EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF MASS SHOOTING OFFENDERS IN U.S. JOURNALISM

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The Supervisory Committee certifies that this ***thesis*** complies with North Dakota State

University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Mass shootings are commonplace in media. The media reports as to why the events happened, often within days or hours. These reasons attributed often lead to political debates on how to deter future mass casualty events. The portrayal by the media is important because their perceptions influence the perceptions of their audience. As of beginning this thesis, there is a lack of research utilizing qualitative analysis to analyze the offender reports using large datasets from the media. This thesis is an exploratory analysis and examines the number of times the offender's name is mentioned to determine whether there are sufficient conditions for the copycat effect. This thesis also explores the attributed wording used in the media articles of mass shooting offenders within the initial 30 days of the shooting. Finally, coverage between the newspapers and events is discussed as well to explore whether certain shootings were provided significantly more coverage.

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motivation and helping me to realize that anything is possible through effort and hard work.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Mass shootings have generated debates on how best to curb gun violence in America. The bulk of our knowledge of these incidents are facilitated as a result of media presentation of the event. Stories of mass shootings such as Aurora, Columbine, Newtown, and Parkland are engrained in our minds as a result of reading and hearing about these incidents through the media. This thesis attempts to unravel how media presentation of mass shooters can possibly shape viewer perceptions of these events. In so doing, this thesis attempts to describe media coverage of mass shootings with an eye toward understanding how the media's portrayal of these events can influence viewers and their opinions. This thesis facilitates a statistical analysis differentiating single homicides from mass casualty events.

Homicides have attracted media attention in America and other countries for many years. News accounts of these incidents generally attempt to describe the attributes of the shooter and speculate as to the causes of the event. This thesis attempts to explore Media reports on the attributes of the shooter(s). More specifically, this thesis analyzes the number of times the shooter's name is mentioned for each shooting and the number of times their race is mentioned to determine whether there may be media bias in disproportionate reporting. Additionally, this thesis also explores whether sufficient conditions exist for the copycat effect.

Media

Media's Purpose

Media has many purposes. However, the primary purpose may differ depending who you ask. One such purpose is to relay information. Media plays a prominent role in the information we receive on a daily basis (Purcell, et al., 2010). Mass news reports can be accessed instantaneously with our phones and tablets. Barak (2013) argues that we are currently living in

what is dubbed as the "information age," where mass news representations are the most effective form of communication in which an individual understands the world.

As with any business, another purpose of Media is to generate revenue. Media outlets make conscious decisions regarding what will be the most profitable to cover. Reporting of crimes dating back to the early 19th century, may have sparked a public fascination with crime (Barak, 2013). Since then, this has led to the publication of popular magazines such as "True Crime" (Barak, 2013). This fascination is still in the spotlight, with crime news occupying a large percentage of media coverage (Chermak, 1995; Chermak, 1997; Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016). This public fascination has enticed Media to present more of these crime stories to generate more viewership and profit.

As a result, crime media has become a form of entertainment sold to the viewers (Duwe, 2005; Kellner, 2003). The most entertaining stories are usually those that are rare or gruesome. Research suggests that violent crimes receive more coverage than property crimes even though they occur less often (Chermak, 1994; Windhauser et al., 1990; Marsh 1991; Cohen & Young, 1981; Huff-Corzine et al., 2014). Furthermore, within the violent crimes that receive disproportionate coverage, mass casualty events are one such topic (Robinson, 2011).

Media's Impact on Perceptions

Our individual perceptions are impacted by Media's portrayal of the information (Kiousis, 2001). Media coverage of crime allows the public to interpret the information in the article and develop their own thoughts on the issues presented (Potter & Kappeler, 1998). One such example is whether the public believes the rates of various crimes are increasing or decreasing. For example, one perceived rise in crime was the 'Superpredator' scare in the 1990s. The 'Superpredator' fear was influenced by exaggerated media portrayal of juveniles engaged in

gang activity and violence (Caldwell & Caldwell, 2011). This eventually led to "Get Tough" policy measures on crime due to the increased fear, which led to stricter penalties for those crimes (Caldwell & Caldwell, 2011). Media's exaggeration of events such as the 'Superpredator' is important and is discussed further in the social construction section of this thesis.

In recent years, however, there has been a shift in Media's portrayal of crime. Media reports are shifting away from factors of controlling the deviant behavior, and towards accepting what was formerly seen as deviant. Examples include media presentations of a more accepting view of mental illness, homosexuality, and homelessness (Barak, 2013). One specific example is the portrayal of homosexuality in the 1980s. Homosexual individuals were described as 'confused youth', whereas nowadays articles accept their sexuality (Pavda, 2007).

Inaccurate Perceptions of Crime from Rushed Media Reports

As discussed above, our individual perceptions of crime are influenced by whether Media portrays it as acceptable or deviant. For that reason, we would expect it to be imperative to report only information that is verified and accurate. However, inaccurate information can permeate the news because of Media's desire to be the first source to cover an event. Studies have found that rushed reporting is done to gain the most attention from viewers since they are the first to cover the issue (Rosenerg & Feldman, 2008). As a result, that subsequent rush to be the first to cover an event, can portray a distorted view. Rushed reports have led to inaccurate depictions of the victims, offender characteristics, and nature of the act(s) (Robinson 2011; Silva & Capellan, 2018).

Rushed reporting of mass shootings has had an impact on the accuracy of the information portrayed. Examples can be found in the Sandy Hook shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. Media misidentified the shooter as Adam Lanza's brother, Ryan (Murray, 2017; Soliwon & Nelson,

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2012; Zurawick, 2012). Additionally, media reports conveyed that the Lanza's' mother taught at the school and was among the first victims (Murray, 2017). All of this information was inaccurate, as it was found that Ryan Lanza had no connection to the shooting, the Lanza's' mother was alive, and that she never taught at the school.

<div align="center">**Theory**</div>

Social Construction of Deviant Behavior and Crime

As discussed above, there has long been a portrayal of crime in Media that impacts our individual perceptions on the issues. One important theory within the field of criminology regarding the portrayal of crime is social construction. Recent scholars argue that media representations and portrayals impact social construction (Gamson, et al., 1992). This is important because as discussed before, Media impacts a large percentage of our individual perceptions and thus has the potential to modify our perceptions within society. Social construction is also of particular importance to this thesis because researchers suggest that mass shootings fall under this issue. (Muschert, 2007; Ogle, Eckman, & Leslie, 2003; Burns & Crawford, 1999; Schildkraut, Elsass, & Stafford, 2015; Lawrence & Birkland, 2004).

