

Mass Murder, Targeted Individuals, and Gang-Stalking: Exploring the Connection

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Abstract

People across the world refer to themselves as “targeted individuals” (TIs) and claim to be the victim of gang-stalking. *The New York Times* conservatively estimates that there are at least 10,000 people claiming to be victims of gang-stalking. Their perpetrators are typically perceived to be powerful government or law enforcement officials, who are seeking to destroy the life of the TI (Sheridan and James 2016). In retaliation, some have committed extreme violence. This article documents some of those cases and reviews the limited informational base of gang-stalking. These cases suggest that more research is needed to understand this unexplored belief system.

Keywords: gang-stalking, group-stalking, persecutory delusions, mass murder, attempted mass murder, targeted individual

Introduction

INDIVIDUALS, WORLDWIDE, CLAIM to be the target of organized group activities designed to cause them physical and psychological harm. They call themselves “targeted individuals” or “TIs.” They refer to the organized group efforts to harm them as “gang-stalking.” *The New York Times* estimates that there are at least 10,000 persons claiming to be the victims of gang-stalking (McPhate 2016). In retaliation for the perceived organized stalking, some have resorted to extreme violence in the form of mass murder or attempted mass murder.

Three such gang-stalking cases have been identified by Mike McPhate of *The New York Times*. One case involves Gavin Eugene Long (also known as Cosmo Ausar Setepenra). In July 2016, he shot and killed three Baton Rouge, Louisiana police officers and wounded three others. The other two include Aaron Alexis, also known as the “Navy Yard Shooter,” who killed 12 people at the Washington Navy Yard in 2013, and Myron May, who shot three people in the Florida State University library, his alma mater, in November 2014 (McPhate 2016).

A fourth gang-stalking mass murder-related case may be that of Jiverly Wong, a Vietnamese immigrant, who killed 13 people on April 3, 2009, at the American Civic Association in Binghamton, NY (Knoll 2010). These cases indicate that at least some individuals, who believe themselves to be victims of gang-stalking, are capable of extreme violence. They are also likely mentally ill. A 2016 study of the phenomenon found that 100% of people in their sample,

who claimed to have been gang-stalked, were considered delusional (Sheridan and James 2016).

Purpose

This article has two main purposes. The first is to formally review the mostly anecdotal informational base of gang-stalking and related concepts. This type of preliminary work is important when examining a new phenomenon (Walsh and Bartunek 2016). The second is to examine, using public-domain materials, the aforementioned cases of individuals who have committed mass murder or who have attempted to commit mass murder, at least in part, as a reaction to their perception of having been gang-stalked. Mass murder involves the killing of three or more people, in a single location, within a time span of several minutes or hours (Burgess 2006¹). Attempted mass murder, for purposes of this study, involves an attempt to kill many people, but the wounds of their victims did not prove fatal.

This analysis is guided by the premise that although the majority of those with mental illnesses are not violent, they can be, when they perceive that others are attempting to harm them, or as shown in at least two of the presented cases, when an individual uses violence as a strategy to draw attention to a perceived important injustice. Although

¹Newer definitions, such as those used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), define mass murder as the killing of four or more people (FBI, 2008).

rare, mass violence events are important to thoroughly document, especially when they are associated with an unstudied phenomenon. Such an analysis can uncover potential warning signs for identifying people who may be at risk for committing extreme violence. It may also deepen their understanding of the relatively unexplored phenomenon of gang-stalking. This may be a new strand of persecutory delusion with the added propensity to commit mass violence.

Only Peer-Reviewed Study of Gang-Stalking

Sheridan and James (2016) conducted the first-ever empirical study of group or gang-stalking. They found that the majority of gang-stalking victims were Caucasian women with a mean age of 45. The group-stalked victims, which represented 12.3% of their sample, were frightened, often felt as though they were going “mad,” were depressed, had suicidal thoughts, lost sleep, were weak, tired, had lost weight, and were more likely to experience posttraumatic symptoms compared to individually stalked victims. They reported increased distrust and aggressiveness toward others. They were also more likely to complain of difficulty in verifying methods of stalking, such as being followed, interference with their homes or property, being spied upon, and having lies spread about them. Some of their more specific stated methods of stalking included: “hostile operatives” having been “inserted” into the workplace and children’s school; 24-h surveillance by teams of men on the street and in black vans; traffic lights being manipulated in their presence; being subjected to repeated sexual assault and dream tampering; friends and family also being victims of mind control; receiving “voice to skull” messages; had been the victims of witchcraft emanating through gold objects, thought insertion; having had their family dog replaced with a foul tempered double; and “remote manipulation” of bodily organs (p. 608).

Beyond the Sheridan and James (2016) study, virtually no empirical information exists about gang-stalking despite it being a worldwide phenomenon. *The New York Times* conservatively estimates that the gang-stalking community exceeds 10,000 people (McPhate 2016), but the real number could be much higher. An YouTube search of the term “gang-stalking” generates about 669,000 results. Many of the videos show self-proclaimed TIs actively tracking their alleged unsuspecting gang-stalkers. They record themselves monitoring “suspicious” cars in their neighborhoods and surrounding communities. They often follow law enforcement vehicles and aircraft and track civilian license plates, and much more. For TIs, these videos constitute evidence of their victimization. Ironically, it is they who are seemingly engaged in stalking behavior.

