

Faculty Research Grant Proposal

The Wiley Handbook of the Psychology of Mass Shootings

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I. Project Description

In 2007, a gunman killed 32 students and faculty members at Virginia Tech in the deadliest mass shooting in the United States by a single perpetrator. In 2012, a gunman killed 26 young children and teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary School. These events are referred to as mass shootings, which are incidents that occur in public places, involving four or more victim deaths, during which victims are indiscriminately selected without socio-political motivation (Bjelopera, Bagalman, Caldwell, Finklea, & McCallion, 2013). Evidence suggests that 78 mass shootings happened between 1983 and 2013, and resulted in 547 deaths and 476 injuries (Bjelopera et al., 2013). Due to the gruesome nature of the events and the devastating impact, these incidences have received increasing attention in recent years.

In the aftermath of these tragedies, the public is left asking questions about factors that precipitated the events, best practices for assisting impacted individuals, and ways to prevent future incidences. The answers to these questions can be greatly informed by the field of psychology. The aim of the project discussed here is to produce a reference book that discusses these questions in the context of empirical evidence, with an emphasis on practical implications for clinicians, researchers, and policy makers.

There is a great need for a reference book on mass shootings. There have been several studies conducted in the past decade that focused on mass shootings. Please see the References and Documentation Section below for a list of several of the primary sources identified. Thus, there is empirical data and information available on this topic. As mass shootings are receiving increasing attention in academia, clinical settings, political arenas and the media, people are looking to psychology for guidance because the field can greatly inform us on these topics. This reference book will make a significant contribution to the field by filling this noticeable gap in the literature by being the only reference book in the field of psychology about mass shootings.

I was personally invited by Wiley in May, 2014 to submit a proposal for a reference work on the psychology of mass shootings. They sought me out because of my recent work on this topic. The proposal I submitted was accepted in August, 2014 and I signed a contract to serve as editor in September, 2014. As editor, I will write the foreword and a chapter, commission contributors for the 23 chapters, review each contribution several times, provide feedback to contributors, guarantee the work meets the requirements stipulated by Wiley, and ensure the work is submitted on time. The list of chapters approved by Wiley is attached to this application. I am applying for a Faculty Research Grant to help support my work on this groundbreaking reference book because this project will require a substantial amount of work and time. Serving as the editor of this large reference work for a major publishing company will be a defining moment in my career, particularly because I am only in my second year as a faculty member. This opportunity

will solidify me as one of the leading experts on mass shootings and will also help me establish collaborations with other researchers in the field.

II. Goals, Specific Objectives, and Project Significance

Goals and Specific Objectives

To review all 23 contributions, and provide feedback to the authors. (July through August 2015)

To communicate with authors and assist them with the revisions to their contributions. (September through November 2015)

To review all 23 contributions again and provide additional feedback to the authors. (December 2015 through January 2016)

To prepare the final manuscript for delivery and ensure it meets the requirements specified in the contract. (February 2016)

To deliver the final manuscript by the deadline. (February 28, 2016)

To make any requested changes required to ensure the work is acceptable to the publisher. (March to June 2016).

Project Significance

Although mass shootings have been a topic of increasing interest and concern, there currently are no reference works in the field of psychology. This is surprising because the field of psychology can certainly inform our understanding of a wide range of topics related to mass shootings. Therefore, this proposed project has the potential to make a significant contribution to the literature and advance scholarship in the field by being the only known reference work on mass shootings in the field of psychology.

In addition to contributing to the field, the project will also significantly contribute to the University of Mary Washington community. By serving as the editor of such a groundbreaking book that will include numerous leading experts and will be published by a large publishing company, I am hoping to increase the visibility of the high quality work being conducted at the University of Mary Washington. This project will also open up future opportunities for collaborations and publications that will further increase the visibility of the University of Mary Washington.

III. Procedures and Methods

At this point in the process, I have secured authors for all 23 chapters. I will be submitting that list of contributors to Wiley and they will issue the authors official contracts. This process should be completed in the next month. At that time, the authors will work on preparing the drafts of their chapters, which I will receive between June and July, 2015. This is the point at which the

grant funding period will begin. It should be noted that IRB approval is not required for this project.

Step 1: July through August 2015

To review all 23 contributions, and provide feedback to the authors

The contracts that will be sent to the contributors by Wiley will specify that I must receive all 23 chapters between June and July, 2015. Once I receive the contributions, I will review all 23 chapters in their entirety for accuracy, relevance, and cohesion. It will take me quite a bit of time to adequately review all of the contributions because the book will be over 500 pages. I will then send my comments and edits back to the authors to allow them to address my revisions.

Step 2: September through November 2015

To communicate with authors and assist them with the revisions to their contributions.

