

2015

Female Parents' Attitudes, Beliefs, and Perceptions About Youth Gun Crimes

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Walden University

2015

Abstract

Female Parents' Attitudes, Beliefs, and Perceptions About Youth Gun Crimes

by

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MA, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1991

BA, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1986

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Health

Walden University

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Abstract

Youth gun crime is an important public health issue that affects many communities in the United States. Since 2012, there were over 30,000 gun-related deaths in the United States. Gun violence remains the leading cause of death for young people ages 15–24. This phenomenological study examined single female parents' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the influences and causes of youth gun crimes. The purposive sample drew from 10 single female parents of youth ages 14-17 charged with gun crimes. Sutherlands' (1974) differential association theory provided the theoretical framework for the study. The mothers participated in a series of in-depth, face-to-face interviews; these data were analyzed via inductive and emergent analysis. Results of the study indicated that these 10 parents were attempting to convey the correct message to their children to avoid gun violence. This message did not resonate due to environmental peer influence. One finding was the perception that peer influence and environmental factors favorable to gun violence hampered the impact of the parents in getting the message to youths to avoid youth gun violence. The study findings suggest that curtailing gun violence will require collaboration amongst community members. In addition, mothers need to be armed with resources that address the issues of peer pressure and community violence. The results of the study can impact positive social change by informing parents to be more empowered to seek resources to combat peer pressure and gun crimes. For this reason, the study should provide information useful for individual families in curtailing youth gun violence, thus impacting the community and the lives of many.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my late Sister Eubie Clark. My sister passed away of lung cancer on October 17, 2014. My sister was always supportive in my endeavors and was instrumental in my success. She was proud of me and hoped to see me graduate. I know she will be there in spirit. She is gone but not forgotten! Goodbye my angelic sister! I will miss you

Acknowledgments

I am thankful for the support of my family throughout this dissertation journey. I am blessed to have an understanding daughter Karissa and son Kendahl. They forgave me for not being there for that performance or that game. My late sister Eubie pushed me to the end while she battled cancer and for that I am grateful.

I would like to thank my chair Dr. Chester Jones and committee member Dr. Barbara Benoliel for seeing me through this journey. Thanks for sharing your knowledge and giving your guidance but most of all, thanks for your patience.

I would like to thank all my friends who have been there for me. I thank my friends for saying the words that uplifted me and kept me going when I wanted to quit. Thanks especially to Probation Officers' Charlie Calvin, Jennifer Edwards, Jeffery Haynes, and Tanya Kira who stayed in my corner. Thanks to all my classmates (Margaret Leung, Norma Fujikawa, and Delilie Langeni) who told me that I can complete this journey and not to give up.

Thanks to the mothers who took the time to talk to me about gun violence and the impact on their lives. I am honored to share their stories.

Last but not least, thank God for giving me the strength to make it through this process that had a fair share of obstacles.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background

Youth gun violence continues to be a major public health problem in the United States and the world (Graziano & Pulcini, 2013). Levine, Goldzweig, Kilbourne, and Juarez (2012) stated that homicide in the United States is seven times as common among non-Hispanic Black youth as among non-Hispanic White youth ages 15–24. Homicide was the leading cause of death among African Americans ages 10–24, the second leading cause of death for Hispanics within the same age range (Levine et al., 2012). It was also the third leading cause of death for Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indians and Alaskan Natives (Levine et al., 2012). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) there were a total of 22,571 firearm homicides in the United States during 2009-2010 (Kegler, Arnest, & Mercy, 2011). Of those totals, 3,397 were firearm homicides, and 1,548 were firearm suicides among youths 10–19 years. Levine et al. (2012) reported that firearms have been the injury mechanism for most US homicides with victims in the 15–24 age range and have affected mostly males. In addition, youth gun violence affected young people more than any other form of violence (Kellerman, Fuqua-Whitley, & Rivera, et al., 2004). The CDC (2013) also reported that between 2009-2010 firearm injury rates of persons 10-19 years old exceeded all other ages. Levine et al. (2012) pointed out that for the past decade national public health officials have not addressed youth violence in terms of the role of firearms. Levine et al. (2012) further

claimed that as a result of this, traditionally underserved populations have been further deprived of the full benefits of services from the public health community.

Youth violence is described as harmful behaviors that start early and continue into young adulthood (CDC, 2013). The youths could be victims, offenders, or witnesses to violence. The behaviors include various violent acts such as bullying, stabbing, hitting, robbery, and rape. These behaviors can cause emotional harm and lead to serious injury or even death. Williams, Rivera, Neighbours, and Resnick (2007) stated that sustained efforts of researchers, practitioners, and others have led to a better understanding of youth gun violence and its causes, but more information is needed. Firearm violence is a significant problem, especially in the African American community (Levine et al., 2012). While the mortality rate for White males aged 15-24 has subsided, the homicide mortality rate among black youth has remained above the pre-epidemic rates from 1999-2007 (Levine et al., 2012). In 2007, White homicides stabilized at rates that were significantly lower than before, but the black youth homicide rate for 2007 (92.3 per 100,000) was 65% higher than the pre-epidemic base of 55.8 percent. African American youth between 15-24 faced a higher rate of victimization from gun violence (Levine et al. 2012). McCarter (2011) reported that for the past 20 years, African Americans have been overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. During that 20-year period, the philosophy of the juvenile court changed from a more informal and rehabilitative model to a more formal and punitive one (McCarter, 2011). As a result of this trend, significant policy changes have been instituted to address this problem of disproportionate minority confinement (McCarter, 2011). The public health approach involves strong problem-

solving that has been effective and has resulted in success in prevention, intervention, and implementation. It is a process that required collaboration and participation (Hemenway & Miller, 2013). The ultimate goal of public health officials was to identify the risk factors of youth gun violence, to provide intervention designed to address the risk factors, and to evaluate the effectiveness of programs implemented. (Hemenway & Miller, 2013)

Parents have a great deal of influence on their children. Studies have shown that parents influence their children based on attitudes and beliefs that they model to their children (Lindstrom-Johnson, Finagan, Bradshaw, Haynie, & Cheng, 2010). I examined beliefs, attitudes, and the potential influence of female parents on the behavior of youths involved in gun crimes. Mothers have more opportunity to be influential in a child's life (Lindstrom-Johnson et al., 2010). Sutherland's differential association theory highlighted that children learn through association and that criminal behavior emerges when exposed to more social messages favoring criminal behavior (Sutherland, 1974). The present study enhanced knowledge in the area of female parents' role in the area of youth gun crimes.

