

"White rage": Bullying as an Antecedent of School Shootings

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Abstract

Objectives: Finland has had a total of three school shootings with deadly outcomes. The aim of the study is to describe these massacres and provide an analysis of what might have caused them. An analysis of a fourth case, of a would-be school shooter who planned a massacre but never fulfilled his plans, is also presented.

Methods: The study is qualitative, consisting of four case studies. The data has been obtained through a systematic collection of information available on the internet and in Finnish press.

Results: Three factors are suggested to have contributed to the shootings: (1) the copycat effect, i.e. imitation of previous school shootings; (2) the relatively easy access to guns in Finland; (3) in all cases, the perpetrator had been a victim of school bullying.

Conclusion: There is evidence that the perpetrators had been exposed to school bullying, which triggered hatred and an urge to exact revenge, not only at school, but at least in one case on mankind as a whole. The massacres were planned well in advance, and in the words of the would-be school shooter, acted out in "white rage", possibly in a dissociative state.

Keywords: School shooting; Bullying; Dissociation; Finland

Introduction

Three school shootings with deadly outcomes have occurred in Finland, a relatively small country with only 5.2 million inhabitants. The first one took place already on January 25, 1989, in Raumanmeri, Western Finland. A 14-year old boy shot and killed two fellow pupils, 14 and 15 years of age. The second took place on November 7, 2007, in Jokela, in the municipality of Tuusula fairly close to the capital Helsinki, leaving nine people dead, including the perpetrator, 18-year old Pekka-Eric Auvinen. The third occurred less than a year later. On September 23, 2008, in Kauhajoki, close to Vaasa, Western Finland, 22-year old Matti Saari killed 10 students at a vocational college, and then himself. When it comes to death tolls in school shootings, the U.S.A. is overwhelmingly in the lead. With respect to death tolls per person, however, Finland probably comes a not-so-flattering second, in close competition with Canada and Germany. This might seem surprising, since according to the so-called PISA (Program for International Students Assessment) investigation, Finnish schools are known to be the best in Europe with respect to academic achievement [1]. One aim of the study is to make information about these school shootings available for an international audience. This would not have been possible without a thorough knowledge of the Finnish language, which the author possesses. Since the study covers all school shootings in Finland so far, it is comprehensive as far as this nation is concerned.

Another aim of the present study is to analyze the reasons for these tragic events, both from an individual and a societal level. A fourth case, describing a young man who was planning to conduct a school shooting, but changed his mind and went into psychotherapy instead,

is also provided, since it brings valuable information about the mental state of a potential school shooter. The study is qualitative, based partly on materials that the perpetrators left behind on the internet, and partly on a systematic analysis of information in Finnish press, TV, and net-based media.

We agree with other authors [2] that each case has its own characteristics, and, accordingly, we are not attempting to profile the "typical school shooter". Profiling cannot be conducted with any reasonable degree of certainty. Still, similarities between cases are important to note, in order to establish hypotheses for future research, and for possible preventive measures. It is hoped that this analysis will bring at least some new insights about this tragic type of phenomenon; knowledge that might help in preventing new cases, in Finland as well as elsewhere.

Method

Data collection: An attempt was made to track down all information available about the school shootings in question in Finnish daily newspapers, as well as in weekly and monthly magazines. Likewise, information available on Finnish public and commercial TV stations was collected. General Google searches were conducted in order to find information available in international press and on private blogs.

Searches were made on Youtube and Liveleak for information left by the school shooters themselves. Some material had been taken off Youtube and was thus not available there anymore, but was found saved on websites of private individuals.

Analysis: The information was categorized into headings, the main ones being: family background; peer relationships at school, such as

experience of bullying; knowledge about and experience of guns; ideology (when applicable); and, activity on the internet. The information was then put together into case descriptions, presented in abbreviated form below in the next section.

