"I Will Punish Everyone": Themes of Masculinity, Race, and Privilege in the Writings of Mass Shooters

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“I Will Punish Everyone”: Themes of Masculinity, Race, and Privilege in the Writings of Mass Shooters

by

Shafeeq Rashid

Under the direction of Eric R. Wright, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

Psychologists, criminologists, media scholars, and other academics have for decades struggled to explain why spree/mass shootings occur. However, a surface level glance at the perpetrators of these events shows one common feature. Most of these incidents are perpetrated by heterosexual white men. I hypothesize that these men are motivated to commit these acts as a byproduct of performing masculinity. I performed a content analysis of various media from 16 spree shooters utilizing Peter Langman’s School Shooter Typology. Analysis found that the School Shooter Typology did not effectively describe the motivations and features of most shooters. By applying an intersectional lens that accounts for masculine identity and performance, I found more insight into the motivations of these shooters. Through my analysis, I developed a theory that helps explain how ostensibly privileged men might also be marginalized due to the constrains from patriarchal demands for masculine performance.

INDEX WORDS: Masculinity, Intersectionality, Placebo Marginality
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PREFACE

To many millennials, the Columbine Massacre was a world-defining event, probably the most significant one of their youth until the events of 9-11. On that day in 1998, schools were canceled and evacuated across the country. Grief counselors and other support systems were activated nationwide, and a people began discussing how and why this event occurred. These discussions often blamed the music the kids listened to and the video games they played. There were other causes identified such as bullying, parental neglect, and failures of social systems. There were lamentations that the perpetrators were good kids who were just troubled. There were even conspiracy theories and scrutiny about the true motives of the perpetrators and their connections to demonic cults. At the end of the Columbine Massacre’s run in the news, little was learned or understood, and more importantly, no one figured out how to prevent it in the future.1 Nearly 20 years later when Nikolas Cruz entered a Florida high school and killed 14 people, the response was mostly the same. There were still discussions about video games, music, and violent media. There was still a lot of blame for parents and social systems. There was still empathy for the perpetrator and sympathy for the victims. However, what is still absent from the national dialogue about these dramatic events is the obvious commonality that the perpetrators of these shootings are almost always cis-gendered, heterosexual, white, males.

This commonality is mentioned in many reports and studies about the spree shooting phenomena. However, it is often only shallowly engaged, or engaged as a correlative or confounding factor in these events. Few, if any scholars have sought to explicitly look at how race, gender, and sexuality may interact to have shaped these events.

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1 There was another shooting in Georgia 1 month later.
This gap in knowledge serves as the basis of this thesis’ research question. How do masculinity, race, and privilege inform the mindset and motivations of spree shooters? Is there a yet unnoticed insight into these events that can help us better understand why they occur? To examine this, I have collected a variety of writings, diaries, video journals and other materials created by the shooters. I utilized a qualitative content analysis process to explore how these shooters’ unique understandings and experiences of race, gender, and sex, affected their motivation for committing their crime. I hope to see how these motivations connect to issues such as masculine identity, toxic masculinity, racial identity, power fantasies, mental health, misogyny, and other issues.

Examining these elements of masculinity are important for a variety of reasons. However, this paper contributes to the study of masculinity as gender performance. While much is understood about masculinity, men’s sexuality, and men’s health, there still exists a sense that the progression of masculinity studies is stagnant (Wailing 2019). This represents a significant gap in gender studies and social theory. By consistently situating whiteness and masculinity as concepts to be measured against, but not as the focus of the study, the scholarship on topics of race and gender are missing important pieces of information. Furthermore, the current political and social climate needs a more nuanced and informed examination of masculinity, especially the population of white males who comprise growing communities of modern hate movements such as Gamergate, the Alt Right, Qanon, and the resurgence of Neo-Nazi and other white nationalist organizations. While it is convenient to simply label these groups as angry white male mobs, it is important to engage with this population more effectively if one hopes to address the problems these groups and ideologies present.
This paper will focus on analyzing how these men view their masculine identities, as well as touching on the mental health and behaviors of the shooters being analyzed. The foundational theory will be a cross section of gender studies and mental health. Analysis through these theoretical lenses has led to the development of a theory that helps explain this phenomenon.
1 PLACEBO MARGINALIZATION

The theory pulled from this paper’s analysis is grounded in gender theories, identity theories, intersectionality, and other gender discourses filtered through the principles of hegemonic masculinity, aggrieved entitlement, and masculine threat coined “Placebo-marginal” masculinity (PMM). The term “Placebo Marginal” is a play on the term marginalized masculinity theorized by Connell and Messerchmidt and their theories of Hegemonic Masculinity (Connell and Messerchmidt 2005). Marginalized masculinities are masculinities automatically marginalized by their distance from the hegemonic ideal. Traditionally, masculinity is marginalized because it is queer, gender non-conforming, non-white, non-able bodied, etc. However, this paper will argue that when one considers the constraints and demands of patriarchy upon men, that even cis-hetero-white men can experience something akin to marginalization, especially if one fully considers their intersections of identity and privilege. Furthermore, this unique experience of marginalization is a key contributor to these individuals’ capacity for becoming radicalized by extremist ideologies, and thus increasing the possibility for violence. The use of the word placebo here is to play on the concept of “feeling” the effects of something even if it is not truly there. The goal is to recognize the unique space that school shooters often have as both the prototypical image of patriarchy and masculinity, while at the same time existing, or at least believing they exist, in a space of marginalization by the same systems that privilege them.

This theory serves as this paper’s main contribution to the ongoing discourse on masculinities. It does this by presenting a theoretical process through which we can better understand the draw of radical thought for certain men but not others. This can help us better identify factors in how “normal” men, especially middle school aged and slightly older boys,
develop intensely misogynistic, racist, xenophobic ideologies. Secondly, it shifts and challenges the discourse to better problematize masculinity and its constraints in a patriarchal system.
2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Quality research on spree shootings is emerging but still limited. However, Peter Langman’s school shooter typology offers a useful framework for building an analysis of school shooters (Langman 2008). The literature review will begin with the analysis of his work along with the theoretical construct that he uses to analyze and categorize shooters.

Beyond Langman, there are few scholars of note with extensive work on the topic. However, there are many theories and concepts that other scholars have connected to this phenomenon, and similarly scoped studies have begun to emerge within the last few years. Steward Chang analyzed racial underpinnings of hegemonic masculinity and spree shootings, looking to redefine shootings with explicitly masculine motivations as acts of terrorism and examining how race affects this distinction. (2018) Numerous scholars have looked explicitly at Elliot Rodger2 and his writings in order to assess the connection between his shootings and masculinity/masculine violence. (Witt 2020, Scaptura and Boyle 2020, Vito 2018) Bridges and Tober recognized spree shootings as a manifestation of masculine performance and gendered violence (Bridges and Tober 2018). Pascoe effectively theorized the compulsive nature of masculinity and the way in which it is maintained and policed by other boys and girls.

These shootings also are greatly related to gendered bullying and social marginalization stemming from masculine performance (Pascoe 2012). In her book “The Bully Society” Jessie Klein describes how bullying is intertwined with American culture, and that the culture of bullying directly correlates to school shootings (Klein 2012). C.J Pascoe’s “Dude You’re a Fag”

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2 Rodger is the perpetrator of the Isla Vista shooting and a founding figure in the “incel” movement (See footnote 7). Although the shooting itself does not stand out much compared to similar shootings, Rodger’s “manifesto” has become canonized among right wing and misogynistic communities online. More details on Rodger and other shooters can be found in Table 3.
illustrates similar points about the nature of bullying and in-group/out-group dynamics. Michael Kimmel’s “Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era” also illustrates how the combination of social ostracism, privilege, and masculinity leads men to extreme behavior (Kimmel 2013).

The literature review will further explain many of these elements. There will also be some discussion of intersectionality, with a significant focus on bell hooks’ work on masculinity and race.

2.1 Peter Langman and the School Shooter Psychology and Typology

Peter Langman has written multiple books, several papers, and curates a website dedicated to the study of the topic of school shooters. His “School Shooter Typology” provides a theoretical construct that explicitly analyzes school shooter motivation and psychology. Langman breaks down shooters to three major categories: Traumatized shooters whose motivations come from explicit childhood trauma in the home; Psychopathic shooters whose motivations are sadistic, sociopathic and narcissistic; and Psychotic shooters who have evidence of or explicit diagnoses of significant mental illnesses that indicate a break from reality. While scholars and criminologists have yet to decide on a standard “profile” for school shooters, Langman purports that this Typology provides a way to understand some of the similarities between certain shooters (Langman 2009). The common image of shooters as socially inept, bullied, loners, does hold some measure of validity, but research in the area of shooter profiles shows that this only works to describe a fraction of shooters (Ferguson et al 2011). For example, Langman points out “impression management” which allows some shooters to be relatively

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3 Impression management is the effort that an individual puts in to control or influence other’s perception of themselves. Sociopaths/psychopaths can be highly skilled in impression management which allows for their pathology to go undetected.
effective at social engagement (Langman 2009). Thus, Langman’s Typology is effective at cutting through stereotypes and grounding the analysis.

Langman has been cited in studies and research on the topic of profiling shooters (Madfis and Levin 2013, Olfie 2015, Neuman et al 2015), however, Langman points out that every shooter does not perfectly fit into one of his categories. Further, his framework is limited for the purposes of this study in several ways. Firstly, Langman’s typology focuses explicitly on “school” shooters. Langman’s work greatly focuses on the locale of schools due their unique and intervening social structures, although many of the shooters he analyzes are only tenuously connected to the schools where they committed their shootings.4 This unfortunately leaves out many notable shooting events such as the Orlando night club shooting5, or the Las Vegas concert shooting6. Events like these are important to this study, thus necessitating the creation of a 4th category in the framework. He calls these “aberrant adult” shooters, which indicates that these events do not follow much of the framework in his Typology. This is an issue that will be discussed more in the results and discussion section. Furthermore Langman is firstly a psychologist and thus much of his work lacks a sociological lens to engage with. That said, due to its clearly defined categories and limited scope, this typology is useful for organizing the shooters for the purposes of this study. By breaking the shooters down to categories already established via previous research, it sets a foundation for the examination of old data with new angles.

4 For example, Elliot Rodger did not attend the school he attacked, thus limiting the value of studying community and group dynamics at the school.
5 The 2016 Orlando Night Club shooting. Omar Mateen killed 49 people in an Orlando nightclub. The event is notable due to the victims seemingly being targeted for being gay.
6 The 2017 Las Vegas Concert Shooting. Stephen Paddock opened fire from a hotel window into a crowd with a high caliber rifle killing 59 and injuring over 800 people.
2.2 Masculinity-

Masculinities as a topic of sociological inquiry is in a difficult space. Compared to other gender topics, it has generally been neglected in the discourse. Beyond that, one of the most prominent voices in the study of masculinities, Michael Kimmel, has himself been disgraced for perpetrating some of the same behavior he and other gender scholars have problematized in their work. Yet Kimmel existed as one of the most active voices in the discourse for 20 plus years to the point of founding the *Journal of Men and Masculinities*. Over the same period, feminist gender studies have constantly seen turnover and shifts in ideology and thought over the previous decades. Feminist scholars have come from various standpoints and disciplines which has enriched the literature and discourse for over half a century. The same cannot be stated regarding Masculinities. While plenty of work is and has been done on masculinity, it lags behind its counterparts in feminist and LGBTQ studies. This begs the question of how the discourse (or lack thereof) on masculinity in a way reinforces the same structural inequality that so much sociological research speaks on dismantling by refusing to engage in the discussion of masculinity and patriarchy. That said, Kimmel’s work and the work of many of his students offers a lot of foundational thought on masculinity that will be utilized in this paper.

C.J Pascoe provides useful conceptual groundwork in examining why the study of men as gendered subjects is important.

…academic inquiry has often taken men for granted as non-gendered subjects…Men’s lives, however, are just as organized by gender as women’s. We too often fail to appreciate this. Why? Because power renders certain identities invisible to those on the receiving end of that privilege; meanwhile, what makes people marginal is all too apparent to the marginalized… It is important to investigate masculinity to understand the ways in which politics, the state, institutions of school and work, religion, family, and nationality are infused with, and themselves shape, masculinity (Pascoe 2016).
Building on the foundation of previous works on masculinity by Connell and Messerschmitt (2005), Kimmel (2013), and hooks (2004, 2010), Pascoe helps isolate a core tenant of this paper, which is that in order to effectively problematize issues of gender and racial inequality, research must more closely examine masculinity.

Kimmel aside, many prominent scholars in masculinity have developed nuanced and useful examinations of masculinity as a gendered performance. Pascoe and Bridges examined “new trends” in masculinity that purport to distance masculinity from hegemonic norms and found that these trends were being produced by predominantly heterosexual white men and still reified patriarchal norms and systems of inequality, but in different ways (Pascoe and Bridges 2016). Other masculinities scholars have examined the role of emphasized femininity in the reproduction of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity (Schippers 2007). Matthew Gutmann examined the construction of men’s sexual health and performance using anthropological, sociological, and biological lenses (Gutmann 2016). Bethany Coston presents work important to this paper by further theorizing masculinity through an intersectional lens and calling into question the binary way in which we often conceptualize the gendered privilege of men (Coston and Kimmel 2012). Overall, despite its underdeveloped state, the study of masculinity is producing important work and growing.

This paper seeks to contribute to this progress by advancing the concepts presented by the current voices in the discourse and applying them to the phenomenon of school shooters. Several themes in masculinities connect with the topic on several levels. Thus, for the sake of clarity this portion of the review of literature is broken up into sections.
2.2.1 **Hegemony and Policing Masculinity**

The performance of masculinity, and the policing of said performance is a key factor in understanding how these shooting acts are a form of gendered violence. These shootings are acts of masculine dramaturgy, put on display as tangible proof of the shooter’s masculinity. Thus, it is important to understand how masculinity is constructed and why/how it is policed.

The contributions to the field from Kimmel, Pascoe, Bridges, Coston, etc. are all built upon (and sometimes working directly with) the work on masculinity by R.W. Connell and James Messerschmitt. Connell and Messerschmitt’s 2005 essay on masculine hegemony is foundational to the modern study of masculinity. Connell and Messerschmidt effectively theorize the process through which masculinity has come to a position of preeminence and dominance, while also managing to repeatedly install and enforce patriarchal systems in various cultures around the world across time. They posit that systems of patriarchy are codependent on continuous and simultaneous discourses of gender binary reification, and male/female = dominant/subordinate ideologies (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). All of these factors contribute to patriarchy and depend on patriarchal systems to uphold the order.

Maintaining this order is integral to the reproduction of patriarchy, as such men are rigidly policed to maintain their adherence to these patriarchal norms. Breaking away from these norms will result in various levels and varieties of social sanction. These sanctions often include bullying, social ostracism, physical violence, and sexual violence. The sanctions influence norms and behavior to the point where direct policing is almost unneeded. Harkening to Foucault’s theoretical concept of “The Panopticon,” men adhering and believing in the normalcy of hegemonic masculinity begin to police themselves as their ideals are diffused through expectations for their gender performance (Foucault 1975:101). C.J Pascoe touches on this in her
development of what she calls the “fag discourse” in which high school boys use the slurring 
effect and marginalizing nature of the word “fag” as a tool to define, test, and display their 
normative masculine ideologies. She speaks to how participation in the fag discourse is a 
requirement in order to ensure avoidance of sanction (Pascoe 2012). Elements of bullying and 
school shootings often come back to the dynamics of bullies and the bullied performing, 
denying, and reclaiming hegemonically masculine positions through a discourse of abuse, 
dominance, and social sanction built around binary gender performance (Klein 2012).

It is important to recognize that hegemonic masculinity establishes hierarchies of 
behavior and thought for all men to aspire to, or at a minimum be held accountable for, 
regardless of a man’s ability to perform. Janet Saltzman-Chafetz (1974) breaks down this 
hierarchy into stereotypical traits that include tropes such as: aggression, sexual experience, 
virility, independence, individuality, intellectualism, objectivity, etc. Connell would also add 
rejection of all things feminine and the acceptance of casual to aggressive homophobia to this list 
(Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The image of the ideal man will be a paragon of the 
aforementioned traits from Saltzman-Chafetz. This is the standard that men are held up to and 
conversely disciplined to adhere to. What is considered “masculine” can change depending on 
the culture, space, or time period. For example, men wearing high heeled shoes was considered 
fashionable in mid-century Europe, whereas now heels are considered exclusively feminine 
clothing. However, the concept of masculine hegemony exists regardless of what shape or form 
masculinity takes on. As long as patriarchy is in place, masculinity will wield power in that 
space (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Further, despite the reality that all men are subject to 
being measured against the hegemonic ideal, the amount of men that attain the hegemonic ideal 
is small (Connell 20051:79). Still this complicity in pursuing the hegemonic ideal yields what
Connell calls the “patriarchal dividend” which is similar to male privilege. The patriarchal dividend is aptly named as it presents itself as a payoff provided to men for their purposeful or involuntary investment into patriarchal systems.

