

MASS SHOOTINGS AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE:
A FEMINIST CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Mass Shootings and Intimate Partner Violence: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Master of Social Work, 2020

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This Major Research Paper is a feminist critical discourse analysis of news articles pertaining to three mass shootings in the United States in which an intimate partner of the perpetrator was targeted and a history of domestic violence was known. The aim of this study is to identify and examine the dominant discourses employed by the media when reporting on mass shootings that are rooted in gender-based violence. I uncovered three discourses: 1) the continued portrayal of intimate partner violence as a private issue; 2) the emphasis on the shock and disbelief held by community members; and 3) the construction of perpetrators as deviant that is detached from IPV. The purpose of this study is that through naming and understanding these discourses at play, social workers can better engage in the critical prevention, intervention and postvention work of addressing gun violence and its inextricable link to intimate partner violence.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of this major research paper (henceforth ‘MRP’) is a feminist critical discourse analysis (henceforth ‘FCDA’) exploring the ways in which the media represents mass shootings in relation to gender-based violence in the United States of America. Specifically, the study focuses on the ways in which media produces and reproduces discourses surrounding mass shootings as they relate to intimate partner violence (henceforth ‘IPV’). Further, I explore intersectional considerations, such as mental health and race, in terms of the dominant narrative in media.

For the purpose of this study, I utilize the Gun Violence Archive’s (2019) definition of a mass shooting, which stipulates a mass shooting as happening in one location at roughly the same time in which four or more people are shot, excluding the perpetrator. The Gun Violence Archive is an independent research group that provides free access to gun-violence related information in the United States; therefore, utilizing this definition allows for a consistent definition to be used across research pertaining to mass shootings in the United States. Various studies have demonstrated that behind the deadliest mass shootings in the United States, a common underlying thread is domestic violence (Everytown for Gun Safety [EFGS], 2018; Gun Violence Archive [GVA], 2019). Despite these studies drawing the connection between gun violence and domestic violence, this MRP argues that mainstream discourses have failed to accurately represent the fundamental issues that contribute to massive societal violence.

Why the American Context?

According to a study conducted by Grinshteyn and Hemenway (2016), there were 10.2 gun-related deaths in the United States per 100,000 people versus 2.3 deaths per 100,000 people in Canada. Due to the dramatic rate in which mass shootings occur in the United States, this

study will focus on the American context. While shootings do occur in Canada, the American context provides a larger sampling size and opportunity for the purpose of this study. More specifically, the rationale for focusing on the American context resides within the fact that 54% of mass shootings in the United States involved an intimate partner or family member being shot by the perpetrator (EFGS, 2019a). Everytown for Gun Safety (2019a) has also found that the United States is the most dangerous high-income nation for women in regards to gun violence. Within the parameters of an MRP-level research project, the American context provides this study with a greater amount of data sources to explore this topic.

Further, the American context is crucial to my own experiences as a Canadian who has lived in both Chicago, Illinois and Cleveland, Ohio for a significant portion of my life. While living in the United States, I watched as mass shooting after mass shooting continued to occur, including the mass killing of students as young as kindergarteners, and felt frustration as politicians' only action was to send "thoughts and prayers." After moving to Cleveland, the summer before grade nine, I remember being shocked that the local movie theatre had a large "No Guns" sign on their main entrance, wondering why anyone would need a gun with them to watch a movie. This shock clearly demonstrated the naivety of my 14-year-old self, yet to understand that no place, however "innocent" or seemingly unrelated to gun violence, is immune from being the location of a mass shooting. My adolescent indoctrination into the regularity of mass shootings gave birth to the habit of scoping out the closest exit when going into schools, malls, and movie theatres. I have also seen the impact gun violence and mass shootings have on communities first-hand. In 2012, while in high school, a shooting occurred at a neighbouring high school. Six years later, I worked in the community in which the shooting occurred, and the reverberations of the event could still be felt.

Importance of Topic

While this study will not provide immediate benefit to participants (as there are none), it seeks to contribute to the overall knowledge base on the intersection of IPV and gun violence in mass shootings. Many communities in both the United States and Canada experience some form of gun violence. Further, no community within these societies is immune to gender-based violence. Both Canada and the United States are white settler nations in which class, gender, and race operate as forms of power and oppression. Patriarchy has created the conditions that allow for gender-based violence to occur. Therefore, this research has potential benefits in contributing to efforts that seek to create a more equitable environment.

More specifically, this research aims to contribute to the working knowledge of many professions that are involved in instances of IPV and gun violence, including, but not limited to, policing, health care, social work, violence against women sector, and the criminal justice system. As will be discussed in the literature review, statistics demonstrate that gun violence and IPV result in a large number of homicides and injuries. As this study seeks to aid in disrupting and transforming hegemonic masculinity in relation to IPV, social work practitioners are highly implicated. Social workers are bound to their code of ethics which directly stipulates a commitment to social justice (Canadian Association of Social Workers [CASW], 2005). They often occupy spaces in the systems that both perpetrators and survivors of IPV and gun violence interact with, including the violence against women sector and the criminal justice system. The study also seeks to contribute to the knowledge base surrounding efforts for gun policy reform, particularly in the United States. As this is a critical discourse analysis (henceforth ‘CDA’) of the media, this study can offer insights into what the dominant discourses are that surround mass shootings connected to IPV and therefore, contribute to efforts that seek to dismantle them.

A Note on Terminology

For this study, rather than using the term “domestic violence,” I will be utilizing “gender-based violence” as a broad umbrella term for the various and multiple ways in which violence operates through patriarchal structures. While much of the literature reviewed for this study utilizes “domestic violence,” it can be limiting in that it perpetuates the assumption that the perpetrator must be cohabiting with the victim. Further, it fails to highlight the disproportionate rate in which women are victims of violence by their male partners on the basis of their gender. Therefore, I will be utilizing the term “intimate partner violence” to refer to a specific form of gender-based violence that is perpetrated against a current or former partner, regardless of marital status. IPV can take many forms, including but not limited to physical violence, emotional abuse, psychological abuse, sexual violence and financial abuse. This list is non-exhaustive, and it should be noted that IPV can take various forms not mentioned here. There are times throughout this MRP in which I utilize ‘domestic violence.’ In these instances, I am using the term to align with a specific piece of literature that is utilized and will be indicated as such.

Situating Self

As this study is conducted from a feminist theoretical framework, I would like to align myself directly to feminist principles by acknowledging the importance of situating myself in this study. FCDA urges researchers to engage in self-reflexivity as a crucial step in its methodological approach to inquiry (Barát, 2005). As a white, cisgender woman, I simultaneously possess privilege and experience oppression in my daily life. While I am directly impacted by the system and structure of patriarchy, it is crucial that I locate myself with an intersectional framework that considers the ways in which power operates. Specifically, within the topic of this MRP, it is imperative to acknowledge and highlight that Black, Indigenous, and

trans people experience violence at much higher rates and are at greater risk of victimization of patriarchal structures of violence, including intimate partner and gun violence (Brennan, 2011; Burczycka & Conroy, 2018; Scheim et al., 2014). As a social worker with experience in the domestic violence and child welfare sectors in both Canada and the United States, I have seen first-hand how male-initiated violence, some of which has involved gun violence, impacts communities and generations.

Outline

Chapter 2 provides a review and critical engagement with the current literature that exists surrounding the topic of mass shootings, IPV and discourses represented in the media. The literature review aims to identify what research has currently been conducted on the topic, as well as the gaps that exist within the knowledge produced from the studies. Chapter 3 provides an overview of post-structural feminist theory, its relevance to this topic, and considerations it creates within this study. Following the theoretical framework, Chapter 4 discusses FCDA as a methodology as it relates to this study and the rationale as to why this was chosen. Chapter 5 demonstrates the findings of the data analysis and the discourses that emerged from the data. Chapter 6 engages in a discussion of the findings, their relation to the literature and the implications for social work practice that the findings present. Finally, the conclusion in Chapter 7 will summarize the MRP, its discoveries and steps for further research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 explores key themes present in the literature that exists on mass shootings, IPV and critical discourse analyses on similar topics, and engages in a critique of the literature that examines where gaps exist in the current knowledge base.

Key Themes

Through an analysis of the existing literature, several themes emerged including quantitative data on the statistics of mass shootings; the relationship between mass shootings, masculinity and violence against women; mass shootings, mental health, race and the media; IPV/homicide and the media; misogyny and the media; and gun violence and violence against women.

Relevant Statistics

There is substantial quantitative data that examines mass shootings, IPV and the relationship between violence against women and gun violence. In order to better understand the data pertaining to the connection between violence against women and gun violence, this section will first discuss each area individually. For context, in 2019, there were 418 mass shootings in the United States, demonstrating a dramatic increase from 2018 in which 337 mass shootings occurred, accounting for an average of one mass shooting per day (GVA, 2019). Of these 418 mass shootings, there were 464 deaths and 1,710 people injured (GVA, 2019). Further, a study that examined mass shootings in the United States from 1982 to February 2020 found that 54% were committed by white shooters (Statista, 2020b). Strikingly, the study found that white perpetrators committed more mass shootings than every race and ethnicity combined. The study also examined shootings within the same time frame and found that 96.58% of the shootings were carried out by males (Statista, 2020a).

Violence against women, as a form of gender-based violence, is also a ubiquitous issue that is pervasive throughout both Canada and the United States. In fact, according to Burczycka and Conroy (2018), IPV is the leading type of violence experienced by women. Indigenous and Black women are three times more likely than white women to experience violence in Canada (Brennan, 2011). Further, 56% of trans people in Ontario have experienced some form of violence due to their gender identity (Scheim et al., 2014). In Canada, women accounted for 80% of victims in instances of IPV, and every six days a woman is killed by her intimate partner (Statistics Canada, 2006). In Canadian IPV situations, when a gun is present in the home, the chances of homicide increase dramatically (Office of the Chief Coroner [OCC], 2018). Likewise, in the United States, when a perpetrator has access to a firearm, the risk for lethality increases five times (EFGS, 2019a). Further, 52 women on average are shot to death by an intimate partner each month and when intimate partner homicides occur, over half of the female victims were killed with a gun (EFGS, 2019a). Everytown for Gun Safety (2019a) has determined that nearly 4.5 million women have reported an intimate partner threatening them with a gun. It is important to note that this statistic does not encapsulate the number of women who, for a variety of reasons, have not been able to report their experiences.

In summation, the quantitative data demonstrates that mass shootings and IPV are each pervasive and destructive issues that permeate society. When gun violence and IPV intersect, the results are especially lethal not only for the partner who is experiencing the immediate violence, but potentially for society as a whole.

Mass Shootings, Masculinity and Violence Against Women

Prior research on the connection between violence against women and mass shootings has been conducted in the form of a case study that examined the overlap of mass shootings,

domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault, and sought to explore the link between masculinity and violence (Issa, 2019). Because the study examined police reports in eight case examples, Issa (2019) had access to information that is not publicly accessible, granting it breadth and depth in its data sources. The study found that in order to get to the root cause of mass shootings in the United States, it is not mental health that needs to be addressed, but rather the understanding of masculinity and manhood. A key finding in Issa (2019) is that “acts of violence against women... should be treated by the law as red flags for larger-scale acts of violence, and proof of their commission should prevent the perpetrators from acquiring guns” (p. 704). Likewise, Myketiak (2016) utilized thematic analysis to guide a CDA of text written by a mass shooter in California from 2014 to understand the role of fragile masculinity in mass shootings. In examining this text, Myketiak (2016) found that the shooter was motivated by a precarious relationship to masculinity and demonstrated fragile masculinity by positioning himself not only against women, but also against racialized men in ways that aligned with various forms of structural social inequalities. Both of these studies utilize a feminist theoretical framework in that they addressed the harmful implications of hegemonic, fragile masculinity and concluded that there is great need to disrupt the ways in which masculinity is often inextricably connected to violence.

Mass Shootings, Mental Health, Race and the Media

Much of the literature that exists within the topic of mass shootings and mental health employ a critical perspective on mental health to explore the incorrect notion that mental health is a direct cause of mass shootings and other forms of gun violence and the ways in which this fallacy becomes understood. For example, Metzl and MacLeish (2015) engaged with the notion of mental health being the commonly understood cause of mass shootings by examining

assumptions held by the public following an incident. The study examined literature from psychiatry, psychology, public health and sociology that focused on perceptions surrounding the connection between mental health and gun violence. They found that many people understand the following to be true: a) mental illness causes gun violence; b) psychiatric diagnosis can predict gun crime; c) shootings represent the deranged acts of mentally ill loners, and d) gun control will not prevent another Newtown (Metzl & MacLeish, 2015). Additionally, these assumptions often coincide with reproducing racism and classism through the perpetuation of racist and classist stereotypes (Metzl & MacLeish, 2015). For instance, a Black shooter was seen as inherently violent and representative of the entire Black community. Alternatively, a white shooter was viewed as an individual, rather than a representative of their entire racial group. When a shooter was white, their actions were viewed as a result of individual problems and not linked to their race. While Metzl and MacLeish (2015) identified these dynamics as cultural stereotypes, they failed to recognize and attribute them to the operation of anti-Black racism. This was further reinforced when class was intertwined into the shooter's identity, in which shooters with lower economic status were understood to be acting upon the values of their perceived socioeconomic group.

