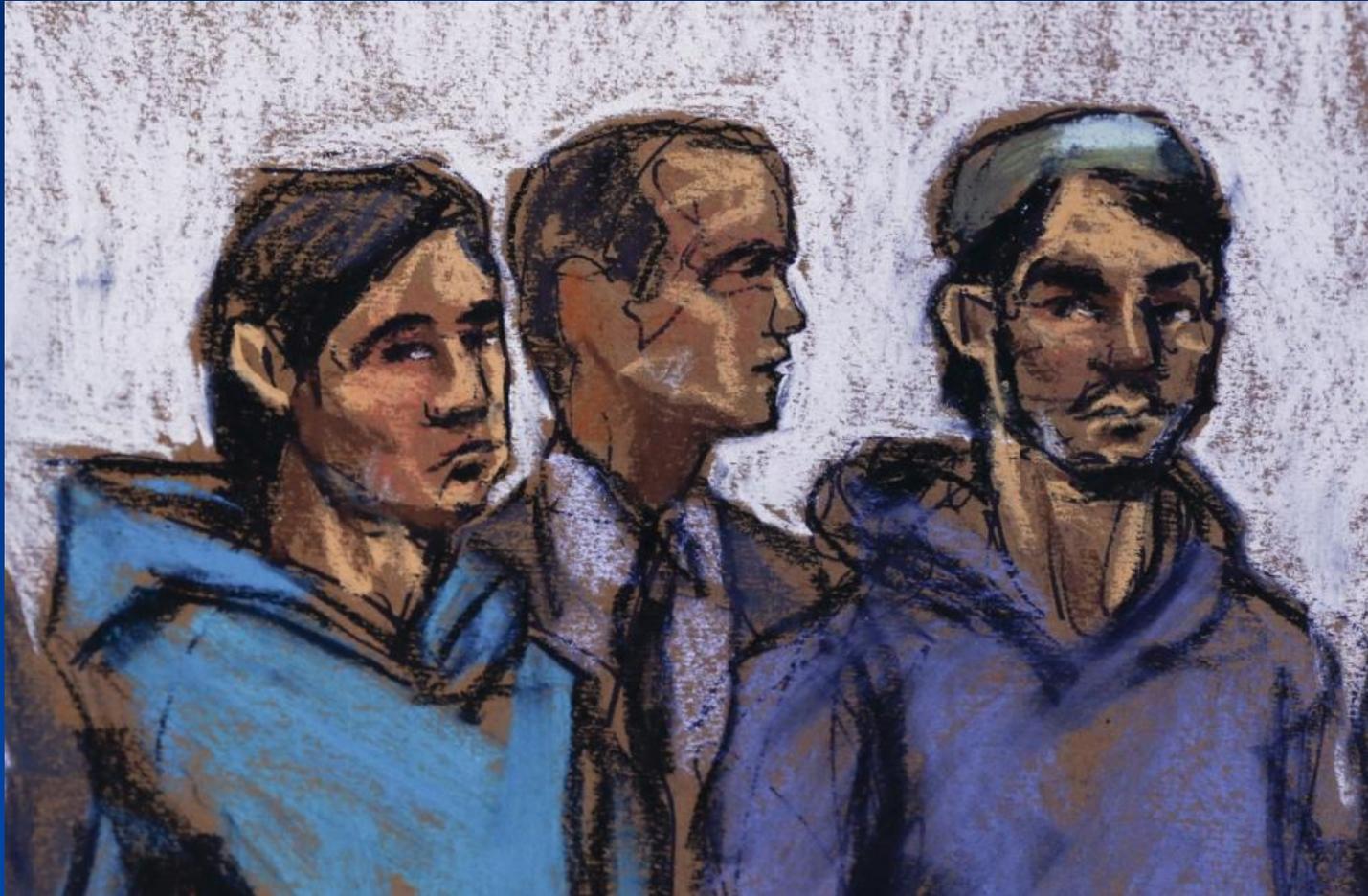


Open source social media

- “Greetings!....I am in USA now but we don’t have any arms. But is it possible to commit ourselves as dedicated martyrs anyway while here? What I’m saying is to shoot Obama, and then get shot ourselves, will it do? That will strike fear in the hearts of infidels.”
 - Abdurasul Juraboev, Hilofatnews.com, Aug. 8, 2014



Federal District Court, Feb., 2015





Planning the school shooting 😄😄😄

IF YOU **SEE**
SOMETHING,
SAY SOMETHING.

