# School Shootings, Neighborhood Violence, and Civil Unrest:
# The Impact of Community Violence on Black Youth Mental Health

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# Disclosures

No conflicts of interest to report
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# Learning Objectives

By at the end of the training, participants will be able to

- Review common stressors like community violence that negatively affect the health of African American youth
- Identify two factors that can increase resilience in Black youth at risk for exposure to community violence during the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- Identify four strategies to protect and preserve the mental health of African American youth exposed to community violence.
- Describe three trauma-informed programs/resources/services focused on improving mental health and wellness among African American youth

# Agenda

Topic A: Community Violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Topic B: Promoting Mental Health and Resiliency among Black Youth at Risk for Exposure to Community Violence

Topic C: Implicit Bias and How it Contributes to Health Inequities and Negative Health Outcomes

# Types of Community Violence

Black youth currently face risk of exposure to multiple types of violence and other stressors that are unique to their generation:

- Rise in visibility of racial violence, racial injustice, and civil unrest
- Neighborhood violence and crime
- School and other mass shootings
- Global pandemic
- Poverty
- War and terrorism

# Negative Impacts on Health

These types of violence and other stressors can negatively impact the mental and

physical health of Black youth:

- Depression, anxiety, ptsd, substance use
- Suicide
- Anger and aggression
- High-risk behaviors
- Elevated blood pressure
- Increased cortisol
- Obesity
- Food deserts and inadequate nutrition

# Negative Impacts on Families

These types of violence and other stressors can also negatively impact familial relationships:

- Parent and caregiver support
- Parental bonding

# Negative Impacts on School Experiences

These types of violence and other stressors can also negatively impact school experiences:

- School performance
- Disciplinary problems
- Involvement with law enforcement and juvenile justice system

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# Resiliency in Black Youth at Risk for Exposure to Community Violence

Factors that can help foster resiliency in Black youth at risk for exposure to community violence include:

- Family and parent support
- Parent bonding
- Positive school climate

# Resiliency in Black Youth at Risk for Exposure to Community Violence

Other factors that can promote mental health in Black youth at risk for exposure to community violence:

- Adaptive and pro-social coping skills

- Peer supports

- Supportive adults in and outside of the family system

# Mass Shootings: Definitions

Several different, but common, definitions:

- Multiple, firearm, homicide incidents, involving 4 or more victims at one or more locations close to one another.
- Often there is a distinction made between private and public mass shootings (e.g., a school, place of worship, or a business establishment).
- Mass shootings undertaken by foreign terrorists are not included, no matter how many people die or where the shooting occurs.
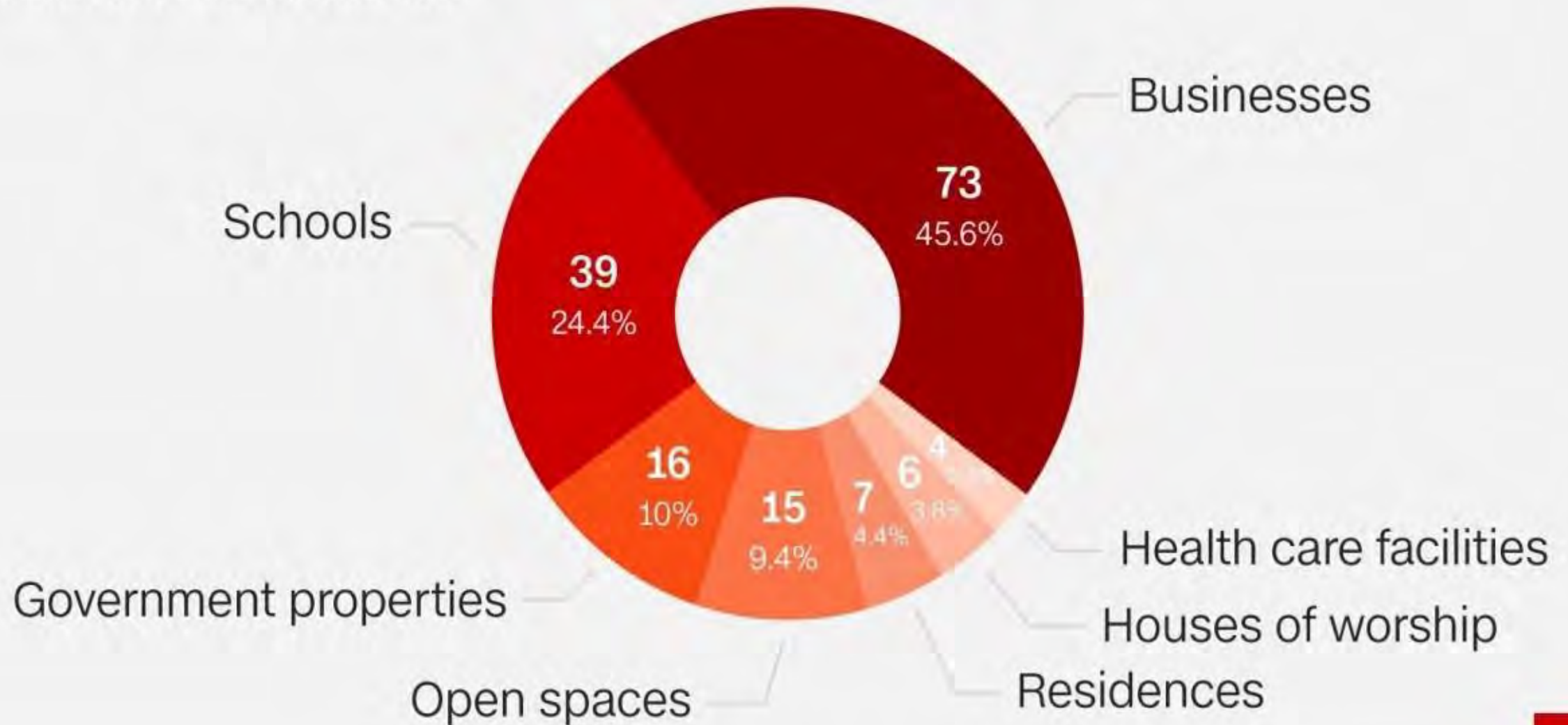
# Mass Shootings: Definitions

Exclusions:

- Number of individuals shot vs. killed <4
- Mass shootings undertaken by foreign terrorists are not included, no matter how many people die or where the shooting occurs.
- Homicides by other means also are not counted - e.g. if 5 people are purposely run down and killed by an individual driving motor vehicle, the deaths do not count because a firearm was not involved