Duxbury et al. (2018) examine how news media portrays the causes of mass shootings through an intersectional lens in a mixed methods study. They sought to determine if the race of the shooter influenced the way in which they were portrayed in media reports by utilizing logistic regression and content analysis methods. They discovered that white shooters were more likely to have their crime attributed to mental illness, whereas Black shooters were framed as violent threats to the public. Further, the white men were framed as sympathetic characters that were acting as an individual, separate from culture (Duxbury et al., 2018). This study emulated

the role of the media in constructing contradictory perceptions of mass shooting perpetrators based upon their race.

Mass shootings involving IPV also raise the notion of mental health and suicidality. When mass shootings connected to IPV occur, the perpetrator kills themselves 66% of the time (EFGS, 2019a). Further, “it is not uncommon for abusers who threaten or commit gun violence against their partners or children to end up dying by firearm suicide” (EFGS, 2019a, p. 10). This statistic is staggering in that it makes a connection between gun violence, IPV and suicide while also bringing attention to the relationship between misogyny and power relations. Further, using a critical lens, Murray (2017) conducted a qualitative ethnographic content analysis of mass media accounts of prominent massacres in the United State to evaluate how the media covers mass shootings and how this inspires future killers. The study found that the way in which reports of mass shootings are covered can “inspire” future killers as the media coverage provided entertainment and promoted the desire to “outdo” the previous shooter (Murray, 2017).

Intimate Partner Violence/Homicide and the Media

Discourse analyses have also been taken up in the context of violence against women and intimate partner homicide. In Australia, Easteal et al. (2019) conducted a CDA of media responses to two homicides relating to IPV. They analyzed the lexical features and referential strategies used to represent the perpetrator and victim, the crime and the location utilized in newswriting and news-editing practices. Easteal et al. (2019) discovered that media reporting fails to include the social context in which the crime occurred and ultimately shifts blame in ways that perpetuates myths surrounding domestic violence, such as victim blaming and incorrect notions of why women stay in abusive relationships. To guide their CDA, Easteal et al. (2019) utilize a feminist theoretical framework.

Fairbairn and Dawson (2013) also explored intimate partner homicides against women from a feminist perspective by analyzing three daily newspapers in Toronto at two different time periods, 1975 to 1979 and 1998 to 2002. They discovered that while the more recent newspapers began to report on a history of IPV, which was previously excluded, and were less likely to excuse the perpetrator's actions, they still portrayed intimate partner homicide as an individual event, rather than a structural issue rooted in misogyny and hegemonic masculinity. More specifically, victim-blaming was still common in the more contemporary news reports. Additionally, Fairbairn and Dawson (2013) noticed important absences in the news coverage, namely the lack of consultation with experts in the violence against women sector, including researchers and service providers. They concluded that while some progress had been made to portray domestic violence as a more dynamic issue, the media failed to endorse and promote social and political responses. In employing a feminist perspective, the study called for structural changes that sought to address, mitigate and prevent gender inequality.

Misogyny and the Media

In investigating how the media reinforces sexism and misogyny, Donaghue (2015), working from a feminist standpoint, engaged in a CDA of media coverage of a speech given by Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard addressing sexism embedded in the political system. Gillard's speech sought to highlight the misogyny displayed by her opponent, including statements of how women are biologically incapable of holding political office, how men are better suited for power and leadership roles, and how abortion is "the easy way out" (Donaghue, 2012, p. 162). The findings indicated that coverage of the print media demonstrated a disjuncture between how the speech resonated with women across Australia and its construction in the media as "playing the gender card" (Donaghue, 2015). Donaghue (2015) revealed how, when women

come forward with being targeted by sexist and misogynistic attacks, the media is often utilized as a mechanism to position the women as trying to gain an advantage through the “gender card.” This process acts to render their experiences of oppression not only invalid, but dishonest and fueled by self-promoting motives.

Gun Violence and Violence Against Women

Smucker et al. (2018) undertook a logistic regression analysis to examine the prevalence and correlates of perpetrator suicide and additional homicide following IPV. The study utilized the North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System to examine intimate partner related homicides. In the cases they examined, nearly all intimate partner homicide-suicide cases were conducted by males who had access to and/or possession of guns and when a gun was used in intimate partner homicide incidents, the death tolls were higher compared to when a gun was not present (Smucker et al., 2018). Ultimately, when gun access was present in a case, the chances of domestic violence ending in death increased and gun-related intimate partner homicide was found to also be coupled with additional killings (Smucker et al., 2018).

Garcia et al. (2007) reviewed studies on intimate partner homicide in the United States to explore the associated factors, consequences, and implications for public health and society in general. The literature demonstrated that when intimate partner homicide occurs, firearms are the most frequently used weapons in the United States. Often times, violent partners use the threat of owning a gun to intimidate their partners and commonly do not let their partners know where the firearms are kept in the home (Garcia et al., 2007). Threats can be both explicit and implicit, such as the perpetrator saying, “I am going to shoot you” or “I bought a gun today,” respectively (OCC, 2018, p. 34).

Further, despite initiatives seeking to prevent those charged and/or convicted of domestic violence from owning or buying a gun in the future, many states' laws have loopholes that allow the perpetrator to continue their access to firearms and do not require them to surrender the firearms they owned prior to the conviction (EFGS, 2019a; Garcia et al., 2007). Many of these loopholes exist within the policies that stipulate the ways in which background checks are conducted. Examples of loopholes in the federal background check system are as follows: a) the boyfriend loophole: allows for those with convictions or restraining orders against a dating partner to purchase firearms; b) the Charleston loophole: if a background check is not completed within three business days, the perpetrator is allowed to purchase the gun(s); and c) the unlicensed sale loophole: in a private sale, guns can be purchased from unlicensed sellers without a background check (EFGS, 2019a).

Even when a survivor is separated from their former partner, there is still fear of continued violence, specifically when they know the perpetrator has a gun or will be able to access one. Vittes et al. (2013) utilized a feminist narrative approach to interview recipients of restraining orders that removed the firearms owned by their abusers to understand their experience and feelings of the experience. They found that the survivors wanted the firearms removed, and as a result, felt safer once the restraining order was in place (Vittes et al., 2013). These findings correlate with the Office of The Chief Coroner's (2018) report that found a notable increase in risk for lethality when the victim had intuition that harm might occur or had an intuitive sense of fear. In fact, 44% of the cases examined by the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee found that the victims had an intuitive sense of fear prior to the homicide taking place, evidenced in the victim disclosing their fear to someone else (OCC, 2018). These

findings speak to the knowledge and strengths that must be honoured in women coming forward about experiences of IPV.

Critiques of the Literature

While the literature that exists is comprehensive in addressing many of the key themes within the topic of this MRP, a major gap exists in studies seeking to understand the ways in which dominant discourses operate through media. More specifically, there has yet to be a FCDA on media reports on mass shootings in which an intimate partner or family member was killed and where there is a known history of domestic violence. Further, while much of the literature comes from a feminist perspective, there are minimal findings that discuss specifically the disproportionate rate in which racialized women experience IPV and gun violence. This insight imposes the question of how to better infuse feminist research with principles such as critical race theory and theories about anti-Black racism.

Further, although the literature utilized a critical perspective on mental health, it failed to name and identify sanism as what contributed to the incorrect notions that viewed mental health as a causation for mass shootings. The literature recognized the binary designations of sane and insane but lacked a critical discussion on the systemic nature of oppression and discrimination. For example, as Metzl and MacLeish (2015) note, when society places blame upon people with mental illness (deemed as the insane) as being the reason for gun violence, it ignores the larger portion of the population without a mental illness (deemed as the sane) and the actual violence they impose on society. While these understandings are crucial to critically engaging with the causes of gun violence and mass shootings, the literature is limited when it does not specifically partake in a discussion of sanism and anti-sanism.

In a similar fashion, the literature failed to specifically name and highlight the operation of anti-Black racism in societal perceptions of shooters based upon their racial identity. Duxbury et al. (2018) and Metzl and MacLeish (2015), for instance, discuss the ways in which race impacts the public's perceptions of shooters and gun violence overall. Both studies engaged in comparative analyses that sought to understand the way in which society understands a white perpetrator of a mass shooting in contrast to a Black perpetrator. The results of each study corroborated each other as they found that Black perpetrators are more often viewed as inherently violent and white perpetrators were viewed as acting as an outlier and in no way as a result of their race. While the studies identified that these perceptions produced and reproduced harmful bias and prejudice specifically towards Black people, they failed to name anti-Black racism as the reason why this was occurring, allowing it to continue operating invisibly. As discussed by Weedon (1997), it is crucial that critical studies are able to identify and bring to the surface the invisible operations of power and oppression.

Summary

In summary, Chapter 2 provided an overview of the literature that currently exists on the mass shootings and IPV, including previous critical discourse analyses that have been conducted. Through this analysis, several key themes emerged including statistics on mass shootings; mass shootings, masculinity and violence against women; the way in which mass shootings, mental health, race and misogyny relate to the media; and the connection between gun violence and violence against women.

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter 3 engages in a critical discussion of feminist theory, post-structural feminism, their key themes, their relevance to this MRP and the implications that are created for social work practice.

Feminist Theory

Broadly, feminist theory is employed in this MRP as it seeks to address IPV as a form of gender-based violence and its connections to patriarchy. This study recognizes that patriarchy creates a system of power, privilege and oppression on the basis of gender. Further, this study acknowledges that women are disproportionately the victims of IPV at the hands of their male partners; this disproportion is inextricably connected to other forms of oppression that operate through patriarchal power structures, including through healthcare, education, the criminal justice system and the workforce. Feminist theory recognizes that patriarchal systems create the conditions that allow for gender-based violence and IPV to occur, while also creating the environment by which this violence is perpetuated. This MRP also seeks to explore and better understand the relationship that hegemonic masculinity has in relation to IPV and gun violence that manifest in the form of a mass shooting.

“The Personal is Political”

The intent of this MRP aligns with the principle of feminist theory that recognizes the connection of micro-personal lived experiences to political processes on the macro scale (Schuster, 2017). This understanding, a hallmark to the feminist movement, was coined by Carol Hanisch (1970) who stated, “the personal is political” (p. 76) to describe the way in which many feminist issues are inextricably connected between the public and private realms. This also aligns with social work practice that recognizes that individual people’s lives are linked to systems and

structures (Austin et al., 2016). Further, because social work practice is inherently political, implications are raised for addressing the operation of power and oppression across the micro, mezzo and macro levels that impact those experiencing IPV (Baines, 2017). For example, a social worker can provide direct support to an individual survivor whose partner is exerting power over them in the form of physical or emotional violence (micro), while simultaneously addressing their agency's policies to reduce the power dynamic between service user and social worker (mezzo), and advocating for policy changes at the federal level that seek to challenge and transform patriarchal manifestations in law that impact survivors across the country (macro).

The notion contains particular importance within the conversation surrounding IPV. Domestic violence was once (and often still is) considered a private issue that only concerns the parties involved (Carlson & Worden, 2005; Murphy & Ouimet, 2008). Such a perception was also ingrained into the systems that interact with those who experience and perpetuate IPV, such as the criminal justice system, which allows for violence to continue through inadequate prevention and intervention systems (Barnett, 2000; Carlson & Worden, 2005). Feminist advocates often criticize the criminal justice system for a variety of reasons, including failing to properly implement laws designed to support survivors, such as the Violence Against Women Act, being biased in its practices and services, including prosecution and judicial decision making by reflecting patriarchal beliefs, and perpetuating and engaging in racist, sexist and oppressive practices (Barnett, 2000). The production and reproduction of IPV as a private issue is exemplified in that "women victimized by IPV express significantly more dissatisfaction than do women victimized by non-partners" in reference to their experiences within the criminal justice system (Barnett, 2000, p. 350). This dissatisfaction was measured by the survivors rating their experiences with professionals within the criminal justice system as well as their

experiences with the system in general, such as rating the fairness of the trial (Barnett, 2000). The consequences of such failures have allowed for IPV to continue as they silenced women who tried to escape or tell their stories.

