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Laura Hamlett

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Common Psycholinguistic Themes in Mass Murderer Manifestos

by

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MA, Webster University, 2012

MFA, University of Missouri – St. Louis, 2001

BA, Webster University, 1989

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

March 2017

Abstract

Mass murder in the United States is increasing, yet understanding of mass murderers is still relatively limited. Many perpetrators compose manifestos, which include journals, blogs, letters, videos, and other writings. Previous research has indicated that personal messages are of great social and psychological importance; however, there remains an important gap in the current literature regarding studies specific to these manifestos. As such, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to provide greater understanding of mass murderers' motives and mindsets through psycholinguistic analysis of their recorded words. The constructivist conceptual framework enabled gathering, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting thematic language from a purposeful sample of 12 American mass murderer manifestos, all of which were freely available online. The 6 research questions aligned with 6 psycholinguistic themes: ego survival and revenge; pseudocommando mindset: persecution, envy, obliteration; envy; nihilism; entitlement; and heroic revenge fantasy. Descriptive and analytical coding allowed for the identification of sentences and passages representative of each theme. Findings revealed a high degree of support for nihilism and ego survival and revenge, moderate support for heroic revenge fantasy and pseudocommando mindset, and limited support for entitlement and envy. These findings contribute to the existing literature, enhancing social change initiatives through increased understanding of mass murderers' communications and prompting further needed research. With greater awareness comes the potential for early identification and intervention, which may favorably impact psychology and law enforcement professionals and at-risk individuals.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Public mass shootings comprise 15% of all mass homicides in America, with their seeming randomness and high visibility leading to widespread fear (Achenbach, 2015; Auxemery, 2015; "Behind the Bloodshed," 2016; Eskey, O'Connor, Rush, & Schmalleger, 2015; Lankford, 2016a; O'Toole & Fondacaro, 2015). The frequency of mass murder has steadily increased over the past few decades, and precipitously so in recent years (Achenbach, 2015; Auxemery, 2015; Blair & Martaindale, 2013; Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Bondü & Beier, 2015; A. P. Cohen, Azrael, & Miller, 2014; Follman, 2015b; Huff-Corzine et al., 2014; Lowe & Galea, 2017; Rocque, 2012; Shultz, Cohen, Muschert, & de Apodaca, 2013; Towers, Gomez-Lievano, Khan, Mubayi, & Castillo-Chavez, 2015). Despite this upswing, psychological research of mass murderers has not kept pace. Although researchers have conducted a limited amount of retrospective scholarly analysis on mental illness in the perpetrators (Bondü & Beier, 2015; Dutton, White, & Fogarty, 2013; Eskey et al., 2015; Follman, 2015b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a), examinations of the offenders' manifestos, or recorded words, is lacking (Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b; Madfis, 2014b).

To grow the scant body of literature in this area, I used the qualitative method to examine psycholinguistic content within a sample of 12 mass murderer *manifestos*, defined as written and video communications composed in advance by the killers. The foundation for comparison was Knoll's (2012b) six psycholinguistic content categories of

mass murderer manifestos: (a) ego survival and revenge; (b) pseudocommando mindset: persecution, envy, obliteration (pseudocommando mindset); (c) envy; (d) nihilism; (e) entitlement; and (f) heroic revenge fantasy. The primary assumption was that offenders only devote time and effort to record the thoughts that are important to them, thus making their manifestos highly meaningful. Based on Knoll's work, I expected the analysis of mass murderers' words to afford clues into the killers' mental states, thought processes, and motives.

Increasing awareness and understanding of mass murderers' words has significant implications for future research and positive social change. In the future, mental health practitioners may be better able to identify at-risk individuals and provide them with the psychological help they need before violence occurs. Eventual benefits to law enforcement may include improved crisis negotiation tactics, enhanced interrogation practices, shortened investigation time, and reduced manpower needs. My hope is the general public will also profit, as early risk identification, intervention, and more expeditious investigations will lessen fear, suffering, and confusion within communities. Additional advantages may be apparent through cost reductions in emergency medical treatment and ongoing health care, missed wages and lost productivity, property insurance premiums and outlays, and police investigation and prosecution expenses borne by taxpayers.

In Chapter 1, I introduce and discuss the mass murder problem with regard to U.S. occurrences, limited understanding, and lasting repercussions. I explore manifestos, a type of leakage warning behavior, and review the modest research. The research gap

identified is a lack of significant, scholarly psycholinguistic analysis of mass murderer manifestos. Six research questions guided manifesto content analysis based on semantic depictions. As suggested by Knoll (2012b), psycholinguistic analysis should reveal mass murderers' motives and mental states. Also in this chapter, I discuss the constructivist conceptual framework, along with the use of inductive reasoning to interpret results and draw conclusions. Additional background for the research questions comes from relevant theories of crime.

I conducted this qualitative multiple case study to identify themes, compare text, and analyze specific linguistic content within 12 mass murderer manifestos. The primary assumption was that psycholinguistic analysis would lead to increased understanding and insight into the thought processes of mass killers. In this chapter, I provide a brief list of relevant definitions, outline primary assumptions, and present the sample selection process. A discussion of qualitative research limitations follows with regard to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The significance of this research study also appears in Chapter 1. The increasing occurrence of public mass murder in the United States calls for greater understanding about these acts and those who commit them. The present body of literature is limited, with scant research specific to mass murderer manifestos. The improved understanding afforded by this linguistic analysis should be the catalyst for additional studies, which, in turn, may have multiple positive social implications. In addition to early identification and intervention are the potentials for more effective investigations, reduced fear, and

improved mental health treatment (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Gordon, Sharan, & Florescu, 2015; Meloy, 2014; Shultz et al., 2013; Winter & Tschudi, 2015).

Background

Since the turn of the 21st century, Americans have seen a marked escalation in the frequency of public mass shootings (Achenbach, 2015; Auxemery, 2015; Blair & Martaindale, 2013; Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Bondü & Beier, 2015; A. P. Cohen et al., 2014; Follman, 2015b; Huff-Corzine et al., 2014; Lowe & Galea, 2017; Rocque, 2012; Shultz et al., 2013; Towers et al., 2015). Mass murders result in the loss of multiple lives, as well as extensive permanent and impermanent injuries, both physical and emotional (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Fan, 2015; Lowe & Galea, 2017). Perpetrators of these violent acts command the public's attention, spreading fear and confusion (Achenbach, 2015; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Lankford, 2016a; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014). Current understanding of mass murder and mass murderers has not kept pace with their upturn, however, as information often remains vague, contradictory, or even erroneous (e.g., Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Fox & Levin, 2014; Meloy, 2014; Walkup & Rubin, 2013).

Numerous researchers have highlighted *leakage*, or intentionally revealing one's intentions to others, as a common warning behavior of mass murderers (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Follman, 2015b; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Knoll, 2012b; Lindberg, Oksanen, Sailas, & Kaltiala-Heino, 2012; Madfis, 2014a; Meloy, 2014; Meloy, Hoffmann, Guldimann, & James, 2012; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). As manifestos are one type of leakage, analyzing an individual's written or recorded communications is a

means of behavioral threat assessment, one that may be useful in preventing mass murder (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Gordon et al., 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Meloy, 2014; Shultz et al., 2013; Winter & Tschudi, 2015). Meloy, Hoffmann, Roshdi, and Guldimann (2014) identified eight warning behaviors exhibited by those intending to commit mass murder, two of which, written leakage and directly communicated verbal threats, mirrored findings from other studies (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Follman, 2015a; Hawdon, 2012; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Lindberg et al., 2012; Madfis, 2014b; Meloy et al., 2012; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014; Phillips, 2013).

Auxemery (2015) asserted that mass murderers' writings could offer valuable clues into their authors' motives and mental health. Examining journals and videos composed by the two Columbine High School killers, Grobbink, Derksen, and van Marle (2015) recognized different drives behind each adolescent's actions. Reviewing writings left behind by mass public shooters, Lankford (2016a) looked for language indicative of the offenders' mental states and identified self-protection to be a common message. Healy (2015) viewed offenders' writings as a way for them to achieve fame, a finding with which Lankford (2016b) concurred. Through automated text analysis, Egnoto and Griffin (2016) identified foreshadowing language in the e-mails, social media posts, and further writings of school shooters. Other linguistic similarities in manifestos include elements of hopelessness, defeatism, retribution, and references to prior mass murders (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Lankford, 2015b, 2016d).

Apparent from the current body of literature is that identifying, coding, and revealing semantic clues in mass murderer manifestos warrants further attention. Despite

the insight an examination of mass murderers' recorded communications can provide, manifestos have not received significant scholarly analysis (Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b; Madfis, 2014b; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). Although Knoll (2012b) conducted direct psycholinguistic analysis of mass killers' manifestos, he used an extremely small sample size. He applied his six criteria to the writings of just two mass murderers, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) shooter Seung-Hui Cho and Binghamton, New York, shooter Jiverly Wong.

More recently, Murray (2016) evaluated 10 mass murderer manifestos according to four fantasy ideation scripts: refuge/escape; revenge/targeting; sexual/misogynistic fantasy; and pride, power, and masculinity. Recognition of mass killers' motives and psychological makeups may provide a tool in anticipating and intervening before future attacks can occur (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Gordon et al., 2015; Meloy, 2014; Shultz et al., 2013; Winter & Tschudi, 2015).

Problem Statement

Despite the rapidly growing problem of mass murder in America, few researchers have conducted psycholinguistic analysis on mass murderers' recorded words (Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b; Madfis, 2014b; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). Manifestos are of both social and psychological importance, and they can provide insight into offenders' motivations

and psychopathologies (Auxemery, 2015; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a; Meloy, 2014; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). Mass murderers rarely incorporate euphemisms in their writings, instead using language that clearly justifies their actions (Coyle, 2014). They also frequently choose words and themes that mirror other mass killers' communications (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Coyle, 2014; Malkki, 2014; Murray, 2015; Paton & Figeac, 2015; Winter & Tschudi, 2015). Conducting scholarly psycholinguistic content analysis of mass murderer manifestos will boost opportunities for research and intervention, thus potentially minimizing future loss of life and community panic (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Gordon et al., 2015; Meloy, 2014; Shultz et al., 2013; Winter & Tschudi, 2015).

To better understand mass murderers and their actions, a number of researchers have conducted qualitative analyses and literature reviews, albeit without manifesto analysis (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Dutton et al., 2013; Faria, 2013; Gordon et al., 2015; Lankford, 2016b; Madfis, 2014b; Neuman, Assaf, Cohen, & Knoll, 2015; Winter & Tschudi, 2015). Behavioral threat assessment, including evaluation of advanced communications, is an important aid in forecasting and preventing mass murder (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Lankford, 2015a; Meloy, 2014). Meloy et al. (2012) suggested that identifying, coding, and utilizing pre–mass murder warning behaviors warranted further study. Noting the lack of scientific confirmability in existing research, Allely, Minnis, Thompson, Wilson, and Gillberg (2014) also recognized a need for rigorous study regarding mass and serial murders.

Multiple researchers (e.g., Auxemery, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b; Leonard, 2015; Malkki, 2014; Murray, 2015; Paton & Figeac, 2015; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014) have noted that mass killers frequently leave behind some sort of final communication. In the majority of recent mass murder studies, however, scholars and investigators have focused largely on the characteristics of crimes and criminals and not on the words the offenders recorded and disseminated. Although researchers generally have agreed on the social and psychological importance of mass murderers' words, scholarly analysis of mass murderer manifestos has been inadequate (Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b; Madfis, 2014b; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014).

Knoll (2012b) proposed six content categories by which to linguistically analyze mass murderer manifestos, examining the language in Cho's and Wong's communications for evidence of (a) ego survival and revenge, (b) pseudocommando mindset, (c) envy, (d) nihilism, (e) entitlement, and (f) heroic revenge fantasy. Meloy (2014) identified warning behavior types shared by mass murderers, one of which was revealing one's intentions to a third party, sometimes a specifically targeted individual. As written and videotaped manifestos are frequent vehicles for such leakage, they warrant in-depth study.

A pressing need exists for early identification of would-be mass murderers and the potential for preventing acts of widespread, catastrophic violence (Auxemery, 2015;

Follman, 2014, 2015b; Huff-Corzine et al., 2014; Lowe & Galea, 2017; Murray, 2015; Towers et al., 2015). Despite this apparent, immediate, and persistent demand, little focused, scholarly research exists specific to mass murderer manifestos (Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b; Madfis, 2014b; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). Psycholinguistic study and detailed analysis of manifestos are necessary to address this gap. Applying Knoll's (2012b) content categories to 12 cases of mass murderer manifestos aided in this endeavor, expanding the presently limited research and knowledge base in this area.

Purpose of the Study

I used a constructivist paradigm in this qualitative case study, based on the tenet that truth is relative and constructed by individual interpretation (Yin, 2014). Knoll's (2012b) content categories served as the basis for identifying and comparing six linguistic depictions within a sample of 12 mass murderer manifestos. The purpose of the study was to provide greater understanding of the perpetrators' motives and mindsets, information that should prompt further research. Law enforcement and mental health professionals may one day draw upon this knowledge to identify at-risk individuals and potentially intervene before future acts of mass casualty can occur (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Gordon et al., 2015; Meloy, 2014; Shultz et al., 2013; Winter & Tschudi, 2015). The central phenomenon was the thematic and linguistic content in mass murderer manifestos, as aligned with Knoll's categories. Additional phenomena and

foundational concepts of interest included mass murder and murderers, mass shootings and shooters, manifestos, and psycholinguistics.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts ego survival and revenge?

Research Question 2: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts pseudocommando mindset: persecution, envy, obliteration?

Research Question 3: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts envy?

Research Question 4: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts nihilism?

Research Question 5: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts entitlement?

Research Question 6: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts heroic revenge fantasy?

Conceptual Framework for the Study

A limited number of researchers have used mass murderer manifesto content analysis to illuminate offenders' impulses, rationales, and psychopathologies (Auxemery, 2015; Knoll, 2010a, 2010b, 2012b; Lankford, 2015a; Murray, 2016; Neuman et al., 2015). Common themes within mass killers' manifestos included envy, entitlement, paranoia, revenge, hopelessness, and revenge (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015b, 2016b, 2016d).

Pury, Starkey, Kulik, Skjerning, and Sullivan (2015) noted similar themes, such as power, revenge, entitlement, and notoriety. In comparing messages left behind by the Columbine killers, Grobbink et al. (2015) found each shooter had conveyed different motives and psychological disorders, whereas Murray (2015) identified a shared, underlying theme of destructive fantasy.

The constructivist model served as a guide for gathering, analyzing, and reporting data, with research findings expected to advance understanding and awareness within the field of mass murderer manifestos. The linguistics theory of semiotics was important, as the aim of this study was to assess how mass murderers' words conveyed meaning. Once data were collected and coded, I applied inductive reasoning to draw conclusions that, although highly valid, cannot be absolute due to the nature of qualitative research. Also significant were Knoll's (2010b, 2012b) assertions that mass murderer manifestos are highly meaningful and their interpretation may aid in the prevention of future mass violence, sentiments echoed by other researchers (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Gordon et al., 2015; Meloy, 2014; Shultz et al., 2013; Winter & Tschudi, 2015). I used basic crime theories as a foundation for better understanding the reasons and motives behind these killings. A more detailed theoretical discussion appears in Chapter 2.

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) can be used, in part, to explain the copycat nature of mass murder, an approach advanced by numerous researchers (Auxemery, 2015; Björkqvist, 2015; Follman, 2015a, 2015b; Follman & Andrews, 2015; Gordon et al., 2015; Healy, 2015; Lankford, 2016d; Leonard, 2015; Towers et al., 2015; Winter & Tschudi, 2015). Madfis (2014b) and Phillips (2013) found masculine expectations and

hierarchies in American culture to be driving factors behind mass murder, an idea that has its roots in strain theory (Agnew, 1992). In line with Eysenck's (1977) personality and Kelly's (1991) personal construct theories, psycholinguistic analysis of manifestos can provide insight into the offender's character and temperament (Dutton et al., 2013; Neuman et al., 2015). Researchers have identified both biology (Allely et al., 2014; Church, 2014; Shermer, 2013) and sociology (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Paton & Figeac, 2015; Winter & Tschudi, 2015) as strong influences of criminal behavior, findings that are in line with Raine's (2002, 2006) biosocial theories. These concepts and ideas are thoroughly discussed in Chapter 2.

To ensure the greatest degree of transferability, a case study researcher must purposefully select sample cases that are representative of the population. I used Knoll's (2012b) linguistic framework of content categories as a basis for coding and analyzing 12 mass murderer manifestos. Answering the research questions required identifying specific linguistic depictions of each content category. I gathered and analyzed data systematically, with outcomes reported so as to increase understanding of mass murderers' motives and mental states. Triangulation came from immersion in the manifestos, including notetaking, reflecting, coding, analyzing, and confirming findings. No formal instruments were used.

Nature of the Study

I selected the qualitative multiple case study approach to identify, compare, and analyze common psycholinguistic themes across a purposeful selection of 12 manifestos composed by American public mass murderers. The intent was to achieve a deeper

understanding of their motives and mindsets as revealed through their words (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2013). According to Yin (2014), a case study is based on a constructivist paradigm, which presupposes that truth is relative and constructed by individual interpretation. Despite the subjective nature of meaning, using empirical inquiry heightens researcher objectivity. The case study approach was the best means for analyzing and coding mass murderer manifestos because of its focus on process, discovery, and context (Yin, 2014). As both content and context are crucial elements in written and spoken language, the case study's strength was essential for manifesto analysis.

The key concept in this qualitative study was that psycholinguistic analysis of mass murderer manifestos would provide insight into the offenders' motivations (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Malkki, 2014; Oliffe et al., 2014). According to the semiotics perspective, individuals use language to convey meaning in specific contexts, such as manifestos. I used a constructivist paradigm to structure all stages of data gathering, coding, and analyzing, as well as to present findings and enable in-depth understanding of the manifestos. Psycholinguistic analysis of the 12 selected mass murderer manifestos was in line with Knoll's (2012b) six content categories.

I used the document analysis method for reading manifestos, research, reports, and articles relevant to mass murder in America. Data gathering came from coding language from the 12 selected manifestos, according to the six criteria outlined in the research questions. This process involved careful reading, notetaking, rereading, coding, and analyzing the linguistic content of each manifesto. To confirm or deny the presence

of Knoll's (2012b) linguistic content categories, I assessed data collected from each case independently, and then compared these data across the sample. The explanatory method of analysis allowed for answering the research questions and identifying how the six linguistic categories were represented in the manifestos.

Definitions

Active shooter events are in-progress, attempted mass murders committed against multiple unknown victims in public places (Blair & Martaindale, 2013). These are similar to *mass public shootings*, except no deaths need to have occurred.

Basic linguistic theory incorporates grammatical descriptions of language and linguistic typology (Dixon, 1997).

Ego survival and revenge is seeking vengeance as a way of broadcasting one's pain. In crafting this criterion, Knoll (2012b) drew upon Menninger's (2007) list of events causing individuals to express rage-fueled violence.

Entitlement is an attitude involving an extreme lack of empathy, in which the individual feels he or she has a right to what others have, and is thus justified in engendering harm (Knoll, 2012b).

Envy is a state in which the individual not only wants what others have, but is willing to destroy their enjoyment of the coveted thing or state as a result (Knoll, 2012b).

Heroic revenge fantasy is a conviction that, by performing an act of violence, an individual will be freed from persecution (Knoll, 2012b).

Leakage occurs when individuals reveal their malevolent intentions to others, either third parties or specifically targeted individuals (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Meloy, 2014).

Manifestos are linguistic forms of communication, such as journals, diaries, blogs, letters, diatribes, and videos, which are published in advance or left behind by mass murderers (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b).

Mass murder, as defined by the Investigative Assistance for Violent Crimes Act of 2012 (Violent Crimes Act, 2013), is the act of intentionally killing three or more people during the same event, not counting the perpetrator. I have used the terms *mass murder*, *mass shooting*, *public mass murder*, and *public mass shooting* interchangeably to mean a *pseudocommando* act committed in a public place with a firearm against victims who are random, symbolic, or a combination of both.

Mass shooting is an act of mass murder in which one or more firearms are used (K. Cohen, Johansson, Kaati, & Mork, 2014). I have used this term interchangeably with *mass murder*.

Nihilism is an extreme form of self-centeredness driven by severe hopelessness and meaninglessness that, when externalized, may result in violence against others (Knoll, 2012b).

Pseudocommando is an individual who uses one or more firearms to commit mass murder in a public place (Dietz, 1986; Knoll, 2010a, 2010b, 2012b; Lankford, 2016a). By extension, *pseudocommando mindset* is a cognitive perspective incorporating innate

distrust and a persecutory worldview, which then creates a combination of narcissism and paranoia (Knoll, 2012b).

Psycholinguistics is an approach used to examine the psychological relevance of language (Hörmann, 1971). *Psycholinguistic analysis* is based on the principles of *basic linguistic theory* (Dixon, 1997).

Public mass murder is a mass shooting in a public location, largely directed toward random strangers (Lankford, 2016a). I have used this term interchangeably with *public mass shooting*.

Public mass shooting is a mass murder in a public location, largely directed toward random strangers (Lankford, 2016a). I have used this term interchangeably with *public mass murder*.

Assumptions

The primary assumption was that mass murderers only take the time to record written or video communications if those words are highly meaningful to them (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014). In addition, verbalizing one's violent intentions in some ways makes them real, increasing their likelihood of occurrence (Leonard, 2015; Presser, 2012). Analysis of these communications can help reveal the offenders' mental state and motives. Casting such light on mass murderers is expected to increase understanding, treatment, and intervention (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Gordon et al., 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Meloy, 2014; Shultz et al., 2013; Winter & Tschudi, 2015). Using psycholinguistic analysis to compare content within 12 mass murderer manifestos required assuming that the linguistic structure of these documents was psychologically

relevant, in line with Knoll and Meloy's (2014) assertion that manifesto content is significant to the mass murderer.

These assumptions are well researched and commonly accepted (Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016b, 2016d; Malkki, 2014; Pury et al., 2015). Such suppositions were necessary components of this study for two reasons. First, if manifesto content were not personally important to the mass murderer, it would be a worthless endeavor to examine these words. Second, there would be no reason to identify common psycholinguistic content in manifestos if the findings would not be of academic, professional, and societal benefit. Based on these assumptions, identifying common linguistic content in mass murderer manifestos is an important tool to better understand the motives and psychological makeups of mass murderers. Recognizing the potential risk relayed through linguistic communications may ultimately lead to the identification of vulnerable individuals and planned attacks before they occur.

Scope and Delimitation

I conducted this study to address the knowledge gap in psycholinguistic analysis of mass murderer manifestos. The population was public mass murderer manifestos, as defined in the Introduction of this chapter, which were available from the Internet, government agencies, or museum collections. I used the U.S. Congress definition of mass murder (Violent Crimes Act, 2013) as three or more people killed to identify eligible mass murders. Qualifying acts were single- and multiple-location massacres, including spree killings, rampage killings, and school shootings. Nonpseudocommando mass

murders, such as acts of familicide, terrorism, and homicide committed within the course of robbery or gang activity, did not qualify, nor did workplace massacres, in part due to the scarcity of manifestos published by these shooters.

I selected a purposeful sample of 12 manifestos based on importance, relevance, information richness, variation, and population representation, with a prioritization of high-profile shooters. Excluded from consideration were communications fewer than two pages, or those composed by mass shooters outside the United States. Because Knoll (2012b) examined Cho's and Wong's manifestos according to his six content categories, I did not use their communications.

I restricted the study's population to mass murderer manifestos that were or have been made public and are presently available. The inherent risk in using this limited population was that important communications may be overlooked due to a lack of accessibility (Huff-Corzine et al., 2014; Sarteschi, 2016). Further limitations may come from restricting the population to public mass murderers in the United States; thus, I did not intend the 12 cases to be representative of mass murderers worldwide. To best minimize these risks, careful assessment of all available manifestos preceded sample selection.

