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# Mass Shootings in the 21st Century: An Examination through the Lens of the Interpersonal Psychological Theory of Suicide

## Introduction

- Suicide-related thoughts and behaviors (SRTBs) are common antecedent experiences of mass shooters
- This study aimed to provide an exploratory perspective of interpersonal experiences of mass shooters who survived and died on the scene using the interpersonal psychological theory of suicide (IPTS) as a theoretical framework

## Research Questions

1. Are there similarities in antecedent IPTS components experienced by mass shooters who live versus die at the scene?
2. Do mass shooters have experiences of perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and a capability to enact lethal self-injury prior to their shooting?

## Methodology

- N = 112 individuals who perpetrated a mass shooting between January 9, 2001, and May 6, 2023
  - 95% (n = 106) assigned male at birth
  - 49% (n = 55) White, 20% (n = 22) Black, 9% (n = 10) Latine, 8% (n = 9) Asian, 8% (n = 9) Middle Eastern, and 6% (n = 7) other
- Using open-source data, mass shootings were coded by four raters for evidence that suggested the presence of perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and capability for suicide

## Conclusion

- Prevalence rates of perceived burdensomeness and acquired capability suggest **shooters across both outcomes are likely more similar to than different from one another**
- The presence of thwarted belongingness and a capability for suicide in most shooters suggest that **interpersonal constructs found in mass shooters overlap with those of suicidal individuals** in accordance with the IPTS
- **Prevention/intervention efforts may benefit from alignment with those proven efficacious for SRTBs**

## Results

