

Running Head: Mass Murder

Violence Expressed through Mass Murder:  
An Epidemic of Growing Proportion and Concern in American Society

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# **Violence Expressed through Mass Murder:**

## **An Epidemic of Growing Proportion and Concern in Society**

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**Keywords:** Multicide, mass murderer, disciple-type killer, family annihilator killer, pseudocommando-type killer, disgruntled employee-type killer, set-and-run killer, external trigger, internal trigger, emotional trigger, impulse control, coping skills, stressors.

**Abstract:** *Mass murder is one form of multicide. Other examples can include familicide. Mass murder generally involves the killing 4 or more persons at one location with out a “cooling-off period” in between. A commonly accepted definition of mass murder is "a homicide involving four or more victims in one location during one event". Mass murderers themselves can be placed into one of five categories: The Disciple, The Family Annihilator, The Pseudocommando, The Disgruntled Employee, and The Set-and-Run Killer. Mass murderers are placed in one or more of these categories depending upon one or more factors surrounding the event itself. These factors can include such things as behavior, motivation, anticipated gain, killer-victim relationship, and victim selection.*

Mass murder. The very words conjure up a vision of a dazed individual, perhaps out-of-touch with reality; someone presumed to be psychotic, insane or at least someone deranged who is frequently armed with a semi-automatic weapon or strapped to an improvised explosive device, ranting incoherently as he threatens to blow up a building or who randomly fires into a crowd of innocent victims before taking his own life. This very perception of a mass murderer is frequently the product of several high-profile cases that have occurred over the last few decades or so. For the most part, mass murderers come from many different demographic backgrounds; some from the obviously deranged, to the quiet and reserved, to the apparently harmless, but slightly eccentric man who just might live next door and to the even the boyish school kid who just didn't fit in.

Mass murder is not exactly an American or even modern phenomenon. History is filled with accounts of mass murder worldwide. However, during the past 40 to 50 years or so, mass murder has crept further and further into the limelight, taking on the appearance of a growing epidemic, with America suffering the most casualties.

What triggers mass murderer? Unfortunately, the public perception often suggests that a senseless crime like mass murder must be the result of a sick and deranged individual and that mental state issues such as insanity really the etiology for such horrendous acts. Can mass murderers be identified and stopped before they carry out this terrible crime? These are just some questions that will be addressed herein.

## Mass Murder: A Definition

The term mass murder is often misinterpreted by the media and the lay public and frequently confused with serial murder and spree murder. Each of these terms represent a specific type or sub-set of those offend and commit more than a single homicide. Referred to as "multicide" (Holmes and Holmes, 1992, p. 53), each category of murderer has its own somewhat specific set of defined criteria. These criteria are broken down into four distinct characteristics: the number of victims; the location of the murders; the time of the killings; and the distance between the murder sites (Holmes, et al., 1992, p. 53).

There is some disagreement over what exactly constitutes mass murder. Some sources define mass murder as "a homicide involving four or more victims in one location, and within one event" (Ressler, Burgess, and Douglas, 1988, p. 138), while other experts have set the minimum number of victims at three. Holmes, et al., (1992, p. 53) discusses the problem of setting such number limits, citing a hypothetical example in which only two people are killed, but many others could have been murdered from the intent of the murderer to fatally harm as many as he could but instead, many of the intended victims are seriously injured and promptly saved by emergency medical attention.

Additional definitional problems arise when discussing the time and location of mass murder criteria. Ressler, et al., (1988, p. 139) suggests that to be considered a mass murder, the event must have occurred within one event at a single location, although are not specific as to what constitutes "a single location". This is done to distinguish mass murder from spree murder, which involves "killing at two or more locations with no emotional cooling off period between murders", and serial murder, which involves "three or more separate events with an emotional cooling off period between homicides" (Ressler, et al., 1988, p. 139).

As one can see, there is an obvious gray area differentiating mass murder from spree murder, whereas a particular multicide can either be one or the other, or even both, depending upon the definition used. For the purposes of this article, the author will use the definition of mass murder that sets the minimum number of deaths at four, and that allows for flexibility regarding elapsed time and differing locations between murders, so long as the time and location differences between the murders are not substantial.