The goal of a qualitative study is to illuminate a specific population sample or phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Due to the smaller sample size and typical absence of statistical computations, qualitative results are not directly transferable to broader populations. Findings may not be applicable to other contexts, such as manifestos written by mass murderers outside the United States or by pseudocommandos who failed to kill

three or more people. Detailed documentation of research methods, assumptions, and processes served to heighten transferability.

Limitations

Due to a narrow focus and modest sample size, qualitative case study results are not generalizable to a broad population (Creswell, 2012). Limitations exist with regard to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Yin, 2014). Because the present case study involved a sample size of 12, the findings were not statistically representative of the entire population of available American public mass murderer manifestos. Document accessibility was another limitation, as many of these manifestos have been withheld from the public and, due to public safety concerns, not released despite Freedom of Information Act requests ("Judge Rules Police," 2016; Sarteschi, 2016). Another validity drawback of qualitative studies comes from the way in which data are gathered, coded, and analyzed. By its nature, coding is a subjective activity without clear guidelines or statistically proven results. As such, vulnerabilities are possible due to researcher error and misrepresentation of findings (Yin, 2014). One way to minimize errors is to follow an organized coding process, with a focus on clarity, depth, analytic methodology, and themes (Zickmund, n.d.).

One way of strengthening qualitative reliability is to use two or more coders and triangulate their findings (Brink, 1993). However, when a single person is conducting data analysis, the risk of bias, omission, or misinterpretation is higher. To achieve the greatest degree of validity and reliability, I conducted multiple rounds of data coding and analysis, while adhering to established criteria and processes (Brink, 1993). Vigilance to

preconceptions and prejudices was present during all phases of data collection and analysis, as these may have biased results. Conscious or subconscious expectations based on Knoll's (2012b) psycholinguistic analysis or other researchers' work could also skew the findings. Mitigating prejudice required maintaining detailed documentation, conducting regular self-checks, and continually challenging personal assumptions and techniques.

One potential bias is making assumptions based on manifestos I have read but not selected for the present study. Expecting the 12 cases to display some or all of the six psycholinguistic themes, or coding words and phrases only peripherally related to these themes, could also bias data collection, consideration, and findings. Too much or too little detail might have skewed results and conclusions, as could overreliance on Knoll's (2012b) findings. Means of addressing these limitations included conducting multiple rounds of reading, coding, and analysis, as well as frequently examining and challenging personal opinions and assumptions.

Significance

Although many researchers have cited broad traits among mass murderers (Allely et al., 2014; Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Knoll, 2013; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2016a, 2016b; Madfis, 2014b; Shermer, 2013), there has been little research conducted with regard to these violent offenders' manifestos (Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b; Madfis, 2014b; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). Improved thematic

understanding of mass murderers' motives and mental states lays a foundation for future research and application, which may subsequently help with identifying high-risk individuals. Developing a list of specific words, phrases, grammar, themes, and tone in mass murderer manifestos may also play a role in improved mental health treatment for would-be killers in need of intervention ("FBI: We've Prevented," 2013; Sarteschi, 2016).

Mental health care providers and government agencies can draw upon the findings of this and future manifesto analyses when assessing individuals who display warning behaviors suggestive of intended mass murder. Awareness of manifesto themes may spur psychology professionals to conduct more comprehensive evaluations, refer a greater number of clients for specialist treatment, or exercise additional community mental health holds. Incorporating psycholinguistic awareness into threat assessment may help law enforcement personnel focus their investigations on individuals who show the greatest potential for violence (Meloy, 2016). Consequently, government organizations could better facilitate behavioral analysis and mental health services, possibly intercepting gun violence before it occurs ("FBI: We've Prevented," 2013; Sarteschi, 2016).

Multiple acts of mass murder have been prevented because people reported hearing or observing oral or written threats of violence (Follman, 2015a; Knoll, 2012a; Sarteschi, 2016; Shermer, 2013). In examining 57 cases of threatened or attempted mass murder in the United States, Sarteschi (2016) found manifestos were prevalent among would-be offenders who made threats deemed highly credible. Nearly one sixth of threats

were observed online. In 2013, a high school teacher in Alabama gave police a journal in which a student wrote about plans for committing mass violence against his classmates (Shermer, 2013). Also in 2013, a likely Netherlands school shooting was averted when 4Chan readers alerted police to threats on the social media site ("Possible Mass Murder," 2013). Made aware of leaked threats, Oregon police stopped an adolescent from carrying out a school shooting in 2000 (Follman, 2015b).

Obtaining a better understanding of mass murderers' motives and mindsets will spark further scholarly and practical research. Over the long-term, application of this accumulated knowledge may mean fewer mass killings, expedited police investigations, and reduced taxpayer burden. Citizens in at-risk communities might be favorably impacted, as better identification of potential mass murderers would make each person less likely to become a victim. Finally, through professional analysis of their words, potential mass murderers are more apt to receive the psychological treatment they need, which could save not only the lives of others, but also their own.

Summary

After the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, the U.S. Congress passed the Violent Crimes Act (2013) defining mass murder as a single-incident, multiple homicide during which three or more persons are killed. In the United States, the frequency of mass murder has escalated in recent decades (A. P. Cohen et al., 2014; Follman, 2015b; Greene, 2014; Lowe & Galea, 2017; Towers et al., 2015). Although the broad classification of mass murder includes familicide, robbery, and gang activity, the most

severe repercussions come from mass killings in public places. As such, these perpetrators' writings were the focus of this study.

As researchers have suggested, the gravity of pseudocommando multiple homicide highlights the critical need to better understand these offenses and offenders. Knoll (2010b, 2012b) noted mass murderers have often left behind written messages, or manifestos, which hold clues to their mental states and motives; however, these documents have received little scholarly analysis (Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b; Madfis, 2014b; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). Findings from this study illuminate the intentions and cognitive states of mass murderers, laying a foundation for future manifesto research. Such knowledge may eventually be applied to understanding, investigating, intervening in, and solving acts of mass homicide (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Gordon et al., 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Meloy, 2014; Shultz et al., 2013; Winter & Tschudi, 2015).

In Chapter 2, I present recent and seminal research, with a focus on reviewing mass murder definitions and frequency, summarizing current knowledge, discussing potential motives, and examining leakage. A review of mass murderers is included. I differentiate between the types of offenders used in this study, discussing recent research on each. Explored are offender motives, among them revenge, suicidal ideation, copycat actions, and fame and notoriety. Also in Chapter 2 is a look at media coverage, including the way information is presented and the resultant societal repercussions. As part of a discussion on American culture, I address firearm ownership, gun laws, and masculinity.

An in-depth synthesis of existing research on mass murder, mass murderers, and mass murderer manifestos also appears in Chapter 2, with a focus on manifesto dissemination and the cursory content analysis conducted to date. I examine the use of the World Wide Web in the communication and distribution of ideas, particularly with regard to school shooters, and present a review of warning behaviors, along with a closer look at individual threat and risk assessment. There is also an overview of the 12 mass murderers whose manifestos I coded and analyzed in this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Despite the rapidly growing problem of mass murder in America, few researchers have conducted psycholinguistic analysis of mass murderers' recorded words (Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016b; Meloy, 2014; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). Obtaining a better understanding the motives and mindsets of individuals who commit mass murder warrants a closer look at their words. I conducted a thorough qualitative psycholinguistic analysis of 12 manifestos, written or video communications disseminated in advance or left behind by American public mass shooters. Identification of common themes in content helped illuminate individual reasoning and psychological makeup. The purpose of the study was to provide greater understanding of the perpetrators' motives and mindsets, inspiring future research that one day may be used for intervention in and investigation of mass homicide.

Although researchers have noted mass murderers often leave behind a final communication, manifestos have received scant careful analysis (Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b; Madfis, 2014b; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). Researchers have focused primarily on the characteristics and traits of mass murders and mass murderers rather than the words the offenders used (Allely et al., 2014; Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Eskey et al., 2015; Knoll, 2013; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford,

2016a; Madfis, 2014b; Shermer, 2013). Multiple qualitative and quantitative analyses have been conducted to better understand the psychological factors behind mass murderers and their actions (Bondü & Beier, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Follman, 2015b; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Grobbink et al., 2015; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016b, 2016d; Neuman et al., 2015). However, I found little information specific to the analysis and comparison of mass murderers' written or spoken words, suggesting the need for focused research and detailed manifesto analysis (Knoll, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016b; Meloy, 2014; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014).

Meloy (2014) recognized leakage, or revealing one's intentions to either random or specifically targeted third parties, as one type of warning behavior common among mass murderers. Written and videotaped communications, or manifestos, are frequent vehicles for leakage (American Psychological Association [APA], 2013; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; K. Cohen et al., 2014; Meloy, 2014; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014; Presser, 2012). Many researchers noted the importance of behavioral threat assessment, including the analysis of advanced communications, as a potential means to prevent mass murder (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Gordon et al., 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Lankford, 2015a, 2016b; Meloy, 2014; Shermer, 2013; Shultz et al., 2013; Winter & Tschudi, 2015). Meloy et al. (2014) contributed to improvements in threat assessment, noting that identifying, coding, and utilizing pre–mass murder warning behaviors warranted further research.

An overview of the literature search strategy comes in Chapter 2, including databases and search terms, with discussions of the theoretical foundation and conceptual

framework to follow. I justify my selection of the theoretical foundation to incorporate specific theories of crime, namely social learning (Bandura, 1977), personality (Eysenck, 1977), biology and sociology (Raine, 2002, 2006), personal construct (Kelly, 1991), and strain (Agnew, 1992). This foundation grounded my application of Knoll's (2012b) mass murderer manifesto content categories to 12 purposefully selected cases. Also following are analyses of seminal and current research, directly or peripherally related to mass murderer manifestos.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review research strategy involved accessing multiple scholarly databases, search engines, websites, libraries, and bookstores. The most frequently used databases were PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, PsycEXTRA, SAGE Premier, SocINDEX, ERIC, LexisNexis Academic, Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, and ProQuest Criminal Justice. Primary search engines were Google Scholar and Bing. I searched numerous keywords, many of them comprising variations, expansions, and combinations of the root terms *mass murder*, *mass shooting*, *school shooting*, *public mass murder*, *rampage shooting*, *spree shooting*, *mass homicide*, and *manifesto*. Additional terms, including *risk*, *statistics*, *frequency*, *motive*, *guns*, *firearms*, *media*, and *impact*, combined with root terms for more specific results. I searched for all terms and combinations of terms in each database (see Appendix A for a complete list of search terms).

I also researched scholarly and nonscholarly sources of information on the 12 mass murderers whose manifestos I studied—Christopher Dorner, Eric Harris, James

Holmes, Kip Kinkel, Dylan Klebold, Adam Lanza, Gang Lu, Elliot Rodger, Dylann Roof, George Sodini, Jeff Weise, and Charles Whitman—as well as on the manifestos themselves. This comprehensive literature review enabled me to identify content, themes, and concepts. As evidenced by research gaps, there was a need for comprehensive scholarly analysis of mass murderer manifestos.

The primary publication date range I searched was 2012 through 2016. Research prior to 2012 supplemented my understanding and knowledge of mass killings and those who have committed them. Seminal research and researchers, including theories and theorists as well as formal definitions of topics, were important. I most commonly retrieved peer-reviewed journal articles, although books, reports, magazines, newspapers, and websites provided information on specific individuals, incidents, statistics, history, and media coverage. Books, both physical and electronic, offered additional scholarly perspectives, research findings, and pertinent information. Even though the majority of researchers did not directly address mass murderer manifestos, they nonetheless gave relevant information on mass murder and mass murderers.

Conceptual Framework

A primary assumption served as a foundation for the study, specifically that researchers can identify mass murderers' motives and psychopathologies through psycholinguistic analysis of offenders' manifestos. Concepts included mass murder, mass murderers, manifestos, gun violence, criminal behavior, and linguistics. The intersection of these concepts provided the framework, as did how the 12 mass murderer manifestos linguistically depicted (a) ego survival and revenge, (b) pseudocommando mindset,

(c) envy, (d) nihilism, (e) entitlement, and (f) heroic revenge fantasy (Knoll, 2012b). Additional psychological and criminological theories considered included social learning, personality, modeling and behavior, power control, informal social control and cumulative disadvantage, and escape theory of suicide.

Addressing what he saw as inadequate scientific models of behavior, Bandura (1977) introduced social learning theory to explain human conduct. Rocque (2012) applied this theory to school shootings, asserting that individuals emulate other mass killers based on what they see in the media. Using his three-factor psychoticism, extraversion, neuroticism (PEN) model, Eysenck (1977) proposed a criminal approach to personality in which law-breaking behavior is driven by interactions between the three factors. Scheider (2002) offered support for the personality/trait theory of criminality, showing how an individual's inherent and stable personality characteristics propelled the commission of a crime. Neuman et al. (2015) conducted an automatic linguistic analysis of school shooters' text messages, looking for language that reflected narcissistic personality traits. In examining mass murderers' diaries and websites, Dutton et al. (2013) identified language suggestive of narcissistic and paranoid personality traits and disorders.

More recently, some psychologists, including Raine (2002, 2006), have suggested a combination of biology and sociology as the main drive behind antisocial and violent behavior. According to this theory, the interaction of genetics, neuropsychology, psychophysiology, and neurology leads to social and antisocial tendencies, actions, and behaviors. Raine's work was supported by Allely et al. (2014), who conducted a study of

serial killers and mass murderers and found extremely violent acts to be the result of a complex biopsychosocial interrelationship.

Borum (2004) used psychological approaches to explain violence, drawing upon the theories of cognition, biology, social learning, and frustration-aggression. Knoll and Meloy (2014) utilized a cognitive approach to trace an individual's path to paranoid mass murder, from idea to inception. In 2013, the APA published a guide on youth violence warning signs, including those predictive of school shootings. The organization proposed a combination of frustration and anger as a primary cause for adolescent violence. Murray (2015) supported this concept, finding manifestos to be frequent vehicles through which mass killers voice their frustrations.

Winter and Tschudi (2015) used Kelly's (1991) personal construct theory to examine a portion of Norwegian mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik's 1,500-page manifesto. Immediately prior to his 2011 government building and youth camp attacks, Breivik sent out more than 1,000 digital copies of his lengthy written and video messages, denouncing what he saw as the upcoming Muslim takeover of Europe. Through their psycholinguistic analysis, Winter and Tschudi found in Breivik a self-construct lacking in personal responsibility.

In accordance with transcendent fantasy theory, Murray (2015) alleged that mass murder resulted from the intersection of specific psychological and sociological factors, with the offender expecting to achieve the fame of his predecessors. Murray believed this theory explained the mass murderer's skewed or incomplete identity formation, as well as his stunted psychosocial development. Many who have researched mass and social media

influences on mass murder achieved findings that supported transcendent fantasy theory (Auxemery, 2015; Follman, 2015b; Gordon et al., 2015; Murray, 2015; Rocque, 2012; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014; Towers et al., 2015).

Madfis (2014b) used Agnew's (1992) general strain theory of crime as the foundation for a study on homicidal anger and entitlement. Madfis showed that societal pressures, especially in the form of cultural ideals, were to blame for mass murder. Bonanno and Levenson (2014) also drew upon strain theory in applying Levin and Madfis's (2009) five-stage, strain-based sequential model to Sandy Hook shooter Adam Lanza. Although their findings were primarily speculative, Levin and Madfis viewed Lanza's destructive to nonexistent familial relationships as evidence of strain at home. According to this theory, Lanza planned the mass shooting as a means of escape when the strain became intolerable (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Levin & Madfis, 2009).

I variously applied these stated behavioral and criminological theories to the six research questions. The first part of Research Question 1, which deals with ego survival, came from the theories of Eysenck (1977), Raine (2002, 2006), Kelly (1991), and Agnew (1992). To identify elements of revenge as outlined in the second part of Research Question 1, I reviewed theories by Baumeister (1990), Eysenck, and Sampson and Laub (1997). The pseudocommando mindset (Dietz, 1986; Knoll, 2010a, 2010b, 2012b), addressed in Research Question 2, can be explained in part according to Eysenck and Raine.

The criminology theories of Borum (2004) and Kelly (1991) provided a basis for Research Question 3, which deals with envy. In identifying nihilistic language, as

outlined in Research Question 4, I drew upon the ideas of Borum and Bandura (1977). Research Question 5 concerned entitlement, a topic rooted in the theories of crime, personality, and behavior posited by Bandura, Eysenck (1977), Raine (2002, 2006), and Borum. The theories of Borum, Kelly, and Agnew (1992) helped illuminate heroic revenge fantasy, which I explored in response to Research Question 6.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

In *Serial Murder: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives for Investigators*, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI, 2005/2008) defined mass murder as a purposeful homicidal act resulting in the deaths of four or more people. Following the December 2012 Sandy Hook shootings, Congress quickly passed legislation lowering the defining minimum number of lives lost from four to three (Violent Crimes Act, 2013). Even with these two federal definitions, many researchers (e.g., Agnitch, 2015; Auxemery, 2015; Blair & Martaindale, 2013; Follman, 2014; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Hilal, Densley, Li, & Ma, 2014; Lowe & Galea, 2017; Phillips, 2013; Towers et al., 2015) have drawn upon other sources and demarcations. For example, to compare and contrast what he termed mass, serial, and sensational homicides, Dietz (1986) defined mass murder as an event in which at least five people are injured and three are killed. Dietz created this definition in self-interest so as to study the greatest number of cases.

Mass Murder

In the United States, mass shootings make up 1% of all firearm homicides (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund [Everytown for Gun Safety], 2015; “Mass Shootings Toll,” 2013). Public shootings comprise 15% of mass murders, with the rest

involving homicidal acts committed against family members, concurrent with robbery or burglary, or as the result of gang or drug activity ("Behind the Bloodshed," 2016; Lankford, 2016a). As the concentration of this study is pseudocommando mass murderers, I focused the literature review on this type of offender.

Definition. Dietz (1986) defined mass murder as an act of multiple homicide with at least three dead and five injured. The FBI (2005/2008) later mandated a minimum of four deaths in a single incident, with no requisite number of additional injuries. Since then, researchers have used varying definitions of mass murder. In a study of rampage shootings since Columbine, Larkin (2009) classified mass public shootings as acts executed against multiple persons, the majority of them randomly selected, in which one or more are injured, but not necessarily killed. Other researchers (Berkowitz & Liu, 2016; Ehrenfreund, 2015; Everytown for Gun Safety, 2015; Hickey, 2016; Lankford, 2016a; Mayors Against Illegal Guns, 2015) have continued to use the FBI's (2005/2008) definition of four fatalities, rather than the government's reduced death toll of three (Violent Crimes Act, 2013).

To further complicate research comparison and synthesis, some scholars included incidents in which four or more people were only injured, but not necessarily killed (Auxemery, 2015; Follman, 2014; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Hilal et. al, 2014; Knoll, 2012b). Others looked at attempted mass murders, regardless of death or injury (Agnitch, 2015; Blair & Martaindale, 2013; Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, 2012; Lowe & Galea, 2017; Phillips, 2013; Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016; Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). As the present study relied upon the most recent federal

definition of three or more murdered (Violent Crimes Act, 2013), research synthesis was challenging due to these varying designations.

School shooting. A school shooting is a mass shooting in which three or more people are killed on the grounds of a school or higher learning institution (Bondü & Beier, 2015). As with mass murders not committed on school property, the majority of school shootings are planned in advance, usually from weeks to months (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Lankford, 2016a; Meloy, 2014; Walkup & Rubin, 2013). This was certainly the case in the 1999 Columbine High School attack, as Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold plotted their massacre for over a year (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014). School shooters are more likely than other types of mass murderers to commit copycat violence as a means of achieving notoriety (Auxemery, 2015; Björkqvist, 2015; Lankford, 2016b; Malkki, 2014; Paton & Figeac, 2015; Rocque, 2012). School shooters exhibit motives and risk factors more in line with those of adult mass murderers than with similarly aged violent offenders who do not attempt homicide (Berkowitz & Liu, 2016).

Frequency. Myriad researchers have cited a recent, dramatic increase in the frequency of mass murders, including school shootings (Achenbach, 2015; Auxemery, 2015; Blair & Martaindale, 2013; Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Bondü & Beier, 2015; A. P. Cohen et al., 2014; Follman, 2015b; Huff-Corzine et al., 2014; Lowe & Galea, 2017; Rocque, 2012; Shultz et al., 2013; Towers et al., 2015). Following extensive journalistic review, Blazonis (2015) identified 267 mass shootings occurring between January 1, 2015, and October 9, 2015. Ehrenfreund (2015) found at least one mass

shooting every 8 days from January through August 2015, after which the frequency increased to every 6 days. Santhanam and Hickey (2015) noted a minimum of one mass shooting per day across 45 states and the District of Columbia.

Towers et al. (2015) identified one nonschool-based mass murder every 2 weeks, and one school shooting every month, with similar results echoed by Everytown for Gun Safety (2015). Following an extensive review of data compiled by the New York Police Department, the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, and *Mother Jones*, Huff-Corzine et al. (2014) pinpointed a recent increase in the frequency of mass murder, from one to three events per month. Gun Violence Archive (2016), using the broader classification of four or more persons injured but not necessarily killed, recorded 330 mass shootings in 2015, a rate of nearly one per day. It bears repeating, however, that different researchers have used different definitions of mass murder.

Statistics. In the last decade, more than 750,000 people have been injured by firearms, and over 320,000 killed (Follman, Lurie, Lee, & West, 2015). Gun Violence Archive (2016) reported more than 52,000 incidents of gun violence in 2015, involving in excess of 13,000 deaths and nearly 27,000 injuries. Specific to mass murder, the organization recorded 367 deaths and 1,312 injuries. Urging caution with regard to the accuracy of numbers, Huff-Corzine et al. (2014) found many acts of mass murder had been overlooked by researchers and government organizations, and thus not represented in official data. Alternately, Schildkraut and Elsass (2016) noted that some organizations' statistics included attempted acts of mass murder, even if the requisite three or more people had not been killed.

Few researchers have attempted to measure the financial cost of gun violence in America. Follman et al. (2015), whose research is often cited, put this number at $229 billion annually, an average of $700 per citizen. This figure represents $8.6 billion in direct costs, such as hospitalization, rehabilitation, and restoration, and $221 billion in indirect costs. In an older report published by the World Health Organization, Waters et al. (2004) placed the annual cost of American violence at $155 billion, plus approximately $40,000 of lifetime medical treatment expense for each victim. Follman et al. (2015) ranked gun violence as the third most expensive epidemic in America, outpacing the financial impact of obesity and nearly on par with federal Medicaid spending.

Mass Murderers

Individuals committing public mass murders rarely "snap," instead planning their attacks over a period of weeks to months (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2014; Cohen-Almagor, 2014; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Meloy, 2014; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). Most mass murderers qualify as lone wolf terrorists, defined as single individuals inflicting widespread death and damage based on a deeply held ideology, pathological need for revenge, or desire for recognition (Gordon et al., 2015; Lankford, 2013, 2016a). Although there is no universal profile of a mass murderer, similarities do exist. A high percentage of American mass murderers are middle-class White males in either their teen- or middle-aged years (Agnitch, 2015; Madfis, 2014b). A difference is apparent among rampage shooters at elementary, middle, or high schools, who are more likely to be from middle- to lower- social classes (Rocque, 2012). Due to

the high number of Asian college and university offenders, just over half of all school shooters are White (Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014).

Knoll and Meloy (2014) used a psychosocial model to review mass murderers' words for evidence of psychosis. The researchers found common psychological themes of destructive envy, threatened narcissism, revenge fantasies, and social torment. Offenders' cognitive processes were deemed abnormal, often leading to extreme, violence-inducing paranoia, sometimes in response to feelings of depression and desperation. In a two-part study of pseudocommando mass murderers, Knoll (2010a, 2010b) also identified psychological problems common among mass murderers, including depression, paranoia, and narcissism. Eskey et al. (2015) found nearly 60% of mass shooters had displayed signs of paranoia, depression, and delusions prior to the act, with Lankford (2016b) identifying similar psychological traits. Langman (2009) acknowledged three primary mental states of school shooters: psychotic, psychopathic, and traumatized.

