Public Figure Attacks in the United States, 1995–2015

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An archival descriptive study of public figure attackers in the United States between 1995 and 2015 was undertaken. Fifty-six incidents were identified, primarily through exhaustive internet searches, composed of 58 attackers and 58 victims. A code book was developed which focused upon victims, offenders, pre-attack behaviors including direct threats, attack characteristics, post-offense and other outcomes, motivations and psychological abstracts. The average interrater agreement for coding of bivariate variables was 0.835 (intraclass correlation coefficient). The three most likely victim categories were politicians, judges, and athletes. Attackers were males, many with a psychiatric disorder, most were grandiose, and most had both a violent and nonviolent criminal history. The known motivations for the attacks were often angry and personal, the most common being dissatisfaction with a judicial or other governmental process (23%). In only one case was the primary motivation to achieve notoriety. Lethality risk during an attack was 55%. Collateral injury or death occurred in 29% of the incidents. Only 5% communicated a direct threat to the target beforehand. The term "publicly intimate figure" is introduced to describe the sociocultural blurring of public and private lives among the targets, and its possible role in some attackers' perceptions and motivations. Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

The paradox of fame is the loss of freedom. It is a freedom to physically move wherever one wants and communicate with whomever one wishes. There is also a darker side: those bedeviled by failures in love and work, and increasingly living on the margins of society, and often their own mental stability, may enviously wish for the attention and wealth the public figure commands. In a very few cases, the thought of infamy through violence becomes foremost in their minds, and they set out on a pathway toward violence. As Sirhan Sirhan, the young man who assassinated Robert F. Kennedy in June, 1968, said, "They can gas me but I am famous. I have achieved in one day what it took Robert Kennedy all his life to do." (accessed at http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/s/sirhansirh171664.html).

The United States Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project (ECSP; Fein, Vossekuil, & Holden, 1995; Fein & Vossekuil, 1998, 1999) was the first operational study of attempted and successful attacks and assassinations of prominent public officials or figures. Eighty-three individuals who participated in 74 principal incidents comprised the basis for their exploratory study, and more than 20 of these subjects were

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directly interviewed. The period under scrutiny was 1949–1995, and the last subjects included were the White House attacker Francisco Duran (October 29, 1994) and the serial bomber Ted Kaczynski (last incident April 24, 1995) (R. Fein, personal communication, December, 2015).

Since the publication of this ground-breaking work, there have been a number of studies of public figure stalkers, attackers, and assassins. Meloy, Sheridan, and Hoffmann (2008) edited a volume that explored these efforts in detail, most of which were done in westernized, developed countries, including the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, Germany, and the United Kingdom. With the publication of this book, other studies have focused upon non-terrorist attacks against German political figures (Hoffmann et al., 2011), western European politicians (James et al., 2007), the British Royal Family (James et al., 2008), Canadian judicial officials (Eke et al., 2014) and politicians (Adams et al., 2009), and problematic approaches toward the Dutch Royal Family (van der Meer, Bootsma, & Meloy, 2012), Australian and New Zealand politicians (Pathé et al., 2015), and terrorist attacks on public figures (Biesterfeld & Meloy, 2008). New concepts have emerged as important points of operational departure, including pathological fixation (Mullen et al., 2009), grandiosity, entitled reciprocity, the intensity of pursuit, and the prevalence of mental disorder (Hoffmann, Meloy, & Sheridan, 2014). There is no systematic research, to our knowledge, concerning attacks against corporate or religious leaders (Hoffmann, 2009; Hoffmann & Sheridan, 2008a,b; Meloy & Mohandie, 2008; Meloy, James, Mullen et al. 2004).

The purpose of this study is to explore the nature and frequency of successful attacks against public figures in the United States over the 21-year period, 1995–2015. Care has been taken to not include any of the ECSP subjects with the exception of Theodore Kaczynski. We think this is the entirety of cases meeting our inclusion and exclusion criteria.

METHODS

Sample Selection

Using a public search engine (Google), we conducted a search of all news articles and press releases published in the United States between January 1, 1995, and December 31, 2015. Incidents for inclusion were identified in a two-step process. First, search terms included, but were not limited to:

- Method – "assassination," "bomb," "IED," "incendiary," "toxin," "anthrax," "ricin," "stabbed," "shot," "murdered," "attacked," "stalked," and "killed;"
- Target – "celebrity," "reality star," "athlete," "music," "entertainment," "model," "actor," "producer," "director," "politician," "CEO," "judge," "president," "senator," "congress," "public figure," "cardinal," and other terms likely to identify targeted public figures. Also, specific target names were searched for known events potentially meeting study criteria.

The search terms were run through the Google internet search engine in two ways. First, a search with no date range restrictions was executed for combinations of method and target terms. For example, "bomb and president." Second, a search of each

combination was executed within each individual year included in the study. For example, each search was executed for the date ranges January 1, 1995 to December 31, 1995, January 1, 1996 to December 31, 1996, January 1, 1997 to December 31, 1997, and so on, up to and including December 31, 2015. Finally, domestic violence incidents involving intimate partners were excluded, owing to the extraordinary access that intimate partners have to one another. This access seemed to set such cases apart from others where attackers generally faced at least minimal challenges to achieving proximity to their intended targets. Cases occurring in the course of a large terrorist attack, such as that on September 11, 2001, were also excluded. Sixty-two incidents were identified in the US during the target date range.

Data gathered for each incident were derived directly from the open source reporting. The information fell within the categories of incident overview (e.g., date, location, type of public figure), incident specifics (e.g., method of attack), victim descriptor (e.g., victim name), offender descriptor (e.g., offender name), and additional reviewer information (e.g., news article web link, additional comments).

It is important to emphasize a number of limitations with this methodology. First, there are limitations inherent in open-source materials. As this sample only includes incidents reported in the media, it is possible that there were other attacks on public figures that met the inclusion criteria during the same time frame. This may be particularly true for those public figures categorized as "community public figures," who are probably primarily known in their local areas for good works in the community. It is probable that searches would have to be done by individual public figure names in most instances in order to identify incidents. Additionally, the level of detail reported varied across incidents; therefore there were limited data on certain cases. Finally, media reporting often contains objective and subjective errors that impact the sample. Second, there are limitations regarding the determined search terms. It is possible that other search terms would have captured additional attacks on public figures. Third, only the Google search engine was used in this data collection phase. The use of other search engines or databases in the future may yield other incidents not captured by Google. Fact patterns of the included cases were confirmed through multiple source reporting, with access to primary source material (court records, police investigative files, interviews of investigators and court-ordered psychiatric and psychological evaluators) in some cases.

Independent Variables

There were two main independent variables in this study: public figures and attacks. A public figure was defined as a personage of great public interest or familiarity, such as a government official, politician, celebrity, business leader, movie star or sports hero.

An attack was defined as follows:

- A person achieved physical proximity to a targeted or proxy individual, either in person or remotely through deliberate deployment of a weapon or viable hazardous device; OR
- A person achieved entry into a protected or private location associated with the target, such as a residence or private office under circumstances indicating a belief that the target was present, with or without a weapon; AND

- In such a way as to demonstrate both intent and imminent capacity to inflict potentially lethal injury, regardless of whether injury was actually inflicted.

