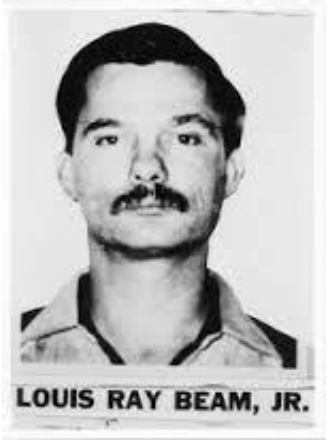
Understanding Lone-Actor Terrorism

Paul Gill

University College London

Some Background… "The Lone Wolf" Idea



"leaderless resistance" a "child of necessity"… …hierarchical organizations are "not only useless, but extremely dangerous for the participants when it is utilized in a resistance movement" because they are "easy prey for government infiltration, entrapment, and destruction of the personnel involved".

Begin with the Lone Wolves

Laws for the Lone Wolf

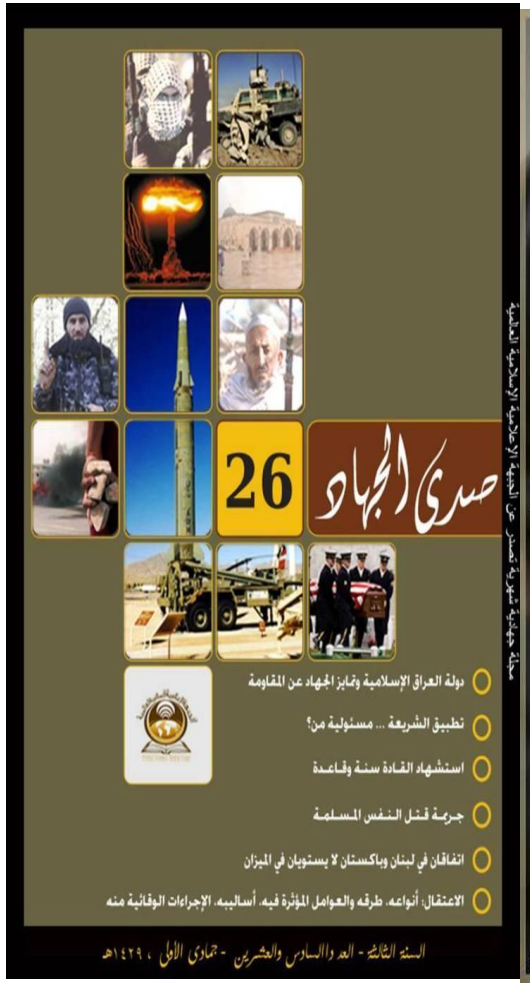
The Lone Wolf Point System

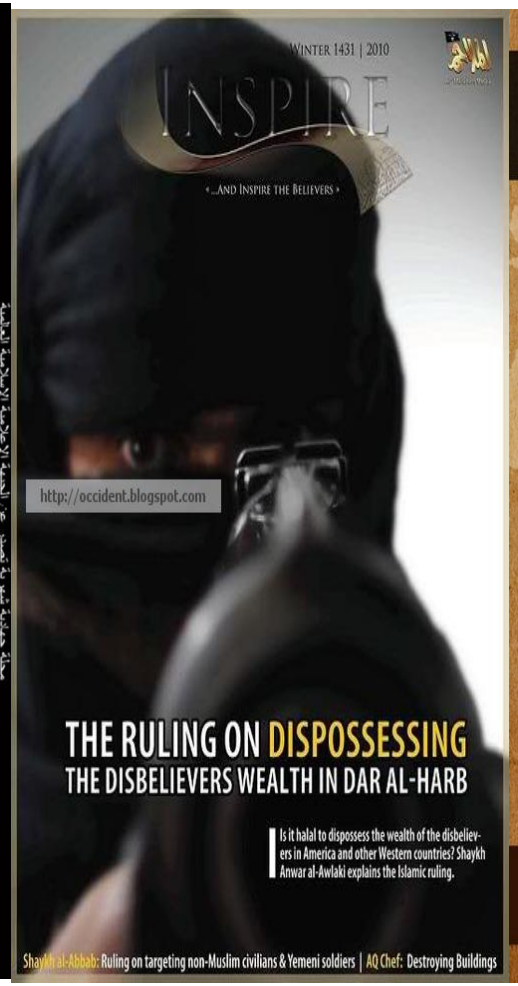
And then…

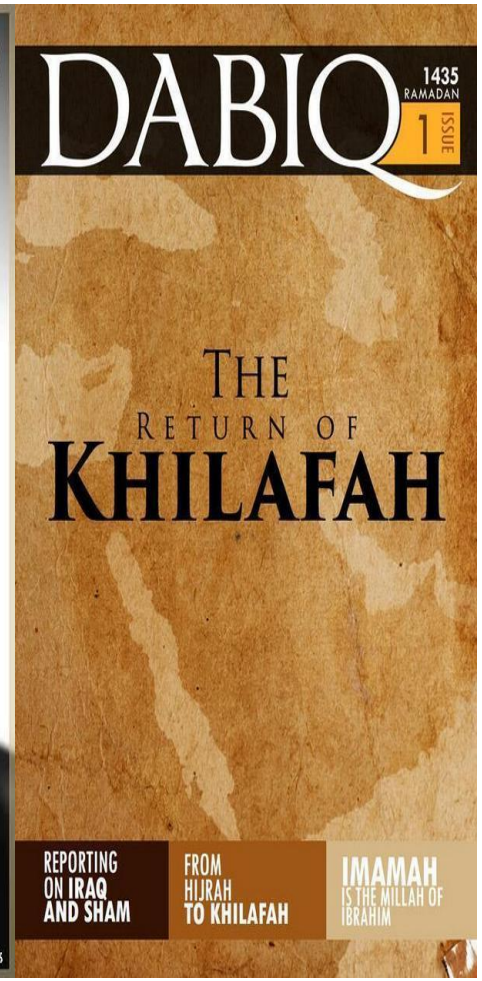
The Army of God Manual

Third Edition

The author of this manual is unknown.







The Data

- 140+ Lone-Actor Terrorists (Open-Source)
- 49 Lone-Actor Terrorists (Closed-Source)
- 115 U.S. Mass Murderers (Open-Source)
- 2000+ Threats to Public Figures (Closed-Source)
- 3 Interviews with Recruiters into Terrorist Groups
- 217 UK Terrorism Act Offenders' Online Behaviors (Open-Source)
- Court & Investigative Files

8 Key Areas

- Profiles?
- Leakage
- Mental Health & Personality
- Recruitment
- The Online Space
- Insight from Analogous Cases
- Attack Planning
- Sequencing

1. Profiles?

Profiles?

Profiles?

BEHAVIOR BEHAVIOR BEHAVIOR

Profiles?

BEHAVIOR BEHAVIOR BEHAVIOR

2. Leakage

2. Leakage

- 86.5% - others were aware of the individual's personal grievances, extreme ideology, and their desire to hurt others
- Over 50% - , others were aware that the individual in question had attack equipment
- When leakage occurs, 58% regarding weapon and 66% regarding target
- ”Leakers” significantly more likely to have a violent past. Around a third of recipients aware of individual's prior violence.
- 32% occurs within a week of the attack

Consequences	Average	Right Wing	Jihadist	Single issue
No further action	37.8%	33.3%	39.3%	42.1%
Provided aid	9.5%	11.1%	14.3%	0
