
The Concept of Identification in Threat Assessment

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Identification is one of eight warning behaviors—superordinate patterns of accelerating risk—that are theorized to correlate with targeted violence, and have some empirical validation. It is characterized by one or more of five characteristics: pseudo-commando behavior, evidence of a warrior mentality, a close association with weapons or other military or law enforcement paraphernalia, wanting to imitate and often surmount previous attackers or assassins, or believing oneself to be an agent to advance a particular cause or belief system. The authors briefly explore the history of the psychology of identification, its current usage, and its application to threat assessment. Four cases are used to illustrate identification as both a process and a product, and a likely motive for targeted violence in some subjects. Its operational relevance for threat assessment is suggested. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

INTRODUCTION

The term identification has its origins in the 17th century medieval latin verb, *identificare*. The psychological usage of identification finds its origins in psychoanalysis, wherein the word describes “endeavors to mould a person’s own ego after the fashion of the one that has been taken as a model” (Freud, 1921/1955, p. 106). Other psychoanalysts have offered similar definitions. Grotstein defined identification as “that modification of the self which is caused by union with the object” (1982, p. 74). Schafer (1968) found the term’s meaning in the modification of the self or behavior to increase resemblance to the object. Identification operates in the interest of, and fundamentally defends, narcissism. As Balint (1945) wrote, “It is, in fact, nothing less than mental mimicry. Its necessary preconditions are an unbroken narcissism, which cannot bear that anything should exist outside itself, and the weakness of the individual, which makes him unable either to annihilate his environment or take flight from it” (p. 150). It is the incorporation into the self of a mental picture of the object, and then thinking, feeling, and acting as one conceives the object to think, feel, and act. It is

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largely unconscious.¹ In current psychiatric nomenclature, identification is the process by which normal *identity* is formed: “experiences of oneself as unique, with clear boundaries between self and others; stability of self-esteem and accuracy of self-appraisal; capacity for, and ability to regulate, a range of emotional experience” (APA, 2013, p. 823); it is a core element in the alternative DSM-5 model for personality disorders (APA, 2013).

There are two significant psychoanalytic contributions to identification in the context of threats. The first is Anna Freud’s (1937/1966) “identification with the aggressor,” which she defined as follows:

The mechanism of identification or introjection is combined with a second important mechanism. By impersonating the aggressor, assuming his attributes or imitating his aggression, the child transforms himself from the person threatened into the person who makes the threat (p. 113).

In this carefully worded definition, A. Freud has separated the aggressor (object) and the aggressive behavior (act), thus assuming that the identification could be rooted in either or both.

The second contribution is developmental, and is found in the work of Erikson (1950). He posited a stage of development referred to as “identity vs. role confusion,” wherein the adolescent, if successful, consolidates his identifications and emerges with an “accrued confidence (of) inner sameness and continuity” (p. 261). One of the dangers at this stage is “intolerance as a defense against a sense of identity confusion” (p. 262). Erikson went on to write that the adolescent “is an ideological mind—and, indeed, it is the ideological outlook of a society that speaks most clearly to the adolescent who is eager to be affirmed by his peers...” (p. 263). In the context of threat assessment, identity becomes embedded in aggressive identifications, if not extremely violent images of the self in action, most often apparent in the fantasies of the young adult as a perpetrator of homicide against another. Erikson’s “ideological mind” in the adolescent may also provide a vehicle for identification with extreme beliefs and believers, and thus pave the way for ideologically driven violence, such as that perpetrated by lone terrorists or so-called “lone wolves” (Meloy & Yakeley, 2014; Simon, 2013). Silverman (1986) wrote, “stability is never absolute... under stress, reversion is possible to dependence on powerful, charismatic leaders that offer return to the illusion of identificatory union with a powerful, protective, parental other” (p. 190).

Identification has also become apparent in the work of social psychologists. One of the most interesting approaches—with operational implications for threat assessment—is the work of Gosling (2008; Gosling, Ko, Mannarelli, & Morris, 2002). He has conducted a series of naturalistic experiments in which inferences concerning an unknown individual’s personality can be accurately made by studying his living spaces and looking for “identity claims:” objects displayed by the person (diplomas, photos of self or others, souvenirs, clothing, amulets, ancient or contemporary weapons, hats, figurines, paintings, artistic displays, sports equipment, political posters, etc.) where the intent, whether conscious or not, is to communicate to the other what the person values, who they are, and with which persons, places,

¹ For further psychoanalytic understanding of identification, see the work of Meissner (1971), Silverman (1986), and Greenson (1954, 1968).

or objects there is an affinity or closeness. The openness and organization of such displays may also accurately imply the extraversion and attention to detail of the unknown person. For example, a person might display within his living room photos of his family, as well as framed prints of *fin de siècle* paintings—along with comfortable furniture, others' works of art as well as his own and his family's, roses from the garden, and a large LCD television. The high ceiling room might convey a sense of European history and colonial American tradition. What he likes, with whom he feels close, and his sources of pride are obvious to others. There are no reminders of his embarrassing moments, failures, or bad decisions.

Identification also may be supported by the neurobiological system referred to as “mirror neurons,” first coined as a term in studies of primates by researchers at the University of Parma (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004). Mirror neurons have been inferred through neuroimaging in the inferior parietal lobe, and they appear to span the inferior parietal lobule and inferior parietal sulcus (Baron-Cohen, 2011). The system appears to be involved in behavioral mimicry and emotional contagion (Carr, Iacoboni, Dubeau, Mazziotta, & Lenzi, 2003; Mukamel, Ekstrom, Kaplan, Iacoboni, & Fried, 2010). Although usually discussed as a building block for empathy, the mirroring neuron system may be the neurobiological substrate for the process of identification with another; identification may be a fundamental precursor to empathy.

IDENTIFICATION IN THREAT ASSESSMENT

One of Eight Patterns of Accelerating Risk

Identification, and its observable correlates, has emerged as one important warning behavior in threat assessment for targeted or intended violence (Meloy, 2011; Meloy & O'Toole, 2011; Meloy, Hoffmann, Guldemann, & James, 2012; Meloy, Hoffmann, Roshdi, Glaz-Ocik, & Guldemann, 2014). It has been identified as one of eight *superordinate patterns* of warning behaviors, which may indicate dynamic and accelerating risk of targeted violence across a variety of domains, such as school shootings, mass murder, public figure attacks and assassinations, and terrorist acts.

The eight warning behaviors provide a rationally derived theoretical typology. It was constructed by “identifying and contemplating patterns of data and theoretical formulations across the entire writing and research on targeted and intended violence, discussions with colleagues who do threat assessment, and casework experience [of the original authors] over the past several decades” (Meloy *et al.*, 2012, p. 265).

- 1 Pathway warning behavior—any behavior that is part of research, planning, preparation, or implementation of an attack.
- 2 Fixation warning behavior—any behavior that indicates an increasingly pathological preoccupation with a person or a cause.
- 3 Identification warning behavior—any behavior that indicates a psychological desire to be a “pseudo-commando,” have a “warrior mentality,” closely associate with weapons or other military or law enforcement paraphernalia, identify with previous

attackers or assassins, or identify oneself as an agent to advance a particular cause or belief system.

