

Public policy: Call for Gun Control Laws and Programs

Dr. Deborah S. LeBlanc
National University
Department of Professional Studies
5245 Pacific Concourse Drive
Los Angeles, CA, USA

Abstract:

The author utilized a descriptive research approach of identifying and collecting findings for call for stricter gun control laws and programs. The author conducted an extensive literature review to ascertain current developments and efforts to curb gun safety laws since 2015 to 2019. The United States also has the highest homicide-by-firearm rate among the world's most developed nations. But many gun rights proponents say these statistics do not indicate causal relationship. As of 2019, there were no federal laws banning semiautomatic assault weapons, military-style .50 caliber rifles, handguns, or large-capacity magazines. Violence is becoming a global problem. The increase in gun/gang violence has not been limited to the US. Like Canada, Britain, especially in South London, has also experienced a spate of firearm homicides that have been attributed to conflicts among gangs and groups of youth involved in the illegal narcotics market. After a decade long decline, gun violence is increasing in many cities in the United States. Much of this increase is being attributed to the revitalization of urban street gangs. Even in Los Angeles, where overall levels of violence continue to fall, gang violence is once again rising. Significant findings emerged from both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies confirmed the correlation between gangs and gun violence. A critical component to public safety -- including the prevention of further crime and violence -- is a successful transition for offenders into effective community-based and after care services; however, this prevention must be in an effective and humane manner. It is time for American reform its gun control laws. Findings revealed that both the United States and Canada have 'demonstrated that even after controlling for individual-level attributes gang members are more delinquent and commit more crime than do non-gang members (Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, and Chard-Wierschem 1993; Huizinga 1997; Thornberry et al. 2003; Huff 2004; Gatti, Tremblay, Vitaro, and McDuff, 2005)'. The key point was the connectivity between violence and gangs. "The conclusion drawn most frequently from these findings is that the observed positive relationship between gang membership and offending levels cannot be explained through a simple process of self-selection, wherein only highly delinquent youth join gangs. Instead, there are additional influences that gang membership brings to bear in facilitating higher levels of offending among individuals who join. American needs more public policies and programs at gun control and gang intervention now.

Examination of the American Culture of Violence and Gangs

Introduction

America is becoming a place of violence and moral decay. According to the U.S. Council on Foreign Policy (Masters,2019), "high-profile mass shootings in the United States in recent years have rekindled the gun control debate and raised comparisons of policies around the world". There seems to be little disagreement that, "gun violence is a contemporary global human rights issue. Gun-related violence threatens our most fundamental human right, the right to life". America is the land of hopes and dreams. American appears to be embracing a culture of violence as its new normal. Gun violence is plaguing America and adversely impacting its youth and future generations (Abrams, L.S. 2006).Gun ownership in the United States is rooted in the Second Amendment of the Constitution: "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."However, it is the author's belief that lack of gun control and lose gun laws are toxic environmental influences on its youth, re-entry juveniles and are contributing to increased gang violence among juveniles in America (Altschuler, D. M., & Brash, R. (2004). Fact surrounding gun violence were startling, firstly, was a daily tragedy affecting the lives of individuals around the world. More than 500 people may die every day because of violence committed with firearms. The other alarming fact was the awareness that anyone can be affected by firearm violence but in certain situations gun violence disproportionately impacts communities of color, women and other marginalized groups in society; in recent years it has been the mainstream communities being impacted the greatest. The author examined the new norm of gun violence and gangs in America to better understand the efforts the

government is making to create a safer world and less violent society for our children and grandchildren (Greenwood, 2008). America needs to develop stricter gun control polices and program and create a more robust and inclusive approach to curbing gang violence. The time for gun control is now. Our children are dying. It is time to stop the violence. The lack of gun control and lose gun law sare toxic environmental influences on its youth and are contributing to increased gang violence among juveniles in America.“Recent years have seen some of the worst mass shootings in U.S. history. They include a 2017 shooting at a music festival in Las Vegas that killed fifty-eight people, a 2018 shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida, that killed seventeen, and a shooting at an El Paso, Texas, shopping center in 2019 that killed twenty-two people” (Masters, 2019). Thus, the regularity of such events has rekindled the gun control debate and invoked comparisons of U.S. gun policies and those of other wealthy democracies.

Key point, the United States, with less than 5 percent of the world’s population, yet “has 46 percent of the world’s civilian-owned guns, according to a report by the Switzerland-based Small Arms Survey”. Law makers need to make gun safety a priority at every level of government: local, state and federal. Violence is on the rise across the country, as is gang-related violence, with no sign that it will let up anytime soon, according to a leading expert. Gangs come from all walks of life, for many different reasons. Color, race, creed does not discriminate against gangs; every culture has its gangs. There are many different reasons on why the gang culture is so strong in today’s society (Hagedorn, 2005). According to researchers we just aren’t paying attention to the reasons. Lack of gun control laws may increase violent and criminal activities more in the future. Laws like this one may be contributors to greater moral decay and violence in the years ahead. Juveniles of color are uniting and also taking matters in their own hands, as they see more and cases of societal inequality and injustice. There is a connection between gun violence and increase of gang activity among young people.

