

Mass Homicide: The Civil Massacre

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Seven cases of mass homicide in Australia, New Zealand, and Britain between 1987 and 1996 are presented. These cases add to the world literature on these rare crimes and balance previous, mostly North American reports. These acts were committed by socially unsuccessful, self-absorbed, and resentful individuals. Lengthy fantasy comprising identification, modeling, and rehearsal preceded the incidents, even where the final acts had impulsive elements. Most had a long-standing fascination with firearms fueling their fantasies and providing the means for mass killing. Their targets were mostly unprotected strangers. Overt suicidal intent or a preparedness to die while committing the homicides was invariable. Ethological theories of status acquisition may provide a useful understanding of mass homicide.

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Mass homicide may be defined as a continuous incident or a series of closely linked incidents in which more than five people are injured and at least three of whom die.^{1–4} Multiple homicides include “serial,” “spree,” and “mass” homicides. Serial homicides for the most part involve multiple single killings over an extended period, sexual sadism as a motive, and efforts to evade detection. Spree homicides also involve killings over an extended time period but with more criminal than sexual motivation and often lesser efforts to evade detection. Mass homicides are more variable and include “disciples” who kill on behalf of a charismatic leader (e.g., Charles Manson); family killings; disgruntled employees, killing mostly in the workplace; “set and runs,” where a bomb or poison may be left and the killer makes a getaway; and finally what Dietz⁵ labeled the “pseudocommando” and we prefer to describe as the “civil massacre.” The latter term avoids stereotypes about dress and conveys more in regard to victims and motivations. Civil massacres involve the indiscriminate killing of

mostly randomly selected victims. Guns are the preferred weapons.

Classification of these acts requires a number of parameters. Dietz⁵ suggested a classification based on criminality, motive, and methods. Holmes and Holmes¹ suggest classification based on motivation (intrinsic or extrinsic), anticipated gain (expressive or instrumental), victim characteristics including selection (random or non-random), relationship (known or unknown), and traits (specific or non-specific) and spatial mobility. The latter scheme conveys more about the context, in addition to the individual who kills.

One of the earliest examples of civil massacres in Western nations was the killings by Ernst Wagner in 1913 at Mülhausen, Germany.⁶ However, it was the massacre by Whitman in 1963 at the University of Texas^{7–9} that created the model, or script, for such activities through the extensive publicity it received at the time, its recreation in the film “The High Tower,” and its continuing infamy in various internet sites. Subsequent examples included Huberty in 1984 at the San Ysidro MacDonald’s and Lepine in 1989 at the University of Montreal.^{6–9} The great majority of the victims of these massacres were unknown to their killers, although in some instances the killings began with family members, as with Wagner and Whitman. Lepine’s victims were unknown to him but selected as being “feminists.”

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Civil massacres have increased in frequency over this century.¹⁰ In 1963, the year of the University of Texas massacre, such incidents were sufficiently rare that those attempting to understand this act returned to the massacre in 1913 by Wagner for a comparable event, although the killing of 13 neighbors by Unruh in 1949 would also have been relevant.^{7, 11} The frequency of these events has further increased in recent decades and further still even during the drafting of this article, with an unprecedented series in the United States. A number of these most recent incidents occurred in schools, some being carried out by students. The increased frequency may relate to improved communications. Two studies by this group involving the massacres detailed in this report have suggested substantial media influence.^{12, 13} Few would currently doubt the need for further investigation of these incidents.

Most perpetrators of civil massacres die among their victims, either by suicide or from police action. Investigations, therefore, usually entail detailed reconstruction of what led to their actions. In at least five cases (Wagner, Unruh, Speck, and Cases 1 and 7 in our series), the killers have lived to tell their own stories. Two others left behind testaments to their motivations, including Dion Terres, who left a video tape, and Case 3 in our series, who offered his diaries to assist society in understanding sick minds such as his own.

Prestige and/or the furthering of some cause are understandable motives for mass homicides involving disciples, as is revenge in family and employee killings. The apparent senselessness of civil massacres demands investigation and review of models for its understanding. Even psychotically driven homicides have an understandable, if distorted logic. Understanding homicide requires consideration of not only the psychology of the individual but also the interpersonal context and the life course that preceded the events. With this thought and the increasing frequency of such events in mind, this article explores seven civil massacres occurring outside of North America, from where most previously reported cases have emanated. The cases were originally selected for our ongoing studies of modeling via the media, reported in more detail elsewhere.^{12, 13} The countries monitored and forming the basis of this series were Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom—all English-speaking and with shared cultural attributes.