# Active shooter incidents: Where you're most at risk

Number of incidents, 2000-2013



Businesses
73
45.6%

Schools
39
24.4%

16
10%

15
9.4%

7
4.4%

6
3.8%

4

Government properties

Open spaces

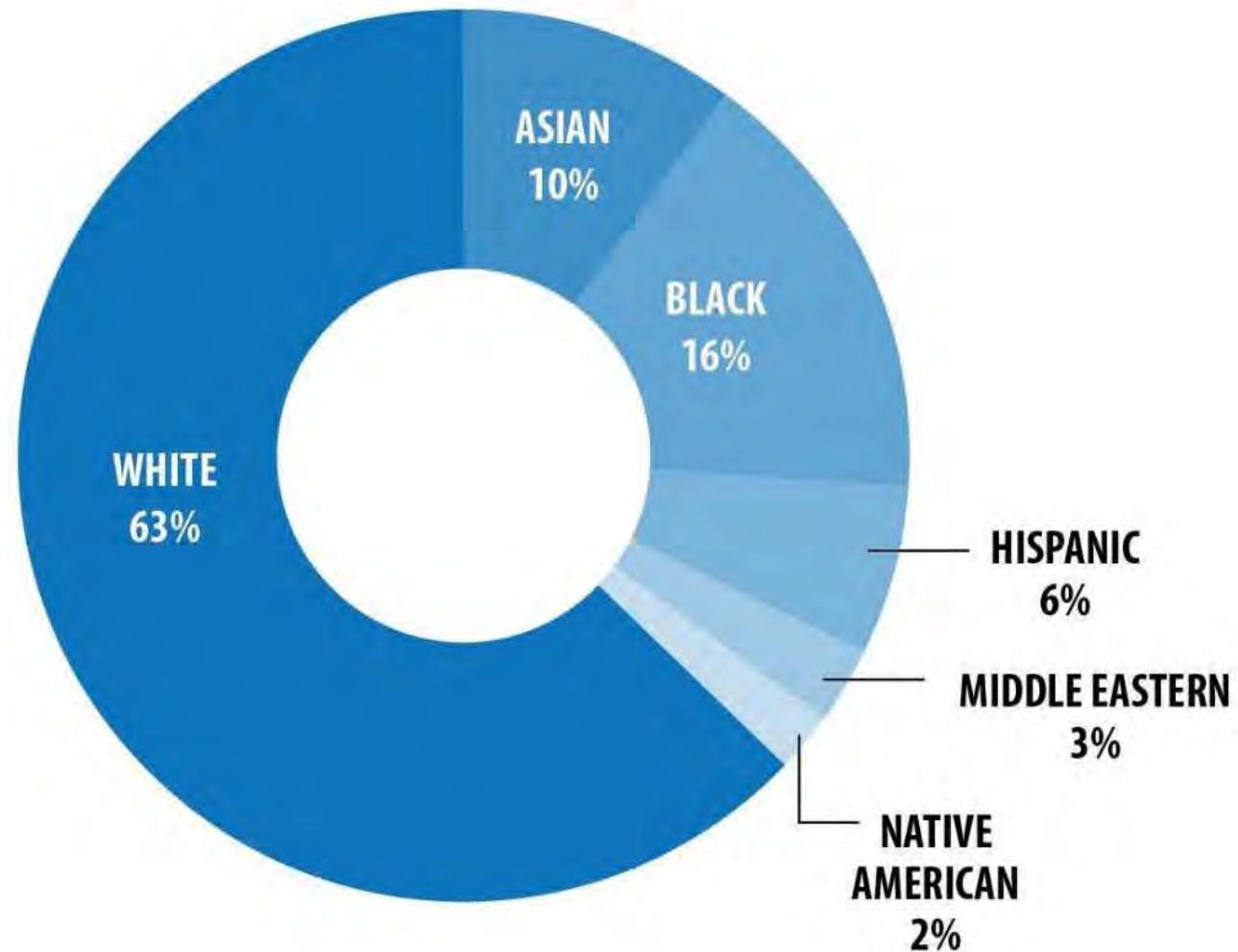Health care facilities
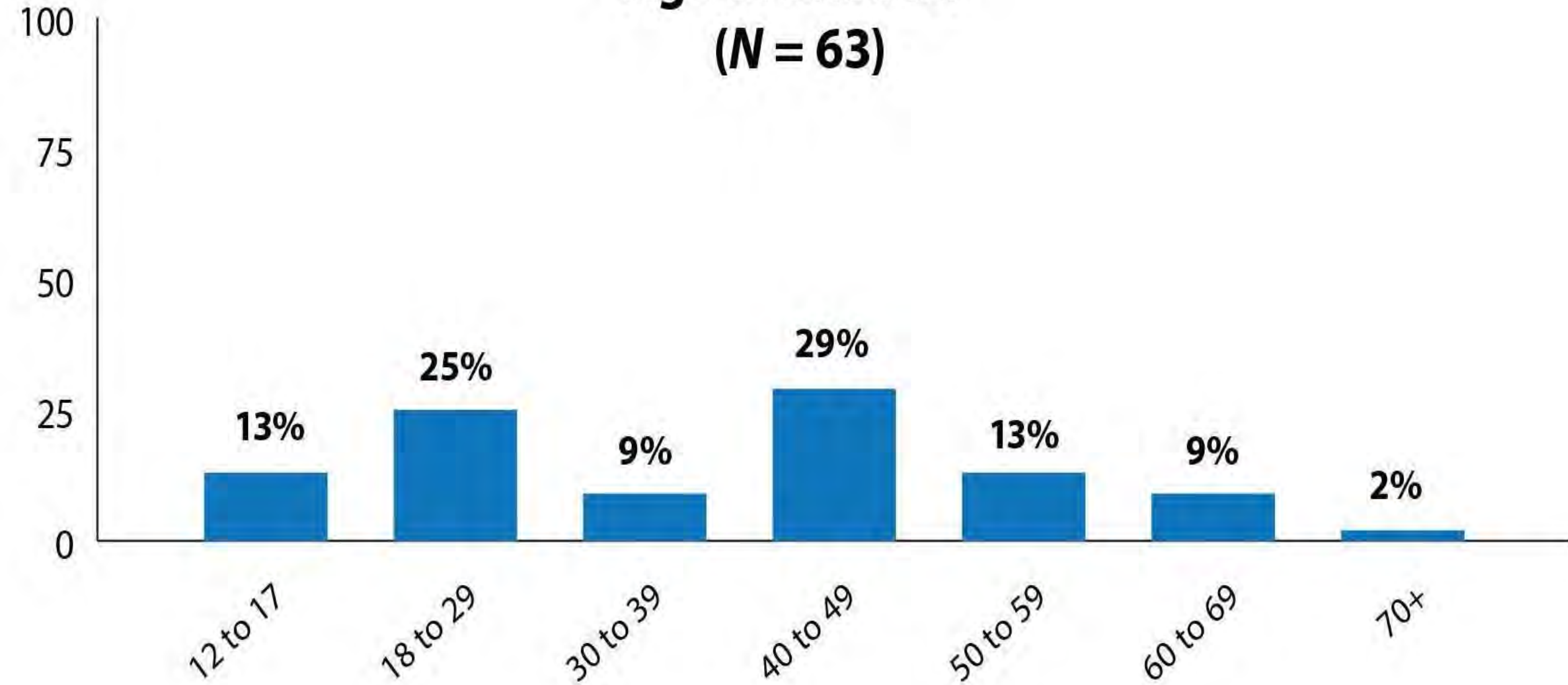
Houses of worship

Residences

CNN

## Gender and Race:

The sample was overwhelmingly male (94%, $n = 59$), with only four females in the data set (6%, $n = 4$), and varied by race as shown in Figure 2:[6]