Problem Statement

Youth gun violence is a major public health issue in urban areas in the United States (CDC, 2011). Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, (2011), discussed the role of public health in the prevention of violence and surmised that, the focus should be on identifying risk factors. Due to the immediate and long-lasting threat to the sustainability of communities, cities, and regions, the public health approach has been to address effective prevention strategies (Blanchard, Griesse, Makely, Oniell, & Tierney, 2009). I

have found very little research on the role mothers have with regard to the issue of youth gun crimes. Further understanding of the potential role of single female parents in youth gun violence is valuable in identifying protective factors that lead to better outcomes in youth gun crimes and address the research gap in the area. The simple presence of parents is a protective factor against adverse outcomes, suggesting that resilience-based interventions should focus on improving the quality of child-parent relationship (Jain, Buka, Subramanian, & Molnar, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore female parental attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the influences and causes of youth gun crimes. This provides insight into measures that can be taken to improve and change the outcome of youth behavior and attitudes toward gun violence. I explored how female parents' attitudes and beliefs can guide youths in terms of gun violence. Further, I explored how this may impact a lack of youth resilience against gun crimes. Researchers have suggested that parents have tremendous influence on children (Karriker-Jaffe, Foshee, Ennett et al., 2012). Parents influence children by transmitting beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions (Copeland-Linder et al., 2007).

Copeland-Linder et al. (2007) stated that adolescents' perceptions of parents' attitudes were a strong predictor of how they behaved. There was limited research that focused specifically on the single female parents with regard to youth gun violence and how their beliefs and perceptions affect youth's behavior. Sutherland (1974) stated that youths become delinquent because of the excess definitions favorable to law violation.

Individuals exposed to social messages favoring criminal conduct are more likely to exhibit criminal behavior (Sutherland,1974). This study focused only on the perspective of single female parents.

Research Questions

The central research question for this study explored the phenomenon of the single female parents' experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of their children's gun crimes. The overarching question had seven subquestions:

Research Question 1: What past experiences did single female parents have with gun crime?

Research Question 2: Do single female parents past experiences with gun crimes affect their beliefs about gun violence?

Research Question 3: Who did single female parents believe were the influences in their child's life?

Research Question 4: How did single female parents believe their attitudes and beliefs about gun violence influenced their adolescents' behavior?

Research Question 5: How did single female parents believe they were influential in preventing their youth from engaging in gun crimes?

Research Question 6: What specific roles did single female parents play in preventing youth gun crimes?

Research Question 7: What did single female parents recommend with regard to individual, community, school, and criminal justice fronts for preventing youth gun crimes?

Conceptual Framework

In this study I employed a transcendental phenomenological research approach. Sutherland's (1974) differential association theory guided the conceptual framework to add insight as to the workings of youth gun violence. Sutherland asserted that a person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to law violation over definitions unfavorable to law violation within their environment. Parents can influence behavior in their children, and this influence can lead to behavior favorable to crime commission. There is also a possible connection between parental attitudes and beliefs and evidence of violent behaviors in youths (Sutherland, 1974). The conceptual framework is aimed at understanding the connection female parents' attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and influences have with youth gun violence and how this affects choices or decisions made by youths.

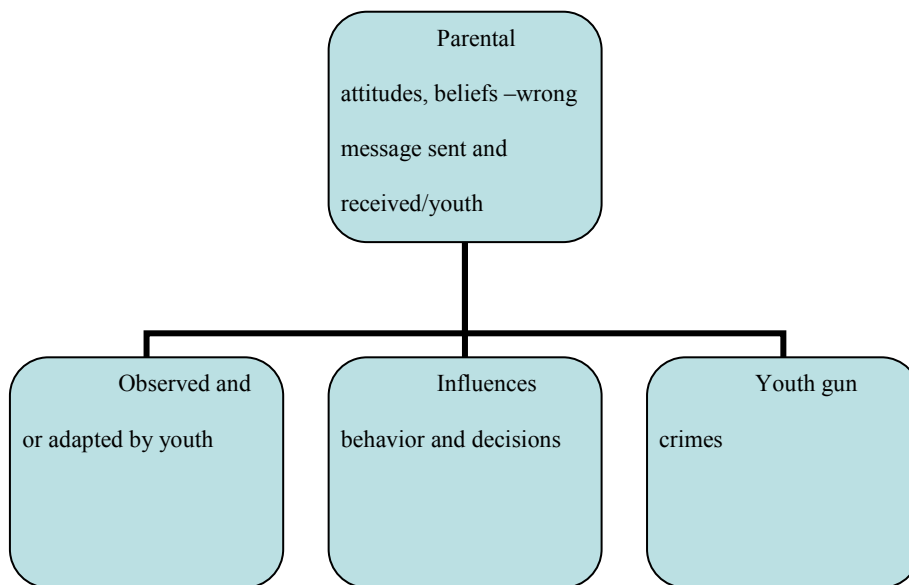


Figure 1. Framework.

The Nature of the Study

The nature of the study was exploratory and provided insights into the phenomenon of single female parents' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the issue of youth gun crimes. The research design included a purposive sampling strategy. The participants were recruited from female parents of juveniles on probation who were charged with a gun crime. The sample consisted of 10 female parents of children charged with unlawful use of a weapon in the United States. The youths were on a period of probation and not in custody. The charges were limited to the youth having possession of a weapon and discharging a weapon without serious injury to an individual. Participants were all single biological mothers with the exception of one adopted mother. I gathered data in face-to-face interviews. This qualitative study followed a transcendental phenomenological approach, which involved an inquiry where the researcher identified the essence of the human experiences about a phenomenon as described by the participants (Moustakas, 1994). The interviews were informal, iterative, and interactive and utilized open-ended comments and questions (Moustakas, 1994). The data was collected and analyzed for patterns of relationships. I work for the probation department in the suburban division, and permission was granted to access information; however, I did not work with clients that I served. Cases selected were from a list generated by the Juvenile Enterprise Management System (JEMS). That system generated all the active probation gun cases in the Chicago area. The list had names and petition numbers for all active gun cases. The names of juveniles were blocked prior to researcher having access to the list. I selected cases for the interviews based on the assigned petition numbers. The

petition and JEMS number was assigned to the juvenile upon being charged by the state's attorney. The files were selected for the following criteria: youth terminated from probation, were on probation for at least one year and charged with unlawful possession of a weapon (UPF), unlawful use of a weapon (UUW), and aggravated unlawful use of a weapon (AUUW). The youth resided with a female parent. Cases where youths resided in a group home, foster home, shelter, and residential placement were not eligible for the study.

The list of 60 eligible participants was provided to me by the liaison from the juvenile probation department. Included on the list was a JEMS number, petition number, the name of the female parent and the address. Letters were sent to all 60 participants requesting participation in the study. Those who did not want to participate were replaced from the original list in the JEMS system to replace that participant. Participants were originally required to contact the researcher upon receipt of the letter of invitations; however, due to lack of response, I contacted the participants with the approval of IRB. Once I contacted participants I screened for study eligibility when scheduling initial interviews. After the first interviews, follow-up interviews were scheduled to verify the information obtained in the first interview. I followed the guidelines of standard open-ended interview questions. On completion of the interview, I stored information in a secure locked file until I was ready for analysis. The petition and JEMS number were assigned to the juvenile upon being charged by the state's attorney. The list of 60 eligible participants was provided to me by the liaison from the juvenile probation department.