LAST YEAR
1,944
NEW YORKERS
SAW
SOMETHING
AND SAID
SOMETHING.

Thank you for keeping your eyes and ears open.
And not keeping your suspicions to yourself.

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.

Tell a cop or an MTA employee. Or call **1-888-NYC-SAFE**.



if you
SEE
something
SAY
something™

Report suspicious activity.
Call **720-913-2000**
In case of emergency call **9-1-1**



DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY

If You See Something Say Something™ used with permission of the NY Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

SubTalk

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New York City Transit *Going your way*

Reporting Resistance

- Fear that reporting will hurt self or the person being reported



Overcoming resistance

- Simple and multiple methods to report
- Anonymity a choice
- Trust in those who are receiving the report to do the right thing
- Campus/school wide awareness of reporting means



Last resort warning behavior

Evidence of a violent “time/action imperative” (Mohandie & Duffy, 1999). Increasing desperation or distress through declaration in word or deed, forcing the individual into a position of last resort. There is no alternative other than violence, and the consequences are justified (de Becker, 1997).





- “If you have the knowledge and inspiration, all that’s left is to take action.”
 - Posted one week before April 15, 2013 Boston Marathon bombing by Dzhokhar Tsarnaev



- “I have no choice. I am not in the position to, alone, go into the ghetto and fight. I chose Charleston because it is most historic city in my state, and at one time had the highest ratio of blacks to Whites in the country. We have no skinheads, no real KKK, no one doing anything but talking on the internet. Well someone has to have the bravery to take it to the real world, and I guess that has to be me.”

Directly communicated threat warning behavior

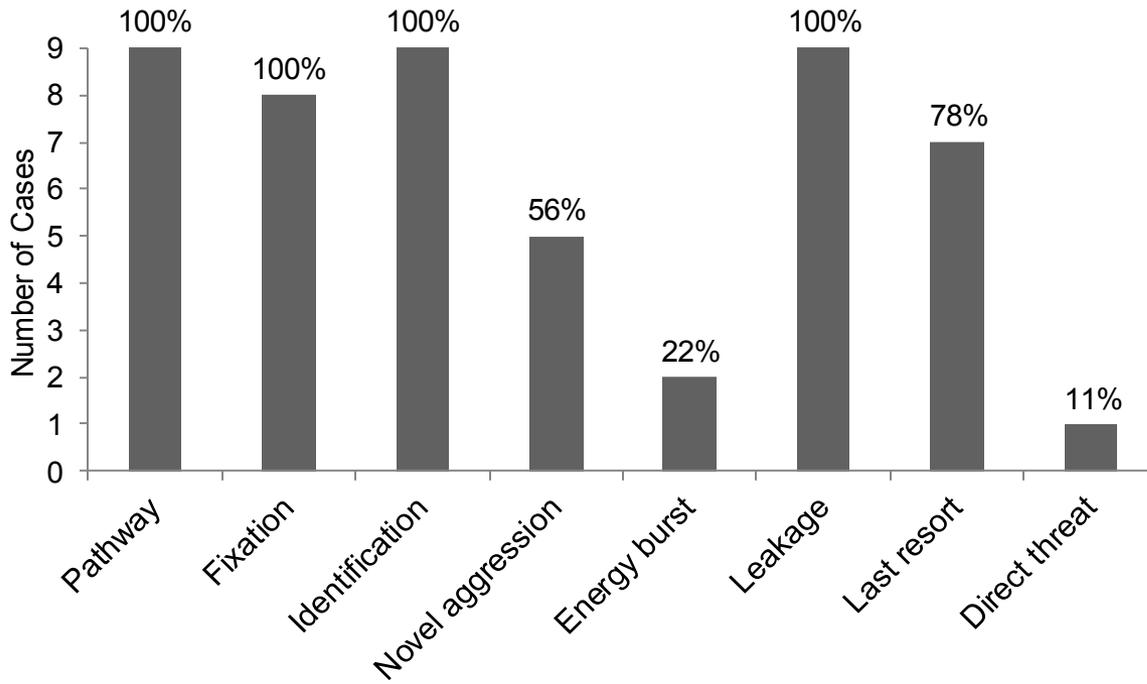
The communication of a direct threat to the target or law enforcement beforehand.