FIGURE 2

**Race ($N = 63$)**

ASIAN 10%

BLACK 16%

HISPANIC 6%

MIDDLE EASTERN 3%

NATIVE AMERICAN 2%

WHITE 63%

**Age of Shooter**
**(*N* = 63)**

# Video



https://youtu.be/9OZCl8q42Xw

# School Violence: How Can We Help?

Current Policies

Our Role

- Evaluating Low Level Threats of Violence
- Preventive Interventions
- Assess Family and Individual
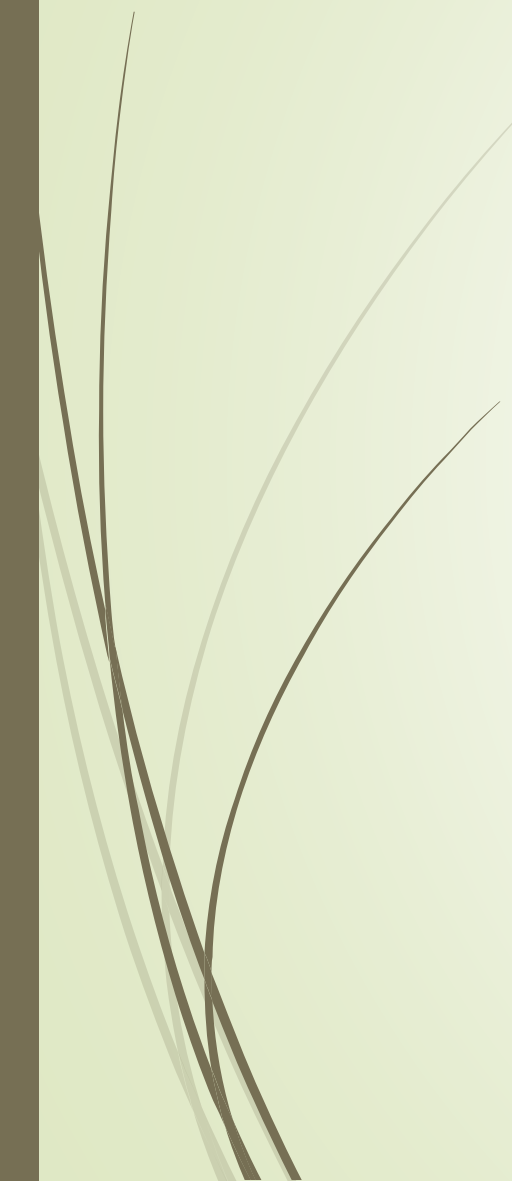- Therapeutic/psycho/social supports

# Current Policies

- Legislative efforts on federal level
- Legislative efforts on state level ( state dependent)
- Local policies ( school district dependent)

# Current Policies

- Safe School Initiative
- Identify the potential attacker
- Envision the attack
- Signal the attack
- Advance the attack
- Resolution of the attack

# What are the community roles?

- Police
  - Assist in protection and service
  - Educate on mediating a crisis without advancing the crisis
- School
  - Identify target behaviors earlier
  - Assist with coordination with mental health professional
- Provider
  - Coordination of care
    - Outpatient clinic
    - School classroom

# Assessing School Threats

Threat: any word or gesture that places a person in fear of harm

Threat Assessment

Informed judgment on 2 questions

HOW CREDIBLE AND SERIOUS IS THE THREAT?

TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE THREATENER HAVE THE FOLLOWING?

Resources

Intent

Motivation to carry out the threat

# Level of Threats

- Low level

- Medium level

- High level

# Low Level Threats

- Minimal risk to the individual and public
  - Vague
  - Indirect

- Threat lacks realism

# Example: Low Level Threat

- Often result in overreaction in intervention
  - 6 Yo girl arrested in Florida for tantrum

- Needs assessment by mental health is needed

- Training on multiple levels is needed
  - School
  - Police

# Medium Level Threats

- Could be carried out, but not entirely realistic
  - More direct
  - More concrete

- There is true intentional ideation

- There is thoughtful preparation
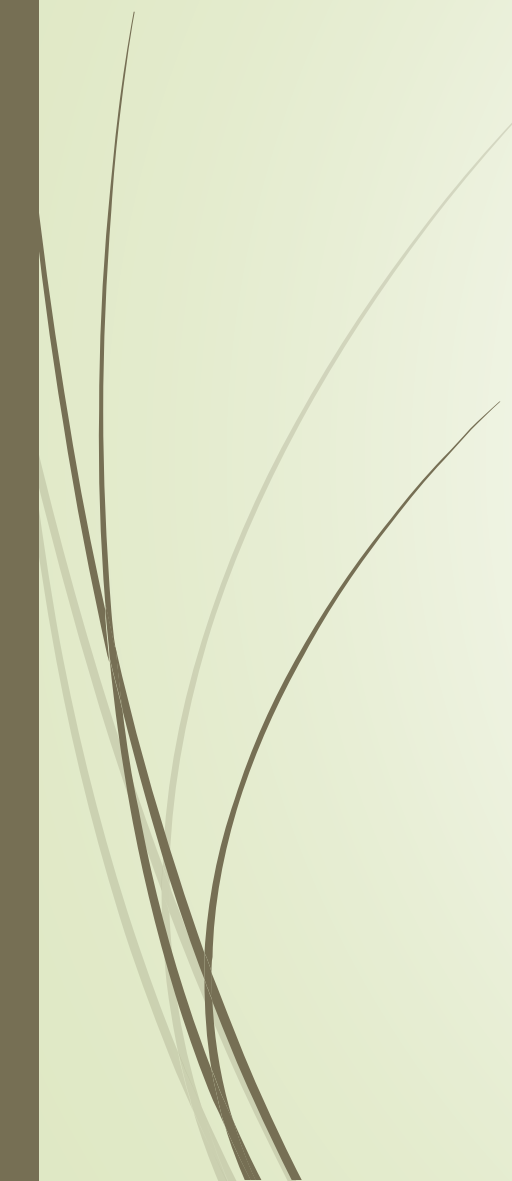
- Voicing more direct intent

# Example: Medium Level Threat

- 16 yo kid with diagnosis of ADHD and organic mood disorder

- Victim of bullying secondary to short stature most of academic career secondary to growth hormone deficiency

- Caught looking up bomb documents on school server in the library

- No history of violence in school system

# How would you handle this case?

- School

- Mental Health

- Is police intervention necessary ?

# High Level Threats

- Imminent and serious

- Direct, specific ,and plausible
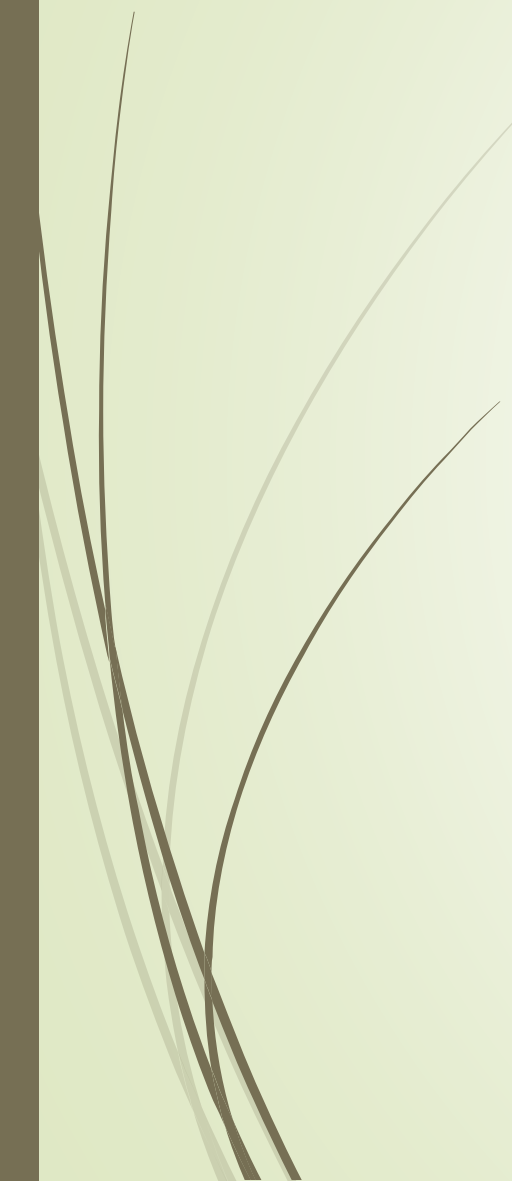  - Well thought out plan with realistic execution

