



LITERATURE REVIEW OF MASS SHOOTERS MOTIVATIONS

INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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The crimes of mass shooting have occurred with more frequency and regularity over the last ten years. The literature has included many new studies using intersectional analysis that promise a new approach to analysing the motivations of mass shooters. The aim of the study was to survey and summarise the scholarly literature on motivations of mass shooters, intersectionality, and related theories, particularly in criminology and sociology. The researcher sought to understand how recent literature used an intersectional lens to analyse motivations of mass shooters. As a result, 10 studies that included an intersectional analysis, along with alternative analysis types, were included in the review. Method was systematic literature review using the PRISMA statement. Along with the inherent limitations to the method used, some specific limitations exist in relation with the narrative types of some studies included. Results included that analysis based on personality disorders was frequent in the psychiatry literature, while a hybrid approach has been used in the criminology literature. Purely intersectional analyses are more often used in the sociology literature on mass shooters. Intersectionality theory has not yet been empirically tested in the Criminological field. Future research should focus on qualitatively measuring to what extent are the discussed components of identity prevalent in the mass shootings perpetrators.

Keywords: mass shooters, intersectionality, personality disorder, social status

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Mass shootings have occurred with high frequency in recent years. Research suggests that this trend may have occurred because of a contagion effect and the desire to ‘copycat’ these crimes (Towers et al. 2015). In the United States, the number of mass shootings in the 1970s was 13; between 2000 and 2013, there were 53 incidents of mass shooting (Anon 2017). This rise has prompted questions about why the frequency has increased, and about what motivates mass shooters.

Various definitions have emerged in bid to capture the mass shooting, which is commonly defined by the victim count. The most used definition includes at least three or four fatalities, not including the shooter/s. The spatial mobility aspect also is part of common definitions – mass shooters’ acts typically occur at single, or few closely related moments in time and in one or several spaces within accessible distance (Declercq & Audenaert 2011). However, in some cases, mass shootings converge with terrorist incidents, which are defined as: “the use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims” (Dom et al. 2018) (qtd in Misiak et al. 2019).

For the purpose of the current study, mass shooter definition comprises both of the abovementioned definitions and excludes shootings that might be attributed to gang- or drug-related violence. Such choice of definition is informed, due to the specific aim of the current work, namely, exploration of the ways mass shooters’ motivation is analysed in relation to the intersectional identity formation of the perpetrators. Excluding politically motivated acts of violence would limit further exploration of the identity emergence of the politically extremised mass shooter.

The literature in a number of different disciplines shows that researchers have taken several distinct approaches when studying mass shooters. Analysis of personality and psychopathology is common in psychiatry literature on mass-shooter motivations, while sociology literature is more likely to include analysis of race, class and economic standing. Criminology literature includes studies that have taken either approach, while a recent line of studies has attempted a hybrid approach looking at both personality and the intersectional categories of race, class and gender.

A qualitative systematic literature review is presented in attempt to uncover what are the approaches taken in the literature to analyse the motivations of mass shooters. The lens used to analyse the studies included in the review is intersectionality. This lens is used because it allows the researcher to identify important interaction effects between the different categories of analysis typically used in the analysis of social phenomena, including those that make up the study of criminology. Previous research shows the usefulness of intersectionality theory as a form of sociological analysis (Threadcraft-Walker & Henderson 2018). In particular, studies suggest that intersectional analysis can give greater depth and detail about certain social issues and behaviour than alternative frameworks. Alternative frameworks that are often used include personality disorders in psychiatry research, and an analysis of economic mobility in social and sociology research. There are a range of studies in the literature that use

personality disorders as the only lens through which a mass shooter's motivations are analysed.

Research on personality disorders has presented evidence for their validity and reliability in both youth and adult applications (Winsper et al. 2016). But dissenting views in criminology research note that personality analysis does not often provide satisfying answers to the motivations of subjects who commit criminal acts (Threadcraft-Walker & Henderson 2018). In response, there has been a call from researchers for more consideration of race, ethnicity, social class and historical conditions beyond personality disorder. One example is the analysis of motivations of the mass killer Anders Breivik. Personality disorder research has speculated that Breivik had a number of possible disorders, including Autism Spectrum Disorder and Narcissistic Personality Disorder (Faccini & Allely 2016). Separate research in criminology and personality theory suggests that race is not a reliable tool to explain the motivations behind criminal behaviour, although personality disorders may be (DeLisi 2018).

Intersectionality theory has been used in combination with personality disorders in recent research, with promising results. Over 1,500 female prison inmates were studied for psychopathology, personality disorders and race and gender (Baskin-Sommers et al. 2013). Statistically significant results included associations between race, psychopathology including co-morbid Antisocial Personality Disorder in the incidence of violent crime. A separate study suggested that race was useful in predicting criminal and violent tendencies. This conclusion was based on links between race and psychological factors associated with criminality such as self-control, personality and psychopathy (DeLisi 2018). However, neither of these studies included a specific focus on mass killers. As a result, there is a gap in the criminology literature in this hybrid approach to analysing motivations of mass shooters. In contrast, intersectional theory-based analyses of mass-shooter motivations may be appropriate because of the racial and class makeup of many of those who have recently committed mass shootings. Recent studies have suggested that ideas of whiteness and middle-class identity can play a role in mass shooter identity and motivations, and in the radicalisation of some people who have, or perceive to have this intersectional identity (Levine-Rasky 2011).

AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of the study is to understand the types of approaches used by researchers to analyse the motivations of mass shooters and if intersectional lens is applied in the process.

Research question 1: The first research question seeks to understand how intersectionality is applied in the literature on the motivations of mass shooters.

Research question 2: The second research question is similar and seeks to understand how analysis of perceived loss of economic or social status is applied in the literature analysing the motivations of mass shooters.

Research question 3: The third and final research question asks how an analysis of personality disorders and psychopathology is utilised in the literature on the motivations of mass shooters and examines if intersectional lens has been applied.

Together, the three research questions are designed to poll the literature for the most up-to-date scholarly thinking on what motivates mass shooters to carry out these acts. The research questions are formulated based on an implicit hypothesis, or series of hypotheses, about how the latest research interprets motivations of mass shooters. A key part of this hypothesis is that race, as well as gender, economic standing, social situation and other important sociological categories play an important role in mass-shooter motivations. Intersectionality hypothesises that these various categories include interaction effects that, when applied to individual psychology and culture in general, have a profound impact on identity (or multitude of ‘identities’) and behaviour (Muntaner & Augustinavicius 2019).

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The theoretical framework used in analysis of the included articles is intersectionality theory. This theory is most often associated with studies on social and other forms of oppression and inequality (Choo & Ferree 2010). But studies using a lens of ‘critical whiteness’ have begun to examine white identity and social processes in a critical manner because whiteness has been identified as a site of social dominance and source of oppression itself (Zingsheim & Goltz 2011). Traditional or original intersectionality theory has focused on how the three categories of race, class and gender mix to make oppressed groups more vulnerable (Davis 2014). In a similar way, intersectionality theory has also been used more recently with respect to middle-class white males to uncover the phenomenon of ‘triple entitlement’, or how the categories of race, class and gender work to create a perception of aggrieved entitlement in middle-class white mass shooters (Madfis 2014).