- 4 Novel aggression warning behavior—an act of violence that appears unrelated to any targeted violence pathway behavior which is committed for the first time.
- 5 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 days or weeks before the attack.
- 6 Leakage warning behavior—the communication to a third party of intent to do harm to a target through an attack.
- 7 Last resort warning behavior—evidence of a violent “action/time imperative,” increasing desperation or distress through declaration in word or deed.
- 8 Directly communicated threat warning behavior—the communication of a direct threat to the target or law enforcement beforehand.

The reader is referred to Meloy *et al.* (2012) and Meloy, Hoffmann, Roshdi, Glaz-Ocik, *et al.* (2014) for further explication of these warning behaviors. There is a small but growing body of validation research concerning this typology. Meloy, Hoffmann, Roshdi and Guldemann (2014) found by comparing a small sample of German school shooters with those who were concerning but had no intent to act violently that five of the warning behaviors were significantly more prevalent among the shooters: pathway, fixation, identification, novel aggression, and last resort. All effect sizes were large ($\phi > .50$). Others have recommended applying three of the warning behaviors—fixation, identification, and leakage—to detect “weak signals” of lone wolves, i.e., ideologically motivated lone terrorists, through computer-generated mining of linguistic data on the internet (Brynielsson *et al.*, 2013; Cohen, Johansson, Kaati, & Mork, 2014).

Identification Defined for Threat Assessment

Identification warning behavior, as noted above, is defined as “any behavior that indicates a psychological desire to be a ‘pseudo-commando’ (Dietz, 1986; Knoll, 2010a, 2010b), have a ‘warrior mentality’ (Hempel, Meloy, & Richards, 1999; Meloy *et al.*, 2004), closely associate with weapons or other military or law enforcement paraphernalia, identify with previous attackers or assassins, or identify oneself as an agent to advance a particular cause or belief system” (Meloy *et al.*, 2012, p. 256). The authors went on to write (p. 272), “identification warning behaviors would likely enhance the narcissism of the subject through his attempts to be like those he admires. In the psychoanalytic literature, these are called idealizing or twinship identifications and refer to the wish to worship someone else (idealizing) or be like someone else (twinship) (Kohut, 1971).” This particular warning behavior was teased out of the fixation warning behavior in our original formulations because it was recognized that there was a difference: fixation, or pathological preoccupation (Mullen *et al.*, 2009), was principally characterized by a continuous perceptual and cognitive focus upon an external person or cause, while identification was an aspect of a person or cause taken within the self. Fixation, although common in everyday life, such as hobbies, sports, intense admiration for public figures, or the early stages of romance, becomes pathological when it is accompanied by a deterioration in social and occupational functioning.

Identification and Cultural Scripting

With whom to identify, however, is not simply a free choice of the individual, but for many offenders there is a socio-cultural offer at the beginning. So-called cultural scripts (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Newman, Fox, Harding, Mehta, & Roth, 2004) provide such aggressive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral models to both consciously imitate and unconsciously incorporate. Cultural scripts are now spread globally through the Internet® and social media within seconds. However, the influence of cultural scripts is older and existed centuries ago, accelerated by the invention of the printing press. A classic example is the “Werther effect” or “Werther fever,” well known in suicide research (Maris, Berman, & Silverman, 2000; Phillips, 1974). The *Sorrows of Young Werther* was a title of a novel written and published in 1774 by German author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. It described the unhappy love story of the main character Werther, who committed suicide due to his unrequited love. The book became extremely popular in a number of European countries in those days, and even the French emperor Napoleon approached Goethe saying that he had read the book several times. Many young people identified with Werther, wearing the same clothes as described in the book, and some of them committed suicide—a copycat or contagion effect (Maris *et al.*, 2000)—following their notational reference to the main character in Goethe’s novel. It became clear how cultural scripts could influence issues of life and death.

A more recent cultural script that is tied to a process of identification with a special form of targeted violence can be seen in the U.S. term “going postal.” It refers to a series of mass murder cases committed by U.S. Postal Service employees in the 1980s. To the authors’ knowledge no similar concept to “going postal” exists outside of North America. The European threat assessment community tries to not dramatize the risk of workplace mass murder incidents in the public media. The concern is to avoid creating a cultural script in Europe that could be as lethal as “going postal” in North America.

In the United States between 1980 and 1989, three young males set out to assassinate three public figures: Mark Chapman murdered John Lennon in December, 1980; John Hinckley, Jr., attempted to assassinate President Ronald Reagan four months later; and Robert Bardo killed the young television actress Rebecca Schaeffer in 1989. All three young men were enamored with assassins who had preceded them, a clear identification, yet they also closely identified with each other² and the fictional character of Holden Caulfield—an emblematic figure of angst ridden and dysphoric adolescence—in J. D. Salinger’s novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. All of them had the book either on their person or in their possession at the time of their violence; Chapman sat down on the curb and was reading the book when the police arrived, within moments after he shot Lennon in the back (Jones, 1992). Martin (1988) wrote of the fictive personality as a source of safety and immutability, particularly for those having borderline personality disorder with an inherently unstable identity. Berke (2012) noted that assassins of idolized public figures may be motivated by a need to make up for their failings by insisting that popular figures are extensions of themselves.

² Hinckley had a strong affinity for Chapman during the months preceding his attack on President Reagan; Chapman reported receiving at least one letter while in prison from Bardo before the latter’s killing of Rebecca Schaeffer (personal communications, R. Fein and B. Vossekuil, November, 2014).

In the late 1990s a pair of young mass murderers deliberately created a psychological process of identification through media to spread the concept of school shootings all over the world. The two Columbine killers prepared videos and diary entries describing their plans and violent fantasies a year before the killings to inspire followers (Cullen, 2009). They first mentioned a “killing spree” in November 1997 in their writings, and referred to the chosen date as “NBK Day,” in reference to the film “Natural Born Killers,” which was released in 1994 and directed by Oliver Stone; Stone, in turn, was inspired by the criminal exploits of Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow, two U.S. depression era criminals responsible for the killing of at least nine police officers and several civilians until ambushed in Louisiana in 1934. Art imitated life; life imitated art—imitation is best conceived as a conscious corollary of the unconscious process of identification.

Mullen (2004) described the results of his detailed forensic evaluations of five pseudo-commando mass murderers who were caught before they could kill themselves or be killed. Most acknowledged being influenced by previous mass murderers that received significant media exposure. This led Mullen to posit the existence of a western culture “script” that, among other factors, may contribute to the propagation of present day mass murder.

Flanner, Modzeleski, and Kretschmar (2012) made the point that cultural and social factors should receive greater attention when considering mass murder as one form of targeted violence. Further investigation of socio-cultural factors of mass shootings, particularly in western society, must consider the link between narcissism and media responsibility. Narcissism may be considered the classic American pathology (Lasch, 1978), but there is concern that it may be proliferating “virally” and gaining momentum (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Is the changing character of mass shootings over the past few decades due, in part, to increasing narcissistic values? Consider the motivations and statements made by mass shooters since the 1990s. In 2007, Robert Hawkins shot nine people in an Omaha mall before killing himself. His suicide note stated “Just think tho, I’m gonna be fuckin famous [*sic*].” (Omaha Gunman Suicide Note; first author’s case files). A similar message was communicated by the Columbine offenders, who stated on a pre-shooting video, “Isn’t it fun to get the respect we’re going to deserve?” (Twenge & Campbell, 2003).