# Example: Nikolas Cruz

- Parkland school shooting February 2018

- Killed 17 people

- Multiple red flags

# Multiple Red Flags

- Multiple 911 calls

- Multiple school interventions and suspensions

- Severe threats of violence

- History of violence

# Systemic Failure

- Educational

- Mental Health

- Family systems

- Police intervention

# Why do these individuals slip through the cracks?

- Ignored Calls for Help
- Family System
- Alcohol & Other Drug Dependency
- Bullied/Bullying
- Individual untreated MH concerns

# Ignored Calls for help

- Often engender strong emotion
    - "I hate you "
    - "you have ruined my life"
    - "May God have mercy upon your soul "

- No correlation between intensity of threat and actual action

# Family system

- Authoritarian childrearing attitudes
- Harsh, lax, or inconsistent disciplinary practices
- Low parental involvement
- Low emotional attachment to parents or caregivers
- Parental substance abuse or criminality
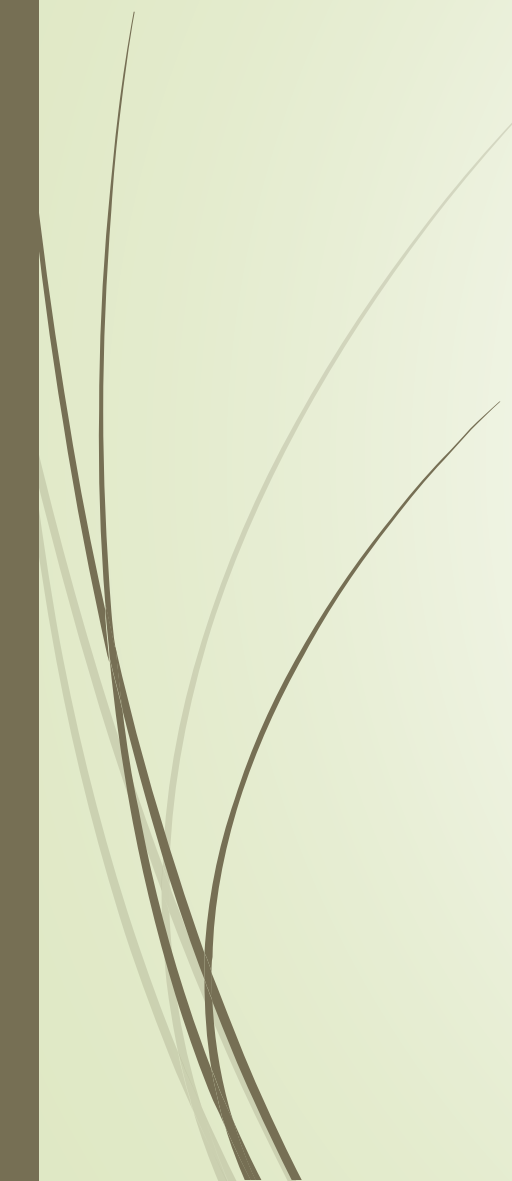- Poor monitoring and supervision of children

# Co-morbid Alcohol and/or Drug Use

- The usual suspects :
  - Alcohol
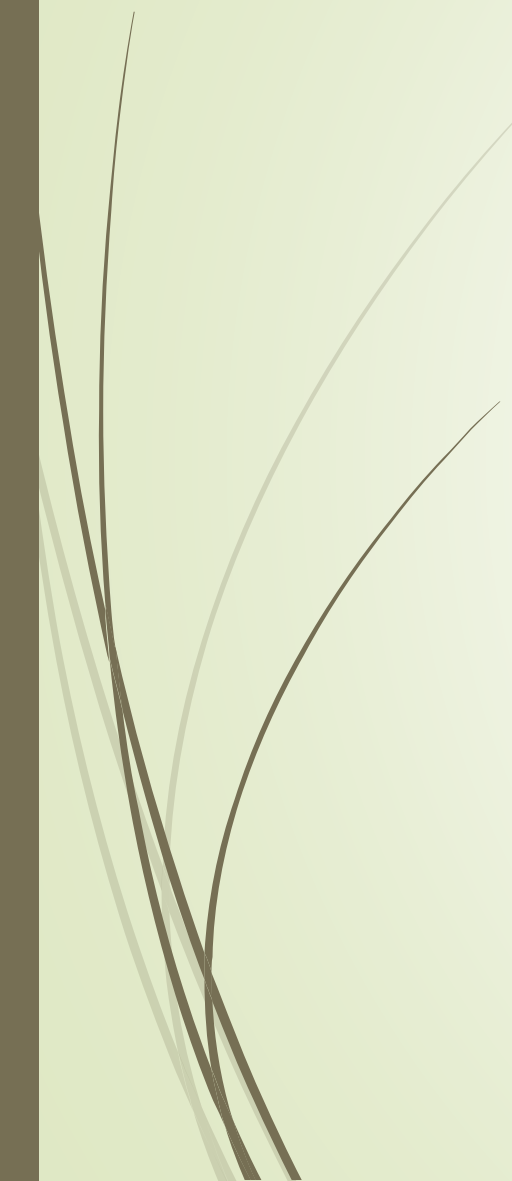  - Marijuana
  - Prescription drugs

# Bullied/Bullying

- Often the easiest trigger for school violence

- Intervention is needed early on so it doesn't escalate to mass school violence

# Untreated Mental Illness

- ADHD
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Bipolar Disorder
- PTSD and Trauma

# Screening and Identification Tool to Assess Individuals at Risk for Violence

The School Shooter:
A THREAT ASSESSMENT PERSPECTIVE



Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG)
National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC)
FBI Academy
Quantico, Virginia 22135

# THREAT ASSESSMENT

**Instructions:**
*Form to be completed by the school and faxed to CCCMHC at 315-253-1687.*  AND/OR  FILLED OUT BY CCCMHC THERAPIST

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Person reporting the threat: | | |
| School: | Date Assessment Completed: | Time: |
| School Contact: | | Phone Number: |

**Information on student making threat/engaging in concerning behavior:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Name of student: | | |
| Date of Birth: | Grade: | Home Phone: |
| Address: | | |
| Parent/Guardian: | | |
| Phone number: | | Relationship: |

**Information about the threat/concerning behaviors:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Date threat occurred: | Time threat occurred: |
| Where the threat was made: | |
| Who reported the threat: | |

What was reported (exact wording and nature of threat):




Any specific information or concerns about the student that may be helpful understanding this incident; i.e. personality traits and behaviors, family

## ASSESSING SCHOOL THREATS

*Threat: Any words or gestures that place a person in fear of harm.*

Threat assessment provides support in making an informed judgment on two questions: how credible and serious is the threat itself? And to what extent does the threatener appear to have the resources, intent, and motivation to carry out the threat?

