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Predictors of varying levels of risks posed by fixated individuals to British public figures

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Abstract

Concerning approaches and communications to the Royal Family and other British public figures are relatively numerous. This paper examines over 2000 such cases logged over a three-year period in the United Kingdom. Using police and health data, the paper conducts a series of bivariate and multivariate analyses to demonstrate the predictors of what types of risk are posed by an individual case (e.g., communicate only, approach, security breach). The results showed that (a) the rates of serious mental disorders are higher among this sample than the general population base rate, (b) approachers were significantly more likely than communicators to suffer from serious mental disorders, (c) approachers were significantly more likely than communicators to have a history of substance use and abuse problems, (d) approachers were significantly more likely than communicators to have a history of violent behavior against property and persons, and (e) the motivations of approachers and communicators significantly differ. The paper concludes with a consideration of the implications for threat assessment and management.

KEYWORDS
approach behavior, assessing risk level, fixated individuals, risk management, threat assessment, threats posed to public figures, violence motivations

Highlights

- The Royal Family and other British public figures regularly experience concerning approaches and communications.
- Approachers were significantly more likely than communicators to have a criminal/violent past.
- Approachers were significantly more likely to display overt mental disorder symptoms.
- Communicators were significantly more likely to hold a resentful agenda or be seeking help.
- Approachers, on the other hand, are more likely motivated by intimacy enmity.
- Communicators more likely felt persecuted and/or had homicidal/suicidal ideation.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, a number of studies analyzing the socio-demographic characteristics and antecedent behaviors of a range of grievance-fueled violent actors have emerged. These include school shooters [1], mass murderers [2], lone-actor terrorists [3], attackers of politicians, public figures and Royal Family members [4,5], workplace shooters [6], and spree shooters [7]. While providing insight into the behavioral trajectory to such violence, their operational utility may be constrained by the fact that they sample on the dependent variable. Only those that successfully committed or attempted to commit such acts of violence are sampled. Others who did not do so, while exhibiting similar vulnerabilities, risk factors and concerning behaviors, are typically omitted, largely because of a reliance upon open-source data.

This paper conducts a series of sub-set comparisons in a sample of over 2000 cases of worrying communications and approaches made to the British Royal Family and other British public figures. Communicators are defined as individuals who made concerning communications to public figures and did not follow them with an approach. Approachers are individuals who made concerning approaches to their intended targets. This is not the first study of its type. For example, similar studies have been conducted on problematic approachers/communicators to the British Royal Family [5], the Dutch Royal Family [8], Canadian justice officials [9], and U.S. Congress members and their staff [10–12]. However, this paper does offer some considerable improvements to the existing knowledge base. For example, the sample size here is far larger than is typical (The above-mentioned studies range in sample size from 86 to 326, except [11] which had a sample of 4387).

This paper makes an additional theoretical contribution to the literature by incorporating insights from criminological studies concerning offender decision-making in the context of risk. We take a hypothesis-driven approach that is atypical of the wider threat management literature. The thinking here is that making approaches toward public figures entails considerable risk to the approacher, given the typically high levels of security surrounding prominent individuals. We posit that a number of offender-, motivation-, and situation-specific predictors linked to accepting risk may account for much of the variance between approachers and communicators.

2 | THEORY

The emergent threat management literature offers four key variables that distinguish approachers from communicators. One focuses on the offender (mental health), and three focus on behavior (the nature, presence, and type of previous communications; previous criminal involvement; and motivational type). This paper suggests several additional variables concerned with the nature of the target, security, and risk, based on our understanding of criminal decision-making.

2.1 | Mental health

A major strand of threat management research consistently highlights the presence and role of mental disorders in aiding and abetting the offender's fixation and concerning behavior toward the public figure. "It has often been assumed that mentally ill assailants… have motives so irrational that they cannot be understood or have no motives other than their illness" [4, p.328]. This is clearly erroneous. Fein and Vossekuil [4] themselves found evidence of mentally ill individuals planning and executing attack-related behaviors as effectively as non-mentally ill actors. Corner and Gill highlight that lone actors diagnosed with mental illness frequently display rational motives and engage in rational and purposive pre-attack behaviors [13]. Borum notes numerous mentally ill lone actors who were capable of sophisticated attack planning [14]. Corner and Gill empirically compared a sample of mentally disordered lone-actor terrorists with a sample of non-mentally disordered lone-actor terrorists [13]. They found that those who were mentally disordered were just as likely (and in some cases more likely) to engage in a range of rational pre-attack behaviors as those who were not.

In comparative studies of communicators and approachers, the nature of the mental disorder tends to discriminate between groups. For example, Adams et al. illustrated that approachers to Canadian politicians were significantly more likely to be psychotic compared with communicators [15]. James et al. demonstrated that approachers were significantly more likely than communicators to possess overt evidence of serious mental illness (e.g., psychosis) [5]. Others found similar results [10–12]. Additionally, Schoeneman et al. found that approachers were significantly more likely to have had previous substance use/abuse problems [12]. Given this evidence base, it is hypothesized that:

2.2 | Previous criminal involvement

In terms of previous criminal involvement discriminating between approachers and communicators, the evidence is mixed. For example, Scalora et al. found that approachers typically had more prior criminal charges than communicators and that these typically related to drugs/alcohol, theft/burglar, assault, and weapons offenses [11,16]. On the other hand, Eke et al. found approachers had engaged in significantly less offending [9]. Scalora's finding is perhaps more rigorous given the difference in sample size between the two studies (>4000 vs. 86). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

2.3 | Previous communications

"Leakage" is a term used for the intentional or unintentional disclosure of planned violence against others [17]. Studies of various grievance-fuelled, violent offenders demonstrate remarkably high levels of leakage. These include studies of school shooters (81%) [18], mass murderers (67%) [19], attackers and approachers to public

figures (63%) [4], and lone-actor terrorists (51%) [3]. However, the numbers who communicate direct threats to the target and later follow-up on them are proportionately quite small. For example, in a victim survey of Canadian politicians, Adams et al. found no relationship between threatening communications and subsequent physical approaches [15].