By connecting personal lived experiences to the political and public dimensions, it becomes apparent that IPV is a systemic issue that permeates across every inch of our patriarchal society as a result of structural oppression and acceptance of violence towards women (Schuster, 2017). This particular understanding challenges the dominant notion that IPV is a private matter to be resolved by those involved and rather, stipulates that it should be addressed through collective political responses dedicated to prevention and intervention. Prior to the feminist movement in the 1960s, domestic violence was considered a private matter and virtually no supports for women experiencing violence existed until grassroots feminists took matters into their own hands and developed the emergency violence against women shelter system in the 1970s (Carlson & Worden, 2005; Murphy & Ouimet, 2008). This response is a prime example of how IPV being forced to remain in the private realm resulted in the lack of widespread societal response. The feminist movement responded to this need and began the process of forcing IPV into the public eye through collective action.

It is important to note that there are many forms of feminism and thus many variations in feminist responses to IPV as a private versus public issue. Similarly, this MRP seeks a more nuanced approach beyond general feminist understandings to guide the research process. Post-structural feminism appears to be the most helpful to this MRP's work, and therefore in the following paragraphs, I will discuss post-structural feminism and how it relates specifically to this study.

Post-Structural Feminism

This study utilizes a post-structural feminist theoretical framework; this framework best aligns within the topic of IPV as it relates to dominant discourses perpetuated in the media during reports of mass shootings. As such, post-structural feminism has informed this MRP in methodology, research questions, and specific methods, in that it provides a framework in which FCDA can best operate. Many of its principles align with those of a FCDA methodology, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. Below, I discuss many of the key concepts of post-structural feminism as it relates to this study.

Language and Discourse

According to Thompson (2010), post-structural feminism is a theoretical framework that aids in the exploration of issues pertaining to gender, power relations and language, and “provides a robust lens to analyze how discourses reflect, reinscribe and sometimes resist hegemonic patterns” (p. 120). At its root, the theory emerged as a means to critically engage with and disrupt the binaries of gender present in linguistic practices (Davies & Gannon, 2011). Post-structural feminism is particularly useful as it draws attention to the impact discourses may have on one’s thought-processes and interpretation of one’s environment; it also acknowledges that language can shape discourses to become what is considered the norm, ultimately upholding oppressive or inequitable power structures (Weedon, 1997). When discourses become so powerful and dominant that they are considered the norm, they can become invisible and therefore difficult to disrupt. The dominant discourse is therefore maintained by positing itself as rational and natural while positing alternative discourses as irrational and ‘other’ (Davies & Gannon, 2011). Within a FCDA, the acknowledgement of how language operationalizes power allows for the ability to understand the way in which language “disqualifies certain voices”

(Quinlan & Bute, 2013, p. 56). This study seeks to examine the ways in which discourses in the media perpetuate certain positions surrounding IPV and mass shootings and also to examine the discourses or voices that are disqualified by their absence from the media reports.

Intimate Partner Violence

Post-structural feminism is particularly useful within the context of IPV as it distinctly brings in an analysis of power (Cannon et al., 2015). In fact, Cannon et al. (2015) emphasize that “applying such an approach to intimate partner violence allows us an opportunity to view how power may be exercised and deployed differently from a traditional feminist perspective of patriarchal top-down forms of power” (p. 670). Further, the theory brings into focus gender binaries and how they can be problematic in their nature (Sharp & Keyton, 2016). More specifically, post-structural feminism recognizes that a power imbalance exists within heterosexual relationships and that these imbalances often go without scrutiny or critical engagement (Sharp & Keyton, 2016). While the framework acknowledges such power imbalances, it recognizes that each individual’s lived experiences within those relationships will be unique. Post-structural feminism is relevant to an analysis of IPV as it rejects meta-narratives and recognizes multiple subjectivities (Fraser, 2003). For instance, within the overarching power dynamics of a heterosexual relationship, IPV survivors will have different experiences based upon class, race, access to resources, geographic location and many other factors. These understanding are crucial to this study as it allows for the analysis to extract the varying experiences and discourses present within the data sources and expose the way in which dominant discourses perpetuate meta-narratives that reflect the status-quo.

Within the discussion of IPV, post-structural feminism brings an important perspective regarding gun violence, gun discourses, and the manner in which they can be critically engaged.

The framework brings in an analysis of power within the gendered, racialized and classed conceptualizations of gun rights and gun control as binary oppositions. For example, Carlson (2014) found that both pro- and anti-gun discourses relied on sexist notions of female inferiority. While Carlson (2014) utilizes a feminist perspective more broadly, this understanding creates implications for the content of this study within a post-structural feminist theoretical standpoint in that it recognizes the manifestation of gender and power within discourse and the way in which binaries are utilized to exacerbate such dynamics.

Post-Structural Feminism and Implications for Social Work Practice

Social work practice is highly implicated by a post-structural feminist theoretical framework as it further emphasizes the need for practitioners to consider the larger societal context in which the “micro-politics” of intimate relationships operate (Fraser, 2003, p. 274). Due to the nature of social work practice, practitioners within a variety of settings in the field are likely to encounter situations in which service users are currently experiencing, have previously experienced, or are at risk of experiencing IPV (Thorpe & Irwin, 1996). As previously stated, through the rejection of meta-narratives, post-structural feminism urges social workers to avoid the homogenization of IPV survivors and their experiences by considering each individual context that occurs within the larger operation of power dynamics. These acknowledgements create a sense of urgency for social work practice, research and education to undertake a gender-based and intersectional analysis of IPV, especially as it relates to gun violence due to the increasing rate of mass shootings and the fact that it has become clear that the vast majority begin with IPV (EFGS, 2019a). As noted by Murphy and Ouimet (2008), social workers occupy unique positions that allow them to contribute to efforts that seek to mitigate IPV in their roles as educators, practitioners, advocates, researchers and policy makers. Post-structural feminism

allows space for social workers in these roles to engage in a critical, nuanced understanding of IPV through its analysis of power and creates opportunities through which transformation can be sought.

Summary

To conclude, Chapter 3 provided an overview of feminist theory as it relates to this study, specifically in its understanding of the relationship between patriarchy and IPV and the connection between micro and macro lived experiences. Further, it discussed post-structural feminism as being the specific theoretical framework of this study because of its alignment with FCDA and understanding of the role of dominant discourses pertaining to IPV. The chapter also engaged in a discussion of the implications created for social work practice that emerge from a post-structural feminist viewpoint.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

Chapter 4 discusses the research questions of this study, FCDA as a methodological approach, data collection methods, including data sources, sampling and population, the sample used for the study, and finally, data analysis methods.

Research Questions

This study is a FCDA of media reports on mass shootings in which a female intimate partner was targeted and a history of domestic violence is known. The study asks the following research questions:

1. What dominant discourses are employed by the media when reporting on mass shootings when gender-based violence, specifically intimate partner violence, is involved?
2. How is power operationalized through these discourses?

Methodological Approach

This study employs a FCDA that seeks to identify and engage with dominant discourses in media on reports of mass shootings when IPV is present. FCDA is a qualitative approach to inquiry that falls within the broader methodology of critical discourse analysis. In this section, I will provide a brief overview of CDA in general before specifically discussing FCDA as its own methodology and why it is most relevant to this study.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis is “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk, 2005, p. 352). While many approaches exist within the umbrella that is CDA across an array of disciplines, they are all aligned in their common mission of engaging in political, economic and cultural change

(Fairclough et al., 2011). CDA as a methodology recognizes that social practice can be enacted through language and discourse (Wodak, 2001) and takes the context in which language is used into crucial consideration (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Due to the nature of CDA seeking to unearth otherwise invisible operations of power and oppression through discourse, it takes an explicit stance in resisting inequalities in society (Fairclough et al., 2011; van Dijk, 2005; Wodak, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

As CDA gained popularity, criticism emerged regarding discourse analysis. Specifically, concerns were posed regarding its capacity for systematic process. It may be argued that a prominent limitation to CDA is that the practice of critically examining the text is nothing more than the researcher searching for what they already know or believe (Breeze, 2011). This critique suggests that as a methodology, CDA lacks rigour, a key feature of legitimate research and knowledge gathering. A prominent figure in CDA critiques is Widdowson (1995), who compares discourse analysis to literary criticism. Widdowson (1995) argues that analysts in the CDA field have “conceptual confusion” in regards to two main areas: their understanding of discourse versus text and analysis versus interpretation (p. 166). Warnings are made to be wary of these considerations due to the possibility of “replacing argument with persuasion and confusing cogency with conviction” due to the ideological commitment of analysts (Widdowson, 1995, p. 171). In response to Widdowson (1995), Fairclough (1996) disputes the claim that CDA is merely a form of interpretation and states that CDA has clearly differentiated between discourse and text and analysis and interpretation. Fairclough (1996) states interpretation has dual meanings: a) “an inherent part of ordinary language use” (p. 49) undertaken by people, not just analysts, to make meaning of spoken and written texts and b) a “matter of analysts seeking to show connections between both properties of text and practices of interpretation” within specific

social spaces, otherwise known as “examination” (p. 50). More specifically, Fairclough (1996) states that Widdowson (1995) also misrepresents modern CDA by presenting it as critical linguistics, instead of the emphasis on “showing how discursive practices, manifested in text which are heterogenous in forms and meanings, can be analysed as facets of wider process of social and cultural change” (p. 55).

By taking Widdowson’s (1995) critiques and Fairclough’s (1996) rebuttal into account, this MRP seeks to maintain and uphold the standards of rigour for qualitative research, including transferability and dependability (Padgett, 2017b). CDA is crucial to answering the research questions of this study in that it allows for the opportunity to critically examine the way in which discourses surrounding mass shootings and IPV operate in the media. Further, by aligning this study in Fairclough’s (1996) articulation of CDA, the discourses found in the data samples of this study will provide insight into the broader societal context in which mass shootings and IPV occur. Avoidance of Widdowson’s (1996) view of CDA as literary criticism or mere interpretation is addressed by following rigorous data analysis methods, which will be discussed below.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

With the combination of CDA and feminist studies principles and practices, a FCDA “aims to advance a rich and nuanced understanding of the complex workings of power and ideology in discourse in sustaining (hierarchically) gendered social arrangements” (Lazar, 2007, p. 141). Over the past twenty-five years, feminist scholars have undertaken analyses of gender ideology and power relations in discourse by adding a feminist twist on traditional CDA methodologies. These include ‘feminist stylistics’ (Mills, 1995), ‘feminist pragmatics’ (Christie,

2000), and ‘feminist conversation analysis’ (Kitzinger, 2000). As its own distinct methodology, a praxis emerges with a distinct set of principles as identified by Lazar (2005):

- a. *feminist analytical resistance*: aims to critique discourses that maintain patriarchal structures and contribute to social transformation (p. 5)
- b. *gender as ideological structure*: views gender as a social construction that categorizes people into hierarchical positions of domination (men) and subordination (women) (p. 6)
- c. *complexity of gender and power relations*: recognizes that the category of ‘women’ is not homogenous as dominant understandings articulate it to be and the operationalization of power through discursive means is ubiquitous across society (p. 9)
- d. *discourse in the (de)construction of gender*: understands the ways in which discourse and language as a social practice construct gender in social situations, institutions and structures (p. 11)
- e. *critical reflexivity as praxis*: has interest in reflexivity manifested in institutional practices and the ongoing need for critical self-reflexivity in order to achieve social transformation (p. 14)

Feminist scholars have often engaged in different forms of CDA without the explicit label of *feminist critical discourse analysis* as CDA in general aligns itself with the feminist principles of maintaining a political stance and focusing on social justice (Lazar, 2005, 2007). In fact, as discussed by van Dijk (2005), “feminist work has become paradigmatic for much discourse analysis” (p. 358-359). Lazar (2005) articulated the crucial reasons as to why FCDA specifically acquired the *feminist* label to its name:

...studies in CDA with a gender focus mostly adopt a critical feminist view of gender relations, motivated by the need to change the existing conditions of these relations...

CDA is one of those broadly progressive projects whose founders and dominant figures are nevertheless all straight white men, and Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1995) specifically remark on these men's failure to give credit to feminists by citing their work... What is striking, though, is that most feminist research in CDA is undertaken by a diversity of women in a wide range of geographical locations, not all of whom are white and heterosexual. (p. 2-4)

As a result, there has been a lack of organizing amongst analysts across the globe who have undertaken CDA with a feminist lens.

Based upon the above principles, FCDA is the best approach in answering the identified research questions as it allows for the examination of the interaction between gender and power in discourse exemplified through the media within the context of mass shootings.

