

**Mass Murder in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:**

**From Assumptions to Truths**

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From Assumptions to Truths**

A THESIS

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## Abstract

Mass murder is the killing of four or more people in one incident. There is a national lack of awareness of the most predominant type of mass murder. This thesis hypothesized that the majority of mass murders in the United States are mass murder familicides. It is further hypothesized that most mass murder familicides are committed by Caucasian men in their 30s and 40s.

Data from two sources were used: the USA Today Behind the Bloodshed database, and the FBI's Uniform Crime Report Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) for the years 2006-2016. It was also necessary to use supplemental data from media accounts where data was missing or in doubt. Mass murder familicides were tallied from both databases. They were then categorized to determine if mass murder familicide was the most common form of mass murder, testing hypothesis one. Ages and race of offenders were then tallied to determine support for hypothesis two, that most offenders were Caucasian and in their 30s and 40s. The mass murder familicides were then divided into two categories, the classic and the chaotic, and the frequency was tallied.

Data from the USA Today Behind the Bloodshed database and the SHR support hypothesis one that mass murder familicide is the most common form of mass murder. Data from both databases partially support hypothesis two, that Caucasian men in their 30s and 40s were the primary perpetrators. The age results skewed younger than expected, with average ages in the 30s in all years but 2012 for the USA Today database, and in 2006 and 2007 in the 20s in the SHR.

## Introduction

Recalling memorable events to help mark the passing of time in life is common. We use these events as a reference, reminder, or example to filter meaning in our everyday understanding of the world. The event could be pleasurable and celebratory, such as a birthday or anniversary, or it can be sad and devastating, such as September 11, 2001, the bombing of the World Trade Center, or April 19, 1995, the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building. It can mean the death of many families, or the death of only one family.

Scholars are not immune from forming impressions of events; in fact, it is their understanding, filtered through the lens of their disciplines, that informs the public through education and publication. When the subject is mass murder, two events dating back to 1966 have been markers for scholars and ordinary citizens alike. On July 14, 1966, Richard Speck murdered eight student nurses in one incident. A little over two weeks later, on August 1, 1966, Charles Whitman murdered fourteen and wounded thirty, mainly students, but a few from at least two blocks away, from atop the University of Texas bell tower. He was then killed by police. It was later discovered that Whitman had also killed his mother and his wife within twenty-four hours of his attack.

The truth about these crimes is that they are horrendous and frightening. The victims were chosen at random, through no fault of their own, which means it could happen to anyone. But according to Duwe (2007), the 1966 crimes were not the beginning of a new phenomenon, but the start of a second wave of crime that started in the 1910s, peaked in the 1930s, and receded in the 1940s and 1950s.

Research on mass murder heightened in the 1980s. Numerous typologies were generated specifically explaining this phenomenon, notably by Fox and Levin (1985) and Dietz (1986). The evolution of thought and perspectives on mass murder are explored in this thesis. There is no unanimous set of typologies adhered to by all scholars, although they do have categories in common and new classifications are still being generated (i.e., Scott & Fleming, 2014; Liem & Reichelmann, 2014).

When exploring domestic violence and mass murder familicide, a typology can be constructed from the contributions of many authors. None of the individual pieces of literature reviewed provides an exhaustive explanation for the links between domestic violence and mass murder familicide. From Frazier's (1975) concepts of murder by proxy and suicide by proxy to Mailloux's (2014) explanation of anomicide, to Liem and Reichelmann's (2014) exploration of the range of family killing from the most intimate members to more distant relatives, there exists a continuum from a narrow definition of mass murder familicide to a more broad definition. This thesis illustrates this collection of thought and expands on it, with the addition of two new classifications by the author: classic and chaotic familicide.

A fairly recent possible typology for female family annihilators by Scott and Fleming (2014) was originally written by men about men. According to Liem and Reichelmann (2014), 95% of familicide perpetrators are men. There is little research on the 5% of women who commit familicide, so Scott and Fleming's (2014) article is a thought provoking contribution. They explore whether the same criteria should apply to female family annihilators that applies to males, namely the killing of a spouse or intimate partner. The women who were studied were heads of household with all of the responsibilities and stresses that entails. They were similar to male family annihilators in this manner, and also in their weapon choice – guns.

The purpose of this study is to examine extant mass murder typologies to determine which type is the most dominant. Second, it also explores the predominant race, age, and gender of the main perpetrators. The news media would lead us to believe that public killings are the dominant type of mass murder. Public killings receive enormous amounts of national news coverage while mass murder familicides usually only receive coverage at the local or regional level (Huff-Corzine et al., 2014).

It has been said by Hickey (2016), Holmes and Holmes (2001) and the USA Today Behind the Bloodshed database (2017), that familicide is the most common form of mass murder. Duwe (2007), in his historical research dating back to the early 1900s confirms that this was so throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The research for this thesis was conducted with data from the United States from 2006-2016, and may not be applicable to other countries.



## Literature Review

### The History of Mass Murder 1900-1960

The 1910s and 1920s were marked by labor conflicts. Violence between striking employees, strike breakers, and business owners was frequent. It was not uncommon for strikers acting as domestic terrorists to bomb buildings and incite riots. The perpetrators were not always caught. This was not the case, however, in the bombing of the Los Angeles Times building on October 1, 1910, in which 21 were killed and 19 wounded (Duwe, 2007). Accused of the crime were two brothers, James and John McNamera. They had been matched to other similar bombings, and both were heavily involved in labor organizations. Though James had Clarence Darrow as his attorney, he pled to a life sentence in exchange for a lesser plea for John, who received a 15 year sentence for another crime.

There were several significant mass murder events in the 1920s. One was the detonation of a bomb on Wall Street on September 16, 1920. The bomb had been placed on a horse-drawn wagon parked in front of the headquarters of J.P. Morgan. The blast killed 40 and wounded 200. Hundreds of suspects were questioned, but by 1922 no one had been charged (Duwe, 2007). Another significant bombing occurred on May, 18, 1927, in Bath, Michigan. Andrew Kehoe, age 55, killed his wife at their home, then travelled to the local school, where he detonated several bombs, killing 44, including himself, and wounding 95 (Duwe, 2007). Kehoe was an electrician and farmer. He had been hired by the school board to rewire the school, which gave him the opportunity to activate his deadly plan. Kehoe's farm would have been repossessed by the mortgage company within the week, and he felt that high school taxes prevented him from making his mortgage payments.

According to Duwe (2007), familicide was most prevalent in the 1920s, within the first crime wave of the twentieth century. “Almost three-fourths of the massacres from 1920 through 1929 were those in which the offender wiped out his family” (Duwe, 2007, p.50). Duwe (2007) speculates that economic factors in the farming industry, affected by issues in World War I, were a cause of increased stress. Divorce was also on the rise in the 1920s, second only to the rise of divorce in the 1970s (Duwe, 2007).

In presenting the history of mass murder, Duwe (2007) uses two sociological/criminological theories, strain theory and control theory, to explain why crime declined in the 1940s and 1950s. He does not use the theories as causes, but as tools to place the context of the decades in perspective. The most recent interpretation of strain theory comes from Robert Agnew (1985), who argues that anger is the prime source of crime-producing strain. Previously, Robert Merton (1938) and Emile Durkheim (1897), provided their own interpretations linking crime producing strain to anomie. Strain occurs when we cannot obtain that to which we aspire. This could include wealth or a fulfilling career. Opportunities are not distributed evenly throughout society; therefore, a part of society will always feel strain. People who have strain may turn to illegitimate means to achieve what they think they deserve. Strain theory predicts crime will increase in this environment. During the Post World War II era, in the late 1940s, many prosocial constructs increased in society. Marriage, employment, home ownership, opportunities for education, and even an increase in church attendance, were all positive influences. The American dream was accessible to more people, leading to a decline in the crime rate. From a control theory standpoint, we are all capable of committing crime, but belief in society’s rules helps keep us from crime. The drop in the crime rate would be a result of better socialization by parents or caretakers.

Despite the high profile of the Richard Speck and Charles Whitman murders in 1966, the 1960s and 1970s were a period of little research or publication on mass murder. The literature that was produced tended to focus more on psychological profiles of offenders and less on mass murder as a phenomenon (Duwe, 2007). It appears, if one does not look closely, as though there is a gap in the literature from 1966 to the 1980s; instead, there was an explosion of research on serial murder and mass murder.

### **History of the Typologies of Mass Murder**

Fox and Levin began researching mass murder in the early 1980s, resulting in their book *America's Growing Menace: Mass Murder* (1985). The study of mass murder was in its infancy then, despite showing signs of being a growing phenomenon since the 1960s (Duwe, 2007). Fox and Levin, at that time, called serial murder mass murder for serial killers who had a high victim count. They did, however, produce a short typology that would later be expanded in 1994. Their initial categories included family slayings, mass murder for profit or expediency, and killing for the sake of sex or sadism (Fox & Levin, 1985). The authors admit the last category fit the serial killer better than the mass killer. Fox and Levin were the first to address mass murder to a large audience with *America's Growing Menace: Mass Murder* (1985) and later *Overkill: Mass Murder and Serial Killing Exposed* (1994) both published in mass market paperback editions. It is fascinating to follow these scholars' research as it expanded and changed through the years.

Dr. Park Dietz weighed in on the study of mass murder in 1986 with an article. He offered a definition of mass murder not used by other scholars, then included a brief typology later expanded by Holmes and Holmes in 1992. Dietz defines "... mass murder as the willful

injuring of five or more persons of whom three or more are killed by a single offender in a single incident” (1986, p. 480). Dietz’s typology has three categories: family annihilators, pseudocommandos, and set-and-run killers. Family annihilators are usually males who kill their entire family (wife and children), and often themselves. An example of a family annihilator is Mark Short, of Sinking Spring, Pennsylvania, who killed his wife, two daughters, his son, his dog, then himself, on August 6, 2016. He was distraught over the breakup of his marriage and had been demoted at work for poor attendance. There was also some financial stress in the family due to his youngest daughter’s heart condition and the expensive medication she required after undergoing a heart transplant (Henshaw & Shuey, 2016). Pseudocommandos “are preoccupied by firearms and commit their raids after long deliberation” (Dietz, 1986, p. 482). Dietz uses as an example James Oliver Huberty of San Ysidro, California. Huberty was a gun collector who practiced target shooting in his basement. His wife had been known to brandish weapons at the neighbors. Huberty had moved to San Ysidro from Ohio with his family after losing his job and his home. He was only able to achieve modest employment in California, and soon also lost that job. On July 18, 1984 Huberty and his family had visited the zoo. His wife was tired and was taking a nap. Huberty woke her to tell her that he was “going to hunt humans” and armed himself with weapons and ammunition. He walked down to the local McDonald’s and began firing indiscriminately, killing 21, and wounding 19. He was killed by police (Holmes & Holmes, 2001). Dietz’s third category is the set-and-run killers “who employ techniques allowing themselves the possibility of escape before the deaths occur” (1986, p. 482). An example of a set-and-run killer is Timothy McVeigh, who bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995.