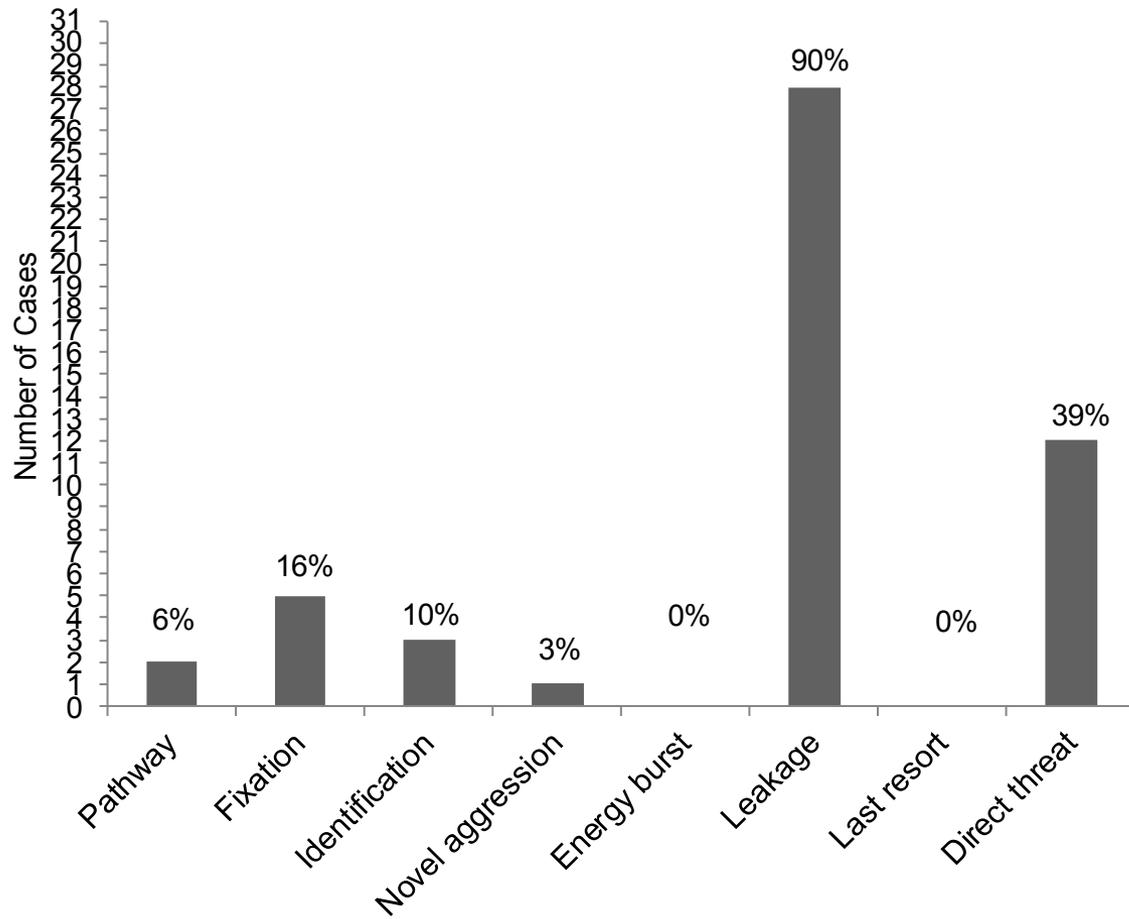
Comparison of German School Shooters and Other Students of Concern (Meloy et al., JTAM, 2014)

- 1999-2010
- All male, ages 15-23
- 37 victims killed, 78% used a firearm
- 56% former students who returned
- Students of concern aged 16-22, 89% current students, none planned to attack

School Shooters (N=9)



Other Students of Concern (N=31)



Comparison of shooters and other students of concern

Shooters, greater frequency of:

- Pathway
- Fixation
- Identification
- Novel aggression
- Last resort

Effect size (phi coefficients)

- 0.61-0.875 (large)
- $p < .001$
- Fisher exact test due to small sample sizes

*Meloy et al. (2014). J Threat Assessment and Management, 1:203-11

When failure lurks....