The term "social construction" was used in *The Social Construction of Reality* by Berger and Luckmann, published in 1966 (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The idea of the theory is that individuals are given roles in a social system by other individual's thoughts and representations. Within social construction, there can be primary claimsmaking and secondary claimsmaking. Primary claimsmaking involves an individual making direct claims about an issue (Duwe, 2005). Whereas secondary claimsmaking is when there is a reporting of claims that others already made (Duwe, 2005). These representations from claimsmakers are imbued upon an individual then are played out by the individuals in society (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

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Examples of Social Construction

Examples of social construction include drug use, child safety, and gun or gang violence. The social construction of the danger of drugs is perhaps one of the first examples of the social construction of crime. One drug that was previously targeted is marijuana. The social construction of the supposed dangers of marijuana started legal sanctions against the drug in the 1960s (Dingelstad, et al., 1996). Another popular substance that was outlawed due to social construction is alcohol during Prohibition (Gusfield, 1986).

Within the social construction of drugs and alcohol, research suggests that the social policies and the "war on drugs" are repressive laws targeting specific populations (Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Reinarman, 1994). The "war on drugs" is often one-sided and represents distorted situations of the problem Barak (2013). One specific example of targeting includes the "Ice Epidemic" that harshened sanctions on crack cocaine which disproportionately impacted minorities (Jenkins, 1994).

In addition to drugs, child safety is another example of a socially constructed panic that causes public fear. Child safety is a common worry among most parents, so it is not surprising that this can be socially constructed (Pain, 2006). One famous example would be the fear of children having a razor blade in the apple during Halloween (Best & Horiuchi, 1985). There were few reports of actual cases, but parents believed the issue to be widespread (Best & Horiuchi, 1985). Another example is child abuse from Satanists (Victor, 1998). However, again there was a disproportionate amount of societal reaction towards the claims as compared to actual Satanic abuse (Victor, 1998). Additionally, fear of children's loss of innocence can also involve the social construction of increasing sexual abuse against children (Hacking & Hacking, 1999). However, more recent examples include school shootings as an example of social

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construction disproportionately encouraging fear about child safety (Donahue, Vincent, & Ziedenberg, 1998).

Finally, social construction of gun violence and gangs is also common. Media has socially constructed street violence and gangs by adopting a framework that mentions gang activity while ignoring other facts in order to gain newsworthiness (O'Grady, Parnaby, & Schikschneit, 2010). The public then has the view that the gang crime is increasing (McCorkle, 2001).

In recent years, however, social construction has started to steer away from these examples to more ordinary citizens and towards events such as school shootings. For example, school violence started to steer away from being confined to the inner city and among gangs and towards the dangerous white male student (Herda-Rapp, 2003).

Moral Panic as a Result of Social Construction

Understanding the overrepresentation of reports from Media is important because it allows us to see the real picture and not fall victim to moral panics that can result. Moral panic is created by media reports which disproportionately publicize concerns of Media itself or of interest-groups (Hunt, 1997). Moral panic is defined as the public's behavior towards stories that magnify the perceived threat in the community (Cohen, 2011). Media can then exacerbate perceived threat with the overrepresentations and misrepresentations of offenders (Bushman & Anderson, 2001). This fear of the perceived threat then results in changes in legislation to make the public feel safe (Zgoba, 2004).

Creation of Stereotypes

Another issue within Media portrayal of events is the creation of stereotypes. This is an issue because as Goffman suggests, our prior knowledge and experiences allow individuals to

organize their experiences and thoughts as "schemas of interpretation" (Goffman, 1974). These schemas enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label the world around them (Goffman, 1974). Recent research has found that the portrayals from Media help the public develop schemas (McCombs, 2014). These portrayals from Media can then influence our individual schemas and create stereotypical beliefs (Ramasubramanian, 2011). Often, those stereotypes can include differences regarding race, culture, and ethnicity (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998). Another example of stereotypes from Media is the overrepresentation of African American and minority individuals as perpetrators of crime while representing white individuals as the victims (Dixon & Maddox, 2005).

The Copycat Effect

In addition to social construction and stereotypes, the representation of mass shooting offenders may also have a "copycat effect." In the past, scholars gave this topic minimal attention, but the idea of killers copying each other for news coverage and fame is an important topic (Fox & Delateur, 2014). One recent analysis suggests killers are in fact inspired by other killings and attempt to rack up a higher body count (Murray, 2017). Additionally, the mass shooters then hope to get more media attention than the ones before them (O'Toole, Beresin, Berman, Gorelick, Helfgott, & Tobin, 2014). Mentioning the offender's name likely gives the offender that attention (Lankford & Madfis, 2018). This thesis analyzes the number of times the offenders name is mentioned to determine which events and sources may have more potential for the copycat effect.

Policy Implications

As discussed in the introduction, recent policy debates revolve around mass murder. Furthermore, Media's perceptions and resulting moral panics can also impact policy. For

example, one widespread debate is how to deter future incidents (Fox & DeLateur, 2014). As a result, there have been numerous proposed legislative actions towards gun control (Kleck, 2009; Newman & Hartman, 2019). Representations by Media of the events and shooters, therefore, make the portrayal of mass shootings a critical issue to understand so that we can decipher the potential policies and perceptions as a result.

Purpose of Research

The overall intent of this thesis is to assess the various perceptions attributed towards mass shooting offenders and the potential policy implications that could result. From the literature review, it is expected that there will be a reference by Media of the offender's mental health, weapon use, ethnicity, and race.

This study will analyze the number of times the mass shooting offender's name is mentioned to analyze the potential for the copycat effect. This paper focuses on the initial 30 days after the incident because this will cover the "Identification of the Shooter" stage of Murray's cycle. The focus on this stage is because the characteristics and descriptions of the mass shooter are the prime interest of this study and are mostly reported during that stage. The study includes a content analysis of the top three viewed newspapers in the United States. The top three newspapers are the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and the New York Times. The data was collected using Lexis Nexis's Global Newsstand searches for the top 10 deadliest mass shootings in the United States. Finally, the potential policy implications that could result from these perceptions are discussed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Mass Shootings

Within the topic of mass shootings, there is a debate on the definition of what constitutes a "mass" shooting (Holmes & Holmes, 1992). There is even debate on the numerical body count necessary for homicide to be considered a mass shooting (Fox & Levin, 2015). According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the current definition of a mass shooting is "three or more killings in a single incident" (Active Shooter Incidents, 2017). This thesis will rely on the FBI definition.

The Rise in Popularity of Mass Murder

The interest in mass murder became popular in Media through reports of serial killers such as Jeffrey Dahmer (Barak, 2013). Since then, mass murder become even more prominent in the news since the occurrence of Columbine. The Associated Press ranked Columbine as the number two news story of 1999, and as the report that developed the most public attention (Chyi & McCombs, 2004). Additionally, in 2012, the Associated Press editor's poll revealed that mass shootings were the year's top news story (Fox & Delateur, 2013, p. 125). The publicity received by mass shootings shows no sign of slowing down with many more recent mass shootings receiving a large volume of coverage (Lankford & Madfis, 2018).