In 1992 and 1994, Holmes and Holmes expanded upon Dietz's typology, adding the disciple killer and disgruntled employee categories to the family annihilator, pseudocommando, and set-and-run killer categories. They would add even more categories in 2001, which will be discussed later. According to Holmes and Holmes, "The disciple killer follows the dictates of a charismatic leader" (1994, p. 83). "The hoped for gain of the disciple killer is generally expressive (psychological) rather than instrumental (material)" (Holmes & Holmes, 1994, p. 83). The classic example of disciple killers is the followers of Charles Manson.

Holmes and Holmes (1994) also expanded Dietz's pseudocommando category. They later dropped this category from their 2001 typology. The pseudocommando is preoccupied with weapons. His murderous plans are deliberate and carefully thought out. The pseudocommando seeks to right a wrong in his world. His victims are selected at random, and the only way victim and offender are related is that they are both in the same place at the same time. The pseudocommando's motivation is within his own psyche. "The anticipated gain of the pseudocommando is twofold. First, the activity of the mass kill calls attention to whatever issue the killer believes to be important. The second hoped for gain is less understandable. The killer wants his name to live in infamy" (Holmes & Holmes, 1994, p. 87). Geographic mobility is not an issue.

The disgruntled employee has often lost his job, or been placed on leave, or has been threatened with the loss of his job. He feels that his workplace issues are beyond his control. The killing site is often his place of employment. His victims are specific: those who have harmed him. The disgruntled employee, however, sometimes kills or wounds co-workers who were not involved in his dispute. An example of this type of killer is Patrick Sherrill, who in 1986 showed up at the post office in Edmond, Oklahoma where he worked, armed and ready to kill. He had

recently been reprimanded and feared he would lose his job. He arrived ready to kill supervisors, but when he got there he also began to fire indiscriminately at his co-workers, killing 14 and wounding 6 others, before killing himself. “The psychological sources of the disgruntled employee’s mentality are unknown” (Holmes & Holmes, 1994, p.88). Holmes and Holmes also state that the disgruntled employee may be taking psychotropic medication, seeing a mental health professional, and is often diagnosed as paranoid. “The victim selection process of the disgruntled employee who kills is initially nonrandom” (Holmes & Holmes, 1994, p. 88). “Disgruntled employees’ motivation to kill rests within their desire to ‘right a wrong.’ They kill to call attention to wrongs that they perceive to have been directed at and carried out against them. There is no external locus of motivation as there is for the disciple killer” (Holmes & Holmes, 1994, p. 88). The anticipated gains are psychological. “There is no money to be realized, no social justice issues to be exposed, nothing outside the world of work and the injustices that were committed there” (Holmes & Holmes, 1994, p.88). Spatial mobility is very limited. The disgruntled employee may have worked for his organization and lived in the same community for many years.

Holmes and Holmes elaborated on the set-and-run killer of Dietz’s typology in 1992 and again in 1994 and 2001 publications. Holmes and Holmes state that this killer is different from the other types of mass killers. His reasons for committing the crime could be revenge, seeking anonymous infamy, or killing for profit. Set-and-run killers are the most difficult to apprehend, as they have left the scene of the crime before the killing begins (such as in placing a bomb on a timer, or setting a fire). Food and medicine tampering is also the occupation of the set-and-run killer. He does not know who the victim will be, and he is not at the scene of the crime after he taints the food or medications intended to kill. The set-and-run killer’s removing himself from

the scene is contrary to the family annihilator or disgruntled employee, who will often kill themselves at the scene, or provoke law enforcement into killing them. An example of a set-and-run killer is Timothy McVeigh, who on April 19, 1995 parked a truck containing a bomb in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, killing 168. McVeigh had left a car parked a few blocks away to make his escape (Frontline, n.d.).

In 1996, Levin and Fox elaborated on their typology of mass murder. In 1985, their categories included family massacres, mass killings for profit, and murder motivated by sex or sadism. They later acknowledged that the sexual homicide category falls mostly into the typology of the serial killer. Levin and Fox's 1996 types of mass murder includes revenge, love, profit, and terror. Revenge has three sub categories: individual specific, category specific and non-specific. "Most mass killings are motivated by revenge, either against specific individuals, particular categories or groups of individuals, or society at large" (Levin & Fox, 1996, p. 65). Although the family massacrer may kill out of revenge, particularly against the spouse, and by extension, the children, family massacrers may also kill out of a perverted sense of love. The family massacrers at times will commit suicide after killing their families, or may simply turn themselves in to police. Levin and Fox made their typology of revenge, love, profit and terror more specific by adding whether the categories had a known victim, whether the crime was planned, whether the crime was random, and whether the offender was psychotic (Levin & Fox, 1996).

Beginning with the revenge category, the individual specific sub-category has a known victim, the crime is planned, the choice of crime scene nonrandom, and the offender is not psychotic. Under revenge: category specific, the victim is not known to the offender, the crime is planned, the location is nonrandom and the offender might be psychotic. Under revenge: non-

specific, the victims are not known. The crime could be random or planned, and the offender is typically psychotic. The love category has victims known to the offender, the crime is planned, the location is nonrandom, and the offender is not psychotic. Under the profit category, the victims might be known to the offender, the crime is planned, the location is random, but the offenders are not psychotic. For the terror category, the victims are not known to the offender, the crime is planned, the crime is nonrandom and the offender is not psychotic (Levin & Fox, 1996).

Levin and Fox also offer contributing factors: class, factor, and explanation. Under class are two areas of predisposition, both of which are necessary for a mass murder event. They are long-term frustration and externalization of blame. Long-term frustration is failure at work, military, or home. Externalization of blame is the tendency to blame others for problems. Precipitants are next, with two factors, either of which is necessary. The factors are catastrophic loss and an external cue. Catastrophic loss is explained by the loss of a job or relationship. An external cue could be explained by obedience to authority or copycat behavior. The third set of contributing factors are facilitators. The factors are social, psychological or situational isolation and access to a weapon of mass destruction. Living alone, inability to share problems with others, and being cut off from support are explanations for social, psychological or situational isolation. Training with and access to firearms are also factors in mass murder (Levin & Fox, 1996).

In 1997, Kelleher published his typology of mass murder. His two-part definition of mass murder differs from other definitions in that he considers the intent of the mass murderer. According to Kelleher,



[I]f the goal is to understand the nature of this crime and its perpetrator, perhaps a less rigid rule would prove more helpful – a definition that embodies the *intention* (emphasis Kelleher) of the perpetrator as being of equal importance to his accomplishment of that intention. Therefore, for the purposes of investigating the American mass murderer, a two-part definition of this crime will be used, which includes 1) the murder of at least three individuals, and 2) the demonstration of a clear intent to murder multiple individuals in a single incident or episode. (Kelleher, 1997, p. 5)

Kelleher uses seven categories in his typology of mass murder, some similar to that of Levin and Fox and Holmes and Holmes. The first category is “perverted love.” This is similar to the family annihilator category of Dietz (1986) and Holmes and Holmes (1992), and the love category of Levin and Fox (1996). It includes the destruction of the family by the father, mother, or a child. The second category is politics and hate. It includes crimes based on racial hatred, specifically when the victims are unknown to the perpetrator. It also includes acts of domestic terrorism. Revenge is the third category. Kelleher’s revenge category is not as structured or detailed as Levin and Fox’s category. Kelleher uses the term lethal employee as an example of one who takes revenge on the workplace and co-workers. The lethal employee is equivalent to Holmes and Holmes’ disgruntled employee (Holmes & Holmes, 1992). In 1997, Kelleher wrote, “Revenge represents the most common motivating factor apparent in the crime of the mass murderer” (Kelleher, 1997, p.35). And, “However, it would be reasonable to assume that elements of revenge play a critical role in many, if not most, categories of mass murder” (Kelleher, 1997, p. 36). This author hypothesizes that killings motivated by love (Levin & Fox, 1996), perverted love (Kelleher, 1997), or the family annihilator (Dietz, 1986; Holmes & Holmes, 1992), are the predominant categories.

The fourth category is sexual homicide. According to Kelleher “Sexual homicide is often associated with serial killing, it is rarely associated with acts of mass murder. In fact, incidents of mass murder that evidence any of the usual characteristics of sexual homicide are extremely unusual” (Kelleher, 1997, p. 36). Levin and Fox also include sexual homicide in their typology (1985), and state that it is mostly related to serial killing. It appears that Kelleher and Levin and Fox included this category in their typologies solely to include the crime of Richard Speck in 1966. Speck murdered seven nurses and sexually assaulted and murdered an eighth.

Kelleher’s fifth category is mass murder by execution. Kelleher (1997) states that mass murder by execution is really two categories. “The premeditated, highly planned, ‘contract’ execution of multiple individuals, and 2) the typically unplanned execution of witnesses usually committed in an effort to avoid apprehension while the perpetrator is in the pursuit of another crime” (Kelleher, 1997, p. 37). Kelleher comments that this category is rare, and that a single or double homicide is more common and results when the perpetrator is committing another crime altogether, that of trying to eliminate witnesses.

Sane or insane is the sixth category. Our justice system sometimes struggles with this category. Sanity does not mean the same thing from legal and medical viewpoints. A judge and jury may decide that an individual was culpable at the time of the crime, while a mental health professional may diagnose the offender with a mental disorder that caused or played a large role in the commission of the crime. Kelleher’s final category is the unexplained. He does not use any cases to illustrate his point in this area. Kelleher states, “The overwhelming number of incidents of mass murder are at least somewhat explainable, given sufficient understanding of the perpetrator, his history, and his life experiences. However, there remains a few incidents of mass murder that seem to defy all efforts at understanding or explanation” (Kelleher, 1997, p. 38).