Police knew and did not prevent it	4.1%	7.4%	0	15.8%
Police knew and no further action	9.5%	7.4%	10.7%	10.5%
Reported, arrested and thwarted	17.6%	22.2%	14.3%	10.5%
Too late	5.4%	11.1%	0	5.3%
Caught post attack	6.8%	11.1%	3.6%	5.3%
Leakage not seen	6.4%	0	7.1%	15.8%

Instances	Average	Right Wing	Jihadist	Single issue
Once	40.5%	48.1%	28.6%	42.1%
Multiple (3-5)	29.7%	22.2%	38.3%	26.3%
Extensive (5+)	29.7%	33.3%	25%	31.6%

Form:	Average	Right Wing	Jihadist	Single issue
Social media	17.6%	14.8%	25%	10.5%
Website	6.8%	4.2%	3.5%	15.8%
Email	12.2%	14.8%	14.2%	5.2%
Verbally	68.9%	63%	64.3%	78.9%
Letters	13.5%	18.5%	7.1%	15.7%
Other	2.7%	3.7%	3.6%	0

Recipients	Average	Right Wing	Jihadist	Single issue
Friends	36.5%	35.7%	42.3%	31.6%
Family	14.9%	7.1%	19.2%	21.1%
Accomplices	23%	25%	23.1%	21.1%
Colleagues	8.1%	7.1%	7.7%	10.5%
Target	6.8%	10.7%	0	10.5%
Mental health staff	6.8%	3.6%	3.8%	10.5%
Partner	9.5%	14.3%	3.8%	10.5%
Stranger	23%	28.6%	15.4%	26.3%
Law Enforcement	20.3%	11.1%	25%	26.3%

3. Mental Health & Personality

Are mental health disorders present?

JOURNAL OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

J Forensic Sci, March 2014, Vol. 59, No. 2
doi: 10.1111/1556-4029.12312
Available online at: onlinelibrary.wiley.com

PAPER

PSYCHIATRY & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Paul Gill,[1] *Ph.D.; John Horgan,*[2] *Ph.D.; and Paige Deckert,*[3] *M.S., A.B.D.*

Bombing Alone: Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorists*,†,‡

31.9%

Does it matter?

Law and Human Behavior
2015, Vol. 39, No. 1, 23–34

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0147-7307/15/$12.00 http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/lhb0000102

A False Dichotomy? Mental Illness and Lone-Actor Terrorism

Emily Corner and Paul Gill
University College London

1. ‘Rational’ attack planning behaviours just as likely
2. More likely to experience stressors
3. Links between certain diagnoses & other risk factors

What about base rates?