## **CLASSIFYING THOSE WHO COMMIT MASS MURDER**

Although Ressler, et al., (1988, p. 138) place mass murderers into two categories, classic and family, this paper will use the typology promoted by Holmes, et al., (1992, pp. 57-60). Admittedly, such categorizations are not perfect, as they tend to generalize, and some cases may involve two or more topologies. The use of these topologies allows for easier handling and discussion of the subject matter. Holmes, et al., (1992, pp. 55-60) examine the following factors in order to classify mass murderers:

### **Behavioral Background: Basic Sources**

These are the elements that combine to produce the foundation for a mass murderer's behavior, an area that is vastly complex and not well understood. Consequently, numerous theories exist. What is known is that the behavior of a mass murderer is the product of a combination of sociological, biological, and psychological factors, with each combination being unique, and the permutations infinite. No single factor can be positively singled out as possessing the causal link to mass murder. A problem arises due to the fact that this applies to every other individual in the world. Thus, the question begs: Why do some individuals become

mass murders, while the vast majority do not, even though murderers and non-murderers may share nearly identical

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backgrounds and may find themselves in nearly identical circumstances? Not surprisingly, this question remains unanswered.

What can be done in the interim is that the factors that suggest an individual's potential for violence can be identified and examined. Psychiatrist John M. MacDonald proposed that a history of three factors - bedwetting, firestarting, and torturing small animals - were indicators of potential homicidal violence (Levin and Fox, 1985, p. 27).

Drs. G. S. Evseeff and E. M. Wisnieslii targeted childhood experiences, such as physical and/or sexual abuse and parental abandonment, as causal factors regarding "homicidal proneness" (Levin and Fox, 1985, p. 29). Others rely on a broader range of factors, such as an individual's demographics, past history of violent behavior, comparison of the individual's violent behavior with those of a similar backgrounds, and stressors in the individuals's present environment (family, peer and employment) (Ewing, 1985, pp. 16-23), when trying to assess an individual's proclivity toward violence.

Unfortunately, the problem of false positives and skewed observations based on small case pools make predicting violent behavior, specifically homicidal behavior, an "educated guess" in many instances. Most mass murderers are brought to the attention of evaluators after the fact, followed by an expected flurry of Monday morning quarterback comments such as, "We should have known", "He showed all the signs", or "Nobody ever took his crazy comments seriously". Rather than prediction, the task at hand now becomes one of historical reconstruction and analysis.

As to the question of "insanity" in mass murder cases, there is dissension among the experts. <sup>7</sup>

Dr. Donald Lund, considered an expert witness in the field of forensic psychiatry, contends that mass murderers are almost always insane (Lunde, 1976, p. 48). Others note that mass murderers do not always display psychotic signs, at least not at the time of the actual murders.

What most experts do agree upon, however, is that an examination of a mass murderer's behavioral history will often show at least one, if not both of the following trends. The first trend being the presence of paranoid personality traits, or the actual disorder itself. Indications of a paranoid personality disorder includes such symptoms as "hyper-vigilance, chronic anger, explosiveness, perceived malevolence, arrogance, social reclusiveness" ("The mass murderer". 1988, p. 1), "suspicious demeanor, hallucinations (usually "hearing voices"), and by delusions of grandeur and/or persecution" (Levin and Fox, 1985, p. 33).

The second trend involves the presence of indicators of an antisocial personality disorder. These indications include "the ability to suspend any empathetic regard for potential victims, and the ability to carefully plan and carry out violent acts that involve a certain amount of preparation, deception, and time." The lack of empathy for the victims frees the mass murderer of any guilt, allowing him to kill (the mass murderer", 1988, p. 2).

One must realize, however, that the presence of one or both of the aforementioned trends does not necessarily mean that an individual will commit mass murder. What is required is a triggering factor; something to set the killer into action. The triggering factor is usually something beyond the control of the killer. These triggering factors can range from the semi-obvious, such as the loss of a job or family problems ("Me mass murderer". 1988, p. 2), to the subliminal and numinous, never to be ascertained.