Case Studies

The seven cases are presented in chronological order. At the time of the incidents the notion of a systematic inquiry into this phenomenon had not been considered in the three countries. Accordingly, information had to be drawn from a variety of sources including official inquiries, coroners' reports, trial documents, and books by crime researchers. Greater weight was given to official investigators, with caution being applied to unofficial researchers. Kapardis,¹⁵ the most extensively cited (Cases 1, 2, and 3) non-official source, obtained a PhD from Cambridge University, U.K. and was a senior lecturer in Legal Studies, La Trobe University, Melbourne (the city of incidents 1 and 3) around the time they occurred. In the cases of Knight (Case 1) and Bryant (Case 7), one author (P.E.M.) has had the advantage of interviewing them, but only material in the public domain was utilized. In the case of Gray (Case 4), P.E.M. both lived in the immediate vicinity of the massacre and was responsible for the local psychiatric services involved in the aftermath and with the subsequent inquiries reconstructing the tragedy. These contacts facilitated the exclusion of more dubious claims about the cases.

The characteristics studied (summarized in Table 1) included: (1) incident characteristics—location, weapons, victims, and whether suicide occurred; and (2) perpetrator characteristics—demography, psychiatric, medical, and forensic histories, developmental history, and life course including family, sexual, and other key relationships, role models, interests, and aspirations, and distal and proximate life events.

Case 1

Julian Knight (J.K.), age 19, in Melbourne, Australia on the evening of August 9, 1987, shot 24 people, killing 7. His victims were the occupants of passing motor vehicles and pedestrians picked at random. He used three weapons: a Ruger .22 semi-automatic rifle, a Mossberg 12-gauge pump-action shotgun, and a .308 caliber M14 military-style semi-automatic rifle. Approximately 125 rounds were discharged from these weapons.¹⁴

J.K.'s adoptive father was an army major, and his adoptive parents had separated when he was 12 years old. At school he was a loner but did have girlfriends and sexual relationships from his early teens. Perhaps in emulation of his adoptive father, he became in-

Table 1 Incident Characteristics

Case No.	Place	Date	Dead + Injured	Victims	Weapons ^a	+ Alcohol	+ Suicide
1	Streets: Hoddle Street, Melbourne	Aug 19, 1987	7 + 17	All random in street but ex-girlfriend intended	Ruger .22 s-a Mossberg 12-gauge shotgun .308 M14 rifle	Yes	No, but planned
2	Streets: Hungerford, U.K.	Aug 19, 1987	16 + 14	Mother + dog, then random	Kalashnikov AK47s-a M-1 carbine s-a Beretta pistol	No	Yes
3	Offices: Queen Street, Melbourne	Dec 8, 1987	8 + 4	Ex-friend missed, then random	M-1 carbine s-a	No	Yes
4	Village: Aramoana, New Zealand	Nov 13, 1990	13 + 3	Started with friend/ neighbor, then random	.223 Norinco AK47 s-a .22 Remington s-a	No	No, but induced police to kill him
5	Shopping center: Sydney, Australia	Aug 17, 1991	7 + 8	Random shoppers	SKK s-a Bowie knife	No	Yes
6	Primary school: Dunblane, Scotland	Mar 13, 1996	16 + 3	Random primary school children and teachers	Pistol	No	Yes
7	Historical tourist site: Port Arthur, Australia	Apr 29, 1996	35 + approx. 35	Two family "enemies," then random tourists and staff	AR15 s-a	No	No, plans uncertain

^a s-a, semi-automatic.

creasingly committed to a military career and increasingly caught up in his ideas and fantasies about the military life. He took an intense interest in guns and collected weapons from his early teens.¹⁵

He entered the Royal Military College, Duntroon, in January 1987. Between March and May 1987 he was charged with eight military offenses suggesting difficulty converting his idealized notions of a soldier's life into practice. A fight with another soldier also led to a charge of assault in the civil courts, which was outstanding at the time of the massacre.¹⁵