STUDIES IN CONFLICT & TERRORISM
2016, VOL. 39, NO. 6, 560–568
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2015.1120099

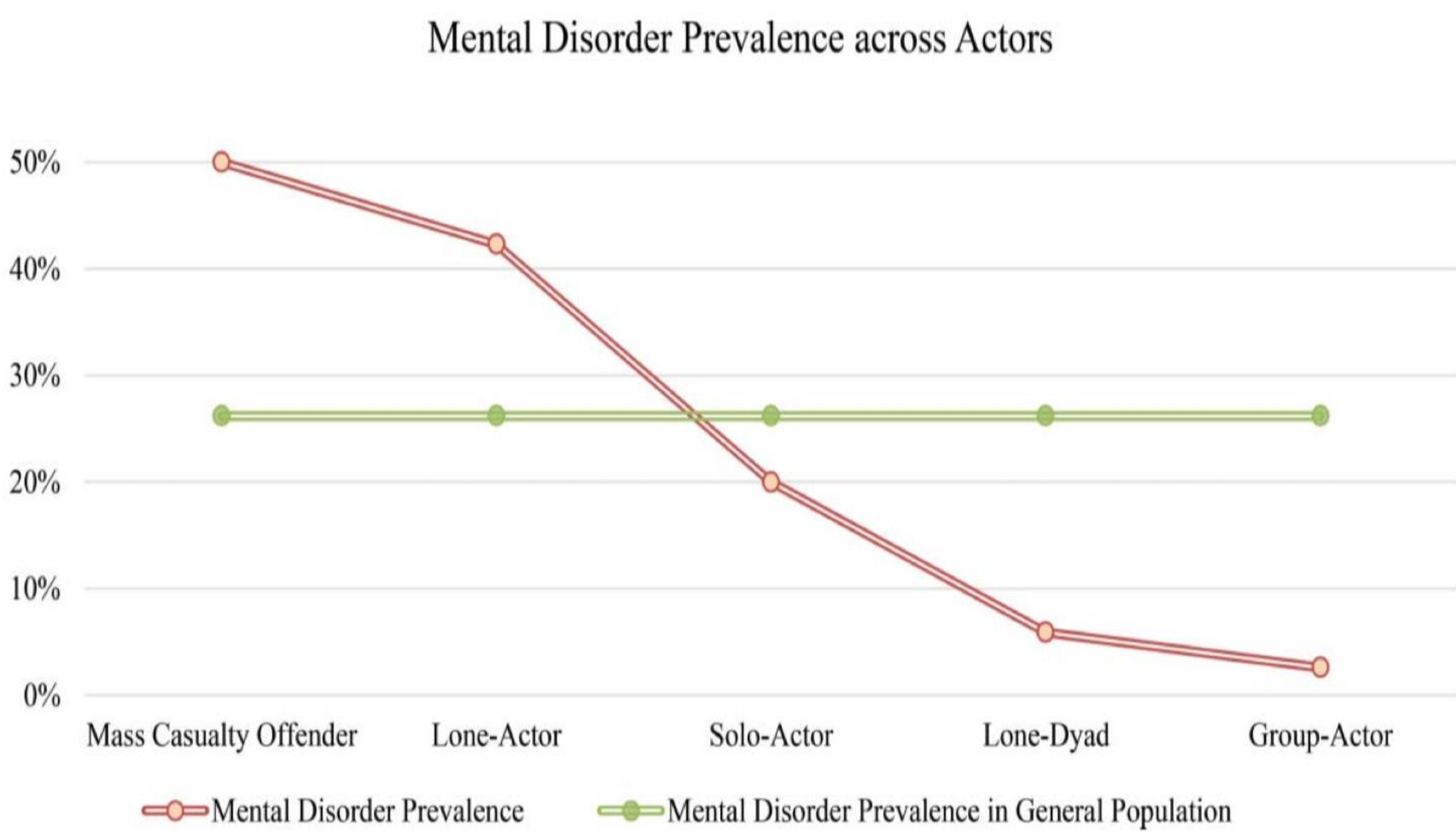
Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