The initial 62 incidents were reviewed for adherence to definitional criteria. Fifty-six incidents were ultimately accepted for inclusion in this study, which included 58 different public figures and 58 different offenders. These numbers, however, do not represent a one-to-one correspondence. In three cases, two public figures were attacked at the same time: Bruce Ivins' 2001 mailed anthrax attacks against Senator Tom Daschle and television news anchor Tom Brokaw and other targets; Jared Loughner's 2011 attack on Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and US District Court Chief Judge John Roll; and Vester Flanagan's 2015 assassinations of television journalist Alison Parker and cameraman Adam Ward on live television. In one case, three public figures were targeted at the same time: an unknown offender mailed improvised incendiary devices to Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, and Maryland Secretary of Transportation Beverley Swaim-Staley in 2011. There were also two cases each involving two offenders, including Reginald Riddle's and David Griffith's murder of athlete Dernell Stenson in 2003, and Harlow Cuadra's and Joseph Kerekes' assassination of film director Brian Kocis in 2007. Finally, one offender was responsible for two public figure attacks in this study: Andrew Cunanan murdered well known Chicago businessman Lee Miglin and then fashion designer Gianni Versace in 1997. Using the 56 cases, data were independently extracted and coded by two reviewers. When discrepancies could not be resolved, a third reviewer rendered the final determination. Original, independent coding of bivariate data was preserved for interrater agreement analysis.

Dependent Variables

Information was coded for the following dependent variables: type of public figure; target identification, gender and age; offender identification, gender and age; date, time and location of incident; relationship between offender and target; method of attack and weapons used; how and when weapons were obtained; injuries and fatalities including the offender; post-offense flight; prior history of criminality by the offender; direct threats; psychological abstracts; mental health of the offender, including diagnosis, history of hospitalizations, whether the offender was in treatment at the time of the attack, evidence of delusional thinking, and evidence of grandiosity; apparent motive; previous attempts to attack the target; previous plans to attack any public figure; contact with other public figures; and whether a proxy target was harmed.

Initial disagreements between reviewers were encountered in primarily two situations. First, they occurred when one reviewer found data on a relatively obscure website that the other reviewer did not. These were easily confirmed and reconciled. Second, they occurred when both reviewers found no data relative to a variable, and reviewers had different philosophies about whether news coverage was sufficiently extensive to code the lack of information as a "no" (that the variable did not exist) as opposed to "unknown." During reconciliation, reviewers quickly arrived at a common philosophy and agreement was achieved in almost all instances. For any discrepancies in coding that could not be resolved or where both reviewers felt another opinion would be valuable, a third reviewer rendered the final determination.

Following coding of these variables, six sections were created for descriptive analysis: victims, offenders, pre-attack behaviors including direct threats, attack characteristics, post-offense and other outcomes, motivations and psychological abstracts.

Statistical Analysis

Interrater agreement for bivariate variables was determined utilizing Intraclass Correlation Coefficients. Consensus was then reached by the two raters and the first author for final coding. Frequencies were then determined for each of the variables within each of the six sections. Certain comparative analyses were also undertaken on select variables, such as comparing attack locations by public figure type.

RESULTS

Interrater Reliability

All of the variables were independently coded. The bivariate variables ($n = 21$) across 56 incidents (1176 data points) were each tested utilizing intraclass correlation coefficients (ICCs) to determine interrater agreement. ICC for the 21 bivariates ranged from 0.595 to 0.923, with overall ICC = 0.835.

Victims

There were a total of 58 public figure victims (targets) across the 56 incidents in this study. Paris Hilton was attacked three times and Suge Knight was attacked twice, but each was only counted once in the study as a victim. The age range of the victims was 23 (Selena Quintanilla) to 80 years (Sadie Holland), with an average age of 43.4 years. Two victim ages were unknown. The largest percentage of victims were 48 years of age and above ($n = 24$; 41%). The second highest group was in the 18–27 age range ($n = 15$; 26%). Victims aged 38–47 years ($n = 10$; 17%) and 28–37 years ($n = 7$; 12%) fell in the middle. This study identified no attacks involving a victim under the age of 18 which met inclusion criteria. The victims were predominantly male ($n = 40$; 69%) and a minority were female ($n = 18$; 31%). Business leaders, community public figures, athletes, religious leaders, health care figures, and incarcerated public figure assassins (Robert Bardo) were 100% male. No category of public figure type was 100% female. In six of 56 cases (11%), proxies were attacked instead of the targeted public figure; these proxies included a bodyguard, family members, a significant other, a professional successor, postal and office workers, and a friend. In one of the six cases, the proxy was also a public figure (Darrent Williams). In two cases, the existence of a proxy could not be determined.

Collateral victims, or victims other than targeted public figures or their proxies, were killed or harmed in over a quarter of cases ($n = 16$; 29%). The highest number of collateral victims in a single incident was 17 (Jared Loughner's 2011 attack in Tuscon, Arizona) and the lowest was one (1996 assassination of rapper Tupak Shakur, shootings of athletes Mike Rozier in 1996 and Stedman Bailey in 2015, and the on-air killings of Alison Parker and Adam Ward in 2015). The Amerithrax mailings killed five

and infected 17 others, but not all of the victims are attributable to the individual attacks included in this study (US Department of Justice, 2010).

The public figures were categorized as business leader, music industry celebrity, politician/political party figure, judge, non-elected government official, film-television industry figure, community public figure, athlete, religious leader, journalist, popular culture figure, healthcare professional, incarcerated public figure assassin, and unknown. At greatest risk for a successful attack in descending order of frequency were politicians ($n = 13$; 22%), athletes ($n = 11$; 19%), and judges ($n = 9$; 16%). These three categories accounted for over half of the public figures attacked (57%). When taken together, governmental figures of politicians and judges (38%) were at lower risk of being attacked than all non-governmental figures together (62%). Musical celebrities and journalists each accounted for 10% of the sample ($n = 6$). Film-television industry figures and pop culture figures each accounted for 5% of the sample ($n = 3$), while healthcare professionals ($n = 2$; 3.4%), business leaders ($n = 2$; 3.4%), community public figures ($n = 1$; 1.7%), religious leaders ($n = 1$; 1.7%), other ($n = 1$; 1.7%), and non-elected government officials ($n = 0$) completed the categories with little to no proportional risk. There were no targets who could not be categorized by profession. One targeted figure was both a religious leader and a politician; he was coded as a religious leader for this study because he was assassinated inside his church. Table 1 identifies attacks ($n = 31$; 55%) that resulted in at least one fatality, regardless of whether the targeted public figure was killed. The Jared Loughner case is counted as an attack on a politician.