Definition of Terms

Aggravated unlawful use of a weapon (AUUW): A person commits this offense when the person knowingly carries on his or her person a concealed firearm uncased, loaded, and immediately accessible in the time of the offense (Illinois Compiled Statutes [ILCS], 2011).

Single female parents: In this study all the participants are female parents (i.e., mothers). Mothers are usually the primary caregivers of the youth in the family.

JEMS number: This is a number assigned to each case in the system that is different from the petition number.

Juvenile enterprise management system (JEMS): This is a database that electronically collects, tracks, and manages data. Reports can be generated from this system on all cases in the juvenile court system (JEMS Informational Manual, 1999).

Unlawful possession of a firearm (UPF): The ILCS defines UPF as a person under 18 being in possession of any firearm of size that may be concealed upon the person.

Unlawful use of a weapon (UUW): The ILCS; (2011) defines UUW as selling, purchasing, or carrying a weapon on or about one's person with intent to use unlawfully against another person.

Youth violence: The World Health Organization (2011) defined youth violence as intentional use of threatened or actual physical force or power against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, or deprivation.

Assumptions

I made the assumption that the mother's responses during the interview were truthful; that the mothers answered all the questions and that the research questions are appropriate to the exploration. To validate my assumptions the participants were interviewed a second time to confirm the original information.

Delimitations

Participants were limited to single female parents only who resided in the Chicago area. Two parent homes would present a different dynamic not sought in this research. The population selected a purposeful sample of individuals who were not fully representative of the general population. I chose not to use cases involving injury or death as that may have been too emotional for the participants and would have brought out information that was not the focus of my study.

Limitations

In the study, only single female parents were interviewed. The population size was limited to 10 participants. Fathers' were not interviewed so as to keep the family dynamic of female parent only.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was to determine and to gain insight from female parents' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the influences and causes of youth gun violence. The knowledge gained added to the body of research on youth gun violence, which I hope will create a path towards improving the issue of youth gun crimes. The overarching goal of this study was to explore the issue of youth gun crimes in terms of

the role single female parents played in increasing awareness of the problem. Further, to empower single female parents to be the voice that informed service providers about what was necessary for them to effectively address the issue of gun crimes with their children and thereby a vehicle to social change. Parents can, therefore, be a part of the instrument of change by sharing their experiences and beliefs in order to provide insights on more effective ways of approaching the issue of youth gun crimes. So far most researchers have indicated that parents' involvement was important in terms of the influence on children (Karriker-Jaffe et al., 2012; Williams et al., 2007). It was my intention that this study will promote positive social change by engaging single female parents with information that will allow them to take an active role in the reduction of gun violence. Mothers can gather information from organized community meetings and informational literature on results of the study. Mothers can inform community stakeholders on the services needed effectively to address the issue of youth gun crimes.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to address the serious issue of youth gun violence. In doing so, the hope is to provide a better understanding of the single female parents' perceptions of youth gun violence and the impact to youth's behavior towards gun crimes. Risk factors associated with youth gun violence are highlighted in order to provide information regarding prevention strategies. The public health approach is focused on prevention, but also believes in resilience or thriving despite the risk factors (Hemenway & Miller 2013). This qualitative study sought to provide current information in the area of youth gun violence specifically as it relates to a single female parent

perspective on youth gun crimes. The upcoming chapters include an extensive literature review in the area of youth gun violence. Chapter 3 included the methodology featuring the qualitative approach in the phenomenological theory. Chapter 4 presented the results and chapter 5 discussed the findings and conclusions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In the literature review, I explored youth gun violence as it related to parental attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions as to influences and causes of youth gun crimes. Violence is a priority for public health officials. Youth gun violence in particular is of high importance because of morbidity and mortality reported each year. Because the public health approach focuses on prevention, it is necessary to determine the root causes for youth violence, especially as it relates to the role of parents in aiding prevention. In this literature review, I examined the major known factors associated with youth gun violence and the current thinking about causes and prevention measures. It was my goal to provide a deeper understanding as to the nature of youth gun violence from lived experience of the female parents. In addition, it was my objective to provide insights on what single female parents believe will aid in the reduction of youth gun crimes. The theoretical framework of this dissertation will capture the theoretical perspective that highlights the significance of parents in shaping the direction of youth and creating a climate for making decisions regarding youth gun crimes. In the proceeding paragraphs, I introduce the literature in the area of youth gun violence and described how I searched for the literature. A list of the terms searched in preparation for the study included: phenomenological theory (theoretical foundation), perceptions of community violence by parents, parental influences on children, parental role in youth gun violence, parental attitudes and beliefs about youth gun violence, adolescence as a period of high risk behavior, the impact of youth gun violence from the public health perspective, causes of

youth gun violence, family factors associated with youth gun violence, environmental factors, and the cost of youth gun violence.

Literature Search Strategy

A literature search was conducted digitally through electronic Academic Search Premier, Google Scholar, ProQuest, Central, Psych INFO, CNAHL, SAGE Journals, SocINDEX, as well as through the Walden University Library database. The list of search terms used to conduct the literature search included youth gun violence, cases of youth gun violence, cost of youth gun violence, parental influences and perceptions of youth violence, and youth violence prevention strategies. The sources reviewed for the study were obtained digitally as well as through print versions of scholarly reviewed journals. There were also several books used to provide historical aspects of the research on youth gun violence.

Theoretical Foundation of the Research

Sutherland's (1974) differential association theory asserted a person becomes delinquent because an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable violation of law (Sutherland, 1974). Sutherland also stated that when individuals are exposed to social messages favoring criminal conduct, it is likely that criminal behavior will emerge. The above theory guides this research in exploring the possible association between parental attitudes and beliefs and youth gun crimes. Researchers have shown that parenting practices are crucial determinants of juvenile offending and important factor to future criminality (Schroeder, Giordano, & Cernkovich, 2010). Losel and Farrington (2012) suggested that parental supervision can have a

protective and buffering effect in reducing the risk factors for youth violence. I, therefore, designed this study to gain insight on the female parents' perspective on youth gun crimes. There was significant research linking lack of parental involvement as a risk factor in youth gun violence (Lindstrom-Johnson et al., 2011). I found no research that provided information on the attitudes and beliefs of parents about youth gun violence and the effect on youth gun crimes.

