

Active Shooters: Behavior, Conditions, and Situations

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NYPD Active Shooter *Recommendations* *and Analysis for Risk Mitigation*

January 2010

- 281 active shooter incidents from 1966 to 2010 (237 in U.S.)
- Significant variations among shooters and attack elements
- 96% male shooters
- Non-school shooters modal age group 35 to 44 years old
- 98% carried out by a single attacker
- Planning tactics range from very little to extensive
- Average number of deaths is 3
- Average number of wounded is 3.6
- Location of attacks:
 - 29% school
 - 23% open commercial
 - 22% “other”
 - 13% office building
 - 13% factory/warehouse

Violence/Shooter Functioning and Drivers

Personal functioning driven by:

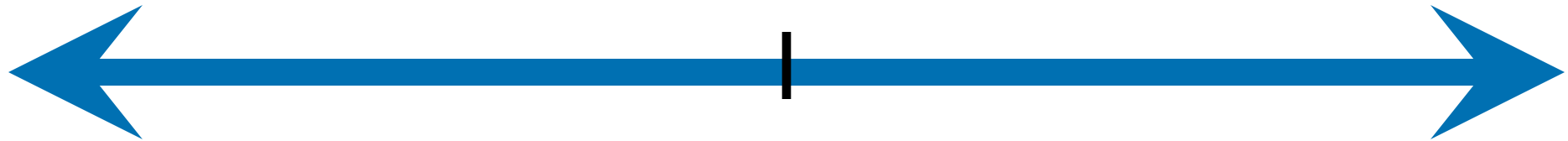
Thinking — mental process

Feeling — emotional process

Behaving — actions
(within life conditions and situations)

Continuum of Life Functioning

Wide Range Exists



Negative
Unproductive
Unsafe
Unhealthy
Disruptive
Threatening to:

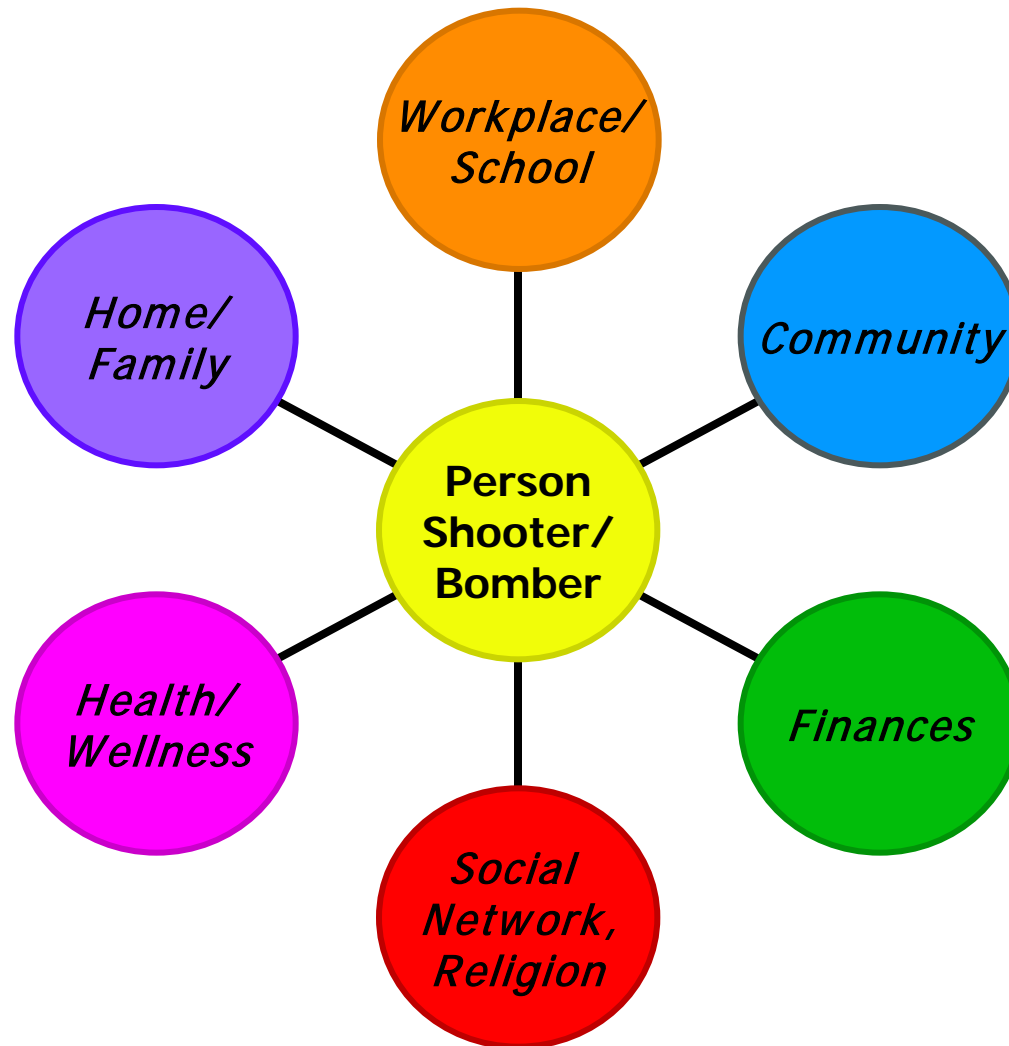
- **Self**
- **Others**
- **Workplace**

Thinking
Feeling
