
Body-Related Issues and the Military

Patterns Among School Shooters

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In my book *School Shooters: Understanding High School, College, and Adult Perpetrators*, I noted numerous patterns among the perpetrators of rampage school attacks. I hypothesized that several of these may be interconnected. For example, many shooters faced biological challenges to their identities, and because most of them were male, these biological issues may have constituted challenges to their masculinity. In addition, many shooters had relatives who served in the military or law enforcement who may have operated as role models for masculinity. Furthermore, many shooters aspired to careers in the military or law enforcement, perhaps as a way to establish a sense of manhood. Finally, many shooters failed in their military aspirations, which may have had a devastating impact on their identities.

This document expands the research on these issues, going beyond what was presented in my book. The information is organized as follows: first, details about each shooter are provided for each of the topics; then a final chart tallies the results for each shooter across the different domains. The shooters are grouped by population: secondary school shooters, college shooters, aberrant adult shooters, and non-school shooters (see my book *School Shooters* or the page “Dr. Langman’s Model” at *School Shooters .info* for an explanation of these categories). Within each population, perpetrators are listed in chronological order of attack.

The information under discussion here was not available for all shooters. This was particularly true of older shooters whose childhoods were more distant, and especially for those shooters who immigrated to the United States or who committed their attacks in other countries. Tracking down information about their families and their early years was often not possible.¹

1 [This document includes incidents through 2015; we hope in a future revision to extend the coverage up to the present. — Ed., 2026]

1 · BODY-RELATED ISSUES

Deciding what to include as a biological challenge is subjective. A bad case of acne may be far more devastating in its impact on self-esteem than a more medically significant birth defect or medical condition. Someone who is teased for being overweight, even if he is not particularly overweight, may take the teasing to heart and suffer terribly from it. Thus, it is not simply a matter of someone crossing a certain threshold for being too short or too heavy, but also of considering if the issue caused him to be mocked or to feel insecure. Some issues, such as bedwetting and stuttering, may not be clearly (or solely) biological, but perhaps belong in this section. Wetting the bed as an adolescent or adult may be humiliating or shameful, and stuttering often results in being mocked.

On a different note, physical injury or severe pain can contribute to frustration or depression. For example, Robert Flores was in a car accident not long before his attack and cited his physical suffering as a contributing factor in his depression.

Besides medical conditions, two other factors may have been challenges to shooters' identities or masculinity. The first is that several shooters were gay and were taunted about this, resulting in public humiliation. The second is that several shooters were molested by older males as children or adolescents, and this caused private humiliation and shame. Both these factors, though not birth defects, illnesses, or other medical problems, were issues related to their bodies that made it difficult to feel good about themselves as males.

For example, Mitchell Johnson was outwardly a good "physical specimen." Girls thought he was cute, and he was a successful athlete, playing on three school sports teams. Because an older boy raped him repeatedly over a four-year period, however, Johnson experienced a devastating violation of his bodily integrity and may have felt damaged by the abuse.

Some shooters were called "gay" who were not actually gay; this may have been a blow to their identities, but it was not rooted in their bodies and is therefore not included here.

1.1 · SECONDARY SCHOOL SHOOTERS

Michael Slobodian

Short; wore platform shoes to compensate

Robert Poulin

Chest deformity
Poor eyesight that prevented him from being a pilot like his father
Late onset of puberty
Homosexual interest

Brenda Spencer

Short: reportedly 5'1", eighty-five pounds
Incapacitating menstrual cramps
Seizure disorder

Patrick Lizotte

Wore thick glasses, had funny walk; reportedly was picked on chronically

James Kearbey

Slight build; often teased

Heather Smith

Short: 5'1"

Eric Houston

Very sick as an infant with meningitis, encephalitis, and severe pneumonia
Delayed developmental milestones
Molested by teacher
Homosexual experimentation that was very confusing and disturbing to him

