Gun Violence and the Epidemic of Mass Shootings

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This proposal to the Criminology Conference is submitted by Brooks Singer and puts forth the argument that there are various options available to stop mass shootings in the United States. A key factor in determining possible solutions to this growing epidemic is to look at our own American culture. This analysis is necessary and crucial to preserve our nation’s safety and health of its citizens, especially given the drastic increase of mass shootings in homes, businesses, schools, churches, and other public spaces.

As of August 5, there have been 255 mass shootings this year in the United States according to the nonprofit Gun Violence Archive. School shootings have increased drastically since Columbine and yet, there have been little steps towards prevention of further attacks. Recent research by social scientists and medical professionals show that prevention is indeed possible and there are many available options that can be applied in order to stop the epidemic of mass shootings.

Patterns of violence show that it is predictable and is contagious, it spreads from person to person as inspiration to commit further violence. Gun violence in the United States is disproportionately committed by men and is predictable by strong ideologies of racism, xenophobia, misogyny, and white supremacy. ‘Toxic masculinity’ has also been shown to be a motivator of many men to carry out acts of violence. Perpetrators of gun violence show signs of antisocial and suicidal behavior and have a history of domestic
violence. Most Americans believe that loose gun laws, racism, white nationalism, and a poor mental health system are to blame for the rise of mass shootings.

In order to prevent the epidemic of mass shootings from continuing, we have presented five options. First, there are preemptive actions such as background checks and waiting periods to purchase that can be implemented which curbs the access to firearms. Second, measures used to identify individuals who are possible threats of committing mass shootings needs to be enforced. Mental health evaluations and screenings as well as red flag laws help to determine these individuals who may carry out these acts. Red flag laws are essential in aiding in protection against potential individuals by temporary removing guns from one’s possession if the individual is at a high risk of harming oneself or others. Third, schools, communities, and professionals must take a holistic approach towards those who are potential threats that there are alternatives to committing violent acts. Fourth, restrictions, bans, and laws need to be expanded and heavily enforced in order to prevent the access to types of weapons that are frequently used. Current weaponry used in mass shootings, such as automatic assault rifles and high capacity magazines, produce the most amount of carnage in the shortest period of time. The recent Dayton, Ohio shooting killed nine people and injured twenty-seven in under a minute using a legal semi-automatic rifle. Weapons chosen do the most damage in the least amount of time and produce great amounts of casualties even with quick reaction time by law enforcement and bystander response. Because of this, tougher restrictions need to be implemented on possessing a gun of this capacity. Finally, society must closely examine the role of males, as they are the predominant perpetrators of mass
shootings and gun violence. The role of ideologies and behaviors of males who
perpetrate violence I previously mentioned need to be addressed in families, schools, and
communities.