Behaving

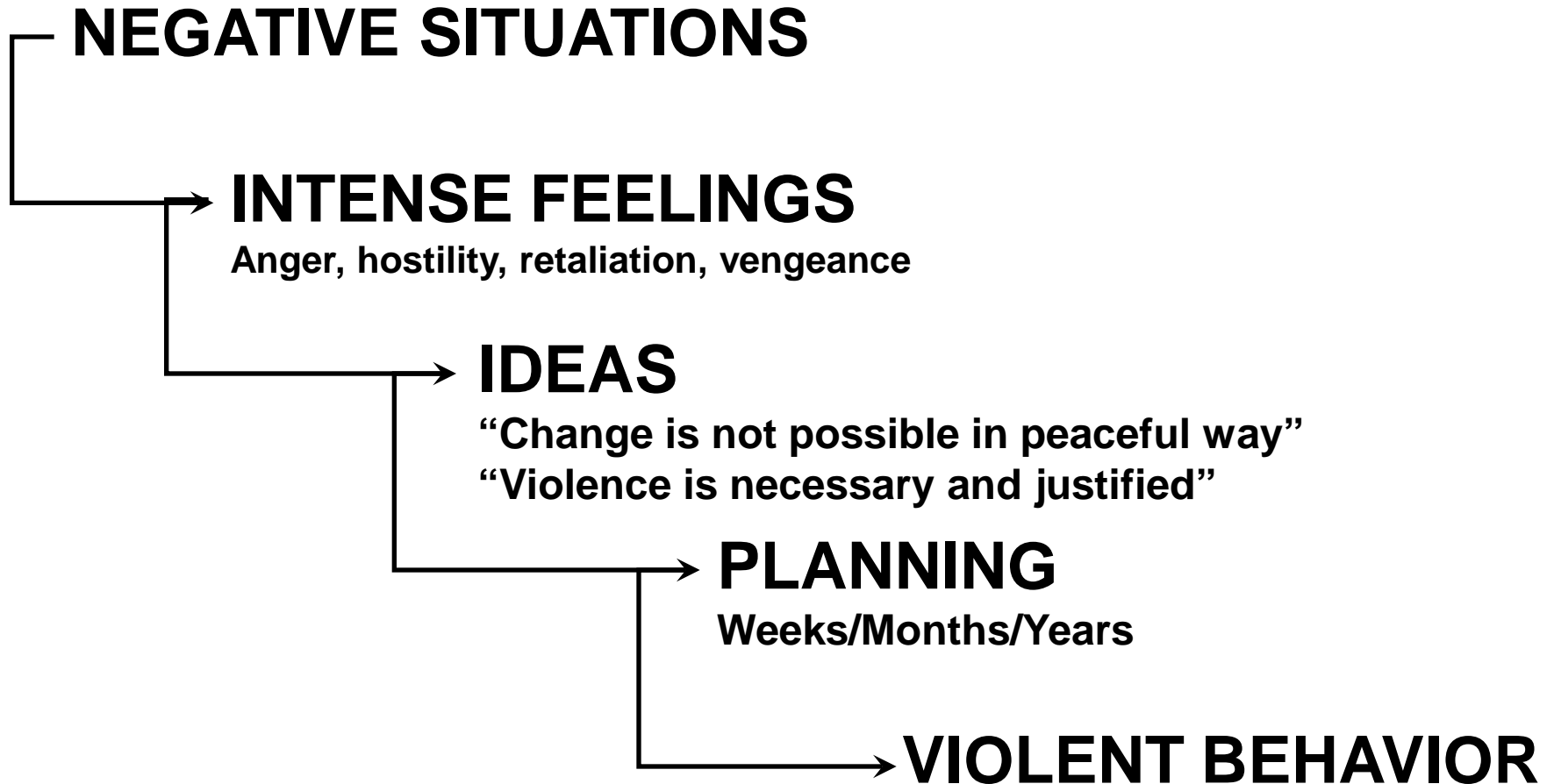
Positive
Productive
Safe
Stable
Healthy
Resilient

