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Status and Slaughter: The Psyco-social Factors that Influence Public Mass Murder

Stephen G. Van Geem
Utah State University

STATUS AND SLAUGHTER: THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL FACTORS THAT

INFLUENCE PUBLIC MASS MURDER

by

Stephen VanGeem

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Approved:

_____   _____
Christy Glass   Patricia Lambert
Major Professor   Committee Member

_____   _____
Michael B. Toney   Amy Odum
Committee Member   Committee Member

                    _____
                    Byron R. Burnham
                    Dean of Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

Status and Slaughter: The Psycho-Social Factors that Influence Public Mass Murder

by

Stephen VanGeem, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2009

Major Professor: Dr. Christy Glass
Department: Sociology, Social Work & Anthropology

Even though public mass shootings are relatively rare, they represent an atypical form of violence that is both sudden and yields an unprecedented amount of carnage; for these reasons, an inordinate amount of scholarship has been produced in order to isolate both the causes and effects of these rampages. As there is no clear cut and universal cause, over the past forty years numerous factors have been offered to account for these types of shootings, including bullying, peer relations, family problems, cultural conflict, demographic change, mental illness, gun culture, copycatting, and the media. While there appears to be an element of truth in each of these perspectives, all of these isolated factors focus upon only one or two surface-level influences, thus ignoring the possibility that multiple and distinct causes are interacting with one another.

The aim of this study is to construct a meaningful model of motivation that is common to each situation, is to build upon psycho-social theories of crime, and to

highlight which combination of specific background factors and processes is necessary to produce these vicious massacres. To answer the underlying research question, "Why do certain individuals elect this specific line of action?" this thesis will first provide a review of the relevant literature, will then emphasize three key social and psychological predisposers that combine together to negatively influence the individuals involved, and will subsequently highlight five separate and unique case studies in order to examine the proposed model.

(103 pages)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

At 6:39 p.m. on Monday, February 12, 2007, 18-year-old Sulejman Talovic opened fire at the Trolley Square Mall in Salt Lake City, Utah. In a shooting spree that lasted a brief six minutes, Talovic killed five innocent people and injured four more before being shot and killed by Salt Lake City Police. According to his employer and family, earlier that day Talovic showed no signs of what was to come, working a normal eight-hour shift at Aramark Uniform Services from 9 to 5 (Winslow and Reavy 2007) before going home and showering (Cerkez-Robinson 2007). Wearing a long tan trench coat and armed with a pump-action shotgun, a .38-caliber handgun, a backpack full of ammunition, and a bandolier of shotgun shells (LaPlante, Rizzo, and Westley 2007), Talovic opened fire the minute he stepped from his car. Other than the shooter, the dead included Jeffery Walker, 52; Vanessa Quinn, 29; Teresa Ellis, 29; Brad Frantz, 24; and Kirsten Hinckley, 15; and the wounded included Stacy Hanson, 53; Carolyn Tuft, 44; Shawn Munns, 34; and AJ Walker, 16 (Winslow 2007b). "Finding the motive is a huge deal for us," Salt Lake City police detective Jeff Bedard said in an interview after the incident. "The only way the victims' families can have some closure is knowing any reason why he did this" (Winslow 2007a).

Because Talovic left no suicide or explanatory note, and because there is no known link between the killer and the victims, no known link between the killer and the location, no known link between any of the victims, and nothing unique about that day

and that setting, the search for a motive is a more complicated and theoretical task. Any answers will have to come from Talovic himself and as he is dead as a direct result of his violent actions, those answers can only be attained by examining his personal background through interviews and first person accounts.

Sadly, the uncertainty of Talovic's motive is not unique to his case; most acts of violent public mass murder appear nonsensical or driven by distinct situational motivators. As there is no clear cut and universal cause, over the past forty years numerous factors have been offered to account for these types of shootings, including bullying, peer relations, family problems, cultural conflict, demographic change, mental illness, gun culture, copycatting, and the media. While there appears to be an element of truth in each of these perspectives, all of these isolated factors focus upon only one or two surface-level influences, thus ignoring the possibility that multiple and distinct causes are interacting with one another.

The aim of this study is to construct a meaningful model of motivation that is common to each situation, is built upon psycho-social theories of crime, and highlights which combination of specific background factors and processes are necessary to produce these vicious massacres. To answer the underlying research question, "Why do certain individuals elect this specific line of action?" this thesis will first provide a review of the relevant literature, will then emphasize three key social and psychological predisposers that combine together to negatively influence the individuals involved, and will subsequently highlight five separate and unique case studies in order to examine the

proposed model. All of this is done with the goal of furthering understanding of this destructive and horrifying phenomenon.

CHAPTER 2

DEFINING PUBLIC MASS MURDER

Even though public mass shootings are relatively rare, they represent an atypical form of violence that is both sudden and yields an unprecedented amount of carnage; for these reasons, an inordinate amount of scholarship has been produced in order to isolate both the causes and effects of these rampages. According to Deitz (1986), multiple homicides should be defined as attacks with homicidal intent against five or more victims, at least three of whom are killed. Multiple homicides have been further subdivided in two types of killings, distinguished from each other by the timing of the crime (Dietz 1986; Fox and Levin 1998). The first, serial killings, involves more than three fatalities killed at a variety of sites over a period of days, weeks, months, or even years, which tend to cause widespread, ongoing panic and anxiety in the public. The second type of multiple homicide is identified as mass murder and involves more than three casualties resulting from a single catastrophic event occurring at one general location.

Prior theories specific to mass murder were mostly concerned with categorization of the crime based upon an unfocused (and often poorly delineated) collection of factors, inconsistently combining motivation, methods, and any pre-existing relationship between the offender and his victims. Dietz (1986) developed three initial categories: family annihilators (those that target family members, usually in a home setting), pseudo-commandos (military types dressed in fatigues who are fascinated with assault weapons

and symbols of power and enact detailed plans for violence), and set-and-run killers (murderers known to utilize poison or bombs to cause remote murders that they can escape from or not be incriminated for). Holmes and Holmes (1994) expanded upon these to include two additional types: disciples (those who kill for a charismatic leader) and disgruntled employees (murderers retaliating against an employer for a perceived slight or mistreatment). Most criminologists in the 1990s found these typologies to be too inconsistent (different cases were categorized by completely different factors) and decided the scope of emphasis should be targeted squarely at motivation alone (Fox and Levin 1998).

Utilizing this new focus, crime theorists identified several categories of motivation, often building off of the earlier conceptions of methods and prior relationships. Fox and Levin (1998) cited vengeance as the most common cause, breaking down the specific targeting motive into individual-specific, category-specific, and nonspecific selection, the latter typically precipitated by the offender's own paranoia and hostility regarding society at large. They also identified motives based upon a warped sense of love (typically family massacres), those oriented toward profit (either monetary or political, such as acts of terrorism), and crimes motivated by a skewed thirst for individual power (popular among pseudo-commandos). Petee, Padgett, and York (1997) theorized that public-setting mass murder is most often felony-related, typically associated with the perceived need to eliminate witnesses or as a consequence of the offender losing control of the situation. They also specifically identified politically motivated acts of terrorism and gang-affiliated mass murder perpetrated by multiple

offenders. If the shooter's motivation did not conveniently match any of these situational types, Petee et al. focused on the setting, arguing that it had to be a place of symbolic significance, connected to some agency or organization with authority or control over the shooter, and therefore acted as the focus of the offender's anger. Finally, Kelleher (1997) developed a seven-category typology of motivation that included most of these categories with the addition of insanity-driven mass homicide, sexual homicide and "perverted love," a motivator typical of serial murderers. Clearly, these recent attempts at motivation-based classification, while descriptive, are still relatively inconsistent and case-specific, necessitating a refocusing on the relationship between the killer's intention and the victims.

Mullen (2004) offers a typology of mass murder that differentiates between three forms: instrumental mass killings, victim-specific mass murder, and massacres. According to Mullen (2004), instrumental mass murder takes place when large-scale homicide is a means to an end, and the intention of the perpetrator is only to advance specific objectives. Victims are particular only in that they maintain membership in a very broad group that acts as an obstacle to said goals, examples of which would include both terrorist killings and homicide incidental to other criminal activities. Victim-specific mass killings are obviously the intended deaths of particular victims, as in family slayings, revenge killings, and gang-affiliated violence. In total contrast, massacres involve relatively indiscriminate killings, where just harming others is the primary purpose. These unfocused sprees can be further divided into two subcategories—those resulting from simmering group-centric social conflict and those generated by the actions

of an individual or small group. The social conflict, or civil massacre, is assumed to be the erupting of antagonism between different groups or classes of people (Canto, Mullen, and Alpers 2000), while the autogenic, or self-generated massacre, is driven by highly personal agendas arising from the perpetrator's own specific social situation and psychopathology (Mullen 2004). These autogenic massacres can overlap with other types of mass murder (i.e., beginning with victim-specific killing before proceeding on to random homicide) in what have been termed "bifurcated killings" (Meloy et al. 2001), but the defining characteristic is the unspecified collateral victimization and chaos that is caused by the very few, or the one, upon the larger society. This type of self-generated massacre has become more and more prominent in the United States in recent years, demanding both public attention and intense investigation.

Beyond these typological issues, Fox and Levin (1998) have proposed a process of mass murder that requires three distinct components: predisposers, precipitants, and facilitators.   According to Fox and Levin, predisposers are long-term stable preconditions that accumulate over time and are incorporated into individual personality and self-conception; precipitants are short term acute triggers that incite the mass murder itself; and facilitators are situational conditions, such as access to weapons and available targets, that increase the likelihood of violent outbursts (Fox and Levin 1998:438). More specifically, predisposers are defined as key dynamics of personality and longstanding environmental conditions that result in a skewed conception of self marked by heightened levels of depression and anxiety; Fox and Levin specifically focus on the predisposer of frustration and the resulting formation of extrapunitive blame in the process of mass

murder. According to the theory, a shooter must first be suicidal, but by externalizing the blame for his or her own lack of success, he or she projects the internalized self-loathing onto an external social actor, thereby justifying a violent course of action (Fox and Levin 1998:438-9). Precipitants are defined as situations of sudden loss or a threat of sudden loss that appear to be catastrophic; on the average, these precipitant triggers include unwanted separation from loved ones or the termination of employment (Fox and Levin 1998:439). Having the right weapons at the right time, having a collection of potential victims (whether individual-specific, category-specific, or nonspecific), and having the proper vengeful mindset facilitates the moment of murder (Fox and Levin 1998:441). The necessary requirement of a collection of potential victims helps explain the popularity of large public venues for this autogenic massacre; if the shooter is not picky about the identity of his victims, the goal is simply having as large a concentration of people to hurt as possible.

In an academic report tracking all incidents of public mass murder in the United States from 1975 to 1999, Petee and Padgett (2000) ran a standard ordinary least squares (OLS) regression and profiled the "typical" mass murderer as male (94.4% of cases), white (62.9%) and middle-aged. A criminal history was common (50.9%), but a history of violent crime was not (only 15.7%), and mental illness was documented in one out of every five cases (18.9%). Interestingly, in the late 1990s, the average age of the mass murderer dropped dramatically from 36.2 in 1997, to 18.5 in 1998, to 17.5 in 1999, marking the first time the annual average age-of-shooter was below legal adult status (previously, the lowest average was 23.7 in 1975). Furthermore, Petee and Padgett

(2000) tell us that firearms are the overwhelming weapon of choice (88%) in spite of being much less effective (an average body count of 4.87 victims per incident) than arson (8.5 victims per incident) and bombing (86.5 victims per incident). Consistent with this, most firearms are either purchased legally (63.3%) or borrowed from a family member or acquaintance (20%). Despite common belief, workplaces are a less popular setting (31%) than commercial locations (40%), and, of those, restaurants are the most likely targets (16.1%), followed by retail or grocery stores (14.5%). Monday is the most prevalent day for mass murder (almost 20%) and Saturday is especially unpopular (only 7%). In addition, Fox and Levin (1994) determined that the number of incidents of public mass murder has doubled since the 1970s to an average of about two attacks per month.

All of this would appear to support a profile of the spree killer as an older, white, male gun owner, who has a one-in-two chance of a history of petty crime and a 20 percent chance of diagnosed mental illness. The declining trend in age appears to be a recent phenomenon, most likely precipitated by the rash of school shootings that took place in and around 1999. As this analysis is driven by descriptive statistics (i.e., sex, age, time of day, etc.) and is atheoretical, both predisposers and precipitants appear to get overlooked, save for mental illness and prior criminality. There is no discussion of environmental factors such as familial strife or poor peer relations. Another assumption that is left untouched is the perpetrator's death wish—a consensus view among media and academics alike that the murderer must be on some sort of suicide mission, as "frequently perpetrators welcome their arrest or suicide, having achieved their mission through murder" (Fox and Levin 1998:430). The common perception is that mass

murderers are truly suicidal, but because of the aforementioned externalization of blame, the killer chooses not to die alone and instead opts to bring as many tangential victims along as possible. Currently, there appears to be no statistical evidence to support such an intuitive claim.

The goal of this research is to tease out some commonality about these self-generated massacres based upon theories tied to psycho-social dynamics of temperament and action. According to this study, the predisposers are imbedded within three distinct places: the marginalized access the shooter has to social capital and status within a community, the skewed psychological "make-up" or orientation of the individual that interprets this marginalization as a form of unending victimization, and, most importantly, the resultant pariah self-image. Many people feel marginalized within their everyday social circles, and many people suffer from psychological impairments that cripple common social interactions, but how the potential shooter views himself is what separates him out as unique. The personalities that emerge as a result of these social and psychological pre-conditions exacerbate each other by increasingly magnifying and scrutinizing status challenges and social dilemmas. Eventually, increased aggression (and then violence) becomes the only viable form of reaction and once some tenuous precipitant takes place (i.e., the termination of employment or of an intimate relationship), the shooter is left with little to lose and so enacts a form of "primordial evil" (Katz 1988) upon whomever is unfortunate enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. By first establishing this potential explanatory model, and then testing it

with five in-depth case studies, the aim of this study is to demonstrate how this line of action results.

