



A Refined Violent Crime Typology: Analyzing and Solving Specific Types of Violence

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CONTENTS

➤ INTRODUCTION	3
➤ VIOLENT CRIME TYPOLOGY	6
▪ Predatory Violence	6
▪ Dispute-Related Violence	9
▪ Targeted Violence	14
▪ Risk-Detached Violence	18
➤ PREVENTION	24
➤ LIMITATIONS	28
➤ BIBLIOGRAPHY	29
➤ AUTHORS	33

INTRODUCTION

While violent crime in the United States may be less frequent than property crime, its significant impact on individuals and communities demands a thoughtful approach to prevention. The objective of this article is to explore the complex nature of violent crime by categorizing its various forms. This disaggregation allows for a more nuanced understanding of the opportunity structures and risk factors associated with each type of violence, ultimately guiding more effective crime prevention strategies tailored to specific situations and locations.^{1 2 3} A typology of disaggregated violent crimes can help us select prevention measures that are more likely to succeed.^{4 5 6} Said another way, a violent crime typology is essential for problem analysis and problem solving. To understand how to approach violent crime prevention effectively, it is essential to look at both historical and modern frameworks for classifying violent behavior.

Historically, researchers have viewed aggression and violence through a dichotomous lens, categorizing them as either instrumental or expressive. This framework, first introduced by Feshbach in 1964, posits that instrumental acts are driven by external goals, while expressive acts stem from emotional reactions like anger.⁷

Instrumental Violence:

With instrumental violence, the violent act serves as a means to achieve a specific motive, typically involving the acquisition of something from the victim. These crimes are conducted with clear, future-oriented goals, such as obtaining money or enhancing one's social status. While there may not be an intent to cause harm, if someone obstructs the offender's objective, they may feel compelled to inflict harm on the victim to avoid

1. Newton, A., & Felson, M. (2015). Editorial: Crime patterns in time and space: The dynamics of crime opportunities in urban areas. *Crime Science*, 4(1). doi:10.1186/s40163-015-0025-6

2. Irvin-Erickson, Y. (2014). Identifying risky places for crime: An analysis of the criminogenic spatiotemporal influences of landscape features on street robberies (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, 2014).

3. Haberman, C. P., & J.H. Ratcliffe (2015). Testing for temporally differentiated relationships among potentially criminogenic places and census block street robbery counts. *Criminology*, 53(3), 457-483. doi:10.1111/1745-9125.12076

4. Cordner, Gary. W. & National Institute of Justice (2020). Evidence-based policing in 45 small bytes.

5. Andresen, M. A., Curman, A. S., & Linning, S. J. (2017). The trajectories of crime at Places: Understanding the patterns of Disaggregated Crime types. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 33(3), 427-449. doi:10.1007/s10940-016-9301-1.

6. Tilley, Nick & Graham Farrell (2012). *The Reasoning Criminologist: Essays in Honour of Ronald V. Clarke*. Routledge.

7. Feshbach, S. (1964). The function of aggression and the regulation of aggressive drive. *Psychological Review*, 71(4), 257-272. doi:10.1037/h0043041.

jeopardizing their desired outcome.^{8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15}

Expressive Violence:

Expressive violence is aggression that arises in response to provocation or anger, with the primary intention of causing harm to the victim(s). Expressive homicides are often, though not exclusively, committed spontaneously and "in the heat of the moment," typically following a physical or verbal altercation between the individuals involved. These acts are often expressions of intense emotions such as anger, rage, revenge, or frustration. Examples of expressive violence include conflicts arising from arguments, brawls, romantic triangles, and youth gang violence. Among these, arguments are the most prevalent triggering events for expressive homicides.^{16 17 18}

Expressive crimes are viewed as being less deterrable because of their spontaneous and impulsive nature.¹⁹ The argument is that the offender acts from emotion and fails to consider the costs/benefits or risk/rewards of the crime. The lack of rational thought makes prevention efforts less effective. More recent research suggests that this dichotomy oversimplifies the nature of violence. Block argued that crimes should be viewed along a continuum that accounts for both spontaneous and planned elements to provide a more accurate reflection of how violence manifests in the real world.^{20 21}

By building upon the expressive-instrumental continuum, we propose a typology that categorizes violent crimes based on their situational and contextual elements. This typology is essential for analyzing crime and implementing prevention measures that address the unique characteristics of each type of violence. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for developing targeted and effective crime prevention strategies.

8 Salfati, C. G. (2000). The nature of expressiveness and instrumentality in homicide. *Homicide Studies*, 4(3), 265-293. doi:10.1177/1088767900004003004

9 Block, C. R., & Christakos, A. (1995). Major trends in Chicago homicide, 1965-1994. Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

10 Block, R. (1976). Homicide in Chicago: A Nine-Year Study (1965-1973). *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 66(4), 496. doi:10.2307/1142890

11 Block, R., & Zimring, F. E. (1973). Homicide in Chicago: 1965-1970. *J. Res. Crim. Delinq.*, 10, 1-17. doi:10.4324/9780203793343-23

12 Decker, S. H. (1993). Exploring victim-offender relationships in homicide: The role of individual and event characteristics. *Justice Quarterly*, 10(4), 585-612. doi:10.1080/07418829300092031

13 Decker, S. H. (1996). Deviant Homicide: A New Look at the Role of Motives and Victim-Offender Relationships. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 33(4), 427-449. doi:10.1177/0022427896033004003

14 Siegel, L. J. (1998). *Criminology: Theories, patterns, and typologies*, 6th edition. West/Wadsworth.

15 Miethe, T., & Drass, K. (1999). Exploring the social context of instrumental and expressive homicides: An application of qualitative comparative analysis. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 15(1).

16 Adjorlolo, S., & Chan, H. C. (2017). The Nature of Instrumentality and Expressiveness of Homicide Crime Scene Behaviors. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 18(2), 119-133. doi:10.1177/1524838015596528

17 Miethe, T. D., Regoeczi, W. C., & Drass, K. A. (2004). *Rethinking homicide: Exploring the structure and process underlying deadly situations*. Cambridge University Press

18 Miethe, T., & Drass, K. (1999). Exploring the social context of instrumental and expressive homicides: An application of qualitative comparative analysis. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 15(1)

19 Cornish, D. B. & Clarke, R.V. (2017). The Reasoning Criminal: Rational Choice Perspectives on Offending. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315134482>

20 Block, C. (1999). Homicide. In *Violence in America: An encyclopedia* (Vol. 2, pp. 127-133). New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.

21 Adjorlolo, S., & Chan, H. C. (2017). The Nature of Instrumentality and Expressiveness of Homicide Crime Scene Behaviors. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 18(2), 119-133. doi:10.1177/1524838015596528

With one exception, we have adopted terminology that is consistent with much of the research and resonates within the field of crime prevention. The last type of violence, Risk-Detached Violence, is a term we coined. The figure below illustrates the four types of violence. Each type is discussed along with their situational and contextual elements later in this article.



Categorizing a crime can be an evolving process. As new details emerge and the fact pattern becomes clearer, the crime type may need to be reclassified. Nonetheless, the typology remains a valuable framework for refining both problem analysis and problem-solving approaches.

