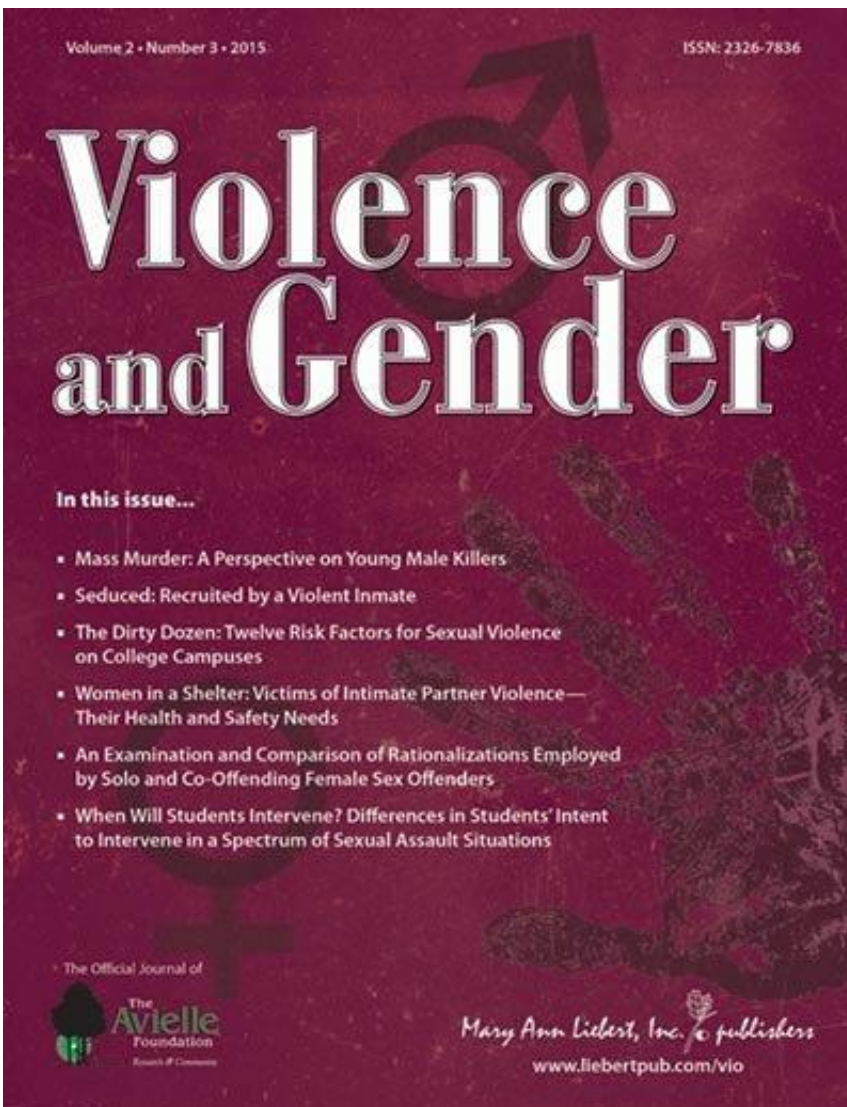


# Why is the San Bernardino shooting rare among mass shootings?

December 3 2015

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The shooting in San Bernardino, CA yesterday marked the 355th mass shooting in the United States in less than as many days in 2015. As details emerge regarding yesterday's events, it is clear that these types of crimes are morphing and not abating.

"Shootings involving mission-oriented females may be a new threshold which should be concerning to all of us, and the incident in San Bernardino might just be a hybrid, and a harbinger, of shootings to come," says Mary Ellen O'Toole, PhD, Director, Forensic Science Program, George Mason University and Editor-in-Chief of *Violence and Gender*, a peer-reviewed journal published by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publishers.

A "hybrid" means a spinoff from other cases of mass murder. "Like a cancer," says Dr. O'Toole, "this crime is moving and growing in insidious ways, and is resistant to 'treatment.'"

As described in the article "[The Mission-Oriented Shooter: A New Type of Mass Killer](#)," a mission-oriented shooter is a person whose mission is to kill as many people as possible, or to achieve maximum lethality. These particular crimes are well planned and can involve months and even years of preparation. In contrast to more recent mass shootings, the one that took place in San Bernardino is the first since Columbine to involve more than one of these types of shooters and, perhaps more surprisingly, the first to have involved a female shooter.

"Guns, clearly, are the elephant in the room," says Dr. O'Toole. "But in addition, from a behavioral perspective, the 'character' and morality of people in this country appears to be seriously degrading. The lack of compassion, lack of guilt and empathy, an embrace of [violence](#) as a method to handle world problems, and a generalized world hatred push those people towards guns to carry out their desire for human destruction."

"We at [The Avielle Foundation](#) are horrified and, honestly, sick of expressing our infinite heartbreak," says Jeremy Richman, PhD, Founder and Director of The Avielle Foundation, of which *Violence and Gender* is the official journal, and the mission of which is to prevent violence by fostering brain science research, community engagement, and education. "We must actively pursue solutions to preventing violence," he continues. "We need to be comfortable advocating for our own brain health and that of our loved ones. How many more innocent people have to die, how many bright lives will be destroyed, how many more families will forever grieve before an overwhelming tide of support occurs to make change? We must push for brain health advocacy and research. We are all responsible for meaningful change."

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc

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