Meloy and Mohandie (2001) investigated the use of “screen violence” in a series of homicide cases, focusing on visual media (movies, Internet®, arcade games) widely available to young perpetrators at the time, and their concepts of aggression immersion, repetitive viewing, theme consistency, and scene specificity to shape the acts of violence during their planning stages. Such behaviors would unconsciously foster identifications with both aggression and the aggressor (Freud, 1937/1966). The concepts within the Meloy–Mohandie study preceded the advent of social media, which has made such identifications via the Internet® much more interactive, and perhaps more quickly and easily internalized.

Perhaps the potency of identification as a warning behavior is found in the need for targeted violence perpetrators to form idealizing narcissistic transferences (Kohut, 1971) with other violent individuals who have preceded them, whether fictional or non-fictional. Moreover, within such identifications envy may also stimulate a desire to trump the number of casualties from previous mass murderers. The individual glorifies the acts of others, wants to be like them, and also wants to diminish their infamy through his or her own. Identifications, although unconscious, can motivate and accelerate overt behavior.

THE FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF IDENTIFICATION WARNING BEHAVIOR

In the original formulation (Meloy *et al.*, 2012), the phenomenology, or observable behaviors, within this pattern were described, but not elaborated upon; also, the motivations or methods, both conscious and unconscious, to seek such identifications were not specified. Details of the five characteristics are as follows.

1. Pseudo-commando

This term was originally coined by Dietz (1986), although he did not use the words identify or identification in his formulation. His description was brief. Such individuals “are preoccupied by firearms and commit their raids after long deliberation” (p. 482). He utilized the term to describe one of his three types of mass murderer. Felthous and Hempel (1995) included the pseudo-commando in their classification of homicide–suicide, as did Knoll (2010a), who drew on Mullen’s (2004) comment on revenge fantasies among these individuals; he elaborated in psychodynamic detail the primary emotions and motivations of the pseudo-commando involving persecution, envy, and nihilism, culminating in desires for revenge and obliteration; he also conducted a psycholinguistic analysis of two pseudo-commando mass murderers in a subsequent article to illustrate these psychodynamics (2010b).

2. Warrior Mentality

The term “warrior mentality” was not defined other than by example and function when it was originally introduced (Hempel, Meloy, & Richards, 1999). The following definition is offered to rectify this:

"Warrior mentality" is the psychopathological fantasy and behavior of being a soldier/warrior, often with the goal of targeting unarmed civilians, in the absence of actual participation in state sanctioned warfare as a trained soldier/warrior against an identified enemy combatant.

The original intent was to focus more on the internal operations of the pseudo-commando than Dietz (1986) and Felthous and Hempel (1995) had done by paying close attention to the psychological inferences that could be drawn from overt behavior: antisocial and narcissistic personality traits, military service, a violent history, a fascination with weapons and war regalia, the absence of a direct threat, the absence of alcohol, the choice of weapons, the target selection, and the predatory mode of violence. “The psychodynamic appears to be twofold: an identification with aggression and authority and an emotional fueling of grandiosity and omnipotent control, two aspects of pathological narcissism that are, for a few moments, translated into a violent reality” (Hempel *et al.*, 1999, p. 219). The deeper work of Knoll (2010a, 2010b) has brought a fuller understanding and convergence of these two terms. It is emphasized that the term in this context is a perversion of the warrior mentality that is fostered in military training as an adaptive psychology to defeat an enemy *combatant*, and is not meant to impugn the importance of the development of a warrior mentality for sanctioned combat.

3. Closely Associate with Weapons or Other Law Enforcement or Military Paraphernalia

Weapon associations may be actual (purchasing, accumulation, construction, deconstruction, practicing) or virtual (first person shooter games, military paraphernalia collections closely linked to weapons, research of weapons on the internet, paintball competitions). They typically will have a strategic and tactical aspect (research, planning, and preparation for an act of targeted violence), but also are imbued with deep psychological meaning, often reflected in a degree of clandestine excitement (Collins, 2012) as they are accumulated in secret, and the anticipated potency that such use of weapons brings. There is also the suggestion that mass murderers will purchase multiple weapons over time in successively larger caliber, and the time between purchases will shorten as the planned date of the attack grows near. These behaviors are in the service of narcissistic inflation of the self, and typically compensate for a general sense of failure, vulnerability, and impotence.

The association with weapons and other paraphernalia often also contains a symbolic element. It may find its way into a nickname—one mass murderer was called “50 cal Al” by his friends and used a .50 caliber single shot rifle as one of his killing weapons (Meloy, 1997)—or, more remotely, the planned act may be committed on an anniversary date that was previously marked by a highly publicized act of targeted violence; for example, April 19, 1995 (Oklahoma City); September 11, 2001 (New York and Washington); March 11, 2004 (Madrid); July 7, 2005 (London); July 22, 2011 (Oslo and Utøya); April 15, 2013 (Boston); and January 7, 2015 (Paris).

4. Identify with Other Attackers or Assassins

The identification with other attackers or assassins can be both historical or contemporary, and fictional or nonfictional. Often there are several individuals with whom the identification occurs. It is usually conveyed by the subject through his verbal statements, appearance, or behavior, and explicit reference is typically made to the person with whom he identifies. A curious example of such identification occurred in the John Hinckley, Jr., attempted assassination case. Paul Schrader, a well known Hollywood writer and director, drew on the diaries of Arthur Bremer, the man who attempted to assassinate presidential candidate George Wallace in 1972, to develop his fictional character Travis Bickle and write the script for the movie “Taxi Driver” released in 1976. Then John Hinckley, Jr., adapted Bickle as one of his identifications during his pathway to attempt to assassinate President Ronald Reagan in 1981. Once again, art imitated life, life imitated art; the common thread was an “assassin”.

Identifications may also enlist a deity. Bastian B, a German school shooter who failed in his attempt to kill anyone in his former school in the town of Emsdetten, identified with both a nonfictional mass murderer and a deity: “(Eric) Harris is god and I want to be godlike.” Herein is the identification with a previous killer, but the tension is also evident to be separate and forge his own identity by producing greater casualties than occurred at Columbine High School. Note that he equates Harris with god, but not himself; he is content with being closely related to god through his actions. His struggle for identity became even more evident in another sequence of his diary in which he denies that he is imitative: “Before anybody asserts that I am a copycat offender of Harris or of someone else he should think about that for a moment: Is a small

priest in a village only a copycat offender of the pope? No! Of course not! He believes in the same thing as the pope but he is not imitating him. He is like the fucking pope part of the whole" (review of journal and quotations extracted by J. Hoffmann, November, 2014). In a similar manner, subjects will attempt to actually change their name to someone else with whom they identify. Tamerlan Tsarnaev attempted to legally change his name to Emir Muaz, a celebrated fighter in Russia's Dagestan republic—it was also the name given to him by rebels during his six month visit to the region—three months before his attack on the Boston Marathon with his brother in April, 2013 (Serrano, 2014).

5. Become an Agent to Advance a Particular Cause or Belief System

Ideologically motivated perpetrators of targeted violence, whom we refer to as violent true believers (Meloy *et al.*, 2001; Meloy, 2011), identify themselves as agents or soldiers to advance a particular cause or belief system. They often cloak their own narcissistic aspirations for fame, or perhaps infamy, in the guise of selfless martyrdom to inspire generations to come. Underlying pathological narcissism is a lack of healthy narcissism, which can stimulate envious feelings toward the other. Destructive envy may be expressed "in a conscious ideology of aggressive self-affirmation," such as nationalism, racism, or other causes with which the violent true believer identifies (Vitz, 1997). However, this envy must be denied and/or pushed out of consciousness as much as possible, due to the fact that recognizing envy in oneself requires an admission of inferiority (Berke, 2012).

