

# School Shootings: Perpetrators and Prevention

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[www.schoolshooters.info](http://www.schoolshooters.info)

# Agenda

- Introduction
- Perpetrators
  - Bio-psycho-social-cultural analysis
- Prevention

Perception vs. Reality

Prepare, Don't Panic

# Impact of Mass Attack

- Massive media coverage
- Increased anxiety
- Skewed perception of danger

# Misleading Statistics

- Be careful about what you read
- Different researchers count school shootings very differently
- Media seize on alarming data

# Whose Data?

- 2018
  - Gun Violence Archive: 331 mass shootings
  - Incidents that met FBI's definition: 7
- Post-Columbine Mass School Shootings
  - Gun Violence Archive: 220
  - Incidents that met FBI's definition: 6

# Question

- Statistically speaking, as you go about your day, where are you most in danger?
- Answer:
  - Your vehicle

# Comparisons

- 1,300x more people die in traffic accidents
- More students killed in school parking lot traffic accidents than school shootings
- School homicides account for about 1/10 of 1% (.001) of homicides in USA
- You are nearly ten times more likely to be hit by lightning than to die in a school shooting.



# Perspective

- Hypothetically, if there were 12 rampage shootings a year:
  - 120,000 schools in USA
  - $120,000 / 12$  rampage attacks
  - A school could expect a rampage attack every 10,000 years

# Language Warning

Profanity and violence

# The Problem with Simplistic Explanations

- You cannot explain something that is extraordinarily rare by blaming something that is extraordinarily common.
  - Bullying
  - Videogames
- There is no one cause of school shootings.
- There is no one profile of a school shooter.

# Diversity of Perpetrators

- Different types of people
- commit different types of attacks
- for different reasons.

# Diversity of Attacks

- **Targeted:** One or more specific intended victims
- **Random:** No specific intended victims
- **Mixed:** At least one targeted victim, plus one or more random victims

# Triviality of Triggers

- Ordinary events    murder
  - Bad grade/academic failure
  - Suspension
  - Romantic rejection
  - Teasing
  - Envy
- Most people don't kill over these

# Killing Up Close

- *On Killing*, by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman
- “As men draw this near [to their enemies] it becomes extremely difficult to deny their humanity. Looking in a man’s face, seeing his eyes and his fear, eliminate denial [of their humanity]. At this range the interpersonal nature of the killing has shifted. Instead of shooting at a uniform and killing a generalized enemy, now the killer must shoot at a person and kill a specific individual. Most simply cannot or will not do it.”

# Not Ordinary Kids

- Not just teenagers who are depressed, lonely, etc.
- “These are not ordinary kids who were bullied into retaliation. These are not ordinary kids who played too many video games. These are not ordinary kids who just wanted to be famous. These are simply *not ordinary kids*. These are kids with serious psychological problems.”



Psychology

Three categories

# Psychological Types

- Psychopathic
- Psychotic
- Traumatized

Psychopathic

# Psychopathic Shooters

- Extreme narcissism
- Reject morality
- Lack of empathy, guilt, remorse
- Sadistic
- Impression management
- Feel like the victim: nothing is their fault
- Entitled and easily enraged
- **Note: it is hard to comprehend how dark the heart of a person can be--especially a young person**

# Brenda Spencer

- When told she had shot 3 - 4 people:  
“Gee is that all? I thought there were a lot more.”
- “I have to go now. I shot a pig, I think, and I want to shoot more.”
- “I just started shooting. . . I just did it for the fun of it.”
- “I’m having a lot of fun.”
- When told reporters were in the area: “That’s great!”

# Brenda Spencer

- “I’m gonna stay here awhile. I want to have some more fun. It was fun seeing kids being shot in a group. . . It looked like a herd of cows standing around the one that was shot. It was really easy pickings. It was fun to watch the kids that had red or blue ski jackets. They made the best targets. It was like shooting ducks in a pond it was so easy. I enjoyed watching them squirm around after they had been shot.”

Eric Harris

# Extreme Narcissism

- “Ich bin Gott” (German: “I am God”)
- “I feel like God and I wish I was, having everyone being OFFICIALLY lower than me.”
- “My belief is that if I say something, it goes. I am the law, if you don’t like it, you die.”



# Rejection of Morality

- “‘Morals’ is just another word.”
- “I really don’t give a good god damn about what you think is ‘right’ and what is ‘wrong.’”
- “There’s no such thing as True Good or True evil.”

# Lack of Empathy

- “NATURAL SELECTION. Kill all retards. . . People spend millions of dollars on saving the lives of retards, and why. I don’t buy that shit like ‘oh, he’s my son, though!’ so the fuck what, he ain’t normal, kill him. Put him out of his misery. He is only a waste of time and money.”

# Sadistic

- “I want to tear a throat out with my own teeth like a pop can. I want to gut someone with my hand, to tear a head off and rip out the heart and lungs from the neck, to stab someone in the gut, shove it up to their heart, and yank the fucking blade out of their rib cage! I want to grab some weak little freshman and just tear them apart like a wolf, show them who is god. Strangle them, squish their head, bite their temples in the skull, rip off their jaw, rip off their collar bones, break their arms in half and twist them around, the lovely sounds of bones cracking and flesh ripping, ahhh...so much to do and so little chances.”