This makes intersectionality theory particularly appropriate for the present study because of the linkage of recent mass shooting events with perpetrators who are white or who cite white racial identity as a key organising principle. While intersectionality theory is usually a theoretical framework used in research on oppression and oppressed or marginalised groups, it is also appropriate here for a number of reasons (Levine-Rasky 2011). Intersectionality theory also has implications for race and class, two key categories that define recent mass shooters (Lankford 2016). In particular, researchers have identified a subtype of mass shooters, typically white, whose motivations are at least partly explained by the literature as stemming from aggrieved entitlement (Lankford 2016).

Intersectionality theory allows for a complex analysis of mass-shooter motivations to take place in a way not possible with alternative theoretical frameworks alone. This is because intersectionality theory recognises that oppression exists alongside domination in the process of identity formation (Levine-Rasky 2011). The particular intersections that pertain to mass shooters who are white and appear to be motivated by aggrieved sense of social and economic entitlement also tend to be middle class. One of the core elements of intersectionality theory is that these different social categories carry separate effects that, when combined, reinforce one another.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research method

The method used to examine the literature is qualitative systematic review. Qualitative review is chosen because the literature on the motivations of mass shooters tends not to be quantitative-based. Some authors object to the tendency of mechanical approach to reviewing the literature in the systematic reviews (Bryman 2012). Narrative interpretive reviews tend to be less focused, more wide-ranging in scope than systematic reviews and are less explicit about the criteria for exclusion or inclusion of studies (Bryman 2012). However, the narrative type of review was considered as the most appropriate for reviewing the literature in the case of mass shooters viewed through intersectional lens. Attempts of incorporating systematic review practices in narrative literature reviews offer more transparency, focus, and more robust criteria for exclusion and inclusion of studies. The current degree project will present an attempt of conducting a narrative review, with incorporated systematic review practices (Bryman 2012 p. 111). Due to the lack of precise terminology about this incorporative method, “qualitative systematic review” term is used, due to the systematic review practices followed, specifically in the usage of explicit research questions and the reproducible nature of the literature searches conducted. Theory is an important part of this literature, and it does not feature controlled trials or statistical analysis. The method included starting the research with selection of database. A database was needed that included a large range of journals and disciplines in which the latest research on motivations of mass shooters could be found.

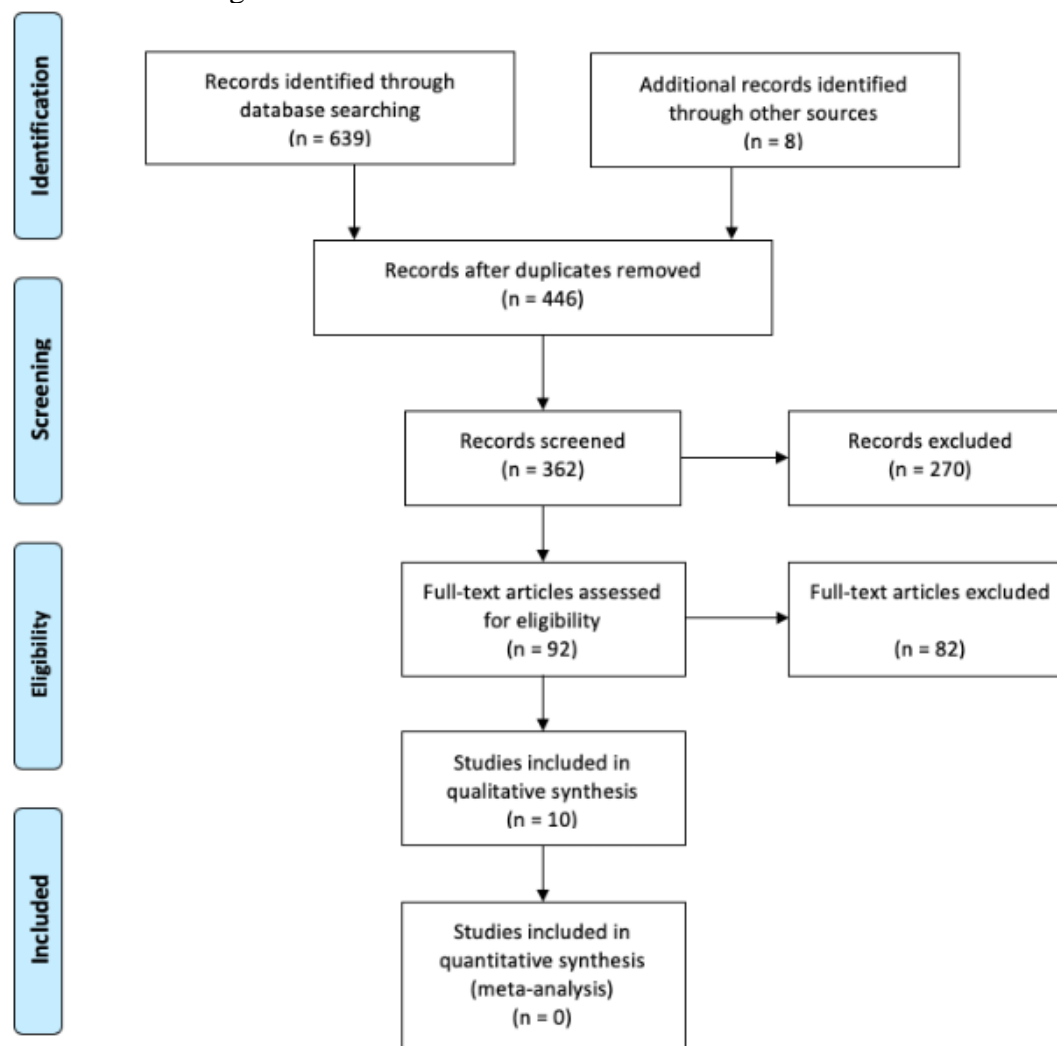
Critical appraisal was the next step after choosing research articles that fit the criteria for inclusion into the review (Bronson & T. S. Davis 2011). The quality of the research studies is assessed by the same set of standards. However, there is difficulty in critical appraisal across qualitative studies. This is because qualitative studies tend to not use the same methods that can make them easily comparable.

Inclusion criteria

The studies included for the review were those published in the period between years 2000 and 2019. This period was chosen, at the recent end, to include the latest

developments in theory and evidence. Studies from near 2000 were included because this time marked a time when a large number of studies looking specifically at the problem of mass shooters were published. Only studies conducted and written in English language were included. The PRISMA statement was used to prepare the systematic review, as the PRISMA statement was found to increase the quality of data reporting and methodology (Panic et al. 2013). A review protocol was used in the form of the PRISMA statement. The flow diagram (*Table 1*), recommended by PRISMA illustrates the flow of information through the different stages of the review process, providing an overview of the number of records identified, and consecutively the included and excluded studies. As noted, the eligibility for inclusion into the review was that the study was published between 2000 and 2019. Existing sources were analysed for the ability to critique the analysis with the intersectional approach, if it was not already part of the analysis. Information sources from which the included studies were drawn include the most recognised scholarly journals in sociology, criminology, and psychiatry as well as psychology. Some studies from culture studies journals were also considered for inclusion.