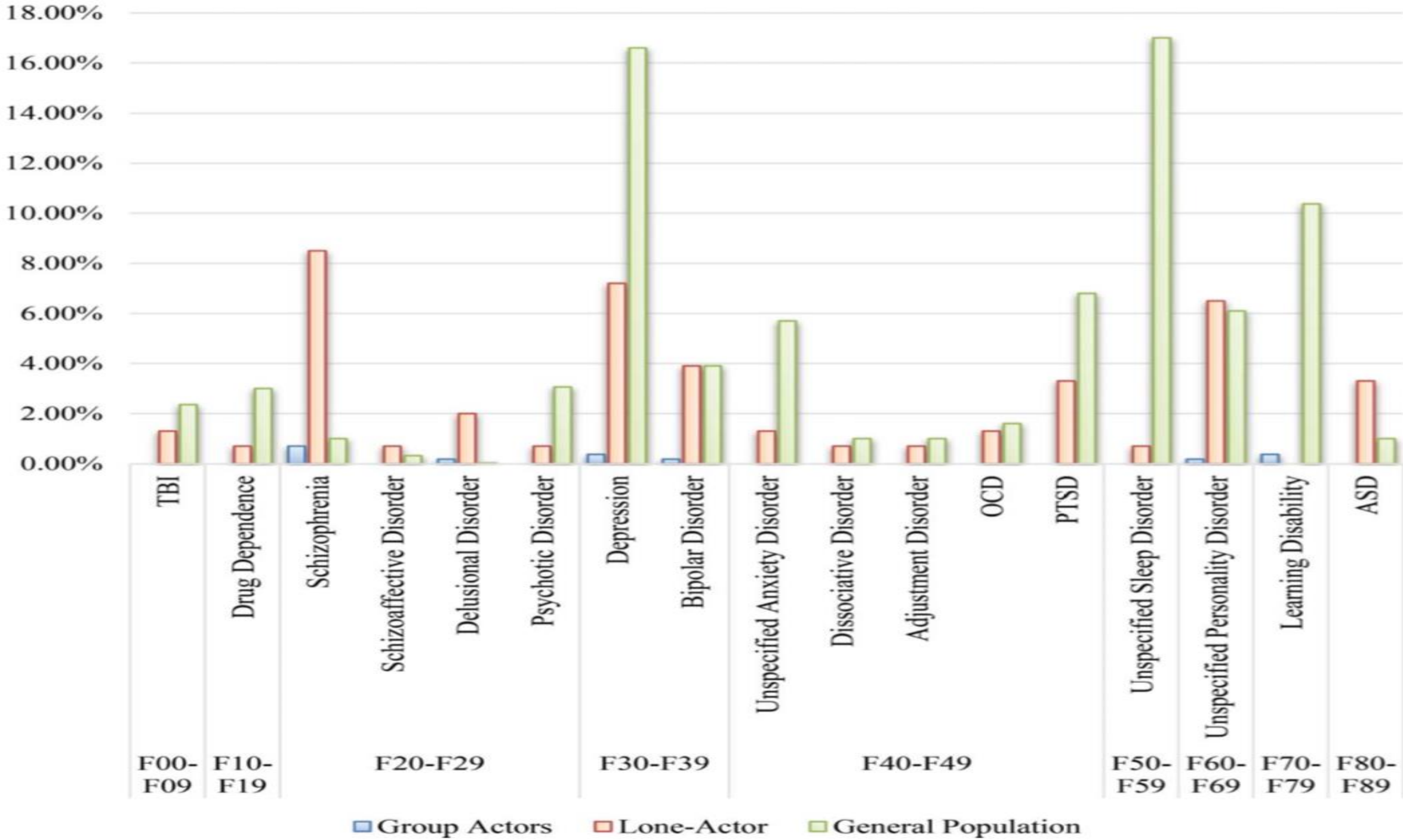
OPEN ACCESS

Mental Health Disorders and the Terrorist: A Research Note Probing Selection Effects and Disorder Prevalence

Emily Corner[a], Paul Gill[a], and Oliver Mason[b]

[a]Department of Security and Crime Science, University College London, London, UK; [b]Department of Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology, University College London, London, UK


Mental Disorder Prevalence across Actors
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Mass Casualty Offender
Lone-Actor
Solo-Actor
Lone-Dyad
Group-Actor
Mental Disorder Prevalence
Mental Disorder Prevalence in General Population


18.00%
16.00%
14.00%
12.00%
10.00%
8.00%
6.00%
4.00%
2.00%
0.00%
TBI
Drug Dependence
Schizophrenia
Schizoaffective Disorder
Delusional Disorder
Psychotic Disorder
Depression
Bipolar Disorder
Unspecified Anxiety Disorder
Dissociative Disorder
Adjustment Disorder
OCD
PTSD
Unspecified Sleep Disorder
Unspecified Personality Disorder
Learning Disability
ASD
F00-F09
F10-F19
F20-F29
F30-F39
F40-F49
F50-F59
F60-F69
F70-F79
F80-F89
Group Actors
Lone-Actor
General Population

So What?

PSYCHOLOGY, CRIME & LAW
2019, VOL. 25, NO. 2, 111–132
https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2018.1503664

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

The multifinality of vulnerability indicators in lone-actor terrorism

Emily Corner[a,b], Noémie Bouhana [b] and Paul Gill[b]

[a]Centre for Social Research and Methods, The Australian National University, Canberra ACT, Australia;
[b]Department of Security and Crime Science, University College London, London, UK

So What?