While a single communication may be a poor risk factor for physical approach, the threat management literature argues that the volume of previous communications may be more important. For example, approachers write more frequently than communicators to a variety of victim groups including celebrity stalkers [20], the British Royal Family [5], United States Congress members [10,11,21], and federal agencies [16]. Given the above evidence, we hypothesize that:

There may also be a case to suggest that the level of effort involved may indicate a greater propensity for more worrying follow-up behaviors. We therefore might expect that correspondence which involves little effort and that can be conducted relatively spontaneously (e.g., email, social media communications) may be less "risky" than those communications that involve a number of steps (e.g., handwriting a letter, placing it in an envelope, and taking it to the post).

2.4 | Motivational types

Studies focused upon school shooters, mass murderers, lone-actor terrorists, and spree shooters typically tend to base their inclusion criteria on the underlying political, social, individual, or psychological motivation behind the violence. In comparison, most studies of public figure communicators and approachers define their inclusion criteria by these two particular behaviors. The study of motivation is either completely omitted or treated in aggregate terms (e.g., personal vs. political). Exceptions to this are James et al. [5,22] who first developed and later tested the presence of eight motivational groups.

The most common motivational group defined by James et al. had "delusions of royal identity," believing either they were the true sovereign or related to the sovereign [5,22]. These individuals were also over-represented among those who attempted to breach security cordons. The second group were "amity seekers" who offered friendship and advice to the public figure and expected it to be embraced. Again, James et al. found this group were over-represented in terms of both communicating and approaching [5]. The third group were "intimacy seekers" who believed they were loved by, destined to be with or already married to the public figure, and had either erotomanic preoccupations or infatuations with the public figure. The fourth group were "sanctuary and help seekers" who sought assistance and/or protection from personal adversity and/or persecutors. The fifth group were "royally persecuted," claiming to be victims of persecution conducted by a public figure. The sixth group were "counselors" who "saw it as their role to offer advice and opinions to the Royal Family on how they should live their lives and respond to political situations" [22. p1483]. This group are significantly more likely to communicate without approaching [5,22]. The seventh group were "querulants" who pursued highly personalized quests for justice and vindication. James et al. found this group disproportionately more successful at breaching security cordons [22]. The final group were the "chaotic," to whom "no clear motivation could be assigned because their writings and/or their statements to police were so difficult to follow or understand" [22, p 1493]. Given this, it is hypothesized that:

2.5 | Hypotheses

Given our outlines of the existent evidence base above, we hypothesize the following:

H1: The rates of serious mental disorders will be higher in this sample than the general population base rate.

H2: Approachers will be significantly more likely than communicators to suffer from serious mental disorders.

H3: Approachers will be significantly more likely to have a history of substance use and abuse problems.

H4: Approachers will be significantly more likely to have a criminal history.

H5: Approachers will be significantly more likely to have a history of violent behavior against property and persons.

H6: Approachers will be significantly more likely to have a history of harassing behavior.

H7: Those individuals who both communicate and approach will engage in significantly more correspondence than those who only communicate.

H8: Different motivational types will display significantly different risks of communicating, approaching, and breaching.

Below, we outline the data and methods used to test these hypotheses.

3 | SAMPLE

The source material comprised 2088 files compiled by the Fixated Threat Assessment Centre (FTAC) in the calendar years 2013–2015.

This covers the universe of cases dealt with by the unit during this time. FTAC is a joint police/mental health unit that has been in operation since 2006. It has a remit to assess and manage the risk to the British Royal Family, members of parliament and other prominent political figures from lone individuals who inappropriately communicate with or attempt to approach them. These data relate to cases of one or more incidents of inappropriate approach or communication toward figures within the remit of the unit. Inappropriate approaches included attempts at unauthorized physical contact, breaching security barriers, trespass in physical locations connected to prominent individuals, repeated loitering near such venues in a manner that raised concern, or unauthorized entry into events attained by deception.

Our dependent variable is split into a number of behavioral outcome categories. This is coded based upon the content of the referral made into FTAC and any accompanying documentation from the referrer (e.g., the threatening letter and witness statements). It is coded in real-time by FTAC personnel including trained and experienced mental health nurses, clinical psychologists, forensic psychiatrists, and police. Referrals came from over 100 locations, professionals, and agencies in the time-period covered by these data. The coded behavioral categories are as follows:

1. *Communications*. The individuals concerned communicated in an inappropriate manner, which brought them to the attention of FTAC. They had not, however, attempted to approach, nor breach security barriers.
2. *Simple approaches*. The individuals concerned had attended residences or events, where they acted in an inappropriate manner, which brought them to the attention of FTAC. They had not, however, attempted to breach security barriers, nor previously engaged in inappropriate communication.
3. *Communications and Approaches*. These were cases where individuals had engaged in both communications and simple approaches.
4. Failed breaches were unsuccessful attempts to breach security barriers, such as walls or entrances to buildings or security cordons around locations and events.
5. Successful breaches were incidents where the individual successfully broke through a security barrier or crossed a security perimeter. This included cases where such proximity was obtained through deception.

Independent variables include the following:

Criminal and Violence Histories—These data are coded as present or absent by FTAC personnel using the police systems they have access to. This includes whether the individual has (a) been previously cautioned by the police, (b) has a U.K. police record, (c) has a foreign police record, and (d) committed different types of crimes including violent crimes.