In addition to receiving attention from Media, mass shootings have received attention from scholars as well (Fox & Levin, 1998). Scholars have researched what characteristics increase coverage, the tone of the coverage, and the attributes portrayed on the offenders.

Characteristics of Mass Shootings that Sell

A study of *The Times* found that homicides with multiple victims were more likely to receive coverage than homicides with a single victim (Sorenson, Manz, & Berk, 1998). In

addition, one Chicago study found that Media reported less than one-third of the homicides committed, and only the "high amplitude" murders received coverage (Johnstone, Hawkins, & Michener, 1994). Further studies also found that certain characteristics of the mass murder that were highly publicized included those with large numbers of victims, whether wounded or dead, and the events that included the use of guns (Duwe, 2000; Gruenewald, Pizarro, & Chermak, 2009). Mass shooting events are also receive more attention when the offender is a lone gunman, and the victims are random (Petee, Padgett, & York, 1997). For these reasons, it is important to analyze the portrayal of the shooters in mass shootings.

Media's Tone Towards Single Homicide versus Mass Homicide

There are differences in the tone that Media utilizes to portray a single homicide and one with mass casualties. First, data suggests that the coverage of single homicides is generally unemotional in tone (Taylor and Sorenson, 2008). One illustration of this phenomenon is the difference in tones between the coverage of the Aurora movie theatre shooting by James Holmes and the shooting of Demetrius Cruz. The Aurora shooting was displayed in national newspapers such as the N.Y. Times and The Wall Street Journal. However, fewer people have heard of the 2012 shooting of Demetrius Cruz in Colorado that same year (McGhee, 2012). Cruz was shot as suspected rival graffiti gang members ran into the back of his car to disable it. A barrage of bullets struck the car shortly after, with two striking Demetrius in the back, causing him to bleed to death.

The Aurora shooting often focused on the offender's mental illness (McGinty, Webster, Jarlenski, & Barry, 2014). By contrast, the Cruz article lacked any emotional tone and mainly discussed the event's details rather than delineating traits or motives surrounding Cruz's killer as was done in the Aurora shooting. Differences in the political landscape also exist in the

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coverage. President Obama tweeted his emotions towards remorse regarding the victims of the Aurora shooting (Parker, 2016). This again contrasts from the Cruz murder which did not receive any significant attention from political figures (Mitchell, 2016). These differences highlight the difference in tones portrayed toward single murder versus mass murder. In addition to differences in tones of the coverage, there is also a difference in reasons attributed to the event and the traits portrayed.

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Difference in Traits Portrayed in Single Homicide and Mass Homicide

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In addition to difference in the tone of the coverage, differences also exist in the reasons attributed to mass homicides and single homicides. Single homicide is more likely to be blamed on drugs and alcohol, gang violence, single parents, and hopelessness. Mass murder is more likely to be blamed on mental health and includes issues such as gun control. In addition, single homicide offenders receive blame for more negative reasons, whereas white offenders in mass shootings seem to get lighter blame, often with mental health and gun policies taking much of the spotlight.

Single Homicide

One of the reasons attributed to many single homicides is gang violence. Researchers estimate however, that only around 13 percent of homicides annually are a result of gang violence (National Gang Center, 2012). The typical gang member's age is around 12 to 24, with a disproportionate members of minority groups (Howell, 1998). This age group is consistent with FBI data that most homicides are committed by offenders between the ages of 17 to 29 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016).

Single-parent households and social disadvantage are also often to blame for these single homicide cases. Data suggests that the offenders reside in single-parent families (Elliott, 1994).

Scholars pose that the single-parent households may have lower levels of social control (Krueger, Huie, Rogers, & Hummer, 2004, Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). In addition, the single-parent households are also more likely to suffer from greater racial and economic exclusion levels (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). Racial isolation and economic disadvantages are attributes of neighborhoods where homicide is more likely to occur (Rosenfeld, Bray, & Egley, 1999; Parker & McCall, 1999; Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003).

Additionally, helplessness is another factor often attributed to single homicides. Akbar (1980) suggests that helplessness may be exacerbated by existing racism that encourages non-responsiveness for individuals in need, leading to displaced aggression, which is a factor in many single homicides. Blau and Blau (1982) also argue that inequality can also lead to the same frustration and aggression.

Finally, drugs and alcohol are other common reasons attributed towards why single homicides occur. One study found that individuals that committed homicide spent most of their time under the influence of drugs and alcohol (Wieczorek, Welte, & Abel, 1990). Not only are the individuals under the influence of alcohol, but they are also triggered easier as well while under the influence. One study found that when youth are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they have an increased likelihood of being a homicide offender (Hohl, Wiley, Wiebe, Culyba, Drake, & Branas, 2017). Additionally, further research has found that heavy drinking in particular was a factor in half of the homicides analyzed in one study (Wieczorek, Welte, & Abel, 1990).

Violence may also result out of the selling and purchasing of these drugs (Baumer, Lauritsen, Rosenfeld, & Wright, 1998; Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2018). Finally, McBride and colleagues (1986) provide support for the drug-related homicide theory. Their results suggest

that 23.8% of the homicides in New York were drug-related, and 24% of those in Dade County, Florida, were drug-related (McBride, Burgman-Habermehl, Alpert, & Chitwood, 1986). Differences in portrayal do not stop at the offender's traits however, as there are also differences in the portrayal of race.

Mass Homicide

Mental health is one prominent trait portrayed in mass homicide. Even though this information is not always publicly available, sources sometimes reveal this information to Media. The Virginia Tech shooting is one good example. News networks such as CNN heavily covered his prior hospitalizations for his mental illness (CNN, 2007; Hoffner, et al., 2017). Not only does Media extensively cover the mental illness, but Media also tends to focus on gun control. Many states have started to implement more strict gun control measures for purchasing guns by those who are mentally ill and also expand the ability to seize an individual's guns (Hoffner, et al., 2017).

Racial Differences in Homicide and Mass Homicide

Statistics reveal that a disproportionate number of single homicides are carried out by African American offenders (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016). Specifically, 35.9% of all single shooting homicides implicate African Americans (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016). Because most homicides are intraracial, this also means that the bulk of single shooting homicide victims are African Americans. This data directly contrasts with mass homicide, where 61% of the offenders are white (Smart & Schell, 2021). Additionally, 43.64 % of the victims of homicide are also white (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016). Finally, most single homicides involve an offender who knows the victim (Fox & Zawitz, 1999; Kraemer, Lord, & Heilbrun, 2004). A

known victim is also distinguished from mass homicide, because in mass homicide the offender is often random and unknown to the victims (Kraemer, Lord, & Heilbrun, 2004).