Personal Interactions

Multiple Conditions in Multiple Situations



Individual Violence Process



Types of Shooters

- Workplace-Related and School Shooters
- Criminal Terrorists
- Ideological Terrorists

Workplace-Related and School Shooters

“Non-Terrorist” Shooters

- Concern is about current and specific problems; i.e., job termination, conflict with someone, financial difficulty, marital problems, etc.
- **Other-centered**
- Shooter believes the violence will “solve the current problem”
- Persons or company/school assets are **specifically** targeted

Workplace-Related and School Shooters

Planning and Preparatory Acts

- Specific relationship with person(s) at the target site
- Brief planning with limited detail; often only approach plan, weapons, and ammunition
- Variation in type of weapons and expertise

Bill Phillips, 60 y/o
Trigger – E-mail Performance Review
April 20, 2007
Johnson Space Center - Houston, TX
1 killed, 1 hostage, shooter suicide



- Company had no plan to terminate his employment
- Day of e-mail, bought .38 revolver and 20 hollow point bullets
- Quiet loner, job was his life
- 3 hour hostage situation
- Wrote on white board “People call me stupid.”
- Shot self when SWAT arrived

Amy Bishop, 44 y/o
Trigger – Denial of Academic Tenure
February 12, 2010
University of Alabama - Huntsville, AL
3 killed, 3 wounded, shooter arrested



- History of disproportional and occasionally violent reactions
- Killed brother in 1986
- Investigated for bomb threat
- Arrested for assault in IHOP
- Could swing between rage for slights and empathy for students
- Lost battle for job tenure
- “Always about to explode!”

Amy Bishop



Omar Thornton, 34 y/o
Trigger – Job Termination for Stealing and
Sense of Racial Prejudice at Work
August 3, 2010
Hartford Distributors - Manchester, CT
8 killed, 2 injured, shooter suicide



- 2 Ruger SR9s
- 10 minute suicide call to mother; plus 911 call
- Girlfriend told police: “It was vengeance for racism.”

Criminal Terrorists

No Major Ideological Issue

- **Hostile reaction** to some frustration, loss, or damage to ego
- **Self-centered**
- Desire for **vengeance** “justifies violence”
- Seeks **psychological reward** through terrorism
- **Thrilled** by power of firearms, bombs, killing, and chaos

Criminal Terrorists (Cont.)

No Major Ideological Issue

- Use soft and opportunistic targets—malls, theaters, retail stores, office buildings, health clubs, etc.
- Lack discipline and training of the ideological terrorist, but more expert weapons use
- Lack of specific goals results in mass murder and often suicide or death by law enforcement

Criminal Terrorists

Planning and Preparatory Acts

- Extra ammunition carried
- Shooter often exhibits cold, calm, and expressionless appearance
- **Mental rehearsals and practice firing prepare shooter**
- Avoidance and escape plans almost non-existent

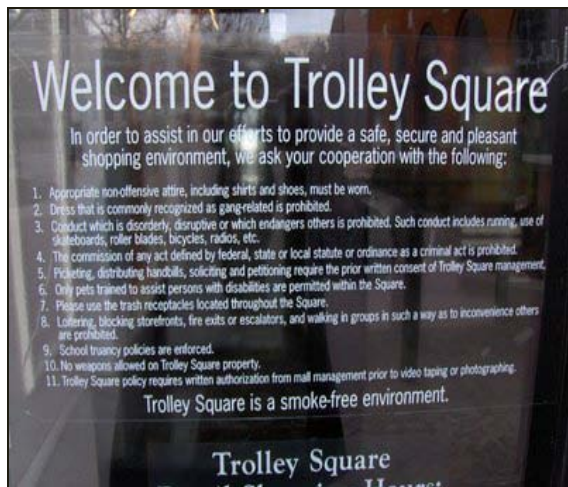
Sulejman Talovic, 18 y/o
Trigger – Anti-ethnic, Possible Jihad
February 12, 2007
Trolley Square Mall - Salt Lake City, UT
5 killed, 4 injured, shooter killed by police

- Began shooting in parking lot; then entered mall
- Random shooting
- Emotionless expression
- Shotgun and .38 revolver used
- Backpack full of ammo
- “During the shooting, his expression stayed totally calm. He did not seem upset.”