- Case management is too brief and not comprehensive enough
- Campus wide awareness of CARE Team and purpose; access inadequate and not tested
- Lack of crucial team members: campus counsel, housing, etc.
- No use of SPJ instruments
- Failure to know relevant case and statutory law, and school policies & procedures
- No partnership with local law enforcement



Calhoun & Weston, ATAP 2015

- **Bunkers**—overconfidence in physical security. Violence occurs at the edges.
 - **Silos**—still pervasive and a problem; multi-disciplinary teams, awareness throughout college community, reporting ease
 - **Myopic Management**—tactics done well at the expense of strategic thinking: connecting means and ends
- 

Suggestions for Operational Success

- Be mindful of context and circumstances of subject
- Keep in mind your intervention goal
- Safety of subject, target, other targets, and public at large
- Intervention should be proportionate, flexible, and sustainable
- Gauge the intimacy effect
- Be prepared to reassess the situation



Operational Success

- Recognize and anticipate precipitating events, usually loss and humiliation
 - Avoid creating a precipitating event
 - Approach problems with innovation and creativity
 - Keep the subject's dignity in mind at all times
 - Stick to the facts and avoid “what if”
 - Hope for the best, plan for the worst
 - Manage problems as long as they need managing
- 

Primary Prevention

- More widely available and comprehensive public mental health care
- Public awareness and responsibility for educational safety
- Balancing of security needs and reassurance in the school/campus environment
- Firearms
 - Register all firearms
 - Regulate who cannot possess a firearm
 - Require competency in use of a firearm



The Swedish School Attack in Trollhattan

Asa Erlandsson, B.A.
J. Reid Meloy, Ph.D.

J Forensic Sciences, 2018



What Never Had to Happen: The School Attack in Trolhattan

- Asa Erlandsson
- Stockholm: Norstedts, 2017





9 av 32 | FOTO: PRIVAT
Anton Lundin Pettersson, 21 år.

The Attack

- 0900, October 22, 2015
- Kronan School in Trollhattan
- Murdered three, injured another: teachers and students, all males
- 90% students foreign origin: Kurds, Turks, Somalis, Lebanese, and Syrians



The Attack (contd)

- Killed by police
- Newly purchased Viking style sword
- Walks through school stabbing people
- Poses for photo with two students who do not know that he is in midst of committing a mass murder





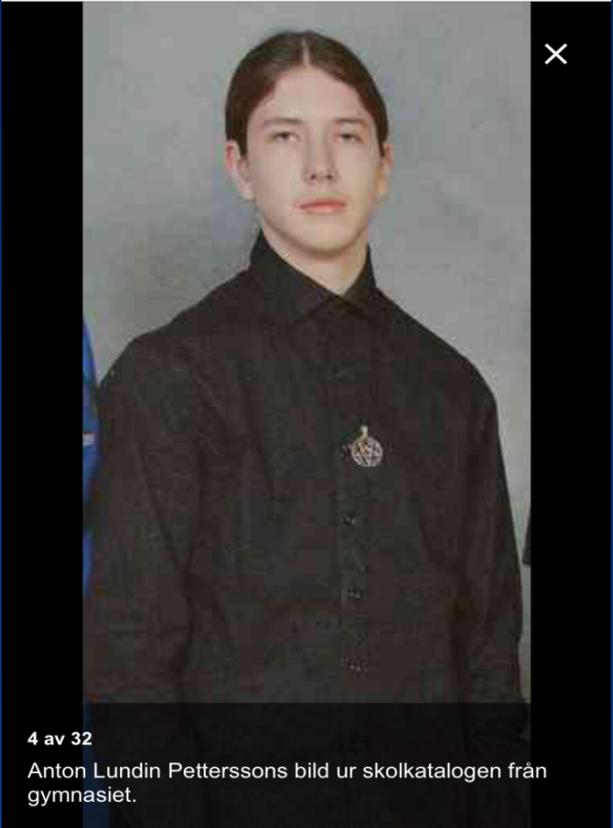
The Offender-early years

- 21 year old Swedish citizen
- Deeply isolated, no friends
- Middle class, youngest sibling of four, a brother and two half brothers
- Mother assistant nurse, father worked at Maritime Museum
- Middle class upbringing



- Signs of autism early in life
- Strong interest in weapons, martial arts
- Academics good
- Ashamed of his body due to scoliosis
- Perhaps bullied
- Meticulous, pedantic, extremely shy, loyal, suggestible, animal lover





4 av 32

Anton Lundin Petterssons bild ur skolkatalogen från gymnasiet.