Within the context of masculine hegemony, one can recognize ways in which patriarchy works against women and marginalized men. However, the literature seems to fall a bit short when seeking to understand ways in which seemingly privileged men (heterosexual, able-bodied, white men that make up the vast majority of spree shooters) suffer from the constraints of masculine hegemony due to their inability to perform masculinity “effectively.” Bethany Coston and Michael Kimmel made early steps into the concept of intersections within privilege among men, but they still illustrated their points by identifying traditionally marginalized male groups such as those with disability or from low socio-economic backgrounds (Coston and Kimmel 2012). I will provide further explanation on this gap later in the literature review when discussing intersectionality.

Of further note is the concept of emphasized and pariah femininities, which illustrate a similar dynamic within patriarchal frameworks as boys and men privileged or marginalized by their masculine performance. Connell describes emphasized femininity as female compliance and support of patriarchy through promotion of certain gendered roles and standards. Schippers expounds on this by emphasizing the need for “relationality” as in, what elements of the gender dynamic in play fit or do not fit with typical hegemonic processes. Most significantly is that she speaks to the concept of “pariah” femininities, which describes feminine attributes or roles that are still intrinsic to patriarchal modalities but do not directly contribute to patriarchy in the same way that emphasized femininities might (2007). In a way they exist for the purpose of delineating “good” gender performance from “bad” gender performance. This is useful for two
reasons. First, pariah femininities greatly encapsulate concepts attached to Placebo Marginality. The core idea is that pariah femininities resist emphasized femininity and thus patriarchy by rejecting the proposed alignment of femininity to patriarchy. However, these coordinates of resistance still fit well into patriarchal structure due to the aforementioned role of delineating good from bad and identifying winners and losers under the system. This same paradox exists in non-hegemonic or non-normative masculine performance. A non-normative masculine performance might still fit into patriarchal modalities but will not be privileged in the same way that hegemonic masculinities might, but still helps contribute to the whole of the system (Connell and Messerchmidt 2005). The concept of a “pariah masculinity” that is still privileged, can fit well into the experiences of many school shooters. Although shooters as a whole generally seek to access their normatively masculine power, many shooters construe their acts as acts of resistance against normative understandings of masculinity. Secondly, pariah femininities, along with emphasized femininities are inherent to the ideologies of several spree shooters and incel’s, specifically those who espouse a lot of grief and animosity toward women (Witt 2020). Both performances contribute to the policing effect that boys experience. Pariah and emphasized femininities serve as contrasts to each other, but since they still define borders between appropriate and inappropriate masculine performance, they are two sides of the same coin to many school shooters who harbor misogynistic ideologies. To them emphasized femininities exist as rewards they have been unfairly denied, and the pariah femininities present as transgressions of the patriarchal standards that these boys believe in, making them easy targets for animosity.

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7 Incel- Stands for “Involuntarily Celibate”. This is a loosely defined movement/community/identity of young and predominantly white men in online spaces. The movement is known for its virulent misogyny and advocacy of violence towards women as a response to what they see as unfair exclusion from opportunities from intimate partnerships.
2.2.2 *Masculinity as a paradox of privilege and victimization*

One key finding from the literature is the lack of effective protective factors or help seeking behavior in men looking to adhere to the masculine ideal. Men are often faced with the decision to either seek out health promoting activities and behaviors or to attempt to perform masculinity at the proscribed level (thus avoiding health promoting behaviors). Research indicates that men will reject higher health outcomes before risking sanction for not conforming to their gender stereotypes (Griffith et al 2016). Various scholars have explained that the trappings of performing masculinity can exclude men from various protective factors and exacerbate risk behaviors and lower health outcomes (Jampel 2019 Addis and Hoffman 2017). Unfortunately, the literature does not spend a lot of time processing these findings as factors of patriarchy’s effect on men.

When looking at men’s health statistics, there is a clear gendered element to it. Men die younger, are more likely to commit suicide, involve themselves in more risky behaviors, are less likely to seek help, and generally have lower health outcomes than women in many significant health outcome categories (Courtenay 2000, Berger et al 2005, Johnson et al 2014, Jampel et al 2019). Despite these glaringly significant differences in health along gender lines, the assessment of why these health outcomes are so much greater has not fully explored how gender identity may work as a factor (Courtenay 2000).

The easy conclusion to draw is that (in the United States) masculine performance can lead to hazardous and destructive behavior in men. However, we have so normalized our conceptualization of masculinity, that when we see these negative behavioral health outcomes of men, we don’t attribute them to performing masculinity the same way we might consider how race, systemic inequality, or socio-economic status might factor into behavior.
Further, men are more likely to be exposed to violence (Begle et al. 2011), and more likely to be victims of and commit homicide (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2013). Yet scholars do not contextualize violence, or being victim of violence as a gendered act unless it happens across gender (Whitehead 2005). Connell points out that violence is a tool often used by men to sustain dominance against women. She also goes on to point out how men use violence against other men in the form of exerting dominance upon a subordinate masculinity (e.g. violence against gay men) or in terms of establishing boundaries between marginalized and subordinate masculinities. However, she stops short to further conceptualize and tease out the reality of “victimhood” for male victims of masculine violence (Connell 2005: 78). These individuals exist in limbo as members of the dominant masculinity on paper and recipients of the patriarchal dividend, yet they still regularly fear the same violence and subordination as actual subordinate masculinities. In fact, other scholars report that these men are sometimes coded as gay in order to provide better separation from the hegemonically ideal masculinities (Collins 2004: 236, Klein 2012: 82). The purpose of this is to better define roles and rules of dominant and subordinate masculinities, even when the dominant and subordinate groups are technically equal on paper.

This paradox is not just a paradox on the study of masculinity as it pertains to violence or health outcomes, it is also a paradox of masculine performance. Just as all men are privileged by patriarchy, all men also have the capacity to be victimized by the constraints of patriarchy’s requirements of men. bell hooks explains this paradox in her writings on masculinity until we can collectively acknowledge the damage patriarchy causes and the suffering it creates, we cannot address male pain. We cannot demand for men the right to be whole, to be givers and sustainers of life. Obviously some patriarchal men are reliable and even benevolent caretakers.
and providers, but still they are imprisoned by a system that undermines their mental health (hooks 2010).

Men are both privileged by patriarchal norms and victimized by them. At the same time, they lack either the will, understanding, or ability to access needed protective factors to address their victimization. As detailed in the next section, many of these men will resort to negative coping mechanisms and externalizing behavioral issues instead of viable support. This paradox is more consistently recognized in the literature but is still in need of further investigation.

2.2.3 Masculine Reclamation and Aggrieved Entitlement

One of the more sobering findings in the literature review is partially illustrated in the following passage:

There are two groups of men for which there are no female equivalents: males who are "reproductively disenfranchised" (excluded by the opposite sex from reproduction) at the low end of the distribution, and males who win a "reproductive jackpot" at the high end (produce many offspring… at the low end, there are indeed some men with whom no woman would want to risk a pregnancy.) Some men are just so unappealing (unattractive, stupid, poor, in poor health, and apparently with lousy genes) that no woman would want to have sex with him… Many spree killers fall into this category, or, they so perceive themselves. Spree killings often follow a personal rejection by a female(s), and, the perception that more rejections are likely to follow perhaps due to social ostracism or loss of social status (Mills 2012).

What is being alluded to here is that the lack of validation and attention from women drives, in a certain population of men, a measure of hatred and spite. Michael Kimmel refers to this feeling of spite as “aggrieved entitlement” and this concept serves as a foundational theory
that ties the behavior of spree shooters to masculine performance. The theory states that men, especially traditionally privileged men, feel degradation and embarrassment when they are not able to access their privilege to the degree they believe they deserve. Essentially, they feel like their patriarchal dividend is too small. To them, the denial of this dividend in any way is a grievous insult, rightfully avenged with violence (Kimmel 2013:74). Placebo Marginality theorizes that for some of these men who exist at a particular intersection of privileged and marginal, their intense anguish is furthered by the fact that they are denied their expected dividend, and are also relegated to subordinate masculine status despite not having any of the traditional markers of a subordinate masculinity. Thus, these men feel the need to reclaim what has been denied to them.

In recent years more scholars have begun to investigate the association between aggrieved entitlement, masculinity, and spree shootings. The idea of violence against women as a form of masculine reclamation is not new and has been substantiated in research on intimate partner violence (Anderson and Umberson 2011). Feelings of ownership, emasculation, and control are often cited as justification for male spousal violence against women (Connell 2005:83). The literature suggests that these men feel wronged by their inability to access their male privilege and their limitations in power over femininities (Emphasized or Pariah), which in turn primes them for ostracism and bullying. This is seen in the data as well. Elliot Rodger, who killed six people near the University of California, explicitly stated that he was targeting women who ignored him and men whom he felt were more capable of accessing women. A close analysis of Rodger’s writings revealed that Rodger made multiple attempts to reconstruct an effective masculine identity and upon failure resorted to violence (Vito Admire and Hughes
Seung Hui Cho voiced various experiences of anger and torment derived from his rejection by women.

Aggrieved entitlement offers a framework to understand the feelings of anger and spite that build up in men who seemingly should be “enjoying” privilege under patriarchy. However, the concept does not fully flesh out the process that takes a young man from experiencing aggrieved entitlement to the point where they commit mass murder. Further, it operates broadly as a concept for all men, but does not seek to drill down on which men are predisposed to experience aggrieved entitlement that turns into radical thought and murderous intent.

2.3 Bullying

Multiple scholars have pointed out that the social ostracism often experienced in middle and high school settings has a hand in grooming future school shooters. One common theme from the literature is how masculine performance informs bullying victimization. Boys who struggle or are apart from the expected performance of masculinity find themselves subject to various levels of bullying from other males as well as females (Klein 2012: 45). Furthermore, the aforementioned weaknesses in men’s ability to engage with protective mental health behaviors (Jampel 2019 Addis and Hoffman 2017), might confound experiences and support needs from male bullying victims. Klein further points out that many schools are designed with inherent competitiveness that directly contributes to normalizing bullying and that a capitalist society requires a bully society to exist:

According to Klien on page 156 (2012):

The rise in school shootings roughly coincides with the Reagan administrations restructuring of the American economic, political, and cultural landscape…. Increasingly, success was defined in terms of
power, economic attainment, and social status—these barometers increasingly used, at the high school level, to assess masculinity.

Being a victim of bullying is a recurring theme in the stories of various spree shooters. Discussions of the “Trench Coat Mafia” helped redefine the national discourse on bullying after the Columbine High School Massacre of 1999 (Mears Moon and Theilo 2017). Of the popularly accepted explanations to these shooting events, bullying and bullying culture have the most saliency across the shooting phenomenon.

That said, bullying cannot completely explain the reasoning behind these phenomena (Mears Moon and Theilo 2017) and many individuals who commit spree and school shootings do not seem to have been victims of bullying. Most shooters are cis gendered, heterosexual, white males. However, the most consistent victims of bullying are the most socially marginal. LGBTQ individuals (Espelage and Holt 2001), economically disadvantaged, and racial minorities are more typical targets for bullying. Yet these populations rarely commit the act of a spree shooting.

2.4 Intersectionality: toxic, racialized, and marginal masculinities

Bell hooks is arguably the most prolific and significant scholar in the realm of intersectional feminist theory. Moreover, her willingness and skill in extending the lens of intersectional theory to cis-het men makes her a required factor in this study due to her ability to problematize masculinity from a perspective that doesn’t automatically situate it as an inherent and static problem. She illustrates the following in her book *The Will to Change*.

Patriarchy as a system has denied males access to full emotional well-being, which is not the same as feeling rewarded, successful, or powerful because of one’s capacity to assert control over others. To truly address male pain and male crisis we must as a nation be willing to expose the harsh reality that patriarchy
has damaged men in the past and continues to damage them in the present. If patriarchy were truly
rewarding to men, the violence and addiction in family life that is so all-pervasive would not exist. This
violence was not created by feminism. If patriarchy were rewarding, the overwhelming dissatisfaction most
men feel in their work lives—a dissatisfaction extensively documented in the work of Studs Terek and
echoed in Faludi’s treatise—would not exist (hooks 2004:31).

Here she rejects the idea that the patriarchal dividend is enough of an examination of
complicit masculine performance. Although hooks does not explicitly state that she is
employing an intersectional lens, her willingness to assess men in this way buoys later work of
other masculinities scholars such as C.J Pascoe, B.M Colston and Michael Kimmel, in that they
seek to recognize that masculinity and men’s relationship to patriarchy should not be
oversimplified. Intersections such as sexuality, class, or disability all affect the way in which
these men experience the world regardless of their privileged identity. hooks indicates however
that these other intersections are too often ignored by other gender scholars, and that an
intersectional lens is needed.

Intersectional theory, first created by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1990), sought to find
a better lens to recognize how overlapping identities can interact with and contribute to
intersecting systems of oppression. Other black feminist scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins
and Audre Lorde as well as writers such as Alice Walker and Zora Neal Hurston helped form the
modern definition of intersectionality.

Intersectionality is one of the most significant theoretical frameworks in modern feminist,
queer, and race scholarship. Despite this popular status, intersectionality has not found a
champion in masculinities studies or men’s health. Michael Kimmel’s “Angry White Men:
American Masculinity at the End of an Era” serves as a strong supporting voice for much of this
paper. Kimmel explicitly talks about race, gender, and class as “categories,” but never manages to go the extra step in evoking intersectional theories (2014, 74). Various studies assessing and evaluating risk behavior differences between males and females consistently come to the same conclusion, that men exhibit a greater propensity for risk behaviors related to violence, substance abuse, and sexual risk taking (Byrnes, Miller, and Schaffer 1999, Connell 2005). Although there are many studies and theories, such as Masculine Hegemony, that effectively explain the phenomena of violence and risk taking as a product of masculine identity performance, ironically none effectively problematize the issues of masculinity with men as the center of a feminist framework. Intersectional scholars, however, have long since arrived at this conclusion (Collins 2004:240).

Further, intersectionality evokes usage of standpoint epistemologies to assess and make sense of intersecting identities, lived experiences and oppressions. These concepts were originally brought into the academic discourse by Black Feminist scholars to analyze the unique experiences of black women as individuals with intersecting oppressions as racial minorities and as women. Collins speaks of the utilization of this concept as a way for members of an oppressed group to form a collective identity.

Historically, racial segregation in housing, education, and employment fostered group commonalities that encouraged the formation of a group-based, collective standpoint. For example, the heavy concentration of U.S. Black women in domestic work coupled with racial segregation in housing and schools meant that U.S. Black women had common organizational networks that enabled them to share experiences and construct a collective body of wisdom. This collective wisdom on how to survive as U.S. Black women constituted a distinctive Black women’s standpoint… (Collins 2004:24)
However, Collins goes on to explicitly state that despite common factors and experiences as an oppressed group, there is no homogenous black woman’s standpoint and that there will be plenty of variances and responses to the factors and forces that affect black women.

This tenant of intersectionality is useful looking at how behavior can be explained by various forces found within an individual's identity, however it is only recently being explored as a way to explain the behavior of white spree shooters. Scholars have pointed out that as spree shootings have become more prominently seen as a white issue, the media focus has avoided racial implications and looked at the perpetrators as deviant, aberrant, or mentally ill as to not implicate whiteness as a core factor of the event (Kimmel and Mahler 2003 Mingus and Zopf 2010). This is partially evident in Langman’s Typology. However, in the previous decade it has been impossible not to recognize certain racialized patterns. As such scholars have recognized themes of race and gender are relevant to these events of mass violence and though they have not always explicitly evoked intersectionality as a framework, several studies examine these events as gendered and/or racialized events (Madfis 2014, Blake 2017, Carlson 2020). Even Langman updated his work with an look at how gender performance informs these events (Langman 2017). That said, the bulk of this work is still emerging and less than a decade old. Elliot Rodger’s shooting spree in 2014 seems to be where many scholars started to pay attention to this unique intersection, however several shooters before him did not elicit the same response.

hooks asserts that the absence of men-focused feminist work is itself a byproduct of patriarchy and that it is an ignorance of maleness and masculinity masked by anti-male rhetoric.

The lack of such writing intensifies my sense that women cannot fully talk about men because we have been so well socialized in patriarchal culture to be silenced on the topic of men…to simply label them as oppressors and dismiss them meant we never had to give voice to our gaps in understanding or talk about
maleness in complex ways. We did not have to talk about the ways our fear of men distorted our perspectives and blocked our understanding. Hating men was just another way to not take men and masculinity seriously (hooks 2004:xiii).

Here hooks alludes to an uncomfortable truth that feminist scholarship has knowingly been avoiding the topic of men. By opting out of a deeper analysis of the trappings of patriarchy on cis-het men, gender scholars have failed to effectively examine the cycles of destruction of men under patriarchy. Intersectionality can be used to isolate the ways in which men benefit from patriarchy, as well as the risks and costs that come with being the key gatekeepers and reproducers of patriarchal power. Intersectionality allows us to look at the well understood protections provided by patriarchy, but intersects them with unique risk factors of masculine gender performance. It does this by isolating the privileged identity of men and then assessing it against what harm is done to them or their peers as the price for that privileged identity.

Many of the shooters to be studied here could be considered victims of this type of harm. However, they ironically see their victimizations of bullying and social ostracism from a different lens. They see their victimization as one of denied access to things to which they feel entitled, as discussed by Kimmel.