Data Collection

As established by Jorgenson and Phillips (2002), CDA research values and recognizes different forms of knowledge and allows for the combination of such knowledges to expand upon the understanding of discourse. Subsequently, there exists limitless ways in which a CDA can be conducted through data collection and analysis in combination with a variety of theories, including post-structural feminism. This study follows Poole's (2007) approach to CDA in that it aligns with work produced by Fairclough (1989). Specifically, Poole's (2007) methodology focuses on the identification of a social problem and the ensuing ways to conduct a CDA on the identified issue. While Poole (2007) examines the social problem of recovery, the methodology is transferrable to other types of social issues. In this study, the social problem is mass shootings that are connected to IPV.

Data Sources

Data sources for this MRP are news media reports of the mass shootings. These sources were chosen as they allow for the exploration of dominant discourses that are at play in the media surrounding the topic. Further, critical discourse analyses of the media are important for this exploration as “journalism intersects with all fields of society” and acts as a “reconstruction of reality” (Carvalho, 2008, p. 162, 164). Through these sources, the language utilized by each news outlet is able to be examined to enable the extraction of discourses through identifying patterns and categories present in the text. Specifically, I conducted a Google News search of each mass shooting (First Baptist Church, Rancho Tehama Reserve and Plano, Texas) and selected the top five articles for each (see Table 1). This method was chosen as it approximates a random sample, which helps to mitigate potential bias in both myself as the researcher and specific news sources that I might choose for the sample. News outlets, such as CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC for example, each have bias in terms of how news is portrayed, what information is included, and has potential to be impacted by political happenings. Additionally, it is crucial to acknowledge that I also have bias in how I consume media. By selecting the first five articles that arose from a Google News search, I was able to mitigate bias as much as possible.

Within the search, the date range was restricted from the date of the shooting to one month after the incident in order to ensure the data was relevant to the events of the shooting. Because each of the incidents occurred in 2017, approximately three years ago, later articles have been published about the location or survivors that are no longer pertinent to the events of the shooting itself. For example, prior to restricting the date range, one search provided articles on how the survivors are coping during the current COVID-19 pandemic, which is irrelevant to the focus of this study. Once selected, each article received a code to indicate which incident they

belonged to and which article they were in the sample. For example, the first article from Group A is listed as A1. Refer to Appendix C for a list of the articles and their respective codes.

<i>Table 1</i>		
Group	Search Terms	Date Range of Search
A	“First Baptist Church shooting, Sutherland Springs, Texas”	5 November 2017-5 December 2017
B	“Rancho Tehama Reserve shooting, California”	14 November 2017-14 December 2017
C	“Plano, Texas shooting”	10 September 2017-10 October 2017

Population and Sampling

The Everytown for Gun Safety website publishes a data sheet that tracks and categorizes shootings in the United States based upon different criteria (EFGS, 2019b). These criteria include a) all mass shootings; b) shooter prohibited from having a gun; c) dangerous warning signs; d) killed intimate partner or family member; and e) assault weapon or high-capacity magazine. Utilizing filters based on each criterion, the shootings that aligned with the “killed intimate partner or family member” and “history of domestic violence known within the last five years” comprised the population for the study. To be considered for the sample, the shootings also had to align with the definition of a mass shooting, happen within the last five years, and occur in the United States. The rationale for this criterion is to ensure that the incidents studied were all classified under the same definition and happened in a time frame in which they applicable to modern day incidents. This contributed to the rigour of the study by standardizing the eligibility criteria for the sample, which reduced bias. The three mass shootings with the highest mortality rates were selected as the sample for the study in order to demonstrate the pertinence in addressing mass shootings rooted in IPV and their widespread harm. This study examines three incidents, rather than only exploring one, to allow for comparisons to be made to reveal patterns regarding the discourses that are present in each. For each mass shooting, five news articles were examined, which make up the data sources of 15 articles in total.

The three mass shootings that were examined for this MRP are the First Baptist Church shooting (Sutherland Springs, Texas, 2017) in which 25 people were killed and 20 were injured, the Rancho Tehama Reserve shooting (California, 2017) in which five people were killed and 12 were injured, and the Plano Texas shooting (2017) in which eight people were killed and one was injured. For a summary of each shooting, refer to Appendix A. References for each data source are included in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

Following data collection, I utilized Poole's (2007) methodology to analyze the data, which comprised of 15 articles in total, five for each of the three shootings examined. For this part of the methodology, I also followed the work of LeBlanc (2016), who similarly utilized Poole (2007) in their critical discourse analysis. Foremost, I did an initial read through of each article and took notes summarizing them into a table. Each column of the table contained the articles with their respective notes placed in the row next to them. This was useful in that it enabled me to compare and contrast summaries not only for the articles that discussed the same mass shooting, but also articles pertaining to the other incidents being studied. Next, I conducted a more comprehensive read of each article and highlighted specific keywords and phrases that spoke to the way in which the events of the shooting were articulated. I logged these keywords in a document that stipulated which article they belonged to before amalgamating the keywords into categories based upon how they corresponded with each other. The categories were created based upon the language being used in the phrases. As LeBlanc (2016) identified, the process of identifying "words, phrases, facts and statistics that fit into these categories" (p. 28) enables the emergence and extraction of various discourses.

Reflexivity in Research

As discussed by Poole (2007), a crucial element to CDA data analysis is engaging in reflexive journaling to record how and why each decision was made. This particular step especially compelled me to utilize Poole's (2007) methodology in that it aligns with FCDA and post-structural feminism that both urge a researcher to engage in critical self-reflexivity throughout the entire research process (Lazar, 2005, 2007). As a white, cisgender woman, I benefit from immense privilege in that the way in which the world is constructed, and the discourses that are utilized to do so, represents the worldview to which I am a part of. My whiteness has meant that when information is presented to me, through platforms such as education or the media, it can be accepted as truth. Even in my journey as a feminist, which compels critique and transformation of power and oppression, there have been very few spaces that demand whiteness within feminism be challenged. Therefore, by utilizing reflexive journaling, I sought to engage in how I interacted with the data by turning the critical lens inward to unearth and challenge my own privilege and the way in which it impacted my research.

Summary

To conclude, this chapter discussed the research questions this study is seeking to answer, including what dominant discourses are employed by the media when reporting on mass shootings with gender-based violence, specifically IPV, is involved and how power is operationalized through these discourses. The chapter also provided an overview of CDA as a methodological approach and its critiques, before discussing FCDA as the methodological approach of this study. FCDA is crucial to answering the research questions because it brings in important and nuanced understandings of gender, power and language. Next, the chapter

discussed the data collection and analysis methods utilized in the study, including a specific focus on the importance of reflexivity in feminist research.

CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the feminist critical discourse analysis of 15 articles pertaining to three mass shooting incidents. The findings provide an in-depth review of the three discourses that emerged from the data and quotations from the articles that represent each of the identified discourses. As stated previously, the data sources were labeled according to shooting and article number. The First Baptist Church shooting is Group A, the Rancho Tehama Reserve shooting is Group B, and the Plano, Texas shooting is Group C.

Findings

I examined three mass shootings by analyzing five news articles pertaining to each, cumulating for a total of 15 articles. These articles originated from various online news sources, including CNN, the Christian Science Monitor, the Daily Mail, Fox News, Global News, the Guardian, the Los Angeles Times, NBC News, the New York Times, Toronto Sun, USA Today and the Washington Post. Through this process, three discourses emerged from the data. First, the initial discourse that appeared I refer to as “The Personal is Private.” This name was given to the discourse due to the either absent or very limited discussion of the perpetrator’s known history of IPV, the targeting of the perpetrator’s intimate partner and the role it played in leading to the shooting. The second discourse that was extracted pertained to the shock expressed by officials and local community members that the shooting happened in what they referred to as a close-knit, small community as well as the language used by the article authors to paint the image of a serene, quaint town plagued by an unusual act of violence. I refer to this discourse as “Small Town Utopia.” Finally, the third discourse that appeared is called “The Tolerated Deviant” to represent the way in which the perpetrators were constructed as deviant in

relationship to their violation of social norms that were not related to their status as an abuser. Each of the discourses are outlined below.

Throughout this section, it is recommended that the reader to refer to Appendix A as it provides an overview of each mass shooting that will provide greater context to the discourses discussed below. As many of the discourses emerged through quotes from witnesses, community members and officials, Appendix A may provide some additional details that are not represented in the quotations themselves.¹ Additionally, the term “domestic violence” is used frequently throughout the chapter to mirror the language utilized in the articles and the Everytown for Gun Safety criteria (EFGS, 2019b). As discussed in Chapter 1, this study recognizes that “domestic violence” as a term can be limiting in that it perpetuates the assumption that the perpetrator must be cohabiting with the victim and fails to highlight the disproportionate rate in which women are victims of violence by their male partners. Therefore, when “domestic violence” is utilized in the articles, this MRP recognizes and understands this terminology to be a form of both IPV and gender-based violence.

The Personal is Private

Each of the incidents examined for this study met the criteria of the perpetrator targeting an intimate partner or family member in the mass shooting as well as having a known history of domestic violence. Despite sharing these traits, not all of the articles discussed a history of domestic violence, even when they discussed a partner of the perpetrator or a relative of a partner being killed in the shooting. The level of details provided on the presence of domestic violence varied across news source and across incidents. The discourse was named to represent how IPV

¹ Occasionally, multiple articles utilized the same quotations from witnesses, community members and/or officials, such as if a witness gave a public statement. If this occurs, it will be indicated accordingly in the respective section.

in the data sources was portrayed as a private issue in the sense that while the events of the shooting that impacted the public were heavily discussed, the events that led up to the shooting that occurred privately were rarely discussed, if at all. Further, the reporting of IPV, both historical and the incidents relating to the shooting, was limited. The name of the discourse is intentional in that it seeks to directly juxtaposition itself from the theoretical underpinning of this study and the hallmark feminist saying, “the personal is political,” as discussed in Chapter 3.

Targeting an Intimate Partner. A shared commonality within this discourse was a discussion, or lack there of, on the targeting of an intimate partner in the shooting, often only emerging when family members of the partner or witnesses made direct statements to the media. In the First Baptist Church shooting, only article A1 reported that the grandmother-in-law of the shooter was a victim killed in the attack at the church while only article A3 stated that the perpetrator’s wife normally attended the church where the shooting took place. Similarly, only one article covering the Rancho Tehama shooting referenced the killing of the perpetrator’s wife. It merely stated, “Investigators also discovered the fifth victim, [perpetrator’s] wife, beneath the floorboards of their home” (Article B2) before simply moving onto an entirely new topic. Also in the reporting of the Rancho Tehama Reserve shooting, while not explicitly discussing the killing of the perpetrator’s wife, article B5 stated, “The authorities had struggled to make contact with the gunman’s family members after the shootings and were concerned about their safety,” vaguely suggesting there was reason to believe the perpetrator’s family had been targeted.

In the Plano, Texas shooting, the data sources discussed the killing of the perpetrator’s wife, who was the owner of the house in which the shooting occurred, in greater detail by including statements from the victim’s mother and community members who identified the perpetrator and victim. For example, article C1 included a quote from a victim’s mother, saying

“one victim was her daughter...who owned the home and had recently filed for divorce from her husband” and that “her daughter’s estranged husband showed up at the house and opened fire.” Article C5 was more explicit in that the opening statement to the article was that a woman “was shot dead by her husband.” The other articles were less specific. Article C3 reported, “The suspected shooter was known by people at the residence and had ties to the home. The parents of the owner of the house who died stated the daughter and her husband were going through a divorce.” It further included a statement that a witness saw the husband “at a nearby bar before the shooting and that he seemed upset.” Article C4 also acknowledged that the owner of the house, who was killed, had filed for divorce in two months prior to the shooting.

In describing the events of the Plano shooting, many of the articles included statements from witnesses who observed the perpetrator arriving to the home and arguing with the victim. Article C2 included a quote from a witness that “a man arrived at the house and had an argument with a woman outside before drawing an automatic weapon and starting to shoot.” It continued:

I seen a man argue with a woman. They were standing outside and they’re arguing. The woman was trying to go back in and as she was going back in the house you seen the man pull out his gun and starting just releasing. (Article C2)

Article C4 included that the witness stated there was an altercation that increasingly grew louder and that eventually the woman “tried to break away from the man.” The witness stated, “She was going into the house. He was coming right behind her.” Article C5 included similar statements from the witness.

History of Violence. This discourse also employed vague and limited language on the history of violence by the perpetrator and potential warning signs of escalating violence. While some of the articles did discuss a prior history of conflict with a partner, they often did not utilize

“domestic violence” or “intimate partner violence” to describe the behaviour of the perpetrator. In fact, only two articles actually used the term “domestic violence” in their reports (articles A1 and B4). When the perpetrators’ histories were discussed, they occupied relatively little space in the articles compared to the events of the shooting itself. Notably, articles A2, A3, and B3 made no direct or indirect mention of a history of intimate partner violence or violence directed towards women in their reporting.