### **Motivation to Kill in Mass Numbers**

Motivation is the mass murderer's reason for acting, and may either internal or external to the killer. The mass murderer's motivation may remain speculative, especially in cases where the killer dies before authorities can question him.



## **Anticipated Gain**

Anticipated gain is what the mass murderer is seeking to gain from his actions. 'These gains can be either expressive (psychological) or instrumental (material). Examination of the anticipated or perceived gain may be of use to the investigator when trying to determine the killer's motivation (Holmes, et al., 1992, p. 56).

### Victim Selection

In some cases, the mass murderer will select his victims. Thus, victims of a mass murder may or may not share common traits, depending upon the particular incident. As part of an investigation, this aspect should be carefully analyzed.

## **Victim-Offender Relationship**

This is the relationship between the victim(s) and the killer at the time of the murder. There may or may not have been a relationship prior to the actual murder. Again, this may or may not be a factor. Examination of this item can also assist the investigator in completing a more accurate assessment of the murder scene and the murderer.

### MASS MURDERER TYPOLOGIES

## **The Disciple-type Mass Murderer**

Charles Manson, Charles "Tex" Watson, Patricia Krenwinkel, Linda Kasabian, and Susan

Atkins - "*Helter Skelter*," were all members of the infamous Manson family, led by the self-proclaimed father/messiah, Charles Manson. One the night of August 8, 1969, Manson ordered the foursome to go to 10050 Cielo Drive in Beverly Hills and kill the occupants. The foursome obliged, and before the night was over they shot and brutally stabbed five people, including actress Sharon Tate, who was eight months pregnant at the time. Allegedly, Kasabian did not actually participate in the actual killings (Blashfield, 1990, pp. 150-152).

The following night Manson ordered the foursome to commit another massacre, but this time they were accompanied by Manson himself, along with two other individuals - Steve "Clem" Grogan and Leslie Van Houten. At random, they selected a house at 3301 Waverly Drive, near Griffith Park in the Los Feliz section of Los Angeles, home of Leno and Rosemary LaBianca. Breaking in, they tied up the LaBiancas. Soon afterwards, Manson and some others left, leaving Watson, Krenwinkel, and Van Houten, who then stabbed and mutilated the LaBiancas (Blashfield, 1990, pp. 155-157).

Shortly afterwards, the police apprehended everyone involved in the Tate-LaBianca murders. They were brought to trial and found guilty of murder, except for Linda Kasabian (Blashfield, 1990, p. 161).

### **Case Example: Jim Jones and His Cult**

On November 19, 1978, at the People's Temple in Jonestown, Guyana, self-styled reli leader and cult dictator Jim Jones ordered his followers to line up and receive a fatal dose of cyanide-laced grape Kool-Aid. Volunteers squirted the deadly mixture- into the mouths of the infants. The older children were next, followed by the adults. Armed guards stood by to coerce those who were the slightest bit hesitant or had intentions other than those of their leader. As a grand finale, Jim Jones shot himself in the head. In a single day, the mass murder/suicide claimed the lives

913 members of the People's Temple (Levin and Fox, 1985, p. 80-81). The Disciple mass murderer is one who kills at the command of a charismatic leader (Holmes, et al., 1992, p. 57). The motivation of the Disciple to commit mass murder appears to stem from the leader's complete control over his followers. Charles Manson is said to have had a unique, mysterious charisma, which he used along with his self-generated religious and moral philosophies, to attract vulnerable teenage runaways and castoffs. Desperate for love and acceptance, these young people found what they sought in Charles Manson. Manson had convinced his followers that he possessed great power, and some Family members even thought he was Jesus Christ (Levin, et al., 1985, p. 90). Thus, Manson's followers were motivated to kill by a perceived psychological (expressive) gain; specifically, increased acceptance by their leader (Holmes, et al., 1992, pp. 56-57).