American men are, in my view, right to be angry…. Most American men live in a system in which they were promised a lot of rewards if they played by the rules. If they were good, decent, hardworking men, if they saddled up, or, even more accurately, got into the harness themselves, they would feel the respect of their wives and their children; if they fought in America’s wars and served their country fighting fires and stopping crime, they’d have the respect of their communities. And, most important, if they were loyal to their colleagues and workmates, did an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay, then they’d also have the respect of other men (Kimmel 2013:26).
This sense of entitlement, when denied leads to the intense sense of cognitive dissonance to be discussed later in the literature review. In short, the rhetoric that surrounds the combination of privilege, whiteness, and maleness leads men to believe that they are deserving of the privileges of manhood. The full sum of the patriarchal dividend is to be paid in perpetuity. When it abruptly ends via downsizing, divorce, rejection of a girl or ostracism from a social group, humiliation is felt, and retribution is sought.

This process of seeking retribution can also be explained under an intersectional and feminist guise as an act of resistance. Though it is important to clarify that the men in question themselves are not what we typically understand as victims of structural oppression and inequality, this paper still will situate their acts of violence as acts of resistance. This is a rational stance to take for two reasons. First, the subjects explicitly express feeling victimized by their failure to access their privilege in the way that they feel that they were promised. Second, these men, and the many men like them, are arguably victimized by the white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal system, in that they are denied the ability to attain full humanity. They are denied the personal emotional range and historical knowledge that could serve as perspective and protective factors, and thus are pre-disposed to participate in actions that either destroy themselves or destroy others.

Earlier Collins talked about how black women create standpoints and subsequentially group collectives and communities that offer support, nourishment, and affirmation to black women. This concept can be seen in almost every oppressed identity. Black, Asian, feminist, LGBTQ, etc. communities situated within oppressive structures often produce vibrant counter cultures where individuals can escape to. However, the same cannot be said for cis-hetero white men. This is not to say that white counter cultures do not exist. What is meant is that the
collectives and communities that these aggrieved white men and boys escape to are often more destructive, toxic, and hateful, and more likely to produce damage. They become radicalized by this experience.

This can be seen in the consistent recruitment of socially and often economically marginal white men into white supremacist groups nationwide, as well as the persistent championing of radical icons in the words of spree shooters. The feeling of ostracization makes alternative and radical communities more appealing to boys and men lacking other venues to address their pain. Dylann Roof, the perpetrator in the South Carolina church shooting was a professed white supremacist, and Adam Lanza, the attacker in the Newtown Connecticut elementary school shooting, was a regular poster on a website called “Shockedit Beyond Belief” that was dedicated to sharing and discussing information on school shooters and mass murderers. Multiple spree shooters in the sample idolized Adolf Hitler and professed white supremacist ideals. These Alt Right, Men’s Rights, Neo-Nazi, groups present these marginal white men a sense of purpose and belonging along with coping strategies and someone to blame for their struggles. This clear mirroring of the machinations of intersectional and feminist concepts is key to examining this phenomenon. We have to examine this phenomenon from an intersectional lens, or we will arrive at the same conclusions most scholars have arrived at.

2.4.1 Intersectionality and Black Masculinities

hooks further provides insight on the trappings of patriarchy from an intersectional lens as she shifts her focus to black men, who are not immune to the spree shooting phenomenon. In fact, her words echo more loudly when situating the actions and motivations of black men who resort to spree shootings.
Long before any young black male acts violent he is born into a culture that condones violence as a means of social control, that identifies patriarchal masculinity by the will to do violence. Showing aggression is the simplest way to assert patriarchal manhood. Men of all classes know this. As a consequence, all men living in a culture of violence must demonstrate at some point in their lives that they are capable of being violent…. Perversely militant anti-racist black power advocates felt that the black male would never be respected in this society if he did not cease subjugating himself to whiteness and show his willingness to kill (hooks 2004:50).

She goes on to state “Black males today lie[sic] in a world that pays them the most attention when they are violently acting out” (hooks 2004:57). The profundity of this statement to my paper cannot be understated. Christopher Dorner who went on a shooting spree in California after feeling wronged by the criminal justice system, and Gavin Long, the perpetrator of the shooting spree targeting police officers in Texas, are both African American men who felt like they had an important message to express through their violence as well as issues and histories of rejection. The same can be said for John Allen Muhammad, Steve Stephens, Micah Johnson,8 and others. Although she speaks to the struggle of black men, the truth in this statement is impossible to disentangle from the overarching theme of violence in hegemonically masculine identity.

Further, Patricia Hill Collins shows us that black men are not immune to the combustible effects of spite and ostracism mentioned earlier in the literature review.

…women’s sexuality becomes the actual spoils of war. In this context, sexual prowess grows in importance as a marker of Black masculinity. For far too many Black men, all that seems to be left to them is access to the booty, and they can become depressed or dangerous if that access is denied (Collins 2004:151).

8 All these men are notable African American Spree Shooters. John Allen Muhammad was leader in the DC Sniper shooting spree. Steve Stevens was known as the “Facebook Killer” after he murdered a random man on a Facebook livestream, and Micah Johnson was the Dallas police shooter.
Here Collins touches on how the combination of toxic and hegemonic ideals for masculinity intersects with structural racism in black men, culminating in violence. This observation is not new; however, it has seldom been examined from the perspective of the perpetrators of the violence. Academics seldom go further than these oft retread steps.

### 2.4.2 Intersectionality and Eastern/Southeastern Asian Masculinities

Another utilization of intersectional studies also allows us a lens through which to view the unique status of South East and East Asian American masculinity in this phenomenon. Asian American men suffer from a juxtaposition against the hypersexual stereotypes of Asian American women in that they are hyposexualized and persistently seen as inferior to other forms of masculinity (Chou 2012). Intersectionality helps make sense of the distinctly unique experience of Asian American men in America of the last 200 plus years.

Unlike African Americans, Latinos, and Asians who are of Arabic and Middle Eastern descent, the dominant Asian American male stereotype is that of the hyposexual or effeminate “nerd.” In their examination of the experiences of stress on Asian American men, sociologists Alexander Lu and Y. Joel Wong constantly employ the phrase “scrawny, small penised, and hairless-bodied” to describe the consistent depiction and image of Asian American men in America (Lu and Wong 2013). However, this was not always the case. Sociologist Yen Ling Shek published an exploratory overview of Asian American male experiences that greatly assessed historical and contemporary spaces for Asian men. He begins by discussing that, historically, much like African Americans and Latinos, Asian American men were initially depicted as animalistic, brute like, and hyper masculine. This was prominent during World War II after Pearl Harbor and in previous cases as Asian immigrants saw the promotion of anti-
miscegenation laws propped up on this hyper masculine fear mongering of “The Yellow Peril” (Shek 2007).

However, at some point in time, the narrative switched from presenting Asian men as aggressive and brutish to effeminate, weak, nerdy, and asexual. It is difficult to assess when this occurred. However, the evidence for this being the case is quite damning. Shek observes this in media depictions of Asian men in the 40’s and 50’s with the buck teeth and awkward mannerisms (Shek 2007). Rosalind Chou begins her book “Asian Sexual Politics” with an anecdote about William Hung a man who became an overnight sensation after an embarrassing and emasculating appearance on American Idol in 2004. She speaks of performance on the show as an example of the racist depiction of Asian men as weak and socially inept (Chou 2012). This constant image of ineptitude is replete throughout American media.

This issue of feeling and being seen as less masculine than other racial groups serves as one of the most prominent issues at play in analyzing heterosexual Asian masculinities. The absence of Asian American male images in the media is already a problem; further, the few Asian men in the media eye are presented as comedy relief and sidekicks to more traditionally masculine men (Shimizu 2012).

This is all significant to this study as it includes three shooters of Southeast and East Asian descent. In fact, Asian men seem to be overrepresented in spree shooting events in America. According to tracking data on the phenomenon, of the 48 spree shootings done over the last 10 years, 12 of them have been done by men of Asian descent. Five of these twelve men were of Eastern or South East Asian descent, the other 7 were from the Middle East (Follman, Arsonen, Pan 2017). So even when controlling for shooters of Middle Eastern descent, for whom terrorism is often cited as a motive, East/Southeast Asian men represent 10 percent of the
perpetrators in these acts. This contrasts greatly with Asians making up only 4 percent of the American population and 1.2 percent of all violent crime.

To conclude, I have no intention of positioning the predominantly white and heterosexual perpetrators of these events in the same manner of traditional oppressed groups. However, one common thread among the shooters selected is the feeling of persecution and the perception of having been failed or grievously injured by society. Whether valid or not, I think it is important to examine these feelings and perceptions with a genuine attempt to assess them.

My perception is that because of the privileged intersection of race and class, many of these men receiving the patriarchal dividend find themselves in an aptly named “no man’s land” where they lack the marginal status to effectively access protective and supportive factors that marginalized groups have, while also being incapable of making functional use of the patriarchal dividend they were paid. In a way, their privileged status renders these individuals, at least in their minds, more excluded, and thus more susceptible to extreme behavior and responses. However, leaving the analysis there is leaving the job unfinished. Intersectionality allows for us to dive further into these un-oppressed identities to see how their intersections of privilege as well as the constraints of their sexual and gender identities contribute to this phenomenon.

2.5 Final Assessment of the Literature

The literature has significant gaps as it relates to the goal of this paper. As previously stated, sociological and gender-based study of spree shooters is emerging but far from fleshed out. The study of masculinity is also in its early stages and now riddled with doubt and controversy. Thus, the theory and research used for analysis in this paper will be covering some new ground that is absent in the overall literature. Moreover, the main methodology for the study of shooters being used in this paper is specifically geared toward “school” shooters. The
purpose of this study to broaden the analytical lens to shooters outside of schools, necessitating the use of the term “spree shooter”. This is significant because it broadens the scope of the shooters in question, as well as the venue chosen for the selection of victims. This change can have some effect on findings and analysis and thus required the usage of a fourth shooter category to be discussed in the methods section.

The literature shows us that, although there isn’t a specific profile for a spree shooter, the literature does provide context through which a profile can be theorized. The literature tells us that men are beholden to an unattainable standard and that the failure to meet that standard can lead to social sanction. It also tells us that men who entitled to a certain level of privilege may act violently in order to express their displeasure over this denial. We also know that the performance of masculinity can isolate men from important protective factors for their health. Further, foundational works in masculinities such as the works of R.W. Connell (2005) and bell hooks (2004) provide us with the framework through which we can effectively explain these factors as manifestations of masculine performance. By adding the lens of intersectionality and endeavoring to examine how masculine performance hurts and damages men, we provide ourselves with the frame needed to examine the complexity of these shooters.

With the literature in mind, the question of how race and masculinity interact with these shooting events remains mostly unaddressed. Langman’s work only partially delves into these areas (Langman 2017). The other subjects of bullying, social ostracism, etc. indicate connections but fails to fully explore the topic. Intersectionality provides a framework for analysis but never touches the unique subject of spree shooting. As a whole, the literature fails to provide an answer for the racial and sexual elements of the topic. However, it does provide frameworks through which I can create coding categories and themes. Recurring topics such as masculine
reclamation, bullying, and isolation can be pulled from the literature and used to analyze the writings of the shooters.
3 METHODS-

3.1 Scope-

This study seeks to analyze the meanings and messages about masculine identities via the words of spree shooters. To do this, I collected writings, blogs, vlogs, videos, animations, and forum posts from 16 shooters. The shooters were selected based on the quantity/quality of information available on them, as well as factors such as race and notoriety. Due to the gripping nature of the words and thoughts of these shooters, and the relative wealth of quality data on many of them, a content analysis was the best methodology to use. Using content analysis, these documents were analyzed and then grouped along thematic lines. The groupings were then further analyzed against other elements pulled from analysis of the sample. Finally, these groupings were then assessed along various demographic measures and within the context of Peter Langman’s shooter Typology. Along with analysis, short profiles were written for each shooter in order to provide an overview and background context for their writings and their crimes. The results of the analysis, as well as the background research produced four products: 1-) Coding tables of each shooter organized by Typology. 2-) Summary graphs containing the scores of the shooters separated by Typology and race, 3-) Short profiles written on each shooter; and 4-) A list of the themes and code examples pulled from the data.

3.2 Data Selection-

The data are a collection of writings, drawings, videos and other media culled from various sources for 16 different shooters. The data represent a nonrandom sample of shooters whose shootings took place in American borders for the sake of scope. The individuals were chosen for a variety of reasons, most significantly is the notoriety, quantity and availability of writings they left behind and the background information that is known about them. Of the
hundreds of shootings that have occurred in the last 3 decades since the concept of the spree shooting was created, relatively few have left behind firsthand textual or visual information to analyze.

The only other factor in selecting the shooters was their race. Shooters of various racial backgrounds were sought as an attempt to provide material to extrapolate themes connected to racial identity. Furthermore, although there have been a few shootings committed by non-hetero males, these events either did not provide useful material or were too like other cases. Moreover, the overall scope of the paper would likely need to expand beyond its intended focus to effectively analyze these events through a queer lens.

Two of the shooters studied are not found on the schoolshooter.info website where Langman houses his work. This is partly due to them existing slightly outside of the “school” shooting profile. They are Dylann Roof, who killed 9 African Americans in a historically black church, and Gavin Long, who opened fire at police officers in the wake of protests related to the police killing of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge. Both men fall outside of Langman’s direct scope of study, and thus are not mentioned on his site. However, media coverage of these events provides easy access to available writings from these men. Dylann Roof’s journals were revealed after his attack and another journal was released from him once he was imprisoned. Both are represented as files on the South Carolina Post and Courier website (Hawes 2017). Gavin Long published several books and posted various video blogs on YouTube. Thus far I have been unable to obtain copies of any of his books, however his YouTube videos are readily available.
3.3 **Data Collection**-

The majority of these shooters (14) have journals collated and transcribed at schoolshooters.info, a website curated by Peter Langman, a premier voice in spree shooting research. In this site, Langman offers a wealth of information in the form of firsthand accounts, news reports, interviews, and writings left behind by the killers. This information is curated from open source media releases of information on the events along with legal and medical documentation he has obtained. He also presents his own work on the topic. This website is updated regularly by Langman and his associates, with the last update as of writing being January 2021. As such, the site serves as the primary source for these writings. The documents are kept in cloud storage for reliable and versatile access.

All pertinent documents are currently in my possession. There will be no costs associated with the collection of this data, and since this is all freely distributed secondary data, there is no requirement for IRB approval.

3.4 **Sampling**-

The sample here is a set of shooters following a framework created by Peter Langman (2009) where he separates the shooters into three types based on several factors. This study is seeking to find through-lines in spree shooter ideology that can serve as an anchor for understanding the phenomena across race, class, and other identity intersections, thus working within a framework that organizes shooters based on specific traits offers the opportunity to show commonalities more vividly than a less organized sample. I will add to this a 4th category that encompasses shooters with less explicit categorizations.

- **Traumatized:** These shooters are marked by elements of unresolved trauma. They had abusive parents, parents with substance abuse problems, came from broken homes, and
otherwise had various other markers of delinquency. Traumatized shooters for this study are Jeffrey Weise, Evan Ramsey, T.J Lane and Nikolas Cruz.

- **Psychotic:** These shooters are marked by an assumed absence of in-home turmoil, but they suffer from severe mental health issues such as schizophrenia. Psychotic shooters for this study are Seung Hui Cho, Kip Kinkel, James E. Holmes, Dylan Klebold, and Alvaro Castillo.

- **Psychopathic:** These shooters are marked by sadistic and/or narcissistic behavior, sociopathic tendencies, impression management, and a lack of empathy. They also have a perceived absence of severe in-home turmoil. Psychopathic shooters for this study are Eric Harris, Adam Lanza, and Elliot Rodger.

- **Aberrant Adult/Additional:** The remaining shooters are marked by an overall absence of known trauma as well as telltale elements of psychopathic or psychotic behavior. The minor commonality at this juncture is that these shooters targeted specific victims and professed a specific agenda in their writings. Aberrant shooters for this study are Gavin Long, Dylann Roof, Gang Lu, and Chris Harper Mercer.

The development of the Aberrant category occurred out of necessity. In order to more broadly examine this phenomenon, and to include more notable shooters of color, I had to move the venue of the shooting outside of schools. The Aberrant labels comes from Langman and serves to indicate that these acts are apart from his overall Typology.

Along with categorizing shooters based on Langman’s typology, I also reclassified them along racial lines in order to get at underlying findings about race and identity. White shooters were: Evan Ramsey, Dylann Roof, Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold, Adam Lanza, Nikolas Cruz, James E. Holmes, Elliot Rodger and Kip Kinkel. POC shooters were: Alvaro Castillo, Chris
METHODS

Harper Mercer, Jeffrey Weis, Seung Hui Cho, Gavin Long, and Gang Lu. Several shooters (Nikolas Cruz, Alvaro Castillo, Elliot Rodger and Chris Harper Mercer) were either bi-racial or White Latinos. Their racial grouping was based on how they self-identified according to background information.

For more information see Table 1 for profiles on each shooter and details on them, their background, their shooting event, and the media they left behind.

3.5 Content Analysis-

Content Analysis works well as a methodological framework due to its ability to discern focused and thematic meaning from seemingly disparate targets of study. It will be immediately evident from a cursory surface reading of the texts from these shooters that there seems to be little in common for many of these incidents. This is likely why popular opinion has concluded that there are no real patterns in these events. However, content analysis provides the framework where commonalities between these events can be better understood and further meaning can be extrapolated from them (Rose 2012).

