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Professor

Course

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Title: Gun Control and Why It Shouldn’t Be a Thing

**Introduction**

In the U.S., disputes on gun control laws lead public policy and political debate. The debate aggravates whenever there is a mass-shooting incident reported by the media. In terms of overall incidents, 2018 is considered to be one of the worst in many decades as incidents of gun-violence continue to claim thousands of lives annually. Many states have introduced stricter gun control laws yet continue to witness rising incidents. My paper will explore the debate on gun control and analyze the arguments and evidence from various sides, to discuss whether it is stricter gun control laws or partly permitting concealed carry weapons that would deter violent incidents and prevent greater damage.

**Outline**

* Importance and Significance of the issue
  + Provide recent Statistics on gun violence (Lartey).
  + Comparison with other developed countries (Mcmillan).
  + Point to the inefficacy of current gun control strategy
  + Public Support (IPSOS)
  + State the complex nature of the constitutional and political debate surrounding it. (Kamal and Burton)
* List all the arguments used to advocate for stricter gun control laws and policies (Webster, Donohue, and Klarevas)
  + Inherent lethal and destructive nature of guns (Wuest)
  + Tendency of young people to engage in irresponsible or aggressive behavior
  + Guns have the potential to escalate a mildly-aggressive situation
  + Guns do not deter incidents of gun violence or reduce their impact
  + In public hands, it is a cause for fear and distraction, with no foreseeable benefits
  + A depressed or distressed individual could snap and go on a killing spree
  + Women who own guns still more likely to be victims
  + Pepper sprays and non-lethal weapons are sufficient for Self-defense
  + Professionals hired for security are sufficient
* Addressing the arguments advocating stricter gun control from self-defense and safety perspective
  + Guns provide its owners an assurance of safety and security
  + Safety against common acts of crime such as burglary or theft.
  + People’s right and need to seek protection and self-defense through weapons (Flapping)
  + States that permit carrying weapons have reduced homicides and crime (Lott)
  + States with minimal gun control laws fare better in gun violence stats (Lewis)
* Mention ways in which lax gun control laws and permitting carrying weapons reduce gun violence
  + Ability in ordinary citizens to deter violent incidents
  + Converts potential victims into those that can prevent violence
  + Perpetrators would not engage due to deterrence effect
  + Reduced likelihood to target defenseless victims
  + Police response time after distress call not usually enough to prevent incident (National Threat Assessment Center).
  + Not practical to have airport grade professional security at different public places
* Present evidence to support position in favor of less restrictive gun control laws
  + No data to suggest that responsible gun ownership leads to violence (Kessler)
  + Implausibility of a sane, well-adjusted person does not ‘snap’ (National Threat Assessment Center)
  + Responsible owners less likely to be involved in murder (Sturdevant and Navasota).
  + Majority incidents end before law enforcement arrives (National Threat Assessment Center)
  + Gun Control without addressing social determinants of crime will still lead to gun violence (Mauser)
* Discuss certain Lax Gun Control laws with conceivable benefits and ensure responsible ownership
  + Increase age to obtain license to 21
  + Limit license to those with history of controlled substance or alcohol abuse
  + Mental health and background checks from local investigators, along with support for mental health programs (Wolf and Rosen)
  + Owner to have demonstrated ability of handling firearms
  + Allowing family members or care providers to confiscate weapon upon perceiving threat of harm
  + Bring in lax but uniform gun control laws (Coates and Pearson-Merkowitzz)
  + Allow one-handed weapons and concealed carrying only in educational institutions and similar public places
  + Restrict large capacity ammunition
* Conclusion
  + Deterrence value of firearms and safety are important factors
  + Without addressing determinants and influencers of crime, gun control alone is not the solution
  + Allowing ownership with certain restrictions, such as mental health and background checks seems viable
  + Focus more on responsible carrying instead of tightening gun control laws to be more beneficial

**Annotated Bibliography**

Lott, John R. *More Guns, Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws*. 3rd. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

In the book, the author uses statistical analyses from a number of states and 3054 counties over the course of 18 years to determine the efficacy of gun control laws or concealed carry laws in other states to determine which policy is more effective in curbing gun violence. The author found that in states where gun ownership is increasing, the overall number of violent crime incidents are decreasing, as long as carrying is restricted to individuals with no record of mental illness or crime. It challenges the conventional wisdom that there is an inherent relationship between violence and guns.

Wuest, Michael E. *The great American gun control debate (not!)*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010.

The author, in this book, examines both sides of the gun control debate to find out objectively assess the conventional wisdom or popular opinion surrounding the gun control debate. In this regard, laws, and policies that have worked for certain states are discussed while analyzing the patterns of gun-related violence over the century. Moreover, all the political and media rhetoric which typically characterizes this debate is examined against facts. The author finds that people on both ends of the spectrum have been dishonest in the debate at certain times and attempts to dispel some common notions, half-truths, and misinformation with facts.

Kamal, Rifat Darina and Charles Burton. "Policy Gridlock versus Policy Shift in Gun Politics: A Comparative Veto Player Analysis of Gun Control Policies in the United States and Canada." *World Affairs* 181.4 (2018): 317-347.

In this research, the authors attempt to study barriers to legislative changes in the U.S. in the wake of recent gun violence incidents and compare the situation to changes in Canadian legislation over the years to provide a comparative analysis of policy shifts between the two countries. The findings suggest that the political structure and institutional design of the U.S. government and the key role played by interest groups and corporations in politics has a significant role to play in marring any substantial policy changes. The general public opinion as well as influential interest groups such as the NRA influences or funds political candidates in their campaigns to divert policies in their favor.

Lewis, J. Scott. "The Relationship between Gun Control Strictness and Mass Murder in the United States: A National Study 2009-2015." *International Social Science Review* 94.2 (2018): 1-22.

In this article, the author attempts to answer whether tightening gun control laws can solely decrease gun violence in the U.S. A number of studies are reviewed to find a lack of convincing empirical evidence, or inconclusive results, that tight gun control laws are the solution. The relationship between mass murder incidents, strict gun control laws as well as victimization rates in different cases of shootings across the U.S. is studied. He finds that there is no considerable change in gun violence over the years despite increasingly stricter controls. However, states with stricter controls have fewer mass shooting incidents, yet a higher number of victims per incident.

Coates, Michael and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitzz. "Policy Spillover and Gun Migration: The Interstate Dynamics of State Gun Control Policies." *Social Science Quarterly* 98.2 (2017): 500-512.

In the study, the state policy spillover effect is studied by the author who examines who varying policies in different states between lax and strict controls influence the migration of weapons between them. It found that most of the guns used for shooting incidents were obtained from states with lax controls, and found a direct link between the strength of gun laws with the place wherein guns are purchased. The overall findings suggest that varying state controls make it more difficult to develop uniform policies across states, and thus a policy spillover, plays a key role in the issue by shifting the markets for guns.

Wolf, Carolyn Reinach and Jamie A Rosen. "Gun Control Is Not The Cure For What Ails The U.S. Mental Health System." *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology* 104.4 (2015): 851-878.

In this article, the question over whether mental health laws should be used to limit access to guns, for certain individuals believed to have mental health issues, is addressed. The authors point to a lack of focus towards improving mental health facilities when compared to the focus on barring weapons to people suspected of having mental health problems, which in turn, leads to a stigma associated with these people that they are more prone towards violence. Instead, the authors point to the need for improving preventive training and community health programs to reduce gun violence by improving ways for early detection. Preventative and educational measures are suggested as alternatives to any policy that associates mental health problems with gun violence.

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