

Final Paper
Multicide and Mass Murder

A multicide can be defined by the killing of multiple people. It can be carried by serial killer, who will murder different people within a certain span of time that can vary, or by mass murderer who will kill multiple victims in a single act. Mass killer can be categorized into multiple categories:

- Disciple Mass Killer, desire to kill a leader of a group
- Family Annihilator Killer, desire to kill member of its own family
- Disgruntled Employee Killer, desire to kill employer and/or co-worker
- Ideological Mass killer, desire to kill people who have a different opinion
- Disgruntled Citizen Killer, desire to kill because of a certain aspect of society
- Psychotic Mass Killer, killing because of a mental issue

In big picture, a multicide is in most of the case, represented by mass shooting, mass murder committed by a serial killer or a terrorist attack causing three or more victims. A good example to introduce this crime could be the terrorist attack of Charlie Hebdo that took place on January 7, 2015, in Paris, where two terrorists shot and killed twelve member of the newspaper and injured eleven others. This attack was motivated by Islamic terrorism and was widely publicized on social media outlet and newspaper around the world.

Multicide is a worldwide problem and has seen a lot of recurrence in the history. There is no correlation between race and perpetrator, a multicide can be the act of anyone and anyone can be the victim of it. Just like race, there is no miracle weapon of choice for multicide. The actor

can be using a large variety of weapon such as firearm, vehicle or knife, but we will later discuss this detail in the thesis. This crime type is very problematic since it can be caused by anyone on any type of population, therefore it is very hard to predict and prevent it.

Different theories of criminology can be applied to multicide. We will discuss theory and how we can apply them to this crime later in this paper.

In this paper we will first begin to reflect on how we can explain this type of crime while using the different theories that criminology offers to us, we will then discuss in detail how multicide happens, who commit them and how, where they happen, the type of responses to these crimes and how we could prevent it.

There is different type of criminology theory that we can use to explain multicide and mass murders. Just like any other crime, multicide are perpetrated with a motive or a goal. According to Jack Levin is his article Mass Murder at School and Cumulative Strain (2009), strain theory is a good way to explain multicide and mass murder. As defined in the article, the strain theory is a “range of difficulties that lead to anger, frustration, disappointment, depression, fear, and ultimately, crime” (pg. 4). These “range of difficulties” can come from a variety of sources, such as lack of income, unpleasant environment, lack of education, drug use, social environment and relation...

In his article, Jack Levin is explaining how the strain theory is used to study mass murder in a school environment. Jack Levin is talking about “cumulative strain”, which mean that a crime happens resulting from a cumulation of event. They argue in the article that one event isn’t the reason why crime happen, but the chain reaction causes the perpetrator to act. The different step that leads to the act are the following: Chronic strain, come from long term frustration that is experienced early in an adolescent life, it may come from the lack of socialization or isolation. A lack of social stimulus will eventually lead to the second one which is uncontrolled strain, here the actor has no control over their frustration, and they can’t get away from it without help. If nothing has been done, acute strain will come along, unlike chronic strain, this result from a short-term event and are usually more troubling which will lead to a stronger frustration. Following the acute strain, this is where the planning phase come, the actor is usually lacking positive feedback and support and is usually at a point of non-return, felling like life as no point in life anymore, the planning phase is where they would plan the future massacre. The final phase would be the massacre phase, this is where the perpetrator act, most of the time, the act itself fail due to a lack of training or poor planning, but for a very strong desire will act.

We saw in the article what would potentially lead an adolescent to commit a mass murder in their school. Strain theory is a good theory to explain how they do it and most of the time why they do it. We saw here why it happens in a school environment, but there is way to link strain theory to mass murder in general. As Taylor Melanie is stating in her article, A Comprehensive Study of Mass Murder Precipitants and Motivation of offenders, a mass murder will usually be the result of a triggering event. According to her, 50.66% of mass murder are trigger by an emotional event, 38.16% are triggered by relationship event, 29.61% are triggered by a mental

disorder, 21.71 are triggered by a financial problem and finally 23.03 are triggered by crime itself. We can see in this statistic that emotion is a most common factor triggering mass shooting. We can link that to the strain theory, which would explain why social rejection a very common reason for such act.