Two leading newspapers, the *Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, have featured multiple stories about gang-stalking. In 2007, Sharon Weinberger interviewed several gang-stalking victims for a story in the *Washington Post*. She learned that there were many people, both living in the United States and internationally, who believed that they were being electronically harassed and gang-stalked by their respective governments. The TI community offers as evidence for their beliefs, the mind control experiments run by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), on unsuspecting individuals, during the 1950s and ‘60s (i.e., Project MKUltra) (McPhate 2016).

Weinberger’s interviewees described the following distressing experiences: ringing in the ears, manipulation of body parts, hearing voices, piercing sensations of the skin, sinus problems, and sexual attacks involving the manipulation of their genitalia (Weinberger 2007). Weinberger (2007) noted that the complaints of TIs were similar to the complaints of people reporting alien abductions.

A 2008 article in *The New York Times*, by Sarah Kershaw, explored the world of mind control and gang-stalking websites. Among psychological experts interviewed was Vaughn Bell, a British psychologist who had studied the individuals that frequented mind control websites. He and the other experts interviewed, all noted the dangers associated with support networks of like-minded people reinforcing ideas that appear to be delusional (Kershaw 2008). The echo chamber of the Internet seems to be exacerbating this problem.

One noteworthy blog entry titled, “Honestly: You Are Not the Victim of Gang-Stalking” was posted on the website of Martin Investigative Services, a private investigation firm. The January 2016 blog post indicates that in 2015, the agency received 38 “sincere” inquiries from people requesting investigations related to gang-stalking. Of the 38 requests, it was determined, by the agency, that “every single one... had no basis in reality.” The gang-stalking victims claimed that they were being harassed by horns, sirens, helicopters, and infrared signals. The blogger who authored the entry noted that they “never tell us who they thought the person(s) were or what their motives might be” but remain convinced that there is a “deep-seated conspiracy by the government, relatives, or people from another planet” stalking them “physically, psychologically, and spiritually” (Martin 2016). When gang-stalking inquiries were presented, after fact finding and full consideration, invariably the investigators would recommend medical treatment. The investigator’s recommendation was often “greeted with anger.”

Gang-stalking victims appear to be a litigious group, a trait notably consistent with delusional disorders (American Psychiatric Association 2013). One self-identified victim sued the FBI over what he characterized as a nonresponsive effort, on the part of the agency, to provide him with “evidence” of gang-stalking. The person bringing the lawsuit was specifically seeking information from a Bureau of Justice statistics special report titled, “Stalking Victimization in the United States.” As part of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, the plaintiff included an affidavit from a former FBI agent who alleged that the FBI had been involved in gang-stalking and retains investigative files on their subjects. The files sent to the plaintiff, as part of the FOIA request, were later posted on a website as proof that “185,050 stalking victims were stalked by groups of 3 to 50 stalkers acting together as a team or group.” An unrelated public court document revealed that the plaintiff had been diagnosed with a psychotic disorder.

Of notable interest is a lawsuit by Rene Pittman Mitchell, who corresponded with the Florida University shooter Myron May (a case examined later in this study) days before he shot several people in a campus library. Public court records from 2009 indicate that she had sought a restraining order against the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) “to stop the painful abuse she lives with daily” (Mitchell v. National Security Agency et al. 2009). She contended that the DEA

spoke to her, in the background of her cell phone calls, for the purpose of psychological torture. She also claimed that they used satellite technology to deliver harassing messages directly into her brain. The restraining order was denied, and the case was dismissed.

In 2015, she again sued the U.S. Government, this time alleging that her constitutional rights were being violated “by the United States’ use of a Directed Energy Weapon to induce electronic harassment” against her (Mitchell v. United States 2016). She worried that they were conspiring with all levels of law enforcement and the military to commit a “convert technological murder” that she feared would be untraceable. Information available publicly revealed her to be a military veteran diagnosed with schizophrenia and a history of substance abuse.

Information contained within that lawsuit revealed that she also believed the following information: that the United States used energy weapons in her ceiling and in her neighbors homes for the purpose of “slowly diminishing” her joints and tissue causing “crippling organ damage;” that they have engaged in “mischievously tampering” of her publications by “inserting grammatical errors to discredit her as being inept and illiterate;” that she is being monitored continuously; that the government conspired with her neighbors during her showers, and had left threatening messages in the background audio of her phone; that they have denigrated her by calling her a “whore;” that they have destroyed her relationship with her daughters; and they have prevented her from having personal relationships with anyone except her alleged attackers. She alleged that the purpose of the campaign against her was to prevent her from writing about the government’s use of electromagnetic mind control technology. This had been the topic of her multiple self-published books. She also believed that the government was “exacting vengeance” for her having had received government benefit payments. Her 2015 case was dismissed without prejudice.