In the First Baptist Church shooting, articles A1, A4 and A5 each discussed the perpetrator’s history of IPV in relatively neutral terms. For example, article A1 stated that the perpetrator was reported to have been “charged in military court in 2012 on suspicion of assaulting his spouse and their child” and as a result he “received a bad conduct discharge, confinement for 12 months, and was demoted to E-1, or airman basic.” Articles A4 and A5 corroborated this charge and the subsequent punishment by the military court. The details of the alleged assault were not provided by any of the articles and no further details on a history of violence were reported. Rather than being referred to as “domestic violence” or “intimate partner violence,” articles A4 and A5 utilized varying versions of “being court-martialed” to describe the outcome of the perpetrator’s behaviour and the consequences that followed, with article A1 being the only to utilize “domestic violence.”

Additionally, articles A1 and A4 discussed prior police involvement with the perpetrator of the First Baptist Church shooting, including an incident that happened within a week of the shooting. Specifically, article A4 reported that police were at the property of the perpetrator in the week leading up to the attack but did not specify the reasons for the visit. In article A1, it was reported that “investigators pieced together from social media and interviews that [the perpetrator] had become increasingly obsessed over an unspecified family dispute. Authorities

said he sent threatening texts as recently as Sunday morning to his mother-in-law.” It is unclear whether the “threatening texts” referenced in A1 are related to the reason for the police visit referenced in A4 as neither provided further details on the nature of the police visit or the family dispute.

In the Rancho Tehama Reserve shooting reports, the articles frequently discussed prior violence against women by the perpetrator when it pertained to a public dispute with female community members, rather than the IPV that took place in the privacy of the perpetrator’s home. Article B1 reported that the perpetrator “had been arrested in January for stabbing a woman and robbing another woman, both of whom obtained restraining orders against him.” It further stated that the woman who was stabbed in January was killed in the shooting. Article B4 included a comment by a local official who stated, “the shooter was facing charges of assaulting one of the feuding neighbours in January and that she had a restraining order against him.” In the events of the shooting, article B5 stated that the gunman “first shot a woman near his home with whom he had a continuing dispute.” Article B4 included an additional perspective of the conflict with the perpetrator’s neighbours by including comments from the perpetrator’s mother who stated that she “posted his \$160,000 bail and spent \$10,000 on a lawyer after he was arrested in January for stabbing a neighbour” and that “the neighbor was slightly cut after [the perpetrator] grabbed a steak knife out of the hand of the neighbour who was threatening him with it.”

In Plano, Texas, the attack took place at the residence of the perpetrator’s wife, who was hosting a football-watching party with her friends. The articles were also vague in describing a history of violence. Article C5 cited that the perpetrator’s wife had filed for divorce proceedings citing “discord or conflict of personalities” but not for a restraining order. It continued that the following Monday would have been the couple’s sixth wedding anniversary, referring to the

perpetrator as her “estranged husband.” It stated that the husband was “furious about [his wife] filing for divorce.” The article included a statement from the friend of the victim stating that she “had a sharp tongue around her husband – and vice versa.” The friend continued:

I always felt that their arguing got kind of ugly sometimes. He would say something to her and I would think, “Wow, if my husband ever spoke to me like that – I can’t believe he does that,” and then she’d turn around and give it right back to him. (Article C5)

In the absence of further details on the perpetrator’s history of IPV, the inclusion of this statement takes on the air of victim-blaming by suggesting that the wife had provoked the perpetrator by arguing with him.

To summarize, “The Personal is Private” discourse is named to represent how the media portrayed the IPV-related events of the shootings, including both the perpetrator’s history of violence as well as the targeting of the intimate partner in the shooting, as private events. By failing to incorporate the perpetrator’s history of IPV into the reports, the media acted to separate the “private” events of the shooting from the public events, despite the private events being integral to what occurred in public. Overarchingly, the media failed to accurately portray IPV as connected to the mass shootings, evidenced in the notable absence of even the term “domestic violence” across the incidents.

Small Town Utopia

Throughout the data analysis phase, a significant discourse that arose from the articles was the use of language to portray of the locations of the shootings as peaceful, small towns. The discourse constructed the towns as existing separate from the violence of the rest of the world. Each of the shootings examined in this study happened to take place in rural towns, which contributed to the language used to describe the community as a “small town utopia,” which

gave way to the name of this discourse. This discourse was executed through the inclusion of quotations and statements from local officials, witnesses and community members that emphasized shock and disbelief that such an incident could happen in their community. The ubiquitous inclusion of such quotations and reactions from community members existed across nearly every data sample, with the exception of articles A1 and C2. Many of the comments from witnesses, officials or community members were supplemented by statements by the article author on the population size of the towns in which the shooting occurred. The name “Small Town Utopia” is intended to represent that a core similarity amongst these statements that rests in the understanding that violence, both domestic and gun-related, existing in a small, rural town was unexpected.

The First Baptist Church shooting took place in Sutherland Springs, Texas. The church was described as a “homely, small church with many small children in attendance, copious flowers and plenty of singing to the accompaniment of electric and acoustic guitars” by article A4. It further included a statement by a community member who “was stunned such violence would be wreaked upon a small, quiet community.” Similarly, another community member stated, “This is horrific for our tiny little tight-knit town” in article A5. The article also included a comment by the Texas Attorney General who stated in a press conference that “‘people never think’ a shooting like this can ‘happen in their communities’” and that “in a small town.... I can imagine that these people are devastated.” The author of article A2 stated, “The town of Sutherland Springs has fewer than 1,000 residents and is located approximately 40 miles east of San Antonio.” Likewise, a community member in article A4 stated that Sutherland Springs only has a few hundred residents, with the author of A5 stating more specifically that it has a population of 400 residents.

The articles in Group B, covering the Rancho Tehama Reserve shooting, employed similar language. Rancho Tehama Reserve is described as “a small community in Northern California” (article B1). The article later states that it is “a subdivision that is home to almost 1,500 people” and “is described on its website as a ‘quiet private country community.’” Similarly, article B5 described Rancho Tehama Reserve as “a small Northern California town” that is “sparsely populated” with under 1,500 residents. Article B4 states, “The shootings occurred in the rural community of Rancho Tehama Reserve, a homeowners association in a sparsely populated area of rolling oak woodlands dotted with grazing cattle about 130 miles north of Sacramento.” It continued by stating that “many there live in poverty, but others are better off” and supplemented this with a quote by a community member who stated, “It’s not a bad community at all. Some people keep their properties nice—some don’t.” In addition to the discourse around the community as a whole, the media also executed this discourse in describing Rancho Tehama Elementary school, a location in the shooting. Article B1 emphasized that the school “houses about 100 kindergarteners to fifth-graders.” Article B3 was more specific in describing the school by stating that it is “a small, rural school – just under 100 students, nine employees and four classrooms.”

Similar to the language included in the previous shootings, the data for the Plano, Texas shooting also heavily focused on the shock experienced by officials in the community. In article C1, the Chief of Police is quoted in saying, “We’ve never had a shooting of this magnitude. We’ve never seen this many victims before.” Article C3 similarly stated, “Plano officials described the shooting as ‘unprecedented’ and as something beyond anything they thought they ever would have to respond to... [The Police Chief stated that the] nature of the investigation is unlike anything the department has seen.” This sentiment was echoed in article C4. Article C5

further elaborated when a spokesperson for the local police stated, “I’ve been here all my life. I’ve never heard of anything like this.”

In addition to the officials in Plano, Texas, community members further described the community under the “Small Town Utopia” discourse. For example, a community member stated, “I’m worried. It’s like one big family here” in both articles C3 and C5 in response to the shooting taking place. Article C4 described the events leading up to the shooting by painting a picture of a serene and joy-filled afternoon and utilizing a community member’s description of the town. It stated:

Laughter and the smell of a grill filled the street as the party kicked off in the afternoon, neighbors told reporters. People in Cowboys jerseys were seen filtering in and out of the house. Even that was more ruckus than usual for [community member], who works at an assisted-living center down the street. ‘There’s nothing that ever happens over here,’ [community member] told [the news outlet]. ‘It’s like they say, quiet as a mouse.’

(Article C4)

The article further emphasized that Plano is “a sprawling suburb of quiet homes and big parks many miles north of Dallas” and that the specific location of the shooting occurred in a house specifically located “between a middle school and a retirement home.”

The “Small Town Utopia” discourse represents the use of language to portray the locations of the shootings as peaceful, small towns. As previously stated, the discourse constructed the towns as non-violent spaces existing separate from the violence of the rest of the world. Coincidentally, each of the shootings examined in this study happened to occur in rural locations, which exacerbated their depiction as somehow different from the outside world. The

discourse is exemplified in the widespread use of language to suggest that violence, both domestic and gun-related, existing in a small, rural town was unexpected.

The Tolerated Deviant

Finally, the last discourse that emerged pertains to the way in which the perpetrators were portrayed in the data. Specifically, the media constructed the perpetrators as deviant, not in terms of the violence they committed against their partners, but rather through additional factors such as mental health or potential substance use. Additionally, many of the data sources expressed confusion surrounding the motive for perpetrators to engage in the shooting, despite each of them involving a history of domestic violence and the targeting or killing of intimate partners. The name of the discourse seeks to demonstrate the manner in which the media did not see these factors as examples of what they categorized as the perpetrator's otherwise deviant behaviours or actions. In short, what made the perpetrator deviant in the media was not being a violent partner, but rather not conforming to other societal norms. As a subset of this discourse, this section will also discuss the perpetrators' abilities to acquire firearms.

Following the First Baptist church shooting, President Trump made a statement suggesting that the shooting was the result of the perpetrator's mental health. Article A1 included a statement Trump saying the shooting was "caused by a 'mental health problem,' not an issue with gun laws." More specifically, the article quoted Trump saying, "This isn't a guns [*sic*] situation. This is a mental health problem at the highest level." The quote continued with Trump saying, "mental health is your problem here" and calling the shooter "a very deranged individual." Similarly, article A4 also discussed President Trump's reaction to the shooting by stating:

Asked at a press conference in Tokyo what policies he would support to tackle mass shootings, the president focused on the mental health of the perpetrator and claimed that gun ownership was not a factor. ‘We have a lot of mental health problems in our country, as do other countries, but this isn’t a guns [*sic*] situation,’ Trump said. ‘Fortunately somebody else had a gun that was shooting in the opposite direction, otherwise it wouldn’t have been as bad as it was, it would have been much worse. This is a mental health problem at the highest level. It’s a very sad event...these are great people at a very, very sad event, but that’s the way I view it. (Article A4)

This article is an outlier in that it is the only data source to employ a critical view of an official’s response. This article will be discussed in greater detail below.

Articles A2 and A3 and A5 were vaguer in their descriptions by including quotes from various officials categorizing the shooting as “evil.” For example, article A2 included a tweet from the Texas Governor who called the shooting an “evil act.” Similarly, article A3, while discussing shootings that occur in churches, quoted an archbishop who stated that “evil attacks the weakest” in regards to the 2016 killing of a Catholic priest in France. Within the context of the First Baptist Church shooting, it appears that the article is suggesting that the perpetrator was “weak” and therefore susceptible to becoming “evil.” It further stated that “evil is defeated by the trust and love of Christ Jesus.” Notably, this article did not discuss the perpetrator’s extensive history of IPV nor his ability to acquire firearms. Article A5 also included statements by Trump calling the shooting “an act of evil.”

Both article A4 and A5 included the word “terrorist” in their reporting; however, the articles contextualized the word in very different manners. Article A5 expressed confusion surrounding the motive as the perpetrator, who is a white male, as he “didn’t appear to be linked

to organized terrorist groups.” As previously stated, article A4 was the only to include a direct critique of the response to the shooting by comparing it to the Las Vegas shooting and a truck attack in New York City. It states:

The shooting comes a month after a gunman opened fired on an open air concert in Las Vegas, leaving 58 dead and 546 injured. After that, Trump showed himself to be reluctant to get involved in the debate around gun control, limiting himself to sending prayers to the victims and their families. That was in stark contrast to the rapid and virulent response he had to the truck attack in New York last week, where eight people were mowed down by a driver inspired by the terrorist group Isis. After that attack, Trump called for a crackdown on immigration rules. (Article A4).