Across cases mental health problems:

- Are a precursor to Other Criminal Behaviours
- Are a precursor to Social Isolation
- Compound Other Stressors
- Could be Present But Play No Role
- Might Hinder Purposive Planning
  - Risk factor for radicalization but protective factor for terrorism
- Could Be a By-Product of Terrorist Engagement

4. Recruitment & Selection Effects

Is there a formal process?

- “My entry into the organization was extremely easy. It is funny to consider how much fantasizing and mystification is spun about the matter now- all the inventions and exaggerations that are used to portray an act that is, in fact, as simple as can be. Almost disappointingly ordinary.”
- 61.6% - no formal recruitment
- Varied from oathing ceremonies, less sophisticated initiation processes, coerced initiation, trickery, in-depth interviews, and shorter political dialogs

Do recruiters discern between would-be recruits?

- “For every one hundred people you talked to, you might get one or two who would actually make the commitment … you knew your chances weren’t that good. It’s a fine line between people who talk about violence and those who cross over into violence”

Do Recruiters prioritize specific traits?

- “So we'd look for single men, ages 18-25 preferably. Anyone over age 45 would generally not be recruitable, because they'd probably be older than [the leader] and not obedient.”
- “If they weren’t trustworthy or if they didn’t have a good reputation for keeping secrets… we weren’t interested in bringing in drama, we didn’t want people that would go and tell other people what was happening at meetings, that would have been a red flag…”
- “I found that hatred was an easy thing to sell to confused teenage kids. Like me, so many of them were filled with anger and hatred already. Recruiting them to become thugs was a breeze.”

Selection effects?

- “we would look for kids… or young people who had issues, because it was easier to promise them paradise… a lot about looking for low hanging fruit, because it was about numbers, it wasn’t necessarily about quality, we were trying to build an army”
- “smart people, who had grievances, who were anti-authority, who… were smart but had low self-esteem, and were looking for somebody to fit into.”

Selection effects?

- “It was really about finding a young person who was going through a rough period, either… So I would find those people… It was trying to find the people on the fringes, people that… felt alienated and marginalised, and had a grievance of some sort.”

Selection effects?

- “I don’t think these groups actively recruit mentally ill people, I think that they look for people capable of putting reason and logic aside, like fooling them into believing a different reason or logic to go do things, so I think that they look for vulnerable people… some of which may have mental illness that’s not that bad… I mean, we really tried to find broken people essentially… dealing with identity crises… abuse, drug addiction, alcoholism, family poverty… those types of things… kids who were on the street… you could tell there was not a lot of family oversight, ‘cos we were looking to draw them into our family.”

5. The Online Space

5. The Online Space

- 61% of cases displayed evidence of online activity related to their attack/conviction
- Just over half (54%) of all actors used the Internet to learn about some aspect of their intended terrorist activity. From 2012 onwards, the figure is 76%.
- 32% prepared for their attacks using online resources
- 29% communicated with others virtually
- 15% of actors disseminated propaganda online
- 9% sought to recruit others online.
- 5% sought legitimisation for future actions from epistemic authority
- 5% also signalled online their plans to engage in attacks prior to the attack itself.

Those who learnt online

- Significantly more likely XRW (attack planning)
- Significantly more likely to attempt harder targets
- Less likely to have military backgrounds
- Significantly more likely to use IEDs
- Significantly less likely to use primitive attack types
- Significantly more likely to be lone actors
- More likely to have offline interactions also

Those who communicated online

- Significantly more likely amongst the extreme-right wing cohort
- Significantly less likely to target military
- Significantly more likely to use IEDs
- Significantly more likely to be accompanied with face-to-face interactions with non-violent co-ideologues

Regulus Results

- Training for the plots typically occurred through a number of ways.
  - 16.3% received some form of hands-on training while 81.6% learned through virtual sources.
  - In 71.4% of the cases, investigators found evidence of bomb-making manuals within the offender's home or property.
  - 44.9% became progressively secure in their planning activities (e.g. through the use of encryption) and this figure was significantly higher amongst the jihadi sub-sample (66.7%) vs. the right-wing extremists (18.2%).
- 34.7% aspired to copy other terrorists within online postings.