Holmes and Holmes, in 2001, expanded their typology to include the ideological mass killer, the disgruntled citizen, the psychotic mass killer and youthful killers (school shooters). Holmes and Holmes consider Jim Jones of the People's Temple to be an example of an ideological mass killer. They consider Jones responsible for over 900 deaths of his followers in 1978. Jones, at times, referred to himself as Jesus. He also preached that the United States would perish in a nuclear war with Russia. He convinced his followers of this and the group relocated from California to Guyana, supposedly to safety. In 1978, a U.S. Congressman from California became concerned about the safety of People's Temple members and visited the commune at relatives' request. Two families from Jonestown wanted to return to the U.S. with the congressman. The two families, the congressman, and his staff members were ambushed at the airstrip, as they were leaving, by People's Temple members. Five died. Jones began to tell his followers that the government, alerted by the congressman, was going to kill them. At Jones' instruction, his followers drank poison mixed in a flavored drink mix. Some were forced to drink it, and some were shot. Jones himself died of a gunshot wound, but it is not known if it was self-inflicted. Holmes and Holmes (2001) explained why the Jonestown incident was a mass murder instead of a mass suicide. According to Holmes and Holmes:

It is a lack of understanding by professionals in the field of social and behavioral science that cases of mass deaths are treated as suicides rather than mass murder. Because of the message that becomes inculcated within the personalities of the victims, they see no alternative to following the message of the leader. The victims actually have little choice because to refuse to do what the leader demands they believe means everlasting damnation. (2001, p.84)

The disgruntled citizen has a personal issue with part of society or all of society. Differing from the disgruntled employee, who lashes out at his place of employment, the disgruntled citizen lashes out against random targets, usually in public places. Physical characteristics of the victims are unimportant. The motive is intrinsic and the gain is psychological. The killer is geographically stable (Holmes & Holmes, 2001). A recent example is Jarrod Ramos, who on June 28, 2018, attacked the Capital Gazette newsroom in Annapolis, Maryland, killing five and wounding several. Ramos had filed a lawsuit against the paper in 2012 for defamation. He had been charged with criminal harassment of a female former classmate. A court ruled in favor of the newspaper in 2015, stating that the information regarding Ramos was true, and a matter of public record. Why Ramos chose this time, and manner to act is not known. Ramos had previously taken a former employer to court after being fired (Williams & Harmon, 2018).

The psychotic mass killer has lost touch with reality. He may see visions or hear voices that command him to do harm. The victims are chosen randomly. They are in the same place at the same time as the killer. Because the killer is disorganized, he is unlikely to travel great distances to kill, staying in his comfort zone. “The motivation is intrinsic to the personality of the killer” (Holmes & Holmes, 2001, p. 107). “The anticipated gain is expressive (psychological). Although the number of psychotic mass killers is low, we may perceive the number as higher due to the media attention that the crime gets” (Holmes & Holmes, 2001). An example is William Cruse. Cruse, 60, of Palm Bay, Florida, was known as the meanest man in his neighborhood. He could not tolerate anyone stepping onto his yard or on the adjoining properties. He had been known to brandish weapons at neighbors. He had delusions that his neighbors were talking about him and telling others that he was homosexual. One evening, April

23, 1987, someone crossed his yard, and Cruse ran out with a gun. He jumped into his truck and drove to a local shopping mall, where he opened fire on shoppers in the parking lot. He then entered a grocery store and took shoppers and employees hostage. He was captured after a stand-off with police. The death toll was 6, with 14 wounded. Cruse was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, but was sentenced to death despite his mental illness (Bearak, 1987; Holmes & Holmes, 2001).

Hickey (2016) presents another typology of mass murder. It includes the following categories: the family slayer or annihilator, murderer for profit, murderer for sex, pseudo-commando, set-and-run killer and psychotic killer. It also includes the disgruntled employee, the disciple-type killer and ideological mass murderer. These categories have been discussed previously. Hickey adds the institutional mass murderer, “a person who commits mass murder as a crime of obedience when ordered to by his or her leader” (Hickey, 2016, p. 16). Examples include genocide and ethnic cleansing.

When profiling youthful killers, Holmes and Holmes, (2001), included not just mass murderers, but those killers who killed fewer than four victims and those who had only wounded their victims. The authors limited their profile of school shooters to adolescents, as opposed to including college students and adults who targeted school children. This category was developed before the Virginia Tech and Newtown, Connecticut incidents took place. Holmes and Holmes’ research found that youthful killers are overwhelmingly white. The ages extend from elementary school through high school. The choice of victims depends on who the killers have access to, mostly other youths in their school. Most youthful killers come from middle-class backgrounds. School shootings have taken place in mostly suburban and rural areas which differ from urban schools, where killers usually target only a single victim (Holmes & Holmes, 2001).

Youthful killers are often disenfranchised from the majority of the student body, and they may abandon their conventional friends in favor of an outgroup. Michael Carneal of Paducah, Kentucky, sought the company of young male goths. Luke Woodham of Pearl, Mississippi, hung out with others who were interested in the occult. Many school shooters spend an excessive amount of time playing violent video games. Some are obsessed with weaponry (Holmes & Holmes, 2001).

There is often a foretelling of fatal events. Michael Carneal leaked his desire and intention to kill when he brought several guns to school prior to his attack and attempted to impress his goth friends. The group did not take him seriously. Similarly, Kip Kinkel of Springfield, Oregon, shared his intentions with a friend and tried to recruit him to participate. The friend did not report the news to authorities. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold of Columbine High School infamy announced to others that something eventful would happen on Hitler's birthday (Holmes & Holmes, 2001).

Holmes and Holmes (2001) offer little opinion on the motivations of school shooters. They suggest it is mixed: hatred toward school or racial groups, or hatred directed at other students for perceived wrongs. The authors do not discuss possible mental health issues.

Langman (2015) developed an extensive typology of school shooters that can be divided into three main classifications: secondary school shooters, college school shooters, and aberrant adult shooters. Langman is not completely specific in describing how the sample of shooters was drawn, except to state that he only included shooters who had sufficient background information available to profile. Some of the subjects in the sample were drawn from outside the United States. He qualifies any diagnostic descriptions by stating that he did not personally

evaluate the shooters, but formed an opinion based on available information, an existing diagnosis, or a diagnosis following the crime (Langman, 2015).

Secondary school shooters are divided into psychopathic, psychotic, and traumatized categories. The sample included students who were currently enrolled in the schools they attacked, or had been students of the attacked schools within the last three years.

Regarding psychopaths, Langman points out that psychopathy is not a formal psychiatric diagnosis. However, it is a term used when describing the criminal personality.

First, psychopaths are egocentric- they live for themselves and meet their own needs with no regard for the impact their behavior has on others. Psychopaths are also often egotistical, with an inflated sense of their own importance and self-worth. Focused on themselves, they lack a normal for empathy, guilt, and remorse. They not only do not care if they hurt people, but they may experience a rush of euphoria by doing so.

(Langman, 2015, pp. 5-6)

Langman (2015) does not distinguish in his description of psychopathy between pre-teens (i.e., Andrew Golden, age 11) or young teens (Barry Loukaitis, age 14), and adults. Andrew Golden grew up around guns. His grandfather was a hunter and a game warden. His parents belonged to the local gun range. He received his first firearm as a toddler. In his parents' eyes Andrew could do no wrong, although the neighbors and kids at school considered him a bully. Andrew tortured cats for pleasure, using them for target practice among other atrocious acts. On March 24, 1998, Andrew, along with 13-year-old Mitchell Johnson, killed three and wounded seven at Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Arkansas (Langman, 2015). Barry Loukaitis began to have personal difficulties when his parents' marriage unraveled. He was a fan of the

movie *Natural Born Killers*, and talked about wanting to kill someone before he died. Two days before he would kill three and wound one at Frontier Junior High School in Moses Lake, Washington, his mother had threatened suicide (Langman, 2015). There is debate among psychologists regarding the diagnosis of youth under the age of 18 as psychopathic (Kahn, 2012).

Eric Harris, one of the Columbine High School shooters in 1999, was an obvious, if not overused, example of a psychopath. Harris was 18 at the time of the crime and his suicide. Langman (2015) describes a dichotomy of feeling from details in Harris' journal where he writes of his inadequacies and the power that he felt as a firearm owner. Harris had violent fantasies of rape, torture, and murder. He created a persona where he felt god-like and held immense power over others.

The second category of secondary school shooters is psychotic youth. Symptoms of psychosis can bring mild interference in daily living, or be debilitating. Although several diagnoses can include psychosis, Langman (2015) labels school shooters as schizophrenic, or having schizotypal personality disorder.

Kipland Kinkel, of Springfield, Oregon, was 15 at the time he killed his parents, 2 fellow students, and wounded 25 others at his high school. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia following the attacks. Kinkel had been under the care of a psychologist and psychiatrist for depression. His schizophrenia was only diagnosed after the attacks when he revealed that he had heard voices for some time that told him to kill. He had not wanted to be labeled "crazy." However, his problems extended beyond hearing voices. He admired the Unabomber, and built his own bombs. He also admired Andrew Golden and Mitchell Johnson, who together in 1998



shot and killed schoolmates and teachers in Jonesboro, Arkansas. Kinkel had tried to recruit a friend to attack his school with him, but the friend did not take him seriously (Langman, 2015).

The third category of secondary school shooters is the traumatized. These are youths who have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse. Their parents may be addicted to drugs or alcohol. Their lives are unstable for many reasons, including domestic violence in the home. “In psychology, a traumatic event is a dangerous or disturbing situation that may be life threatening or that causes intense fear for one’s safety. The trauma may be something done directly to us or something that we witness happening to others” (Langman, 2015, p.55).

Jeffrey Weise was 16 years old when he attacked his former school, was shot by police, and committed suicide. Prior to the attack, where 7 were killed and 7 wounded, Weise had killed his paternal grandfather and his grandfather’s girlfriend. His grandfather was a police officer, and, after killing him, Weise stole his grandfather’s patrol car and drove it to his former school, where his life ended (Langman, 2015).

Weise was born to unmarried parents. At three months old he was sent to live with his father and paternal grandparents on the reservation in Red Lake, Minnesota. His father was an alcoholic who committed suicide in a stand-off with tribal police. More tragic, Weise’s grandfather was there that day and failed to negotiate successfully for his son’s life.