Offenders

The offenders ($n = 58$) were virtually all males ($n = 53$; 91%). The genders of four offenders were unknown, and one was a female: Yolanda Saldivar, the woman who killed the pop singer Selena Quintanilla in 1995. Average age was 35.8 years with 10 unknowns. The range was 17–78 years. The largest group of offenders by age was in the age range 18–27 years ($n = 16$; 28%), closely followed by those aged 28–37 years ($n = 15$; 26%). Eleven offenders (18%) were 48 years of age or greater. The least represented age groups were younger than 18 ($n = 1$, 2%) and 38–47 years old

Table 1. Attack lethality risk ($n = 31$ incidents: proportion of incidents in each victim category that resulted in at least one fatality)

Victim Category	Lethal Incidents	Percentage of All Incidents in Category
Journalists	$n = 5$	100%
Film-television industry figures	$n = 3$	100%
Business leaders	$n = 2$	100%
Healthcare figures	$n = 2$	100%
Religious leaders	$n = 1$	100%
Music industry celebrities	$n = 4$	57%
Politicians/political party figures	$n = 6$	55%
Judges	$n = 3$	38%
Athletes	$n = 4$	36%
Popular cultural figures	$n = 1$	20%

(n = 5, 9%). We did not code for race or marital status. Across the 56 incidents, 22 (39%) of the targets personally knew the attacker. In eight incidents (14%), the existence of a relationship could not be determined. Knowledge of the offender ranged from a political rival, known litigant in courtroom, president of the victim's fan club, social acquaintance, known constituent, biological son, known stalker, co-worker, to a first-night meeting in a bar and home for a nightcap. In at least half the incidents, the public figure had no prior knowledge of the attacker whatsoever.

Although there were known mental health problems in 26 offenders (44.8%), we could not determine this variable in 21 cases (36%). When a credible diagnosis could be determined, the two most common were paranoid schizophrenia (n = 6) and bipolar disorder (n = 2). These findings were based upon a forensic psychologist or psychiatrist's report filed in the case, or discussion with the examiner by one of the authors. Other mentioned diagnoses included depressive disorder, delusional disorder, schizoaffective disorder, and personality disorders with various narcissistic, avoidant, antisocial, borderline, histrionic, and paranoid features.

Thirty-six per cent (n = 14) of the offenders when data were known (n = 39) were delusional at the time of the attack. Sixty-four per cent were not (n = 25). When data were known (n = 30), 73% (n = 22) also showed evidence of grandiosity, which was defined as a disparity between the importance the subject attached to himself and the facts of his life. Grandiosity ranged from exaggeration of one's self-importance to frank delusion, which was typically an aspect of the offender's major mental disorder. Examples of the former include James Kopp's statement that he was the lone wolf needed to defend the unborn after he murdered Dr. Barnett Slepian in 1998; and Phil Spector – a celebrity who killed another celebrity – who often compared himself to Galileo, Leonardo di Vinci and Irving Berlin. Delusion is evident in the case of Oscar Ortega-Hernandez, who fired rounds into the White House in 2011 and believed he was Jesus Christ, while President Barack Obama was the Antichrist and the Devil.

When data were known (n = 36), 77% (n = 28) of the offenders had a history of criminal violence. Offenses included stalking, previous mailing of IEDs, previous acquittal for murders, assault, domestic violence, making death threats, carrying bomb components in one's car, aggravated battery, and murder. Eighty-one percent (n = 22) had a history of non-violent criminality when data were known (n = 27), including drug possession, theft, parole violations, solicitation of prostitutes, and embezzlement. A prior documented history of psychiatric treatment and/or hospitalization could not be credibly established, so the frequencies are not reported.

Pre-attack Behaviors

When data were known (n = 39), only two offenders made a direct threat to the target beforehand (5%). Robert Hoskins stated to Madonna's bodyguard, Basil Stephens, while Madonna was present on her bicycle, that he would slit her throat from ear to ear in April, 1995. Nine weeks later he came onto her property in the Hollywood Hills and was confronted by the same bodyguard, which ended in the nonfatal shooting of Hoskins in the arm and abdomen. Carl Drega would stand outside Associate Judge Vickie Bunnell's office on multiple occasions and scream obscenities and threats at her. She had made an adverse property tax ruling against him years earlier. On August 19, 1997, he killed two law enforcement officers, took their car and drove to Judge Bunnell's office, followed her out of the building, and killed her and a bystander who

tried to stop him. He was subsequently killed by law enforcement but not before wounding a third officer. Neighbors said Drega was a rampage waiting to happen. For the last 3 days prior to his attack they kept hearing him shooting his gun. One neighbor thought he was, "weirder than a three-dollar bill." Another described him as, "Somebody that you should be goddammned afraid of. He had bad blood for everybody. He was a psycho, a terror…. He was extremely clever, but as nutty a man as you'd ever meet. He was one you were afraid to be around because you never knew what he was going to do next." (accessed at http://murderpedia.org/male.D/d/drega-carl.htm).

There were insufficient data to analyze other warning behaviors across the dataset prior to the offenses (Meloy et al., 2012).

Attack Characteristics

The attacks themselves occurred at all times of day. Morning (6:00 a.m. until noon) was the most popular time to attack ($n = 17$; 30%), followed by the overnight hours (midnight until 6:00 a.m.) ($n = 14$; 25%). Afternoon (noon until 6:00 p.m.) was the third most frequent time chosen ($n = 11$; 20%), followed by evening hours (6:00 p.m. until midnight) ($n = 8$; 14%).

Not surprisingly, over half of attacks occurred where victims spend a great deal of their time, at a residence ($n = 15$; 27%) or at work ($n = 14$; 25%). Vehicles ($n = 9$; 16%) and open spaces such as a street or sidewalk ($n = 6$; 11%) also represented locations of notable vulnerability. Places of worship and public events each represented a small portion of attack locations ($n = 2$, 3.5%), as were "other" locations (a prison yard and on a plane in flight). No attacks occurred at educational or healthcare institutions. One attack location was unknown.

The most common primary method of attack was shooting ($n = 32$; 57%). Physical assault ($n = 10$; 18%) and stabbing ($n = 6$; 11%) were also somewhat common. Physical assaults took many forms: actress Adrienne Shelly was hanged with a bed sheet from a shower curtain rod in her studio office by an undocumented immigrant working in construction nearby, and baseball player Ty Hensley was brutally beaten during an argument with another athlete about signing bonuses. Toxin-laced mail and mailed improvised explosive or incendiary devices each represented a minority of attack methods ($n = 2$, 3.5%). Two methods were categorized as "other:" use of a headphone cord to attempt strangulation and use of a specialized knife to break window glass to gain entry into a home. One method was classified as unknown.

Guns were the primary weapon used a majority of the time ($n = 33$; 59%). Twenty-six attacks featured handguns, three featured long guns, and in four cases the type of gun was unknown. This number is one higher than the 32 shooting attacks, because in one incident a handgun was used to beat a victim: in 1997 Duane Cain forced his way into the home of former Miss Missouri USA, Shelly Lehman, beating her badly with the gun he was carrying. Edged weapons and so-called "personal weapons," such as hands and feet, were each used with equal frequency ($n = 7$; 13%). Improvised explosive or incendiary devices were used in three cases (5.4%). Two cases involved toxins as a primary weapon (3.5%) and two cases featured "other" weapons: bed sheet as a hanging rope and headphone cords as a strangulation instrument. A blunt instrument was the primary weapon in one case, and one weapon was unknown. Where data were available ($n = 53$; 95%), multiple weapons were used in 22.6% ($n = 12$) of cases; a single weapon was used in 77.4% ($n = 41$) of cases.

