An Analysis on Gun Violence

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Introduction

- Gun violence is one of the biggest public health issues of our time
- Link between gun violence and mental illness in the media should not be the sole focus in addressing the issue of gun violence
- There should be more focus on gun violence itself in order to reduce and prevent it
- More prevalent in low SES communities
- State and local gun laws
- More national restrictions on the use of guns

Gun Violence and Mental Illness?

- Many news reports about shootings (school shootings, disputes, random shootings, etc.)
- Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012
- Grabbed the entire nation’s attention and brought the topic of gun violence back into discussion on a national level (Gold, 2013)
- Due to this incident, the public strongly believes that there is a link between gun violence and mental illness
- Mental health professionals have been asked what could be done to prevent individuals with mental illness from committing such crimes
- People in these individuals’ lives have been blamed for not seeing the signs earlier
- Mental illness does not play a huge role in gun violence
- Not all individuals who use guns are mentally ill and not all individuals who are mentally ill will use guns
- Deaths by firearms vastly outnumber mass shootings (Burgason et al., 2014)
- Although it is important to study the context of mass shootings, it is just as important to study the nature of gun violence as an everyday occurrence

Factors for Gun Violence

- Not mental illness, but the prevalence of firearms
- If parents keep firearms in the home, those need to be locked up to prevent their children from accessing them, which could result in injury or even accidental death
- Research has shown where there are fewer guns, there will be less gun violence
- States that restrict weapons have the lowest per capita homicide rates
- Many states with the weakest gun laws have the highest rates of gun violence
- States with the strongest gun laws had a lower overall gun-related fatality rate
- The U.S. has the highest per capita rate of gun ownership in the world, with 88.8 people out of 100 owning firearms
- The U.S. also has the highest overall firearm-related mortality rate in the world

Research on Gun Violence

- Quite limited since Congress greatly reduced funding for research on gun violence
- Concerned that it could be used to advocate or promote gun control (Gold, 2013)
- Restrictions on releasing data on firearms
- Very few experienced investigators in the U.S. had focused their careers primarily on gun violence
- Only occasional work had been done in this field

Violence in Low SES Communities

- Research suggests that gun violence is prevalent in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities (Burgason et al., 2014)
- Guns are most commonly used because they are seen as symbols of toughness, status, and respect in these communities
- Residents who live in these communities live by “two basic orientations”: “decent” and “street”
- The role of the street culture increases levels of violence
- This culture outlines behavior norms that likely impacts how violence plays out in such communities
- Individuals gain or lose respect based on how they respond to challenges
- If they respond with violence, they earn respect, despite the outcome
- If they back down, they lose respect and status, since this violates “the code of the street”
- This may result in dire consequences such as losing respect among the entire community and becoming a victim
- Most residents are “decent” and don’t strongly follow “the code of the street”
- These residents understand the behavioral norms in their community and abide by them to decrease their chances of being victimized and increase their odds of surviving a violent encounter
- However, the attackers themselves abide by the code, their victims have an increased chance of being injured in assaults and even robberies

Statistics

- After car crashes, guns come second in causing injury death
- Injury by guns is one of the top three causes of premature death
- Even more people are injured in a nonfatal manner
- Firearms play a part in 67% of homicides, 43% of robberies, and 21% of aggravated assaults
- In 2008, 73% of firearms-related injuries were due to interpersonal violence
- The use of firearms are one of the leading causes of death for youth aged 15 – 24
- This outnumbers the next nine leading causes of death combined

Gun Laws & Possible Solutions

- One solution is to establish (more) minimum national restrictions on the use of guns
- Each state has adopted its own set of gun laws
- California has strong gun laws, Nevada and Arizona have weak or no gun restrictions
- Transferring guns to a different state can make things more complicated
- Chicago’s restrictions on guns is more strict than elsewhere
- Very few federal laws restricting access to guns
- If no further action is taken, gun violence may keep rising, taking away more innocent lives every single day
- If parents keep firearms in the home, those need to be locked up to prevent their children from accessing them, which could result in injury or even accidental death
- Congress has not taken action regarding gun control on a national level for quite some time
- The last federal gun law was 1994’s Federal Assault Weapons Ban (Koper & Roth, 2001)
- Gun control in itself is a very controversial topic
- If more gun sellers conducted background checks, this could prevent prohibited purchasers from getting more guns
- Background checks are required in every other state and municipality would abide by the same rules
- Many guns are actually obtained without background checks in the U.S. (Hemenway & Miller, 2013)
- This makes it easier for felons to access guns
-背景检查要求在每其他州及市，这将使由同解决枪支的州
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Conclusion

- Gun violence is a very prominent issue nowadays
- If no further action is taken, gun violence may keep rising, taking away more innocent lives every single day
- By implementing national gun restrictions, it can help reduce gun violence even more than what is seen today and even put an end to gun violence

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