Perceptions of Community Violence by Adolescents and Parents

Studies suggested that youths exposed to neighborhood violence were more likely to perceive situations as threatening (Lindstrom-Johnson et al., 2010). This threat made them respond in ways that protected them from perceived threat (Lindstrom-Johnson et al., 2010). Parents exposure to neighborhood violence also influenced their perception of the conflict situation and the suggestions they made to their children regarding how to respond (Lindstrom-Johnson et al., 2010). Lindstrom-Johnson, et al. (2010) examined the link between neighborhood context and parental messages to their adolescent children about violence. The authors examined the influence of perceived neighborhood violence and neighborhood collective efficacy on parental attitudes toward violence, and the messages they give their adolescent children about how to resolve interpersonal conflict. The authors recruited 143 African American parents and their adolescent children from inner-city schools to participate in a parenting intervention. They found that parent and adolescent perception of neighborhood collective efficacy influenced the messages that adolescents received about interpersonal conflict resolution (Lindstrom-Johnson et al.,

2010). Lindstrom-Johnson et al. (2010) further suggested that parents' living in a violent neighborhood shapes how they deal with conflict and their experience with violence.

Parental Influences on Children

Many studies in psychology and child development state that the influence of a parent on a child helps to mold the child's development. The study by Lindstrom-Johnson et al. (2010) also assessed that parental attitudes have a strong influence on both children's attitudes toward violence as well as their involvement in violent behavior. The current study confirmed that parental attitudes influenced children's attitudes; however, the strength of the influence was determined by the presence of peer influence. Parental attitudes are often transmitted to adolescents coping with neighborhood violence, either through coaching or advice given to their children (Lindstrom-Johnson et al., 2010). Slovak and Helm (2007) stated that attitudes about youth gun violence are affected by exposure to violence. Slovak and Helm investigated the impact of violence exposure on youth attitudes toward violence and guns. To obtain this information, rural youths in the study completed surveys on their exposure to violence in the home, school, and neighborhood, as well as their attitudes towards guns and violence. The researchers focused on the connection between violence exposure and unhealthy attitudes towards violence as a risk factor for subsequent violent behavior. One of the main goals in Slovak and Helm's study was to examine the variables that influenced the development of violent attitudes among youth. Slovak and Helm concluded that there was enough information to support previous research on the influence of family in the development of unhealthy attitudes toward violence. The development of unhealthy attitudes toward

violence led to subsequent violent behavior (Hurd, Zimmerman, & Reischl 2011; Slovak & Helm, 2007). Vaughn et al. (2012) discussed the many factors that influenced a juvenile's choice to possess a gun and highlighted effective parenting. Vaughn et al. stated that parents played an important role in the socialization process of their children. Effective parenting, communication, and parental supervision played an important role in reducing the risk of handgun carrying (Vaughn et al., 2012) One such process included how parents influenced prosocial and delinquent attitudes. The outcome of the study suggested that juveniles whose parents placed fewer limitations on them or exercised poor methods of discipline, such as threats, and were more likely to carry a gun regularly (Vaughn et al., 2012).

Parental Role in Youth Gun Violence

Educating parents on how to decrease violent behavior was very important. Parents armed with the necessary resources to combat violence with their children results in a more positive outcome for the future of their children (Farrell, Mays, Henry, & Schoeny, 2011). Farrell et al. suggested that the benefits of parental involvement, in terms of reducing child aggression depend on the message parents convey. The messages parents transmit to their adolescents served as a protective function (Farrell et al., 2011) Parental support for nonviolence was a significant moderator of the relations between risk factors and aggression (Farrell et al., 2011). Parents' involvement was an important aspect for reinforcing to youths the inappropriateness of weapon carrying and use. Parents have to send consistent messages that weapons are dangerous ways to resolve conflict (Borowsky, Mozayeny, Stuenkel, & Ireland, 2004). One intervention discussed by

Borowsky et al. (2004) was to promote healthy child-parent relationships. Youths witnessing violence by parents will be affected at some point in their lives (Barowsky et al., 2004). Murrel, Merwin, Cristoff, and Henning (2005) explained what occurred when parents modeled violence. The authors found that youths witnessing violence by parents became violent and aggressive themselves. The article raised questions about the extensive use of weapons in violent families. The authors concluded that not all who witnessed violence by parents or in families used violence later on, and suggested other possible factors. Therefore, if youths witnessed violence and that violent behavior go unreprimanded, this influenced their behavior (Murrel, Merwin, Christoff, & Henning 2005). Lindstrom-Johnson et al. (2010) stated that parental attitudes towards violence have a strong influence on both children's attitudes toward violence as well as their participation in violent behavior. Adolescent perceptions of their parent's attitudes toward fighting are a strong predictor of their attitudes toward violence. It is, therefore, essential to ensure nonviolent coaching as a means of preventing the use of violence to resolve conflict amongst youths (Lindstrom-Johnson et al., 2010). Lindstrom-Johnson et al. suggested parental attitudes toward violence have a strong influence on both children's attitudes toward violence as well as their involvement in violent behavior.

Hurd et al. (2011) investigated whether role models contributed to the resilience of an adolescence that was exposed to nonparental adult influences. The sample included 659 African American, ninth-grade adolescents. The participants completed interviews that lasted 50-60 minutes. They further completed self-administered surveys about personal alcohol and drug use. Fourteen items were used to assess adult negative

influences, some of which included possession of weapons and drug use. Hurd et al. focused on the premise that role models contributed to the resilience of adolescents who were exposed to negative non-parental influences, such as drug or weapon use. They also found that nonparental adults who exhibited positive behavior produce positive outcomes and add to youth resilience in adolescents. Hurd et al. reported that adults influence the lives of adolescents in a variety of ways. They concluded that adolescents often look to adults for approval in order to determine what behavior is acceptable (Hurd et al., 2011). They further determined that adult influence could be either positive or negative.

Vaughn et al. (2012) discussed the correlation of handgun carrying among adolescents in the United States. The authors used a public data file from the adolescent sample of 17,842 in 2008 and employed a survey method that examined the behavioral, parental involvement, and prevention correlates of hand gun carrying. The adolescents were between the ages of 12-17. Results from this study indicated that males selling and using illicit drugs had an increased probability of carrying handguns (Vaughn et al., 2012). Youth who carried hand guns were significantly less likely to report a parent being significantly involved in their lives. Vaughn et al. found that effective parenting, communication, and parental supervision played a significant role in reducing the risk for handgun carrying.

In a similar study, Keary and Berry (2008) found that juveniles without curfews and those whose parents had threatened to throw them out of the house because of drug use were more likely to carry a gun regularly. Keary and Berry stated that even though the courts may not be able to force coercive involuntary intervention on parents, they

should do everything in their power to encourage active, positive parental influences before a juvenile becomes impossible to control. Vaughn et al. (2012) also corroborated previous studies in that they found strong patterns of protective effects from parental involvement and supervision.