The Impact of Timing of Reporting on Perceptions of Mass Shootings

Characteristics and traits involved in the shooting are not the only factors that influence the reports, the timing also influences what is relayed. One analysis of mass shootings between 2000 and 2012, using the New York Times, suggests that Media tends to focus on the shooter more than victims for the first week (Schildkraut, 2014). However, the societal impacts are the focus during the second week (Schildkraut, 2014).

Further research suggests that there are seven stages in which Media covers mass killings (Murray, 2017). The first stage is "Tragic Shock." This stage is when the initial media reports focus on the area where the shooting occurred. The next stage is the "First Witness Reports" (Murray, 2017). This stage is when the interviews arise of individuals who survived the shooting. These interviews can include many conflicting details due to the new trauma and chaos (Murray, 2017). Third, there is the "Identification of the Shooter" stage. This stage is when Media focuses on the perpetrator's details, including their mental state and other personal characteristics (Murray, 2017). With these stages in mind, this study will focus on the characteristics of mass shooters. Therefore, building on Murray and the other studies, the analysis in this study will include a timeframe of studies utilizing a one-month window to identify the shooter characteristics. The remaining four stages focus less on the shooter, and therefore are not of importance for this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The first step of the methodology is to evaluate the offender's attributes portrayed in mass shootings. This study utilized a quantitative analysis of newspaper coverage from the top three national newspapers by circulation in the United States: USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times. These three newspapers have the highest rates of circulation within the U.S. (Barthel, 2017). These three sources were used due to the amount of circulation they receive, which could negatively impact public perceptions of the offender(s).

Each search used similar keywords and date ranges that were published thirty days within the initial date of the shooting. The article search utilized Global Newsstand (formerly ProQuest) archives to collect the articles to analyze. The search terms and date ranges for each search are outlined in the Data section below for greater transparency and replication. Every article containing the keywords for that shooting was downloaded. An initial analysis was done by plugging every article into Atlas.Ti and the data revealed bias introduced from articles that fit the keywords but had no relevancy or mention of the shooting.

For this reason, every article was first reviewed for mention of the shooting. The words "said," "says," "Mr," and "M's" were removed from the final Atlas.Ti Word Cloud figures for a more transparent representation of the mass shooter's traits. This was done due to the irrelevancy of those words to this study.

The paper's overall purpose is to analyze the terms used to refer to the shooter in the initial 30 days after the occurrence of the mass killing based on Murray's Cycle. As such, the search was limited from the date of the shooting until 30 days after the event. After the initial review, the resulting articles pulled from Global Newsstand were analyzed using a quantitative analysis software called Atlas.Ti. The search results were saved in a list, and a Word Cloud

feature for a more visualized representation of the words mentioned most frequently. The offender's name, religion, and race were then analyzed in SPSS to determine whether there were significant differences in the portrayal under each category.

Data and Measures

As was stated in the above, the articles were collected through ProQuest (now called Global Newsstand) searches. The first important limitation to note about the data is the lack of availability of articles published USA Today. Whether this is a database issue or copyright issue, many of the searches resulted in no articles published by USA Today. Another caveat was the lack of data on the University of Texas shooting. This is due to the limited scope of the database which does not include data from the time period of the shooting. The final data pool covered 13 of the deadliest mass shootings in the United States. The data parameters were limited to 30 days after the incident for each newspaper. This 30-day time frame is based off Murray's Cycle as mentioned above that suggests that coverage of the shooter is most likely to occur within hours of the incident. A total of 3,940 articles were included in the analysis. A total of 2,306 came from the New York Times. A total of 1,366 came from the Wall Street Journal. Finally, a total of 268 came from the USA Today.

I analyzed the entire data set to and found common words that were irrelevant to the investigation of this research. Those words were excluded so a more descriptive picture of the research could be presented. These words were main adjectives titles that would detract from the main mission of the search results. The excluded terms were: mr, ms, says, and said. Atlas.ti allows researchers to think and analyze large datasets in a visible meaningful way (Konopásek, 2007). When searching for the offender's name, the last name was inputted into the word list and any search results including the last name were included. Additionally, when utilizing race, the

offender's race was inputted and for many if the individual was Caucasian, the terms 'white' (and any similar results) and 'Caucasian' were used. If no use of Caucasian was found, it is not listed in the results for simplicity. Finally, the results are shared as categories for the overall coverage, number of times the offender's name was mentioned, and the number of times the offender's race was mentioned.

Table 1: Shootings

Shooting Name	Location	Casualties	Race	Date
Aurora	Aurora, CO	12	White/Caucasian	7/2/2012
Binghamton	Binghamton, NY	13	Vietnamese	4/3/2009
Columbine	Littleton, CO	13	White/Caucasian	20/1999
Edmond Post Office	Edmond, OK	14	White/Caucasian	8/19/1986
Fort Hood	Ford Hood, TX	13	Muslim	11/5/2009
Harvest Festival	Las Vegas, NV	60	White/Caucasian	10/1/2017
Luby's	Kileen, TX	23	White/Caucasian	10/16/1991
Parkland	Parkland, FL	17	White/Caucasian	2/14/2018
Pulse	Orlando, FL	49	Muslim	6/12/2016
San Ysidro McDonald's	San Diego, CA	21	White/Caucasian	7/18/1984
Sandy Hook	Newtown, CT	28	White/Caucasian	12/14/2012
Sutherland Springs	Sutherland Springs, TX	26	White/Caucasian	9/5/2017
Virginia Tech	Blacksburg, VA	32	Asian	4/16/2007

Dates and Keywords Used for Each Search

Binghamton Community Center Keywords:
>mass shooting OR killed OR community center OR Binghamton OR shooting OR Jiverly
>>OR Wong
>April 3, 2009-May 3, 2009

Columbine Keywords:
>mass shooting OR killed OR school OR Columbine OR shooting OR Dylan OR Klebold
>>OR Eric OR Harris
>April 20,1999-May 20,1999

Edmond Post Office Keywords:
>	mass shooting OR killed OR post office OR Edmond OR shooting OR Patrick OR Sherill
>	August 20, 1986-September 20, 1986

Fort Hood Keywords:
>	mass shooting OR killed OR Fort Hood OR Kileen OR shooting OR Nidal OR Hasan
>	November 5, 2009-December 5, 2009

Harvest Festival Keywords:
>	mass shooting OR killed OR festival OR harvest OR shooting OR Stephen OR Paddock
>	October 1,2017-November 1, 2017

Luby's Cafeteria Keywords:
>	mass shooting OR killed OR cafeteria OR Luby OR shooting OR George OR Hennard
>	October 16, 1991-November 16, 1991

Parkland School Keywords:
>	mass shooting OR killed OR school OR Parkland OR shooting OR Nikolas OR Cruz
>	February 14, 2018-March 14, 2018

Pulse Nightclub Keywords:
>	mass shooting OR killed OR club OR Pulse OR shooting OR Omar OR Saddiqui
>	June 12, 2016-July 12, 2016

