The De-Escalation of a School Shooting:

Toward a Micro-Sociological Theory

Abstract

Conversations on gun violence in schools have largely been dominated by discussions of gun ownership and mental

health. Drawing off of audio-visual recordings, archival data, and autobiographical accounts, this paper provides a

theoretically informed account of an averted school shooting. It demonstrates that both carrying out and preventing

violence are contingent on framing work similar to that carried out in ordinary internal and external conversation, and

shows how such a framework complements existing theories on the etiology of school shootings.

Introduction

When reading extensively in the sociology of violence, it is easy to be caught up in a sense of enormity and inevitability.

As a factor both in world history, and in everyday life, it is easy to forget that violence is a contingent, emergent

phenomenon, rather than the inevitable converging horizon point of human interaction. But on occasion a case comes

to light that gives the lie to this impression, and reminds us that though violent crime and oppression is prevalent

worldwide, each event is the outcome of an interactional process in which the outcome is very far from a foregone

conclusion.

Such a case came into public attention in the U.S. on August 20, 2013, when a 20-year-old white man who had

exchanged shots with the police outside an elementary school in Decatur, GA surrendered himself after about half an

hour of interaction with the first person he found in the front office of the school, a 47-year-old black woman named

Antoinette Tuff.

The case of the averted school shooting in Decatur, GA made a splash when it first came out, appearing in the New

York Times, the Washington Post, on CNN, the Huffington Post, and numerous other media outlets. Of particular note

was a recording of the 911 call Tuff made to the DeKalb county police department that was released on YouTube the

day after the attack by the Atlanta Journal Constitution (Atlanta Journal Constitution 2013), and quickly spread from

there through other media outlets. After a few days in the limelight, the story quickly declined in popularity (See fig. 1),

with the search term "Antoinette Tuff" receiving its maximum popularity in the period from August 18-24, but dropping

to 18% of its search popularity by the period from August 25-31, and further to 3% of its maximum popularity by the

September 1-7 period. There was a small rise back up to 17% of its maximum popularity around the time that Tuff's

book, *Prepared for a Purpose* was released in January 2014.[1] Surveillance camera videos from inside and outside the school

during the event were released after the shooter, Michael Hill, entered a plea bargain agreement (Atlanta Journal-
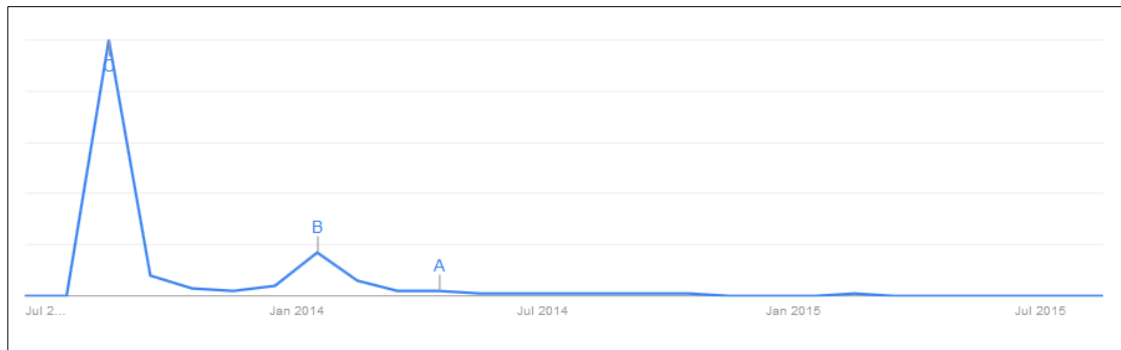
Constitution 2014a, 2014b).

Figure 1: Popularity of "Antoinette Tuff" from June 2014 to August 2015. Y-axis variable represents the number of Google searches for the

term "Antoinette Tuff" divided by total searches conducted, scaled such that the maximum point is 100. Data Source: Google Trends

(www.google.com/trends).

Though the case has faded from public view, an anomalous case for which a transcript, surveillance video, and a book by

one of the participants is available remains highly relevant to the academic study of school shootings, and more generally

to the study of escalation and de-escalation in potentially violent situations. What is it that allowed this case to end with

no loss of life, rather than as a national tragedy?

Theory

Since escalating from phenomenon to social problem to moral panic in the late 1990s, school shootings have become

the object of a sustained body of academic work, and several lines of theory. Two primary streams have been advanced,

one focused on the psychology of the shooters, and another focused on the social and cultural conditions that make

school shootings possible. However, as in numerous other areas of sociology, the theoretical relationship between the

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[1] Data source: Google Trends (www.google.com/trends),

cultural and structural variables and the psychological variables remains problematic. A micro-sociological theory that examines the place where the psychological and the macro-sociological meet—the situation—is needed.

School Shootings

The literature on school shootings, which has found homes in sociology, psychology, criminology, and media studies (among others), has matured well over the last 20 years, moving from a largely disconnected, moral-panic-inspired collection of variables that invited comparisons to Kurosawa's exploration of ambiguity, *Rashomon* (Muschert 2007) to a theoretical near-consensus on the *explanandum* and its level of operation—albeit with differences on the theoretical traditions emphasized in providing an *explanans*—in one of the latest edited volumes on the subject (Böckler et al. 2013).

Muschert's (2007) review of the early literature on school shootings, which repeatedly stressed the ambiguity of the findings, documented 25 different "contributing causes" in the literature, which he then categorized, producing five categories at the level of individual causes and qualities, four at the level of "community contexts"—mostly dealing with context between the level of the peer-group and that of the extended network of families whose children attend school together—and four at the level of social and cultural contexts—variables that purport to describe a society as a whole (Muschert 2007).

Five years later, another reviewer was able to trace a consensus on the historical incidence of school shootings. Rocque (2012) showed that school shootings, which had taken place sporadically through the latter half of the 20th century, rose from one or two per decade to a rash of rural and suburban shootings in the 1990s, provoking a moral panic regarding school shootings—all this while deaths from school violence overall declined (CDC 2008). Rocque also noted a gathering consensus about the profiles of offenders as white males in the middle or lower-middle class in suburban or rural locations, who often share some characteristics—gender, history of harassment, and history of mental illness—with offenders in more-disadvantaged areas where race and economic hardship are usually part of the explanation offered for the violence observed (Rocque 2012, Farrington 2007). Regarding the explanations offered for school rampage shootings, Rocque noted three concentrations in the literature. The first was a largely atheoretical (perhaps more properly unreflectively theoretical) attempt to identify risk factors, moderated by the sense that there is no "profile" for a school shooter (O'Toole 1999, Verlinden et al. 2000, Vossekuil et al. 2002, Rocque 2012). It was this body of literature

that led to Agnich's (2014) somewhat premature dismissal of the attempt to construct a psychological profile of school

shooters.

However, the other streams of analysis Muschert identified had borne fruit as well. Rocque (2012) noted that the

availability of guns (Newman et al. 2004) was critical, and the so-called "copycat factor" found support in case studies

(Fox & Burstein 2010, Newman et al. 2004, Sullivan & Guerett 2003), and quantitative studies of mass

shootings/suicides (Stack 1989). Similarly hegemonic masculinity and a strong gun culture were highlighted by Kimmel

(2008) as further contributing cultural factors. Selection on the dependent variable plagued findings suggesting that

violent media played a role in causing school shooting, though it appeared important in some more detailed case studies,

including studies of the Columbine shooters (Cullen 2009, Larkin 2007). The literature on bullying, Rocque observed,

was not conclusive either, with Vossekuil et al. (2002) identifying many school shooters that had been victims of

bullying, but others (Fast 2008, Langman 2009, Newman et al. 2004) finding school shooters on the other side of a

bullying dyad, or being embedded in a group of peers. While many of these variables had been noted by Muschert

(2007), Rocque (2012) noted that some of these were being brought together under criminological theories of longer

standing, with Levin and Madfis (2009) theory combining strain, control, and routine activities appearing particularly

promising.

Simultaneously, Rocque (2014) noted that psychological theories had produced some important results. The best of

these went beyond the surface finding that many school shootings involve mental illness, a regularity whose causal value

is troubled by selection on the dependent variable (Newman et al. 2004), as well as by the fact that mental illness, and

psychopathy in particular, has a history of being used as a catch-all category for difficult cases (Rafter 1997) and being

applied after-the-fact (Newman et al. 2004)[2]. As heuristic categories describing phenomenal experience, though,

Langman's typology of psychopathic, psychotic, and traumatized shooters (Langman 2009, 2013) may still be valuable to

micro-sociological theories. Meanwhile, Fast's (2008) conceptualization of school rampage shootings as ceremonial,

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[2] Goffman warns of this danger in a section on the editing license often taken on occasions of diagnostic assessment:
"The extreme here occurs when we come to review the actions and attitudes of someone we know well, our purpose being to determine whether his previous apparent sanity can now be seen to disguise and portend a current episode, or whether his past apparent insanity can now be seen to reflect simply and sanely upon the company he had been forced to keep." (Goffman 1974: 453)

theatrical, and frequently suicidal, has promising echoes in the dramaturgic and interaction ritual strains of micro-

sociological theory (Goffman 1959, 1967, Collins 2004).

School Shootings

However, from a theoretical perspective, the most hopeful sign is the series of theoretical contributions that lead Böckler

et al.'s (2013) edited volume—distinguished from other volumes that might otherwise fall by the wayside by standing in

a field where other edited volumes (Moore et al. 2003 in particular) have played a leading role in consolidating the field,

and by the stature of its contributors. I summarize these in table 1, and present a synthesis of the theories below.

 Four theoretical papers share an *explanandum* in a set of similar experiences undergone by the numerous shooters whose

experiences they compare, one that begins with *alienation* from affirming interactions in the dominant social space—

often a school in the towns in which these shootings take place, with an attendant loss of recognition and status, a loss

of stabilizing relationships, and a sense of strain resulting from the inability to achieve social or academic standards of

success upheld by the community.

Secondly, in most of these cases, alienation in the peer-group is heightened by dysfunctional family relationships,

pressure to detach from parents, or a community structure with such social closure that it approximates a total

institution, wherein adolescents are not free to retreat to a backstage outside of the school-centered community. This

leaves the adolescent with few options but to retreat into *fantasies*.

Thirdly, some of these doubly alienated adolescents retreat into fantasies of being powerful as a way of regaining respect

from the dominant social field. They may dally with ideas of violently vanquishing those who have disgraced them,

without necessarily intending to follow through on such ideas. However, as stigmatization continues, or achievement is

blocked by time spent in fantasy, the fantasy begins to become more detailed and more realistic. At this point, other

cultural influences, perhaps violent books, media, games, or ideas of what it takes to be a man may be appropriated to

help sustain or feed the fantasy. Access to guns may also suggest ways in which the fantasy could be taken further.