In the case of the Jonestown massacre, Jim Jones created an atmosphere of complete physical and psychological dependence between himself and his followers. Isolated from friends, family, and the reality of the outside world, Jones provided for all their- needs. Seeing his vision of paradise nearing an end, Jones ordered his followers to end not only their own lives, but the lives of others. By and large, his "flock" blindly obeyed (Levin, et al., 1985, p. 90). Again, the perceived gains were expressive.

The Disciple can actually be examined using theories of organizational behavior. Often times group dynamics will play a role, causing individuals to commit acts which they never would have committed as an individual. Such theories have been advanced to explain the actions of those individuals involved in carrying out Hitler's "Final Solution" (Levin, et al., 1985, p. 84-85).

Additionally, Maslow's hierarchy of needs may no longer apply. The Disciple's need to gain the acceptance of the leader and/or the group may rank higher than physiological or even survival needs, as seen in the Jonestown case. However, regarding self-preservation, since the disciple's

primary motivator is acceptance by the leader, in cases where the leader requires further action,<sup>12</sup> the Disciple may place survival needs at a higher priority. Consequently, suicide or intervention by the police would not be a viable option for the Disciple (Holmes, et al., 1992, p. 57), such as in the Manson case, where the Disciples made conscious efforts to avoid apprehension.

As for the victims, the Disciple usually chooses strangers selected at random, or kills those which the Disciple's leader has selected, as in the Manson and Jonestown cases (Holmes, et al., 1992, p. 57).

### **The Family Annihilator**

The Family Annihilator is a person who murders numerous members of his own family at once (Holmes, et al., 1992, p. 57). Victim selection and the relationship between the killer and the victims are obviously a critical factors here. This category comprises almost half of all mass murder cases (Levin, et al., 1985, p. 100).

### **Case Example: James Ruppert**

It was Easter Sunday, 1975. The location was Charity Ruppert's house in Hamilton, Ohio. Scattered between the kitchen and the living room were Charity, her son, Leonard, Leonard's wife Alma, and their eight children. Her other son, James, was upstairs in his bedroom. As the Ruppert clan was preparing to sit down for their Easter dinner, James Ruppert came downstairs and entered the kitchen carrying a .357 revolver, two .22 pistols, and an 18-shot rifle. He told everyone he was going out target shooting, an activity that he frequently enjoyed, and was at which he was quite proficient. Seconds later, he opened fire. Within minutes, 11 members of

the Ruppert family were dead. Three hours later, James Ruppert called the police and reported,<sup>13</sup>  
"here's been a shooting here" (Levin, et al., 1985, p. 107-108).

At his trial, James Ruppert entered a plea of insanity. His defense team painted him as a deeply disturbed and frustrated man. Expert witness for the defense, Dr. Howard Sokolov, testified that Ruppert was suffering from "a paranoid psychotic state" in which there was a "departure from reality in terms of thinking and behavior", and went on to say that he had a tendency to be excessively suspicious, jealous, and angry" (Levin, et al., 1985, P. 112).

Frail and sickly as a youth, James Ruppert was constantly teased by other children and was a loner for most of his childhood and teen years. His father died when he was 12, leaving him only bitter memories of an unsuccessful, unaffectionate man, who had a violent temper and a vocal lack of confidence that his son, James, would ever amount to anything (Levin, et al., 1985, pp. 115-116).

According to Ruppert, his mother did little improve the situation. She often told him that he was a mistake; that she had actually wanted a girl instead. She would beat and taunt him, egging his older brother Leonard to join in. His mother made no attempt at concealing her overwhelming affection for her older son. At age 16, James ran away and attempted suicide (Levin, et al., 1985, p. 116).

As James grew older, his own failures and insecurities were exacerbated by Leonard's relatively successful life. Leonard was everything that James had aspired, but failed to be. James soon came to believe that Leonard and his mother were plotting against him.

In 1965, the local police department had traced an obscene phone call back to James Ruppert. He admitted to making the call, but he believed that his mother and Leonard were trying to

discredit him by telling everyone what he had done. He also believed they had told the FBI that<sup>14</sup>

he was a communist and a homosexual. Consequently, James was convinced that the FBI now had bugged

not only his home phone, but the phones at the various bars and restaurants he frequented. By 1975, James included the State Highway Patrol, the local Sheriff's Department, private detectives, and the Hamilton Police Department in the conspiracy against him (Levin, et al., 1985, p. 117).

