

If you give a man a gun: the evolutionary psychology of mass shootings

December 14, 2015

The Conversation:

Men commit over 85% of all homicides, 91% of all same-sex homicides and 97% of all same-sex homicides in which the victim and killer aren't related to each other.

These startling statistics are driven home with each new mass shooting (though the most recent tragedy in San Bernardino, California is a bit unusual in that a married couple were the shooters).

In any event, politicians and the media are trotting out the usual suspects to explain the tragedy, whether it's the lack of attention paid to mental illness or the easy availability of guns.

But these explanations dance around the big questions: why is there always a man behind these shootings? And why is it almost always a young man?

Evolutionary psychology can provide some clues.

...

Psychologists Joseph Vandello and Jennifer Bosson have coined the term "precarious manhood" to describe a dilemma that only men seem to face.

...

In 2006 I coauthored a laboratory study on men's responses to guns in the journal *Psychological Science* with my colleague Tim Kasser and one of our students. We demonstrated that males who interacted with a handgun showed a greater increase in testosterone levels and more aggressive behavior than males who interacted with the board game Mouse Trap.

Read the whole story: [The Conversation](#)