

## **Killing for Recognition: Mass Public Shootings in the Era of Hyper-Neoliberalism**

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Drawing from manifestos, online communications, interviews, and other written reports, we examine the words and thoughts of five mass shooters from 2007-2019. These documents provide important insights into the structural conditions and ideological factors that have contributed to increases in the frequency and lethality of mass public shootings in the U.S. since the mid-2000s. Unlike studies that focus on gun laws and/or the mental health or personality traits of mass shooters, we emphasize the connection between mass public shootings in the U.S. and the prevailing neoliberal ideology that has, particularly in recent decades, shaped not only material conditions but value systems, social relations, and conceptions of the self in accordance to the logic of the market. We suggest the increasing digitization of social life under neoliberalism has led to a form of *hyper-neoliberalism* that amplifies conditions such as social isolation, low self-esteem, and egoistical forms of agency, all of which discourage empathy, erode social bonds, and foster a fertile environment for various forms of social degradation and violence. Under these conditions, mass public shootings can be regarded as an attempt to seek respect or recognition—what classical Greeks described as *thymos*—among individuals, particularly men, who feel alienated and irrelevant. [Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: [journal@transformativestudies.org](mailto:journal@transformativestudies.org) Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2022 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]

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