Results

First school shooting: Raumanmeri, 1989, anonymous perpetrator

The first school shooting in Finland took place already on January 25, 1989, in Raumanmeri, Western Finland. A 14-year old boy shot and killed two fellow pupils, 14 and 15 years of age. He also tried to kill a third one but did not succeed. After the shootings, he fled out of the school into nearby woods, but was caught by the police. Due to his low age – under 15 – no criminal charges were filed against him, and his name has never been revealed to the general public. As a motive for his actions, he stated that he had been bullied at school, and the killings were an act of revenge [3,4]. There is no information available about family background, no information about knowledge or experience of guns, and he left no information on the internet. Very little information was made public, in order not to jeopardize his anonymity.

Second school shooting: Jokela, 2007, perpetrator Pekka-Eric Auvinen

The killer at Jokela High School in 2007, Pekka-Eric Auvinen, left numerous writings and film clips on the internet, providing insights into his thinking and mental state. This fact has been of the utmost importance for the investigation of his personal motives. He liked to communicate with others on the internet [5].

He wrote on forums and chat sites using the following pseudonyms: sturmgeist, sturmgeist89, naturalselector, naturalselector89, and Pekka von Auffoin (note the Nazi-like “Germanization” of his family name).

He was born in 1989, and left 89 videoclips on the internet (note the number). Some of his texts under the pseudonym “naturalselector89” were blocked on YouTube in October 2007 due to the extremist views that were expressed in them. He is thought to have been using, among others, a website upheld by Dillon Cossey, taken into custody in Oct. 2007, suspected for planning a school massacre like the one in Columbine.

Pekka-Eric Auvinen was probably influenced to some extent by Finnish eco-fascist philosopher Pentti Linkola [6] who, among other things, expresses the opinion that there are too many humans on the planet and some should be eliminated in order for life (in general, not only human) to survive. Auvinen also expressed in his texts that he liked Nietzsche [7]. His publications on the internet reveal an interest in philosophy, for instance he criticized the Abrahamic religions [8].

Clearly, he was inspired by the Columbine and Virginia Tech massacres, as can be seen from his video clips imitating them. The choice of music for his clips reveals an influence from Columbine (see below). The weapon he chose for his killings was precisely the same as used by Seung-Hui Cho, the perpetrator of the massacre at Virginia Tech, a Walther P22 semiautomatic handgun. (When he applied for his weapon's license, he wanted a stronger revolver, a Beretta, commonly used in James Bond films; when it was denied, he settled for a Walther P22, which was accepted.) It is worth noting that he received his weapons license only three weeks before the shootings. As pointed out by others [9], he modeled himself after Christopher Walker's character Max Zorin in the Bond film 'A View To a Kill'. Max Zorin was the

psychopathic result of a Nazi medical experiment who laughed as he murdered. At least three of Auvinen's YouTube videos featured the film, and Auvinen copied Zorin's hairstyle.

Auvinen uploaded several pictures and clips to the internet just a few days before the killings, as he was finalizing his plans for a grandiose departure from life, with the intention to take as many as possible with him. He also sent out a package of pictures and quotes from his texts to bloggers around the world, clearly in an attempt to ensure that the world would know who he was, and why he did what he did. One such package was left at Rapidshare [10]. On November 7 (four days before the killings), the Swede Christian Bolstad [11] posted a peculiar story about how while having coffee one evening with another Swedish blogger calling himself “martin”, from Rstvideo, he was told by the latter that he had received a strange package from Auvinen with pictures and texts, and he did not know what to do with that material. He referred to it as presskit (“press shit”). Despite having some moral concerns about it, he decided to put it up on the web anyway [7].

The most widely spread and best known video by Auvinen, which he entitled “Jokela High School Massacre – 11/7/2007”, was published on YouTube just days before the shooting [12]. It starts with a photo of the school in question in Jokela, Finland, continuing with himself holding a handgun. The film then zooms in on his revolver - which he had affectionately given the name “Catherine” - before shooting a bullet into an apple, smashing it into powder, just as if he were shooting a human head into pieces. The clip is accompanied by the track “Stray Bullet”, by the rock band KMFDM, whose lyrics were also quoted by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the students behind the Columbine High School massacre of 1999. The video film is highly suggestive, aiming at giving an almost hypnotic impression.