Violent crime types exist on a continuum, where neighboring categories may appear similar, but the extremes are clearly distinct. At times, elements may overlap, and a single violent incident can fall at multiple points along this spectrum. For example, FBI data²² shows that most robberies are committed by strangers, classifying them as predatory. However, in some cases, robberies occur after a targeted assault intended to humiliate the victim.²³ In such instances, the crime is both predatory and targeted.

²² FBI Crime Data Explorer

²³ St. Jean, Peter K. C. (2007). *Pockets of Crime: Broken Windows, Collective Efficacy, and the Criminal Point of View*. University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226775005.001.0001>

VIOLENT CRIME TYPOLOGY

Predatory Violence

Situational/Contextual Elements

Predatory violence is a form of aggression characterized by a deliberate, planned approach aimed at achieving a specific goal, typically without emotional provocation or personal conflict with the target. Predatory violence is typically described as instrumental and opportunistic, with offenders acting, not out of emotional arousal, but in a calculated manner to achieve a specific goal. These offenders are motivated by obtaining something—whether it's money, sex, or another possession of the victim. As such, they often do not intend to physically harm the victim but use the threat of force to compel compliance. Robbery is the most common example of predatory violence. A robber seizes an opportunity when a victim possesses something they want. In most cases, the target is a stranger, and the primary aim is not physical harm, but the acquisition of the desired object.

Predatory violence can be broken down into sub-types, each of which can help inform specific crime prevention strategies. For instance, robberies at retail stores can be categorized into several distinct sub-types:

- Robbery of a person (e.g., mugging, purse snatching)
- Carjacking
- Vehicle crime escalation
- Shoplifting escalation
- Robbery of the business

The first three retail robbery sub-types are directed at people. The retailer is the victim of the last two.

Like the other three types of violence, predatory violence occurs when a target and offender converge. It is often considered an opportunistic crime, as offenders typically act when targets are present with little or no guardianship. This could be a chance encounter, such as a purse snatching in a parking lot or a street robbery between strangers.²⁴ If a specific target isn't available, the offender is usually willing to substitute another.²⁵ Contrast this with Targeted Violence, discussed later, where the offender is

24 Block, R., Galary, A., & Brice, D. (2007). The Journey to Crime: Victims and Offenders Converge in Violent Index Offences in Chicago. *Security Journal*, 20(2), 123-137. doi:10.1057/palgrave.sj.8350030

25 Dugan, L., & Apel, R. (2005). The differential risk of retaliation by relational distance: A more general model of violent victimization. *Criminology*, 43(3), 697-730. doi:10.1111/j.0011-1348.2005.00021.x

focused on a specific victim (individual or group).

Predatory violence is most likely to occur in neighborhoods with many resident offenders or in places with many possible targets. Predatory offenders may find it easier to commit crimes in their own neighborhood or in a nearby shopping district than to incur the additional costs and dangers of traveling further.²⁶ Although committing crimes in their own neighborhoods, predatory offenders will typically victimize strangers who are unable to identify them.

A civil case stemming from a violent crime established a legal test for assessing the potential to deter criminal behavior. During the litigation, two opposing security experts agreed that certain criminals could not be deterred by security measures. They identified several factors to consider when evaluating deterrability, including:

1. Whether the crime was premeditated or impulsive;
2. The perpetrator's effort to conceal their identity;
3. The perpetrator's criminal history;
4. The perpetrator's mental state;
5. The perpetrator's level of intoxication, if any;
6. The presence of bystanders; and
7. Whether the crime was part of a broader crime spree.²⁷

Problem Analysis and Problem-Solving Questions

The primary dataset for evaluating predatory violence is historical crime data and security incident reports for specific places. When analyzing the problem of predatory violence, Place Managers may consider asking the following questions to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue:

Types and Frequency of Predatory Violence

- What specific types of predatory violence are occurring (i.e. murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault)?
- What specific sub-types of predatory violence are occurring (e.g. carjacking, robbery of a person, robbery of a business, etc.)?
- At what frequency is predatory violence occurring? In other words, what is the violent crime rate? Is the frequency or crime rate changing over time?

²⁶ Block, R., Galary, A., & Brice, D. (2007). The Journey to Crime: Victims and Offenders Converge in Violent Index Offences in Chicago. *Security Journal*, 20(2), 123-137. doi:10.1057/palgrave.sj.8350030

²⁷ *Perez v. DNT Global Star, LLC*, 339 S.W.3d 692 (Tex. App. 2011)

- Are there any identifiable temporal trends (day of week, time of day, etc.)?
- Are there specific locations on the property where predatory violence is more prevalent?
- How does predatory violence manifest in different contexts (e.g., in public spaces, in private spaces, etc.)?

Victims and Vulnerabilities

- Who are the typical victims of predatory violence?
- Are there identifiable factors that make individuals more vulnerable?
- What characteristics are common among offenders of predatory violence?
- What motivations drive offenders to commit these types of crimes?

Environmental and Social Influences

- What environmental conditions contribute to the occurrence of predatory violence (e.g., lighting, environmental design)?
- Are there any patterns with respect to vulnerabilities at the place that contribute to predatory violence?
- What social factors (e.g., poverty, community cohesion) influence the prevalence of predatory violence?

Prevention and Intervention Strategies

- What operational prevention strategies are in place to prevent predatory violence?
What physical prevention strategies are in place to prevent predatory violence?
- Has the Place Manager implemented evidence-based security practices and measures?
- Should the Place Manager consider additional security practices and measures?
- How does the presence or absence of guardianship (e.g., security officers, bystanders, etc.) affect the likelihood of predatory violence?

Resources and Research Gaps

- Are there gaps in the existing research that need to be addressed?
- Are there any resources available from governmental agencies (e.g., police department) to assist with predatory violence?

Dispute-Related Violence

Situational/Contextual Elements

A dispute is a disagreement, an argument, or a quarrel.²⁸ Dispute-Related Violence are acts of aggression that arise from conflicts or disagreements between individuals, groups, or communities. While predatory violent criminals are dispassionate, those involved in Dispute-Related Violence are driven by emotion. The violence is expressive. The act is often impulsive. The impulsive, emotional reaction is sometimes exacerbated due to mental state or intoxication. Examples of dispute-related violence include bar brawls, road rage, and domestic violence. Domestic violence is the most common form of dispute-related violence. Most domestic violence occurs in private spaces.²⁹

Dispute-related violence has two sub-types: Retaliatory Violence and Non-Stranger Violence. In general, dispute-related violence occurs as the result of a perceived insult or wrongdoing. The perpetrator often feels disrespected. Provocation is the key situational factor leading to dispute-related violence.³⁰ Some conflicts involve a simple exchange of insults – going no further. Other conflicts escalate to violence leading to serious bodily injury or death. The Council on Criminal Justice research found that in 1985 arguments were the cause of 33% of homicides; in 2022, the frequency dropped to 22%.³¹

Homicides arising from brawls, arguments, and interpersonal disputes are often labeled as expressive homicides;³² however, from a rational-choice perspective, dispute-related violence is instrumental aggression; harming others is a means to an end. Individuals are motivated to harm victims for three reasons:

1. To deter them from engaging in some offensive behavior;
2. To attain retribution or justice; or
3. To lower their adversary's status/image in order to improve their own status or image.³³

Many dispute-related violent incidents are the result of character contests. The victim is sometimes seen as playing some role in the offense. For example, a bar patron may insult a fellow patron and the conflict ends there. However, if the aggrieved party then retaliates, the dispute may escalate to violence. Some dispute-related violent involves victims

28 Klofas, J., Altheimer, I., & Petitti, N. (2019). Retaliatory violent disputes. *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police, Problem-Specific Guide Series, No. 74.*

29 St. Jean, Peter K. C.. (2007). *Pockets of Crime: Broken Windows, Collective Efficacy, and the Criminal Point of View.* University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226775005.001.0001>

30 Felson, R. B. (2015). Opportunities for Dispute-Related Violence. *The Criminal Act*, 88-107. doi:10.1057/9781137391322_7

31 Council on Criminal Justice (2023). *Trends in Homicide: What You Need to Know.*

32 Miethe, T., & Drass, K. (1999). Exploring the social context of instrumental and expressive homicides: An application of qualitative comparative analysis. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 15(1).

33 Tedeschi, J. T., & Felson, R. B. (1994). Violence, aggression, and coercive actions. *American Psychological Association.* doi:10.1037/10160-000

engaged in risky behaviors such as gang affiliation and trading in illicit sex or drugs.³⁴

Gang affiliation has been linked to an increased risk of victimization, though studies differ on the extent of this increase.³⁵ Research consistently shows that gang members engage in high-risk behaviors at much higher rates than those not in gangs. For instance, being involved in a gang raises the likelihood of sustaining serious injuries from fighting by 284%.³⁶ ³⁷ Classifying an event as dispute-related violence is not intended to place blame on a victim, but rather offers perspective for understanding the crime and what factors can prevent it.

Dispute-related targets can be either strangers or non-strangers. The Department of Justice defines stranger crime as a classification of the victim's relationship to the offender for crimes involving direct contact between the two. Incidents are classified as involving strangers if the victim identifies the offender as a stranger, did not see or recognize the offender, or knew the offender only by sight.

Non-Stranger crime is the second classification of a crime victim's relationship to the offender. An offender who is either related to, well known to, or casually acquainted with the victim is a non-stranger. For crimes with more than one offender, if any of the offenders are non-strangers, then the group of offenders as a whole is classified as non-stranger.³⁸

Some police departments have data entry fields in their Offense/Incident Reports to document the relationship between the suspect and victim. For example, the field will ask "The victim was a [stranger to] [had a pre-existing relationship with] the offender." The Atlanta Police Department's Offense/Incident Report form takes this a step further by including a field that asks, "Prior difficulties between the parties?" This highlights the significance of examining the context of whether the parties involved are strangers or non-strangers when analyzing crime issues.

Retaliatory Violence

Retaliatory violent disputes, a subset of dispute-related violence, include gang violence, family feuds, and interpersonal violence. Although similar to dispute-related violence, retaliatory violent disputes possess the following elements:

34 Army, Christine, & Vellani, Karim H. (2023). Risky Behaviors and Violent Victimization (EBSP-23-01). Evidence-Based Security Practices, International Association of Professional Security Consultants.

35 Curry, G., & Spergel, I. (1992). Gang involvement and delinquency among Hispanic and African-American adolescent males. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 29(3), 273-291.; Battin, S. R., Hill, K. G., Abbott, R. D., Catalano, R. F., & Hawkins, J. (1998). The contribution of gang membership to Delinquency Beyond Delinquent Friends*. *Criminology*, 36(1), 93-116 Hill, K. G., Howell, J. C., Hawkins, J., & Battin-Pearson, S. R. (1999). Childhood risk factors for adolescent gang membership: Results from the Seattle Social Development Project. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 36(3), 300-322.; Curry, G. D. (2000). Self-reported gang involvement and officially recorded delinquency. *Criminology*, 38(4), 1253-1274.

36 Gover, A. R., Jennings, W. G., & Tewksbury, R. (2009). Adolescent male and female gang members' experiences with violent victimization, dating violence, and sexual assault. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 34(1-2), 103-115

37 Army, Christine, & Vellani, Karim H. (2023). Risky Behaviors and Violent Victimization (EBSP-23-01). Evidence-Based Security Practices, International Association of Professional Security Consultants.

38 Bureau of Justice Statistics (2015). Stranger and non-stranger crime.

- An interaction involving conflict;
- Over a period of time;
- Between two or more individuals and/or people associated with them;
- Marked by two or more events involving confrontation or intimidation; and
- In which at least some of those events involve violent acts or credible threats of violence.³⁹

The key difference distinguishing a dispute as retaliatory is the involvement of two or more events involving a confrontation. Not only are these disputes often over seemingly minor issues, they can accelerate rapidly to violence. The escalation of a dispute into violence occurs in stages; however, those stages are just as likely to play out over months as seconds. Retaliatory violent disputes are not a new phenomenon. The legendary dispute between the Hatfield's and McCoy's started in 1878 with the alleged theft of a pig. Retaliation ensued after the theft trial did not result in a conviction. The dispute lasted over 10 years and resulted in several deaths despite authorities making several attempts to intervene. The dispute did not officially end until eight people on the Hatfield side were convicted of murder.⁴⁰

Non-Stranger Violence

Non-stranger violence is usually committed by intimates, family members, friends, and acquaintances. It is often driven by interpersonal conflict, and that conflict may significantly predate any one particular incident of violence.⁴¹ Domestic violence is the most common form of non-stranger violence.

In contrast to stranger violence, non-stranger violent offenders often act spontaneously out of anger and the non-stranger victim often plays some role in the events leading up to the violent incident.⁴² Homicides were more frequently impulsive and driven by strong emotions when the connection between the offender and victim was closer.⁴³ The assumption that non-strangers use violence solely to express themselves, rather than as a tool, is flawed. In personal relationships, violence is sometimes instrumental, used to achieve specific goals rather than simply expressing anger. This instrumental use of violence is also common in non-domestic personal disputes.⁴⁴

One example of the impact and prevalence of non-stranger violent crime can be found

39 Klofas, J., Altheimer, I., & Petitti, N. (2019). Retaliatory violent disputes. *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police, Problem-Specific Guide Series, No. 74.*

40 Klofas, J., Altheimer, I., & Petitti, N. (2019). Retaliatory violent disputes. *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police, Problem-Specific Guide Series, No. 74.*

41 Hessick, C. (2007). Violence between lovers, strangers, and friends. *Washington University Law Review, 85*(2).

42 Hessick, C. (2007). Violence between lovers, strangers, and friends. *Washington University Law Review, 85*(2).

43 Gillies, H. (1986). Homicide in the West of Scotland. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 128*(2), 105-127. doi:10.1192/bjp.128.2.105

44 Hessick, C. (2007). Violence between lovers, strangers, and friends. *Washington University Law Review, 85*(2).

in multi-family housing. Studies have shown that 72% of violent crime and assaults at apartment complexes are non-stranger and usually the result of domestic violence.⁴⁵