The prosecution contended that James Ruppert killed his family for financial gain, in that following the murders, he stood to inherit close to \$300,000. The prosecution argued that Ruppert was trying to be found not guilty by reason of insanity so that he would be committed to the state mental hospital, be eventually found sane, and then released to collect the family fortune (Levin, et al., 1985, p. 113).

In the end, James Ruppert was found guilty of murdering his mother and brother, but was found not guilty by reason of insanity in the other murders. He is currently serving two consecutive life sentences (Levin, et al., 1985, p. 121).

Who typifies the Family Annihilator and what are the base sources for the act? Ironically, the Family Annihilator is the senior male of the family (Holmes, et al., 1992, p. 57). The family setting itself is often filled with stress. This stress may be the result of "possessiveness or jealousy toward the spouse, parental rigidity, isolation of family members, and in extreme cases, sexual abuse of family members, including children" ("The mass murderer". 1988, p. 1).

### **Case Example: Ronald Defeo**

Ronald Deeo, who in 1974, shot and killed his parents and four brothers and sisters, felt he was under constant pressure at home. He failed to live up to the high expectations set by his father, who thought that beating his son would somehow solve the problem. Ronald Defeo's father also refused to let

Ronald go off and live on his own, and would bribe him with money to stay with the family (Blashfield, 1990, pp. 162-180). In 1987, Ronald Gene Simmons shot and killed 14 family members, among others. Relatives claimed he abused his wife, and may have fathered his daughter's baby, all of whom were among those killed (Johnson and Shapiro, 1988, p. 20).

Other stress factors, such severe depression, alcohol or drug abuse, presence of a paranoid personality disorder or paranoid traits, loss of or inability to find employment, and actual or possible estrangement from his wife and/or family can all add up to creating a potentially explosive emotional and physically violent situation, just waiting for that one certain factor to set it off. 'Me family now becomes the- object that must be retaliated against ("the mass murderer". 1988, p. 1).

Several days prior to that fateful Easter Sunday, James Ruppert lost his job, and his mother told him he could no longer live at her house. When he entered the kitchen with his guns, James' brother, Leonard, asked him about his Volkswagen. James Ruppert was convinced that his brother had been trying to sabotage his car for the past several months, and had actually done so. James felt that Leonard was scolding him with the question concerning his car. That is when James flew into his murderous rage. This seemingly innocent question was James Ruppert's triggering factor (Levin, et al., 1985, pp. 101, 120).

It is not uncommon for the internal family problems or stresses to be transparent to the outside observer. Both John List and William Bradford Bishop had what appeared to be on the surface, normal, well-adjusted family lives. List was a successful insurance salesman. Bradford was a promising midlevel career diplomat with the State Department. In 1972, List shot and killed his wife, mother and three children. In 1976, Bishop beat to death his wife, mother and three children. In both cases, the basic sources and motivations for the killings are still speculative at best. Both men became federal fugitives (Ressler, et al., 1988, p. 139).

Psychiatrist Dr. Sherver Frazier has suggested two motivations which may explain some of the Family Annihilator cases. Each motivation is based around two completely opposite emotions: love and hate. In a family setting filled with spousal conflict, the man may be either willingly or unwillingly removed from the family setting. Lacking the emotional support and security of the family structure, and feeling lost, alone, and angry, his thoughts turn to revenge. Even though the Family Annihilator's main anger is directed at the spouse, he views killing "her" children as a way of gaining complete revenge. Frazier refers to this as "murder by proxy" (Levin, et al., 1985, p. 100).

On the other end of the emotional spectrum, in cases where the male has lost his job, is unable to find employment, or has committed some act that in his mind will bring unspeakable shame upon family, the Family Annihilator decides to spare his family the imagined suffering by mercifully killing them, confident they will be brought back together under better circumstances in the hereafter. Dr. Frazier calls this "suicide by proxy", and goes on to say that "the parent may identify so strongly with his children that he sees them as an extension of himself. Therefore, to kill his children is, in his mind, to commit suicide" (Levin, et al., 1985, p. 100).