According empirical research conducted by the Government and Canada, “one of the more robust findings to emerge from both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of youth addresses the relationship between gang membership and individual levels of delinquency and offending”(GC). Findings revealed that both the United States and Canada have ‘demonstrated that even after controlling for individual-level attributes gang members are more delinquent and commit more crime than do non-gang members (Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, and Chard-Wierschem 1993; Huizinga 1997; Thornberry et al. 2003; Huff 2004; Gatti, Tremblay, Vitaro, and McDuff, 2005)’. The key point was the connectivity between violence and gangs. “The conclusion drawn most frequently from these findings is that the observed positive relationship between gang membership and offending levels cannot be explained through a simple process of self-selection, wherein only highly delinquent youth join gangs. Instead, there are additional influences that gang membership brings to bear in facilitating higher levels of offending among individuals who join. This is especially true for behaviors related to guns and violence” (Tiet, 2010).

Methods

Public policy development starts with a needs assessment and public outcry. It is time for our leaders to act. Author utilized a descriptive research approach of identifying and collecting findings on the examination of the American culture of violence. The author conducted an extensive literature review to ascertain current developments and efforts to curb gun safety laws since 2015 to 2019. The review of literature used was an evaluation of previous studies on the topic of violence and gun laws in America which examined the arguments objectively and without bias. The research goal of the literature review was to address the following research questions: (1) What is the current status of gun law reform in the United States? (2) What impact, if any, has state law made on reducing or curbing violence? (3) What is the relationship, if any between the lack of gun laws and the rise of gang activity in the United States (Tiet. 2010).

Results

Public policy reform is long overdue for gun control. Our children need our protection from guns. Gun ownership in the United States is rooted in the Second Amendment of the Constitution: “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”However, shootings are becoming the new norm with unchecked frequency. Moreover, “gun violence is becoming a contemporary global human rights issue. Gun-related violence threatens our most fundamental human right, the right to life,” according the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations. Public policy reform for curbing violence among youth is directly related to stricter gun control policies and programs. The overall results revealed to major findings: (1) “As of 2019, there were no federal laws banning semiautomatic assault weapons, military-style .50 caliber rifles, handguns, or large-capacity magazines. There was a federal prohibition on assault weapons and large-capacity magazines between 1994 and 2004, but Congress allowed these restrictions to expire.” And (2)

that in January 2016, President Barack Obama took several actions intended to decrease gun violence, including a measure requiring dealers of firearms at gun shows or online to obtain federal licenses and conduct background checks. And (3), as reported previously from the Government of Canada, robust findings emerged from both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies confirmed the correlation between gangs and gun violence in its research on youth which addressed the relationship between gang membership and individual levels of delinquency and offending. Many youth's in the juvenile justice system often struggle with educational deficiencies, mental illnesses, and substance abuse, and return to communities with high rates of crime, poverty and poorly performing schools (Tita 2007).

A critical component to public safety -- including the prevention of further crime and violence -- is a successful transition for offenders into effective community-based and after care services; however, this prevention must be in an effective and humane manner. Gun control reform is needed now in America. As previously stated, federal law provides the basis for firearm regulation in the United States, but states and cities can impose further restrictions. Some states, such as Idaho, Alaska, and Kansas, have passed various laws attempting to nullify federal gun legislation, but legal analysts say these are unconstitutional" (Masters, 2019). Further, findings did reveal that state laws such as Stand Your Ground laws are associated with an increase in firearm homicides and injuries and do not deter crime. Human life is valuable; and more should to help society see the value and sanity in its protection. On the other hand, some research supports the notion of evidence that stand-your-ground laws may increase homicide rates only moderately, and further evidence that such laws may increase firearm homicides is very limited. And moreover, that evidence for the effect of stand-your ground laws on other types of violent crime is inconclusive. Lastly, more research is needed to ascertain, what impact, if any, has state law made on reducing or curbing violence?

Discussion

Public policies and programs are a must, if America is to continue to thrive and succeed as the leader of the free world. Studies revealed that United States also has the highest homicide-by-firearm rate among the world's most developed nations. But many gun rights proponents say these statistics do not indicate a causal relationship. After a decade long decline, gun violence is increasing in many cities in the United States. Much of this increase is being attributed to the revitalization of urban street gangs. Even in Los Angeles, where overall levels of violence continue to fall, gang violence is once again rising. Gangs then were seen as organizations that were positive and benefited the struggling community. They offered resources and protection to community members, more specifically females who feared their neighborhood (Moore, 2001). The inability to find a job and the struggling economy made gang life incredibly attractive to both males and females (Molidor, C.E. (1996).