CHAPTER 3

PREDISPOSER I: LOW SOCIAL CAPITAL

According to social exchange theorist Georg Simmel, competition is present in all forms of human relation, not just ones that center on physical interaction. For Simmel, exchange between social actors is the purest and most concentrated form of all human associations and this exchange begins in any situation where several individuals enter into interaction—an interaction assumed to arise in order to fulfill certain individual needs. Social groups of all kinds—economic, religious, familial—form out of necessity as individuals must satisfy their own interests through forms of sociation; exchanges "always arise on the basis of certain drives or for the sake of certain purposes" (1950:40). Exchange is thus pursued mainly in order to attain something desired at a price, or what Simmel calls a necessary sacrifice ([1907] 1971). Within each exchange, Simmel assumed that social actors were inherently motivated by a quest for domination and the attainment of domination (1950). He presupposed that the need to dominate was basic human instinct and, as such, inherent within each individual. Correspondingly, it was a social universal that dominance would invariably rear its head as soon as two or more people interacted with one another for any length of time (Simmel [1908] 1971). Here he defined dominance not as purely animalistic, but as a social drive within an individual who wants "his influence, [his] determination of the other, to act back upon him…. His will draws its satisfaction from the fact that the acting or suffering of the other…offers

itself to the dominator as the product of his will" ([1908] 1971:96). As a result, all interaction is infused with some struggle for supremacy.

The motivation for dominance was based on Simmel's assumption that nobody was intrinsically satisfied with "the position which he occupies in regard to his fellow creatures, everyone wishes to attain one which is, in some sense, more favorable" (1950:275). The individual's striving to surpass others comes to the fore in all possible forms of new exchange, along with the hope that it is possible to prolong some kind of obvious superiority (Simmel 1950). As a part of this innate drive, dominance hierarchies are omnipresent and guaranteed to invariably develop in all human communities:

> People who occupy higher positions can make their identification of emergent social acts prevail over people in lower positions, which in turn, sets off dominance struggles …. Human communities differ from each other in many important ways, but in this critical respect, they are the same ….. Although the faces of those who occupy the top and bottom positions change, a hierarchy of some type always remains. (Simmel 1950:273-4)

Thus, the members of any community endlessly vie among themselves for higher positions, whether in groups or as individuals, illustrating that dominance struggles are indigenous to all human communal life. For Simmel, to be human was to be social, and to be social meant that every exchange was driven by self-interested motives tied to status attainment.

Tooby and Cosmides (1990) argue that this dominance drive, and much of human behavior, is generated by evolved psychological mechanisms (or EPMs) that have developed deep within the human psyche to solve recurrent problems that existed in human ancestral environments. This drive is tied to mechanisms of social exchange,

status, prestige and reputation maintenance, hierarchy negotiation, and aggression (Buss 1995). Although the theory is related to foundational concepts of Darwinian evolution and fitness selection, the argument is not that all individual activity is rationally geared toward personal fitness striving as "human life is permeated with systematic deviations away from rationally maximized child-production and kin assistance" (Tooby and Cosmides 2005:13), but that psychological mechanisms that proved successful over generations of human development are still active within modern day social actors. An underlying assumption is that the brain has a functional structure because, just like any other organ, it has evolved over time via natural selection:

> The programs comprising the human mind were designed by natural selection to solve the adaptive problems regularly faced by our hunter-gatherer ancestors—problems such as finding a mate, cooperating with others, hunting, gathering, protecting children, navigating, avoiding predators, avoiding exploitation, and so on…. The brain's evolved function is to extract information from the environment and use that information to generate behavior and regulate physiology. (Tooby and Cosmides 2005:16)

The long-term scientific goal of the evolutionary psychology movement is to map a universal human nature (Tooby and Cosmides 2005) in order to identify, describe, and understand psychological mechanisms in terms of the specific adaptive problems that they were designed by selection to solve (Buss 1995). For the purposes of the current study, this discussion will focus on the human preoccupation with prestige and capital within social groups, and the aggressive and potentially violent actions associated with status attainment and hierarchical negotiation.

Historically, social hierarchies bestowed a host of reproductively relevant resources upon the successful (Buss 1994), so rising in hierarchies, or status striving, should be a major species-typical goal of humans across time and location (Buss 1995). Achievement and power are frequent motivators for many social actors because of the how they reflect positioning within a social hierarchy (McClellan 1951, McAdams 1988), although both may be defined differently across cultures and pursued differently across actors. Even within the same culture, Trivers (1972) argues that due to the limited reproductive capacity of all human females, the biological difference in the minimal parental investments of males and females has resulted in distinct reproductive strategies and behaviors. According to his theory, females can typically afford to be more discerning when choosing a mate due to the abundance of male genetic material relative to their own, and males are therefore driven, in some contexts, to adopt increasingly riskier behaviors in order to attract positive female attention. Wilson and Daly (1985) found that North American males do engage in more risk-taking activity than women do, particularly between the ages of 16 and 24, when men are entering the arena of mate competition, although Cashdan (1998) found that both sexes felt equally competitive when vying for attention from the opposite sex. In some instances, this more adventuresome attitude among males translates into a heightened level of aggression toward perceived rivals, which in turn may lead to increased instances of violence.

According to much research, there appears to be no stronger predictor of a person's likelihood to commit a violent act than their sex as "the leading cause of violence is maleness" (Wright 1995:71-2). Daly and Wilson (1988:277) argue that there

is a "cross-culturally universal sex difference in human use of physical violence, whether it be fist fights or homicides, warfare or the slaughter of non-human animals." Violent acts are overwhelmingly perpetrated by young males, especially unmarried ones (Wilson and Daly 1985; Mesquida and Wiener 1999; Hudson and den Boer 2002, 2005), who are found to be more competitive, more aggressive, and more likely to kill and be killed (Andersson 1994). Almost all violent offenders first manifest their tendencies between the ages of fourteen and eighteen (theoretically with the onset of puberty), with violence peaking in the early twenties; this age distribution of crime is often cited as a "law of nature" that has held constant for the past 150 years (Goring 1913; U.S. Department of Justice 1979). In modern tribal villages, 44 percent of males 25 or older have participated in killing someone and approximately 30 percent of all adult male deaths are due to violence (Chagnon 1988). Biologically, male maturation appears to facilitate a mating strategy that requires a certain amount of strength, physical stamina, and a higher propensity for violence (Alexander et al. 1979; Diamond 1992).

Violence between potential rivals appears to be both at once consistent and context-specific. In studies focused upon animal social interaction, Ghiglieri (1999) and Wrangham and Peterson (1996) observed regular and destructive "wars" between neighboring groups of chimpanzees—our most common genetic relatives—suggesting that the relationship between social positioning and violence may extend far back into a shared ancestral past. In a more modern context, Chagnon (1988) observed that blood revenge among Yanomamö villages is widespread, but is still a very context-specific form of violence. Low (2000) found that boys, across cultures, are trained to show

greater aggression than girls, although this hardly means that violence is guaranteed. According to Daly and Wilson, most homicides in the urban regions they studied in both the United States and Canada were the final results of "altercations of a relatively trivial origin (where these) trivial altercations behave as though a great deal more is at issue than spare change or access to a pool table" (1988:127). Further, a large proportion of homicides are the "rare, fatal consequences of a ubiquitous competitive striving among men for status and respect. These social resources have come to be valued by the male psyche because of their positive fitness consequences" (1988:146). Similary, Wilson (1996) found that, isolated from legitimate means of success, youths will turn to alternative means of gaining material wealth or social prestige.

When reviewing prior research, short-term physical violence appears to be the simplest way for individuals to elevate their status among peers and acquire material goods or power over others, although it is very apparent that the context must facilitate the heightened aggression. Seeking high social status appears to be a universality that transcends gender, but there is no denying that physical violence is a strategy more consistently adopted by males. Heightened aggression and violent acts appear to be evolved psychological mechanisms that have been selected for over time and tied to male strategies of reproduction. On a related note, the less status and influence an individual has, the less they have to lose if engaging in risk-taking behaviors goes poorly. When tying these observations to potential public shooters, the primary assumption is that all other measures of social achievement have been exhausted and have failed, and violence is the only option left to be tried. Also, tying autogenic massacres to male violence is no

accident, as statistics have shown that nineteen out of every twenty shooters is a man (Petee and Padgett 2000).

Considering the ongoing drive to attain or maintain high social standing, another key factor worth noting is the role of social capital within a community. High levels of social capital tend to prevail in homogeneous communities where social networks are tightly interwoven (Park and Burgess 1925; Shaw 1929; Coleman 1988, 1990; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Putnam 2000). Those that do not fit in or are not held in high regard are often marginalized or excluded, finding the judgment of others to be both oppressive and victimizing (Portes and Landolt 1996). According to Newman (2004) in a study of small town high school shootings, "When people remain in the community for work or school, their high school personas remain with them. Friends made at [high school] stay with them for life, and the past is hard to escape.... The small-town views, habits, and patterns don't change" (2004:141). The idea of "small-town" personas can be extended to work environments and limited social networks—essentially the most immediate community that provides critical feedback for an individual negotiating an ongoing self-image. Public mass murderers select violence as a means to redefine themselves and their identities, using the public stage to broadcast a message to their peers and community social structure.

In sum, the dominance drive in social exchange appears to be a powerful undercurrent tied to multiple evolved psychological mechanisms present in contemporary social actors. Individuals may or may be overtly driven to seek access to sexual partners, but are also subtly geared toward acquiring material and social resources that reflect

heightened status within a social hierarchy; this fitness is reflected in the status an individual is afforded in his or her surrounding community. Violence is often employed, particularly by males, as a high-risk strategy of status attainment, although the risk decreases dramatically for the individual the less he or she has to lose. As will become clear in the following chapters, in cases of autogenic massacre the marginalized access the shooter has to social capital and status within a community is filtered by a skewed psychology that heightens the sense of unfair misrepresentation, resulting in a self-image that both vilifies and rejects their immediate social environment. With nothing left to invest in the surrounding community other than anger and resentment, the shooter literally has nothing to lose when they enact the most violent response possible.

CHAPTER 4

PREDISPOSER II: THE IMPAIRED PSYCHE

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2000), up to 8.3 percent of people suffer from depression and suicide was the third leading cause of death for people aged fifteen to twenty-four. In addition, more than two million Americans are affected by schizophrenia which usually develops in the late teens and early twenties; of these two million, two-hundred thousand patients eventually commit suicide. Since these numbers significantly dwarf the population of people that actually commit self-generated massacres, the direct relationship of mental illness to these attacks would appear problematic accept that the current study is arguing that psychological impairment is one of a series of necessary ingredients, not the sole cause. While a Secret Service study determined that only one-third of offenders had ever received a mental health evaluation and less than one-fifth had been diagnosed with a mental health or behavior disorder prior to the shooting (Vossekuil et al. 2002), data drawn from media accounts show that at least 52 percent of offenders suffered from a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder at the time of the shooting (Newman 2004). Clearly mental illness cannot be isolated as the principle culprit for any and all public shooting, but that does not mean that all personal factors should be ignored. Individual psychologies—whether classified as problematic or not—that magnify the impact of social marginalization are important influences that facilitate this line of action.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) positioned the individual—based upon his or her unique level of self-control—as the primary facilitator of any anti-social or delinquent action. Because action is geared toward immediate gratification, a major characteristic of a person with low self-control is therefore "a tendency to respond to tangible stimuli in the immediate environment—to have a concrete 'here and now' orientation" (1990:89). People who lack self-control will also tend to be impulsive, insensitive, physical, risk-taking, short-sighted, and nonverbal—all traits strongly associated with evolutionary assumptions about violence. Individual self-control is conditioned early in life based upon not only the ability of parents to monitor activity, but also their ability to identify and discipline troublesome behaviors appropriately. In addition, after the age of eight an individual's level of self-control will be constant over his or her life course, manifesting as an assortment of activities aimed at more immediate gratification, such as delinquency, alcohol abuse, and even smoking.

In accordance with Gottredson's and Hirschi's underlying premise of low self-control, the focus of the individual is primarily upon the "here and now," with an inordinately large tendency to discount the future. An assumption in this paper is that this "here and now" orientation does play a significant role in orienting an individual toward a violent outburst like a self-generated massacre. Unfortunately, the evidence is inconclusive that potential shooters suffer from low self-control. Nearly two-thirds of school shooters had never or rarely been in trouble at school (Vossekuil et al. 2002) and "remain off the radar screen because they do not behave in ways that alert schools to their potential for violent behavior" (Newman 2004:104). Still, there is no denying that

individuals fixated on the present, with no thought of long-term consequences or benefits, are more likely to react emotionally and dramatically. This preoccupation with immediate emotions and environment can be even more problematic if the individual suffers from having a low degree of social capital.