Trolley Square Shooting

- Sulejman Talovic—a Bosnian immigrant
- Lived with mother, father, and 3 sisters
- Mall was “the only place he went [as a child];” often alone, ate lunch in car; one fight in mall over video game
- Motive not clear to family or police; he stated in 2001 or 2002 he was going to “shoot white people like Serbs.”
- FBI report indicated he told girlfriend “Tomorrow will be the happiest day of my life.” Possible martyrdom?



Robert A. Hawkins, 19 y/o

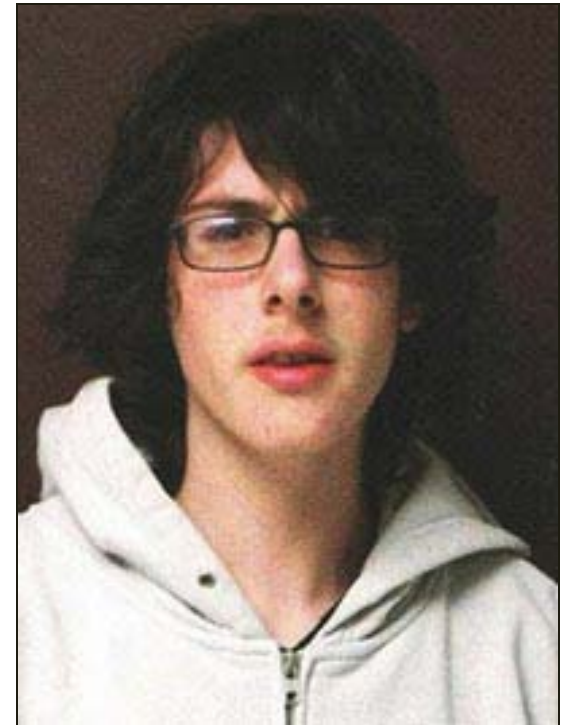
Trigger – Depression, Job Termination, Loss of Girlfriend

Dec. 5, 2007

Westroads Mall Shooting - Omaha, NE

8 killed, 4 injured, shooter suicide

- Estranged from parents—lived with friends and their mother
- Medication and therapy for depression by age 6
- At age 14, threatened to kill stepmother with axe
- Criminal record, felony drug charges, and homicidal threats
- AKM semi-automatic rifle used in shooting
- One hour prior to shooting, mother gave police his suicide note:
 - “I just want to take a few pieces of S*** with me...just think, I’m gonna be F***** famous”



Ideological Terrorists

- Use violent acts intended to create **population fear** (terror)
- Perpetrated for an **ideological goal**, as opposed to a lone attack, for a specific contemporary issue
- They **deliberately target** or disregard the safety of **non-combatants**
- **Cause-oriented**

Ideological Terrorists (Cont.)

- Narrowly focused
- Highly motivated & Dedicated to a cause
- Acts based on or driven by political, economic, social, geographic, or religious elements
- Do not believe change can occur in a peaceful way; therefore **“violence is justified”**
- **Includes radical environmentalists, racists, separatists, political groups, and violent jihadists**

Psychology of Terrorists

- Profiling an average shooter is no more possible than profiling an average office person
- Personality traits vary widely as do those in non-terrorists
- Numerous studies indicate no significant presence of psychopathology

Summary of Risk Factors for Potential Terrorists

- Often younger male
- Serious personal issue—social, cultural, national, and/or religious
- Blames large oppressive “system” or circumstances
- Obsessive about “**victimization**”
- Sees terror or suicide as supreme sacrifice, revenge, manipulation, and possibly salvation
- Some believe that problems are solvable through violent jihad

Ideological Terrorists

Planning and Preparatory Acts

- Determine maximum ROI (terror/message per event vs. total cost/effort of the act) i.e., ROI on cargo plane bombs = \$4,200 AQAP cost vs. billions of dollars for new Western shipping security measures
- Target selection
- Surveillance & Intelligence gathering
- Fund raising
- Weapons purchased or stolen
- Bomb manufacturing