Scott Pennington

Slow to develop physically
Reportedly picked on because he was short
Stuttered

Toby Sincino

Extremely short: less than five feet tall at age sixteen; picked on

Jamie Rouse

Reportedly bullied in elementary school because he was short

Barry Loukaitis

Short, thin: reportedly teased about his body

Evan Ramsey

Childhood sexual abuse

Luke Woodham

Reportedly teased as a child for being overweight and wearing thick glasses

Michael Carneal

Short: 5'2"; teased for height
Late onset of puberty

Andrew Golden

Very short and thin: reportedly barely four feet tall

Mitchell Johnson

Brutally raped by older male peer repeatedly over four years
Reportedly teased for being chubby as a child

Andrew Wurst

Self-conscious about glasses; wanted contact lenses
Insecure about strength; couldn't do tasks for his father's landscaping business like his
brothers; wanted to get stronger by lifting weights
Bedwetting until age nine

Kip Kinkel

Slow physical development as child; reportedly upset that he was short
Kidney stone surgery at age twelve
In high school, put himself down for being small and unathletic; wanted to be big and
strong

Eric Harris

Chest deformity resulting in two surgeries
Birth defect in legs
Hated his looks; complained that kids made fun of how "fucking weak" he was
Teased for having a big head on a skinny body

Dylan Klebold

Nearly died shortly after birth due to pyloric stenosis; life was saved by emergency surgery
In adolescence, injured pitching arm, which interfered with his ability to play baseball;
was devastated when he failed to make the Columbine High School team
Wrote about "looking weird" and being "bad" and "intimidated" in all sports
Wrote about his envy and hatred of athletes

Nathaniel Brazill

Asthma that kept him from playing sports

Charles “Andy” Williams

Reportedly teased for being thin, short, and pale; called “anorexic” and “albino”

Jason Hoffman

Had a bad skin condition that sometimes oozed blood
Overweight

John Jason McLaughlin

Reactive airway disease in infancy and later
Short
Severe acne

Jeffrey Weise

Overweight as adolescent

Alvaro Castillo

Wondered if he might be gay or bisexual

Eric Hainstock

Childhood sexual abuse
Identified as gay; reported being harassed about his sexuality

Asa Coon

Short
Markedly overweight

Pekka-Eric Auvinen

Reportedly suffered because he was so short

Tim Kretschmer

Possibly short as a child; nicknamed “Mini-Timmi”

Bryan Oliver

Teased for being short
Identified as gay

Jose Reyes

Birth trauma: "almost died at birth"; umbilical cord around neck; may have lost oxygen
Delayed speech, stuttered; received speech therapy
Taunted by peer for not having enough muscle to participate in physical education

Jaylen Fryberg

Diabetic

1.2 · COLLEGE SHOOTERS

Charles Whitman

Testicular surgery in eleventh grade
Fear of sterility as adult
Overweight as adult: Boy Scouts in his troop called him "Porky"

Mark Houston

Brain damage from car accident as a child

Gang Lu

Short: reportedly 5'4", 130 lbs

Valery Fabrikant

Short: estimated height of 5'4"
Fear of sterility

Wayne Lo

Short: reportedly 5'5"; tried to prove how tough he was

Peter Odighizuwa

Shoulder, neck and eardrum injuries from car accident as adult
Knee, hip, and back injuries from prior car accident as adult

Robert Flores

Back pain from car accident as adult

Seung Hui Cho

A sickly child
As adult, tried to bulk up by working out; despite this, autopsy noted an unusual lack
of muscle

Steven Kazmierczak

Bedwetting
Experimented with homosexuality (confusion about sexuality)
Had been very overweight

Matti Saari

Slow to grow as an infant; as adult, below average in height

Amy Bishop

Asthmatic in childhood; multiple trips to emergency room
Severe allergies that caused hives and eczema

Chris Harper-Mercer

In adolescence was short and overweight (“chunky”) and had acne

1.3 · ABERRANT ADULT SHOOTERS

Walter Seifert

As adult, developed tuberculosis; as a result, he lost his job as a police officer

Robert Smith

“Weak, slow and clumsy”
Short
Uncoordinated: could not tie shoes or ride bicycle

Larry Harmon

“Slight handicap as the result of a bout of polio as a child”

Laurie Dann

Very short as a child
Corrective surgery on ears and nose

Clemmie Henderson

Reportedly shot in head while being robbed

James Wilson

Reportedly ridiculed as a child for being overweight

Engaged in male prostitution as teen; may have been underage and thus this would constitute molestation