In the fourth step, the adolescent undergoes a subjectively experienced crisis, from which his fantasies no longer have

the power to rescue him. This may be a major stressor, or something that under other circumstances might be

experienced as a minor setback, but when added to other stresses and strains becomes the straw that breaks the camel's back.

When this occurs, some adolescents, inured to the horror of their fantasies by long exposure, embrace the story that their fantasies tell, that a catastrophic act of violence could allow them to transcend the forces that have alienated them, often while freeing themselves from the suffering they go through in a blaze of suicidal glory. Those that embrace this story find their triggers transmuted into motives, and their fantasies transmuted into plans. Some may carry out additional planning. Many, in an effort to be the interpreters of their own apotheoses, write manifestoes or explanations before engaging in the acts of destruction.

Finally some follow all the way through, and carry out the plans and fantasies they had replayed and developed time and again, seeking to become, in a moment, a primal cosmological power, dealing death and destruction to those considered offenders, or to those gathered in the public space as representatives of the community at large.

That such a shared understanding of the experience should emerge is either suspicious or reassuring, depending on the degree to which one credits the convergence to attempts at external or internal validity—ie, faithfulness to one anothers' accounts, or to the accounts of the case study authors off of whom they draw. That the *explanans* for each is different may suggest external validity as an explanation for convergence despite loyalty to previously held paradigmatic standpoints. However, mutual citation keeps this question open.

That this may in fact point to something beyond a construct of the collaborators is suggested by the similarities between their work and that of Jack Katz, writing about seemingly "senseless" killing (Katz 1988). In the cases Katz (1988) describes as well, the protagonists enter the scene "as a pariah" (290), becoming "dizzy" by "alternately exploiting symbols of deviance for interpersonal dominance and experiencing conformity as a moral dis-ease," (305), Eventually, in the dizzying effort to keep up this identity, they may recognize a "transcendent power" that comes from killing (297), a chance to reverse the equation of their suffering. Rejecting the message of the agents of a larger social structure that their suffering was a vengeance cast upon them for their defiling act, they instead seek to enact vengeance for the acts of defilement they experienced, taking the active role and casting suffering symbolically on the world that had cast them out (290). This is done by mobilizing narratives told within the self that end with horrific murder. Such congruence in these

theories is far from expected, but suggests a kinship of experience between adolescents that carry out school shootings, and adult offenders that carry out the most apparently senseless of murders.

The Contingent Accomplishment of School Shootings

There has been very little investigation in the literature on school shootings into successfully averted school shootings, with the key exception being work put together by a team of counseling psychologists (Daniels et al. 2007, Daniels et al. 2010, Daniels et al. 2011). The data gathered for these articles is largely unilluminating, and seems to capture more the opinions on how to handle school shootings currently circulating in the culture of school administrations, rather than insights into actual school shootings.

The synthesized theory that I argue represents the state of the art in explaining school shootings does leave space for school shootings to fail. Madfis and Levin (2013) point out that there is an additional set of contingencies in play that affect whether the actual school shooting takes place. Drawing off Cohen and Felson's (1979) routine activity theory, stating that the shooting will only take place "when suitable targets are available, effective guardians are absent, and motivated offenders are present," (Madfis and Levin 2013: 94). However, the notion of what constitutes an "effective guardian" is in need of elaboration. In order to do this well, a more complex understanding of the contingency of violence and the work that must be put in to actualize fantasies is necessary to render the case of Antoinette Tuff and Michael Hill intelligible.

Micro-Sociological Perspectives: Interaction Ritual and Framing

The central puzzle here is one posed by Collins (2008) in the opening of his micro-sociological theory of violence. If conflict is so common, why is violence such a rare event, both in society as a whole, and even in the lives of those who specialize in producing violence? Collins argues on the basis of evidence from a vast array of different types of violence that violent and potentially violent situations are structured by a feeling of confrontational tension/fear, which renders violence very difficult to perform, and increasingly so as one makes face-to-face and eye-to-eye contact. When violence does take place, it is largely done ineffectively, except when carried out through one of five major pathways:

1. Attacking the weak.

2. Audience-oriented staged and controlled fair fights.

3. Confrontation-avoiding remote violence.

4. Confrontation-avoiding by deception.

5.   Confrontation-avoiding by absorption in technique. (Collins 2009:9)

Each of these pathways, Collins argues, allows for situations in which greater degrees of rhythmic entrainment are possible for those committing violence, allowing them to build up the emotional energy necessary to overcome confrontational tension-fear and commit violence.

However, mere charging with emotional energy does not explain what a person is likely to do with that energy—whether they are likely to commit an act of violence or prevent one. Techniques of emotional energy building are a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the creation of acts of violence. In addition, the one who seeks to carry out violence must have a violence frame in his (or, in a more limited set of cases, her) repertoire of frames, and be able to grasp and deploy the situational power necessary to frame the situation as one of violence. Goffman, in his analysis of an averted armed robbery thus argues that the power of a gun is simply that it "can give to its holder an expectation that he can radically restructure what is to occur and carry off a scene that overrides the existing one," but that "[s]hould his intent or capacity (which may mean his perceived suitability for the role) be given no credit, then indeed a fiasco can occur, an open failure to carry off not only the goods, but also the scene . . ." (Goffman 1974:447). Katz similarly states that "if one is effectively to mobilize the form of primordial evil, he needs a situation structured for cosmological transcendence," (Katz 1988:304). Without the ability to completely dominate the scene, the prospective killer may not feel sufficiently in control to take on the relational position of primordial evil. Attention to each of Collins' five pathways shows that each can be interpreted as framing activity:

1.   The straightforward case in which the attacker has the situational resources (weapons, information, situational initiative, etc.) to impose a violence-frame on the victim.

2.   A situation in which a majority of participants (including observers) have given signals of agreement that the violence frame is acceptable, and entered into roles in the violence frame.

3.   A situation where the aggressor is able to control the framing by excluding the victim from participation in the situation by sheer distance.

4.   A more complex situation in which the aggressor employs a frame in which the primary frame is a violence frame, but there is a keying of a frame of some other type of activity, bringing the other participants' unsuspecting behavior into the range of expected behavior within both parties' frames.

5.   A situation in which the aggressor constricts his view of "here" and "now" to include only his (or her) own action, allowing him (or her) to monopolize definition of the framed situation.

There remains, then, significant explanation to do beyond what the state of the art with respect to school shootings would tell us to understand the experiences of Tuff and Hill, as they felt their way through their close encounter. However, before approaching their encounter, we have need of a few more tools by means of which to set the stage. Goffman's concept of a frame, while it provides a powerful tool for analysis, its original formulation, as the answer to the question, "What is going on here and now," renders it an item of information, a cognitive conceptualization. However, so sober a concept is ill suited on its own to describe the emotional intoxications that buffet the practitioners of violence. We must go deeper still.

<u>Fantasy, Emotion Work, and Internal Conversation</u>

A striking feature of the synthesized theory of school shooting above is the centrality of an intra-personal dynamic, which Robertz (2013) analyzes as fantasy. Drawing off of the work of Ethel Person (1995), he writes of fantasy as "a special case of imagination that is highly emotionally charged and inextricably linked to wishes, hopes, fears, and other strong emotions," (Robertz 2013: 113) and that "while fleeting phantasies (sic) serve to compensate a temporary loss of equilibrium, repeating phantasies arise from recurring needs," (Robertz 2013: 113). He further writes, "Phantasies are such powerful tools that they enable people to remain functional even in the most extreme situations. . . . fantasies provide a way of acting out cathartic emotions and impulses that are forbidden in real life. . . [and] in situations that are difficult to endure, the experience of reality can be softened by means of mitigating phantasies," (Robertz 2013: 112). He also ties this to Lempp's (2003) concept of *secondary realities*, a concept from developmental psychology that Lempp argues persists and develops over the life course. Lempp argues that we develop a "transitioning ability," by which we learn to switch back and forth between this and the so-called "primary reality," that shared with parents and others around the age of 3 or 4 (Robertz 2013:114, Lempp 2003:39).

A Goffmanian reconceptualization of these experiences would refer to them as various keyings of a violence frame, a mapping of a primary frame of violence into a secondary frame of imagining or play (Goffman 1974). However, this analysis is an incomplete mapping of the concept of fantasy, because it does not recognize that fantasy is carried out in order to meet an emotional need, or more generally, because it elides the emotional consequences of playing out (or playing out a keyed version of) a framing of a situation. It is here that both Collins' argument that situations have emotional consequences, and Hochschild's perspective on emotions as a sense-function interacting with feeling rules can aid us in expanding the concept of frames to the point that it is adequately equipped to deal with situations of violence.

Collins' micro-sociological work focuses largely on the ability of rhythmic entrainment and shared mood to heighten the level of emotional energy in participants, as well as to create a sense of group identity leading to solidarity, as well as to invest symbols with meaning. Here this paper advances the additional claim that rhythmic entrainment can only (or, for a softer version, most effectively) come about when all participants are working within the same, often unreflectively held framing of the situation. Hence there is a partially anticipatable emotional payoff that can motivate participants in a situation to seek a common framing.

Hochschild's work, meanwhile, deals more with the more familiar transient emotions than with the somewhat monolithic but more durable concept of emotional energy. She argues that emotions serve as a comparison between the world as perceived and the expectations of the world in the mind of the one experiencing the emotion.

It is clear that in Robertz' conception of fantasy, as in the conceptions of those he cites, fantasy is an at least partially volitional strategy directed toward the control of emotions. At this point the concept of fantasy he is using begins to intersect with Hochschild's concept of emotion work or emotion management (Hochschild 1979), which she describes as "trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling." (Hochschild 1979: 57). She describes three different techniques of emotion work:

- Cognitive: "the attempt to change images, ideas, or thoughts in the service of changing the feelings associated with them."

- Bodily: "the attempt to change somatic or other physical symptoms of emotion"

- Expressive: "trying to change expressive gestures in the service of changing inner feeling." (Hochschild 1979: 562)

This agentic account of emotions also intersects with the perspective of internal conversation, though the two have yet to be successfully integrated. In one of her key examples, however, one of her respondents describes her attempts to tamp down feelings for a man with whom she had broken up in terms of conversation, saying "I talked myself into not caring about Mike . . . To sustain this feeling, I had to . . . continue to tell myself he didn't care," (Hochschild 1979: 562).

