



Book Review

Laura C. Wilson, editor, *The Wiley Handbook of The Psychology of Mass Shootings* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 432 pages, \$195.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-1190-4793-3.

Reviewed by Dr. Joshua Sinai, Senior Analyst, KGH

This is one of the few psychology reference handbooks focused exclusively on the state of the literature on the empirical examination of mass shootings. As defined by the volume's editor, a mass shooting is "an incident in which a gun was used to kill four or more victims." (p. xvi). The editor admits that this definition may be "controversial and flawed" because of its "restrictions on the number of victims and type of weapon." (p. xvi).

The forty contributors to this volume are leading authorities on this topic from the multidisciplinary fields of communication, criminal justice, criminology, psychiatry, psychology and sociology, and come from diverse countries such as Finland, Norway, and the United States.

The handbook's chapters are organized topically into six parts. The first part, "Background of Mass Shootings," introduces the topic by identifying the challenges associated with empirically investigating such incidents, the prevalence and key features of such incidents in the United States from 1915 to 2013, and theories to explain the types and patterns of mass shootings. The second part "The Psychology of Perpetrators," discusses the causes and psychobiological features to explain the aggression by mass shooters, and issues related to predicting dangerousness by such individuals prior to their attacks. The third part, "The Role of Media in the Aftermath of Mass Shootings," focuses on the influence of media coverage of such incidents in shaping public attitudes, the increasing role of social media in providing a form of "vicarious exposure," the role of technology as a medium for the expression of grief, and the impact of journalistic coverage on the grieving communities. The fourth part, "Psychological Considerations for Impacted Individuals," covers the mental health outcomes of those directly affected by such mass casualty incidents, the secondary impact of "post-disaster psychopathology" affecting rescue workers, and distress among journalists who cover the incidents. The fifth part, "Clinical Interventions for Impacted Individuals," discusses empirically-based trauma therapies, the view of public relief efforts from an international perspective, the utilization of mental health services following such incidents, and upgrading resiliency and facilitating post-traumatic growth following the incidents among the survivors. The final part, "Prevention, Ethics, and Future Directions," discusses the basic principles for conducting threat assessment in terms of developing pathway to violence models, understanding the difference between violence prevention and prediction, and applying threat assessment methods to assessing such risk in the workplace and in schools. Two final chapters examine the need for ethical conduct in researching the aftermath of mass shootings, such as respecting the privacy rights of victims, and future research directions, such as the development of theories to examine the uniqueness of the phenomena of mass shootings, methods to minimize the impact of mass shootings, and how to minimize the likelihood of public mass shootings.

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In conclusion, this handbook is an important contribution to the literature on explaining and understanding the phenomena of mass shootings. This includes its usefulness in highlighting the theories and techniques on how to identify individuals likely to conduct such attacks during the pre-incident phases, and how to minimize the prevalence and impact of such attacks on their victims and those indirectly affected by them.

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