# Impression Management

- “If [I] have to cheat and lie to everyone then that’s fine. . . I have confidence in my ability to deceive people.”
- “I could convince them that I'm going to climb Mount Everest, or I have a twin brother growing out of my back. I can make you believe anything.”

# Impression Management

- Apology letter to owner of van he robbed:
  - “I strongly feel I owe you an apology and explanation. . . I am truly sorry for what I have done.”
- Teacher’s reaction to Eric’s essay about his arrest:
  - “It’s not one action that makes a person. I would trust you in a heartbeat.”

# Journal entry

- “Isn’t America supposed to be the land of the free? How come, if I’m free, I can’t deprive a stupid fucking dumbshit from his possessions if he leaves them sitting in the front seat of his fucking van out in plain sight and in the middle of fucking nowhere on a Frifuckingday night. NATURAL SELECTION. Fucker should be shot.”



# Impression Management

- Parent of a friend
  - “The perfect little gentleman.”
- Teacher comments
  - “Positive attitude and good cooperation.”
  - “Strong interest and participation.”
  - “Eric is doing awesome!”
- Probation officer (early termination, 2/3/99)
  - “Really nice young man. Seems responsible and remorseful. . . Prognosis: Good. Eric is a very bright young man who is likely to succeed in life.”

# Online threats

- “God I can’t wait until I can kill you people. I’ll just go to some downtown area in some big ass city and blow up and shoot everything I can. Feel no remorse, no sense of shame. . . I will rig up explosives all over a town and detonate each one of them at will after I mow down a whole fucking area full of you snotty ass rich mother-fucking high strung godlike attitude having worthless pieces of shit whores. I don’t care if I live or die in the shootout, all I want to do is kill and injure as many of you pricks as I can, especially a few people. Like [name redacted]. . . you all better hide in your houses because I’m coming for EVERYONE soon, and I WILL be armed to the fuckin’ teeth, and I will shoot to kill and I will fucking KILL EVERYTHING!”



Psychotic

# Psychotic Shooters

- Hallucinations
- Delusions
- Disorganized speech, writing, behavior
- Impaired social/emotional functioning
  - Profound alienation
  - Envied more successful peers
  - **Note: it is hard to comprehend the profound impact and apparent reality of psychotic symptoms**

# Being Schizophrenic

- Quotes from people with schizophrenia
- “My greatest fear is this brain of mine. . . The worst thing imaginable is to be terrified of one’s own mind, the very matter that controls all that we are and all that we do and feel.”
- “What then does schizophrenia mean to me? It means fatigue and confusion, it means trying to separate every experience into the real and the unreal and not sometimes being aware of where the edges overlap.”

# Understanding Psychosis

- After attacks, sometimes see comments in the media:
  - “He’s not psychotic—he planned this.”
- Being psychotic does not mean incapable of functioning

Kip Kinkel

# Kip Kinkel: Psychotic

- Hallucinations
  - Heard 3 voices starting at age 12
- Paranoid delusions
  - Prepared for invasion by China
  - Thought government might have put computer chip in his brain

# Kip Kinkel: Psychotic

- “I don’t know who I am. . . I hate myself for what I’ve become. . . I am repulsive. . . My eyes hurt. They hurt so bad. They feel like they are trying to crawl out of my head. Why aren’t I normal?”

# Rage

- “I am so full of rage that I feel I could snap at any moment. . . I sound so pitiful. People would laugh at this if they read it. I hate being laughed at. But they won’t laugh after they’re scraping parts of their parents, sisters, brothers, and friends from the wall of my hate. . . Please. Someone, help me. . . Oh God, I am so close to killing people. So close.”



# Parents

- “I have just killed my parents! . . . I’m so sorry. I am a horrible son. I wish I had been aborted. I destroy everything I touch. . . My head just doesn’t work right. God damn these VOICES inside my head. I want to die. I want to be gone. But I have to kill people. I don’t know why. I am so sorry! Why did God do this to me?”

Traumatized

# Traumatized

- Unstable, chaotic, fragmented families
- Parental substance abuse
- Parental criminal behavior
- Physical, sexual, emotional abuse
- Frequent relocations/changing caregivers

Jeffrey Weise

# Abuse

- “My mom used to abuse me a lot when I was little. She would hit me with anything she could get her hands on, she used to drink excessively, too. She would tell me I was a mistake, and she would say so many things that it’s hard to deal with them or think of them without crying.”

# Suicidal

- “The kind of pain that makes you physically sick at times, makes you so depressed you can’t function, makes you so sad and overwhelmed with grief that eating a bullet or sticking your head in a noose seems welcoming.”

# Suicide Attempt

- “I had went through a lot of things in my life that had driven me to a darker path than most choose to take. I split the flesh on my wrist with a box opener, painting the floor of my bedroom with blood I shouldn’t have spilt. After sitting there for what seemed like hours...I had the revelation that this was not the path.”