Similarly, both the emotional features associated with emotion work and the sensory features associated with fantasy appear in one of the key passages Wiley cites, originally collected by Caughey, in which a waitress reports on her thoughts:

> *"Only eight minutes, takes five to change. I've got to book* (hurry).*"* Imagery: A disgustingly filthy locker room Visions
>
> of me running from table to kitchen table. Sounds. Forks and knives scraping plates, customers yelling over
>
> each other. *"I have to make money. At least it's not as bad as last summer."* Memory imagery: A tiny dumpy diner. . . ."
>
> (Caughey 1984: 135, Wiley 1994:64)

This interplay between speech and imagery with emotional overlay is typical of other reports of the inner life, and

demands a theory combining aspects of emotion work, fantasizing, and internal conversation.

Internal Conversation has only in the last three decades emerged as a significant part of sociological discussion, primarily

through the works of Norbert Wiley and Margaret Archer, though related concepts can be found in the works of

Simmel, Goffman, the American Pragmatists James, Peirce, Dewey and Mead, and in the developmental psychologies of

Piaget, Vygotsky, and Vocate (Chalari 2009). Both Archer and Wiley draw particularly from the pragmatists, Mead and

Peirce in particular, and affirm that the internal conversation is a location of freedom (Wiley 1994) or agency (Archer

2003), in which one's actions are not scripted in advance by external forces. However, both also point out that the

internal conversation can, at some level or another be observed and studied (though Archer cautions against putting too

much weight on this introspection). For both, the internal self is not merely unitary, but is able to speak and to listen.

For Archer, both the subject and object of the internal speech are simultaneous—one is truly speaking to oneself, and

the self, though unitary, can be analytically described as having a past, conditioning self (the me), that influences a

present, speaking self (the I), which in turn affects a future self (the You), that will speak in time. In this conversation,

society enters as the object of discussion, because our projects must take into account our embeddedness in society

(Archer 2003: 129). Wiley describes the internal conversation as being "structured like" language, a discussion to which

the I-present-sign speaks to the You-future-interpretant about the Me-past-object, but in a conversation that also has

room for temporary visitors with whom one enters into dialogue, permanent visitors who have become so integral to the

internal conversation as to become constitutive of a generalized other, and a largely untheorized unconscious realm

(Wiley 1994:40-59). He also holds to a notion, derived from Mead that the "I" is always a blind-spot, unable ever to truly

see itself, but that the "I" is always the speaker, though it may speak for the "me," the "you," or any other party to the

conversation. Chalari, following Archer, seeks to draw together the ideas of internal and external conversation through

the idea of mediation—acts of translation and selective transmission between the internal and external conversations,

externalizing internal conversations and internalizing external ones (Chalari 2009). Both Archer and Wiley make nods

toward emotion, recognizing that internal conversation is not the only constituent of internal life. However, neither truly

factors emotion into the conversation, leaving this aspect of the inner life largely unexplored, along with relationships

between the reflexive, dialoguing self and the habitus, and with biological factors (Elder-Vass 2005, Chalari 2009).

Building on Goffman's conceptualization of frames, this paper argues that framings of the situation are implicit in all of

human action, but are rarely directly expressed. They reflect a judgment about the interpretation of completed action, as

well as reflection on the likely short-term (i.e. next conversational turn) emotional and behavioral reactions of other

participants in the situation, as well as a vision of a future outcome. These frames contain both emotional routines for

the self, and expected emotions from the other (feeling rules), as well as echoes of expected emotions in both the short-

term focus, as well as long-term outcome. These frames are expressed and communicated through the visual and verbal

mechanisms of both internal and external communication, and an agentic "I" can ally with the internalized expressers of

different framings of the situation, and choose which of these to express externally in verbal or para-verbal action in the

intersubjective realm of the "primary frame."

In this paper, then, I apply the above reconceptualization of frame analysis to the external conversation recorded both

by the 911 call and reduced to prose in Tuff's memoir, and to the insights into her internal states that Tuff records.

Data and Methods

As mentioned above, Tuff and Hill's case is striking in the type of data that is available about the case. The two primary

texts that I analyze from the event are the 911 recording, posted by the Atlanta Journal Constitution, of which I

produced a close transcription, following conversation analytic conventions. The recording runs for 24:38, and produced

a transcript of 19 pages. The audio recording also had significant gaps of blank space in it when the 911 operator was on

hold, or the action in the room too quiet to register on the phone receiver. Utterances by Hill in particular were hard to

make out, as he was far from the telephone for most of the conversation. There are a number of important moments

where his utterances could not be made out clearly, even after applying a static filter to the audio file.

I also prepared an audio-visual file, upon discovering the security camera video, splicing together the sound from the 911

call with the video from security cameras. The security camera in particular aided in triangulating the content and timing

of events from the time that Hill entered the room to the time that Hill called 911. However, the security camera footage

had been clipped, with most of the content between Hill's first episode of shooting at the police and his surrender

removed. However, the available video was very useful in constructing a start-to-end account of the situated interaction.

For places where I could not make out what one or another of the participants were saying in the tape, I referenced the

equivalent passage in the book, *Prepared for a Purpose*, written by Antoinette Tuff with the help of Alex Tresniowski, and

published on January 21, 2014, five months after the event. However, some utterances could not be verified, as the

dialog had been edited for conciseness in the transition from audio to narrative prose. While specific utterances could

not always be put together, the action going on and Tuff's perceptions in some of these gaps can be filled in from the

foreground passages of the book, which served as my next major source of data. In line with the micro-sociological

perspective of highlighting the foreground, I opted to start by analyzing just the passages of the book in the foreground,

introducing background material only if it entered into her consciousness or was highlighted in her speech in the

moment. The descriptions of the events in the school and the biographical sections were interwoven in the book as a

whole. Of the 232 pages of the book, about 70 dealt specifically with the events of August 20, 2013, with the remainder

filling in biographical detail about Tuff's life.

The data in the book, of course, must be treated somewhat differently than the transcript of the audio, taking into

account the fact that it is a stylized account, and that the writing voice is that of Alex Tresniowski, not Antoinette Tuff,

although speaking about his involvement in the writing process, Tuff said in an interview:

> "I had a excellent person who actually um.. um.. wrote it for me, which was actually, um.. Alex, and Alex was
>
> a.. a great writer, and so even with the emotions behind it, he helped to actually get me to pull out everything
>
> we need to have done in the book." (WSB-TV 2014)

Tresniowski never hints in the prose of the book that anyone other than Tuff is writing, leaving the reader to discuss this

by other means, if at all. He has a history as an author, having worked as a human-interest writer for *People* magazine,

and has collaborated on a number of other books telling the stories of people overcoming hard circumstances, often

with Christian themes, including *When Life Gives you Lemons* (2000), *An Invisible Thread* (2012), *Waking up in Heaven* (2013),

What it Takes (2014), as well as a true crime book, *The Vendetta* (2009).[3] However, it would be a mistake to say that he has

singlehandedly provided this reading of her life story, as Tuff has consistently rejected a reading of the situation in which

she is the hero, instead saying that God did it, and saying that it was not of her doing. She has tended not to volunteer

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[3] From Alex Tresniowski's author profile on Amazon.com.

information about her family situation beyond saying that she talked about her husband leaving her and raising a

multiple disabled son to Michael Hill, unless prompted by interviewers, so it may be that part of the framing of the book

as a tale of triumph out of struggle relates to the type of story Tresniowski prefers to tell. As for the first-person details

in the book, while it is impossible to be sure whether they were experienced exactly as described, Tuff in the short

passage credited him with eliciting her emotions well, and absent evidence to the contrary, it is more productive for us to

tentatively (and falliably) assume that the emotions he writes into the story are those he elicits from Tuff, though

perhaps more in the language of his experience, or of the conventional metaphor of mass-market writing than in her

own idiolect.

In addition to these documents, the Atlanta Journal and Constitution also released video from security cameras inside

the front office of the school and just outside the front door of the school where the exchange took place, albeit a video

from which a large piece of the interaction had gone missing. Tuff is out of view of the camera for most of the video,

and Hill is too far from the camera for his facial expressions to be clearly seen, but his larger body language, movements

around the room, and gestures can be seen. The video does serve as an important method of triangulating the opening

to Tuff's story before she called 911, though, and shows Hill preparing to enter the hallway toward the classrooms

multiple times.

I also consulted news reports from the days of the attacks, listened to interviews conducted with Tuff in the days

following the attempted shooting, and consulted case notes from the officers of the DeKalb County Police Department,

which were useful in providing background on Michael Hill.

Results

A careful, step-by-step analysis of the available texts and audiovisual materials produced by this interaction, and recorded

by security camera and telephone, described in a book by one of the participants and a sympathetic interlocutor, and

described in police files affirms the face-validity of the existing synthesized theory of school rampage shootings, with the

caveat that the version of Routine Action Theory (Cohen and Felson 1979) employed to describe the contingencies

involved in the final stage of violent performance be understood as a vast simplification of a complex micro-sociological

process with contingencies at the intra-individual (i.e. agentic), and intersubjective (i.e. situational) levels of

consciousness.

In this case this process can be defined as a conflict between two participants in the internal and external conversations of Antoinette Tuff and Michael Hill, ranging across the attention-action space of Tuff's subjectivity, the intersubjective attention-action space shared by Tuff and Hill, and the attention-action space of Hill's subjectivity. These participants, each of whom occupies a role akin to a temporary or permanent visitor (Wiley 1994:54-55) in the internal conversations of Tuff and Hill, act over the course of an approximately 29 minute interaction to bring to dominance particular emotional-imaginative-linguistic framings of the situation in the subjectivities of Tuff and Hill, and in the intersubjective space of the conversation between them. Each similarly has particular strategies of action that flow from these emotional-imaginative-linguistic framings, which get implemented more and more consistently as the "I-present-sign" allies with the "visitor" in question, and ultimately results in a non-violent de-escalation when one of the "visitors'" successfully implements an emotional-imaginative-linguistic framing of the situation that favors a surrender to the police, growing out of an emotion blend of hope and a sense of being loved, an imagined future of medical attention rather than death or long incarceration, and a language-use strategy based in the use of eliciting questions to guide frame transitions rather than imperative orders.

Argument 1: Face-Validity of the Synthesized Theory of School Rampage Shooters

In as far as the documentation related to the case is concerned, Michael Hill's trajectory towards a school rampage shooting is consistent with the synthetic argument laid out above.