The key distinction of non-stranger violence is therefore the victim selection-- the target is someone known to the offender. Further, the level of emotion involved in the non-stranger violent act is more "hot-blooded" and spontaneous than its predatory counterpart. Because of this, non-stranger crime is more difficult to prevent than predatory violence. Criminals engaged in Dispute-Related Violence are generally more difficult to deter as offenders are more influenced by emotions and less concerned about risk. For this reason, a simple increase in surveillance may be less effective unless it is combined with other efforts and the response is rapid.⁴⁶

Problem Analysis and Problem-Solving Questions

The primary information for evaluating Dispute-Related Violence is knowledge of specific situations that may escalate into violence. For example, a nurse manager at a hospital may learn about a nurse who has a protective order against an estranged spouse. Similarly, a bar manager may see two groups of patrons arguing. Situational awareness is fundamental. Questions that should be asked by Place Managers include:

Types and Context of Dispute-Related Violence

- What specific types of dispute-related violence are of concern (e.g., domestic violence, bar fights, gang-related disputes, etc.)?
- How does the context of the dispute (e.g., personal, financial, territorial) influence the nature of the violence?
- Who are the typical parties involved in dispute-related violence (e.g., family members, acquaintances, strangers)?

Triggers and History of Violence

- What factors or emotions typically trigger disputes that lead to violence (e.g., anger, jealousy, revenge)?
- Are there specific events or stressors that commonly precede instances of dispute-related violence?
- What is the history of the relationship between the parties involved? Have there been prior disputes or violence between the parties involved?

45 Vellani, Karim H. (2021). Unraveled: An Evidence-Based Approach to Understanding and Preventing Crime. Threat Analysis Group, LLC.

46 Kim, S., LaGrange, R. L., & Willis, C. L. (2012). Place and crime: Integrating sociology of place and environmental criminology. *Urban Affairs Review*, 49(1), 141-155. doi:10.1177/1078087412465401

- How do past grievances or unresolved conflicts contribute to current violent incidents?

Environmental and Social Influences

- What environmental conditions (e.g., bars, homes, public spaces) are conducive to dispute-related violence?
- How do social dynamics, such as peer influence or cultural norms, affect the likelihood of violence in disputes?

Prevention and Intervention Strategies

- What strategies are currently employed to prevent dispute-related violence, and how effective are they?
- Can conflict resolution techniques reduce the likelihood of violence?
- How does the legal system address disputes (e.g., restraining orders, criminal charges)?
- Are there policies that effectively mitigate or respond to dispute-related violence?
- How can education and awareness campaigns help in preventing disputes from escalating into violence?

Resources and Research Gaps

- Are there gaps in current research regarding dispute-related violence that needs further exploration?

Threat Assessment and Response

- Can threats of violence be validated?
- What additional information is needed about the threat?
- Is the threat of violence imminent? Is there time to plan a holistic response?
- Are there tools available to the Place Manager to prevent disputes from escalating?
 - Using our hospital example above, can the nurse manager move the nurse to another unit or another shift?
 - Using our bar example above, can staff verbally de-escalate the situation?
- Is there sufficient time for the Place Manager to implement security measures to prevent the violence?
- Are there tools (e.g., de-escalation training, relocating the target) available to the Place Manager to intervene once violence occurs?
- Is it safe to intervene?
- Does the situation require others (e.g., threat assessment team, police, etc.)?
- If countermeasures are limited and the threat is imminent, is there enough time for law enforcement to respond?

Targeted Violence

Situational/Contextual Elements

Targeted Violence is also called Victim-Centric or Victim-Targeted Violence. Targeted Violence is an act of aggression or harm deliberately directed towards specific individuals, specific groups, locations, or institutions.⁴⁷ The offender shows a clear preference for a specific target, selecting their targets to achieve specific motives, such as the resolution of a grievance or to make a political or ideological statement.^{48 49 50}

Targeted attacks are not spontaneous, impulsive crimes. Rather, the perpetrators often have a grievance, and they take time to consider, plan and prepare their attack.⁵¹ Irrespective of whether a specific grievance can be pinpointed, general motives for targeted violence include:

- Revenge for a perceived injury or grievance
- Quest for justice (as defined by the offender)
- Desire for notoriety or recognition
- Desire to solve a problem believed to be unbearable
- Desire to kill or be killed.⁵²

Criminals engaged in targeted violence may call in additional resources or surrogates – online hate groups may accept a call to arms. Gang members may attack a witness who testified against a fellow gang member. These types of attacks can emanate from both formal organizations (e.g. organized crime, criminal street gangs) and informal organizations (loosely affiliated online groups).

The following are examples of Targeted Violence:

- The murder of Paul Castellano by John Gotti who succeeded Castellano as Boss of the Gambino crime family. When he was murdered, Castellano was less than six feet away from his personal armed bodyguard.

47 United States, Behavioral Analysis Unit–National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, Federal Bureau of Investigations, U.S. Department of Justice. (2017). Identifying, assessing and managing the threat of targeted attacks.

48 <https://www.schoolsafety.gov/>

49 United States, Behavioral Analysis Unit–National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, Federal Bureau of Investigations, U.S. Department of Justice. (2017). Identifying, assessing and managing the threat of targeted attacks.

50 Dugan, L., & Apel, R. (2005). The differential risk of retaliation by relational distance: A more general model of violent victimization. *Criminology*, 43(3), 697–730. doi:10.1111/j.0011-1348.2005.00021.x

51 United States, Behavioral Analysis Unit–National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, Federal Bureau of Investigations, U.S. Department of Justice. (2017). Identifying, assessing and managing the threat of targeted attacks.

52 Dugan, L., & Apel, R. (2005). The differential risk of retaliation by relational distance: A more general model of violent victimization. *Criminology*, 43(3), 697–730. doi:10.1111/j.0011-1348.2005.00021.x

- The murder of Lee Harvey Oswald, President Kennedy's assassin, at the hands of Jack Ruby. At the time of his murder, Oswald was surrounded by law enforcement.
- The failed assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan in 1981 by John Hinckley, Jr.. President Reagan was injured despite the known threats to U.S. Presidents and the high level of security provided in response. When President Reagan sustained life threatening injuries, his protective detail included United States Secret Service agents and the Metropolitan [District of Columbia] Police Department Officers.

Beyond high-profile cases, targeted violent crimes against ordinary individuals occur frequently. For instance, in 2021, Le'Shonte Jones was murdered by Javon Carter, who was allegedly paid to carry out the killing by Jasmine Martinez, the ex-girlfriend of Jones's boyfriend. Prior to the murder, Martinez had physically assaulted Jones in front of police officers. At the time of her death, Jones was wearing her Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security uniform.

A new form of targeted violence, appointment robbery, was created with the proliferation of online marketplaces. "Appointment robbery is defined as the taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and/or putting the victim in fear by way of using an electronic device and/or a cell phone app to set up the robbery." Appointment robberies allow criminals to clearly identify a victim and calculate their reward when deciding to commit a robbery. The main difference between robbing a random victim and selecting a targeted victim from an online advertisement is that the criminal can determine the precise value of the reward and set the appointment in order to rob the individual.⁵³ To reduce the likelihood of appointment robbery victimization, many police departments encourage residents to use their parking lots to conduct transactions.