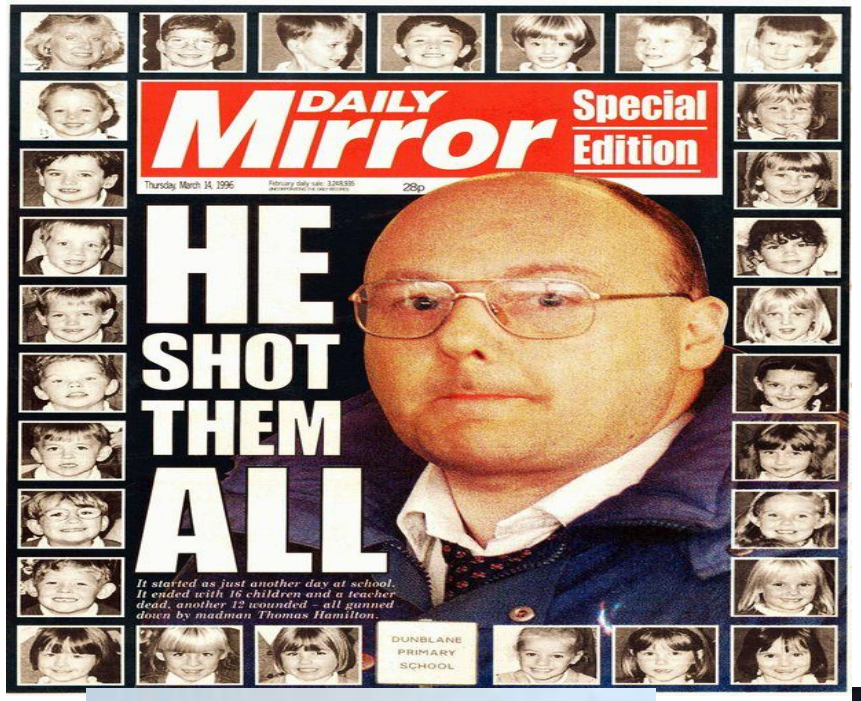
6. Insight from Analogous Cases

Mass Murderers

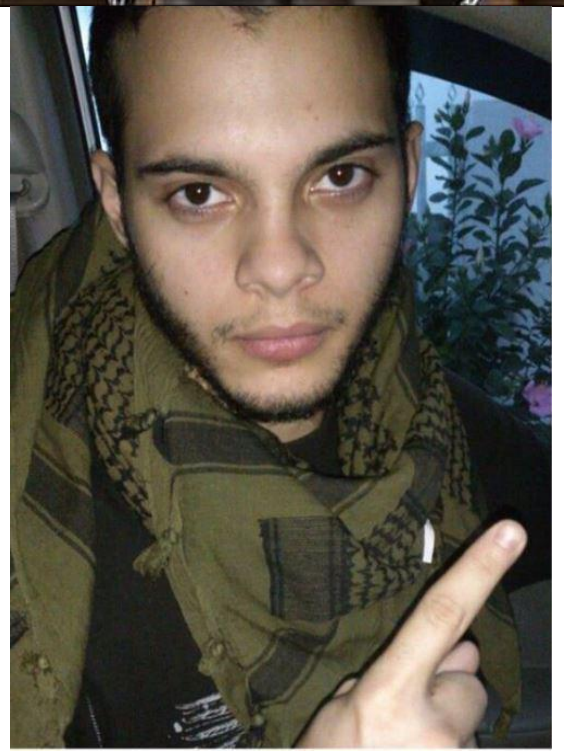
- Few differences in terms of risk factors
- Differences emerge in attack related behaviors

Public Figure Threats

- 2118 Threats made to U.K. Public Figures
  - Royal Family & Members of Parliament
  - Threats communicated both online and offline
  - Background “offender” information
  - Follow-up information
    - Those who did nothing
    - Those who showed up and did nothing
    - Those who showed up and tried something


DAILY Mirror
Special Edition
Thursday, March 14, 1996
28p
HE SHOT THEM ALL
It started as just another day at school. It ended with 16 children and a teacher dead, another 12 wounded – all gunned down by madman Thomas Hamilton.
DUNBLANE PRIMARY SCHOOL

ENTRE
It's time to pull out of Afghanistan
we don't want Australia to be
Dear Kevin, don't kill Afghan civilians
anymore. If you kill Afghan civilians
they will kill
civilians. Stop
danger for Australia. Please let us
Australians live in peace.



SUPPORT
LIGHT
FOR THOSE IN THE DARK
HOPE
FOR THE SURVIVORS
Targeted Individuals Worldwide
@susieogren365
Home
About
You are NOT alone.
Like
Follow
Share

Myron May

November 14 at 7:51am

Also, has anyone here ever been encouraged by your handler to kill with a promise of freedom?

Like · Share

Myron May shared **Bedanta Bora**'s **photo**.
November 16 at 1:12pm

Bedanta Bora

All vigilant people all u need is just to have a look at it to know the truth.....!!!!!!!!!!!

Like · Share

10 people like this.

Tori Iman Williams Kendra Willis **WOW!!!**
43 mins · Like · 4

Kendra Willis DAMN
42 mins · Like · 2

"IS OUR GOVERNMENT VIOLATING ORDINARY CITIZENS' RIGHTS? UNFORTUNATELY, THE ANSWER IS YES! SEE INSIDE THIS VIDEO."

