Entitlement, Masculinity, and Violence? An Analysis of New York Times Reporting and Twitter Discourse on US School Shootings

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Abstract

A handful of salient factors are consistently omitted in public discourse surrounding school shootings in the United States. Uniformity of shooters' race and gender persists across almost all of these events, as perpetrators of US school shootings have overwhelmingly been white boys and men. Following the work of previous scholars, I assert that the production and perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity and aggrieved entitlement play a pivotal role in school shootings. Today's world relies heavily on the media for information dissemination, which in turn shapes our understanding of major events, social issues, and cultural values .I collected reports of recent US school shootings from the New York Times and later collected tweets that allowed for a comparison of how *traditional (NYT)* vs *new social media (Twitter)* frame these events. My research suggests that conversations surrounding the role of racialized/toxic masculinity and school shootings are occuring in some spaces rather than others, and has generated findings that could assist future scholars/activists in identifying how to effectively disseminate discourse surrounding this factor.

Keywords: Sociology, School Shootings, Masculinity, Toxic Masculinity, Gender, Race, Social Media, Twitter, New York Times, Discourse

Introduction

I began this project in the months following the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, FL in February 2018. This was, at the time, the most recent in a series of highly publicized and much discussed school shootings taking place in the United States. School shootings are typically accompanied by a great deal of media attention, and become the site for public discussions about gun control, media violence, parenting, bullying, mental health, and so on. It always seemed to me that a handful of salient factors are consistently omitted in public discourse surrounding these events--namely, the gender and race of the shooter. Perpetrators of school shootings in the U.S. have overwhelmingly been white boys and men; thus, following the work of previous scholars, I asserted that the production and perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity and aggrieved entitlement play a pivotal role in school shootings. Today's world relies heavily on the media for information dissemination, which in turn shapes our understanding of major events, social issues, and cultural values. I began my research particularly interested in the framing of hegemonic masculinity and aggrieved entitlement by traditional news sources, eventually expanding my analysis to discourse via the twitter social media platform. I collected reports of recent US school shootings from the New York Times and later collected tweets that allowed for a comparison of how *traditional (NYT)* vs *new social media (Twitter)* frame these events. My research suggests that conversations surrounding the role of racialized/toxic masculinity and school shootings are occuring in some spaces rather than others, and has generated findings that could assist future scholars/activists in identifying how to effectively disseminate discourse surrounding this factor.

Background and Literature

School shootings have become a distinctly American phenomenon. Scholars and media sources alike attribute these events to a slew of socially-relevant yet generally unrelated factors. While many offenders struggled with mental health issues (Blum, Dinur, and Jaworksi, 2016), for example, this is not a comprehensive explanation as to why offenders commit these acts. Additionally, framing "mental illness" as a predictor of such exceptionally violent acts only serves to alienate and stigmatize those living with mental illness--the majority of whom lead productive and nonviolent lives. Cultural influences such as violent video games, music and certain social taboos like pornography are frequently linked to school shootings, despite considerable and increasing evidence to the contrary (Ferguson, Coulson, and Barnett, 2011). Approaches such as these pathologize the individual perpetrators, ignoring the influence that social values (i.e masculinity) exert on their actions (Ferguson, Coulson, and Barnett, 2011).

Though only a small subset of the scholarly literature on school shootings focuses on the possible role of racialized masculinity in school shootings, there is considerable evidence for its significance in these events. For example, in her analysis of media reports of school shootings between 1996 and 2001, Klein (2006) found that "gay harassment" (homophobic bullying, regardless of the actual sexual orientation of the person being bullied) was repeatedly identifiable as an important contributing factor to school shootings, yet these factors and the related role of masculinity were completely absent from media analysis. Kimmel and Mahler (2003) similarly found that the school shooters they studied had overwhelmingly experienced harassment in the form of "gay-baiting" (or other harassment centered on challenges to their masculinity). Kalish and Kimmel (2010) go on to suggest that the culture of hegemonic masculinity (where boys/men

are both expected to conform to cultural expectations concerning masculinity, *and* where boys/men may also expect to receive privileges associated with their gender identity, status, and performance) may create *aggrieved entitlement*, or the sense of not receiving something (including symbolic goods, such as respect) that one believes one is due.