Motivation For the Behavior—This is coded by a small team of trained FTAC personnel with backgrounds in clinical psychology and forensic psychiatry. The motivational types were developed in previous FTAC research [5,22] and are outlined in-depth in the literature review section above.

Mental Health Diagnoses, Symptoms, and State of Mind—This is also coded by a small team of trained FTAC personnel with backgrounds in clinical psychology and forensic psychiatry, as well as mental health nurses. These data are coded from a consideration of mental health information they have access to including psychiatric reports, GP history, prior hospitalizations, and/or first-hand assessments.

Concern Levels—At the point of initial referral, a joint team of police, clinical psychologists/forensic psychiatrists, and mental health workers ascribe a risk level to the case based on their predominant concerns emanating from the referral.

3.1 | Statistical analysis

Associations between each variable of concern were sought with other items in the dataset. To determine differences/similarities between groups on categorical variables, analyses were performed using Pearson's chi-square (χ^2) where the appropriate assumptions were met. Where assumptions were violated, exact tests were used. Multivariate analyses were run on continuous and dichotomous dependent variables.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Descriptive results

Nearly three-quarters of the cases only conducted communications (73%), while most of the rest only conducted approaches (23.4%). Very few (2.7%) conducted both communications and approaches. Cases overwhelmingly involved a single individual (98.2%) as opposed to a dyad or group of individuals.

Communications tended to be directed to individuals within the Royal Family (46.3%) or individual politicians (26.6%). Many fewer communicated to arbitrary sites such as Royal Family residences (9.1%) or embassies (2.1%). The great majority communicated via either letter (70.9%) or email (20.2%). Of those who communicated, 55.3% did so once, 32% did so between two and nine times, 10% did so more than ten times, and 1.2% did so more than 100 times. Within the communications, 6.5% made a direct threat and 6.3% made an indirect threat.

The language and content of the communications was also coded, 68.4% of the content being coded as incoherent, 13.8% as demanding, 21.3% as abusive, and 7.1% as containing "end of tether" language. The communications also showed evidence of sexualized (8.1%), amorous (7.2%), help-seeking (44.7%), and help-offering (5.6%) content.

For those who conducted approaches, the majority did so to static sites such as Royal addresses, such as Buckingham Palace (66.1%), or to embassies (10.8%). Smaller numbers approached individual members of the Royal Family (8.5%) or politicians (4.9%). Of those who did make an approach, 23.1% did so more than once.

56% of approaches were deemed concerning, 41.1% problematic, and 2.7% violent. Only 2.3% of approachers possessed a weapon. Two hundred and thirty-two approaches concerned an attempt and failure to conduct a breach, while 17 successfully managed to breach security.

In terms of the initial concern level, FTAC assessed 61.7% of cases as low risk, 34.4% as moderate, and 3.9% as high. Following a full investigation and/or intervention, 96.9% were deemed low risk, 1.5% moderate, and only one case was still considered high. At the time of data collection, 1.6% of cases were still open.

In terms of previous criminal behaviors, many individuals had a history of police cautions or criminal convictions (45.8%, with 2.2% having a history of serious violence and/or sexual offending), 24.6% had a UK police record, and 3.7% had a foreign police record. These included a history of violence (22.3%), harassment (10.6%), making threats (6%), and weapon (9.4%), and drug use (4.7%).

In terms of previous correspondence, 6.6% had a previous record of corresponding with 10 Downing Street and/or other government departments, and 20.4% had a previous record of corresponding with royal palaces.

At least 54.7% of cases had previous contact with mental health services, 16.9% of the sample had previously been admitted to a psychiatric hospital, and 17.2% had a previous diagnosis of a serious mental disorder. Such disorders included bipolar disorder (3%), delusional disorder (5.2%), depression (1.3%), learning disabilities (0.7%), non-specific psychotic disorders (3.1%), personality disorders (3%), substance problems (4.5%), and schizophrenia (26.1%). Alongside previous diagnoses, 45.8% displayed overt symptoms of a serious mental disorder at the time of referral. Figure 1 highlights prevalence rates within the sample and across a general population [23]. The results suggest significantly higher rates of schizophrenia and delusional disorder within this sample compared with what would be expected from the general population. On the other hand, the sample contains significantly lower rates of substance abuse, depression, unspecified personality disorders, and learning disabilities.

The FTAC psychologists and psychiatrists also coded the mental states of the individual at the time of assessment. The results illustrate a number of mental states and include experiencing horrific delusions (10.8%), perceptions of external control (7.4%), suicidal ideation (3.2%), and homicidal ideation (1.3%). Within the sample, 7.4% were classified as organized, 27% were as grandiose, 28.3% were as rambling or incoherent, 21.4% were as persecuted, 65.3% were as deluded, and 12.4% were as hostile. These categories were not mutually exclusive.

The motivational profiles of each of the communication cases were coded. The results showed a wide range of motivational types including the following: help-seeking (33.3%), chaotic (31.4%), pursuing a resentful agenda (10.6%), attention-seeking (7.3%), friendship-seeking (6.3%), resentful persecution (5.2%), erotic (4.6%), and presenting as an incompetent suitor (1.2%).

4.2 | Comparing communicators and approachers

First, we compared those who made communications with those who made approaches (Table 1). If an individual conducted both behaviors, they were treated as an approacher for the purpose of this analysis. Approachers were significantly more likely to have a history of contact with the police (including cautions and convictions). When examining specific criminal behaviors, approachers were significantly more likely to have a history of violence, drugs, and weapon concealment.

