

3rd International Conference on Forensic Research and Technology

October 06-08, 2014 Hilton San Antonio Airport, USA

Forensic psychological autopsy of home grown terrorists: More questions than answers

Ronn Johnson

University of San Diego, USA

Internationally, the clinical forensic and public safety significance of gun violence in academic settings is not a difficult case to make. Columbine, the Norway Killings, Virginia Tech, and Beslan school hostage crisis in Russia are global residual PTSD reminders. The Sandy Hook School Shooting is a more recent incident that is again marked by a public outcry for answers to the logical why question that reflexively emerges in the aftermath of such incidents. Prediction poses a number of empirical challenges because this area has received comparatively limited research clinical forensic attention. The clinical forensic-relevant questions center on a desire to uncover the presence of non-overlapping sets of symptoms. The media's seeming intent was to place the Sandy Hook Shooter (Adam Lanza) into a convenient one size fits all psychological containers. For example, the media speculated that an Autism Spectrum Disorder was the primary causal force behind the violence. It is probably empirically wiser to avoid using these non-empirical thumbnail assessments for these cases because there is no universally acceptable way to predict violence or for that matter terrorism. Even though Lanza had a mental health history, there is no well-validated nexus between the psychopathology and the shootings. Despite the inherent psychological assessment challenges, there is clinical and forensic psychological justification for using a recognized mental health technique to approach evaluating the psychosocial circumstances surrounding this incident. A forensic psychological autopsy is one approach for identifying the potential biopsychosociocultural aspects underlying this type of act. Internationally, this method has demonstrated reliability and validity. This presentation reviews the use of a forensic psychological autopsy (FPA) as a method to collect information about Adam Lanza as it pertains to the Sandy Hook Shooting incident.

Biography

Ronn Johnson is licensed and board certified clinical psychologist with extensive experience in academic and clinical settings. He is a Diplomate of the American Board of Professional Psychology. He has served as a staff psychologist in community mental health clinics, hospitals, schools and university counseling centers. The University of Iowa, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Central Oklahoma, and San Diego State University are among the sites of his previous academic appointments. His forensic, scholarship, and teaching interests include: ethical-legal issues, police psychology, women death penalty, and contra-terrorism.

ronjohncts@gmail.com