Hegemonic masculine ideals manifest themselves as 'attributes' or practices (Myketiak, 2016). Although anyone, regardless of the gender alignment, can present masculinity, male bodies largely perform masculinity in Western societies. Social demands thus direct those wishing to appear masculine to socially validate their manhood (Vito, Admire and Hughes, 2017). A handful of attributes of hegemonic masculinity have persisted over time, namely aggression, toughness, hardness, and competitiveness (Whitehead, 2002). More specifically, the physical manifestation of masculinity depends on strength, height and size. Because society rewards those who meet hegemonic masculine ideals, those who fail to uphold these ideals often feel compelled to reassert their masculinity to others. Such men often experience a crisis of masculinity and feelings of aggrieved entitlement wherein anger is directed at social "others", such as racial minorities and women (Tonso, 2009). These men tend to overconform to masculine tropes and view violence as an acceptable means of reaffirming their perceived gender role. School shooters seem to "borrow from violent masculinities, common socioculturally produced images, or tropes, for acting, implicating not only shooters...but also simultaneously everyday sociocultural contexts where violent masculinities are produced, reinforced, and valorized.." (Tonso, 2009). Speaking of his rampage shooting and emphasizing the masculinity inherent in the act, the Pearl High School shooter stated that 'Murder is not weak and slow-witted', distancing himself from feminize weakness; 'Murder is gutsy and daring', showing

that he feels more power from his acts (Kalish and Kimmel, 2010).

Violence becomes particularly salient for men who have been denied certain social privileges to which they felt entitled. When these privileges are thwarted, men may react with frustration and hatred. James (2003) found that shooters often feel "wronged" and sought homicidal retaliation as a result of these real and/or perceived injustices. Aggrieved entitlement suggests that perpetrators feel justified in these actions--a sort of balancing of scales in making others feel the pain the perpetrator has experienced. As such, violence becomes a means of vengeance and compensation for humiliation. Dominance is restored by assaulting those who have supposedly "emasculated" the shooter. This scenario plays out repeatedly in school shootings, with women who rejected the perpetrator (or otherwise caused them gender distress) as the primary targets of the attacks (Klein, 2006). The effects of normalized masculinity and aggrieved entitlement are operative in everyday life yet all but invisible in public discussions of school shootings (Klein, 2006). Although students in Jonesboro, Arkansas, repeatedly claimed that the March 1998 killing of four female students and one female teacher was motivated by the shooter's desire for vengeance against a young woman who refused to be his girlfriend, reporters and authorities alike dismissed this explanation and the role of gender in the crime (Perlstein, 1998). An unfortunate parallel can be made to the 2018 Santa Fe High School shooting, as one of the first victims of the massacre, Shana Fisher, had recently embarrassed the shooter by publically rejecting his romantic advances. Standard reporting all but overlooked this element of the shooting.

An additionally salient yet equally overlooked factor in school shootings is the race of the perpetrator. American men grapple with a singular hegemonic masculine ideal, a particular vision of manhood that is upheld as the measurable standard (Vito, Admire and Hughes, 2017). We thus come to understand what it means to be a man in our culture through an "Us versus Them" juxtaposition, with racial minorities, sexual minorities, and women as a subordinated "other" (Vito, Admire and Hughes, 2017). White males, then, are seen as the embodiment of "real" men. Combined with aggrieved entitlement, whiteness should be considered a leading predictor of school shootings.

Research by Mingus et al. noted that the race of the shooter influences the response of the media and the public to these tragedies: the attention given to the race of the perpetrator when the shooter is of any race but white coupled with the deliberate omission of race in discussions of white shooters results in both white privilege and an opposing "otherness" status for non-whites (Mingus, William, and Zopf, 2010). As the shooters are consistently White and suburban middle-class males, the public has conveniently shifted the blame away from group characteristics to individualized explanations--assuming that the shooters are deviants rather than reflections of broader social issues. Although it is indisputable that many of the boys and men who committed these heinous acts did have serious psychological problems, such a framing masks the significant role that race, in addition to gender, play in school shootings (Kimmel and Mahler, 2003). If all the school shooters had been African American boys in inner-city schools, Muslims, or Mexican immigrants, it is much more likely that their acts would be attributed to their collective identities (Kimmel and Mahler, 2003).

