Chapter 4
Mass Shootings:
Aan International Perspective

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ABSTRACT
Understanding the international perspective discerning mass shootings is complicated and difficult to understand due to the lack of complete data. The problem that the world is facing with mass shootings in the last couple of decades is a fairly new phenomenon that has been a common topic in the news and media. Mass shootings that have cost the lives of dozens of people per event has been due to a variety of reasons including drug markets, terrorism, mentally unstable individuals, availability of firearms, ethnic and religious tensions, and much more. The impact of mass shootings is vast including mental health trauma for survivors and their families, change in public policy, cost of billions of dollars, the cost of human life, and much more. These shootings vary widely throughout countries and regions in each country. The chapter focuses on specific nations throughout the world, common firearms involved in the shootings, the environments in which these shootings take place, the characteristics of the shooter and much more.

INTRODUCTION
“He is a terrorist, he is a criminal, he is an extremist, but he will, when I speak, be nameless, and to others I implore you: Speak the names of those who were lost rather than the name of the man who took them. He may have sought notoriety but we in New Zealand will give him nothing – not even his name.” New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said in a speech to lawmakers’ days after a mass shooting that killed 50 people in Christchurch, New Zealand (Hjelmgaard, 2019). Less than a month later the New Zealand Parliament passed an assault weapon ban with a vote of 191 to 1 (Lopez, 2019). Devastating shootings such as the Christchurch mass shooting have occurred globally at schools, camps, churches, mosques, synagogues, government buildings, hospitals and just about anywhere else that people congregate at. Mass shootings have been a phenomenon that has grabbed international attention in the 21st century. The occurrences of mass shootings differ drastically throughout the world. In devel-

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Mass Shootings

Mass shootings are extremely rare for most nations. The President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, was quoted commenting on how the country has an abnormally high amount of mass shootings for an advanced nation “You don’t see murder on this kind of scale, with this kind of frequency, in any other advanced nation on Earth.” (Lott, 2018).

Males are often the perpetrators of mass shootings in an overwhelming majority of the time (Katsiyannis, Whitford, & Ennis, 2018). One issue in comparative crime statistics when it comes to mass shootings is that the term mass shooting is a vague term that can be hard to get proper statistics on. Various countries do not have valid statistics on crime. For example, in the United States, the federal government does not define what a mass shooting is, but the Uniform Crime Report has a term for mass murder which includes any event with four or more deaths. Using the United States definition, the Thurston High School shooting in Oregon with over twenty people shot would not qualify under their definition. School shootings are an important subset of mass shootings that have been a growing phenomenon in the twenty-first century for western nations (Katsiyannis, Whitford, & Ennis, 2018).

Gun control legislation by countries has helped reduce gun murders in various nation’s most notably Australia. After a mass shooting in 1996 in Port Arthur, Tasmania, Australia that resulted in thirty-five deaths the country had implemented strict gun control in the country. Before the mass shooting in Port Arthur, there were thirteen previous mass shootings in just 18 years. Australia had been free of a fatal mass shooting for over a decade after the Port Arthur shooting and had a significant reduction in firearm-related deaths overall. (Grimson, 2015).

After mass shootings, investigators often find signs that these individuals were distressed (Neuman, Assaf, Cohen, & Knoll, 2015). Many shooters had previous problems with their life, and many felt rejected in one way or another. In more recent times Islamic terror groups have taken credit for inspiring many of the mass shootings and the Muslim shooters have been perceived as less mentally ill but driven by religion compared to other mass shooters (Mercier, Norris, & Shariff, 2018). Mass shootings can be very costly for example estimates of the overall cost of the largest mass shooting in the United States in Las Vegas in 2017 are over a half-billion dollars in damages (Goldstein, 2018).

International Comparison

Between the years of 2000 and 2014 The United States had a victimization rate of .31 per 100,000 for mass shootings victims between the year 2000 and 2014, while other developed countries have had higher per capita rates including Switzerland with a rate of .4, Norway with a rate of 1.94, and Finland with a rate of .78 (Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016). The victimization rate of these countries has been pushed up by one large mass shooting due to their smaller population compared to larger nations like the United States. The total number of dead and wounded in these countries due to mass shootings are small compared to the United States. China with a much larger population than the United States had only twenty-six people killed by mass shootings compared to the United States with over 487 people killed (Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016).

One issue in comparing mass shootings and evaluating mass shootings is the variation of the definition of a mass shooting (Lott, 2018). There is no standard definition of a mass shooting and no organization keeps track of mass shootings and mass shootings get put into the mass killings category (Bagalman, Caldwell, Finklea, & McCallion, 2013).
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