The Offender—onset of radicalization and psychiatric decompensation

- Long standing interest in violent video games, firearms, horror movies, and fast cars
- Slept under his samurai sword
- Racist attitudes
- Lived with only mother in final years
- Chronically unemployed, would apply, but no interviews



- Months before murders began to change: increased sleep, more aggression, angrily impatient, more antisocial behavior
- Began to angrily cuss about immigration
- Identified with older Swedes, “that built this country”
- In 2015, 163,000 asylum seekers arrived in Sweden



- National mood angry and polarized
- 36 attacks against detention centers, mosques, and worker homes
- Voted for Sweden Democrats Party
- Increasingly depressed and suicidal
- Wrote two farewell notes, one is still classified
- 2nd note to gaming friend in Holland:



- “Hey man! I don’t have a lot of time so I’ll get right down to it. I’m going to be dead in the next hour or two, max. I remember all the fun we had playing SWTOR together and I want you to know that you’re the best friend I’ve ever had, you’re awesome.....”



-I'm going to miss you so much, even though I know I could have been more active, but you know me, fucking hate myself. If there's an afterlife I hope to see you there! Those fucking cops better aim straight: I really don't want to survive the rampage. Anyway, I love you, Anton"



Proximal Warning Behaviors

- Let's take a look



Pathway

- Researched, planned, and prepared two weeks prior to attack
- Studied route from home to school
- Studied pictures of building, pupils, and teachers
- Bought black coat, boots, viking sword and knife, black mask and helmet
- Studied films on how to use the sword



Fixation

- Preoccupied with belief for over two years that all Sweden's problems were caused by immigrants
- Fixation accompanied by failures in work and relationships



Identification

- Thin, young man who looked feminine
- Idolized alpha males, Vikings, warlords, and body builders
- Consumed related YouTube channels: The Golden One, The Amazing Atheist, Angry Foreigner, many Nazi films
- Loved weapons and hung a samurai sword above his bed



Novel Aggression

- Used a melon to practice slicing and stabbing
- “I would like to try this on people.”
- Fired a soft air gun when neighbors playing loud music, which frightened them



Energy Burst

- Last few weeks lived in front of his computer, surfing porn sites of shemales, planning attack
- Bought all paraphernalia during this two week period
- Invoice to be paid on October 23
- Searched for discussions: “quick and easy ways to die, what would your last meal be, why is it so hard to make friends?”



Leakage

- Told a relative he was angry about immigration and “one should do something”
- Wrote digital letter to Dutch friend an hour before attack: “I’m going to be dead in the next hour or two. I really don’t want to survive the rampage.”



Last Resort

- He could not tolerate Sweden anymore, felt he was being forced to do something, and convinced attack was his only alternative.
- “The blood is on your hands”
- Triggering event was imminent loss of his temporary employment (anticipated)



Directly Communicated Threat

- None



Proximal Warning Behaviors

- Pettersson met seven out of eight warning behaviors
- Compared to N=43 extreme right wing attackers (Meloy & Gill, 2016)
 - Pathway 81%
 - Identification 86%
 - Leakage 88%
 - Fixation 65%



Psychodiagnostic Issues

- Depressed and suicidal
- History of autism spectrum disorder
- Possible gender dysphoric disorder
- Possible personality disorder:
narcissistic, schizoid, or borderline traits



Conclusion

- “Attacks on schools and other public venues may be motivated in part by troubled individuals whose psychopathology is magnified by social and economic volatility, and the political movements, often extreme, that rise to address them.”





- Threat assessment and threat management are dynamically related; when you do one, you do the other.



- Social Media Investigation (SMI) is critical to threat assessment and management
 - Emails
 - Blogging
 - Listservs
 - Texting
 - Twitter
 - Facebook
 - Tumblr
 - Instagram
 - Snapchat
 - WhatsApp



Use young consultants!



I
know
more
than
my
dad



Do you mind if I strap your phone to my forehead so I can pretend you're looking at me when I talk?



- SandyHookPromise.org



Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines (VSTSAG)

- Cornell & Sheras, 2006
- Seven step decision tree
- Interviewing student of concern and witnesses
- Open-ended inquiries, parallel interviews, factual information from multiple sources and considering contextual and situational factors
- Transient threats usually resolved with explanation or apology
- Substantive threats require protective action



Substantive threats: protective action

- Notifying intended victim and parents
- Contacting student of concern's parents
- Increased monitoring and supervision of SOC: virtual and terrestrial realities
- Further classification as serious or very serious
- Mental health treatment
- Disciplinary action (<10%)
 - Exclusionary, law enforcement action: suspension, change in placement, arrest, charges, juvenile detention



Burnette, Datta & Cornell (2018). JTAM, 5, 4-20.