We must do more as a nation to prepare our youth for survival and safety. Further, 'Stand Your Ground' laws upend centuries of traditional self-defense doctrine and threaten public safety by encouraging armed vigilantism, allowing a person to kill another person in a public area even when they can clearly and safely walk away from the danger. These laws are associated with increases in homicides and injuries across different demographics and neighborhoods, while disproportionately impacting communities of color. They encourage the escalation of violence in avoidable situations and do not deter crime. It is my belief, that laws such as this are influencing greater violence and criminal activities among juveniles and gang members nationwide; and that they too are taking the law into their own hands. This article produced descriptive information to guide further studies. Moreover, future empirical study is needed to explore reasons our government has not tighten gun control laws and what Americans can do as a nation to combat rising gang violence by creating greater opportunities for education and economic success for our youth (Greenwood,2008); in addition further research is needed to refine methodological issues related to treatment outcome studies for youth involved in the criminal justice system. Gun control reform and greater commitment to hearing the demands of our youth is at an all time high. Now is the time to act to save our democracy and our standing on the world stage.

References

- Abrams, L. S. (2006), and Butts et al., 2010. Listening to juvenile offenders: Can residential treatment prevent recidivism? *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 23 (1), 61–85.
- Altschuler, D. M., & Brash, R. (2004). Adolescent and teenage offenders confronting the challenges and opportunities of reentry. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 2(1), 72–87.
- Amnesty International (2019). Gun Violence – Key facts. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/gun-violence/> Retrieved on December 7, 2019.
- Bell, K.E. (2009). Gender and Gangs: A Quantitative Comparison. *Crime & Delinquency*, 55(3), 363-387.

- Egendorf, L. (2001). *Gangs: Opposing Viewpoints*. USA: Greenhaven Press, Inc.
- Esbensen, F and Huizinga, D (1993). Gangs, Drugs, and Delinquency in a Survey of Urban Youth, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1993.tb01142.x>, Retrieved December 7, 2019.
- Gatti, Tremblay, Vitaro, & McDuff, (2005). For Red, For Blue, For Blow: Acquisition of Gang, <http://www.mhsl.uab.edu/dt/2012r/gaines.pdf>. Received December 7, 2019.
- Greenwood, Peter. "The Future of Children." *Prevention and Intervention Programs for Juvenile Offenders* Volume 18, Number 2, Fall 2008 pp. 185-210 | 10.1353/foc.0.0018
- Goldstein, A. P. (1991). *Delinquent Gangs: A Psychological Perspective*. Champaign, Illinois: Research Press
- Hagedorn, J. M. (2005). The Global Impact of Gangs. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 21(2), 153-169.
- Huff CR (2004). Gangs in the United States. <http://scholar.google.com>. Retrieved December 7, 2019.
- Krohn, Marvin D. and Terence P. Thornberry. (1993). Network theory: A model for understanding drug abuse among African American and Hispanic youth. Pp. 102-128 in Mario De La Rosa and Juan-Luis Recio Adrados (eds.) *Drug Abuse Among Minority Youth: Advances in Research Methodology*, NIDA Research Monograph 130, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- LeBlanc, D. (2019). Examination of the American culture of violence and gangs, Journal submission. *International Journal of Current Research*, December 7, 2019.
- Masters, J. U.S. Policy: Global Comparisons (August 6, 2019). https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/usgunpolicyglobalcomparisons?gclid=CjwKCAiAuK3vBRBOEiwA1IMhukK5zjyAS0UqVp82HcS20bljwaxz4KQtknHVQHnswjaWckdNFBnTBoCrUoQAvD_BwE, Retrieved on December 7, 2019.
- Melde, C., Gavazzi, S., McGarrell, E., & Bynum, T. (2011). On the Efficacy of Targeted Gang Interventions: Can We Identify Those Most at Risk? *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 9(4), 279-294. doi:10.1177/1541204011399934
- Molidor, C.E. (1996). Female Gang Members: A Profile of Aggression and Victimization. *Social Work*, 41(3), 251-257.
- Nicholas, S. (2010). Gang Involvement. *Gang Involvement - Research Starters Education*, 1-6.
- Schroeder, R., Osgood, A., & Oghia, M. (2010). Family Transitions and Juvenile Delinquency. *Sociological Inquiry*, 80(4), 579-604.
- Tiet, Q., Huizinga, D., & Byrnes, H. (2010). Predictors of Resilience Among Inner City Youths. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 19(3), 360-378. doi:10.1007/s10826-009-9307
- Tita, G.E. (2007). Strategies for Reducing Gun Violence: The Role of Gangs, Drugs and Firearm Accessibility <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/rdcng-gn-vlnc/index-en.aspx> Retrieved on December 7, 2019
- Thornberry, Terence P., Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, Carolyn A. Smith, and Kimberly Tobin. (2003). *Gangs and Delinquency in Developmental Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.