Despite the Las Vegas and First Baptist Church shootings, both committed by white males, killing and injuring significantly more people than the New York truck attack, the President was unwilling to label them acts of terrorism, rhetoric echoing the reporting in article A5. This contrast will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Similar to the First Baptist Church shooting, reactions to the Rancho Tehama Reserve shooting also employed language suggesting that mental illness and behaviours deemed as deviant unrelated to IPV caused the shooting. For example, article B1 quoted a neighbor and community member saying:

‘The crazy thing is that the neighbor has been shooting a lot of bullets lately, hundreds of rounds, large magazines,’ [community member] said. ‘We made it aware that this guy is crazy and he’s been threatening us.’ Living near the gunman was ‘hell,’ [community member] said, adding he was a known felon who often harassed [community member] and his neighbors. (Article B1)

Article B5 echoed this language by including additional quotes by the same community member stating, “As far as we know he was, you know, crazy.”

Article B2 further employed language to characterize the perpetrator by including comments from his sister that “her brother had a history of mental illness and in recent months seemed ‘possessed or demonic.’” Article B4 similarly discussed comments made by the perpetrator’s sister who said that the perpetrator had a “violent temper” and had “no business owning firearms.” Additionally, article B4 included quotes from a community member and neighbor to the perpetrator who stated:

[They] heard constant gunfire from the area of the gunman’s house but couldn’t say for sure it was him firing. ‘You could hear the yelling. He’d go off the hinges,’ [the community member] said. The shooting, ‘it would be during the day, during the night, I mean it didn’t matter.’ (Article B4)

The community member stated, “The sheriff wouldn’t do anything about it.” The Sheriff speculated that the perpetrator’s motive was “getting even with his neighbours and when it went that far – he just went on a rampage.” Article B1 made a point to state that the perpetrator’s property is a collection of mobile homes and that “Google Earth images show numerous marijuana grows in the neighborhood.” Curiously, article B4 also made a point to describe the perpetrator as a “marijuana grower.” It is unclear how these facts are related to the events of the shooting.

It is notable that none of the articles regarding the Plano, Texas shooting included reactions from state or federal officials. Further, nearly all of the articles on the Plano, Texas shooting either provided no statement on a possible motive (articles C2 and C4) or simply stated that a motive had not been confirmed (articles C1 and C3). Within this understanding, it is

noteworthy to recognize that this was the only shooting of the sample to take place in a non-public setting, as it occurred in a private home owned by the wife of the perpetrator. While both articles C1 and C5 referred to the perpetrator as one of the victim's "estranged husband," only article C5 slightly expanded upon this. It stated that the perpetrator was "furious about [the victim] filing for divorce" and proceed to enter the home and begin shooting.

Firearm Acquisition. Within this discourse, a subset emerged about the ability of the perpetrators to acquire the firearms used in the shootings despite their "deviant" status. This discussion is inherent to "The Tolerated Deviant" discourse as many of the quotes included above suggest that mental health is the issue with gun ownership, not being a perpetrator of IPV or the ability of guns to kill a large amount of people at once. Within this subset, many of the articles had varying insights into firearm acquisition or at times, none at all. For example, none of the articles covering the Plano, Texas shooting (Group C) discussed how firearms were acquired by the perpetrator or engaged in a critical discussion of the impact of those with violent histories having access to firearms.

In the reporting of the Rancho Tehama Reserve shooting, article B2 was the sole article to provide an in-depth discussion of the perpetrator's ability to acquire the firearms used in the shooting. It began by stating, "He made his own killing machines." It stated that the perpetrator's weapons included "two AR-15 type semi-automatic rifles with multi-round magazines that he assembled himself" and described this as an "arsenal" of weapons. The article proceeded to say that according to experts, "[the perpetrator] apparently exploited a legal loophole that enabled him to get around California's tough gun laws by ordering the parts for a weapon that is illegal in that state – and putting it together at home." This loophole became the focus of the article and it highlighted interviews with experts to discuss how the perpetrator was legally able to order gun

parts and assemble them himself. The article identified that these are known as “ghost guns,” as they are essentially untraceable.

In contextualizing this information with the events of the shooting, article B2 noted that the perpetrator also owned two handguns that were used in the killings in addition to the self-assembled assault rifles. The article included a paraphrase made by a local official that “despite being out on bail for stabbing a neighbor in January, the 44-year-old shooter was not barred from owning a weapon.” It proceeded to add that ghost guns can range from \$450 to \$1,000 and require “absolutely no background checks.”

In contrast to the level of detail provided in article B2, the remaining articles examined within the Rancho Tehama Reserve shooting provided varying levels of information on the perpetrator’s ability to acquire such weapons. Article B1 stated that the perpetrator “fired a gun – possibly an AR-15 Bushmaster rifle – during the attack” and “the rifle was specifically mentioned as illegal in the criminal complaint”. Articles B4 and B5 both released varying accounts of the perpetrator’s bail, either stating it was unclear what the bail terms were (article B4) or that “the judge’s order did not prohibit the gunman from possessing firearms” (article B5). Within the context of IPV, ghost guns present a significant concern as those who have histories of violence are still legally able to access assault-style weapons without a background check, essentially rendering them undetectable. This is further compounded by the failure of the media to report upon the problematic nature of ghost guns and the way in which they circumvent safety measures, with article B2 being the only data source to even make mention of them.

In the First Baptist Church shooting (Group A), the majority of the articles were vague in describing the perpetrator’s acquisition of the firearms used, demonstrating a similar discourse to all Group C articles and articles B1, B3, B4 and B5. However, similar to article B2’s focus on

bringing attention to the unbarred access the Rancho Tehama Reserve perpetrator had in purchasing a ghost gun, article A1 engaged in a critical conversation about the way in which the perpetrator in the First Baptist Church Shooting obtained weapons considering his history of domestic violence. It stated:

The US Air Force acknowledged [perpetrator's] court martial conviction was not entered into the federal law enforcement database at the National Crime Information Center, information that might have prevented gun sales to [the perpetrator]. Federal law prohibits people convicted of misdemeanor crime involving domestic violence from owning firearms. (Article A1)

The article continued to state that when the gun used in the shooting was purchased, the perpetrator when filling out paperwork for a background check “checked a box to indicate he didn’t have any disqualifying criminal history... There was no disqualifying information in his background check.”

To summarize, “The Tolerated Deviant” discourse represents the way in which the media constructed the perpetrators as deviant in relation to their actions outside of IPV and expressed confusion as to what the perpetrator’s motives were when the shooting occurred in the absence of non-IPV related information, such as in the case of the Plano, Texas shooting. Despite each of the shootings involving a perpetrator with a history of domestic violence and the targeting or killing of an intimate partner, the media overarchingly contributed the events of the shooting to the perpetrator’s deviance from social norms in other facets of life. Within the discourse was the subset of how despite being considered deviant for non-IPV related characteristics, the perpetrators were still able to acquire firearms with very few barriers.

Summary

This chapter discussed the three discourses that emerged from the data. The first discourse to emerge was called “The Personal is Private” due to the lack of reporting on the specific history of IPV by the perpetrator while simultaneously heavily focusing in the public events of the shooting. Next, the “Small Town Utopia” discourse demonstrated the emphasis on the articles to use language describing the locations of the shootings as a “small, close-knit town” thus leading to a sense of shock that such an incident could occur. Finally, “The Tolerated Deviant” discourse exemplified the way in which the media portrays the perpetrator as deviant as a result factors unrelated to their history of committing IPV.

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

Chapter 6 provides a detailed interpretation of the results, a summary of the findings as they relate to the research questions, an overview of the strengths and limitations of the study, and a discussion of the implications the findings create for social work practice.

Discussion of Findings

This section will engage in a critical discussion and interpretation of each of the discourses by contextualizing them within post-structural feminism as a theoretical framework and the literature underpinning the study. The first discourse to emerge from the data was “The Personal is Private,” named to represent how IPV in the data sources was portrayed as a private issue that was not directly related to the shooting. This name was specifically given to juxtapose the feminist saying, “the personal is political,” coined 50 years ago. The name represents precisely what feminism has been seeking to address in regards to IPV and aims to expose the way in which individual experiences that occurred in private settings are portrayed as private issues by being discussed *adjacent* to the shootings, not *inextricably connected* to them.

For example, despite the First Baptist Church shooting perpetrator having an extensive documented history of violence, only three of the five articles offered limited reporting on the 2012 charge in military court of assault of his wife and child and only one referred to it as “domestic violence” (article A1). Below is a brief, non-exhaustive outline of the perpetrator’s history received from EFGS (2018) that was not included in the data:

- In the 2012 charge, the perpetrator had assaulted his wife and made multiple threats to kill her and her family while holding her at gunpoint. He was convicted of strangling and choking his wife and fracturing her infant son’s skull (Article A1 referred to this as “suspicion of assault”).

- After, he made death threats towards the military officers who charged him and was caught smuggling firearms onto the Air Force base. The perpetrator and his wife divorced after these incidents.
- Following his release, the perpetrator was investigated for sexual assault, rape and physical assault of his new girlfriend in 2013. They wed in 2014.
- 2014: the perpetrator was charged with cruelty to animals, a misdemeanor
- 2015: a resident of Colorado received a protection order against the perpetrator
- Prior to the shooting, the perpetrator falsified his background check to receive a license to be a security guard.

Likewise, the media failed to report that the Rancho Tehama Reserve shooting began with the perpetrator killing his wife the evening before the shooting and only one article (B2) specified that the mass shooting was carried out with firearms possessed in violation of his restraining order per his pending felony and misdemeanor charges by ordering ghost guns. Further, while the Plano, Texas shooting perpetrator had no official documentations of IPV, the media failed to include anecdotal evidence from the mother of the wife who was killed. A separate source outside of the data quoted the mother saying that her daughter's husband was physically abusive and at one point slammed her head against a wall, which her daughter did not report to the police (Light et al., 2017). This demonstrates an important aspect of IPV in that it often goes unreported in official capacities and is instead discussed in the victim's informal support systems.

This discourse also raises serious concerns about the relatively unbarred access the perpetrators had to firearms, even when they had violent records, when contextualized in "The Tolerated Deviant" discourse. This consideration becomes more nuanced when we consider the

amount of IPV that is not reported due to barriers survivors may be experiencing. One such barrier is apparent: even when the violence is reported, and the perpetrator is *convicted*, there are still avenues in which they are able to acquire firearms. The perpetrators in this study were enabled in one way or the other to continue acquiring their own personal arsenal.

These findings align with much of the existing literature. Primarily, Fairbairn and Dawson (2013) conducted a longitudinal CDA of intimate partner homicides and found that while domestic violence was portrayed as a more dynamic issue as time went on, there were notable absences in the discourse, including the failure of the media to endorse social and political responses that seek to prevent or mitigate future acts of violence and lack of consultation with experts in the violence against women sector. Of the 15 articles, precisely zero consulted with violence against women experts. Similarly, while some took more nuanced stances on loopholes and their ability to be exploited and other means for perpetrators to acquire weapons, none explicitly took a stance on the problematic nature of gun ownership and the connection between mass shootings and IPV. Further, domestic violence or violence against women were only portrayed when documented in police or court reports, which negates and ignores the volume of IPV that is documented in informal channels.

Similarly, Smucker et al. (2018) examined the outcomes of intimate partner homicide-suicides and found that risk of lethality for the victim and perpetrator, as well as risk for additional killings, increased when the violent partner had access to a firearm. This coincides with Garcia et al. (2007) and EFGS (2019b) who studied loopholes that allow perpetrators to continue accessing firearms, even after a formal charge. In each of the incidents studied, the discourse did not directly challenge the access each of the perpetrators had, aligning with Fairbairn and Dawson's (2013) findings that the media failed to connect intimate partner

homicides as connected to structural misogyny and hegemonic masculinity and did not endorse any social or political solutions to address this.

In conjuncture with “The Personal is Private,” the “Small Town Utopia” discourse emerged from the nearly identical language utilized in 13 of the 15 articles. The main characteristic of this discourse was language used to signify the location of the shootings as peaceful, quiet rural towns “where nothing ever happens” through either the use of comments from community members or additional descriptors and facts by the author. This discussion is not meant to minimize the shock and harm that community members, witnesses and family members experienced due to the shooting. The occurrence of violence in any form in one’s community can be traumatic, and this study recognizes that mass shootings in particular can shake a community in unique ways. Shock and disbelief are legitimate reactions to a violent and scary situation, especially when widespread grief is involved. Rather, this discourse is intended to demonstrate how the media failed to contextualize the shootings as inextricably connected to IPV considering its ubiquitous nature across geographic locations.