The moniker Targeted Individual makes sense, because victims are individuals being Targeted by the #CIA with weaponized frequencies but the misconceptions TI's have are either mind controlled perceptions or dumbass theories

Bio-Hacking Victim @tiawareness · 6h
pic.twitter.com/7Dco1ePA3B

Renee Pittman Mitchell
39342 Chantilly Lane
Palmdale, CA 93551

VIA CERTIFIED MAIL, RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

November 17, 2014

Dear Ms. Mitchell and Other Addressees:

The purpose of this letter is three-fold. First, I would like to make a sincere plea to you not to let my personal story die. Enclosed within this letter, you will find a USB flash drive containing a personal testimony from me about the financial, emotional, and psychological pain that I have endured over the course of the past few months since I discovered that I was a "targeted individual." I have literally been forced to endure a living hell. There are thousands of targeted individuals within the United States that literally suffer each and every day at the hands of our government. Personally, I have experienced significant harassment from law enforcement in every place that I have been these past few months.

Second, over the coming days and weeks, you will hear numerous people try to label me as a person with mental health issues. If you simply google "targeted individual," "gang stalking," "Freedom From Covert Harassment and Surveillance," or "Dr. Robert Duncan,"[1] you will see that what I have experienced, albeit not widely known, is very real. In addition, you can find various videos on youtube by searching under these exact same search terms. Our government is able to capitalize on this lack of knowledge among the general population to curb sentiments towards questioning the mental health of targeted individuals rather than admitting the truth—that there is a system of covert torture of ordinary, innocent citizens that is happening within our own borders. **I have not told a single person exactly what I intend to do—and only you eight people know that I intend to do anything at all**—but my goal is to garner some much-needed media attention to the plight of targeted individuals because we are a marginalized group with few financial assets. Coincidentally, that means we get ignored.

Third, enclosed within, you will also find a sample letter to congress. Please encourage as many people as you can to send a copy of this letter to congress. My hope is that if enough people take a genuine concern into the struggles of targeted individuals, then congress will have to do something to stop it once and for all—not like the false machinations of stopping it that took place in the 1970s with COINTELPRO.

I apologize for putting this responsibility on you guys, but you are people that I know and trust. I am confident that Ms. Mitchell will not allow my story to die. I sincerely hope that you will (1) keep an electronic copy of my story for yourself, (2) provide a copy for distribution to media outlets, (3) make sure that Ms. Mitchell gets a copy [although I am sending her a copy, I fear that it may be intercepted], and (4) see to it that if my story is removed from the internet—youtube, vimeo, etc.—it will be promptly re-uploaded. I know that I am asking for a lot, but please assist me with this.

---

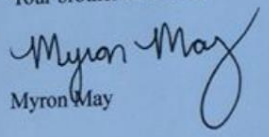
[1]Project: Soul Catcher: Secrets of Cyber and Cybernetic Warfare Revealed by Dr. Robert Duncan.

Lastly, please whisper a prayer for my soul. I am still a believer, and I [illegible] hope for me. Consequently, I am making a sacrifice so that others in my same position might have a chance at a normal, harassment-free life. I realize that my methods are not the best selection—and probably will not be perceived as the selection of a Christ-follower—but I have prayed incessantly for months to no avail. There are targeted individuals that have endured this torture for decades without any relief, and what targeted individuals need more than anything is media attention.

OTHER TARGETED INDIVIDUALS

1. Randy Quaid
2. Melinda Fee
3. Stephen Shellen
4. Gloria Naylor
5. Kola Boof
6. Jill Anjuli Hansen
7. Matt Barasch
8. Ted Gunderson (former Senior FBI agent/whistleblower)
9. Jiverly Wong
10. Aaron Alexis

Your brother in Christ,



Myron May

cc:

a) Derrick Robinson
PO Box 251
Upland, CA 91785-0251

b) Christopher Chestnut
303 Peachtree Street, Ste. 4150
Atlanta, GA 30308

c) Aaron Watson
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Pensacola, FL 32502

d) Juan P. Chisholm
PO Box 1965
Orlando, FL 32802

e) Chris V. Rey
PO Box 1139
Spring Lake, NC 28390

Approachers vs. Communicators

- Those Who Approached
  - Significantly More Likely
    - Police Record
    - Substance Problem
    - Violence
    - Evidence of Overt Mental Disorder
    - Grandiose Language
    - ’Deluded’ Content
  - Significantly Less Likely
    - History of Harassment
    - ‘Rambling’ Content
    - Help Seeking

Online and offline threats

Online vs. Offline threats

- Which carries greater risk?
- Online threats could be seen as…
  - Just ‘Keyboard Warriors’
  - Less effort
  - Less time consuming
  - less risk of detection possibly
  - Easier access to communicate to principal target
  - Wider milieu leading to anonymization/groupthink/all social psych explanation