Another gang-stalking lawsuit was filed in March 2016, this time against the Departments of Justice, Commerce, and Defense, the FBI, the National Institute of Health, several states, and five judges, for what court officials referred to as a “mishmash of unrelated and bizarre allegations” (Shelden v. Department of Justice et al. 2016). These included accusing several U.S. senators, including Senator John McCain of Arizona, of noncompliance with their legal duties to “publicly investigate family murders and eight attempted murders.” These acts, in the plaintiffs’ opinion, amounted to terrorism “delivered in the form of psychological and physiological warfare.” The case was also dismissed, without prejudice, on the same day that it was filed. The aforementioned cases are only a sample of similar misguided lawsuits brought against the U.S. Government, and related agencies, by people who appear to be delusional.

Concerns about gang-stalking and mind control have, on occasions, originated from U.S. lawmakers. For instance, in 2001, Rep. Dennis Kucinich introduced a bill (Space Preservation Act of 2001, H.R. 2977, 107th Cong 2001) into the U.S. House of Representatives to ban, among other things, “electromagnetic, psychotronic, sonic, laser, or other energies directed at individual persons or targeted populations for the purpose of information war, mood management, or mind control of such persons or populations...” The bill was interpreted by some to mean that Rep. Kucinich was seeking to

ban mind control weapons, a claim that his spokesperson denied (Weinberger 2007). More recently, in 2015, Councilwoman Jovanka Beckles of Richmond, VA, introduced a resolution in support of Rep. Kucinich’s 2001 bill, to prevent residents of her district from being targets of space-based weaponry (Richmond Resolution on Space-Based Weaponry 2015). The resolution was intended to “include all of the things people are feeling the pressure of and feeling the attacks of [sic].” As a result of her proposed resolution, the local police department began receiving phone calls from people across the world, referring to themselves as TIs, and claiming to be victims of surveillance and mind control technologies (Richmond Resolution on Space-Based Weaponry 2015).

References to gang-stalking can also be found in contemporary literature. Timothy Taylor incorporated elements of gang-stalking into the fictional characters of his 2011 book titled, *The Blue Light Project*. He reportedly learned about gang-stalking by studying the many videos posted on YouTube by people claiming to be victims (Medley 2011). Another popular novel about gang-stalking was written by the award-winning novelist, Gloria Naylor, titled, *1996*. Although her book is fiction, a 2006 National Public Radio interview with Ms. Naylor indicated that she wrote the book based upon her personal experiences as a TI. The book, she explained, is about the loss of privacy and the government’s ability to do more than just simply tap into their phones (Gordon 2006). “But they now have technology that is able to code the brain patterns and to detect what people are actually thinking. And they have another technology called microwave hearing, where they can actually input words into your head, bypassing your ears” (Gordon 2006, para 2). Much like other TIs, Ms. Naylor believed that she was under surveillance. Although never formally diagnosed, she once believed that she had schizophrenia (Weinberger 2007).

There has been a series of unusual incidents occurring in cities across the United States associated with gang-stalking. For instance, several towns in Connecticut have been blanketed with public safety notices about gang-stalking. The orange-colored flyers are attempting to alert the public about the crime of “illegal surveillance and harassment of TIs” (Lederman 2016). Similar flyers have been seen around the city of Milwaukee. The flyers indicate that the Milwaukee Police Department, the city of Milwaukee itself, Time Warner cable, and several emergency medical technician (EMT) companies are involved in organized stalking and are using their vehicles to spy on the public. One flyer warned “wake up or fall victim” (Handelman 2016). A search of the website Craigslist, (a classified advertisement site), at the time of this writing, revealed a number of posts involving gang-stalking. A repeated posting involved a former U.S. navy officer announcing his plans to walk from Delaware to California to raise awareness about electronic assault weapons. He claims to have secret knowledge about unethical covert testing on humans, specifically on “TIs,” who are being psychologically and physically tortured by electronic weapons.

Frightening perceptions of gang-stalking may have historical precedent. An intriguing parallel case study was published in 1810, by John Haslam, in a book titled, *Illustrations of Madness*. Haslam was a chemist at London’s Royal Bethlem Hospital (Hirjak and Fuchs 2010). *Illustrations of Madness* describes the delusions of a Welsh tea

broker and self-appointed peace negotiator named James Tilly Matthews, hereinafter referred to as Mr. M. (Hirjak and Fuchs 2010; Howard 1991). Mr. M. believed that he was being controlled by mysterious, undercover, highly influential, and politically connected gangs of people who were manipulating him with machines he called “air looms” (Suzuki 2005).

Mr. M. was concerned about one air loom in particular that he believed was operated by a “gang” of seven people, composed of four men and three women. Mr. M. described, in meticulous detail, the lives and personalities of the seven gang members. The mysterious machines, he explained, ran on magnetically charged invisible gases and rays (Hirjak and Fuchs 2010). The air loom caused dozens of tortures and great bodily pain for the victim, eventually causing the victim to become insane. For instance, the machine was capable of “fluid locking,” in which it would constrict the fibers of the root of his tongue and impede his speech. “Bladder filling,” another bizarre torture, involved filling the nerves of the neck with “gaz” in an effort to cause partial dislocation of the brain and to weaken the intellect. Other unusual tortures described included stomach skinning, lobster cracking, lengthening the brain, thought making, dream working, and others (Haslam 1810).