Table 1. Flow Diagram.



Databases and key words

The electronic search strategy for studies used for the review was as follows. Google Scholar was used as a first resort in order to locate important studies in the different disciplines. In addition, the Malmö University's electronic library, the database of SAGE journals and the JSTOR have been used. The last update of the database of this project was May, the 16th 2019.

Keywords used included “mass shooter”, “mass shooter” AND “motivation”, “mass shooter” AND “Intersectionality”, “mass shooter” AND “Identity”, “mass shooter” AND “personality disorder”, “mass shooter” AND “social status”, “mass shooter” AND “gender”, “mass shooter” AND “race”.

Screening process

The systematic review for study inclusion went as follows. Studies were examined for their relation to the topic of mass shooters and intersectional analysis. A wide latitude for possible inclusion was given to studies on this topic, in part because there are not numerous studies that address both intersectional analysis and mass shooters. As a result, studies were considered that, for example, focused only on mass shooters, but that gave promising analyses that could be used to create or deepen the intersectional analysis of mass shooters and their possible motivations. In addition, studies discussing personality disorders in relation to motivations of mass shooters were included, on the requirement, that the content was opened to be analysed by the intersectionality framework.

The variables for which data was sought by the researcher include the following items: (1) The credentials of the study authors were looked at so that credibility of the source could be established. (2) Only peer reviewed studies were included (3) Signs of author and researcher disclosure of conflict of interest were also examined.

While conducting the present review, it has become apparent that the majority of the literature on mass shooters has been published by American researchers. Although the intention of the author was not to geographically limit the scope of this review, most of the articles included were published by American authors. This increases the risk of missing on important cultural differences in other geographical regions. Differences which, given the focus of the present study have the potential to create a very divergent, or even contrasting picture on what motivates the mass shooter.

Studies focus and methods

There is diversity in the focus and the methods of the studies included. Madfis (2014) study is theory-based, and proposed theories on mass shooter motivations. The author proposed ways in which intersectional analysis could be used when analysing motivations. Myketiak (2016) uses linguistic content analysis of mass shooters

manifestos to study their motivations. Speaks (2019) presents an extensive narrative review, using intersectional and personality analysis to explore the white criminality and mass shooters psyche. Shultz (2019) along with interviews and observation methods, used elements of intersectional analysis, analysing the race and gender of white supremacists, members of online chat rooms. Bushman (2018) surveyed relevant theoretical and empirical literature, linked mass shootings with Narcissistic Personality Disorder and a desire on the part of the mass shooter for fame. Gray (2018) examines the ideology of the alt right in its relation to the importance of identity. He concludes that this ideology is likely to increase its importance as a rightist form of intersectionality.

There were two case studies included:

Declercq & Audenaert (2011) presented a case study of a mass murderer who voluntarily underwent psychiatric evaluation. This study gave first-person testimony from a mass murderer. The analysis of Faccini & Allely (2016) linked personality disorders with a psychiatric model of violence and motivation to commit violence. There is little mention of race, gender or class expectations in this case study and intersectional approach is not used.

Systematic reviews included:

Allely et al. (2014) analysis in their systematic review departs from the intersectional approach with its use of biological and bio-developmental factors to understand mass killers. Race, gender and socioeconomic factors like class do not factor into this strategy of analysis.

MIsiak et al. (2019) provided a systematic review on the link between mental health and the sort of mass violence that is apparent in mass shootings as well as a link between mental health and mass violence in the form of radicalisation. It included reviewed studies that tested possible links between these three elements. This study does not adopt the critical approach of intersectionality, although it is open to being interpreted by the theoretical framework.

Bias risks

Selection of the studies for the systematic review required assessing large amounts of studies. This created the possibility of missing relevant studies.

One method, used to reduce outcome and publication bias, was the assessment of how studies have been funded. Studies, which were funded by organisations with potential vested interests have been excluded.

The risk of confounding bias has been assessed on study level. Some studies included in this review use methods such as feminist linguistics text analysis, narratives, inductive methods to propose theories, analysis of psychiatric disorders with intersectional perspective, all of which are regarded as more susceptible of confounding bias than the more traditional methods.

There is an ongoing debate, the Becker-Gouldner debate, about the values and politics in sociological research, and the issue of “taking sides” (Bryman 2013). Becker’s point is that taking the side of the underdog’s perspective, specifically in deviance research, is more likely to be regarded as biased, “because members of the higher group are seen as having an exclusive right to define the way things are. In

other words, credibility is differentially distributed in society” (Bryman 2013). Mentioning this debate is highly relevant when discussing the risks of bias in the articles used in this review, albeit direct applicability cannot be garneted, since the mentioned “underdog” in this case, could be the opposite of the mass shooter identity (non-white, female etcetera) but could also be the mass shooter too, whose identity , also converges with the “higher group” with the exclusive right to be granted credibility, due to its privileged position. On this note, the greater risk of bias lays with the threat of taking a feminist stance, due to the theoretical framework used. However, having the awareness of this threat, each study has been closely examined for unsupported assumptions, claims and exaggeration of results.

The other side of this debate is Gouldner’s stand. He contends that taking seriously the point of view of section of society in research does not necessarily equate to sympathising with that group (Bryman 2013). This side of the debate is even more relatable with this thesis. The included studies have made well supported assumptions and tentative conclusions or included specific section about possible bias implications.

Additionally, feminist research is also concerned with using “strong objectivity,” which acknowledges that “the production of power is a political process and that greater attention paid to the context and social location of knowledge producers will contribute to a more ethical and transparent result” (Gurr and Naples 2014, kindle ed. 816-821)(qtd in Shultz 2019). The author of the present study assesses and acknowledges their own position and bias as a researcher, creating a stronger objectivity in the data analysis. An aspect to feminist “strong objectivity” is self-reflexivity, “a process by which researchers recognize, examine, and understand how their social background, location, and assumptions can influence the research” (Hesse-Biber YEAR, kindle ed. 453) (qtd in Shultz).

The author of this thesis, as a carrier of identities which both marginalise and privilege her, was exposed, has witnessed and experienced various adoptions of supremacy, and dedication of some groups to privileged identities in four geographically, linguistically and culturally different countries. She also opposes to any form of oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, origin, class; however, she understands the anxieties, which could drive some people to adhere to destructive ideologies. This and related knowledge in the feminist realm aid the fine recognition of bias that could impede objectivity.

Advantages and limitations of the method

Advantages of the chosen method include the ability to review a wide range of relevant research on the topic of mass shooters and their motivations. The systematic review allows for studies with very different methodologies, qualitative and quantitative in nature, to be included for analysis. The systematic review also allows the researcher to carry out one of a number of different forms of analysis. These options include, among others, narrative review and meta-analysis, as well as thematic synthesis of qualitative research (Thomas & Harden 2008). In this case, the meta-analysis and narrative review are chosen. The researcher chose this approach so that the findings of the analysis could be broken down into themes.

The method of thematic synthesis went through the following stages (Thomas & Harden 2008): coding of the findings of the studies; organizing them into common areas to conduct descriptive themes; development of analytical themes.