San Ysidro McDonald's Keywords:
>	mass shooting OR killed OR McDonalds OR San Ysidro OR shooting OR James OR
>		Huberty
>	July 18, 1984-August 18, 1984

Sandy Hook Elementary Keywords:
>	mass shooting OR killed OR school OR Sandy Hook OR shooting OR Adam OR Lanza
>	December 14, 2012-January 14, 2013

Sutherland Springs Church Keywords:
>	mass shooting OR killed OR church OR Sutherland OR shooting OR Stephen OR
>		Paddock
>	November 5, 2017-December 5, 2017

Virginia Tech Keywords:
>	mass shooting OR killed OR college OR Virginia Tech OR shooting OR Seung OR Hui
>		Cho
>	April 16, 2007-May 16, 2007

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Table 2: Number of Times Offender's Name is Mentioned

Shooting	NY Times	WSJ	USA Today
Aurora	741	508	N/A
Binghamton	154	6	N/A
Columbine	445	61	431
Edmond Post Office	77	1	N/A
Fort Hood	387	356	N/A
Harvest Festival	559	400	N/A
Luby's	109	1	31
Parkland	737	344	N/A
Pulse	884	1300	91
San Ysidro McDonald's	118	2	N/A
Sandy Hook	231	717	N/A
Sutherland Springs	498	193	N/A
Virginia Tech	380	81	183

Table 3: Number of Times Offender's Race is Mentioned

Shooting	NY Times	WSJ	USA Today
Aurora	17	16	N/A
Binghamton	25	1	N/A
Columbine	94	26	38
Edmond Post Office	4	0	N/A
Fort Hood	163	169	N/A
Harvest Festival	72	27	0
Luby's	15	0	3
Parkland	420	146	0
Pulse	640	483	3
San Ysidro McDonald's	0	0	N/A
Sandy Hook	99	157	0
Sutherland Springs	47	14	N/A
Virginia Tech	18	2	3

Overall Newspaper Coverage

The overall number of articles published were 2, 306 by the N.Y. Times, 1, 366 by the Wall Street Journal, and 268 by the USA Today. The most coverage of mass shootings was provided by the New York Times which provided 58.53% of the articles in the analysis. Second, the Wall Street Journal had 34.67% of the articles. Finally, USA Today had 6.80% of the articles in the analysis. However, it is important to note that the USA Today results may be due to a lack of availability of the articles within the Global Newsstand database. Additionally, the USA Today may have just been getting its footing as it is a newer source than the NY Times and Wall Street Journal.

The shooting that received the most coverage overall was the Pulse Nightclub shooting. This shooting had the highest number of articles per event in both newspaper sources that had articles in the database (N.Y. Times and Wall Street Journal). The shooting that had the lowest coverage overall is the Edmonds Post Office Shooting.

Aurora

Amount of Coverage

The Aurora shooting included articles from the N.Y. Times and Wall Street Journal. A total of 167 articles were analyzed. The NY Times had 99 articles and the Wall Street Journal had 68 articles. The NY Times had 59.28% of the coverage and the Wall Street Journal had 40.72%.

Offender's Name

Here, the shooter was referenced by his last name 'Holmes' 741 times in the N.Y. Times and 508 times in the Wall Street Journal.

Offender's Race

The offender's race was mentioned as 'white' 17 times in the N.Y. Times. The offender's race was mentioned as 'white' 16 times in the Wall Street Journal .

Figure 1: N.Y. Times Word Cloud (Aurora)

Figure 2: Wall Street Journal Word Cloud (Aurora)

Binghamton

Amount of Coverage

The Binghamton shooting included articles from the N.Y. Times and Wall Street Journal. A total of 20 articles were analyzed. The NY Times had 16 articles and the Wall Street Journal had 64articles. The NY Times had 80% of the coverage and the Wall Street Journal had 20%.

Offender's Name

Here, the individual was referenced by his last name '*Wong*' 132 times and '*Wong's*' 22 times in the N.Y. Times and 3 times in the Wall Street Journal under each '*Wong*' and '*Wong's*'. Overall, the offender's name was mentioned 154 times by the N.Y. Times and 6 times in the Wall Street Journal.

Offender's Race

The offender's race was mentioned as 'Vietnamese' 25 times in the N.Y. Times. The offender's race was mentioned 'Vietnamese' 1 time in the Wall Street Journal.

Figure 3: N.Y. Times Word Cloud (Binghamtom)

Figure 4: Wall Street Journal Word Cloud (Binghamton)

Columbine

Amount of Coverage

The Columbine shooting included articles from the N.Y. Times, Wall Street Journal, and USA Today. A total of 472 articles were analyzed. The NY Times had 231 articles, the Wall Street Journal had 87 articles, and USA Today had 154. The NY Times had 48.94% of the coverage, the Wall Street Journal had 18.43%, and USA Today had 32.63%.

Offender's Name

Here, there were two shooters. Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris. Both shooters' names will be analyzed with this data. Overall, between Klebold and Harris, their name was mentioned 445 times in the N.Y. Times, 61 times in the Wall Street Journal, and 431 times in the USA Today.

For Dylan Klebold

In the N.Y. Times, 'Klebold' was mentioned 160 times, '*Klebold's*' was mentioned 11 times. '*Klebolds*' was mentioned 7 times and '*Harris-Klebold*' was mentioned 2 times.
In the Wallstreet Journal '*Klebold*' was mentioned 27 times, and '*Klebold's*' was mentioned 3 times.

In USA Today, '*Klebold*' was mentioned 167 times, '*Klebold's*' was mentioned 26 times, and '*Klebolds*' was mentioned 1 time.

For Eric Harris

In the N.Y. Times 'Harris-Klebold' was mentioned 2 times, '*Harrises*"' was mentioned 1 time, '*Harris*' was mentioned 242 times, '*Harris's*' was mentioned 19 times, and '*Harrises*' was mentioned 3 times.

In the Wallstreet Journal, '*Harris*' was mentioned 28 times, and '*Harris's*' was mentioned 3 times.

In USA Today, '*Harris*' was mentioned 193 times, '*Harris*"' was mentioned 39 times, and '*Harrises*' was mentioned 5 times.

Offenders' Race

The offenders' race was mentioned as 'white' 93 times and 'white-American' 1 time in the N.Y. Times. The offenders' race was mentioned as 'white' 26 times in the Wall Street Journal. The offenders' race was mentioned as 'white' 38 times in the USA Today.

Figure 5: N.Y. Times Word Cloud (Columbine)

Figure 6: USA Today Word Cloud (Columbine)

Figure 7: Wall Street Journal Word Cloud (Columbine)

Edmond

Amount of Coverage

The Edmond Post Office shooting included articles from the N.Y. Times and Wall Street Journal. A total of 16 articles were analyzed. The NY Times had 15 articles and the Wall Street Journal had 1 article. The NY Times had 93.75% of the coverage and the Wall Street Journal had 6.25%. Overall, the offender's name was mentioned 77 times in the N.Y. Times and 1 time in the Wall Street Journal.