I used an inductive form of content analysis, following an analytical process that sought to break down large portions of text into pieces of data via thematic coding. Some deviation from this model occurred due to the finite data available that fit the focus of this paper and the fact that the shooters were already loosely grouped based on Langman’s Typology framework. Thus, the grouping and categorization phase contrasted the typologies with new groups and categories created during the coding process. For example, a shooter fitting into the psychopath category and a shooter fitting into the psychotic category may both express explicitly misogynistic views and as such could possibly be grouped together under a misogyny related code. This led to the creation of a coding matrix where similar codes can be tracked across
different shooters of different types. After all of the writings were analyzed for themes and
coded, they were placed into a matrix detailing which shooters in which typologies have which
codes. I then present final findings based on what the data tell us about the shooters once
grouped by different themes, types, as well as race.

As a theoretical baseline, I developed three core themes based on the previously
mentioned literature. These three main themes were developed as products of interpretation of
some of the core literature. “Masculine Reclamation” grew out of extrapolation from Pascoe’s
“fag discourse” (Pascoe 2012). Pascoe theorizes that males engage in challenging and affirming
each other’s masculinity, often with escalating actions needed to participate in the discourse.
“Misogyny” is a well-established concept in the social sciences (Butler 1990, hooks 2004,
Connell 2005). “Social Ostracism, Alienation and Spite” comes from the analysis pulled from
the works directly discussing and addressing school shootings (Klein 2012, Langman 2009,
Newman et al 2009). Finally, Masculine Hegemony touched on all three major themes currently
identified (Connell 2005). However, after engaging with the data I recognized that Masculine
Hegemony was mostly covered in the first theme, and that Misogyny did not have enough
salience across all the shooters to stand alone as its own core theme. Further, I created the theme
of “Internalized suffering” as multiple codes relevant to the data could be covered by it. This
theme relates to how these men experience. Interpret, and respond to suffering in their current
circumstances and/or with previous traumas.

3.6 Coding and Recoding

After the first reading of the writings, other thematic commonalities were discovered, and
new codes were created. After codes revealed themselves, a final pass through each set of
writings or videos was done with each set being scored for their presentation of the codes
revealed in the initial open coding phase. This process was loosely based off of the “Gottschalk-Gleser Content Analysis Scale” framework (Gottschalk-Gleser 1979). I looked for how often and to what extent a code was present in the writing relative to the actual length of the writing based on the language used, the repetition of words, or the context of the statement within the shooters background. To keep things simple, I created a scale between one and three to denote the magnitude of a code for each set of writings. A score of one meant that the code was present but not saturated in the writing. A score of 1 indicates that a particular theme was relevant to the shooter’s ideology or motivation but was not a core concept that they focused on in their writing. A three represents this code being a core theme in the shooter’s words. Two exists as a midpoint between 1 and 3, and no score is given if a theme is not present. These scores were then tallied in order to provide further insight into the roles of these themes in their actions and motivations across various groupings. These tallies were then averaged to give a better indication of the prevalence of a given theme due to the difference in the amount of shooters per category/typology.

3.6.1 Themes and Codes

Based on the literature and an initial reading of the data, three themes were identified. Once these themes were identified, a second close reading of the data occurred looking to pull codes that fit into these themes. After the codes were identified, a third reading of the data occurred where the codes were measured and assessed. This process produced the resulting framework:

A. **Masculine Reclamation**- This theme relates to words and phrases where the shooter is seeking to profess, express, or reclaim a sense of power and connection to their masculinity that they feel has been denied or rejected. This is done through the use
masculine symbols and avatars for power such as an excessive love for guns, endorsing violence against women, or a disregard for the autonomy of women. This theme produced the following codes:

1. Asserting Dominance
2. Reclaiming a Right
3. Glorification of Violence
4. Self-Aggrandizement
5. Vengeance for a Wrong
6. Casual to Overt Misogyny
7. Gun/Weapon Glorification

B. Social Ostracism, Alienation, and Spite- This theme relates to words and phrases where the shooter expresses apathy, antipathy, or general contempt regarding society and their social station. This theme produced the following codes:

1. Bitterness Toward Women
2. Wanting to Spread a Message
3. Disapproval of Society
4. Looking to Become Famous

C. Internalized Suffering- This theme relates to the ways in which the shooters expressed suffering and pain, usually as partial explanations for their actions. This theme produced the following codes:

1. Awareness of Personal Issues and Limitations
2. Reflection on Bullying/Payback for Bullying
3. Suicidal Ideation/Glorification
4. Feelings of Loneliness and Isolation

There were also two codes that didn’t easily fit into any major category. These were “racist statements,” which are basically discussions of race, often in the form of denigrating black or non-white people. The other was the glorification of past shooters. These are statements in which prior shooters are celebrated by shooters as visionaries and martyrs. Although loosely grouped, these codes do have close relationships with each other and in many ways inform or connect to other themes.
4 FINDINGS

The initial themes presented served as a useful starting point for understanding and assessing the ideologies and motivations of the shooters. However, it became clear very early that the themes in isolation did not really provide a full picture of the motivations and core issues at play in the minds of these shooters. As such, this results section will give an overview of the data explored through Langman’s Typology, and then an exploration of trends and findings related to race and gender.

4.1 Langman’s Typology

Langman’s Typology helps provide several important findings. However, several of its features that seek to explain and categorize the shooters fail to fully explain the phenomenon when compared to the shooter’s own words. Furthermore, this model had little to offer when attempting to consider how race and gender intersected with the motives of the shooters.

4.1.1 Traumatized

Traumatized shooters have less to say about politics, race, gender, and other topics than their psychotic and psychopathic counterparts. As a whole traumatized shooters in the sample had less to say in general. As seen in figure 1.1, the cumulative score for traumatized shooters across all themes was 52 with the highest contributing score being Jeffrey Weise at 19. It is possible to see the absence of race and gender codes as a product of the length of contributions from traumatized shooters; however, this did not bear out after further analysis when looking at shorter and longer entries from shooters in other typologies.

What was clear from the data is that Traumatized shooters seemed less inclined to delve into their ideologies and motives and spent more time reflecting on their pain.
Hey Every body!! I feel rejected, rejected, not so much alone, but rejected. I feel this way because the day-to-day treatment I get usually it’s positive but the negative is like a cut, it doesn’t go away really fast. I figure by the time you guys are reading this I’ll probably have done what I told EVERYONE I was going to do. -Evan Ramsey

I am nothing. I am no one. My life is nothing and meaningless. Everything that I hold dear I let go beyond your half. Every day I see the world ending another day. I live a lone life, live in seclusion and solitude. I hate everyone and everything. -Nikolas Cruz

This is seen through two of the top scoring codes for traumatized shooters being tied to Theme C: Internalized Suffering. Feelings of Loneliness and Isolation (8), and Reflections on Bullying/Payback for Bullying (5) were two of the top scores, with Glorification of Violence being the other high score for this Typology. Overall, the analysis indicates that Langman’s Typology does effectively describe features and motivations of traumatized shooters.

4.1.2 Psychotic

Psychotic shooters had the second lowest average at 19.6 between 5 shooters. Unlike the other shooter categories which revealed some specific in-group patterns, no specific theme seemed to dominate their writings.

Some psychotic shooters espoused psychopathic and sadistic elements in their writings.

Love at first sight is only in movies. Where the people in the movies are better than you. That is why you go to a pone [pawn] shop and buy an AR-15 because you are going to execute every last mother fucking one of you. -Kip Kinkel

Conversely, others offered minimal emotional affect or came off dispassionate when speaking on their future acts of mass murder.
And finally, the last issue, mass murder at the movies. 1st obsession onset >10 years ago. So anyways, that’s my mind. It is broken. I tried to fix it. I made it my sole motivation but suing something that broke to fix itself proved insurmountable… -James Holmes

As seen in figure 1.2, the three most prominent codes among psychotic shooters were Self Aggrandizement (10), Disapproval of Society (11), and notably Awareness of Personal Issues (10), which contrasts with Langman’s description of psychotic shooters. Langman points to paranoia, a lack of empathy, and delusions of grandeur as key attributes of the Psychotic shooters. In many ways these traits are present. However, some of the Psychotic shooters exhibited clear awareness and remorse for their actions as well as guilt for how their actions would affect those left behind. The prominence of Disapproval of Society as a code also indicates a stronger connection to reality for several of these shooters. While Sueng Hui Cho and Jame’s Holmes writings do indicate significant breaks with reality, Dylan Kebold, Kip Kinkel, and Alvaro Castillo all describe issues with society that are typical of other shooters such as feelings of inadequacy with girls, bullying victimizations, and the belief that society was “wicked” or unfair.

Dylan Klebold opines about a girl with whom “the world would be a better place”

You don’t consciously know who I am (please don’t skip to the back: read the note as it was written), & undoubtedly unconsciously too. I, who write this, love you beyond infinince. I think about you all the time, how this world would be a better place if you loved me as I do you. I know what you’re thinking: “(some psycho wrote me this harassing letter)” I hoped we could have been together … – Dylan Klebold

Alvaro Castillo makes a similar comment about a crush he has.

…I don’t deserve her. She is so beautiful. I don’t deserve her though. I do not deserve anyone. If I was mentally well, maybe I could’ve told her my feelings…. I know that I am sick. What do you do with sick people like me. -Alvaro Castillo
Kip Kinkel wraps up a letter where he speaks to his anger at society and his angst over a girl with a rant on fixing the world

I want you to feel this, be this, taste this, kill this. Kill me. Oh God, I don’t want to live. Will

I see it to the end? What kind of dad would I make? All humans are evil. I just want to end

the world of evil. – Kip Kinkel

The words of these shooters show clear understanding and intentionality regarding why they sought to commit their acts. It’s completely fair to say that these boys weren’t mentally well for ever arriving at the decision to commit mass murder, but my analysis of their words does not find compelling evidence to say that all of them were having a break from reality as they planned out their actions.

Three of the five shooters in the psychotic category did receive treatment for mental illnesses at some point in their lives (Seung Hui Cho, James E. Holmes, Alvaro Castillo), and the two that do not have any documentation of mental illness (Kip Kinkel and Dylan Klebold) did report auditory hallucinations at some point either before or after their shootings. However, several other shooters not identified as psychotic also have varying levels of mental illness diagnoses on record. Thus, the analysis indicates that Langman’s Typology does not effectively describe the features and motivations of Psychotic shooters.

4.1.3 Psychopathic

Psychopathic shooters had the highest average score at 24.6 which is somewhat confounded by the N of this category (N=3). Further, Elliot Rodger and Eric Harris were responsible for a significant portion of this average with 59 points between them. Both provided lengthy writings where they were able to cover a myriad of topics. Adam Lanza’s writing seems
light in comparison, but this is partially due to the nature of Lanza’s writing being mostly
comments in message boards, whereas all of Rodger and Harris’s writings were private writings
and video diaries.⁹

The three most prominent codes for Psychopathic shooters were “Disapproval of
Society” (9), Awareness of Limitations (7) and a four-way tie between Asserting Dominance,
Feelings of Loneliness and Isolation, Vengeance for a Wrong, and Self- Aggrandizement (6).
Again, the data indicates more at work on the motivations for these shooters than Langman’s
Typology can explain. It is notable to recognize that Awareness of Personal Issues was also a
high scorer under this typology. While there are indications that psychopathic shooters saw their
actions as rightful and had delusions of grandeur regarding their actions. It is still clear from their
words that they understood what they were doing was wrong and would hurt people, including
people that did not deserve it, even by their compromised moral standards. They knew they
acted out of anger and revenge. They knew what limitations they had in the social structures
they came from. They recognized that they were not popular, successful with women, or able be
the type of men that they felt they were supposed to be.

I had to suffer the shame of other boys respecting me less because I didn’t get any girls. Everyone knew I
was a virgin. Everyone knew how undesirable I was to girls, and I hated everyone just for knowing it. I
want people to think that girls adore me. I want to feel worthy. There is no pride in living as a lonely,
unwanted outcast. I wouldn’t even call it living. –Elliot Rodger

…about the asshole [redacted] in gym class, how he worries me, about driving, & my family, about friends
& doings with them, about girls I know (mainly [redacted] & [redacted] ) how I know I can never have
them, yet I can still dream …. –Eric Harris

⁹Many writings from Adam Lanza were released after the analysis for this paper was complete, early descriptions
of it indicate that the writings fall well in line with the writings of Rodger and Harris.
In multiple passages psychopathic shooters very cogently recognized how their physical, social, or economic limitations directly affected them and brought them to the point of mass murder. From a sociological perspective, it is impossible to ignore the discourses related to power that many of these shooters spoke to. They feared being bullied, being rejected, and being seen as other.

4.1.4 Aberrant

Aberrant shooters served as a midpoint between the previous two with a score of 79 and an average score of 19.75. They also had two scorers that accounted for a large majority of their points with Gavin Long and Chris Harper Mercer, the only two African American shooters in the study, scoring 22 and 29 respectively. The highest scoring themes were Reclaiming a Right (8), Wanting to Spread a Message (10), and Disapproval of Society (9). The scores for Aberrant shooters in the codes for “Awareness of Personal Issues”, along with Glorification of Violence, and Gun Worship significantly lag behind other typologies, likely due to the aberrant shooters skewing older and their shootings being more targeted in their nature. It is indicated from their words that these shooters felt completely justified in their actions.

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. -Gang Lu

Well unless we take real, possibly violent, action, we have no future, literally. I am 21 years old and I don’t play pretend. I couldn’t go another day without doing something. I couldn’t live with myself seeing these things happen to my people and doing nothing about it! - Dylann Roof
Aberrant shooters not only felt justified in their actions much like other shooters, they also saw their act as a form of protest or an inciting action toward a specific greater goal or political/ideological statement. Langman does not offer much in the form of a theoretical construct for aberrant shooters, other than pointing out that they were adults.

4.2 **Prominent and Notable Findings Between Typologies**

As seen in figure 2.1, three codes significantly outpaced the others in terms of their presence across most of the shooters. They were Wanting to Spread a Message with a score of 24, Self Aggrandizement with a score of 27, and Disapproval of Society with a score of 33. None of the other 14 codes had a score above 22, and most of them (8) were scored between 14 and 19, making the aforementioned codes clear strengths in terms of their relevance to the data set.

Conversely, only two codes had a cumulative score of 0 in any Typology. Psychopathic shooters had no indication of suicidal ideation, even though all three of them did commit suicide, and traumatized shooters had no indication that their shooting was a means to reclaim a lost right.

One prominent code that does not fit easily into any of the related themes but correlates greatly with the overarching view of these shootings as acts of protests is seen in how shooters pay tribute to other shooters in their writings. Multiple shooters, especially those who are more recent, pay tribute to previous shooters as peers and influences:

My whole life has been one lonely enterprise. One loss after another. And here I am, 26, with no friends, no job, no girlfriend, a virgin. I long ago realized that society likes to deny people like me these things. People who are elite, people who stand with the gods. People like Elliot Rodger, Vester Flanagan, The Columbine kids, Adam Lanza and Seung Cho. –Chris Harper Mercer
Today is the big day for Operation Columbine. The first time that the world be reminded of Columbine. I will die today! –Alvaro Castillo

I'm normally not interested in non-Kaczynski bombers, but the format and organization of everything involved was such an impressive instance of mass murder self-actualization that it seemed fictional. I wouldn't call it encouraging, but it seemed motivational enough in some sense… -Adam Lanza

Due to the data being from shooters spanning the last 30 years, it is hard to assess this code effectively via Langman’s Typology considering the confounding factors of time and media notoriety for earlier shooters versus later shooters. However, its presence across multiple shooters definitely informs the overall picture of what motivates these actions. This code shows how shooters construe their behavior as acts of resistance against a society they believe has wronged them and relegated them unfairly to a subordinate social status. By framing their acts as continuing a legacy of previous spree shooters, they position themselves as part of growing movements of men/boys who feel the same way. Similar to the aforementioned pariah femininities, who reject the ideals of emphasized femininity, spree shooters construe this outsider role as a rejection of the traditional masculinities that are more handsomely rewarded by patriarchy. It is not a complete rejection of patriarchy, but a rejection of how the hierarchy of patriarchy is organized. This outsider identity works to serve as an anchoring/rallying point for their actions and the future actions of others. It can be seen in the growth of the “manosphere” in the last few years, as figures like Elliot Rodger have become canonized in those spaces.

4.3 **Findings along Racial Lines**

After controlling for N, the data do not show significant differences between shooters of color and white shooters on most of the variables. The absence of significant findings here has 3 major considerations:
1- The nature of the data and method of grouping for analysis compromised any findings that were present. There were 10 shooters designated as white, and 6 designated as non-white. However, 4 shooters were either bi-racial or white Latinos. These individuals were group based on their racial self-identification. However, this introduces error into the racial element of the analysis.

2- Furthermore, due to the small N for shooters of color, the method of analysis makes the data sensitive to skew. With Seung Hui Choi and Chris Harper Mercer accounting for nearly half of the total scores for non-white shooters, the patterns in the findings for shooters of color is heavily skewed based on the themes prominent in their writings. Codes such as “racist statements” or ”glorification of past shooters” show disparities that are almost completely caused by 1 shooter in the sample.

