

Introduction to the Inaugural Issue of the *Journal of Mass Violence Research*: A Note from the Editors

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<https://doi.org/10.53076/JMVR75527>

Volume: 1, Issue: 1, March 2022: Pages 1-3

Various forms of mass violence plague the United States and countries around the world, and all require critical scholarship aimed at understanding their root causes and prevalence. Moreover, this type of research requires an understanding of the specific nuances of these issues to better inform policy and work towards prevention efforts. As researchers in this area, we, like others, have experienced challenges in getting our research published. Even more, while there are many researchers and practitioners working in this space, our efforts may lack cohesion due to the absence of a dedicated resource through which to publish our work. These obstacles highlighted the importance and demand for an outlet that can speak to and enhance the research and the conversation about mass violence in all forms.

Recognizing this need, the idea of the *Journal of Mass Violence Research* (JMVR) was born in October 2020 and the journal was officially launched the following month. From the earliest days, we envisioned JMVR as an outlet to showcase scholarship on these contemporary issues to not only address the need for such a journal but also to present our findings in a way that is more accessible to policymakers, the media, and the public alike. As we share on our website, the purpose of the journal is:

[T]o share rigorous, multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed studies related to different facets of mass violence in the U.S. and beyond. With a focus on public research and accessibility, the *Journal of Mass Violence Research* seeks to promote high-quality scholarship and authors, disseminate findings via articles, videos, and infographics, and generate academic and public interest in this important research area.

Informed by this goal, we set out to create a journal that showcases this research while adhering to best practices regarding violence research, encouraging authors to refrain from naming the perpetrators, and recognizing (and respecting) the trauma of such violence of victims and survivors of mass violence.

We also wanted to address the shortcomings and stressors of publishing and academia more broadly. As such, we created guiding principles for editors and the editorial board, authors, reviewers, and the journal to make the review and publication process a more positive experience. Since its inception, we have had the pleasure of working with enthusiastic scholars who share in our vision for the journal and recognize the need for such research and the myriad of considerations that it demands. The editorial board and other external reviewers have been dedicated to the promotion, support, and growth of the journal, and their thoughtful contributions along with thorough and prompt reviews of articles ultimately have enhanced the articles that we have published, ensuring that we remain committed to publishing high-quality multidisciplinary studies. We are grateful to those who have made the journal possible, and we look forward to the ways that we can enhance the reach and the impact of JMVR.



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The creation, promotion, and publication of the journal is the culmination of hard work, commitment, and dedication, and these efforts make the inaugural issue even more exciting. We hope that readers will find articles of both interest and value. Addressing issues of serial murder, familicide, and nuanced aspects of mass homicide and shootings, the research notes and articles present unique and useful insights about these topics.

In the article “A Rose by Any Other Name: Problems in Defining and Conceptualising Serial Murder with a New Proposed Definition,” authors Wayne Petherick, Shuktika Bose, Amber McKinley, and Candice Skrapec describe definitional challenges that have long plagued the research on serial murder, including outlining the history of the term. The authors contend that the way in which definitions are crafted can have a considerable impact both for individuals who are investigating and research this form of mass violence, and that variability in required victim count is one of the most significant issues. Other elements that must be considered when defining serial murder include case linkage, cooling-off periods, motive, and propensity. After carefully laying out the respective challenges for each of these individual elements, the authors then propose a revised definition designed to overcome such limitations and help move the body of research on serial murder forward.

The second article of the issue, “Out of Sight, Out of Mind: An Analysis of Family Mass Murder Offenders in the US, 2006-2017” by authors Madelyn Diaz, Kayla Toohy, Ketty Fernandez, Lin Huff-Corzine, and Amy Reckdenwald seeks to expand our understanding of family mass murderers beyond the more sensationalized forms of mass violence. With specific focus paid to offender, victim, and incident characteristics, the authors shed important light on the context of family mass murder events in the U.S. The authors highlight how these incidents vary based on the differences in offenders’ relationships with their victims, which can be further impacted by disparities in their motivations. The findings of this study lead the authors to call for more robust research and policy examinations dedicated to better understanding the relationship between domestic violence and mass violence.