There are limitations to the method of systematic review and thematic synthesis of qualitative research. First, because the review relies almost solely on studies with qualitative methods, limitations associated with this methodology apply. This includes the limitation that the results are not generalisable and should be used merely to suggest useful avenues on the topic for further research. The aim of the study is merely to uncover themes in the literature related to the research questions presented above.

Ethics statement and ethical positions relevant for the project

There were not a large number of ethical problems in researching the study. The project presents a systematic literature review and did not include the use of human participants. Informed consent was thus not required to be collected from participants and there was no need of ethical approval to be obtained from the concerned authorities.

RESULTS

The emergence of the mass shooter in criminology research: A white male

One study was theory-based and used induction to propose theories on mass shooter motivations (Madfis 2014). This study was included because it used an intersectional analysis that examined the three key dimensions of class, gender and race in exploring motivations of mass shooters. The study author introduced ways in which intersectional analysis can be used to analyse mass shooter motivations, emphasising the role of anger from aggrieved entitlement. The author contends these factors are important because mass shooters are often of a particular socio-economic and racial background, in this case white and above lower class. The author argues that intersectionality analysis does not only work in the downward direction of oppression but also in the upward direction of race and class privilege.

The researcher describes the crime of mass murder to be a crime of supremacy (Madfis 2014). Shootings in which multiple people are killed are not classified as mass murders if they involve gang affiliation or criminal opportunists. Instead, massacres and mass shootings have been identified in the literature as distinct events and singled out for study on their own terms. This has been the case since the uptick in mass shootings that occurred in the United States in the 1970s (Holmes & DeBurger 1985). The formal study of mass murder began in the middle of the 1980s in studies by Holmes and DeBurger (1985) (qtd in Madfis 2014).

The emergence of mass shootings as a unique and distinct crime from others in which multiple people are killed is significant (Fox & Levin 1998). This is because mass shootings have become associated with white perpetrators, as Fox and Levin (1998) found that whites commit mass murder at a rate that is much higher than their proportion in the general population (qtd in Madfis 2014).

This and related studies analyse motivations of mass shooters with respect to a perceived decline or inequities of social class or economic standing. Researchers working in the field of feminist linguistics examined patterns of mass-shooter speech and writing to suggest mass shooters can become preoccupied with the perception of social inequities stacked against him (Myketiak 2016). This phenomenon was referred to by the researcher as ‘fragile masculinity’. This description of mass-shooter perceptions suggests that one critical category of intersectionality theory, gender, has become unstable and is thus under threat in the mass-shooter psyche. The analysis in Myketiak (2016) includes a section on masculinity discourses, which is appropriate given the methodology of content analysis and the aim of completing a linguistic analysis of one mass shooter’s manifesto. The masculinity discourses section draws a link between hegemonic masculinity and the unstable, threatened masculinity of the mass shooter under analysis.

The content analysis suggests that the mass shooter was motivated by disappointment of perceived social standing among peers (Myketiak 2016). The mass-shooter subject express dismay of not ‘living up to’ the characterisation of life promised by hegemonic masculinity; namely, “possessing” a socially-desirable girlfriend and other trappings of purported white-male privilege in American masculinity culture. In his manifesto, the subject uses discourse markers of British aristocracy and claims outright that he is a descendant of British aristocrats, suggesting both his class and race privilege claims, and referring to himself as half-white rather than half-nonwhite to emphasise racial privilege.

In this way, the mass shooter’s racial self-perception was an important part of his overall perception of declining social status. Not only does Myketiak (2016) analyse the role of perceived drop in social status, but the researcher includes aspects of the subject’s manifesto that naturally give rise to an intersectional interpretation of his position, and especially the grounds for his perceived grievances. An additional element of the analysis that deals with the subject’s perception of class and status decline is how he puts forth his “own vision” of masculinity, and this is said to be associated with a claim to authority of hegemonic masculinity (Myketiak 2016). In doing so he attempts to impose hegemonic masculinity and all the social inequalities that come with it in order to justify his own heightened social expectations, which are then dashed.

This single case study does not provide enough evidence to allow for any sort of generalisation. However, the analysis by the study author through the qualitative methodology of content analysis of a manifesto allowed for the subject’s perception of class anxiety to come to the forefront. This is a methodologically distinct approach from that used in Madfis et al (2014). This study explored earlier studies that contended mass shooters and other perpetrators of mass violence tended to suffer from anger over their middle- or low-class position in society. Alternative scenarios are provided as examples of mass shootings by aggrieved white heterosexual males

facing downward social mobility from positions of relative wealth and comfort (Madfis 2014). The white, male mass killers feel entitled to the social position they have achieved or otherwise expect to achieve.

What distinguishes the analytic approach of Madfis et al (2014) from that of Myketiak (2016) is a focus on economic matters. Madfis et al (2014) is one of the few studies among those included in the review that provide historical-economic context to social and economic downward mobility, particularly of middle- to upper-middle-class white males. The researcher contends that good-paying jobs for low-skill workers, particularly in the United States but also in Europe and elsewhere in the west, have all but disappeared. This has put downward pressure on the economic and social lives of many men who had grown used to supporting large families on their income alone. The author cites research to contend that this is much less frequent a phenomenon today. As a consequence, the author argues, there is a crisis especially in heterosexual, white male 'hegemonic masculinity' and identity. This is purported to be, in part, because countries like the United States, which suggest to all citizens that they have equal opportunity to become successful, do not have a corresponding 'myth' to explain how and why good people can fail to find success, and can even descend the social ladder (Madfis 2014, p.77).

It is this deadlock that Madfis argues leads people in very rare cases to commit mass murder or mass shootings. The act of a mass shooting is analysed as being the result of one final show of male-based authority and prestige designed to reassert dominance over one's situation and over society taken together as a whole. This analysis is added to in the study by reports of mass shootings, one of which involved a white heterosexual lower-class male who killed fourteen female engineers because he was rejected from the professional school for his desired occupation, engineering (Madfis 2014). This mass-shooting episode shows the social decline and destroyed expectations of hegemonic masculinity. That the mass shooter in question targeted solely female engineering students suggested he felt they had 'taken' 'his' place at the school. His murderous act was interpreted as a futile attempt to restore the previous, gender and male-domination based, social order.

The researcher then carries out an analysis that makes use of intersectionality theory even if the theory is not mentioned by name initially. Madfis et al (2014) do mention intersectionality theory when discussing how male identities and the process of identity formation intersect in the problem of white-male expectations. The author argues that the privilege some white males enjoy and that is expected by others who do not enjoy it is itself the result of intersectional identity. But the white male who has an expectation of privilege and then nonetheless suffers from actual downward social mobility. The net effect of this process is that white males who have privilege expectations experience failures and struggles as shocking surprises. Madfis et al (2014) argues that these surprises are every bit as intersectional in nature as are the privileges and privilege expectations of white males who have yet to experience such social and economic failure. The analysis of Madfis is even more successful because it includes a discussion of the added layer of perceived downward social and economic mobility. The shock experienced by disappointed white-male privilege is thus a key part of this perceived aspect. As the author notes in the analysis, the same experience coded as a 'failure' because of white male expectations of privilege will

be experienced, for example, by many black males in the United States as simply 'normal'. For this reason, the shock occurs most dramatically in the white-male experience.