The day after the killings in Jokela, the video at YouTube had 140,000 viewers before 15:00 CET, when it was taken off the internet. Comments were made by 1,200 viewers. However, it had been downloaded by others and was put up again, this time on LiveLeak, a site less restrictive than Auvinen revealed his plans on the internet very clearly and in close detail, as shown from the following texts [7,9]; both providing the package sent out by Auvinen to bloggers a few days before the shootings). All excerpts follow his texts in close detail; he wrote in English, and grammatical mistakes, misspellings etc. were not corrected.*

Attack information

Event: Jokela High School Massacre.

Targets: Jokelan Lukio (High School Of Jokela), students and faculty, society, humanity, human race.

Date: 11/7/2007.

Attack Type: Mass murder, political terrorism (although I choosed the school as target, my motives for the attack are political and much much deeper and therefore I don't want this to be called only as “school shooting”).

Location: Jokela, Tuusula, Finland.

Perpetrator's name: Pekka-Eric Auvinen (aka NaturalSelector89, Natural Selector, Sturmgeist89 and Sturmgeist). I also use pseudonym Eric von Auffoin internationally.

Weapons: Semi-automatic .22 Sig Sauer Mosquito pistol.

Sig Sauer

The text reveals not only the exact date and location of his planned massacre, but also something about his motives. He pointed out that he did not want his deed to go down in history as "just" a school shooting, but that his motives were in his own view political and directed at humanity as a whole. This fact is indicated also by his choice of the pseudonym "naturalselector", revealing that he considered himself to be "aiding" evolution to get rid of less worthy individuals.

The pseudonym "Sturmgeist" could allude to Nietzschean übermensch ideals, but possibly also to the rock band KMFDM's member Sturm.

He also stated explicitly what he disliked, and liked:

What do I hate / What I don't like?

Equality, tolerance, human rights, political correctness, hypocrisy, ignorance, enslaving religions and ideologies, antidepressants, TV soap operas & drama shows, rap -music, mass media, censorship, political populists, religious fanatics, moral majority, totalitarianism, consumerism, democracy, pacifism, state mafia, alcoholics, TV commercials, human race.

What do I love / what do I like?

Existentialism, self-awareness, freedom, justice, truth, moral & political philosophy, personal & social psychology, evolution science, political incorrectness, guns, shooting, BDSM, computers, internet, aggressive electronic and industrial rock & metal music, violent movies, FPS -computer games, sarcasm, irony, black humour, macabre art mass & serial killer cases, natural disasters, eugenics

He wrote something which he labeled the "Natural Selector's Manifesto":

How Did Natural Selection Turn Into Idiocratic Selection?

Today the process of natural selection is totally misguided. It has reversed. Human race has been devolving very long time for now. Retarded and stupid, weak-minded people are reproducing more and faster than the intelligent, strong-minded people. Laws protect the retarded majority which selects the leaders of society. Modern human race has not only betrayed its ancestors, but the future generations too.

Homo Sapiens, HAH! It is more like a Homo Idioticus to me! When I look at people I see every day in society, school and everywhere... I can't say I belong to same race as the lousy, miserable, arrogant, selfish human race! No! I have evolved one step above!

Humans are just a species among other animals and world does not exist only for humans. Death and killing is not a tragedy, it happens in nature all the time between all species. Not all human lives are important or worth saving. Only superior (intelligent, self-aware, strong-minded) individuals should survive while inferior (stupid, retarded, weak-minded masses) should perish.

Of course there is a final solution too: death of entire human race. It would solve every problem of humanity. The faster human race is wiped out from this planet, the better... no one should be left alive. I have no mercy for the scum of earth, the pathetic human race.

Democracy... you think democracy means freedom and justice? You are wrong. Democracy is a dictatorship of the moral majority... and the majority is manipulated and ruled by the state mafia. Modern western democracy has nothing to do with freedom or justice; it is totalitarian and corrupted system. Laws are made over the heads of the

people and people are being brainwashed to support the system and connected to the institutional structures immediately after their birth. Societies are being ruled by manipulative and charismatic politicians...