# Hopeless

- “So fucking naïve man, so fucking naïve. Always expecting change when I know nothing ever changes. I’ve seen mothers choose their man over their own flesh and blood. I’ve seen others choose alcohol over friendship. I sacrifice no more for others, part of me has fucking died and I hate this shit. I’m living every man’s nightmare and that single fact is kicking my ass. I really must be fucking worthless. This place never changes, it never will. Fuck it all.”



# Rage

- “16 years of accumulated rage suppressed by nothing more than brief glimpses of hope, which have all but faded to black. I can feel the urges within slipping through the cracks, the leash I can no longer hold.”

# Beyond the Typology

# Multi-determined Violence

- Most people who are psychopathic, psychotic, or traumatized never kill anyone
- Many factors come together to cause rampage attacks

# Biology

# Biological Factors

- Genetics
- Developmental issues
- Body-related issues

# Genetics: Psychopathic

- **Nikolas Cruz**
- Mother: 28 arrests
  - Assault with tire iron
  - Threatened to burn down friend's house and kill her
- Half-sister: 17 arrests
  - Twice charged for weapons in school
  - Elder abuse, battery of disabled person
  - Prison: attempted murder of police officer

# Genetics: Psychotic

- **Kip Kinkel**
- Great-uncle: psychotic, tried to kill officer he believed was a Nazi; officer shot and killed him
- A cousin thought he was second coming of Jesus; built bomb and threatened coworkers
- Another cousin: schizophrenic and suicidal
- Perhaps a dozen relatives had been institutionalized

# Genetics: Traumatized

- Multiple shooters had family members who engaged in illegal use of guns
- Parents/relatives
  - Domestic violence
  - Child abuse
  - Arrests/incarcerations



# Prenatal/Postnatal Issues

- **Eric Houston:** mother hospitalized w/pneumonia during pregnancy; hospitalized in infancy: meningitis/encephalitis; pneumonia, severe asthma; developmental delays
- **Seung Hui Cho:** hospitalized in infancy (whooping cough, pneumonia); heart problem as toddler—traumatized by procedure; not the same afterward
- **Adam Lanza:** mother: hypoglycemia, hypotension; decreased fetal movement; Cesarean birth; stopped breathing at 8 days, hospitalized; developmental delays
- **Nikolas Cruz:** mother arrested buying crack during pregnancy; developmental delays

# Body-Related Issues

- Birth defects
- Unusually short
- Overweight
- Uncoordinated/unathletic
- Felt extremely unattractive

# Eric Harris: Body-Related Issues

- Congenital leg problem
  - 12 visits to doctor by 19 months
- Chest deformity
  - Age 12: surgery: metal piece implanted
  - Age 13: surgery metal piece removed
  - At death: chest deformity noted by coroner
- “how fucking weak I am”
- Grew up on military bases, aspired to be Marine

# Elliot Rodger: Inferiority

- “I was the shortest kid in my class — even the girls were taller than me. . . It instilled the first feelings of inferiority in me.”
- “I was physically weak compared to other boys my age. Even boys younger than me were stronger. This vexed me to no end.”

Social

Frustrations, Failures, and  
Rejections

# Social Stresses

- Educational issues
  - Academic failures
  - Disciplinary problems
- Romantic failures
- Family issues
- Legal trouble
- Conflicts with peers
- Loss of potential future

# Eric Harris

- Teased/harassed by peers
- Rejected by girls—repeatedly
  - Never had girlfriend
  - Never had sex
  - No date for prom
- Suspended
- Arrested

# Elliot Rodger

- Parents divorced
- Father remarried
- Profound social anxiety/poor social skills
- Struggled with friendships
- Dropped out of three colleges
- Unemployed
- Romantic failure



# Damaged Masculinity

Feeling like a “loser”

# Combined Factors

- Psychology +
- Body-related issues +
- Social failures = Damaged masculinity
- May not apply to all shooters, but is a common pattern

# Elliot Rodger

- “I felt inferior and undesirable.”
- “I was scared that she might view me as nothing but an inferior insect.”
- “I felt like such an inferior mouse.”
- “They made me feel so inferior and worthless and small.”
- “Turning 21 as a kissless virgin was indeed a dark day. How pathetic it was, to be 21 and still a virgin while kids were having sex at the age of 14?”

# Eric Harris

- “I have always hated how I looked. . . That’s where a lot of my hate grows from. The fact that I have practically no self-esteem, especially concerning girls and looks and such.”
- Last entry in his journal
  - “the weird looking Eric KID”

# Misery/Self-Pity

- **Dylan Klebold:** “My existence is shit to me —how I feel that I am in eternal suffering, in infinite directions in infinite realities. . . Let’s sum up my life . . . the most miserable existence in the history of time.”
- **Chris Harper-Mercer:** “I have always been the most hated person in the world. Ever since I arrived in this world, I have been under siege from it.”
- **Luke Woodham:** “I suffered all my life. No one ever truly loved me. No one ever truly cared about me.”

# Envy/Resentment

- **Sebastian Bosse:** “Jocks are all of those who think they are above others because of expensive clothes or beautiful girls on their side. I loathe these people.”
- **Seung Hui Cho:** “Oh the happiness I could have had mingling among you hedonists, being counted as one of you.”
- **Dylan Klebold:** “I see jocks having fun, friends, women. . . I hated the happiness that they have.”