Once I return the corrected chapters to the authors, my primary responsibility will be to assist them with completing the requested edits. This will require me to be in constant contact with the authors of all 23 chapters and I will continue to review the material as authors send me drafts.

Step 3: December 2015 through January 2016

To review all 23 contributions again and provide additional feedback to the authors

The authors' contracts will require them to send me a second official draft of their chapters in December. I will review all 23 chapters again to ensure the revisions were adequately addressed and provide additional feedback. Again, this phase will be very time consuming due to the length of the book. Then, I will assist authors in making final edits to their contributions.

Step 4: February 2016

To prepare the final manuscript for delivery and ensure it meets the requirements specified in the contract.

I will receive the final versions of the chapters in January and I will then compile all of the contributions into a final manuscript. In my role as editor, I am also required to ensure that the formatting of the entire reference work satisfies the requirements outlined by Wiley.

Step 5: February 28, 2016

To deliver the final manuscript by the deadline.

Based on the contract I signed with Wiley, I will submit the final manuscript by February 28, 2016.

Step 6: March to June 2016

To make any requested changes required to ensure the work is acceptable to the publisher.

Once the work is submitted in its entirety, I will be required to make edits and revisions as stipulated by Wiley.

Faculty Member Credentials and Commitments

I was personally invited by Wiley to serve as the editor for this reference work because I am considered an expert in the trauma field, particularly in the study of mass shootings. I am an experienced trauma researcher and have published 16 peer-reviewed journal articles on trauma and stress related topics, including papers on mass shootings. I have the necessary background

and skills to complete this project. The proposed study does not require any special materials or space. During the grant period, I will be teaching a normal course load in the fall and spring semesters. My other responsibilities related to service and research will not be impacted by this project, and I will have adequate time to dedicate to the preparation of this reference work.

IV. Results

The end product of this project will be a 23 chapter reference work (over 500 pages) that will be published by Wiley. Wiley is considered a top publisher in the academic field and therefore the visibility of this work should be rather high. I have also secured numerous top names in the field to serve as authors. This should also increase the marketability of the work.

V. Additional Information

References/Documentation

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- Scarpa, A., Sheetz, S., Wilson, L. C., Waldron, J. C., Patriquin, M. A., & Jones, R. T. (2014). Posttraumatic stress symptoms after the 2007 Virginia Tech shootings: Mode and function of communication about the events. *Journal of Critical Incident Analysis*, 4, 1-20.
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- Wilson, L. C. (in press). Mass shootings: A meta-analysis of the dose-response relationship. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. doi: 10.1002/jts.21964

Budget

I am not requesting any funding for expenses because no additional materials or equipment are needed for this project. I am only requesting a summer stipend (\$3,500) to support me while I dedicate adequate time to the project.

Grant Support

This project is not currently under consideration for any internal or external grant support.

Previous Awards

I was awarded a Faculty Research grant for the funding period of 7/2014 to 6/2015. I conducted a systematic literature review of posttraumatic stress disorder in first responders following man-made mass violence. As a result of that project, I currently have a manuscript under review for publication in a peer-reviewed journal and I plan to submit the results for presentation at the Association for Psychological Science 2015 convention. I submitted my final report to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences on October 6, 2014.

Report

I will submit a final report to Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences by the deadline. The final report will review the completion of each stage of the project, how the final project will be disseminated, and the implications of the produced work.

Chapter List

- I. Background on Mass Shootings
 - i. Terminology and scope of the problem
 - ii. The history of mass shootings
 - iii. Dispelling myths
 - iv. Cross-cultural perspectives
- II. The Psychology of Perpetrators
 - i. A developmental view of the perpetrators
 - ii. Biosocial perspective on the perpetrators
 - iii. The challenge of predicting dangerousness
- III. The Role of Media in the Aftermath of Mass Shootings
 - i. The influence of media on public attitudes
 - ii. Social media and news coverage as vicarious exposure
 - iii. The role of technology in expressions of grief
 - iv. The impact of journalism on grieving communities
- IV. Psychological Considerations for Impacted Communities
 - i. Mental health outcomes following direct exposure
 - ii. Psychosocial functioning within impacted communities
 - iii. First responders and emergency personnel reactions
 - iv. Distress among journalists working the incidents
- V. Clinical Interventions for Impacted Communities
 - i. Crisis intervention
 - ii. Empirically-based trauma therapies
 - iii. Long-term management of community response
 - iv. Barriers to treatment
 - v. Post-traumatic growth and resiliency
- VI. Threat assessment, policy, ethical and future considerations
 - i. Threat assessment and violence prevention
 - ii. Policy and ethical implications of mass shootings
 - iii. Future directions and the role of psychology