



DV-Related Mass and Spree Killings

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Outline

- I. Defining Mass & Spree Killing
- II. Types of Mass & Spree Killing
- III. Social & Historical Patterns
- IV. Case Illustrations & Key Themes

I. DEFINING MASS AND SPREE KILLING

- Public mass and spree killings are extremely rare –less than 0.2% of all US murders
- Media amplification & public concern considerable
- Mass murder = the killing of four or more victims in one event, in one location/setting
- Spree murders = 2+ victims, in one episode, in 2+ locations/settings, without the offender “cooling off” emotionally between murders

II. TYPES OF MASS/SPREE KILLING

- Familicide – usually non-public, not always
- Felony mass/spree killing – usually public
- Non felony-related public mass/spree killing include:

* Cases usually with fewer but targeted killings where the DV/IPV is centrally important (e.g. IPV offender kills current/former spouse/partner and/or those associated with the DV/divorce/custody case)

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Case illustration: Dwight Jones

Case types

- * Cases usually with many unknown victims where DV/IPV is one aspect of the case (e.g. mass killer kills his [abused] current/former spouse/partner or family member [e.g. mother] before killing many unknown victims)
- Case illustration: Omar Mateen
- * Cases without any apparent DV/IPV component

III. SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL PATTERNS

- Congressional Research Service (CRS), 1999-2013 –at least 272 (0.14%) of the BJS-reported 197,191 murders and non-negligent manslaughter incidents were mass shootings
- Mass (non-felony related) public shootings = 54 incidents, 348 victims
- Familicides = 111 incidents, 507 victims
- Felony mass shootings = 107 incidents, 461 victims

Social patterns

- In mass public shootings and familicide mass shootings, nearly all the offenders were lone assailants
- Over half of the offenders in either type of mass murder committed suicide or were killed by responding police
- Most mass murderers who kill with firearms carefully plan their attacks well in advance, know at least some of their victims, and often select their victims methodically

Social patterns

- A domestic dispute of some type was allegedly a precipitating factor in roughly a fifth (21.2%) of “mass public shootings” incidents, from 1999-2013 (Congressional Research Service, 2015, page 16). Note problem of missing data in DV/IPV cases
- Either all or a majority of the victims were not related to the offender(s)

Social patterns

- Everytown for Gun Safety, March 2017, Mass Shootings in the United States: 2009-2016
- In US (2009-2016) **-156 mass shootings -** 4+ people shot and killed, not including the shooter
- In at least 54 percent of these (85/156) a current or former intimate partner or family member killed (most were familicides, i.e. non-public; fewer involved non-felony related mass/spree shootings)

Social patterns

- Mass murderers are often “emotionally/mentally unstable,” at least temporarily, but they are rarely psychotic and hallucinatory*
- They are seldom found to be criminally insane or otherwise unfit to stand trial
- The large majority of people with mental illness are not violent and most violence is caused by factors other than mental illness
- Depression, anger, & suicidality much more important than psychosis and schizophrenia as drivers

Social patterns

- However, at certain junctures, e.g. period surrounding a psychiatric hospitalization or first episode of psychosis, small subgroups of those with serious mental illness are at elevated risk of violence
- Secret Service, 2018, examined 28 mass attacks in 2017, killing 147 and injuring 700 others
- 32% had psychotic symptoms prior to their attacks but only 14% of attacks identified mental health or psychosis as the principal motive*

Social patterns

- Most of the attackers ($n = 20$, 71%) had histories of criminal charges beyond minor traffic violations. Those charges included both non-violent ($n = 16$, 57%) and violent ($n = 15$, 54%) offenses
- All had at least one significant stressor* within the last five years, and over half had indications of financial instability in that timeframe

Social patterns

- All the attackers were male
- The majority (n=23; 82%) displayed behaviors indicative of aggressive narcissism (rigid, hostile, extreme self-centeredness) – note often hidden but very important unrecognized shame