Eventually, Weise returned to his mother, stepfather and two siblings. His mother was abusive, locking him out of the house, locking him in a closet, and making him kneel for hours in a corner. He became depressed, began to use drugs and alcohol, and had to repeat the eighth grade. Later, his mother was out one night drinking with her cousin, and there was a car accident. The cousin was killed, and Weise’s mother was brain damaged. His stepfather left, taking

Weise's siblings and leaving him behind. Weise then bounced between homes of relatives and foster homes. He attempted suicide at age 15 by cutting his wrists (Langman, 2015).

Weise posted his thoughts on suicide online, along with his zombie fiction. These provide a glimpse into his tortured life. Like many school shooters, he leaked his idea of a shooting at the school to friends and a cousin. On March 21, 2005, he chose murder and suicide at Red Lake High School (Langman, 2015).

Langman's (2015) classification of college shooters is divided into three types: targeted attacks, random attacks, and ambiguous attacks. The shooters themselves are then categorized as psychopathic or psychotic. Langman (2015) states that he intended to model the college shooter sample after the secondary school shooter sample, but found differences in attack style. He also stated that there were no traumatized shooters in the college sample.

Although an older attack, taking place on November 1, 1991, college shooter Gang Lu's rampage and suicide is a clear example of a targeted attack. Langman (2015) labeled Lu a psychopath. Lu was a physics student from China, enrolled in the doctoral program at the University of Iowa. From the beginning, his academic career was adversarial. He attempted to change academic programs from physics to business administration. He was not allowed to, due to restrictions on his visa. Lu complained to university administration to no avail. He was known as argumentative, abrasive, and confrontational. By all accounts, Lu was a brilliant student. He was soon, however, overshadowed by a newcomer, also from China, Linhua Shan. Shan was even more brilliant. He was also good-looking, well-liked, and engaged to a beautiful woman. He began to outperform Lu, completing his degree first, even though he had started a year later. Lu blamed his professors for being unsupportive, especially his adviser, professor Chris Goertz.

Goertz had also missed deadlines for sending recommendations for employment for Lu (Langman, 2015).

Lu's breaking point came when Shan was awarded a university dissertation prize instead of him. Lu protested to the department and university administration, insisting that he had been wronged, as his was the better dissertation. He even wrote to newspapers, including the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times without results. With nowhere left to turn, Lu chose violence. He shot and killed Shan, Goertz, another physics professor, an administrator, and a secretary. He also wounded one. He then committed suicide (Langman, 2015).

Another category of Langman's college shooters is random attacks. These attacks were not random in a sense, because they were focused on the shooter's school. However, no specific student, group of students or faculty member(s) were targeted. Seung Hui Cho was a psychotic shooter who committed a random attack. Cho had had both difficult relationships and lack of relationships at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. He was rejected by three women; two had complained to campus police about him. He had been kicked out of a poetry writing class because his behavior bothered the instructor and other students. He got into an argument with a professor in a technical writing class when it was suggested that he drop the class (Langman, 2015).

On April 16, 2007, Cho first killed two students in a dormitory, then later moved to a building of classrooms where he killed 30 more and wounded 17. He then committed suicide. The victims were random targets. Cho could have targeted the women who rejected him, or his classmates and professors from the two writing courses, but he did not (Langman, 2015).

Besides Cho's difficult relationships, there were other clues to his instability. He claimed to have a girlfriend from outer space named Jelly, who sometimes visited him. He would ask his roommates to leave so that Jelly could visit. When signing into class, he signed with a question mark and referred to himself as "Question Mark." These actions were not seen as pranks, as it was reported that Cho had no sense of humor. On the day of the attacks, he sent letters to the English department and to MSNBC calling himself "Ax Ishmael, the Anti-Terrorist of America." Found written on his dead body were the words "Ax Ishmael." Cho also referred to "hedonists" in his writing. He disparaged them, while appearing angry that he could not be one of them.

Langman (2015) states that Cho was never diagnosed as schizophrenic. He fails to mention that in December of 2005, Cho was taken to a psychiatric hospital for making a suicidal statement. He was not admitted, but ordered to outpatient therapy. There is a record of him attending only one session (Editors, Biography.com. 2014).

There are two examples of shooters who committed "ambiguous" attacks. These are so labeled because it is questionable whether the attacks were targeted or random. Both shooters were diagnosed by others as paranoid schizophrenics. On April 2, 2012, One Goh, a nursing student at Oikos University desired to kill an administrator at his college. She was not there the day of his attack, so he shot 10 random victims, killing 7 (Langman, 2015). Goh had targeted the administrator because he could not get a full refund on his tuition after dropping out mid-semester, and he was furious. After his crime, which left seven dead and two injured on July 12, 1976, at Cal State, Fullerton, Edward Allaway stated that his attack was random, although the location was his workplace, and one of the people he killed was a co-worker who had spurned his romantic advances (Langman, 2015).

Langman's third major classification of school shooters is aberrant adult shooters. This classification is broken down into four categories: young adults who attacked colleges they did not attend, adults who attacked schools they had attended years before, adults who attacked elementary schools to which they had no connection, and adults whose attack was in an atypical educational setting (Langman, 2015).

In the first category, there is only one mass killer in the sample: Marc Lepine, of Montreal, Canada. Lepine aspired to study engineering at the Ecole Polytechnique. The problem was that as he attempted college, he kept changing fields and failing and dropping out of courses. He applied to the Ecole Polytechnique twice and had been refused admission. Lepine had also attempted to enlist in the military, but was denied (Langman, 2015).

Lepine was obsessed with feminists and blamed them for ruining his life. He especially despised women in the military, female police officers, and female engineers. On December 6, 1989, Lepine attacked the Ecole Polytechnique, killing 14 and wounding 14. His main targets were female engineering students. He committed suicide at the scene (Langman, 2015).

Lepine grew up shy, anxious, and socially awkward. He was an admirer of Adolf Hitler. Although intelligent, Lepine lacked direction, was an underachiever, and had difficulty holding even menial jobs, but he was not diagnosed as mentally ill while alive. Langman speculates that Lepine had schizotypal personality disorder because of his sometime unusual behavior and paranoid beliefs (Langman, 2015).

The next category is adults who attacked schools they had attended years before. The most well-known recent example is Adam Lanza, who on December 14, 2012, killed 26 and

wounded 2 students and teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut. He committed suicide at the scene. He also killed his mother prior to the attack.

Lanza was fascinated with mass murder. He had compiled a detailed chart of over five hundred mass murder incidents. He was fascinated with the military, and played violent video games with military themes. He also enjoyed going to the shooting range with his mother (Langman, 2015).

Lanza had been diagnosed with Asberger's syndrome around the age of 13. In Langman's (2015) opinion, Lanza had several symptoms of schizophrenia. He was extremely withdrawn and hardly spoke. He was overly sensitive to touch, yet felt little pain. His parents wondered if he was schizophrenic, yet he was never diagnosed as such (Langman, 2015).

His motives for attacking the students and teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary are unclear, especially since his family felt that his best years had been spent there. Of note is that information about child pornographers and their rights was found on his computer, and that he possessed a few films depicting child pornography (Langman, 2015).

The next category is adults who attacked elementary schools to which they had no connection. There are no examples of mass murderers in this category from the United States or Canada. The sample included Thomas Hamilton from Dunblane, Scotland, who killed 17 and wounded 15 at Dunblane Primary School on March 13, 1996. He then committed suicide. Hamilton was a pedophile who was asked to resign from a boys' scouting organization because of his borderline abusive behavior. He never got over this incident, writing to officials in the organization and even to Queen Elizabeth demanding his reinstatement. He wrote letters for years with no results (Langman, 2015).

Hamilton left no motive for killing young children and their teachers, or why he had chosen Dunblane Primary School. He was never diagnosed with a mental illness. Langman, again assigns the schizotypal personality diagnosis, because of Hamilton's lack of affect, lack of meaningful adult relationships, and paranoia, among other symptoms (Langman, 2015).

Langman's final category of aberrant adult shooters is adults whose attack was in an atypical educational setting. There is only one shooter in this category. Jiverly Wong arrived in the U.S. from Vietnam with his parents and siblings at the age of twenty-two. His family members acclimated well to their new country. Wong did not. He had problems learning English, and held a series of low-paying jobs (Langman, 2015).

There are conflicting accounts as to his marriage and family. One account states that he was married and had a child, but kept it a secret from his family. Another account states that a wife and children left him. Whatever the truth, he was living with his parents by 2007 in Binghamton, New York. In his family's opinion, he was reclusive and silent. At work, he talked about guns and shooting politicians. He spent a good deal of time at the shooting range. His co-workers joked that they might become victims of workplace violence because of Wong's obsession. He still struggled with English despite having lived in the U.S. almost twenty years. To remedy this, Wong had enrolled in an English class at the American Civic Association in January, 2009, but dropped out in early March (Langman, 2015).

During the two weeks leading up to his attack, Wong stopped eating dinner and watching television. He spent more time in his room. "On March 18, 2009, he wrote a letter to a local television news show complaining of harassment by police and indicating his homicidal and suicidal thoughts" (Langman, 2015, p. 155). Wong mailed the letter the day of his attack, on

April 3, 2009, when he shot and killed 13 and wounded 4 at the American Civic Association where he took English classes. Langman (2015) speculates that Wong was schizophrenic. He bases this diagnosis in part on the fact that Wong's letter contained paranoid delusions regarding police.

Scott and Fleming (2014) explore the profile of the family annihilator and its validity when applied to women. They question whether all facets of the profile, which was written about men, by men, apply to women, or if there should be a separate profile for women perpetrating family annihilation. The authors question whether it is necessary to kill the spouse, ex-spouse, or intimate partner to qualify as a family annihilator. The authors state, "Earlier profiles (Dietz, 1986; Fox & Levin, 1998, 2012; Holmes & Holmes, 2000) assume a patriarchal family structure and therefore are limited with regard to what is considered family" (p. 74). The sample size of the research was small, with only seven subjects. It is not generalizable to the population of female mass murderers, but suggests some similarities and differences between genders. Most of the subjects in their study were divorced, separated, or unmarried. One point they have in common with their male counterparts is that they were heads of households, with all of the responsibilities and stress of a male provider. Also, in the sample, most subjects used guns as their preferred weapon, similar to men. This is an area that requires more research. This category of women could be seen as simply committing filicide (Scott & Fleming, 2014).