Most importantly is the fact that coverage of school massacres have all missed gender. Any mention of the single unifying characteristics amongst all perpetrators is strikingly absent. Journalistics accounts pay little or no attention to the obvious fact that nearly every American school shooting has been committed by a boy or young man—masculinity is the greatest risk factor in school violence. And yet, as Kimmel and Mahler (2003) so pointedly note, if the killers in America's most infamous school massacres had all been girls, gender would undoubtedly be the only story.

The framing and dissemination of information by the media is critical to understanding cultural values and norms; it is consequently the lense through which we understand major events and social issues. Thus, the omission of gender, race, and masculinity in reports of school shootings by traditional media outlets appears to indicate a cultural nescience regarding these factors. My research offers a comparison of traditional vs new media, which has not been done concerning this issue. I hypothesize a possibly increased focus on racialized masculinity given its emergence into public discourse via new media platforms. My research thereby illuminates where discussions about these overlooked topics are--and are not--happening.

Methods

NYT (phase one-media analysis):

     I began this project in summer 2018 through the Student Undergraduate Research Program at SUNY New Paltz. I sought to obtain a targeted sample of media coverage surrounding school shootings. I selected five school shootings to focus my research on: Marysville-Pilchuck High School, Umpqua Community College, Sandy Hook Elementary School, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, and Santa Fe High School. These events were chosen based on their adherence to my sampling criteria: shooting events must have occured in an academic setting, involved five or more victims, and occured between 2014 and present day. I derived my sample from the New York Times, as this traditional print media source offers a reliable and expansive journalistic record of major events, and is often considered the "newspaper of record" in the United States. Using Nexis Uni, I collected all New York Times articles related to each shooting published within thirty days following each respective event. There were a total of 100 articles fitting these criteria. Data were analyzed through QDA Miner via a coding schema which utilized a series of primary codes and sub-codes.

     I chose the codes Shooter, Victim Description, and Miscellaneous based on my interest in masculinity, race, and gender. I developed other codes in an attempt to cover other likely causal explanations (given that I and others posit that racialized masculinity may play a causal role in school shootings, I was particularly interested in the question of causes). Sub-codes were developed inductively throughout the research process with the intention of narrowing down the broader primary codes into more specific aspects of each topic. Codes and subcodes were as follows:

Table 1

Codes	Subcodes
Causes	Bullying, gun access, media, medication, mental health, motive, publicity, video games, Warning signs
Response	Local, national, family
Site	Small town, suburbs
Shooter	Description, shooter named, gender, race
Victim Description	Gender, victim named
Miscellaneous	Gender, masculinity, toxic masculinity, race

Twitter (phase two)

Phase two of my research varies slightly from phase one as I chose to modify my data-set. First, the Umpqua Community College and Marysville-Pilchuck High School shootings were omitted from the data-set, as these cases received relatively minimal media coverage and thus generated less discourse on social media platforms. Secondly, I made the decision to add the Isla Vista Shooting to my data set. Though I did not include this case in phase one of my research, I ran a QDA miner search of this case (search terms: gender, race, masculinity) and found there was no indication of increased discourse of these factors via the New York Times. I felt it was important to include this shooting in phase two of my research as I anticipated a substantial amount of twitter discourse surrounding this event. Given that The Isla Vista Shooter was notoriously misogynistic and expressed freely that he felt justified in his killing spree, I

expected to find a breadth of discussion on the Twitter-sphere that the New York Times simply could not capture. The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Santa Fe High School, and Sandy Hook School Shootings remained in the data set.

