

Aftermath Dynamics and Management: Through the Lens of the Virginia Tech Incident

Hosted by

ACIAJJ
The Academy for Critical Incident Analysis
at John Jay College

The Academy for Critical Incident Analysis,
John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY



The Center for Peace and Violence Prevention
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

The Inn at Virginia Tech
July 22-24, 2009

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Conference Objectives

Critical Incident Operational Definition: A critical Incident is a relatively brief occurrence involving injury, loss, conflict, discovery or change of significant proportion, usually unscripted and unanticipated, with the potential to alter existing societal norms. Critical incidents are usually traumatic, threatening the bonds of trust that bind communities, but may be positive, initiating historic consequences. (Frank Ochberg, 2008)

Model for Critical Incident Analysis: Over the last 15 years, a model for critical incident analysis has emerged. The framework offered by this model is intended to guide analysis of critical incidents and enhance our ability to understand, mitigate, and negotiate the episodes and incidents in society that have a great impact and deep significance for humankind. The model includes the event itself, the authorized interveners responsible for managing such events, the political arena, and the larger community affected by the event. This larger community may be a nation, an industry, or a society with its various customs and culture. Time-limited incidents rarely have the power to change a culture, but they often, in retrospect, symbolize a turning point or epitomize an epoch. The definition and meaning of critical incident therefore includes not just the event, but also the behaviors of those at the scene, the context in which it occurs, the impact beyond the theater of action, and the aftermath dynamics of the event. A critical incident may have consequences for days, week, months, years and even decades after the event itself has ended. An operational definition of a critical incident and an overview of model components establishes a common lens and foundation for rich and meaningful analysis.

Charge to the Conference: Collectively, conference participants will examine understandings of the aftermath dynamics of critical incidents. We will critically examine questions such as:

- How do aftermath dynamics fit with prevailing theories and concepts in critical incident analysis?
- How do public and media narratives of incidents evolve during the aftermath?
- Who are the stake-holders in aftermath dynamics?
- How would you describe the different stages of aftermath dynamics?
- Are there more constructive and more destructive dynamics?
- Are there protective attributes of communities that mitigate risk and promote resilience following a critical incident?
- Can aftermath dynamics be managed to mitigate trauma and promote healing?
- What are the unique conditions or issues relative to college and university incidents?
- How is policy shaped during the aftermath of incidents?
- What is the role of memorialization following an incident?
- Are there understandings about aftermath dynamics that are fundamental to the field of critical incident analysis?

These general and theoretical questions will be examined in the abstract, and based on what is known by those who have experienced critical incidents. The conference takes place at Virginia Tech to facilitate the assessment of concepts “through the lens of the Virginia Tech incident” as the conference title explains. Presentations based on other incidents, such as the World Trade Center attack and the Columbine shooting, also inform the deliberations.

Chatham House Rule

This conference takes place under the Chatham House Rule.

The Rule

When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

Explanation

The Chatham House Rule originated at Chatham House with the aim of providing anonymity to speakers and to encourage openness and the sharing of information. It is now used throughout the world as an aid to free discussion. Meetings do not have to take place at Chatham House, or be organized by Chatham House, to be held under the Rule.

Conference Interpretation

The identity and/or the affiliation of a speaker, or of any other participant, may be revealed with the permission of the speaker or participant involved.

Wednesday July 22, 2009

3:00 Convening Panel: The Aftermath Phase of Incident Dynamics
Panel Chair: Victor Herbert, Executive Director ACIA

Welcome and Reflections

John Ryan

Conference Orientation—Purposes and Groundrules

Ned Benton

Overview and Timeline of the Virginia Tech Incident

John Ryan and James Hawdon

*Theories and Models of Stages of Incident Dynamics Define
and Address the Aftermath*

Betty Kirby

5:30 Wine and Cheese Reception

6:30 Dinner

Lessons from the Columbine Incident in Aftermath Management

Dave Cullen

8:00 Evening Panel: The Emerging Record of the Virginia Tech Incident
Panel Chair: Erik Goodman

Initiatives to Assemble a Record

Donald J. Shoemaker, Edward Fox, Steven Sheetz

9:30 Dessert Buffet

Thursday July 23, 2009

7:30 Breakfast

8:30 Panel: The Evolution of Incident Narrative

Panel Chair: Bruce Shapiro

The Evolution of the Incident Narratives

Arnold "Skip" Isaacs

The Self-Proclaimed Expert in the Aftermath of a Catastrophic Incident

Steven M. Gorelick

The Journalist Role and Perspective

Donna Banks

10:00 Panel: The Mitigation of Trauma During the Aftermath

Panel Chair: Frank Ochberg

Risk & Resilience Following the Virginia Tech Shootings

Danny Axsom

Solidarity as a protective factor in the aftermath

Russell Jones

Cultural and population beliefs about trauma mitigation

Richard Curtis

What Might Be Learned Based on a Program of Systematic Research

Richard Schwester

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Tour of the Virginia Tech Campus

3:30 Panel: Special issues of university incidents

Panel Chair: Robert Till

University Incidents – Lessons Learned

James McShane, VP for Public Safety, Columbia University

What they share with other sets of incidents

Laura Agnich

Recovery and Support in a University Environment

Megan Armbruster

Thursday July 23, 2009, continued...

5:30 Wine and Cheese Reception

6:30 Dinner

9-12: FDNY Confronts the Aftermath of 9-11,
Victor Herbert

8:00 Evening Panel: Community Solidarity
Panel Chair: Richard Curtis

The Emergence of Solidarity after the Tragedy
John Ryan and James Hawdon
Solidarity as a protective factor in the aftermath
James Hawdon and John Ryan

9:30 Dessert Buffet

Friday July 24, 2009

7:30 ACIA Council Meeting

8:00 Breakfast

8:30 Panel: Dynamics of policy response during the aftermath
Panel Chair: Richard Schwester

Can tragic incidents lead to effective policy?

Jeff Stern

Community-Experienced Trauma: Implications for Intervention

Michael Hughes

Stakeholder Roles Shaping the Aftermath

Bruce Shapiro

10:00 Panel: Healing and Memorialization During the Aftermath
Panel Chair: Ned Benton

Promoting Recovery and Healing, in the Immediate, Mid-term and Long-term Aftermath

Jerzy Nowak

Memorialization in the Aftermath of the World Trade Center Attack

Glenn Corbett

Memorialization: Purposes, Approaches and Management over time

Gerard Fromm

12:00 Lunch

Aftermath Management in the Handbook of Critical Incident Analysis

Richard Schwester

Roster of Participants

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Pris Sears	Ctr for Peace and Violence Studies	

Background and Resource Materials

Note: All documents available online at <http://aciajj.org/July 2009>

- The Virginia Tech Review Panel Report August 2007
 - Timeline of Events
 - Summary of Key Findings
 - University Setting and Security
 - Immediate Aftermath and the Long Road to Healing
 - Fatal School Shootings in the United States, 1966-2007
 - Warning Signs and Indicators
- Report to the President: Issues Raised by the Virginia Tech Tragedy (June 2007)
- Violence-Related Behaviors Among High School Students 1991-2003 (MMWR Vol. 53 No. 29:)
- American College Health Association: Campus Violence White Paper
- Results of the National Campus Safety And Security Survey (National Association of College and University Business Officers)
- President's Commission on University Security in the Wake of the Virginia Tech Incident (University of Wisconsin)
- International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators: Overview of the Virginia Tech Tragedy and Implications for Campus Safety
- Midwestern Higher Education Compact: The Ripple Effect of Virginia Tech