- Transient threats-no real intent to harm others
 - Humor, anger, frustration, fear
 - Judged by content as well as investigation of threat, including collaterals and student of concern
- Substantive threats-a serious risk of harm to others
 - Planning and preparation
 - Recruitment of accomplices
 - Acquisition of a weapon
 - Subclassified as “serious” (threat to assault) or “very serious” (threat to kill)
 - Student has means and intent to carry out threat



Findings

- 844 student threat cases
- Across 339 Virginia public schools
- 70% classification agreement
- Substantive threats included warning behaviors, older students, mentioned use of bomb or knife, and threat to self and others
- 2.5% of threats resulted in attempts, but substantive threats **36 times** more likely to be attempted than transient threats



Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines

- Only TATM system subjected to randomized controlled trials in Virginia
- Growing body of reliability and validity research
- Decreased belief that school violence is commonplace
- Decreased support for zero tolerance approach
- Decreased propensity to use suspension
- Reduction in disciplinary actions
- More supportive school climate
- Less bullying
- More use of counseling services
- Higher ratings of fair discipline and school safety by students and teachers



- “Overall, studies evaluating the VSTAG model found substantial evidence that school adoption of a threat assessment approach can change attitudes of school personnel regarding violence prevention efforts and discipline, promote a more positive school climate, and result in less punitive disciplinary responses for students making threats of violence” (Burnette et al., 2018, p. 9)



Salem-Keizer Threat Assessment System

- John Van Dreal, Ph.D.
- Detective Dave Okada (retired)
- Assessing Student Threats (2017)



Advantages of a Threat Assessment System

- Shared ownership, shared responsibility.
- Multi-discipline, multi-agency.
- Expeditious but methodical.
- Community collaboration and ownership.
- Decreased liability.



- Identification of risk in clear terms.
- Interventions and supervision strategies that fit the situation and accurately address risk.
- Promotes observation and supervision.
- Increases both the physical safety of a community and the psychological sense of safety.



INITIATE LEVEL 1 IF THE FOLLOWING IS KNOWN OR SUSPECTED:

- **Threat, aggression or violence is specific to identified target with motive and plan.**
- **Threat, aggression or violence is causing considerable fear or disruption to activity.**



- **Weapon at school or attempt to bring a weapon.**
- **There is continued intent to carry out threat.**



- **There is a history of threats, aggression or violence.**
- **Staff, parent or student intuition suggests a need to investigate threatening circumstances.**
- **Administrator is unable to determine if a situation poses a risk to school personnel or the community.**



SALEM KEIZER SCHOOL DISTRICT
 STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
Level 2 Referral and Guidelines

**Threat
Concern**



- 1. Call:**
 Law Enforcement
 Security Department
 Level Offices
- 2. Follow:**
 District Safety Guidelines