The vast majority of the research on Targeted Violent Crime has found that preventing Targeted Violence is more difficult than Dispute-Related Violence and Predatory Violence. This is true even when there is a high degree of notice regarding the threat before it happens. Victim-Targeted Violence is difficult to anticipate based on the condition of a property because it is the product of preexisting animosities.⁵⁴ To determine if a targeted crime was preventable, in retrospect, the complete fact pattern must be evaluated.

53 Vasquez, A. G., Rodriguez, A., Suh, J., & Martinez-Cosio, M. (2020). Appointment Robbery: Do Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Strategies Work? *Voices from the Street. American Journal of Qualitative Research*, 4(1), 16-37. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/8203>

54 Army, Christine, & Vellani, Karim H. (2021). *Violent Crime Typology and Continuum*. CrimRxiv. <https://doi.org/10.21428/cb6ab371.71ec923d>

Problem Analysis and Problem-Solving Questions

The primary data for evaluating Targeted Violence is awareness of vulnerable people, groups, and locations, and entities. Questions that should be asked by Place Managers include:

Definition and Characteristics of Targeted Violence

- How is targeted violence manifesting at the place (e.g., terrorism, hate crimes, workplace violence, appointment robbery, etc.)?
- What are the common characteristics of targeted violence incidents?
- Who are the typical targets of targeted violence (e.g., individuals, specific groups, institutions)?
- What characteristics make certain individuals or groups more vulnerable to being targeted (e.g., ethnicity, profession, beliefs)?

Motivations and Influencing Factors

- What are the underlying motivations behind targeted violence (e.g., ideological beliefs, personal grievances, social issues)?
- How do factors such as ideology, politics, or religion influence the choice of target?
- How do the backgrounds and experiences of offenders (e.g., personal history, mental health issues) influence their decision to commit targeted violence?
- How do societal or cultural norms impact the likelihood of targeted violence?

Perpetrator Profiles and Patterns

- What profiles or behaviors are common among perpetrators of targeted violence?
- Are there identifiable patterns in the incidents of targeted violence over time (e.g., offender characteristics, methods used)?
- What trends are emerging in terms of who is being targeted and the motivations behind such violence?

Situational and Environmental Factors

- What situational or environmental factors contribute to the occurrence of targeted violence (e.g., specific locations, events)?
- What victim characteristics contribute to the occurrence of targeted violence (e.g., gang members, etc.)?

Threat Identification

- What additional information is needed about the situation? Can the threat be validated?
- Is there any social media discussing an attack?
- Who else within the Place Manager's organization needs to be aware of the threat?
- What outside entities need to be aware of the threat?

Prevention and Response

- What measures are currently in place to prevent targeted violence, and how effective are they?
- How can law enforcement and community organizations collaborate to enhance prevention efforts?
- How does the legal system address targeted violence (e.g., specific laws, penalties)?
- Are there existing policies aimed at preventing or responding to targeted violence, and how effective are they?
- Are there enhanced penalties for targeting specific groups (e.g. healthcare workers)?
- What resources are needed to quickly recover after the incident?

Gaps in Research and Education

- Are there gaps in the research regarding targeted violence?
- What role can education and awareness programs play in preventing targeted violence?
- How can community resilience be strengthened to mitigate the impact of targeted violence?

Risk-Detached Violence

Situational/Contextual Elements

Risk-Detached Violence describes acts of violence carried out with minimal or no regard for the personal risks to the perpetrator, often due to a disconnect from consequence.

In 2011, the Capital Gazette (Annapolis, MD) published a story entitled, "Jarrod wants to be your Friend." Jarrod Ramos, the subject of the article, was unhappy about the article and unsuccessfully sued the newspaper. After making threats via Twitter, the Capital Gazette requested a Threat Assessment from the Anne Arundel County Police Department. Police did not believe Ramos was a danger. Almost 7 years after the article was published, Ramos walked into the Capital Gazette offices and killed five people. After the shooting stopped, Ramos put down his weapon, sent one final Tweet, and waited for police to arrest him. His last act before committing the crime was to spend the last of his money on a lifetime membership to the United States Chess Federation to use in prison.

In 2018, Michael Lee Williams stabbed and killed Jacob Pedro Shroyer outside Shroyer's Portland apartment. Williams pled guilty and received a minimum sentence of 30 years. Before the murder, Williams informed his Parole Officer that he wanted to be back in prison.

In 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed 13 people at their school, Columbine High School. They planned their attack for almost a year. After the massacre, Harris and Klebold committed suicide as planned.

In 2019, Anthony Comello killed Francesco "Franky Boy" Cali, the Boss of the Gambino crime family. Comello had no affiliation with the mafia. As a QAnon adherent, Comello believed Cali was part of the "deep state." Comello was subsequently found mentally unfit to stand trial.

Each of these is an example of Risk-Detached Violence. Comello could not perceive the risks/consequences of his actions. Society's established consequences for crime (prison) were irrelevant to Harris and Klebold who planned their post-massacre suicides. Williams wanted to be incarcerated. For Ramos, the consequence of prison was of lesser concern than revenge.

There are three sub-types of Risk-Detached Violence:

1. When the risks/consequences are of lesser concern than the purpose of the violence

(e.g. mass shootings, political violence).

2. The risk/consequences are what the offender wants (e.g. suicide-by-cop, desire to be in prison, etc.).
3. Acts where offenders cannot perceive the risks/consequences of their actions due to mental illness, intoxication, or other condition

With the first and second sub-types, violence is rarely spontaneous. In fact, planning can take months, as seen in the cases of Harris and Klebold, or even years, as with Ramos. This extended preparation period can increase the chances that the plan may be discovered and thwarted. The extended planning may also enhance the offender's chance of successfully committing their crime. Research indicates that as a Risk-Detached actor develops their plan, they often follow a "Pathway to Violence."⁵⁵

The "Pathway to Violence" is a framework used to describe the progression of behaviors and actions that lead an individual from initial thoughts of violence to the actual commission of a violent act. This concept is often applied in threat assessment and prevention fields to understand and intervene before violence occurs. The pathway typically includes several stages:

- Grievance: The individual develops a real or perceived grievance, often involving feelings of injustice, anger, or resentment.
- Ideation: The person begins to fantasize about or contemplate violence as a potential solution or response to their grievance. This may include daydreams of revenge or imagining violent scenarios.
- Research and Planning: The individual starts researching or gathering information to determine how to carry out the violence. This can involve identifying a target, studying similar acts of violence, or considering specific methods.
- Preparation: Concrete steps are taken to prepare for the violent act, such as acquiring weapons, creating a plan, practicing, or assembling necessary resources.
- Breach: The person moves from preparation to direct action, often approaching

⁵⁵ Calhoun, F. S. (2003). *Contemporary Threat Management: A Practical Guide for Identifying, Assessing, and Managing Individuals of Violent Intent*. San Diego, CA: Specialized Training Services.

the target or location. This is typically the last stage before the actual violence occurs.