Phase two data were collected via a convenience sample of consecutive tweets posted on Twitter. A series of hashtags that emerged following specific shooting events were used to identify relevant tweets. Hashtags were initially selected based on their popularity and frequency of use; associated hashtags were then added to the list. The discourse surrounding the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting was obtained via searching #parklandshooting, #walkupnotout, #neveragain, #boysarebroken, #2a and #NRA; the Isla Vista shooting, #islavistashooting and #notallmen; #santafeshooting for the Santa Fe High School shooting and finally #sandyhook for the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

Twitter's advanced-search function was used to limit the sampling frame to tweets posted up to one month following each respective shooting. The advanced search function was additionally used to identify keywords which may appear in hashtag-specific tweets. The following words and phrases were implemented: men, masculinity, entitlement, sexism, gender, white, and privilege; bullying, mental health, and mental illness. The advanced search function of Twitter allowed all the keywords in each group to be searched simultaneously. Search results were then briefly reviewed and tweets deemed "spam" or irrelevant to the content of the hashtag were discarded. The resulting 477 tweets were collected and entered into QDA Miner using a variation of phase one's coding schema. In addition to existing codes, I developed two new codes and a handful of new sub-codes to account for the discourse I anticipated on the twitter-sphere. The additional codes encompass potential discussion of race, policy, and

components of entitlement and privilege.

 Additional codes and sub codes (all in red) were as follows:

TABLE 2

Codes	Subcodes
Causes	Bullying, gun access, media, medication, mental health, motive, publicity, video games, Warning signs
Shooter	Gender, description, named
Race	Discussion of, comparison of treatment
Policy Ideals	Gun control, gun rights, politics
Response	Local, national, calls to action, activism
Victims	Gender, description
Miscellaneous	Masculinity, toxic masculinity, entitlement, racism, sexism, privilege, gender,

Findings

Though scholarly literature suggests that discussions of gender and masculinity are lacking in traditional media reports of school shootings, I wondered if the current socio-political climate may have inspired new sources to take a closer look at these factors. This was, ultimately, not the case. The New York Times articles included in my sample contained little-to-no analysis of gender or masculinity, essentially reaffirming previous literature on the subject. Bullying and Mental Health were more clearly linked to school shootings by the New York Times, though they were not attributed as direct causes of these events.

The New York Times

Gender appeared in 7 cases regarding descriptions of shooting victims, 11 cases regarding shooter description, and in 3 miscellaneous cases. There was almost no analysis or discussion of this factor; gender was used exclusively as a means of describing the shooter/victim via gendered pronouns. One article detailing the Umpqua Community College shooting identified the shooter using only his age and gender:

> *At least 13 people died and 20 were wounded on Thursday in a shooting at the Umpqua Community College, in Rosenburg, Oregon, the state police reported, adding that the suspected shooter, a 20-year-old man, died after opening fire on police.*

Likewise, in one excerpt regarding victims of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas shooting, the usage of a gendered pronoun was the only identifier of a female victim's gender:

> *"Her passing was on, her shooting was on, her decision-making was on," her mother, Lori Alhadeff, recalled. With her outgoing personality, Alyssa had a wide circle of friends at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. She placed first in a debate tournament, was taking Algebra 2 and Spanish 3, and was honing her*

skills as an attacking midfielder. The score at what was to be her last time on the soccer field was 1-0, Parkland.

It is interesting to note that of the two articles drawing attention to the overwhelming frequency of male assailants in school shootings, both were op-ed pieces that typically do not appear in regular news reporting. This further indicates that discussions of gender and/or masculinity are occuring in very particular social spheres. While the first piece highlighted the uniformity of school shooters ("I realized I was telling the same story over and over -- a lost, isolated, unbalanced (usually white) young man with legal access to firearms"), the second piece was the only one in the sample to make mention of Masculinity/ Toxic Masculinity.

Given the relative absence of masculinity or gender analysis, I wondered what the NYT said about the role of bullying and mental health in school shootings. Discussion of bullying was minimal, appearing in five articles and in 4.7% of cases, though ostracization of perpetrators by their peers was still framed as a major predictor of school shootings. Mental illness appeared in 74 articles and 24.5% of cases, frequently in descriptions of the shooter. These descriptions typically involved intense speculation regarding the shooter's mental state; the Parkland shooter, for example, was described as suffering from "anger issues as well as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder" ,as well as "cutting himself, and possibly swallowing gasoline in a failed suicide attempt." This desire to characterize shooters as mentally unstable is perhaps indicative of a search for socially acceptable explanations that individualize the issue and present shootings as "lone-wolf" attacks.