J.K. was forced to resign from Duntroon in July 1987, ending his dream of a career in the military. He also faced mounting financial problems, outstanding criminal charges, difficulties with his girlfriend, and family tensions. On the afternoon of the massacre he had been drinking heavily. He returned home, dressed himself in military clothing, armed himself, and walked a short distance to a major thoroughfare where he began shooting. He continued shooting until he ran out of ammunition. He had secreted a bullet with which to kill himself, but while searching for this he was overwhelmed and captured by police.¹⁵

J.K. subsequently spoke of being partly aware of his actions and partly caught up in a fantasy of being a lone warrior repelling an invading army. He acknowledged frequent daydreams of military heroism

and dying in battle. He had been well aware of the Texas University massacre and the McDonalds massacre in San Ysidro and realized their similarities to his own actions.¹⁵

J.K. was examined by a number of psychiatrists and psychologists. Although a prepsychotic condition was suggested, the predominant opinion was of a narcissistic young man involved in his world of fantasy. J.K.'s subsequent course in prison has made any psychotic condition highly unlikely, but obsessional personality traits and narcissism have become more obvious.

Case 2

Michael Ryan (M.R.) age 27, in Hungerford, England, on August 19, 1987, shot 30 persons, killing 16 prior to killing himself. He was dressed in combat apparel with a bullet-proof vest, and his weapons included a version of a Kalashnikov AK47 and a M1 carbine, both military-style semi-automatic rifles, and a Beretta pistol. In all, he discharged 134 shots.¹⁵ This incident occurred 10 days after the massacre in Melbourne. This strong time linkage has been reported as supporting a media modeling process.¹²

The killings began with a mother picnicking with her children. He then returned home where he killed

his mother and his dog. He then drove into Hungerford where he began firing indiscriminately.¹⁶

Of the seven cases, the least is known about M.R. His father had been a local council clerk, a perfectionist and strict by nature. His mother was 20 years younger than his father and was said to have overindulged her only son. A teacher described him as shy, self-conscious, and resentful.¹⁵ He grew up a socially inadequate loner. After failing college he drifted from one job to another. In 1984 after his elderly father died, he became depressed and sought medical help. He lived in a fantasy life often telling complex lies to increase his apparent importance and impress his family members with his adventurous life. One such lie involved a retired colonel whom he claimed had found him a fiancée and was about to buy him a Porsche or Ferrari. He had been fascinated by guns from adolescence and had acquired a license for semi-automatic rifles and handguns and attended shooting clubs.

Case 3

Frank Vitkovic (F.V.), age 22, killed eight people and injured four more at the Australia Post Office building, in Melbourne, Australia, on December 8, 1987. He used a M1 carbine .30-caliber semi-automatic military-style rifle with a sawed-off barrel and a shortened stock.¹⁷ It should be noted that this third incident was four months after the two previous ones and occurred in the same city as Case 1, again suggesting possible modeling.¹³

The first intended victim was a former friend, but the gun misfired and he escaped. F.V. then proceeded around the building shooting indiscriminately. His comments included "Are you dead yet? You will be soon. . . . how do they expect me to kill people with this gun? . . . you're all scum. You all give me the shits. Well. Who's laughing now? What's the point of life when nobody loves you? I'm going to take you all with me. . . . The police are going to kill me, so none of you bastards are going to stay alive." He was finally tackled by two men, and in the ensuing struggle he threw himself through an 11th floor window to his death.^{15, 17}

F.V. at school was a gentle, quiet, shy person who never displayed any temper and had a brilliant record. He had a sensitive, somewhat rigid personality with obsessional qualities. At high school he took up tennis and being a perfectionist, acquired a high level of skill. His many hours of playing tennis led to

a recurrent knee problem that eventually ended his sporting aspirations. F.V. kept extensive diaries, in which from his mid-teens he often expressed an intense dislike for others and society in general. He invented female friends with whom he corresponded in his diaries. In 1981 when he was 16, he wrote "I know one thing for certain I am hated very much by many people, but they don't know anything of my hatred which is twice as much as theirs."¹⁵

In 1985 he formed an important friendship with an acquaintance from school, but this ended with disappointment and perceived rejection a year before the massacre. During 1986 he wrote a university essay including "the present criminal laws are a farce. One person has lost all his civil rights (I have been murdered) while the son-of-a-bitch who killed him is entitled, according to the 'civil libertarian philosophy' to have his future considered, his reform considered, his constitutional rights considered, his state of mind considered, the stress he was under. . . ." As a result of this essay, he was required to attend the student counseling service where a psychologist assessed him as severely disturbed and on the way to becoming psychotic. It was also noted that he was speaking of taking his own life. Unfortunately, F.V. failed to attend the follow-up appointment, and no further action was taken.¹⁷