3- There was minimal ingroup similarity between non-white shooters or even shooters of the same ethnicity or of the same race. Gang Lu and Seung Hui Choi presented very different rationales in their writings, as did Gavin Long and Chris Harper Mercer. The minimal differences that do show up between the groups mostly fail to hold up under scrutiny. While it’s clear that race informs the reasoning for non-white shooters, it does so in a way that is difficult to assess through the data as it was analyzed.

Of the codes that did present prominent differences that weren’t confounded in the analysis, “Wanting to Spread a Message” has the biggest discrepancy between the two groups and lends credence to an idea that non-white shooters were more thoughtful about why they were committing their acts. Non-white shooters seemed more intentional and explicit regarding the groups they felt wronged by and the individuals they sought retribution from. This is also seen in the code for vengeance which showed a relatively large discrepancy between the groups.
Although tenuous, this finding indicates that aggrieved entitlement may work differently for non-white shooters. Non-white shooters may require a greater sense of indignation to be spurned to respond to their perceived wrong in a spree shooting, and even then, seem more likely to target explicit groups than society as a whole. Shooters like Gang Lu and Alvaro Castillo explicitly name their targets. Gavin long sought only to kill police officers. Conversely several white shooters seemed only to seek a way to maximize their body count or at a minimum strike back against mezzo level institutions that they belonged to (attacking the school they attended.

However, this finding is not strong compared to other findings. For one, at least 3 non-white shooters (Seung Hui Choi, Chris Harper Mercer, and Jeffrey Weise) did seem to indiscriminately choose their targets. At least 2 white shooters (T.J Lane, Kip Kinkel) seemed very specific in choosing at least some of their targets. The reasoning gleamed from their writings doesn’t yield a strong pattern to explain the inconsistency across the data.

The clear constant for the findings around race is that strongest codes related to masculinity and social ostracism and alienation are greatly similar across race. This implies that regardless of race, the conceptualization of masculinity and the patriarchal dividend remain core motivators behind the actions of these spree shooters. That said, considering the findings from the data further study is needed to assess how Langman’s Typology may be used to asses racial differences between shooters.

4.4 Findings on Gender and Sexuality

Codes related to masculinity had varied relevance across the different shooters and Typology groupings, to the point where it would be difficult to assert a specific pattern or trend that grouped all of them together. Overall, shooters had various ways in which they contextualized their actions and beliefs as masculine acts.
Traumatized shooters offer little regarding women, but express their masculinity through glorifying violence, dominance, and a glorification of guns. Psychopathic shooters were often sadistic in their gendered statements. Eric Harris’s writings included vivid depictions of violence against men and women, along with rape fantasies. Elliot Rodger’s writings had similar elements. Aberrant shooters statements regarding gender varied due to the variety of the purposes for their shootings. Both Gavin Long and Dylann Roof committed their acts in the name of a political ideology, and in their statements expressed that they were doing so in protection of their people, explicitly stating how they needed to protect “their” women. Gang Lu talks at length about his love of America’s gun laws and takes a moment to boast about his sexual prowess. Chris Harper Mercer’s writings followed closely with the themes presented by Elliot Rodger.

There is clear variety in the way in which the shooters situate their acts as masculine, however the findings strongly suggest that masculinity and gender are core features to the motivations behind these acts.

Some shooters were very overt and sometimes explicit with how their masculinity informed their actions:

I’m an alpha male. I stand up. I stand firm. And I stand for mine. Till the end. Till the last day in this flesh. -Gavin Long

Others gloss over their ideas about manhood but reveal things about their masculinity through avatars such as guns, power fantasies, and sexual fantasies. For example, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold reflect on occasion about feeling rejected by women and how it makes them feel lesser, but in other passages they fantasize about rape and violence towards these women for perceived slights and rejections:
The one who I thought was my true love, is not. Just a shell of what I want the most.... the meanest trick was played on me a fake love... she in reality doesn’t give a good fuck about me…. doesn’t even know me . . . I have no happiness, no ambitions, no friends, & no LOVE!!!-- Dylan Klebold

They are all spoiled, heartless, wicked bitches. They think they are superior to me, and if I ever tried to ask one on a date, they would reject me cruelly. I will sneak into their house at around 9:00 p.m. on the Day of Retribution, just before all of the partying starts, and slaughter every single one of them with my guns and knives. If I have time, I will set their whole house on fire. Then we shall see who the superior one really is!

- Elliot Rodger

Many shooters used guns, sex, and symbols of power to represent their masculinity.

Some shooters aggrandized themselves by comparing themselves to deities:

I am Death. And you have always been the sod. So repulsive and so odd. You never even deserved the presence of God, and yet, I am here. - T.J. Lane

I am fucking armed. I feel more confident, stronger, more God-like. - Eric Harris

Some shooters did explicitly speak on women, often a girl they were infatuated with.

These statements mostly illustrated feelings of angst or anger at rejection. Women either confirmed to the shooters that they had been treated unfairly or served as proof of their masculine prowess.

Every time I see your face, my heart is shot with an arrow. I think she will say yes, but she doesn’t, does she? She says, “I don’t know”. The three most fucked up words in the English language. – Kip Kinkel

When I went to college I often slipped into our old home at the Number 262 Hospital under cover of darkness and spent the night with girls. After I came to the States I had liaisons with Chinese and American women, with single and married women, with girls of good families and girls of the streets. I just don’t have a constant heart in these matters; the grass always looks greener somewhere else…. - Gang Lu

Lastly, there were also clear ways in which race and sexuality intersected for shooters of color. Elliot Rodger and Chris Harper Mercer both reflect upon how ethnicity impacts their prowess, or lack thereof with women.
Black men have corrupted the women of this planet. All they care about is sex and swag. All they care about is swinging their “BBC thang” around in public. All their brain power has been submerged into their penis. This blackness effect is only prominent on men. On women it has no effect. No one lives in fear of the black woman but everyone lives in fear of the black man. It would be better if all black women left the beast on the alter and dated a white man. Or lesbian exploration…-Chris Harper Mercer

As my frustration grew, so did my anger. I came across this Asian guy who was talking to a white girl. The sight of that filled me with rage. I always felt as if white girls thought less of me because I was half-Asian, but then I see this white girl at the party talking to a full-blooded Asian. I never had that kind of attention from a white girl! And white girls are the only girls I’m attracted to, especially the blondes. How could an ugly Asian attract the attention of a white girl, while a beautiful Eurasian like myself never had any attention from them? -Elliot Rodger

While it is difficult to tease out many clear patterns based on the Langman’s Typology, it’s very clear that all these shootings in some way represented a “manly” or noble act in the eyes of the shooters. The shooters all found different ways to contextualize their actions as grand actions of important men and almost all of them alluded to the hope to have historical relevance through their act. That said, Langman’s Typology is a limited tool at best for understanding these events and does not offer an effective theory to better understand or identify the motives of spree shooters.
5.1 **On Langman’s Typology**

The results support Langman’s own assertion that his typology is a limited theoretical construct for understanding these events in their totality. Langman’s Typology is useful in that it does present some elements of a profile, allowing scholars to better contextualize and categorize these shooters. However, his Typology is limited when assessing motivations and other factors, especially when factoring race and gender performance. In later work, he examined how factors that directly connect to masculine performance such as physical size and social skills, directly connect to the presumed motivations of shooters (Langman 2017).

Understanding Langman’s limitations are inherent to better understanding these mechanisms. For example, “Awareness of Issues” was one of the most prominent themes present in the writings of psychotic and psychopathic shooters. These shooters were very aware that they were lower in the social order. In fact, a shooter’s awareness of their personal issues and limitations would have been one of the most prominent themes in the data if the data only included Psychotic and Psychopathic shooters. This stands in stark contrast to Langman’s explanations in the Typology which suggest compromised mental faculties as defining characteristics of these shooters. This is not to say that the shooters he labeled as such do not have these traits, however, it does suggest that not enough of the motivation and ideology behind these acts can be explained by these designations.

What this implies is that despite their compromised mental faculties, these shooters could perceive their own limitations and ostracism from their particular social circles, and that this knowledge informed their decision making. They know that they are “wrong” for what they are
doing, at least in the eyes of the society that they belong to, but they feel compelled, and more significantly, justified in their actions due to the wrong that they feel they have endured. This not only conflicts with Langman’s Typology, but it undermines the common rhetoric that characterizes these shooters as deranged.

Another limitation is that his Typology explicitly focuses on the locale of the “school”. While this is understandable considering that many of these events occur at schools, leaving out the multitude of public locations where these events happen limits the typology as a tool for fully understanding the logic that goes into committing these acts. By focusing only on schools the insinuation is that shootings that happen elsewhere are different at their core, but this is not the case. Regardless of location and environmental factors, the words of most of the shooters implicate that these acts are about power and bombast. While there is reason to look at Gavin Long shooting police in response to police brutality juxtaposed with Elliot Rodger shooting women in response to him being a virgin, the commonality is the audacity of seeing such an act as within their right to commit, and their desire to be known for committing said act. This is missed by isolating events based on location. Though some locations are symbolic, such as shootings at churches and mosques or gay night clubs, the importance of local should not preclude important similarities.

Langman’s focus on the presence of psychosis, previous trauma, or sociopathy, while of importance, is secondary to the end result these men sought in their actions. The words in the shooters’ writings show that they are most concerned their inability to maximize their access to the patriarchal dividend. It is reasonable to theorize that this pattern of behavior is true not just for most shooters, but other “rampage” style mass murderers in general such as Alek Minassian the driver behind the Toronto van attack that killed 15 (who also explicitly cited Elliot Rodger as
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an influence) or Mark Anthony Conditt, the Austin Texas Bomber\textsuperscript{10}. However, these individuals are on the extreme end. They are outliers from a larger population of disaffected, angry, predominantly white, males who have gained a greater presence in the contemporary social consciousness. Alt-right groups, Neo-Nazi’s, and even radical African American political groups, and other communities all follow similar patterns and mostly consist of disaffected, disgruntled, men seeking to affirm their humanity and reclaim the power of their masculinity.

5.2 Masculine Entitlement Regardless of Race

As shown in figure 1.2, several patterns become evident after shooters are regrouped along racial lines. This regrouping causes the prominence of several codes to change. However, as mentioned previously, under greater scrutiny and analysis, much of the differences lack compelling evidence that can be pulled from the data as it was used.

When examining the writings across race and looking specifically at what is said by individual shooters, the messages have some similar themes but minimal ingroup consistency and more outgroup consistency when looking at content. For example, Chris Harper Mercer and Sueng Hui Choi’s messages (greatly related to a general and nebulous disapproval of society and animosity toward women) are more in line with several white shooters. Gavin Long and Dylan Roof’s messages are both racially motivated and have similar broad themes despite being on polar ends of the racial divide. Many of the new patterns that emerge from regrouping along racial lines fail to provide compelling evidence to draw conclusions from.

This absence of findings across race also lends credence to the argument that these acts are about something other than race. The fact that there are minimal differences implies that

\textsuperscript{10} Mark Anthony Conditt committed a series of seemingly random bombings in Austin Texas in 2018. His “manifesto” referred to a multitude of conservative and right-wing beliefs.
there is a separate and more prominent motivating factor that drives this behavior. This does not completely eliminate race as an element of the motivations behind these events. The data does show some differences in terms of why shooters of color commit their acts, but aside from “Wanting to Spread a Message” the other most prominent codes (Self Aggrandizement and Disapproval of Society) were still highly relevant across racial lines, and both codes connect to elements of aggrieved entitlement and masculine reclamation. This is another area in which Placebo Marginality provides an effective theoretical tool as it helps explain the phenomenon regardless of race or ethnicity, and promotes the theory that the issue of these shootings is more about masculine identity than racial identity.

Future studies on race and spree shooters should look at motivation and style of shooting, as these seem to have more potential for explaining differences between certain shooters than race. Specifically, shooters with explicit victims or victim groups in mind seem to differ from shooters with more generalized victim groups. Several white shooters, much like shooters of color, did in fact have specific victims in mind. T.J Lane shot at a rival connected to his ex-girlfriend, Kip Kinkel killed his parents before attacking the school, Dylann Roof chose members of a historical black church for his victims, and Gavin Long targeted police. Conversely shooters of color who sought out to attack society as a whole (Jeffrey Weise, Chris Harper Mercer, and Seung Hui Choi) killed as many as they could at their respective schools seemingly out of convenience much like white shooters like James E Holmes, Elliot Rodger, and Eric Harris/Dylan Klebold. Future research could build upon these early findings by expanding the sample, adjusting for motivations across racial lines, separating targeted and non-targeted shootings, or looking at other factors such as the number of fatalities or differences in writings
from shooters from different time periods as both of those factors may yield greater insight on racial dynamics at play between shooters.
I have combined the previous literature and findings into a theory I call “Placebo Marginality.” I did this because it became clear from the data that there were in fact distinct patterns and profiles for many of these men and that there was an opportunity to fill a hole in the literature around this topic. Further, the visible rise in extremist ideologies among young white men, ideologies which a large portion of spree shooters pull from or have influence over, can be explained through this theory. Thus, it has value as a tool that can be used to explain the process through which men, especially cis-hetero white males, become more susceptible to radicalization.

6.1 The Placebo Marginalized Process of Radicalization

The core principle of Placebo Marginality is that men who would not traditionally be considered marginalized (i.e. cis-gendered, heterosexual, white) can experience a “placebo” effect of marginalization due to the distance between their/society’s expectations of masculinity juxtaposed to their actual ability to perform masculinity, and the absence of effective support systems and protective behaviors inherent in their privileged identity. In short, the placebo status combined with aggrieved entitlement and an absence of protective factors creates the environment through which men go through a process of radicalization as illustrated Figure 3.
Figure 3 The Placebo-Marginal Radicalization Process
Placebo Marginal Men (PMM) have traditionally privileged identities who, due to a specific combination of factors, perform a non-normative masculinity. This may come from factors such as physical unattractiveness, social inefficacy, possible behavioral disorders, environmental or economic factors, or simply personalities that do not lend themselves to ideal masculine performance. As such, these individuals are subject to maltreatment by their peers due to their transgressive masculine performance. This maltreatment is intensified by the fact that their privileged status paradoxically hinders their ability to be resilient against it, and they lack the beneficial supportive communities that often exist for more traditionally marginalized groups. They are in a way isolated and lacking effective recourses for their mistreatment. These individuals will eventually seek mitigation opportunities where they can try on new identities and seek community and mastery in safer spaces. These spaces are often alternative spaces such as gaming, anime, music and other arts/media communities. These spaces are also saturated with radicalizing agents seeking to recruit more followers by offering community, comradery, and solace. What follows is a radicalization process similar to processes scholars have described for other forms of terrorism (Borum 2011). These radicalizing agents identify the “unfairness” of the subject’s experiences. Over time the individual becomes desensitized to hateful and violent rhetoric disguised as humor, until such rhetoric is adopted and employed at face value. This socially unacceptable world view produces an isolating effect trapping them in these radical spaces, drawing them deeper into the radical communities. The unique nature of this process is effectively described by individuals who have been through this process and back in a notable video essay titled the Pewdiepipeline11 (NonCompete 2019). After being radicalized, multiple

11 The Pewdiepipeline is a video essay where Youtuber NonCompete describes his own experience of being drawn into radical racist/misogynist groups via online communities and his eventual recovery. The essay gets its name from youtuber Pewdiepie who up until recently was the most subscribed Youtuber in the world with over 100 million subscribers and over 25 billion views. He himself has minimal affiliation with radical racist or misogynist
negative outcomes come into play such as higher risks for mental health issues, lower mental health outcomes for individuals who already have issues, greater social isolation, substance abuse, suicide, and a propensity toward violence.

This theory can be illustrated in almost all the shooters. For example, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris both lived solidly middle-class lives. They dealt with bullying and ostracism due to being shy and quiet kids. Over time, as a coping method to counteract their mistreatment, both sought out alternative identities and ideologies. They collected with others around these (anti)social identities and exposed themselves to more radical rhetoric and images. Their antisocial views and behavior were overlooked by parents, teachers and social support systems, likely due to their privilege status as boys and their whiteness. Their circle of friends became an echo chamber of radical rhetoric, and their antisocial behavior escalated over time. They cross the threshold into the planning phase, documenting every step, and reveling in the notoriety that they would gain from their act. This eventually turned into the Columbine shooting.

Adam Lanza, Dylann Roof, and Nikolas Cruz follow almost the exact same story. Even most of the shooters of color follow a very similar pattern. Gavin Long faced mental health struggles and failed relationships after his time in the military before engaging in radical Afro-centric social movements and alternative health communities. This led to him adopting an extreme world view and made his actions justified in his mind. Elliot Rodger and Chris Harper Mercer both had significant difficulties socializing, anger management issues, and troubled home lives that led to social ostracism. Rodger self-radicalized while Mercer claimed heavy influence from Rodger for his radical views. While this process is not inherent to all shooters, it is present.
for most of them across Langman’s Typologies. The pattern that the shooters follow is impossible not to notice once we begin to recognize the common features of aggrieved entitlement and intersectional activism around antisocial identities.

6.2 Placebo Masculinity and the Void of Productive Alternative Spaces

One commonality between traditionally marginalized men and oppressed people in general is that they tend to create communities amongst each other as a way of creating a safe space, reaffirming their humanity, sharing resources for surviving their persecution, possibly even gestating plans of resistance and activism. This is visible today in many formal and informal movements such as Black Lives Matter or GLAAD, plus the countless online communities of LGBTQ, immigrant, Muslim, etc. people who connect to each other via social media.