In line with his übermensch ideals, he stated that there are three kinds of humans, obviously only three per cent (the individualistic) worthy of staying alive:

There are three kinds of human personality types in this world:

- individualistic human (3% of the world population)
- manipulative human (3% of the world population)
- mass human (94% of the world population)

He also declared what he called a "Total War Against Humanity":

Hate, I'm so full of it and I love it. That is one thing I really love. Some time ago, I used to believe in humanity and I wanted to live a long and happy life... but then I woke up. I started to think deeper and realized things. But it was not easy to become existential... knowing as much as I know has made me unhappy, frustrated and angry. I just can't be happy in the society or the reality I live... I have come to the point where I feel nothing but hate against humanity and human race.

Life is just a meaningless coincidence... result of long process of evolution and many several factors, causes and effects. However, life is also something that an individual wants and determines it to be. And I'm the dictator and god of my own life. And me, I have chosen my way. I am prepared to fight and die for my cause. I, as a natural selector, will eliminate all who I see unfit, disgraces of human race and failures of natural selection.

You might ask yourselves, why did I do this and what do I want. Well, most of you are too arrogant and closed-minded to understand... You will probably say me that I am "insane", "crazy", "psychopath", "criminal" or crap like that. No, the truth is that I am just an animal, a human, an individual, a dissident.

I have had enough. I don't want to be part of this fucked up society. Like some other wise people have said in the past, human race is not worth fighting for or saving... only worth killing.

Long live the revolution... revolution against the system, which enslaves not only the majority of weak-minded masses but also the small minority of strong-minded and intelligent individuals!

If we want to live in a different world, we must act. We must rise against the enslaving, corrupted and totalitarian regimes and overthrow the tyrants, gangsters and the rule of idiocracy. I can't alone change much but hopefully my actions will inspire all the intelligent people of the world and start some sort of revolution against the current systems.

I am ready to die for a cause I know is right, just and true... even if I would lose or the battle would be only remembered as evil...

I will rather fight and die than live a long and unhappy life.

And remember that this is my war, my ideas and my plans. Don't blame anyone else for my actions than myself. Don't blame my parents or my friends. I told nobody about my plans and I always kept them inside my mind only. Don't blame the movies I see, the music I hear, the games I play or the books I read. No, they had nothing to do with this.

This is my war: one man war against humanity, governments and weak-minded masses of the world! No mercy for the scum of the earth!

HUMANITY IS OVERRATED! It's time to put NATURAL SELECTION & SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST back on tracks!

He appears to have been very fond of the slogan "Humanity is overrated" – he had it printed on a T-shirt, which he wore on pictures on the internet [13]. It tells something about his ideology, in the same way as his chosen pseudonyms. By referring to himself as the Natural Selector, he also reveals an influence from the Columbine killers, who used exactly the same formulation [14].

Third school shooting: Kauhajoki, 2008, perpetrator Matti Saari

Matti Saari, the school shooter at a vocational college in Kauhajoki on Sept. 23, 2008, also left video clips on the internet. From a psychological point of view they are less informative than those by Auvinen. Although there is no doubt that he was inspired by Auvinen, there is no indication that the two had ever been in direct contact. He published a picture of himself with his gun pointing at the camera, in a pose exactly similar to one by Auvinen [15]. He wrote using the pseudonym Wumpscut89, the ending -89 being the same as the one used by Auvinen in his pseudonyms, suggesting imitation. Saari also bought his gun in the same shop as Auvinen did. The police have neither confirmed nor denied this, but only admitted that he bought his weapon in a gun shop in the municipality of Tuusula; however, as there is only one gun shop in that municipality, i.e. the one in which Auvinen bought his gun, the case is clear. The gun was also of a similar type (a Walther P22) as used by both Auvinen and Virginia Tech shooter Cho. He bought the gun in August 2008, only about one month before the killings.

According to information left by Saari on paper at his home, discovered by the police after the killings, he had been planning his massacre six years in advance. Like Auvinen, he had been a victim of school bullying. Information by his mother [16] reveals that he had been bullied not only at middle school, but also in the army (in 2006, two years before the shootings; note, army service is compulsory for males in Finland). He was a lonely child, who found it hard to make friends.

According to an interview with his mother [16], his elder brother died unexpectedly from an aorta failure when he was a teenager, and this was a terrible shock to him, a fact likely to have affected his state of mind. The mother also said that he suffered from depression.