F.V. was not known to have had a special interest in guns prior to 1987, but his diaries reveal a fascination with action movies, particularly the Rambo series. In 1987 he attended a rifle range and obtained a shooter's license, subsequently acquiring his small arsenal and large quantities of ammunition.¹⁵

On December 7, his last diary entry refers to "today it must all come out. . . . it's time to die."¹⁵

Case 4

David Gray (D.G.), age 33, on November 13, 1990, at Aramoana in New Zealand, shot and killed 13 people, including a police officer, and injured 3 others. D.G. was shot dead after emerging shooting from his house, in which he had taken refuge, and yelling to police "Kill me, kill me." His weapons used were a .223 Norinco semi-automatic AK47 look-alike with telescopic sight and 30 shot magazine, and a .22 Remington semi-automatic with telescopic sight and seven-shot magazine. Later, at his home several other firearms were found.¹⁸

The one person with whom D.G. had anything approaching a normal relationship was a neighbor,

who became his first victim.¹⁸ He was reportedly isolated at school and bullied. On leaving school he continued to be socially isolated and failed, despite good intelligence, to establish himself in regular training or employment. His mother was sufficiently concerned to seek a psychiatric assessment in his late teens. He was considered a rigid young man with social anxieties, but otherwise unremarkable.

He had a long-standing fascination with military magazines and possessed several firearms and copious ammunition.¹⁸ Only hours before D.G. began his rampage, he wrote a letter to the editor of "New Zealand Guns" magazine, in which he referred to the 1987 Hoddle Street, Hungerford, and Queen Street massacres (Cases 1 through 3 above).¹⁹

Case 5

Wade Frankum (W.F.), age 33, on August 17, 1991, at a coffee shop inside the Strathfield Plaza shopping complex in Sydney, Australia, suddenly fatally stabbed a 15-year-old girl sitting nearby. He then took a SKK semi-automatic assault rifle from within a cylinder and began shooting people indiscriminately, killing six and wounding eight. He hijacked a car and then ordered the woman driver to stop, apologized to her, exited the car, and shot himself.^{20, 21}

W.F.'s family were inclined to rigidity, demands for conformity, unpredictability, and lack of enjoyment of each other.²⁰ His mother who was alcoholic and had an affective illness, killed herself in 1990. At 16, W.F. was required to leave his school because of his difficult behavior. In his teens he showed some violence against inanimate objects but never then or subsequently against persons or animals. He had several "dead-end" jobs but finished the last years of his life as a taxi driver.²¹

In 1982 he sought treatment for depression from a psychiatrist and visited other doctors for depression again in 1984. He received treatment from a clinical psychologist for depression in 1990 and early 1991. One doctor described him as "very talkative, circumlocutory, and egocentric."²¹

In September 1990 he obtained a shooter's license, and subsequently purchased a Norinco SKK-45 semi-automatic military rifle. He bought a Bowie knife and a set of handcuffs some time after April 1991, and the day before the killings, he had his hair cut short and was thought to have sharpened the knife himself.²¹ After the massacre, the book *Ameri-*

can Psycho was found on W.F.'s bed. This book aroused controversy worldwide with its sexual violence and sadism. On the way to the site of his massacre, W.F. had unexpectedly met a friend to whom he had quoted a passage from the book: "I think I should go home. . . . I think I might hurt you."

Case 6

Thomas Hamilton (T.H.), age 43, on March 13, 1996, at the Dunblane Primary School in Scotland, killed 15 children and an adult and wounded a further 10 children and 3 adults before shooting himself.²²

T.H.'s parents separated shortly after his birth. He moved with his mother to the home of his maternal grandparents, who adopted him. He grew up believing that his natural mother was his sister.²²

On completing schooling he trained for two years as a draftsman before opening a do-it-yourself shop, which he ran for 13 years before the business failed and he registered as unemployed. At the time of the massacre, he was in considerable debt, and the bailiffs were threatening to repossess his property. T.H. was a loner with only one consistent acquaintance and no known partners or intimates. He was described variously by neighbors and acquaintances as odd, rigid, and easily offended.²²