The Impact of Youth Gun Violence: The Public Health Perspective

Violence among youths is a significant public health problem and a crisis in the United States (CDC, 2013). Guns kill an average of 85 Americans per day (CDC, 2013). In 2010 more than 3,100 persons in the US died after being shot with a gun and more than 73,500 more were shot and survived (Frattaroli, Webster, & Wintermute et. al., 2013). It is a problem that disproportionately affects minority youths and is the leading cause of death for young black men (Legal Community Against Violence, 2010). African Americans made up 13% of the population; however, in 2007 African Americans suffered over 26% of all firearm deaths and 55% of all firearm homicides (Legal Community Against Violence, 2010). In contrast to the legal approach, the public health approach favors prevention. The legal order approach tends to be punitive in that it punishes, and the public health approach is to educate and prevent (Safe States Alliance, 2011). Although these approaches may seem opposite, the public health approach is meant to be a complement to the law-and-order approach and not necessarily to challenge it (Safe States Alliance, 2011). Having access to firearms is an important factor to violent outcomes due to deaths from homicide, unintentional killings and suicides (Rutherford, Zwi, Grove, & Butchart, 2006). Individuals around guns are more likely to be victims of gun violence than be protected by guns (Rutherford et al., 2006). The aim of public health

is to create social change by reducing death and physical injury created by youth gun violence. Therefore, the public health approach emphasizes interdisciplinary, scientifically-based action to prevent harm to entire populations (Rutherford et al., 2006). The criminal justice system such as police, probation, parole, judges and corrections have a crucial role in helping to prevent interpersonal gun violence (Hemenway & Miller, 2013). In order to accomplish a reduction in gun violence, the public health approach is to create good data systems that provide consistent and comparable detailed information across cities and over time (Hemenway & Miller, 2013)

Causes of Youth Gun Violence

More research is needed to identify the causal factors of gun violence and the effect of the intervention to reduce it or prevent it (Gold, 2013). The prevalence of guns was a high-risk factor for gun violence. States with the weakest gun laws have the highest incidents of gun violence. Evidence suggested that restricting access to firearms decreased firearm-related morbidity and mortality (Gold, 2013). There was significant information available about the cause of youth gun violence. Research has led to the implementation of preventative measures. In identifying risk factors, parents can be a key and can play a role in the prevention by the taking the right action modeling appropriate behavior (Jenson, 2010). Community exposure has an impact on youth gun violence in that it leads to violent behavior among youths. Jenson and Howard (1999) introduced causes of youth gun violence and provided the foundation to explore further. The authors investigated the origination of exposure that may occur in the home and the ability of parents to enable or diffuse violent behavior.

Adolescence as a Period of High-Risk Behavior

Adolescents who exhibited a great deal of dysfunction and antisocial behavior tend to come from an environment where parents are hostile, aloof, or uninvolved (Feder, Levant, & Dean, 2012; Steinberg, 2000). There are several schools of thought as to adolescence stage of development and brain development. Kohlberg (1971) discussed stages of moral development and the preconventional level where a child is responsive to cultural rules and labels of good, bad, right, or wrong. The child interprets the labels in terms of either physical or hedonistic consequences of action (punishment, reward, exchange of favors) or the physical power of those who enunciate the rules and labels. The preconventional level includes the stage of punishment, obedience, and orientation. In this stage, the physical consequences of an action determine its goodness or badness regardless of the human meaning or value of these consequences. The next stage in this level is the instrumental relativist where the right action consists of what instrumentally satisfies one's needs and occasionally the needs of others. The conventional level was the level where the individual perceived the maintenance of the expectations of his family, group, or nation as valuable in its right, regardless of immediate obvious consequences. The attitude was not only one of conformity to personal expectations and social order but of loyalty to it, actively maintaining, supporting, and justifying the order and identifying with the persons or group involved in it. The postconventional level was the level where the individual makes an explicit effort to define moral values and principles. These moral values and principles have the validity and application apart from the authority of the groups of persons holding them and apart from the individual's identification with the

group (Kohlberg, 1971). Blakemore and Choudhury (2006) described adolescence as a time of considerable development at the level of behavior recognition and the brain. The transition from childhood to adulthood is characterized by changes in identity, self-consciousness, and cognitive flexibility. The prefrontal cortex and the parietal cortex have consistently been shown to undergo development during adolescence, and puberty represents a period of synaptic reorganization. As a consequence, the brain might be more sensitive to experiential input at this period in the realm of executive function and social recognition (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). The authors further explained that research in psychological and cognitive neuroscience can contribute to the debate about juvenile crime especially in the area of antisocial behavior (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). Antisocial behaviors are civil orders that can be imposed against anyone age 10 or over who is deemed to have acted in a manner that causes alarm or distress to anyone. If these civil orders were breached, they become criminal offenses (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). Current theoretical underpinnings of criminal law were grounded in the principle of autonomy. This concept means that individuals are regarded as rational, autonomous human beings who can choose their actions and are, therefore, held responsible by the criminal law.

Risk Factors Associated with Youth Violence

There are four main areas of risk factors that played a role in youth violence. They include individual, family, peer, school, and community issues. In this study I highlighted some topics included in the above categories. They included: poor family functioning, low parental attachment, poor monitoring and supervision of peer and gangs, school

factors, and environment and community factors (Williams Rivera, Neighbours, & Reznik, 2007). They included a high concentration of poor residents, high level of transiency, and high level of family disruption, low community participation, diminished economic opportunity, and access to firearms (Williams et al., 2007).

Poor Family Functioning

Parents and caregivers influence the course of a child's development in every way, including the propensity towards violence (Feder, Levant, & Dean, 2010). In a report by Steinberg (2000) (also cited in Feder et al., 2010) stated that a dysfunctional family can contribute to the development of antisocial behavior among young people. Steinberg (2000) also noted that there was not an influence in the development of antisocial behavior among young people that is strong than that of family (Feder et al., 2010) Harsh discipline styles, aggression in the family and favorable attitudes toward aggression have been linked to increased aggression and violence among youth (Feder et al., 2010). For example, many young people who become involved in violence come from families in which there is a long history of domestic violence. The home environment has been abusive, hostile, or conflict-ridden (Feder et al., 2010). The conclusion was that adolescent perceptions of their parent's attitudes toward fighting may be a factor in subsequent violent behavior (Copeland-Linder et al., 2007). Farrington and Welsh (1999) also stated that if the parents normalize the violent behavior, it portrays an attitude supporting violence. Steinberg (2000) highlighted that the most powerful predictors of mental health problems among children and adolescents were a poor family relationships and of antisocial, violent behavior. According to Copeland and Linder et al.

(2007), parental engagement in their children's lives was one of the most important contributors to children's psychological development. The conclusion was that in order to reduce youth violence there must be a systematic effort of parental engagement (Copeland –Linder et al., 2007). Witnessing violence and being a victim of violence can be influential on the attitudes towards violence. Therefore, the attitudes of parents can influence a youth's decision on committing a violent act (Feder et al., 2011).