He was discharged from his army service before due time, but the reasons are unclear. According to one source, there was an incident at a shooting exercise when he fired his gun with live ammunition from a position behind his combat partner against instructions, thereby risking the latter's life. He is supposed to have commented, "Pity that I missed" [17]. The Finnish army has not revealed any details as to why he was discharged from service.

The day before the school shooting at Kauhajoki, Matti Saari was taken into custody and questioned by the police about his video clips on the internet. (After the Jokela case, the police had started monitoring the internet closely in order to prevent further shootings.) One video, published about one month before the killings, showed him training shooting with his gun, then turning towards the camera, saying: "You die next" [15]. It appears likely that he must have been having an aid in making the film, i.e. somebody holding the camera, but the identity of that person has never been established.

The police officer in charge of the interview judged him not to be a security risk, and let him keep his gun. This decision was an obvious mistake - the following day Saari committed the mass killings - and

charges were later filed against the officer by parents of the victims. In lower courts, he was freed from judicial responsibility, but the case is still pending in higher courts at the time of writing. It is possible that the police inquiry sped up Saari's decision to commit the mass murder as soon as possible before risking having his gun confiscated.

Case no. four: Confessions of a would-be school shooter, "Lauri"

The following are excerpts from an interview with an anonymous Finnish man, here referred to as "Lauri", who had been obsessed with the idea of committing a school shooting. His case is highly illuminating, since he is able to analyze his psyche and motives, and verbalize them quite clearly, perhaps partly due to the fact that he had been going through long-term psychotherapy in order to overcome his urge to kill. The interview was made by Merikallio [18] and published in the Finnish weekly journal Suomen Kuvalehti. Translations into English are by the present author.

Said Lauri [18]: "I wouldn't only have committed simple mass murder – I would have made it into a ritual, into style, into a last supper."

Lauri was born as a dearly wanted child in a normal family. He had a happy childhood, until his father died when he was eight. The loss of his father was a massive trauma. He had a good relationship with his mother, but she was psychologically weak, and he had to take up the role of the man in the house.

At school, he had excellent academic results, but he was bullied by his peers. An especially severe incident had a deeply traumatic impact on his psyche. Four fellow pupils were holding a firm grip on him, while two others were hitting him. He fell down into the mud on the ground. The four were still keeping hold of him, and the other two started jumping on him.

The bullying continued over the years, but although Lauri's mother contacted his school, school officials denied that anything serious had happened and did not intervene with the bullying.

At age 16, he started planning to kill all his peers at school. He also had fantasies about torturing his tormentors. He started planning a full-fledged school massacre. He began to study weaponry, and joined a shooting club. He especially fancied large caliber weapons, strong enough to kill an elephant.

While doing his army service, he was eager to learn about shooting. When his platoon was shown how to shoot with a bazooka, some of his peers had fears about using it. He offered willingly to shoot for all of them. At that moment, something "snapped" in his head.

He went directly to the chief of his brigade (passing by both his captain and major, since he wanted immediate action), and informed him about his state of mind, reporting himself to be a security risk. The next day, he was released from army duty.

Lauri went into long-term psychotherapy, which enabled him to overcome his urge to kill and to understand his trauma. His explanation about what school shootings really are all about is quite revealing, and should be noted by researchers in the field. He believes that school shooters are in fact in a state of dissociation [19]. Furthermore, he suggests that murders are being committed during two different types of rage: these, he describes as black rage and white rage.

According to him, most murders are carried out in a state of "black rage", i.e. when an individual is suddenly overwhelmed by anger and loses impulse control. Typically, these murders are not planned at all.

"White rage" is something completely different, he suggests. During white rage, there is no lack of impulse control; quite the opposite. The murderer is in a completely cool state of mind. He feels that his killings are perfectly justified. They have usually been carefully planned long in advance. This state of mind, he claims, is typical of school shooters.

Says Lauri [18]:

"When I was lying in the mud, and two boys were jumping on me, what happened inside of me was a so-called dissociation. I kind of left my body in order to close the pain out of me."