Compensating for Feeling Like  
Losers: Violence

Murder = Power



# The Dynamics of Violence

- From nobody to somebody
  - Assertion of power/manhood
  - Restoring “justice”/revenge
  - Enhancing status
  - Achieving fame
- Transformative

# Strategies of Compensation

- Guns enhancing status
- Find violent role models to identify with
- Attach themselves to ideologies of power
- Dehumanization and contempt
- Sadistic violence
- Fame-seeking

# Guns Enhancing Status

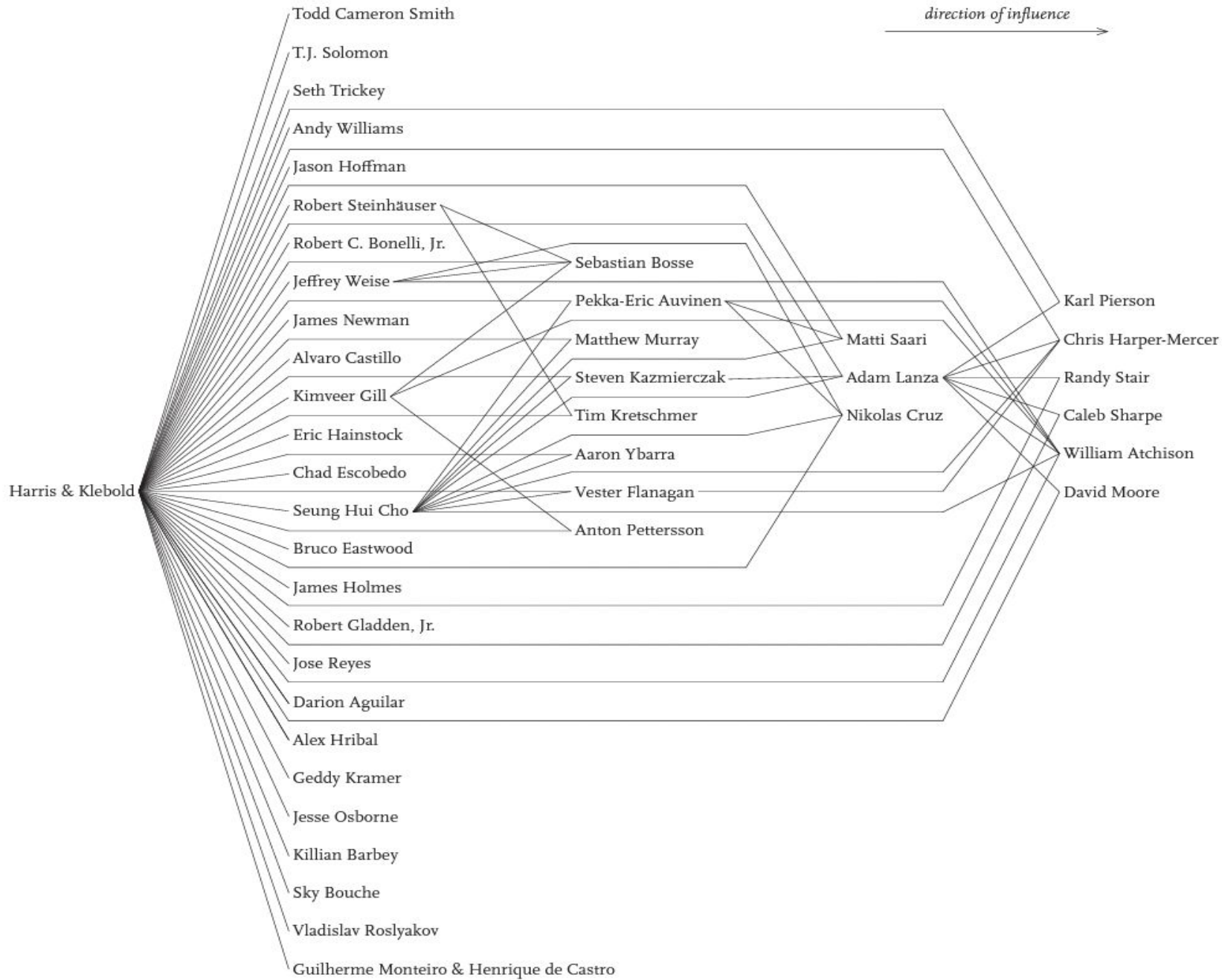
- **Eric Harris:** “I am fucking armed. I feel more confident, stronger, more God-like.”
- **Elliot Rodger:** “After I picked up the handgun, I brought it back to my room and felt a new sense of power. I was now armed. *Who’s the alpha male now, bitches?*”
- **Kimveer Gill:** “I love guns I really do. The great equalizer..... wouldn't you say? HA HA HA HA HA HA HA MUHAHAHAHA”

# Role Models

- **Seung Hui Cho** referred to the Columbine killers as “martyrs.”
- **Sebastian Bosse** wrote, “Eric Harris is GOD!”
- **Alex Hribal** wrote, “I became a prophet because I spread the word of a God” and named Eric Harris as the god.
- **Chris Harper-Mercer**: “People who are elite, people who stand with the gods. People like Elliot Rodger, Vester Flanagan, The Columbine kids, Adam Lanza and Seung Cho.”