Delusions of an “influencing machine” were also described by Tausk (1919) in an article titled, “The Origin of the Influencing Machine in Schizophrenia.” Tausk presented several case studies of patients who believed that their thoughts and feelings were influenced by a distant machine, sometimes through their dreams, using waves, rays, and other mysterious forces (Hirjak and Fuchs 2010; Sledge 1992; Vaughan et al. 2006).

A more modern example of anti-technology fears may be those of the infamous Theodore Kaczynski, also known as “The Unabomber.” In his manifesto titled “Industrial Society and Its Future,” Mr. Kaczynski argues that technological systems suppress freedom and force humans to conform to and to become reliant upon machines. Mr. Kaczynski noted that historically, it was more difficult to control the masses with technology because societies lacked the “efficient mechanisms for enforcing the ruler’s will: There was no modern well organized police forces, no rapid long distance communications, no surveillance cameras, no dossiers of information about the lives of average citizens... (FC 1995, p. 11).” Kaczynski, who killed 3 people and injured 23 others by sending anonymous self-constructed bombs through the mail, was diagnosed with schizophrenia. He maintains that the industrial technological system must be destroyed. Perhaps gang-stalking and related fears represent the modern day delusional equivalent of the “air loom” and the “influencing machine.” They may also be indicative of an extreme overvalued belief, a new concept proposed by Rahman and colleagues (2016). An extreme overvalued belief is defined as an idea that is shared by people in the culture, relished by the possessor, and in some cases “overvalued” to the point where violence is used as a statement for their strongly held belief systems (Rahman et al. 2016). The researchers argue that extreme overvalued beliefs are different from a delusion or an obsession. More research is needed to understand the nature of gang-stalking and other staunchly held ideas.

The Case of Myron May

According to police reports, 31-year old Myron DeShawn May returned to his alma mater, Florida State University (FSU). He entered the front lobby of the library at ~12:30 a.m. on November 20, 2014. He was armed with a stolen .380 semiautomatic handgun. He then shot three people. One victim was an employee and alumnus of FSU, and the other two were students; all victims were male and his victim choice appeared to be random. After the shootings, Mr. May reloaded his weapon and exited the library, where he was confronted by police officers. When he refused to surrender, he was shot 24 times and died from his wounds.

In the aftermath of the shooting, it became evident that Mr. May had been experiencing mental health problems. The evidence that he left behind also suggests significant premeditation of the event. Students, on campus, observed him acting strangely for days before the shooting. One student said that he approached her and her classmates, identifying himself as an alumnus of the university and a lawyer (both of which were true). He claimed that Beyoncé and Jay-Z would be attending the university’s homecoming and he needed their social media information to build support for the celebrities to visit campus. They described him as polite but pushy. Another student reported being present during a review session in class, days before shooting, when the instructor noticed an unfamiliar male student sitting in the class, who turned out to be Mr. May. When the instructor asked why Mr. May was there, he responded that he was a former student and was just sitting in for the day. No further action was taken.

Mr. May recorded multiple videos 2 days before the shooting. Each video was accompanied by a script. The first video was ~41 min long and described some of his experiences as a TI. The goal of “gang-stalking,” he said, was to drive the TI “crazy.” Gangs-stalking programs, he went on to explain, involved “Control Panel Stalkers,” whom he described as a group of people confined to an operation center whose job was to monitor TIs across America. He complained of being harassed by people who wore dark sunglasses and who would give him “strange looks.” He heard voices that would narrate his movement through his apartment. Gang-stalkers also would shine bright lights into his home and vehicle, a tactic he called “brightening.” They also subjected him to a “noise campaign” which prevented him from sleeping and they would break into his apartment to rearrange his household items, all tactics designed to cause insanity.

Other methods of psychological torture included “mopping,” a scenario that involved 5–10 cars driving past him, all at once, each driver wearing dark sunglasses; “hacking,” a tactic that would involve people gaining remote access to his electronic devices and preventing his downloading of books about gang-stalking; electronic harassment in the form of “directed energy weapons”; and the usage of psychotronic weapons (also known in the gang-stalking community as voice of God technology) that utilized microwave technologies to induce sound into the ears of TIs and would allow the gang-stalkers to see images directly from his mind as he slept.

The second video left by Mr. May was playing on a loop on his computer when it was found by authorities. In this

video, which was ~33 min long, he prays, asks for forgiveness, and says goodbye to his family and friends. The third video, also about 33 min long, provides a deeper explanation of his experience as a TI and his rationale for murder. His main motivation was to focus media attention on the plight of TIs. The media attention would enable other TIs to “have a shot at living a normal life.” The life that he was denied. He insisted that he was not mentally ill, but was instead a victim of targeted harassment.