- **Attack:** The individual executes the violent act, fulfilling their intentions.

Although the Pathway to Violence is presented in a linear fashion, individuals may take steps out of order or skip certain phases. Recognizing early stages in the pathway can provide opportunities for intervention, potentially disrupting the progression and preventing violence.

Each stage of the Pathway, combined with the prolonged time leading up to the attack, creates opportunities for "leakage"—the intentional or unintentional revelation of hints, thoughts, fantasies, or explicit admissions about the planned attack.⁵⁶ One study found that 87% of mass shooting perpetrators leaked violent thoughts or intentions, with 80% specifically indicating an interest in mass killings.⁵⁷ In some cases, this leakage results in interactions with law enforcement, which can lead to the prevention of Risk-Detached Violence.

Risk-Detached Violence can manifest in various ideations based on the behavior's nature, the context in which it occurs, and the underlying intent. This understanding can aid in identifying potential interventions to prevent or mitigate such incidents. In addition to ideologically motivated events, the theory of frustration-aggression posits that aggression serves as a fundamental way for individuals to assert their significance and sense of worth. Hostile aggression tends to increase in response to frustration, particularly when the thwarted goal is crucial to an individual's need for validation.⁵⁸

When referring to mass shootings as a form of Risk-Detached violence, we exclude geopolitical terroristic acts. The focus is on lone actors in workplace, school, or rampage shootings driven by grievances.⁵⁹ For offenders engaged in this subtype, the risk and consequences associated with their actions are often the ultimate goal. Legal Intervention Homicides (LIH) refer to individuals shot and killed by police officers while performing their duties.⁶⁰ Research indicates that approximately 29% of LIH cases are

56 Meloy, J. R. (2011). The Concept of Leakage in Threat Assessment. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*. doi: 10.1002/bsl.986.

57 Peterson, J., Erickson, G., Knapp, K., & Densley, J. (2021). Communication of Intent to Do Harm Preceding Mass Public Shootings in the United States, 1966 to 2019. *JAMA network open*, 4(11), e2133073. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.33073>

58 Kruglanski AW, Ellenberg M, Szumowska E, Molinario E, Speckhard A, Leander NP, Pierro A, Di Cicco G, Bushman BJ. Frustration-aggression hypothesis reconsidered: The role of significance quest. *Aggress Behav*. 2023 Sep;49(5):445-468. doi: 10.1002/ab.22092. Epub 2023 Jun 7. PMID: 37282763.

59 Ebbrecht, C. K. (2023). From violent lone-actor types to lone-actor grievance-fueled violence: The Aarhus University shooting as an example of multi-faceted offender motivations and context-sensitive boundaries between violent lone actor categories. *Frontiers in Psychology*. doi: 10.3389/fpsy.2022.995818.

60 Wertz, J. (2020). A typology of civilians shot and killed by US police: a latent class analysis of firearm legal intervention homicide in the 2014-2015 National Violent Death Reporting System. *The New York Academy of Medicine*.

instances of suicide-by-cop, where the subject deliberately provokes lethal action from law enforcement.⁶¹ In cases where suicide-by-cop is not the intended outcome, the offender may ultimately resort to suicide. Recent studies show that nearly 37% of mass shooting incidents involve the perpetrator's suicide.⁶²

Crime control strategies such as environmental design and situational crime prevention techniques can be effective for both instrumental and expressive crimes. These approaches may raise the "costs" for rational instrumental offenders while reducing opportunities for spontaneous or expressive criminal behavior. However, mere sanctions are unlikely to deter an offender who is driven by a desperate desire for revenge or is willing to die to achieve their objective.^{63 64}

Problem Analysis and Problem-Solving Questions

The primary data for evaluating Risk-Detached Violence are known historical threats, contemporaneous broadcasted threats, and leakage. Questions that should be asked by Place Managers include:

Psychological and Sociological Factors

- What psychological or emotional factors contribute to the commission of risk-detached violence?
- What common profiles or characteristics are seen among individuals who engage in risk-detached violence?
- How do factors like social isolation, mental health issues, or past experiences affect the likelihood of someone committing risk-detached violence?
- How do societal norms and cultural attitudes toward violence affect the occurrence of risk-detached violence?

Targets and Vulnerability

- Who are the typical targets of risk-detached violence (e.g., random individuals, specific groups)?
- What factors make certain individuals or groups more vulnerable to being targeted in

61 Lord, V. B. (2014). Police responses in officer-involved violent deaths: comparison of suicide by cop and non-suicide by cop incidents. *Police Quarterly*, 2014; 17(1):79-100.

62 Capellan, J. A. (2023). Who lives, who dies, who decides: Differences between mass public shooters who survive, are killed, and commit suicide. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, 20(1), 80-96.

63 Miethe, T., & Drass, K. (1999). Exploring the social context of instrumental and expressive homicides: An application of qualitative comparative analysis. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 15(1).

64 Fein, RA; B. Vossekuil; G A Holden (1995). *Threat Assessment: An Approach to Prevent Targeted Violence*. NIJ Research in Action. U.S. Department of Justice.

risk-detached incidents?

Patterns and Methods

- Are there observable patterns or trends in risk-detached violence incidents overtime?
- What methods or weapons are frequently used in these violent incidents?
- Are there situational factors (e.g., location, opportunity) that contribute to the occurrence of risk-detached violence?
- How does the environment (e.g., urban vs. rural settings) influence the prevalence of this type of violence?

Influence of Media and Society

- What role does media representation play in shaping perceptions and behaviors around risk-detached violence?

Prevention and Intervention

- What prevention strategies currently exist to address risk-detached violence, and how effective are they?
- How can community-based interventions be developed to reduce the likelihood of risk-detached violence?
- How can education and awareness campaigns help in preventing risk-detached violence?

Impact and Research Gaps

- What are the short- and long-term impacts of risk-detached violence on victims and their families?
- Are there gaps in current research on risk-detached violence that require further investigation?

Threat Identification and Response

- Can a Place Manager effectively monitor social media for signs of an impending threat?
- Once a risk-detached violence threat is identified, what additional information is needed about the situation?
- Can the threat be validated?
- Is there social media activity discussing a potential attack?

Communication and Coordination

- Who within the Place Manager's organization needs to be informed of the threat?
- Which external entities should be notified about the threat?

Timeliness and Security Measures

- Is there enough time for the Place Manager to implement security measures to prevent the violence?
- Does the situation require the involvement of other entities (e.g., threat assessment teams, law enforcement)?
- If resources are limited and the threat is imminent, is there enough time for law enforcement to respond?
- What resources are needed to quickly recover after the incident?

PREVENTION

As noted earlier, the four types of violence exist on a continuum, where situational and contextual elements often intersect. Analyzing these elements is crucial for understanding the risk patterns associated with violent crime (problem analysis). This continuum also helps identify the opportunity structures and risk factors that contribute to violence. This approach is similar to other problem-solving tools, such as after-action reports and root cause analyses, commonly used after major incidents like school shootings. By applying this method to more common forms of violent crime, we can more effectively pinpoint opportunity structures and risk factors, ultimately guiding the development of effective mitigation strategies (problem solving).