# Role Models

- **Randy Stair:** “It’s very surreal how similar Eric Harris’ journal is to my mental journal (my thoughts) . . . The dude is a fucking hero to me. . . Eric has literally been in my thoughts the last 3 years. . . Pretty fucking surreal learning how similar we are.”
- **Sebastian Bosse:** “There is no doubt. It is scary how similar Eric was to me. Sometimes it seems as if I were to live his life again, as if everything would repeat itself.”





# Ideologies: Eric Harris

- “I love the Nazis too . . . I love their beliefs and who they were, what they did, and what they wanted.”
- Nazi ideology:
  - Source of power to identify with
  - Ultra-masculine, militaristic
  - Despite body issues, he was the master race
  - Justification for murder

# Ideologies: Luke Woodham

- Described himself as “a short little fat boy with a crewcut and thick brown glasses. I was nothing, and I knew it.”
- Involved with peers who were into Hitler and the Nazis, black magic, and Satanism
- Became convinced that they had the power to kill people through magic spells
- “One second I was some kind of heartbroken idiot, and the next second I had complete control or complete power over a lot of things.”



# Ideologies: Chris Harper-Mercer

- “here I am , 26, with no friends, no job, no girlfriend, a virgin. I long ago realized that society likes to deny people like me these things. . . Though we may have been born bad, society left us no recourse, no way to be good. I have been forced to align myself with demonic forces.”
- “My success in Hell is assured. They will give me the power that I seek.”
- “666 For Satan I do this, for the Darkness I do this 666.”

# Dehumanization and Contempt

- Enhance self by looking down on others
- People deserve to die/don't deserve to live
  - Jocks, preps
  - Whores, bitches
  - Snobs, hedonists
  - Retards, idiots, zombies, robots

# Dehumanization and Contempt

- **Eric Harris:** “YOU KNOW WHAT I LOVE!!!? Natural SELECTION!!!!!!!!!!!!!! God damn it’s the best thing that ever happened to the Earth. Getting rid of all the stupid and weak organisms.”
- **Elliot Rodger:** “I imagined how sweet it would be to slaughter all of those evil, slutty bitches who rejected me.”
- **William Atchison:** “Kick natural selection up to the max and allow only the smartest and strongest to live, as all of these degenerates meet a brutal, well-deserved death.”

# Sadism

- **Elliot Rodger**

- “I will cut them, flay them, strip all the skin off their flesh, and pour boiling water all over them while they are still alive, as well as any other form of torture I could possibly think of. When they are dead, I will behead them and keep their heads in a bag. . . Once they see all of their friend’s heads roll onto the street, everyone will fear me as the powerful god I am.”

# Sadism = Self-Elevation

- Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*
- The sadistic personality:
- “He is sadistic because he feels impotent, unalive, and powerless. He tries to compensate for this lack by having power over others, transforming the worm he feels himself to be into a god.”
- **Eric Harris:** “weird-looking Eric KID” god-hood
- **Elliot Rodger:** “kissless virgin” alpha male/powerful god

# Fame-Seeking

- **Chris Harper-Mercer** re: Vester Flanagan
  - “So many people like him are all alone and unknown, yet when they spill a little blood, the whole world knows who they are. A man who was known by no one, is now known by everyone. His face splashed across every screen, his name across the lips of every person on the planet, all in the course of one day. Seems the more people you kill, the more you’re in the limelight.”
    - August 31, 2015



# Fame-Seeking

- **Eric Harris:** “I want to leave a lasting impression on the world.”
- **Randy Stair:** “I’ll make the news headlines . . . I’ve always desired to be famous; to make a name for myself and inspire others ... I want to leave my mark. . . Screw fame, gimme infamy ... In 25 days I’ll go into the history books . . . The human race will remember my name for a century.”

# Fame-Seeking

- From nobody to somebody
  - **Nikolas Cruz:** “I am nothing. I am no one. My life is nothing and meaningless. . . I live a lone life, live in seclusion and solitude. I hate everyone and everything. With the power of my AR[15] you will all know who I am.”



Combined Influences:  
who they are and what happens to them

- **Biological**

- Genetics
- Developmental
- Body-related issues

- **Psychological**

- Psychopathic
- Psychotic
- Traumatized

- **Social**

- Setbacks
- Failures
- Rejections

- **Cultural**

- Role models
- Ideologies
- Fame-seeking

Prevention

# Pay Attention to Fear

- Peter Odighizuwa
  - “We used to sit around and talk about how Peter’s gonna shoot somebody.”
- Wayne Lo
  - “It’s not like we haven’t been afraid of Wayne. . . My friends and I had been talking daily about how scary he is.”

# Problem Student: Nikolas Cruz

- Animal cruelty
- School discipline
- Police called to home
- Threats, intimidation, aggression
- Threat assessment conducted
- Not allowed to wear backpack
- People lived in fear of him

# Jared Loughner

- Student
  - “We do have one student in class who was disruptive. . . The teacher tried to throw him out and he refused to go. . . Hopefully he will be out of class very soon and not come back with an automatic weapon.”
- Instructor
  - “I always felt somewhat paranoid. When I turned my back to write on the board, I would always turn back quickly—to see if he had a gun.”