In contrast to Gottfredson and Hirschi, Sampson and Laub (1993) argued that social bonds over the life course are more malleable and situation specific. Impulsive risk-taking is a more appealing line of action when social bonds between a delinquent and the larger society are weak. Individuals are capable of shedding pro-criminal attitudes by building strong adult bonds of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief during key turning points in life. Although background factors such as structural disadvantage and chaotic familial relations can significantly compromise social bonds in childhood and negatively affect youth delinquency and deviance, in adulthood, positive marriage attachment and job attachment serve as mechanisms of change. As an individual attains legitimate accomplishments over the life course, he or she can build social capital around such institutions and, as a result, turn away from the criminal trajectory. The theory would appear compatible with evolutionary assumptions regarding status and status attainment—the more an individual has to lose, the less likely he or she is willing to risk it by violently challenging the social hierarchy. Given the assumption that impulsive behaviors may be situational and reflect how an individual views his or her own level of community social capital, it is theoretically consistent to assume that as status and social capital decreases, impulsive behavior increases proportionately. Instead of just focusing

on the social processes though, there needs to be an element of individual agency that helps facilitate how the decrease in social capital is registered.

In behavior analysis, experimental psychologists have examined human and non-human levels of self-control and impulsivity by examining the rate at which a subject discounts future consequences. Delay discounting is the degree to which the present value of an outcome is degraded, or discounted, by delay to its receipt (Mazur 1987; Rachlin, Raineri, and Cross 1991); long-term reward values decrease in effectiveness due to the presence of a delay. Assessing rates of delay discounting allows researchers to determine the rate of devaluation of reward over time. In this regard, delay discounting is an operationalized index of low self-control since choosing smaller, more immediate rewards over larger, more delayed compensation is symptomatic of high impulsivity (Ainslie 1974; Logue 1988).

Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) were actually the first to posit that delinquents discounted the future at a higher rate than other people, but they never established more than a theoretical link between what they termed the "Short Time Horizon" worldview and specific delinquent acts.

> The larger the ratio of the rewards (material and nonmaterial) of noncrime to the rewards (material and nonmaterial) of crime, the weaker the tendency to commit crimes.... The strength of any reward declines with time, but people differ in the rate at which they discount the future. The strength of a given reward is also affected by the total supply of reinforcers. (Wilson and Herrnstein 1985:61)

Research findings in the past ten years have established a strong correlation between steep delay discounting and substance abuse. People with addiction problems including

alcohol (Vuchinich and Simpson 1998; Petry 2001a; Odum and Rainaud 2003), cocaine (Coffey et al. 2003; Heil et al. 2006), opioids (Madden et al. 1997; Kirby, Petry, and Bickel 1999; Odum et al. 2000), and cigarette smoking (Bickel, Odum, and Madden 1999; Mitchell 1999; Audrain-McGovern et al. 2004) show steeper discounting of delayed hypothetical money than do matched control participants, and even steeper discounting of their abused drug of choice. Also, pathological gamblers have been found to discount more steeply than non-gamblers (Petry and Casarella, 1999; Petry, 2001b). Here, the chemical dependence is overriding individual capacities to see beyond the "Short Term Horizon," thus demonstrating the effects that chemically impaired mental faculties would have on an individual's ability to see beyond the immediate environment.

Neurologist Johnathan H. Pincus (2001) proposes a theory of violence that focuses on the interaction between neurological developments during childhood and surrounding environments of abuse, theorizing that the resultant psychosis is what ultimately leads to violent urges. Pincus focuses specifically on the neurological process of myelination, which occurs over the first two decades of life.

> Myelination refers to the deposition of a fatty insulation material that covers nerve fibers; without it they cannot carry electrical impulses and therefore cannot contact other cells. Myelination of the back of the brain, the occipital lobes, is nearly complete at birth. Gradually, myelination advances forward, with the frontal lobes the last to be fully myelinated. The process of myelination is not complete until about twenty years of age. (2001:124)

As this process is crucial for the formation of a mature, fully-functional brain, Pincus's research shows that all serial killers he examined displayed a marked lack of complete myelination in the frontal cortex, implying that the frontal lobe was not communicating

effectively with the rest of the brain. The resultant temperament is one marked by an inability to prioritize or concentrate, by a decrease in inhibiting primitive urges and instinctual behavior, and the bulk of other characteristics generally associated with immature behavior.

Consistent with this viewpoint is the idea that all children and most teenagers are limited by their lack of brain maturity due to what is essentially a lobotomized frontal cortex, and will act in an accordingly immature manner. The key difference, according to Pincus, between the average "brain damaged" teenager and a potential mass murderer is the presence of an ongoing environment of severe childhood abuse; Pincus argues that the presence of sexual or physical abuse is the most significant finding of research into the causes of violence. Abused children often display short attention spans, overactive urges, defiance of authority, a propensity for fighting, and a desire to damage things—patterned behavior that is impossible to overcome without a brain that is positively maturing due to a nervous system that is functioning without intrinsic deficits. Besides suffering from brain damage, "the most vicious criminals have also been, overwhelmingly, people who have been grotesquely abused as children and who have paranoid patterns of thinking" (2001:27). Physical abuse alters the basic development of the brain, causing adverse effects on anatomy, physiology, and some biological functioning, resulting typically in some sort of psychological impairment. A complete model of important background characteristics should incorporate abuse, although it may be problematic when not reflected in the data collected posthumously through interviews.

The point here is to illustrate how neurological imbalances compromise pro-social behaviors. Between abuse studies and drug-related research, the negative effects shown demonstrate that alternative brain functions manifest as an inability to see beyond the "Short Term Horizon," inciting an impulsive nature that is instinctual and risk-taking. In coupling this damaged psyche with a marginalized social status that itself incites primitive and violent tendencies, an individual that has otherwise not displayed low levels of self-control previously could become increasingly fixated on the "here and now," resulting in a high potential for situational violence. It is reasonable to assume that anyone willing to participate in an autogenic massacre is marginalized within the social hierarchy and is experiencing some type of neurological imbalance, but the final component is how that individual specifically views him or herself in the face of this social marginalization and compromised neurology.

CHAPTER 5

PREDISPOSER III: THE PARIAH SELF-IMAGE

Building from his emphasis on social interaction, Simmel highlights the creation

of a dualism of social reality, noting that individuals live both within and without society.

In other words, there is both the directly perceptible manifestation of the individual, and

the latent interests housed within said individual that motivate the pursuit of social unions

([1907] 1971). Actors must mediate personal desires, situations, and needs on the one

hand, with all the internal and external situations involved in super-individual social

interaction on the other ([1908] 1971). In this way, exchange not only defines society,

but it also defines social actors in relation to their own interests and to one another.

Within this understanding, the conception of the self in society is socially derived:

> The self functions as a soliloquy. People soliloquize through conversing
> with "others" who inhabit their corporal and phantom communities.
> Through soliloquizing, they interpret the situations that confront them
> daily in their corporal communities, and, on the basis of their
> interpretations, assemble their action. Interpretations of situations are
> constructed in two ongoing but alternating phases. During the definition
> phase, people ascertain the nature of a situation by telling themselves what
> their corporal community members, who are implicated in the situation,
> are saying. During the judgment phase, people decide upon the proper
> course of action to take in the situation based on their definition of it and
> themselves. (Athens 1994:676-7)

People are constantly negotiating their personal identity and hence tend to see themselves

through the lenses of their peers; this is the "looking glass self" (Cooley 1902).

Goffman (1967) states that all societies equip and motivate their members to

engage in social encounters, providing tools toward adequate self-conception, social

regulation, and consistency in interaction. He also characterized social interaction as a series of pressured performances, each with a specific meaning intended for a special audience; in these exchanges, audiences are always critical, looking for the cracks that invalidate an actor, showing him or her to be less than the person he or she is claiming to be (Fukuyama 1999). Through the ongoing experience with objective conditions of powerlessness and lack of control, individuals learn that their own actions primarily affect their egocentric conceptions, though not necessarily their external state of being (Geis and Ross 1998). Individuals striving for dominance can only register supremacy during exchange with others when surrounding social actors are present to serve as objects that mirrored degrees of power. Consequently, a general social concern for reputation and generic reflection of worth develop as a mechanism to hasten exchange between unfamiliar actors (Baxter and Margavio 2000). In all, inherent self-interested pursuits lead to a necessary sociability that expresses itself via exchange; exchange, in turn, leads to the development of the social self.

In the 1930s, Schutz pioneered a school of social study that approaches social phenomena from the perspective of the "lived experience" and explores the dialectic relationship between subjective understanding and real-world stimuli. Jack Katz (1988) took phenomenology and applied it to crime and deviance, believing that the phenomenological approach is uniquely situated to appreciate how a person's lived world is not only his perceived reality, but that "by experiencing himself as an object controlled by transcendent forces, an individual can genuinely experience a new or different world" (1988:8). According to Katz, deviation from convention is the result of a dialectic magic

that is both produced by and exercises certain pressures upon the future offender, changing his or her personal ontology by altering the plain of subjectivity.

Instead of the utilitarian obsession with financial and material gain, the phenomenological approach emphasis the subjective construction of self-image and how those conceptions of self motivate violent and chaotic action in the surrounding lived world. According to Katz, "The causes of crime are constructed by the offenders themselves" and "the causes they construct are lures and pressures that they experience as independently moving them toward crime" (1988:216). The seduction itself is a dialectic process that "pulls" the offenders toward certain lines of action that they themselves have unconsciously conceptualized and set into motion. The moment of "magic" is in the allure of potential transcendence that frees the person from prior inhibition. Individual perception is the first building block of action, but in order to change the meaning of the surrounding environment, the social actor must conjure up an alternate state of mind that feels as authentic, natural, and "real" as the previous ontological understanding. Emotions are the necessary mechanism of change that allows for disassembling the previous perception of reality as colored by an ongoing consistent understanding of both rules and routine, thus exposing a new subjective perception in the moment of "magic" that sparks the beginning of the new, unconventional form of action. In autogenic slaughter, these emotions are ignited by the ongoing social and psychological pre-conditions that exacerbate each other by increasingly magnifying and scrutinizing status challenges and social dilemmas.

Katz theorizes that perhaps the ultimate example of criminal transcendence is the act of cold-blooded, "senseless" murder, murder committed by men mimicking the ways of primordial gods out of a desire to be viewed by the world as astonishingly evil. Katz's explanation for cold-blooded murder appears to be a dramatic synthesis of the various theories he presents for less vicious crimes. Katz identifies a sequentially causal process of defilement, vengeance, and suffering that catalyses perceptional change (Katz 1988:303), and the question he examines within each offender focuses on suffering. Will the offender suffer under his own internal judgment, believing him or herself to be a weak conformist, or will he suffer under external judgement, because he chooses to strike out at the world around him? In essence, the whole description of the emotional rationale behind the criminal's inevitable choice to enact primordial evil and embrace the powerful non-conformist identity of the "senseless" murderer informs the transfer of blame from internal self-loathing to externalized rage.

In the beginning, Katz presents a phenomenological model explaining what he calls "righteous slaughter," emphasizing the defensive, "seductive" justifications that humiliation and rage incite in those potentially murderous individuals. Rage and humiliation facilitate an attraction toward violence that proves to be fundamentally compelling as the individual recasts himself as an agent of morality defending the self-serving "greater good" in some sort of self-righteous "last stand." The righteous murderer overcomes a personal challenge to his moral existence by creating a scenario in which he is defeating an unspeakably offensive character who threatens widely sanctioned institutions such as honor or respect. Murder becomes a sacrifice to some

ambiguous moral abstraction, and "the objective of sacrificial violence is to avoid the greater violence or chaos that would develop if the sacrifice were not undertaken" (Katz 1988:289). In the case of primordial evil, the chaos that would develop would be a situation outside of the offender's frame of control and the sacrifice to the "greater good" becomes a necessary sacrifice to the killer himself.

Katz also develops an interpretive mechanism for what he calls "sneaky thrills"—crimes built upon the rush of seizing an opportunity to satisfy the enticing question of whether or not the individual can "pull off" an act of shoplifting, vandalism, or burglary. The seductive aspect of sneaky thrills is when the would-be criminal's motivation is projected externally from the self, imbuing the potentially stolen bracelet or potentially impenetrable house with a decidedly provocative and flirtatious quality. Recasting the social environment as a "game," the shoplifter utilizes tactics outside the routine rules of play to seize both a physical object and a moment of delinquency that take his own previously held image of self and recast it in a more thrilling, risk-taking way. In applying this moment of appropriation to senseless murder, Katz found that

> the killers only became killers in [that one] moment of their lives. They could not be sure that they would do it until they did it, and [up until then] they only lived the primordial symbolism of evil inconsistently and in a compromised way. (1988:288)

The moment of opportunity to commit murder forces (or at least allows) the offender to cement a new, more thrilling self-image, and to demonstrate his willingness to break whatever rules he wanted.

When analyzing the construction of the persona of the "bad ass," Katz develops a prototype that is necessarily tough, alien, and mean. Being tough is portrayed through symbolic and practical displays of non-conformity; to be alien is to be unreadable, unknowable, and morally incomprehensible. To be mean is not, as might be expected, to engage in violence sadistically for its own sake, but rather to act out physically as a means of manifesting "the transcendent superiority of [the bad ass's] being, specifically by insisting on the dominance of [his] will" (Katz 1988:81). In order for the true bad ass to separate himself out from the imitators and poseurs, he must demonstrate that, unlike the pretenders, he is not kidding, and that any retribution will be swift and certain. The bad ass denies that he suffers at all in conventional society and rejects the norms that would condemn him. He transcends convention so much that his integrity should be honored and he is justified in "avenging others' failures to pay him the respect he [is] due" (Katz 1998:290). Acting as an agent of primordial evil necessitates the endeavor for a bad ass self-image, which serves as the key subjective mindset in navigating the morally uncertain dilemma when adopting criminal over conventional lines of action.