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### Identify the Level of Threats: *PRESUMPTIVE INDICATORS*

Instructions: Identify each indicator that applies to the threat made:

| *LOW LEVEL:* A threat which poses a minimal risk to the victim and public safety. | *MEDIUM LEVEL:* A threat which could be carried out, although it may not appear entirely realistic. | *HIGH LEVEL:* A threat that appears to pose an imminent and serious danger to the safety of others. |
|---|---|---|
| Threat is vague and indirect | Threat is more direct and more concrete than a low level threat | Direct, specific and plausible |
| Information within the threat is inconsistent, implausible or lacks detail | Wording suggests threatener has given some thought to how the act will be carried out. | Threat suggests concrete steps have been taken toward carrying it out, for example, statements indicating that the threatener has acquired or practiced with a weapon or has had the victim under surveillance. |
| Threat lacks realism | General indication of a possible place and time (but not a detailed plan) | |
| Content suggests person is unlikely to carry it out | Some indication the threatener has taken preparatory steps, although there may be some veiled reference or ambiguous or inconclusive evidence pointing to that possibility— an allusion to a book or movie that shows the planning of a violent act, or a vague, general statement about the availability of weapons. Specific statement seeking to convey that the threat is not empty: "I'm serious!" or "I really mean this!" | |
| E.g. "You don't want to make me mad." "You better be careful about what you say." | | E.g. "At 8 am tomorrow morning I intend to shoot the principal. That's when he is in his office by himself. I have a 9mm. Believe me, I know what I am doing. I am sick and tired of the way he runs this school." |
| | E.g. "I'll punch you until you die." "I could burn this place down." | |

# Establishing Channels of Communication

- INDIVIDUAL MAKES A THREATENING STATEMENT:

- School personnel take necessary actions following their established plans/protocols

- When a threat does not rise to the level of Medium or High.
  - Referred to CCCHMC

- Schools may find it helpful to have a specified team or lead individual to be the
- Point of contact with CCCMHC.

# Establishing Channels of Communication

HOW TO MAKE A REFERRAL:
- Call local CMHC
  - Clinic director
  - Assigned school social worker

- Fax Assessment and all relevant information to local appointed school violence administrator

- Transport individual to CMHC; Parent, SRO, Counselor...

- School's responsibility to sign consent to treat if individual is under the
- age of 18 and a parent/guardian is not present

# Establishing Channels of Communication

- WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN INDIVIDUAL IS REFERRED:

- Assessment of individual by a therapist

- Therapist collaboration with school, family, others

- Treatment team review

- Mental health staff will communicate recommendations with school officials

- Family/individual offered mental health and/or other services- ongoing collaboration between providers

# Solutions to Evaluate Threats to School Systems

- 4 prong approach:
  - Personality of the student
  - Family Dynamics
  - School Dynamics
  - Social Dynamics

# Prong 1: Personality of the student

- Behavior characteristics and Traits
  - Not fully formed (fluid)
  - Struggle with vulnerability and acceptance

- Observance is made first hand before threat is made
- Observance of behavior is the key to understanding
  - coping mechanisms
  - Exposure to stresors

# Keys to Observation

- Coping with stressors
  - Conflicts
  - Disappointments
  - Failures
  - Insults
- Expression of emotions
  - Anger or rage
  - Frustration or disappointment
  - Humiliation
  - sadness

# Keys to Observation

- Failure to demonstrate resiliency
- Accurately giving a self assessment of ones own behavior
- Response to societal constraints
-  rules
-  instruction
-  authority figures
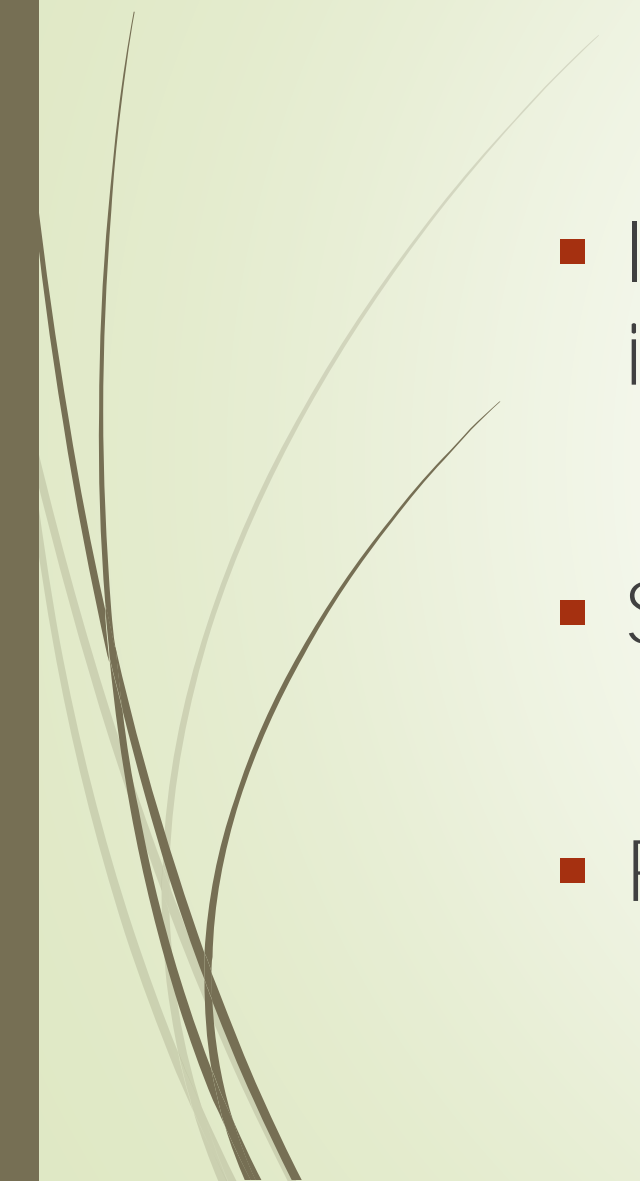
# Keys to Observation

- Failing to demonstrate empathy

- "standing out "
  - Need for control
  - Need for attention
  - Need for respect or admiration
  - Need for confrontation