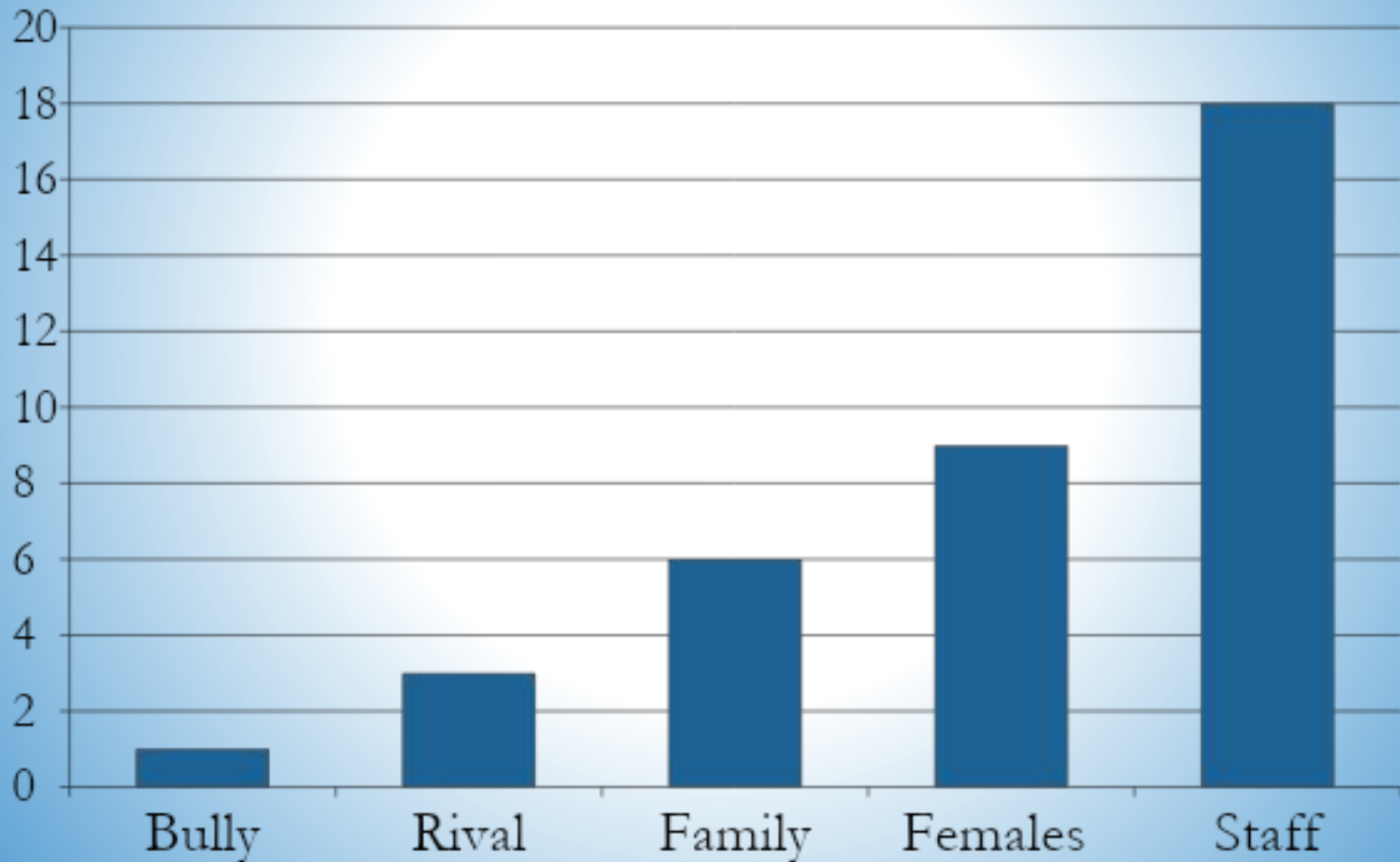
# Finding the Balance

- On one hand:
  - Respect our reactions
- On the other hand:
  - Make sure we're not over-reacting to someone who's just odd/socially awkward, rude, etc.

# The Stereotype

- School shooters are
  - teenaged
  - white males
  - who are loners
  - and get picked on so badly
  - that they kill the bullies who abused them.

# How Many Shooters Targeted What Types of Victims? (n=48)





# Follow Where the Evidence Leads

- Case at a high school
- Multiple students involved
- Evidence was gathered
- Administrators struggled to take the threat seriously

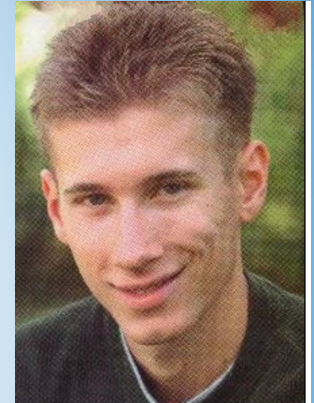
# Follow Where the Evidence Leads

- “They looked like normal kids. I mean literally just looked like normal kids. They were on the wrestling team! . . . Looking at them, I will say this; when I heard it was the one kid who I had met before, I was like no way! What are you kidding? No way!”