Different entities have differing capacities to address violent crime, a concept exemplified by the Problem Analysis Triangle. This model visually represents the key elements needed for a crime or problem to occur and identifies those who have both direct and indirect influence over its prevention.⁶⁵ The inner triangle represents the primary ingredients required for crime. The outer triangle shows entities who influence the primary ingredients. Each side of the outer triangle is called a Controller. The Controllers suggest three disparate strategies for preventing crime:

- Offender-based strategies
- Target/Victim-based strategies
- Place-based strategies



⁶⁵ Eck, J.E., Ceccato, V. & Guerette, R.T. A general problem-solving matrix (GPSM): combining crime prevention and public health tools. *Secur J* (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-024-00438-0>

On the outer triangle, Guardians are those who protect Targets/Victims. Police are an obvious Guardian. However, other Guardians include neighbors, family members, and bystanders. Most guardianship is self-guardianship; that is, people taking action to protect themselves.⁶⁶ Handlers influence Offenders. Handlers include parents, coaches, community leaders, among others. Place Managers influence Places. Place Managers are those who can exert control over a place and have legal authority to exercise this control.⁶⁷

There is a substantial body of knowledge that enables Place Managers to effectively address property crimes and disorder offenses. Offenders involved in disorder crimes, like vandalism, and property crimes, such as theft, are generally more deterrable by standard security measures that Place Managers can implement. However, there is far less evidence regarding effective strategies for preventing violent crime by Place Managers. Perpetrators of violent crimes, such as murder, are typically less responsive to common security measures. Criminologists have long suggested that violent crimes are more difficult to prevent due to the spontaneous, irrational nature of many violent acts and the impulsive, expressive behaviors often displayed by violent offenders.^{68 69 70}

Numerous empirical studies have explored police strategies for preventing violent crime, with some, like focused deterrence and problem-oriented policing, proving highly effective. However, there is a notable gap in research on the ability of Place Managers to prevent violent crime. Additionally, the studies available suggest that traditional security measures, such as cameras and lighting, have minimal impact on reducing violent crime.⁷¹ As Eck points out, "One of the greatest impediments to preventing crime is the impulse to reach for generic solutions."⁷²

This does not suggest that Place Managers are incapable of preventing violent crime; rather, it underscores the gaps in current research. In fact, crime prevention practitioners have found effective strategies for addressing specific problems in certain locations. For instance, the sharp decline in commercial bank robbery over the past two decades

66 Sampson, R., Eck, J. & Dunham, J. Super controllers and crime prevention: A routine activity explanation of crime prevention success and failure. *Secur J* 23, 37–51 (2010). <https://doi.org/10.1057/sj.2009.17>

67 Eck, J., & Madensen, T. (2018). Place management. In G. Bruinsma, & S. Johnson (Eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Criminology*. Oxford University Press.

68 Taylor, B., Koper, C. S., & Woods, D. J. (2010). A randomized controlled trial of different policing strategies at hot spots of violent crime. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 7(2), 149–181. doi:10.1007/s11292-010-9120-6

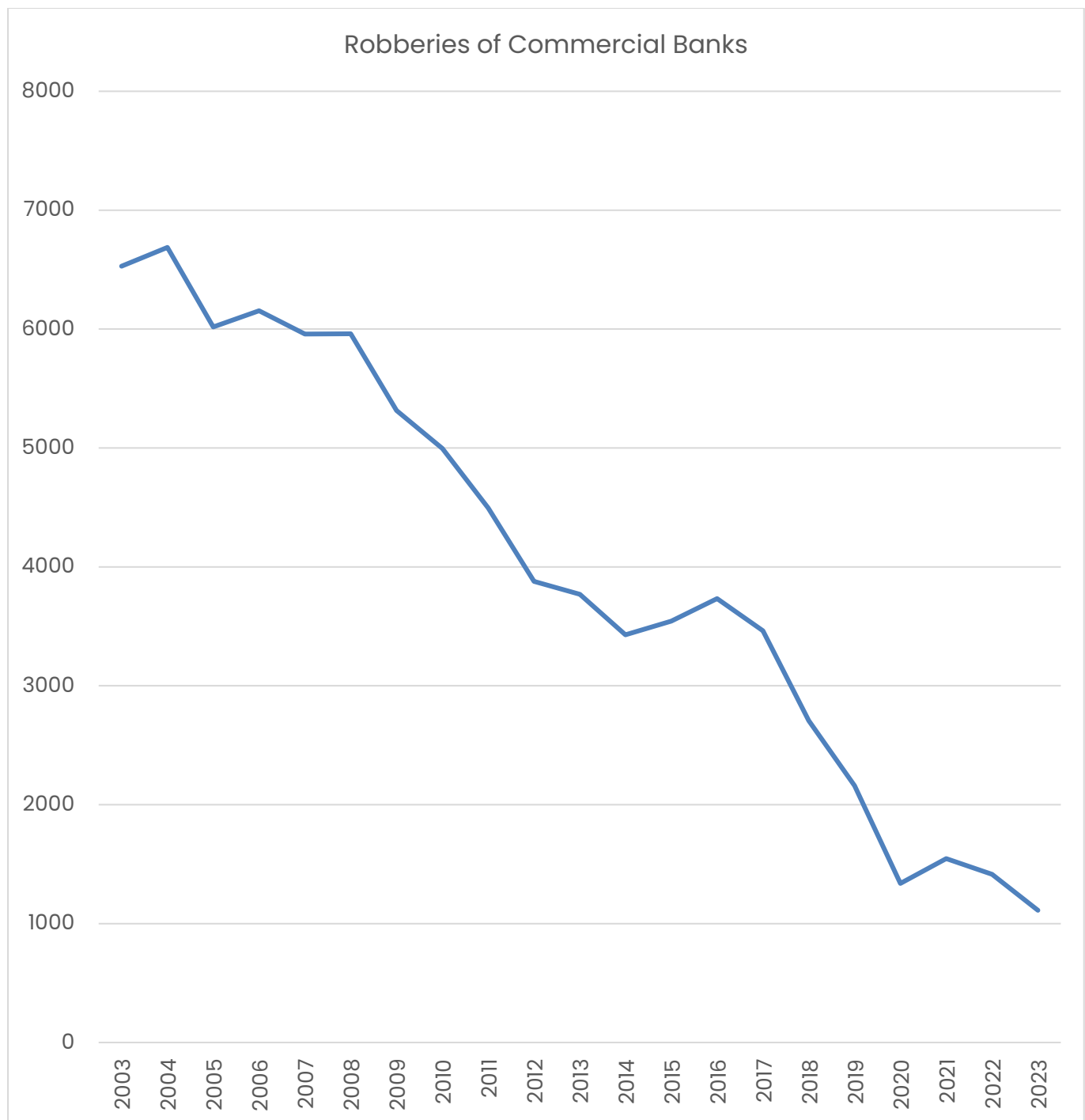
69 Douglas, J. E. (2013). *Crime classification manual a standard system for investigating and classifying violent crimes*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

70 Felson, M. (1993). Predatory and dispute-related violence: A social interactionist approach. In *Routine Activity and Rational Choice: Advances in Criminological Theory* (Vol. 5).