# "Leakage"

- Intentional or unintentional expression of intent to commit violence

- Subtlety in reference

- Recruitment of peers to carry out acts

# Examples of Leakage ( videos)



https://youtu.be/hcakXUnXVew
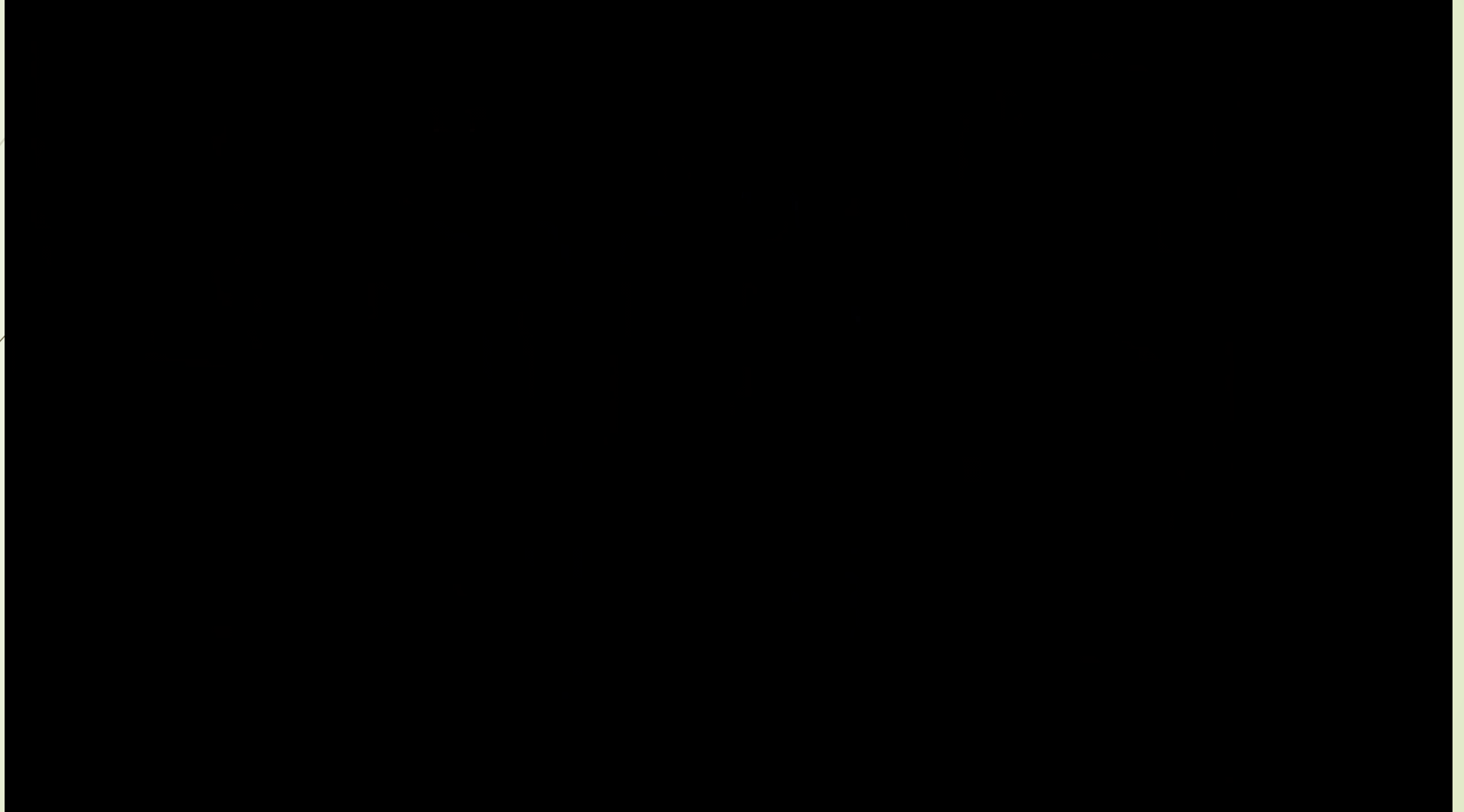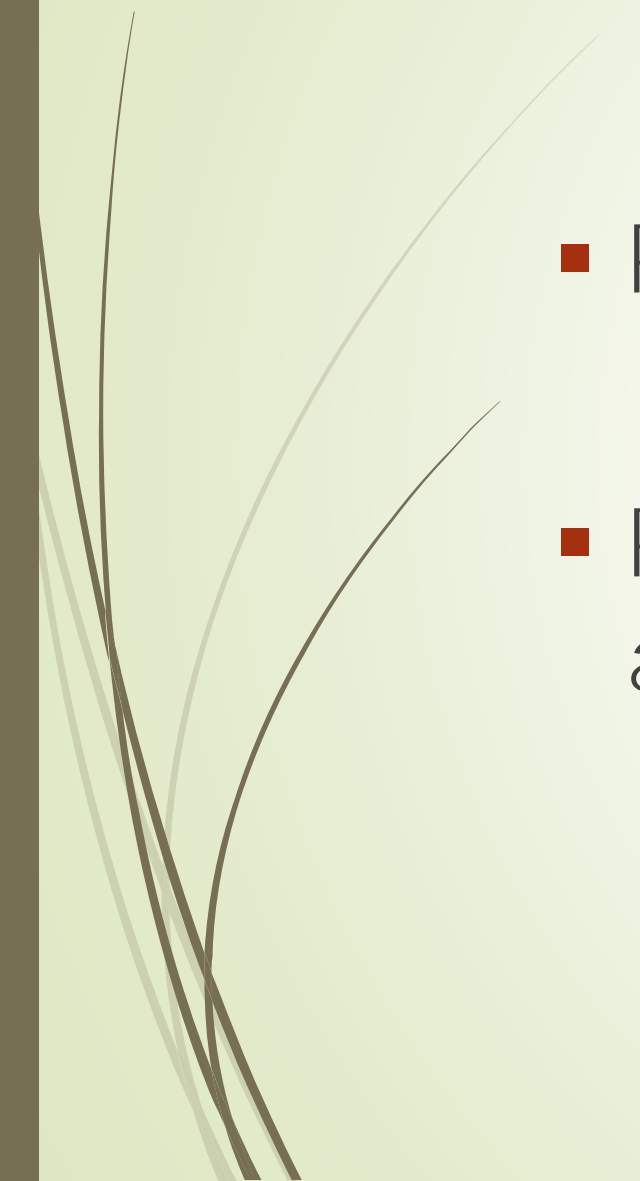
# Sandy Hook Promise school shooting PSA