In 1973 he was appointed as an assistant scout leader. Subsequently a number of complaints were made about his leadership and his peculiar behavior toward the young boys. He was asked to resign. This dismissal became a life-long source of resentment, and for the next 22 years he launched repeated complaints and streams of letters of demand and accusation. Subsequently the police joined the Scout movement as targets of his tireless grievances. Just prior to the massacre, he wrote to the Queen appealing for her intercession. He increasingly complained that he was the victim of rumor and false accusations, with some justification. Less plausibly, he claimed the Scout movement was behind these persecutions.²²

T.H. set up his own boys clubs, and between 1981 and his death in 1996 he organized and operated 15 clubs for boys between the ages of 7 and 11. These and the associated summer camps became his life. His odd manner, irregular practices, and arrogant attitude to parents and authorities led to repeated failures, and his attempts to run boys clubs were clearly at an end in the months prior to the massacre. Rumor and suspicion increasingly followed him.²²

T.H. had a life-long interest in guns, acquiring between 1987 and 1995 revolvers, semi-automatic pistols, and rifles. He was intermittently a member of gun clubs, but his behavior and methods of shooting (rapid fire without concern for the usual niceties) alienated him from other shooters.²²

Hamilton carefully prepared for the massacre, entering the school in the preceding days and walking through his route of murder. He cut the telephone lines to the school prior to beginning the killings.²²

Case 7

Martin Bryant (M.B.), age 28, on April 28 and the early hours of April 29, 1996, killed 35 persons and injured a similar number at the historic penal colony site, Port Arthur, Tasmania, Australia. The killings began with the murder of an elderly couple against whom Bryant's family held a long-standing grudge and whom he believed had contributed to the suicide of his father. He used an AR15 semi-automatic rifle fitted with a 30-shot magazine and a military-style semi-automatic FN rifle during the killing but other similar weapons were found in the boot of his car.* This incident occurred only six weeks after Dunblane. There have also been suggestions that M.B. may have been influenced by the two Melbourne incidents (Cases 1 and 3).¹³

M.B. was noted as an infant to be slow in developing. On entering school his immature and ill controlled behavior created problems from the onset. He related poorly to both other children and adults. His disordered conduct, including stealing, aggression, and cruelty to animals, led to a series of referrals to educational and health services. His IQ was found to be in the borderline subnormal range, but he never received special schooling. A number of psychological assessments over the years failed to reach agreement as to diagnosis. On leaving school, he was assessed as too disabled for open employment. He was isolated from peers and regarded as peculiar. He continued to live with his parents doing occasional odd jobs and, while working at casual gardening, met a woman in her fifties who effectively adopted him. She was a wealthy eccentric, and they seem to have had a childlike relationship that was not sexual. She died in a car crash in which M.B. was also seriously injured. He inherited the bulk of her considerable estate. Soon after the loss of this lady, who had been

his only companion, his father, who was the only family member with whom he was close, committed suicide.[†]

Having access to considerable sums of money, M.B. made a number of overseas trips, traveling to such places as London, Los Angeles, Amsterdam, and Bangkok. In these cities he tried to initiate conversations with people he encountered. He later said: "I wanted to meet up with normal people. . . [but]. . . it didn't work." He was distressed and enraged by the frequency with which people would move away. One attraction of overseas travel was that the long airplane journeys forced people to remain in proximity to him where, confined to their seats, some conversation was unavoidable. Next to the journeys, M.B. described sex video shops in Amsterdam as the greatest pleasure he derived from world travel.[†]

M.B. attempted to use his wealth to acquire the friends he had never had, but although he succeeded in attracting short term attachments from individuals impressed with his wealth, he remained essentially isolated. He began indulging his interests in weapons and militaria, purchasing illegally semi-automatic and fully automatic weapons and acquiring military and commando style magazines.[†]

In the 12 months prior to the mass killing incident, his alcohol consumption rapidly increased to drinking daily, commencing in the morning, and drinking more heavily as the day wore on. However, he was not intoxicated at the time of the killings, and he denied using illicit drugs.[†]

MB became increasingly unhappy and angry about his lack of friends: "all I wanted was for people to like me." Twelve months prior to the incident, he decided that he had had enough. Thoughts of suicide increasingly developed. He entertained intense resentment at a world that he felt had rejected him. Weeks before the event, he elaborated the fantasy of committing a massacre and then being killed by police. This fantasy would have emerged at the time of the Dunblane massacre, and although M.B. denied being influenced by Hamilton, he had detailed information about prior massacres and was later aware that he held the record for the largest number of victims. M.B. believed he would be shot in the process of the massacre, but in the event, although seriously burned, he survived and was imprisoned.²⁵

* The court report prepared on Martin Bryant was placed on the Internet following its release by the judge sentencing Bryant (1996).

