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Kids Killing Kids

Mental Illness, Adolescence, and Mass Murder

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Introduction

Are rates of mental illness higher in adolescents who commit mass violence compared to other adolescents? Are rates of mental illness higher among adolescents who commit mass murder compared to adults who commit mass murder?

Mass murder has proven to be a phenomenon that we can't predict. Typical reasons for committing violence may not suffice in instances of mass killing, and many have suggested mental illness as a possible causative factor. Looking at publicly-available data, our research looks for correlation between mass murder and mental illness.

Mental illness is not normally linked to violent behavior in adults. However, the difference in brain development between adolescents and adults could impact that link to violence in mentally ill adolescents.

Table 1- Mental Illness in Detained Youth

	Property	Violent	Versatile
Any Illness	94.3%	65.4%	82.6%
Violent Offenses mean	0	1.6	3.8
Substance Offenses mean	1.1	.3	1.1

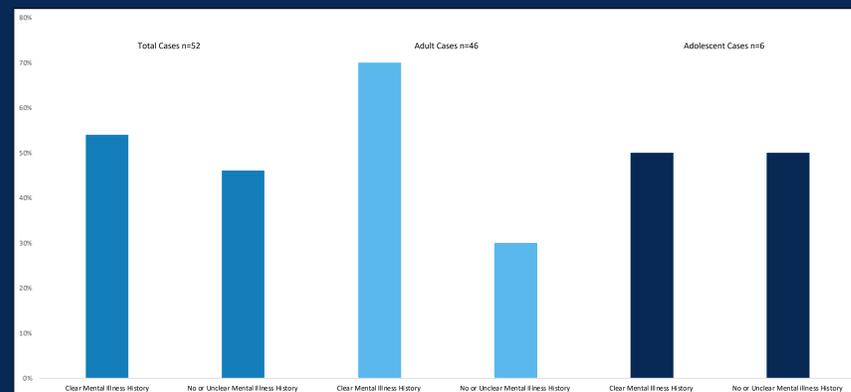
Colins, et al. studied adolescent property, violent, and versatile offender mental illness rates. High mental illness rates were found in all three categories.

Preliminary Results

Preliminary findings suggest a high percentage of mentally ill offenders among both adolescent mass murderers, and detained adolescent males in juvenile detention centers.

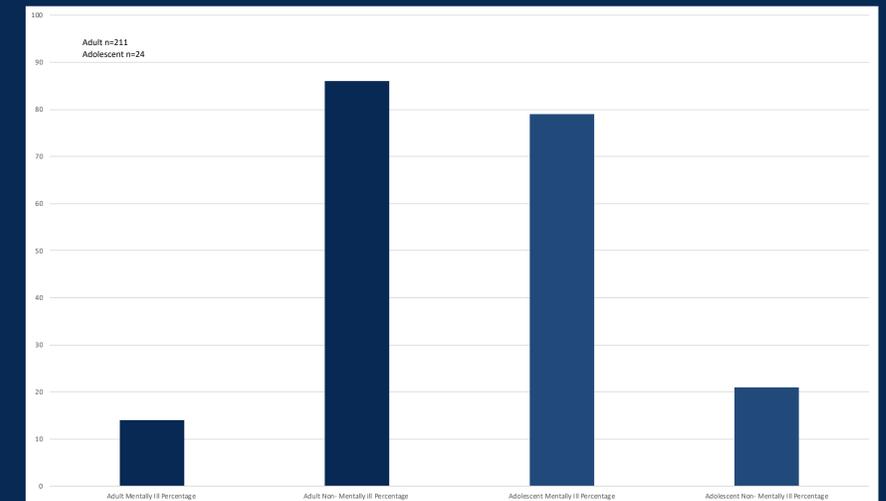
Separating Dr. Stone's data by adolescent perpetrator shows 79% of adolescent mass murderers had a mental illness. Colins, et al. shows a similar percentage in detained violent offenders (see Table 1 & Figure 2).

Figure 1 – Mother Jones Data Set



The news publication Mother Jones keeps a current data set available online and is used by Dr. Stone. Their methodology for these results is unknown. The graph illustrates years 1994 - 2014.

Figure 2 – Dr. Stone's 2015 Data Set



When separating the adolescent cases from adults in Dr. Stone's data set, the presence of mental illness in the adolescents becomes obvious with 79%. The graph illustrates years 1913 - 2014.

Results & Future Methods

While preliminary findings are inconclusive, we believe that using a different methodology will provide more answers and less ambiguity in results. For future research, we will use a portion of Dr. Michael Stone's data set of mass murders from 1994 to 2014 from his work *Mass Murder, Mental Illness, and Men*. Our research will determine if mental illness is present based on statements of an official mental illness diagnosis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we suggest that more research needs to be completed to find any correlations between mental illness, adolescents, and mass violence. Current literature lacks definitional consistency, along with clear methodology. These findings can help us better understand the mass violence phenomenon, especially in the case of adolescent perpetrators. Understanding these events could help us improve both therapy practices for this demographic and school policies related to violence.