Limited Parental Attachment

Losel and Farrington (2012) stated that an emotionally positive parent-child relationship and secure bonding is a basic and direct positive factor in child development. It served has a buffering effect in preventing a wide range of problem behaviors in youths. Losel and Farrington further stated that a close relationship with parents protects against aggressive behavior in youths. Having a positive relationship with at least one parent encouraged social behavior in a structured setting. Dahlberg (1998) reported that research on emotional attachment and bonding shows a greater risk for aggressive behavior and antisocial behavior in children who experience rejection, neglect, or indifference from parents. Parents who were neglectful and not engaged with children were not responsive to the needs of their children and demand little of them (Dahlberg, 1998). Youth who have low attachment to parents have higher rates of delinquency. Losel and Farrington(2012)., pointed out that a child's family is arguably the most critical component of the proximal social level of influence, as they influence youth risks for violence in several ways. Losel and Farrington stated that family can influence youth risks for violence in several ways. They highlighted that families served as a protective

buffer by lowering the likelihood that a youth was exposed to risk factors for violence; from other levels of social influence. Reese et al. discussed that protective family influences included the presence of a nurturing parent or adult in a youth's life. It is important, for parents to nurture, but equally important is to provide monitoring and supervision (Losel & Farrington, 2012). Blanchard et al. (2009) found that at the family level a youth that lacked the consistent presence of a caring adult is at a high risk of becoming violent.

Monitoring and Supervision

Factors such as failing to set limits clear expectations, poor monitoring and supervision and severe and inconsistent discipline predicted later delinquent acts, (Losel & Farrington, 2012). Strong levels of parental involvement function as a protective factor against violence (Losel & Farrington, 2012). Lack of parental involvement increased youth's future risk of violence (Losel & Farrington, 2012).

Letiecq and Kolinsky (2004) found that parents were the most salient figures in the lives of most children. They conducted the study in a violent neighborhood where African American fathers shared strategies and found that parents have the greatest potential to protect children from the ill effects of the community. They further stated that when parents were supportive and protective, they facilitated positive development. However, when parents were absent or stressed, children were developmentally at risk (Letiecq & Koblinsky, 2004). In the study, the monitoring was focused on preschoolers; however, the concept was the importance on providing adequate supervision and knowing where your children were at all times.

Garbarino, Bradshaw, and Vorrasi (1999) indicated that parental acknowledgement of the fact that no family is immune to gun violence is a first step in prevention. Parents can acknowledge the dangers of gun violence by being alert to signs that their children might be prone to violence (Garbarino, Bradshaw, & Vorrasi., 1999). Garbarino et al. stated parental monitoring is an extensive research practice. Parental monitoring is characterized by tracking whereabouts and attending to a child's activities. In this study, it was discovered that parental monitoring of children could be effective in preventing gun violence. Not only was it important for parents to monitor and supervise their children, they also needed to monitor delinquent peers.

In a more recent study, Yang et al., (2011) discussed the dynamic association between parental monitoring and adolescent risk involvement among African American adolescents. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between parental monitoring and communication and the adolescent risk involvement overtime. Baseline data were collected from 1999-2003 on African American adolescents and their parents from a low-income area in Baltimore. Perceived parental monitoring, parent-adult communication, and seven risk behaviors were assessed (Yang et al., 2011). The findings suggested perceived parental monitoring had protective effects on concurrent adolescent risk involvement over two-year period observation. The study concluded that there was a protective effect of perceived parental monitoring on adolescent risk involvement. The study confirmed the importance of consistent parental monitoring and communication in preventing high-risk behavior (Yang et al., 2011).

Peer Factors and Gangs

A social context that included delinquent peer and friends were an important risk factor for youth violence (Losel & Farrington, 2012). Youths who were in a gang were more likely to be involved in violent offenses (Losel & Farrington, 2012). Wilkinson, McBride, Williams, Bloom, and Bell (2009) completed a study on peers and gun use among urban adolescent males. The study examined the social embeddedness of gun use. The study used interview data with 416 violent male offenders from two disadvantaged New York City neighborhoods. The study examined the roles that the peers' context played in explaining the patterns of gun-related behaviors. The belief is that peers who associated with other peers who carried guns would also be involved in serious gun violence (Wilkinson et al. 2009). The findings were that guns were used for protection (Wilkinson et al., 2009). Wilkinson et al. (2009) also found that belonging to a group of associates was also perceived to have protective value. Stretesky and Pogrebin in another study explored the relationship between street gang membership and violence (2007). The study considered how gangs promote violence and gun use (Stretesky & Pogrebin, 2007). Gangs were found to be important agents of socialization (Stretesky & Pogrebin 2007). Gang involvement shaped identify and the sense of self (Stretesky & Pogrebin 2007). Violence by gang members is used to settle disputes. The authors discussed the fact that guns help gang members shape and convey their identity. One of the conclusions of the study is that policies aimed at reducing gun violence should consider socialization. It is not enough just to reduce the availability of guns through law enforcement crackdown. It is necessary for the gang culture to change through the resocialization of

gang members. The authors cited Phiehl, Kennedy and Braga who pointed out that homicide in Boston decreased as a result of the Gun Project. The project focused on reinforcing nonviolent norms by increasing peer support (Stretesky & Pogrebin, 2007). Thornberry, Huizinga, and Loeber (2007) stated that there were three perspectives concerning the relationship between gang and violence. First was the selection perspective which suggested that gang members were individuals with delinquent and violent behavior prior to joining a gang (Thornberry et al., as cited in Stretesky et al., 2007). Therefore, it was more likely that they would engage violent behavior even if not in a gang (Thornberry et al. as cited in Stretesky et al., 2007). Second was the social facilitation perspective. Here a gang member was no different from the non-gang member; however, the gang served as a source of the delinquent behavior (Thornberry et al. as cited in Stretesky et al., 2007). The third perspective was the enhancement perspective where recruitment of new gang members was from a pool of individuals. These individuals showed a propensity to engage in crime and violence and to be in a gang increased the violent behavior (Thornberry et al., as cited in Stretesky et al., 2007). The findings in this study suggested that gang violence has a relationship with gun violence. Gang members use weapons as a tool to perform violent activities in gangs. The authors concluded that in order to reduce violence in gangs, the focus should be on gang socialization (Stretesky et al., 2007). It is clear that there cannot be a discussion about reducing youth gun violence without dealing with the issue of gangs and their impact on youth gun crimes, and these are issues prevalent in schools.

School Factors

Negative School relationships and experiences were risk factors for serious violent offending (Losel & Farrington, 2012) Youths failing in elementary grades have an increased risk for later violent behavior. Prevention and early intervention strategies developed should promote children's attachment to prosocial peers, involvement in school activities and academic achievement. One important suggestion was to have home-school collaboration. In this case, parents were provided with ideas of rewarding children's desirable school behaviors and providing consequences for disruptive behaviors. Ideas included, assisting and making sure children are safe. Losel and Farrington (2012) in a study found that positive school experiences in academics and bonding serves as a protective and buffering factor schools than elsewhere. Positive relationships meant that they were less likely to be in future criminality, whereas negative school relationships and experiences are risk factors for serious violent youth offending. In addition, children from high-risk backgrounds, sound school achievement and bonding to school was more relevant for successful adjustment (Losel & Farrington, 2012).

