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## **What Turns a Kid Into a School Shooter: Cynical Shyness!**

### *Boys - very vulnerable to the effects of shyness*

You would not believe it, but those Rambo-like kids that kill all breathing humans, eventually putting a bullet into their own heads, are just ... shy. Cynically shy. This is the result of a research made by psychologists at Indiana University. "Cynically shy people are shy people who are motivated toward moving to others, and then they are rejected," said lead author Bernardo Carducci, director of the Shyness Research Institute at Indiana University Southeast in New Albany. "In addition to feelings of anxiety about social situations, cynically shy people, who are a small subclass of shy people, also have feelings of anger and hostility toward others and that comes from this sense of disconnect. Shy people truly want to be with others, so they make the effort, but when they are rejected or ostracized, they disconnect. Once you disconnect, it's very easy to start being angry and hate other people. It's you against them, and they become what I call a cult of one. Once you start thinking 'it's me versus them,' then it becomes easy to start hurting these people." explained Carducci. The new study aims at detecting the likely school shooters before such odious acts take place. The researchers detected 8 types of shyness, cynical shyness being one of them. "Right now, our ability to predict violence is not very good at all, so people overreact to a lot of things because of a fear of something happening. For years, we were under-reacting. It would be nice if psychologists could help us characterize who would be more likely to be a school shooter." said Dr. Jane Ripperger-Suhler, assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral science at the Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Medicine and a psychiatrist with Scott & White Mental Health Center in Temple. "One thing we know about shyness in boys, particularly in North America, they seem to be particularly at risk for maladaptive outcomes. We expect boys to be more outgoing and assertive. Boys are particularly sensitive and are exposed to cues from other people that shyness is not a good thing." said Heather Henderson, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Miami. Carducci's team investigated seven high school shooting cases involving eight teen shooters between 1995 and 2004: Jeffrey Weise, 16, a Native American boy, killed 7 people at Red Lake High School in Minnesota as well as his grandfather and grandfather's girlfriend in 2005; (all the other boys are White) Jamie Rouse, 17, killed one student and one teacher at Richland High School in Tennessee in 1995; Luke Woodham, 17, killed two persons at Pearl High School in Mississippi in 1997; Barry Loukaitis, 14, killed 3 persons at Frontier Junior High in Washington state in 1996; Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, 18 and 17, killed 12 students and a teacher at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999; Michael Carneal, 14, killed 3 girls at Heath High School in Kentucky in 1997; and Kip Kinkel, 15, killed his parents and 2 classmates at Thurston High School in Oregon in 1998. "Weise, the two Columbine killers and Kinkel had a "cynically shy score" of 10 (on a scale of 10). Rouse, Woodham and Loukaitis had scores of 8, and Carneal had a score of 6," wrote the researchers. Cynical shyness usually occurs in males and they are in fact extroverted people unable to relate to the others. The rejection boosts an intense rage, an extreme type of the frustrations normally experienced by shy people. "If you walk by somebody and avoid eye contact, you interpret that as they don't want to interact, but I think often it's completely the opposite. They really do want to interact and don't know how.", Henderson said. "It's important for parents and teachers to start at a young age, before the person is walking down the high school corridor ready to shoot, not to interpret their behavior as not wanting to interact. If we flip our interpretations, people may respond differently. As a field, we need to understand prospectively what's happening, so we can start identifying kids at a very young age, what would drive a shy kid into this pattern.", Henderson further explained.