Patrick Purdy

Molested (engaged in male prostitution as young teen)

Identified as gay and complained of harassment

Marc Lépine

Cruelly mocked for severe acne

Duane Morrison

May have been victim of childhood sexual abuse

Asthmatic

Reportedly received disability payments for injuries sustained in a car accident

Impotent: reportedly could not perform sexually due to pain medications

Wellington de Oliveira

Mocked due to a limp

Adam Lanza

Mother's health issues resulted in difficult pregnancy

Eight days after birth, stopped breathing and was hospitalized due to apnea

Delayed speech

Extreme sensory sensitivities

Possible homosexual and pedophilic fantasies

Extraordinarily thin: 6'1" and only 112 lbs

Odd gait, not well coordinated

Three days before attack, sustained head injury, very bloody

Elliot Rodger

Very upset about being short; tried to make himself taller by stretching himself

Weak, uncoordinated, unathletic

Anton Pettersson

Chest deformity (pectus carinatum)

1.4 · NON-SCHOOL SHOOTERS

Clay Shrout

“Athletic ineptitude”; had been “chubby,” then lost weight and looked “frail” and “slight”

James Holmes

Wrote about numerous biological concerns, including teeth, nose, ears, and eyes
Wrote about concerns with penis and “accidents” that happened to it, including torn skin that didn’t heal
Diagnosed himself with body dysmorphic disorder

2 · RELATIVES IN THE MILITARY OR LAW ENFORCEMENT

As noted above, I hypothesize that some school shooters were interested in the military as a way to achieve manhood. This may have been particularly important to those who experienced themselves as having damaged masculinity because of the various body-related issues presented above. Having parents who served in the military may have created other dynamics than solely being role models for masculinity (though not every family member who served was male, virtually all of them were). For example, military families often relocate frequently, which uproots the children, adding stress to their lives. Or if a relative served in combat, he may have been traumatized, which in turn could have created distress within the family. In most cases, however, these do not seem to have been factors. Thus, the focus here is on the possible connections between body-related issues, military role models in the family, military obsession or aspirations, and the frequent thwarting of the shooters’ ambitions.

Several shooters outside of the United States very likely had relatives who served, because in some countries military service is essentially mandatory. Thus, the German, Finnish, and other international shooters may have had family members in the military. They are not included here because I have not seen this confirmed. In addition, however, the dynamic may not be the same for those who were compelled to serve as for those who choose it as a career. Finally, those who were called up to mandatory service presumably served prior to having children so that their children (the shooters) did not grow up on military bases or seeing their parents or other relatives in the role of soldiers.

2.1 · SECONDARY SCHOOL SHOOTERS

Robert Poulin

Father: pilot in Canadian Air Force
Grandfather: military

Relatives on both sides: military

Brenda Spencer

Father: Navy

[*Brent Fleming*]²

[Father: police officer]

James Kearbey

Father: Vietnam veteran / former marine

Heather Smith

Father: Army officer; Smith was born on an Army base

Floyd Warmesley III

Grandfather: Army

Great-uncle: Army

Great-uncle: Navy

Cousin: Navy

Father: security guard

Jamie Rouse

Grandfather: military

Uncle: military

Evan Ramsey

Father: Navy

Luke Woodham

Grandfather: Army Air Corps

Great-uncle: Air Force

Great-uncle: Military

Great-aunt: Pentagon / War Department

² Fleming supported Spencer's homicidal intentions without participating in the shooting.

Andrew Golden

Grandfather: fish and game warden

Mitchell Johnson

Mother: corrections officer

Eric Harris

Father: pilot in Air Force

Maternal grandfather: military

Seth Trickey

Father: U.S. Navy

(Mother: Veterans Affairs)³

Great-uncle #1: U.S. Navy

Great-uncle #2: U.S. Navy

Great-uncle #3: law enforcement

Other, more distant, relatives: military

Nathaniel Brazill

Uncle: military

Charles "Andy" Williams

Mother: U.S. Army

Father: U.S. Army (and later lab technician in Naval Medical Center)⁴

Grandfather: military

Great-grandfather: Marines

John Jason McLaughlin

Father: sergeant in county sheriff's department

Jon Romano

Half-brother: served in Iraq; Romano said he was a role model

3 A connection to the military, rather than military service.

4 A connection to the military, rather than military service.

Jeffrey Weise

Paternal grandfather: police officer
Grandfather's brother: Navy
Grandfather's brother: Army

Robert Butler, Jr.