Text messages revealed that he had been interacting with Rene Pittman Mitchell, the self-published author of multiple gang-stalking books (*Remote Brain Targeting*; *Diary of an Angry Targeted Individual: Remote Neural Monitoring*; *Convert Technological Murder: Big Brother Approved!*; and *The Targeting of Myron May: Florida State University Gunman*, among others), who, as described above, twice sued the U.S. Government regarding her beliefs about being spied upon. Ms. Pittman was initially contacted by Mr. May through social media. As their interactions continued she became worried that he was an “imposter” and attempted to cut ties with him. It appears as though he continued to contact her despite her attempt to end their relationship. Before the shooting, he mailed her a certified package and left her multiple voice mails and text messages. He also sent her an email at 11:19 p.m., the night of the shooting that said “I’ve been getting hit with the direct energy weapon in my chest all evening. It hurts really bad now.” The two also appeared to be having a disagreement about his threats of suicide. They exchanged the following messages, in between several phone calls to one another, beginning after 9 p.m., on the night of the shooting:

Pittman: “It appears you are being used to play on my humanity side with the suicide crap...”

May: “No, Renee. Stop being paranoid. I’m a genuine guy... I’m still getting hit right now.”

Pittman: “You never mailed anything and you know it. I guess the HNIC thought they had a handle on me through my sympathy. You are a shill! You say you want to kill yourself. Go for it. That is your business and not mine. Sorry kid we must part ways now. I can’t save you.”

May: “Calm down now!!! My death can’t be in vain. I devised a scheme and you are about to mess it up real bad Renee.”

Pittman: “If you kill yourself you hurt our effort and allow this program to continue. You can bet the media will portray you as schizophrenic... saying you were hearing voices. Don’t involve me.”

Myron May also left a five-page explanation about being harassed by gang-stalkers titled, “My Experiences as a Targeted Individual.” In it, he expressed regret for having resorted to a mass shooting, but felt that his options were extremely limited. By virtue of being a TI, he believed that everything had been taken away from him. “I have literally been robbed of life through psychological, financial, and emotional hardship.” The letter details his experiences with electronic harassment. The letter explained: when it started, who was following him, and what he believed was the factual daily experience of a TI. He hoped that his actions would benefit other TI victims.

The Case of Gavin Long

It may never be fully known what motivated 29-year-old Gavin Long to shoot six Baton Rouge law enforcement

officers on July 17, 2016. News reports indicate that he left his hometown of Kansas City, MO and traveled to Baton Rouge, LA soon after learning about the death of Alton Sterling, an African American man who was killed by two Baton Rouge police officers on July 5, 2016 (Teague and Pengelly 2016). Mr. Long was armed with two assault rifles, a 9 mm pistol, and was wearing a ski mask. He attacked the six officers, ambush style. Three of the officers died, and three were injured during the shoot-out. Mr. Long was subsequently shot and killed by a member of the Baton Rouge Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team (Teague and Pengelly 2016). It is unknown how many times he was shot.

According to *The New York Times*, Mr. Long had considered himself a TI for ~11 years (The Baton Rouge gunman 2016). He, like Myron May, believed that law enforcement officers were persecuting him. On his personal blog, he shared an article that suggested that 99% of all gang-stalking was being perpetrated by police officers. He would sometimes discuss his fears about gang-stalkers in videos that were posted on YouTube, in his podcasts, and on social media platforms, such as Twitter. In a podcast, shortly before the shooting, he said that he thought he was being closely monitored by Marine Corps supervisors, the same branch of the military he served for 5 years. “Once they knew that I was a man and I would stand on my rights that nothing they could do could scare me, that’s when they knew, they really, really had to keep a close eye on me (para 11),” he told his listeners.

He also believed that the government might have black-listed him which, in his mind, prevented him from finding employment after his military service. He thought the military had instructed his friends and family to avoid him, in an effort to make him feel isolation and fear. Even though he would sometimes speak out about his being a TI, he instructed his friends not to discuss gang-stalking, fearing that *anyone* could be part of the conspiracy against him. He also saw himself as a “freedom strategist” and likened himself to someone who freed slaves (The Baton Rouge gunman 2016, para 16). “I’m the one that’s freeing slaves. So what do you think they would do to the person that’s freeing slaves from the plantation? “You don’t think that they would target and harass that individual?” (The Baton Rouge gunman 2016, para 18).

Although a mental health diagnosis has not been officially established, his mother, Corine Woodley, told a Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) reporter that she thought he had posttraumatic stress disorder (Arrington 2016). She had urged him to seek help from the Veterans Administration (VA), but was unhappy with their services. He claimed that they did not want to help him and only helped people at the “top, the 1%” (Arrington 2016). She also indicated that he had received a letter from the VA, in 2013, denying his request for treatment (Hanna 2016). That news prompted Florida Representative Jeff Miller, Chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Veterans Affairs, to request the medical records of Mr. Long from the VA. It is unclear when and if a congressional investigation of these matters had taken place or will in the future (Hanna 2016).

Ms. Woodley also indicated that her son was “troubled” and paranoid. He was convinced that he was “being...watched” (Arrington 2016) and thought that the CIA was following him (CBS 2016). His mother also said that he intensively tracked

high-profile cases of African American civilians who were killed by law enforcement officers across the country. He once complained to her that “cops always go free...” (Arrington 2016). It was her opinion that each killing pushed him “further over the edge” (Arrington 2016). He would “pretty much lose it” when he heard about a black man being killed by the police. He would often tell her that “somebody has to do something” (Revesz 2016, para 13).