† The court report on Martin Bryant was released from the court and placed by *The Age* newspaper on its Web site (no longer in existence) in 1996.

Discussion

These seven incidents resulted in 101 deaths (excluding five perpetrator deaths) and only slightly fewer physical injuries. Only 1 of the 101 deaths was inflicted with a weapon other than a firearm. All seven assailants were males with ages ranging from 19 to 43 years and a mean age of 29. Five of the perpetrators had a long established fascination with guns, and at least three regularly purchased military magazines such as *Soldier of Fortune*. All but Bryant possessed firearm licenses. Six of the incidents involved military style, semi-automatic rifles.

The characteristics of these cases bear many similarities to cases described in the United States and elsewhere.⁵⁻⁹ The picture emerging in each case is of socially isolated men with little or no intimacy in either their current or past lives. As children they had been isolated from their peers, and in five cases there was a history of being bullied and teased at school. None made a successful transition to the workforce or to tertiary education, despite mostly average or better intellectual abilities. All displayed serious deficiencies in long term emotional and sexual relationships. There was no one obvious personality type but they tended to be egocentric, rigid, and obsessional. Self-absorption, if not frank narcissism, and grandiose fantasies were also features. These are not individuals with significant histories of criminal offending or violence. Knight was the exception, having been prone to fighting and having an assault charge outstanding. Where their politics were known, they seem to have been conservative individuals at odds with liberal values. However, their developmental and personality characteristics are sufficiently common in the general population as to provide no basis for either adequately understanding these acts or for the prediction of homicide or mass homicide.

The formulation of a plan for a massacre might be fostered through identification with a role model offered through television, films, or other media.²⁶ Work already conducted by our group provides evidence that Ryan, Vitkovic, Gray, and Bryant may have been directly influenced by one or more of the preceding massacres.^{12, 13} This and work in progress leads us to believe that media-related modeling is a potential factor in the emergence of this type of crime in recent years. Several of the perpetrators saw themselves as lone warriors modeled on Rambo-like im-

ages and informed by knowledge, and occasionally study, of prior massacres.

There appears to be a kinship between these massacres and the phenomenon known as amok. Amok is a culture-bound syndrome originally described in people of the Malay archipelago, with similar phenomena later being described in other Southeast Asian communities.²⁷⁻²⁹ Traditionally, amok involved a sudden outburst in which the perpetrator, or "pengamok," armed with a sword or other cutting instrument, ran through the streets stabbing and hacking at random victims. The episode was usually ended by the killing of the pengamok. This has been characterized as a form of suicide, which was usually preceded by social withdrawal and brooding over loss of face or self-esteem and which was resorted to, at least in part, because of a powerful interdiction in the culture against suicide.^{30, 31} Interestingly, "running amok" realizes both the distressed and shamed male's death and a restoration of their prestige. There are elements of contagion in amok, which has been described as spreading in epidemics.³¹

Understanding why people commit homicide requires a consideration not only of personalities but also the perpetrators' life situations.³³ Two phenomena stand out in these cases: first, a loss of social supports, and second, a loss of key elements that maintained their sense of identity. Specifically, Knight lost both his girlfriend and army career; Ryan lost his father, and was confronted by a frustration of his dreams of success³⁴; Vitkovic's ambitions in law and tennis were in ruins; Gray fell out with his only friend; Frankum lost his father, and then his mother committed suicide one year before his massacre; Hamilton's boys' clubs were in terminal decline; Bryant's only companion had died, his father had committed suicide three years before the incident, and his first real girlfriend had ended their relationship immediately prior to his planning the massacre. Frankum, Knight, Hamilton, Ryan, and possibly Gray were either at the end of their financial resources or in serious debt. A deteriorating life course, combined with chronic resentment and fantasies, appears to have contributed to each of these men having reached a critical threshold for mass homicide.