Finally, Katz's assessment of the crime of "stickup" and the callous or "hard" man that results provides the final bit of insight to make sense of the senseless. In Katz's opinion, "fatal violence in robberies is far less often a reaction of panic or a rationally self-serving act than a commitment to the transcendence of a hard will" (Katz 1988:187). To be a "hard man" in stickup is necessary when the manifested will of the robber is called into question and the dynamic of the exchange shows signs of precariously shifting in the direction of the would-be (and in the eyes of the criminal, should-be) victim. The

goal is not the attainment of material possessions for the sake of ownership, but rather, as in shoplifting, the goal is for control over material possessions that will facilitate the construction of a successful image of self. Being a "hard man" has a perpetuating transcendent appeal that allows the individual to stand boldly in the heart of the chaos, embrace its unconventional atmosphere, and force it upon others as a means for controlling both worlds. In declaring out loud that "this is a stickup," the hard man sets off an irreversible chain of events—one where he himself controls the frame of interaction and embraces chaos in order to imbue a chaotic situation with his desired level of control and order. Obviously, not everyone has the guts to commit stickup, so it is a precarious commitment to make. It is also, however, a necessary one if the social actor is to completely transcend his surroundings and exert his uncanny "otherworldliness." As a result, "stickup men find local audiences who enthusiastically celebrate the hard man's identity" (Katz 1988:232), embracing his reputation as a star that stands above and beyond the immediate surroundings that dictate how everyone but him must live. As in stickup, violence becomes a potential and necessary outcome in senseless murder when the will of the perpetrator is in danger of being overpowered by that of the victim. The offender in cold-blooded murder must maintain his will over the situation and everyone under his immediate sway.

In all, agents of "primordial evil" experience a similar but distinct reorienting process as they enact the battle between the sacred and profane, ultimately seeking to reestablish their self-centered definition of "sacred" by the most profane means possible. Just as stickup is about imposing control upon a situation through chaotic means,

primordial evil exercises a will that reclaims order via horrific violation. The "dizziness" associated with senseless murder (Matza 1969) is the result of the dialectical and powerful process of transgression, swirling the evil individual back and forth between opposing forces of conventionality and deviance, akin to a cartoon angel and demon advising from opposite shoulders. By transcending the dizziness via emotional and dynamic introspective conversation, the social actor finds the compulsion to commit that act of senseless violence and sacrifice another's innocence to himself and his chosen self-image. Situational tensions arise when actions by other (perceived as lesser) creatures gives reason to question whether the would-be killer could sustain a position of terrifying dominance. The result is typically a cataclysmic display of primordial punishment.

For the murderer, being deviant gives him an initial edge and, after establishing superiority to conventional authority, the offender then needs to "rationally" continue toward the peace of transcendent significance that the choice of deviance provides and to quash any challenges that appear along the way. These public shooters are not seeking anonymity; in the majority of cases they go as far as to advertise their impending crimes to multiple people beforehand (Vossekuil et al. 2002). This advertisement is not intended to serve as a warning to others or a last ditch effort to bolster social standing and garner external validation. It is a statement of intent voiced to assuage their own uncertainty and cement their course of action. The very public stage is set and the pariah has committed him or herself to delivering a deliberate and powerful message in the only way left. Self-generated massacre demonstrates a lifetime of alien and self-serving action that builds toward a moment of transcendent primordial violence where the chaos that framed the

killer's subjective understanding spilled forth in order to cement how "hard" and "bad" he or she was through the self-aggrandizing sacrifice of others.

CHAPTER 6

PRECIPITANTS, FACILITATORS, AND THE COMPLETE MODEL

In this study, precipitants are a necessary but not significant focal point. The argument here is that an individual does not "snap" as much as he or she builds toward a certain line of action. As less violent options fail to produce desired results, and as the perception of self becomes more and more warped and socially isolated, the potential shooter begins to orient him or herself toward something drastic and dramatic. While losing a job or having a significant relationship end is traumatic and does fill most people with an initial sense of panic, so many social actors weather those storms without fixating on the most violent alternative. The argument here is that social and psychological mechanisms have already brought a potential shooter to the edge, far enough that violence was already internally justified. The precipitant, as Fox and Levin (1998) defined it, is just the termination of the last tenuous social bond that keeps this public mass murder from happening.

This brings us to Fox and Levin's (1998) idea of a long simmering frustration and overwhelming sense of failure. Frustration has a cumulative effect as feelings of worthlessness grow into self-hate based upon internally focused, intropunitive aggression (Henry and Short 1954), in which the individual blames his own weakness for his undesirable situation. Based upon this intropunitive anger, most fatalism results in suicide without any physical harm to anyone else, but, according to Fox and Levin (1998), if the focus shifts to external blame, the seeds of mass murder are planted.

Extrapunitive aggression results when the individual starts to view him or herself as the victim of disappointments invariably engineered by someone else (Henry and Short 1954). The external aggression spawns the adoption of a moral righteousness that facilitates the justification for a potential slaughter. The shooter now adopts the self-image of a pariah, a more powerful deviant identity that exists in a morally virtuous stance beyond the reach of cowardly conformists. To assume the stance of conformity is to admit that maybe those that victimized the future shooter were right to do so (Katz 1988), so adopting conventional attitudes about and toward society is simply no longer an option. It is here that most mass murderers found themselves, beyond the reach of conventional morality, and predisposed toward a moralistic slaughter of conformity as a type of sacrifice to their personal frustration.

Some evidence shows that there is a precedent that violent public attacks may be a way to forcibly "go down in flames" or to commit suicide by forcing others, especially police, to shoot to kill. Known as "victim-precipitated homicide" or "suicide by cop," this an "exit strategy" favored by individuals who seek a spectacular end to their current low social capital—a factor found to influence one of every ten homicides (Hudson et al. 1998). According the 2000 National Institute of Mental Health Survey, approximately 20 percent of people in the United States consider suicide each year and 8 percent of the general population actually attempts it. In the past, the majority of school shooters studied had a history of severe depression and suicidal desires (Vossekuil et al. 2002), as nearly four out of five had a history of suicide attempts prior to opening fire.

All of this appears to point to attempted suicide as a primary predisposer for this type of crime, but that claim may still be rather dubious. Considering how fixated shooters become on the "here and now" and short term horizons, the desire to die may be less of a predisposer and more of an outcome variable. It can be argued, based upon Katz's model, that the only thing that matters in "the moment of" is executing the righteous slaughter that the individual's warped sense of morality demands; the shooter may know that he or she will die in the end, but that is inconsequential. This act is an extreme example of dramatic redefinition—both for the individual's sense of self and for the reciprocal feedback from his or her surrounding social environment. Isolation from social capital that is enhanced by warped internal processes can foster a sense of persecution and unfair social misrepresentation that result in extrapunitive blame, but that does not necessarily make the shooter suicidal. Just because taking a stand for "morality" and a lifetime of perceived victimization right here and right now supersedes any long term consequences does not mean that the perpetrator has a death wish; it just means that this agenda has taken priority over everything else.

Guns are commonly cited as one of the principal facilitators of public massacres and for easy reason: mass murder is obviously much more difficult without a long-range weapon that is easy to use. Bombing notwithstanding, firearms are really the most effective tools for killing as many people as possible in as short a time as possible (Petee and Padgett 2000), and what invariably happens in the fallout of these types of killing is the call for stricter gun laws and gun access. Both scholars and the media are quick to point out that the increase in the number of guns in the United States correlates with the

increase in popularity of this type of violence; since 1970, the number of guns in the United States has doubled to about 200 million and the frequency of public shootings has increased over that same period of time to an average of about two incidents per month (Fox and Levin 1994; Cook, Moore, and Braga 2001). Based upon gun purchases, it is assumed that access to guns is spreading rapidly, but the increase has actually been fueled by people who are already gun owners, who are acquiring second or third firearms to add to their collections (Cook et al. 2001). In the past thirty years, the percentage of adults who own guns in the United States has stayed relatively constant at 30 percent (Cook et al. 2001), so it is not access to weapons but the number of offenses that has increased. In this regard, the increase in national firearm sales has not had a clear direct effect on the increase of offenses despite the intuitive assumption to the contrary.

In all cases the potential shooter was aware of his or her access to firearms. Whether borrowing it from an acquaintance or purchasing it legally beforehand, no one that committed an autogenic massacre stumbled across the weapon the day of the spree. The shooters all thought about what they had access to beforehand and made plans based on those ideas. If there was not a shotgun or hunting rifle in a family member's den and if he or she was of age, the killer simply cobbled together what resources were needed in order to acquire access to a weapon beforehand. Those actions show premeditation and forethought, and an ongoing process that pulled the shooter into this line of violent action. Legal weapon purchase takes time and background checks, while illegal pursuit of firearms demands unlawful inquiry and research; these are both time-consuming processes that illustrate just how fixated these perpetrators were on gaining access to a

long range weapon. Even if one did not have to go through the steps to purchase a gun because one was immediately available, an easy assumption is that the killer knew how to gain exclusive control of that weapon should the need arise; in essence, the weapon held a decidedly provocative and flirtatious quality. All of this points to a mindset already geared toward the potentiality of violence, where weapons are a necessary mean toward an intended end.

Arguments built around media and pop culture glorification of violence are problematic, as most are quick to blame these cultural influences as the genesis of the violence itself. From a sociological standpoint, it appears intuitive to blame social influences like gory movies and television, or sensationalistic first person shooter video games, but research on imitative violence suggests that television affects the form and method of crimes rather than the amount (Donnerstein and Linz 1998). Instead of viewing media coverage of autogenic massacres as what incites the violence, it is more accurate to say that the media influences how that violence is enacted. In this instance, the shooting itself has become something of a "cultural script" or "strategy of action" that is drawn upon to resolve social problems (Swidler 1986; Quinn and Hollan 1987). According to Newman, "Cultural scripts do more than provide the range of possible solutions to a potential shooter's problems; they shape the design of the rampage" (2004:252). In this regard, the "cultural script" of the self-generated massacre is more of a tool than a cause—a necessary facilitator for the violence but not the genesis of the violence itself. The chances that a marginalized high school student will adopt this "cultural script" are so much greater now than they were thirty years ago, because it has

been introduced as a strategy for people of all ages, not just adults. The "genius" of the Columbine massacre was that two violent young men abstracted an adult template of workplace violence and applied it to their surrounding environment.

An individual suffering from low social status, filtered through the skewed lens of psychological impairment, "rationally" develops a pariah self-image fixated upon a violent solution. In that situation, the individual is only looking for the most appropriate way to effectively cause chaos, fear, and pain; he or she relies upon "cultural scripts" geared toward this end. The unfortunate role the sensationalistic media plays while attempting to educate and horrify the majority of the population about this violent line of action, is to introduce a specific prescription of behavior that is seductive. Similar to the role of guns, once this line of action becomes a provocative focus, the individual will simply do whatever is necessary to achieve it; the "cultural script" of the autogenic massacre dialectically seduces the shooter to act.

As stated earlier, the goal of this research is to tease out some universality about these self-generated massacres based upon the predisposers imbedded within three distinct places: the marginalized access the shooter has to social capital and status within a community, the skewed psychology that filters this inequitable access as a form of victimization that shows no sign of changing, and the resultant pariah self-image. The personalities emerge as a product of these social and psychological pre-conditions exacerbating each other by increasingly magnifying and scrutinizing status challenges and social dilemmas. As the prospective shooter gathers more information about accessibility to weapons and potential strategies of action, violence becomes the only

viable form of reaction in the "here and now" (See Display 1). Once some tenuous precipitant takes place (i.e., the termination of employment or of an intimate relationship) and eliminates any internal or external restraints, the shooter is left with little to lose; the result is a righteous slaughter rained down upon whoever is unfortunate enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. By first establishing this potential explanatory model, and then testing it with five in-depth case studies, the aim of this study is to demonstrate how this line of action results.

Display 1: The Factors Influencing the Self-Generated Massacre
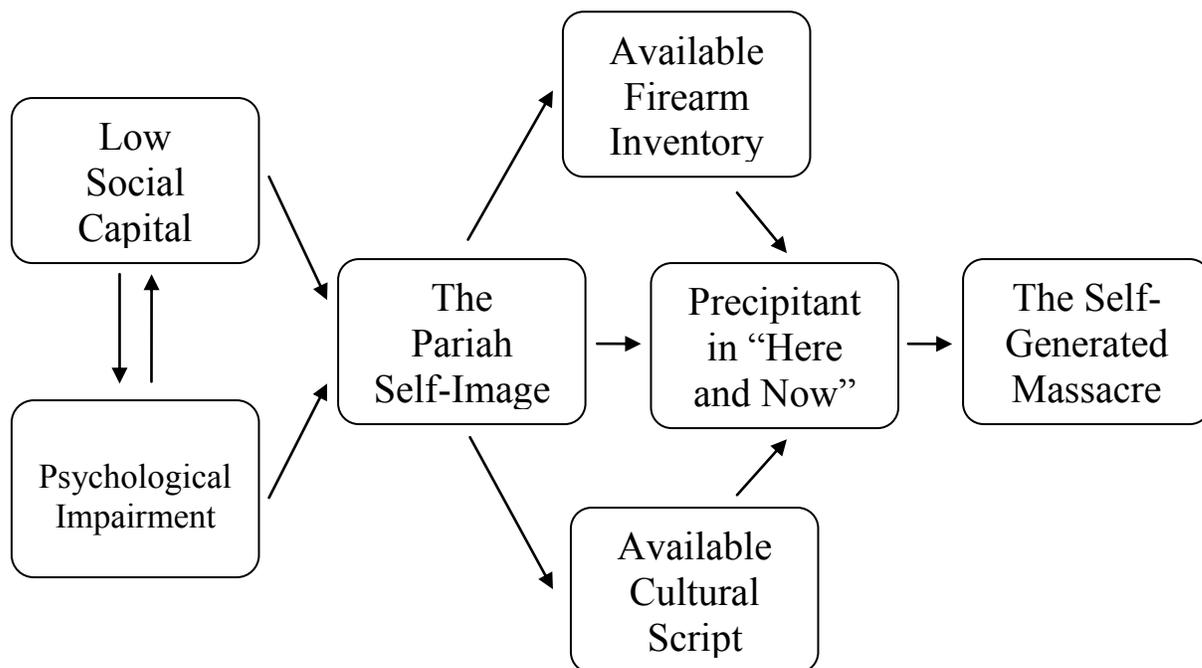
CHAPTER 7

METHODOLOGY

Having constructed a theoretical model focused upon the predisposers imbedded within three distinct places—the shooter's marginalized status within his or her community, some form of psychological pathology, and a pariah self-image—the research goal now is to examine whether multiple examples share these commonalities. As most public mass murderers are killed as a result of their actions, gaining access to one after the crime is nearly impossible. Given this limitation, the easiest way to examine each example is to construct case studies built upon interviews and background reports. As all incidents of public mass murder receive an inordinate amount of coverage, there are multiple research sources available for reconstructing a profile for each individual. For this study, data were collected from newspaper articles detailing each selected event. Due to limitations in time and scope, the current research will only look at five examples that meet the criteria for the requisite number of homicides (at least three) and the appropriate context (occurring in a public place). These five cases were chosen primarily because they are the most recent high-profile self-generated massacres in the United States; fortunately, they include the deadliest mall shooting ever, the worst school rampage ever, and the most lethal workplace shooting ever perpetuated by a female gunman.