His fear of gang-stalking might have only been part of what drove Gavin Long to violence. He was also a member of an obscure black separatist group called United Washitaw de Dugdahmoundyah Mu’ur Nation, an antigovernment “sovereign citizen” group who contend that U.S. laws do not apply to them (The Baton Rouge gunman 2016; Zavadski 2016). At one point, Mr. Long dropped out of college, sold his cars, gave away all of his possessions, and traveled to Africa. During this period he wrote several self-help self-published books about holistic health for “melanated people” (The Baton Rouge gunman 2016). His international travels are likely the inspiration for his name change to Cosmo Ausar Setepenra, paying homage to an ancient Egyptian religion with African roots (The Baton Rouge gunman 2016). In media interviews, he openly supported bloodshed instead of protest. “One hundred percent of revolutions, of victims fighting their oppressors,” Mr. Long said, “have been successful through fighting back, through bloodshed. Zero have been successful just over simply protesting” (Fausset et al. 2016, para 9). “You’ve got to stand on your rights, just like George Washington did, just like the other white rebels they celebrate and salute did,” he added. “That’s what Nat Turner did. That’s what Malcolm did” (Fausset et al. 2016, para 10). In a handwritten letter, found in his car, and also in a three-page letter sent to a musician (a distant acquaintance—not personally known), he expressed his belief that his actions were necessary to create change within the American police force and the justice system (Kunzelman 2016). Although the authors may never know precisely why he chose to engage in a murder spree, it would seem that a confluence of factors were the trigger for his extreme violence. Frustration, anger, and the fear that comes from being a gang-stalking victim, his hatred of the police shootings of African American males, combined with his demonstrated mental illness, appear to have triggered his violent behavior.

The Case of Aaron Alexis

According to multiple reports, including the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations of the U.S. Navy and a congressional investigation by U.S. House of Representatives, Aaron Alexis entered Building 197 of the Washington Navy Yard in Washington DC on September 16, 2013, fatally shot 12 people, and wounded four others. Mr. Alexis was able to gain entry into the building using a valid temporary access badge he acquired as an employee of a small private defense security company, hired by the Navy to update their computer hardware (House of Representatives 2014).

Mr. Alexis arrived at the facility at 8:02 a.m. He began shooting within 15 min of entering the building. He was confirmed dead at 9:25 a.m., having being fatally shot in the head by law enforcement. Mr. Alexis was armed with a concealed sawed-off shotgun that he had purchased only

2 days before the shooting. During the course of the attack he acquired a handgun, most likely from one of the dead security guards stationed in the first-floor lobby (Hermann and Marimow 2013). The entire shooting rampage lasted ~69 min and his targets appeared to be randomly chosen (Johnson and Stanglin 2013).

Evidence recovered from Mr. Alexis’s laptop revealed his belief that he was the “target” of low frequency waves. He wrote that an “ultra-low frequency attack is what I’ve been subject to for last three months... and to be perfectly honest that is what has driven me to do this” (Johnson and Stanglin 2013). He also engraved the barrel of his shotgun with phrases such as “End the torment!” (Hermann and Marimow 2013), “Better off this way,” “not what ya’ll say,” and “My ELF weapon.” ELF refers to extremely low frequency electromagnetic waves used by the Navy for submarine communications (Schmidt 2013). Although ELF technology is a perfectly legitimate form of electronic communication, it remains a major concern among self-identified victims of gang-stalking who see it as a form of mind control.

A series of incidents, 1 month before the attack, highlights his mental decompensation. On August 4, 2013, Mr. Alexis was traveling when he became convinced that a man in the airport was making fun of him and it made him angry. He called his supervisor who was able to calm him down and suggested that he seek help from airport security. He later told the police that “this party” had sent three people to follow him and “to keep him awake by talking to him and sending vibrations into his body” (Department of Defense 2013).

The next day, while at the hotel, Mr. Alexis contacted his employer again to request assistance in changing hotel rooms because of a high noise level. Over the course of his multiple-day hotel stay, the police received at least four calls either from or about Mr. Alexis. He complained about being harassed by hotel guests. He reported the following unusual set of beliefs: that people were speaking to him through the walls, floors, and the ceiling; that they were sending vibrations through his body; that someone had implanted microwave signals and a chip into his head; that people were hiding underneath his bed and taping his every word; and that they were using an ultrasonic machine to keep him awake and to physically pin him to his bed.

Mr. Alexis’s behavior was so concerning that his employer contacted the hotel staff to warn them that he may harm someone. In response, the front desk clerk requested that the police stay close in case Mr. Alexis engaged in violence. Part of their concern involved his disturbing hotel guests. He would knock on walls and ask people to stop making noise. Mr. Alexis himself was also evidently frightened of what he felt was happening to him. He requested that a deployment supervisor stay with him in the hotel room, because he believed that people had followed him from the airport and were staying in the same hotel. They were harassing him with noises and threats. The supervisor regarded his story as being “preposterous.”