As we can see, the motivation behind the killing is often based on conjecture; only known to the killer, who may take this secret to the grave. It is not uncommon for Family Annihilators to commit suicide following the act. Without a proper understanding of the motive, it may be difficult to determine whether the Family Annihilator's perceived gains were expressive (psychological) or instrumental (material) (Holmes, et al., 1992, p. 56).



## **Pseudocommando-type Killer**

### **Case Example: Patrick Edward Purdy**

Recess was in full swing at the Cleveland Elementary School in Stockton, California as Patrick Edward Purdy parked his car nearby. Purdy's thoughts probably drifted back to the time many years ago, when he had attended this very same school. He put on a flak jacket bearing the words "LIBYA" and "DEATH TO THE GREAT SANN (sic)" before picking up his semi-automatic AK-47 rifle with the word "HEZBOLLAH" carved into the stock and his Taurus gmm pistol with the word "VICTORY" painted on its grip. Before he stated his car, Purdy lit the fuse to a gasoline bomb that was to act as a diversion/dramatic enhancement to the act which he was about to commit. He then walked into the schoolyard and devoid of emotion, proceeded to fire 105 rounds into the crowd of over 300 elementary schoolchildren. As police sirens began to sound in the distance, Purdy put the Taurus to his head and pulled the trigger. By the time the police had arrived, five children were dead, and 29 others, along with one teacher were wounded. (Caputo, 1989, pp. 137-154; Foreman, 1992, pp. 73-75; "Slaughter in", 1988, p. 29).

The Pseudocommando is the image that usually comes to mind when one hears about a mass murder. They are often loners; introverts lacking social skills, or possessing antisocial personality traits such as incidents of "repeated conflicts with society" and low frustration levels (Toch, 1979, p. 323). As Holmes, et al., (1992, p. 58) put it, "The Pseudocommando lashes out at society in a most grotesque way. Something in his world is not correct, and he vall "teach the world a lesson" by his behavior.

Paranoid tendencies are often a factor in Pseudocommando mass murders. Howard Unruh, who<sup>18</sup> is considered by many to have been the first modern mass

murderer, walked through his Camden, N.J. neighborhood on September 6, 1949, shooting and killing 13 people, some of whom were his neighbors. He later told psychiatrists he believed that some of his neighbors had been slandering him. Psychiatrists at the time diagnosed Unruh as having "dementia praecox, mixed type, with pronounced catatonic and paranoid coloring" (Foreman, 1992, p. 58).

Former librarian, William Bryan Cruse, who in 1987, gunned down six people at a Palm Bay, Florida shopping mall, was convinced that his neighbors gossiped about him, and were spreading rumors that he was a homosexual. Several psychiatrists for the defense testified that Cruse was a "paranoid schizophrenic beset by delusions" (Foreman, 1992, p. 68). Pseudocommandos are typically infatuated with weapons, usually firearms, to a degree far beyond that of an enthusiastic collector. The Pseudocommando often thinks about his act far in advance, and may make elaborate plans and preparations.

Charles Whitman, who in 1966, gunned down 44 people, killing 13, from the University of Texas clock tower, had visited the university psychiatrist four months prior to the massacre and told him of the recurring thought he was having of "going up on the tower with a deer rifle and start shooting people" (Blashfeld, 1990, pp. 206-207). The list of items Whitman brought with him to the tower read like a grocery or sporting goods store stock list.

"Cans of meat ravioli, Spam, Vienna sausages, peanuts, sliced pineapple, fruit salad, and liquid diet formula; ajar of honey, boxes of raisins, sandwiches, and a vacuum flask of coffee; vitamins, Dexidrine, Excedrin, earplugs, jugs of water and of gasoline, matches, charcoal lighter fluid, rope, binoculars, canteens, a machete, a hatchet, three knives, a transistor radio, toilet paper, a Gillette razor, and a plastic bottle of Mennen deodorant; a 6mm Remington bolt-action rifle with a four-power Leopold scope, a .35-caliber Remington pump rifle, a .30-caliber

carbine, a sawed-off 12-gauge Sears shotgun, a 9mm Luger pistol, a Galesi-Brescia pistol, a .357 magnum Smith & Wesson revolver, and 700 rounds of assorted ammunition" (Foreman, 1992, p. 31).