Offender's Name

In the N.Y. Times, '*Sherrill*' was mentioned 70 times, '*Sherrill's*' was mentioned 5 times, and '*Sherill*' was mentioned 2 times.

In the Wallstreet Journal, '*Sherrill'* was mentioned 1 time.

Offender's Race

       The offender's race was mentioned as 'white' 4 times in the New York Times. The offender's race was not mentioned at all in the Wall Street Journal.
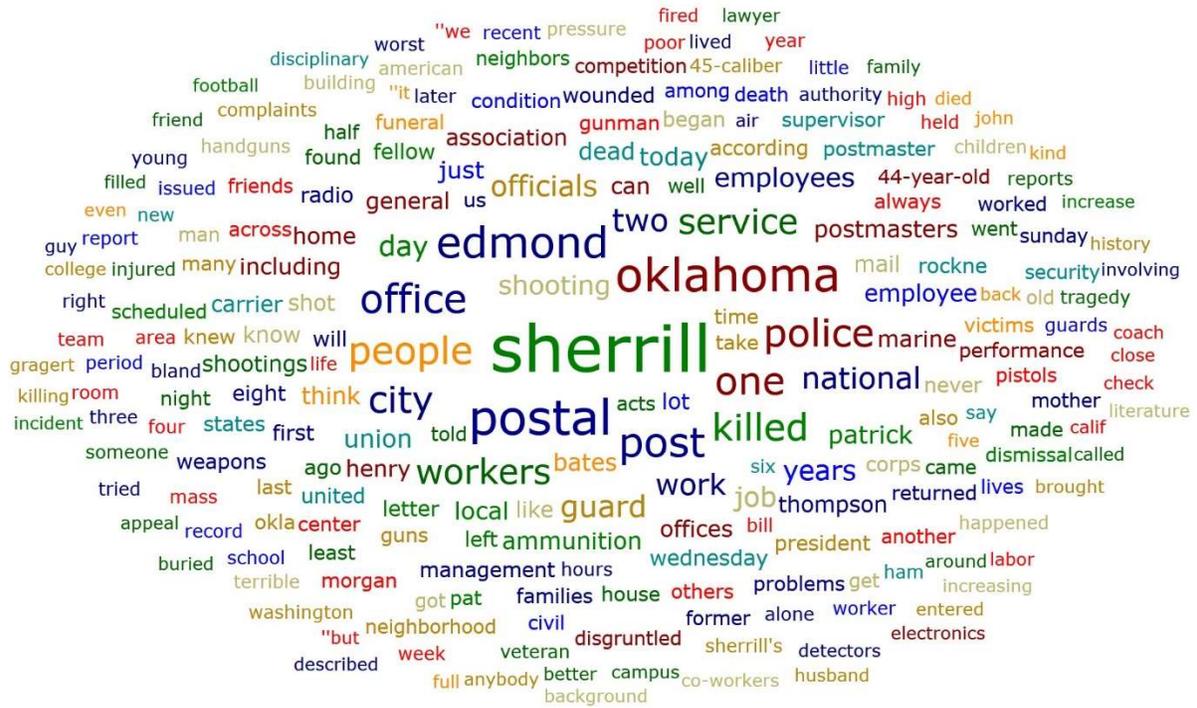
Figure 8: N.Y. Times Word Cloud (Edmond)
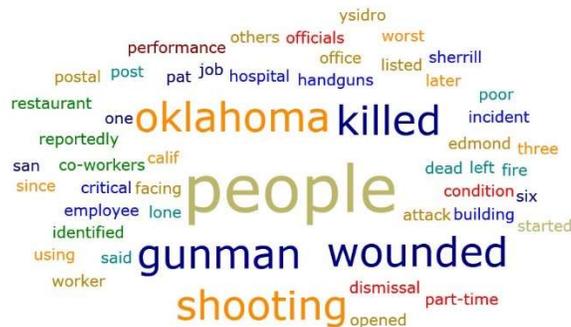
Figure 9: Wall Street Journal Word Cloud (Edmond)

Fort Hood

Amount of Coverage

The Fort Hood shooting included articles from the N.Y. Times and Wall Street Journal. A total of 138 articles were analyzed. The NY Times had 70 articles and the Wall Street Journal had 68 articles. The NY Times had 50.72% of the coverage and the Wall Street Journal had 49.28%. Overall, the offender's name was mentioned 387 times by the N.Y. Times and 356 times by the Wall Street Journal.

Offender's Name

In the N.Y. Times, '*Hasan*' was mentioned 329 times, '*Hasan's*' was mentioned 55 times, '*Hassan*' was mentioned 3 times, and '*Hasans*' was mentioned 1 time.

In the Wallstreet Journal, '*Hasan*' was mentioned 273 times, '*Hasan's*' was mentioned 80 times, and '*Hasans*' was mentioned 2 times, '*Hassan-as-war-victim*' was mentioned 1 time and '*Hassan*' was mentioned 1 time.

Offender's Race

The offender's race was mentioned as 'palestinian' 4 times, 'palestinians' 1 time, and 'israeli-palestinian' 1 time, 'arab/muslim' 1 time, 'arab-muslim' 1 time, and 'arab' 8 times, and 'arabic' 6 times in the New York Times.

The offender's race was mentioned as 'palestinian' 2 times, 'arab' 2 times, and 'arabic' 6 times in the Wall Street Journal.

Other Prominent Words

Prominent words among the Wall Street Journal include 'muslim' which was mentioned 86 times, muslims' which was mentioned 73 times, 'afghanistan' which was mentioned 123 times, and 'iraq' which was mentioned 103 times.

Prominent words among the Wall Street Journal include 'islamic' which was mentioned 53 times, 'muslim' which was mentioned 91 times, and 'afghanistan' which was mentioned 56 times.

Figure 10: N.Y. Times Word Cloud (Fort Hood)

Figure 11: Wall Street Journal Word Cloud (Fort Hood)

Harvest Festival

Amount of Coverage

The Harvest Festival shooting included articles from the N.Y. Times and Wall Street Journal. A total of 288 articles were analyzed. The NY Times had 185 articles and the Wall Street Journal had 103 articles. The NY Times had 64.24% of the coverage and the Wall Street Journal had 35.76%. Overall, the offender's name was mentioned 559 times in the N.Y. Times and 400 times in the Wall Street Journal.

Offender's Name

In the N.Y. Times, "*Paddock*" was mentioned 454 times, Paddock's was mentioned 103 times, and "*Paddocks*" was mentioned 2 times.

31

In the Wall Street Journal," *Paddock*" was mentioned 333 times, and "*Paddock's*" was mentioned 67 times.