Mass shooters, intersectionality and psychopathology: A whiteness ego?

In order to summarise the narrative review present in Speaks (2019) it is necessary to present the author's narrative. This narrative draws a link between current psychopathology of white mass shooters and the European "whiteness ego" that, she argues, drives marginalisation in American society. As an important use of intersectional analysis and personality to understand white criminality and mass shooter psyches, it is reported here at length.

Going back to the early history of the American colony, Speaks (2019) mentions the relationship of Protestants with the slave trade. The author argues for an inner struggle within American Protestants with respect to the moral contradictions of the slave trade (Speaks 2019). The author also notes a contradiction in the slave trade and the tenets of the Reformation, which suggested that all human beings have dignity before God. This appears to include slaves, a fact that, Speaks (2019) argues, would not have been lost on white American Protestants during these early years of the American republic. This contradiction in principles and morals was not resolved, however. Instead, the domination of slaves was made to be a permanent part of American wealth and economic growth. This domination persisted even after slavery was abolished, giving rise to what is now referred to as the marginalisation in American society of non-white groups, especially blacks with the legacy of slavery still resonant in the social order today. The author argues that this is also the legacy of a white psychopathology and a historical European ego.

There exists a "sickness" of the white ego as a result of a kind of departure from responsibility to God that has occurred in the European ego (Speaks 2019). Through hubris, the author contends, the whiteness Ego of the early Protestant Americans decided to ignore the universal human dignity of the Reformation, preserve slavery and give birth to marginalisation. This marginalisation has become a feature of life for many groups in America as a result, she continues. Racism is one way that white Americans in particular defend themselves against social insecurities and perceived changes to social position or social anxiety, argues Comer (1991) (qtd in Speaks 2019). But the author further suggests that the whiteness ego is the result of psychiatric constructs developed for psychoanalysis. Speaks (2019) argues that psychoanalysis was an attempt to "normalise" white male behaviour and psychological tendencies while other behaviours were classified as deviant, often associated with people of the non-white races.

Where psychopathology comes into play, the Diagnostic Statistical Manual presents a number of diagnoses related to the whiteness ego, contends Speaks (2019). The author then makes connections between the whiteness ego and three personality disorders. These are said to include narcissistic personality disorder, sociopathic personality disorder and antisocial personality disorder (Anon 2013). Speaks (2019)

then makes a connection between the decision of early American slave owners to elevate themselves over their slaves, arguing that this, in itself, was a core moment for the psychopathology of the whiteness ego. This later arose in the form of attempts in psychoanalysis to classify parts of white culture as “normal” and parts of African-descended culture as deviant or in some sense lesser, or even evil (Speaks 2019, p.283).

The author then goes on to describe the personality disorders and make connections with aspects of the whiteness ego that have been pointed out. Another element of the analysis given in Speaks (2019) is white supremacy. This part of the author’s analysis is intersectional because it includes an analysis of the major economic system, capitalism, along with social, religious, and historical factors that influence the viewpoint of white supremacy. An additional element of white supremacy, according to Speaks (2019), is the fear of “white genetic annihilation”, and the use of this fear as a justification to continue to degrade black people and members of other racial minority groups (p. 286).

Additional studies related to the radicalisation of white males in the United States further this line of analysis. A study of the ideology of a white supremacist group meeting on an internet message board gathering place included elements of intersectional analysis. In particular, study authors combine an analysis of race and gender to better understand the motivations of white supremacists who used a similar online message board through which the Christchurch mass shooter may have become radicalised and also through which he spread the idea of ‘white genocide’ (Shultz 2019).

One parallel between the analysis of white supremacy in Speaks (2019) and mass shooters can be seen in the most recent mass shooting, which took place in Christchurch, New Zealand and was perpetrated by an Australian national (Besley & Peters 2019). The analysis of personality disorders in the ‘whiteness ego’ given by Speaks (2019) can be analysed with a critical approach. This approach allows the author’s narrative to be viewed through the lens of intersectional analysis as well.

Mass shooters and personality disorders: An incomplete analysis?

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5 2013) informs the definition of personality disorder as an “enduring pattern of inner experience and behaviour that deviates markedly from the expectations of the individual’s culture, is pervasive and inflexible, has an onset in adolescence or early adulthood, is stable over time, and leads to distress or impairment”. There are 10 defined personality disorders, amongst which the Narcissistic Personality Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, Antisocial Personality Disorder and others.

Additional research has taken up the same personality-disorder analysis of mass-shooter motivations as pursued by Speaks (2019). A study, which surveyed relevant theoretical and empirical literature, linked mass shootings with Narcissistic Personality Disorder and a desire on the part of the mass shooter for fame (Bushman 2018). This research study was written as a response to the notion that criminal acts

of aggression are the result of personal insecurities on the part of the aggressor (Donnellan et al. 2005). In contrast, researchers have proposed that violence, particularly mass homicide, can be the result of narcissism and threatened ego (Bushman & Baumeister 1998). The meta-analysis carried out by Bushman (2018) suggested that while insecurity and low self-esteem can be factors in mass-shooter motivation, narcissism can coexist independently as a motivator as well.

Case studies of mass shooters and personality-disorder analysis

A different section of psychiatric analysis of mass shooters tends to use a psychiatric profile in order to attempt to establish a diagnosis related to personality disorders. One research article included a case study of a mass murderer who voluntarily underwent psychiatric evaluation (Declercq & Audenaert 2011). This study gave first-person testimony from the mass murderer. Researchers and psychiatric professionals questioned the subject to discuss at length his motivations for committing the crime, his attitude toward the world and others, and other important factors they thought pertained to the crime. Using this information, the study authors concluded that the subject showed signs of Borderline Personality Disorder. They also speculated motivation for the mass murder came from feelings of loneliness, attachment issues with a primary caregiver during childhood, and clinical depression during the period leading up to the crimes (Declercq & Audenaert 2011). Researchers concluded that this condition combined in the subject's perception with the sense that he had become a 'powerless victim' in an uncaring world that constantly rejected him. In addition to the diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder, the study authors suggested the subject showed signs of mild psychopathy or secondary psychopathy.

A second case study analysis focused on the mass shooter Anders Breivik (Faccini & Allely 2016). This analysis linked the personality disorders Autism Spectrum Disorders and Narcissistic Personality Disorder with a psychiatric model of violence and motivation to commit violence. Researchers also presented evidence Breivik may have had Antisocial Personality Traits and Disorder. As in the study by Misiak (2019) given below, the researchers in Faccini and Allely (2016) found a link between Narcissistic Personality Disorder, in the case of Breivik, and a tendency toward violence. While the case study does consider factors outside personality disorders, it focuses on psychological and social stress and childhood development problems instead of the favoured traits of intersectionality theory. There is little mention of race, gender or class expectations in the case study by Faccini and Allely, and also little mention of these factors in Misiak (2019). However, the second study is a systematic literature review rather than a case study.