Weapons other than "personal weapons" were used in 48 cases (86%). Among those 48 cases, the weapon was known to have been acquired or possessed unlawfully in 43.8% of cases ($n = 21$) and lawfully in 18.8% ($n = 9$). Lawfulness of acquisition or possession could not be determined in 39.6% ($n = 19$) of cases. In 24 of the 48 cases, the source from which an offender acquired the weapons used in the attack could not be determined. Where data were known about how weapons were acquired ($n = 25$; 45%), these observations were made: offenders purchased the weapon from a store in 24% ($n = 6$) of cases, but never online. A few offenders stole their weapons from a third party ($n = 3$) or acquired them at the scene of the attack ($n = 3$). Five offenders (20%) made their weapons, including toxins, improvised devices, and a stabbing implement. Four offenders (16%) used weapons they had owned for some time previous to the attack. Two attackers got their weapons from a family member. Some weapons may have been obtained from individuals qualifying as acquaintances, but data were insufficient to conclude acquaintanceship to the exclusion of other source types in those cases. Attempts were made to identify weapon acquisition in temporal proximity to the attack. Among the 48 cases involving use of a weapon, this could not be determined in a significant majority ($n = 32$; 67%). Therefore, frequencies for this variable are not reported.

From among the fatal cases noted in Table 1, 23 (77%) involved a single victim fatality. Three (10%) cases involved two victim fatalities each and three (10%) cases involved four victim fatalities each. Six victims were killed in one case (Jared Loughner, Tucson, 2011) and nine victims were killed in one case (Dylan Roof, Charleston, 2015). The Amerithrax case (Bruce Ivins, 2001) involved five victim fatalities in total, but only two were directly related to the specific attacks against Tom Daschle or Tom Brokaw.

Offenders were unlikely to be killed or injured during the course of their attacks. Forty-seven offenders (81%) completed their attacks unharmed, and six (11%) were killed or injured. In one case, Timothy Johnson walked into Democratic Party Headquarters in Little Rock, Arkansas, and fatally shot super delegate Bill Gwatney. Johnson told witnesses he wanted to speak with Gwatney about volunteering before murdering him. Johnson fled the scene and led police on a 30-mile vehicle pursuit before being fatally shot himself by police. His motive was never ascertained, though he had quit his job earlier that day. In three (5%) cases, we were unable to determine if the offender was killed or injured.

Post-offense Behaviors and Other Outcomes

Seventy-three per cent ($n = 35$) of the offenders intentionally fled the scene of their attack among those who were alive and had the opportunity to do so ($n = 47$). Data were unknown in one case.

Six of the offenders (10%) committed suicide after the offense. However, all of these suicides except one occurred after a time delay ranging from hours to years, although all were in relation to the attack and typically preceded imminent arrest or indictment for the crime. Only one committed suicide immediately after his attack. This was the stabbing of state senator Creigh Deeds by his mentally ill son, Austin Deeds, in 2013.

Motivations and Psychological Abstracts

The motivations for the attackers were coded across 17 categories, with multiple motivations apparent in 12 (21%) cases (see Table 2). The denominator for percentages

Table 2. Motivations of 58 attackers of US public figures (multiple motivations in 12 cases)

Motivation	n	%
Unknown	14	24%
Dissatisfaction with judicial or other governmental process	10	23%
Retaliation for specific actions	9	21%
Incidental to other violent crime	7	16%
Generalized emotional distress	6	14%
Other	6	14%
Unresolved and ongoing dispute	4	9%
Rejection by, or romantic obsession with, target	3	7%
General perception of injustice	3	7%
Domestic terrorism, single issue	3	7%
Unemployment or financial stress	1	2%
Achieve fame or notoriety	1	2%
Domestic terrorism, right wing	1	2%
Domestic terrorism, left wing	0	0%
International terrorism	0	0%
Ambient societal violence	0	0%

was the number of offenders where motivation could be determined (n = 43), with the exception of "unknown" category wherein total attackers (n = 58) is used.

In descending order of frequency, the most common known motivations were dissatisfaction with judicial or other governmental process (n = 10; 23%), retaliation for specific actions (n = 9; 21%), incidental to other violent crime (n = 7; 16%), and generalized emotional distress (n = 6; 14%). These four motivations accounted for three-quarters (74%) of those motivations that could be identified; however, data were unknown in 24% (n = 14) of the offenders. There were four offenders considered to be motivated by a terrorist agenda from either the domestic right wing or single issue categories (9%). There were no offenders considered foreign-inspired, such as jihadists. There was only one offender (Andrew Cunanan) motivated by a desire for fame or notoriety when data were available.

A psychological abstract is a "sentence or words uttered immediately prior to or during the attack" (Hempel et al., 1999, p.217) and this was coded. Although a psychological abstract was unknown in a majority of the incidents, it could be identified in 13 (23%). Some of the psychological abstracts are listed in Table 3. We have also included a written message delivered with a lethal substance (anthrax) in one case.

Table 3. Psychological abstracts

- "This will teach you to mind your own (expletive) business."
- "You're going to commit me?"
- "Give me everything you got."
- "You cannot stop us. We have this anthrax. You die now. Are you afraid? Death to America. Death to Israel. Allah is great." (letter)[1]
- "I've got something for you."
- [I am here to] "shoot black people."
- "I'm the marshal of this town now. Everything's under control. Everything will be all right."
- "Bitch."

[1]Although this letter appears to be related to a jihadist motivation, it was apparently written by Bruce Ivins to mislead investigators during the anthrax attacks in the weeks following 9/11.

DISCUSSION

There has been no published operational study of attacks against public figures in the United States since the US Secret Service ECSP (Fein et al., 1995; Fein & Vossekuil, 1998, 1999). There has been a published study of homicidal attacks against non-political public figures (Schlesinger & Mesa, 2008) and a large bibliography of failed and successful attacks against public figures worldwide (de Becker, Taylor, & Marquart, 2008). Both of these sources were utilized for case inclusion. This study is a contemporary update of prior work with important similarities and differences: first, we tried to capture the universe of US public figure cases over the most recent 21-year time period; second, this is essentially a study of successful breaches, attacks, and assassinations. We wanted to focus on these cases, in particular, because they are striking failures from both a threat assessment and a personal body protection perspective. Our hope is that such data collection improves future operational performance for those conducting public figure protective intelligence and establishing perimeter security. Third, we did not interview any of the subjects, and mostly relied on secondary source material through internet searches that were virtually unavailable during the period of the ECSP research (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998, 1999). This difference has the advantage of more data availability, but has the disadvantages of potential inaccuracy and the absence of direct interview data, which is much more productive of clinical material, such as the in-depth exploration of thought to action in the ECSP (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999). Fourth, we tried to be precise in our definitions of both of our independent variables (attack and public figure), as well as our dependent variables; and fifth, we established the interrater reliability of our bivariate findings before interpreting them.