While five case studies may seem like a small number of examples with which to test commonalities, quantitative researchers Lincoln and Guba (2000) stress an approach

called "naturalistic generalization" which is built around intensely exploring a handful of detailed cases. These "naturalistic generalizations" are generalizations tied to intuition and based upon personal direct and vicarious experiences—any transferability from one social context to the next is contingent upon the "fittingness" of both situations. The phenomenon under study is analogous to a holograph that appears to exist in three-dimensional space, but that exists in a variety of ways at a variety of different perspectives. Lincoln and Guba (2000) see a more contextual argument for social research findings and downplay the goal of universal understanding by highlighting just how ethereal social science "facts" can be.

As the modern autogenic massacre is so distinct and has been plagued by a lack of universality since it began in the 1960s, any attempt to make generalizations must be made with this holographic analogy in mind. The one fact that can be said to be concrete is the violent act itself, but any assumptions tied to what precedes, precipitates, or facilitates that violence is influenced by this sense of "fittingness." Therefore, in order to prevent this event from happening in the future, homicide research needs to focus on the transferability of these "naturalistic generalizations"—intuitive commonalities that professionals apply when examining one prospective case to the next—in an attempt to gauge where a problematic individual falls on a continuum of potential, violent action.

Case Study I: Sulejman Talovic

On Monday, February 12, 2007, 18-year-old Sulejman Talovic opened fire at the Trolley Square Mall in Salt Lake City, Utah, killing five innocent people and injuring four more before being shot and killed by Salt Lake City Police. To date his motives remain a mystery, as nothing specific about that day and place has surfaced to provide a clue to law enforcement agencies. In not targeting any one individual, there is no evidence for personal vengeance, prior interpersonal conflict, a warped and fatalistic sense of love, nor sexual homicide. As there is no pattern of victimization along race or gender lines, there is no apparent deep hatred for any particular group. In fact, there is no evidence for any differential association or peer influenced inducement, as a family friend confirmed that Talovic had no gang affiliation (Bauman 2007a) and, though he was a Muslim, there is no discernible religious statement. Salt Lake City Police Chief Chris Burbank said that investigators also do not believe there are any links to terrorism, as the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force ran Talovic's name through national security databases to determine if there were any possible ties to networks of organized terrorism and found nothing (Winslow 2007a). Also, there appears to be nothing place-specific about Trolley Square Mall itself. Usually the setting of a massacre is a place of symbolic significance and the focus of the offender's anger, connected to some agency or organization with authority or control over the shooter (Petee et al. 1997). In this case, Talovic was neither a disgruntled employee, nor an obviously frequent mall presence. He took no money or hostages, so the fact that Trolley Square is a commercial location lends

no evidence for a felony-motivated murder; why he chose Trolley Square appears as ambiguous as his motive to kill. Finally, as FBI Special Agent Scott Wall put it, "there really has been no written documentation that the subject left behind to be analyzed" (Winslow 2007b), meaning that Talovic had no discernable outlets for his own internal dialog. What drove him to kill is such a mystery that police cannot even lock down when he committed to the act.

The first thing to consider in Talovic's case is the distinct lack of status that he maintained within his limited social networks and environment as a whole. A habitual high-school transfer student, he floated from school to school, engaging in numerous fights on each campus before officially dropping out at age 16 (Carlisle and Hunt 2007). His eighth-grade math teacher remembers him as a below-average student who only did about half his work (Winslow, Reavy, and Bauman 2007). Former classmates and teachers saw a desire in him for social approval but acknowledged that he knew little about making friends (Hunt and Israelson 2007; Winslow et al. 2007). He was typically described as a loner, going through his daily routine with little to no interaction with others (Rizzo and Gehrke 2007). He held multiple jobs after he dropped out of school, but only for short periods of time, and all were low skilled construction jobs or menial factory work. At his latest job, he had made no efforts to bond with anyone and mostly stayed to himself (Winslow and Reavy 2007). Being Muslim in Utah and speaking broken English made him an outcast among his predominantly Mormon peers both at school and work. According to a former coworker, Spencer Critchett, Talovic's earlier years were fraught with difficulty because "he was often picked on at school [and was]

treated as a loner," and that constant harassment made him quick to be defensive at work (Hunt and Israelsen 2007).

Within his own family, Talovic's interaction with his parents was so strained that his father, Suljo Talovic, assumed that Sulejman was downstairs in his basement bedroom until the senior Talovic saw the newsbreak about the Trolley Square killings (Bauman 2007b). Talovic's father knew nothing about Talovic's gun collection or anything about his son's friends (Bauman 2007b). The extent of Talovic's isolation can be seen in the fact that his girlfriend was a young woman whom he never met in person. Her name is Monika (surname withheld), a 17-year-old Bosnian refugee in Amarillo, Texas, with whom he talked frequently on the telephone during the month before the shootings (Bauman 2007d). While they apparently talked for hours every day and even discussed the possibility of marriage, she was as surprised by his actions as anyone (Bauman 2007d), further demonstrating that no one was really close to the young man. According to Monika, Talovic made reference to "two or three" friends, but never mentioned names (Bauman 2007d). Police Chief Burbank summarized his social isolation thusly: "He went to work and did his thing. He wasn't real active anywhere. He wasn't anyone who had friends anywhere" (Winslow 2007b). In other words, he had next to no social capital, which in almost all situations, heightens the likelihood of violence.

The second predisposer, mental illness, is more problematic to isolate because of Talovic's marked lack of contact with any mental health facilities or practitioners. Pincus (2001) applies the label of "impaired psychology" to conditions such as schizophrenia, paranoia, severe depression, and post traumatic stress disorder. In Talovic's case, post

traumatic stress disorder was probable, based upon his childhood of violence in war-torn Bosnia, as was depression, given his history of post-immigration cultural incompatibility and his extreme social isolation. Talovic was born in Bosnia on October 6, 1988, when that country was a peaceful and relatively prosperous part of Yugoslavia until war broke out in 1992. From 1993 until they immigrated to the United States in 1998, the Talovic family was on the run, constantly moving from village to village (Carlisle and Hunt 2007). During that period, Talovic spent some time in Srebrenica, the northeastern enclave where up to 8,000 Muslim men and boys were slaughtered in 1995 by Serb forces loyal to late ex-Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic—the worst European massacre of civilians since World War II (Cerkez-Robinson 2007). Although the war ended when Talovic was only 7, his girlfriend said he remembered large open graves where victims were thrown in and shot. Apparently, he also witnessed the horrific murder of a woman with her child: "there was a soldier just coming up behind her, and, like, shooting her in the head." The soldier threw the child on the ground and started to shoot it (Bauman 2007d). The atrocities of war and ethnic cleansing, and the pressures of daily life in a new country after he immigrated to the United States, could have created immense pressure on Talovic, resulting in post traumatic stress disorder (Jurkovic et al. 2005). It is not being a victim of violence that automatically causes some people to perpetrate it; it is the constant everyday stressors of negotiating previous horrors with the less caustic nature of American daily life (Jurkovic et al. 2005).

Once in the United States, Talovic appeared to have a steady history of violent or violence-based behavior, most of it centering around a relatively cruel sense of humor.

Beginning in 1998, the year the Talovic family immigrated to the United States, Sulejman was already acting hostile or indifferent toward other people. When he was only 9 years old, he threatened his family's landlord, Musto Redzovic, with a knife (Bauman 2007c). The next year, Talovic committed his first act of official delinquency and another unofficial act of violence against his own cousin. At age 10, Talovic was referred to court for throwing rocks at a little girl, an allegation he apparently denied, but which was found to be true (Hunt and Israelson 2007). Later on that winter, when he was 11, he packed a piece of broken glass into a snowball and threw it at his 7 year-old cousin, Safer Omerovic. Apparently, as the younger boy was bleeding, Talovic's only concern was fear of punishment (Bauman 2007c). In April 2001, at age 12, Talovic was once again referred to juvenile court, having held a knife over a young girl's head and having menacingly uttered "I'll kill you" (Hunt and Israelsen 2007). Around the same time, his uncle claims he tried strangling and gagging the same younger cousin while playing (Bauman 2007c). His final brush with juvenile court came in June of that year as he was charged with stealing fireworks from a grocery store (Hunt and Israelson 2007). There is also his use of school internet connections to look up lethal assault weaponry (Carlisle and Rizzo 2007), building to his eventual dropout. According to his uncle, Nasir Omerovic, Talovic displayed enough violent symptoms that he should have been under psychiatric care (Bauman 2007c).

Due to the lack of communication with the outside world, the third predisposer, Talovic's deviant self-identity, is not obvious, but according to statements made to his girlfriend, it is apparent that both his line of action and his conception of self were solidly

in place prior to his self-generated massacre. In his last conversation with his long-distance girlfriend the night before his shooting rampage, he confided that Monday, February 12 was "supposed to be the happiest day of [his] life." When asked what that involved, he responded, "everything but you" (Bauman 2007d). He knew he was going to do it, as everything in his life had built to that moment, and he knew that he was "supposed to be" happy about it. In that moment, he was acknowledging that he was about to do something horrific and that the type of person that would execute such a heinous act would be happy about it. Stating it aloud to someone other than himself was a chance to cement his decision and reinforce that it was righteous and that he was exactly the type of "hard" and "bad" person to carry it through.

In his moment of homicidal rampage, his vengeful mindset apparently gave him a transcendent quality consistent with Jack Katz's "primordial evil" (1988), as, according to eyewitnesses, "the expression on his face never changed. Not as he walked into the crowded mall. Not as he began to fire … He wasn't yelling or saying anything. He was just loading his gun and blasting away" (LaPlante et al. 2007). He was not sweating profusely, wavering as he shot, nor breathing hard (Winslow 2007a). Talovic's final words to one of the officers before he died in the shootout with police were simply "fuck you" (Winslow 2007a), signaling that he did want not anything from the situation other than to impose his will over it for as long as he could. Thanks to the weapons he had collected—Talovic had illegally purchased a black market handgun (Rizzo 2007) and legally purchased his shotgun at a local sporting goods store (Carlisle and Rizzo 2007)—and the "cultural scripts" available to him, Sulejman Talovic let his lack of social capital,

his accumulating psychosis, and his suffering of endless social indignities culminate in one agitated outburst of frustrated anger and extrapunitive hostility.

Clearly there are complicating factors in an analysis of Talovic, as his story is obscured by imperfect information from a number of sources, both formal and informal. Due to his early migratory years and constant cycle of change, any longstanding psychological issues were masked by constant (re)adjustment. Without a formal system of monitoring and discipline, there were no early warning signs of potential sociopathy or anger management problems. External monitoring, as would happen in school, was nearly nonexistent until the family immigrated to the United States when he was nine, and even then, the inconsistency in schooling resulted in a lack of predictive insights. Probably the greatest hindrance to proper evaluation is that of the only credible source of internal monitoring was his family. In every interview conducted with his father and his aunt, the spokespersons for the immigrant Talovics, both desired to appear as American as possible, conceivably to the point of falsifying information. Talovic's father would de-emphasize any traits that might mark the Talovic family as foreign or atypical to other Americans. By downplaying any psychological trauma that might have resulted from originating from another country, especially one as war-torn as Bosnia, he may have sought to diffuse any negative outcry toward Bosnians that Talovic's violent actions might incite. However, after initially denying that the slayings were in any way influenced by the Talovic's experiences in war-ravaged Bosnia, Talovic's father began to speculate that the early exposure to violence may have had some impact, but still claimed he saw no warning signs (Carlisle and Rizzo 2007). The unwillingness to share anything

negative could go beyond a desire to protect their image as Americans, and may have served to protect their image as parents. If this is the case, then there is no possible way to know if there was any reality of abuse, much less the extent and type.

Although Sulejman Talovic left no suicide or explanatory note, there is still a strong model of explanation. By sifting through his personal background and employing contemporary criminological theory, it becomes clear that Talovic had next to no social capital around which to build a positive conception of self. His social isolation had a reciprocal relationship with a growing psychosis of depression and post traumatic stress disorder, resulting in the adoption of the identity of the morally righteous social pariah. Once he had decided he was a societal outsider who was unfairly discriminated against, he sought access to weapons and targets, and was finally in a state of mind to murder.