The cause or belief system is usually secular or religious, and in contemporary geopolitics is often either right wing nationalism or radical Islam, respectively. There is also a cultural element among violent true believers: those from westernized developed countries, which endorse individual autonomy, tend to see themselves as solitary heroes, while those from more collectivistic Middle Eastern and Far Eastern societies see themselves as joining those believers, or *Shaheed* in an Islamic context, who have preceded them. Contemporary research has labeled these ideologically motivated subjects as "lone wolves" (Meloy & Yakeley, 2014; Simon, 2013) or "lone terrorists" (Borum, 2014).³ Ideologies vary considerably, and may also include single issues, such as anti-abortionism, or idiosyncratic beliefs that touch the edges of psychosis. What they share is a philosophical simplicity, cognitive rigidity, absolutism, resolve, literal-mindedness, and intolerance of and contempt for others' differing beliefs. There is no room for critical analysis, doubt, or humor concerning their identifications.

METHODS AND CASE EXAMPLES

The five aspects of identification in threat assessment are elaborated upon and illustrated by four cases culled from the authors' primary source material. The primary

³ The term lone terrorist is preferable to lone wolf, since the latter term tends to romanticize certain characteristics and behavior of the offender, who in reality is often desperately trying to resurrect a life in decline; the term school shooter, instead of mass murderer or homicidal-suicidal subject, likewise unwittingly romanticizes the culture of the gun, and brings a "coolness" to an actor and a behavior that is both inhumane and catastrophic for the victims, families, and communities.

sources were (a) direct evaluations and review of case evidence following retention on the case by the defense during criminal litigation, (b) indirect assessment and review of case evidence following retention on the case by the prosecution during criminal litigation, (c) consultation with psychiatrists, psychologists, or judicial officials who had direct access to primary investigative evidence on the case, or (d) direct interviews and review of evidence in the case in the context of conducting research. Subjects who were directly interviewed gave their written consent. In cases where the perpetrator could not be directly interviewed, all data were admitted as evidence at trial and became public record. In cases wherein the subject died at the time of the crimes, permission to publish evidence was granted by the jurisdictional authority. This case series did not rely on secondary sources such as print and electronic media, and consequently has enhanced reliability and validity. Historical, clinical, cultural, and other behavioral aspects of the cases are also included to place the identifications in context.

Jiverly Antares Wong, Binghamton, NY

Jiverly Antares Wong was a 41 year old naturalized Vietnamese immigrant who killed 14 people, wounded another four and then killed himself in the Binghamton, NY, American Civic Association on April 3, 2009, at approximately 10:30 am. The American Civic Association in Binghamton provides citizenship, cultural, and language assistance to the local immigrant community. Immediately before entering the Civic Association, he used his father's car to block the building's back door, preventing escape from one of the building's two doors. He then entered the front door, carrying two handguns and wearing a bullet-proof vest.

In the very place where he had recently taken English classes, he proceeded to shoot everyone he saw before finally shooting himself. He was equipped with large amounts of ammunition, and he had held permits since approximately 1996 for the two guns he used. Police determined that Wong ended up firing a total of 99 rounds: 88 from a 9 mm Beretta and 11 from a .45-caliber Springfield. Wong was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Detectives discovered that he possessed a hunting knife, a bag of ammunition tied around his neck, and a number of unspent magazines. At least one empty magazine had a 30 round capacity and a firearm laser sight.

Wong immigrated to New York with his family in 1990. He was the second of four children, and was ethnically Chinese, but had lived with his family in Vietnam. His father reported that not long after they had moved, when Mr. Wong was approximately 22 years old, Mr. Wong told his father someone was trying to kill him. At the same time, he appeared to complain of visual hallucinations of someone trying to harm him. He willingly went to the hospital with his father, was evaluated, and was released without treatment or follow-up. Retrospectively, Mr. Wong's father wondered if his son's lack of treatment may have been partly due to the communication barrier, as both he and his son spoke little English. He became an American citizen in 1995, but left the country shortly after. He returned in 1999 to California, where he was married and divorced. He had little contact with his family during his 15 years in California, and refused to share his mailing address with them.

After losing his job as a truck driver in California, Wong moved back to New York to live with his parents in 2007. His parents reported noticing a significant change in him since he had left New York. He did not care to have friends, and barely spoke to anyone. Other changes were somewhat odder. Even in the hot New York summer, he

would never wear short sleeves. There were no major episodes of violence prior to the shootings; however, there were several incidents of out of character aggression directed towards his family. For example, in 2008, Wong slapped his younger sister across the face during an argument, and raised his voice inappropriately to his father over a relatively minor household issue. Wong was laid off from his 3:00 pm to midnight shift job at a vacuum cleaner plant in November of 2008. He then began attending classes at the American Civic Association to improve his English. His family described him as increasingly isolative in the year leading up to the tragedy.

Wong was described as a gun enthusiast who would spend weekends target shooting. Post-tragedy investigation revealed that Wong exercised at a local gym. However, the gym owner noted that Wong regularly performed only one exercise on a piece of equipment designed to strengthen his grip. A co-worker at the vacuum cleaner plant reported that Wong sometimes “joked” about shooting politicians. Co-workers and his family reported that he was upset about not being able to obtain work. There were also unverified reports that Mr. Wong may have had a criminal record dating back to 1999. In the two weeks leading up to the tragedy, his father reported that he stopped eating dinner, stopped watching TV, and became even more isolative. This was approximately the time he composed the letter that he sent to “News 10 Now” (a TV station in Syracuse, NY).

According to survivors present at the time of the shooting, Wong did not speak before opening fire. However, several days after the tragedy, an envelope was received by News 10 Now. The package contained a two-page handwritten letter, photos of Wong holding handguns while smiling, a gun permit, and his driver’s license. Although the written letter was dated March 18, 2009, it was postmarked April 3, 2009, suggesting that he had been planning the shootings for a significant period of time. The letter was written in all capital letters, and contained numerous errors in spelling and grammar. The letter appeared to be Wong’s attempt to explain his motivation behind the mass shooting. Careful analysis of the letter revealed long-standing paranoid and persecutory delusions, as well as hallucinations (Knoll, 2010b). Wong described being severely resentful about being systematically persecuted in a bizarre manner by “undercover cops,” who had destroyed his chances of assimilating and working successfully in the U.S.

Wong’s autopsy revealed that he had a bizarre tattoo which covered most of his left shoulder, left upper arm, and left forearm. His family had been unaware of the tattoo. It consisted of four rows of seemingly random numbers and shapes, as well as a solid black square that appeared to cover up another design underneath. Neither local law enforcement, nor the FBI, could find any meaning in Wong’s tattoo. Subsequent consultation by the senior author with a group of cryptographers at a major software corporation was also unsuccessful in revealing the meaning of the tattoo (see Figure 1).