A recent example of a female (or females) committing a family annihilation is lesbian couple Sarah and Jennifer Hart. They had adopted six children together, ages 12-19 years, before the incident. With the children inside their van, the women drove off of the Pacific Coast Highway and plunged 100 feet into the ocean. There was evidence that the act was intentional, as the van traveled at a high rate of speed, and there was no evidence of braking. Jennifer Hart was



driving the vehicle. In the days preceding their deaths, an investigation by Children's Services was opened after neighbors reported one of the children begging for food every day for a week. He stated that the children were being punished by their parents' withholding food. In 2011 Sarah Hart pled guilty to a domestic assault charge after getting out of control while spanking one of her daughters, then six years old (Holcomb & Martin, 2019).

### **Domestic Violence and Mass Murder**

The literature on familicide does not cover mass murder per se, other than the category of the family annihilator first described by Dietz (1986) and elaborated by Holmes and Holmes (2001). The death count could be only one, as in uxoricide (the killing of a spouse or intimate partner), or a single child in filicide (the killing of one's children or step-children), ranging to varying types of family members including parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, or even in-laws. The narrow definition of familicide includes the murder of a spouse or intimate partner and a child or children. The broad view includes the deaths of parents, siblings, and extended family members, including in-laws. Mailloux (2014) defines familicide as "a homicide in which there are two or more victims, including the killer's partner/spouse, and one or more children who may or may not be biologically related to the killer" (p. 921). Liem and Reichelmann (2014) have a wider definition of familicide as the killing of multiple family members. Liem, Levin, Holland and Fox (2013) combine the two definitions: "Familicide is a term used to denote the murder of multiple family members. Its most common form is the killing of an intimate partner and children" (p. 351). According to Liem and Reichelmann (2014), "One of the main limitations in the work on multiple family homicides so far, however, is the lack of

recognition of heterogeneity among familicides” (p. 44). This thesis attempts to illustrate this heterogeneity by including multiple viewpoints in recent literature on the subject. In fact, when reviewing the literature, there exists a typology from the contributions of many, which becomes apparent when the literature is presented as a whole.

Liem et al. (2013) discuss the murder of spouse and children with two illustrations with different motives. They are murder by proxy and suicide by proxy. These actions were originally described by Frazier in 1975, but are still relevant to current knowledge. In murder by proxy, the spouse is the primary object of aggression. If the spouse threatens withdrawal or actual departure, this causes rage within the perpetrator. He views the children as an extension of the spouse (“her” children, as opposed to “their” children), and lashes out and kills them all. The suicide of the perpetrator sometimes follows. The motive in this type of familicide is similar to that of uxoricide, as the spouse is the primary target of rage or revenge, and the children are not objects of rage, except as an extension of the spouse.

Suicide by proxy describes familicide that has a different motive. The perpetrator in this situation sees himself as the center and provider for the family, which could not survive without him. When a job loss, or large debt, for example, burdens the family’s solvency, the perpetrator feels himself losing control. He fears for the future of the family, and becomes despondent or depressed. Pseudo-altruistic thinking causes the perpetrator to take the lives of his family and himself. Mailloux (2014) describes the same scenario, but labels it “anomic” familicide. She states that it is a more rare occurrence, and is not the result of escalating domestic violence that can act as a precursor to murder by proxy. Anomic familicide also is not triggered by the departure or threatened departure of a spouse, but by feelings of desperation by the perpetrator.

Liem et al. (2013) and Mailloux (2014) differ somewhat in their descriptions of the characteristics of familicidal men in the context of a marital or intimate partner relationship (other relationships will be discussed below). Mailloux (2014) states that most victims of familicide had previously been victims of domestic violence (with the exception of anomicide, which will be discussed below). Characteristics of familicidal men, are, according to Mailloux (2014), as follows: domineering in the relationship, have a need for control, abuse substances, and “have a patriarchal perspective of the family unit” (p. 921). Additionally, most of the men have a history of childhood trauma to varying degrees. This experience has caused poor coping skill development. Their employment history is erratic. Familicidal men are typically in their mid to late 30s, and are likely to have been married.

Liem et al. (2013) found that the typical familicidal male is white, in his 30s or 40s, and, “...when compared to single intimate homicide perpetrators, is more likely to have substantial economic resources and less likely to have a criminal record” (p. 351). Liem and Koenraadt (2008) as cited in Liem et al., (2013) found that the familicidal man is a distinct subtype that cannot easily be compared to men who commit uxoricide or child homicide.

The authors found that familicidal perpetrators were more likely than intimate partner homicide perpetrators to be married, less likely to have committed a previous violent offense, and are more likely to suffer from a personality disorder. Familicide perpetrators were also generally better educated than child homicide perpetrators. (Liem & Koenraadt, 2008, as cited in Liem et al., 2013, p. 352)

The characteristics of men who commit familicide in the suicide by proxy and anomicide categories differ from those who murder by proxy. According to Liem et al. (2013), the men still

see themselves as dominant – the provider, controller, and central figure in their family’s lives. “They become depressed, despondent, hopeless, and emasculated” (Liem et al., 2013, p. 352), over the loss of a job, or a large debt. They feel out of control, and to regain control they eliminate the family and themselves.

Mailloux (2014) discusses pre-cursors to familicide. These may not apply to female perpetrators or cases of anomicide. A major precursor to familicide is prior domestic violence. Mailloux (2014) cites sources that state between 64% and 79% of women killed in familicide suffered previous abuse. “Such incidences may have included sexual assaults, rape, choking, and strangulation. Sadly, one study showed that only 54% of female survivors were able to predict the level of lethality of the abuse they were experiencing” (Mailloux, 2014, p. 922). According to Mailloux, there are other precursors: “Such precursors include an increased severity of violence, use of or threats to use a weapon, and threats by the perpetrator to harm or kill self or others” (Mailloux, 2014, p. 922). The greatest predictive risk factor is when the woman attempts to leave the relationship or has left.

Liem and Reichelmann (2014) identified four types of familicide: labeled despondent husbands, spousal revenge, extended parricide, and diffuse conflict. The number of victims for each incident in their study was between two and ten, so the study did not specifically address mass murder. However, it sheds light on two types of familicide previously unidentified. These authors were the first to describe extended parricide and diffuse conflict as familicide types. The despondent husband type can be equated with suicide by proxy or anomicide, and spousal revenge can be equated with murder by proxy, all discussed previously.

Of the four types, Liem and Reichelmann (2014) concluded that the largest group was despondent husbands, at 46% of the sample. This is in contrast to Mailloux (2014), who describes anomicide as a rare event, with murder by proxy more prevalent.

Interestingly, the diffuse conflict group was the second largest, at 24% of the sample. The group includes murder of various family members, including more distant relatives. Combinations could include spouse and in-laws, parents and other family members (parents and siblings together fall under extended parricide), or grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins. The perpetrator generally does not reside in the same household as the victims. The average age of the perpetrator is 39. The nature of the conflicts is diffuse, and the targets of the perpetrator are not necessarily those with whom he has conflict. Sometimes members of the family are killed just because they are present when the perpetrator decides to act.

The third largest type is spousal revenge, at 17% of the sample. The average age of the perpetrator was 40 years old. This group was more likely to be non-white than the despondent husband group. “The perpetrator shared the household with at least one of the victims in two thirds of the cases” (Liem & Reichelmann, 2014, p. 51). Differing from the despondent husband group, these perpetrators did not commit suicide following the murders.

The fourth and smallest type of familicide is extended parricide, at 13% of the sample. This type describes the murder of parents and siblings. The targets are one or both parents. The siblings are seen as extensions of the parents, or perhaps were witnesses to the crime. The perpetrators were predominantly white, with an average age of 27. This is younger than has been identified in the other three types. Liem and Reichelmann (2014) stated that over half of the perpetrators were in their teens or early 20s. “In the majority of cases, the perpetrator shared the

household with at least one victim” (Liem & Reichelmann, 2014, p. 51). The motive was either personal to the parent(s), or aggression was directed at them because they were deemed responsible for some outside pressure. The perpetrators generally did not commit suicide following the event.

## **Hypotheses**

This study first tests the hypothesis that the most common form of mass murder is familicide. This includes family mass murders committed by either parent. It also includes mass murder committed by a child, teen, or adult child of family members. Extended family members have also been known to commit mass murder of other relatives (i.e. grandchild/grandparent, nephew/uncle), and so they are also included within the category of familicide.

Second, it is hypothesized that familicidal killers are predominantly male, Caucasian, and in their 30s or 40s. Research has shown that age, race, and gender impact familicide. Therefore, independent variables are the gender, race and age of the murderer.

## Methods

Content analysis was used for this thesis. Eleven years of records were studied in order to have a large enough database to fully explore the two hypotheses because of the relative rarity of mass murder. Two databases were utilized: the USA Today Behind the Bloodshed database, and the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) for the years 2006-2016. Additionally, media accounts were consulted to fill in missing details and data.

The USA Today Behind the Bloodshed database records mass murders from across the United States gleaned from media reports. The murders are displayed using several interactive charts. The database was constructed partly as a response to the Newtown, Connecticut killings and as an extension of in-depth reporting on mass murder begun by a new editor before the Newtown incident. It was felt that no one was keeping track of the numbers (Miller, 2015). Reporters and editors began their research into these events with the SHR. According to the USA Today Behind the Bloodshed database (2017), "Erroneous and excluded cases from 2006-2014 leave FBI data with a 57% accuracy rate." According to Jodi Upton, then senior database editor, "By the time we were done, [we found] the FBI data is only correct about 50% of the time...It could be just bad data entry from someone at the local level. There are a hundred reasons it may not be correct, but in the end nobody had really good information on how many mass killing [sic] there were in the U.S. and where they were and how they happened" (Miller, 2015, para. 8).

The SHR is a supplement to the FBI Uniform Crime Report. Information is submitted from local law enforcement agencies across the country. The exceptions are Florida and tribal law enforcement. Nebraska and the District of Columbia did not start submitting information until 2009.



There are limitations to both databases that make using media accounts necessary for identifying familicides and for complete demographic information. Limitations to media accounts include initial information reported that may be inaccurate or incomplete. Subsequent reporting at a later date is often more accurate (Huff-Corzine et al., 2014). Advantages include media accounts with details such as offender and victim names, circumstances around the crime, witness accounts, event timelines and police response (Huff-Corzine et al., 2014). The USA Today Behind the Bloodshed database contains some names and ages of offenders, briefly describes the crime, and lists the number of victims. It provides the exact date of the crime. It does not provide names and ages of offenders for every case, nor does it list the race of the offender. One advantage is that the incidents are labeled as family killings, public killings, robbery/burglary and other.