There was no significant difference between the two behavioral categories in terms of likelihood of previous serious violence and sexual offenses, a history of harassment or threats, firearms' possession history or access, militancy experience, arson, or having a foreign police record.

Those who solely communicate are significantly more likely to have done so previously (see Table 2). The inverse is also true. Those who have made previous approaches are significantly more likely to repeat such a behavior. The contents of these communications and/or approaches are unknown and may have been relatively benign or benevolent. The malleable nature of the focus is also reflected in the high degree to which both communicators and approachers change the targets of their fixation. This is significantly more likely within the communicator sub-sample.

Next, we compared mental health backgrounds in both subsamples (Table 3). The data suggest more serious mental disorders occur within the approacher sub-set. They are significantly more likely to have display symptoms of an overt mental disorder at assessment and have been previously admitted to a hospital. The type of diagnosis is also important to consider here with approachers significantly

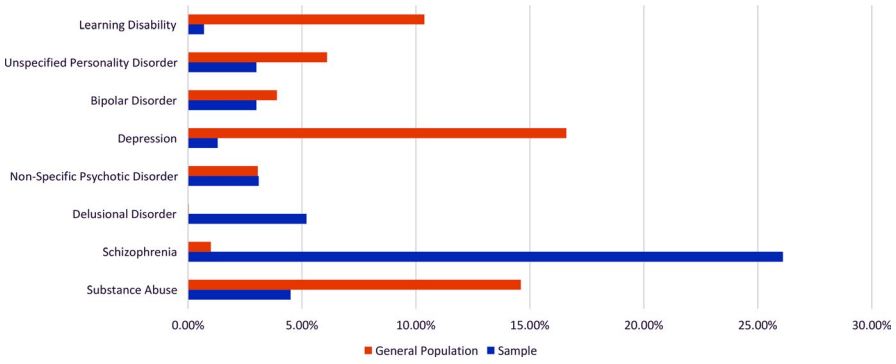

FIGURE 1 Comparing prevalence rates of disorders between sample and general population

TABLE 1 A bivariate comparison of prior problem behaviors of communicators and approachers

Behavior	*N*	Communicator (%)	Approacher (%)	Sig	OR	Lower	Upper
History of cautions or convictions	1984	45.2	56.5***	0.000	1.574	1.286	1.926
History of violence	1986	21	30.2***	0.000	1.622	1.294	2.033
History of drugs	1979	3.5	8***	0.000	2.355	1.544	3.593
History of concealing weapons	1979	0.1	1**	0.006	7.186	1.390	37.152

**p <.01;
***p <.001.

TABLE 2 A bivariate comparison of prior communicative behavior of communicators and approachers

Behavior	*N*	Communicator (%)	Approacher (%)	Sig	OR	Lower	Upper
Previous correspondence to downing street	1982	8.2%***	1.9%	0.000	4.202	2.222	7.946
Previous correspondence to royal office	2005	24.6%***	8.5%	0.000	2.905	2.160	3907
Previous communications	1117	82.1%***	26.9%	0.000	3.054	2.510	3.716
Previous approaches	1117	9.4%	61.6%***	0.000	15.444	11.053	21.580
Same focus	1117	49.4%***	35.5%	0.000	1.392	1.172	1.654

***p <.001.

TABLE 3 A bivariate comparison of illness history of communicators and approachers

Variable	*N*	Communicator (%)	Approacher (%)	Sig	OR	Lower	Upper
Previous hospital admission	1138	28	38.8***	0.000	1.629	1.241	2.139
Overt symptoms of mental disorder	1415	65.1	73.3**	0.003	1.473	1.144	1.896
Bipolar disorder	1297	3.9	7.4*	0.01	1.973	1.169	3.330
Delusional disorder	1292	7.2	11.2*	0.022	1.625	1.071	2.465
Substance abuse	1416	5	10.2***	0.000	2.158	1.411	3.300

*p <.05;
**p <.01;
***p <.001.

TABLE 4 A bivariate comparison of mental states of communicators and approachers

Mental State	*N*	Communicator (%)	Approacher (%)	Sig	OR	Lower	Upper
Persecuted	1416	40.9***	22.4	0.000	1.826	1.505	2.215
Rambling	1416	38***	28.1	0.000	1.351	1.137	1.605
Grandiose	1415	16.6	26.9***	0.000	1.852	1.409	2.432
Homicidal Ideation	1417	5.5***	1.2	0.000	4.618	1.862	11.454
Suicidal Ideation	1417	7*	3.6	0.013	1.959	1.135	3.382
Organized	1418	3.2	8.1**	0.000	2.669	1.624	4.387
Horrific delusions	1418	12.8***	6	0.000	2.147	1.421	3.246

*p <.05;
**p <.01;
***p <.001.

more likely to have previously been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and delusional disorder. They are also significantly more likely to have a substance abuse problem. There were no significant differences in terms of schizophrenia psychosis, personality disorder, or depression.

In terms of mental state at the time of assessment (Table 4), approachers were significantly more likely to be deemed by the psychologists and/or psychiatrists to be grandiose and organized. Communicators were significantly more likely to be coded as

TABLE 5 A bivariate comparison of motivations of communicators and approachers

Motivation	N	Communicator (%)	Approacher (%)	Sig	OR	Lower	Upper
Resentful agenda	1430	12.7***	5.9	0.000	2.163	1.430	3.271
Intimacy amity	1430	4	11.7***	0.000	3.193	2.072	4.921
Help-seeking	1430	36.4***	26.2	0.000	1.387	1.160	1.659
Chaotic	1430	28.2	38.9***	0.000	1.618	1.275	2.053

***p <.001.

persecuted, rambling, exhibiting homicidal ideation, exhibiting suicidal ideation, and suffering horrific delusions. There was no significant difference in terms of their mental states being hostile or their being subjected to external control.