Historical patterns

- For 44 years (1970-2013), the prevalence of mass public shootings has increased: 1.1 incidents per year on average in the 1970s, 2.7 (1980s), 4.0 (1990s), 4.1 (2000s), and 4.5 in the first four years of the 2010s
- In the 29 years (1982-2011) mass shootings occurred on average every 200 days. In the three-year period 2012-2014, mass shootings occurred every 64 days on average

IV. CASE ILLUSTRATIONS OF DV-RELATED PUBLIC MASS/SPREE KILLINGS

- DV/IPV appears central and victims associated in some way with the DV/IPV case – Jones, 2018

Dwight Lamon Jones, Scottsdale, May 31-June 2, 2018

- Killing spree by Dwight Lamon Jones, 56
- Acrimonious divorce, DV, and child custody case, lasting at least nine years
- Involved family lawyers and allied professionals
- Jones killed prominent Scottsdale forensic psychiatrist, Steven Pitt, and paralegals Veleria Sharp and Laura Anderson, and psychologist Marshall Levine

Dwight Jones

- He also killed acquaintances, Bryon Thomas and Mary Simmons, in Fountain Hills, before taking his own life in his Extended Stay hotel room in Scottsdale
- Dr. Pitt testified that Dwight Jones suffered from anxiety, mood disorders, and paranoia
- The paralegals worked at the law firm retained by Dr. Connie Jones, Dwight Jones ex-wife

Dwight Jones

- Marshall Levine had no connection to the Jones case but he rented space in the same office complex where the therapist who examined Jones's child used to work
- Scottsdale Police Department had arrested Dwight Jones in May 2009 on charges of domestic violence and making threats
- “Backing the mother into a wall, pushing and hitting her in the face with his forearm” (court docs)*

Dwight Jones

- Multiple accusations that he assaulted Dr. Jones over 20 years of marriage, including a 2007 incident where he fractured her sternum
- Dr. Jones described Dwight Jones as, “A very emotionally disturbed person,” adding, “I have feared for my safety for the past nine years”*
- Custody evaluator provided evidence of Dwight’s TK Dr. Jones, his constant carriage of a firearm

Dwight Jones

- “Mother has not engaged in acts of domestic violence against Father or the minor child” (Superior Court, Maricopa County, FC 2009-001948, Nov 15, 2010, Docket, 5-6).
- Before the shootings, Dwight Jones posted a series of YouTube videos outlining a conspiracy to deny him access to his son, a son in whose life the court acknowledged the father “played an important role” and a son the father loves “very deeply” (Docket, 9) – leaking/signaling?

Key Themes in DV/IPV central cases

- Gendered
- Signaling, leaking, warning
- IPV history more like IT than SCV
- Extreme hate and anger
- Yet, planning/preparation
- Killings – dissipate hate/anger? Or, feed or gratify feelings of grandiosity and omnipotence? Both?

Key Themes in DV/IPV central cases

- Social isolation, loners, social ostracism
- Fascination, proficiency with weaponry/guns
- Threatening change in life circumstances
- Suicidality, depression
- Paranoia and persecution - grievances, revenge
- Mental health issues. Extent?

Key Themes in DV/IPV central cases

- Acrimonious/contentious divorce
- Hannah Arendt “Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its course it ends in power’s disappearance”*
- James Gilligan, “I can only conclude that their desire for omnipotence is in direct proportion to their feeling of impotence”**

Public Mass/Spree Killings where DV/IPV is one factor

- DV/IPV one factor among many and most victims unknown to the offender and not linked to the DV/IPV case. Case illustration: Omar Mateen, 2016

Omar Mateen, Pulse Nightclub massacre, June 12, 2016, Orlando

- Fatally shot 49 people and injured 53 more at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando
- Eye witnesses described him as laughing as he killed people
- He had shown some interest in radical Islam, enough for the FBI to investigate him twice
- At the time of the shooting he had a wife (Noor Salman) and a three year old son

Omar Mateen

- His ex-wife (Sitora) alleged he beat her before they divorced in 2011. “He would just come home and start beating me up because the laundry wasn’t finished or something like that”*
- He beat her for not doing the laundry, pulled her hair, choked her. Later explained he had just had an argument with his father
- He also threatened her with a gun if she left him