James Von Brunn, 88 y/o

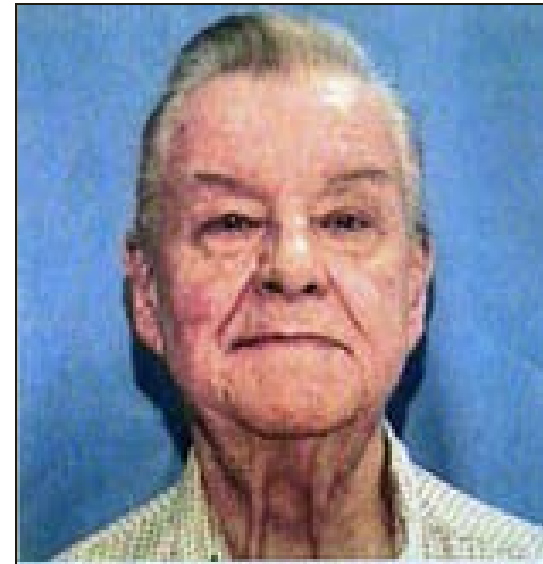
Ideology – White Supremacist and Anti-Semite

June 10, 2009

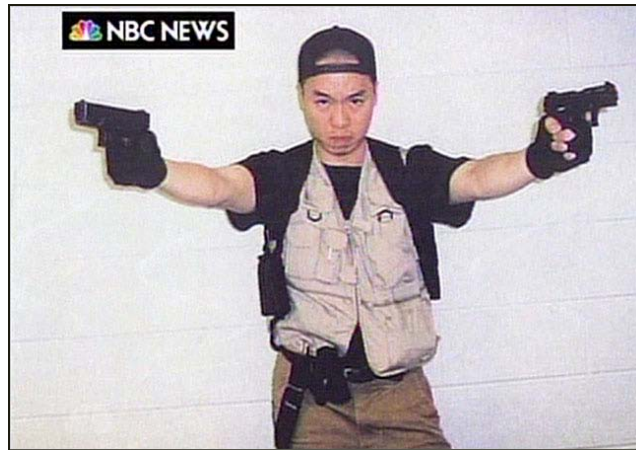
Holocaust Memorial Museum - Washington, DC

1 killed, shooter arrested

- Guard killed while trying to assist Von Brunn into door
- Signed with Navy in 1942, reason given as “patriotic”
- Honorable discharge in 1956
- Arrested outside Federal Reserve Board meeting with shotgun, revolver, knife (1981)—upset about interest rates and economic turmoil—served 6.5 years in prison
- Ex-wife claims “**his hatred ate him like cancer**”
- Shooter died in prison hospital January 5, 2010

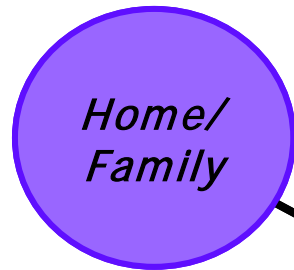


Seung-Hui Cho, 23 y/o
Ideology – Warfare for Oppressed and Poor
April 16, 2007
Virginia Tech - Blacksburg, VA
32 killed, 23 wounded, shooter suicide

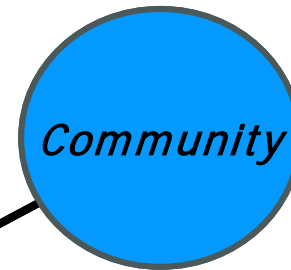


Seung-Hui Cho

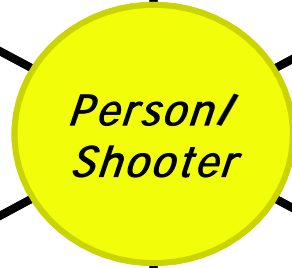
- Loss of Father
- Born in Seoul
- Quiet, sullen, brooding, empty face
- **Immigrated at age 8 to bring confidence**
- Both parents worked in VA



- Disturbing writings
- Gruesome poems, stories, and plays
- **Ignored conversation attempts**
- **Class laughed at him**
- Known as “the Question Mark” Kid
- Bullied



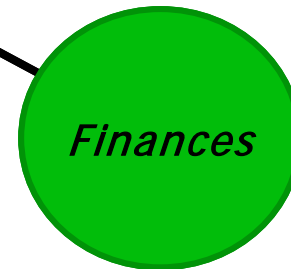
- Isolated
- Stalking
- Harassing
- **Manifesto to NBC between first and second shooting**



- **Selective Mutism**
- Depression
- **Severe Social Anxiety**
- Suicidal
- **Frightened of world**
- Hatred of wealthy
- Paranoid
- MH Treatment