The Victims

The types of public figures observed in this sample as compared with the ECSP are more diverse. Fein and Vossekuil recorded a clear majority of governmental/judicial figures as targets (68%), particularly the president, whereas we did not (38%). Movie, sports, and media celebrities comprised 19% of ECSP public figures, but 34% in this study. Business executives were represented at similar frequencies in both studies. A perfect, side-by-side comparison between our data and the ECSP is not possible because we categorized the public figures in a more granulated manner, and we did not have access to non-publicized cases.

A new breed of public figure has evolved since the ECSP was conducted – the "publicly intimate figure." Although not all famous personages fit this description, there is little doubt that what it means to be famous has changed considerably in 20 years. Horton and Wohl (1956) coined the term "parasocial interaction" to define the process by which consumers of media believe and experience aspects of an actual relationship or affiliation with a public figure. Substantial research has confirmed this phenomenon over the past half-century (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2008). We would go further in describing this trend, particularly with the stunning rise of internet availability and social media over the past decade. Celebrities and other public figures now participate directly in their public intimacy more than ever before. First, there is unprecedented access to information about celebrities on television, online, or in print. Often, the

entirety of their lives is laid bare for public consumption. In some cases, public figures can be observed in real time doing their jobs – virtually every sporting event and congressional debate can now be viewed regularly on television or online. Second, as noted by Schinkel (2000), they are willing or unwilling fodder for both entertainment and news media, some having their every move captured and made public. A football player may be just as likely to make headlines for attending a party as for scoring a winning touchdown. A female news anchor may interject a comment about her pregnancy following her report on a breaking news event. A US Supreme Court justice may give a candid television interview. Third, they have Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, Instagram accounts, and more, providing a constant and close-up view of their private and public lives alike. Their presence on social media, in turn, nurtures public awareness and curiosity, which also drives sales of their products, whether they be endorsements, performances, opinions, or market share. This new normal relationship between public figures and the public at large is at once intimate and impersonal. This sociocultural blurring of the boundaries between public and private does not pose a problem for most people, who can distinguish between their wishful fantasies and external reality. This phenomenon, however, makes it much more difficult for borderline, and in some cases psychotic, individuals who cannot readily make this distinction (Hoffmann & Meloy, 2008; Leets, de Becker & Giles, 1995; Meloy, Sheridan & Hoffmann, 2008). They may be deeply disturbed and feel personally affected by the behaviors of public figures because they think they know them well, and in some cases, believe the public figure knows them too.

The attacks in this study also presented a threat of violence to more than just the public figures being targeted. Collateral damage in the form of additional victims killed or injured was inflicted in 15 cases. The most substantial loss of life was caused by Dylan Roof when he killed Reverend Clementa "Clem" Pinckney, a state senator, and eight additional victims. Although Bruce Ivins' anthrax attacks of 2001 failed to harm the public figures he targeted, he killed five other people, infected at least 17 more, and frightened an entire nation.

Proxies were attacked in 11% of the 56 cases in our sample, either because the targeted public figure could not be reached at the time of attack or because a proxy was simply more available than the public figure. Schlesinger and Mesa (2008) reviewed 21 cases of nonpolitical celebrity attacks or attempts worldwide between 1949 and 2004. They found six cases (29%) of violence displaced onto proxies, three of which were directed toward someone connected with the public figure and three in which the proxy was completely unrelated to the celebrity. For comparison, violence was displaced onto a proxy in 17% ($n = 6$) of nonpolitical public figure targets ($n = 36$) in this sample. At least in our study, attacks against proxies appeared to have been driven by happenstance and convenience rather than intentional displacement.

The Offenders

Relatively few data were available about the offenders in the open sources primarily used for this study, with exceptions for cases of particular public interest (e.g., the Unabomber, Amerithrax, serial killer Andrew Cunanan). This disadvantage was also noted by Schlesinger and Mesa (2008). The format of the ECSP allowed exploitation of investigative, judicial, and clinical data, and therefore more was known about those offenders than here.

Virtually all of the offenders in this study were male where data were known. This compares with the ECSP wherein 86% of subjects were male, and a review of non-political celebrity targets which found 76% were male (Schlesinger & Mesa, 2008). Public figure assassination continues to be pursued by men of all ages, with nearly a fifth of offenders over the age of 47. The mean age of offenders here was 35.8 years, and 35.0 in the ECSP (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999). An average offender age was not identified by Schlesinger and Mesa (2008), but they ranged in age from 19 to 55 years. Our study included five offenders over the age of 55.

Using primarily open source information, it was often difficult to identify whether these offenders had contacts with or made plans to attack other public figures at any point before or after the indexed attacks. In some instances they did. Where data were known ($n = 26$), 12 had contact with at least one other public figure. In some instances, this involved attack-related contacts such as in the cases of Theodore Kaczynski, who terrorized the country as the Unabomber, or Robert Hoskins, who stalked both Madonna and Halle Berry. In other situations, however, these contacts were simply part of the course of an offender's life, such as with several attackers who were serial criminal defendants and had contact with multiple judges. Therefore, the significance of this variable is unclear based upon available data. The same is true for plans to attack other public figures. Data were known in only 21 cases and such a plan was identified in six (29%). Sometimes these two variables overlapped and sometimes they did not.

Pre-attack Behavior and Direct Threats

Unfortunately there were insufficient data to code these cases across seven of eight warning behaviors theorized as correlates of targeted violence: pathway, fixation, identification, novel aggression, leakage, energy burst, and last resort (Meloy, 2011; Meloy et al., 2012). This has been previously done in a small subsample ($n = 18$) of the Fein and Vossekuil subjects ($n = 83$), which found that pathway, fixation, and identification were present in a majority of the cases (Meloy and Hoffmann, 2014). In our study, the one warning behavior that could be coded was a directly communicated threat to the target beforehand, which produced a frequency of 5%. Not surprisingly, and consistent with Fein and Vossekuil (1999), directly communicated threats are very infrequent in any targeted violence incident, and this is a replicated finding among those who attack public figures (James et al., 2007; Meloy, James, Farnham, Mullen, Pathé et al. (2004); Meloy & Hoffmann, 2014). The likely reason for this is the desire to maximize the probability of success. And in some cases, direct threats have been shown to decrease the risk of a problematic approach to a public figure (Dietz & Martell, 1989; Dietz et al., 1991a,b; Meloy et al., 2010) in large group studies. Once again, however, it is critical to note that a small proportion of direct threateners do attack public figures, and all direct threats should be taken seriously (Hoffmann, Meloy & Sheridan, 2014; Scalora et al., 2008; Warren et al., 2014).