Mr. Wong demonstrated three aspects of identification—a *warrior mentality*, acting as *an agent to advance a cause or belief system*, and a *preoccupation with weapons and law enforcement paraphernalia*. His attack was predatory, methodical, and planned so that his victims were unable to escape. Prior to the mass shooting, he obtained or purchased a bullet-proof vest and a large amount of ammunition. He spent a great deal of time at a firing range, and appeared to be highly focused on improving his grip strength at the gym, possibly in order to develop the muscular endurance required to continuously fire a high number of rounds. His actions appeared to have been effective, as law enforcement noted they had rarely come across an individual capable of firing such a high number of shots in a relatively brief period (personal communication, Binghamton Police Chief J. Zikuski, April 4, 2009; Chen, 2009; Rivera, 2009). Mr. Wong’s final



Figure 1. Jiverly Wong's tattoo of unknown meaning on his left shoulder photographed during his autopsy. (Permission granted for use by J. Zikuski, Binghamton NY Chief of Police, and G. Mollen, Binghamton NY District Attorney).

letter revealed that he was motivated to commit the offense in order to *advance his cause and belief system*, although likely delusional. He indicated that his actions were intended to call attention to his perceived persecutors, who would then be held “responsible.” Conspicuously absent in the case of Mr. Wong is any evidence of *identification with previous attackers*, which may indicate a lack of stable, whole object representation of others due to psychosis.

Seung-Hui Cho, Virginia Tech

On April 16, 2007, Seung-Hui Cho, a college student, shot and killed 32 students and faculty at Virginia Tech, wounded 17 others, and then committed suicide. He fired approximately 170 rounds, using 17 separate magazines. The incident began with a double homicide at a residence hall, after which Mr. Cho left campus to Fed-Ex a package to NBC in New York. This package included a DVD (with about 20 separate videos) of Mr. Cho speaking about his motivation for the mass homicide, photographs, and two letters, which could be characterized as a written “manifesto,” and appear to have been used as scripts for his spoken words on camera. Upon his return, for approximately ten minutes, he methodically attacked victims in Norris Hall after locking the west entrance doors to prevent victim escape. Reportedly he used his left hand to operate the Walther .22 for suppressive fire and the Glock in his right hand to kill, and returned to several classrooms where he had previously fired his weapons and administered fatal coup-de-grace shots to wounded students and faculty.

Mr. Cho's so-called manifesto mailed to, and received by, NBC included the following excerpts.

You forced me into a corner and gave me only one option. The decision was yours. Now you have blood on your hands that will never wash off.

I will no longer run. It's not for me. It's for my children.... I did it for them.

You thought it was one pathetic boy's life you were extinguishing. Thanks to you I die. Like

Jesus Christ. To inspire generations of the weak and the defenseless people.

Do you know what it feels like to be torched alive? Do you know what it feels like to be humiliated and be impaled upon a cross and left to bleed to death for your amusement? You have never felt a single ounce of pain your whole life.

To you sadistic snobs, I may be nothing but a piece of dog shit. You have vandalized my heart, raped my soul, and torched my conscious again and again. You thought it was one pathetic, void life that you were extinguishing. Thanks to you, I die, like Jesus Christ, to inspire generations of the Weak and Defenseless people—my Brothers, Sisters, and Children—that you fuck.... Like Moses, I spread the sea and lead my people—the Weak, the Defenseless, and the Innocent Children of all ages that you fucked and will always try to fuck—to eternal freedom. Thanks to you Sinners, you Spillers of Blood, I set the example of the century for my Children to follow....

Do they wanna fuck us and pretend to be devout Christians? Do they wanna smear dog shit on our face then give us a dirty towel to wipe away? Do they wanna rape us then give us stained toilet paper to clean up? Do they wanna cut our throat then give us a used band aid to patch up? Do they wanna perpetrate endless sessions of crucifixions and holocausts on our innocent life then go to church and praise the Lord and Jesus? Do they wanna fuck us and pretend to be Jesus Christ? I say we're the Jesus Christs, my Brothers, Sisters, and Children. Jesus Christ exists in us all: Ax Jesus Christ, John Jesus Christ, Jane Jesus Christ, Seung Jesus Christ, Carlos Jesus Christ, Hakeem Jesus Christ, Mohammad Jesus Christ, Zhang Jesus Christ, Oliver Jesus Christ, Elizabeth Jesus Christ, Vladimir Jesus Christ. I say there is no pain they can inflict on us that they haven't already inflicted. I say they can't fuck us any more than they have already done. I say there are no lies they can say about us that they haven't already said. I say fuck you, you Descendants of Satan Disguised as Devout Christians. I say we take up the cross, take up our guns and knives and hammers, and take no prisoners and spare no lives until our last breath and last ounce of energy.

Generation after generation, we martyrs, like Eric and Dylan, will sacrifice our lives to fuck you thousand folds for what you Apostles of Sin have done to us....

All of you who have ever been fucked by these Descendants of Satan Disguised as Devout Christians, all of you who have went through what I went through, all of you who have felt what I have felt in my life, all of you who have suffered the wrath of these Democratic Terrorists, all of you who have been beaten, humiliated, and crucified—Children of Ishmael, Crusaders of Anti-Terrorism, my Jesus Christ Brothers and Sisters—you're in my heart. In life and death and spirit. We'll soon be together.

Let the revolution begin now!



Figure 2. Cho self-photograph prior to the mass murder at Virginia Tech with weapons of identification brought to the killings.

Die you Descendants of Satan! Fuck you, and die now! I am Ax

Ishmael. I am the Anti-Terrorist of America.

Photographs depicted Mr. Cho in his tactical vest holding both guns, as well as other photographs of him holding a hammer in a menacing display (see Figures 2 and 3). Another photograph showed him holding his knife in a similar fashion. Mr. Cho had apparently viewed and been inspired by the Korean vengeance themed movie titled *Old Boy*. In one of the scenes from this movie, the central character used a hammer to wreak his revenge upon the victims. When Mr. Cho was found dead of suicide, it was noted that he had brought this hammer to the scene, as well as the knife, neither of which he used in the violence. Multiple weapons are usually carried to the scene by a mass murderer, and often the weapons that have no practical purpose have deep identification meanings for the perpetrator (Hempel *et al.*, 1999).

In other writings submitted for school, he appeared to borrow lines and inspiration from the rock group Guns and Roses, specifically their CD *Appetite for Destruction*, lending a sinister and violent tone within the content of his writings. One of his plays was titled *Mr. Brownstone*, which was the title of a Guns and Roses song about heroin addiction; within this play he writes about a student being angry at a teacher over detention, “I want to kill him. I want to watch him bleed.” The line “I want to watch you bleed” is a refrain within the song *Welcome to the Jungle* on this CD. In another play titled *Richard McBeef*, he wrote about a person wanting to kill his stepfather, “I hate him. Must kill Dick. Dick must die.”

Mr. Cho’s documented preparations for his mass murder began in February 2007 with the purchase of his first handgun, a Walther P22. Subsequently, he shopped for an additional handgun at various gun dealers, finally purchasing a Glock Model 19 in March 2007. During this operational preparation time period which continued until the shooting, he purchased multiple magazines for his weapons, ammunition, and a street map of Christiansburg, VA. The day after his parents dropped him off to college from spring break on March 11, 2007, he rented a red Kia Sedona minivan from Enterprise Rent-A-Car at the Roanoke airport. On March 14, 2007, he was seen for the first time shooting at the National Forest Service gun range outside of Blacksburg,



Figure 3. Scene from the Korean vengeance themed movie *Old Boy* (compare to figure 2).