Offender's Race

The offender's race was mentioned as 'white' 72 times in the New York Times. The offender's race was mentioned as 'white' 27 times in the Wall Street Journal.

Figure 12: N.Y. Times Word Cloud (Harvest Festival)

Figure 13: Wall Street Journal Word Cloud (Harvest Festival)

Luby's

Amount of Coverage

The Luby's shooting included articles from the N.Y. Times and Wall Street Journal. A total of 38 articles were analyzed. The NY Times had 23 articles and the Wall Street Journal had 5 articles, and USA Today had 10 Articles. The NY Times had 60.53% of the coverage and the Wall Street Journal had 13.16%, and USA Today had 26.32%. Overall, the offender's name was mentioned 109 times in the N.Y. Times, 1 Time in the Wall Street Journal, and 31 times in the USA Today.

Offender's Name

In the N.Y. Times, "Hennard" was mentioned 89 times, "Hennard's" was mentioned 16 times, "Hennards" was mentioned 2 times, and "Hennards'" was mentioned 2 times.

In the USA Today, "Hennard" was mentioned 28 times, and "Hennard's" was mentioned 3 times.

In the Wall Street Journal, "Hennard" was mentioned 1 time.

Offender's Race

The offender's race was mentioned as 'white' 14 times in the New York Times. The offender's race not mentioned at all in the Wall Street Journal. The offender's race was mentioned as 'white' 3 times in the USA Today.

Figure 14: N.Y. Times Word Cloud (Luby's)

Figure 15: USA Today Word Cloud (Luby's)

Figure 16: Wall Street Journal Word Cloud (Luby's)

Parkland

Amount of Coverage

The Parkland shooting included articles from the N.Y. Times and Wall Street Journal. A total of 776 articles were analyzed. The NY Times had 571 articles, and the Wall Street Journal had 205 articles. The NY Times had 73.58% of the coverage, and the Wall Street Journal had 26.42%. Overall, the offender's name was mentioned 737 times in the N.Y. Times and 344 in the Wall Street Journal.

Offender's Name

In the N.Y. Times, "Cruz" was mentioned 664 times, "Cruz's" was mentioned 38 times, "Cruz's" was mentioned 35 times.

In the Wall Street Journal, "Cruz" was mentioned 301 times, and "Cruz's" was mentioned 43 times.

Offender's Race

The offender's race was mentioned as 'white' 420 times, 'whites' 4 times, and '-white' 1 time in the New York Times. The offender's race mentioned as 'white' 146 times in the Wall Street Journal.

Figure 17: N.Y. Times Word Cloud (Parkland)

Figure 18: Wall Street Journal Word Cloud (Parkland)

Pulse

Amount of Coverage

The Pulse Nightclub shooting included articles from the N.Y. Times, Wall Street Journal, and USA Today. A total of 1,054 articles were analyzed. The NY Times had 634 articles, the Wall Street Journal had 397 articles, and USA Today had 23 articles. The NY Times had 60.15% of the coverage, the Wall Street Journal had 37.67%, and USA Today had 2.18%. Overall, the offender's name was mentioned 884 times in the N.Y. Times, 1,300 times in the Wall Street Journal, and 91 times in the USA Today.

Offender's Name

In the N.Y. Times, "Mateen" was mentioned 749 times, "Mateen's was mentioned 122 times, "Mateen's" was mentioned 13 times.

In the Wall Street Journal, "Mateen" was mentioned 1093 times, "Mateen's" was mentioned 207 times.

In USA Today, "Mateen" was mentioned 73 times, and "Mateen's" was mentioned 18 times.

Offender's Race

The offender's race was mentioned as 'afghan' 42 times' afghans' 6 times, and 'afghan-american' 1 time in the New York Times. The offender's race was mentioned as 'afghan' 53, and 'afghans' 8 times times in the Wall Street Journal. The offender's race was not mentioned at all in the USA Today.

Figure 19: N.Y. Times Word Cloud (Pulse)

Figure 20: USA Today Word Cloud (Pulse)

Figure 21: Wall Street Journal Word Cloud (Pulse)

San Ysidro

Amount of Coverage

The San Ysidro shooting included articles from the N.Y. Times and Wall Street Journal. A total of 23 articles were analyzed. The NY Times had 20 articles and the Wall Street Journal had 3 articles. The NY Times had 86.96% of the coverage and the Wall Street Journal had 13.04%. Overall, the offender's name was mentioned 118 times in the N.Y. Times and 2 times in the Wall Street Journal.

Offender's Name

In the N.Y. times, "Huberty" was mentioned 103 times, "Huberty's was mentioned 8 times, "Hubertys" was mentioned 6 times, and "Hubertys'" was mentioned 1 time.

In the Wall Street Journal, "Huberty" was mentioned 2 times.

Offender's Race

        The offender's race was not mentioned at all in the New York Times or the Wall Street
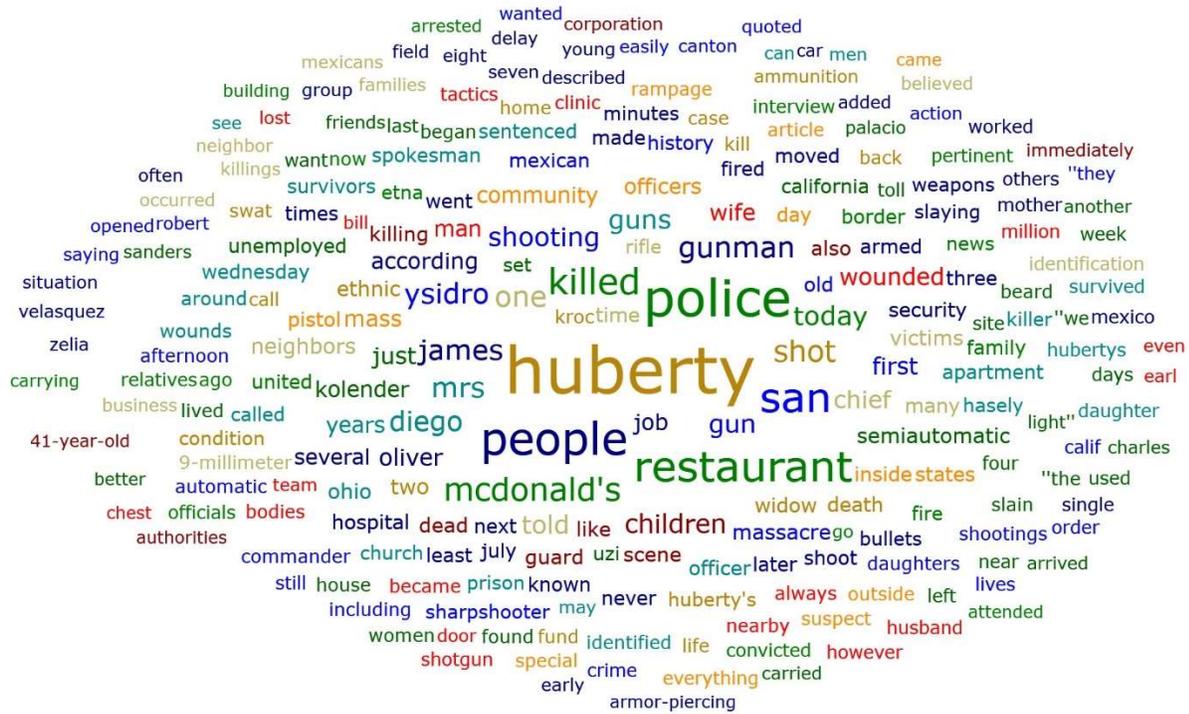
Journal.