Courtesy: Sandy Hook Promise

Click 2 Houston.com

https://youtu.be/turCfxwkfPE
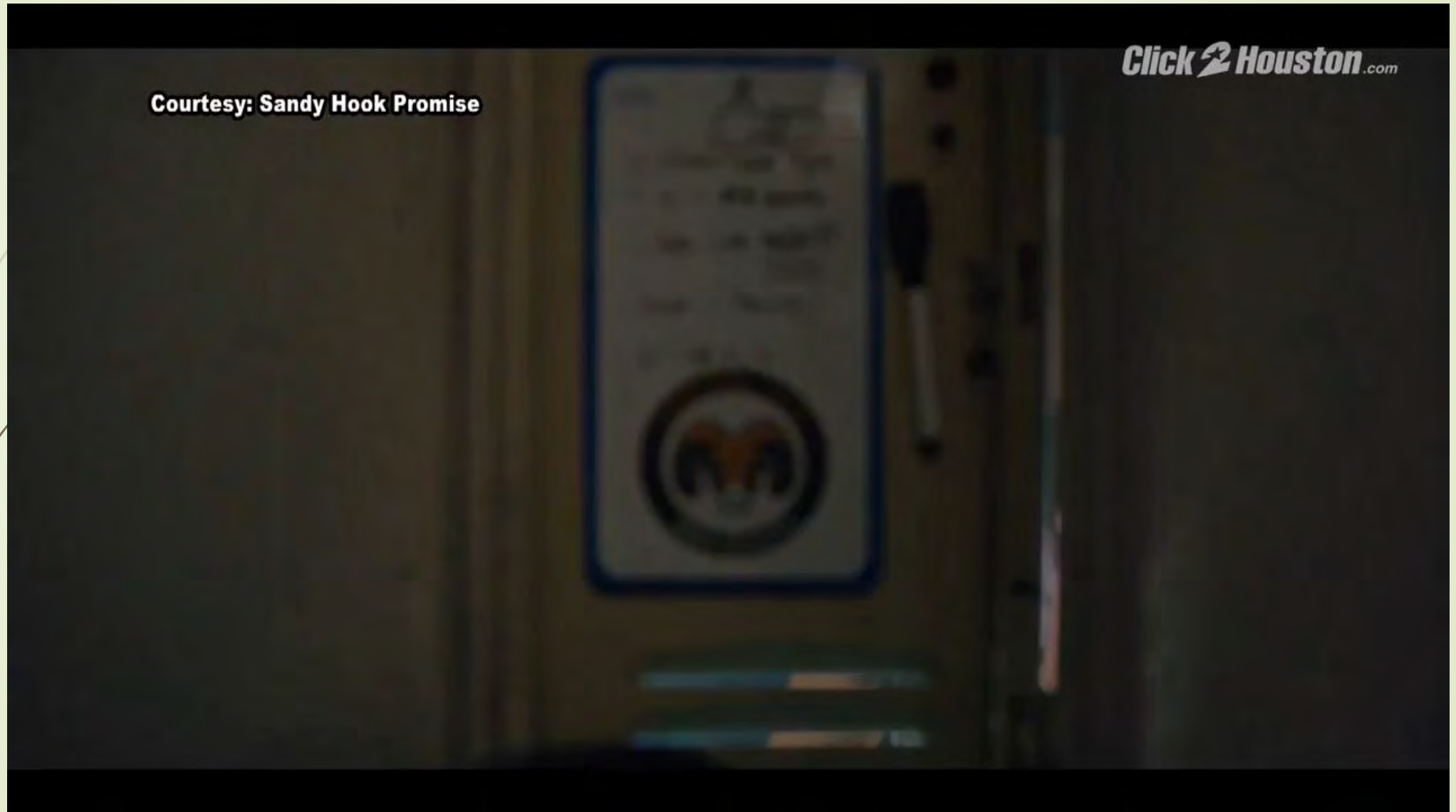
# Prong 2:  Family Dynamics

- Patterns of behavior in a family

- Perception by both the student and/or parents
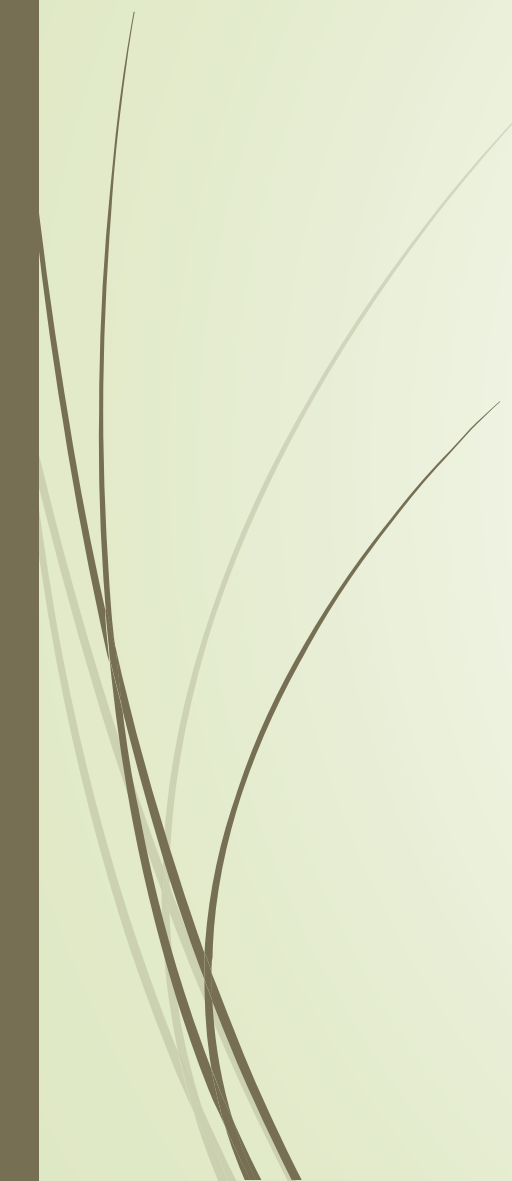
# Risk factors for student violence

- Turbulent Parent Child Relationships
- Acceptance of Pathological Behavior
- Access to Weapons
- Lack of Intimacy

- Student "Rules the Roost"
- Student attachment to school
- Tolerance for disrespectful behavior
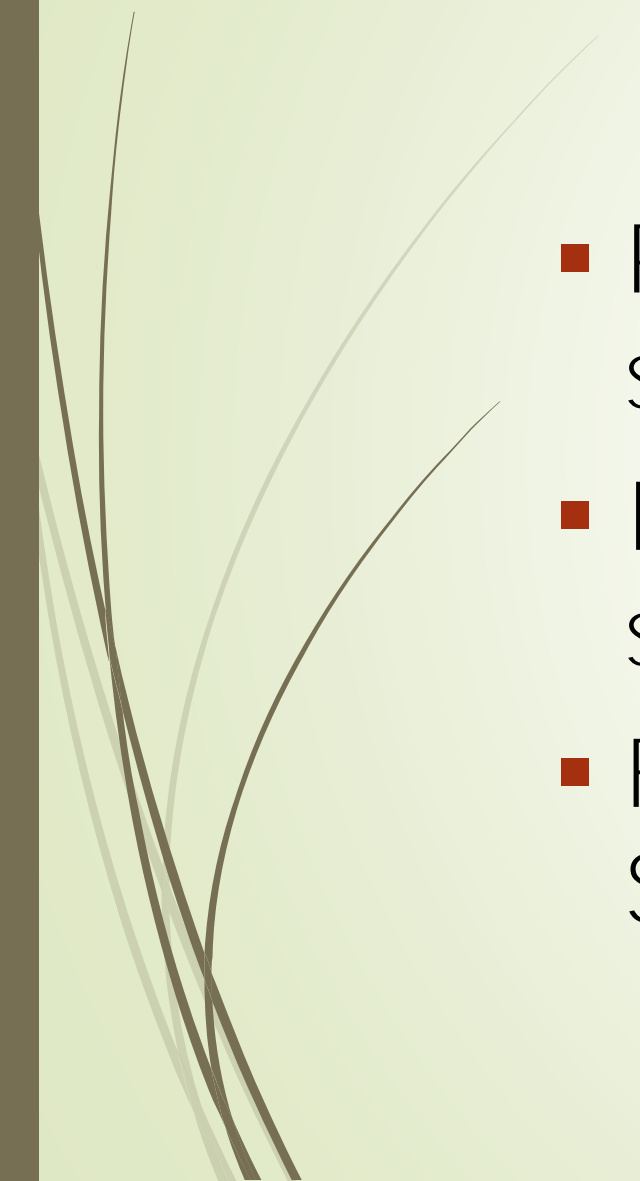- Inequitable Discipline
- Inflexible Culture

# No Limits on Monitoring of TV and Internet

- Parents fail to properly monitor social media or television viewing

- Students isolates from family to entertain themselves in this manner

# Prong 3: School Dynamics

- Patterns of Behavior in the school setting
- Difference in perception between students and staff members
- Failure to Monitor Computers at School