Case Study II: Seung-Hui Cho

On Monday, April 16, 2007, on the campus of Virginia Tech University, 23-year-old Seung-Hui Cho initiated the deadliest self-generated massacre in United States history. Beginning at 7:15 a.m. EST, when he killed his first two victims, Emily Hilscher, 18, and Ryan Clark, 22, at the West Ambler Johnson dormitory, Cho launched a public shooting spree that claimed 32 lives and wounded an additional 25 people (Gelineau 2007a). Just after the dormitory killings, Cho prepared a press package containing 43 photos, a hand-written statement, and a video tirade, and then mailed it to the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) News Division in New York, at 9:01 a.m

(Gelineau 2007b). He then proceeded to Norris Hall, an engineering building at Virginia Tech, where he engaged in nine minutes of active shooting before committing suicide at 9:54 a.m. EST immediately after police blasted through the chained doors (Breed 2007c; Gelineau 2007a). After the smoke had settled, it is determined that Cho had unleashed 170 rounds of ammunition from two handheld pistols—one shot for every three seconds (Gelineau 2007a)—and cemented his legacy as the most effective mass murderer of the modern era.

Clearly, any attempt to provide an explanatory model for public mass murder must consider a shooter as lethal as Seung-Hui Cho. Over his life course, he demonstrated very limited social skills, suggesting low social capital and strained psychological functioning. These two distinct but related features could have acted in conjunction with one another to foster the necessary pariah self-image that would facilitate such a violent and caustic outcome. Evidence gathered in the wake of his crimes illuminated an individual born with a debilitating shyness that was exacerbated by a series of poor social interactions throughout his formative teenage and early adult years. Because this process was ongoing and therefore never-ending, he eventually came to embrace an identity that existed outside of his immediate reality and ultimately lashed out at abstractions of the people that he viewed as both antagonistic and unjustly victimizing. While the FBI maintains that his self-produced "manifesto" provides little to no legitimate insight into his motivation (Gelineau 2007b), there is still a reasonable model for understanding when one isolates his low social standing, his unique psychological make-up, and his presentation of self.

Cho's parents emigrated from South Korea in 1992 when he was only 8 years old and it is clear that from the onset he struggled to form strong social connections. Former classmates claim that he was constantly teased and picked on in school, most likely due to his initial shyness and his strange, mumbled way of speaking (Breed 2007a). Most remember him as unresponsive and distant—almost mute—which acted as strong obstacles while he struggled to fit in (Lee 2007). In high school, he was officially diagnosed with severe selective mutism—a condition marked by feeling threatened in structured social interactions and thereby experiencing heightened anxiety—which resulted in his Fairfax county school developing a special education plan that excused Cho from class participation in order to assuage his fears (Lindsey 2007). Furthermore, he was suspected of having autism due to his impaired social isolation, delayed speech acquisition, and repetitive behaviors (Lee 2007). According to most accounts, Cho was a loner who rarely spoke, and when he did, it was usually in one-word conversations (Breed and Kahn 2007). He revealed himself to very few people; even his own family members stated that they rarely heard him speak (Apuzzo 2007a). In all, Cho began his life in the United States as a social outcast and, due to both environmental and personal factors, that is what he remained.

Cho's burgeoning low social capital was most noticeable in his relations with the opposite sex. According to his roommates, he claimed to have an imaginary girlfriend named "Jelly," a supermodel that lived in space (Breed and Kahn 2007). He was known to use the college's web-based people finder (jokingly referred to as the "Hokie Stalker") in order to research objects of his affection, often learning dorm assignments and other

official information that he used to send unwanted messages (Breed 2007c). At least three female students at Virginia Tech claimed that they received unwelcome advances from Cho, either in the form of bizarre computer posts or a coded message on a dorm room dry-erase board (Breed 2007a). Two of these women officially complained to campus police, spawning an investigation that made Cho both depressed and suicidal (Breed and Kahn 2007). His response prompted his roommate to contact authorities on December 13, 2005, who took Cho to the New River Valley Community Services Board for a psychological evaluation (Apuzzo 2007a).

After reviewing Cho's case in 2005, special judge Paul M. Barnett declared him an "imminent threat to self and others" and ordered involuntary outpatient treatment (Apuzzo 2007a; Breed 2007b). Unfortunately, Cho was never committed to a mental hospital and the judge's mandate went unfulfilled (Apuzzo 2007b). Instead of appealing to official channels of psychological rehabilitation, Cho's parents elected to expose him to various Korean Presbyterian churches in Virginia during the summer of 2006, under the assumption that religious council might act as an adequate form of therapy (Breed 2007b; Lee 2007). In the wake of the killings, some psychiatrists have stated that he clearly suffered from the mental disease schizophrenia (Lee 2007), while others argue that that is impossible to prove post hoc (Gelineau 2007b). At any rate, it is taken as fact that public record classified Cho as psychologically impaired and that, if left untreated, that impairment could fester into something problematic and dangerous to both himself and his surrounding environment.

Over time, this impairment did negatively manifest as a pariah self-image—a self-selected identity that transcends conventional morality and opposes the established order. Low in social capital with little to lose, Cho began to tinker with an identity that was menacing and intimidating. This deviant self-image first appeared in the only medium that Cho felt comfortable communicating in—his writing (Breed 2007c). In spite of his longstanding issues with public speaking and verbal communication, Cho sought refuge in his compositions, going so far as to declare English his undergraduate major. He apparently felt a freedom when transcribing his personal thoughts and ideas, but those thoughts were so disturbing and violent that he was kicked out of class and forced to complete a few courses as independent studies with his department head (Breed 2007c). English professor Lucinda Roy described her interactions with Cho as talking to a deep, dark hole (Breed 2007c), and others in the department relayed stories of Cho constructing himself as someone that defied convention. On the first day of a literature class, he scrawled a question mark on a sign-in sheet instead of his name, earning the unofficial and otherworldly nickname "The Question Mark" (Breed 2007a). Even when he sent in his press packet the day of his massacre, he used the name "A. Ishmael" in the return address (Breed 2007c), demonstrating a strong desire for an identity outside that of Seung-Hui Cho.

According to multiple sources, Cho's interest was piqued by the "cultural script" of the school shooting, especially the Columbine High School massacres that took place in Colorado on April 20, 1999. In eighth Grade, just after the rampage occurred, he wrote a school paper voicing his admiration for the act and expressed a desire to repeat it

(Breed 2007a). In his NBC News video rant, he mentions "Eric and Dylan," a passing reference to the teenage Columbine killers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, and some criminologists think that the eighth anniversary of their massacre was suspiciously close to the timing of Cho's (Breed 2007a). In addition, there is evidence that Cho might have made a practice run two days prior to the mass murder, as witnesses saw a suspicious man in a hooded sweat shirt in Norris Hall on Saturday, April 14, chaining the doors shut (Lindsey and Sampson 2007). It appears that Cho found the "cultural script" enticing and seductive, and ultimately sought to emulate in an attempt to address his own feelings of victimization and unjust alienation. By practicing how he would enact his crime 48 hours prior, he strengthened both his commitment and resolve to that "cultural script."

On a similar note, Cho's dedication to perpetuating a self-generated massacre was strengthened when he began compiling firearms. Because he had no convenient access to a gun or cache of guns, Cho started purchasing weapons in early February, a full two months before the crime (Breed 2007c). After buying the Walther P22, he then picked up the more powerful Glock 9 in March from a Roanoke, Virginia dealer (Breed 2007c). After attaining both weapons, he filed the serials numbers off of each gun and then began purchasing accessories online, legally buying ammunition on March 22 from a gun shop in Idaho (Geller and Kahn 2007). Despite owning two firearms and frequenting a few Virginia-area gun ranges (Geller and Kahn 2007), his roommates at school were shocked that he even knew how to use a gun (Breed and Kahn 2007), demonstrating how effective he was a hiding his burgeoning hobby from the rest of the world. It appears that this progression from firearm novice to dedicated gunman was premeditated and deliberate,

demonstrating how his obsession with violence was gaining momentum steadily over time.

Two of the more mysterious elements of this rampage are Cho's victim and setting selections. The authorities never established a relationship between Cho and either of his initial victims, although a key assumption is that, given his history on campus, Cho may have had some sort of voyeuristic obsession with Emily Hilscher (Apuzzo 2007b). It was revealed that the timing of Cho's confrontation with and subsequent killing of Hilscher coincided with her return to the dorm from a weekend trip with her boyfriend (Breed 2007c), although that may be coincidental, as it could be that she was simply who he ran into at the wrong time. His roommates claim that he often stared at the West Ambler Johnston dormitory despite having no apparent connection to the place or the people housed there (Breed 2007a), potentially pointing to an interest in the physical building if nothing else. Another question that looms is why an English major would target an engineering building like Norris Hall. Some have speculated that he was an engineering student early on in his collegiate career, but switched to English at some point under circumstances that might have spawn residual resentment and anger (Breed 2007a). Clearly, his potential dress rehearsal two days prior points to the building being specifically targeted (Lindsey and Sampson 2007), although, again it is impossible at this point to say why.

Despite the FBI claim that Cho's video package held little tangible evidence around which to build a plausible motivation, there still appears to be some insights into his unique perspective. He rails again "materialism" and "hedonism" (Lee 2007) and

chastises "rich kids," "debauchery," and "deceitful charlatans" (Breed 2007a). He points

out the hypocrisy of "drinking vodka, sharing needles and going on Saturday night

escapades while still going to church on Sunday morning" (Breed 2007a).   In his final

paragraph he relies heavily upon trite rhetoric and simple slogans:

> Do you know what it feels to be spit on your face and to have trash shoved
> down your throat? Do you know what it feels like to dig your own grave?
> Do you know what it feels like to have your throat slashed from ear to ear?
> Do you know what it feels like to be torched alive? Do you know what it
> feels like to be humiliated and be impaled upon on a cross? And left to
> bleed to death for your amusement? You have never felt a single ounce of
> pain your whole life. Did you want to inject as much misery in our lives
> as you can just because you can? I didn't have to do this. I could have
> left. I could have fled. But no, I will no longer run. It's not for me. For
> my children, for my brothers and sisters that you fucked, I did it for
> them…. When the time came, I did it. I had to.... You had a hundred
> billion chances and ways to have avoided today, but you decided to spill
> my blood. You forced me into a corner and gave me only one option. The
> decision was yours. Now you have blood on your hands that will never
> wash off. (Lee 2007)

It is obvious that he is railing against being marginalized by something external to

himself and is angry about the resulting life time of unfair stigmatization, but the purpose

of this rant is not to establish a logical explanation for his actions. This rant serves as a

transcendent declaration to himself, an attempt to elevate his intensity and commitment to

this violent line of action. The video is meant to act as a mirror and the more he paints

himself as someone akin to Jesus Christ, "humiliated and impaled upon a cross," the

more he convinces himself that that is the truth. He's building up an image of himself as

a martyr, someone that does not run because he is making a moral stand for his "brothers

and sisters that you fucked" (the "you" in that statement being everyone and no one

specific at the same time). He does not need the media or society to believe what he is

saying; he just needs to convince Seung-Hui Cho that this massacre is both necessary and righteous. This "manifesto" was for his own sake, not for ours, because, as his suitemate pointed out, how could Cho have built up such resentment against rich kids at a school where more than 60 percent of the students get financial aid (Breed 2007c)? Cho just needed something to rally against in order to inspire himself to carry out his deadly plan. This was a one-man motivational rally where he needed an ambiguous external villain to whom he could say, "You caused me to do this" (Breed 2007c).

In sum, Seung-Hui Cho fits the three criteria necessary to initiate a self-generated massacre: he suffered from low social capital, he was psychologically impaired, and he adopted a pariah self-image that existed in contrast to conventional reality. His social bonds were extremely weak (almost everyone interviewed, from his family to his roommates, said he was a loner that kept everyday social exchange perfunctory and monosyllabic), he was officially diagnosed with a series of psychological ailments (including selective mutism and being an imminent danger to himself and others), and he built up a persona in his own writing and in his mind that was both mysterious and "other" (embracing the nickname "The Question Mark"). He was fascinated by the Columbine killings and purchased weapons in anticipation of his eventual rampage—in all, it was only a matter of time before he gave in to his chosen course of action. The specifics of how still remain a mystery, but, given the evidence, the why appears consistent with the research model of this study.

Case Study III: Jennifer San Marco

On the evening of Monday, January 20, 2006, 44-year-old Jennifer San Marco cemented her legacy as the most deadly female public shooter of all time (Malloy 2006). After three years of living out of state, she returned to both her former residence and former workplace in Santa Barbara, California, to kill seven people in cold blood with a 15-round, 9mm Smith and Wesson model 915 pistol (Vandor 2006c). Starting at an area condominium complex where she killed former neighbor Beverly Graham, 54, between 7:15 and 8:15 pm PST (Vandor 2006b) she moved on to the US Postal Service Processing Plant in nearby Goleta, California, where she opened fire on six postal employees just after 9 pm (Archibald 2006). After her workplace rampage ended, Maleka Higgins, 28; Ze Fairchild, 37; Nicola Grant, 42; Charlotte Colton, 44; Guadalupe Schwartz, 52; and Dexter Shannon, 58, were all dead from gunshot wounds to the head (Vandor 2006a). She wanted to slaughter every single person in that room before eventually turning the gun on herself and committing suicide (Malloy 2006). While the rampage began at one location and ended at another, it is clear from the evidence reported that both targets were consciously and deliberately selected as part of a premeditated plan of attack.