The SHR includes the month and year of the crime and the jurisdiction. It includes the gender, age, and race of the offender and the victims. It does not list names. It includes the relationship of the first victim to the offender. This makes it difficult to determine if the murder was a familicide, because it does not list the relationships of the other victims.

For hypothesis one, the following steps were used to obtain, supplement, and clarify data in the USA Today Behind the Bloodshed database, years 2006-2016: Each event labeled family killing was searched for on Google, using the date of the offense, keyword murder, name of offender if given and location. It was then verified as a familicide (the killing of two or more family members) or not. Filicides (the killing of children or step-children) were counted as “other” because they do not meet the definition of familicide, even though USA Today classified them as family killings. Killing of a family by a non-family member was classified as “other” even though USA Today classified it as a family killing. The percentage of total cases for each

category was then calculated to determine whether familicide was the most common form of mass murder (USA Today Behind the Bloodshed, 2017).

The following steps were used to obtain, supplement, and clarify data in the SHR, years 2006-2016. Files were downloaded from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. They were not merged, to make the data easier to access. The records of single perpetrator, multiple victims were derived from each dataset. This was further narrowed down to cases with four or more victims. Each mass murder was queried on Google to determine if it was a familicide, and to classify it using USA Today's Behind the Bloodshed categories. Search words used were month and year, jurisdiction, murder and number of victims. Incidents were checked for their inclusion in USA Today's database. If not found in that database, or in Google, incidents were labeled as "not available." The percentage of total cases for each category was then calculated to determine whether familicide was the most common form of mass murder.

For hypothesis two, from the USA Today Behind the Bloodshed database, ages of offenders, if available, were averaged by year for the years 2006-2016. If ages were not available, it was necessary to query news accounts of the crime. Racial/ethnic categories were tallied by consulting media accounts, as race was not available in the database. Regarding hypothesis two and the SHR, the SHR lists gender, age, and race in its database. Ages were averaged by year for the years 2006-2016. Ages were averaged by year, as the files were downloaded by year to make their use more manageable.

## Results

Table 1 shows SHR total homicides by year, followed by the number of mass murders per year, and finally the number of mass murder familicides by year. This table depicts the rarity of mass murder. Thirty-two incidents from 2006-2016 were not available for categorization as internet search efforts yielded no information. Table 2 shows the results of data collected from the USA Today Behind the Bloodshed database. More complete data were available for searching, including the month, day, and year of the incident, the location, and sometimes the name of the offender. This is reflected in the higher count of mass murder familicides. The differences in the two data sets' total mass murder familicides could be due to the missing SHR cases. However, the difference in the number of mass murders, overall, could be due to under reporting to the SHR (Huff-Corzine, et. al, 2014).

Table 1 – SHR Homicide Incident Totals

Year	Total Homicide Incidents	Mass Murders	Familicides
2006	15076	23	7
2007	14977	12	6
2008	14336	20	13
2009	13858	21	8
2010	13300	14	7
2011	12887	17	8
2012	13063	14	4
2013	12546	21	6
2014	12532	15	6
2015	13844	19	12
2016	15331	22	8

Table 2 – USA Today Behind the Bloodshed Totals

Year	Mass Murders	Familicides
2006	39	10
2007	25	8
2008	36	15
2009	32	16
2010	27	10
2011	28	16
2012	22	7
2013	30	6
2014	24	12
2015	31	15
2016	30	10

Charts 1 and 2 break down the mass murder incidents by category, and support hypothesis one, that familicide is the most common form of mass murder. Categories used by the USA Today Behind the Bloodshed database were utilized for this study, as the crimes were already labeled. The categories were familicide, public killings, robbery/burglary, and “other”. The “other” category included arson, and drug-related killings. This author classified filicides (the killing of children or step-children) as “other”, because it does not meet the definition of familicide.

Hypothesis two stated that offenders would be predominantly male, Caucasian, and in their 30s and 40s. Results on gender indicate only three incidents of female perpetrated mass murder familicide during the time period that was examined (2006-2016). Chart 3 depicts that, from SHR data, 64% of offenders were Caucasian. Chart 4, which is from USA Today Behind the Bloodshed data, indicates that 54% of offenders were Caucasian. The difference in figures

reflects that in the USA Today Behind the Bloodshed database race is not provided, and, since media accounts are not always adequate sources for race, there was a larger “unknown” category.

