

# Public Shootings and Narcissism

This morning, a Virginia news reporter and cameraman [were tragically shot dead](#) on live TV by a gunman dressed in black.

Now, [news comes out](#) from Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe that the shooter is most likely “a disgruntled employee of the station.” This means that the attack was probably timed to take place on live TV. And I don’t wish to presume too much here, but this further means that the shooter, like other shooters whose attacks are carried out with the goal of getting public attention, is most likely a narcissist.

I am reminded this morning of the following passage from Christopher Lasch’s *Culture of Narcissism*. According to Lasch, it is one of the hallmarks of the narcissist to have a “fascination with fame”:

*“Notwithstanding his occasional illusions of omnipotence, the narcissist depends on others to validate his self-esteem. He cannot live without an admiring audience. His apparent freedom from family ties and institutional constraints does not free him to stand alone or to glory in his individuality. On the contrary, it contributes to his insecurity, which he can overcome only by seeing his ‘grandiose self’ reflected in the attentions of others... For the narcissist, the world is a mirror.”*

Lasch also describes narcissists as having a “boundless repressed rage”... a rage that sometimes finds outward expression when the narcissist’s “demands are not met”... a rage that can find expression in a violent act that also satisfies the narcissist’s desire for fame.

Let us mourn for the victims of this attack. It is unfortunate

that the loss of their lives most likely came at the expense of one man's narcissism.