The Attacks

Most attacks in this study were direct, interpersonal attacks ($n = 50$; 89%), including shootings, stabbings, physical assaults, a Molotov cocktail thrown at the public figure, and strangulation. Indirect, distance attacks ($n = 4$, 7%) were far less frequent, including use of improvised explosive or incendiary devices and toxins mailed by the

offenders. In one case, we were unable to determine the method of attack (abducted journalist Jodi Huisentruit), and in another the attack was a security breach of Paris Hilton's home by Nathan Parada, who was caught before completing whatever his ultimate plan was. Shootings represented the largest proportion of attacks (57%), which is somewhat fewer than discovered by Schlesinger and Mesa (2008) at 71%. Edged weapons were also prominently observed. They were used to stab victims in six cases ($n = 11\%$) in our study, and 18% in Schlesinger and Mesa's (2008) review. This clear preference for attacking celebrities in a relatively "up close and personal" manner may be a symptom of the retaliatory sentiment that characterizes these public figure attacks; retaliation from an unseen distance would feel less satisfying for some, particularly those who are deeply angry and believe they have a personal relationship with the public figure.

Political figures were almost exclusively attacked in the mornings or afternoons ($n = 11$; 85%), and often at their place of work ($n = 7$; 54%). They were attacked at home and in vehicles with equal frequency ($n = 2$; 15%). Public events and open spaces offered low but observed frequencies each ($n = 1$, 8%). Judges were even more likely than politicians to be attacked at work ($n = 6$; 67%). Popular culture figures were all attacked in their homes, although Paris Hilton was also attacked by proxy in an open space: ironically, she was on her way to court to testify against a man who had been stalking her when the other man who had been stalking Hilton assaulted her boyfriend. Athletes were likely to be attacked in vehicles ($n = 3$; 38%), at nightclubs ($n = 2$; 25%) or on the sidewalk or street ($n = 2$; 25%). These data show that public figures are largely being attacked at locations where a reasonable person could expect to find them. Politicians and judges are public figures because of the work they do, and they can reasonably be expected to be found at work. Popular culture figures, conversely, may have no established pattern of going to a particular work site, but their home addresses are often publicly available. As discussed below, athletes are often attacked at or after leaving nightclubs; they may be associated with nightclub attendance as part of a professional athlete's lifestyle and they may be posting their whereabouts on social media. Therefore, a high level or lengthy period of pre-attack surveillance or planning may be unnecessary in many cases where public figures are predictable. This could potentially result in a shortened period of time between the decision to attack and the attack itself, as compared with more difficult to predict or reach public figures.

Motivations and Post-offense Behaviors

It appears that some motivations for attacks on public figures have changed. Perhaps the most striking finding in our study is the virtual absence of a desire for fame or notoriety. Again, this finding is only suggestive as there were no clinical interviews to probe for such motivation; but the fact that only one of the 58 offenders (Cunanan) indicated any such motivation is in stark contrast to the finding in the ECSP study – and our own confirmatory bias inherent in our introduction to this study. Fein and Vossekuil (1999) found that attention-seeking and notoriety were a motivation in 38% of their incidents ($n = 73$). One could observe that it may be less necessary than in the past to engage in assassination in order to become famous. The internet and social media make it possible for anyone with access to technology to achieve fame with little effort. Trending Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube topics regularly make national

television newscasts, and virtually anyone can attempt to step into the spotlight by live streaming, podcasting or posting their opinions or activities.

This change does not appear to be the result of a paucity of data, as other motivations, apparently more personal and angry, fueled the attacks, such as rejection, ongoing disputes, retaliation, dissatisfactions, and other perceived general emotional distress, in some cases apparently caused by psychosis. These five motivations accounted for 77% of the 43 offenders where they could be reliably determined.

The emotion of anger, often a component of a grievance, is very common in most acts of targeted violence, although the violence that results is typically planned and purposeful, and not impulsive. This is also apparent in studies of public figure attacks (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999; Hoffmann et al., 2011; Hoffmann & Meloy, 2008; Meloy, Mohandie and McGowan, 2008; Schlesinger & Mesa, 2008), as well as being central to the grievances and resentments that often begin a pathway to violence in adult mass murderers and high school and university attackers (Drysdale et al., 2010; Hempel et al., 1999; Meloy et al., 2004; O'Toole, 2000; Stone, 2015; Vossekuil et al., 2002). Knoll (2010) captured this dynamic when he described it as "revenge and obliteration" among mass murderers – noting the fact that most adult mass murderers' lives end at the time of the mass murder either by suicide or "suicide by cop" (Mohandie, Meloy & Collins, 2009) – but public figure attackers are different. Here, instead, we see "retaliation and survival." There is clearly a desire to strike back against a perceived wrong, end an injustice, retaliate for a rejection, or express profound dissatisfaction, but there is not a desire to obliterate the self at the same time (see psychological abstracts, Table 3). In fact, survival is a key element in the post-offense behavior: escape if at all possible, and suicide only if capture or indictment is imminent. This may afford an advantage to security personnel in that planning for escape and survival reasonably poses a greater challenge than planning for death. Visible and close security would probably deter at least some would-be attackers who will recognize that such measures lessen their chances of escape and increase the odds of them being harmed themselves.

What also appears to be different is the more personal nature of the attacks on public figures over the past 20 years. One might assume that this change is due to the growth of the internet, and the acceleration of social media wherein the attacker might feel and believe he has a personal relationship with the victim due to his remarkable access to personal information, but this is not just occurring in virtual reality. In this study more than one-third of the public figures personally knew their attacker. Terrestrial reality is in play. Perhaps the most plausible hypothesis is that the internet and social media magnify the intensity of feelings, i.e., resentment and grievance, toward the public figure, especially when there is an actual relationship; or help incubate the parasocial fantasy of a dysphoric and angry connection when no actual relationship exists. The pathological narcissism of public figure attackers (Hoffmann & Meloy, 2008) when apparent may have shifted for some subjects from the pursuit of infamy through an attack against a famous person, to the belief that one is entitled to mount an attack given the importance of one's grievance and resentment. This is supported by our finding of grandiosity in three-fourths of the subjects where data were available, and relates to an earlier finding of grandiosity as a strong predictor of approach to members of the British Royal Family (James et al., 2008). An inflated view of oneself, often one of the final narcissistic defenses in a depleted personality, can fuel a strong sense of entitlement.

Mental Disorder and Criminality

Mental disorder continues to be a prominent factor in this study, as it was in the ECSP (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999). Mental disorder among problematic communicators, approachers, and attackers of public figures is becoming a continuously replicated finding, supporting its validity regardless of time (James et al., 2008; James et al., 2009), continent (James et al., 2007; van der Meer et al., 2012), or public figure domain (Dietz & Martell, 1989; Dietz et al., 1991a,b; Eke et al., 2014; Hoffmann & Meloy, 2014; Hoffmann et al., 2011, 2014; Meloy et al., 2004, 2008, 2010; Scalora et al., 2008; Scalora, 2014). When five studies of attackers and assassins were analyzed, the proportion who had a major mental disorder or were delusional at the time of an attack ranged from 42% to 65% (van der Meer et al., 2012). In this study, among the cases where credible data were available, more than one-third were delusional at the time of their attack, and almost half had a history of mental problems.