Whitman even rented a mover's dolly earlier that day in order to move everything from his car to the tower. All in all, hardly a spontaneous endeavor. There usually exists no prior relationship between the Pseudocommando and his victims. In some instances, such as the Unruh case, the killer will keep a "grudge list" of individuals whom they perceive as having wronged them in some way (Foreman, 1992, p. 58). More often than not, the actual victims are not the ones on the list.

Victim selection may or may not be a factor. Sometimes the victims just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, as seen in the V-Ihitanan case. Other times the killer seeks out victims that fit into a broad category. In 1989, Marc Lepine entered classroom C-230 at the University of Montreal's Ecole Polytechnique armed with a Ruger Mini-14 semi-automatic rifle and 100 rounds of ammunition (Foreman, 1992, pp. 141-159). Telling the students, "I want the women" (Doerner and Graff, 1989, p. 30), he ordered the males out of the room. Just before opening fire on the remaining female students, Lepine shouted, "You're all a bunch of feminists, and I hate feminists" (Came, Burke, Ferzoco, O'Farrell, Wallace, 1989, p. 14). He continued his rampage throughout the building before committing suicide. As a result of Lepine's attack, 14 women died. Note of interest - Lepine was rejected from entering the military because he was, in their view, antisocial. (Foreman, 1992, pp. 141-159).

As for the motivation of the Pseudocommando, it is not always clear, and sometimes, as in the cases of Purdy and Whitman, it is a complete mystery. In other cases, such as the Lepine case, Holmes, et al. (1992, p. 59) surmise that the killer was calling attention to an issue he felt was important. Marc Lepine felt women were overstepping their bounds and were taking away

opportunities from men (Foreman, 1992, pp. 141-159). He applied to, but was never accepted<sup>20</sup> into the Ecole Polytechnique where the killings took occurred.

Holmes, et al. (1992, p. 59) hypothesize that another motivating factor is the anticipated fame that the killer would receive following a mass murder. When Robert Smith, who killed five women in a Mesa, Arizona beauty salon in 1966, was asked by police officers why he did it, he replied, "I wanted to make a name for myself. I wanted people to know who I was" (Foreman, 1992, p 60).

### **Disgruntled Employee-type Mass Murderer**

#### **Case Example: Joseph Wesbecker**

On September 21, 1989, Joseph Wesbecker walked into his former place of employment armed with an AK-47 and a 9mm pistol, and shot 20 former co-workers, killing seven, before committing suicide. Wesbecker had a well-documented history of mental health problems and previous suicide attempts, and had been placed on long-term mental disability leave from work prior to the incident. Doctors said that Wesbecker was a manic-depressive who had been taking medication for his condition. His medication had been changed the day before the shooting took place ("Another AK-47", 1989, p. 27) (Baker and Murr, 1989, p. 22).

The Disgruntled Employee category encompasses those workers who have been dismissed, placed on medical or disability leave or disciplined by their employer, and then return to their former workplace, seeking revenge. As revenge is the typical motivator, the perceived gains are psychological. Additionally, as in Wesbecker's case, many Disgruntled Employees possess vast

degrees of mental illness, and may actually be undergoing treatment or taking medication at the <sup>21</sup>  
time of the incident.

They also share some of the characteristics of the Pseudocommandos those of paranoid personality traits and deliberate, long-range planning. Co-workers said that Wesbecker had talked about getting revenge a year before he actually carried it out. One co-worker said, "He's paranoid, and he thought everyone was after him" ("Another AK-47", 1989, p. 27).

Victim selection is definitely a factor. The Disgruntled Employee normally targets those individuals whom the killer perceives as having done him an injustice. However, victims other than the intended targets frequently appear on the list of casualties. This may be due to the killer's sense of frustration in not being able to find particular targets, and consequently unleashing that frustration on targets of opportunity instead.