In terms of motivations (Table 5), those who only communicated were significantly more likely to be categorized as holding a resentful agenda or seeking help. Those who followed their communication with an approach were significantly more likely to be seeking friendship or be chaotic. There were no significant differences between communicators and approachers in terms of resentful, persecuted, erotic, incompetent suitor, or attention-seeking motivations.

A binary logistic regression analysis (Table 6) was conducted using the variables identified in Tables 1–5 as being highly significant (p < 0.01 and p < 0.001). This analysis showed that, in combination, the independent variables significantly impacted on the likelihood of approach, χ^2 (18) =258.857, p < 0.001. The model correctly predicted 86.6% of the cases. Previous approaches and an intimacy amity motivation were significant predictors of approachers. Previous communications, a persecuted mental state, and previous correspondence with the royal office decreased the likelihood of approach.

4.3 | Comparing communicators and communicator–approachers

Earlier, it was demonstrated that communicator–approachers comprised a very small sub-sample of the whole dataset (2.7%). We compared those who only communicated (communicator-only) with those who communicated and later approached (communicator–approachers; Table 6). The latter group were significantly more likely to have a foreign police record, send packages, express their intention to approach, have previously approached, and present as organized. Motivational types also proved a consistent differentiator between the two sub-types. Communicator–approachers were significantly more likely depicted as seeking friendship, being an incompetent suitor, and seeking attention. There was no difference in terms of the volume of communications (Table 7).

A binary logistic regression analysis was conducted on the variables with significance values of p < 0.01 and p < 0.001. The results indicated that previous approaches were significantly associated with communicator–approachers, χ^2 (6) =65.752, p < 0.001. The model correctly predicted 95.3% of the cases (Table 8).

TABLE 6 Binary logistic regression of communicators and approachers

Variable	Sig	$e\beta$	Lower	Upper
History of cautions or convictions	0.123	1.686	0.869	3.274
History of violence	0.359	0.718	0.353	1.458
History of drugs	0.726	1.234	0.381	3.996
Previous correspondence to downing street	0.249	0.488	0.144	1.653
Previous correspondence to royal office	0.000***	0.208	0.089	0.490
Previous communications	0.000***	0.156	0.080	0.304
Previous approaches	0.000***	13.247	6.897	25.443
Same focus	0.759	1.120	0.542	2.313
Previous hospital admission	0.513	1.212	0.681	2.159
Overt symptoms of mental disorder	0.057	2.013	0.980	4.132
Substance abuse	0.920	1.056	0.368	3.033
Persecuted	0.005**	0.405	0.217	0.759
Rambling	0.064	0.578	0.323	1.033
Horrific delusions	0.357	634	0.240	1.674
Resentful agenda	0.614	1.312	0.457	3.177
Intimacy amity	0.021*	4.026	1.230	13.177
Help-seeking	0.528	1.340	0.540	3.322
Chaotic	0.267	1.649	0.682	3.989
Constant	0.021	0.285		

* p <.05;
** p <.01;
*** p <.001.

4.4 | Comparing approacher-only and attempted breachers

Table 9 highlights the significant results of comparative analyses between approachers and attempted breachers. Those who attempted a security breach after conducting an approach were significantly more likely to be in possession of a weapon, to have made previous approaches, to have had the same focus in previous

TABLE 7 A bivariate comparison of communicator-only and communicator–approachers

Variable	N	Communicator-only (%)	Communicator–approacher (%)	Sig	OR	Lower	Upper
Foreign police record	1538	3.7	9.3*	0.038	2.651	1.016	6.916
Send packages	1598	4.5	14.3***	0.001	3.505	1.597	7.691
Intentions expressed	1584	11.3	25**				
Previous approaches	870	9.4	75.8***	0.000	29.94	13.085	68.707
Organized	1040	3.2	14.3***	0.000	5.031	1.979	12.793
Intimacy amity	1047	4	11.1*	0.021	3.006	1.126	8.026
Incompetent suitor	1047	0.9	6.7***				
Attention-seeking	1047	7	20***	0.001	3.329	1.542	7.187

*p <.05;
**p <.01;
***p <.001

approaches, and to be categorized as an attention-seeking type. They were significantly less likely to have a history of cautions or convictions, a UK police record, a history of threats, to be diagnosed with bipolar or personality disorder, or to be characterized as chaotic (Table 9).

TABLE 8 Binary logistic regression of communicator-only and communicator–approachers

Variable	Sig	$e\beta$	Lower	Upper
Send packages	0.251	2.698	0.495	14.700
Intentions expressed	0.314	1.702	0.604	4.799
Previous approaches	0.000***	27.849	10.378	74.733
Organized	0.140	3.405	0.670	17.313
Incompetent suitor	0.171	5.859	0.467	73.501
Attention-seeking	0.107	2.758	0.803	9.468
Constant	0.000	0.008		

4.5 | Comparing successful and unsuccessful breachers

The next analyses focused on comparing successful and unsuccessful breachers (Table 10). Those who successful breached security were significantly more likely to have a history of cautions or convictions, a history of violence, a history of weapon use, to be in possession of a weapon at the time of the breach, to have previous hospital admissions for their mental health problems, diagnoses of depression or a learning disability, present with homicidal ideation, and be depicted as either resentful persecuted or an incompetent suitor. They were significantly less likely to be help-seeking.