Evidence that Hill was *socially alienated* was present, but somewhat limited. Hill's lawyer stated that Hill had an abusive father, and that his mother had been found frozen in the backyard in what appeared to be a suicide (11Alive Staff 2014), and his brother Timothy estimated that he had not seen him since early 2011. In December of 2012, Hill had been placed on probation for threating to kill his brother (Winter et al. 2013). Hill had been diagnosed at around the age of six or seven with ADHD, and had subsequently also been diagnosed with Bipolar and Schizophrenic disorders and had been on medication since that time. (Winter et al. 2013, Kershaw 2013, 11Alive Staff 2014)   He had later lived in the home of his pastor, Pastor Knotts, but had eventually been kicked out for reasons not cited in the police statement summary (Paden 2013). Following this, he had moved into an apartment with two people from church, which had caught fire in March or April of 2013. Lung damage from the fire sent him to the hospital, and he later moved into the home of one Ms. Edwards and her boyfriend Mr. Lewis, who attended the same church that he did (Paden 2013).

The data consulted does not delve clearly into Hill's *fantasy life*, but Edwards testified to the police that "a while ago," had said that he "hated DeKalb County Police and that he wanted to have a shootout." (Paden 2013) No data was found about Hill's current employment status or income at the time, so the social isolation documented above is the only data from which to draw conclusions about Hill's socioeconomic status or other measures of social strain. Another way for a future investigator to test this would be to read the theory backwards, and see if Hill had trouble being taken seriously, or had a frustrated desire for fame, given his initial cries of "This is serious, this is not a joke," (Tuff 2014: 21) and his demand for a news helicopter (Tuff 2014).

The primary *cultural inputs* suggested by the synthetic theory above include violent media programs, hegemonic masculinity, and access to firearms, each of which could be appropriated into a fantasy life to enhance the affective power of the fantasies Edwards told the police that Hill "would watch COPS a lot," (Paden 2013), while Ms. Graves, whom Hill called from his cell phone during the shooting, in another testimony testified that Hill "sent her pictures of an AK-47 and duffle bag filled with ammunition that he just got" on the day of the shooting, and that "she told [Hill] that he did not need a gun. [Hill] replied to her stating 'if I have to go to war, I'll be ready,'" (Findlay 2013). The police investigation into the weapon, which strongly resembled an AK-47, showed that it belonged to a friend of Hill's roommate, Lewis, with two narratives about how it came to be in Hill's possession. Hill testified that the gun had been given to Lewis by Mr. Powell, while Powell claimed that it had been stolen from his house, and that Lewis and Hill had both known about the weapon, since they had helped him move in a few weeks earlier (Davis 2013).

As for *proximal triggers*, the two most likely candidates for triggers include the fact that Mr. Hill claimed he had been off his medicine for Bipolar and Schizophrenic disorders for about a week, (Kershaw 2013), and his fellow resident Edwards stated that on the day before the shooting, upon returning from a probation meeting Hill had called her, "stating that he hated the Police," ostensibly because they "were going to make him come back on [the day of the shooting] to stare at a wall the entire day," because he had "signed in the wrong spot," (Paden 2013).

Tuff's book, Hill's statement, and the transcript of the 911 tape offer clues that suggest that Hill's primary goal was to commit "suicide by cop" in a shootout with the DeKalb police, and that the school shooting aspect of the endeavor was a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. Hill testified that he "woke up and felt suicidal," and that "he accidentally fired the rifle one time inside the school first, and then only shot the weapon at police officers who were outside," and that he "was waiting for SWAT to kill him," (Kershaw 2013). Similarly, Tuff writes that the second statement Hill made upon entering the school was "*We are all going to die today,*" (Tuff 2014:12), testifying not only to

homicidal but also suicidal intent, and that although Hill aimed down the school hallway toward the beginning of the

encounter, he did not fire, for reasons she finds inexplicable (Tuff 2014:35). The security camera footage shows Hill

approaching the door to the teacher's lounge once (00:27), and the door leading toward the classrooms three times, first

at (02:03-02:11), when he approaches the door at a slow pace with the gun dangling downwards by one hand. The

second time is at (05:47-06:03), when he again approaches the door with his gun dangling at his side. He disappears from

view, but the weighted door does not close all the way, and when he returns to the office, the gun is still dangling at his

side. The third time, at (06:28-06:34), he once again approaches the door with his gun at his side, remains partially visible

to the camera with his gun still lowered, then proceeds to walk to the entrance (at 06:38), when he drags a chair to hold

the door open, and exchanges his first volleys with the police. The only time he is seen firing the gun indoors occurs at

(01:11), when he fires at the floor without raising the gun while in the middle of a torso-pivot. He was recovering after

having looked over his right shoulder out the windows at the road in front of the school where the police eventually

congregated. This shot has all the appearances of an accident in the video, a possibility made more likely by the fact,

presented by his attorney, that Hill had never held a gun before. (11Alive Staff 2014). Later in the interaction, Tuff tells

the dispatcher,

        154 AT: okay.

        155   (0.47) he sai:d,

        156   ... he said to

        157   =tell them to back off?

        158   =he doesn't want the ki:ds,

        159   (0.44) He wants the po:lice,

        160   .. so back off,

        161   (0.52) and um.

        162   (0.75) and what else sir?

        163   (1.9)

        164 MH: Tell 'em I don't care if I die,

        165   I got nothin to live for?

However, as we will discuss later, this occurs significantly into the framing transition from the initial fear-death-command framing to the hope-togetherness-elicitation framing that takes place over the course of the interaction, as will be discussed later. Later statements by Hill's attorney similarly state that before this attack, Hill had made nine suicide attempts, and that he had gone into the school intending to be shot by police (11Alive Staff 2014).

Taken together, these data suggest that Hill was in fact largely fulfilled his fantasy of having a suicidal shootout with the police, while he largely did not share the motivations of other school rampage shooters who fantasized about getting revenge on a larger community or specific people through their shootings.

The degree to which the final step of contingency suggested by Madfis and Levin applies depends largely on the interpretations given by the researcher to the terms "suitable targets," "effective guardians," and "motivated offenders," (Madfis and Levin 2013: 94). Viewed broadly, one could argue that in this case Hill acted as an "effective guardian," between Hill, the "motivated offender," and the children, or (given the arguments above), the police, who were his "suitable targets," removing him from the fight before he successfully killed or injured one of his targets or was killed or seriously injured by one of the policemen outside. However, given that Madfis and Levin explicate this statement by saying that there is "an absence of armed officers in the immediate area," (2013:94), this study suggests that the appropriate category rather than "effective guardians," might be "effective interveners." The inclusion of the word "effective" as a descriptor, however, introduces a threat of circularity to the argument, though, since an armed officer could be judged an ineffective guardian or intervener in any circumstance where all other properties of a guardian or intervener were present save success at preventing the shooting. This suggests that the intervening variable needs to be sought not at the level of the individual, but in the properties of the situated subjectivities and intersubjectivities present when all the background conditions are in place for a school rampage shooting.

Argument 2: Polar Emotional-Imaginative-Linguistic Framings

Of the micro-sociological traditions addressing conflict and violence, one of the most successful at dealing with the structure of micro-interactions has been that developed by Collins (2008) and others, including Klusemann (2010, 2012), who adapted the theory to deal with massacres and other atrocities, and Rossner (2011), who applied aspects of the same theory to models of restorative justice. The central mechanism of the theory, which describes conflict as contests of dominance in an emotional attention space, many of which fit the pattern of the 9/11 cockpit fight, which Collins describes as "a struggle of opposing self-entrainments," (Collins 2008: 412). The key difficulties of the mutual-

entrainment/shared-mood versus confrontational-tension/fear model of building solidarity and engaging in conflict is

the difficulty it has in explaining the relationship between the content of utterances, the startling variety of the transient

emotions (over and above the suggested medium-term Emotional Energy), and the persistent question of human agency,

many of which derive from the Goffmanian adoption of ethological technique (Goffman 1971), which requires

observing human behavior "as though" without sound, a technique which has been highly productive for both

Goffmanian and Collinsian theory. However, this approach leaves open a significant explanatory blind spot—I suggest

that it is the semiotic blind spot—in the idea of violence as "a struggling of opposing self-entrainments," in attempting

to explain just why it is that these entrainments are seen by those caught up in them as irreconcilable. Or why it is,

making the argument more concrete, that though the conversation recorded in the transcript here largely follows the

principle of turn-taking, albeit with pauses much longer than the usual 0.1-0.3 second micropauses between turns, the

vocal qualities of both parties display raised volumes and pitches, and at the end of the interaction Tuff says, (with her

voice breaking):

817 AT: (0.94) I'ma tell you something babe,

818   I [BR ain't never been so scared BR]

819   =[BR in all the days of my life. BR]

To deal with this, I invoke the Goffmanian concept of "frames" of action, conceptualized broadly as definitions of

"What are we doing right here and now" (Goffman 1975). I suggest that the more semiotically oriented acts of framing

can (and should eventually) be brought together with the Wiley's neo-pragmatist theory of internal conversation,

Hochschild's concept of emotion work, and a robust conceptualization of imagination and envisioning, perhaps similar

to Robertz' view of fantasy invoked here. Once again, this work remains to be done systematically. For the moment, I

use these concepts more awkwardly together, describing a *framing of the situation* that includes the *feeling rules* prescribed for

the parties to the interaction, the *envisioned future* that each party to the interaction is supposed to anticipate, and the *type of

speech act* deemed most appropriate to that frame. These Emotional-Imaginative-Linguistic framings (EIL framings, for

conciseness), I suggest, should be observable in texts representing both internal and external conversation.

Having defined the concept, I suggest that in the interaction centering on the dialogue between Tuff and Hill, there is a

7-stage structure (albeit one with somewhat fuzzy boundaries) starting from the beginning of the extract, with

hegemonic forms of two EIL framings showing up in stages 2 and 6, and conflict between these two major EIL

framings and a few minor or transitional EIL framings in the other stages. I will describe the two major EIL framings as they appear in their hegemonic forms in sections 2 and 6 here, then proceed to describe their combinations in argument 3 below, connecting these to the larger "strategies of action" and the concept of "visitors" in the internal conversation in argument 4, and discussing the construction of these "visitors" in argument 5.

Section 2 of the extract begins very nearly at the beginning, as the transition into it is remarkably quick. In Tuff's narrativized account, it begins with "What changed it all were his eyes. . ." (Tuff 2014:21), and absent audio for this segment of the combined audio-video clip, it is best regarded as starting at about (00:10), when Hill opens his bag and pulls out a gun. Tuff's reaction cannot be seen, so for want of a better indicator, I suggest that Belinda's action of standing up is the best proxy to help us recognize the moment when Hill's definition of the situation takes control not just of the visible/audible intersubjective space, but also demands hegemony of Tuff's and Belinda's inner worlds. The key elements of this EIL include:

Feeling rules: Both sides of the interaction are deadly serious (Tuff 2014: 21), but the interaction is bifurcated. One side of the bifurcation is angry, enraged, energetic, agitated, impatient, and loud, while the other is consumed by shock, terror, and dread of the one, and with accompanying weakness, heaviness, shaking, and paralysis. Both sides are serious, and ease is inappropriate (Tuff 2014:39).