Community and Environmental Factors

Access to Firearms

Having easy access to firearms increased the risk of violent offending (Ruback, Shafer & Clark, 2011). Having access to firearms was a potentially important determinant of criminal activity, even though the relationship between guns and crimes has not clearly identified (Ruback et al., 2011). Easy access to guns was determined by characteristic of neighborhoods (Ruback et al., 2011). For instance, juveniles who reported feeling safe in

their neighborhood also reported having easy access to guns (Ruback et al., 2011). There was overwhelming evidence that the availability of guns was the single most important factor that distinguished youth violence (Ruback et al. 2011). Access to firearms was higher for males, whites and adolescents having a two parent family (Ruback et al., 2011). Current access to firearms at home significantly increased the odds of both violent offending and violent victimization (Ruback et al. 2011). The authors concluded that easy access to guns is an important risk factor for violent offending and that having easy access to guns increases a juvenile's risk of violent offending (Ruback et al., 2011). The authors also found that easy access to the gun was an additional risk factor for juveniles. Additional measures should be taken to prevent easy access (Ruback et al., 2011). Preventing this access to weapons would be an effective strategy in reducing violent victimization (Ruback et al., 2011).

Poverty and Poor Economic Status

Poverty was a risk factor for violence and being raised in poverty contributed to a greater likelihood of involvement in crime and violence (Murry, Berkel, & Gaylord-Harden, 2011). Socio-economic status has predictive effects on aggression and delinquency (Santiago, Wadsworth, & Stump 2011). The number of children living in poverty has increased by 21% from 200-2008 (Murry et al., 2011). Over 14 million children live in families below the federal poverty level, with an annual income of US\$22,050 for a family of four (Grieder, 2009). Parental marital status was not an issue with youth outcomes. However, it was the lack of additional income or the time a single parent has available to spend with their children (Murry et al., 2011). Adolescents face

challenges when reared in situations in which families are unable to provide the experiences, resources and services essential for them to thrive and to grow (Murry et al., 2011). In the article they further discussed the fact that poverty stricken neighborhoods have high incidences of crime, physical and social disorder, drug trafficking, therefore, made it difficult for adolescents to develop positive social networks (Murry et al., 2011). As a result, youths were likely to engage in activities resulting in excessive levels of arrest and gun violence (Bingenheimer, Brenan, & Earls, 2005 as cited in Murry et al., 2011). African Americans were more likely to reside in resource-scarce neighborhoods at 34%, than Latino youth at 31% compared to whites at 11percent. The study found that intervention programs must focus on changing individual behavior attitudes and belief and behavior (Bingenheimer, Brenan, & Earls, 2005 as cited in Murry et al., 2011). This study aims at providing additional information on the influence on attitudes and beliefs of parents in the area of youth gun crimes. Carlson (2006) completed a study of youths in rural America and found that, violence exposure was a significant problem. The results of the study found that higher levels of poverty significantly related to higher levels of direct exposure to violence in school (Carlson, 2006).The rural youths were also more prone to be violent (Carlson, 2006).

Cost of Youth Gun Violence

Youth gun violence has emotional and financial cost on families. Gun violence disproportionately affects the poor, but the financial impact affects everyone in the community (Cook & Ludwig, 2004). Many young people sought medical care for violence-related injuries ranging from cuts and bruises to broken bones and gunshot

wounds (CDC, 2011). These gunshot wounds often resulted in long-lasting disabilities that require extended medical care. Firearm-related deaths also resulted in an estimated medical cost of \$2.3 billion each year, half of which are borne by taxpayers. The costs incurred were the result of visits to emergency rooms and the cost for after care. The CDC (2011) highlighted the fact that many young people each year seek medical care for violence-related injuries. From 2006 to 2010, the cost to care for victims of gunshot violence who presented to the emergency department was estimated at 88.6 billion. (Lee, Quraishi, Bhatnagar & Zafonte, et al., 2014) The traditional public health way of capturing cost focused on medical expenses and loss of earnings. The effect on the poor however; was of great significance, and the cost may not be in the dollar amount but the quality of life (Cook & Ludwig, 2004). The poor dealt with living in unsafe neighborhoods with limited resources. Limited resources meant they have less access to quality facilities that are available for healthier play and constructive recreation. They were stuck in a situation because they cannot afford to live in a productive inspirational environment. Schools equipped with metal detectors, subject students to personal searches each day for weapons and the like. Youths felt unsafe to walk home or to take the bus. Parents were not always able to transport children because they have no access to transportation

Literature Related to the Methodology

The literature revealed that there were numerous studies related to youth gun violence and its causes. The literature also revealed a wide variety of information as to the impact of physical exposure to violence and its relation to youth gun violence. Since

the recent school violence, there were numerous studies as to the causes of youth gun violence and parental perceptions of the causes of youth gun violence. Markowitz, in 2001 completed a qualitative study to assess attitudes and family violence (linking intergenerational and cultural theories). Social learning theory suggested that witnessing violence makes one more susceptible to committing violence (Markowitz, 2001). The study relied on face-to-face interviews from two sample groups, ex-offenders and the general population. The findings revealed that experiencing violence while growing up is related to favorable attitudes towards violence against spouses. A study by Howard, Kaljee, and Jackson (2007) on the urban adolescent's perceptions of community violence also used a qualitative study to investigate the coping strategies initiated by urban adolescents relative to violence exposure. The study relied on semi-structured interviews of 37 African-American youths. The study also utilized a questionnaire on violence called the mean-ends problem-solving competence (MEPS). The study found that although the perceptions of Safety varied according to weapon to weapon carrying status, staying locked inside one's home and maintaining vigilance when dealing with others identified as primary protective strategies.