Online vs. Offline threats

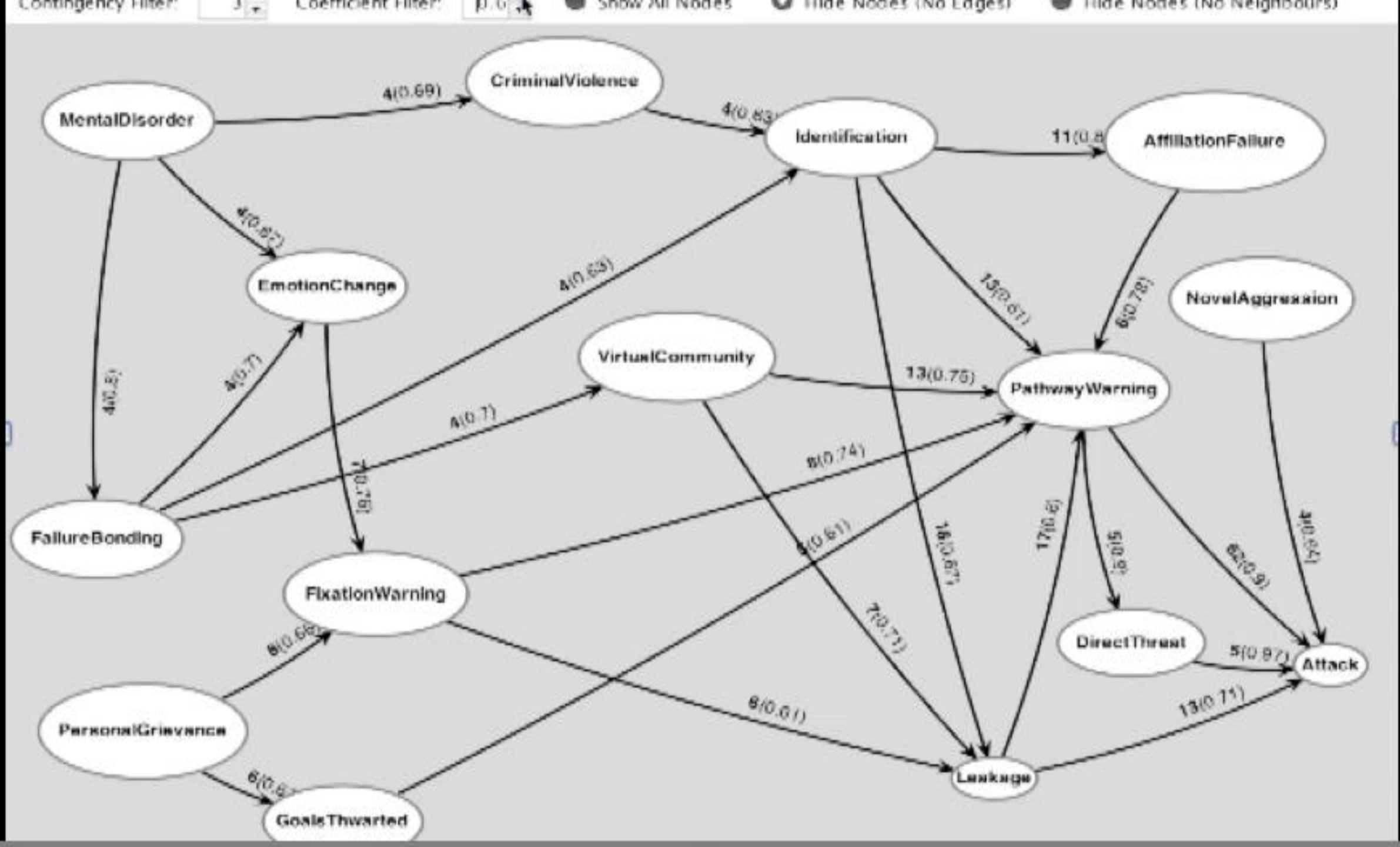
- Online threats more likely to
  - involve a subsequent approach* (almost twice as likely)
- Maybe a result of different targets of fixation or individual characteristics
  - Online threats more likely against politicians, Sites, embassies
- Online threateners more likely to have
  - Police criminal record
  - Harassment history
  - Threats History
  - Firearms access

7. Attack Planning & Decision-Making

7. Attack Planning & Decision-Making

- It looks like criminal decision-making
- Rarely sudden & impulsive
- Often keep several potential targets in mind and choose the one with the relatively fewest risks.
- The cost–benefit analyses differ across terrorist groups and terrorists because risk preferences differ.
- Prior successful experiences decrease averseness to risk
- The weighing of security features necessitates hostile reconnaissance which itself offers risk to the terrorist in terms of detection.
- What matters are perceptions of how effectively deployed security is
- Subjective ‘feelings’ play a large role

8. Sequencing



Contingency Filter:
Coefficient Filter:
Show All Nodes
Hide Nodes (No Edges)
Hide Nodes (No Neighbours)
MentalDisorder
CriminalViolence
Identification
AffiliationFailure
EmotionChange
NovelAggression
VirtualCommunity
PathwayWarning
FailureBonding
FixationWarning
DirectThreat
Attack
PersonalGrievance
GoalsThwarted
Leakage
4(0.69)
4(0.83)
11(0.8
4(0.67)
4(0.63)
13(0.61)
6(0.78)
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13(0.71)

Thank you

- Contact - Paul.Gill@ucl.ac.uk
- Twitter - @paulgill_ucl
- Web – www.grievance-erc.com