# Pecking Order Among Students

- Socioeconomic differences in students
- Academic achievement variances
  - Optional vs regular education vs special education
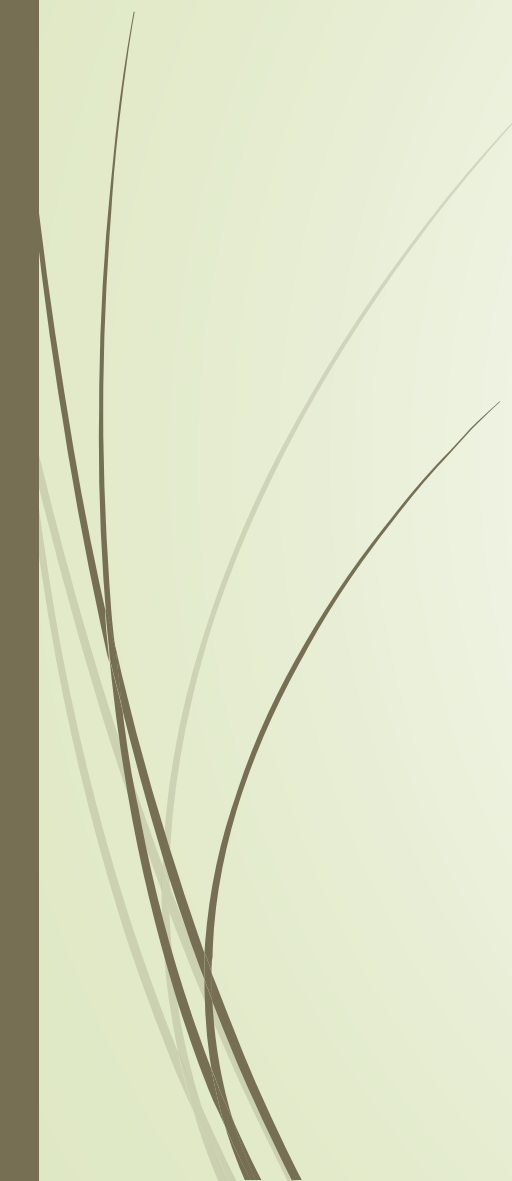
# Code of Silence

- Students don't feel that student feedback is valued by administration
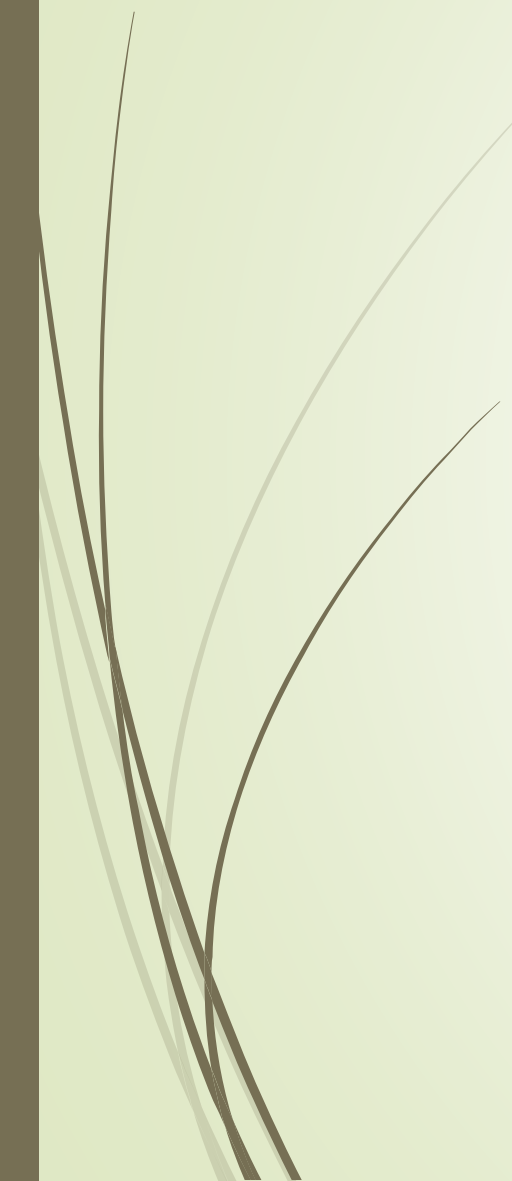
# Prong 4 :  Social Dynamics

# Media, Entertainment & Technology

- Easy access to themes of violence

- Recruitment tactic for extremist groups

# Peer Groups

- Shared fascination with violence amongst your peers

- Exclusion of others that don't share those ideas

# Outside Interests

- Having balancing interests outside of school that are favorable
  - Extra-curricular activities
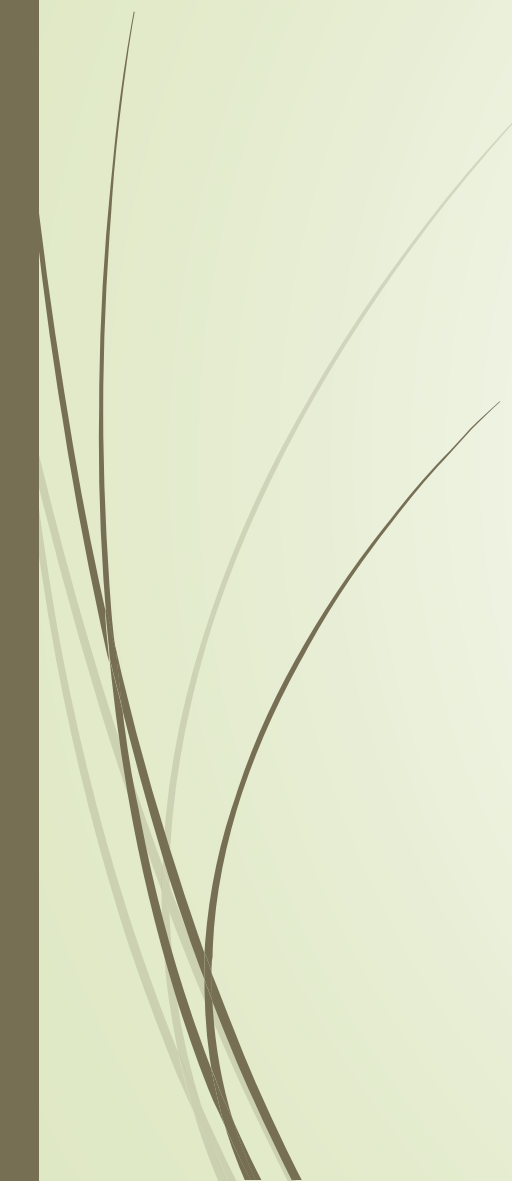  - Sports
  - Volunteerism

# The Copycat Effect

- Intense media attention generates
  - Interest
  - Courage to act on previous ideation
- Vigilance is highest after a major event in school , mental health , and police agencies

# Value of 4 Prongs

- High or medium level threats have correlation with previous behavioral anecdotes highlighted in prongs

- Threats should be taken more seriously

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# Implicit Bias

- Most individuals with mental health problems are not violent

- Abnormal behavior is often viewed as "deviant" or "dangerous"

- To examine implicit bias in mental health care, the criminal justice system must also be considered

# Implicit Bias in Child Welfare, Education, and Mental Health

- BIPOC youth are overrepresented in each of these public institutions

- Ambiguity in evaluation processes

- Risk of unconscious bias is great

- "De-Biasing" techniques are designed to mitigate implicit bias

# Conclusion

- Examples
- Questions
- Concerns