Due to overwhelmingly negative experiences like this, he suggests, some people will develop depression and perhaps kill themselves. However, others will, through the process of dissociation, open the channel to "white rage". This, according to him, is typical of school shooters.

Discussion

Any attempt to explain school shootings has to consider both societal and individual factors. There must be something conducive in the society in question, facilitating the shootings. On the other hand, facilitating factors are not enough to explain why the shootings take place. Massacres are made by individuals. Therefore, there must also be psychological factors triggering the impulse to kill.

Three possible contributing factors will here be considered: The copycat effect, gun availability, and school bullying.

The copycat effect: A clear influence of role modeling from previous school shootings, starting from those taking place at Columbine and Virginia Tech, can be observed. Although school shootings have been occurring for decades all over the world, the internet has changed it all. The shootings at Columbine and Virginia Tech differed from all previous ones, in one important respect. The shooters made video films and published them on the internet in advance of the killings, thereby giving forewarnings and stating their intentions, also their self-perceived motives. This was certainly a way of trying to make an impact, of becoming a kind of "hero" in the macabre subculture of would-be school shooters.

There can be absolutely no doubt about the fact that Pekka-Eric Auvinen was strongly influenced by the videos made by Columbine shooters Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold [10], and by the Virginia Tech shooter Seung-Hui Cho. As mentioned, in his film *Jokela High School Massacre 11/7/2007*, Auvinen used the track "Stray Bullet" by rock band KMFDM, which was also featured on the website of Eric Harris¹⁴. He referred to himself as Natural Selector, copying a phrase used by Harris and Klebold. His used exactly the same kind of gun as Cho at Virginia Tech. Other examples could be mentioned.

In the same way, the shooter at Kauhajoki, Matti Saari, copied not only Harris, Klebold, and Cho, but even more so Auvinen. He took a picture of himself with his gun in exactly the same pose as Auvinen. His gun was similar to the one owned by Auvinen (and Cho), and it was even bought in the same shop as Auvinen's.

A gruesome example of the copycat effect is that after these shootings, there has been an enormous increase in threats of school shootings in Finland. During the first two months after the shootings

at Kauhajoki in 2008, the police reported not less than 200 threats [20]. Most of these were of course prank threats, but there were also some close calls, in which an actual school shooting very well could have occurred, but was prevented.

The question of whether media violence increases the risk of aggressive behavior is by now thoroughly researched. Already the earliest studies from the 1960s, like the famous Bobo Doll study by Bandura and colleagues [21], and the "weapon's effect" study by Berkowitz and LePage [22] found imitation of aggressive models in viewers, and similar findings have been made ever since. The report of the media violence commission by the International Society for Research on Aggression from 2012 [23] concludes that more than 15 meta-analyses have been published examining the link between media violence and aggression, and, although they vary greatly in terms of how many studies they include and what media they focus on, they find very similar results. The effect sizes are almost identical, in the range of being small to moderate, but they all show that greater media violence viewing statistically predicts greater aggression by the viewer. The report suggests several pathways for this effect, most importantly, the learning and rehearsing of aggressive cognitive schemas or scripts through watching violent films or playing aggressive computer games. The report points out that no single risk factor, such as playing violent games and/or watching violent films, causes a child or adolescent to act aggressively. Instead, it is the accumulation of risk that leads to an aggressive act [23]. In the case of the Finnish school shooters, it can be established that Auvinen copied scripts from the Columbine shooters Harris and Klebold, and from the Virginia Tech shooter Cho. Saari, in turn, copied not only Harris, Klebold, and Cho, but also, and mostly, Auvinen. However, there must be other factors at work as well, since media violence may increase the risk, but violent media consumption is not sufficient as a full explanation for the shootings.

Gun availability: In Finland, a weapon's license is required for buying a gun. Guns kept at homes have to be locked up so nobody but the license holder can get hold of them. Assault weapons cannot be legally bought at all. To this extent, Finnish gun laws are restrictive.

However, before the aforementioned school shootings, a gun license was relatively easy to obtain. The most common purposes for obtaining a license are hunting (c/a 60 %), and membership in a sport shooting club (c/a 40 %). Due to tradition and the richness of wildlife in the country, hunting is a popular pastime. At the age of 15, you may buy a gun for hunting, and by joining a sport shooting club, any 18-year is able to get a license for a handgun. After the shootings, laws were changed so that a psychiatric check-up might be required if the official issuing the license deems it necessary.