However, no such group exists for white cis-hetero PMMs. Moreover, the groups that do exist for these men are almost always inherently toxic or are saturated with radicalizing agents seeking to recruit. There is not a culture of resistance to imperial, white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy among white men, and the informal communities of “wholesome” or nurturing communities for cis-hetero white males are minimal in comparison to their toxic counterparts. Further, these white men are also generally not welcomed in traditionally marginalized groups, and rightfully so. As a result, groups such as Qanon, Neo Nazis, the Alt Right, and Incels find ways to recruit these individuals via other communities that PMMs populate.

Most significantly is that there is minimal oversight or culpability in participating in these secluded spaces. So, individuals are allowed and encouraged to dive deeper into these toxic communities without repercussions, in the end making it harder for them to come back out. The absence of productive alternative spaces and support systems combined with the abundance of
toxic and radical spaces as well as a general lack of oversight is a key factor in how these boys radicalize seemingly overnight with few having taken notice. Lastly, after going through this process, they are paradoxically “protected” and barred from the steps necessary to recover. Their privileged status and the dominant cultures general apathy toward racism and misogyny makes it less likely that they will be confronted on their toxic and antisocial views and behavior. Similarly, this status will also keep them from seeking/receiving help for addressing the underlying problems that led them to radicalization in the first place.

In summation, PMMs are pre-disposed to being radicalized by their specific intersection of being both privileged and marginalized within their privileged group because of a lack of role competency and latent aggrieved entitlement. Due to the patriarchal standards of their privileged group, PMMs fail to consistently find social support and effective help seeking behavior is discouraged. Thus, they seek mitigation of their pain via alternative communities. These communities are saturated with radicalizing agents and a process of radicalization ensues, eventually priming some of these PMM for acts of violence and self-harm.
Analysis of these shooters revealed that this “phenomenon” was not hiding any surprise revelations. The commonalities between these shooters are not coincidental, and the persistent avoidance of these commonalities as clear indicators of how and why these shootings occur is the true phenomenon that requires more inquiry. For 20 years spree shootings have been a part of America’s national identity, yet only recently have scholars been intentional about discussing how the obvious similarities of race, gender, and sexuality inform these events. This study only confirms what many passively recognized about the phenomenon, that these individuals reflect an extreme outcome of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.

That said, re-centering the compulsory nature of masculine performance is key to understanding this and pushing the discourse on masculinities forward. Discussions of masculinity are often based around passive and unexamined understandings of what masculinity is. As hooks suggests, this absence of analysis is a blind spot in our understanding of men and masculinity. When combined with a similar blind spot for whiteness, and the systemic barriers in place limit critical analysis of race, it is no wonder that this area of study seems underdeveloped. The literature is limited in its ability to explain the problem identities born from toxic masculinity. We can identify these identities, but we do not fully understand them. We recognize all of the toxic manifestations of masculinity, patriarchy, and privilege with these shooters, but we are hesitant to engage with the mechanisms that drive this process, especially the ones that make us uncomfortable or challenge our established norms within the discourse.

This brings me to a possibly controversial suggestion as it pertains to these boys, and cis hetero, and mostly white men in general. Setting aside well-known and understood behavioral health, social support, and criminal policy strategies, another response to the problem of these
men and those like them can be found in a reframing of the discourse. Academic rhetoric regarding white men and whiteness is often adversarial and exclusionary. This is understandable considering the nature of the abuse often at the hands of patriarchy and white supremacy. However, it is necessary to prioritize the compulsory nature of whiteness and patriarchy in our studies, similarly to how we look at other social issues with systemic and structural causes. As indicated in this paper, and echoed by feminist scholars, systems of patriarchy are built through efficient manipulation and isolation of boys from their humanity. From an early age they are given scripts to follow and intensely policed to adhere to. It is no wonder why many land where they land in the matrix of domination. Thus, pulling these boys and men out of this role should look less like resistance and more like rehabilitation.

I vividly remember some of the problematic behaviors that I participated in as a teenage boy and young adult, most of which were behaviors instilled in me, often by force, from the time I could walk. I also remember the patience that people showed me as I began to recover from a life of tutelage under patriarchy. Effort must be made to not alienate young men who have been weened under white supremacy and patriarchy when many of them are simply following the scripts that have been given to them. Radicals feed on that alienation experience and use it as a recruitment tool.

At a minimum, scholars must put in more effort to remove whiteness and cis-hetero status from the category of “normal” or “regular”, meaning that we have to put in an effort to look at whiteness in isolation and not just in comparison to a minority group, even going as far as to center it in terms of assessing the effects of patriarchy. This will hopefully produce a more robust discourse on the topic and invite more cis-hetero men to the research table (protecting against the possibility that one voice could somehow dominate the subject area for years). At a
policy and public health level, we must look to neutralize the pull of radical thought on PMMs, rethink how we market self-care and health promotion to cis-hetero men, and find ways to promote beneficial alternative communities for cis-het males to connect to before they are engulfed by radical ideologies.

There is an African proverb that states, “The child who is pushed out of the village will set it on fire to feel its warmth.” The essence of this saying speaks to the danger of alienating people from societal ties that are necessary for affirming their humanity, helping them feel love, giving them anchors to hold on to when they find difficulty in the world. Men who commit these acts are not born destined to become mass murderers. They are responding maladaptively to societal pressures, internal struggles, poor social support, and behavioral health crises. Although uncomfortable, if we are to better address the realities of these acts, we must resist the natural desire to shun and consider how we can better address the factors that create them.
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Shooter Profiles

Shooter Profiles- The following provides a short synopsis of each shooter used in the study.

Profiles seek to provide context and background information on the shooters and their actions pre and post shooting. This background information was compiled mostly from Langman’s School Shooter database, as well as media coverage and news reports.

Shooter: Alvaro Castillo

Langman Typology: Psychotic

Special distinctions: Castillo is the child of immigrants from El Salvador and is the only shooter in the sample of Latino descent. He is also the only school shooter who did not kill any of his peers.

Background: Castillo had a troubled childhood as a result of the overbearing and abusive nature of his father, who had abnormal and extreme beliefs. For example, his father would forbid Alvaro’s mother from taking him and his siblings to the doctor and would instead make them take cold baths as remedies for illnesses. Reports state that Castillo had issues with feeling dirty and sinful stemming back to seeing pornography at an early age, and on one occasion becoming sexually aroused while babysitting a young boy. As a result of these events, Castillo developed paranoid delusions that he was being watched by government agencies. In high school he was successful as a student and got along well with his teachers. There are no reports of bullying, but he was thought of as odd by other students. He would also develop an obsession with guns, Columbine and other spree shooters at this time, as well as a long-standing infatuation with a girl named Anna. He joined the Coast Guard in an effort to become better with guns. This was
unsuccessful and humiliating. He attempted suicide a year later and months after that attempt committed his shooting.

Details of shooting: Castillo wanted to pay homage to previous school shooters, so he chose August 30th which was the birthday of Kip Kinkel as the day to do the shooting. Castillo shot and killed his father in their home and then subsequently made a video and wrote about it in his journal. He then went to the school and began firing at random at students who were outside the school. He missed them but the spray lightly wounded two others. His gun eventually jammed, and he was subdued by a resource officer, although he was asking the officer to kill him during the process. Castillo did not die in his shooting. His father was the only person to die in his shooting.

Summary of writings: Castillo’s writings come in the form of multiple journals and some video journals. For the most part they are rambling and scattered thoughts. He speaks significantly about his own damaged mind state and his desire to be like his heroes who were other school shooters and mass murders.

**Shooter: Seung Hui Cho**

Langman Typology: Psychotic

Special distinctions: Cho was born of Vietnamese immigrants. His shooting is the deadliest shooting at an institution of learning.

Background: Cho was the child of Korean immigrants who moved to America when he was 8. They settled in Virginia after moving several times after immigrating to the states. He was seemingly diagnosed with an anxiety disorder as a child though the details of a diagnosis are unconfirmed. Family reports state that he suffered from an early age with severe anxiety and
would hardly speak in public, and when forced to speak would do so in a highly exaggerated deep voice. He reportedly had some therapy and services in place in middle and high school that were not present for college. He acted out significantly in college over the 3 years that he attended Virginia Tech. He had several incidents of harassment against female students. He wrote obscene and disturbing stories that eventually had him removed from one of his classes and he was generally treated as a pariah.

Details of shooting: Cho put significant planning into his shooting compared to most other shooters, and he may have been thinking about committing the act since middle school. He, like most other shooters, obtained all his guns legally over time. He recorded multiple videos that he then sent to local news stations. He first murdered a female student in her dorm room that he was reportedly obsessed with. She had no prior knowledge of him. He then killed a resident of the dorm who reportedly came to investigate the shooting. After this, he managed to walk back to his own dorm room to change clothes. He then walked to a classroom building and chained multiple doors from the inside. He walked methodically through the building shooting into the classrooms until he was confronted by police, at which time he took his own life by shooting himself in the head. Cho killed 33 people, including himself, and wounded 17 others.

Summary of writings: Cho’s writings are dark and difficult to make general sense of. His poetry and writings for his class are slice of life dramas with absurd dialogue and situations along with sometimes dramatic dark turns. In one story, he wrote about an odd situation between a young man, his mother and his stepfather, in which accusations of sexual assault are made (presumably false accusations) that ends in the son’s death. In another story, the main character wishes he were a psycho because “It would be so much easier” before wishing to be killed. In another story the main character plans to shoot up a school before being stopped by a girl who then
seemingly wants to join in the shooting. The poem loser he laments feeling like a loser. His 
manifesto is the most incoherent of his writings. He indicates an underlying wish to belong to 
the group of people he targets in his shooting and speaks of his actions as grand acts of revenge 
and war. He indicates that he had no choice in the matter and takes a moment to call Eric Harris 
and Dylan Klebold martyrs for his cause.

**Shooter: Nikolas Cruz**

Langman Typology: Traumatized

Special distinctions: Cruz is the most notable recent shooter, having committed his act in 2018. 
Other than that, what is most notable is how well he fits into the “school shooter” profile and the 
significant amount of warning signs that were ignored as well as social support safety nets that 
failed.

Background and profile: Cruz had a highly traumatic childhood. He was adopted at birth by 
older and relatively well-off parents. At 4, he was diagnosed with a developmental delay. At 6, 
his adoptive father died. Not long after he started exhibiting behavioral issues culminating in 
dozens of police calls, child protective services visits, and school infractions. Reports state that 
he was a target for bullying, but he was also known for his violent temper and got into many 
physical altercations with students and neighbors. There was some engagement with mental and 
behavioral health services, but nothing sustained and with minimal success. Nikolas was said to 
torture animals and engage with various extremist groups. He expressed hateful views about 
African Americans, Muslims, Mexicans, and LGBTQ people in online communities. He also 
engaged in self-harm, often cutting himself and sharing it on social media. He had a fascination 
with guns and weapons and owned as many as 10 guns. Months before the shooting, Nikolas’ 
adoptive mother died, leaving him to live with a family friend, and then the parents of a friend.
Nikolas telegraphed his desire to become a spree shooter multiple times and had multiple red flags ignored.

Details of shooting: Nikolas rode an Uber to the school where he no longer attended and entered the school undetected where he pulled a fire alarm and began shooting into a crowd of students indiscriminately. After a few minutes, he dropped his weapon and blended into the crowd before leaving the school grounds. He was apprehended later without incident. Cruz shot 34 people, killing 17 of them.

Summary of writings: Cruz’s writings are transcripts of videos he created right before the shooting. In the first video he tries to detail the plans for his attack. In the second video, he gets into his motives which all hit the typical shooter marks about being lonely, hating society, and wanting to show people. He talks about being a nobody. He clearly focuses on his desire for this to make him known, proclaims his power through his ability to commit the act, proclaims his love for a girl, and complains about society being brainwashed by government programs.

**Shooter: Chris Harper-Mercer**

Langman Typology: Aberrant

Special distinctions: Mercer is the rare shooter of African American descent who targeted his victims at random. However, it’s important to note that he expressed significant levels of internalized racism he explicitly rejected his African American identity, stating that he is biracial and gets his brain from his white father.

Background: Harper-Mercer had a relatively rough childhood and youth. He was born to a black mother and a white father and his parents split while Harper-Mercer was still a baby. He seemed to have some behavioral issues from an early age, and never had much of a relationship with his
father. He was described by his mother as being a loner and that he had anger issues. His mother also admits to him having previous violent altercations with her as a child and teenager.

Shooting details: Harper-Mercer legally owned multiple weapons as his mother was a gun enthusiast, despite having a history of violent outbursts at home. Mercer entered the writing class at the college he attended and began shooting. He took his time and taunted many of his victims before shooting them. This lasted for around 10 minutes until police arrived at which time, he exchanged fire with the police before killing himself. Harper-Mercer killed 10 people, including himself, and wounded 8 others.

Summary of writings: Harper-Mercer’s writings hit many of the themes other shooters touch on such as alienation, loneliness, the corruption of society, glorification of previous shooters, etc. Unique to Mercer was a tirade on black men in a fashion similar to Elliot Rodger’s anger toward men in general. Mercer saw black men as the lowest of the low and claimed he was only partially black and that he inherited his brain from his white father.

**Shooter: Eric Harris**

Langman Typology: Psychopathic

Special distinctions: He was one of the perpetrators of the Columbine massacre, the deadliest school shooting of its time and was the first shooting of it’s time to attain national attention.

Background: Harris was born into a military family. His father’s work forced him to move around on multiple occasions, often requiring Harris to uproot and break off friendships and connections to his peers. Other than this, his childhood and home life had minimal challenges. Harris was well liked by adults and teachers, and in his writings prided himself on his impression management. This served well after being arrest along with Klebold for vandalism charges.
Despite this, he was still a part of Trench Coat Mafia and on multiple occasions in his writing and the videos before the shooting complained about his mistreatment. As with Klebold he was arrested early in 1998 and completed the diversion program a year before enacting the massacre.

Details of shooting: Klebold and Harris planned their shooting for months. They acquired guns illegally through friends, learned how to build pipe bombs, and planned with the hope of inflicting maximum damage. The boys arrived at different times to the school and set down bags with bombs inside that were set to go off at a certain time. When the bombs did not go off, they went into the school and began shooting. They eventually made their way to the library, where they killed most of their victims. Afterward they exchanged gunfire with police officers before fatally shooting themselves. Their shooting killed 15 people including themselves and wounded 24 others.

Summary of writings: Harris’ writings are similar to Klebold’s in various ways but different in others. Harris’ writing is far more self-aggrandizing and confident. While Klebold spoke significantly of feeling pain, Harris spoke greatly of his desire to inflict pain. Harris also seemed far more aware of the impact he would have and how much he desired it. There are still elements of lovelornness, ostracism, and glorification of violence, but there is also a level of sadism present. Further, Harris does not speak of his own desire to die nearly as much as Klebold. This, along with other evidence, has led many to believe that Harris was the ringleader of the incident. In one entry, Harris tries to release all other related parties of responsibility for his actions. He states that his mother, the school, and his family had no part in his acts (though he contradicts this in other statements).

Shooter: James Holmes

Langman Typology: Psychotic
Special distinctions: Holmes is unique in that he had a significant history of mental illness in his family, and much effort was put into providing him with mental health support for his psychosis. His case typifies the argument that treatment for mental illness is not a clear solution to preventing these events.

Background: Holmes’ background has no markers of childhood conflict or trauma. However, multiple reports indicate that he struggled with mental illness since puberty. There is little indication that Holmes was bullied, however, he was quiet and reserved. He is said to have been obsessed with killing for years and saw multiple mental health practitioners before the shooting. He flunked out of graduate school the year before the shooting and broke up with a girlfriend a few months prior.

Details of shooting: Holmes put a lot of planning into his attack and was very thoughtful about his goals. He wanted to kill as many people as possible but did not want to kill children. He chose a movie theater where he calculated the police would have to travel the longest distance to and where he would be able to lock doors. He chose a midnight showing with the hope that there would be no kids present. He entered the theater normally with his weapons in his car. He set the doors ajar to allow re-entry with his weapons, then locked them once he came back. He opened fire killing 12 people and wounding 70 others. He then snuck out of the theater and waited near his car where he gave himself up without incident.

Summary of writings: Holmes’ writings are cryptic and hard to follow, but clearly centered on his idea of a point system. He describes each life being worth one point and indicates that killing may add a point to his life. He then deep dives into his own mental health issues and offers multiple diagnoses for himself. He goes over his plans for the shooting, complete with diagrams
on the theater, before ending with philosophical thoughts on life and purpose. He expresses rage over and over and how the rage is the key factor in his intention to kill.

**Shooter: Kip Kinkel**

Langman Typology: Psychotic

Special distinctions: Kinkel’s shooting is one of the few in the study that predates Columbine. Coincidentally, he also wore a black trench coat to hide his weapons as he went to the school where the shooting took place.

Background: Kinkel was the youngest of two and born to two teachers. He reportedly had a loving and nurturing home life, however, there are indications that he struggled with mental health from an early age. His family had a history of mental health issues on both sides. His sister was a gifted star student, creating a difficult sibling and familial structure for him, which is a trait that occurs frequently in some shooters. The family tried multiple avenues for helping Kip, but also kept their history of mental health issues private. Kinkel committed his murders right after he was arrested and suspended at school for buying a stolen handgun from another student.