**Level
1**

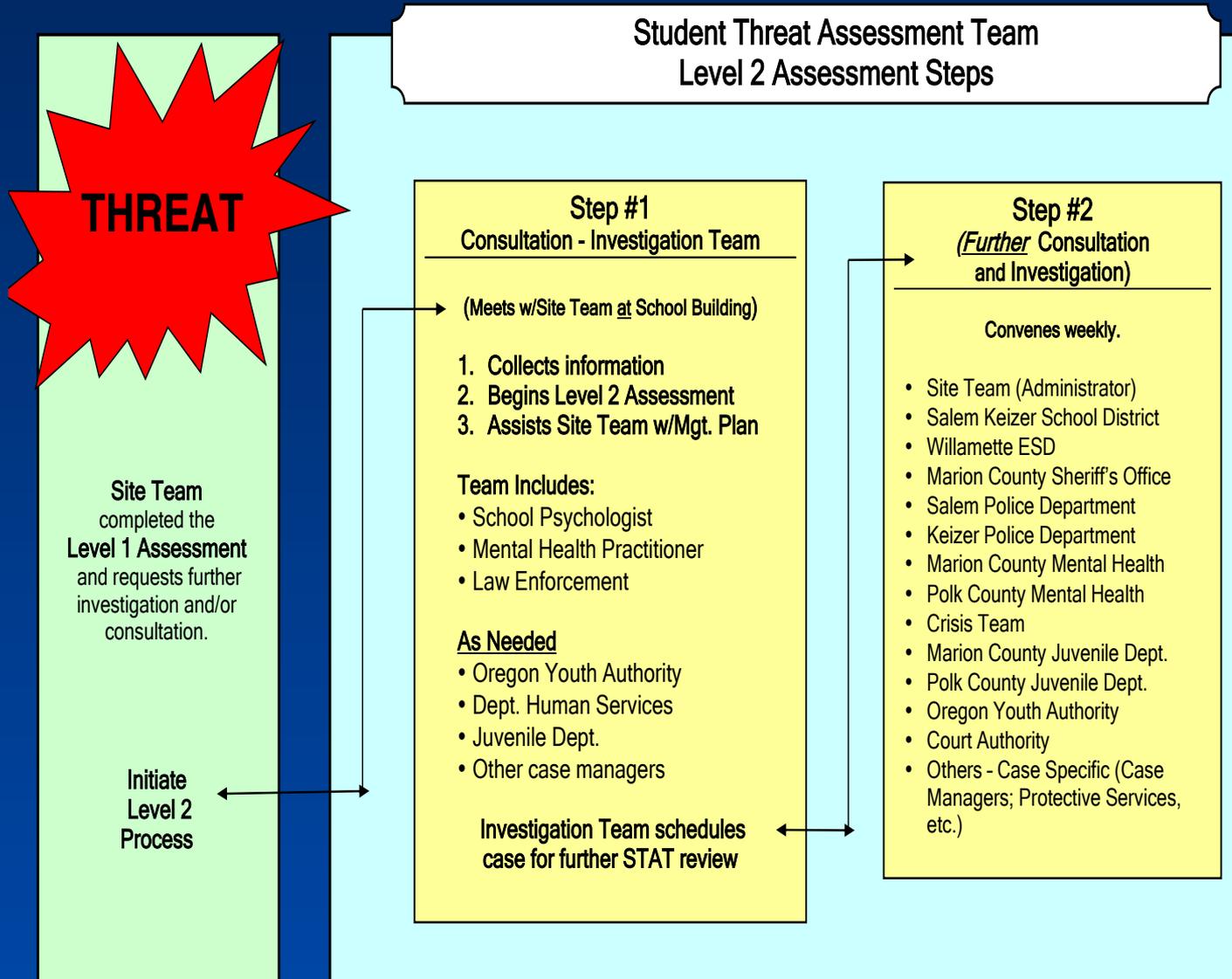
| Reasons to proceed with Level 2 referral. | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| Student brought gun to school or attempted to acquire gun with possible intent to harm others | Unable to confidently answer items on Level 1 Protocol | Safety concerns significant and beyond Site Team's ability to supervise and secure within the building | Exploration of community resources is needed to assist in supervision |

Concerns are identified (or dismissed) and team is confident in supervision, safety and resources.

Level 2

SALEM KEIZER SCHOOL DISTRICT
STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT and MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Flow Chart - Level 2



County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health



**Emergency Outreach Bureau
SCHOOL THREAT ASSESSMENT RESPONSE TEAM**

Maria Martinez, Ph.D.

SA Jeff Cugno, BAU Liaison
FBI Los Angeles



Emergency Outreach Bureau

Countywide Response

PMRT, START, SPU, MHAT, SMART, MET, CRU, HOPE, LET



- **Training & Consultation**
 - **Early Screening and Identification**
 - **Assessment**
 - **Intervention**
 - **Case Management and Monitoring**
- 

- **Internal Referral**
- **External Referral**
- **Triage System**
- **Response Time**



START Model

Assess
Immediate
Danger

Clinical
Assessment &
Collateral
Interviews

Fact Finding
and Objective
Data
Gathering

Develop &
Reinforce the
Safety Net

Data Sources

- **Face to Face Interview**
- **Collaterals**
- **Home Visit – Bedroom, Garage, etc.**
- **School**
- **Locker**



- **Back Pack**
 - **Desk**
 - **Vehicle**
 - **Peer's Locker**
 - **Other Storage Sites**
- 

- **Computer**
- **Cell Phone**
- **Social Media**
- **Police Calls for Service**
- **Weapon Registration**

Intervention Goals

- **Stop Forward Motion**
- **Surface Threat and Dynamics**
- **Mitigate/Eliminate Threat**
- **Establish Comprehensive Safety Net**



Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model

- U.S. Secret Service
- National Threat Assessment Center
- July, 2018
- Lina Alathari, Ph.D. et al.



Step 1. Establish a Multidisciplinary Threat Assessment Team

- Variety of professionals at school
- Designated leader
- Protocols and procedures
- Meet on a regular basis and “as needed”
- Local school or even better, regional



Step 2. Define Prohibited and Concerning Behaviors

- Such behaviors occur on a continuum
- Keep threshold for intervention low
- Other concerning statements or behaviors may be identified while assessing



What behaviors?