Mass murderers commonly lack a sense of personal responsibility, instead blaming others for their psychological pain and suffering (Bondü & Beier, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Knoll, 2012b; Murray, 2015). Offenders who commit acts of multiple homicide often display concurrent preparation and visualization actions (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Murray, 2015; Schurman-Kauflin, 2012; Walkup & Rubin, 2013). Approximately one third of mass shooters die at the scene, either by their own hand or from justifiable homicide (Lankford, 2015b, 2016d). Also known as *suicide by cop*, justifiable homicide results when an individual behaves in a dangerous or menacing way, forcing police officers to shoot. Charles Whitman, the 1966 University of

Austin killer, died this way, continuing to fire his weapon and giving officers no choice but to kill him ("Austin [Tex.]. Police Department," 1941–2000).

Mass Murderer Manifestos

For the present purpose, a manifesto is a linguistic communication recorded by an offender prior to the commission of mass murder. These communications are usually made in writing, yet may also appear in video form (Cohen-Almagor, 2014; Follman, 2015a; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2016a, 2016b; Madfis, 2014a; Malkki, 2014; Murray, 2015; Oliffe et al., 2014; Paton & Figeac, 2015; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). Although manifestos have received little scholarly analysis (Auxemery, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014), researchers who have studied some of these messages speak to the wealth of knowledge they contain (Auxemery, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a; Murray, 2015, 2016; Paton & Figeac, 2015; Pury et al., 2015). Careful analysis of mass murderers' words should help to expose offenders' motivations and mental states, thus revealing the significant, driving forces behind their brutal acts (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b).

Mass murderers frequently write or publish manifestos before the massacre, a reality acknowledged by Tucson shooter Jared Loughner in his writings: "Of course, I kept a journal. Don't people like me always keep a journal? It's part of the whole thing. It was me against the world" (Junod, 2014, para. 28). With social media and online forum posts visible to all who access or interact with them, World Wide Web users may be given an advanced look at offenders' plans (Björkvist, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer,

2015; K. Cohen et al., 2014; Hawdon, 2012; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2013; Lankford, 2016a; Lindberg et al., 2012; Madfis, 2014a; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). Some would-be mass murderers write letters or other messages to specifically targeted individuals. More than a year before the Columbine shootings, Eric Harris created a website on which he threatened and encouraged homicidal violence against a former friend, whom he named (Cullen, 2009).

Another means of communication is a package the mass murderer sends to the media just before the shooting (Auxemery, 2015; Björkqvist, 2015; Paton & Figeac, 2015). In such messages, the offenders use writings, videos, and photos to express their rage, hatred, and quest for retribution. By directing these communications to the media, mass murderers, in essence, ensure their own fame and notoriety. Videos are often aired on television and the World Wide Web, and written manifestos are printed in newspapers and posted online (Eskey et al., 2015; Lankford, 2016a; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014). Hours before his 2007 mass homicide and suicide at Virginia Tech, Seung-Hui Cho mailed a multimedia package to NBC, excerpts of which appeared in news reports and remain available on the World Wide Web today (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Paton & Figeac, 2015; Powell & Self, 2011).

Leakage. Leakage occurs when the would-be mass murderer expresses threats or intentions to friends, coconspirators, or specific targets (Bondü & Scheithauer, 2014, 2015; Madfis, 2014b; Meloy, 2014). These threats may be made verbally or in writing, and are particularly common among adolescents. In the vast majority of school shootings, at least one person knew about the killers' intentions (Bondü & Scheithauer, 2015;

Madfis, 2014b; Meloy et al., 2012). In comparison, only half of adult mass murderers leak information (A. P. Cohen et al., 2014). By reporting these advance communications, individuals can help prevent planned acts of mass violence (Bondü & Scheithauer, 2015; Knoll, 2012b; Shermer, 2013). As a means of encouraging adolescents to speak out, many school administrators have provided anonymous avenues for students to make reports without fear of repercussion (Follman et al., 2015; Fox & Levin, 2014; Knoll, 2012b; Madfis, 2014a; Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016). Nationally, the Department of Homeland Security (n.d.) instituted the "If You See Something, Say Something" campaign as a means of encouraging citizen reporting and community safety.

Internet communication. Internet communication comes in many forms, including writings such as journals, blogs, social media posts, and message boards, as well as audiovisual diatribes posted on video-sharing websites such as YouTube and LiveLeak. Troubled individuals often use these forums to declare their grievances and advance their violent intentions (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Cohen-Almagor, 2014; Hawdon, 2012; Knoll, 2016; Lindberg et al., 2012; Paton & Figeac, 2015; Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016). Similarly disturbed persons may celebrate and respond to such messages, encouraging action by the menacing party (Hawdon, 2012; Lindberg et al., 2012). Beyond the direct communication of threats, researchers found that online posts also inspire copycat crimes (Gordon et al., 2015; Hawdon, 2012; Oksanen, Hawdon, & Räsänen, 2014).

Psycholinguistic Analysis

Dixon (1997) coined the term *basic linguistic theory* to describe the analysis of word usage and meaning. Hörmann (1971) drew upon this theory as the basis for psycholinguistic analysis, an attempt to infer psychological relevance from the words people use. Specific to mass murderer manifestos, researchers can use psycholinguistic analysis to obtain a view into the offender's mind, and to aid in understanding, forecasting, and intercepting mass violence (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b). A. P. Cohen et al. (2014) devised algorithms to assess linguistic markers in World Wide Web posts, helping to identify individuals at risk of committing mass shootings. Points of assessment included words and phrases revealing leakage, the offender's self-identification as an avenger, and a preoccupation with executing radical violence.

Coyle (2014) recommended using a linguistic approach to comprehend the social forces underlying violent crime. In profiling school shooters, Neuman et al. (2015) looked for words strongly representative of personality traits. K. Cohen et al. (2014) found linguistic markers suggestive of leakage, fixation, and identification to be predictive of radical violence. Through psycholinguistic analysis of mass murderers suffering from violent paranoid spectrum disorders, Knoll and Meloy (2014) identified common traits, including envy, social persecution, and revenge fantasies. Using automated text analysis, Egnoto and Griffin (2016) recognized foreshadowing language in the e-mails, social media posts, and manifestos of spree killers.

Motives

Over the years, researchers and reporters have posited numerous motives for types of mass murder. Motives vary across attack types: public mass shootings, including school shootings; workplace shootings; gang violence; and familicide. Mass murderers, such as Isla Vista, California, rampage killer Elliot Rodger, are often motivated by feelings of persecution and revenge (Follman, 2015b; Kivivuori, Savolainen, & Aaltonen, 2016; Murray, 2015; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). The offender may be consumed with achieving infamy and making history (Healy, 2015; Lankford, 2016b; Pury et al., 2015; Robinson, 2015; Ziv, 2015). Mass shooters may be spurred by the compulsion to exact homicidal revenge, and subsequently establish a sense of personal identity (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Grobbink et al., 2015; Healy, 2015; Lankford, 2016b). School shooters, in particular, frequently act on resentment caused by peer rejection and ostracism. Lankford (2016a) used strain theory to explain mass murderer motivation, with a focus on poor social relations and the inability to achieve one's goals. These frustrations, paired with an irrational sense of entitlement and victimization, can be a lethal combination in the mass murderer.

Some researchers have advanced the idea of precipitating events as the primary cause of mass violence (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Lankford, 2012; Madfis, 2014b; Murray, 2016; Taylor, 2016). However, as most acts of mass murder were planned in advance, this is not generally a dominant factor (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Cohen-Almagor, 2014; Lankford, 2016a; Meloy, 2014; Schurman-Kauflin, 2012). Achenbach (2015) suggested desires for notoriety and power, misogyny,

and racism as precipitating factors, yet little consensus in the literature exists for the latter two. Fox and DeLateur (2014a) asserted that mass shooters were also driven by profit, loyalty, and terror; however, few other researchers have supported these motives.

Mental illness. In the media and across public opinion, mental disorders are often linked with mass shooters (Follman, 2014, 2015b; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Knoll, 2016; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a; Levin, 2014; Towers et al., 2015). According to a 2013 Gallup poll (Fan, 2015), 80% of Americans blame mass shootings on the nation's inadequate mental health system, an opinion often echoed by researchers (Achenbach, 2015; Bondü & Beier, 2015; Lankford, 2015a; Walkup & Rubin, 2013). Indeed, a number of mass shooters have struggled with severe mental disorders or suicidal thoughts (Eskey et al., 2015; Follman, 2014, 2015b; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a; Madfis, 2014b). After an extensive literature review on mental illness in those committing homicide-suicide, Roma et al. (2012) placed this rate as high as 75%.

From the latter part of the 20th century through the first decade of the 21st, twice as many youths were diagnosed with severe psychological problems compared to the preceding 25 years (Schiller, 2013). In a linguistic analysis, Madfis (2014b) noted both implicit and explicit references to mental illness as being rampant in the manifestos of mass murderers. According to Eskey et al. (2015), over half of mass killers had previously been diagnosed with a mental illness. Postevent, psychiatrists were able to identify mental disorders in a majority of mass shooters (Lemieux, 2014). However, despite the high percentage of researchers associating mental health problems with mass

murder, some contend this is not the case (e.g., Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Fox & Levin, 2014).

Researchers have advanced a number of specific mental disorders as being common among mass murderers. Following the Virginia Tech attack, Cullen (2007) suggested all school shooters suffered from one of three psychological disorders: psychopathy, schizophrenia, or suicidal depression. Psychosis, he said, was a symptom of paranoid schizophrenia and other illnesses. Knoll and Meloy (2014) found a clear progression of paranoid thoughts in mass killers, with similar findings echoed by Metzl and MacLeish (2015). Dutton et al. (2013) identified not just paranoid personality disorder, but also paranoid schizophrenia with delusions, and what the authors termed "malignant narcissism."

Lankford (2015a, 2016a) presented similar views, pointing to not just schizophrenia, but also psychosis and profound depression as common afflictions of public mass shooters. Neuman et al. (2015) applied automatic linguistic analysis to the written words of six school shooters. The researchers noted suggestions of narcissistic personality disorder, particularly the dimensions of revenge and humiliation, yet found no clear association with paranoid, schizotypal, or depressive personalities. Wondemaghen (2014) suggested offenders may use violence as a means of alleviating the unbearable symptoms of mental illness.

The presence of one or more mental disorders has been shown to exacerbate environmental or psychological stressors, which may then result in the potential mass murderer taking action (Lankford, 2015a, 2016a). Thus, early identification of

psychological disorders may aid in in preventing negative outcomes, from lessening the afflicted individual's suffering to intercepting violent acts before they occur (Bondü & Beier, 2015; Lindberg et al., 2012). Walkup and Rubin (2013) found mental illness alone to be an incomplete explanation for mass homicide. Rather, they noted, the road to mass murder appears complex and complicated, dependent upon a convergence of dynamics that rarely intersect.

Multiple drivers may overlap, including not just psychological disorders, but early or ongoing physical and emotional trauma, alienation, loss, and "final straw" triggering events (Declercq & Audenaert, 2011; Murray, 2016). Additional risk factors include access to firearms, an attraction to violent imagery, an obsession with weapons, and a history of aggression (Follman, 2015b; Levin, 2014; Meloy et al., 2012). Pseudocommandos, in particular, appear to have endured long-lasting feelings of rage, shame, guilt, and self-hatred (Knoll, 2012b; Lankford, 2015a). School shooters are also especially prone to depression and suicide (Grobbink et al., 2015; Lindberg et al., 2012). Although Bonanno and Levenson (2014) were unable to profile the typical school shooter, they noted strong psychological similarities with regard to severe depression, suicidal ideation, an attraction to violence, sustained bullying, and poor coping skills.

Culture. Over the past two decades, the World Wide Web has impacted global culture and communication about violence in ways never before seen (Antliff, 2013; Roesler, 2014; Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016). Cultural scripts, such as those threatening or glorifying mass shootings, spread globally (Follman, 2015b; Knoll, 2013; Lindberg et al., 2012; Paton & Figeac, 2015). Individuals psychologically at risk for committing violent

crimes may come to view mass murder not as an atrocity, but as a courageous act of retaliation against injustice (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Lankford, 2013, 2016d; Pury et al, 2015). Hampered by weak cultural and social ties, unstable persons may feel compelled to create an identity through violence (Knoll, 2016; Lankford, 2016b, 2016d; Schiller, 2013; Shermer, 2013; Winter & Tschudi, 2015). The prevalence of U.S. gun ownership is seen as contributing to this risk, as is the cultural script that firearms solve problems (Healy, 2015; Lankford, 2016a; Lopez & Oh, 2016; Oliffe et al., 2014; Paton & Figeac, 2015; Robinson, 2015; Rocque, 2012; Shermer, 2013). In American society, citizens often accept aggression and courage as part of the masculine identity (Kennedy-Kollar & Charles, 2013; Lankford, 2016d; Madfis, 2014b; Oliffe et al., 2014; Pury et al., 2015; Schiller, 2013).

Risk Factors

In persons prone to violence, mental illness may exacerbate persecutory thinking and spark murderous attacks (Knoll, 2010a; Knoll & Meloy, 2014). However, researchers have identified a history of violent crime and aggression, not mental illness, as the greatest predictor of firearm assault against oneself or others (Cloud, 2012; Dutton et al., 2013; Follman, 2015b; Levin, 2014; Meloy et al., 2012). Threatened violence, talk of self-harm, and self-loathing are other worrisome signals (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2014; Dutton et al., 2013; Knoll, 2013). Also of concern are psychological warning signs such as paranoid and delusional thoughts, uncontrollable anger, and an abnormal desire for recognition and reward (Dutton et al., 2013; Eskey et al., 2015; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2016b, 2016d; Schurman-Kauflin, 2012). Knoll and Meloy (2014) proposed

the “threatened ego” model of paranoid cognitive progression as one way to explain violent rage. Psychobiology is another school of thought meriting consideration, as brain pathology and neurological abnormalities intersect with social and environmental risks, including ostracism, rejection, and gun culture (Allely et al., 2014; Madfis, 2014b; Shermer, 2013).

Myriad researchers, journalists, and citizens have called for the media to dramatically reduce its coverage of mass murders and murderers (Follman, 2015a; Knoll, 2012b, 2013). Such pervasive reporting and analysis may glamorize mass murder, sending an especially dangerous message to copycats (Herz, 2014; Knoll, 2016). There is also a movement against publicizing the names and photographs of mass killers or broadcasting their manifestos (Brooker, 2009; Eskey et al., 2015; Follman, 2015a; Friedersdorf, 2014; Tufekci, 2012). Tom and Caren Teves, whose son, Alex, died in the 2012 Aurora, Colorado, theater shooting, spearheaded a “No Notoriety” campaign in an attempt to shift media coverage from the offenders to the victims (Follman, 2015a). Following the 2015 Umpqua Community College mass shooting, the Douglas County, Oregon, Sheriff echoed similar sentiments in a press conference (Andrews, 2015).

Threat Assessment

Identifying individuals at risk of committing mass murder is a difficult and imprecise endeavor (Achenbach, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Cloud, 2012; Kleinfield, Buettner, & Chen, 2015; Levin, 2014; Queen Mary University of London, 2015). Although psychologists and psychiatrists have used structured testing instruments

in correctional and clinical settings with varying degrees of success, they infrequently administer such tests to persons who have not yet offended (Knoll, 2012b).

Warning signs. Researchers view leakage as one of the strongest warning signs an individual intends to commit mass violence (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; A. P. Cohen et al., 2014; Meloy et al., 2014; Presser, 2012). Recognizing and reporting such messages is essential, as early identification provides the best chance for intervention (Knoll, 2012a, 2012b; Shermer, 2013). At-risk persons may reveal these warnings through preparatory actions, preoccupation with a person or cause, first-time violence, an increase in activities directly related to the pending offense, and expressions of desperation. Bondü and Scheithauer (2015) studied two groups of school shooters, those targeting single victims and others attempting mass murder. The researchers found different warning signs between the groups with regard to seriousness, patterns, characteristics, offense-related behavior, and type of leakage.

In assessing the threat of violence, Meloy et al. (2012) proposed eight overall warning behaviors: pathway, fixation, identification, novel aggression, energy burst, leakage, directly communicated threat, and last resort. Bondü and Schneithauer (2015) found the majority of school shooters had announced their intentions, either verbally or in writing; as such, they identified a need for assessment and treatment. Meloy et al. (2012) also recommended analyzing adolescents' written and spoken communications according to eight themes offered by the FBI: violence, hopelessness, despair, hatred, isolation, loneliness, nihilism, and an end-of-the-world philosophy. The researchers proposed similar analyses of adult mass murderer manifestos.

Risk assessment. Following the Columbine High School massacre, the FBI published a report on threat assessment for school shooters, identifying types and levels of threats and outlining factors for assessment (O'Toole, 1999). The FBI echoed then–Attorney General Janet Reno's call for principals and teachers to develop and implement violence prevention plans. In line with other researchers and scholars, the organization recognized leakage as the most important and visible warning sign. Specific psychological disturbances pinpointed as signs of a student contemplating violence against his classmates include depression, narcissism, entitlement, alienation, low self-esteem, lack of empathy, and a strong fascination with violence. As Bonanno and Levenson (2014) cautioned, though, the key determinant should not be *if* the student makes a threat, but whether he *poses* a threat.

Broad common denominators among mass murderers include age, race, gender, and psychological disorders (Agnitch, 2015; Follman, 2015b; Madfis, 2014b). Following a review of multiple studies on American mass murderers, Lankford (2015a, 2016a) identified mental health problems and suicidal ideation as particularly common traits. Although Neuman et al. (2015) found no single psychological diagnosis among school shooters, they documented a common thread of narcissistic personality disorder in both adolescent and adult mass murderers. Similarly, Knoll and Meloy (2014) recognized a cognitive progression in paranoia among many mass murderers, which they attributed as a narcissistic defense. Wondemaghen (2014) viewed committing mass killings as one way for individuals to cope with the symptoms of serious mental illness.

Family, friends, teachers, and classmates have a social responsibility to assess the risk of violence, especially in adolescents. Individuals need to know which behaviors or words may signal danger, and to take appropriate action (Klebold, 2016; Knoll, 2012b). If people overhear or observe threatening or disturbing words or behaviors, they should either address the individual directly or report their concerns to a suitable authority. Many high school administrators now employ school resource officers to break the implied code of silence, giving students and teachers a safe, confidential channel to voice their concerns (Perumean-Chaney & Sutton, 2013; Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016). Because of early identification, hundreds of school shootings, as well as other mass murders, have been averted (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Madfis, 2014a, 2014b; Shermer, 2013).

Duty to warn. In 1969, after announcing his intentions to a school psychologist, Prosenjit Poddar stabbed to death Tatiana Tarasoff, a fellow student at the University of California at Berkeley (Simone & Fulero, 2005). Tarasoff's parents sued the University for its psychologist's failure to inform them or their daughter of the threat. The California Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Tarasoffs, finding the duty to warn an individual or society of a specific threat took precedence over maintaining client confidentiality (*Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California,* 1974, 1976). This ruling impacted courts across the country, with each state devising its own interpretation of the law. Generally, the duty to warn obligates psychotherapists to disclose confidential client information when the danger is foreseeable and the victim is identifiable (Simone & Fulero, 2005).

Firearms

Collectively, Americans own over 300 million guns, more than one for every citizen (Follman, 2015b; Lopez & Oh, 2016). There is least one firearm in 33% of American households (Ehrenfreund, 2015). American citizens often view guns as symbols of empowerment, self-defense, self-sufficiency, and masculine virility (Fan, 2015; Lemieux, 2014). From 2005 to 2015, more than 750,000 people were injured by firearms, with another 320,000 killed (Follman et al., 2015). U.S. rates for firearm deaths, including both homicide and suicide, are unparalleled among countries with advanced economies (Lopez & Oh, 2016; Shultz et al., 2013).

Gun use in mass murder. The United States comprises 5% of the global population, yet has 31% of the world's mass public shootings (Lankford, 2016a). Since 2006, more than 240 mass killings have been committed in America, at least 75% of them involving firearms (Fan, 2015; Fox & Levin, 2014). In 2015, Towers et al. counted one American mass shooting every other week. Public mass shooters predominantly employ multiple firearms, with semiautomatic handguns and semiautomatic assault rifles the most common (Lankford, 2016a; Phillips, 2013; Robinson, 2015). When perpetrators use an assault weapon, semiautomatic weapon, or firearm with a high-capacity magazine, they shoot 151% more people and kill 63% more, on average (Everytown for Gun Safety, 2015).

Media Coverage

The media devote extensive air time and print space to publicizing acts of mass murder and those who commit them, sensationalizing violent tragedy while attracting

viewers (Knoll, 2013, 2016; Murray, 2015; O'Toole & Fondacaro, 2015). The 1999 Columbine High School shooting became a watershed event in terms of 24-hour media coverage, air time which has risen steadily with each successive atrocity (Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; O'Toole & Fondacaro, 2015). CNN and MSNBC recorded their highest viewership to date on April 20, 1999, the day of the attack (Irving, 1999). Cable news networks' around-the-clock coverage continued for weeks, making Columbine the year's top news story (Muschert, 2002; Pew Research Center, 1999). Mass shootings were the leading story in 2012, as well, following massacres in Aurora, Colorado, and Newtown, Connecticut. Despite taking place in mid-December, Newtown became the second-most-watched story of the year (Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014).

Walkup and Rubin (2013) supported media reporting of mass shootings, yet felt coverage needed to be less superficial. They advocated for media to instead investigate the societal problems of alienation and antisocial violence. Similarly, Follman (2015a) recommended the media use neutral language and limited imagery in reporting mass killings. Knoll (2012b) suggested mass murderers be neither glorified nor demonized, with coverage instead focused on victim healing and community reconstruction. In an ABC News interview, Duwe adopted an antithetical stance, arguing mass public shootings deserve the coverage they receive (Phillips, 2013). On the same news program, Follman also supported news coverage as being necessary for public education, understanding, and discussion.

Media and violence. Researchers have conducted many studies to assess the relationship between violence in the media and violence in real life. Following a

comprehensive review of newspaper, magazine, television, and online news reports, Björkqvist (2015) found that individuals exposed to greater media violence levels were more likely to commit acts of aggression and brutality. Walkup and Rubin (2013) drew parallels between media violence and social isolation, finding some extremely withdrawn individuals particularly susceptible to outwardly expressing what they see onscreen. Pozios, Kambam, and Bender (2013) concluded that, although violent media exposure does not by itself lead to violence, it is a proven risk factor. Acknowledging this connection, Knoll (2010b) called on the media to accept greater responsibility for the extent of their violent coverage, including the images, words, and messages they select. Finally, by devoting excessive air time and print space to only the most extreme mass murders, the media may unwittingly be inspiring future attacks (Taylor, 2016). Extensive viewing of media violence often predicts violent behavior, even among nonmurderers (Björkvist, 2015).

Media influence. In reporting any story, the media choose the language, images, approach, and presentation of information, effectively dictating public discourse (Coverdale, Coverdale, & Nairn, 2013; Coyle, 2014; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014). By devoting extensive coverage to public mass murder, the media enable the killers to, in effect, control what news people see (Paton & Figeac, 2015). Through this exposure, mass murderers are able to achieve the fame, infamy, and notoriety they seek (Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2016; Lankford, 2016a, 2016b, 2016d; Murray, 2015; Pury et al., 2015). Although it is impossible to pinpoint how many mass murderers have been inspired by

earlier media coverage, researchers suggest the number is likely quite high (Auxemery, 2015; Knoll, 2013; Leonard, 2015).