As the events at the hotel continued to unfold, the human resources director for Mr. Alexis’s employer called his mother who revealed that he “had been paranoid and this [was] not the first episode he had experienced” (Department of Defense 2013, p. 38). After collecting information from

supervisors and law enforcement, senior level company personnel met to formally discuss how they should handle the situation with Mr. Alexis. They ultimately decided that the information that they had collected thus far had been “based on rumor and innuendo” and decided against reporting the aforementioned incidents to the government to avoid infringing on his privacy rights.

After a brief respite, Mr. Alexis resumed his work for the company. On two occasions, near the end of August 2013, he visited the emergency rooms of two different Veterans Affairs treatment facilities. During his first visit, he reported that over the last 3 weeks he had only slept for 2 or 3 h (House of Representatives 2014). He was given a prescription for a low-dose antidepressant. His medical records indicate that when asked if he was a danger to himself or others, he answered “no.” During his second visit, 5 days later, he again complained of insomnia. He said that he was waking up at 4:00 a.m. “like clockwork” (House of Representatives 2014, p. 10). The attending physician refilled his prescription for the low-dose antidepressant and was told to follow-up with his primary care physician.

It is noteworthy that on September 1, 2013, 15 days before the shooting, Mr. Alexis exchanged several emails with the president of Freedom from Covert Harassment and Surveillance (FFCHS). FFCHS is a group which assists victims of gang-stalking. According to their website, their mission is to “educate” and save the lives of people who have been “marginalized and abused” by a number of United States sanctioned technologies, including “...remote brain experimentation and remote neural monitoring of an entire human body; manipulation by evil technologies... remote burns by high power lasers or burns by directed energy...” and much more. The emails included a discussion of Alexis’s contention that he was under “constant bombardment from some type of ELF weapon,” a problem that, in his view, nearly cost him his job. Mr. Alexis believed that he was the victim of government mind control. The FBI concluded that Mr. Alexis was prepared to die and accepted death as a consequence of his actions (Johnson and Stanglin 2013).

The Case of Jiverly Wong

A 41-year-old Vietnamese immigrant named Jiverly Antares Wong killed 13 people and injured another four at the American Civic Association in Binghamton, NY on April 3, 2009. Like many mass shooters, he committed suicide at the scene and was heavily armed with extra weapons, ammunition, and a bullet proof vest (Meloy et al. 2015). Mr. Wong was familiar with the immigration center, having been a student, for the 2 months that preceded the attack. His targets were former fellow students and current center employees. They did not appear to be chosen at random.

An investigation revealed that by all accounts, Mr. Wong was severely mentally ill. Weeks before the murders, his symptoms had worsened. His parents noticed that he had become increasingly isolative and paranoid. They said that he had stopped eating and watching television and would rarely leave his bedroom (Langman 2016). They took him to a hospital for psychiatric evaluation, but the language barrier is thought to have prevented the evaluators from iden-

tifying the severity of his illness. The staff ultimately sent him home with no treatment (Langman 2016). Post-humously, it would appear as though Mr. Wong was psychotic at the time of the shooting and might have been schizophrenic (Langman 2016).

A two-page, paranoid-laden suicide letter, from Mr. Wong, arrived at a local television news station 3 days after the shooting. It revealed his belief that he was a victim of extensive harassment. He described a specific “undercover cop” who had been surveilling his home. The “undercover cop” would use an “... ultramodern...camera for burn chemicals.” The villainous cop would also change the channels on his television, adjust his fan, make him “unbreathable,” cause him to vomit, and would “connect the music into” his ears. In addition, Mr. Wong said that the police officer broke into his room 13 times, stealing his money, touching him while he slept, using an electric gun “behind his neck,” knocking on his door to “harass and domineer” him, and calling and texting him.

The harassment did not end with home and personal property tampering. Mr. Wong thought that the “undercover cop” had been spreading rumors about him, leading him to lose his job, and causing him to be “poor.” Mr. Wong was convinced that the “undercover cop” had followed him from California to New York. He described one occasion when the cop nearly caused him to have a collision while driving, an allegation notably similar to that of Mr. May who alleged that gang-stalkers had on numerous occasions attempted to force him into having car accidents. Mr. May, in his suicide letter, identified Mr. Wong as being a victim of gang-stalkers. Mr. Wong felt bombarded by the harassment of the “undercover cop” and he blamed him for his life problems. It logically followed, in his delusional state, that a violent attack was necessary to draw attention to his perceived attacker(s) who, when exposed, would finally be held “responsible” (Meloy et al. 2015).

During the autopsy of Mr. Wong, a large tattoo, covering most of his left arm and shoulder, was discovered (Meloy et al. 2015). It consisted of seemingly random numbers and shapes and a solid black square. Reid Meloy, a prominent researcher in the field of threat assessment, consulted numerous law enforcement agencies and cryptographers who were unable to determine its meaning.

Discussion

The purpose of this article was to explore, in richer depth, the phenomenon of gang-stalking and its connection to mass murder. This analysis examined a small subset of individuals who engaged in extreme violence as a response to their sincere belief that they were the targets of gang-stalking. These individuals were middle-aged males, ranging in age between 29 and 41 and were all members of minority groups; three African American and one Vietnamese immigrant. These demographics are in line with some of the latest findings about race and mass murder (Huff-Corzine et al. 2015; Lafraniere et al. 2016; Lankford 2015). This study focused on individuals who both believed they were victims of gang-stalking and who reacted with extreme violence. When it comes to gender, this study is distinctly different from the Sheridan and James (2016) study of gang-stalking victims, which was composed of middle-aged

Caucasian women. The individuals examined in both this analysis and the Sheridan and James (2016) study appear to have been both delusional and paranoid.