Envisioned Future: The envisioned future is inevitable. Death is coming for all, (Tuff 2014:21), but the ones on the angry/energetic side of the divide are its master. They wield the instruments of death by which it will come to some, and be invoked upon their makers. There is nothing that can be done or said that can change this. "*He's going to kill Russ*," Tuff is recorded as thinking, "*and then he's going to kill the children. This is how it would begin.*" (Tuff 2014: 23). Before this, the will of the empowered will be done automatically, quickly without thought or question.

Appropriate Types of Speech Act: Commands are to be given, from the angry and energetic, to the weak and fearful, from the bringers of death to those fated to die. These commands should be loud, delivered in clipped syllables. "Tell them to stop moving!" (Tuff 2014:35), and "Go! . . . Go now!" (Tuff 2014:54). Those about to die, the weak, the paralyzed shaking ones are to be silent as they obey these commands. It is already the beginnings of her assault on this EIL that enables Tuff to repeat Hill's words after him, telling Lou to "Do what he says . . . Go." Lou and Belinda, however, can only speak their questions in the silence of a worried look that said, "Is it okay to leave you here?" (Tuff 2014: 54).

Section 6 of the extract begins very close to the close of the action, and starts just after Hill apologizes over the school intercom.

Feeling Rules: Joyful surprise, hope excitement, a sense of "okay," patience, affirmation, and calmness, "My heart leapt when he said it . . ." (Tuff 2014:147), is appropriate, as is the excitement in the passage below:

678 AT: (1.05) oh for real,

679   .. ribbon week,

680   =so you was actually in there,

681   =doin all of that with them?

682   (0.90) oh how awesome.

683   (0.60) so that means,

684   .. I- I seem to-

685   .. so that means,

686   =I've seen you before this.

687   (1.38) O:h o:kay,

688   (1.04) y'all played them drums and stuff,

689   =real good.

Patience, too, is appropriate, which Tuff asks the dispatcher for in the passage below:

545   okay,

546   = he wants to drink his bottle of water,

547   = so let him drink his-

548 MH: .. x-x

549   (1.16)

550 AT: let- let him get it together,

Envisioned Future: The future in section 6 is one which is at least apparently open, and it is this open-ness that creates room for surprise. Yet there are definites about it—it is a future in which no-one gets hurt, in which those who threaten

to kill are not hated for it, (Tuff 2014:148). It is a future that is open to creativity. It is certain that Hill will surrender, but it is left to Hill himself to volunteer either to go out with his hands up, or to lay on the floor with his hands behind his back. It is, however, most importantly a future that is shared—one in which, though Hill may be on the floor, Tuff is sitting beside him, keeping an eye on the gun and advocating for him with the police.

Appropriate Types of Speech Act: The key type of speech act here is the question, in its elicitative and directive forms, in which action is proposed, but feedback is invited. It is both,

      490 AT: =d'you want to leave it right here?

and

      595 MH: (0.58) is it okay if I,

      596   ... take my belt off?

Speech acts in which one uses gentle imperatives for patience with another have a place here, and imperatives that help coordinate an action already agreed,

      517   =put all that over here,

      518   =so that way they won't see it,

      519   =okay?

      520   ...come over here

      521   =and put it over here on this-

as do statements of possibility—could-statements and the like—and affirmations of affection and pride in another's accomplishment. Volunteering comes quickly, as when Tuff volunteers to call someone for Hill, (lines 556-559), or Hill volunteers information about the ammunition in his pocket (line 584).

Argument 3: The Domination of Subjective and Intersubjective Spaces

These two sections are easier to describe than the others, because one or another of the framings is hegemonic. Not homogeneous—the interruption by Lou threatens to dismantle the work Hill has done to make section 2 "serious," while forms of despair continue to arise in Hill, despair not of life, but of acceptance, and echoes of fearful agitation crop up in the midst of the calm creativity Tuff fosters. However, describing these periods when one or another EIL

framing is hegemonic is important to be able to see the movement and struggle between the EIL framings that takes

place during the other 5 periods of the interaction.

Section one is the shortest, and describes the brief period in which Tuff is not yet convinced that things are serious. She

describes it as a moment before the danger she was in struck her. She writes that her first though on seeing Hill's gun

was, "*Is this a joke? Some kid with a fake gun playing a prank? Or maybe a real gun, but he's just fooling around?*" (Hill 2014: 21). It

is a moment of ambiguity, before her attention is dominated by the emotion in Hill's face and the yelling, gesturing, and

waving of guns that allowed him to dominate the scene, activating the automatic sense-function of the emotions

(Hochschild 2003 [1983]). As he does so, the image of the cosmological, all powerful dealer of death grows in Tuff's

mind in a vein guided by her Biblical ontology, from a quotation from John 10:10: that "The thief cometh not, but for to

steal, and to kill, and to destroy," (Tuff 2014:11) into a "demon [that] has come to *steal, kill, and destroy*," (Tuff 2014:11),

and finally into "death itself" (2014:37). However, as the framing of a primal force of destruction is thrust into her

subjectivity, the "I," the speaker of the internal conversation asks, "God, what are we going to do now?" (Tuff 2014:13).

In the pronominal subject of this utterance is laid the base commitment that grows in section three: a unity between

God as visitor in Tuff's internal dialog[4] and her speaking "I". The other framing active in section one, that of a school

staff member talking to "*some kid*" also steps into the speaking position to chide Hill, "They're just doing what you told

them," (Tuff 2014:23), to order him to "come back in here," (Tuff 2014:35), and to ask him, "What is your name?" (Tuff

2014:36), though she received no response.

Section three of the interaction describes the transition that takes place in what, for want of a better term, I refer to as

Hill's subjectivity—that plane in which envisioning, emotion work, and internal conversation all take place in an

integrated process. One of the "I"'s first acts as Hill's EIL framing came rushing into her consciousness was to invoke

God-as-visitor, while fitting the primal power of evil that Hill seemed to be trying to embody into the category of thief,

then demon. An important transition in this immanent ontology of evil takes place shortly, though, as Tuff revises her

statement to say that "the demon inside him was there to steal, kill, and destroy," (Tuff 2014:37).

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[4] Wiley envisioned this possibility, when he wrote "But for people who strongly believe in a personal God, he can
be a quite central and permanent visitor. Some talk dialogically with God, making him not only a passive
(eavesdropping) visitor but a speaking participant." (Wiley 1994: 65, Rosenblatt, Meyer, and Karis, 1991, and see
Luhrmann 2012)

Next may have another Biblical quotation (if it is not a later interpolation by Tuff or Tresniowski), "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, [Proverbs 18:21]" (Tuff 2014:37). Each of these, if the narrative is sufficiently true to experience, brings with them a seed of the section six EIL framing—the possibility of hope for Hill, since he was not himself the demon or death incarnate, the open future in which words, not primal destruction, had power over life and death, and simultaneously a strategy, to "speak life into [the] situation." (2014: 37). The other core emotion, the first one to filter from her internal conversation into the intersubjective space, she describes growing out of the images of stillness and affirmation of fearing no evil when God is present in Psalm 23. On this base, and on the basis of the togetherness in "God, what are *we* going to do now?" Tuff affirms "God was going to do the talking for me." (Tuff 2014:38) The unity of co-presence becomes the unity of univocality as the elusive "I" at the podium becomes the mouthpiece for the "visitor."

The same invocation of the powerful visitor, she writes, became an effective displacer of the sensation of bladder discomfort, before she sought to engage the gunman, asking his name. However, in section three, the EIL framing that was being built remained largely in her own subjectivity, spilling out primarily in the calm, measured pace that she used as she carried out Hill's orders, calling the police and alerting the news of Hill's intentions. The intersubjective space seems to have remained sufficiently consistent with Hill's framing for him to be ready to step out and attempt to assert his dominance over the police.

A full play-by-play is still beyond the scope of this paper, but Tuff notes that after Hill returned from his first exchange of fire with the police, he went through a ritual of reloading his gun, a moment of interiority that Hill uses to surreptitiously interact with a teacher through her phone and looking up a phone number for the channel 2 news on the computer. [5] After Hill finished reloading, there occurred a banal exchange that stands out in Hill's mind as a turning point in the encounter. It began when the bladder discomfort, suppressed earlier, arose once again, more insistently. At

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[5] There is some ambiguity about what happens next, however, as Tuff's book places Hill's conversation with Ms. Graves (Tuff 2014:78-80) next in the sequence of events. However, police records indicate that Hill entered the building at approximately 12:51 PM, and that Graves received a call from him at approximately 1:09 PM. The position (17:30 – 18:30) in the audiovisual recording overlaps with one of a number of long silences in the audio file that would fit into the book's narrative after the conversation about Officer Scott and before the phrase "She sounds like she loves you a lot." (Tuff 2014: 118). This makes much more sense, as Graves was "like Hill's second mother" while Officer Scott was his probation officer. Meanwhile, the beginning of the next frontstage passage in the book begins with "The gunman had fully armed himself with loaded magazines. . ." (Tuff 2014:97), a passage that fits much more closely with Tuff's image of Hill reloading while she sought the phone number for the local news. For all these reasons, I assume this re-ordering to be the correct one.

this the book says, "The lyrics of an old Shirley Caesar gospel song began jumping in and out of my head. The song is

called "Hold My Mule," . . . [meaning] Lord give me some restraint. . . . I sang along with her in my mind, which helped

me forget how much I had to go to the bathroom. But only some of the time. . . . While the gunman was huffing and

puffing and pacing, I calmly asked . . . 'Can I go to the bathroom?'" (Tuff 2014:97-98). After some consideration, she

gets an answer in the affirmative, but finds herself doubly paralyzed, first by weakness in her legs, but secondly by the

recognition that Hill might follow her into the hallway. She states in the book that "Basically I went from knowing I had

to go the bathroom . . . to knowing there was no way I could go. I had to stay in the front office, with the gunman. . . . I

had to keep the gunman here, away from the kids," (Tuff 2014: 99). However, she notes that it was with the tiny hint of

human compassion that was the permission to go to the bathroom that she realized that "some kind of bond was

forming between us," (Tuff 2014: 100). Almost immediately, however, he then propped the front door open again with

a chair, stepped out, and began exchanging shots with the police.