In describing mass murderers, journalists often use emotionally heightened terms such as *psycho*, *psychopath*, *monster*, *madman*, *deranged*, and *crazy* (Coverdale et al., 2013; Patton, 2013; Thrasybule, 2012). Most times, they do so with limited understanding or explanation of these labels, or the real or suspected mental disorders from which the offenders may suffer. Using this inflammatory language demonizes the mentally ill, perpetuating the misperception that psychological disorders alone cause violent crime (Coverdale et al., 2013; Levin, 2014; McGinty, Webster, Jarlenski, & Barry, 2014; Paulson, 2014). By misrepresenting those with mental illness, the media contribute to discrimination and stigma (Follman, 2015b).

Copycat crimes. Researchers and journalists have identified a correlation between media coverage of mass murder and murderers, and the commission of subsequent offenses (Auxemery, 2015; Follman, 2015a; Francis, 2014; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2013; Leonard, 2015; Rocque, 2012; Towers et al., 2015). Applying a contagion model to media exposure, Towers et al. (2015) found each mass murder and school shooting had inspired 0.30 and 0.22 new acts, respectively. Tufekci (2012) called for a balance between reporting mass murder and informing the public, as those who commit such acts often imitate what they see and hear in the media. The manifestos of mass murderers support these assertions, as they frequently reference and often express admiration for prior offenders and offenses (Auxemery, 2015; Björkqvist, 2015; Fox & Levin, 2014; Lindberg et al., 2012). As Paton and Figeac (2015) illustrated, school

shooters tend also to copy the appearances of other adolescent mass murderers in their video manifestos and photographs, especially with regard to firearm positioning and military or combat attire.

The 1999 Columbine High School mass shooting was a landmark event in contemporary society, leading to a series of copycat actions researchers and media call "the Columbine effect" (Follman & Andrews, 2015). Countless school shooters have referenced either Columbine itself, or Harris and Klebold in particular, in their journals, videos, and social media posts (Auxemery, 2015; Healy, 2015; Malkki, 2014; Oksanen et al., 2014). In 2015, Follman and Andrews identified at least 74 planned or completed school shootings across 30 states that had been inspired by Columbine. Alternatively, Follman (Phillips, 2013) and Fox and DeLateur (2014a) did not believe media coverage inspired future mass murders.

Societal impact. Another dangerous effect of extensive mass murder media coverage is its negative impact on society. Viewing the prevalence and sensationalism of these acts, people often think such tragedies occur with greater frequency than they actually do (Fox & DeLateur, 2014b; Lankford, 2016a; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014). Pervasive coverage of public mass shootings by the media conveys the idea that no one and no place are safe (Achenbach, 2015; Barbieri & Connell, 2015; Eskey et al., 2015; Madfis, 2014a; Nekvasil, Cornell, & Huang, 2015; O'Toole & Fondacaro, 2015; Schurman-Kauflin, 2012). Citizens suffer a disproportionate amount of fear as a result, overestimating their personal risk of victimization (Lankford, 2016a; Paton & Figeac, 2015; Roque, 2012).

Sample of 12 Mass Murderers

I investigated the 12 mass murderers and their acts prior to psychologically analyzing the linguistic content of their manifestos. Offenders' ages, locations, and attack specifics were relevant, as were the number of victims killed and injured. Also significant were indications of the murderers' psychological states, suggested or diagnosed mental disorders, and what communications they left behind. The sample contained manifestos written by 12 perpetrators who collectively committed 11 acts of mass murder. Combined, these homicidal killers left 108 victims dead and 175 injured, with nine offenders dying at the scene. Although firearms factored into each act, three offenders also employed knives.

Christopher Dorner. On February 3, 2013, 33-year-old former Los Angeles police officer and U.S. Navy veteran Christopher Dorner killed a police captain's daughter and her fiancé with a 9-mm Glock handgun (Goffard, Rubin, & Streeter, 2013). Over a subsequent 9-day spree, he used both the Glock and an AR-15 assault rifle to shoot five officers, two of them fatally, before committing suicide when surrounded by police (Goffard et. al, 2013). Shortly after the initial killings, Dorner posted a 6,000-word manifesto on Facebook in which he detailed his grievances toward the Los Angeles Police Department, naming specific targets (Rubin, Leonard, & Linthicum, 2013). In the manifesto, Dorner claimed to be suffering from severe depression (Hartley, 2013).

Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. On April 20, 1999, 18-year-old Eric Harris and 17-year-old Dylan Klebold entered Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, armed with four guns and homemade explosives (Cullen, 2009). Less than an hour later,

following a rampage during which they killed 13 and injured 24, they took their own lives. As evidenced by their manifestos, the boys had planned a much larger massacre, hoping to exceed the 168 deaths from the Oklahoma City bombing. Had the propane bombs in the cafeteria detonated as intended, the number of fatalities could have been closer to 600 (Langman, 2009).

Prior to the shooting, Harris had seen a psychologist for anger management, which may have been an early manifestation of psychopathy (Cullen, 2009). Psychiatrists post-Columbine believed Klebold suffered from severe, suicidal depression (Cullen, 2004; “Glimpses of Klebold and Harris,” 2000). In addition to recording video diaries with Klebold, Harris maintained several webpages and kept a ranting, hate-filled journal (“Glimpses of Klebold and Harris,” 2000). In contrast, in his journal, Klebold revealed hopelessness, confusion, and the desire to die (Langman, 2009).

James Holmes. On July 20, 2012, 24-year-old James Holmes entered the Century 16 Theatre in Aurora, Colorado, during a midnight premiere of *The Dark Knight Rises* (O’Neill, Cabrera, & Weisfeldt, 2015). Using an AR 15 assault rifle, Remington shotgun, and 40-caliber Glock handgun, Holmes killed 12 and injured 58 before surrendering to police (Foreman, 2012; Gembrowski, Bello, & Hughes, 2012). Three months prior to the massacre, he had told a psychiatrist he was having homicidal thoughts multiple times a day (McKinley, 2015). Following his arrest, he was diagnosed with a schizophrenia spectrum disorder (Ingold & Steffen, 2015). In his journal, Holmes questioned the meaning of life and documented his delusional thoughts, self-diagnoses, and plans for the attack (Alter, 2015).

Kip Kinkel. On the evening of May 20, 1998, 15-year-old Kip Kinkel shot and killed his parents (Frontline, 2000b). The next morning, he brought three guns to Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon, where he killed two students and wounded 25. Months prior, the teenager had been diagnosed with major depressive disorder and prescribed Prozac (Frontline, 2000b). Kinkel often complained of hearing voices saying he was worthless and commanding him to kill (Langman, 2009). Doctors later found these psychotic and paranoid thoughts and behaviors suggestive of early-onset schizophrenia (Frontline, 2000a). Kinkel maintained a diary in which he recorded hallucinations, delusions, paranoia, anguish, and homicidal thoughts (Langman, 2009).

Adam Lanza. On the morning of December 14, 2012, Adam Lanza, 20, killed his mother in her bed (Kreider, 2012). He then drove to nearby Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, armed with a semiautomatic rifle and two semiautomatic handguns (Esposito, Smith, & Ng, 2012). Lanza killed 20 first-graders and six adults in under 5 minutes, and then fatally shot himself (Esposito et al., 2012). Based on prior psychiatric treatment, Lanza appeared to have suffered from Asperger's syndrome, a personality disorder, or both (Lysiak, Slattery, & Schapiro, 2012). Although his manifesto was not made public, some of Lanza's journals, message board discussions, and radio transcripts are available.

Gang Lu. On November 1, 2001, 28-year-old Gang Lu showed up at a meeting of the physics department at the University of Iowa, armed with a .38-caliber revolver and .22-caliber handgun (Marriott, 1991b). He shot and killed two distinguished physics professors, the department chairman, and a fellow former doctoral student before moving

on to the administration building, where he fatally wounded the associate vice president and paralyzed her assistant; Lu then took his own life (Mann, 1992). Investigators discovered five unsent letters in Lu's briefcase that revealed had been planning his attack for 6 months, after learning the other student, and not him, had won a prestigious dissertation award (Marriott, 1991b).

Elliot Rodger. On May 23, 2014, 22-year-old Elliot Rodger fatally stabbed his roommates, uploaded his final video blog to YouTube, and drove to Isla Vista, California, armed with three semiautomatic handguns (Duke, 2014; Nagourney, Cieply, Feuer, & Lovetree, 2014). Rodger shot and killed three college students, wounding others before committing suicide; all told, the rampage left six dead and 14 injured. Mental health professionals had proposed a number of mental disorders throughout Rodger's life, including autism spectrum disorder, depression, and anxiety (Nagourney et al., 2014). Rodger left behind a Facebook page, YouTube channel, extensive video blog, and 140-page manifesto, which he emailed to friends and family just before the attack (Hill, 2014).

Dylann Roof. On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof attended a prayer meeting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina (Mindock, 2015). An hour into the gathering, the 21-year-old White man opened fire on the Black parishioners, killing nine. Roof fled the scene but was later apprehended. A follower of the White Supremacist movement, he displayed obsessive-compulsive behavior and substance abuse since adolescence (Weiss & Mone, 2015). In addition to maintaining a

website outlining his ideology, Roof leaked his intentions to several friends (Mindock, 2015).

George Sodini. On August 4, 2009, George Sodini, 48, entered an LA Fitness Center women's aerobics class in suburban Pittsburgh ("Gunman in Health Club," 2009). Using two 9-millimeter automatic pistols, he fired 52 shots, killing three and injuring nine before taking his own life (Potter, Cuomo, & Ferran, 2009). Sodini left behind a note, website, online videos, and blog, which included frequent lamentations about a lack of female companionship ("Gunman in Health Club," 2009). Based on the chronology of diary entries, he had been planning the massacre for nearly 9 months.

Jeff Weise. On March 21, 2005, Jeff Weise, 16, used a 22-caliber pistol to kill his grandfather and the man's companion as they slept (Rave, 2005). He then drove his grandfather's police cruiser to Red Lake Senior High School, located on the Red Lake, Minnesota, Indian reservation, where he shot and killed seven before fatally shooting himself (Sevcik, 2005). A year before the massacre, Weise had received a prescription for Prozac following two suicide attempts (Rave, 2005). While alive, he posted online a journal and violent animated videos, in addition to making entries on neo-Nazi, Libertarian National Socialist Green Party, and zombie websites (Gunderson, 2005).

Charles Whitman. In the early hours of August 1, 1966, 25-year-old Charles Whitman fatally stabbed his mother and his wife, and then went gun shopping ("Report to the Governor," 1966). Once he was armed with rifles, handguns, and a shotgun, he headed to the University of Texas at Austin, where he was a student (Macleod, n.d.). From the 27th floor of the University Tower, Whitman killed 16 and injured 33 before

being shot dead by police nearly 2 hours after the massacre began ("Austin [Tex.]. Police Department," 1941–2000). Whitman had previously been treated for depression and anxiety; following his death, medical examiners discovered a malignant brain tumor. He left behind writings, including letters, notes, and a diary (Macleod, n.d.). As his diary, written 2 years prior, was unrelated to the impending massacre, I did not consider it for this study.

Research Approach

Myriad researchers who conducted studies most closely related to the current project primarily focused on mass murderers, manifestos, motives, psychological disorders and symptoms, and linguistic analysis (Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b; Madfis, 2014b; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014). I used Knoll's (2012b) manifesto content categories and descriptions for the six research questions posed in this study, and selected the qualitative multiple case study approach to identify, compare, and analyze common psycholinguistic themes across a purposeful selection of 12 manifestos by American public mass murderers. I closely examined the language these killers used, enabling interpretation and reporting through coding and data analysis. This approach is line with the key concept that psycholinguistic analysis of manifestos will reveal offenders' motives and mental states (Auxemery, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Malkki, 2014; Oliffe et al., 2014).

Summary and Conclusions

The frequency of mass murder in the United States is increasing, and with it, the number of deaths and injuries from such acts (Auxemery, 2015; Blair & Martaindale, 2013; Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Bondü & Beier, 2015; A. P. Cohen et al., 2014; Everytown for Gun Safety, 2015; Follman, 2015b; Rocque, 2012; Shultz et al., 2013). In part because of extensive media coverage, public shootings are the most visible type of mass murder, causing pervasive fear and panic (Achenbach, 2015; Auxemery, 2015; Eskey et al., 2015; Lankford, 2016a; O'Toole & Fondacaro, 2015). The U.S. Congress defines mass murder as a single act of homicide in which three or more people are killed (Violent Crimes Act, 2013). Researchers use different numbers to identify mass murders, however, making research synthesis an imprecise exercise.

Scholars have suggested a number of motives behind mass murder. Commonly cited drives include deep-seated desires for revenge, fame, or personal identity (Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Eskey et al., 2015; Follman, 2015b; Grobbink et al., 2015; Healy, 2015; Lankford, 2016b; Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2014; Pury et al., 2015; Robinson, 2015; Shermer, 2013; Ziv, 2015). Other traits may play a role, such as narcissism, peer rejection, and social isolation (Achenbach, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Grobbink et al., 2015; Knoll, 2013; Lankford, 2016b; Schurman-Kauflin, 2012; Ziv, 2015). Some killers appeared to have been inspired by other mass murders and murderers. This copycat effect may be the result of sensational media coverage and online access to other killers' manifestos (Auxemery, 2015; Follman, 2015a; Francis, 2014; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2013; Leonard, 2015; Rocque, 2012; Towers et al., 2015).

A psychological disorder alone is not sufficient cause for mass homicide, but it is often a contributing factor (Follman, 2014, 2015b; Fox & DeLateur, 2014a; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a; Levin, 2014; Towers et al., 2015; Walkup & Rubin, 2013). When mental illness is present, common symptoms include paranoid or delusional thoughts and actions (Dutton et al., 2013; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a; Metzl & MacLeish, 2015). Stronger predictors of mass murder are a fascination with firearms, uncontrollable anger, social marginalization, and a history of violence (Cloud, 2012; Dutton et al., 2013; Follman, 2015b; Levin, 2014; Meloy et al., 2012).

Only a handful of researchers have focused their studies on the manifestos disseminated or maintained by mass murderers (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Lankford, 2013, 2016b; Meloy, 2014; Murray, 2016). I conducted this psycholinguistic analysis of manifesto content to address gaps in the literature, evaluating data to identify examples of the six linguistic themes specified in the research questions, which are based on Knoll's (2012) manifesto content categories. My findings expand the presently limited body of knowledge on mass murderer manifestos and, subsequently, mass murderers' motives and mental states (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Paton & Figeac, 2015). Based on this improved understanding, researchers can undertake future inquiries and, ultimately, grow the potential for identification and treatment of intended killers before they commit mass violence.

In Chapter 3, I provide a discussion on the role of the qualitative researcher with regard to sample selection, reading, coding, analyzing, verifying, and reporting. I offer a review of researcher biases and ethical issues, as well as present my bases for the number

of cases, criteria for inclusion, and participant selection. There is a thorough review of data collection methods and locales, with an outline of data coding and analysis procedures to answer the stated research questions. Credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reliability also merit discussion.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to provide greater understanding of mass murderers' motives and mindsets. I conducted psycholinguistic analyses of manifestos—written or videotaped communication, either disseminated in advance or discovered postmassacre—according to Knoll's (2012b) six themes: (a) ego survival and revenge; (b) pseudocommando mindset; (c) envy; (d) nihilism; (e) entitlement; and (f) heroic revenge fantasy. The fundamental assumption was that, by taking the time to record their thoughts, mass killers communicated what was highly significant to them. Study results supported the presence of these six content categories within the 12 manifestos.

In this chapter, I restate the rationale for the qualitative case study design and explain the role of the researcher as reader, outlining subsequent responsibilities including coding and psycholinguistic analysis. Techniques for minimizing researcher bias and risk mitigation methods, such as triangulation and reflexivity, appear. As manifestos are historical documents, the ethical obligation is to the reliability of results, and not to participants. Representative case selection, bias elimination, and a focus on the scientific method are necessary components.

Criteria for participant selection appear in this chapter. First, the homicide in question must be classified as a mass murder, defined by Congress as three or more killed within what can be regarded as a single incident (Violent Crimes Act, 2013). The murderer(s) must have committed the crime in the United States in a public place, using at least one firearm. I chose the 12 cases from an overall population of publicly available

mass murderer manifestos meeting study conditions according to length, representation, and richness of content. The only instrument was me as the researcher. Because study participants are documents and not people, ethical concerns were minimal and power relationships were nonexistent.

Relying on the veracity of mass murderers was a necessary risk, as only their words provided the best insight into their motives and psychological states. I conducted data collection and coding to answer the six research questions, which were drawn from Knoll's (2012b) manifesto content themes. I recorded and coded linguistic examples of these themes and created a master codebook. The chapter also includes a discussion of trustworthiness, incorporating credibility, triangulation, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Research Design and Rationale

I designed this study to answer six research questions, as follows:

Research Question 1: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts ego survival and revenge?

Research Question 2: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts pseudocommando mindset: persecution, envy, obliteration?

Research Question 3: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts envy?

Research Question 4: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts nihilism?

Research Question 5: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts entitlement?

Research Question 6: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts heroic revenge fantasy?

The central phenomenon was mass murderer manifestos. Secondary concepts I used to conduct, understand, and interpret research were the following: mass murder and murderers; mass shootings and shooters; mass public shootings and shooters; pseudocommandos; manifestos; gun violence; criminal behavior; and linguistics and psycholinguistics. These concepts were related to or referenced in the 12 manifestos.

The qualitative multiple case study research tradition served as the foundation. The case study was the most appropriate for exploring participants in detail (Yin, 2014). Researchers practice this tradition to examine lived experiences, letting individuals reveal their stories through recorded documents. The multiple case study approach allowed not only for in-depth analysis within each case, but also comparisons across cases.

Role of the Researcher

The usual qualitative roles of observer, participant, and observer-participant were not applicable to this study. As manifestos are documents and not people, there could be no subject observation or researcher participation. Instead, my role as researcher was that of reader. Subsequent responsibilities included identifying linguistic examples based on Knoll's (2012b) categories, coding words and phrases, and analyzing the coded data. There were no personal, professional, or power relationships between either the

manifestos themselves or the mass murderers who composed them, and me as the researcher.

The potential for researcher bias is stronger in qualitative studies than quantitative ones, due to the inherent subjectivity in gathering and coding qualitative data. To ensure the greatest degree of objectivity, researchers must address their own personal beliefs and prejudices. Single persons gathering and analyzing data must take care to avoid misinterpretation or omission. I conducted multiple rounds of coding and analysis, adhering to pre-established criteria and processes (Brink, 1993). Maintaining researcher objectivity helped maximize accuracy across all phases of data collection and analysis. I sought to minimize any expectations based on Knoll's (2012b) psycholinguistic categories or other researchers' work, as they could also skew findings. Additional means of reducing bias included maintaining detailed documentation, implementing regular self-checks, and continually challenging assumptions.

A researcher has ethical obligations to select cases appropriate for the study and to avoid making choices according to personal preferences or expectations (Yin, 2014). It was important for me to stay up to date with emerging research, incorporating it into the present study, as applicable. I did not intend this study as a means of validating Knoll's (2012b) proposed manifesto content criteria, but to accurately and independently confirm or deny the presence of his six categories within the 12 selected cases. There were no conflicts of interest.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The overarching population encompassing this field of research is manifestos written by U.S. mass murderers who committed their crimes in public places, using at least one firearm. Because not every communication has been made public, the population available for this study was manifestos that were accessible from the Internet, government agencies, or history museums.

I selected a purposeful sample of 12 mass murderer manifestos to obtain a comprehensive cross-section of available communications. Excluded from consideration were manifestos of fewer than two pages, or those composed by mass shooters outside the United States. Although rich content is important, I neither selected nor rejected manifestos based on how well they conformed to or deviated from the six categories specified in the research questions. As Knoll (2012b) had already applied these categories to Cho's and Wong's manifestos, I did not use their communications.

I used the U.S. Congress's definition of mass murder as a homicidal act in which three or more people are killed (Violent Crimes Act, 2013) to identify eligible acts and reject alternate or outdated classifications, many of which required a minimum of four deaths or injuries. Qualifying acts of mass murder were rampage, spree, and school shootings carried out in one or more public places; nonqualifying acts were nonpseudocommando mass murders, such as familicide, terrorism, or homicide committed within the course of robbery or gang activity. Due to the spontaneous nature of workplace shootings, manifestos by these offenders are rare and not representative of

the population. After selecting cases that built upon Knoll's (2012b) findings, I applied these criteria, gathered all available documents, and read and evaluated the manifestos.

Prior to manifesto evaluation, I conducted exhaustive research on mass murderers and murders, including offender names, locations, attack types, weapons, and fatalities. The only murders I considered were American public mass shootings, classified as single- and multiple-location, rampage, spree, and school shootings meeting the federal definition. Conducting extensive Internet searches on each of the offenders allowed me to locate as many written and video manifestos that were available. From this population, I selected a sample of 12 cases to maximize reliability, validity, and generalizability. As Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) identified 12 as the point of saturation in a multiple case study, adding participants beyond this number would have provided no new data or themes.

In researching this topic, I searched each mass murderer's name by itself, and then again when paired with variations or combinations of the terms *manifesto*, *journal*, *diary*, *letter*, *suicide note*, *video*, *blog*, and *website* (a complete list of search terms is provided in Appendix A). Numerous library databases and search engines proved useful, including PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, PsycEXTRA, SAGE Premier, SocINDEX, ERIC, LexisNexis Academic, Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, ProQuest Criminal Justice, Google Scholar, and Bing. Questionable or unreliable sources, such as personal blogs or letters to the editor, were excluded.

Instrumentation

The researcher is often the primary data collection instrument in a qualitative study (Xu & Storr, 2012). As the sole researcher, I alone was responsible for reading, coding, and analyzing manifesto content. Although I conducted psycholinguistic analysis in accordance with Knoll's (2012b) six content criteria, I had to decide which language was relevant to the research questions and how to classify the mass murderers' words. Following coding came data analysis, presentation, and conclusions.

The principal sources of data used in this study were archival documents. Because manifestos are written from the mass murderers' perspectives, they provide the best insight into the killers' minds. A first-person composition is not guaranteed reliable, however, as the author controls the presentation of information, language, and tone. Despite this drawback, the only way to psycholinguistically analyze manifesto content was to use the mass murderers' words as composed. Answering the six research questions required identifying linguistic depictions within the mass murderers' communications, based on Knoll's (2012b) content categories. I accomplished this by examining, coding, and analyzing the manifestos.

Instruments

I used no formal tools or instruments, instead establishing content validity by drawing upon Knoll's (2012b) established coding categories. The manifestos of the 12 mass murderers were the only data sources needed to answer the research questions. Because this was a qualitative study conducted by a single researcher, a degree of subjectivity was a concern and therefore required monitoring and minimization.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Data collection. I collected linguistic data from the sample of 12 mass murderer manifestos according to the six specified content categories. Prior to formal coding or analysis, I read each manifesto a minimum of three times.

Research Question 1: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts ego survival and revenge? I conducted coding and data analysis to identify examples of ego survival and revenge in the language.

Research Question 2: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts pseudocommando mindset: persecution, envy, obliteration? I conducted coding and data analysis to identify examples of pseudocommando mindset in the language.

Research Question 3: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts envy? I conducted coding and data analysis to identify examples of envy in the language.

Research Question 4: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts nihilism? I conducted coding and data analysis to identify examples of nihilism in the language.

Research Question 5: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts entitlement? I conducted coding and data analysis to identify examples of entitlement in the language.

Research Question 6: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts heroic revenge fantasy? I conducted coding and data analysis to identify examples of heroic revenge fantasy in the language.

Collecting data. Collecting data necessitated identifying linguistic depictions of each content category, and then compiling a list of category representations from each mass murderer's manifesto. The duration of data collection was not as important as its comprehensiveness.

Recording data. I used Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word to record data, the former for compiling and sorting information, and the latter for writing, rearranging content, and editing. As I had read each of the 12 manifestos prior to study selection to determine whether they qualified, no recruitment follow-up plan was necessary. Because participants were historical documents and not human beings, no exit or follow-up procedures could occur.