Omar Mateen

- He had also held her hostage and had “serious mental health problems”
- Sitara Yusifiy divorced Mateen after four months of marriage in 2009**
- Rescued by her family after being held hostage
- According to Sitara, much of his anger came from his problems with his father

Omar Mateen

- His ex-wife described him as “Obviously disturbed, deeply, and traumatized”*
- A man who had recently been his colleague said, “He was an angry person, violent in nature...I saw it coming... He said he was going to kill a whole bunch of people” **
- Sitora also described him as “very short tempered”
- She noted he had a history of abusing steroids and a friend of his confirmed that he using steroids to bulk up from his weightlifting

Omar Mateen

- He allegedly attacked Sitora when she was sleeping
- After their marriage he showed his more flamboyant side
- He expressed his resentment about homosexuals, especially when he was angry
- Possible repressed homosexual especially in light of his father's disapproval of homosexuality?

Omar Mateen

- He had a gun license and was proficient with weaponry
- Worked as a security officer and eventually wanted to become a police officer
- Pledged allegiance to ISIS and urged an end to the bombing of ISIS in Syria
- Rather, according to his father, Omar was “disgusted” by displays of homosexual affection

Omar Mateen

- Evidence suggests he stalked a woman who he had escorted to court. Continued for three years, frequent calls and texts
- He followed her but never came to her apartment
- He was obsessed with her
- He tracked her to her car and said he wanted to date her
- She rejected him and he did not recognize her right to say “no” and he reacted badly

Omar Mateen

- Sitora believed he was a repressed homosexual
- She alleged there was no sexual connection between them
- All he wanted to do was have children
- He never initiated sexual contact and he was not sexually interested in her

Omar Mateen

- Sitora thought his pledge to ISIS was a ruse
- Omar's father mocked Omar for being "gay"
- He killed people during Ramadan. Sitora reportedly thought he did it to please his father who strongly disapproved of homosexuality

Omar Mateen

- In the weeks before the attack, Mateen had spent more than \$26,500 buying jewelry, clothes, toys, guns and ammunition on credit cards*
- Noor Salman claimed Omar was so abusive that she was afraid to question his actions leading up to the attack
- She was put on trial in federal court for aiding and abetting Omar in his plan to murder 49 people and with obstruction of justice. Federal jury found her not guilty

Omar Mateen

- Noor Salman claimed Mateen beat her while she was pregnant and sometimes threatened to kill her
- She did not question him watching violent Islamic state videos including beheadings “because he was violent”
- “Has he ever forced you to have sex when you did not wish to do so?”
— yes, she said
- Salman told her family that her husband had beat her. He raped her. He controlled her life

Omar Mateen

- “Has he ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a lethal weapon?” — she said he had not
- “Noor Salman is a severely abused woman who was in realistic fear for her life from her abusive husband”
- “Her behavior was entirely consistent with severely abused women who are completely controlled by a highly abusive male partner”

Omar Mateen

- Quotes from Dr. J. Campbell for the defense team
- Prosecution objected that the defense was not raising a defense that Noor was under duress when she aided and abetted Omar, therefore Campbell should not be allowed to testify
- US District Judge Paul Byron ruled jurors will be allowed to hear from Dr. Campbell
- Noor Salman acquitted of helping her husband plan his attack

Omar Mateen

- It appears Mateen chose Pulse randomly, less than an hour before the attack
- It is not clear he knew it was a gay bar

Key Themes in DV/IPV one factor cases

- Gendered
- Signaling, leaking, warning
- IPV history more like IT than SCV
- Mood altering drug abuse
- Planning/preparation
- Organic impairment?
- Mental health issues. Extent?

Key Themes in DV/IPV one factor cases

- Social isolation, loners, social ostracism
- Fascination, proficiency with weaponry/guns
- Threatening change in life circumstances
- Suicidality, depression, rage, vengefulness, ruminations

Questions

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