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## Terrorism & White Men's Murderous Rage

By David Rosen  
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Five days after the Halloween lone-wolf terrorist, Sayfullo Saipov, attacked pedestrians and bicyclists in New York, killing 8 people and injuring 12 others, another lone-wolf undertook a terrorist attack this time in a small, unincorporated community 30 miles southeast of San Antonio, TX. The terrorist, Devin Kelley, killed 26 people and injured 20 others attending the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs; in 2000, its population was but 362 people.

One month earlier, on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, in Las Vegas, NV, Stephen Paddock, a 64-year-old retired real-estate speculator and gambler, shot assault rifles from a room on the 32<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Mandalay Bay at attendees of the Route 91 Harvest music festival, killing 59 people and leading to over 500 people being injured. In August, at the bloody political showdown in Charlottesville, VA, a 20-year-old white nationalist, James Alex Fields, Jr., of Maumee, OH, drove his car into a crowd of marchers, killing Heather Heyer, a 32-year old local resident, and injuring 19 others.

The attackers were lone-wolf terrorists operating in different parts of the country, executing different actions and for apparently different reasons, but taking one of two forms – political (i.e., Saipov and Fields) or psychopathological (i.e., Kelley, Paddock). Pres. Donald Trump expressed very different assessments of both forms.

With regard to political terrorist, Trump initially declared about Saipov: “Send him to Gitmo — I would certainly consider that, yes”; he then backed off, saying “that process takes much longer.” With regard to the Charlottesville, he initially declared: “I think there’s blame on both sides,” he said. “I have no doubt about it, and you don’t have any doubt about it either. And if you reported it accurately, you would see.” Under pressure, he revised his assessment, angrily denouncing Fields as a “disgrace” and a “murderer.”

With regard to (apparent) psychopaths, Trump found that Kelley “a very deranged individual” and that “mental health is your problem here.” He also insisted, “This isn’t a guns situation. ... This is a mental health problem at the highest level. It’s a very, very sad event. ... “A very, very sad event, but that’s the way I view it.” Trump said. And he dismissed Paddock, “He’s a sick man, a demented man. A lot of problems, I guess.”

The different ways Trump classified these four recent attacks seems rooted in his racist, nationalist agenda, one that denies the role of race, masculinity and weapons (especially assault machine-guns) in domestic terrorism. Most troubling, it blinds law enforcement from fully appreciating the growing threat posed by deepening crisis besetting white people, but especially men, who feel abandoned by the faltering American social system. They are a restive force and one – extreme — way they express themselves is in mass killings, 21<sup>st</sup> century terrorist acts.

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Earlier this year, the nonprofit advocacy group, Everytown for Gun Safety, released a revealing study, “Mass Shooting in the United States, 2009-2016,” that argued that, in the U.S., most mass shootings are related to domestic or family violence. It reports that from 2009-2016, there were 156 “mass shootings,” incidents in which four or more people were shot and killed. Digging deeper, it found: “These incidents resulted in 1,187 victims shot: 848 people were shot and killed, and 339 people were shot and injured. In addition, 66 perpetrators killed themselves after a mass shooting, and another 17 perpetrators were shot and killed by responding law enforcement.” Most disturbing, “the majority of mass shootings — 54 percent of cases — were related to domestic or family violence.”

In a recently updated report, “A Guide to Mass Shootings in America,” *Mother Jones* found that “since 1982, there have been at least 94 public mass shootings across the country, with the killings unfolding in 34 states from Massachusetts to Hawaii.” It notes that 57 occurred since 2006 and 7 took place in 2012 alone, including Sandy Hook.” Analyzing 62 cases that took place from 1982-2012, it found that 44 of the killers were white males. Only one was a woman.

Kelley and Paddock are representative of these mass killers, but very different types of men. Nevertheless, both committed suicide rather than being captured and having to face a trial and likely a life-long prison sentence, if not the death penalty.

Kelley was armed with Ruger AR assault-type rifle and wore black tactical gear, including an anti-ballistic vest. He seems to have been a very troubled man. After graduating from his hometown, New Braunfels, TX, located about 35 miles from where the killings took place, he joined the Air Force. However, after allegedly assaulting his wife and child, he served a one-

year detention sentence, was demoted and received a bad conduct discharge. He apparently remarried and was the father of another child, but was living a hard-scrabble existence.