Data Analysis Plan

The type of data was archival documentation, which includes diaries, journals, letters, notes, and other forms of personal communication by mass murderers. I used psycholinguistic analysis to uncover the presence of Knoll's (2010b, 2012b) content criteria and to answer the six research questions. Descriptive and analytical coding enabled me to identify categories, concepts, ideas, keywords, phrases, and themes (Gibbs & Taylor, 2010).

A critical component of the coding process is adherence to the research questions. Vigilance to researcher preconceptions or prejudices is necessary to minimize bias. As such, I carefully considered and executed the coding process according to three units of analysis: individual manifestos, words and phrases, and research question relevance. Clear thematic definitions for each code, including the criteria for content inclusion,

merited elaboration. As I read the manifestos and recorded language content depictions, I developed a master codebook in accordance with the six research questions, modifying the codebook when any codes appeared redundant or inaccurate.

I did not use any software programs for analyzing data. Because all 12 cases were prequalified, there were no discrepancies requiring treatment.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility. As one individual conducted this study, triangulation by way of comparing two or more researchers' findings was not possible. Instead, I employed other forms of triangulation to strengthen internal validity, including using reliable data sources, addressing multiple theories, and repeating analysis and coding procedures. Reflexivity, an ongoing awareness of the researcher's personal influence on content and interpretation, enhanced credibility. To ensure saturation, I selected 12 representative and thorough cases as rich data sources. Researcher trustworthiness was also important, which I boosted through subject matter expertise, data immersion, and presentation of findings.

Transferability. To realize the greatest degrees of external validity and reliability, and thus transferability, I undertook multiple rounds of data coding and analysis, ensuring population representativeness and adhering to pre-established criteria and processes (Brink, 1993). Case selection allowed for variation in mass murder types, further increasing transferability. I achieved thick description by keeping a comprehensive diary of manifesto language, detailing how and why I coded the communications.

Dependability. Dependability came from reading and rereading each manifesto, taking notes, identifying examples of the six content criteria, compiling lists, and coding linguistic depictions. I kept a litany of notes throughout the process, providing an audit trail to allow for research replication. Transferability came from considering different theories and perspectives, confirming data reliability, and conducting multiple rounds of analysis and coding to ensure repeatability.

Confirmability. Reflexivity, a component of confirmability, came from recognizing my personal opinions, feelings, or situations that may have affected data collection and analysis. I acknowledged previous researchers' findings and established theories, and then confirmed, rejected, or expanded upon them, as applicable. Confirmability depended upon objectivity, reliability, and the use of multiple triangulation methods. Reviewing emerging literature, challenging assumptions, and comparing findings against those of Knoll (2012b) were ongoing throughout the process.

Intracoder reliability. I achieved intracoder reliability through repeated coding and analysis. This ensured results reliability over time, and eliminated temporary risks such as mood and distraction. Intercoder reliability was not a factor.

Ethical Procedures

Because historical documents comprise the sample, there were no ethical concerns with regard to the treatment of human participants. No institutional permissions were required as would be with human participants, and no recruitment materials were necessary. All manifestos were publicly available, eliminating the need for access

agreements. Because these documents could be publicly accessed, no ethical concerns existed with regard to data collection.

All manifestos were clearly attributed to the mass murderers who composed them. Confidentiality concerns were nonexistent, as the manifestos were freely available. Data storage, dissemination, access, and destruction did not merit consideration. No funding was provided by any individual or organization, and there were no conflicts of interest.

Summary

Chapter 3 illustrated how findings from the present study are used to answer the six research questions. The central phenomenon was mass murderer manifesto content, with secondary concepts related to mass murderer and murderers, violent crime, and psycholinguistics. I provided justification of the qualitative multiple case study research design as the best tradition for in-depth content analysis of personal documents. I also discussed the researcher's roles as reader and instrument, as well as the integral duties of coding and analysis. Ongoing self-assessment decreased the risk of single-researcher bias. Evaluating personal beliefs, expectations, and prejudices, as well as conducting multiple rounds of data gathering and coding, were also necessary.

I discussed my use of the World Wide Web to conduct extensive research and assemble the population of available manifestos by American mass shooters. After identifying qualifying mass murders based on location, attack type, weapons, and number of fatalities, I ascertained the presence of manifestos and procured all available documents. The 12 selected cases met defined criteria and information richness, with

consideration for presenting a mix of types. I reiterated the six research questions and applied them to the data collection process.

Information on how data were collected from the manifestos was included. I used a combination of descriptive and analytical coding to identify categories, concepts, keywords, and themes. I detailed steps taken to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and intracoder reliability, and included repeated reading and coding, as well as triangulation, thick description, and reflexivity.

In Chapter 4, I review setting and participant demographics. I provide in-depth data collection and analysis procedures, with the steps clearly enumerated. This account includes how, when, and where I collected information. There is a presentation of codes, categories, and themes. Finally, I revisit issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in accordance with study procedures. Following this detailed process discussion come the results of the study, which answer the research questions.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Mass murder is a catastrophic phenomenon occurring in the United States with increasing frequency (Achenbach, 2015; Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Beier, 2015; Follman, 2015b; Lowe & Galea, 2017). By definition, a mass murder is a multiple homicide in which three or more individuals are killed in a single event, taking place in one or more locations in close proximity within a finite period (Violent Crimes Act, 2013). A mass shooting, by extension, is a multiple homicide in which one or more firearms are employed in killing three or more people. Although mass shootings may include acts of familicide, terrorism, and homicide committed within the course of robbery or gang activity, for this study I considered only pseudocommando acts, or mass shootings that occurred in public places.

Through limited studies conducted on mass murderers, researchers have focused largely on the field of postevent psychological analysis (Bondü & Beier, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Eskey et al., 2015; Follman, 2015b; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015a). A review of mass murderers' manifestos, writings or videos composed in advance of the act, is one means of assessing the psychological states and motives of perpetrators; however, there has been little analysis of these communications (Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Healy, 2015; Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Lankford, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b). Only Knoll (2012b) and Murray (2016) have assessed these offenders' words for specific themes.

I selected the manifestos of 12 mass murderers for this qualitative case study, the purpose of which was to identify instances of Knoll's (2012b) six manifesto themes. Through psycholinguistic analysis, I identified common mental states and motives among the perpetrators. Accordingly, the research questions were as follows:

Research Question 1: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts ego survival and revenge?

Research Question 2: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts pseudocommando mindset: persecution, envy, obliteration?

Research Question 3: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts envy?

Research Question 4: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts nihilism?

Research Question 5: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts entitlement?

Research Question 6: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts heroic revenge fantasy?

First in this chapter is a review of participant demographics and characteristics. An inspection of data collection and methods follows, particularly with regard to location, frequency, and duration. Next, I discuss data recording processes, including steps taken to gather and code language illustrative of the study's six themes. An outline of the data analysis steps includes the initial coding and subsequent analysis of thematic

examples from the 12 manifestos. A discussion of researcher trustworthiness follows, addressing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

I present study findings for each mass murderer's manifestos, beginning with an overview of the perpetrator and his actions. Following each summary is a list of themes represented in the communications. I provide and discuss specific textual examples and their contexts, illustrating how the language is indicative of the six specific themes. The chapter concludes with a summary of how the study's findings have answered the research questions.

Demographics

Study participants were the manifestos written by 12 American mass murderers who killed three or more people in single incident, or closely related incidents. The killers executed their attacks in a public place, with at least one firearm among the weapons used. The manifestos, which included journals, diaries, letters, blogs, message board posts, and videos, had been composed prior to the act. Written manifestos ranged in length from two to 137 pages. All of the written and video manifestos were openly available on the World Wide Web.

All of the perpetrators were male, with two acting in tandem and 10 operating alone. The perpetrators ranged from 15 to 48 years of age, and their crimes were committed between 1966 and 2015. Attack types and quantities were three single-location, two rampage, one spree, and five school shootings.

Data Collection

I collected data on each of Knoll's (2012b) psycholinguistic themes from all available manifestos written or recorded by the 12 selected mass murderers. Some left behind only a single document and others had composed multiple missives; as such, in excess of 12 separate communications comprised this study. I read, or viewed, transcribed, and read, all manifestos a minimum of three times before conducting coding.

Gathering and coding data involved highlighting sections of text that exemplified the six themes. I coded each manifesto a minimum of three times before making final determinations. I logged all linguistic examples on a spreadsheet, along with the perpetrator's name, document name, date of entry, and page or paragraph number, as available. Along with direct quotations, I noted contextual placement to provide a framework for each entry. After logging all verbiage, I organized it by perpetrator according to theme and order of appearance.

Data collection did not vary from the pattern detailed in Chapter 3. No unusual circumstances arose during data collection and coding.

Data Analysis

Following multiple reads of each manifesto, I identified sentences and passages representative of Knoll's (2012b) six content categories: (a) ego survival and revenge; (b) pseudocommando mindset; (c) envy; (d) nihilism; (e) entitlement; and (f) heroic revenge fantasy. I used descriptive and analytical coding in selecting text that aligned with the categories. Psycholinguistic analysis allowed me to more clearly identify

language illustrative of the themes. Although the phrases recorded were standalone representations of the themes, I also noted their context within the overall manifestos.

The six themes served as codes, corresponding with the study's six research questions. Direct quotes from the manifestos appear in the Results section of this chapter in illustration of the themes. I found at least one of the six themes in each mass murderer's manifesto. Envy, however, appeared only in the communications of Elliot Rodger, suggesting this case or this theme may be an outlier.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As outlined in Chapter 3, I applied various methods to ensure credibility. The first involved selecting 12 cases representative of the overall population. As all manifestos were composed by the individuals who later committed mass murder, their reliability as data sources was maximized. Subject matter expertise came from long-term immersion in the material, including not only the manifestos, but also background information on the perpetrators and details of the acts. Different theories of crime and linguistics were also factors. After conducting multiple rounds of coding, I created a table and compiled results in accordance with Knoll's (2012b) six themes.

Repeated readings of manifestos combined with multiple rounds of coding made for the highest possible external validity and reliability. Although qualitative results by nature are not directly transferable to a larger population, by selecting manifestos composed by different types of mass murderers, I increased the degree of possible transferability. First, I noted language indicative of each theme on both printed and digital copies of the manifestos. Next, I created a comprehensive spreadsheet of thematic

language, which I then extensively reviewed. Combined, these two practices lent thick description to the study.

I implemented several procedures to achieve dependability, including the above-mentioned practices. As outlined in Chapter 3, the process involved conducting multiple rounds of reading and coding, taking copious notes, carefully considering thematic examples in the language, repeatedly reviewing each theme's description to ensure alignment, and maintaining an ongoing list of actions. Future researchers should be able to replicate or expand upon this study based upon my documented the steps in the process.

Researcher reflection occurred both before and after conducting extensive research and selecting the 12 participants for this study. This involved examining my personal feelings and pre-existing opinions and was a necessary component of ensuring objectivity. I read and considered, and then embraced or rejected, extensive corresponding research, both established and emerging. With the use of triangulation, objectivity and reliability led to the confirmability of findings.

Results

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts ego survival and revenge? Seven of the 12 manifestos included language representative of ego survival and revenge: Christopher Dorner, Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold, Gang Lu, Elliot Rodger, Dylann Roof, and George Sodini.

Research Question 2: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts pseudocommando mindset: persecution, envy, obliteration? Four of the 12 manifestos included language representative of pseudocommando mindset: Christopher Dorner, Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold, and Elliot Rodger.

Research Question 3: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts envy? One of the 12 manifestos included language representative of envy: Elliot Rodger.

Research Question 4: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts nihilism? Eight of the 12 manifestos included language representative of nihilism: Dylan Klebold, James Holmes, Kip Kinkel, Adam Lanza, Elliot Rodger, George Sodini, Jeff Weise, and Charles Whitman.

Research Question 5: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts entitlement? Three of the 12 manifestos included language representative of entitlement: Eric Harris, Elliot Rodger, and Dylann Roof.

Research Question 6: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts heroic revenge fantasy? Five of the 12 manifestos included language representative of heroic revenge fantasy: Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold, James Holmes, Gang Lu, and Elliot Rodger.

All 12 manifestos included language illustrative of at least one of Knoll's (2012b) themes, with one manifesto exhibiting all six themes. The most commonly represented themes were ego survival and revenge and nihilism.

Case 1: Christopher Dorner

Five years after his dismissal from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), Christopher Dorner embarked on a murderous rampage during which he targeted law enforcement personnel and their families (Kelly, 2013). On February 3, 2013, the Navy veteran shot and killed the daughter and future son-in-law of his former LAPD captain, spurring a massive manhunt. Four days later, Dorner shot two police officers, killing one, and on February 12, he attacked three officers in a shootout, leaving one dead and two injured. The next day, following an hours-long standoff outside a Big Bear, California, cabin, Dorner committed suicide as authorities burned down the structure in which he was hiding (Kelly, 2013; Serna, 2014).

Following the first two killings, Dorner posted online a 6,000-word manifesto, entitled “Last Resort” and addressed to America, in which he detailed his grievances toward the LAPD (Democratic Underground, 2013). He listed specific dates, events, and individuals involved in what he believed to be acts of police brutality, as well as occasions on which he felt punished for filing incident reports. In 2009, he had been dismissed from the force for making false statements, and his subsequent appeals were denied. Because of this, Dorner wrote, he believed he had lost his identity and his reputation, or what he called his “name.” In one section of the manifesto, Dorner named and described each of the police personnel he felt had wronged him, ending each paragraph with the words “You are a high value target” (Democratic Underground, 2013, paras. 41–45).

Dorner wrote that he had been suffering from severe depression since his dismissal from the police force (Democratic Underground, 2013). He expressed hope his brain could be researched to study the physiological effects of the disorder, using as comparison prior CT scans he had done following football concussions. After the massacre, investigative journalists found Dorner had been treated for severe depression since 2008, possibly with the aid of psychotropic medication (Gant, 2013). After his death, psychologists addressed the question of serious mental illness—in particular, sociopathy, antisocial personality disorder, and posttraumatic stress disorder—ultimately concluding that Dorner suffered more from a desperate sense of victimization and utter helplessness than any of these three disorders (Mills, 2013).

Within Dorner's "Last Resort" were representations of ego survival and revenge, pseudocommando mindset, and nihilism.

Ego survival and revenge. Although he planned the mass murder as a means of payback, Dorner revealed a sense of ethics and fairness in his manifesto (Mills, 2013). LAPD reform, he wrote, was necessary for the safety of all. His murderous act was not just one of revenge, but also self-sacrifice. He viewed himself as personally responsible for bringing injustices to light as a means of effecting necessary social change. Dorner acknowledged the vilification he knew he would receive because of his actions; however, he felt all other avenues had been exhausted, leaving him no other choice: "Unfortunately, this is a necessary evil I do not enjoy but must partake and complete for substantial change to occur within the LAPD and reclaim my name" (Democratic Underground, 2013, para. 1).

Dorner wrote that he had tried to clear his name through legal avenues but had been unsuccessful. He felt personally and unjustly vilified, communicating what he saw as undeserved, targeted narcissistic injury. Expressing hopelessness in a nonviolent resolution, he continued to justify his homicidal attacks. He could no longer tolerate the pain and injustice, and felt decisive action was necessary.

> I have exhausted all available means at obtaining my name back. I have attempted all legal court efforts within appeals at the Superior Courts and California Appellate courts. This is my last resort. The LAPD has suppressed the truth and it has now lead [*sic*] to deadly consequences. (Democratic Underground, 2013, para. 25)

To support his case, Dorner meticulously detailed incidents of police brutality and racial prejudice, listing the offending officers by name (Democratic Underground, 2013). He had reported many of these events to his supervisors, yet wrote that no one had been reprimanded and nothing had changed. Accused of filing false reports, he was disciplined, ostracized, and demonized. His manifesto provided a detailed and comprehensive account of these incidents, with Dorner specifying locations, dates, offenders, victims, and conversations as he remembered them. He directed his rage toward every individual he felt had wronged him, concluding with “You destroyed my life and name because of your actions. Time is up” (Democratic Underground, 2013, para. 22).

While calling for change throughout the LAPD, Dorner repeatedly returned to the personal affront he believed he had suffered (Democratic Underground, 2013). His words

revealed narcissistic rage at the perceived mistreatment, leading to an intense need for retaliation. In writing about his forthcoming actions as a means of regaining his reputation, Dorner demanded recognition and respect from his audience of both third-party readers and direct targets. His language showed him to be an injustice collector, externalizing blame. This exemplified what Knoll (2012b) identified as "ris[ing] triumphantly from the ashes of shame, loss, and vulnerability" (p. 764):

> I stood up for what was right but unfortunately have dealt with the reprocussions [*sic*] of doing the right thing and now losing my name and everything I ever stood for. You fuckers knew Evans was guilty of kicking (excessive force) Gettler and you did nothing but get rid of what you saw as the problem, the whistleblower. (Democratic Underground, 2013, para. 27)

Pseudocommando mindset. Evidence of a persecutory worldview permeated Dorner's words. He specifically outlined numerous occasions in which he had reported police mistreatment, only to be reprimanded himself. In repeatedly accusing the LAPD of intentionally destroying his name, Dorner revealed strong egotism and paranoia. He felt himself to be a target:

> It is clear as day that the department retaliated toward me for reporting Evans for kicking Mr. Christopher Gettler. The department stated that I lied and made up the report that Evans had kicked the suspect. (Democratic Underground, 2013, para. 8)

In the manifesto, Dorner blamed the LAPD for not only ruining his law enforcement career, but also taking away his military standing, reputation, and personal

relationships. His excessive and angry protestations showed deep, longstanding feelings of frustration, mistreatment, and persecution:

> I lost my position as a Commanding Officer of a Naval Security Forces reserve unit at NAS Fallon because of the LAPD. I've lost a relationship with my mother and sister because of the LAPD. I've lost a relationship with close friends because of the LAPD. In essence, I've lost everything because the LAPD took my name and new [*sic*] I was INNOCENT!!! (Democratic Underground, 2013, para. 25)

Nihilism. Deep-seated feelings of persecution often create a strong sense of helplessness, which may subsequently lead to hopelessness about the future (Knoll, 2012b). Dorner's continual assertions of having done nothing wrong suggested he was unable or unwilling to recognize his own weaknesses. He accepted no responsibility for the trajectory of his career, and instead blamed his superiors for the way his life had fallen apart. His words pointed to a lack of self-awareness, whether intentional or inadvertent. Because of these desperate feelings, Dorner accepted self-defeat and embraced the act of multiple homicide-suicide. The majority of Dorner's manifesto was highly suggestive of an entrenched nihilistic attitude, including one direct statement to this effect: "Self Preservation [*sic*] is no longer important to me. I do not fear death as I died long ago on 1/2/09" (Democratic Underground, 2013, para. 29).

Christopher Dorner's manifesto revealed him to be a collector of injustice who believed he has been irreparably wronged by his employer. Because of the recurring mistreatment he felt he had endured, he was unable to see any other option but to retaliate in a deadly manner. As Dorner conveyed, it was only through a violent public statement

that he could clear his name, as well as bring awareness and change to the LAPD's seemingly unethical practices.

Case 2: Eric Harris and Case 3: Dylan Klebold

On the morning of April 20, 1999, 18-year-old Eric Harris and 17-year-old Dylan Klebold left their homes equipped with duffel bags full of guns and homemade explosives (Cullen, 2009). Driving to a nearby field, they set a fire bomb intended to create a diversion and draw emergency personnel away from Columbine High School, where they were students. Next, Harris and Klebold drove to their Littleton, Colorado, school and set propane tank bombs in the cafeteria, timed to go off during the lunch period when the maximum number of students would be present. The teenagers then returned to their cars and waited for the explosion. When the bombs failed to detonate, they retrieved their firearms: a sawed-off shotgun, a semiautomatic handgun, an automatic rifle, and a pump-action shotgun (Jefferson County, Colorado, Sheriff, 2000).

Harris and Klebold began firing as they walked toward the school, killing and wounding students on the lawn before entering the building (Cullen, 2009). The two young men made their way through the halls, shooting at students and teachers and reportedly laughing as they went. In the library, as students and faculty hid under desks, Harris and Klebold taunted and shot their classmates, stopping twice to reload. The duo left to roam the cafeteria and halls once again before returning to the library, where they committed joint suicide with gunshots to the head. Excluding the perpetrators, 10 students and one teacher were dead, and another 24 students injured (Cullen, 2009). At

the time, the Columbine rampage was the worst school shooting in American history (Langman, 2009).

In investigating the mass shooting, Supervisory Special Agent Dwayne Fuselier noted profound differences between the two killers (Cullen, 2004). Klebold, he said, was filled with self-blame and self-loathing. Quick to anger, the youth also displayed symptoms of depression and suicidality. Harris, in comparison, bore homicidal, not suicidal, intentions. Some of the latter's personal qualities appear on the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (Neumann, Johansson, & Hare, 2013), including lack of empathy, grandiosity, manipulation, pathological lying, absence of remorse, and glibness (Egan, 2016). Following the shooting, multiple psychiatrists labeled the older teen a psychopath (Cullen, 2004).

Both Harris and Klebold kept journals, which revealed they had been planning the attack for almost a year (Langman, 2009). The pair also left behind a series of videos dubbed "The Basement Tapes." Although the videos were not released to the public, summaries that incorporate direct quotes from both boys are available.

Case 2: Eric Harris. The first entry in Harris's journal, which he titled "The Book of God," was dated April 10, 1998, and the last entry was dated April 3, 1999 (Cullen, 2010c). The journal was a 16-page handwritten record of Harris's hatred, homicidal plans, godlike self-image, and Nazi admiration. Four of Knoll's (2012b) themes are evident throughout the teenager's communications, primarily in the journal but also in the video and his blog: ego survival and revenge, pseudocommando mindset, entitlement, and heroic revenge fantasy.

Ego survival and revenge. Harris saw himself not only as the victim of mistreatment and disregard by his classmates, but as the only one qualified to deliver what he deemed necessary retribution (Cullen, 2010c). His sense of entitlement extended beyond ego protection to supreme retribution. In his first journal entry, the teenager positioned himself and Klebold above the whole of society, believing only they were able to see what was really going on:

> Everyone has their own god damn opinions on every god damn thing and you may be saying "well what makes you so different?" because I have something only me and V [*a shortened version of Klebold's nickname, VoDKa*] have, SELF AWARENESS. Call it existentialism or whatever the fuck you want. We know what we are to this world and what everyone else is... We have been watching you people. (Cullen, 2010c, p. 1)

Harris repeatedly wrote about being superior to the rest of humanity, beginning with an April 12, 1998, post in which he claimed:

> No one is worthy of shit unless I say they are. I feel like God and I wish I was, having everyone being OFFICIALLY lower than me. I already know that I am higher than most anyone in the fucking welt [*German for* world] in terms of universal Intelligence. (Cullen, 2010c, p. 2)

He later expanded upon this idea, linking his God complex with his murderous desire for retribution:

> I will kill who ever [*sic*] I deem unfit for anything at all. Especially life. And if you pissed me off in the past, you will die if I see you. Because you might be able

> to piss off others and have it eventually blow over, but not me. I don't forget people who wronged me . . . (Cullen, 2010c, p. 3)

Harris lashed out at the elements of society he deemed worthless, including the government, rules and laws, and what he termed "mindless" television programs (Cullen, 2010c). He wrote, "The human race isn't worth fighting for anymore. . . . people just aren't worth saving. Society may not realize what is happening but I have" (p. 4).

Knoll's (2012b) theme of ego survival and revenge draws from the threatened ego model (Knoll & Meloy, 2014) and Menninger's (2007) proposed elements of violence, one of which is the access to weapons. In an entry dated 5 months prior to the school shooting, Harris revealed as much in his journal, writing, "I am fucking armed. I feel more confident, stronger, more God like. I have confidence in my ability to deceive people" (Cullen, 2010c, p. 10).