According to multiple media reports, San Marco had been deteriorating both socially and psychologically for the last four or five years (since around the time she turned 40). Born in New York, she attended Brooklyn's Edward R. Murrow High School, Brooklyn College, and Rutgers University, before relocating to the west coast in

1989 (Jablon 2006). She worked on separate occasions as a guard at medium-security Chuckawalla Valley State Prison in Blythe and as a Santa Barbara police dispatcher, although she left both jobs unexpectedly after only a few months (Jablon 2006). In 1997, she began working nights at the Goleta mail sorting plant and bought her condominium, beginning an association with both locations that would eventually end in violence (Jablon 2006). Around 2000, neighbors said that San Marco appeared to have some kind of breakdown, as her actions became more and more erratic and nonsensical (Jablon 2006). At the time, her now deceased neighbor had complained to friends and family about a crazy woman who "used to come out and rant and rave in front of her building," who was "having conversations and there wasn't anyone around" (Malloy 2006).

This ranting and raving started to negatively impact her professional life as well, prompting an official psychological examination. On February 25, 2001, Santa Barbara County Sherriff's deputies were summoned to the mail facility to address a situation with San Marco and forcibly remove her from the premises when "she was acting irrational" (Malloy 2006). She was placed on "involuntary hold" and held for three days at an area psychiatric hospital (Archibald 2006), although there appears to be no official record of any diagnosis (Malloy 2006). After returning to work, other postal employees described her as "agitated and stand-offish" (Archibald 2006) and she was eventually placed on medical retirement in early 2003 for mental problems stemming from angrily talking to herself (Malloy 2006). As a result of her newly imposed retirement, San Marco decided to leave the Santa Barbara area, selling her condominium in July, 2003, and telling her limited acquaintances that she was going to visit a sister on the east coast (Jablon 2006).

It is not clear whether she ever intended to return to Santa Barbara, as it is uncertain whether she had any familial connections to the area other than a rumored cousin and her friendships dwindled as she had become something of social recluse (Vandor 2006a).

In late 2003, Jennifer San Marco relocated to Grants, New Mexico, 70 miles west of Albuquerque, purely by happenstance. Her car broke down there while she was on her drive east and the town was small enough and distant enough from her old existence to capture her interest (Jablon 2006). She lived an isolated life alone in her home, but still managed to attract the attention of her new neighbors in the very same way she aggravated Beverly Graham in Santa Barbara. She garnered a reputation as the new woman in town who shouted furiously to herself, who harassed municipal employees, who ordered food at restaurants and left before eating it, who frequently made racist comments and screamed profane rap lyrics, who unexpectedly knelt in prayer at the roadside, and who stripped in random parking lots (Blood 2006; Frosch 2006; Jablon 2006). In the two and a half years she lived there, she applied for two business licenses—one for a publication called *The Racist Press* and another for a cat food plant (Archibald 2006)—and was denied both. Two months prior to her rampage, a mental health professional found her "delusional" and praying in the parking lot of the local post office, but when she attempted to facilitate a meeting between San Marco and the local police, San Marco fled the scene (Frosch 2006). According to one neighbor, "the passion of her anger (was) hard to describe. It was so frightening" (Jablon 2006) and omnipresent.

Despite living the in area for only 30 months, Jennifer San Marco had built a solid reputation in Grant as a woman with severe mental issues, who, intentionally or not, alienated almost everyone around her. She was a perpetual outsider who began to assume that she was kept apart due to the concerted and coordinated efforts of others. In New Mexico, she began to adopt a physical appearance that mirrored this "otherness," first by collecting a series of new and random tattoos and then, just before her rampage, by shaving her head in an inconsistent and haphazard manner (Jablon 2006). She told locals that she was "going to be gone for a while" and even talked about how the US Postal Service had mistreated her (Jablon 2006). After her rampage, authorities raided her home and found a diary of more than 100 pages of meticulous notes that tracked perceived slights and offenses that she had received over time (Jablon 2006), all of which culminated in a vague plot that she had "discovered" was specifically against her, that involved the postal distribution plant where she once worked, a Santa Barbara medical facility, and the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department (Vandor 2006c). Clearly, she had fostered a pariah self-image that held her outside of but still victimized by conventional society—more specifically the official institutions in Santa Barbara that had dealt with her prior mental deterioration. Given this evidence, it is clear why she chose the place she did, and it appears only a matter of time before she returned there to right all of her perceived wrongs.

Leading up to her autogenic massacre, it appears that San Marco started to plan for something violent starting in August, 2005, when she first purchased her weapon. She bought her hand gun for $325 at the Ace Pawn and Antiques in Grants, NM, and

obtained her ammunition from a different pawn shop in nearby Gallup (Vandor 2006c).

She presented a New Mexico driver's license as proof of residency and was not flagged

by the federal background check required for handgun purchases despite her 72 hour

psychiatric incarceration in California (Blood 2006). Credit card purchases put her at

home in New Mexico on January 24, 2006, but in Los Angeles, CA, at 11 am PST on the

morning of the shooting. Later that night, she apparently broke into Graham's

condominium in Santa Barbara through a rear sliding door (Vandor 2006b) and obtained

access to the mail plant by driving through a security gate close behind another vehicle

(Malloy 2006), both of which are entrance strategies dependent upon prior knowledge. It

is obvious that both attacks were premeditated, fueled by a history of real or imagined

social slights that San Marco stewed about while isolated in her new desert community.

Despite both physical and temporal distance, she decided that she had to return out of a

warped sense of morality and righteous revenge.

Despite a long history of spouting racial epithets, and the fact that all of the postal

workers at the facility that night were minorities (three black, one Chinese-American, one

Hispanic, and one Filipino), the police assumed that there was no racial motivation

behind the postal plant shooting (Archibald 2006). In all reality, the attack had

everything to do with the facility and nothing to do with the people there. Barring

Beverly Graham, the victims were just working in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Jennifer San Marco had externalized her blame, mentally constructing a coordinated

conspiracy against her that started with her former place of work. Having reached a point

where she was not socially invested in anything other than her own sense of self worth,

her obvious psychosis and paranoid nature was compounded by her low social status. It should also be noted that she had no documented history of suicide or suicidal thoughts, so no assumptions can be made about any kind of "death wish." However, conjecture can be made about her frame of mind; prior to her rampage, she appeared to exist more and more frequently outside of the realm of normalcy and had come to embrace that existence by adopting a physical appearance that challenged conventional social norms. Once she committed to this conception of herself as something "other," violence against those that had harmed her character most (or at the very least, the place where it happened) was a rational and appropriate line of action. Ultimately, Jennifer San Marco fits the three criteria necessary to initiate a self-generated massacre, as she suffered from low social capital, she was obviously psychologically impaired, and she had adopted a pariah self-image that existed in contrast to conformist reality.

Case Study IV: Robert A. Hawkins

Robert A. Hawkins was only 19 years old when he decided that he wanted to end his life violently and to take as many innocent victims with him as possible. Hawkins appears to fit the contemporary statistical profile in that he was a white, male teenager. In contrast to all the other case studies presented, he left a note for his loved ones detailing his alienation and extrapunitive blame. At 1 pm CST on Wednesday, December 5, 2007, Hawkins called the mother of the family he was living with to tell her that he had prepared and left a suicide note on floor of his bedroom (Olson 2007). Less than an hour

later, at 1:42 pm, he stormed off of a third-floor elevator inside the Von Maur department store at the Westroads Mall in Omaha, Nebraska, armed with an AK-47 assault rifle (Forliti 2007) and perpetuated the deadliest mall shooting in United States history (Funk 2007c). Once the dust had settle, Hawkins had fired more than 30 rounds inside the store (Funk 2007a), wounding three and killing eight: Maggie Webb, 24; Angie Schuster, 36; Beverly Flynn, 47; Gary Scharf, 48; Dianne Trent, 53; Gary Joy, 56; John McDonald, 65; and Janet Jorgenson, 67 (Bratton 2007b; Forliti 2007). Hawkins then ended his own existence with a single shot from the AK-47 under his chin (Garcia 2007). In sifting through newspaper articles written in the fallout of his rampage, Hawkins's life appears to be one full of social scarring and emotional instability—both factors that weighed in heavily when motivating his heinous attack.

Robert Hawkins had a long history with dejection and environmental instability. While not on any medication for mental illness at the time of the shooting, he had been treated in the past for depression and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and had a pronounced substance abuse problem with both alcohol and marijuana (Bratton 2007a; Olson 2007). His parents divorced and both remarried when he was younger and in May 2002, when he was just 14 years old, he threatened his new stepmother, Candace Hawkins, with physical violence (Garcia 2007). Four months later, a Nebraska court decided that his emotional instability was problematic enough that he should be designated a ward of the state as his home environment was simply not equipped to deal with his mental state (Bratton and Jenkins 2007). As a result, he went through a series of government-run institutions including a treatment center and group home in Omaha in

2003, foster care and another treatment center in 2004 and 2005, and prison in 2006 for failing to perform community service for a felony drug-possession charge (Bratton and Jenkins 2007). During this time, he became violent with a staff member in August 2003 and was expelled from school in October 2005 (Bratton 2007a). He entered an outpatient drug program in May 2006, but was "unsuccessfully discharged" in July 2006 because of "negative behaviors and a failure to make a commitment to sobriety" (Garcia 2007). In August 2006, Hawkins was released from state care into the general population after four years because he was no longer cooperating and would be a legal adult in nine months (Garcia 2007). In the end, despite multiple psychiatric evaluations and instances of violence (Forliti 2007), Hawkins's issues with substance abuse and his behavioral problems ultimately went untreated, as he was bounced from facility to facility, developing into what his host mother called a "lost pound puppy that nobody wanted" (Olson 2007).

In the time after his discharge, Hawkins eventually found some stability living with his friends in the Maruca-Kovacs family home in Bellevue, NB. In the year prior to his rampage, Hawkins earned his GED, got a driver's license, started working at an area McDonald's, and developed a relationship with a girlfriend (Olson 2007). Despite not seeing his birth mother for the final two years of his state-run custody, Hawkins reconnected with her and his step-family (Funk 2007b). The step-mother that he had threatened had left his dad as a result, but Hawkins did maintain some sort of relationship with his birth father (Garcia 2007). Unfortunately, all of this started to unravel beginning when the Maruca-Kovacs parents began to take on more of an authoritative role. Two

weeks prior to the public shooting, Debora Maruca-Kovacs said that she and her husband had told Hawkins that it was time for him to find a new place to live because he was not responsible with his money: "He was starting to be a freeloader," she said (Funk 2007a). At the same time, he broke up with his girlfriend and then, a week later, he was fired from his job (Olson 2007). Any social capital he had built up in the time after his release from state custody was rapidly evaporating and, given that he had a history of emotional instability and violent tendencies, it appears logical to assume that once he had nothing left invested in the surrounding social structure, an emotional and violent outburst was a predictable result.

It appears that Hawkins became dedicated to an autogenic massacre the night before his shooting spree. While eating with his mother and step-sisters at their home, he decided to take the assault rifle and ammunition that he needed from his stepfather's closet (Funk 2007b). It is hard to imagine that he was not already aware of having easy access to guns, as police found 16 shotguns and rifles inside a locked gun safe in the Maruca-Kovacs basement and found four handguns, a .223-caliber rifle, a BB pistol, and an assortment of ammunition when searching the step-father's home after the rampage (Funk 2007b). Hawkins took his weapon of choice from his step-father out of convenience (there is no mention of a gun safe at that residence) and then showed it off to both his friends and host mother that night before bed (Bratton and Jenkins 2007). According to surveillance video at the crime scene the next day, Hawkins initially walked into the mall unarmed at 1:36 pm CST (Bratton 2007b) and, after fully committing to this "cultural script," returned six minutes later with the gun concealed in a balled-up sweat

shirt and began firing as soon as the elevator doors opened (Bratton and Jenkins 2007). In contrast to the other case studies, his recent and overwhelming lose of social capital immediately preceded this attack and it seems that he reacted quickly and suddenly. There was not a long-simmering anger that boiled over at an ostensibly random date—from an outside perspective, Hawkins's killing spree appears more temporally and therefore causally direct, and more in line with the classic assumptions about this type of phenomenon.

In his handwritten suicide note, he claims that he "just snapped" and, despite an immense amount of love for his friends and family, the contempt he felt for his random victims was overwhelming (Forliti 2007). Omaha police believe that the setting and the victims were both selected randomly and that the entire situation arose as a convenient method for Hawkins to commit suicide while making a larger social statement (Bratton and Jenkins 2007). This would appear accurate given his history with depression and according to friend Kraig Kovac, 17, Hawkins had written about killing himself in public (Funk 2007a). Also, there was an incident in January 2006 when he was still in a treatment facility, when he claimed that he swallowed 30 Tylenol pills at once because he wanted to die (Bratton 2007a; Garcia 2007). He also told a therapist about his rather fatalistic views of the death, voicing in a session that he was not certain "if there is a God or life after death (but) that when he dies, he'll probably go to hell" (Bratton 2007a). While all of this might appear to lend support to the "death wish" argument, it seems theoretically plausible to recast it as some evidence of his self-identified "otherness."

While it is true on a superficial level that his sudden bankruptcy of social capital did immediately precede his public mass murder, it must be noted that a pariah self-image existed within this young man for a while. Despite referring to himself as "a burden," "a constant disappointment," and "peice (sic) of shit" living a "meaningless existence" in his suicide note (Forliti 2007; Olson 2007), he still elected to demonize his victims as opposed to his parents or friends. In the same note, he refers to these victims, whom he does not even know, as "a few peices (sic) of shit" (Forliti 2007), vilifying conventional reality as something awful and restrictive. He does not blame his parents—he purposefully wrote "I love you dad. I love you mommy" (Olson 2007)—but he is angry enough at all social agents external to himself that he wants to be something different. According to Katz (1988), the slaughter is righteous only if the social agent elects a morality that defies convention. When he wrote "I'm gonna be fucking famous" (Forliti 2007), he knew that his rampage would illicit attention focused on his life. If he were truly ashamed of himself, if he really thought that he was a burden and it was his fault, there is no reason for him to want to highlight his own miserable existence. He wanted to send a message that being "a constant disappointment" was an external condition forced upon him by someone else. By other's standards, he was a burden, but in enacting a very terrible and very public death, he was calling attention to the ambiguous injustices that caused that label to be applied.