VA. He was seen again at this range on March 19, 2007, where he reportedly watched shooters practicing for a defensive pistol match, and was observed practicing magazine changes while shooting. In addition to ongoing magazine and ammunition purchases, he also purchased a shoulder holster and bought a video tripod on March 22, 2007. On March 28, 2007, he checked into a motel and used the services of a prostitute, which was reportedly his first sexual experience. On March 31 and April 3, he made purchases related to the locks he ultimately used to chain the doors of the west entrance to Norris Hall. On April 4, he was observed outside Norris Hall, apparently studying the building. It appeared that he stopped attending classes around March 29. On April 8, he took several still photos that were used as part of his “manifesto,” one of which was him posing with the Buck knife he had purchased on the same day.

Seung-Hui Cho was born in South Korea on January 18, 1984, to an intact family. Due to some health issues that occurred within his first three years of life (cardiac issues and pertussis) and the resultant medical attention and treatment, his mother indicated that he did not like being touched and avoided direct physical contact with others. Generally as a child he was described as *wangdda*, a Korean word meaning loner or outcast in Korean society. His family immigrated to the United States and settled in Baltimore, MD, when he was eight years old and entering second grade. Korean was the primary language used by the family in the home, and Mr. Cho excelled at the basics of English in his ESL classes, but teachers were concerned that he was very quiet and his speech was barely audible. In 1993, he acknowledged that, despite his mastery of English, he was embarrassed when he spoke. In 1997 he experienced his first bout of suicidal ideation and mental health treatment, including anti-depressant medication. Subsequent to the Columbine school shooting Mr. Cho, for the first known time, evidenced homicidal ideation: he wrote a paper for his eighth grade class that had homicidal and suicidal ideation and indicated something to the effect that he wanted to “repeat Columbine.” In 2000, his Korean classmates teased him by calling him *wangdda*.

Mr. Cho engaged in leakage, another one of the warning behaviors, prior to the mass homicide: multiple students, faculty, and others were disturbed, concerned, and fearful due to his various behaviors and statements. In fall of 2005, he wrote and read out loud a violent poem, and was caught taking surreptitious photographs of females in his class; this triggered a referral and feedback session with the Dean of Student Affairs. He explained the poem was satire, and agreed to stop taking photographs, but refused to follow up on recommended counseling. He continued to episodically engage in behavior that was odd, distressing, and disturbing to classmates and some faculty. This included unsolicited text messages and instant messages to several female students consistent with stalking type behavior, referring to himself as “question mark,” and stabbing the carpet of a female student with a knife during a party. Ultimately, in December 2005, after the police intervened regarding his unwanted contacts with one female, he sent an IM to a roommate that stated, “I might as well kill myself.” This led to police being called, and an involuntary hospitalization, where he was determined on admission to be an imminent danger to himself and others. Upon discharge, he was judged by a special justice to be “an imminent danger to himself as a result of mental illness,” and outpatient treatment was ordered, but he did not follow through. Continued evidence of serious problems was manifested in his behavior leading up to the mass homicide: wearing reflective sunglasses in class, minimal social responsiveness, lack of collaboration on group assignments, and general social alienation. In spring 2006, he continued

to be obsessed with violent themes, as apparent in one writing assignment submitted for his fiction workshop class:

The character, Bud, “gets out of bed unusually early... puts on his black jeans, a strappy black vest with many pockets, a black hat, a large dark sunglasses [sic] and a flimsy jacket.... I’m nothing. I’m a loser. I can’t do anything. I was going to kill every god damn person in this damn school, swear to god I was, but I... couldn’t. I just couldn’t. Damn it I hate myself!” If I get stopped by a cop my life will be forever over. A stolen car, two hand guns, and a sawed off shotgun (p. 50).

Mr. Cho demonstrated all five aspects of identification, including *pseudo-commando or warrior mentality*, *identification with previous attackers or assassins*, and *aspiring to be an agent to advance a cause or belief system*. The *warrior mentality* is unequivocally evidenced by his predatory attacks, and the methodical way he prepared for the killings, including the purchase of multiple weapons, weapon rehearsal, possession of weapons that were costume related or symbolic (the knife and the hammer), and the cold-blooded, efficient, and tactical manner in which he killed and prevented escape. Regarding *advancing a cause or belief system*, Mr. Cho viewed himself as a martyr, having concluded that he uncovered the flawed pretenders and hypocrites. Mr. Cho invoked Jesus Christ and Moses in this imagery, with whom he clearly identified—although at another point he stated that he was persecuted by Jesus, evidence of his contradictory and rapidly shifting states of mind. While he approached the mass homicide with attention to the operational aspects necessary for success, including weapon acquisition and rehearsal, the memorializing of his thoughts and feelings via photographs, video recordings, and written communications is the strongest evidence for his own desire to be remembered and thus occupy a fantasized position within the gallery of anti-heroes he himself emulated, a long tradition in American culture (Mailer, 1957; Utley, 1989). The religious themes of purity represented by Jesus Christ and Moses add a dimension of moral righteousness, grandiosity, and entitlement to the equation: this narcissistic aspect of his self-identity absolves him of guilt; as a god-like figure it is his duty to revenge and obliterate (Knoll, 2010a), and thus purify by killing.

Mr. Cho strongly *identified with previous attackers and assassins*, both real and fictional. It appears that he first identified with the Columbine attackers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, in 1999, and that interest and identification persisted, becoming part of the template for his acts of aggression and himself as aggressor (Freud, 1937/1966). Within fiction, he clearly had immersed himself in the identity of the *Old Boy* character who armed himself with the hammer, as well as themes literally and metaphorically derived from his interest in heavy metal or hard rock music, particularly Guns and Roses. This process of *aggression immersion*, as described by Meloy and Mohandie (2001), seems particularly relevant as a *means* by which identification can be solidified.

Joseph Paul Franklin, an American Lone Terrorist and Serial Murderer

Joseph Paul Franklin was born James Clayton Vaughn, Jr., in Mobile, AL, on April 13, 1950. From August 1977 through August of 1980, Mr. Franklin’s “mission” was to start a race war, something partially inspired by his reading of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. He committed approximately 23 homicides, primarily targeting African Americans,

mixed race couples, women who admitted dating African American men, and Jewish people. He funded his quest by committing 16 bank robberies. His violent spree spanned 33 states, employed nearly 20 aliases, and utilized multiple methods including sniper attacks, close range shootings with handguns, and several bombings. He wounded multiple victims as well, including *Hustler* magazine publisher Larry Flynt, who was targeted for showing mixed race couples in his magazine, and public figure (then Urban League President) Vernon Jordan.

As a child he grew up in poverty, and was reportedly subjected to physical abuse. During the tumultuous times of the Civil Rights era in the United States, Mr. Franklin gravitated toward groups espousing extremist views, including British Israelism from George Herbert Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God, the National Socialist White People's Party (formerly known as the American Nazi Party), and the Neo-Fascist National States Rights Party (while simultaneously holding membership in a local branch of the Ku Klux Klan), and regularly listened to William Pierce's White Power messages broadcast from Arlington, VA. William Pierce wrote under the pseudonym Andrew MacDonald and authored *The Turner Diaries*, a racist novel that inspired and was considered the blueprint for Oklahoma City Federal Building bomber Timothy McVeigh in 1995. He also penned *Hunter*, a 1989 novel about a man who assassinated mixed race couples and public figures who advocated for civil rights. The latter novel began with this notation by Mr. Pierce: "Dedicated to Joseph Paul Franklin, the Lone Hunter, who saw his duty as a White man and did what a responsible son of his race must do, to the best of his ability and without regard for the personal consequences." During a videotaped interview with Mr. Franklin by Dr. Mohandie during October 1999, Franklin indicated that his last meeting with racist leaders William Pierce and Edward Fields took place in late 1973. The following direct quotes are taken from the interview.