Pseudocommando mindset. The paranoia that contributes to a pseudocommando mindset is accompanied by the belief that one has been intentionally and irreparably harmed (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b). In his journal, Harris continued to lament the teasing he had endured while also contradicting this position, claiming others' words meant nothing to him (Cullen, 2010c). He denied having been rejected by his peers because he had rejected them first. Again, he returned to a closely held belief in his own superiority:

> [I]t's funny, people say "you shouldn't be so different" to me, and 1st I say fuck you don't tell me what I should and shouldn't be and 2nd mother fuckers different is good. I don't want to be like you or anyone. (Cullen, 2010c, p. 4)

Despite assertions of uncaring independence, Harris wavered back and forth throughout the journal, revealing the pain of exclusion up until the month of the massacre.

Five months prior to the event, Harris displayed his vulnerability in an especially revealing entry:

> Everyone is always making fun of me because of how I look, how fucking weak I am and shit, well I will get you all back, ultimate fucking revenge here. You people could have shown more respect, treated me better, asked for my knowledge or guidance more, treated me more like a senior, and maybe I wouldn't have been so ready to tear your fucking heads off. (Cullen, 2010c, p. 8)

He continued in this vein a few days later, clearly externalizing blame for the impending massacre. In one entry, Harris explored calling off the attack if his classmates were nicer to him, writing, "If people would give me more compliments all of this might still be avoidable" (Cullen, 2010c, p. 8). In the final entry, written 17 days before he and Klebold conducted the mass shooting, Harris revealed the pain he still felt at being an outsider:

> I hate you people for leaving me out of so many fun things. And no don't fucking say "well that's your fault" because it isn't, you people had my phone #, and I asked and all, but no, no no no don't let the weird looking Eric KID come along. (Cullen, 2010c, p. 11)

Entitlement. A thread of entitlement pervaded Harris's writings, including words illustrative of entitlement. He held others responsible for the horror they would soon endure, and asserted that he was the only one allowed to deliver such vengeance. Harris wanted to play God in deciding who would live and who would die, as evidenced by an

April 1998 entry that read: “I will kill who ever [*sic*] I deem unfit for anything at all. Especially life” (Cullen, 2010c, p. 3). A statement he made on the Basement Tapes in the days prior to the shooting was also particularly telling: “Isn’t it fun to get the respect we’re going to deserve? We don’t give a shit because we’re going to die doing it” (Cullen, 2010a, p. 4).

Another component of entitlement is a hatred of that which is beautiful and alive (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b). Nowhere is this sentiment better illustrated in Harris’s journal than in a July 1998 entry:

> I think we are all a waste of natural resources and should be killed off, and since humans have the ability to choose . . . and I’m human . . . I think I will choose to kill and damage as much as nature allows me to so take that, fuck you, and eat napalm + lead! HA! Only nature can stop me. (Cullen, 2010c, p. 6)

Even with the insecurity and hurt scattered throughout Harris’s writings, he always returned to the idea of himself as a Supreme Being, entitled to exact what he saw as necessary revenge on a society that was beneath him.

Heroic revenge fantasy. By the time an individual crafts a heroic revenge fantasy, he has decided existence means nothing and obliteration is everything. He has lost all hope in achieving a satisfying life, and feels he must take away others’ lives as a result. Final communications are often composed during this stage, as the individual knows he will soon be gone but his words will remain (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b).

The primary examples of this theme in Harris’s manifestos appeared in an undated blog post and a video statement on the Basement Tapes. After insulting the

students he wants to kill, calling them “snotty ass” and “rich,” Harris embraced his forthcoming annihilation, posting on his website: “i [*sic*] don’t care if I live or die in the shootout, all I want to do is kill and injure as many of you pricks as I can” (Shepard, n.d., para. 2). He echoed these sentiments in a video rant, directly addressing his audience: “You all need to die! We need to die, too! We need to fucking kick-start the revolution here!” (Cullen, 2010a, p. 4).

Case 3: Dylan Klebold. Unlike the dominant expressions of rage and hatred permeating Harris’s communications, Klebold’s private writings revealed a depressed and hopeless individual who wanted to die (Cullen, 2010b). Although his 48-page handwritten journal, which he termed “Existences,” also showed similar themes of ego survival and revenge, pseudocommando mindset, and heroic revenge fantasy, there was a strong element of nihilism not found in Harris’s words. Also worth noting were the mixed messages that revealed Klebold’s internal confusion and ongoing struggles.

Ego survival and revenge. In his journal, Klebold frequently questioned how he had gotten to such a miserable state. Perhaps to counter the feelings of hopelessness and boost his self-respect, he sometimes followed such posts with words that demonstrated ego survival and revenge. In an entry dated more than 2 years prior to the shooting, Klebold lamented his troubled existence before turning his perceived abnormality into dominance, albeit with a touch of envy:

> I see how different I am (aren’t we all you’ll say) yet I’m on such a greater scale of difference than everyone else (as far as I know, or guess). I see jocks having fun, friends, women. LIVEZ [*sic*]. . . . Or rather shallow existences compared to

> mine (maybe) like ignorance = bliss. They don't know beyond this world (how I do in my mind or in reality or in this existence) . . . (Cullen, 2010b, p. 2)

At times, most often in the 1997 entries, Klebold balanced his hopelessness and need for action with existentialism, attempting to think beyond the physical realm. A somewhat lengthy passage illustrated his attempts at self-preservation:

> Within the known limits of time . . . within the conceived boundaries of space . . . the average human thinks those are the settings of existence . . . yet the ponderer, the outcast, the believer, helps out the human. "Think not of 2 dimensions," says the ponderer, "but of 3, as your world is conceived of 3 dimensions so is mine. While you explore the immediate physical boundaries of your body . . . see my dimensions. My realm of thought – Time, Space, & THOUGHT. Thought is the most powerful thing that exists . . ." (Cullen, 2010b, p. 4)

Some entries succinctly captured all of Menninger's (2007) five factors predictive of violent behavior. One example of this was a post dated November 3, 1997, which read: "Nobody will help me . . . only exist with me if it suits them. I helped, why can't they? [*Redacted*] will get me a gun, I'll go on my killing spree against anyone I want" (Cullen, 2010b, p. 8). In an entry dated 7 months later, he acknowledged, "I know everything, yet I know nothing" and embraced "fate [as] my only master" (p. 11).

Pseudocommando mindset. In line with many other mass murderers, Klebold viewed the world through a persecutory lens. According to his words, he had lost hope in a positive resolution to what he perceived as intentional mistreatment by his peers. Multiple posts reflected these feelings, including three early entries:

> I don't know why I do wrong with people (mainly women) – it's like they are set out to hate & ignore me. . . . I have always been hated, by everyone & everything, just never aware . . . Goodbye all the crushes I've ever had . . . BUT WHY? . . . Everyone knows everyone. I swear – like I'm an outcast, & everyone is conspiring against me . . . (Cullen, 2010b, p. 6)

Interspersed throughout these entries was casual language, almost as if one teenager were writing a mindless letter to another. Evidence of this included a late-1997 post that begins, "Yo . . . whassup . . . heheheheh . . ." (Cullen, 2010b, p. 4). Such phrasing was yet another example of the contradictory messages in Klebold's journal.

Nihilism. The severe depression Klebold related throughout his journal frequently gave way to nihilism, a need to deny one's shortcomings while viewing the world as meaningless (Knoll, 2010b, 2012b). Individuals entrenched in nihilism exhibit self-defeating actions and feelings, and frequently turn to suicide as the only way to escape the ongoing persecution. Klebold displayed both sides of this theme, discussing alternately what he saw as his elevated, nonhuman status, along with his utter hopelessness and desire to die.

> I do shit to supposedly 'cleanse' myself in a spiritual, moral sort of way . . . yet it does nothing to help my life morally. My existence is shit to me – how I feel that I am in eternal suffering, in infinite directions in infinite realities. (Cullen, 2010b, p. 2)

In the next sentence, however, Klebold acknowledged that such realities did not exist.

Suicide was a persistent and repetitive subject throughout the journal. In his earliest entries, Klebold wrote of the desire to kill just himself and not others. A March 31, 1997, passage revealed his view of suicide as the only way to relieve his inner torment:

> I don't fit in here [*sic*] thinking of suicide gives me hope, that I'll be in my place wherever I go after this life . . . that I'll finally not be at war with myself, the world, the universe – my mind, body, everywhere, everything at PEACE in me . . . (Cullen, 2010b, p. 2)

In the same entry, he acknowledged an unfulfilled desire for acceptance by his peers, saying he went to school "scared and nervous."

Klebold frequently wrote of life's unfairness, relating that he wanted to die "really bad" to escape the ceaseless punishment of living. He saw his life as a cruel joke, irreparable and unfair, as illustrated in the following quote:

> Oooh god I want to die sooo bad . . . such a sad desolate lonely unsalvageable I feel I am . . . not fair. NOT FAIR!!! I wanted happiness!! I never got it . . . Let's sum up my life . . . the most miserable existence in the history of time. (Cullen, 2010b, p. 5)

Nihilism was a sentiment he echoed time and again. Whereas Harris repeatedly addressed his hate-filled homicidal plan, Klebold, even as late as 3 months prior to the school shooting, still expressed ambivalence: "I hate this non-thinking stasis. I'm stuck in humanity. Maybe going 'NBK' [*an abbreviation for the movie* Natural Born Killers*, the*

name Harris and Klebold gave to their plan] (gawd) with Eric is the way to break free. I hate this" (Cullen, 2010b, p. 12).

Heroic revenge fantasy. Klebold's first mention of the boys' planned school shooting did not come until early 1998. Up to the end, though, he did not consistently view the massacre as the only solution. On February 2, 1998, he wrote:

> Soon . . . either I'll commit suicide or I'll get with [*redacted*] & it will be NBK for us. . . . Society is tightening its grip on me, & soon I & [*redacted*] will snap. We will have our revenge on society, & then be free, to exist in a timeless spaceless place of pure happiness. (Cullen, 2010b, p. 9)

This entry is a clear example of the heroic revenge fantasy theme, as Klebold revealed envy, entitlement, and worthlessness. He displayed no fear of death in these words, embracing suicide as the only means of escape.

Klebold recorded his final entry on January 20, 1999, exactly 3 months prior to the shooting. Even then, he continued to speculate as to the best way to escape his never-ending pain. In his final words, he assured himself of finally finding love after death.

Case 4: James Holmes

Shortly after the start of a July 20, 2012, midnight showing of *The Dark Knight Rises*, James Holmes entered Aurora, Colorado's Century 16 Theatre (O'Neill et al., 2015). He was dressed in full body armor, goggles, and a gas mask, and carried an assault rifle, handgun, and shotgun (Gembrowski et al., 2012). After setting off tear gas, Holmes began firing into the crowd, stopping only when his rifle jammed. The attack left 12

people dead and 58 injured. Holmes was apprehended by police without incident while sitting in his car behind the theater (Foreman, 2012).

Holmes had recently dropped out of a neurobiology doctoral program at the University of Colorado. Prior to withdrawing from the college, he had seen a school counselor and two psychiatrists for social anxiety. One of the psychiatrists identified psychotic thinking progressing into paranoia and prescribed antianxiety medication, which he soon quit taking ("Aurora Theater Shooting Trial," 2015). When Holmes revealed having homicidal thoughts several times a day, the psychiatrist alerted campus police; ultimately, however, she chose not to place him on a mental health hold (Ingold & Steffens, 2015).

In the weeks leading up to the massacre, Holmes (2012) kept a journal he titled "Insights into the Mind of Madness." Although he mailed the book to his psychiatrist before the shooting, authorities did not discover in the school's mailroom until days later (Illescas, 2015). Holmes' manifesto revealed more of an internal struggle than a preoccupation with mistreatment and revenge. Throughout the diary, he referenced his "broken brain," listed possible self-diagnoses, and documented his mental struggles. Page after page filled with a single word—"Why?"—suggested a desperate search for answers. In the manifesto, Holmes (2012) revealed depression and hopelessness, along with the awareness that his mind did not function as it should.

Themes of nihilism and heroic revenge fantasy were evident in Holmes' journal.

Nihilism. Unlike the majority of cases, Holmes' (2012) manifesto included neither ego survival and revenge nor pseudocommando mindset. In documenting his

repeated, unsuccessful attempts to diagnose and fix his broken brain, he revealed a lack of meaning in his life that was representative of nihilism. Moreover, Holmes repeatedly questioned the overall value of life and death, as evidenced by the statement, “I have spent my entire life searching this alternative so that the questions of how to live and what to live for may be addressed” (p. 7) After documenting his examination of these alternatives, he concluded that people have no value and justice is a myth.

As Knoll (2012b) described, nihilism paired with avoidance may lead to the desire to escape one’s thoughts and realities. Although this often leads to escape by suicide, Holmes pursued homicide to avoid taking his own life (Holmes, 2012). He listed three alternatives to death—“ignore the problem,” “delay the problem,” and “pawn the problem”—noting that each “didn’t work” (p. 8). He omitted the outcome of his final option, “Love. Hate,” and then expressed his hopelessness with the words “Despite knowing death is false and a suboptimal response, I couldn’t find a working alternative” (p. 8).

Heroic revenge fantasy. One way individuals cope with long-lasting nihilism is through mental escape (Knoll, 2012b). In mass murderers, this escape may take the form of heroic revenge fantasy, prioritizing the need to strike back against persecution, even in the face of self-destruction. Although Holmes sought psychological help, he documented the futility of treatment, instead viewing the psychiatrists with suspicion and distrust (Holmes, 2012). This obliterative mindset was also reflected in his belief that both life and death were meaningless.

As he wrote, Holmes planned the massacre as a means of freeing himself: “And finally, the last escape, mass murder at the movies. . . . [T]hat’s my mind. It is broken. I tried to fix it” (Holmes, 2012, p. 14). Later in his journal, Holmes revisited this sentiment, writing, “No consequences, no fear, alone, isolated, no work for distractions, no reason to seek self actualization. Embraced the hatred, a dark knight rises” (p. 32).

Although he knew he would be sacrificing his regular life, Holmes did not give up his physical one. Rather, he viewed mass homicide as the only way to avoid suicide: “Decided to dedicate life to killing others so that I could live” (Holmes, 2012, p. 28). He saw only one way to free his mental anguish, and wrote: “The mind is a prison of uncertainty . . . Destroy the mind and be free” (p. 15).

Case 5: Kip Kinkel

On May 20, 1998, 15-year-old Kip Kinkel was suspended from Thurston High School for bringing a gun to campus; that night, he shot and killed his parents (Langman, 2009). The ninth grader returned to the Springfield, Ohio, school the following day, armed with three guns and a hunting knife, where he killed two students and wounded 25 others before being disarmed (Frontline, 2000b; Peters, 2013).

A few weeks prior to the shooting, Kinkel had yelled in class, “God damn this voice inside my head” (Langman, 2009). Upon later examination, he revealed having auditory hallucinations dating back to sixth grade, with some of the voices conversing with each other and some commanding him to kill (Frontline, 2000a). After murdering his parents, Kinkel wrote a note in which he revealed his ongoing psychological struggle:

"My head just doesn't work right. God damn these VOICES inside my head" (Langman, 2016b, p. 2).

When Kinkel was in elementary school, doctors diagnosed dyslexia and a learning disability, which resulted in his attending special education classes and repeating first grade (Frontline, 2000b). In 1997, worried about her son's behavior, his mother took him to two psychologists, the first diagnosing major depressive disorder and the second identifying hallucinations, paranoia, and delusions. Before Kinkel was tried for the murders, court-appointed child psychologists observed major paranoid symptoms illustrative of a psychotic disorder and suggestive of early-onset schizophrenia (Frontline, 2000a).

The teenager had been obsessed with guns, knives, and explosives, which he had begun accumulating in eighth grade (Frontline, 2000b; Langman, 2009). Less than a year before the shooting, Kinkel's father bought his son a Glock in hopes of bridging the distance between the two. Despite his age, Kinkel received the maximum adult sentence of life without parole (Peters, 2013).

Throughout his writings, Kinkel's language revealed ego survival and revenge, pseudocommando mindset, and nihilism.

Ego survival and revenge. Unlike some mass murderers in this study (i.e., Dorner, Harris, Klebold, and Rodger), Kinkel did not reveal an exceptionally strong preoccupation with revenge. Although he wrote of committing a massacre at school, he described this as being the result of his psychological struggles: He heard voices, he

believed himself to be evil, and he had uncontrollable anger. “My head just doesn’t work right,” he wrote in a letter after killing his parents (Langman, 2016b, p. 1).

The theme of ego survival and revenge appeared most frequently in Kinkel’s journal, with other common themes of nihilism and pseudocommando mindset. His undated journal was 19 short paragraphs in length, suggesting it was composed in a single sitting. Many of the words revealed the tortured mind of an adolescent who is alternately hurt, angry, and psychologically unstable. After documenting his sadness when a girl he liked did not return his feelings, he exploded into anger, writing:

> I am so full of rage that I feel I could snap at any moment. I think about it everyday [*sic*]. Blowing the school up or just taking the easy way out, and walk into a pep assembly with guns. In either case, people that are breathing will stop breathing. This is how I will repay all you mother fuckers for all you put me through. (Langman, 2016b, p. 1)

Interestingly, there was no evidence Kinkel had been bullied; if anything, according to classmates, he was the one harassing others (Langman, 2009).

In other passages, Kinkel displayed a range of emotions, vacillating between self-pity, narcissistic injury, and vengeance. His words suggested that the limits of his tolerance, for both himself and others, had been exceeded:

> Oh fuck. I sound so pitiful. People would laugh at this if they read it. I hate being laughed at. But they won’t laugh after they’re scraping parts of their parents, sisters, brothers, and friends from the wall of my hate. (Langman, 2016b, p. 1)

Kinkel continued to display this range of feelings throughout the journal, as evidenced by another entry that read, “Why aren’t I normal? Help me. No one will. I will kill every last mother fucking one of you” (Langman, 2016b, p. 2). Despite these clear feelings of desperation and hopelessness, Kinkel never mentioned taking his own life. By also not addressing the inevitability of arrest, he displayed a disregard for the consequences of his actions.

Pseudocommando mindset. One of the hallmarks of the pseudocommando mindset is paranoia (Knoll, 2012b). Through their words, individuals may reveal a strong sense of personal injustice, mistreatment, distrust, and torment. Despite the handful of these topics found throughout Kinkel’s journal, one passage stood out as clearly representing the pseudocommando mindset:

> I gave her all I have, and she just threw it away. Why? Why did God just want me to be in complete misery? I need to find more weapons. My parents are trying to take away some of my guns! My guns are the only things that haven’t stabbed me in the back. (Langman, 2016b, p. 2)

Before the killings, Kinkel displayed clear paranoia and delusions. One of the reasons he gave for collecting so many weapons was for protection against what he believed was China’s imminent invasion of the United States (Langman, 2009). Two child psychologists who evaluated Kinkel after the shootings each identified symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia in the teenager (Frontline, 2000a).

Nihilism. Although nihilism in mass murderers frequently leads to suicidal thoughts and actions, Kinkel’s writings revealed not self-harm, but conflicted emotions

and a loss of religious faith. In his journal, Kinkel lamented, “Why did God just want me to be in complete misery?” (Langman, 2016b, p. 2), and then, in the final paragraph of the document, concluded, “If there was a God, he wouldn’t let me feel the way I do” (p. 2). In acknowledging the futility of life and what he could not control, he directed his pain outward:

> I don’t want to see, hear, speak or feel evil, but I can’t help it. I am evil. I want to kill and give pain without a cost. And there is no such thing. We kill him – we killed him a long time ago. Anyone that believes in God is a fucking sheep. (Langman, 2016b, p. 2)

Nihilism was also apparent in the note Kinkel (1998) wrote after killing his parents. Once again, he expressed confusion over what he saw as his sentence in life: being evil and full of hate, and guided by hallucinations. “I don’t know what is happening” (Langman, 2016b, p. 2), he wrote after killing his parents, and then justified his actions by saying they could not have lived knowing what he had done.

Case 6: Adam Lanza

Adam Lanza lived at home with his mother until the morning of December 14, 2012, when he fatally shot her as she slept (Kreider, 2012). The 20-year-old then drove to nearby Sandy Hook Elementary School and forced his way in through a glass panel flanking the locked front door (Gorosko, 2013). Once inside, Lanza moved from classroom to classroom, using a Bushmaster rifle to shoot students, teachers, and administrators at point-blank range (Esposito et al., 2012). When he stopped firing, 26

people were dead: 20 first-grade children and six adults. Lanza then turned the gun on himself, taking his own life before first responders arrived on the scene.

Speculation abounds with regard to motive and mental illnesses, with some diagnoses indicating multiple psychological maladies, including Asperger's syndrome, psychosis, extreme anxiety, a lack of empathy, and undiagnosed schizophrenia (Langman, 2015; Pilkington, 2013; Stoller, 2013). Lanza was also hypersensitive to sensations including touch, suggesting he may have had a sensory disorder. His mother had talked about her son's problems with her friends and, in an attempt to bond with her troubled child, bought him guns and took him to shooting ranges.

Lanza spent hours alone in his sunless basement bedroom, playing first-person shooter video games, compiling extensive spreadsheets of mass murders and murderers, and creating journals, stories, and drawings (Winter & McClam, 2013). Unfortunately, despite Freedom of Information Act requests by *The Hartford Courant*, an appeals court ultimately ruled that the state attorney did not have to make these documents public ("Judge Rules Police," 2016). Even despite the ruling, police had not been able to retrieve an unknown number of documents, as Lanza had destroyed his hard drive. Other communications appeared on online message boards and in transcripts of call-in radio programs.

Accessibility to Lanza's journal would have provided deeper insight into the young man's mind and the content themes within his recorded thoughts. Because a review of this text was not possible, however, his message board posts and private email communication were the only documents available for this study.

Language suggestive of nihilism could be found within Lanza's electronic communications.

Nihilism. Lanza's "Shocked Beyond Belief" message board posts revealed a dispassionate, logical, and intelligent individual (Coleman, 2014). He wrote extensively about mass murderers, as well as mass murder–themed movies. He displayed little emotion through his words, the one exception being a hatred of "Pumped up Kicks," a song often thought to be about Robert Hawkins, a mass murderer who killed eight people at an Omaha, Nebraska, mall in 2007. Lanza argued vehemently and repeatedly against this connection, however, enumerating ways in which the "Robert" of the song differed from the Nebraska killer.

Nihilism was the primary theme running throughout Lanza's message board posts. One of the most prominent examples was a 2012 entry entitled "Anxiety and fear in American society: a history," in which he argued that humans were defective, indoctrinated from childhood and forced into submission by prescription drugs:

> Civilization has not been present for 99% of the existence of hominids, and the only way that it's ever sustained itself is by indoctrinating each new child for years on end. The "wellness" that you speak of is solely defined by a child's submission for this process and their subsequent capacity to propagate civilization themselves. When civilization exists in a form where all forms of alienation (among other things) are rampant, as can be seen in the most recent incarnation within the last fifty years which AS55 talked about, new children will end up "not well" in all sorts of ways. You don't even have to touch a topic as cryptic as mass

> murder to see an indication of this: you can look at a single symptom as egregious as the proliferation of antidepressants. (Coleman, 2014, p. 38)

Lanza displayed similar contempt for the educational system, which he called "the brutal indoctrination of pristine minds so as to propagate some delusional system of cultural values" (p. 32).

In an email to an unnamed correspondent less than 5 months prior to the murders, Lanza expressed a complete loss of pleasure, revealing that his only source of enjoyment and excitement no longer had the same effect:

> My interest in mass murdered [*sic*] has been perfunctory for such a long time. The enthusiasm I had back when Virginia Tech happened feels like it's been gone for a hundred billion years. I don't care about anything. I'm just done with it all. (Office of the Child Advocate, 2014, p. 100)

Lanza's displays of nihilism, coupled with his fixation on mass murder, could have served as warning signs for the violence that was to come.