Figure 22: N.Y. Times Word Cloud (San Ysidro)

Figure 23: Wall Street Journal Word Cloud (San Ysidro)

Sandy Hook

Amount of Coverage

The Sandy Hook shooting included articles from the N.Y. Times and Wall Street Journal. A total of 509 articles were analyzed. The NY Times had 191 articles and the Wall Street Journal had 318 articles. The NY Times had 37.52% of the coverage and the Wall Street Journal had 62.48%. Overall, the offender's name was mentioned 231 times in the N.Y. Times and 717 times in the Wall Street Journal.

Offender's Name

In the N.Y. Times, "Lanza" was mentioned 189 times, "Lanza's was mentioned 34 times, "Lanzas" was mentioned 5 times, and "Lanzas'" was mentioned 3 times.

In the WSJ, "Lanza" was mentioned 592 times, "Lanza's" was mentioned 112 times, "Lanzas" was mentioned 12 times, and "Lanzas'" was mentioned 1 time.

Offender's Race

The offender's race was mentioned as 'white' 99 times, and 'whites' 2 times, and 'caucasians' 1 time in the New York Times. The offender's race mentioned as 'white' 157 times and 'whites' 2 times in the Wall Street Journal.

Figure 24: N.Y. Times Word Cloud (Sandy Hook)

Figure 25: Wall Street Journal Word Cloud (Sandy Hook)

Sutherland Springs

Amount of Coverage

The Sutherland Springs shooting included articles from the N.Y. Times and Wall Street Journal. A total of 188 articles were analyzed. The NY Times had 131 articles and the Wall Street Journal had 57 articles. The NY Times had 69.68% of the coverage and the Wall Street Journal had 30.32%. Overall, the offender's name was mentioned 498 times in the N.Y. Times and 193 times in the Wall Street Journal.

Offender's Name

In the N.Y. Times, "Kelley" was mentioned 402 times, "Kelley's" was mentioned 50 times, "Kelley's" was mentioned 46 times,

In the WSJ, "Kelley" was mentioned 154 times, "Kelley's" was mentioned 37 times, "Kelleys" was mentioned 2 times.

Offender's Race

The offender's race was mentioned as 'white' 47 times, and 'white's' 2 times in the New York Times. The offender's race mentioned as 'white' 14 times and 'whites' 2 times in the Wall Street Journal.

Figure 26: N.Y. Times Word Cloud (Sutherland)

Figure 27: Wall Street Journal Word Cloud (Sutherland)

Virginia Tech

Amount of Coverage

The Virginia Tech shooting included articles from the N.Y. Times, Wall Street Journal, and USA Today. A total of 251 articles were analyzed. The NY Times had 120 articles, the Wall Street Journal had 50 articles, and USA Today had 81 articles. The NY Times had 47.81% of the coverage, the Wall Street Journal had 19.92%, and USA Today had 32.27%. Overall, the offender's name was mentioned 380 times in the N.Y. Times, 81 times in the Wall Street Journal, and 183 times in the USA Today.

Offender's Name

In the N.Y. Times, "Cho" was mentioned 299 times, "Cho's" was mentioned 78 times, "Chos" was mentioned 3 times.

In the WSJ, "Cho" was mentioned 67 times, "Cho's was mentioned 12 times, and "Chos" was mentioned 2 times.

In the USA Today, "Cho" was mentioned 144 times, "Cho's was mentioned 39 times.

Offender's Race

The offender's race was mentioned as 'korean' 51 times, 'koreans' 19 times, 'korea' 11 times, and 'korean-american' 11 times, and 'korean-americans' 4 times, 'korean-born' 2 times, and '" korean' 1 time in the New York Times.

The offender's race was mentioned as 'korea' 8 times, 'koreans' 2 times and 'korean-american' 2 times, and 'korean-born' 1 time in the Wall Street Journal.

The offender's race was mentioned as 'korean' 22 times, 'koreans' 7 times, 'korean-american' 5 times, 'korea' 4 times, and 'korea-americans' 4 times in the USA Today.

Figure 28: N.Y. Times Word Cloud (Virginia Tech)

Figure 29: USA Today Word Cloud (Virginia Tech)

Figure 30: Wall Street Journal Word Cloud (Virginia Tech)

Overall

Overall, the largest percentage of articles were published by the N.Y. Times. The NY Times published 2,306 articles, the Wall Street Journal published 1,366 articles, and the USA Today published 268 articles. Overall, the N.Y. Times also had the largest number of average published articles per shooting. The average number of articles per shooting for the N.Y. Times was 177.385, the average number for the Wall Street Journal was 105.077, and the average number for the USA Today was 67. This data suggests that the N.Y. Times has the potential to influence more individuals by publishing more articles, but another study on the amount of viewership in each source would be needed to provide confirmation.

The largest number of mentions of the offender's name was 5, 320 times in the N.Y. time, 3,970 in the WSJ Today, and 736 times in the USA Today. However, The Wall Street Journal

attributed most towards the potential copycat effect by naming the offender 2.906 times on average per article. The NY Times named the offender 2.307 times on average times per article. Finally, the USA Today had an average mention of the offender's name 2.746 times per article.

The largest number of mentions of the offender's race was 3,662 times in the N.Y. time, 3,083 in the WSJ Today, and 343 times in the USA Today. However, The Wall Street Journal discussed race the most on average by naming the offender's race 2.257 times on average per article. The NY Times named the offender's race 1.588 times on average times per article. Finally, the USA Today had an average mention of the offender's name 1.280 times per article.

CONCLUSION

The exploratory analysis suggests that N.Y. Times published more articles than others, and therefore had the potential to impact more reader's perceptions of the events. Additionally, differences in the number of times the offenders name was mentioned led to sufficient conditions for a potential copycat effect. Finally, the number of times that the offender's race was mentioned also differed results within the news sources.

Another prominent mention would be the utilization of religion that came up frequently in the articles of the non-white offenders. Religion would be a good follow up study, but without access to the verified ideologies of all offenders, the analyses would be impossible to run.

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