Details of shooting: The evening of his suspension Kinkel first shot and killed his father and then his mother in an ambush. He then hid their bodies and began playing classical opera through the house. The next day he drove to the school armed with multiple guns, knives, and over 1000 rounds of ammunition and opened fire. He fatally wounded 2 students before needing to reload at which point the students subdued and disarmed him. They held him until the police came at which time, he retrieved one of his hidden knives and attacked a police officer hoping to be killed. He was taken alive. Kinkel killed 4 people.
Summary of writings: Kinkel’s writings come in the form of short journals, and have the unique caveat of being written before, during, and after his shooting. Two journals were written some time before the shooting. One was done after he killed his parents, and one was done after the shooting at the school. In the two before the shooting, he laments his low social status, his inability to function or connect with others as well as his sanity. He also laments the rejection of an object of his affection. The second journal is similar but focuses more on love and the rejection of this unnamed person. In the letter right after killing his parents he questions his actions but also depicts them as acts of benevolence. He feels like his parents would not want to live with the embarrassment of him being a felon. He indicates that he is aware of what he is doing and what he is about to do and feels compelled to do it despite knowing that it is a horrible act. The fourth writing is a statement of remorse after his arrest. It is apologetic and offers no explanation or justification.

**Shooter: Dylan Klebold**

Langman Typology: Psychotic

Special distinctions: He was one of the perpetrators of the Columbine massacre, the deadliest school shooting of its time and was the first shooting of it’s time to attain national attention.

Background: Klebold had an effective and nurturing home with no known trauma. He was described as intelligent. In high school he began to display anti-social behavior along with some of his peers (one of which was Eric Harris). Some peers and adults describe Dylan as a follower and Harris as the real leader of their friend group. He was described as relatively quiet and varying reports indicate some level of bullying and ostracism from “jock” kids at the school. During high school, Klebold and Harris began to show signs of disruption. Both began drinking and smoking. Klebold and his friends, known as the “Trench Coat Mafia” (TCM), participated
in “missions” where they would sneak out and commit acts of delinquency and vandalism, often involving fireworks, egging houses, and other forms of mischief. This culminated in his arrest, along with Harris’, for which they received probation and a diversion program. They both completed the program with favorable reviews. The shooting occurred a little over a year afterward.

Details of Shooting: See Eric Harris section.

Summary of writings: Klebold’s writings are various journals that he kept over a few years before the shooting. They vacillate between frustration at his social and emotional state, fear and loathing toward others (often “jocks”) who ostracized him, and eccentric and existential pining’s on existence and life. In multiple passages he repeats his frustrations with his life, girls, and society. There are some liberal uses of hate speech, a lot of direct threats of violence, plenty of fantasies related to guns, and a significant level of self-aggrandizement. In many entries Dylan laments over his superiority over others and looks at that as a reason for his ostracism. His writings typify almost every element one might expect from a school shooter. Suicide and the wish for death were also very common in his writings.

**Shooter: T.J Lane**

Langman Typology- Traumatized/Psychopathic

Special distinctions: Lane’s only notable distinction is in his post shooting behavior which prompted Langman to add the psychopathic label to him. He has shown little remorse for his actions and has taunted the families of his victims. He also broke out of prison briefly in 2014.

Background: T.J Lane’s backstory is less detailed than others. He was born in Ohio and had a troubled childhood. His mother had issues with alcohol and his father had multiple incidents of
domestic violence, one of which garnered jail time. He was in the custody of his grandparents at the time of the shooting. Lane was said to be a target of bullying by many of his peers, but it is indicated that he also had comparatively higher levels of social efficacy compared to other shooters. He seemed to target specific individuals, namely a rival male who was dating his ex-girlfriend, as opposed to other shooters who target either a specific population or anyone at random. Although he had a traumatic background that slotted him in the traumatized category, his behavior after his incident resulted in Langman adding psychopathic to his profile. He wore a T shirt that said ‘killer’ during his trial, made a sexually crass joke about his victims, and gave the middle finger to a crowd. He also tried to fake psychotic traits as a means of defense. Further, he has been a difficult prisoner and successfully escaped prison for a brief period in 2014. He has said little about his motives directly and offered no remorse since his shooting. His behavior and the content of his writing indicates that he was seeking infamy through his act.

Details of shooting: Lane entered Chadron High School, which he did not attend, seemingly under the cover of being a normal student. At breakfast time in the cafeteria he stood and opened fire on a group of students sitting at a specific table. He then fled the area firing more shots before dropping the gun. He was apprehended later in the day. Lane shot 6 people, killing 3 of them.

Summary of writings: Lane posted a poem on his Facebook page a little less than 2 months before the shooting. The poem tells the story of a downtrodden man seeking to gain power and influence. It goes on to depict a woman in a castle with other peers, who are eventually killed by the man. Many of the phrases used in the poem clearly allude to power fantasies, feelings of isolation and separation, and self-aggrandizement before ending with the phrase: “Die, all of you.”
Shooter: Adam Lanza

Langman Typology: Psychotic

Special distinctions: Lanza is one of only a few shooters with confirmed diagnoses of an Autism Spectrum Disorder. He is also unique in the fact that he targeted small children.

Background: Lanza lived a relatively uneventful and trauma free life outside of the difficulties of coping with being on the Autism spectrum and dealing with bullying and social ostracism because of it. He was also abnormally skinny and physically very frail. Multiple psychologists and mental health workers engaged with Lanza over the years, none of which detected a hint of violence. Lanza’s parents divorced a few years before his shooting spree, but he had not talked to his father for 2 years before it occurred.

Details of shooting: Lanza first murdered his mother at their home. He then drove to the school where she worked and broke into it using his weapon. Upon entering the school, he opened fire killing 26 people, 20 of whom were children aged 6 and 7.

Summary of writings: Lanza’s writings are relatively unique as they were not written to explicitly seek the attention of people after his shooting. His writings include message board posts from a shock website, and multiple texts from various private writings. In his writings he consistently speaks to the failure and uselessness of culture, morality, and society. There are some indications of pedophilic desires in some of his writing as he was labeled a pedophile by his peers and writes a short argument in defense of relationships between boys and men.

Shooter: Gavin Long AKA Cosmo Sepentera

Langman Typology (not covered by Langman’s work): Aberrant
Special distinctions: Long is one of few African American spree shooters. He specifically targeted police officers during a civil rights march in 2016.

Background: Long had a relatively healthy childhood outside of a reportedly neglectful father figure who had minimal interaction with him after he split with his mother. He took some college courses and served in the military including a deployment to Iraq. After his time in the military, he engaged with the Office of Veteran Affairs for several years with complaints about PTSD. He was attempting to work as a nutritionist, spiritual advisor, and motivational speaker. Long had some extreme views in terms of race, society, and government. He felt that black people needed to overthrow the American government and that blacks were racially superior to all other races. He was a part of multiple fringe and separatist groups. There were some concerns by his family regarding his mental health, but there is little evidence that he received treatment in the years before the attack. Long was married to a woman in 2009 and they divorced 2 years later. He had no children and did not seem to have regular work at any point after his military service.

Details of shooting: Long traveled from Kansas City Missouri to Baton Rouge Louisiana shortly after protest marches in Baton Rouge following the shooting death of Alton Sterling, an unarmed black man shot by police officers in the summer of 2016. This was the first of two high profile police killings of unarmed black men in less than a week and was one of many high-profile killings of unarmed African American men by police or citizens over the course of several years. Long felt called to action. He was seen in several places with a high-powered rifle before police were called. When they arrived, he opened fire killing 3 and wounding 3 more before being killed by a police sniper.

Summary of writings: Longs writings for this study come in the form of multiple video blogs he posted on YouTube. He also wrote several books that were not available for analysis. Long’s
YouTube videos included various topics, but he would always come back to health, spirituality, manhood, and God. The main videos used were right after a shooting similar to his occurred in Dallas and the one he recorded right before he did his shooting. In both, he speaks of the need for black people to fight back and retaliate. He looked down upon marching and passive resistance. At a certain point, he picks up his assault weapon and talks about using it to defend black people.

**Shooter: Gang Lu**

Langman Typology: Aberrant

Special distinctions: Lu’s shooting is the oldest of the sample. Lu is also the only first-generation immigrant in the sample.

Background: Lu’s background is obscured, but what is known is that he came to the states to attend graduate school at the University of Iowa. He finished his doctorate in 6 years at the age of 28 and months later committed the shooting. He was described by colleagues after the shooting as combative and temperamental. He was angry for not receiving an award for his dissertation that he felt he deserved and needed to find work in his field. He also felt that there was a conspiracy against him by faculty members.

Details of shooting: Lu attended a conference meeting with several members of the University of Iowa faculty. After a time, he left the room and came back with a gun and opened fire. Lu explicitly targeted his victims for their role in him not receiving the award he desired. He then walked to another area of campus and shot and killed an administrator who denied his grievance over the matter and shot a student unrelated to the issue on his way out. He then walked to
another room in the building and shot himself in the head. Lu killed 5 people including himself and wounded one other.

Summary of writings: Lu allegedly wrote multiple letters, but only two were made public. One of these letters was to his older sister. In it he apologizes for the harm he might cause his family, but in no way shows hesitance for what he is about to do. He also takes a moment to talk about his sexual exploits with girls both in China and in the states. He speaks to the idea that he was not given a choice and had to retaliate. In the other letter, set to be a manifesto of sort, he explains the need for persecuted people to stand up and fight. He spends some time explaining his appreciation for America’s gun rights and their purpose in supporting oppressed people. Through most of it he explains how his professors cheated and mistreated him.

**Shooter: Evan Ramsey**

Langman Typology: Traumatized

Special distinctions- Ramsey was unique in that he was a white racial minority among his community of predominantly Native American peers in Bethel Alaska. Also unique is the fact that his father had a violent standoff with police after taking hostages at a newspaper office.

Background: Ramsey had a highly tumultuous upbringing. His father spent a large chunk of Evan’s early life in prison after committing a rampage of his own. His mother became alcoholic and lost custody of Evan and his brothers at times, partially due to constant abusive partners. Evan grew up relatively poor in a small Alaskan town. Reports indicate that Evan was incessantly bullied and mistreated by his peers. He was not a loner though and had some friends, at least two of which are said to have provided some assistance with planning his attack. Evan had a significant trauma history, aside from his alcoholic mother, and imprisoned biological
father. He reported suffering from sexual abuse at the hands of a foster parent’s son. Evan was quiet, reserved, and socially awkward. Later evaluations of him indicate that he suffered from depression at an early age, and he was said to have attempted suicide at the age of 10. It is indicated through later interviews and reports on his shooting that Evan was seeking notoriety from his attacks. However, he also states that he wanted people to stop messing with him.

Details of shooting: Ramsey rode the school bus armed with a shotgun. He entered the student commons area and shot a popular student in the abdomen before opening fire into the crowd. He was accosted by a teacher who attempted to calm him. He ran from the teacher and eventually met with the school principal who he shot and killed before being confronted by police. He aimed the shotgun at himself but stopped and was arrested by police. Ramsey shot 4 people, killing 2 of them.

Summary of writings: Ramsey’s writings are short but clearly indicative of an angry and troubled youth. He starts off by opining over the damage a shotgun can do to a person, before expressing his desire to show people how “Fucked up and cruel the world is.” He discusses being depressed, lonely, and rejected. He also telegraphs that he did not plan on surviving the incident.

**Shooter: Dylann Roof**

Langman Typology (Not covered in Langman’s studies): Aberrant

Special distinctions- Roof is unique for explicitly targeting an “opposing” group in contrast to the indiscriminate killing of random people. It is also the most explicitly racially motivated shooting in the sample.

Background- Reports on Roof’s childhood and youth indicate some dysfunction but minimal significant trauma. His parents split and he grew up in an unstable environment due to the financial
challenges of his parents. Relatives and others reported that Roof was quiet and socially awkward, but Roof also seemed to have friends, including multiple friends that were African American. He dropped out of high school after repeating the 9th grade and seemingly lived nomadically between different family members until the shooting. At some point in the years prior, he discovered white supremacist rhetoric and began to become radicalized. He reportedly told multiple friends of his plans to commit a mass shooting.

Details of shooting: Roof entered Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church on June 17th, 2015 and sat with multiple parishioners during a bible study. He reportedly said little during the study but once they bowed their heads in prayer, Roof pulled gun from his fanny pack and opened fire. He then left the scene and went on the run. He was caught the following day after being recognized by a citizen several hundred miles away from the scene of the crime. He killed 9 people.

Summary of writings. Roof’s writings have the unique distinction of allowing us to look at him before and after the shooting. In his writings before the shooting he focuses on how he developed his racist world view and cites issues with the current state of the world as it pertains to the problems of white people. He expressed the need to do something. He also expressed opinions on other races throughout the writing. He states that his goal is to spur white people and black people to war. His second writing was done after his capture as he awaited trial. In it he responds to some of the stories that have come out about him, including the idea that he had black friends which he denies. He shows, and explicitly expresses no remorse and doubles down on the importance and necessity of what he did.

**Shooter: Elliot Rodger**

Langman Typology: Psychopathic
Special distinctions: Has one of the more significant legacies of all spree shooters as a figure of the “incel” movement. Incels are a nebulous online community of men who are “involuntarily celibate.” Their online activity vacillates between self-deprecating memes and jokes shared on message boards, to elements of self-help, to aggressive misogyny and advocacy of violence toward women. Roger’s beliefs expressed in his autobiography are often considered foundational to incel worldviews. Multiple shooters have identified him and his belief system as influential. He was also of partially Asian descent and was the child of immigrants.

Background: Rodger lived a relatively privileged but difficult life due to severe social inefficacy and possibly being on the Autism spectrum. He was the child of British and Chinese immigrants. His father was a musician with Hollywood ties, and his mother also worked on film production. They divorced when he was still very young, and he had a strained relationship with both parents at times. He grew up upper middle class and struggled socially from an early age according to his own words. Because of his social anxieties and issues, he did not attend school regularly and eventually graduated from a home school program. He inconsistently attended community colleges before his shooting. His family did provide mental health support at different times in his life.

Background: Many people who knew Rodger were not overly surprised by his actions. He was known to have significant social issues and extreme views on women. He had few friends and weak familial ties. The few friends he had were eventually alienated due to his unyielding obsession with “fixing” women and creating a world without sex. He was passive and did not have many violent outbursts before the time of his shooting. At that time, he began to act out assaulting men and women at parties and in public. His escalating actions never caught up to
him, however, the police did visit him under suspicion that he would commit a shooting after some of his videos were found. Unfortunately, they did not find cause to question or detain him.

Details of shooting: Rodger first stabbed his two roommates and a friend of theirs to death in his apartment. He then went to a sorority house seeking entry, but when it was denied he began shooting people nearby, killing three women and wounding another. Next he drove to a deli and shot and killed another student. He then drove around the area shooting at pedestrians and striking people with his car before being accosted by police and exchanging gunfire until shooting himself in the head. Rodger killed 3 people by stabbing, and 4 by firearm including himself. He also wounded 9 people by gunfire and struck 7 people with his car.

Summary of writings: Rodger filmed multiple video blogs weeks and days before his shooting, along with writing a 150-page autobiography where he goes over his life from childhood up to his final planning of his rampage. In his autobiography, he consistently complains about how the denial of sex, attention, and affection is what drove him to kill. He expresses how women don’t know how to choose mates. He complains about the men that women often choose calling them “brutes.” He shows significant and often violent jealousy toward more socially effective men, even declaring that he would kill his own little brother because he could tell he would be popular and charismatic, an act he did not complete. He mentions that he wants to create a world where no one could have sex or that only certain people would be allowed to do so.

**Shooter: Jeffrey Weise**

Langman Typology: Traumatized

Special distinctions- Weise was of Native American descent and lived on a native reservation, making him unique among shooters.
Background: Weise lived a troubled life that included the suicide of his father and alcoholism from his mother, that possibly contributed to a car accident that resulted in her having a traumatic brain injury. He also lost his maternal grandmother two years before his rampage at the age of 15. There was significant instability in Jeffrey’s home life. He moved a lot and lived with various people over the course of his life. He had multiple engagements with mental health and social services as a teenager.

Background: It is indicated that Jeffrey had issues from his family and his school. He had one hospitalization for suicidal thoughts a year before his shooting. There is not a lot of information about bullying in his background or his work, but the indication is there. He wrote poetry and fiction with violent and dark elements and idolized Adolf Hitler. He joined an online Neo-Nazi discussion group and called himself a Native-Nationalist. He seemed to be annoyed at the proliferation of African American culture among Native American people.

Details of shooting: He first killed his grandfather and his grandfather’s girlfriend at their home. He then drove to the school and killed a security guard before going inside the school where he killed a teacher and five other students. A brief shootout with the police ensued afterward and he eventually killed himself. Wiese killed 10 people including himself.