Another form of analysis in the psychiatry literature linked to personality disorders is psychosocial stress. A study of 239 serial and mass killers found that 28.03 percent were likely to have Autism Spectrum Disorder (Allely et al. 2014). In addition to checking for this personality disorder, the researchers examined the lives of the violent subjects to better understand how neurodevelopment and psychosocial stressors may have played a role. Further, the research drew a links between Autism Spectrum Disorder, psychosocial stress and a definite or suspected head injury (Allely et al. 2014). This analysis departs from the intersectional approach with its

use of biological and bio-developmental factors to understand mass killers. Race, gender and socioeconomic factors like class do not factor into this strategy of analysis. Like other studies that focus on personality disorders, this study found a link between Autism Spectrum Disorder and Narcissistic Personality Disorder in subject violence. This is perhaps because of overlap in the DSM designations for these disorders (Anon 2013).

An additional study provided a systematic review on the link between mental health and the sort of mass violence that is apparent in mass shootings (Misiak et al. 2019). Although this review does not select studies with an exclusive focus on personality disorders, it does relate to the general hypothesised link between personality disorders and mass shootings. Although mental health and personality disorders are not directly analogous, study of personality disorders does broadly overlap with the discipline of psychiatry and mental health. The study makes another link between mental health and mass violence in the form of radicalisation. It includes reviewed studies that tested possible links between these three elements.

The analysis suggested that depressive symptoms are associated with a higher probability of radicalisation. Since depressive symptoms are associated with a number of personality disorders, there is a link between the analysis of radicalisation, personality disorders and acts of mass shooting. The focus on depressive symptoms and radicalisation mirrors two studies above that focus on a process of political radicalisation leading to acts of mass shooting violence. In addition, the research found that lone-acting mass shooters represent a small portion of those at risk for radicalisation, and that they often hold extreme beliefs (Misiak et al. 2019). These beliefs are reported as more prevalent among radicalised people with psychotic tendencies and mood disorders.

This study constitutes one way in which personality disorders and mental-health connections to mass shootings are analysed in the literature, the topic of research question 3 in the current thesis. However, this study does not adopt the critical approach of intersectionality, although it is open to being interpreted by the theoretical framework. One issue is that nowhere in the text of the study is race or racial experiences and perceptions mentioned. Given the context provided by other studies on how the alt right has organised around concepts of whiteness, how whiteness and white supremacy play a role in creating marginalised groups, and other race-related findings, the lack of mention of race limited the analysis provided in Misiak et al (2019). One reason for the lack of mention of race is that the review included studies published in countries where race plays a different role in domestic politics and conceptions of local identity than it does in the United States. In spite of these complications, the study does make a valuable contribution to answering research question 3. The headline result reported by the study authors was that there was not enough high-quality evidence to conclude that there was a single “unique profile” of psychopathological traits (including personality disorders) that were common among perpetrators of mass violence who had become radicalised (Misiak et al. 2019).

The above finding is consistent with other studies included in this review that analyse the motivations of mass shooters from the perspective of personality disorders and

mental health. Although links are drawn between high egotism, Narcissistic Personality Disorder, and mass shooters in Bushman (2018), evidence presented in this and similar studies merely suggests that some mass shooters may have had diagnosed or undiagnosed personality disorders. This mere suggestion is not close to sufficient to conclude that the motivations of mass shooters are heavily impacted by personality disorders alone, or even in part. At any rate, both Bushman (2018) and Misiak et al (2019) present some available evidence that links personality disorders and mental-health issues with individual shooters, drawing out a few tendencies in the data in the process.

Intersectionality theory, identity, and political radicalisation

A number of studies also made explicit use of intersectionality theory in analysing motivations of mass shooters. A related trend in recent years is the rise of identity politics on the left of the political spectrum, which has lately been joined by the use of identity as an organising force on the right, as well. It is the latter that is the subject of a research article examining how intersectional construction of identity is similar in both versions of identity politics (Gray 2018). The difference is that radicalisation of identity among those in “alt right” political groups has been associated with at least one white, heterosexual and male mass shooter in the form of the Christchurch, New Zealand shooting.

This alt-right political movement is much different from mainstream American conservatives, Gray argued, because it is explicitly based on race — specifically whiteness — as the most important organising idea. While there does seem to be aspects of the alt right that are capable of including people of races that are not white, evidence that much of the alt right is based on a common idea of white identity appears to be plentiful (Hartzell 2018). Because the alt right depends so much on race, intersectional analysis is highly appropriate to analysing the motivations of the movement’s followers. But this does introduce some issues simply because the alt right and white nationalism in the United States (and Europe) appear to be “using” intersectional-like elements as a defence against groups on the left who use intersectionality to identify oppression and organise along largely racial lines. This fact is emphasized by Gray (2018), who notes that the alt right has organised along racial lines because those who espouse it feel that “race is a fundamental part of their identity” (p. 7).

While the study does not directly address radicalisation, Madfis (2014) describes the unique downward spiral of dashed expectations experienced by white-male heterosexuals as a result of their high level of entitlement for standing, success and achievement. One element that could have been included in this otherwise excellent analysis is the point at which white-male heterosexual individuals are most likely to go through the changes of radicalisation. If one were to speculate it would appear likely that radicalisation could occur when males with this intersectional identity experience downward social mobility that they perceive to be irreversible.

Risk of bias

In the systematic review, selection bias could occur due to the large amounts of literature the researcher has to go through. This creates the risk of missing some of the relevant articles on the topic. There is also high risk of confounding bias, since some of the included articles use alternative methods of research. Publication bias could also be a risk; however, this risk can be limited by ensuring there is no vested interest in the funding, or the authors have good credentials in the academic community

DISCUSSION

The body of literature chosen for the systematic literature review above provides answers to the three research questions. The literature does include substantial analysis through the application of intersectionality to analyse motivations of mass shooters. The manner in which the literature performs this analysis is by combining the social categories of race and gender, and sometimes class, in order to capture an intersectional picture of white-male mass shooters. Most of the included studies featured at least some analysis of gender, race and class in exploring the motivations of mass shooters. However, a number of included studies gave an extensive analysis of mass-shooter motivations based on intersectional theory. Of particular note was Madfis (2014), which explored how identity intersections of heterosexual white males created unique conditions for the emergence of mass shooters. Several studies did not use intersectional approach, focusing on psychiatric diagnoses or biological and developmental factors to understand mass violence. However, they remain open to analysis by the intersectionality framework.

In summary, hegemonic male identity includes the performance of male gender, by virtue of Judith Butler's notion of 'doing gender' (Butler 1988). This performance of masculinity, distinct from the performance of femininity, often includes displays of domination in the form of violence. Intersection of white-male heterosexual identity is also responsible for the elevated expectations with respect to life outcomes that these men develop. In a twist, however, these elevated expectations set white heterosexual males up for a singularly painful fall from grace if they experience downward social mobility. This is because of the peculiar intersection of white-male heterosexual identity, which can be seen in the fact that marginalised people do not experience the 'shock' of this 'fall from grace'.

The second research question pertained to the manner in which the literature included analysis of perceived loss of economic or social status in the motivations of mass shooters. Again, the findings of the systematic review show that the literature does include an analysis of perceived downward social and economic mobility in the perception of the people who carry out these acts. Some of the studies referenced downward mobility perceptions of mass shooters in an indirect way. Examples of such studies included Shultz (2019), which explored perceptions on the part of radicalised white males of the existence of a 'white genocide', or a conspiracy to

undermine the white supremacy that purportedly provided them with a measure of nominal social prestige and superiority.