The issue’s third article, “Changing Media Framings of School Shootings: A Case Study of the Parkland School Shooting” by Jennifer LaRose, Jose Torres, and Michael Barton, explores the media coverage of the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and how it differed between local and national outlets. Grounded in the Social Coping model, this analysis of front-page news stories in three Florida-based and three national newspapers finds that the shooting was covered more at the local level, which mirrors coverage patterns related to previous school-based mass shootings like Virginia Tech. At the same time, the authors highlight the important ways in which the coverage of the Parkland shooting departed from the media attention dedicated to earlier shootings. Given that most individuals will not be directly impacted by mass shootings like Parkland and that the media then serve as their primary source of information about these events, understanding the impact of framing is all the more critical to contextualizing the public reactions that follow in the wake of these tragedies.

Our first research note, “An Exploration of Female Mass Shooters” by Jason Silva and Margaret Schmuhl, explores a critically overlooked subset of mass shooters – female perpetrators. Although a small segment of such perpetrators, it is critical to understand the characteristics of these individuals and their corresponding events, including motivating factors, to better understand how to inform not only response strategies to mass shootings, but how they may need to be tailored based on who is carrying out the act. In this note, the authors highlight how mass shootings perpetrated by females are most likely to occur at their workplace, are more likely to be motivated by problems in the workplace rather than relationship issues, and how female offenders are more likely to work in dyads than mass shooters more broadly (more commonly perpetrated by males).

Finally, we conclude the issue with a research note from Miranda Sanchez and Christopher Ferguson entitled “Exposure to Bullying, Childhood Trauma, and Violence in Video Games Among Perpetrators of Mass Homicides: A Brief Report,” which compares these different childhood experiences among firearm mass

homicide offenders against matched samples. Contrary to the common discourse that often follows such events, the authors find that mass homicide perpetrators did not experience more bullying nor play more video games than members of the general public, though they did find a higher prevalence of reported child abuse among the mass homicide perpetrators. The authors further consider how this more nuanced understanding of the etiological factors of firearm-related mass homicides can be used to inform prevention efforts.

As the creators and editors, we are excited to present the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Mass Violence Research*. At the same time, we are continuing to accept article submissions while also creating additional opportunities to continue and expand on this work. Beyond this first issue, we remain committed to our original goal of become a leading research and platform to promote quality scholarship on mass violence research. By publishing high-quality, peer-reviewed articles and research notes that are open-access and linguistically and intellectually accessible, we hope that these publications reach a broader audience and can, therefore, shape the way that people consider and address issues of mass violence. We look forward to the chance to collaborate and engage with scholars, practitioners, and the public, and we are excited about the future of the Journal of Mass Violence Research.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jaclyn Schildkraut is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Oswego and is the co-founder and co-editor of the *Journal of Mass Violence Research*. Her research interests include mass/school shootings, homicide trends, mediatization effects, moral panics, and crime theories. She is the co-author of *Mass Shootings: Media, Myths, and Realities* and *Columbine, 20 Years Later and Beyond: Lessons from Tragedy*, and has published in journals such as *Journal of School Violence*, *Homicide Studies*, *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice & Criminology*, *Crime, Law and Social Change*, and *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*.

Sarah E. Daly is an assistant professor and director of the graduate program for the Criminology, Law, and Society department at Saint Vincent College. She teaches courses on mass violence, race and gender, research methods, and policy analysis. Her primary area of research is gender-based violence, particularly related to issues related to involuntary celibates. She has a book manuscript in progress on incels as well as recent publications in the *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice & Criminology* and *Sex Roles*. She is also co-founder and an editor of the *Journal of Mass Violence Research*.