Description of writings: Jeffrey wrote several poems with dark undertones that alluded to suicidal thoughts and a low self-worth, as well as low opinion of society. He wrote a short violent and graphic horror story where the main character expressed hope that his school would be victim of a school shooting. He had several dialogues on message boards discussing his opinions on nationalism, and one that detailed a story he felt predicted his death. Jeffrey also created a short cartoon which depicted a character shooting at a school before committing
suicide. In some writings, he seemed self-aware of his struggles with mental health and hopeful for the idea of improving.
**Table 1.1 Themes from Shooters**

**Sampling of Themes/Codes from the Data**

Major theme A: Masculine Reclamation- These codes relate to words and phrases where the shooter is seeking to profess or reclaim a sense of power masculinity that they in some way feel has been taken from them, or they present classically toxically masculine ideas and avatars for their power such as an excessive love for guns, endorsing violence against women, or a disregard for the autonomy of women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code 1: Asserting Dominance</td>
<td>This code displays the recurring need for shooters to reclaim a sense of dominance, dominion, power, control, or importance. Usually it’s directed toward society, sometimes it relates to their school or town. It connects directly to their masculine identity and a need to feel empowered.</td>
<td>&quot;My belief is that if I say something, it goes. I am the law. If you don't like it, you die&quot; - Eric Harris &quot;I am the good guy. Humanity struck at me first by condemning me to experience 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&quot; - Elliot Rodger &quot;But the true winner, he has nothing at all. Enduring the pain of waiting for that castle to fall. Through his good deeds, the rats and the fleas. He will have for what he pleads, through the eradication of disease. So, to the castle he proceeds, like an ominous breeze through the trees. &quot;Stay back!&quot; The Guards screamed as they were thrown to their knees. 'Oh God, have mercy, please!&quot; - T.J Lane &quot;By destroying we create. We create the feelings in you of what it is like to be the victim, what it is like to be fucked and destroyed.&quot; - Seung Hui Cho &quot;I'm an alpha male. I stand up. I stand firm. And I stand for mine. Till the end. Till the last day in this flesh&quot; - Gavin Long</td>
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<tr>
<td>Code 2: Reclaiming a Right</td>
<td>This code displays the need for shooters to reclaim their masculinity. Shooters express the idea that they have been wronged in some way by the removal or</td>
<td>“Those girls deserved to be dumped in boiling water for the crime of not giving me the attention and adoration I so rightfully deserve!” - Elliot Rodger “When people talking bout, don’t defend yourself just pray, and believe and march and peaceful protest… I don’t know that’s just not me though. I follow nature…Self preservation is the first law of nature…you have the right to preserve yourself.” - Gavin Long</td>
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<td>Code 3: Glorification of Violence</td>
<td>withholding of a right or privilege. They speak of their acts as acts of restitution where their rightful experience, existence, etc. is either avenged or restored by their acts.</td>
<td>“And here I am, 26, with no friends, no job, no girlfriend, a virgin. I long ago realized that society likes to deny people like me these things. People who are elite, people who stand with the gods.” - Chris Harper-Mercer</td>
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<tr>
<td>This code displays how the shooters often affirm or reclaim their masculinity through their willingness to enact violence against their enemies or society as a whole</td>
<td>“I have thought to myself, what kind of damage can a 12 gauge slug do to a human’s internal organs or their head? Well today I found out, and so did everyone else that is in school . . .” - Evan Ramsey</td>
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<td>“Love at first sight is only in movies. Where the people in the movies are better than you. That is why you go to a pone [pawn] shop and buy an AR-15 because you are going to execute every last mother fucking one of you.” - Kip Kinkel</td>
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<td>“Hello. My name is Nick and I'm gonna be the next school shooter of 2018. My goal is at least 20 people with an AR-15 and a couple tracer rounds. “ - Nikolas Cruz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Code 4: Self Aggrandizement</td>
<td>This code displays how the shooters will affirm or reclaim their masculinity or a sense of power and significance through their act. It also relates to shooters who have developed a sense of grandiosity almost as a defense mechanism to how ostracized and</td>
<td>“Thanks to you, I die, like Jesus Christ, to inspire generations of the Weak and Defenseless people.” - Seung Hui Cho</td>
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<td>“I decided that my destiny in life is to rise to power so I can impose my ideology on the world and set everything right.” - Elliot Rodger</td>
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<td>“I am Death. And you have always been the sod. So repulsive and so odd. You never even deserved the presence of God, and yet, I am here.” - T.J Lane</td>
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<td>“You gotta stand on your rights, you see that’s what separates me from the 7 billion. That’s why I’m so powerful because I stand on my rights.” - Gavin Long</td>
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</table>
rejected they feel by society.

“...I believe that I was stopped from suicide by God because I have to do another massacre. That’s right. In my view, I think I must do a massacre. . . . And I’m not doing it for revenge. I love that school. I’m doing it to save them.”-Alvaro Castillo

This code displays how the shooters express or contextualize their acts as acts of restitution or vengeance for a wrong done upon them. Sometimes it’s literal, but mostly it’s a sense of being wronged by society or a system.

“The whole scene looks pretty like the famous story of “The Count of Monte Cristo” by Alex Dumas. Since then I have sworn to myself that I would revenge at any cost, sooner or later”-Gang Lu

“I love it! sometime in April me and V [Vodka, i.e., Dylan] will get revenge and will kick natural selection up a few notches.”-Eric Harris

"Society is tightening its grip on me, & (blank[1]) soon I & will snap. We will have our revenge on society, & then be free, to exist in a timeless spaceless place of pure happiness.”-Dylan Klebold

“You have never felt a single ounce of pain your whole life, thus, by destroying you, by giving you pain, we attempt to show you responsibilities and meanings of other people’s lives.” Seung Hui Cho

This code displays how some shooters evoke patriarchal dominion over women whether stating that the act is in protection of them, or that women should be required to obey them as men. It is another example of the need to reaffirm masculine identity.

“I have noticed a great disdain for race mixing with white women within the white nationalists community, bordering on insanity it. These women are victims, and they can be saved. Stop”-Dylann Roof

“When the girls would rather go with alpha thug black men, we can all agree that somethings wrong with the world. When good individuals like myself are alone, but wicked black men get the loot, like some sort of vaginal pirate, it’s not fair.”-Chris Harper-Mercer
### Code 7: Gun/Weapon Glorification

This code displays statements where shooters take a moment to glorify their weapons, often in a manner that indicates the power they feel from them, or the power the weapon gives them over other people’s lives.

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<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Private guns make every person equal, no matter what/who he/she is. They also make it possible for a individual to fight against a conspired/incorporated organization such as Mafia or Dirty University officials”</td>
<td>Gang Lu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Well, today I gave Arlene[1] a complete makeover. I turned her into Eric’s shotgun[2]. I sawed off the barrel and stock of the shotgun with a hacksaw. It took a lot less time than I thought…”</td>
<td>Alvaro Castillo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Well folks, today was a very important day in the history of Reb today, along with Vodka and someone else who I won’t name, 21 we went downtown and purchased the following: a double barrel 12 ga. Shotgun, a pump action 12 ga. Shotgun, a 9mm carbine, 250 9mm rounds, 15 12 ga slugs, 40 shotgun shells, 2 switch blade knives, and a total of 4 10-round clips for the carbine. We . . . . . . have . . . . . . GUNS! we fucking got them you sons of bitches! HA!”</td>
<td>Eric Harris</td>
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### Major theme B: Social Ostracism, Alienation and Spite
- These codes relate to words and phrases where the shooter expresses apathy, antipathy, or general contempt regarding society and their social station.

### Code 8: Bitterness Toward Women/Gendered Violence

Similar to the code about misogyny, this code differentiates in that these statements evoke a call to action against women (and sometimes men), often in the form of violence because they believe women have wronged them or rejected them.

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<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I will punish all of you for it. [laughs] On the day of retribution I’m going to enter the hottest sorority house of UCSB. And I will slaughter every spoiled, stuck-up, blond slut I see inside there.”</td>
<td>Elliot Rodger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Oh God, have mercy, please!” The castle, she gasped and then so imprisoned her breath, to the shallow confines of her [1]fragile chest…Now! Feel death”</td>
<td>T.J. Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 9: Wanting to Spread a Message</td>
<td>This code displays how many shooters wanted to express a specific message to society through their actions. Still in the realm of masculine reclamation and power, they wanted the ability to be heard.</td>
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<td>“This decision was made from an inner power, not by any external influence. And that message of self-preservation goes out to everyone.”- Gavin Long</td>
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<td>“What are you going to do with the blood money? Buy a new Mercedes? You want to brainwash your bratty, snobby kids that its right to steal from the poor, the Weak, and the Defenseless to always stay in power? The fat surpluses that you roll on everyday aren’t enough? Fuck you. Your answer rings loud and clear. I say we take up the cross, Children of Ishmael, take up our guns and knives and any sharp objects, and take no prisoners and spare no lives until our last breath and last ounce of energy.”-Seung Hui Cho</td>
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<td>“I have no choice. I am not in the position to, alone, go into the ghetto and fight… We have no skinheads, no real KKK, no one doing anything but talking on the internet. Well someone has to have the bravery to take it to the real world, and I guess that has to be me.”-Dylann Roof</td>
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<tr>
<th>Code 10: Disapproval of Society</th>
<th>This code displays how many shooters wanted to express a specific message to society. This code displays how shooters expressed their disappointment and disapproval of society. This was the most saturated code among all shooters.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Some people say that you should love everyone. But that is impossible. Look at our history it is full of death, depression, rape, wars and diseases. I also do not believe in love at first sight. But I do believe in hate at first sight. Therefore love is a much harder feeling to experience.”- Kip Kinkel</td>
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<td>“I concluded that women are flawed. There is something mentally wrong with the way their brains are wired, as if they haven’t evolved from animal-like thinking. They are incapable of reason or thinking rationally. They are like animals, completely controlled by their primal, depraved emotions and impulses. That is why they are attracted to barbaric, wild, beast-like men. They are beasts themselves. Beasts should not be able to have any rights in a civilized society.”- Elliot Rodger</td>
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<td>“YOU KNOW WHAT I LOVE!!!!? Natural SELECTION!!!!!!!!! God damn it’s the best thing that ever happened to the Earth. Getting rid of all the stupid and weak organisms…..but its all natural!!! YES! I wish the government would just take off every warning label. So then all the dumbasses would either severely hurt themselves or DIE! And boom, no more dumbasses.”- Eric Harris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 11: Looking to Become Famous</td>
<td>“I figure by the time you guys are reading this I’ll probably have done what I told EVERYONE I was going to do. Just hope 12 gauges don’t kick too hard but I do hope the shells hit more than 1 person because I am angry at more than 1 person.”- Evan Ramsey</td>
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<td>“On an interesting note, I have noticed that so many people like him[1] are all alone and unknown, yet when they spill a little blood, the whole world knows who they are. A man who was known by no one, is now known by everyone. His face splashed across every screen, his name across the lips of every person on the planet, all in the course of one day. Seems the more people you kill, the more you’re in the limelight.”- Chris Harper-Mercer</td>
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<td>“Directors will be fighting over this story. I know we’re gonna have followers because we’re so fucking God-like. We’re not exactly human — we have human bodies but we’ve evolved into one step above you, fucking human shit.”- Dylan Klebold</td>
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<tr>
<th>Major theme C: Internalized suffering- These codes relate to the ways in which the shooters expressed and experienced suffering and pain, often in relation to their masculine performance, and usually as partial explanations for their actions.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Code 12: Awareness of their Issues and Limitations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Code 13: Reflections on Bullying Victimization</td>
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<tr>
<td>This code displays how shooters discussed bullying. Some explicitly speak to getting payback for bullying, some talk about it passively as if it had minimal impact on them. Some just discuss the topic in a general sense. Because there wasn’t a clear pattern, all discussion of bullying was combined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hey Everybody!! I feel rejected, rejected, not so much alone, but rejected. I feel this way because the day-to-day treatment I get usually it’s positive but the negative is like a cut, it doesn’t go away really fast. I figure by the time you guys are reading this I’ll probably have done what I told EVERYONE I was going to do.” - Evan Ramsey</td>
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<tr>
<td>“For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Can you feel the pain that you fucked us in, you Descendants of Satan? Well, can you feel it? All the shit you’ve given me, right back at you with hollow points.” - Seung Hui Cho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Unbeknownst to the horror and misery the female gender would inflict upon me later in my life. In the present day, these girls would treat me like the scum of the earth; but at that time, we were all equals. Such bitter irony.” - Elliot Rodger</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>Code 14: Suicidal Ideation/Glorification</th>
<th>Their own conditions or the ways in which their actions are wrong.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This code displays how shooters spoke on their desire to commit suicide. For the most part, statements where shooters spoke of the desire to die as a result of being shot by police during their rampages were left out.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Only the worthy are saved, y’know. I don’t know, but what I do know is I’m a retarded fuck for ever believing things would change for me. I’m starting to regret sticking around, I should’ve taken the razor blade express last time around[1]… Well, whatever, man. Maybe they’ve got another shuttle comin’ around sometime soon?” - Jeffrey Weise</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I don’t fit in here 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 — my soul.” - Dylan Klebold</td>
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## TABLES AND FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Feelings of Loneliness and Isolation</td>
<td>More so, this theme seeks to show examples where shooters looked at suicide as a useful solution to their issues or pain. “Some will of course say I had so much to live for, but I don’t think so. I had no friends, no girlfriend, was all alone. I had no job, no life, no successes. What was it that was supposed to happen, what great event was it that was supposed to make me realize how much there was going for me. But for people like me there is another world, a darker world that welcomes us. For people like us this all that’s left.” - Chris Harper Mercer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This code displays shooters pressing feelings of being alone, shunned, and misunderstood. It indicates how these feelings led to their actions and their disassociation from their peers and society as a whole. “Removing myself from social settings. Being around others is tiring…99% of the time will not initiate a conversation. If discourse is unavoidable or redundant action socially unacceptable responses.”- James Holmes “I am nothing. I am no one. My life is nothing and meaningless. Everything that I hold dear I let go beyond your half. Every day I see the world ending another day. I live a lone life, live in seclusion and solitude. I hate everyone and everything.”- Nikolas Cruz “I sit here all alone. I am always alone. I don’t know who I am. I want to be something I can never be. I try so hard every day. But in the end, I hate myself for what I’ve become. Every single person I know means nothing to me. I hate every person on this earth. I wish they could all go away. You all make me sick. I wish I was dead.” - Kip Kinkel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uncategorized Codes- These two codes were significant to the interpretation of the data but were not effectively categorized by any of the previous core themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Glorification of Past Shooters</td>
<td>This theme displays how the shooters lionize and revere previous shooters as influencers or martyrs. In some way they see previous shooters as almost prophetic or messianic. They seek to situate their acts within “Today is the big day for Operation Columbine [1] it’s time that the world be reminded of Columbine. I will die today; I just killed my father. It felt good!”- Alvaro Castillo “Columbine wasn't an isolated incident: it was the apex of a string of school shootings which began increasing with Lu Gang and Wayne Lo [1] in the early 1990s. Despite American students committing fewer school shootings in 2000-2009 than they did in 1990-1999, the rate of attempts actually increased beyond their pre-Columbine level. Columbine caused Americans to begin taking the potential for school shootings seriously.” - Adam Lanza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 17: Racist Statements</td>
<td>the same tradition of violent acts of societal resistance.</td>
<td>“And here I am, 26, with no friends, no job, no girlfriend, a virgin. I long ago realized that society likes to deny people like me these things. People who are elite, people who stand with the gods. People like Elliot Rodger, Vester Flanagan, The Columbine kids, Adam Lanza and Seung Cho.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 17: Racist Statements</td>
<td>This theme displays how the shooters take opportunities to evoke racist thoughts. Often these statements have minimal indication that they influenced the shooters motivation. More commonly, they seem to inform the shooters overall ideology or stand as an opportunity for the shooter to be “shocking” or “edgy”. Also, many shooters revere Adolf Hitler and identify with white supremacy groups and teachings. The “othering” nature of racism informs the shooters’ ability to see their victims as subhuman.</td>
<td>“If you recall your history the Nazis came up with a ‘final solution’ to the Jewish problem. Kill them all. Well, in case you haven’t figured it out yet, I say ‘KILL MANKIND’ no one should survive.- Dylan Klebold”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 17: Racist Statements</td>
<td>“I would say that Hispanics and Muslims have similar IQs and violence levels, but unfortunately the Muslims violent behavior is increased exponentially by their sick religion.”- Dylann Roof</td>
<td>“I came across this Asian guy who was talking to a white girl. The sight of that filled me with rage. I always felt as if white girls thought less of me because I was half-Asian, but then I see this white girl at the party talking to a full-blooded Asian. I never had that kind of attention from a white girl! And white girls are the only girls I’m attracted to, especially the blondes. How could an ugly Asian attract the attention of a white girl, while a beautiful Eurasian like myself never had any attention from them? I thought with rage. I glared at them for a bit, and then decided I had been insulted enough.” - Elliot Rodger</td>
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### Final Coding Themes by Langman’s Typology

*Table 1.2 Traumatized Shooters*

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Nikolas Cruz</th>
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### Table 1.3 Psychotic Shooters

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<th>Kip Kinkel</th>
<th>James E Holmes</th>
<th>Dylan Klebold</th>
<th>Alvaro Castillo</th>
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<th>Mean</th>
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### Table 1.4 Psychopathic Shooters

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Table 1.5 Aberrant Shooters

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Figure 1.1 Code Totals by Langman’s Typology
Figure 1.2 Code Means Grouped by Race