Victim-Killer relationship is also a factor. 'Me victims are known to the killer, and the relationships may be employer-employee, supervisor-employee, employee-employee.

### **Set-and-Run Killer-type Mass Murderers**

#### **Case Example: Jack Graham**

On November 1, 1955, Jack Graham saw his mother off at the airport in Denver, Colorado. Prior to his mother boarding the plane, Graham obtained \$86,500.00 worth of insurance policies on her. Eleven minutes after takeoff, United Flight 629 exploded in mid-air, killing all 44 people aboard, including Jack Graham's mother. Ten days later, taken into the custody by the FBI, Jack Graham confessed to being the one responsible for the bombing. Although the insurance money obviously played a role in Jack Graham's actions, it became known to investigators that Jack

wanted to get back at his mother for wanting to leave him, while at the same time, he wanted to<sup>22</sup>  
free himself from the dependence he had on her (Blashfield, 1990, pp. 121-123).

Of all the categories of mass murderers, the set-and-run killers are probably the easiest to  
rationale and understand. Prone to violence, they often display antisocial personality traits.

Their

motivations run from money or revenge, or both as in the Graham case, to self-preservation. On  
February 14, 1983, Willie Mack and Benjamin Ng robbed the patrons of the Wah Mee Club, a  
private gambling club frequented by Chinese, located in Seattle's Chinatown area. In order to  
ensure there would be no witnesses, all 13 people present were tied up, forced to lie on the floor  
and were shot in the head (Levin and Fox, 1985, p. 15). Getting away and staying alive are key  
components of the Set-and-Run killer character, setting him apart from most other types of mass  
murderers.

Anticipated gains, victim selection, and victim-killer relationship are all dependent upon the  
killer's motivation. Since the killer will avoid being apprehended, analysis of these factors will  
be crucial to the investigation and bringing the killer to justice (Holmes, et al., 1992, pp. 59-60).

### **Conclusion**

Many aspects of mass murder, and the individual's who perpetrate these acts, remain a mystery.  
The exploration and understanding of the human mind are still in their infancy stages, and much  
remains to be discovered. Perhaps we should follow Truman Capote's suggestion concerning  
mass murderers - "Such people, whom we do not begin to understand and therefore cannot  
pretend to 'treat,' should be confined in humane circumstances in a very secure place, and  
observed every day of their lives" (Levin, et al., 1985, P. ix).

Mass murders are shocking in concept, and leave one groping for an explanation - one that often is not often found. Father Hartz, who sermonized Marilyn Dreesman, who, along with five other members of the Dreesman family, was killed by another family member, may have summed up mass murder best. This kind of tragedy crashes into our world without warning, a cruel, uninvited guest. We can neither anticipate it before the fact, nor understand it after the fact" (Rowan, 1991, p. 12).

The usefulness of categorizing mass murderers is twofold. First, it may be possible to identify individuals who demonstrate a strong potential for violence, specifically mass murder, using the various indicators and characteristics discussed within each of the five categories. In several of the cases outlined in this paper, warning signs were present prior to the actual murders, but were mostly ignored or dismissed. The ability to recognize these pre-indicators, link them to possible acts of violence, and take preventive steps, greatly increases the chances of avoiding a tragedy.

Secondly, the characteristics of each type of mass murderer can be of extreme utility to the investigator. The ability to place the perpetrator into a certain category could provide crucial information, insight, and direction in otherwise enigmatic investigations.

## **Discussion**

It is evident that the media's coverage of mass murders is extremely superficial, lacking in analysis and accuracy. The media are quick to dismiss the mass murderer as a "nut" or "lunatic", delving no further into his motivations than those that are readily apparent.

Another trend is to bypass any meaningful analysis, and proceed straight to identifying a scapegoat, typically the mental health care profession. Time magazine is also especially fond of

blaming mass murders on the availability of various types of firearms, and what are in their opinion "lax gun control laws". Almost every one of their articles covering a mass murder incident blames one or both of these as reasons for the occurrence of mass murder. This, in my opinion draws attention from the core aspects, and promotes ignorance regarding the issue.

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