It is worth noting that both Pekka-Eric Auvinen and Matti Saari received their gun licenses by joining sport shooting clubs, only briefly before their respective school shootings.

Guns were thus relatively easy to access at the time of the shootings, and, according to estimations by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there were about 32 guns per 100 inhabitants. This was the third highest figure in the world, with only U.S.A. and Yemen having more guns per person. The number of illegal weapons is unknown, so the actual figure could be considerably higher [24]. The fact that guns were relatively easy to obtain is likely to be a factor that facilitated the school shootings.

School bullying: A striking observation is that all three Finnish school shooters – at Raumanmeri, Jokela, and Kauhajoki – had been victims of school bullying. School bullying is here understood and

defined as a specific kind of school aggression characterized of repeatedly ongoing conscious and willful acts of aggression, either physical or psychological, where the purpose is not only to hurt, but also to humiliate and put down the victim. Usually, there is a power imbalance between aggressor and victim, so that the victim is not able to defend him- or herself [25]. The would-be school shooter, "Lauri", who was cured from his urge to kill, stated that it was the bullying he had been exposed to which triggered his hatred and his impulse to become a mass murderer. Accordingly, exposure to school bullying clearly appears to be a risk factor that may trigger hatred toward one's tormentors, school in general, and perhaps mankind as a whole. In extreme and rare cases, this hatred may turn an individual into a killer. The Jokela shooter, Pekka-Eric Auvinen, clearly expressed the utmost disgust he felt toward humanity.

Although this observation appears to be accurate for these Finnish school shooters, there is of course no evidence that it may be generalized to other countries and all cases. Cullen [14] argues that the bullying hypothesis is simplistic at least in the case of Columbine shooters Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. He suggests that they dreamed about something much bigger than "just a school shooting", they wanted to induce carnage much worse than even the Oklahoma City bombing. However, Auvinen used exactly the same words, i.e. that what he intended to do was not just a school shooting, but it was a politically motivated act. He had a clearly expressed worldview; in a nutshell, "humanity is overrated", and it is time to "put natural selection back on track". He wanted his deed to become an example for others, and he wanted to reach fame, in his own way. In that sense, there are clear similarities with Harris and Klebold. Auvinen was narcissistic in the extreme, possibly suffering from megalomania.

Black rage and white rage: The would-be school shooter Lauri's distinction between "black rage" and "white rage" is intriguing. As he points out, in contrast to the vast majority of killings which occur on sudden impulse - in a state of black rage, in Lauri's terminology - school shootings are planned long, often years, in advance, and they are conducted in cold blood - in white rage. Lauri's suggestion that school shooters act in a state reminding of dissociation is also worthy of notice. The shootings often come as a great surprise to those who know the perpetrator personally. For instance, Matti Saari's mother stated, "To me, he was always a nice boy" [18]. The rector of the vocational college Saari attended said "He was one of our best students" [26]. It is typical for dissociative states that an individual may show quite different sides, they may have so called multiple personalities [19].

Strengths and limitations of the study: A strength of the study is that it covers all school shootings in a certain country, Finland, so far. It is thus representative for this particular nation. Another strength is that the author, due to his knowledge of the Finnish language, has been able to find information about these cases which would have been impossible to access otherwise.

An obvious limitation of the study is that due to the small sample size, generalizations from these cases should be made with caution.

Suggestions for future research: In all cases, it was shown that the perpetrator had been exposed to school bullying. While there may be a number of societal factors facilitating school shootings, such as the existence of role models (the copycat effect), and gun availability, these alone cannot explain why the shootings occur. There must be a

triggering factor, making the perpetrator plan the massacre and then acting it out.

As would-be school shooter Lauri suggests, while some victims of school bullying turn depressive, others may respond by developing a "white rage". This observation could be a worthy focus for future research. All cases may not have bullying as an antecedent, but revengeful feelings caused by some traumatic experience of humiliation may well have triggered the urge to kill, in most cases.

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