Mr. Franklin strongly identified with other violent true believers:

I don't consider myself a serial killer. I consider myself a multiple slayer... I was not a sex killer. I didn't go around raping women.... It wasn't my MO, my style.... Ever heard of the Red Brigades in Italy? They were my heroes when I was out there doing this stuff... they were active over there while I was here... I identified with the Puerto Rican FALN too... I would keep up with the stuff they were doing. The bombings and all. And to me it was just like they were my comrades in different areas.... Only I was kind of just my own terrorist organization... the whole Ku Klux Klan did not do as much stuff as I did....

Dr. Pierce never really influenced me at all in that regard. I was influenced by Samuel Bowers... Imperial Wizard of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. He was the one that inspired me. It was the most violent Klan around. They were doing a lot of bombings, murders, they killed the three civil rights workers... I considered him one of the greatest right wing leaders in history. Next to General Nathan Bedford Forrest.... The Klan was actually founded as a terrorist organization by Nathan Bedford Forrest [who] deliberately started the Klan as a terrorist organization... they did not intend for them to be doing stuff like they're doing now. All the parades and demonstrations and all that shit. It was strictly meant to be a terrorist organization.... there's really no genuine Klan anymore. It's really run by the FBI [via informants and the ADL....]

Mr. Franklin indicated that he made his decision to embark on his mission on Christmas eve 1975 in Mt. Ranier, MD:

I was kicked out of a rooming house, the night before Christmas, for not paying my rent... I just got really pissed off.... I just thought I'm not going to put up with this shit any more.... I'm gonna start doing some killing... I blamed the Jews on everything that happened to me. Typical Nazi belief. I figured I'm gonna get some of them... Here I was an intelligent man

and couldn't hold a job, while they got a lot of people a lot dumber than me with really good jobs. I decided that wasn't fair.

Several months later, he joined the local KKK, hoping to acquire operationally useful information about methods of terrorism from the Klan that he could employ on his mission. However, he became disappointed, dropped out because he perceived the Klan to be a "joke" and nothing like the group that it originated from, the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Mr. Franklin indicated a process of "mental preparation" that also included studying forensic and criminology books to facilitate his attempts to elude detection. Later in 1976 he wrote a letter to President Jimmy Carter complaining about Black people in America. It was this year that he also legally changed his name to Joseph Paul Franklin, paying homage to his heroes, Nazi propaganda minister Paul Joseph Goebbels, and Benjamin Franklin, the latter whom he considered to be a true American—an insurgent against the British colonial occupation.

Mr. Franklin indicated he was sorry he got caught, and that if he had it to do over again, "I would have targeted less Jews, more Blacks, and government leaders," and "I would have targeted homosexuals." He added some regrets over shooting Larry Flynt: "I'm sorry I shot Larry Flynt, he's a rebel like me." Upon reflection, he stated, "It was the will of God that I do it—he didn't stop me... everything we do today, I feel we agreed to do before we were born... American people should love me, if mixing continues it will be the downfall of American civilization...." He indicated his identification with a purported quote from George Bernard Shaw: "A fanatic is someone who is doing God's work if he were here." When discussing his "count" of 23 homicides, Mr. Franklin indicated, "I'm a little bit ahead of Billy the Kid in terms of notches...."

Mr. Franklin was executed by lethal injection on November 20, 2013, in Missouri, 15 years after being sentenced to death for the 1977 murder of Gerald Gordon.

Individuals evidencing identification warning behavior as a pattern may vary in range and depth: they have a belief system that is actively carried to others, and may seek to improve upon or upstage predecessors or contemporaries. They may also solidify their identification by belonging and joining; on the other hand they may embrace martyrdom or seek exalted hero status as a lone terrorist. The case of Joseph Paul Franklin reflected multiple levels of these aspects of identification, up to and including his deep commitment as an agent to advance a violent belief system.

Mr. Franklin demonstrated three aspects of identification, including *warrior mentality*, *identification with previous attackers or assassins*, and *an agent to advance a cause or belief system*. The *warrior mentality* is strongly supported by his predatory attacks onto his chosen victims, who served as scapegoats for his failings. He approached his mission with thoughtful attention to the operational aspects necessary for success, including funding, acquiring necessary technical proficiency in weapons and explosives, target selection and reconnaissance, and multiple methods of eluding detection.

Mr. Franklin strongly *identified with previous attackers and assassins*—contemporary as well as historical. Contemporary violent true believers such as Samuel Bowers admittedly inspired and served as role models for his violence, while historical figures such as Adolf Hitler, Paul Joseph Goebbels, and the founder of the KKK Nathan Bedford



Figure 4. Joseph Paul Franklin booking photo.

Forrest furnished Mr. Franklin with an assortment of heroes from which to model his mission, philosophically as well as operationally. Changing his birth name as homage to that of a historical Nazi figure reflects a deep internal consolidation of his identity and belongingness to this world of violent true believers. He measured his own “success” with that of other anti-heroes and groups, as varied as Billy the Kid—the late 19th century outlaw—and the modern day Ku Klux Klan, obviously proud of his greater fatalities and action orientation.

His mission clearly defined his stated goal of *advancing a cause or belief system*. Mr. Franklin carried the torch of the original Ku Klux Klan as well as the Nazis, with its agenda to rebel against and undermine civil rights, and to deny basic life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness to those deemed as less than human by virtue of race, ethnicity, and religion. Fixation is what he believed; identification is what he became (see Figure 4).

Anders Breivik, a European Lone Terrorist

In early July, 2011, Anders Breivik prepared to carry out his attack on the government of Norway. He familiarized himself with the routes to the targets and programmed his GPS (Breivik, 2011, p. 1464). He dug up his body armor and bought hollow point ammunition (Breivik, 2011, p. 1465). He rented a van, a Passat, on July 15, and removed all the rental stickers (Breivik, 2011, p. 1469). He placed a fertilizer bomb in the Passat between July 18 and 19, and utilized mattress stuffing and cardboard to transport the booster and detonators separately (Breivik, 2011, pp. 2348–2349). He parked the van in a western part of Oslo on July 20, and then drove the van into the city center on July 22. He had written out a time schedule for the attack, but would fail to follow his own plans.

It appears that Breivik spent his last night at his mother’s home. He had difficulty installing a high powered modem to distribute his manifesto when he awoke about 8:00 am. He drove the Fiat to Hammersborg Square, a short walk from the government center, at 11:00, and returned to his mother’s in a taxi, uploaded his marketing video, and made his last manifesto entry: “I believe this will be my last entry. It is now Fri July 22, 12.51. Sincere regards, Anders Berwick, Justiciar Knight Commander, Knights

Templar Europe, Knights Templar Norway.” He then tried to send it to his 8,000 email addresses.