- **Prohibited**
 - Threats or violence
 - Bringing a weapon to school
 - Bullying
- **Concerning**
 - Decline in academic performance
 - Increasing isolation
 - Drug or alcohol use
 - Depression or other emotional problems



Step 3. Create a Central Reporting Mechanism

- Establish one or more means of reporting
- Provide training and guidance
- Allow for anonymous reporting
- Respond immediately
- Create confidence in reporting system:
acted upon appropriately, kept
confidential, handled appropriately



Step 4. Determine the Threshold for Law Enforcement Intervention

- Weapons, threats, physical violence, concerns about safety always report to LE
- School resource officer on TAT
- Safe2Tell (Colorado, 2016-17)
 - Suicide, bullying, drugs, cutting, depression
 - Threats of violence, planned school attacks



Step 5. Establish Assessment Procedures

- Maintain documentation
- Review online social media, conduct interviews, review class assignments, consider searching locker and desk
- Use a community systems approach
 - Identify all sources that may have information on the student, interview them, study formal record of student from multiple sources



- Build rapport that facilitates information gathering efforts: health and safety of student and school
- Always evaluate behaviors in context of student's age and social/emotional development



Investigative Themes

- Motives
- Communications
- Inappropriate and heightened interests
- Weapons access
- Stressors
- Emotional and/or developmental issues
- Desperation or despair
- Violence as the only option
- Concerned others
- Capacity to carry out an attack
- Inconsistency or concealment
- Protective factors

Step 6. Develop Risk Management Options

- Risk of harm to self or others
- Individualized management plan
- Monitoring or guidance
- Resources to assist the student
- Removal from school
- Notify law enforcement
- Enhance safety of all potential targets
- Create a situation less prone to violence
- Remove or redirect motive
- Reduce effect of stressors



Step 7. Create and Promote Safe School Climates

- Build positive and trusting relations with students: listen
- Identify students not connected to a trusted adult at school
- Enhance connections among students
- Identify clubs or teams at school
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)



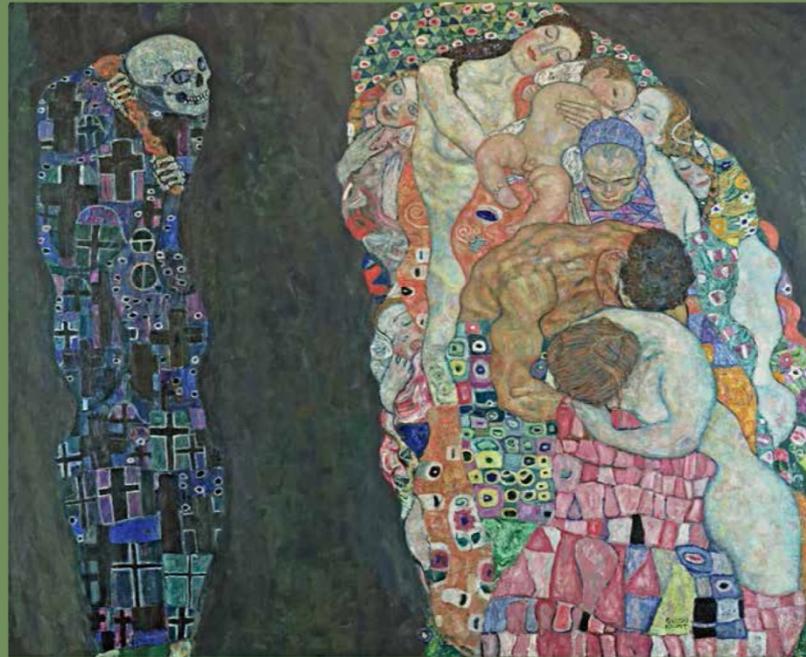
Step 8. Conduct Training for all Stakeholders

- Teachers, staff, administrators, parents, students, school psychologists, counselors, law enforcement
- “Snitching or ratting” is not seeking help for another



“We want to keep personal issues
from becoming public events.”





INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK OF THREAT ASSESSMENT

EDITED BY **J. REID MELOY** AND **JENS HOFFMANN**

OXFORD

Journal of Threat Assessment and Management



Networking Resources

- Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (atapworldwide.org)
- Canadian Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (catap.org)
- Association of European Threat Assessment Professionals (aetap.eu)
- Asia Pacific Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (apatap.org)



Thank you very much!

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