Articles emphasized, perhaps unintentionally, politicians' habit of characterizing shooters as mentally ill; a particular excerpt quotes President Trump as referring to the Las Vegas gunman as " a very sick man" and a "demented person". One article noted how this characterization both perpetuates the stigma of mental illness and ignores the necessity of proper treatment for these individuals, stating that "... a vast majority of those with serious mental illness are not dangerous" and that "failure to treat the small share who might be violent can lead to tragedies like suicide and murder."

Two op-ed pieces called for practical measures to prevent school shootings, emphasizing the effectiveness of mental health screenings and background checks. These articles noted the difficulty of achieving such measures in the United States.

> *"Think about this. It's really remarkable. Two years after the Sandy Hook tragedy, the top gun-control priority in the United States is still background checks. There is nothing controversial about the idea that people who buy guns should be screened to make sure they don't have a criminal record or serious mental illness. Americans favor it by huge majorities. Even gun owners support it. Yet we're still struggling with it."*

> *"If a person is not old enough to be able to rent a car or buy a beer, then he should not be able to legally purchase a weapon of mass destruction. This could have been prevented. If the killer had been properly treated for his mental illness, maybe this would not have happened. If there were proper background checks, then those who should not have guns would not have them."*

The media landscape has changed dramatically in recent years, birthing countless alternatives to traditional news outlets. I thus considered it necessary to incorporate new media forms into my research. Given that the New York Times data did not show any significant shift toward robust discussions of racialized masculinity, I next turned to social media data (specifically, Twitter) to further examine whether and where these discussions take place. I found that the Twitter-sphere yielded far more extensive discourse around masculinity, gender, and race in school shootings than did the New York Times.

In the miscellaneous category, gender appeared a total of 106 times and in 100% of hashtag-specific cases. Victim's gender appeared in 6 tweets and in 36.4% of cases (#neveragain, #santafe, #NRA, #Islavistashooting), and gender of shooter appeared 13 times and in 36.4% of cases (#parklandshooting, #NRA, #santafe, #sandyhook). In general, twitter users more readily highlighted the shooter's gender and addressed a potential link between misogyny and shootings. Users were quick to comment on a pattern that is rarely mentioned in NYT reporting--shooters are almost always men, and their victims are often disproportionately female:

> *"It appears to be business as usual in the USA. He was a white American and the victims were women,"*

> *"Let's call what happened in #islavista what it was: a hate crime against all women by a misogynistic men #UCSB #IslaVistaShooting"*

Some users even attributed entitlement and misogyny as a direct cause of targeted shootings:

> *"...Misogyny and entitlement to women is behind too many gun deaths. #ParklandShooting"*

> *"How many women need to be killed before people admit that male entitlement is harmful? #islavistashooting #whyineedfeminism,"*

Some tweets sparked indirect conversation between users, fueling discussion of gun policy debates and the role of gender in gun ownership.

> *"If you are for women's right why would you want to disarm them?"*

> *"I am for women's rights—that's why I demand we disarm violent men."*

"Masculinity" appeared in 25 tweets and in 90.5% of all cases (#neveragain, #parklandshooting, #2a, #santafe, #NRA, #Islavistashooting, #notallmen, #boysarebroken, #sandyhook). "Toxic masculinity" appeared in 14 tweets and 72.7% of all cases (#parklandshooting, #2a, #santafe, #NRA, #boysarebroken, #islavistashooting, #notallmen). "Toxic Masculinity" appeared in 14 tweets and in 70.7% of all cases. The term "toxic masculinity" was used almost colloquially, seemingly to imply that the phrase and its meaning are common knowledge within this particular twitter community. No definitions or further explanations of the term were offered:

> *"Four years after the #islavistashooting and masshootings and toxic masculinity are seemingly even more prevalent than ever"*

> *" I don't think we've quite rejected toxic masculinity. #BoysAreBroken is still. true in a lot of ways"*

Calls to action to address "toxic masculinity" and/or forms of "disordered" masculinity were embedded within such tweets. Twitter users identified these terms as major causes of shootings, and cited both individual and collective changes as necessary means of prevention:

"it's well past time to interrogate the pervasiveness and horror of toxic masculinity in this society! This asshole killed 10 people because a girl said NO to him?? WTF?? #SantaFeShooting"