It was during this exchange that the EIL framing that had been growing within Tuff's mind reached full expression, and

burst from her subjectivity to the intersubjective space between her and Hill, marking the transition from section three

to section four. The passage is worth quoting at length:

> The gunman was on a rampage now. He was firing his rifle through the front door, shooting and shooting and
>
> not stopping. Endless explosions were ringing in my ears, and then the sound of more gunshots, these ones
>
> coming from outside, and blasting through the entrance doors, shattering the glass, and the gunman kept
>
> shooting, and this was the showdown now, the final showdown, the end of it all, the bullets fling so bad, the
>
> Devil coming to claim his souls.
>
> For some reason I did not duck when he fired this time. I did not crouch beneath my desk. Instead I just sat
>
> there, calmly watching the gunman shoot. Maybe I was just in shock. But I felt like I had an obligation to watch
>
> him, to keep an eye on him and not abandon him in his darkest moment. . . .
>
> And what was there [in my head] came from God, because it sure didn't come from me. Even though I was
>
> terrified, even though the shooting nearly stopped my heart, even though seeing the gunman shot down was
>
> probably the best thing I could have hoped for, that is not what was in my head.
>
> Instead I thought, *This is about saving his soul, too.*

(Tuff 2014: 112)

Another particularly dramatic passage of internal dialogue, originally located earlier in the text of the book cites a further

piece of internal dialogue that from its content, and its position relative to other foreground passages,[6] I suspect was

actually lifted from here. Beginning in the shadow of death, it seems to form a battle cry:

> I am standing in the shadow of death and all around me is darkness and chaos and in the midst of it all I
>
> think, *"No, it cannot be this way. We must not die today, we must survive. We must go home to our families, we must kiss our*
>
> *loved ones. We must live so that we can serve God.*
>
> I think, *The Devil shall lay no claim to our souls this day."*
>
> (Tuff 2014: 73)

By this point, the cosmological theme is fully expressed, and brings with it a rebellion ("*No*"), a sense of linked fate (. . .

we . . .) with the shooter, a determination to live *(. . . must not die . . .),* a desire for family evoking the sensuous

embodiment of a kiss, and a more abstract devotion to God, before laying before the eyes of the listening future self the

enemy to be opposed, not Hill but the Devil, the battleground and prize to be won (. . . *our souls. . .),* and a

determination to do so in the here and now, *(. . . this day.)*

Her description of the climactic shootout continues:

> The gunman kept shooting. Glass and shell casings were flying everywhere. I knew if the gunman stayed by the
>
> door he would soon be dead. Maybe that was how it had to be. But maybe not. Maybe God had another plan.
>
> "Sweetheart, come back in here," I said, as loud as I could so the gunman could hear me over the shooting.
>
> "Bullets don't have no names. And these bullets are gonna kill me and you. I need you to come back in here,
>
> and it's gonna be you and me, and we will work this thing out together."

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[6] This passage, which originally appears at the beginning of chapter 5, would fall between a passage about Hill reloading and the passage in which Tuff contacted the news station. The only grounding in external conversation that this dramatic passage gets is the idea of standing "in the shadow of death," a descriptor that matches this climactic shootout much more exactly than its original location between two relatively banal events. Similarly, the language of the devil coming to claim souls, and the idea that "our" souls must be saved bear greater kinship to the thoughts Tuff is recorded as having during the second shootout, and the words Tuff is recorded as using to call Hill back in.

The gunman heard what I said. All of a sudden he stopped shooting. The shooting from outside stopped, too.

The gunman kept low and came back into the office and closed the door behind him. He was bleeding from

his right elbow, and he was angry because he was bleeding. . . .

(Tuff 2014: 113)

Here, then, is the transition to section four, in which the EIL framing that began with the invocation of God-as-visitor

in a moment of terror united with the speaking "I" in the intersubjective world to produce an utterance. In this

utterance, the command was prefaced with a term of affection, possibly drawing in the earlier EIL framing of Hill as a

joking student from section one. After a pithy reminder that he was putting more lives than just his own in danger, Hill

developed the hint of a bond she had experienced earlier, magnified through her recognition of Hill as a fellow soul to

be saved, into four clauses strung together emphasizing their shared fate through sheer pronominal repetition: . . . *me and*

you. I need you . . . you and me . . . we . . . together.

Hill retreated, the confrontational tension-fear of the encounter perhaps adding a push to the pull of Tuff's words. Tuff

describes him as "agitated," "full of crazy adrenaline," "out of breath," and "unstable on his feet," as well as "out of

control," and "upset with his bleeding." The hegemony of his earlier EIL framing of himself as a deity of destruction

seems to have crumbled not just in the intersubjective space, where he found that though he gave permission for Tuff to

go, she did not. We have no way to tell whether he read this as a challenge to his situational dominance to be

compensated by once again embodying the demon of destruction, or as an act of loyalty laying the groundwork for later

cooperation, or as an inconsequential act not worth considering. What we do know is that he returned from the firefight

significantly changed, with two major EIL framings battling back and forth for control of Hill's "I," one of regret and

despair, the other seeking still to reclaim his lost situational dominance. Meanwhile, for Tuff, the EIL framing described

above dictates most of her actions from this point forward, as she seeks to communicate affection, communicate hope

for an open future over his despair in an inevitable one. Throughout, she also acts as a mediator with the police, a

unique position that ought not to be underestimated. In a mediating position, one allows two different parties to speak

as visitors through their "I", creating with each a solidarity that the mediator understands their position, and yet

sufficient distance from the other that there is no need to "shoot the messenger," a descriptor surprisingly apropos for

this circumstance. This mutually coordinated behavior with Hill, on the one hand, and with the dispatcher on the other,

seems to have given her the ability to communicate with Hill by this point in the conversation.

Within Hill, the first EIL framing to show up is one characterized by regret and despair, on the emotional angle, a sense of an inevitable doom, a sense that "This has to end bad," (Tuff 2014:142). However, in tracking Hill's utterances when he is governed by this EIL framing, there is still a sense of movement, perhaps as a result of the continued contact with Tuff's "hope-togetherness-elicitation" EIL framing. He begins with "I know I'm going to die today," (Tuff 2014: 115). Next seems to come a realization that there is a possibility that no-one else has to die, driving his statements about not wanting the kids and evacuating homes (Tuff 2014: 116-117). In the final step before stage five, in which he begins seriously considering Tuff's EIL framing, the inevitable doom comes to be

242   =they're going to lock me up?

243   =for a lo:ng time

The movement is not perfectly linear, however, as he still entertains suicidal ideation, saying "I should just shoot myself" (Tuff 2014:118) about fifteen seconds before asking Tuff to call the probation office in DeKalb County. The characteristic speech-acts for this EIL seem to be largely declarative statements, some confessional, some statements of doom. Rather than orders, permission is given, as when he tells the police,

210 MH:(0.56) tell them,

211   =if they have to,

212   =go on evacuate them ho:mes across there.

213   (0.74)

This alternates with a dominance-based EIL framing in which he still seeks to give orders to the police officers, ordering them to back up, demanding a radio be brought in by an unarmed officer, and threatening to shoot if the officer was armed, issuing a command for the police to stand down again after hearing a loud noise outside. After asking Tuff to call the probation office in DeKalb county (a call about which there is no further evidence to indicate whether it went through or not), Hill put in a phone call to Ms. Graves. In that phone call, according to Graves, Hill

". . . stated that he loved her and that he did not want to ruin her birthday. He then stated that he was going to be dead or in jail. Ms. Graves asked [Hill] why, the suspect said he was going to get into a shoot-out with the

DeKalb Police. [Hill] stated that he was tired. When Ms. Graves asked him what he had done, and where he

was, [Hill] stated that he could not tell her. Ms Graves stated to [Hill] that she was going to call her sister,

Tasha Knotts, and the suspect replied 'so, I don't care.'" (Findlay 2013).

Tuff's memory of the phone call (though she places it at another point of the narrative), is similar in theme, but differs in

content.

"I have done something really bad," he said when someone picked up, "and I know I'm going to have to pay

for it."

The shooter was silent as the other person spoke. I imagine they were asking, "What in the world did you do?"

"I'm at the school," the gunman said. "I'm the person on the news. They're going to kill me because of what I

did. I shot at the police."

I surprised myself by jumping into the conversation.

"No, it's okay, they're not going to kill you," I said. "You didn't harm anybody." I couldn't be sure this was

true, but I said it anyway to try and calm him down.

"You don't understand," he said to me, "I shot at the police."

"That don't make any difference," I said. "You might have shot at them, but you didn't harm no one."

I heard an urgent voice come through his cell phone. Whoever it was sounded frightened and desperate.

"Don't do it!!" they were saying. *"Don't do it!"*

But the gunman wasn't listening. He was drifting off into his own world again.

(Tuff 2014: 78-79)

In both versions of the exchange (which is not recorded on the 911 tape), there is mention of the police shooting, in one

as a threat, in the other as an accomplished fact, and in both there is a sense of inevitability about the consequences of

the act, and a mention of his location. In both, there seems to be some kind of attempt to intervene in the situation,

whether directly by saying "Don't do it," or by threatening to call her sister Tasha Knotts, the wife of Hill's Pastor

Knotts, in whose shared home Hill had lived, and who in a later interview referred to Hill as her adoptive son ("I don't

have the papers, but I have the heart," (Winter et al. 2013)). Both accounts seem to have something of the confessional

to them, and of inevitability regarding the result. Graves' version records Hill's talk about the shooting as a future threat

(Hill's anger-death-command frame), while Tuff records it as a past condition necessitating a future doom (Hill's regret-

doom-confessional frame).

Shortly thereafter, the tape records the following exchange:

334 AT: she sound like,

335   =she loves you,

336   =a lo:t,

337   (7.51 – dead silence)

338 MH: x-x x-x

339 KM: ... you on the phone with a relative?

340 AT: (1.03) y- yes.

341   (0.35) yea-

342   (0.58) what you say sir?

343   he what- you-

344   (3.08 – static)

345   he say,

346   =he shoulda just went to the

347   =mental hospital

348   instead a doin this?

349   (1.56)

350   because he's not on his

351   =medication?

Tuff, once again, seeks to bolster Hill's sense of being loved, and continues to mediate with the police. The key event of

this exchange, however, is the beginning of a new, medicalized framing by Hill. He begins to think of himself as an

unstable person who should have been on his medicine, and who needs to go to the hospital. This quickly submerges

under the regret-doom-confessional frame. However, Tuff seizes on this, recognizing a fit between this and her hope-

togetherness-elicitation frame, as a possible future that does not involve doom. She presents her frame back to him,

(unsuccessfully) eliciting permission to talk to the police and advocate for Hill. Hill responds with a sense of doom, and

Hill contradicts him, saying,

368 AT: No it does matter.

369   (0.94) I can let them know,

370   =that you have no:t tried to harm me.