The present massacres appear to have involved individuals planning their own deaths, or at least accepting that their own destruction would be the inevitable outcome of their actions. To this extent, their actions are an extended atypical form of suicide.

Suicidal behavior can arise from a variety of states of mind and contexts, although depression is the most common accompaniment in western culture.³² Among this group of mass killers, only Frankum had received treatment for depression, but his disorder was more a dysthymic than a major depressive disorder. Feelings of guilt and worthlessness characteristic of severe depression were conspicuous by their absence. They were mostly men who perceived themselves as having been unjustly treated by others. They displayed a marked sense of entitlement, which in Hamilton verged on the grandiose. The picture that emerges from these mass killers is less one of sadness or depression and more one of resentment and despair.

A psychopathological model adds little to the understanding of these cases. Consequently, we turned to animal behavior to aid the understanding of this form of aggression. In ethological terms, their terminal life situations can be described as "blocked escape."³⁵ Most commonly people in such situations become depressed and fade into the background, supported by friends and family. Our seven subjects' fragile identities and grossly deficient social networks contributed not only to their problems but also to a solution not usually open to those of better social adjustment, that of cheating. They could achieve the all too elusive social status they desired by mass killing.

Social animals cooperate by way of reciprocal altruism, which is associated with contingencies and strong expectations regarding reciprocity.³⁶ Cheating is the antithesis of cooperation, but it is a viable option when the perceived negative consequences are insufficient deterrents. Humans are cognitively programmed to detect cheating in social interactions.³⁷ Ellis has described "control behavior," the animal equivalent of policing, as having evolved to function as a counterstrategy to victimizing behavior in a variety of non-human species.³⁸ This biosocial archetype emphasizes the depth to which some rules prohibiting certain behaviors are ingrained in various species. Cheating of the dimension involved in these incidents entailed the virtual certainty of group extrusion, by life imprisonment if not death. As there were few, if any, groups remaining for these outcast individuals to be excluded from, cheating became a more attractive option. Finally, the apparent intent to suicide or be killed in these subjects nullified the

already reduced influence of group extrusion as a deterrent.

These subjects' final acts involved the ultimate dominance over others by taking the others' lives. These chronically alienated and subordinate individuals finally achieved status. Knight made the chilling claim to have upstaged Whitman and Huberty—two of America's worst mass murderers. While Knight has been permanently extruded from conventional social groups, his comments suggest that from his perspective he has achieved not only status but found a group identity—that of mass killers. Bryant, with his IQ of 66, is more famous than any living psychiatrist or psychologist.

In mental health practice, the very low base rate of civil massacres greatly limits the practicalities of both prediction and prevention. While four of the seven individuals had contact with mental health personnel, these contacts were usually well before the homicides and probably before the development of murderous intentions. The model advanced in this article emphasizes that chronically embittered subordinate individuals with violent fantasies may be capable of such crimes, despite their inadequate personality characteristics. In all of the cases outlined, the subjects' life courses were deteriorating, which included the loss of inhibitions against both suicide and homicide. It is not uncommon for such individuals to present to mental health professionals. The therapeutic challenge may be to establish and maintain meaningful, long term relationships with individuals who evoke complex negative countertransferences, including contempt associated with inadequacy and both repugnance and anxiety associated with revenge fantasies. Such therapeutic relationships may reduce the subject's sense of chronic alienation and inhibit, albeit modestly, the progression to mass homicide.

Conclusions

These seven cases of mass homicide by civil massacre have common elements, although study of further cases in different cultures will determine how generally applicable these elements may be. In particular, the recent series of U.S. high school killings by adolescents will be an important comparison, with the assailants being from both a youth culture and of another era than our assailants. The rarity of mass homicide in general, and the extreme rarity of civil massacres in particular, requires that an explanatory theory must account for both its rarity and the

departure from this rule, giving rise to the occasion. We suggest that the essence of these actions entails socially inadequate and self-absorbed individuals who have lived for years resenting their subordinate status. Identification and modeling support their fragile identities by fueling fantasies of social success and dominance. Firearms further fuel their fantasies and provide the means of pursuing them. Real-life supports consisting of the few available relatives, friends, and/or ambitions in the great majority of potential cases inhibit (through threat of group extrusion) the assertion of dominance by these acts. When such supports collapse, the transient experience of dominance by way of mass homicide and simultaneous suicide may occasionally result.

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