71 Vellani, Karim H. (2021). *Unraveled: An Evidence-Based Approach to Understanding and Preventing Crime*. Threat Analysis Group, LLC.

72 Eck, J.E., Ceccato, V. & Guerette, R.T. A general problem-solving matrix (GPSM): combining crime prevention and public health tools. *Secur J* (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-024-00438-0>

demonstrates that Place Managers can successfully address this issue.^{73 74}

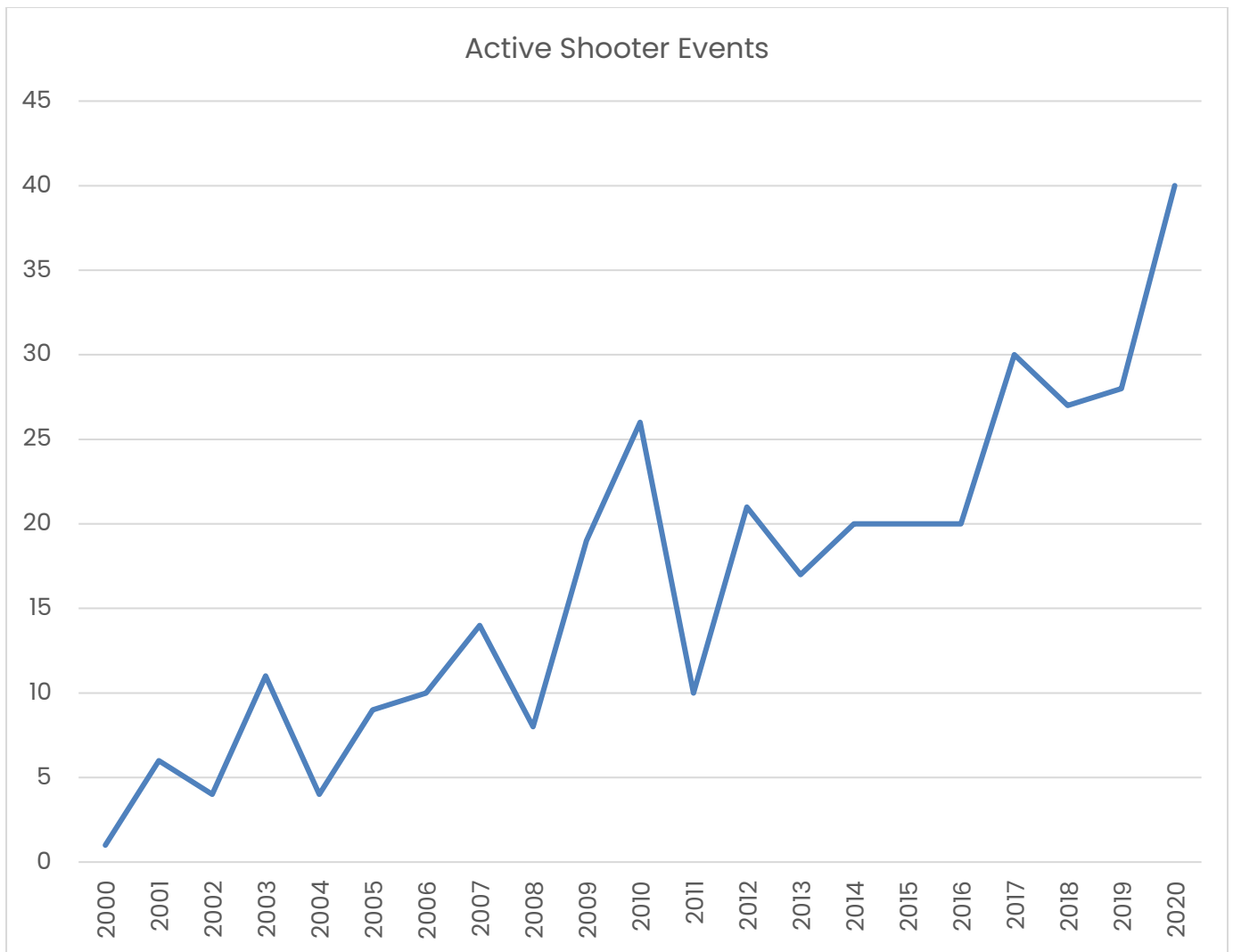


There are also instances where outcomes have been less favorable. For example, the active shooter trend in the United States has sharply increased over the past twenty years. This indicates that Place Managers have not yet found effective solutions to this problem.⁷⁵

⁷³ <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/violent-crime/bank-robbery/bank-crime-reports>

⁷⁴ It should be noted that high apprehension rates and stiff penalties (deterrence) at the federal level undoubtedly contributed to the success.

⁷⁵ <https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/active-shooter-safety-resources>



The data above indicates that certain forms of violence, such as risk-detached violence (e.g., active shooters), are more difficult to deter or prevent than others, like predatory violence (e.g., bank robberies). From a problem-solving standpoint, it is evident that the four types of violence exist on a continuum, ranging from those that are least deterrable or preventable to those that are most easily deterred or prevented, as shown below.



The effectiveness of crime prevention strategies is highly situational and cannot be universally applied. Given that violent crime exists on a continuum, a prevention approach tailored to predatory violence may not yield results against dispute-related, targeted, or risk-detached violence. Likewise, strategies focusing on preventing targeted and risk-detached violence can be particularly challenging for Place Managers. If security measures are implemented without considering the specific situational and contextual factors of violent crime, they are likely to fail.

LIMITATIONS

This paper acknowledges three notable limitations. The first two are related to the term "Risk-Detached Violence" and the body of research associated with this concept. The third limitation involves research gaps in violent crime prevention specifically concerning Place Managers.

First, "Risk-Detached Violence" is a relatively new term, and while it aptly describes a specific type of violence, the term itself has not yet gained widespread adoption in the field. This lack of recognition is evident in the existing research, where discussions of this form of violence often center around its situational and contextual characteristics rather than using a consistent term. The absence of an established term poses challenges for keyword-based literature searches. To address this limitation, the authors conducted their literature review using keywords that reflected the situational and contextual elements commonly associated with this form of violence rather than relying solely on the term risk-detached violence. This resulted in a substantial amount of research to support this article. However, one of the objectives of this work is to introduce and advocate for "Risk-Detached Violence" as a standardized term, aiming to streamline future research and discussion on this type of violence.

Second, as the body of literature on Risk-Detached Violence grows, there may be a need to further differentiate between various subtypes within this category. This could lead to further refinements in the Violent Crime Typology to better classify and address distinctions between types of risk-detached violence.

Third, as discussed both in this paper and in other studies, there are significant gaps in the research on effective methods for Place Managers to prevent violent crime. Place Management Theory is increasingly used to understand and mitigate violence, but the evidence base remains underdeveloped, limiting our understanding of effective interventions. As research in this area progresses, we expect a stronger evidence base to emerge, providing insights into what works, what doesn't, and what holds promise for the prevention of different types of violence. This growing knowledge will enable more targeted and effective applications of Place Management strategies for various forms of violent crime.

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