Once again, the outstanding analysis is given in Madfis (2014). This is because the author in the study combined intersectional analysis of white-male heterosexual identity with a scenario of downward social and economic mobility. The perception of downward mobility and the associated shock is uniquely shocking for white-male heterosexuals because of their specific intersectional identity. Other intersectional identities, for example African American-female homosexual, do not experience a similar shock because their identity does not include the entitlements that are characteristic of white-male heterosexual identity (Madfis 2014).

The research involving perceived loss of status and economic class on mass-shooter motivation included in the review largely centred on the political 'alt-right' and radicalisation of white mass shooters. A researcher in one exploratory and theoretical study combined an analysis of the alt right with white identity (Gray 2018). However, a critical approach was taken in this study, which utilised analysis through intersectionality theory. This approach allowed for the combination of an analysis of perceived loss of status with the process of identity formation affecting some radicalised white males who have been associated with a recent mass shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand. It accounted for perception of social and economic status decline by referring not only to expressions of these perceptions, but also through a deeper analysis of the role identity formation plays in the politics of the moment. This strategy for analysis acknowledged that the climate of identity politics may have implications for motivations of mass shooters.

This is possible because identity politics increases the intensity of in-group and out-group identification and raises the stakes of belonging to a particular group along with its claims to social or historical importance (or infamy). The analysis of shooter motivations in this way thus includes consideration for interaction effects between race, gender and class, and political radicalisation as well as notions of whiteness and white supremacy. It also exhibits a special aspect of the current political moment in the use of intersectional thinking to create a racial 'white consciousness' identity in a fascinating comparison between the alt-right and the 'intersectional left'. On this analysis, both groups use similar strategies to identify a privileged group of people as oppressed, except 'oppressed' is here understood in two very different ways, historically speaking.

The third research question was how the literature included analysis of personality disorders in the analysis of motivations of mass shooters and explored if intersectional lens has been applied. This research question was approached with caution because a critical approach was needed to point out the limitations of this approach to the analysis from the lens of intersectionality. According to intersectionality, personality disorders are a limited way of understanding social reality. This is the case because personality disorders do not take into account the variety of social categories that intersectionality hypothesises play a role in shaping human identity and motivations.

Both Speaks (2019) and Bushman (2018) explore the possible influence of personality disorders on the motivations of mass shooters. The latter carried out a review and meta-analysis suggesting that narcissism or Narcissistic Personality Disorder could have an independent impact on the motivations of mass shooters even when individuals showed other mental-health issues, such as mood disorder. It relied on evidence from a number of studies suggesting a link between narcissism and a tendency toward violence. No intersectional lens has been applied in the studies about personality disorders in relation to mass violence (Faccini Allely 2016) (Misiak 2019). In Allely et al. (2014) the study departed from the intersectional approach but focused on biological and developmental factors.

While the research on mass shooters and personality disorders offers important insight, it appears to be limited by a focus on individual psychopathology. One element that it fails to account for is the way in which gender, race and class combine in middle-class white shooters to give rise to what one researcher referred to as ‘triple entitlement’, the disappointment of which causes anger and, in some cases, rage (Madfis 2014). Taking a critical approach to this difference, it is necessary to point out that while personality disorders may offer only a limited and narrow perspective, it is not necessarily an exclusionary perspective on the issue. In other words, an account of mass-shooter motivations based on personality disorders does not necessarily rule out motivations stemming from white identity, white supremacy or ‘triple entitlement’.

Study limitations

The inherent limitations associated narrative reviews are that they are less focused and more wide-ranging in scope than systematic reviews. They are also invariably less explicit about the criteria for exclusion or inclusion of studies (Bryman 2013). A narrative review generates understanding of a topic, as opposed to accumulating of knowledge in the systematic reviews.

Conducting systematic reviews has some limitations, related to its reliance on already conducted research. There is also a tendency towards mechanical approach to reviewing the literature (Bryman 2013). In addition, the identification and the availability of the identified records is dependent on the researcher’s access to the articles.

The hybrid approach used in the present study incorporates both narrative and systematic reviews in attempt to revise the literature in systematic manner and to gain better understanding about the topic of mass shooters motivation and intersectional identity. In addition to the benefits of such incorporation, some of the limitations of both of the used methods were inherited.

The reviewed literature included only peer reviewed articles, which excluded “grey literature”. This limitation, however, has increased the validity of the study.

The discussion of the role of race, gender, class, entitlement, identity, personality disorder is not new in the study of mass shooters. However, the dynamics of these identity components is rarely studied in the frame of the intersectional approach and

literature. This itself limits significantly the number of studies available on the topic, bringing along difficulties to the identification of studies, which do not explicitly state “intersectionality”, but do apply the intersectional framework to their analysis. Noted in the present review is the sparse adoption of the intersectional approach when analysing mass shooters’ personality disorders.

Approaches undertaken to study mass shooting in intersectional perspective are in its infancy. The present review mines some advances achieved in the understanding the complex interaction of identity components, using feminist linguistics text analysis, narratives, inductive methods to propose theories, analysis of psychiatric disorders with intersectional perspective - all of which are vulnerable to critique as opposed to the more traditional scientific methods.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to understand the types of approaches used by researchers to analyse the motivations of mass shooters and if intersectional lens is used in the process.

Analysis of the literature allowed to explore the way race, gender, class, sexuality, personality disorder have been discussed as privileges, which are intersectional in nature. The intersectional lens aided the understanding, that typical mass shooter is not merely a white privileged male, who may or may not have personality disorder. Having an identity, which is racially and otherwise privileged, does not guard against unexpected downward mobility, or loss of status and domination over others. On the contrary, such identity multiplies the feelings of pain and humiliation.

Personality disorder in relation to mass violence research rarely adopts the intersectional lens. The knowledge gained about personality disorder characteristics is not sufficient to create a predefined profile of disorder characteristics that predispose to radical attitudes; however, they can be important component in the formation of the mass shooters identity.

Results included that analysis based on personality disorders was frequent in the psychiatry literature, while a hybrid approach has been used in the criminology literature. Purely intersectional analyses are more often used in the sociology literature on mass shooters.

Intersectionality theory has not yet been empirically tested in the Criminological field. Future research should focus on qualitatively measuring to what extent are the discussed components of identity prevalent in the mass shooters.