TABLE 9 A bivariate comparison of approach-only and attempted breachers

Variable	N	Approach-only (%)	Attempted breach (%)	Sig	OR	Lower	Upper
History of cautions or convictions	520	60.9*	51.8	0.037	1.175	1.008	1.370
UK police record	514	25.6**	15.2	0.004	1.685	1.176	2.415
History of threats	518	8.9**	2.8	0.004	3.149	1.381	7.180
Weapon possession	545	1	4*	0.023	4.056	1.104	14.903
Previous approaches	281	49.7	80***	0.000	4.047	2.323	7.050
Same focus as previous approaches	281	33.1	50**	0.06	2.017	1.224	3.323
Previous contact with MH services	380	92.3*	84.3	0.014	1.095	1.015	1.181
Bipolar disorder	343	10.7*	4.9	0.043	2.175	1.006	4.700
Personality disorder	341	10.1**	3	0.006	3.432	1.352	8.713
Hostile	422	9.1	16.8*	0.017	2.023	1.123	3.642
Attention-seeking	429	5.5	11.9*	0.017	2.313	1.142	4.685
Chaotic	429	43.5*	31.8	0.015	1.366	1.056	1.768

*p <.05;
**p <.01;
***p <.001

TABLE 10 A bivariate comparison of successful and unsuccessful breachers

Variable	*N*	Unsuccessful breach (%)	Successful breach (%)	Sig	OR	Lower	Upper
Help-Seeking	176	33.1*	6.3	0.026	5.300	0.784	35.808
History of cautions or convictions	249	50	76.5*	0.035	3.250	1.029	10.262
History of violence	248	28.1	52.9*	0.003	4.353	1.546	12.261
History of weapon use	250	10.8	27.8*	0.037	3.397	1.012	11.401
Weapon possession	250	2.2	27.8***	0.000	17.462	4.483	68.019
Previous hospital admissions	159	35.2	64.3*	0.032	3.318	1.056	10.427
Depression	203	1	10*	0.022	10.611	0.878	128.216
Learning disability	203	0.5	10**	0.003	21.333	1.232	369.276
Homicidal ideation	178	0.6	6.7*	0.033	11.571	0.686	195.119
Resentful persecuted	176	3.8	18.8**	0.009	5.923	1.326	26.467
Incompetent suitor	176	0.6	6.3*	0.043	10.600	0.631	178.175

Key: *p <.05; **p <.01; ***p <.001

TABLE 11 Results of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis		Accepted/ Rejected
1	The rates of serious mental disorders will be higher in this sample than the general population base rate.	Accepted
2	Approachers will be significantly more likely than communicators to suffer from serious mental disorders.	Partially Accepted
3	Approachers will be significantly more likely to have a history of substance use and abuse problems.	Accepted
4	Approachers will be significantly more likely to have a criminal history.	Accepted
5	Approachers will be significantly more likely to have a history of violent behavior against property and persons.	Accepted
6	Approachers will be significantly more likely to have a history of harassing behavior.	Rejected
7	Those individuals who both communicate and approach will engage in significantly more correspondence than those who only communicate.	Rejected
8	Different motivational types will display significantly different risks of communicating, approaching and breaching.	Accepted

5 | DISCUSSION

In combination, the results provide important insights for threat assessment. This study illustrates that concerning approaches and communications to the Royal Family and other British public figures are relatively numerous. Over 2000 cases were logged in a three-year period. Given the high self-report rates of parliamentarians being victims of stalking and other worrying behaviors, there may in fact be an undercount from this victim set within the data [15,24]. The data reflect a high prevalence of both communications and threats. However, the research also shows that the majority of individuals only conduct one of these behaviors. Relatively few cross the threshold from communication to approach. This may be the case for several reasons. First, it may be due to the individual seeking to maximize their chances of success by maintaining operational security. Second, the communication may have been sufficient for the individual to get their grievance "off their chest." Third, it may be due to effective interventions by agencies such as FTAC subsequent to the initial communication. As for approachers, many skip the communication segment entirely.

Table 11 outlines the results of our hypothesis testing.

The results do not, of course, enable precise estimation of the risk in a single case. Such a hope is common among some academics and politicians not well versed in the limitations of risk assessment. In practice, each individual case should be assessed on its own merit based on the clustering of different behaviors and motives, rather

than a simple summative tick-box exercise. Instead, the results indicate patterns of factors that are associated with worrying and escalating behavior. These patterns may provide insight into threat management and provide a rationale for the diversion of resources toward specific sub-sets of individuals. For example, the results show higher prevalence rates of particular serious mental disorders and previous criminal engagement across the different phases of escalating behaviors. These results confirmed different elements of H1-H5. Such background factors are therefore open to intervention by both mental health and criminal justice practitioners.

The results also suggest that certain motivational sub-types are significantly more likely to display concerning approach and breach behaviors and other motivational sub-types are significantly more likely only to communicate. This confirmed H8. There may be a path dependency involved whereby a motivation offers a limited set of potential future actions. The presence of other factors such as mental health problems, previous criminality, or previous similar behavior either sends the individual further down the path or breaks it entirely.

Those who communicate may offer very few "true positives" for future escalation into approach behavior. In other words, few of those who communicate go on to approach. However, this is not to suggest they are not worthy of threat management. Other research suggests communicators may pose an increased risk of future offending and violence against individuals other than the targets of their communications. For example, Eke et al.'s follow-up study on offenders who harass Canadian Justice Officials showed that three out of four individuals who committed postindex violent criminal acts were communicators, not approachers [9]. Warren et al. found similar results in samples of homicidal threateners in Australia [25–27]. In other words, communicators are at an increased risk of being somebody else's "true positive" at some future point and are worthy of assessment, and potential disruption in order to prevent future harm in general (and not just specifically harm to the public figure).