Post-structural feminism recognizes that a power imbalance exists within heterosexual relationships and that these imbalances often go without scrutiny or critical engagement (Sharp & Keyton, 2016). Despite the heavy focus on the small, rural towns, and in the presence of “The Personal is Private” discourse, the media failed to critically engage with the mass shootings examined, leading to the creation of the “Small Town Utopia” discourse. Further, post-structural feminism is relevant to an analysis of IPV as it rejects meta-narratives and recognizes multiple subjectivities (Fraser, 2003). In terms of the findings within this discourse, this principle is crucial in recognizing that while each situation had many parallels, each of the partners of the perpetrators had different experiences in terms of the violence and abuse they experienced. This

analysis of IPV enables this study to expose the way in which the media utilizes discourse to perpetuate meta-narratives around the nature of IPV, such as in the “Small Town Utopia” discourse.

Each of the shootings examined for this study occurred in rural environments: Sutherland Springs, Texas; Rancho Tehama Reserve, California; and Plano, Texas. The language utilized by the media reports suggest that being a small town where many people may know each and have an established sense of community means that violence is not a common occurrence in such places. However, IPV is not less likely to occur just because one lives in a small town. In fact, Peek-Asa et al. (2011) found that women in rural areas reported a higher prevalence of IPV compared to those in urban settings, specifically citing more severe physical violence. These survivors also experienced increased barriers in accessing supports as the distance to the nearest resource was triple than that of urban environments (Peek-Asa et al., 2011). It is important to note that a gap in the statistics exist on instances of IPV that do not get reported to the police.

Both “The Personal is Private” and the “Small Town Utopia” interact to pave way for the final discourse: “The Tolerated Deviant.” The name of this discourse is intended to represent the way in which the media constructs the perpetrators as deviant in acts separate from their involvement in IPV. Similarly, the media purported that the motives of the perpetrators were unclear when there was less information available on other forms of potential delinquency exemplified by the perpetrator. In essence, the behaviours of the perpetrator that violated social norms involving outsiders (e.g. neighbours) deemed them as deviant in the media while the behaviours that occurred in private were ignored and lead to uncertainty when the media sought to establish a motive. The name seeks to demonstrate that despite the “deviant” behaviour reported on by the media, the perpetrator’s engagement in IPV was tolerated. Further, it seeks to

bring focus to the emphasis on the perpetrator's mental health that ensued as a result, even when none of the articles included statements by doctors or mental health professionals confirming diagnoses.

A significant characteristic to this construction was the individualizing of the perpetrators, who were all white males. This individualizing took place in the absence of a discussion about their gender and especially their race. These portrayals were further notable in the lack of critical discussion around the trend of mass violence committed by white males and paved the way for non-IPV related behaviours to be blamed for the shootings. The language utilized in the data perpetuates the incorrect notion that mental illness leads to violence, producing and reproducing sanism. Such portrayals are stigmatizing to those who do experience mental health and discredits the fact that those with mental illnesses are more likely to experience violence than those without mental illnesses (Canadian Mental Health Association, n.d.). This language, in addition to perpetrating stigma against mental illness, also draws the attention away from the root of these shootings: intimate partner violence.

Post-structural feminism, within the context of a FCDA, is useful in examining the way in which gender, power and language interact to provide "a robust lens to analyze how discourses reflect, reinscribe and sometimes resist hegemonic patterns" (Thompson, 2010, p. 120). It also recognizes that inherent to language is power, which has the ability to uphold structures by becoming the norm and by extension, turning invisible (Weedon, 1997). For instance, only article A4 referred to the perpetrator as a white male, with the remaining 14 either leaving this out entirely or merely stating that the perpetrators were males, positioning whiteness as the norm unless otherwise specified. This language is particularly apparent in article A5 that appeared to express confusion about why the shooting occurred as the perpetrator "didn't appear

to be linked to organized terrorist groups.” This language in particular stood out considering the data shows that between 1982 and February 2020, 54% of mass shooting perpetrators were white (which accounted for more than all other races and ethnicities combined) and 96.58% were male (Statista, 2020a, 2020b).

Taking this knowledge into consideration, two questions arose for me: 1) why are IPV perpetrators, who are ubiquitous, not considered terrorists, as they enact widespread violence? and 2) why are white males who commit mass shootings, especially those relating to IPV, also not considered terrorists when they account for the vast majority of terror-inciting mass shootings? However, IPV perpetrators *are not* viewed as terrorists just as white males who commit mass shootings *also are not* viewed as terrorists. It is precisely within these notions that the language surrounding mental illness from this discourse finds its footing: the dominant discourse enacted by the media has defaulted to mental health. When shootings were committed by white males, the media did not utilize the perpetrators’ race, religion or gender to explain their violence, nor did the media associate the perpetrators with terrorist groups. This omission can largely be attributed to the interaction of whiteness and maleness (Weedon, 1997). Further, the media overarchingly did not question the perpetrators’ abilities to acquire firearms because of their history of IPV, but rather due to their prescribed status as mentally ill and deviant.

These points align with both Metzl and MacLeish (2015) and Duxbury et al. (2018) who engaged with perceptions of mental health when a mass shooting occurs and how the race of the shooter impacts these perceptions, respectively. Metzl and MacLeish (2015) found several misconceptions that people believe to be true following a mass shooting, most notably that mental illness causes gun violence and that shootings are carried about by people who are mentally ill. They found that these misconceptions aligned with negative cultural stereotypes

around race and class, which aligns with Duxbury's et al. (2018) discovery that white shooters were more likely to have their crime attributed to mental illness, whereas Black shooters were framed as violent threats to the public.

Because each of the shootings examined in this study were conducted by white males, a comparison cannot be made to corroborate these findings. However, by focusing on the perpetrators' mental health or other behaviours that are considered to be deviant, the media portrayals fail to attribute the shootings as being rooted in and inherently related to IPV. For example, through a CDA, Eastaugh et al. (2019) found that the media fails to include the social context in which the domestic violence occurs when reporting on intimate partner homicides. The social context in which the shootings in the study occurred failed to include a discussion of IPV as a widespread issue ("Small Town Utopia" discourse) and further failed to include the social context of white male initiated mass violence emerging from violence against women. Moreover, both Issa (2019) and Mykietiuk (2016) identified a connection between mass shootings, violence against women, IPV, and the constructions of masculinity and manhood. The findings within "The Personal is Private" discourse is compounded within this discourse in that not a single article made the connection between the perpetrators being white males with a history of violence directed towards women, especially their female partners.

To summarize, "The Personal is Private" portrays IPV as a private issue separate from the mass shootings, "Small Town Utopia" represents language used to signify the location of the shootings as separate from the violence of the outside world, and finally, "The Tolerated Deviant" represents the construction of the perpetrators as deviant in acts separate from their involvement in IPV. While each discourse is comprised of its own set of language, each operate in cohesion with each other in a mutually reinforcing manner. Together, they maintain the status

quo around IPV and mass shootings and demonstrate the failure of the media to critically engage with IPV as a major factor involved in the majority of mass shootings.

Findings and the Research Questions

To review, this study asked the following research questions:

1. What dominant discourses are employed by the media when reporting on mass shootings when gender-based violence, specifically intimate partner violence, is involved?
2. How is power operationalized through these discourses?

As discussed, the discourses that are employed by the media when reporting on mass shootings when IPV is present include a) the Personal is Private, b) Small Town Utopia and c) the Tolerated Deviant. Combined, these discourses perpetuate the ideas that a) violence against women does not play a role in white male-initiated mass violence, b) IPV is a rare issue that does not occur in every town across the country, especially small towns, and c) when the perpetrator is a white male, the reason for shooting to occur is mental health and deviance, not hegemonic masculinity, IPV, and whiteness. Power is operationalized through these discourses by perpetuating and maintaining the dominant understandings of IPV and mass shootings while also failing to employ a critical lens around white male violence. The language utilized by the media suggests that mass shootings related to IPV are not part of a larger pattern and exist as individual acts of violence.

Strengths and Limitations

This section will discuss the strengths and limitations of this study, as well Lazar's (2005) FCDA principles in relation to the MRP. As discussed in Chapter 4, critiques of CDA have emerged particularly questioning its ability to engage in systematic, rigorous research, characteristics that are used to classify research as valid and legitimate knowledge gathering

(Widdowson, 1995). Therefore, a strength of this study resides in its intentional engagement with such critiques at an early stage in the research process so as to best mitigate and address potential critique about the legitimacy of its methodological approach to answering the research questions. For example, in order to reduce bias and ensure rigor in the sampling and data collection methods, data sources were not limited to any particular news outlet and were chosen at random based upon the results of a Google News search. This avoided bias that would emerge if I were to have hand-picked articles that align with my worldviews and also allowed for a variety of news outlets, which each have their own biases, to comprise the data sources of the study. This study incorporated Fairclough's (1996) rebuttal to Widdowson's (1995) characterization of CDA as literary criticism or critical linguistics into its methods by maintaining the goal of CDA as "showing how discursive practices, manifested in text which are heterogenous in forms and meanings, can be analysed as facets of wider process of social and cultural change" (Fairclough, 1996, p. 55). This was incorporated by adhering to the standards of rigour through the data collection and analysis phases of the research to maintain legitimacy and mitigate bias. Further, by aligning this study with Fairclough's (1996) articulation of CDA, the language used in the media reports were examined within the context of the broader societal context in which they occurred.

Another strength resides in an underlying principle of the entire study: reflexivity in research. This concept was informed by Poole's (2007) utilization of CDA as a methodology and took the form of reflexive journaling. This principle unites post-structural feminism with a core feature of the framework this study was based upon, represented by Poole (2007). Reflexivity is crucial to feminist research in order to engage the researcher in turning the critical lens inward and unearthing potential bias in the decisions made throughout the study. As a practice,

reflexivity was especially apparent throughout the data collection and analysis phases in which I documented each step and decision that was made in regards to categorizing the data and extracting the discourses. Further, as stated by Warburton (2016), it is imperative that CDA researchers critically engage with their own work to unearth and examine the way in which they have contributed to the construction and maintenance of certain discourses in order to understand their relationship to them. In this sense, reflexivity occurred by situating myself within the research by reflecting upon my experiences related to gun violence and IPV, in both personal and professional capacities, as well as my social location and positionality throughout each stage of the research process.

In addition to the various strengths held by the study, there are also some limitations that are important to discuss. The limitations of this study are predominantly related to it being a small-scale inquiry into a complex and dynamic topic. In other words, the topic requires extensive further research to gather additional information on the way in which the media operationalizes power through its discourses and language use regarding mass shootings and IPV. Further, as this study only examined three incidents of mass shootings and five articles for each, the findings should not be used as confirmation or verification of any particular theory or perspective. Rather, as in all qualitative research, it seeks to provide greater depth to the knowledge that exists surrounding a specific topic (Padgett, 2017a). Specifically, external validity is not a priority of this study because the focus on depth, rather than breadth (Padgett, 2017b). Moreover, a notable limitation exists in the way in which the findings are only able to partially engage with race due to the nature of the methodology limiting the data to what is stated in the articles and the fact that each of the shootings examined were perpetrated by white males. Because race was not a focal point for any of the articles, it limited the ability of the study to

critically incorporate a more intensive anti-racist lens. While this exists as a limitation of the study, it simultaneously demonstrates that the media and the discourses it employs fail to connect mass shootings that involve IPV with white, male perpetrators and poses the urgent need for further research into this topic.

Principles of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

As discussed in Chapter 4, FCDA as a methodology and praxis contains a distinct set of principles as identified by Lazar (2005): feminist analytical resistance; gender as ideological structure; complexity of gender and power relations; discourse in the (de)construction of gender; and critical reflexivity as praxis. This section will briefly examine how this MRP engaged with each of the principles as a subsection of the study's strengths and limitations.

Feminist Analytical Resistance. This FCDA principle aims to critique discourses that maintain patriarchal structures in order to contribute to social transformation (Lazar, 2005). From the onset of this study, the main objective was to identify the dominant discourses employed by the media when reporting on mass shootings that are rooted in IPV from a post-structural feminist lens. This study recognized and argued that the media maintains patriarchal structures through its reporting of such incidents and fails to acknowledge IPV as a pervasive issue and a common denominator in the majority of mass shootings. While this study strives to contribute to social transformation, it recognizes that additional research is needed to gain further knowledge on this topic. In addition, significant policy and cultural changes are needed in order to address both IPV and gun violence and the way in which they relate to patriarchal violence within our communities. These next steps highly implicate social workers and urge the sector to further engage with these topics in education, practice and research.