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APPENDIX 1

Results from the articles used in the systematic literature review:

	Author, year of publication	Type	Methodology	Results
1	Allely CS, Minnis H, Thompson L, Wilson P (2014)	Original Article	Systematic review, polling the literature involving serial killers, violent crime, psychopathy, following PRISMA Preferred reporting Items.	Serial/mass killing are rare; there is lack of rigorous research on serial/mass killers; media reporting generates harmful stereotyping for symptoms associated with autism spectrum disorders; Risk factors: neurodevelopmental: over 10% of serial/mass killers have ASD; over 10% have had head injury; Other risk factors: psychosocial – abuse, abandonment, illness, separation. Interplay between these factors could, in rare cases result in predisposition to developing murderous urges.
2	Bushman B J (2018)	Original Article	The article examines the relationship between narcissism/narcissistic traits and mass shooters exhibiting such traits and the implications for society as well as the media coverage of incidents. Meta-analysis.	Link discovered between narcissism and violent criminal behaviours; High likeliness of mass shooter to have narcissistic traits; Links between media “celebrity culture” and raising number of mass shooting incidents; Brief recommendation about using the acquired knowledge to limit shooters reaching “celebrity status” in media.
3	Mykietiak C (2016)	Original Article	Critical content analysis guided by thematic analysis of one case of mass shooting , by applying feminist linguistics on the perpetrator’s manifesto used for rationalising his actions through a frame of hegemonic masculinity based inequalities as gender, race, sexuality, class.	Misogyny, racism, colonialism, heteropatriarchal discourse demonstrates that women are commodified as goods for masculine subjects. Violence in these toxic ideologies becomes a path to claiming worth that has been perceived as unjustly denied. The complex and fragile relationship to masculinity cannot be isolated from social inequalities and desire for domination.
4	Faccini L, Allely C S (2016)	Original Article	Case analysis of one mass murder case.	Providing diagnoses and forensic profile; possible association between narcissistic personality

				disorder and violence; narcissistic decompensation mediated this association; Asperger's syndrome and narcissistic decompensation contributed to grievances, related to violent acts.
5	Gray PW (2018)	Original Article	Article examines the ideology of the "alt right" in relation to the importance of national/racial identity.	The alt right provides means to analyse identitarian ideology. This would aid highlighting problematic areas that apply both to the Right and to the Left. Investigating the beliefs and policy preferences would assist the distinguishing between moderate and extreme cases in both movements, calling for heightened self-criticism as a path to deconstructing the structures of power, underlying the basis of deterministic group identity.
6	Shultz A (2019)	Original Thesis	Race and gender analysis by conducting feminist research, Participant observation, online data collection, student and administrator interviews.	Data shows that there is potential contribution from the Left supporters to the feelings of isolation of the white supremacist members of chat room and websites, fuelling their commitment to "white ideology".
7	Speaks F (2019)	Book Chapter	Narrative review exploring the link between current psychopathology of white mass shooters and the European 'whiteness ego' that drives marginalization in American society.	The author calls for dismantling inequitable mental constructs on a personal, and institutionalised oppression on collective level as the only course of treatment of present psychoses. This, along with empowerment, as opposed to oppression of the weaker, and awareness of the biases we might be socialise into by perceiving ourselves as belonging to Ego-driven ideologies. Author goes as far, as calling it metaphorically "A whiteness-ego pathology diagnoses".
8	Misiak B, Samochowiec J, Bhui K, Schouler-Ocak M (2018)	Original Article	Systematic review of the relationship between mental health, radicalisation and mass violence	Depressive symptoms cannot be associated with resilience or vulnerability of radicalisation with certainty. Some personality traits, however, can be linked to extreme ideation. Lone actors could be members of subgroup holding extreme beliefs, characterised by high prevalence of psychotic and/or mood disorders.

9	Madfis E (2014)	Original Article	Article investigates and analyses the convergencies of race (white), class, downward mobility and heterosexuality in relation to violence.	Triple privilege of white, heterosexual masculinity is prerequisite for highly painful experiences when unexpected losses in result of downward mobility are encountered. The final act of violence is a bid to ward off subordination of the intersecting identity of white, heterosexual masculinity.
10	Declercq F, Audenaert K (2011)	Original Article	Data gathered via interviews, observations and official records to examine one case of mass murderer.	Subject showed signs of borderline personality disorder and mild psychopathy or secondary psychopathy. motivation for the mass murder came from feelings of loneliness, attachment issues with a primary caregiver during childhood, and clinical depression during the period leading up to the crimes ne personality disorder.

APPENDIX 2

PRISMA 2009 Checklist

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on page #
TITLE			
Title	1	Identify the report as a systematic review, meta-analysis, or both.	1
ABSTRACT			
Structured summary	2	Provide a structured summary including, as applicable: background; objectives; data sources; study eligibility criteria, participants, and interventions; study appraisal and synthesis methods; results; limitations; conclusions and implications of key findings; systematic review registration number.	2
INTRODUCTION			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known.	4-5
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of questions being addressed with reference to participants, interventions, comparisons, outcomes, and study design (PICOS).	5
METHODS			
Protocol and registration	5	Indicate if a review protocol exists, if and where it can be accessed (e.g., Web address), and, if available, provide registration information including registration number.	-
Eligibility criteria	6	Specify study characteristics (e.g., PICOS, length of follow-up) and report characteristics (e.g., years considered, language, publication status) used as criteria for eligibility, giving rationale.	7-8
Information sources	7	Describe all information sources (e.g., databases with dates of coverage, contact with study authors to identify additional studies) in the search and date last searched.	9
Search	8	Present full electronic search strategy for at least one database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.	8-9
Study selection	9	State the process for selecting studies (i.e., screening, eligibility, included in systematic review, and, if applicable, included in the meta-analysis).	9
Data collection process	10	Describe method of data extraction from reports (e.g., piloted forms, independently, in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators.	9
Data items	11	List and define all variables for which data were sought (e.g., PICOS, funding sources) and any assumptions and simplifications made.	9
Risk of bias in individual studies	12	Describe methods used for assessing risk of bias of individual studies (including specification of whether this was done at the study or outcome level), and how this information is to be used in any data synthesis.	10
Summary measures	13	State the principal summary measures (e.g., risk ratio, difference in means).	-
Synthesis of results	14	Describe the methods of handling data and combining results of studies, if done, including measures of consistency (e.g., I^2) for each meta-analysis.	-

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PRISMA 2009 Checklist

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on page #
Risk of bias across studies	15	Specify any assessment of risk of bias that may affect the cumulative evidence (e.g., publication bias, selective reporting within studies).	9
Additional analyses	16	Describe methods of additional analyses (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression), if done, indicating which were pre-specified.	-
RESULTS			
Study selection	17	Give numbers of studies screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally with a flow diagram.	8
Study characteristics	18	For each study, present characteristics for which data were extracted (e.g., study size, PICOS, follow-up period) and provide the citations.	10
Risk of bias within studies	19	Present data on risk of bias of each study and, if available, any outcome level assessment (see item 12).	27
Results of individual studies	20	For all outcomes considered (benefits or harms), present, for each study: (a) simple summary data for each intervention group (b) effect estimates and confidence intervals, ideally with a forest plot.	6-11
Synthesis of results	21	Present results of each meta-analysis done, including confidence intervals and measures of consistency.	-
Risk of bias across studies	22	Present results of any assessment of risk of bias across studies (see item 15).	19
Additional analysis	23	Give results of additional analyses, if done (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression [see item 16]).	-
DISCUSSION			
Summary of evidence	24	Summarize the main findings including the strength of evidence for each main outcome; consider their relevance to key groups (e.g., healthcare providers, users, and policy makers).	17-19
Limitations	25	Discuss limitations at study and outcome level (e.g., risk of bias), and at review-level (e.g., incomplete retrieval of identified research, reporting bias).	22
Conclusions	26	Provide a general interpretation of the results in the context of other evidence, and implications for future research.	23
FUNDING			
Funding	27	Describe sources of funding for the systematic review and other support (e.g., supply of data); role of funders for the systematic review.	-

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