"I got embarrassed by a girl after asking her out in 7th gr. Know what I did? Got upset, called her names, and threw candy at her. Not my finest moment, but you know what? She's still alive today because I didn't decide to reassert my masculinity with a gun #SantaFeShooting"

"No, #NotAllMen rape or kill, but #AllMenCan and must confront the disordered culture of masculinity"

Bullying appeared 235 times and in 54.5% of twitter cases (#parklandshooting, #walkupnotout, #2a, #santafe, #NRA, #notallmen). Many twitter users attributed school shootings to bullying in schools and called for a sort of "kindness revolution" as a means of preventing these events. Here we see the emergence of the "Walk Up Not Out" movement, born as a counter-action to the politicized Student Walk Out to protest gun violence:

#walkup should be the goal! Walk up to someone who might need a friend, walk up and say hi. School violence ends when people engage one another and bullying is stopped. Speak up if you see it! #walkupnotout

I'm so annoyed by seeing all these students #walkout in "protest of gun violence" guns aren't the issue in schools, bullying is the issue, bullying is what pushes these kids to the edge #WalkUp #walkupnotout

Instead of #WalkoutWednesday , why not #walkup ? #walkupnotout it's not a gun problem, it's a people problem. It's how to treat each other. Stop bullying and picking on your classmates.

#walkup should be the goal! Walk up to someone who might need a friend, walk up and say hi. School violence ends when people engage one another and bullying is stopped. Speak up if you see it! #walkupnotout

The Walk Up Not Out movement encourages students to treat their peers with compassion and empathy. Supporters of the movement believe that such treatment will reduce social isolation and ostracization of bullying victims, who will then be less likely to retaliate with extreme violence. Other twitter users criticized the Walk Up Not Out movement, likening the concept to victim blaming and condemning the idea that kindness alone can prevent a school shooting:

"Most of us know that kindness is important & bullying is wrong. We should also know that children go to school to learn, not to repair the mentally disturbed. It's a convenient shift of blame when we tell these kids to "#walkupnotout" and assume they could have prevented his rage ."

Y'all really bought into the myth that school shooters are the product of bullying, huh? So, those elementary school kids at Sandy Hook had bullied Lanza? In 2014, in Marysville, only the shooter's friends were targeted. #walkupnotout #NationalWalkoutDay #NationalSchoolWalkout

Some identified the bullying debate as an intentional distraction from lax gun laws, which they cited as the overarching cause of school shootings:

"#WalkUpNotOut is quite literally the most pathetic and pointless movement i have heard of. thinking bullying is the problem is a reason why this country has made no progress in ending mass shootings. it's a gun issue, not a kindness issue."

"people who say #walkupnotout and "it's about bullying" are really too afraid to admit that this is literally about guns. no matter how outcast, a kid couldn't instantly murder 17 people with a knife. also victims aren't responsible for these heinous acts of violence bye!"

Tweets focusing exclusively on mental illness approached the topic from multiple angles. Some users addressed the gun-access debate by naming mental illness --identified as a by-product of bullying--as the sole cause of school shootings. Though bullying can exacerbate existing mental health issues, a diagnosis of "mental illness" implies many complexities that cannot be explained by bullying alone. As bullying and mental illness are predominantly lumped together by these twitter users, there seems to be a general disconnect between these user's perceptions of mental illness and the intricacy of this diagnosis. These users once called for a shift in social consciousness and a more sympathetic attitude towards social "outcasts".

"#walkupnotout Kids!! Be smart! Guns don't kill, people kill! Mental illness is real! Honor those killed by reaching out to those you ignore, pick on, bully. Stay safe INSIDE kids!!

"The problem is mental illness, ostracism, bullying, and liberal ignorance."

"#notallmen #YesAllWomen The reason this happened was mental illness, no sane human would do this, so there is no hate needed."

Other twitter users continued to criticize the "Walk Up Not Out" movement. These users appeared to link mental illness to school violence:

"While #walkupnotout is a nice concept, mental illness is not cured by someone sitting with another at lunch"

" #walkupnotout is stupid. Kids aren't psychologists. They can't take care of the mentally ill. Mental illness is more than just needing a fucking friend."