## Follow Where the Evidence Leads

- “They weren’t isolated. . . They did not fit what we thought was the profile for the kind of student that would plan something like this. They were engaged in school. They were involved in a sport. They seemed to have a large base of friends. They even had some popularity amongst the student body.”

“They looked like normal kids”



# Not Who We Think They Are

- Regarding Mitchell Johnson:
  - “Some of the teachers said Mitchell Johnson was one of the nicest, quietest, kids they had.”
  - “I still cannot believe that Mitchell Johnson did that, because he was . . . the most polite student I’ve ever had.”



# Not Who We Think They Are

- Regarding Drew Golden:
  - “If you tell me to make a list of all the boys who would do this. . . by no means would [Andrew] have been the top of the list. . . it’s been terrifying. To think that you’ve got this child who did this awful thing where we could tell you twenty more that we wouldn’t be surprised at all to do such a thing.”

# Not Who We Think They Are

- Regarding Michael Carneal:
  - “[Michael] told us that he was going to do something that day. . . but he [was] one of those people that was just kind of little and you just want to give him a hug because he’s so funny and nice. Didn’t seem like somebody that could possibly do something like that.”

## Charles Whitman

- Professor: Whitman deserved “all the standard appellations of a high school yearbook. He was easily the ‘Best Looking,’ ‘Friendliest,’ and ‘Most Mature.’”
- University psychiatrist: “There was something about him that suggested and expressed the all-American boy.”
- Psychiatrist noted that Whitman was “thinking about going up on the tower with a deer rifle and shooting people.”



# Not Who We Think They Are

- Steven Kazmierczak
  - “He was exceptional as a student, one of those who was definitely a standout. He was every professor’s and advisor’s dream come true, a very respectful student who was polite and so dedicated and conscientious. Nobody had anything bad to say about him.”
  - “He was the star in our department, the Golden Child. We all knew that one day he would go on to get his Master’s and his Ph.D. at prestigious universities, become a great success, and make us all proud.”

## Follow Where the Evidence Leads

- Kip Kinkel
  - Parents were respected educators
  - Kip was found to have gun in his locker
  - No investigation

# Follow Procedures

- Dick Doyle, Assistant Principal
  - “We’d crafted preventive measures. We’d created a safety wall, but the rules we set up were ignored when the moment of truth arrived. They were not followed because, quite simply, he was Kinkel. Instead of considering the fact of the gun, they considered the family of the boy who was caught with it.”

# The Danger of Stereotypes

- If we think we know what a school shooter looks like, we may fail to take action when warning signs come from someone who does not fit our image of a school shooter.
- They could be:
  - The All-American Boy
  - The Golden Child
- Follow where the evidence leads.

# Warning Signs

- Warning signs are **comments** and **behaviors** that indicate someone is planning an attack
  - Leakage and threats
  - Attack-related behaviors

# Explicit Warning Signs

- Jesse Osborne told a boy, “When I come back with a rifle, you’re going to be the one I shoot.”
- Luke Woodham told his ex-girlfriend he would “put a bullet” in her head.
- Brenda Spencer told a classmate “that she ‘would blow his brains out with a gun.’”
- Eric Hainstock: the principal “is not going to make it through homecoming.”

# Implied Threats

- Robert Flores: “You better watch your back if you’re going to flunk me.”
- Wayne Lo: “I have the power to bring the whole school to its knees.”
- Valery Fabrikant: “You know who I am and you know what is going to happen.”
- Bryan Oliver: “I watched five movies about serial killers and thought of you the whole time.”



# Indirect Leakage

- Evan Ramsey told a peer he was plotting an “evil day.”
- Caleb Sharpe gave notes to friend saying he was going to do “something stupid” that would get him killed or jailed.
- Bryan Oliver warned friends not to go to school because “something bad” was going to happen.



# Attack-Related Behavior

- *Selecting* the victims
- *Planning* when, where, and how to carry out the attack
- *Surveying* the venue
- *Obtaining* the necessary weapon(s)
- *Practicing* with firearms
- *Experimenting* with explosives
- *Recruiting* an accomplice

# 5 Stages of Active Shooter

- Fantasy
  - Planning
  - Preparation
  - Approach
  - Implementation
- 
- First 3 stages: threat assessment
  - Last 2 stages: physical security and emergency response

# Evidence of Imminence

- Stage 1: Fantasy
  - “Sometimes I feel like just getting a gun from somewhere and going on a rampage.”
- Stage 3: Preparation (attack-related behavior)
  - “I stole my Dad’s shotgun and Friday at noon I’m getting revenge in the cafeteria.”

# Evidence of Imminence

- **More details   more imminent risk**
  - Realistic, specific, achievable plan
  - Time, place, method, access to means

# Grandiose Fantasies

- “It’ll be like the LA riots, the Oklahoma bombing, WWII, Vietnam...all mixed together.”
- “We will hijack a hell of a lot of bombs and crash a plane into NYC.”
- “I have a goal to destroy as much as possible. . . I want to burn the world.”
- “I say “KILL MANKIND” no one should survive.”