- “Evil plan is doing good”
- **Fantasy as savior of oppressed, poor, and rejected in society**
- Likened self as Jesus Christ
- Antagonistic toward religion



Jared Lee Loughner – 22 y/o
Ideology – Anti-Government/Conspiracy
January 8, 2011
Rep. Gabrielle Giffords' Event - Tucson, AZ
6 killed, 14 wounded, shooter arrested

- “Normal kid” until junior in high school
- Fired from job for “personality change”
- Mentally distorted with alcohol and drugs
- Cycled between normal teen activities and nihilistic views, the occult, conspiracy theories, “government mind control and brainwash by controlling grammar”
- Became obsessed with Rep. Giffords’ answer to his question “What is government if words have no meaning?”

Jared Lee Loughner

Rep. Gabrielle Giffords Shooter

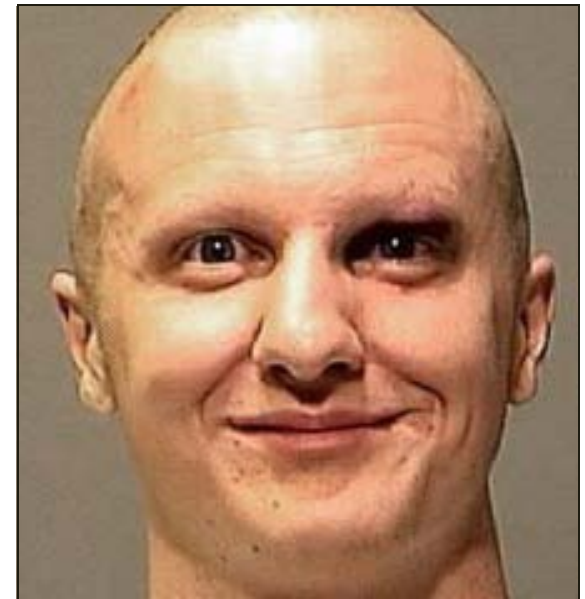
Pre-Disturbed Normal State
3 years prior to shooting
Roughly 2007



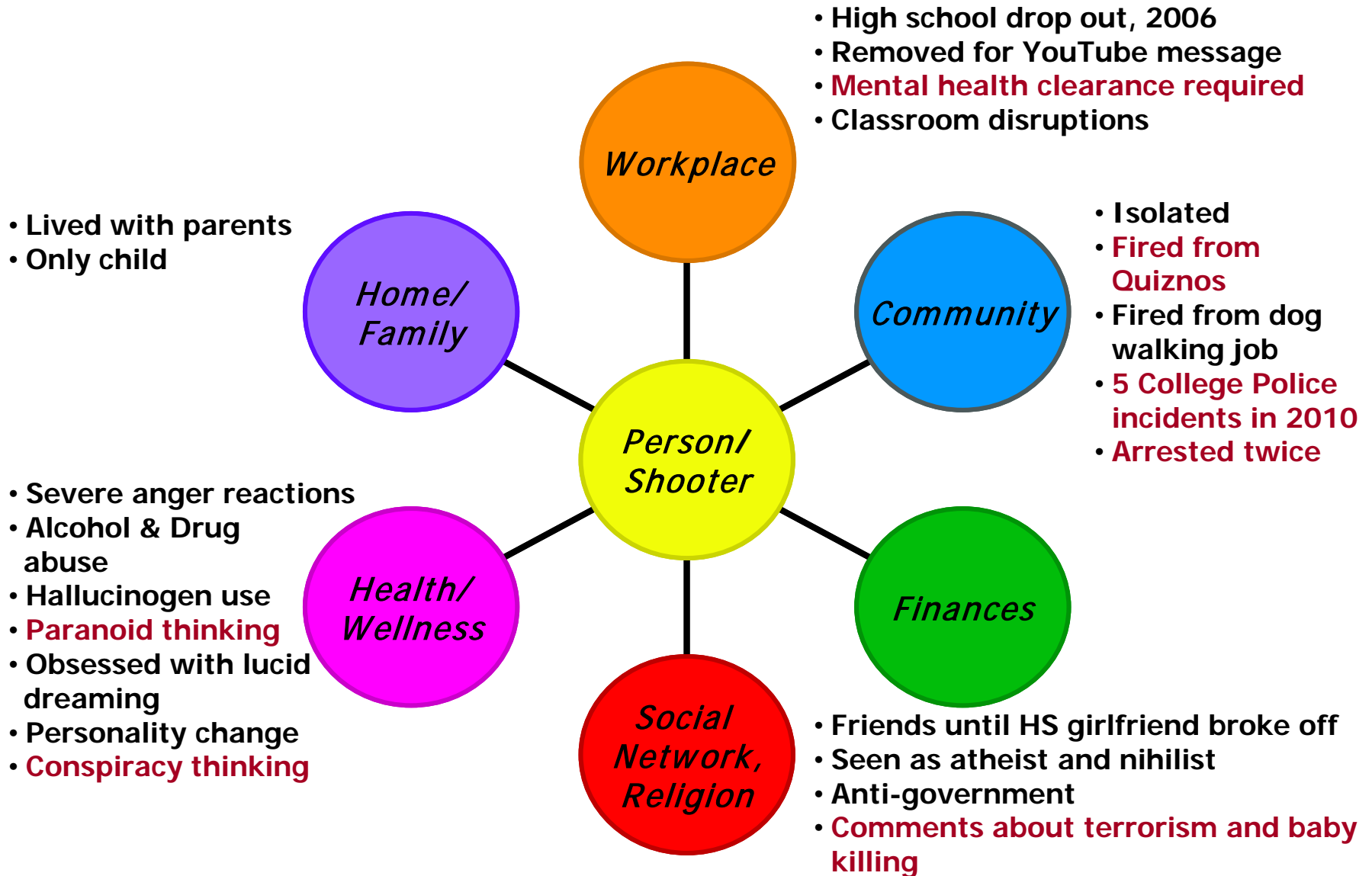
Strange Thinking State
1-2 years prior to shooting
2008 - 2010