The strain theory has been studied and used in order to understand why these acts happen, it is also very useful to prevent them from happening. By knowing why and how perpetrator are acting, we can understand why they're doing it, and potentially explain the reason to it. By understanding why, they do it, it is easier to help them not acting, thus preventing the crime to happen. We saw that most of the mass murders happen because of emotional problem, trauma, or triggering events, by providing help for these problems, the rate in which someone might act will decrease. It is unfortunately not happening a lot. As Taylor Melanie is stating in her article, "The issue is that the media attention is primarily focused on offenders with mental illness, resulting in the assumption that treating those with a recognizable mental illness is the main solution to preventing mass murders" (Pg. 18), here stating that preventing mental illness is seen as the primary source of mass murder. We saw earlier that a triggering event cause is one of the main causes for this crime. We could prevent most of mass murders by ensuring that no triggering event happen to these peoples. This is why it is important to be aware of the problem and to make sure that this problem is recognized and that we learn about it.

As we saw earlier, multicide is the act of killing three or more victim within a short period of time. We also saw that multicide can be caused by a serial killer, a mass shooter or mass murderer and by terrorism. It is a difficult task to establish a clear definition of what multicide is exactly since there is so many different ways to do it, so many possible act, perpetrator and time they can be committed. In the article Shooting for Accuracy: Comparing Data Sources on Mass Murder, the authors are trying to establish a clear definition of what multicides are. It is established that “three people must be killed” and “the perpetrator must injure five or more victims” (Pg. 2).

There are many ways a multicide can be committed and a variety of weapon can be used for the act. In United States we hear a lot about school shooting and the use of rifle by a student, but multicide can be committed anywhere in the world by any type of person with any kind of weapon. As we saw earlier, and emotional event is most of the time the triggering event for a multicide, but there are multiple factors that can be applied to a multicide. We can take the example of the Palestinian terrorists, who commit terrorist attack in Israel with bombs following the annexing of their homeland. As Yann Auxemery states in his article, “Although they rarely seem to be related to psychotic mental pathologies, they are always an expression of suffering that manifest itself in a psychological crisis that is both homicidal and suicidal”. Mass murderers usually commit suicide after their act. It can be seen in the Columbine High School Massacre in 1999, both of the perpetrator committed suicide after the act, proving that a mental episode is the cause of this decision.

Even if mass murders are not a very common type of crime, it usually is one of the most shocking and mediatized around the world. We usually believe that firearm is the main source of multicide around the world, but all sort of weapon can be used for this crime. As stated in Psychotic symptoms in mass shootings v. mass murders not involving firearms, only 65% of multicide were perpetrated with firearms in united states from 1900 to 2019 (Brucato et al., 2021). Weapon such as bomb or knife are also used. Sometime, unconventional weapon would be used, such as vehicle, we can take the example of the Nice terrorist attack on the 14th of July 2016, where a terrorist killed 86 people and injured 458 others while driving a truck through a crowd of people. It is hard to predict what weapon could be used in a multicide since there is a lot of alternatives to firearms that are equally or even more deadly.

We saw earlier that mass murder are caused by triggering event usually linked to emotion. This fact means that anyone capable of emotion is susceptible to commit such act, by definition, every human anywhere on earth. Knowing this, it is impossible to link mass murder and multicide to any race or origin, since it can be committed by anyone. We talked about school shooting in united states, according to Jack Levin, “almost all of the school shooters have been males” (Pg. 16), but it is also stated that there were cases of “female school shooter” but in fewer case. This is why in the common mind; mass murders are always represented by male.

It is hard to predict where and when a multicide will happen. We already saw in the first part that identifying psychological troubles and preventing it was possible, but most of the time, they would be a hard thing to notice. For this reason, multicide is a crime that kept on happening throughout history and will sadly keep on happening.

As we saw here, multicide is the results of many different factors. The study of criminology helped us understand it and established a theory on how, why and where it happens. The strain theory is a good method of explaining this crime, since it was proven that we can link stress to this crime. Understanding this crime is a good way if preventing it, since we know why it happens, we could make sure the triggering factor is avoided. Like stated before, this crime will probably continue to happen, but it is possible to make sure that it happens less and less. Prevention is the best remedy, and it is better to be safe than sorry.