All of the individuals presented in this analysis had made significant efforts to make others aware of their perceived victimization and persistent harassment. In some cases, they created extensive documentation. They left manifestos, video and audio tapes, and social media posts, presumably hoping to make the world aware of their plight. By attempting to tell the world of the existence of gang-stalking, they inoculated and or reinforced their unusual belief system in many others. The behaviors, which preceded the outbreak of violence, may serve as warning indicators and help in identifying potential perpetrators of mass violence.

Much like the participants in the Sheridan and James (2016) study, the individuals in this study also appeared to have been in severe psychological distress. In three out of the four cases, psychiatric help was sought but none was provided. Had treatment been provided, these individuals may not have resorted to extreme violence as response to their perceived ongoing assault.

Self-proclaimed victims of gang-stalking, arguably, pose a unique threat to society, particularly to government and law enforcement officials who are perceived as perpetrators of malicious harassment. These four individuals, detailed in this study, demonstrated a propensity for extreme violence. Their belief in being targeted and being the victims of illegal inhumane treatment was the foundational basis for their reactionary attack upon their own targeted victims. Their violence was intended either as a preemptive strike in self-defense and or to bring awareness to the perceived phenomenon of gang-stalking.

Further indication of their potential capacity for violence was demonstrated by the threats received by researcher Dr. Lorraine Sheridan. In a newspaper interview Dr. Lorraine Sheridan, the researcher who published the first empirical examination of this topic, indicated that she received threats of an unspecified nature from members of the gang-stalking community (Kiberd 2016). They also sought to discredit her work. Dr. Sheridan's study was given the label "Kooky Stuff" on a gang-stalking Wiki page (Kiberd 2016). It was also deemed "unreadable," presumably because she was, as her accusers suggested, working on behalf of the government (Kiberd 2016). Recent videos posted on YouTube suggest that members of the gang-stalking community were also highly displeased with Mike McPhate, the author of an article about gang-stalking, which appeared in *The New York Times*. It is unknown whether Mr. McPhate did also receive threats. Future investigators of this phenomenon should anticipate threats and the mischaracterizations of their work.

Limitations

Case studies are inherently small and are severely limited in their generalizability. This study was intended to be descriptive and exploratory and thus can draw no definitive conclusions. Gang-stalking and related delusions may not represent a distinct type of delusion. They may be indicative of the well-known delusions of persecution, common to schizophrenia (Bell et al. 2005; Hirjak and Fuchs 2010;

Knoll 2010). It is also important to note that the motivation, for the individuals examined in this study, to engage in extreme violence, might have been more complex than simple fear of gang-stalking. For instance, Gavin Long, in addition to believing that he was a TI, also considered himself a sovereign citizen, followed ancient Egyptian religions, was upset about high-profile cases of police violence against African Americans, and wrote books about esoteric aspects of nutrition. It would be overly simplistic to categorize his violent behavior as being solely driven by fears of gang-stalking. Clearly, there were multiple factors which motivated his decision to stalk and kill police officers. An inspection going beyond that which is possible in public records might show this to be true for the other cases as well. In addition, there are known limitations associated with collecting data from publicly accessible records. While this study made a concerted effort to collect data from the most objective sources, which included police and congressional reports, media reports were necessary for inclusion and cannot be guaranteed to be without error. Finally, it remains possible that cases may have been missed or that different researchers might have had different criteria for inclusion in their samples.

Conclusion

Those who believe that they are TIs and thus victims of gang-stalking believe so with great sincerity. As has been shown in this study, their belief is so strong as to compel them to "fight back" through mass murder. Logically, they either are or are not victims of gang-stalking. Certainly, they believe they are but their belief exists without evidence of causality. Court systems demand evidence beyond a reasonable doubt. Science demands objective evidence before it will assert causality. Without evidence of causality, the self-proclaimed TIs believe that their perceptions are true and are the result of government directed gang-stalking. Holding beliefs that are contradicted by evidence or logic is a reasonable definition of a delusion. The unsupported beliefs of the "targeted individual" are strengthened manifold by the availability of the Internet. Clinicians quickly see how easily delusions are strengthened and how exceedingly difficult they are to be weakened. Gang-stalking websites, blogs, videos, and support groups populate the Internet and act as an explanation and further confirmation for those experiencing perceptions which are common to delusions of persecution. By connecting with like-minded people, on the Internet, gang-stalking beliefs are both validated and reinforced, which can lead to acts of extreme violence, as illustrated in this study.

Although the phenomenon of gang-stalking remains "virtually unresearched" (McPhate 2016, para 7), it should not remain so. Many tens of thousands worldwide believe themselves to be victims of gang-stalking, and the authors are aware of the violence that is possible by those who hold this belief. The phenomenon of gang-stalking should be of interest to the research community and society at large. Future research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of this unexplored belief system.

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