Although severe mental disorder and its correct diagnosis may be critical for successful treatment of the person at risk for targeted violence, or during post-offense litigation, Fein and Vossekuil (1999) correctly noted that it is much less relevant for threat assessment and operational purposes. They and their colleagues have argued that it is the movement from thought to action, analyzed through the lens of a functional and behavioral approach, which is the key to prevention of targeted violence (Borum et al., 1999; Fein & Vossekuil, 1998, 1999). We would add that analysis at the level of symptoms, if present, and their relationship to a motivation to be violent, such as a persecutory delusion which mandates an attack against a particular target, is much more salient to threat assessment than quibbling about diagnosis (Meloy, Habermeyer & Guldimann, 2015). This position is largely supported by a meta-analysis of the relationship between psychosis and violence conducted by Douglas, Guy & Hart (2009).

The frequency of criminality, both nonviolent and violent, among attackers and assassins of public figures appears to have increased when compared to the ECSP (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999). Whereas they reported arrests for a violent crime in only 20% of their subjects, and no prior incarceration in 66% of their subjects, we report a history of violent and nonviolent crimes in the vast majority of our subjects when data were known. Moreover, our findings are in line with a review of the research concerning public figure attacks done by Meloy et al. (2004), which found that a "significant proportion of subjects who threaten, approach, or attack public figures also have criminal histories, necessitating the importance of criminal background checks … and cross jurisdictional cooperation among various law enforcement agencies" (p. 1092); another review conducted a decade later (Hoffmann & Meloy, 2014) confirmed these findings. Although mental disorder and criminality are not predictive of, or specific to, public figure attacks in the US, they are distal characteristics which warrant operational attention in a subject of concern. They also are known predictors of violence in general, criminality typically accounting for a much larger proportion of the predictive variance than mental disorder (Eke et al., 2014).

The Threat to Politicians

Politicians continue to be at greatest risk for attack or assassination among the various domains of public figures in the United States. They comprise one-fifth of the incidents over the course of the 21 years of this study, but average less than one per year ($n = 13$).

Their fatality rate when attacked was 55%. Stalking, threats, harassment, and problematic approaches are very common for politicians, and can be a source of both hypervigilance and misery (Adams et al., 2009; Every-Palmer, Barry-Walsh & Pathe, 2015; Hoffmann & Meloy, 2014). In one study of attacks against western European politicians, over half resulted in a fatality or serious injury. The mentally disordered, fixated, and non-ideologically motivated were responsible for the most tragic outcomes (James et al., 2007). In a New Zealand survey of Members of Parliament, 87% reported harassment, and 15% of those public figures were attacked by their harasser (Every-Palmer et al., 2015).

It is notable that ideologically motivated attacks in our study represented only 9% ($n = 4$) of the incidents, and none of the subjects were jihadists (Meloy, 2004). The threat to politicians is largely personal, not ideological, and from within the populace. Nevertheless, it is often difficult to tease apart ideology, fixation, psychiatric disorder, and esoteric beliefs, the Jared Loughner case in 2011 being an example. In some subjects, it is thought that the adoption of a strange and unusual belief system, such as nihilism, may modulate and bind the anxiety of a decompensating mind (Meloy & Yakeley, 2014).

The Threat to Athletes

To our knowledge, no systematic study has been conducted of targeted attacks against public figure athletes as a discrete group. Movie, sports, and media celebrities were combined into a single category in the ECSP, and together they comprised 19% of the total cases (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999); the specific proportion of athletes as ECSP targets was not published. In our study, athletes alone made up over 19% of our sample. Although this may, to an extent, be reflective of better reporting and accessibility of news items than existed when the ECSP was conducted, we also speculate that other factors contribute to a genuine increase in attacks on sports figures.

The targeted athletes in our sample, all professionals, appeared to have been largely situationally vulnerable. They were often involved in nightclub altercations, robberies, drive-by shootings, and other violent encounters, and usually (82%) attacked in the overnight hours (midnight to 6:00 a.m.). Half of the athlete cases involved an appearance at a nightclub. Paul Pierce and Chris Copeland were attacked at nightclubs; Darrent Williams was the victim of a drive-by shooting after leaving a nightclub; Cleanthony Early was robbed and shot after leaving a nightclub; and Dernell Stenson was kidnapped and murdered after he left a nightclub. If there is a stereotypical professional athlete lifestyle, it may have influenced these events. Professional athletes are often invited into VIP sections at nightclubs by promoters and owners, where they receive "star treatment." They may even receive appearance fees. Tangible perks, as well as intangibles like maintaining a high public profile, help athletes to promote their personal brands and support a potentially attractive lifestyle. Once ensconced in this atmosphere, they encounter a wide variety of people, sometimes including opportunists and predators, increasing their situational vulnerability and risk. This effect may be enhanced in some cases by naivete about how wealth and fame create a need for increased vigilance and security: Sean Taylor allowed any number of people to see large amounts of cash and valuables in his home, which is precisely what attracted his eventual murderer to his home.

Two athletes knew their attackers (Mike Rozier and Ty Hensley were both attacked by acquaintances), and six did not. Personal knowledge could not be determined in two cases. In two of the six "stranger" cases (Darrent Williams and Sean Taylor), victims had indirect contact with the offenders through a known third party: Darrent Williams' friend (an athlete public figure) had an altercation with Williams' attacker shortly before the incident; Sean Taylor hosted a co-conspirator of his eventual murderer in his home.

The Threat to Judges

In the two centuries between 1789 and 1979 one federal judge was assassinated. Three were killed in the decade between 1979 and 1989 (Calhoun, 1998). Fein and Vossekuil (1999) found that in four cases, representing 5% of their sample, a federal judge was the primary target between 1949 and 1996. Only state and city officials, which did not include judges, and business executives represented a smaller proportion of their entire incident sample ($N = 74$). In our study spanning 1995–2015, less than half the time frame of the Fein and Vossekuil (1999) sample, judges at both the state and federal levels were outranked only by politicians and athletes as targets of attack, and accounted for 16% ($n = 9$) of the overall incidents. Likewise, dissatisfaction with judicial or another governmental process was the motivation in one out of four incidents in this study, and another 7% were motivated by a general perception of injustice.

Although we cannot say for certain that attacks against judges are on the increase, due to ambiguity as to whether the universe of judges attacked are represented by the Fein and Vossekuil (1999) sample and this sample, and other factors such as the rise in the absolute numbers of civil and criminal litigation throughout the United States; both the motivational data and proportional increase compared with our other categories of public figures would appear to support this hypothesis. Our findings, which are small in number yet devastating in consequences, indicate the need for enhanced security at all levels of the state and federal judiciary.

The Threat to Musical Celebrities and Journalists

Music industry celebrities and journalists each represent 10% of the sample of targeted public figures. Although proportionately at somewhat lesser risk than politicians, judges, and athletes, these two groups present an interesting dichotomy in how attack cases seem to manifest. Music celebrity attacks were in some respects homogeneous, whereas journalist attacks ran the gamut of variability. The chances of an attack fatality involving a music celebrity were just over half, whereas attacks on news media figures had a 100% fatality rate. The differences between these two groups can best be described by summarizing them.