"Response to #walkupnotout To imply that students and teachers aren't kind enough already is infuriating. KINDNESS DOES NOT CURE MENTAL ILLNESS. Stop blaming the victim by stating we are not doing enough. #Enough"

Users also commented on a disconnect between ideology and approach, calling for stricter gun policy and mental health care reform.

> " people saying the #parklandshooting is about mental illness & not guns are the same people who put a man in office who signed a bill to allow mentally ill people to buy guns & actively wants to take away access to mental health care. ..."

> " I appreciate #walkupnotout but what you're missing is that roughly 4/5 of school shootings are done by those who do not have mental illness. There are so many other factors that cause these things to happen. So the best way to end this is to take away to means by which it happens"

> "We must not blame or stigmatize mental illness but work for better understanding, treatment and care. #Parkland #Parklandshooting #ParklandFlorida

Twitter users consistently touched on broader issues than the New York Times, highlighting a sophisticated analysis of the complexities of school shootings. Race transcended discussions of gender, masculinity, and mental health on the twitter-sphere, with users appearing more attuned to the intersection of these topics. Some users named "toxic masculinity" and whiteness a deadly combination, and called for dramatic cultural shifts to tackle the issue:

> "There is a serious issue with young, white American men. There is a crisis with toxic masculinity identity and isolation. The cultural narrative has to be challenged. We need interventions with our white male youth in communities around this country. #ParklandShooting"

> "How many more people have to die before we finally name the pairing of whiteness and toxic masculinity as a terrorist threat? #SantaFeShooting"

Twitter users were quick to identify the role of white privilege in school shootings. As one individual noted, "When white males kill, search for a "mental illness". When Black males kill, search for a 'social problem'. #racism #SandyHook*",* asserting that white shooters are granted the luxury of being labeled mentally ill, allowing the public to view school shootings as isolated events and thus avoid systemic change. Another user remarked that **"**if the shooter at Douglas was Black, Muslim, or Mexican, strict laws would be implemented. But since the kid was white, we will just brush it off as a mental illness?", noting that non-white shooters typically receive harsher treatment for the same crimes as their white counterparts.

Users went on to note that the "bullying defense" in school shootings once again garners sympathy for the shooter while overlooking those who are traditionally marginalized:

> *"If bullying causes mass shootings in schools, where are all the gay, trans, minority and disabled shooters at? #GunControlNow #walkupnotout"*

> *"This #walkupnotout logic doesn't work for me. Many mass shooters blame romantic troubles, not bullying... are you also going to tell girls they can't reject guys or mass shootings might happen?"*

Conclusion

My research demonstrates that the role of toxic masculinity in US school shootings has entered public discourse in specific, limited spaces. The framing of hegemonic masculinity and aggrieved entitlement by traditional news sources is significant in that it is essentially nonexistent. Contrarily, discussions of these topics are thriving in new media--particularly on Twitter. I found that the Twitter-sphere produced considerable discourse around the roles of masculinity, gender, and race in school shootings. Users actively identified a potential link between misogyny and shootings, often generating sophisticated analyses of the complexities of these events. This indicates a disconnect in how these events are perceived by "standard" news sources versus a considerable portion of the public.

Twitter and other social media platforms may likely become a space where these ideas continue to develop; however, the nature of such platforms may limit the depth of analysis. There is also risk of "preaching to the choir"--is the discussion of racialized masculinity in school shootings via twitter reflective of a shift in greater social consciousness, or are the individuals having these discussions already well-versed in the topic? As conversations surrounding racialized masculinity and related topics exist with in certain social media communities and not others, future research may benefit from expanding analysis to platforms such as facebook or the blogosphere where posts are less refined based on user preference and users are not limited by character count. Additionally, though I feel my decision to modify my original case-list was necessary and appropriate for this particular work, future research should incorporate parallel data sets to ensure more measurable results. A challenge remains in shifting the discourse occuring on new media platforms towards traditional media, as well as identifying

and measuring the effects of this discourse via the new media sphere.

It is my hope that my findings will assist scholars and activists to reconceptualize the means by which American school shootings are studied, and provide a preliminary framework for effective dissemination of racialized masculinity discourse. It is only through this reconceptualization that productive discourse and tangible change can occur.

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