In many ways, the results correspond with our expectations based on previous research on the threat to public figures. The sample contains a higher rate of serious mental disorders compared with the population base rate. Within the sample, approachers are significantly more likely than communicators to suffer serious mental disorders and have higher rates of substance abuse problems. Compared to the societal base rate, the sample had an increased prevalence rate of both schizophrenia and delusional disorders, a finding also common to that of lone-actor terrorists [23]. Approachers also have a greater likelihood of previous criminal and violent behaviors.

The results also illustrate the importance of specificity when answering: "risk of what"? Very different sets of behaviors delineated (a) approachers from communicators, (b) communicators who did and did not follow-up with an approach, (c) those who approached and then either did or did not attempt a breach, and (d) the successful from the unsuccessful breachers. Figure 2 depicts this in a flowchart-style format. It highlights those variables which demonstrate a significantly greater (in bivariate terms) likelihood of belonging to one outcome category than the other. It should not be viewed as a path analysis nor do the size of the boxes suggest the strength of the relationship. It must also be pointed out that we did not account for "risk of violence" and the behaviors associated with this may be different again. For example, Figure 2 visualizes the differences we found between those who communicate versus those who approach. It shows communicators more likely (a) motivated by resentful agenda and help-seeking, (b) to have a previous history of correspondence and communications with a similar target focus, and

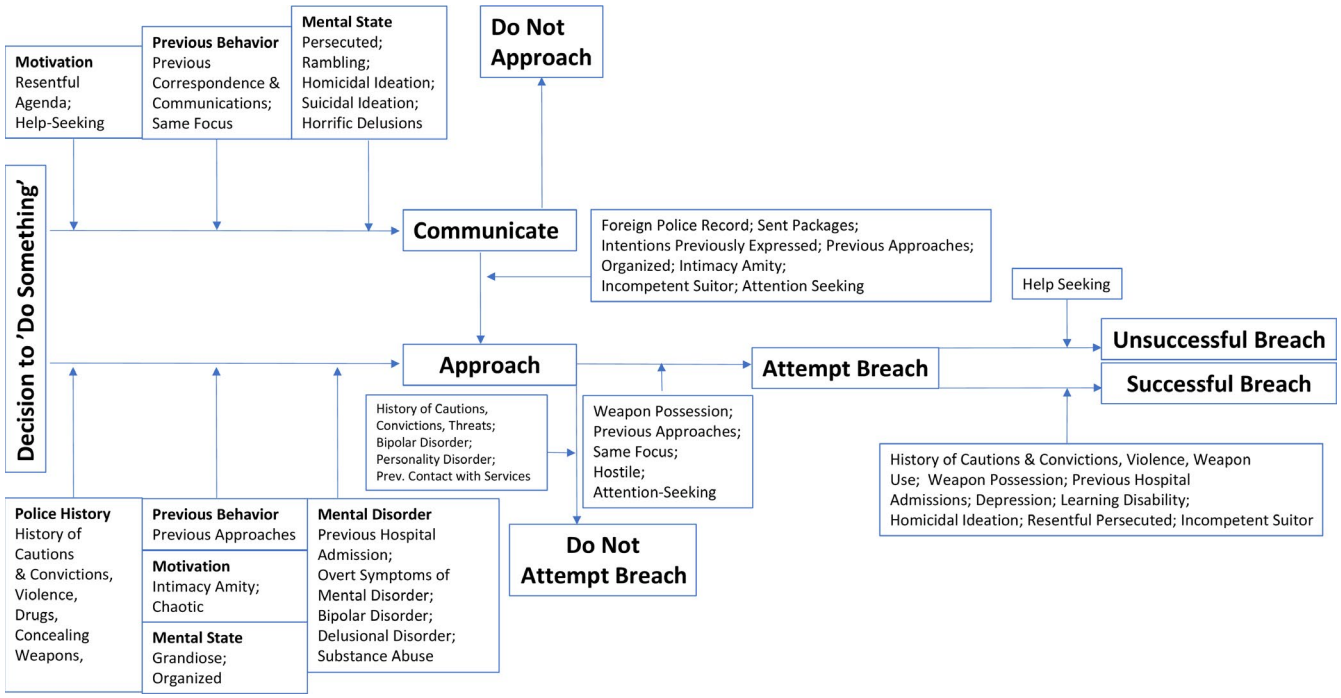

FIGURE 2 The different stages of risk and their bivariate predictors

(c) to have a mental state of persecuted, rambling, homicidal ideation, suicidal ideation, and horrific delusions. Approachers, on the other hand, are more likely (a) motivated by intimacy enmity and chaotic, (b) to have a previous history of approaches, (c) to have grandiose or organized mental states, (d) to have a history with the police, and (e) a range of mental disorders.

In many ways, the Figure 2's visualization of results highlights the best predictor of future behavior is often past behavior. For example, if the individual has conducted previous approaches, it makes the likelihood of (a) an initial approach, (b) an approach following a communication, and (c) an attempted breach significantly more likely. Previous correspondence, likewise, predicts the individual is more likely to conduct a communication rather than an approach. When comparing communicator-only and communicator–approachers, previous approaches were the only significant variable identified in the bivariate analyses that were also significant in the logistic regression analysis.

The results visualized in Figure 2 also hold promise for structured professional judgment approaches to assessing and managing such risks. This is particularly the case when having to produce a synopsis, formulation, or a statement of understanding about individual risk that explains the assessor's view on what the person is at risk of doing and why. We demonstrate that what the person is at risk of doing differs greatly depending upon their constellation of previous behaviors, motivations, and mind-sets. Figure 2 demonstrates clearly that risk factors should be considered together, holistically, rather than individually, for fear of missing the ways in which risk factors can and do interact with one another, and their functional links to the outcome being considered. These interactions should inform management strategies. Given that the function of threat assessment is to prevent harmful outcomes, any disconnect between assessment and management is a significant weakness.