Case 7: Gang Lu

After graduating from the University of Iowa in 1991, 28-year-old Gang Lu purchased a .38-caliber revolver and a .25-caliber handgun (Mann, 1992), and then took shooting lessons to establish his aptitude. Later in the summer, Lu withdrew his money from the bank and sent it to his sister back in China. On the morning of November 1, 1991, Lu mailed a statement to media outlets, keeping a copy in his briefcase to be found after his death (Mann, 1992). Later that afternoon, he entered the physics hall on the University of Iowa campus, where he fatally shot three professors and a former classmate

(Marriott, 1991a). Next, he moved to the administration building, killing the associate vice president of academic affairs and severely wounding the receptionist. Lu then went into an empty office and took his own life (Mann, 1992).

Lu completed his studies in May 1991, earning a Doctor of Philosophy in physics (Mann, 1992). He had hoped to receive the D.C. Spriestersbach Dissertation Prize, an academic honor accompanied by a cash award; instead, the prize went to a fellow student (Marriott, 1991b). Lu blamed his dissertation chair for the loss, believing his advisor had not submitted Lu's research for consideration. Instead of Lu obtaining the professorship he had expected, his postdoctoral position ended and he was unable to obtain subsequent employment.

Lu's actions in the months preceding the killings showed evidence of premeditation, beginning shortly after graduation (Mann, 1992). After failing to procure the award, he wrote multiple letters, grievances, and appeals to school administrators, all of which were dismissed. He also sent letters to the *Des Moines Register*, which went unpublished. Filled with entitlement and resentment, he isolated himself from friends and family.

In his statement to the media, Lu conveyed ego survival and revenge and heroic revenge fantasy.

Ego survival and revenge. The most prevalent theme in Lu's statement was ego survival and revenge. He repeatedly wrote about avenging what he saw as a lack of justice in society, blaming the University of Iowa for its failure to act and thus prevent

the forthcoming atrocity (Langman, 2016a). In imprecise English, he presented a courageous view of himself as righting the inequalities of the world:

> It is believed that there exists no justice for people in this world, extraordinary action has to be taken to preserve this world as a better place. . . . What an outrage! . . . I have sworn to myself that I would revenge at any cost, sooner or later. (Langman, 2016a, p. 1)

In this paragraph and the one preceding it, Lu shifted between topics, also listing his favorite places, movies, and beliefs. Despite acknowledging one individual who had successfully sued the school and won, he maintained that "privately-owned guns are the only practical way for individuals/minority to protect themselves against the oppression from the evil organizations/majority who actually control the government and legal system" (Langman, 2016a, p. 1).

Five components comprise the threatened ego model, which underlies expressions of rage and violence (Knoll, 2010b). In his statement, Lu displayed each of these elements: He felt he had been personally and irreparably harmed; he had given up on a nonviolent resolution; he saw himself as tasked with retaliation; he had purchased guns; and he knew he would lose his life in the attack.

> I regret that I have to take extraordinary measure to resolve this matter, but it is simply not my fault. The University of Iowa authorities should be blamed for the unfortunate outcome. If the university had taken positive steps as it is supposed by the tax-payers, tuition payers and funding agencies, all this could be avoided. (Langman, 2016a, p. 3)

Throughout the statement, Lu externalized blame and responsibility while embracing what he viewed as a necessary evil: murder and self-sacrifice in the name of justice.

Heroic revenge fantasy. As illustrated by his words, Lu had lost all hope of a peaceful solution to his perceived maltreatment. He saw himself as a heroic crusader solely tasked with righting the world's wrongs. Lu needed to escape from irreversible obliteration, and planned a public, symbolic gesture of revenge as a final display of heroism. He stated, "[E]xtraordinary action has to be taken to preserve this world as a better place" (Langman, 2016a, p. 1). Later in the document, he further personalized this self-sacrificing struggle:

> Although my flesh/blood-made body seems dead, my spiritual soul remains perpetual and I am being quantum leaping [*sic*] to another corner of our world. I have finished what I am supposed to be here [*sic*] which is to make right what was once wrong. I am proud of my achievement here and I am more confident in my upcoming journey. (Langman, 2016a, p. 3)

Lu appeared to have been an underdog hero in his own eyes and, judging by his writings, was confident other people would see him that way, too.

Case 8: Elliot Rodger

Elliot Rodger began his May 23, 2014, killing spree at his apartment, stabbing to death his two roommates and their friend (Duke, 2014). As night fell, he loaded three semiautomatic handguns and multiple rounds of ammunition into his car and drove to the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) campus in Isla Vista. He shot three girls in the front yard of a sorority house, killing two. He then took to his car, killing another

student and wounding 13 people. When police caught up to Rodger, they found him in his vehicle, dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Rodger's parents had filed for divorce when he was 7 years old, an event that seemingly contributed to their son's burgeoning emotional troubles (Lovett & Nagourney et al., 2014). Throughout his youth, the introverted and withdrawn boy viewed himself as an outsider, unable to attract the attention of girls. He felt personally insulted when his peers began dating, and professed his superiority in his journal and videos.

His parents recognized the young boy's psychological problems and sought treatment for their son. Rodger visited his first therapist at age 8, and through the years was seen numerous times for evaluation and treatment (Yan, Brown, & Duke, 2014). Prior to the rampage, he was being seen by at least two mental health professionals. Over the course of Rodger's life, psychiatrists alternately diagnosed him with high-functioning autism, anxiety, and depression (Nagourney et al., 2014). Although Rodger was prescribed antipsychotics on multiple occasions, he refused to take medication.

Rodger attended four high schools and multiple colleges before settling on UCSB (Nagourney et al., 2014). He soon stopped attending classes, however. The longer he went without a girlfriend, the more his hatred and jealousy grew and he began to plot revenge. While writing his 137-page autobiography, which he titled *My Twisted World*, Rodger maintained a public video blog and a YouTube channel. He also posted on message boards and made comments on his Facebook page (Lovett & Nagourney, 2014). He uploaded his final video to the World Wide Web before the shootings, and emailed

his manifesto to 30 people, including his parents, therapists, and former teachers ("Gunman Emailed Plans," 2014; Yan et al., 2014).

All six of Knoll's (2012b) themes appeared in the extensive communications Rodger left behind.

Ego survival and revenge. A pervasive subject within Rodger's written and video messages was revenge. He repeatedly lamented his lack of female companionship, but instead of accepting any responsibility, described himself as a "[m]agnificent, supreme gentleman" ("Elliot Rodger," n.d.). Through his words, he revealed the five elements Menninger (2007) believed led to explosive rage. Rodger felt he had been unfairly and irreparably injured and some action had to be taken. Seeing no possibility of a nonviolent resolution, he acquired weapons and planned a rampage that would result in not only others' loss of life, but also his own.

In one undated video, he related what would be a "spectacular" sunset if only he had a beautiful girl beside him:

> Sex, love, companionship. I desire those things. I desire girls. I'm sexually attracted to girls. But girls are not sexually attracted to me. There's a major problem with that—a major problem. And it's a problem that I intend to rectify. I, in all my magnificence and power, I will not let this fly. It's an injustice that needs to be dealt with. (Rodger, 2014b, 5:21)

In multiple entries, both audiovisual and written, Rodger echoed similar sentiments. In the final video recorded before the rampage, he was more specific as to the nature of his revenge.

> You are animals, and I will slaughter you like animals. I'll be a god, exacting my retribution on all those who deserve it. And you do deserve it, just for the crime of living a better life than me. All you popular kids. You've never accepted me and now you'll all pay for it. And girls—all I've ever wanted was to love you and to be loved by you. . . . If I can't have you, girls, I will destroy you. You denied me a happy life, and in turn, I will deny all of you life. It's only fair. (Beyond the Veil, 2014, 3:54)

The autobiography's concluding paragraph clearly illustrated the theme of ego survival and revenge:

> All I ever wanted was to love women, and in turn to be loved by them back. Their behavior towards me has only earned by hatred, and rightfully so! I am the true victim in all of this. I am the good guy. Humanity struck at me first by condemning me to so much suffering. I didn't ask for this. I didn't want this. I didn't start this war. . . . I wasn't the one who struck first. . . . But I will finish it by striking back. I will punish everyone. And it will be beautiful. Finally, at long last, I can show the world my true worth. ("The Manifesto," 2014, p. 137)

Rodger repeatedly displayed a highly distorted self-perception, viewing himself as both victim and vigilante hero.

Pseudocommando mindset. Evidence of this theme appeared more often in Rodger's video blogs than his writings. His skewed worldview was that of being intentionally harmed by the women who failed to express interest in him and the men who dated them. In one video entry, he related, "I always have to see these young couples

and I get jealous of them. . . . There's a major problem with that . . . And it's a problem that I intend to rectify . . . It's an injustice that needs to be dealt with" (Rodger, 2014b, 5:10).

In other videos, Rodger took the sight of a happy couple as a personal affront, saying, "I was enjoying such a nice view until they came and sat down and started kissing" (Rodger, 2014c, 3:33). In particular, he blamed the women for what he saw as their poor choices: "You're attracted to the wrong kind of guy. You should be attracted to guys like me: beautiful, magnificent guys" (Rodger, 2014a, 4:53). In these and other manifesto entries, Rodger exhibited externalization as a defense mechanism. At one point in his autobiography, he documented "curs[ing] the world for condemning me to such suffering" ("The Manifesto," 2014, p. 87).

Envy. The strongest emotion Rodger displayed throughout the majority of his writings and recordings was envy. It was interwoven throughout the entries, incorporated into different concepts and underlying his reactions and actions. Because he could not have what he wanted, Rodger vowed to destroy everyone else's happiness and enjoyment. At age 17, he wrote in *My Twisted World*:

> I began to have fantasies of becoming very powerful and stopping everyone from having sex. I wanted to take their sex away from them, just like they took it away from me. I saw sex as an evil and barbaric act, all because I was unable to have it. . . . This was when I formed my ideas that sex should be outlawed. . . . If I can't have it, I will destroy it. ("The Manifesto," 2014, p. 56)

Next, Rodger equated jealousy with loathing, as he wrote, “I was fueled both by my desire to destroy all of the injustices of the world, and to exact revenge on everyone I envy and hate” (p. 57).

When it came to romance and sex, he felt the world should be egalitarian, affording equal opportunities to all. Illustrating his increasingly destructive feelings at age 18, he wrote, “It was all fueled by my wish to punish everyone who is sexually active, because I concluded that it wasn’t fair that other people were able to experience sex while I have been denied it all my life” (“The Manifesto,” 2014, p. 65).

Nihilism. Elements of nihilism appeared in Rodger’s manifesto after the recorded age of 17, when he concluded there would be no happy ending for him. Without a sense of personal control, he was unable to see a path toward happiness, or even improvement. Nothing could help him, and so all that remained was to destroy the world in which he lived. “As time progressed,” he wrote,” I realized how hopeless everything in my life was” (“The Manifesto,” 2014, p. 57).

According to the final pages of his autobiography, Rodger had given up faith in finding a solution to his unhappiness: “During the last few weeks of my life . . . I realized that the only world I can possibly ever experience is a twisted world of constant suffering. No matter where I go, I have to face all of the same injustices” (“The Manifesto,” 2014, p. 137). Just before the epilogue, which served as a farewell, he embraced the end: “There is nowhere in the world I can go anymore. There is no more life to live. The Day of Retribution is all I have” (pp. 134–135).

Entitlement. In repeatedly professing his magnificence, Rodger displayed a profound sense of entitlement. He was the exception, the perfect gentleman. He deserved a girlfriend but the "brutes" of the world did not, and for that they would pay. This was clearly evidenced by his words "If I can't have it, I will destroy it. I will destroy all women because I can never have them" ("The Manifesto," 2014, p. 101). The same theme reappeared later in the autobiography: "As the phrase that I had coined goes: If I cannot join them, I will rise above them; and if I cannot rise above them, I will destroy them" (p. 112).

Although there were multiple lengthy passages of his need for revenge, some are more vivid than others, such as the following entry:

> Ever since my life took a very dark turn at the age of seventeen, I often had fantasies of how malevolently satisfying it would be to punish all of the popular kids and young couples for the crime of having a better life than me. I dreamed of how sweet it would be to torture or kill every single young couple I saw. (Rodger, "The Manifesto," 2014, p. 101)

Despite these enduring feelings, Rodger at first clung to hope for a nonviolent solution: winning the lottery and, subsequently, a girlfriend. Such riches never materialized, of course, and he returned to his plan of annihilation.

Rodger clearly believed that the withholding of women's affection was an intentional injustice, one that, in turn, entitled him to kill his offenders. At age 22, he wrote, he felt he had exhausted any chance of a peaceful resolution, and thus intended to execute his homicidal plan:

> My whole tragic life had led to this, and I was ready. I had been rejected, insulted, humiliated, cast out, bullied, starved, tortured, and ridiculed for far too long. Humanity is a cruel and brutal species, and the only thing I could do to even the score was to return that cruelty one-thousand fold. ("The Manifesto," 2014, p. 131)

As Rodger revealed throughout his lengthy writings and numerous videos, his desire for love had transformed into a hatred of it. He failed to acknowledge the situations of others as analogous to his own, instead viewing himself as an exception to society's rules.

Heroic revenge fantasy. As Rodger planned his attack, he realized he would need to take his own life in the process. Due to what he perceived as deliberate harm by potential lovers and friends, he no longer attributed meaning to his life or to the lives of others. He called his forthcoming attack the Day of Retribution, a day on which he would "exact [his] ultimate retribution and revenge on all of the hedonistic scum who enjoyed lives of pleasure that they don't deserve" ("The Manifesto," 2014, p. 101). He continued:

> If I can't have it, I will destroy it. I will destroy all women because I can never have them. I will make them all suffer for rejecting me. I will arm myself with deadly weapons and wage a war against all women and the men they are attracted to. And I will slaughter them like the animals they are. . . . They showed me no mercy, and in turn I will show them no mercy. The prospect will be so sweet, and justice will ultimately be served. And of course, I would have to die in the act to avoid going to prison. ("The Manifesto," 2014, p. 101)

Rodger saw himself as godlike, entitled to mete out justice because of his perceived intentional mistreatment.

In *My Twisted Life*, Rodger noted that, when he was 20 years old and living in Santa Barbara, his thoughts turned from self-pity and revenge to mass murder and retribution:

> I crossed a threshold that I knew existed, but never actually believed I would cross. . . . I always mused to myself that I would rather die than suffer such an existence, and I knew that if it came to that, I would exact my revenge upon the world in the most catastrophic way possible. At least then, I could die knowing that I fought back against the injustice that has been dealt to me. ("The Manifesto," 2014, p. 101)

Over the course of the autobiography, Rodger's language evidenced a cognitive progression from hatred and envy to entitlement and violent revenge. He accepted no responsibility for his failures, instead assigning external culpability to justify his murderous intentions.

Knoll (2012b) identified the heroic revenge fantasy phase as the point at which the mass murderer may begin composing his manifesto. These words are not only a way to be remembered, but also a means of justifying the heroic sacrifice the killer will make. This appeared to be an accurate representation of Rodger's pervasive need to document his misguided, self-centered, and vengeful intentions.

Case 9: Dylann Roof

On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof, a 21-year-old White man, sat among Black worshippers at an Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church Bible study in South Carolina (Weiss & Mone, 2015). After an hour had elapsed, he stood up and began shooting, killing nine parishioners and injuring one. According to one victim's son, Roof attempted suicide at the scene but his gun misfired (Phelps, 2015).

Roof had a middle- to upper-class upbringing (Weiss & Mone, 2015). His neighborhood and schools were racially integrated, something Roof addressed in the first words of his manifesto: "I was not raised in a racist home or environment" (Roof, n.d., para. 1). Roof struggled with school when he hit adolescence and was forced to retake ninth grade, subsequently dropping out before finishing. He gained and lost jobs, began using alcohol and drugs, and accumulated an arrest record of minor infractions. He also developed an interest in White supremacist websites, and often shared his racist views with friends.

In the months preceding the church massacre, Roof told friends he intended to commit mass murder, to do "something big" with the goal of starting a race war (Robles & Stewart, 2015, para. 33). The day before the killings, he related plans of executing multiple people at a nearby college (Mindock, 2015). He spent much of his time drinking with his Black friends, and sharing threats of violence with the White ones (Weiss & Mone, 2015). None of his confidants, however, reported Roof's threats.

The manifesto Roof posted on his website (which I obtained before it was taken down by law enforcement the day after the shooting) contained elements of ego survival and revenge and entitlement.

Ego survival and revenge. According to his manifesto, Roof's actions were spurred more by racial hatred and White supremacy than a feeling of persecution or unfairness (Roof, n.d.). Throughout the majority of his 1,500-word personal essay, he addressed particular racial or religious groups and what, in his mind, was wrong with each. He saw the White man as beleaguered, forced to endure the injustices imposed by racial integration. Black people, he felt, were "stupid and violent" (para. 5), and the commingling of the races had brought Whites down a base level. Roof held similar views toward Jewish, Hispanic, and East Asian races. He felt something needed to be done to restore Whites' racial superiority, and that this action was up to him. He loosely quoted two of his favorite movies, the White supremacist–focused *American History X* and the dystopian *Himizu*:

> To take a saying from a film, "I see all this stuff going on, and I dont [*sic*] see anyone doing anything about it. And it pisses me off." To take a saying from my favorite film, "Even if my life is worth less than a speck of dirt, I want to use it for the good of society". I have no choice. (Roof, n.d., paras. 30–31)

These words revealed how Roof saw himself as a martyr, the only person brave and smart enough to take what he saw as necessary and swift action.

He conveyed the same sentiment in other entries, lamenting the inaction of Whites in defending their place in society:

> What about the White children who, because of school zoning laws, are forced to go to a school that is 90 percent black? . . . [W]ho is fighting for him? Who is fighting for these White people forced by economic circumstances to live among negroes [*sic*]? No one, but someone has to. (Roof, n.d., para. 14)

A consistent focus on White oppression and Black inferiority pervaded the manifesto, as did a call to bring back racial segregation.

Entitlement. Among the elements comprising Knoll's (2012b) theme of entitlement is a belief that one is authorized to engender harm to others as a result of the wrong done to him. Roof represented this in the above entries, as well as in one of the last sentences on the page: "Well someone has to have the bravery to take it to the real world, and I guess that has to be me" (Roof, n.d., para. 31). Although he was raised in a society that promoted the idea of racial equality, he felt his own research had proven otherwise. To combat the unjust teachings he had received, he saw no other way out but to kill the problem.

Case 10: George Sodini

On August 4, 2009, 48-year-old George Sodini brought two 9-millimeter automatic pistols to LA Fitness in Bridgeville, Pennsylvania ("Gunman in Health Club," 2009). He entered a women's aerobics class and began firing, committing suicide after a volley of shots killed three women and wounded nine. A series of dated blog entries revealed he had been planning the massacre for over a year, yet had repeatedly changed his mind when things seemed to be going well for him ("Full Text," 2009). In fact, he had

brought loaded guns to the gym 10 months prior to the actual shooting, but “chickened out” and went home (para. 18).

Sodini prefaced his blog with a litany of details about himself, including his dates of birth and death (“Full Text,” 2009). Throughout the document, he repeatedly bemoaned his 19 years without sexual intercourse. He documented his solitude, excessive drinking, layoff fears, and eroded family relationships. He revealed an interest in younger girls, and remarked how good he looked because of tanning and working out.

Sodini maintained two websites and posted two videos online, one in which he spoke about himself and another in which gave a tour of his house, both seemingly attempts to entice women. He also left a suicide note at the crime scene, but that document was not made public.

Although the most recurring theme in Sodini’s blog was nihilism, ego survival and revenge was also represented.

Ego survival and revenge. In his writing, Sodini revealed ostracism from, and frustration with, the opposite sex (“Full Text,” 2009). Despite his efforts, he found himself excluded from the world of couples, whom he regarded with jealousy and disdain. Some of his words were prescient of Elliot Rodger’s writings over a decade later, such as the following passage illustrative of this theme:

> I dress good, am clean-shaven, bathe, touch of cologne – yet 30 million women rejected me – over an 18 or 25-year period. This type of life I see is a closed world with me specifically and totally excluded. . . . Flying solo for many years is

> a destroyer. . . . I owe nothing to desirable females who ask for anything . . . ("Full Text," 2009, para. 6)

Seeing himself as powerless to change his life, Sodini directed his anger and blame outward at the women who withheld what he felt he deserved.

Nihilism. Despite recording no platonic or romantic relationships, Sodini was obsessed with his lack of sexual encounters. He frequently referenced the subject, addressing recency, frequency, and jealousy while noting the meaninglessness of life: "The future holds nothing for me. Twenty five years of nothing fun. I never even spent one weekend with a girl in my life, even at my own place. . . . If you have nothing, you have nothing to lose" ("Full Text," 2009, para. 20). He likened his hopeless state to the Holocaust, writing, "This is the Auschwitz Syndrome, to be in serious pain so long one thinks it is normal" (para. 14).

In an entry dated November 5, 2008, Sodini wrote of composing a list of things intended to motivate him into conducting what he called the "exit plan" ("Full Text," 2009). In a later passage, he revealed having had a lunch date, but then returned to obsessing over his destructive hopelessness:

> Women just don't like me. There are 30 million desirable women in the US (my estimate) and I cannot find one. Not one of them finds me attractive. . . . These problems have gotten worse over a 30 year period. I need to expect nothing from me or other people. All through the years I thought we had the ability to change ourselves – I guess that is incorrect. Looking at The List makes me realize how TOTALLY ALONE, a deeper word is ISOLATED, I am from all else. . . . I no

> longer have any expectations of myself. I have no options because I cannot work toward and achieve even the smallest goals. ("Full Text," 2009, para. 30)

Sodini provided no further detail of his date, but allowed himself to delve deeper into his inability to control the trajectory of his life, thus remaining entrenched in his nihilism.

Throughout the 9 months of recorded entries, Sodini vacillated between trying to find the good in life to documenting the reasons why continuing to live was futile. His posts read like an ongoing discussion with himself, building a list of reasons to conduct the exit plan. In an entry dated May 4, 2009, he wrote:

> It is difficult to live almost continuously feeling an undercurrent of fear, worry, discontentment and helplessness. . . . I need to realize the details of what I never accomplished in life and to be convinced the future is merely a continuation of the past – WHICH IT ALWAYS has been. ("Full Text," 2009, para. 23)

Two and a half months later, Sodini referred to himself as a "total malfunction," continuing, "Girls and women don't even give me a second look. ANYWHERE. There is something blatantly wrong with me that NO goddamn person will tell me what it is" ("Full Text," 2009, para. 37).

Sodini's second-to-last entry, dated August 2, 2009, ended in mid-sentence. He reiterated his lack of control and his belief that nothing would ever change: "Everything stays the same regardless of the effert [*sic*] I put in. If I had control over my life then I would be happier. But for about the past 30 years, I have not" ("Full Text," 2009, para. 46). He introduced religion in the final post, seemingly to reassure himself of

salvation, not damnation. The document then ended with two oddly enthusiastic words: “Death Lives!” (para. 56).

Case 11: Jeff Weise

On March 21, 2005, 16-year-old Native American Jeff Weise used a .22 caliber handgun to kill his grandfather and his grandfather’s companion at home (Rave, 2005). He stole the man’s tribal police patrol car, shotgun, and semiautomatic handgun, and then drove to Red Lake Senior High School, where he had been a student. Weise shot and killed a security guard, teacher, and five students, injuring another seven before taking his own life (Davey & Wilgoren, 2005).

Weise was known to be a troubled adolescent. A year and a half before the shootings, he had been diagnosed with depression and prescribed increasing dosages of Prozac (Rave, 2005). He twice attempted suicide, first by cutting his wrist and then by hanging (Sevcik, 2005). According to an aunt, the family tried to get him help, enlisting “every single resource . . . on the reservation,” including mental health services, social services, law enforcement, and the school (Rave, 2005, para. 62).

The teenager’s family history contributed to his risk of violence and suicide (Rave, 2005). Weise’s mother left him with his father when he was 3 months old, where he stayed until his father committed suicide when the boy was nine. Although Weise returned to his alcoholic and abusive mother’s custody for 16 months, he mostly lived with his paternal grandparents. He was frequently bullied at school, which led to the administration’s decision to enroll him in the homebound schooling program (Sevcik, 2005).

