

## Electronic Media, White Supremacy, and Contagion

Fifty people are dead, and dozens injured, after a self-proclaimed “ethno-nationalist” and “eco-fascist” fulfilled his convictions by killing those he feels are responsible for destroying the very beliefs he holds. But perhaps most disconcerting is the fact that electronic media has provided a forum, not only for future shooters to post their rants and collect “injustices,” but to also host dozens of domestic and foreign hate groups whose messages and recruitment efforts are traveling as we speak. <sup>1</sup>

Though numerous bio-psycho-social factors play a role in rampage shootings, experts within this field agree that marginalization, seeking a connection with others, dissatisfaction with the political climate, and a host of life failures are relevant, but one stands at the forefront in terms of motivation: “injustice collecting.” An “injustice collector” is identified as someone who “nurses resentment over real or perceived injustices, and no matter how much time has passed, the “injustice collector” will never forget or forgive those wrongs or the people he or she believes are responsible.” <sup>1 2 3</sup>

The themes in the shooter’s previous social media posts, the music playing in his vehicle on the way to the first mosque, and his manifesto provide clear evidence of the “injustices” he had collected. The attacker’s weapon was covered with references to, among other terms, others who experienced “injustice.” The music was intentionally selected; one can overhear the Chetniks’ marching anthem in the background, an ode to Serbian nationalist paramilitary units from the 1990s. Further, the aforementioned manifesto speaks of revenge toward “foreign invaders” whom he blames for thousands of deaths. It is likely he learned of the “injustices” through electronic media.

No child comes into this world filled with hatred. Yet, at some point in his or her development, the innocence and happiness of a child turns sour primarily through nurture, not nature. Terrorists of all forms identify with violent historical figures and collect real or perceived injustices while heading on a path toward violence. We saw similar patterns with Virginia Tech, University of California Santa Barbara, and Columbine shooters who referenced “snobs,” “blonde sorority girls,” and “jocks.” It is highly likely the New Zealand shooter accessed a wealth of information about these individuals, as post-shooting computer searches typically reveal search after search of past perpetrators.

Social media has provided a forum for these shooters and it didn’t take experts long to connect the title of the New Zealand shooter’s manifesto to a growing hate movement that is weaving its way into the minds of other “injustice” collectors. “The Great Replacement” isn’t merely a title for his manifesto, it is the name of an anti-Islam movement, based on a conspiracy theory, that is reaching dozens via hidden social networking pages on popular sites such as Facebook and

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<sup>1</sup> [The Dangerous Injustice Collector: Behaviors of Someone Who Never Forgets, Never Forgives, Never Lets Go, and Strikes Back!](#), Mary Ellen O'Toole. *Violence and Gender*, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> [A Bio-Psycho-Social Model of School Shooters](#), Peter Langman, Ph.D., 2017.

<sup>3</sup> [An Exploration of the Risk, Protective, and Mobilization Factors Related to Violent Extremism in College Populations](#), Van Brunt, Murphy, & Zedginidze, 2017.

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Twitter. Renaud Camus made popular “Le Grand Remplacement” (2012) in reference to immigration into France and other nations. The far right continues to use it today as a battle cry.

Though Camus claims he opposes violence in favor of re-immigration, the damage has been done and we now have new hate groups using the term in support of ending immigration at all costs.

It is time that the world begins to take seriously the outward manifestations of hatred, violence, and “injustice” collecting. As with the New Zealand tragedy, there is usually leakage by the perpetrator prior to the incident. More than half of shooters to date spoke or wrote statements of concern that went unreported or were reported and ignored. Right at this moment there are hundreds of extremists in communication on smart phones and computers, most are expressing their idolization of Friday’s gunman, many who are on the pathway to a similar attack. These extremists are also recruiting youth from across the globe, including the United States.<sup>4</sup>

Though we like to think “it can’t happen here,” it is happening and will continue to happen, especially if we are in denial, and online sites like YouTube continue to allow the posting of real-life carnage. Research suggests that in the two weeks following a highly publicized incident, similar venues should be on heightened alert. Now, the two weeks seem to span across years, especially due to 24/7 extremist content and communication online.

One of the dangers of looking elsewhere for risks to our nation is missing the youth who are struggling on our soil. The majority of domestic school shooters are also “injustice” collectors who are often marginalized, so they connect with those who sympathize with their contempt toward classmates. They have often sought connections with peers prior to the incident, only to have failed at forming relationships. These individuals often see themselves as the “have nots” among the “haves” within the microcosm of their educational setting. What extremists perceive at a societal scale, school shooters perceive within their school walls.

Increasing awareness of contributing factors is key. All educators, parents, school administrators, even peers should be taught to recognize behaviors of concern and to whom to report them. The ideal approach involves behavioral threat assessment by experts combined with caregivers and school personnel keeping a close eye on the types of social networking sites an individual visits. Most importantly, every school and campus in our nation must have a well-trained behavioral intervention team that assesses risk and develops a case management plan geared toward rehabilitating potentially violent youth. We’ve waited long enough and have watched too many die.

Lisa Pescara-Kovach, Ph.D.  
Director, Center for Education in Targeted Violence and Suicide, Associate Professor,  
Educational Psychology, University of Toledo

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<sup>4</sup> [A Study of the Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters in the United States between 2000 and 2013.](#) Silver, Simons, & Craun, 2018.