371   =or do anything with me.

372   =or anything.

373   =if you want to-?

Once again, she repeats the reason for hope, that "no harm" has been done.

Hill comes back with a version of his regret-doom-confessional frame,

374 MH: (?I shot at them, I ?)

Muffled in the tape, Tuff's book includes it as "But I shot at police." (Tuff 2014: 119).

375 AT: (0.56) But that doesn't make any difference,

376   =you didn't hit anybo:dy.

377   (0.52) [s-]

378 MH: [I] don't

379   kno:w that.

380 AT: (0.32) Okay.

381   ... let me ask you this, ma'am,

382 KM: ..mmhmm

383 AT: ..he didn't hit anybody,

384   =he just shot outside the door.

385   =if I walk out there with him?

386   (1.89)

387   If I walk out there with him,

388   ..th- they so they won't shoot him,

389   =or anything like that,

390   =he wants to give his self up,

391   =is that okay,

392   =they won't shoot him?

393 KM: (1.06) Yes [ma'am]

394 AT: [and he say]

395   =he just wanna go to the hospital?

396 KM: (0.71) okay.

Here we see Tuff coming to dominate the intersubjective space with her hope-togetherness-elicitation frame. She presents it to Hill, who finally begins to respond to Tuff's queries, even if only to argue against them. After his protests, where his tone of voice is more distressed than angry, Hill assumes the initiative by presenting an alternative possible future to the dispatcher, determined to demonstrate to Hill that there is a real possible future in which he does not get shot. She then pulls off an extremely risky move, stating "*he wants to give his self up*" in the middle of this presentation. While the first sequence (*if . . . so . . .like that."* of the presentation is safely bound up in an "if" clause, rendering it safely irrealis, this second sequence is ambiguous as to whether the irrealis framing of the previous if-statement should extend to this framing "*if he wants to give his self up*" or whether this is a parenthetical explanatory, and thus necessarily realis, claim, before she proceeds to the question that most properly should have been linked to the first sequence. The ambiguity renders it difficult to challenge, and embedding it in a representation to a third party to whom only she had access, and not Hill directly rendered this first statement of his interest in giving up very difficult (though not impossible) for Hill to challenge. There is a 1 second pause in the tape, and in the book, Hill writes that Hill, who had given her his full attention added, "'I want to go to the hospital,' . . . almost in a whisper." (Tuff 2014:119). Hearing it presented, Hill ratifies it, allowing himself to be led on a pathway from regret to hope, taking an action he says he regretted not doing *"going to the hospital"* and transforming it into an action he hoped would take place in the future.

All of this is done without calculation in the art of speaking, but serves to cement Hill's control of the intersubjective action-attention space. Moreover, this act of imputation and its ratification marks the beginning of the invasion of Hill's subjectivity by the hope-togetherness-elicitation framing, which represents stage five of the interaction.

Not having a detailed narrative of the story from Hill's perspective, we can only trace the effects of this invasion, not observe its process, for the inner world is truly private, and the individual always mediates what goes in or out of it, Chalari argues (2009).

However, it seems that unlike the conquest of Tuff's subjectivity, which was from within, this is a conquest from without. The brief argument back and forth between Tuff and Hill above is critical in that it is the first real conversation they have had, in which Hill is not giving orders, and Tuff is not repeating questions asked her by the voice on the other end of the telephone. They converse, they briefly weigh actions, consequences, and the framing of the situation, and Tuff steps into dominance of the intersubjective space. But more than that has happened. Tuff is inside Hill's phenomenological world, being incorporated as a temporary visitor to his subjectivity. As Hill hears Tuff speak "*he wants to give his self up"* in the outside world, so Tuff-as-visitor speaks these words in Hill's inner world, and he briefly allows Tuff-as-visitor access to his "I", speaking his desire to go to the hospital. Tuff-as-visitor brings the hope-togetherness-elicitation EIL framing into Hill's internal plane of conversation, emotion work, and imaginative envisioning. But just stepping in does not give her dominance of the conversations.

Hill next tells her, "I feel bad . . ." (line 408) and the rest is too muffled to make out. The book renders it "I feel so bad about my life," (Tuff 2014:140) but the number of muffled syllables does not quite correspond to this. It is a return of the regret of his previous frame, but there is not yet any sign of despair. The speech act is an expressive, closely related to the confessional, but without necessarily incorporating the self-blame. It is as though the past has been, in some measure accepted, and must now simply be mourned.

Tuff in her book, then traces her next course of action to an inner understanding that "I had a weapon I could use to push back at the enemy. It was the only weapon I had, but, in this situation, it was a good one. . . My weapon was compassion." (Tuff 2014:141) It is unclear whether the verse of scripture she quotes next actually came to mind in the moment, or if it was a retrospective explanation of where the idea of compassion as a tool came from: "To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak, I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (1

Corinthians 9:22). She writes, "So it fell to me to become as weak so I might gain the weak. It fell to me to show compassion to the gunman." (Tuff 2014:141).

And Hill was weak here. Situationally, he had lost his dominance. Tuff's book states that his "shoulders were slumped and his body was listless. He wasn't pacing anymore. He seemed far away. He looked like he could no longer handle the pain and torment he felt. Whatever fury he came in with seemed gone now." (Tuff 2014:142).

Tuff responded to Hill's expression of "bad feeling" with a future-oriented contradiction, and an identification with him. Tuff-outside and Tuff-as-visitor said, affectionately,

> 410 AT: well don't feel bad baby,
>
> 411   =my husband just left me
>
> 412   =after thirty-three ye:ars.

She claimed a pain like his, remembering her own attempted suicide several months before. Hill resisted the identification, saying, "But I don't even have anyone," (Tuff 2014:142) Again, Tuff contradicted, but in line with her EIL frame, she emphasized their togetherness, and presented once again the difficulties of her own life as grounds for common feeling. (Tuff 2014:142). Hill protested one last time that "This has to end bad," and was met with a third contradiction, framed in affection. "No it doesn't baby . . . This is all going to be well." (Tuff 2014: 142).

It is then that Hill takes his first creative action, seemingly guided by the last vestige of his regret-doom-confessional frame transmuting into a hope-togetherness-elicitation frame, yet still acted out as a command. The feeling of regret combines in this action with an act of togetherness, in which he and Tuff are sufficiently united as to allow her to apologize on his behalf, yet the speech act is an imperative. But it is without the force of the earlier imperatives, offered so quietly that the 911 recording only picks it up as muffled syllables (line 443).

The outer-Tuff and Tuff-as-visitor step over to the intercom, and speak, on behalf of Hill,

> 478 AT: (3.02 – static) everybody, this is a-
>
> 479   this is still a continuous lockdo:wn
>
> 480   (0.98) now he wants to let everybody know that he is sorry,
>
> 481   (0.49) he does not want to ha:rm anybo:dy,
>
> 482   (0.59) everybody stay in place.
>
> 483   (0.64) till the lockdown is over with.

The next words we hear from Hill show that his speaking, creative "I" has adopted the hope-togetherness-elicitation frame, as he asks, "What do they want me to do with the gun?" (Tuff 2014: 147)

Section six, noted above, marks the time of maximal cooperation and positive feeling between Tuff and Hill, though it still takes work for Tuff to maintain that feeling—the underlying sense of terror remains, as we shall see. Throughout section six, there are recurrences of Hill's other framings, in the form of isolated speech acts, like

> 559 MH: (0.31) (? Everyone is going to hate me ?)
>
> 560 AT: (1.23) okay.
>
> 561   (0.31) we not gon' hate you baby.
>
> 562   (0.41) it's a b- good thing that you-
>
> 563   .. that you givin' up,
>
> 564   .. but we not gon' hate you?
>
> 565

And

> 647 MH: (1.79) (? I just want to die, ?)
>
> 648   (? a sudden death. ?)
>
> 649 AT: (0.51) no::, you don't want that.
>
> 650   (0.32) you gon' be okay.

In both of these cases, Tuff is quick to contradict then reaffirm him like a teacher comforting a child, telling him that he will not be hated, that he will be okay (a word that Tuff and the dispatcher use to open and close almost every exchange they have, as though trying to ward off the probability that everything will, in fact, not be okay at all, with the okay-ness being contingent on a very narrow set of actions.

Section seven is brief, and represents a short period at the end where impatience takes a hold of Hill, and Tuff questions her slowly-developed trust for Hill, resulting in a burst of fear as he reaches into his bookbag for his phone. Realizing that he is just getting a phone, she reassures the police (and perhaps more to the point, herself), talking herself into a state of "okay." Finally, as she catches sight of the police force, she feels confrontational tension/fear building up inside

her, bringing with it once again a fear that Hill will once again seek to become the death-god of the front room of

McNair:

> The sight of them took my breath away. Every nerve in my body felt electric. I looked down at Michael, who
>
> was starting to stir again. If he got up now and saw what I saw, who knows what he would do? It would only
>
> take him a second or two to grab his gun and start shooting. (Tuff 2014:192)

The soldiers swarm in, and Tuff writes, "I can't say I felt relief when the SWAT team came crashing in. If anything, I felt

more fear. I'd never been around so many drawn and loaded weapons in my life, and it was not a comfortable feeling,"

(Tuff 2014:195). Death and destruction still loom nearby, but she is no longer the one holding it back, so as the shouting

settles into a background condition, Hill ceases to do the work of holding back her fear, telling the dispatcher, her voice

breaking, sniffling, and switching briefly into falsetto,

817 AT: (0.94) I'ma tell you something babe,

818   I [BR ain't never been so scared BR]

819   =[BR in all the days of my life. BR]

820 KM: me either,

821 AT: <sniffling>

822 KM: but you did grea:t.

823 AT: [FAL oooooooo FAL] Jesus.

824 KM: .. you did grea:t

825   (4.17 – garbled shouting)

826 AT: Oh,

827   =Go:d.

828   (0.65) (sniff)

829   (4.89) (phhhhhh - 0.81)

830   (1.67) (sniff)

831   (5.01) okay.

Argument 4: Strategies-of-action associated with each visitor

Having thus laid out the key moments of the interaction, and explained them in terms of EIL framings, it remains to note that at a more aggregate level, both God-as-visitor and the cosmological-destruction-as-visitor that Hill seemed to be embodying at the beginning of the interaction battle to claim dominance in the field of attention-and-action that is the social space within and between the two central individuals in the interaction. Each, however, has distinctive strategies for doing so.