Weise found fellowship in the Goth culture of the World Wide Web, creating multiple profile pages and blogs, as well as contributing to discussion forums on neo-Nazi, Libertarian National Socialist Green Party, fan fiction, and zombie websites (Gunderson, 2005). He produced and posted two animated videos, one of which depicted a gory mass shooting, police annihilation, and suicide (Benson, 2005). He wrote short stories about school shootings and drew sketches of guns and bloody deaths, which he shared with friends (Davey & Wilgoren, 2005).

Common threads throughout Weise's online postings were racial purity, anger, self-loathing, and self-defeat, illustrating nihilism.

Nihilism. Two months before the shooting, Weise wrote on his blog about women who chose men and alcohol over their children and friends (Weise, 2004–2005), likely a loosely veiled post about his own mother. He expressed his naiveté in expecting things to change before conceding defeat:

> I sacrifice no more for others, part of me has fucking died, and I hate this shit. . . . I'm living every mans [*sic*] nightmare and that single fact alone is kicking my ass. I really must be fucking worthless. This place never changes, it never will. Fuck it all. (Weiss, 2004–2005, p. 1)

These words illustrated Weise's deep-rooted nihilistic attitude, as he acknowledged a perceived inability to effect change and embraced the meaninglessness of life.

Weise created two MSN profile pages, one under his own name and one with the stylized moniker of Sølitüdë (Weise, 2005). For the user photo, he uploaded a still from *Elephant*, Gus Van Sant's fictionalized film based on the Columbine High School

massacre. Weise again embraced his downfall, writing in the "A Little About Me" section of the page: "16 years of accumulated rage suppressed by nothing more than brief glimpses of hope, which have all but faded to black. I can feel the urges within slipping through the cracks, the leash I can no longer hold" (Weise, 2005, p. 13). Among his favorite things, Weise listed losing control and psychopaths unleashing the gates of hell. Both of these further signified a turning point in the losing battle to change his life.

Case 12: Charles Whitman

On the evening of July 31, 1966, 25-year-old Charles Whitman drove to his mother's apartment, where he killed her with a large hunting knife ("Report to the Governor," 1966). He then returned home and stabbed his sleeping wife to death. After supplementing his arsenal of firearms, he arrived at the University of Texas at Austin just before noon the next day (Macleod, n.d.). With a duffel bag full of weapons and supplies, Whitman ascended to the observation deck of the campus's main building, the 307-foot Tower, where, for over 90 minutes, he shot people on the ground. Eventually killed by campus police, Whitman left behind a toll of 16 dead and 33 injured ("Austin [Tex.] Police," 1941–2000).

Whitman had enlisted in the U.S. Marines when he was 18 (Macleod, n.d.). He enrolled at the University of Texas on a military scholarship 2 years later but, due to poor grades, was recalled to active duty. Following an honorable discharge in 1964, he returned to his studies in 1965. The next year, exhibiting symptoms of depression, anxiety, and self-loathing and complaining of severe headaches, Whitman was prescribed Valium, yet he failed to pursue treatment (Biography.com, n.d.; Macleod, n.d.). A post-

shooting autopsy revealed an aggressive, malignant brain tumor, which experts suggest may have played a role in impacting his self-control ("Austin [Tex.] Police," 1941–2000).

Whitman had been close to his mother, yet estranged from his physically and emotionally abusive father ("Austin [Tex.] Police," 1941–2000). Although he kept a diary while enlisted in the U.S. Marines, it was a mundane account of his daily life and not used for this study ("Report to the Governor," 1966). Of relevance here are the writings Whitman wrote after killing his mother and wife, including a suicide note, letters, and a list, all of which portrayed a vastly different man from the record-keeper of 2 years prior (Macleod, n.d.). Nihilism was the primary theme throughout these later writings.

Nihilism. Whitman's note and letter revealed a man who no longer believed himself capable of enjoying life (Whitman, 1966a, 1966b). He frequently referenced the physical headaches and psychological anguish over which he felt powerless. The note began, "I don't quite understand what it is that compels me to type this letter" (Whitman, 1966a, p. 1). Later in the paragraph, Whitman twice referenced his "mental turmoil," including in the following passage:

> I talked with a Doctor once for about two hoursand [*sic*] tried to convey to him my fears that I felt come overwhelming violent impulses [*sic*]. After one session I never saw the Doctor again and since then I have been fighting my mental turmoil alone, and seemingly to no avail. (Whitman, 1966a, p. 1)

Although Whitman expressed feeling isolated in his fight, he failed to attend a scheduled psychiatrist appointment.

Whitman also left behind a typed list of positive reminders entitled “Thoughts to Start the Day.” At the top were two brief sentences, perhaps also written in between the killing sprees: “I never could quite make it. These thoughts are too much for me” (Whitman, 1966b, p. 1).

Whitman handwrote a second letter dated August 1, 1966, addressed “To whom it may concern” (Whitman, 1966c, p. 1). The first sentence, “I have just taken my mother’s life” (p. 1), suggested he had composed the words in his mother’s apartment before returning home to kill his wife. In addition to documenting how much he loved his mother, he noted wanting to release her from the abuse she had endured over her 25-year-marriage to his father. The surrender revealed in Whitman’s first letter was now accompanied by words connoting cognitive deconstruction, along with the need to take his life as the only means of escaping what he had become. In a final display of self-defeat, Whitman wrote, “I truly do not consider this world worth living in, and am prepared to die” (Whitman, 1966a, p. 1).

Discrepant Cases

Envy was the theme least represented, appearing only in the manifesto of Elliot Rodger. In addition, as Rodger was the only mass murderer whose communications included all six of the study’s themes, this case may be an exception within the sample. Because of this, the possibility also exists that the theme of envy is an outlier among

mass shooters' manifestos. As such, this theme in particular warrants further investigation and research.

Table 1

Presence of Six Manifesto Themes by Mass Murderer

	Manifesto Themes					
Mass Murderer	1	2	3	4	5	6
Christopher Dorner	x	x				
Eric Harris	x	x			x	x
Dylan Klebold	x	x		x		x
James Holmes				x		x
Kip Kinkel				x		
Adam Lanza				x		
Gang Lu	x					x
Elliot Rodger	x	x	x	x	x	x
Dylann Roof	x				x	
George Sodini	x			x		
Jeff Weise				x		
Charles Whitman				x		

Note: The six themes are aligned with the six research questions, as follows: (1) ego survival and revenge; (2) pseudocommando mindset: persecution, envy, obliteration; (3) envy; (4) nihilism; (5) entitlement; and (6) heroic revenge fantasy (Knoll, 2012b).

Summary

This study involved the examination of manifestos written or recorded by 12 male American mass murderers. I evaluated all manifestos to identify linguistic examples of Knoll's (2012b) six themes, text which I then used to answer the six research questions. I read and coded each manifesto multiple times to achieve the highest possible degrees of validity, reliability, and transferability. Language illustrative of each theme appeared in the sample, with thematic appearances in from one to eight of the 12 cases, and individual manifestos displaying from one to six themes. As each theme was aligned with one research question, all questions were answered with regard to each manifesto.

Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the purpose and nature of this study, as well as the rationale for why the research was undertaken. I summarize findings with regard to how well they confirm and extend knowledge of mass murderers and their words. I revisit limitations and implications, along with recommendations for further research. Finally, I discuss the potential for social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

In the United States, the frequency of mass murder has been increasing over the past few decades, and dramatically so in recent years (Achenbach, 2015; Auxemery, 2015; Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Bondü & Beier, 2015; A. P. Cohen et al., 2014; Follman, 2015b; Huff-Corzine et al., 2014; Lowe & Galea, 2017; Towers et al., 2015). With this rising incidence of mass murder come increases in death, injury, fear, and anxiety (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Fan, 2015; Lowe & Galea, 2017; Newman, Tabke, & Pfefferbaum, 2016). While general research on these offenders has been conducted (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Dutton et al., 2013; Faria, 2013; Gordon et al., 2015; Lankford, 2016b; Madfis, 2014b; Neuman et al., 2015; Winter & Tschudi, 2015), research specific to the language they recorded has been scarce. Despite the insight mass murderers' recorded words—written or video manifestos—can provide into the minds of the offenders, only a limited number of researchers (e.g., Knoll, 2010b, 2012b; Lankford, 2013, 2016b; Meloy, 2014; Murray, 2016; Paton & Figeac, 2015) have contributed to the overall scant scholarly analysis of such communications.

In response to this research gap, I conducted the present study to illuminate offenders' motives and mental states as revealed through their words. I identified examples of Knoll's (2012b) six psycholinguistic themes within a purposeful sample of 12 mass murderer manifestos, and then analyzed them according to their contexts within the communications. Use of the qualitative tradition allowed for careful examination of historical documents, which in this study were mass murderers' manifestos. The multiple

case study research design allowed for detailed, descriptive assessment and analysis. Due to issues of availability and attack type, I purposefully selected the 12 cases. Because individuals construct their own truths, the constructivist paradigm was appropriate. The study's results should inspire further research and inquiry into mass murderer manifestos.

Research questions were aligned with Knoll's (2012b) six content categories, as follows:

Research Question 1: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts ego survival and revenge?

Research Question 2: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts pseudocommando mindset: persecution, envy, obliteration?

Research Question 3: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts envy?

Research Question 4: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts nihilism?

Research Question 5: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts entitlement?

Research Question 6: What language in mass murderers' manifestos depicts heroic revenge fantasy?

I read, coded, and analyzed each of the 12 manifestos to answer the research questions, identifying language illustrative of each theme, and then analyzing those words within the context of the communication. I found all six psycholinguistic themes throughout the sample, with each theme appearing in a minimum of one manifesto, and a

maximum of eight. Individually, each mass murderer's manifesto contained language representative of at least one of the six themes. Potential outliers include the theme of envy, which appeared only in the manifesto of Elliot Rodger, as well as Rodger's manifesto itself, the only one to exhibit all six themes. Whether this is due to the excessive length of the Isla Vista shooter's writings and videos is unclear.

Interpretation of the Findings

Mass murderers often create journals, blogs, websites, or videos to record their grievances; however, these documents have received infrequent study (Auxemery, 2015; Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Murray, 2015, 2016; Paton & Figeac, 2015). Looking at the manifestos themselves, Knoll (2012b) identified six psycholinguistic themes in the communications of two mass shooters, Seung-Hui Cho and Jiverly Wong. Examining the manifestos of 10 mass murderers, Murray (2016) was able to pinpoint four shared fantasy ideation scripts. Paton and Figeac (2015) found common cultural scripts from a review of visual media composed by eight school shooters. Other researchers (e.g., Bondü & Schneithauer, 2015; Dutton et al., 2013; Grobbink et al., 2015; Knoll & Meloy, 2014; Lankford, 2015b, 2016b, 2016d; Murray, 2015; Pury et al., 2015) also noted common themes in the words of mass killers. However, only Knoll's (2012b) themes were used as a template for the present study.

Based upon limited prior research in the field (Auxemery, 2015; Knoll, 2010a, 2010b, 2012b; Lankford, 2015a; Murray, 2016; Neuman et al., 2015), the concept grounding this study was that psycholinguistic analysis of mass murderer manifestos would provide insight into the killers' motives and psychopathologies. With my results, I

was able to confirm the presence of the six psycholinguistic themes identified by Knoll (2012b). Coding and analysis of these 12 manifestos not only supported his results, but furthered understanding of these themes and their appearances among the words of mass shooters. Identifying common content across mass murderers' communications also affirmed Murray's (2016) findings that mass murderers revealed similar concepts in their manifestos, extending knowledge in this regard, as well.

Although this study's results shed light on the thought processes and motives behind each offender's violent actions, it was not possible for me to identify individual psychopathologies. I drew or inferred information related to mental disorders primarily from biographies, news reports, and prior scholarly research, not the mass murderers' recorded words. It is important to note, however, that diagnosing offenders was not an objective of this study, nor did it align with any of the research questions.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations, beginning with the inability to transfer qualitative case study results to alternate contexts or broader populations (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2014). Other limitations included threats to researcher credibility, dependability, and results confirmability (Yin, 2014). Findings from a sample size of 12 cannot be generalized to all mass murderers' manifestos. In addition, the limited sample size was not statistically representative of the broader population and cannot be extrapolated as such. Purposeful participant selection based on availability also precluded the ability to adequately represent the entire population of mass murderer manifestos.

Using myself as a single researcher to collect, code, and analyze data did not allow for confirmability, as it eliminated the benefit of triangulation and increased the risk of researcher bias and misinterpretation. Even if multiple researchers had been employed, however, coding and analysis remain imprecise activities, without clear rules to guide their execution (Yin, 2014). I acknowledged and addressed all limitations in advance and during execution of the study, and minimized risk factors as able to achieve the highest degree of trustworthiness.

Recommendations

A number of future research opportunities exist based on these findings. Scholars could replicate the study using a sample from one specific pseudocommando population, such as school shooters, non-U.S. mass murderers, single-location attackers, terrorists, and mass killers in a given timeframe, among others. Researchers may also wish to look for psycholinguistic examples of Murray's (2016) manifesto content categories within the current sample. Different themes, such as language indicative of the desire for fame and glory, could also play a role in later evaluation (Lankford, 2016c).

Evaluating manifestos with regard to mental illness is another potential field of future study. Researchers can look for evidence of psychological illness in the mass murderers' manifestos, either disorders specifically stated or words highly suggestive of an abnormal psychological condition. A review of news reports, biographies, and psychological evaluations would provide insight into the mental state of the perpetrator, which could further qualify participants for a study incorporating mental illness into

subject selection criteria. Lankford's (2016c) suggestion of suicidality in mass murderers may also warrant thematic exploration.

Researchers might also wish to apply psycholinguistic analysis to the words mass murderers speak, not just the ones they write or record. Additionally, postevent communications may merit examination to see if themes are consistent both before and after the mass murder is committed. Such documents may include the jail writings of Oklahoma City Federal Building bomber Timothy McVeigh ("An Essay on Hypocrisy," 2013; "Timothy McVeigh's Manifesto," 2013), or the documents Fort Hood shooter Nidal Hasan provided to Fox News after the 2009 massacre in Killeen, Texas (Hasan, n.d., 2012).

Extending thematic analysis to similar groups, later researchers may also wish to examine the communications of serial killers or of different types of mass murderers, including familicide or workplace shooters. The population could also include individuals who attempted acts of mass murder, but were stopped before they could kill at least three people.

Implications

Following a comprehensive literature review, I identified a clear research gap: analyzing the words left behind by mass murderers. For this study, I used Knoll's (2012b) six psycholinguistic themes to evaluate the manifestos of 12 American mass murderers: Christopher Dorner, Eric Harris, James Holmes, Kip Kinkel, Dylan Klebold, Adam Lanza, Gang Lu, Elliot Rodger, Dylann Roof, George Sodini, Jeff Weise, and Charles Whitman. Among the findings were that all manifestos contained at least one of Knoll's

themes, and each theme was represented in at least one manifesto, lending confirmability to Knoll's results.

The results of this study expand awareness and understanding of mass murderers' communications, which will undoubtedly lead to further research and findings. Use of such accumulated information has multiple significant implications for social change. The greatest potential for positive social change exists for mental health care professionals and their clients, as practitioners may be able to provide better care and protection to at-risk patients. If a client's communications reveal two or more of these six themes, the care provider may wish to alter the methods of evaluation and treatment, perhaps by asking more probing questions or exercising 3-day psychiatric holds. More effective psychological care may one day lead to the prevention of future acts of violence.

Using these and other tested themes, researchers may also wish to analyze manifestos found postoffense. Such review and understanding have the potential of streamlining law enforcement interrogations, investigations, negotiations, and productivity. Further, if any or all of these benefits follow as a result of this and future studies, positive social change may extend to individuals, families, and societies through reductions in fear, trauma, and loss of life.

The qualitative multiple case study approach was the best means of examining historical documents. This method allowed for close analysis of mass murderers' recorded communications, a necessity when searching for psycholinguistic themes. Using 12 cases achieved the saturation point for a case study (Guest et al., 2006). This larger

sample size improved upon Knoll's (2012b) original thematic analysis, which involved the communications of just two mass killers. Use of the constructivist paradigm provided the structure to answer each research question, and to present findings clearly and accurately.

Conclusion

Individuals often reveal their thoughts, mental states, and motivations through personal communications (Riffe, 2013). As mass murderers frequently compose or publish written or video communications in advance of committing mass violence, I expected analysis of these words to provide insight. Because the language in these manifestos had not been extensively studied, the current study greatly expanded knowledge in this field.

This was the first study done in response to Knoll's (2012b) qualitative analysis of two manifestos, in which he identified six psycholinguistic themes in the pre-attack communications of Cho and Wong. My results confirmed that mass murderers' communications display common psycholinguistic themes, specifically ego survival and revenge, pseudocommando mindset, nihilism, entitlement, and heroic revenge fantasy. Although I found weak support for envy, the remaining five themes were well represented, with each appearing in from three to eight manifestos.

Even with the consistency of findings across my and Knoll's studies, by nature, I cannot extrapolate qualitative results to the entire population of mass murderer manifestos. To heighten transferability, additional research should be conducted. Future scholars may seek to replicate these findings with new participants or segments of the

mass murderer population. Exploration of different themes could also enable further understanding of mass murderers and their manifestos. Likely, individuals conducting future studies will also find commonality in the language of those planning acts of multiple homicide.

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Appendix A: Comprehensive List of Keywords Searched

mass shooting
mass shooting
rampage shooting
mass homicide
mass murderer manifesto
mass murderer diary
mass murderer suicide note
mass murderer blog
school shooter manifesto
school shooter diary
school shooter suicide note
school shooter blog
mass shooter manifesto
mass shooter diary
mass shooter suicide note
mass shooter blog
mass public shooter manifesto
mass public shooter diary
mass public shooter suicide note
mass public shooter blog
rampage shooter manifesto
rampage shooter diary
rampage shooter suicide note
rampage shooter blog
spree shooter manifesto
spree shooter diary
spree shooter suicide note
spree shooter blog
mass homicide manifesto
mass homicide diary
mass homicide suicide note
mass homicide blog
mass murder risk
mass shooting risk
mass public shooting risk
mass murder statistics
mass shooting statistics
mass homicide statistics
mass murder frequency
mass shooting frequency
mass public shooting frequency
mass murder motive
school shooting
mass public shooting
spree shooting
manifesto
mass murderer journal
mass murderer letter
mass murderer video
mass murderer website
school shooter journal
school shooter letter
school shooter video
school shooter website
mass shooter journal
mass shooter letter
mass shooter video
mass shooter website
mass public shooter journal
mass public shooter letter
mass public shooter video
mass public shooter website
rampage shooter journal
rampage shooter letter
rampage mass shooter video
rampage shooter website
spree shooter journal
spree shooter letter
spree shooter video
spree shooter website
mass homicide journal
mass homicide letter
mass homicide video
mass homicide website
school shooting risk
rampage shooting risk
mass homicide risk
school shooting statistics
mass public shooting statistics
rampage shooting statistics
school shooting frequency
rampage shooting frequency
mass homicide frequency
school shooting motive

mass shooting motive	rampage shooting motive
mass public shooting motive	mass homicide motive
mass murder gun use	school shooting gun use
mass shooting gun use	rampage shooting gun use
mass public shooting gun use	mass homicide gun use
mass murder firearm use	school shooting firearm use
mass shooting firearm use	rampage shooting firearm use
mass public shooting firearm use	mass homicide firearm use
gun statistics	firearm statistics
U.S. gun statistics	U.S. firearm statistics
U.S. mass murder	U.S. mass murder statistics
U.S. mass murder frequency	U.S. school shootings
U.S. school shooting statistics	U.S. school shooting frequency
U.S. mass shootings	U.S. mass shooting statistics
U.S. mass shooting frequency	U.S. rampage shootings
U.S. rampage shooting statistics	U.S. rampage shooting frequency
U.S. mass public shootings	U.S. mass public shooting statistics
U.S. mass public shooting frequency	U.S. mass homicide
U.S. mass homicide statistics	U.S. mass homicide frequency
mass murder media coverage	school shooting media coverage
mass shooting media coverage	rampage shooting media coverage
mass public shooting media coverage	mass homicide media coverage
mass murder media impact	school shooting media impact
mass shooting media impact	rampage shooting media impact
mass public shooting media impact	mass homicide media impact
mass murder impact	school shooting impact
mass shooting impact	rampage shooting impact
mass public shooting impact	mass homicide impact
Tarasoff	duty to protect
Christopher Dorner	Eric Harris
James Holmes	Kip Kinkel
Dylan Klebold	Adam Lanza
Gang Lu	Elliot Rodger
Dylann Roof	George Sodini
Jeff Weise	Charles Whitman
Columbine High School	Aurora theater shooting
Sandy Hook	Newtown
Red Lake Indian Reservation	Charleston Church

Appendix B: Homicide Victims of the 12 Mass Murderers

Christopher Dorner
Los Angeles Law Enforcement Attacks, 2013
Michael Crain
Keith Lawrence
Jeremiah MacKay
Monica Quan

Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold
Columbine High School, 1999
Cassie Bernall
Steven Curnow
Corey Depooter
Kelly Fleming
Matthew Kechter
Daniel Mauser
Daniel Rohrbough
William “Dave” Sanders
Rachel Scott
Isaiah Shoels
John Tomlin
Lauren Townsend
Kyle Valasquez

James Holmes
Aurora Theater, 2012
Jonathan Blunk
A. J. Boik
Jesse Childress
Gordon Cowden
Jessica Ghawi
John Larimer
Matt McQuinn
Micayla Medek
Veronica Moser-Sullivan
Alex Sullivan
Alex Teves
Rebecca Wingo

Kip Kinkel
Thurston High School, 1998
Faith Kinkel
William Kinkel
Mikael Nickolauson
Benjamin Walker

Adam Lanza
Sandy Hook Elementary School, 2012
Charlotte Bacon
Daniel Barden
Rachel D’Avino
Olivia Engel
Josephine Gay
Dawn Hochsprung
Dylan Hockley
Madeleine Hsu
Catherine Hubbard
Chase Kowalski
Nancy Lanza
Jesse Lewis
Ana Marquez-Greene
James Mattioli
Grace McDonnell
Anne Marie Murphy
Emilie Parker
Jack Pinto
Noah Pozner
Caroline Previdi
Jessica Rekos
Avielle Richman
Lauren Rousseau
Mary Sherlach
Victoria Leigh Soto
Benjamin Wheeler
Allison Wyatt

Gang Lu
University of Iowa, 1991
T. Anne Cleary
Christoph Goertz
Dwight Nicholson
Linhua Shan
Robert Smith

Elliot Rodger
Isla Vista, 2014
George Chen
Katherine Cooper
Chen Yuan Hong
Ross Michaels-Martinez
Weihan “David” Wang
Veronika Weizz

Dylann Roof
Charleston Church, 2015
Cynthia Marie Graham Hurd
Susie Jackson
Ethel Lee Lance
Depayne Middleton-Doctor
Clementa C. Pinckney
Tywanza Sanders
Daniel Simmons
Sharonda Coleman-Singleton
Myra Thompson

George Sodini
Pennsylvania LA Fitness, 2009
Jody Billingsley
Elizabeth Gannon
Heidi Overmier

Jeff Weise
Red Lake Indian Reservation, 2005
Derrick Brun
Dewayne Lewis
Chase Lussier
Daryl Lussier
Neva Rodgers
Chanelle Rosebear
Michelle Sigana
Alicia White
Thurlene Stillday

Charles Whitman
University of Texas, Austin, 1966
Thomas Ashton
Robert Boyer
Thomas Eckman
Mark Gabour
Karen Griffith
David Gunby
Thomas Karr
Marguerite Lamport
Claudia Rutt
Roy Schmidt
Paul Sonntag
Billy Speed
Edna Townsley
Harry Walchuk
Kathy Whitman
Margaret Whitman