Father: police detective

Mason Campbell

Uncle: Army Reserve, National Guard

Jared Padgett

Older brother: U.S. Army Reserve
"A large family with a history of military service"

Jaylen Fryberg

Grandfather: U.S. Marine Corps

2.2 · COLLEGE SHOOTERS

Valery Fabrikant

Father: reportedly physician in Russian Army

Gang Lu

(Mother: military hospital — the family lived in the compound)⁵

Wayne Lo

Father: pilot in Taiwanese Air Force

Robert Flores

Father: police officer

Amy Bishop

Father: Air Force

⁵ A connection to the military, rather than military service.

One Goh

Brother: U.S. Army

2.3 · ABERRANT ADULT SHOOTERS

Robert Smith

Father: retired Major in Air Force

Patrick Purdy

Father: military

Marc Lépine

Uncle: Algerian military

Father: possibly in Algerian military

Jillian Robbins

Father: Army Reserve

Kimveer Gill

Family served in military in India

Duane Morrison

Father: military

Charles Roberts IV

Father: police officer

Jiverly Wong

Father: South Vietnamese Army

Adam Lanza

Uncle: Marines and law enforcement

Aaron Ybarra

Grandfather: U.S. Army

Myron May

Father: Navy
Uncle: Marines

2.4 · NON-SCHOOL SHOOTERS

Clay Shrout

Grandfather: Navy

Jared Loughner

Paternal grandfather: Air Force
Maternal grandfather: Navy (later worked as nurse in VA hospital)⁶

James Holmes

Grandfather: career officer in Army
Father did research for Navy and Marine Corps

3 · MILITARY ASPIRATIONS, OBSESSIONS, AND OUTCOMES

Though the title of this section uses the word “military,” it includes law enforcement and security work too. What these professions have in common is the use of firearms. They may also all be perceived as typically masculine fields and thus appeal to the male shooters who were insecure about their masculinity. There could, of course, have been other factors in their interest in the military. Perhaps they wanted to serve their country, follow a family tradition of military service, or channel their interest in weapons or violence into a socially acceptable profession. Such interests are not mutually exclusive of a desire to establish their masculinity.

3.1 · SECONDARY SCHOOL SHOOTERS

Michael Slobodian

Aspired to military and joined local militia before his attack

Robert Poulin

Applied to an officer training program but was rejected as too immature

⁶ A connection to the military, rather than military service.

Brenda Spencer

Wanted to become a sniper

Patrick Lizotte

Had military obsession; not known if he had aspirations; he ate alone at school and read *Soldier of Fortune* magazine; in class he drew soldiers and tanks shooting; he habitually wore an army fatigue jacket

Eric Houston

Wanted to join the army but failed to graduate high school and thus could not apply

Kip Kinkel

Wanted to go into law enforcement, be on bomb squad; committed attack before he was old enough to do so

Eric Harris

Tried to enlist in the Marines but was rejected⁷

Seth Trickey

Military aspirations, but committed attack before he was old enough to enlist

Nathaniel Brazill

Aspired to join police, military, or Secret Service, but committed attack before he was old enough to enlist

Jason Hoffman

Rejected by the Navy for being too heavy, having a skin condition, and having an assault and battery charge

7 Mrs. Harris asked the recruiting officer if the fact that Eric was taking Luvox would prevent him from being accepted. The officer said he would have to look into this. After the attack, he said that he had tried to reach Eric to tell him that he was not accepted due to the medication but was unable to do so, and a few days later the attack occurred. At least two friends, however, reported that Eric had told them he had been rejected. If these reports are accurate, then it appears that Eric knew or assumed he would be rejected.

John McLaughlin

Wanted to be military explosives expert, but committed attack before he was old enough to enlist

Jon Romano

Wanted to be a state trooper: "That's all I want to do."