Annotated Bibliography

Levin, J., & Madfis, E. (2009). Mass Murder at School and Cumulative Strain: A Sequential Model. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 52(9), 1227–1245.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764209332543>

In this article, the author is analyzing the origins of mass murders in school environment and why the perpetrator is doing it. The author is using criminology theory such as strain theory, control theory and routine activity theory, to propose a five-stage sequential model that can explain some of the behavior leading to the act. The stages are chronic strain, uncontrolled strain, acute strain, the planning stage, and the massacre. Each of these stages can be explained by using criminology theory and are, for the author, the way to explain such an act in the school environment. Chronic strain is the long-term frustration that an adolescent can experience early in their life that can lead to social isolation and lack of prosocial support or uncontrolled strain, this allows short-term negative events or acute strain. The combination of these phase can

destroy an adolescent mentally which would lead to the planning phase and eventually result in the massacre. Understanding and analyzing this process can help preventing mass murder by helping potential perpetrators

Taylor, M. A. (2018). A Comprehensive Study of Mass Murder Precipitants and Motivations of Offenders. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 62(2), 427–449. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X16646805>

A lot of ideas around mass murder and speculation have been made in history and in the medias but not a lot of actual research on why they happen have been made. This article is trying to research from a sample of 152 mass murder that happened between 2007 and 2011 with info provided by the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report and USA Today. The research shows that mass murders are usually committed by someone following a triggering event such as social rejection or intensive drug uses. It also states that mass murders are very rarely committed by mentally ill patient. The distinction is important and as to be made so the public policy and the social charge isn't applied to the wrong person and no stereotype is generated from it.

Auxemery, Y. (2015). The mass murderer history: Modern classifications, sociodemographic and psychopathological characteristics, suicidal dimensions, and media contagion of mass murders. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 56, 149-54. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.comppsy.2014.09.003>

This article is reviewing the history of mass murderer in the history on united states. It is exploring sources and establishing modern classification, psychological characteristics, and the media contagion around mass murders throughout history. The authors are starting by establishing a clear definition of what mass murders is. Then they established why mass murders happen in United States using statistic and research to establish a psychological model.

This research helps us understand why mass murders happen and what profiles perpetrators have.

Brucato, G., Appelbaum, P., Hesson, H., Shea, E., Dishy, G., Lee, K., . . . Girgis, R. (2021). Psychotic symptoms in mass shootings v. mass murders not involving firearms: Findings from the Columbia mass murder database. *Psychological Medicine*, 1-9.
doi:10.1017/S0033291721000076
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/psychological-medicine/article/psychotic-symptoms-in-mass-shootings-v-mass-murders-not-involving-firearms-findings-from-the-columbia-mass-murder-database/50514607ADF1AC2ECEB43369B6153E34>

In this article, the author is explaining the relation between mass shooting and mental disorder. It is stated that mass shooting is not a common type of crime in the US but is one of the most shocking and that affect society the most. The author of this article is taking a sample of 14,785 murder committed between 1900 and 2019 to analyze the perpetrator, what kind of demographic they come from, other crime they committed, if they had history of drug and alcohol issue and history of mental health issue. Within the sample of murders, 1315 were mass murder, and within this sample, 11% had history of mental health issue. The rest had issue with drug and alcohol uses. 65% of the 1315 mass murder were perpetrated with a firearm, and 8% of the firearm user had mental health issue. Policies regarding the purchase and possession of firearm for mentally ill patient and user of drug and alcohol were adopted in order to prevent further accident. These policies may be a way to prevent future mass murder perpetrated with a firearm.

Huff-Corzine, L., McCutcheon, J. C., Corzine, J., Jarvis, J. P., Tetzlaff-Bemiller, M. J., Weller, M., & Landon, M. (2014). Shooting for Accuracy: Comparing Data Sources on Mass Murder. *Homicide Studies*, 18(1), 105–124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088767913512205>

This article is covering a multitude of sources and statistics around multicide and mass murders. It is using database from all around internet and media sources in order to establish reliable and unbiased data around the mass murders committed in the United States.