Gender as Ideological Structure. This principle views gender as a social construction that categorizes people into hierarchical positions of domination (men) and subordination (women) (Lazar, 2005). FCDA as a praxis recognizes that while individuals “may deviate from the archetypes of masculinity and femininity pertinent to a community, this nonetheless occurs against the ideological structure of gender that privileges men as a social group” (Lazar, 2005, p. 7). Further, FCDA recognizes that gender as an ideological structure is produced and reproduced throughout discourse (Lazar, 2005). This principle was evident throughout this study through the merging of post-structural feminism as the theoretical framework and FCDA as the methodological approach, allowing the study to examine IPV through an analysis of power (Cannon et al., 2015) and the power balances that exist in heterosexual relationships (Sharp & Keyton, 2016).

Complexity of Gender and Power Relations. In FCDA studies, it is recognized that the category of ‘women’ is not homogenous as dominant understandings articulate it to be and the operationalization of power through discursive means is ubiquitous across society (Lazar, 2005). Within this principle, FCDA understands that while gender may shift across time and space, “the structure of gender (and the power asymmetry that it entails) has been remarkably persistent” (Lazar, 2005, p. 9). While power imbalances exist in heterosexual relationships, post-structural feminism acknowledges that each individual lived experience within those relationships are unique by rejecting meta-narratives (Fraser, 2003). This understanding was particularly important throughout this study as it examined three separate instances. Despite each of the female partners being connected throughout their experiences of IPV and being targeting in the mass shootings, this study recognizes that each of their experiences were unique and cannot be erased through homogenization.

Additionally, Lazar (2005) states that a goal of FCDA is to “undertake contingent analyses of the oppression of women” (p. 9). Because power is operationalized through discursive means and contingent analyses are required to gain further knowledge, additional research is needed to expand this study across various times and spaces. As previously discussed, a limitation of this study was that its sample solely comprised of only white male perpetrators and white female partners based upon the incidents that were generated from the sampling method. As a result, the findings cannot be seen as transferable to the experiences of anyone who has experienced IPV or IPV circumstances that have turned into mass shootings. Specifically, future research into this topic should centre the experiences of racialized women who experience IPV in relation to gun violence, by examining the interaction of race and gender power imbalances.

Discourse in the (de)construction of Gender. This FCDA principle represents the way in which discourse and language operate as social practices to construct gender in social situations, institutions and structures (Lazar, 2005). Specifically, for FCDA researchers, “the focus is on how gender ideology and gendered relations of power are (re)produced, negotiated and contested in representations of social practices, in social relationships between people, and in people’s social and personal identities in text and talk” (Lazar, 2005, p. 11). Within the context of the research questions of this study, a predominant focus was on the way in which gendered relations of power are represented in the media in response to mass shootings involving IPV. The study found that the media represented IPV as a private issue and failed to discuss the way in which white males are the predominant perpetrators of such instances, reinforcing dominant understandings of the role of gender in instances of IPV. However, as previously stated, further

research is required in order to better understand the way in which media discourses constructs gender and power across various IPV-related circumstances.

Critical Reflexivity as Praxis. This final principle represents FCDA's interest in reflexivity manifested in institutional practices and the ongoing need for critical self-reflexivity in order to achieve social transformation (Lazar, 2005). As discussed in the strengths section above, critical self-reflexivity was a crucial underpinning of this study in order to unite FCDA as the methodology with post-structural feminism as the theoretical framework. However, within the context of this principle, a limitation of this study exists in that its focus was not geared towards exploring the way in which the media as an institution engages in reflexivity as a practice. Subsequently, further research should be conducted to examine and explore the way in which the media engages in reflexivity, what practices they utilize to do so, and the ways in which feminist values are either utilized for progressive change or co-opted for "non-feminist ends" (Lazar, 2005, p. 15).

Implications for Social Work Practice

This MRP raises significant implications for social work practice. Although this study focused on the American context in terms of the data collected, Canadian social workers are equally implicated in the findings of this study. Notably, during the writing of this MRP, Canada experienced its most-deadly mass killing in modern history during the April 2020 shooting and arson rampage that spanned 12 hours and resulted in the deaths of 23 people (including the perpetrator) by a white male impersonating an RCMP officer in Nova Scotia (Ankel, 2020; Stephenson & Armstrong, 2020). An investigation into the killings revealed that the perpetrator had an extensive history of IPV and that the killings began in an act of IPV when the perpetrator attacked his female common law partner (Ankel, 2020; Stephenson & Armstrong, 2020). In less

than two weeks following the Nova Scotia massacre, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau swiftly announced a ban on assault-style weapons (Tasker, 2020). The shooting, and its roots in violence against women, paralleled the notorious 1989 École Polytechnique massacre in Montreal in which the perpetrator attacked female engineering students, killing many of them. For 30 years after the attack, the plaque at the site's memorial park described the shooting as a "tragic event" until late 2019 when a new sign was erected that "explicitly calls the massacre an 'anti-feminist attack,' and condemns 'all forms of violence against women'" (Lynch, 2019, para. 9).

As previously stated, by nature of social work practice, practitioners within a variety of settings in the field are likely to encounter situations in which services users are currently experiencing, have previously experienced, or are at risk of experiencing IPV (Thorpe & Irwin, 1996). As noted by Murphy and Ouimet (2008), social workers occupy unique positions that allow them to contribute to efforts that seek to mitigate IPV in their roles as educators, practitioners, advocates, researchers and policy makers. These understandings must be contextualized alongside the theoretical underpinning of this study. Post-structural feminism emphasizes the need for practitioners to consider the larger societal context in which the "micro-politics" of intimate relationships operate (Fraser, 2003, p. 274). This means, for example, that while one client may be experiencing IPV in the private setting of their home, it does not exist separate from the socio-political happenings of the outside world, or the socio-political happenings of other clients' experiences with IPV. In fact, I argue that IPV is a microcosm of structural patriarchal violence in society. Therefore, through these positions, there emerges a distinct call to action for social workers.

Through an anti-oppressive framework, social work practice is inherently political and must simultaneously address the micro, mezzo and macro levels of practice (Baines, 2017). The

work in addressing violence—intimate partner, structural, patriarchal and gun-related—must exist in a cross-sectorial manner in the various roles social workers may hold, including in the violence against woman sector, the criminal justice system and those working in policy making, to address, dismantle and transform the various forms of patriarchal violence that permeates society. For example, frontline social workers in the IPV sector can collaborate with policy makers to address loopholes in firearm acquisition and advocate for further gun control measures. The findings of this study reveal that the media employs dominant discourses that continue to portray IPV-related mass shootings as anomalies perpetrated by one person with a mental illness. These discourses conceal the origins of a significant portion of wide-spread societal violence. While not all IPV situations turn into mass shootings, each of the mass shootings examined in this study began as “ordinary” instances of IPV.

Summary

To summarize, Chapter 6 engaged in a critical discussion of the findings of the study, including a detailed interpretation of each of the three discourses as well as how they relate to the research questions. Next, it discussed the strengths and limitations of the study before concluding with the implications the findings create for social work practice.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

This MRP was written during the COVID-19 pandemic. I believe that as a feminist researcher, it would be irresponsible to conclude this study without a discussion of what it means within context of the current state of the world. Since the pandemic began, schools, restaurants, churches, workplaces and any place where people could gather have been closed. Many parts of the world went on lockdown. While they varied in timing and intensity of the restrictions, people in countries across the globe were told to stay home, and by extension, stay safe (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020). This messaging, for some, was true. In fact, in April, the number of mass shootings dropped 24% compared to April 2019 (Dolmetsch, 2020). Further, March 2020 was the first March that did not have a mass shooting since 2002 in the United States (Lewis, 2020). While we are still in the midst of the pandemic and will not have holistic data until the pandemic ends, these figures are striking to consider. Did it really have to take a pandemic of a deadly virus to (temporarily) stop the slaughter of children while in math and social studies?

While many people were able to shelter away in their homes and keep their families safe, the same cannot be said for those experiencing IPV. If they are to leave their homes and perhaps enter a shelter or stay elsewhere, they are not only increasing the chances of contracting and spreading COVID-19, but the risk for homicide also increases when there is a separation in a domestic violence situation (OCC, 2018). If they are to stay in their homes, they become trapped with their abuser, isolated from their support systems and potentially face increased barriers in accessing resources. Across the globe, the rates of domestic violence have been increasing (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020). This coincides with a spike in gun sales in the United States during the lockdown (Dolmetsch, 2020; Lewis, 2020). In fact, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Instant Criminal Background Check system, "gun sales are estimated to

have risen more than 71% in April from the same period a year earlier, after surging more than 85% in March” (Dolmetsch, 2020, para. 7).

This has raised concerns for gun safety advocates who worry about the safety of those in violent homes during the lockdowns and the potential for an increase of mass shootings once communities begin to reopen (Lewis, 2020). The Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, through the Office of the Chief Coroner, identifies both possession of and threats with a weapon, including a statement such as “I bought a gun today,” as risk factors for lethality in domestic violence situations (OCC, 2018, p. 34). As previously stated, while we are still in the thick of the pandemic, we will not fully understand the situation until further information is gathered. In the meantime, it is crucial to monitor these figures as they provide valuable insight into the needs of those experiencing IPV and the ways in which services may need to be modified in order to reach those who are most isolated. Understanding the experiences of survivors who were in lockdown with abusive partners, especially if there was a gun present in the home, could be a future study to be conducted through a feminist lens.

To conclude, this study is a feminist critical discourse analysis of media reports pertaining to three mass shootings that were related to IPV and occurred within the last five years. The mass shootings examined were the First Baptist Church shooting, the Rancho Tehama Reserve shooting and the Plano, Texas shooting. For each of the events, five articles were examined to extract discourses that are employed by the media when reporting on such incidents and to gain insight into the way in which power is operationalized through the language used in the discourses. The discourses that emerged from the data were: “The Personal is Private” which represents the way in which intimate partner violence was portrayed as a private issue, even when the perpetrator had an extensive documented history; “Small Town Utopia” which

represents the way in which language used in the reporting presented the location of the shootings as peaceful, close-knit towns where “nothing ever happens,” negating and ignoring the fact that intimate partner violence is an ubiquitous issue; and finally, *The Tolerated Deviant*” which represents the way in which the media constructed the perpetrators as deviant in acts separate from their involvement in IPV. These findings created several implications for social work practice, including in critical prevention, intervention and postvention work of gun violence and its inextricable link to intimate partner violence. This research recognizes that it is a small-scale study of a large and complex issue and further research is required to gather knowledge on the relationship between mass shootings and intimate partner violence, and language, power and the media.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE: MASS SHOOTING INCIDENTS

1. First Baptist Church, Sutherland Springs, Texas

Date: November 5, 2017

of people shot: 25 killed, 20 wounded

Narrative: A shooter walked into the First Baptist Church and opened fire on the congregation, killing 25 people, including eight children. Additionally, one of the victims was pregnant and the unborn child did not survive the mother's death. Among those shot and killed was the shooter's grandmother-in-law. He also injured 20 other people. Outside the church, a bystander attempted to neutralize the shooter by shooting him twice in the leg and upper torso; The shooter made it into his SUV and sped off down the highway. The bystander joined another man in pursuit, chasing the shooter until he lost control of his vehicle and came to a halt in a ditch. Police arrived shortly after and found the shooter dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

2. Rancho Tehama Reserve, California

Date: November 14, 2017

of people shot: 5 killed, 12 wounded

Narrative: A shooter shot and killed his wife, cut a hole in the floor of their house, and hid her body. The next day, he shot and killed four additional people, and shot and injured at least 12 more, largely at random, in multiple different locations across town, including an elementary school that went into lockdown when school officials heard gunshots. Other people were injured by debris and broken glass during the attack. Eventually, a patrol car rammed the shooter's vehicle, forcing it off the road, and he fatally shot himself.

3. Plano, Texas

Date: September 10, 2017

of people shot: 8 killed, 1 wounded

Narrative: A shooter opened fire on a football viewing party being held by his estranged wife. Seven people were killed immediately, including his wife. An eighth victim later died at a hospital. A ninth was shot but survived her injuries. The shooter was ultimately shot and killed by a responding police officer.

Narratives and statistics for each incident provided by Everytown for Gun Safety (2019b).

APPENDIX B

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APPENDIX C
DATA SOURCES BY CODE

Code	Author(s) and Date
A1	Hanna & Yan (2017)
A2	Vomiero (2017)
A3	Editorial Board (2017)
A4	Dart & Pilkington (2017)
A5	Darrah (2017)
B1	Schultz (2017)
B2	Blankstein & Siemaszko (2017)
B3	Kohli (2017)
B4	Warning signs (2017)
B5	Pérez-Peña & Fuller (2017)
C1	Petrecca (2017)
C2	Texas shooting (2017)
C3	Ciesco, Brown, Jackson & Heinz (2017)
C4	Siegel & Selk (2017)
C5	Wilkinson & Graham (2017)

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