Jeffrey Weise

Military aspirations, but committed attack before he was old enough to enlist

Alvaro Castillo

Joined the National Guard but hated it; after a suicide attempt, he was able to obtain a discharge

Sebastian Bosse

Dreamed of military career; committed attack before enlisting

Douglas Chanthabouly

After his attack, told an officer he was thinking of joining the police

Pekka-Eric Auvinen

Military service was deferred for mental health reasons; not clear if he had aspirations or was simply called to serve

Tim Kretschmer

No military aspiration; worked to get out of mandatory service

Robert Butler

Aspired to be a police officer, but committed attack before he was old enough to enlist

Bryan Oliver

Aspired to join U.S. Army, but committed attack before he was old enough to enlist

Jose Reyes

Aspired to join police or Marines, but committed attack before he was old enough to enlist

Karl Pierson

Aspired to go to West Point or Air Force academy; he started the application process with at least West Point, but West Point closed his file due to lack of activity; he may have given up due to poor grades and disciplinary history at school

Jared Padgett

Aspired to join the military and participated in Junior ROTC, but committed attack before he was old enough to enlist

3.2 · COLLEGE SHOOTERS

Charles Whitman

Joined the Marines, but got himself discharged after being court-martialed

Edward Allaway

Joined the Marines, but did not last long; was dishonorably discharged

Leo Kelly

Served in Air Force

Valery Fabrikant

May have served in Russian army, but if so, this was presumably mandatory

Wayne Lo

Obsessed with marines; had “USMC” (United States Marine Corps) shaved in his hair

Frederick Davidson

Served in military; no known problems

Robert Flores

Served eleven years; demoted; discharge status unknown

Biswanath Halder

Reportedly attended military school in India and served in India’s military corps of electrical and mechanical engineers

Steven Kazmierczak

Joined the Army but was discharged after it was discovered he had lied about his mental health history
Shortly before his attack, tried to enlist in the Navy

Matti Saari

Joined the military but was recommended for discharge, which he wanted; he lasted less than two months

Chris Harper-Mercer

Enlisted in the army, but after five weeks was discharged following a suicide attempt

3.3 · ABERRANT ADULT SHOOTERS

Walter Seifert

Served in WWII, then was police officer, but was discharged due to health problems

Robert Smith

Not known if he had military aspirations, but his heroes included Caesar, Napoleon, and Hitler

Clemmie Henderson

Served in Vietnam; got into altercation with superior officer; “less than honorable” discharge

Patrick Purdy

Had military aspirations but never applied, perhaps because he knew he would be rejected due to his many arrests, alcoholism, and drug abuse; tried to be security guard: quit one job and was fired from two others; he then gave up on that career

Marc Lépine

Rejected by the Canadian Army as “unsuitable” or “asocial”

Kevin Newman

Committed attack shortly after “less than honorable” discharge from Navy

Jillian Robbins

Discharged from the Army Reserve for failing to complete high school

Kimveer Gill

Enrolled in a military leadership course but dropped out, or was discharged, after a month

Duane Morrison

Served in the Navy for six months; discharged a month after going AWOL

Jiverly Wong

Claimed no military experience on immigration paperwork, but reportedly told an acquaintance he had served in the military or law enforcement

Bruco Eastwood

Wanted to enlist but failed GED, so he couldn't; he went on rampage shortly after this

Brendan O'Rourke

Wanted to be a security guard; got licensed, got gun, but didn't get a job

Wellington de Oliveira

Wanted to be a terrorist

Adam Lanza

Wanted to enlist in Marines but mother talked him out of it; he took this harder than she expected

3.4 · NON-SCHOOL SHOOTERS

Clay Shrout

No known military interest, but was obsessed with weapons and explosives; collected knives, death stars, nunchucks, brass knuckles, sword, BB gun; also wore combat boots

Stephen Morgan

Served successfully in Navy

Tried to enlist in Army but was rejected

4 · SUMMARY OF DATA

The word military is used in the chart, but as noted above, this includes law enforcement and related fields. The dash is used to indicate those shooters with military aspirations who committed their attacks when they were too young to enlist. Within each category, perpetrators are ordered chronologically by attack date.

