Chapter 20
The Role of Teachers and School Leaders in Mass Shootings and Multiple Victim Violence

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ABSTRACT
There is an increased concern for school violence, particularly instances of mass shootings, which has led researchers to respond by examining both the causes and consequences of this behavior. What is often missing from the discussion on mass shootings in school settings, however, is the role of teachers and school leaders. Because these individuals are on the front line when school shootings occur, their ability to influence and enforce school policies must be taken into consideration. The mission of this chapter is to provide an overview of the vital role that teachers and school leaders play in mass shootings and incidents of multiple victim violence. This chapter is essential for any text exploring the issues surrounding mass shootings in school settings.

INTRODUCTION
School violence prevention has been at the forefront of societal concerns for decades, however, recent incidents of mass shootings in school settings have helped to move the discussion forward even further, given recent tragedies that have occurred throughout schools in the United States. Without a doubt, mass shootings have changed the culture of the school environment, including the classroom itself (Interlandi, 2018). Schools have begun to utilize lockdown curtains and drill bags more often now than they previously have – likely a reaction to recent tragedies (Willingham, 2018), and it is becoming more common.
for law enforcement agencies to offer trainings to schools and universities that teach participants to run, hide, and fight in the event of an active shooter (Pierce, 2019). In a sense, school shootings have become a catalyst to the ongoing gun control debate in the United States (Merica & Klein, 2018). As a result, several notable policy changes have taken place following recent school shootings. For example, following the tragedy at Sandy Hook, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that Remington, the manufacturer of the rifle used in the shooting, can be sued because of how their firearm was marketed to youth (Lindsay, 2019). Remington recently requested that the court decide on the state’s interpretation of a federal statute that grants immunity to gun manufacturers following injuries that result from the misuse of their product during the commission of a crime (Jorgensen & Anthony, 2019). The case, which is still pending, has the potential to serve as a precedent for gun companies to be held liable for their role in mass shootings, which has not been the case historically (Jorgensen & Anthony, 2019; Lindsay, 2019).

Perhaps one of the more controversial policies to stem from recent mass shootings are those which involve the arming of school staff, particularly teachers, as a way of deterring or stopping attacks. While school resource officers are usually armed because of their authority positions, it is much less common for teachers. Recently, however, President Trump suggested that arming teachers might be a practical, inexpensive solution to preventing school shootings (Superville, 2018). The statement, which was made during a listening session with school shooting survivors, teachers, and families following the Parkland shooting, received mixed reaction from those who attended. While some in the audience concurred with the suggestion, others said that they would rather address the root causes of the issues than arm more people with firearms (Abramson, 2018). Many people resonate with this position; in fact, studies have found that teachers’ unions and law enforcement organizations largely oppose the idea of arming teachers in school (Chokshi, 2018). Several teachers who have survived school shootings have publicly spoken out against firearms in school and have concurred that the idea is dangerous, it can make situations worse, and it puts teachers in positions that far exceed their responsibilities (Clements, 2018). Further, the policy contradicts research which suggests that having access to a gun increases the risks posed to children (Clements, 2018; Luo & McIntire, 2013). So far, it has been difficult to determine the effectiveness of arming teachers. There are, however, recent reports of teachers’ guns going off in the classroom (Ozimek, 2019; Swisher, 2019), which reveals serious flaws in this prevention strategy. Regardless, since the Parkland shooting, 14 states have introduced measures to arm teachers and staff. As of this writing, only one proposal has passed (Griggs & Andone, 2018).

The role that teachers and school leaders play in preventing incidents of mass violence in school settings are noticeably missing from the dialog because it has been muted by the gun control debate. In addition, the paucity of literature that examines this dimension of school violence reveals that little is known moving forward. Considering that teachers and school leaders have an unprecedented ability to influence and enforce school policies, and they are at the forefront of school shootings, their views must be taken into consideration in the development, implementation, and evaluation of prevention strategies. The mission of this chapter is to provide an overview of the vital role that teachers and school leaders play in mass shootings and incidents of multiple victim violence. This chapter begin with a discussion of the role that teachers and school leaders play in mass shootings. Additionally, this chapter examines the nature and extent of mass shootings in schools by reflecting on past incidents to better frame the phenomenon in context. Certainly, lessons learned from previous school shootings offer valuable insight into risk factors and consequences of mass shootings in schools so that other tragedies can be thwarted in the future (Ricketts, 2007).