Paddock was older, 64-years of age, and much more financially secure. He owned two planes, was a licensed pilot and owned homes in four states as well as being dedicated gambler. His brother, Eric Paddock, “He’s just a guy who played video poker and took cruises and ate burritos at Taco Bell. There’s no political affiliation that we know of. There’s no religious affiliation that we know of.” After the shooting, police found 23 guns in his room at on Mandalay Bay hotel as well as 20-plus in his two Nevada homes, along with an enormous amount of ammunition. He seems to have been as normal as the proverbial “guy next door,” although some reports claim his father was reportedly mentally ill with “psychopathic with suicidal tendencies.”

In 2015, Georgetown National Security Critical Issue Task Force (NSCITF) issued a revealing report, “Lone Wolf Terrorism.” It warns, “While the majority of LWTs [lone-wolf terrorists] are single, white men with criminal records, these patterns are too broad to develop a clear profile for LEOs [law enforcement officers].” Among the all-to-many white men who committed some of most egregious terrorist acts are: (i) Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, who bomb the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City, OK, in 1995, killing 169 people and injuring 675 people; (ii) James Holmes, kills 12 people and injured 70 others in a shootout at an Aurora, CO, movie theatre in 2012; (iii) Adam Lanza, who d killed 20 children and seven 7 members at the Sandy Hook Elementary School as well as his mother; and (iv) Dylann Roof who killed 9 African-American parishioners at the Emanuel AME Church in downtown Charleston, SC.

Mass shooting are not limited to white men as indicated by Saipov. Other “non-white” killers include: (i) Omar Mateen’s shooting at an Orlando, FL gay nightclub in 2016; (ii) Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik, killing of 14 people and wounding 22 others at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, CA, in 2015; and (iii) Tamerlan Tsarnaev and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev bombing at the 2013 Boston Marathon that killed 3 spectators and wounded 264 others.

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Sadly, like the wide-range of domestic mass shootings, the reasons people commit such acts are equally diverse. Everytown for Gun Safety study warns that the “majority of mass shootings in the United States are related to domestic or family violence.” It notes that many share a set of common symptoms including the violation of a protective order, evidence of ongoing substance abuse, serious mental illnesses and the easy availability of high-powered assault firearms.

However, one factor that is given little attention is the deepening sense of disillusionment spreading through the country. It is like an undiagnosed cancer, a phenomenon that is often expressed in secondary symptoms until a major outbreak – like a mass shooting — occurs that is, sadly, too late to treat.

Disillusionment is expressed in the rising morbidity and mortality rates, including suicides and drug (e.g., heroine and oxy-condign) overdoses among white men 35 to 64 years. It is also expressed in deepening dissatisfaction with the way income and wealth are distributed, notably

ongoing wage stagnation and the rising poverty rate. Perhaps most troubling, depression and social or political cynicism is mounting, evident is a growing sense that the long-cherished belief in the “American Dream” is over, the shared ideology that hard work, debt and white skin privilege would guarantee the ordinary American – and, more importantly, their children – a better tomorrow. Disillusionment was most bitterly expressed in the desperate effort to reverse history that elected Trump president.

Sadly, one often overlooked factor contributing to mass shootings is an all-to-common male attribute, the recourse to violence. It is a defining, endemic, feature of patriarchy. It plays a significant role in domestic or family violence, the male’s mistreatment of the female and/or children in the family. In addition, it is often an implicit — if not explicit — feature in a man’s relations with other men, whether in a bar, in a sport’s contest or on the battlefield.

Finally, there is a need to call “mass shootings” by their true name, terrorist acts. Mass shooting are conducted by lone-wolf perpetrators, whether driven by political, cultural or psychopathic factors — or combinations of all three. They are intended to not simply permit a perpetrator to act-out his rage, but to inflict pain and suffering on a targeted other. To succeed, the terrorist must believe that the target, whether wife or gathered group, is not capable of stopping him.

Most troubling, in an era when a significant segment of the nation’s white population feels under threat, that their once-chosen privileged position in American society is eroding, one can only expect deepening rage to be expressed in additional mass-shooting terrorist attacks.