# Methodical Planning

- “First we will go to the house of ---- and ---- in the morning before school starts. . . We go in, we silently kill each inhabitant and then pin down ---- and ----. Then take our sweet time pissing on them, spitting on them, and just torturing the hell out of them. Once we are done there we set time bombs to burn the houses down. . . then get totally prepared and during A-lunch we go in and park in our spots. With sunglasses on we start carrying in all of our bags of terrorism and anarchism shit into our table. Being very casual and silent about it. It’s all for a science/band/English project or something. Then, we sit down, play some pump-up music, light a \$50 stogie, and get ready to start throwing out the first wave of crickets [small bombs]. Then we light them and throw them as far as we can. . . Then I open fire. . . Then if we can we go upstairs and go to each classroom and pick off fuckers at our will ”

# Michael Carneal: Leakage

- Warned kids “something big is going to happen on Monday;” said to stay away from the morning prayer group; it would involve “blood and guts”
- Said Monday would be the “day of reckoning”
- Said it would be “cool to walk down the hall and kill people
- Five peers saw Michael bring gun to school
- He said, “the hypocrites in the prayer group were going to go down.”



# Evidence of Imminence

- Time: Monday morning after Thanksgiving
- Place: School lobby
- Method: shooting
- Access to means: yes
- Victim selection: students in prayer circle



# Mitchell Johnson: Leakage

- told peer, “some people are going to die”
- “he said he was gonna kill a lot of people”
- “all my girlfriends who ever broke up with me, I am gonna kill them”
- “he said he was going to ‘cut school tomorrow and bring a gun to school, and we’d find out if we’d live or die.’
- Said if you go outside the next day during fifth period, you will die
- He said “he was going on a killing spree”
- said he was going to “get back at some people from last year” and “kill them and stuff”

## Drew Golden: Leakage

- He told a girl that he and his friend were going to pull the fire alarm, set up a sniper position in a field, and shoot people as they exited the building. Two days after this, however, he said he wasn't going to go through with it.
- He stood on a table in the cafeteria during lunch and said, "You're all going to die."

# Evidence of Imminence

- Time: tomorrow, 5th period
- Place: outside the school
- Method: shooting/sniper
- Strategic plan: pull fire alarm to evacuate building
- Access to means: guns in their homes
- Victim selection: girls who broke up with him

# Safety Plan Options / Threat Management

# Brief Overview

- Safety planning cannot be cookie-cutter
- Every situation is different
- What follows are options to consider

# Safety Plan

- Notifications
  - Staff, intended victims, etc.
- Disciplinary actions
  - Detention, suspension, expulsion
  - Note: punishment alone has no preventive value

# Placement Options

- Stay in current school
  - With regular schedule
  - With modified schedule
- Transfer to alternative school
- Be placed in alternative program within the school
- Be home-schooled
- Virtual/hybrid classes
- If severe mental health issues:
  - Psychiatric hospital
  - Residential treatment program

# Searches/Monitoring

- Person
- Locker
- Backpack
- School computer/network
- Vehicle
- Home
- Cell phone
- Home computer
- Social media



# Escort/Monitoring

- Escort to/from bus or family vehicle
- Escort within school
- Decrease unstructured time (recess, lunch)
- Check-ins: daily, weekly, etc.
- Backpack
  - Prohibit
  - Use clear/mesh backpack

# Supports/Interventions

- Academic
  - In-school, home (tutoring)
- Mental health
  - In-school, community
- Peer mediation/restorative justice
- Prohibit contact with certain peers, reassign classes
- Functional behavioral assessment
- Social emotional learning
- Positive behavioral interventions support
- Skill-building

# Other Considerations

- Promote pro-social development
  - School/community groups: sports, scouting, faith-based, clubs, etc.
  - Find mentors, positive role models
- Home factors
  - Limit/monitor use of internet and social media
  - Remove firearms
  - Limit contact with concerning peers

# Psychopaths and Deception

# Thwarted Attack

- “I’ve been working on this craft of mine for as long as I can remember now. The biggest con I’ve ever done. Making things seem like they are all right when in reality, they’re not. And people believe me. They think I’m doing well and better, when really, my hatred and anger has maintained pretty constant, I’m just good at lying and making things seem okay. I’m very proud of myself, for nobody I know could pull this off as well as I am. It’s amazing they have no idea what’s going on. This is my biggest and grandest work of art that’s been years in the making, but yet they’ve been clueless.”

# Summary

# Domains to Investigate

- Threats, leakage and attack-related behavior
- Recent or impending losses, failures, rejections, blows to identity, conflicts
- Themes: sadism, fame-seeking, rage, revenge, envy/resentment, misery/self-pity, guns enhancing status, dehumanization and contempt

# Domains to Investigate

- Capability of killing
  - Psychopathic, psychotic, traumatized
  - Desperate, enraged, believe others deserve to die
- Evidence of imminence



# Resources

- [Warning Signs: Identifying School Shooters Before They Strike](#)
- [School Shooters: Understanding High School, College, and Adult Perpetrators](#)
- [Why Kids Kill: Inside the Minds of School Shooters](#)
- [Schoolshooters.info](#)
- [Driftnet.com](#)

The End