Breivik had posted a sign in the van that said “sewer cleaning in progress,” to avoid drawing attention to the smell of sulfur emanating from the homemade explosives. He changed into military clothes and placed blue lights on the roof of the van so he could approach the target, the government buildings, undetected. When he parked the van, he put on his helmet and vest. He ran away from the Passat at 3:17 pm with his Glock in his hand, an image caught on surveillance and later published. After driving two blocks in his second vehicle, the Fiat, he heard the explosion. It was 3:25 pm. At 4:30 he arrived at Utvika, 35 km from Oslo, now dressed as a police officer with fake identification papers, and told the guards (camp participants) that he was there to do a routine security inspection of Utøya. At 5:17 pm he left the pier for the island, and began killing four minutes later, a spree that lasted about 75 minutes. 564 persons were on the island; over 10% were murdered. The most effective escape route was into the sea (Meyer, 2013).

Breivik showed clear evidence of his identification as both a *pseudo-commando* and having a *warrior mentality*, although he had no actual military or law enforcement experience. Breivik took photos of himself for his manifesto posted to the internet in the hours before the attack: in one he is wearing a wet suit with insignias (see Figure 5), and pointing a rifle with laser lights and a scope in a modified offhand standing position; in the second (see Figure 6) he is wearing a dress “military” uniform with epaulets and various medals, including his personally designed insignia on his arm: a skull with the symbols for Nazism, communism, and Islam on its cranium being penetrated by a red sword/cross. Both of these uniforms were his creation.

He admired the Israel Defense Forces and wore one of their vests during the attack (Breivik, 2011, pp.1510–1513). He deeply identified with the Knights Templar of the 11th century, the “special forces” of the Christian Crusades against Islam, and claimed that he attended a meeting of the Knights in London in 2002. Subsequent investigation revealed no evidence of such a meeting, and this was likely a fantasy. He referred to himself as “Commander Breivik who just performed an operation on behalf of the Knights Templar” while talking to the police by



Figure 5. Anders Breivik with homemade wetsuit.



Figure 6. Anders Breivik with homemade military uniform.

telephone during his attack. At trial he apologized to “militant nationalists” for not killing more people. He played the video game “World of Warcraft,” a game of fantasy combat, and told his first psychiatric examiners it was his martyrdom gift. He also named his Ruger firearm “Gungnir,” after the spear of Odin, who hurled it to begin the Æsir–Vanir War between two groups of gods in Norse mythology.

Another aspect of his identification was the study of *previous attackers and assassins*. Breivik copied and pasted many of the passages in his manifesto from the US serial

bomber Theodore Kaczynski, the so-called “Unabomber,” replacing words such as “leftist” with “cultural Marxist.” He often plagiarized Kaczynski’s own manifesto, which had been published in the *Washington Post* on September 22, 1995, and led to his apprehension when his brother, a social worker, recognized his writings. Kaczynski killed 3 and injured 23 between 1978 and 1995 as he railed against technology and industrialism.

Breivik probably identified most closely with Timothy McVeigh,⁴ who bombed a U.S. federal building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, leaving 168 people dead. Here is one reference to McVeigh in his manifesto: “I am really beginning to understand why Mr. McVeigh limited his manufacturing to 600 kg. He probably encountered much of the issues I did and he probably had to learn everything the hard way just as I have done” (p. 1466, manifesto). In this passage, and in his mind, he is just like McVeigh in his behavior and learning. McVeigh, however, was an actual soldier/warrior and distinguished himself during the first Iraq–U.S. conflict in 1990–1991—a stature that Breivik clearly yearned for and admired, if not envied. Breivik also reported liking a movie about Baader–Meinhof, a German left-wing terrorist group, and utilized one of their bomb-making techniques (Breivik, 2011, pp. 1425, 1458). Breivik clearly identified himself as *an agent to advance a particular cause or belief system*: a resistance fighter against multiculturalism, Marxism, and the Islamization of Europe (Leonard, Annas, Knoll, & Torrisen, 2014).

OPERATIONAL AND LEGAL RELEVANCE

Identification informs both prospective and retrospective analyses of threat and violence cases. In prospective threat management contexts, information seeking and investigation of the presence of identification may reveal critical interests of the subject, which either escalate or diminish concern about risk. The concept of identification provides another potentially productive area for investigators to explore during their review and interviews, another content area to specify within search warrants, and to help focus other efforts, such as social media investigations (SMIs). The discovery of a specific identification theme may illuminate the potential trajectories of a threat. For example, a subject who identifies with Hitler might be inclined to target minorities or those of Jewish heritage. In retrospective analyses, this content area may similarly prove fruitful in understanding the motivation and state of mind of an offender who has committed a violent act and may be at future risk, and provide a topical area for computer and other forensic searches, as well as an area for exploration during interrogations and interviews. An offender might retrospectively claim he was psychotic or reacting in self-defense, but a pronounced identification with a historically violent figure who was purposeful might support a different mode of aggression and motive.

In addition to threat assessment or post offense understanding of the subject, the five aspects of identification warning behavior described may be relevant to an affirmative defense of insanity. In *Clark v. Arizona* (2006), the U.S. Supreme Court indicated that it conceptualizes expert forensic mental health testimony in insanity cases as falling into

⁴ For an analysis of McVeigh’s identification warning behavior, see the work of Meloy *et al.* (2012). McVeigh saw himself as the “first hero of the second American revolution,” and selected the date of his bombing to correspond with the firing of the first shot in the American Revolution on April 19, 1775, at the Battle of Lexington–Concord.

three general categories: (1) observation evidence (e.g., an expert's description of a defendant's speech, thought, or behaviors, which may lend support to the diagnoses), (2) mental disease evidence (whether a defendant suffered from a mental disease or defect at the time of the offense), and (3) capacity evidence (e.g., whether the disease or defect left the defendant incapable of knowing that his act was wrong) (Knoll & Resnick, 2008).

For insanity defense evaluations, the defendant's behaviors, statements, and motives must be carefully analyzed. Exploration of identification warning behavior can be expected to provide valuable information regarding knowledge of wrongfulness and/or ability to conform one's conduct to the requirements of the law. Considering such identifications in an insanity defense evaluation will likely provide a more accurate and meaningful elucidation of the defendant's motives. For example, it may assist in clarifying long held ideological beliefs and other alternative motivations that do not flow from a purported mental disease for which there is no evidence. On the other hand, identification with a strange or bizarre belief system may have modulated the anxiety of the subject in the midst of a genuine psychotic decompensation (Meloy & Yakeley, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Identification is both a process and a product of normal psychological development. For forensic psychologists and psychiatrists, identification may be one warning behavior that motivates the subject of concern to be an actor and immerse himself in the action of violence. For all threat assessors, the analysis of warning behaviors should include the investigation of the subject's identifications: is there evidence that suggests any of the characteristics of identification that have been outlined—(1) a pseudo-commando appearance and behavior and a desire for revenge and obliteration, (2) a warrior mentality motivated by the psychopathological fantasy of killing unarmed civilians, (3) a close, and often secret, association with both practical and symbolic weapons and other military or law enforcement paraphernalia, (4) seeking to be like, and surmount, other historical or contemporary fictional or nonfictional attackers or assassins, or (5) seeing oneself as an agent or soldier to advance a particular cause or belief system?

The finding of such identifications in a threat assessment, of course, does not predict targeted violence; however, it may elevate concern, especially when combined with the other warning behaviors of pathway, fixation, novel aggression, and last resort (Meloy, Hoffmann, Roshdi, Glaz-Ocik, *et al.*, 2014; Cohen *et al.*, 2014). This configuration of warning behaviors needs to be further researched to support its validity as a measure of risk for targeted violence, but in the meantime heightened awareness on the part of threat assessors in the field is warranted.

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