The strategies of the cosmological-destruction-as-visitor are the more obvious, the easier to see. The yelling, the screaming, the waving of the gun as both implement and symbol of death, the later symbolism of blood from the wound on Hill's arm, leading him into the contemplation of his own death, and the accompanying regret-death-confession framing. They revolve around enormous dominations of the senses, apocalyptic yet primeval symbols, and the direct acting of one person by means of the inanimate but pre-interpreted world on the body of another, without consultation or respect paid to the subjecthood of the other—acts of physical domination reinforcing a conception of the transcendence and untouchability of the other.

The strategies of God-as-visitor were still acts meant to dominate the space of attention and action, but followed a seemingly counter-intuitive strategy of fearlessness paired with cooperation, even with a killer, building solidarity by representing him to other actors, asking repeatedly for a way into the person's experiential world, eliciting hope for a future of togetherness, and allowing that hope to unite with the speaking, emotion-working, envisioning "I", and thereby transforming intersubjective spaces and the subjectivities of others.

Argument 5: Whence these visitors?

It is important in approaching any theorist to identify where they ascribe agency, and where causality, and a reader approaching in this vein will have noted that I agree with Wiley in ascribing free agency to the "I," but that I take liberties with Wiley's notion that visitors may be partially free (Wiley 1994), ascribing to them much of the causal force in this intersubjective interaction. It remains then to say that these visitors have a pre-history in these subjects. Wiley does not go into much detail in describing how visitors come to be present in another, but I suggest, following Archer, Collier, and Porpora (2004), that it comes from experience, and incorporating Collins' (2004) insight that the emotional efficacy of symbols diminishes over time (though I suggest that what we are dealing with is more akin to Wiley's notion of "visitors" than mere symbols), that these experiences must be habitually reinforced. This resembles the mechanism

reported by Luhrmann (2012) on the basis of extensive fieldwork to describe how American Evangelicals come to sense the presence of God.

Given the lack of background evidence about the life of Michael Hill before this event, it is hard to say much of relevance about where the "visitor" in his mind came from, save to theorize with Robertz (2013), that it comes from active and regular fantasy, reinforced by input from larger violence-glorifying aspects of a shared culture (which may in fact, be largely made up of EIL framings—but this is pure speculation).

However, Tuff theorizes it herself. She writes:

> So why, if I was so terrified, was I able to speak so calmly?
>
> That very morning, in the kitchen of my home, I read Psalm 23—"The Lord is my shepherd . . . he leadeth me beside the still waters." I read the words, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; they rod and thy staff they comfort me." And I read, "Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." The morning before that at the same table, I read those very same words—"I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." And the morning before that, and the one before that, too. I read those words every morning and in this way they seeped into my soul.
>
> (Tuff 2014: 38)

This is no mere backward projection or introduction by Tresniowski, either. In the first pages of the book, she refers to this as *anchoring* herself in the Lord, a phrase that she had used in the interview she gave to the local TV station WSB-TV within a few hours of the event:

> Interviewer: Antoinette, this whole time, what are you thinking?
>
> Antoinette: Well, to be honest with you, I just- My- My pastor, he- he really talked to us about, y'know, um- He just started this teaching on anchoring, and how you anchor yourself in the Lord, and I just sat there and started prayin. I just remembered the teaching and what he actually taught me of how- taught us as the members of church—of how to, y'know, consult people when they're bereaving, and all that, and so I realized at that time, that it was bigger than me. He was really a hurtin' young man, so I just started prayin for him. And then just started talkin to him and just allowin him to know some of my life stories and what was going on with me and that he was going to be okay. And then let him know that he could just give himself up.

(WSB-TV, 2013)

When formal theory and the in-the-moment theory developed by a participant in the situation converge like this, there is little else to add.

Conclusion

As always, there are gaps in the data. While it would have been desirable to have a full recording of everything that went on the room, even this could not have truly illuminated what was taking place in terms of the emotion work being done, internal conversations being held and moderated, and imaginations being envisioned. It would have been preferable to have a full, phenomenological account of the situation from the perspectives of Michael Hill, the dispatcher Kendra McCray, Belinda for the time she was present, Lou while he was present, and to understand what went on in their minds, what influenced them to act in the ways they did, how Hill accounted for the event and its outcome. However, the data available in this case is truly remarkable.

I have written this case, too, in terms that will likely be criticized as insufficiently structural, paying too little attention to why it is that Hill was unable to get medication when his Medicare ran out, or why his Medicare ran out in the first place. Placing this dramatic event at the fore may also be criticized for distracting from the importance of understanding the places of racialization, gendering, and class-stratification on Hill's life that are shared by so many, connecting the background parts of her story that make up the bulk of her book with the life-stories of others. I may be guilty of these things, and can only say that from the point of view of micro-sociology, it is critical to understand the pathways that mediate these larger structural effects at the most minute levels. Furthermore, from the point of view of one who hopes for transformation of these structures of inequality, an understanding of the conditions that at the most micro of levels remind us that the world must not necessarily be as it is are a critical tool for changing it.

I may also be criticized for focusing too heavily on a single exceptional story, getting caught up in or perpetuating media-hype. The first of these, I believe not to be a defect. In the face of a well-defined theory, there is nothing like a good exception on the basis of which to make some judgments about its ability to handle them. As for media-hype, the media attention that this story garnered (which could itself be taken as an object of social inquiry, though I do not choose to do so here) has the benefit of providing the researcher with a plenitude of publicly available audio and visual data. This has proven immensely valuable in this case, but is in fact fraught with the danger of simply going along with the questions

which society more generally is asking about this case—to whit, questions regarding gun control and the mental health system. I will limit my remarks on those subjects to what I can say on the basis of this case.

Tuff was able to intervene in the situation in a way such that no one was killed in the encounter, unarmed, but that the emotional sense of defeat that gave her the opportunity to speak appears directly after the shootout. Bringing sociologically informed insight to questions about what the attack would or would not have been like had guns been illegal for citizens to own in the U.S. would require a very different research design.

As for mental health, I have remained quietly agnostic about how Hill's mental health affected the situation, except to note that had Hill's Medicare not run out, and had he still been receiving his medication, the humiliation he perceived receiving from the probation office the day before the shooting might have been very different. Would this have changed the outcome? This is questionable, since there are other strains that could have created the desire for Hill to actualize his fantasy of dying in a shootout with the police. Preventing this violence on a smaller scale likely would have required Hill to have more relationships deep enough for his fantasy life to become a topic of conversation and influence, increasing the chance that the voice of the primeval-destruction-as-visitor was set off as a voice not to listen to before it became as dominant in Hill's inner conversation, as powerful a worker of his emotions, or as capable of presenting images as it seemingly became.

What then can we learn from the truly dramatic series of events at the Ronald McNair Discovery Learning Academy? Firstly, that the growing consensus around what the major landmarks that a person must pass on the way to becoming a school shooter seem to be reliable in Hill's case. The background condition often starts with a person who is socially alienated, as Hill was during his adolescence, and like many others, he was mentally unstable—though the tendency to diagnose in retrospect, and the sheer number of people diagnosed with various forms of mental disorders should keep us wary about generalizing this proposition. Next, as pressure mounted on his life, he seems to have generated a hatred toward the police and a violent fantasy of dying in a shootout with them, one of a number of fantasies that could lead to an attempted school shooting. He then underwent a triggering event, running out of his medications at a time when he had a number of other stressors in his life, and had an encounter with the police that he perceived as being humiliating, and had cultivated a sense that violence was the means by which to exorcise this humiliation. Finally, he was able to get access to a gun, which either he stole from a friend of a friend, his housemate stole from a friend, or which the housemate's friend gave to the housemate with the intention of committing insurance fraud—I advance no opinion about which of these interpretations is most likely.

However, he was stopped from committing "suicide by cop" through a complex series of interactional moves by which

Antoinette Tuff was able to reframe the situation from one of anger/fear-murder/death-command/silence, to one of

hope/alrightness-togetherness/surrender-elicitation/advocacy. This took place as a "visitor" in Tuff's internal attention-

action field, whose efficacy was the result of daily interactional reinforcement, was able to gain hegemony for this

framing of the situation first in Tuff's attention-action field, then in the intersubjective space of the interaction between

Tuff and Hill, and finally, as Hill began to hold a true conversational exchange with Tuff, inside Hill's own internal

attention-action space, leading him to cooperate with Hill and surrender himself peaceably to the officers of the law.

Further research into thwarted school shootings, however, is clearly called for as a resource to refine the growing

consensus in the area of school shootings, to point out areas of contingency throughout the journey into school

shooting, to identify other landmarks that may not yet have been noted, and to document the process of formation that

gives efficacy to the demonic visitors that seek to seduce the minds of individuals like Hill.

Table 1: Synthesizing theories from Böckler et al. 2013

Article	*explanans*	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
(Heitmeyer et al 2013)	Social Disintegration Theory, Youth Theory, Control Theory	Erosion of Recognition	Inability to take action, Fantasies of omnipotence.	Media and accessible guns make available violent fantasies	A final experience of frustration or loss	Escape from dramatic situation, achievement of illusory immortality
(Newman 2013)	Status competition, Presentation of Self	Social Failure in Adolescent Society	Total institutionalization of small towns—constraints on action (networks, prospects for change, outsider non-solidarity, hegemonic masculinity)	Cultural Scripts/ Strategies of action.	Failure of "taking it" strategies	Inverting the social hierarchy in a burst of aggression
(Madfis and Levin 2013)	Strain Theory, Control Theory, Routine Activities Theory	1: Chronic Strain	2: Uncontrolled Strain		3: Acute Strain	5: Massacre at School – solve problems of damaged identity and tarnished self-worth,

			4: The Planning Stage[7]			Must have targets, no guardians, committed shooter.
(Robertz 2013)	Phantasy, Control Theory, Erosion of Stabilizing Relationships	Dysfunctional Family, (Perceived) Victimization, threats, and exclusion at school	Triggering motives Violent Phantasies from unconscious or consumed fictions	Violent Phantasies from unconscious or consumed fictions	Crisis of collapsing vicious circle.	Acting out phantasies.
		Alienation	External Constraint, Internal Dalliance	Cultural Input	Proximal Trigger	Transcendent Violence

[7] Here Madfis and Levin's stages are in a different order from those of the other theorists with whom they are in dialogue. The ordering is an empirical question, but if it is true that the planning stage is experienced first as fantasy, this would imply that some of the planning stage takes place before the potential shooter has committed to the action, and that it is in this fantasizing that they may become committed to the violent act. This fits better with Heitmeyer's, Newman's, and Robertz' characterization, though not with the more agentic account that Madfis and Levin provide, so for the sake of drawing parallels between the concepts, I have reversed steps 4 and 3, at slight cost to the integrity of their theory. However, another reading of the case materials on which the different theories draw should shed empirical light on this subject. This depth of re-reading, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

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