WHAT ARE THE FACTORS IN CHO SEUNG-HUI THAT WE SHOULD STUDY?

1. Neurobiological factors: We know that the brain chemistry of murderers is more likely to be pathologic. We know that two brain chemicals: a. Catechol O methyltransferase (COMT) and Monoamine Oxidase-A (MAO-A) are deficient in people who have little empathy and have a
lower threshold for committing violence. Is brain chemistry either a necessary or sufficient cause in Cho’s case, absolutely not.

2. Family Environment. We know that pathological families are more likely to spawn people who commit violence. Can we infer Cho’s family was abusive? Absolutely not.

3. Desensitization/Habituation: We know that people who can commit such heinous acts of violence are desensitized to others’ pain and suffering. Screams, cries, pleading behaviors fall on deaf ears. Desensitization IS a necessary cause of serially repeated acts of violence. In other words, Cho may have killed one or two people in a feeling state, but at some point we know that he was desensitized to the sights and sounds of pain and suffering. Here is a good place to talk about the interaction of other factors.

WHAT PROMOTES DESENSITIZATION?

Repeated exposure to realistic depictions of violence that do NOT include the real life consequences of that violence promotes desensitization. Let’s take the movie GRINDHOUSE and the television tour de force THE SOPRANOS. In the movie Grindhouse, a double feature from directors Quentin Tarantino “Death Proof” and Robert Rodriguez, “Planet Terror,” we are presented with an exceedingly violent series of scenes, one right after the other. Tarantino’s artistic, over-the-top action scenes do not pass what I call the “morgue test.” The same is true for Rodriguez’ contribution to the double feature. The morgue test is a test of reality, where nothing in the movie is entertaining and the theater, itself, is not an environment conducive to eating popcorn. While some neurological habituation may occur, watching a million Grindhouse-type movies will not likely serve as a precedent factor in real-life expressions of violence.

Depictions of violence in the Sopranos is realistic. But because Soprano’s violence passes the morgue test, The Sopranos may actually inhibit expressions of violence. David Chase has permitted us to see the ugly side of Soprano’s characters Tony, Carm, Pauly, Silvio, Chris, Janice, et al. We may wish we had Tony’s power at times but few, if any, want Tony’s life. More importantly, even if a viewer wanted to be Tony, you can’t apply for the job and get it. In other words, even the sick mind is not likely to be encouraged to engage in violence after watching the Sopranos. So are all movies safe? No.

The Jackass series of movies, extreme fighting and blood sports like cock-fighting, bullfighting, dog fights, etc., CAN AND DO promote acts of meanness and violence. Anyone can be a “Jackass” and I dare say that the consequences of raising a generation of desensitized experts on first person shooter video gaming will result in nothing good.
4. **The Deselected Male:** Our society is steeped in beauty, attraction, popularity and social status. Males who are unattractive AND who have few or no compensatory skills are continuously subjected to frustration, social isolation and rejection, especially from women and others who appear to be part of the “Social” cliques we find on EVERY campus.

5. **Ignition Factor:** An ignition factor can be thought of as a precipitating event, “the straw that broke the camel’s back.” This could be rejection from a real or imaginary lover; it can be a failing grade in a class, it can be the award winning success of a rival or almost any other “trigger” unique to the person in question. In Cho’s case I note that the American Spring Break ritual had just concluded, with all of its displays of debauchery, social cliques, popular boys and girls having fun, being alive.

6. **The Ambient Culture:** The immediate culture of a very socially oriented campus, within the greater context of an American culture that glorifies wealth, fame and fortune, created an excruciatingly toxic environment for the isolated, incompetent, unpopular and neurobiologically impaired Cho.

**RECIPE FOR DISASTER**

- **Cho was a person who was unattractive with no compensatory skills such as humor or persuasive intelligence to counterbalance his unattractiveness.** People who are unattractive are socially ostracized, rejected by members of the opposite sex and not invited to become a part of the social order.

- **Cho had a pathological brain chemistry. He was most likely suffering from a Schizoaffective disorder in addition to an Axis II Borderline/Narcissistic personality disorder.**

- **Cho found himself in the middle of a particularly social campus where fraternities, clubs, school spirit and status is the desired norm.**

- **Cho had just experienced the spectacle of Spring break and all of the concurrent images that go along with that American ritual of debauchery, sexual freedom and social interaction.**

- **Cho had reached a logical end-point in his life. A phase or stage of his life, from his perspective, was ending, with no future prospects or hope on his radar screen.**
• Cho was the under performer in his family, a family that placed a great deal of value on “success.” His family’s cultural pressure to excel, paired with Cho’s “defects,” meant that Cho was more likely to perceive himself as a “loser” and had failed his family.

• Cho possessed a great deal of ambition without the requisite skills required to achieve his lofty goals. He demanded a lot of himself and he always came up short.

• Cho fell through the cracks of a mental health system loathe to involuntarily commit anyone other than the worst of the worst.

Cho was a self-obsessed social failure who had disappointed his family and who was haunted by feelings of depression, paranoia and not belonging. Every time he turned on the television, walked outside his dorm room, entered a classroom or thought of his sister and parents his already troubled brain was pushed into the abyss of rage paired with despair. He had aspirations of dating a supermodel, being brilliant, powerful and handsome. He was none of these things and it killed him. Unfortunately, he finally found a sick solution to his isolation by forcing others to come with him into his abyss.

Dr. Napoleon wrote the following in his book: **Awakening Beauty, an illustrated look at mankind’s love and hatred of beauty**, in a chapter entitled **MURDEROUS RAGE**. It is apropos to include here because Cho paid homage to Columbine’s murderers Harris and Klebold in his published manifesto.

What do Jonesboro, Arkansas, Springfield, Oregon, Paducah, Kentucky, Moses Lake, Washington, Pearl, Mississippi, Littleton, Colorado and Santee, California have in common? They are all locations where disenfranchised young men, called geeks, gangly, skinny, dorks and/or ugly, have gone on a murder spree against their more attractive and popular classmates and teachers. In the instance of Littleton, two boys named Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold went after the popular boys and some pretty girls. Fifteen were killed in that rampage. Eric and Dylan were described by their classmates as skinny, gangly and ugly. In one news report following the Littleton massacre, one classmate was interviewed who reported that she had been asked by one of the boys to ask a girl to the prom on his behalf. The girl being interviewed said that when she asked, the girl just laughed.

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HOW TO INTELLIGENTLY ANALYZE THIS NATIONAL TRAGEDY

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