Delusional State
Post-Shooting Mug Shot
January, 2011



Jared Lee Loughner



Jared Lee Loughner

Planning

- More than 1 year obsessive thinking about target and her government
- Gathered weapons and ammunition
- Prior night in motel—posted Internet message, bizarre pictures of self, and weapons
- **Evaded father's attempt to stop him**
- Used taxi for transport to event
- Walked unobstructed into crowd and began shooting

Major Nidal Hasan, 39 y/o

Ideology – Islamic Jihad

November 5, 2009

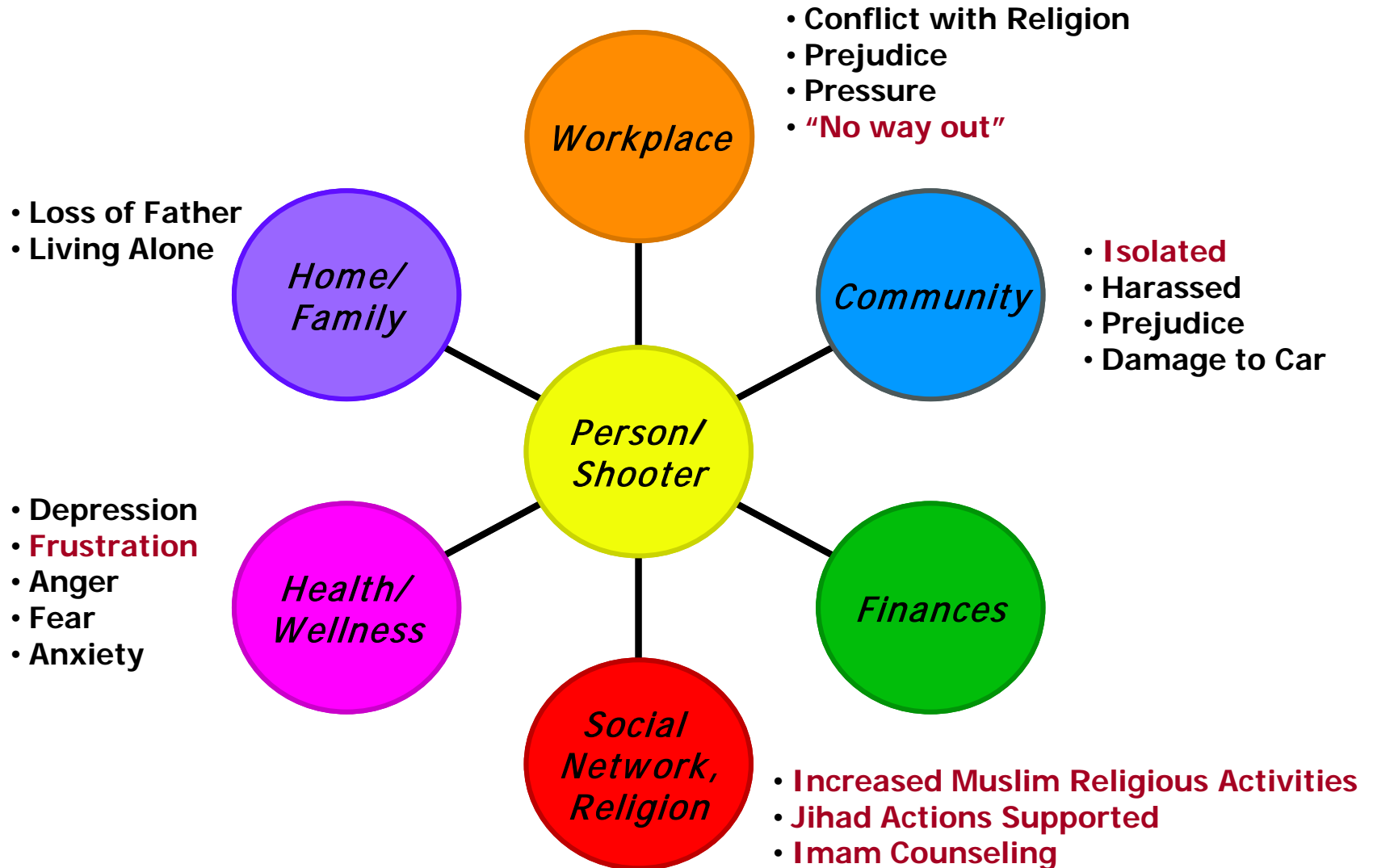
Fort Hood Military Post - Fort Hood, TX

13 killed, 30 injured, shooter injured and arrested



- Attempts to avoid deployment or leave Army unsuccessful
- Support and guidance obtained through e-mails with Imam
- Practice firing at private range
- Distribution of personal items to neighbor
- No apparent escape plan
- Random shooting on the post

Major Nidal Hasan



Anders Behring Breivik, 32 y/o

Ideology – “Begin campaign for Pan-European Coup d’États, deportation of Muslims and execution of militia traitors, by year 2083”

July 22, 2011

**Bomb Attack on Labor Party Building - Oslo, Norway
8 killed (of 76 total), many injured, bomber arrested
(at later shooting event)**

- Bomber’s concerns
 - “Multiculturalism, Marxist-oriented governments, Islamic tyranny...Islamic demographic warfare”



Anders Behring Breivik

July 22, 2011

Active Shooter - Post Bomb Attack - Utøya Island, Norway
68 killed (of 76 total), 60 wounded, shooter arrested

- Shooter's immediate goals:
 - **Assault the current and future Labor Party Leaders**, considered by the shooter as traitors to “Pure European Culture.” The **“actions are atrocious but necessary.”**
 - Promote other self-appointed guardians to also act as “judge, jury, and executioner, until threats by cultural genocide are gone.”



Anders Behring Breivik

Radicalized Homegrown Lone Wolf

- No contact with father since he was 14. About mother: “I do not approve of the super-liberal upbringing...it completely lacked discipline and has contributed to feminize me to a degree”
- Initial reaction to multi-culturalism at age 16. He claims he was beaten up by Pakistani youth in his neighborhood, who had “a total lack of respect for my culture”
- Over 9 years, he **became progressively more extreme in his obsessive thinking**, his **intense emotions**, and his **planning** for the attack to begin to “save” Norway and Western Europe
- Shooter is charged with “destabilizing or destroying basic functions of society...**creating serious fear in the population, acts of terrorism...**”

Triggers Exist but Persons “Don’t Just Snap”

- Violent behavior or **potential is rarely new** for perpetrators
- Usually **patterns** of negative thinking, feeling, and/or behavior are **part of the history**
- **Triggers intensify** the negative elements
- **Planning** for violent reaction usually takes place over some time
- During this **time, signals, flags**, and sometimes **threats exist** but are rarely seen as serious or are **not reported**

Summary

- Risk of violence from many different types of persons. “Profiles” are not helpful and may be dangerous.
- Knowledge of individual’s **Thinking-Feeling-Behaving** patterns and possible potential reactions to negative events is critical to prevention.
- Mental illness sometimes contributes but is not a major risk driver.
- Effective risk assessment and violence prevention requires “all hands on deck,” i.e., security, office workers, supervisors, HR, family, and friends.

Contact Information

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