In sum, young Robert Hawkins also fits the three criteria necessary to initiate a autogenic massacre. Despite working to increase his social capital in the year prior to his public shooting, it all started to dissipate in a few short weeks, prompting a turn toward

violence as a legitimate course of action. He had served time in treatment facilities for substance abuse and emotional disorders for four years. And finally, he built up a persona as something alien and unconventional by demonizing the "peices (sic) of shit" that were holding him back. By all accounts, Robert Hawkins was not a terribly original young man. He decided to enact a public mass murder because the "cultural script" was prevalent, firearms were apparently copiously available, and he wanted to make a very public statement. Given the evidence, the Hawkins case study appears consistent with this research model.

Case Study V: Steven Kazmierczak

Steven Kazmierczak is ostensibly the most problematic case study in this research, as he had a strong reputation as an extroverted and successful student leader and budding criminologist. He was not an overt social isolate like Robert Hawkins, Suljeman Talovic, Jennifer San Marco, and Seung-Hui Cho, nor did he suffer publically from obvious psychological impairment like Hawkins, San Marco, and Cho. At 27 years old, he was a successful graduate student in social work at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and was the on-campus leader of two student organizations (Rousseau and Bellandi 2008). He was invested in an on-again, off-again relationship with his long-term live-in girlfriend, Jessica Baty (Bellandi 2008a). According to many of his professors, his academic focus was on mental health issues (Bellandi 2008b) and he was just a "devastatingly good" student (Babwin 2008a). Everyone interviewed

thought highly of both him and his future. Unfortunately, none of that appeared to matter at 3:06 pm CST on February 14, 2008, when he entered a lecture hall at neighboring Northern Illinois University armed with three handguns and a brand-new pump-action shotgun, and opened fire on a lower level geology class just as it was ending (Nguyen 2008). He killed Gayle Dubowski, 20; Ryanne Mace, 19; Catalina Garcia, 20; Daniel Parmenter, 20; and Julianna Gehant, 32, and wounded 18 other people (Bellandi 2008b; Heher 2008). According to one professor, "If there is such a thing as a profile of a mass murderer, Steven Kazmierczak didn't fit it: outstanding student, engaging, polite and industrious, with what looked like a bright future in the criminal justice field. There was not a hint of trouble with this guy" (Bellandi 2008b).

As with all the other cases, the goal here is to evaluate a model of understanding built upon low levels of social capital, psychological problems, and the resultant pariah self-image. From a purely superficial level, Kazmierczak clearly did not suffer from low social capital (he was universally well-liked and well-thought off in all his surrounding social networks), but he did suffer from some mental issues that will be highlighted later. In spite of this seemingly imperfect fit, the model is still applicable because of the strong focus upon the internal mechanisms that guided how he saw himself and his identity. According to evidence shared in news articles, Kazmierczak recast himself as a new and different person in the days leading up to the massacre, reframing his existence in a way that was alien to his everyday life. He retreated from the conventional social environment that emphasized his normalcy and elected to assume a self-image that was not invested in his current life.

It appears that Kazmierczak was perpetually searching for a specific type of social identity—one that dealt strongly with issues of morality and abstract notions of right and wrong. After high school, he had a short stint in the United States Army that lasted from his enlistment in September 2001 until his sudden discharge in February 2002 for an "unspecified" reason (Bellandi 2008b). He graduated in 2006 with a degree in sociology from the same Northern Illinois University that he attacked two years later; while there his research focused on self-injury in prison and what the prison system could do to have a more positive and therapeutic role (Rousseau and Bellandi 2008). Enrolling as a continuing graduate student in August 2007, he withdrew suddenly the next month to take a job as a full-time corrections officer at the Rockville Correctional Facility in Rockville, Indiana (Bellandi 2008b). His tenure there only lasted two weeks, from September 24 until October 9, after which he "just didn't show up one day" (Bellandi 2008b). Three months later, he was enrolled full-time at the University of Illinois, focusing again on issues tied to crime and criminology (Babwin 2008a). Because his self-selected occupations and area of study all appear tied to things like objective morality and community service, it seems likely that Kazmierczak was searching for a specific type of social capital tied to universal issues of right and wrong, and it also appears likely that he struggled to gain that capital in applied settings such as the army and the prison system.

In the aftermath of this rampage, Kazmierczak's mental faculties were called into question as records released after his death revealed that he had spent more than a year at the Thresholds-Mary Hill House mental facility after high school graduation (Heher and

Rousseau 2008a). In the late 1990s, his parents had committed him for routinely cutting himself and "acting unruly" (Bellandi 2008b). It also turns out that his sudden discharge from the army was due to the government's displeasure with his psychological history (Heher and Rousseau 2008a). In addition, Kazmierczak had been taking the anti-anxiety drug Xanax, the sleeping aid Ambien, and the antidepressant Prozac, all prescribed by a psychiatrist he had begun seeing shortly after he and his girlfriend moved to Champaign, Illinois, in June 2007 (Babwin 2008a). Kazmierczak had stopped taking the antidepressant three weeks before the attack because of concerns that both he and his girlfriend had about combining all three medications (Babwin 2008a); he said it "made him feel like a zombie" (Bellindi 2008a). Despite the obvious mental issues that he was wrestling with over the past decade, according to the former house manager at his treatment facility, "He never wanted to identify with being mentally ill. That was part of the problem" (Bellandi 2008b). It is clear that Kazmierczak wanted to deny certain things about himself that kept presenting as problematic, and might have sought out an identity that was clearly serving the greater good in order to compensate for the psychological issues that were simmering under the surface. His need for a very focused type of social capital might have developed in correlation to the denial of any self-destructive tendencies, although, in the end, it looks like he eventually accepted a fatalistic self-image built upon the traits that he previously sought to deny.

On August 6, 2007, seven weeks prior to starting work at the prison facility, Kazmierczak purchased the first of three handguns, a Sig Sauer, from a Champaign gun store (Bellandi 2008b), beginning a newfound fascination with firearms that stayed with

him until his dying day (Heher and Rousseau 2008b). On December 30, he bought a second weapon, a Hi-Point .380, and on February 9, just five days before his shooting spree, he picked up two more guns—a Glock 9mm handgun and a Remington pump-action shotgun (Bellandi 2008b). Five days prior to that, on February 4, he bought two empty 9mm Glock magazines and a Glock holster online in anticipation of his next gun purchase (Bauer 2008). Upon his death, investigators recovered 48 shell castings and six shotgun shells at the crime scene, and discovered pouches of unspent ammunition around his waist (Babwin 2008b). Authorities also found a duffel bag of his with the zippers glued shut, which was full of boxes and boxes of ammunition (Heher and Rousseau 2008b). For a little over 6 months, Kazmierczak had been assimilating a small arsenal for reasons known only to him, indicating a certain amount of premeditation and calculated effort.

At the same time, Kazmierczak began to focus on adding a series of disturbing tattoos that covered his arms (Heher and Rousseau 2008b). As recently as January 2008, a tattoo artist in Champaign said he spent hours creating tattoos for Kazmierczak, including an image of the macabre doll from the horror movie *Saw* riding a tricycle through a pool of blood with images of several bleeding cuts in the background (Heher and Rousseau 2008b). For many acquaintances, this intense focus on tattoo sleeving seemed incongruous with the clean-cut, academic persona that Kazmierczak had fostered over the past five years. In hindsight, these physical changes might have been a clear illustration of Kazmierczak's reassessment of his own self-image. For someone seeking the positive status tied to universally approved institutions of law enforcement and

military peacekeeping to permanently mark himself with the totem of a fictional serial killer, there has to be a dramatic philosophical reorientation. It is possible that as he gathered both weapons and deviant tattoos, he was seeking to rebuild himself, in his own mind, as something otherworldly.

All of this frames Steven Kazmierczak as a man at something of a crossroads—he was clearly successful as a conventional graduate student, but appeared plagued by mental issues that threatened his positive self-image. After collecting weaponry and tattoos for months, suddenly going off his antidepressant medication might have acted as a catalyst for violence. In the two weeks prior to his self-generated massacre, his behavior was described as "erratic" (Bellandi 2008b) and, three days prior to his shooting spree, he appeared to abandon his current lifestyle almost entirely. On January 11, Kazmierczak checked into a Travelodge hotel near Northern Illinois University, paying in cash and using only his first name to sign in (Heher and Rousseau 2008a). After his rampage and subsequent suicide, police raided the room and found it littered with cigarette butts, empty energy drink bottles, and cold medicine containers (Heher and Rousseau 2008a). They also found that he had removed the hard drive from his laptop computer and his cell phone's SIM card in an effort to maintain his secrecy posthumously (Babwin 2008a). The only concession he made to his old life was to call his girlfriend just after midnight on the morning of February 14 employing her "not to forget about me" (Bellandi 2000a). In addition, the day of the shooting or the day after, she received a package from Kazmierczak containing a cell phone, a goodbye note, and two books—*The Anti-Christ* by Nietzsche and a textbook about serial killers (Bellandi 2000a). In those

three days, the only person he felt any obligation toward was his ex-girlfriend and, after talking to her, he was free to give in entirely to his new identity. In that hotel room, Kazmierczak redefined himself, shed his more conventional past, and readied himself for the righteous slaughter that Steven the Pariah would enact.

According to eyewitness accounts, during the shooting, Kazmierczak maintained that same transcendent quality that Katz discussed as he was calm and workmanlike from the moment he entered Northern Illinois University's Cole Hall, shotgun barrel first. Dressed in black and wearing a stocking cap, he emerged from behind a screen on the stage of the 200-seat hall, and opened fire just as the class was about to end (Rousseau and Bellandi 2008). He said nothing as he took a few steps toward the front of the stage, appearing neither hurried nor agitated, and he did not seem to be aiming at anyone in particular (Babwin 2008b). Instead, he just pointed the gun in the direction of the largest concentration of students and fired over and over and over again (Babwin 2008b). Like Talovic, Kazmierczak showed no emotion, neither anger nor delight, while gunning down innocent victims; in fact, the only time he moved with any sense of urgency was when the police arrived and he left the stage, walking up one aisle and then back down another, before climbing onstage again and killing himself by putting a gun in his mouth (Babwin 2008b, Heher 2008). In this case, the suicide was not the underlying motivation, because, like Talovic and Cho, he did not want anything from the situation other than to impose his will over it for as long as he could. The arrival of the police just signaled the end of his complete domination of the space and the people trapped in it.

Selecting Cole Hall at Northern Illinois University is a clear indicator that Kazmierczak's goal was to abandon the trappings of his previous life, even if some of them had been affirmative. His time at NIU was universally positive and was a period of sustained intellectual excellence, so the symbolism of gutting it from the inside in a wave of bullets and blood must have been intentional. Kazmierczak saw his academic career take off during his first sociology class in Cole Hall, earning A after A at NIU after being a B-level student in high school and spending a year in a psychiatric treatment center (Babwin 2008a). Despite all of these successes, he essentially selected the birthplace of Steven Kazmierczak, the successful academic, as the focus for his violent outburst; that, more than anything, demonstrates just how forcibly he wanted to reject his conventional self-image for something different.

In sum, Kazmierczak did suffer from the necessary psychological instability, as evidenced by both his year-long stay in a treatment facility and his ongoing prescriptions to both antidepressant and anti-anxiety medication, but had a cache of social capital. This case study would appear to be problematic when applying the explanatory template espoused in this study, except that there was final necessary component—a burgeoning pariah self-image. Victims can be random but violence rarely is, meaning that Kazmierczak's rampage was fulfilling some sort of internal drive distinct to Kazmierczak himself. As Jack Katz said, "The causes of crime are constructed by the offenders themselves" and "the causes they construct are lures and pressures that they experience as independently moving them toward crime" (1988:216). The seduction itself is a dialectic process that "pulls" the offenders toward certain lines of action that they themselves have

unconsciously conceptualized and set into motion. Steven Kazmierczak began pulling himself toward this Valentine's Day massacre the previous summer when he started collecting firearms and tattoo sleeves, both purchases that were incongruous with who he had been up until that point. Like everyone, Kazmierczak was constantly immersed in the process of self-definition, and somewhere along the line it shifted toward a darker and more sinister place.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

The goal of this study is to find some commonalities among these self-generated massacres because they are so brutal and so sudden. These random acts of chaotic violence aimed at total strangers are both terrifying and compelling. It is uncertain what policies can be undertaken in an effort to stop these events before they happen, but, as with most things, the more people are educated about the common causes involved, the more likely it is that communities can stop this type of crime before it happens. It therefore falls to researchers to work diligently to isolate key factors and teachers to share that information with as many people as possible.

With this motivation in mind, this paper posits a theory combining three principle predisposers: low social capital associated with being marginalized within a community, an impaired psyche that frames this marginalization as a reflection of a biased and unjust system, and the resultant pariah self-image. Despite age, race, religion, and sex, in all five cases examined, the pariah self-image was present as the shooter gathered weapons and the justifications to use them. The righteous slaughter that resulted was rained down upon whoever was unfortunate enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, as each shooter had no known relationship with any of his or her victims. Rage and humiliation motivated a violence that acted as a self-serving sacrifice to a skewed morality. Each shooter embraced a powerful rationale that sought to undermine the

system that denied them access to the status that they rightfully deserved. In this regard,

the motivation for public mass murder can be said to be universal.

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