Perpetrator, age	Bodily issues	Family military service	Military aspirations / obsession	Thwarted ambitions / failure
<i>Secondary school shooters</i>				
Michael Slobodian, 16	✓		✓	—
Robert Poulin, 18	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brenda Spencer, 16	✓	✓	✓	—
Patrick Lizotte, 17	✓		✓	
James Kearbey, 14	✓	✓	✓	
Heather Smith, 14	✓	✓		
Floyd Warmesley III, 13		✓		
Eric Houston, 20	✓		✓	✓
Scott Pennington, 17	✓			
Toby Sincino, 16	✓			
Jamie Rouse, 17	✓	✓		
Barry Loukaitis, 14	✓			
Evan Ramsey, 16	✓	✓		
Luke Woodham, 16	✓	✓		
Michael Carneal, 14	✓			
Andrew Golden, 11	✓	✓		
Mitchell Johnson, 13	✓	✓		
Andrew Wurst, 14	✓			
Kip Kinkel, 15	✓		✓	—
Eric Harris, 18	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dylan Klebold, 17	✓			
Seth Trickey, 13		✓	✓	—
Nathaniel Brazill, 13	✓	✓	✓	—
Andy Williams, 15	✓	✓	✓	—
Jason Hoffman, 18	✓		✓	✓
John McLaughlin, 15	✓	✓	✓	—
Jon Romano, 16		✓	✓	—
Jeffrey Weise, 16	✓	✓	✓	—

Perpetrator, age	Bodily issues	Family military service	Military aspirations / obsession	Thwarted ambitions / failure
Alvaro Castillo, 18	✓		✓	✓
Eric Hainstock, 15	✓			
Sebastian Bosse, 18			✓	
Douglas Chanthabouly, 18			✓	—
Asa Coon, 14	✓			
Pekka-Eric Auvinen, 18	✓		?	✓
Tim Kretschmer, 17	✓			
Robert Butler, Jr., 17		✓	✓	—
Bryan Oliver, 16	✓		✓	—
Jose Reyes, 12	✓		✓	—
Karl Pierson, 18			✓	✓
Mason Campbell, 12		✓		
Jared Padgett, 15		✓	✓	—
Jaylen Fryberg, 15	✓	✓		

College shooters

Charles Whitman, 25	✓		✓	✓
Edward Allaway, 37			✓	✓
Mark Houston, 19	✓			
Leo Kelly, 22			✓	
Gang Lu, 28	✓			
Valery Fabrikant, 52	✓	✓		
Wayne Lo, 18	✓	✓	✓	
Frederick Davidson, 36			✓	
Peter Odighizuwa, 43	✓			
Robert Flores, 41	✓	✓	✓	?
Biswanath Halder, 62			✓	
Seung Hui Cho, 23	✓			
Steven Kazmierczak, 27	✓		✓	✓
Matti Saari, 22	✓		?	✓
Amy Bishop, 44	✓	✓		
One Goh, 43		✓		
Chris Harper-Mercer, 26	✓		✓	✓

Aberrant adult shooters

Walter Seifert, 42	✓		✓	✓
Robert Smith, 18	✓	✓	✓	
Larry Harmon, 21	✓			
Laurie Dann, 30	✓			
Clemmie Henderson, 40	✓		✓	✓

Perpetrator, age	Bodily issues	Family military service	Military aspirations / obsession	Thwarted ambitions / failure
James Wilson, 19	✓			
Patrick Purdy, 24	✓	✓	✓	✓
Marc Lépine, 25	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kevin Newman, 29			✓	✓
Jillian Robbins, 19		✓	✓	✓
Kimveer Gill, 25		✓	✓	✓
Duane Morrison, 53	✓	✓	✓	✓
Charles Roberts IV, 32		✓		
Jiverly Wong, 41		✓		
Bruco Eastwood, 32			✓	✓
Brendan O'Rourke, 41			✓	✓
Wellington de Oliveira, 23	✓		✓	
Adam Lanza, 20	✓	✓	✓	✓
Elliot Rodger, 22	✓			
Aaron Ybarra, 26		✓		
Anton Pettersson, 21	✓			
Myron May, 31		✓		
<i>Non-school shooters</i>				
Clay Shrout, 17	✓	✓	?	
Stephen Morgan, 29			✓	
Jared Loughner, 22		✓	✓	✓
James Holmes, 24	✓	✓		SS.I