Chart 1

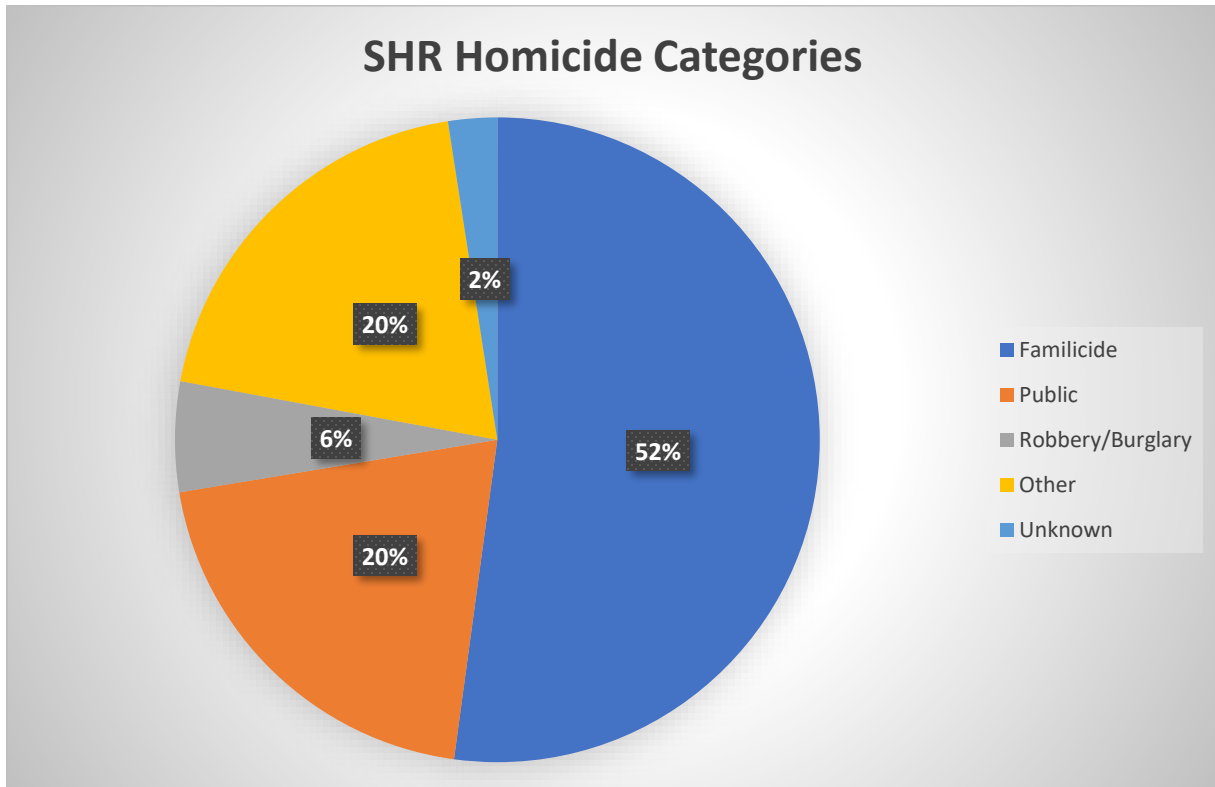


Chart 2

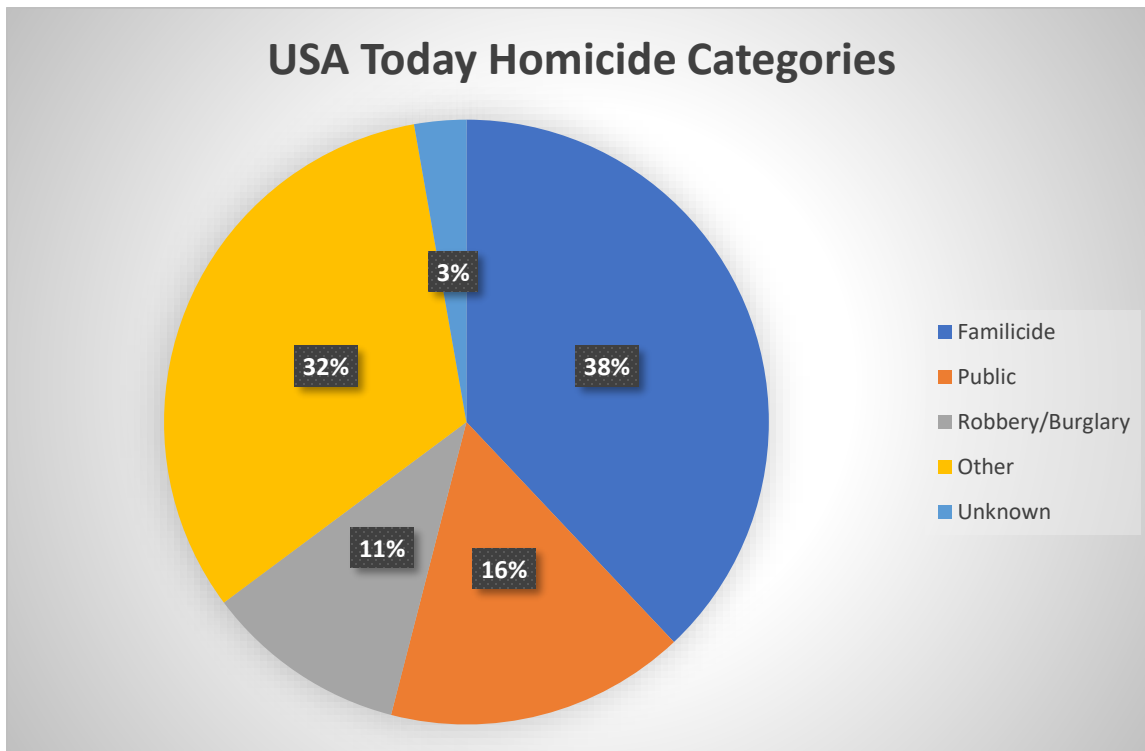


Chart 3

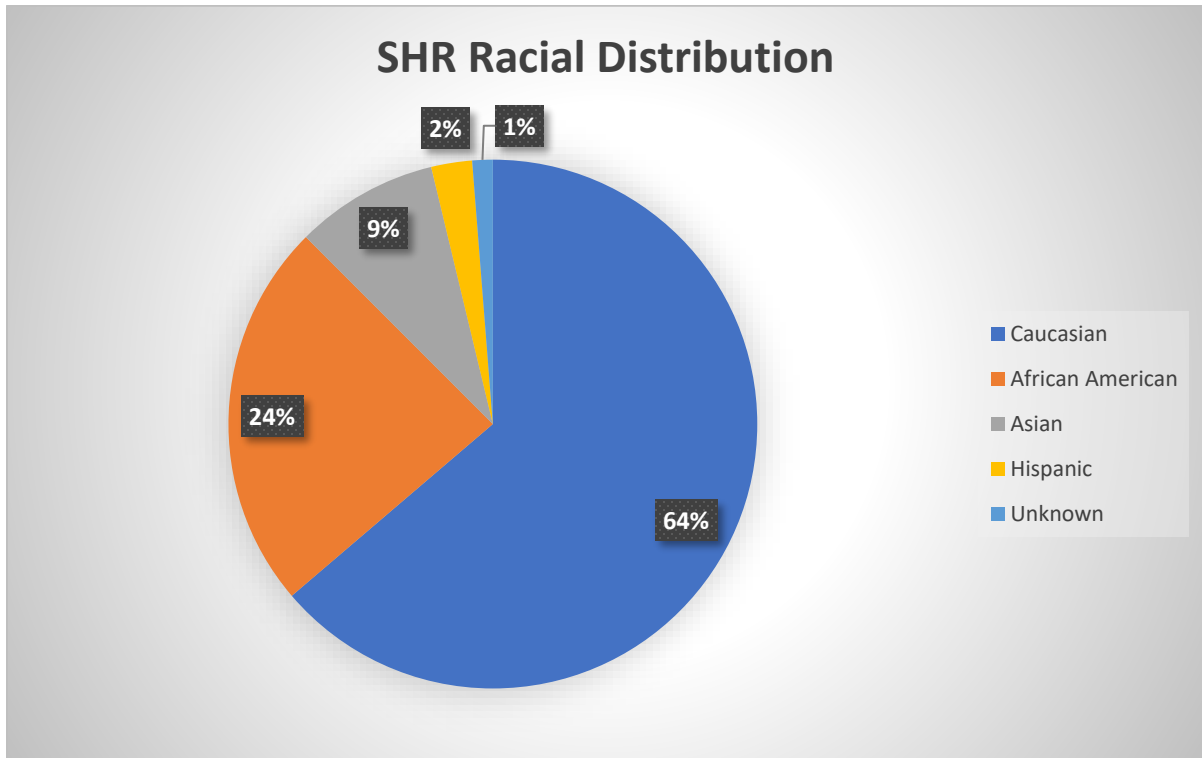


Chart 4

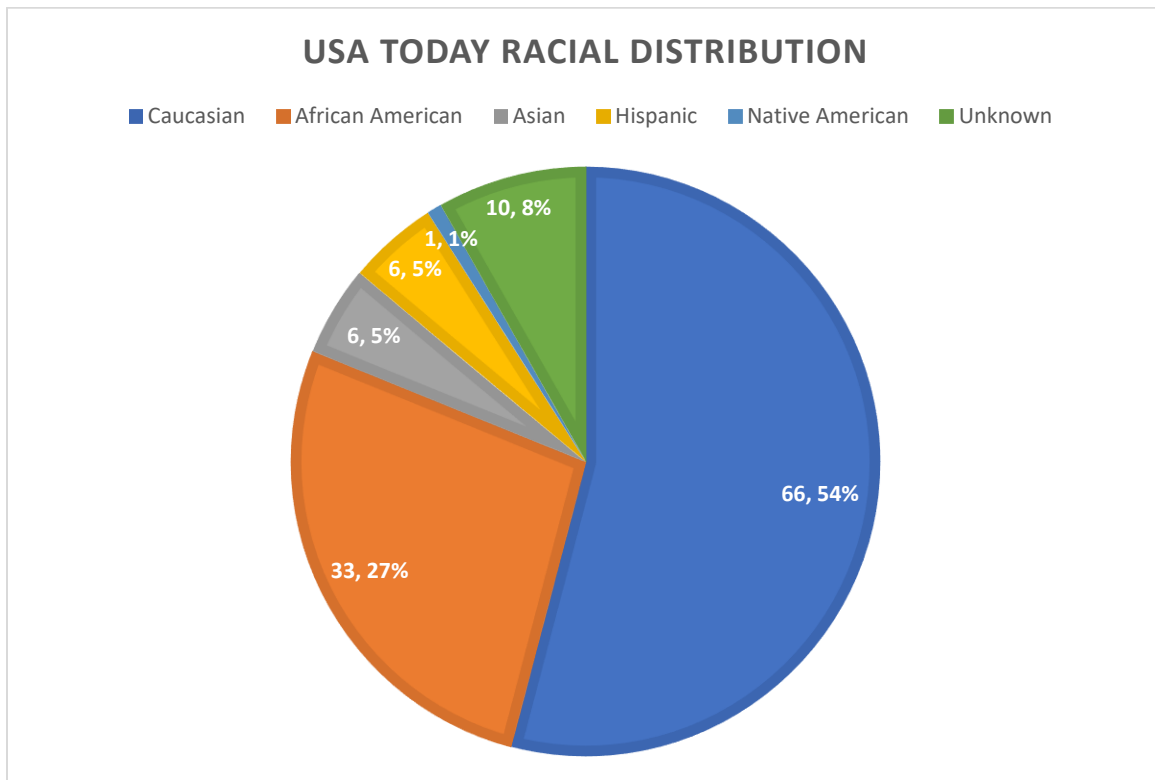


Table 3 depicts average ages of offenders by year in the SHR, and Table 4 presents average ages of offenders by year in the USA Today Behind the Bloodshed database. Average ages are similar in both datasets. Average ages skewed younger than expected, with the only average of over 40 taking place in 2012 in both datasets. In the SHR dataset, years 2006 and 2007 had average ages of 29 and 28.8. These figures suggest partial support for hypothesis two regarding age.



Table 3 – SHR: Average Age of Offender by Year

Year	Average Age of Offender
2006	29
2007	28.8
2008	37.2
2009	35.3
2010	34.1
2011	39
2012	43.2
2013	30.6
2014	38
2015	34.4
2016	35.6

Table 4 – USA Today Behind the Bloodshed Average Age of Offender by Year

Year	Average Age of Offender
2006	31.2
2007	34.9
2008	35.5
2009	35.3
2010	34.5
2011	38.2
2012	40.9
2013	30.7
2014	36.3
2015	33.7
2016	34.5

## Discussion

The first and perhaps most important take-away point a reader should glean from this thesis is that mass murder familicide is the most common form of mass murder. Mass murders happen about every two weeks (USA Today, 2017; Hickey, 2016). With national news media highlighting mass public killings, mass murder familicide is often overlooked, with news appearing only at the local or regional level. Since the commencement of this project, mass murders of all types have continued too frequently to include all of them in this thesis.

Four of the most recent examples of mass murder familicide are presented below; they happened in February, March and April of 2019. On February 25, 2019, five bodies were found at the apartment of 45-year-old Shana Decree and her 19-year-old daughter Dominique. Dead were two of Shana's children, her sister, and her two nieces. They were discovered when child protective services made an unannounced visit. When questioned, both women stated that Shana's sister's boyfriend and two unknown men had murdered the family, but their stories unraveled and both confessed to the killings. They stated that everyone in the household had been suicidal, but that did not explain why the two of them were alive or why the three children who died could have had suicidal intent (Cuellar and Scott, 2019).

On March 13, 2019, Luke Karpinski of Sheffield, Massachusetts murdered his wife and three children, lit their home on fire, then killed himself. Karpinski's wife, Justine Wilbur was found dead with her throat slit to the bone. Evidence has not been released about the cause of death for the children. Karpinski was found in a separate room, burned, with several bottles of alcohol nearby. His motive for murder has not been determined (Garver, 2019).

On April 27, 2019, in Sumner County, Tennessee, Michael Cummins murdered his parents, his uncle, his uncle's girlfriend, her daughter, her mother and a neighbor. He is also charged with killing another man the week before, in a separate incident. Cummins had a history of substance abuse and mental health problem and had been on probation after serving jail time for arson. His probation was going to be revoked the Monday following the murders (Kelman, 2019).

Also in April 2019 (the 28<sup>th</sup>), Gurpreet Singh murdered his wife, her parents, and her aunt, in West Chester, near Cincinnati, Ohio. Singh's three children were not present at the time of the murders and were not injured. Family members had expected trouble in the Singhs' marital relationship, possibly divorce, but did not imagine murder. One relative was not surprised that Singh was arrested (Londberg, Knight, and Chopra, 2019).

Mass murder familicide is to a great extent aligned with domestic violence. In fact, two of the four examples above included specific references to domestic violence prior to mass murder familicide, while domestic violence could be inferred in the other two cases, as there was certainly evidence of such. Mailloux (2014) lists several precursors to familicide linked to domestic violence. They are: an increased severity of violence, use of or threats to use a weapon, and "threats by the perpetrator to harm or kill self or others" (Mailloux, 2014, p. 922). When the at-risk partner leaves or attempts to leave the relationship, the odds of death increase.

Stith and Amanor-Boadu (2010) state that 79% of women killed in familicide had been abused by their killer, while Johnson (2006) suggests the 64% of female victims experienced increased severity of abuse prior to the fatal attack. Such incidences may

have included sexual assaults, rape, choking, and strangulation (Johnson, 2006; Stith & Amanor-Boadu, 2010), (as cited in Mailloux, 2014, p. 922).

“Regarding weapons, Stith and Amanor-Boadu (2010, as cited in Mailloux, 2014) believe that the threat or actual use of weapons in past situations of domestic violence is a risk factor for familicide” (Mailloux, 2014, p.922). According to Auchter (2010, as cited in Mailloux, 2014), most familicides are committed with a gun, and access to firearms increases the likelihood of familicide. Other predictors are threats by the perpetrator to harm self or others. The greatest risk factor for familicide is when the spouse or intimate partner attempts to leave or has left the relationship (Mailloux, 2014).