While the disproportionately high levels of mental disorder within such samples have long been noted, the results here reflect the importance of digging deeper into current mental states and the nature of the disorders themselves. Mental states, in particular, appear consistently to differentiate approachers from communicators. Those who appear grandiose and/or organized are significantly more likely to conduct an approach. The latter is also true in the presence of an initial communication. Those who are persecuted, rambling and/or have horrific delusions, homicidal ideation, or suicidal ideation are significantly more likely to communicate. Attention-seekers are significantly more likely to run through all of the behaviors (e.g., communicate then approach then attempt a breach). While it appears no one particular mental disorder is a predictor of communicating rather than approaching, the following are significant predictors of an approach: previous hospital admission, overt symptoms of mental disorder, bipolar disorder, and delusional disorder.

Approachers are significantly more likely than communicators to have a history of drug-related cautions and convictions and a history of substance problems. Future data collection efforts might record whether approachers appear to be under the influence of substances at the time of their approach. In the general crime literature, many offenders reported consuming substances to help overcome fear and nervousness [28] Just under one-fifth of Kang and Lee's sample admitted to substance use prior to a robbery in order to "fortify themselves" [29]. Gill found a negative correlation between degrees of planning and whether substances had been consumed prior to the offense [30]. These points lead us to assume that approachers may include a sizeable proportion of almost spontaneous non-planners who act opportunistically and may therefore be less likely to engage in correspondence beforehand.

Previous criminal engagement inconsistently predicts next behavior across the sequences depicted in Figure 2. Whereas it intuitively delineates approachers from communicators, and successful from unsuccessful breachers, it also unexpectedly predicts a breach will not be attempted once the approach has been conducted. The reasons behind the first two results may be found in the wider criminological literature. There, prior criminal experience has been linked with "more elaborate target schemes" [31, p147], increased confidence that helps monitor and control behavior and nerves [32], dehumanization of the victim [33], decreased concern about being detected and caught [34–35], perceptual and procedural skill superiority and self-belief [36], highly developed offense conduct scripts to fall back on [37], and decreased worries concerned with sanctioning by family members [35].

Figure 2 also demonstrates the complexity of the differentiators between different harmful behaviors. On many occasions, a single individual behavior appears to be a disinhibitor for further risky behavior and at others appears to be an inhibitor. For example, one of the key differentiators between communicators and approachers on a bivariate level is whether the individual has the same target focus. Where the same focus was present, the individual is significantly more likely to communicate. However, in those smaller numbers with a same focus that do approach, there is then a significantly more likely chance of an attempted breach. In other words, "same focus" predicts a less risky behavior in the first instance (e.g., to communicate). Should the riskier initial behavior be chosen, an even riskier behavior (e.g., to attempt breach) is more likely. The same pattern is also true for homicidal ideation being apparent in the individual's mental state. Homicidal ideation predicts communications rather than approaches. When present during an attempted breach, however, it also predicts success.

6 | CONCLUSION

These results are true for a snapshot in time (2013-2015). We cannot tell if the significant prevalence of one factor within one sub-set of offender types can be expected to be universally present across a wider time frame, or whether it is distributed unevenly across time. An analysis of a longer time-period is worthy of investigation therefore. The results of such an investigation may have different implications for future investigations. As mentioned by Gill et al. [2], the study of low-likelihood, high-impact crimes therefore runs the risk of

identifying risk factors and indicators heavily skewed toward older time-periods (thereby increasing false positives) or missing emerging risk factors associated with more recent times (thereby increasing false negatives). This has major repercussions for how threat management protocols are developed. It may therefore be useful to determine whether facets of offender behavior are increasing/decreasing across time and whether this trend (if any) is statistically distinguishable from random chance.

What the results provide is a sense of the correlation between behaviors and outcomes. Future research may look for a sense of sequencing. We do not know, for example, where in the chain of behaviors criminal history plays a key role in the pathway toward approaching a public figure in a threatening way. Is it a root cause that led to mental health problems (e.g., after time in jail); the symptomology of which led to a fixation with a Royal? Or does it occur only after mental health problems led to a fixation and a need to do something and perhaps the criminal history negated the sense of risk-taking involved in such an approach? There are likely to be examples of each, and many more, within the data. Sequencing and pathway analyses, however, have the ability to provide a sense of the prevalence of such interdependencies within the data. It may be irrelevant for prediction or assessment, but could be crucial for management particularly in the case of attempting to formulate what the individual of concern gained from such worrying or threatening behaviors [38].

It must also be remembered that this is a correlational design. We may be able to infer causation via formulation on a case-to-case basis by gaining a mapping as to how all the key variables crystallized for the individual experiencing them. It would be a struggle to do so based on such an aggregate analysis as this. Horgan correctly notes that, although studies of lone actors, for example, often find a high preponderance of mental health problems within the sample, "detailed research would be needed to further clarify the precise nature and role (if any) of mental health problems in the development of their violent activity" [39]. This debate is ongoing within the wider study of crime also. On the one hand, a strand of research assumes a consistent causal link between psychiatric symptoms (where they are found to be present) and criminal behavior. On the other hand, a more nuanced strand of research argues there are "a (small) group of offenders whose symptoms relate directly to crime and a (larger) group whose symptoms and crimes are not directly related" [40, p1]. For example, various studies illustrate that the offender (across a range of crimes) was experiencing the symptoms of their symptoms at the time of their (often violent) crime between 4% and 18% of the time [23]. The same may also be true for factors such as motivation, previous behaviors, and mental states. Only deep case-study-driven approaches will provide such nuanced understanding of the functional role that different risk factors have for the outcomes being considered.

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