In cases where injury was inflicted ($n = 6$), music celebrity targets in this study were all shot. In the seventh music celebrity attack, Madonna's stalker, Robert Hoskins, physically assaulted her bodyguard and tried to take the bodyguard's handgun; had he succeeded, Hoskins would also have had the capacity to shoot his target. In four of the seven cases (57%), these celebrities appear to have been situationally vulnerable in the same way as many athletes were. Suge Knight was shot twice at nightclub parties in 2005 and 2014. Tupak Shakur and Christopher G. "The Notorious B.I.G." Wallace were each murdered, in 1996 and 1997, respectively, in drive-by shootings speculatively attributed to an ongoing, east coast–west coast, hip hop music war. These four

cases were never officially solved. Three attacks occurred at nightclubs (Suge Knight, twice, and Darrell "Dimebag" Abbott). Two occurred after the targets left night-time social events: Shakur had just left a major boxing match in Las Vegas and Wallace had just left a party for the annual Soul Train Music Awards.

Music celebrity attacks were not entirely uniform, however. Selena Quintanilla, murdered in 1995, Madonna, attacked via proxy in 1995, and Dimebag Abbott in 2004, present variation in terms of motivation and other surrounding case facts. Quintanilla's assassin had just been discovered embezzling from the star and killed her during an argument over it at a hotel. Saldivar seemed to both love and despise her quarry, having been an ardent fan for years, then stealing from her, then ending her life (shouting "Bitch!" during the attack). Madonna had been the object of Hoskins' erotomanic fixation for some time. He approached her home for the indexed attack and on other occasions, and demonstrated symptoms consistent with schizoaffective disorder and methamphetamine abuse. Rather than bringing a weapon with him to the scene of the attack, he improvised on site, attempting to acquire Madonna's bodyguard's firearm. Dimebag Abbott was on stage at a concert when a deranged non-fan took to the stage and began shooting, motivated by the delusional beliefs that Abbott's band stole his songs and was responsible for the break-up of another band; he had paranoid schizophrenia.

Six journalists were attacked in this study, and each case is highly unique with particularly dramatic circumstances. Shootings represented a minority of attack methods ($n = 2$; 40%). Other methods included anthrax by mail ($n = 1$), physical assault ($n = 1$) and one unknown ($n = 1$). While a study has been conducted of stalking related to television personalities (Hoffman & Sheridan, 2008), none of these cases are known to have involved prior stalking to any extent. Violence against journalists in global conflict zones has also been treated (Taback & Coupland, 2006). We are aware of no research specifically focused on domestic, targeted violence attacks against news media figures without prior stalking, and this topic deserves further research given their particular vulnerabilities; to our knowledge, journalists are not generally known to have armed security escorts as some other celebrity types might, and they frequently work in uncertain conditions.

Local television anchor Jodi Huisentruitt was a young and popular fixture on early morning television in Mason City, Iowa. One day in 1995, she disappeared from her apartment complex in the early morning hours. Obvious signs of a struggle at her car told the police she was taken against her will. The case was never solved and her body has never been found, though the search for her consumed the small community for years afterward. She is still remembered there, and the story of her disappearance runs every year on the anniversary of her abduction. Another case, over a decade later, is reminiscent of Huisentruit's: the Anne Pressly murder in 2008. Pressly was also a young and popular morning news anchor in Little Rock, Arkansas, when she was attacked and murdered in her home in the early morning hours. Pressly's body, however, was found in her home and the case was solved. National news anchor Tom Brokaw was an intended recipient of one of Bruce Ivins' anthrax mailings. Although the letter never reached Brokaw himself, it did infect others who came into contact with anthrax spores. This so-called Amerithrax case, particularly because it unfolded in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, affected the nation in a unique way: lethal danger came from the most ubiquitous of objects – letters in the post. In 2007, San Francisco area newspaper editor-in-chief Chauncey Bailey was killed on

the sidewalk as he walked to work one day. The subject of an investigative story Bailey was working on, Yousef Bey IV, was one of those convicted for the murder. According to testimony, Bey IV ordered Bailey's death to stop him from completing the story which would allegedly have implicated Bey IV in criminal activity. Finally, in August 2015 Vester Flanagan assassinated television journalist Alison Parker and cameraman Adam Ward on live TV during a morning broadcast. Filled with rage over a multitude of perceived injustices, Flanagan approached the site of an early morning interview Parker was conducting with Ward as her cameraman. Making his own video at the same time, Flanagan could be seeing aiming his gun at Parker for several seconds while he waited for Ward's camera to turn back to her before firing. Clearly, he wanted the station's live audience to watch his crime as it unfolded. He then shot Ward and another victim, and fled. Shortly thereafter, Flanagan posted his video of the murders to Facebook, as well as commenting via Twitter while he was on the run, justifying his actions ("Alison made racist comments") and advertising his video ("I filmed the shooting see Facebook"). He then committed suicide as he faced imminent arrest by a state trooper.

Study Limitations

This is a descriptive study utilizing archival data largely gathered through systematic internet searches utilizing keywords related to our independent variables. Other sources of information were primary material from the cases identified, including some psychiatric and psychological evaluations, some direct retentions during litigation by the first author, and the utilization of investigative resources available to the second author. However, there was no comparison group, and therefore the findings of this study should not be utilized to predict behavior, or to classify the level of concern of a particular subject. We do not know the specificity of any of the findings concerning the subjects. Other limits include the possibility of observational bias (irregularities in the data that were available in the public domain) and confirmatory bias (the tendency to construct the investigation along the lines of previous findings and the dismissal of dependent variables unknown to the researchers), as well as the ever-present research conundrum of not knowing what we do not know. However, we have demonstrated the reliability of coding of the variables, which is fundamental to the assumption of accuracy of measurement, and have included, to our knowledge, the universe of cases that meet our independent variable definitions, precluding problems with sample selection.

CONCLUSIONS

Gabriel Garcia Marquez once wrote, "All human beings have three lives: public, private, and secret" (*The Paris Review Interviews, The Art of Fiction No. 69*). Attacks on public figures in the United States over the past 20 years accentuates the sociocultural blurring of these distinctions, and the degree to which these frequently homicidal acts are personal, often driven by the dynamic of *retaliation and survival* – and no longer a primary desire for infamy or notoriety. Many factors remain the same when compared with the ECSP (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999) – perpetrators are males, often psychiatrically disordered, do not directly threaten, are not ideologically motivated, and attack a

politician with a firearm – but we see a surge in histories of violent and non-violent criminality among the perpetrators, a shift toward judges and athletes as frequent victims, and the emergence of the *publicly intimate figure*. We have attempted to present primarily operational data that will help threat assessors and personal protectors in their work with public figures, recognizing the limitations and shortcomings of our research methodology. We invite others to further explore the clinical, motivational, and pre-attack behaviors of what we think are the universe of cases of public figure attackers in the United States during 1995–2015.

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