Interestingly, although little has been written about the link between domestic violence and mass murder familicide, researchers have developed plenty of different terms for the phenomenon. As previously mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, regarding domestic violence and mass murder familicide, separate terms describing the same types of mass murder familicide have been developed by disparate researchers. First are terms used to describe the murder of a spouse or intimate partner and children due to jealousy, rage, or revenge: family annihilator (Dietz, 1986; Holmes & Holmes, 2001), murder by proxy (Frazier, 1975), and spousal revenge (Liem & Reichellman, 2014). Next are terms used to describe the murder of a spouse or intimate partner and children due to suicidality, depression, or despondency: suicide by proxy (Frazier, 1975), anomicide (Mailloux, 2014) and despondent father (Liem & Reichelmann, 2014).

The next duo of mass murder familicide terms was created by Liem and Reichelmann, (2014): extended parricide and diffuse conflict. Extended parricide is the killing of parents and

siblings together. Diffuse conflict (Liem & Reichelmann, 2014), which this author prefers to label “diverse family homicide,” because it is more descriptive, involves mass murder of a variety of related victims for various reasons. The choice of victims is diverse, and includes extended family members, such as in-laws, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. The conflict is diffuse - it may not be with one specific individual, but with the family as a whole. The aggression is directed against all present, rather than the one person who may be responsible (Liem & Reichelmann, 2014). All of the aforementioned has one thing in common: domestic violence as precursor to mass murder familicide.

When this author explored the data on mass murder familicide, a specific pattern emerged. Two distinct categories of murder were identified: what this author terms classic and chaotic familicides. Classic familicides include the murder of spouse or intimate partner and children, or extended parricide (the killing of parents and siblings). Chaotic familicides include the murder of immediate family members, but also extended family members, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, or even strangers. Results show that chaotic familicides outnumber classic familicides by a significant percentage.

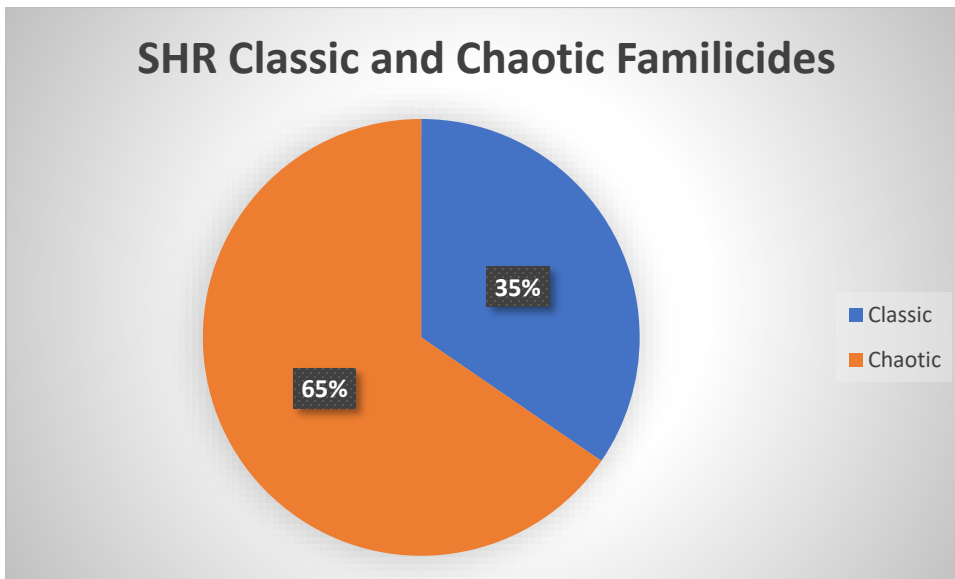
There could be several reasons why this is so:

1. Even if the crime is planned, unexpected complications happen.
2. Even if the crime is planned, the offender may be out of control, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
3. Unexpected people are at the scene.
4. The presence of unintended targets as witnesses to the crime.
5. Others try to intervene.

6. The crime is spontaneous – whoever is present is a target.
7. The conflict is diffuse – blame is spread among many (Liem & Reichelmann, 2014).
8. The crime is a result of disordered thinking such as mental health problems (see also substance abuse).

Charts 5 and 6 reflect the proportions of classic and chaotic familicides from the SHR and USA Today Behind the Bloodshed databases.

Chart 5



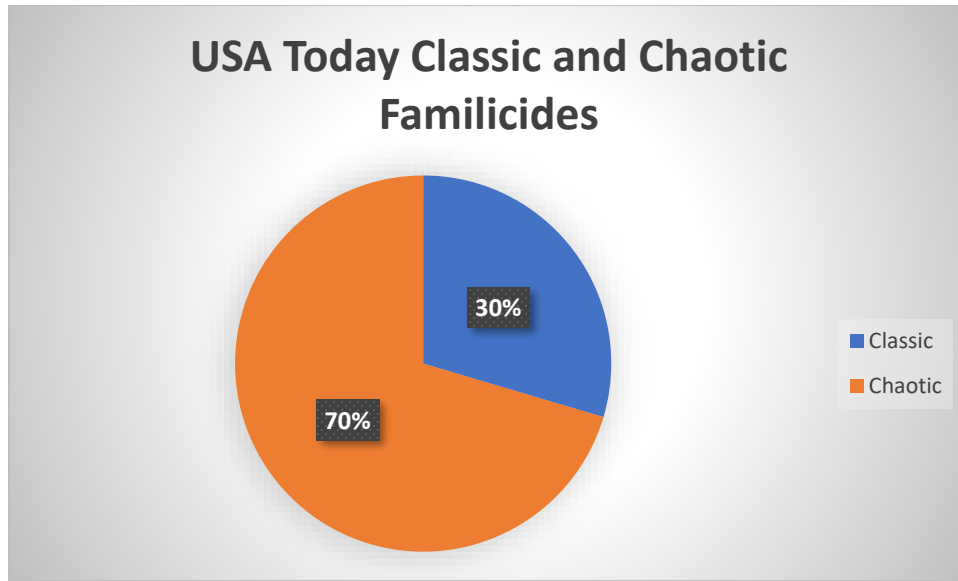


Chart 6

In the evolution of work on the typologies of familicide, it is natural that some typologies may become less useful as more knowledge is gained. Dietz's (1986) typology of the family annihilator is one that seems to have stood the test of time, while Fox and Levin's (1996) revenge and love (two distinct categories to illustrate the motive of the family annihilator) and Kelleher's (1997) perverted love category are perhaps too general and outdated. However, the family annihilator category did not include the suicide-by-proxy concept of Frazier (1975), and was meant to include family killings for anger or revenge, or expediency (Holmes & Holmes, 2001). The family annihilator is second to Frazier's early categories of murder-by-proxy and suicide by proxy, written about in 1975 and later resurrected in the work of Liem et al., (2013). Liem and Reichelmann (2014) have renamed these categories spousal revenge and despondent father, but they recognize that these are just new names for decades old typologies. Where Liem and Reichelmann (2014) break ground is with the categories of extended parricide and diffuse conflict (what this author has termed diverse family homicide). Liem and Reichelmann (2014)

also emphasize the heterogeneity of familicide with their four category typology discussed previously. This author's new categories of the classic and chaotic familicides are the first new categories in familicide in the last five years.

The results of hypothesis two, that Caucasian males in their 30s were most likely to commit mass murder familicide, are most consistent with the research of Liem and Reichelmann (2014), who stated that the majority of familicidal offenders were Caucasian men in their 30s and 40s. Mailloux (2014) found that males in their mid to late 30s were the most likely familicidal offenders, but she does not address race. Huff-Corzine et al. (2014) discuss mass murder and race, but not mass murder familicide. Their research, based on data from the SHR, shows that African-Americans are slightly more likely than Caucasians to commit mass murder. Obviously, with disparate findings, and in some cases lack of information, more research is required to address racial disparities in mass murder, especially regarding mass murder familicide. The importance of these statistics is that it helps us to target better who is at risk of committing familicide. Combined with circumstances that we know can be triggers, we will be better equipped to intervene before tragedy occurs.



## Conclusions

This thesis has shown through hypothesis one that mass murder familicide is the most common form of mass murder. Yet there is still scant research in this area, especially regarding the link between domestic violence and mass murder familicide. Hypothesis two confirmed that Caucasian males are the predominant perpetrators. This hypothesis was partially supported by expected ages of the perpetrators, with most perpetrators in their 30s, rather than the hypothesized 30s and 40s.

This author believes that the recognition of mass murder familicide as mass murder linked with domestic violence is parallel to the emerging coverage of domestic violence in the 1970s. According to Gillespie, Richards, Givens and Smith, “Thirty years ago in the United States the crime of violence against women was not perceived to be a social issue” (2013, p.222). It was not considered a crime by law enforcement or the courts. Violence happened between strangers, not family members.

It was not until 1976 that the New York Times began coverage of nascent battered women’s shelters and some new associated services, that the coverage of domestic violence in their news stories began to change.

According to Best (1989), public issues grow up around private troubles when the experiences of individuals are understood as exemplifying a larger social problem, and the news media, in particular are positioned to play a vital role in the construction of such problems. The news media provide a unique forum in which personal troubles are

selectively gathered up, invested with a broader meaning and made available for public consumption (Sacco, 1995). (as cited in Gillespie et al., 2013)

The way the news media chose to present these problems led to a social awareness and new ways to formulate solutions. It also led to determining public responsibility. Coverage began with the idea that only certain people were vulnerable to domestic violence, those from certain socioeconomic groups or with criminal histories. Recognizing that the news media did not go far enough in reporting on domestic violence led to the research of Richards et al., (2011) to right the problem. The role of the public in recognizing domestic violence as a shared problem then led to new public policy.

According to USA Today's Behind the Bloodshed database, mass murders involving four or more victims occur about every two weeks. According to the results of this thesis, 52% of those will be mass murder familicides (the murder of four or more family members). This is frequent enough to happen on a regular basis, yet the general public is not aware of this fact due to the mainly local and regional news coverage these crimes produce (Huff-Corzine et al., 2014). Instead, we are led by national news accounts to believe that public killings are the most common form of mass murder. Mass murder familicide is the ultimate form of domestic violence. Our awareness of this phenomenon is on par with where the concept of domestic violence was decades ago. We do not label these murders as mass murders, and do not call them by their name: mass murder familicide. This leads to not identifying mass murder familicide as a social problem. When society fails to acknowledge its problems, no collective solutions will be offered. Where is the public will to intervene?

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