Steinman & Zimmerman (2003) completed a study on the episodic and persistent gun carrying among urban African American adolescents. The study examined whether similar risk factors influenced episodic and persistent gun carrying among urban African American youths. They used a qualitative approach found that young people who carried guns persistently rather than episodically were more likely to use them against others. Vaughn, Perron Abdon & Olate et al.(2012) cited Steinman & Zimmerman in a similar

study on the “Correlates of handgun Carry among adolescents in the United States” .In this study , the authors examined behavioral, parental involvement and prevention correlates to handgun carrying(Vaughn et al. 2012) The authors found that the youths who sold drugs were more likely to carry handguns. Furthermore youth who carried hand guns were significantly less likely to report a parent being involved in their lives and were more likely to have encountered violence. The above studies were critical in providing information about violence and youth gun violence in terms of exposure and variables that predict youth violence. This current study sought to use qualitative methods to provide information as to the nature of parental attitudes and beliefs about youth gun violence. Furthermore, the study sought to assess how these variables influenced youth gun crimes Church, MacNeil; Martin and Gardell (2009) completed a qualitative phenomenological study of parental response to the detention of their child. The study involved an in-depth interview with 11 primary caregivers whose children had been taken into custody (Church et al., 2009). Eight of the parents were females who headed single parent households. The study was conducted in Juvenile Justice Facilities in a medium size city in southeastern United States. The caregivers were given 22 questions. Church et.al (2009) examined the initial response of parents to the detention of their children. There was an exploration of parent’s thoughts and feelings about the process and their involvement in the juvenile justice system (Church et al., 2009). The themes that emerged from the study, included feeling frustrated and confused, a perception of the system as being fair, the juvenile system assuming parental role, and the issue of detention on family dynamics (Church et al., 2009). The findings of the study highlighted the personal

experiences of the parents as they attempted to navigate the juvenile justice system (Church et al., 2009). A phenomenological study was completed by Basson and Mawson (2011) on the experience of violence by male juvenile offenders convicted of assault. Juveniles between 13 to 19 in a correctional facility in Johannesburg were interviewed based on the crime they committed. Open-ended interviews were used to gather data.

The researchers found that the phenomenon of violence characterized by the juveniles experience of external events that provoke a certain response manifesting itself into violent behavior. The researcher further found that certain behaviors took place prior to the violent behavior by the juvenile that created the response. A phenomenological approach used in a study by Patton, Crouch and Camic (2009) who examined young offenders' experiences of traumatic life events. The purpose of the study was to look at how a group of young offenders attending an inner-city young offender team experienced adverse and traumatic life events (Patton, Crouch, & Camic, 2009). Interviews were conducted and analyzed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (Patton et al., 2009). Analysis of the accounts yielded a number of themes (Patton et al., 2009). For instance, the authors found that young offenders experienced violence at home, in the community and custody. There were also instances of instability at home and school. Deprivation was experienced both in terms of poverty and the literal and emotional absence of parents (Patton et al., 2009). The researchers found when assessing the risk level of young offenders; consideration should be placed on the history of trauma experienced by the young offenders (Patton et al., 2009).

Literature Relating to Differing Methodologies

In this study, the aim was to provide information on whether a parent's attitudes and beliefs about youth gun violence influence youths in committing youth gun violence. There is a gap in the research, and there was limited information as it pertains to parents' attitudes and beliefs about youth violence and how it influence youths. Spano et al. (2011) completed a study to find out if parenting shield youth from exposure to violence. This was a five-year longitudinal study with high-poverty minority youth. The researchers found that parents make a concerted effort to shield their children from violence that is endemic in high-poverty neighborhoods (Spano et al., 2011). The study was not able to determine if some youth can avoid exposure to violence during adolescence or the role of parenting in keeping youth out of harm's way (Spano et al. 2011). The authors concluded that some youth are successful at avoiding exposure to violence during adolescence. They were not able to verify that exposure to violence is not simply a shared consequence of living in communities with high rates of violent crimes. They were not able to specify the role of parent as well as other factors that make some youths more successful at avoiding violence. This study was not directly related to the present study, but contains components that were relevant to the present study. The study directly dealt with family factors, as well as how parental interaction may influence violent behavior. Krohn, Lizotte, Bushway, Schmidt, and Phillips, 2011 completed a study on the search for factors that protect at-risk adolescents from violence. The authors used data from the Rochester Youth Development. The study showed that trajectories of past violence predict future violence. The researchers found that several factors protect

youth from violent behavior but not from gun or weapon carrying (Krohn , Lizotte, Bushway, Schmidt & Phillips, 2011). There were both qualitative and quantitative studies on youth gun violence that adds to the body of the research for this study. Because my study sought information from the lived experience of mothers, the qualitative approach was best suited.

Conclusion

Youth gun violence is a substantial public health problem. Given the current toll of gun violence, it is clear that something must be done (Thompson 2011). Over the last decade, progress has been significant but much work remains (Thompson, 2011). Thompson (2011) pointed out that it was only through alternative approaches such as education, policy implementation and evaluation that we can develop confident conclusions about which strategies may reduce gun violence. The above literature review explored a wide array of the factors involved in youth gun violence. However; in this study, I focused on the role parent's played in youth gun violence and established how their attitudes and beliefs influenced youths' behavior in gun crimes. I explored the idea that parents played a vital role in curtailing youth gun violence because they were the main influences in the lives of their children especially as it related to their attitudes and beliefs. Furthermore, Sutherland's differential association theory established the significance of parents and their influence on children's behavior. There was limited research in the area of the single female parent perspective of youth gun violence and the impact on youth gun crimes. Therefore, the aim of this study was to add information to

this area of limited research. In Chapter 3, I describe in detail the methodology employed to fill the gap in the literature.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this qualitative study was to provide insight into female parental attitudes and beliefs about their adolescent children's involvement with youth gun crimes. This study was a phenomenological qualitative analysis and explored parental attitudes and beliefs and their perception of the influences and causes of youth gun crimes and the role played in the problem or the solution. Phenomenological research is the study which "looks closely at an individual's interpretation of experiences and understands the meaning of an experience from the perspective of the participant (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher constructs "the reality of the participant(s) and begins to make interpretations and focuses on the essence of the human experiences" (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). A series of open-ended questions revealed a greater understanding of parental attitudes and beliefs about youth gun violence and further establish female parental role in the problem or the solution. Findings from the study should help increase understanding of parental perceptions about youth gun violence and may identify attitudes and beliefs that can reduce youth gun crimes. This study used qualitative methodology to explore the issue of parental attitudes and beliefs and their perceived influence on youth gun violence. The following research questions served as a tool for retrieving this information.

Research Question 1: What past experiences did single female parents have with gun crime?

Research Question 2: What past experiences did single female parents have with gun crimes?

Research Question 3: Who did single female parents believe are the influences in their child's life?

Research Question 4: How did single female parents believe their attitudes and beliefs about gun violence influenced their adolescents' behavior?

Research Question 5: How did single female parents believe they can be influential in preventing their youth from engaging in gun crimes?

Research Question 6: What specific roles did single female parents play in preventing youth gun crimes?

Research Question 7: What did single female parents recommend with regard to individual, community, school, and criminal justice fronts for preventing youth gun crimes?

The Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study (Creswell, 2007). My role in this research was to complete a thorough literature review on the topic. I also developed interview questions, obtained IRB approval recruit participants, conducted interviews, respond to participants questions , obtain signed consent from participants scheduled interviews, transcribed and reviewed data and secured data in a secure place ,analyzed data, reported results, showed conclusions and opportunities for future research. It was also my responsibility to ask the

questions in order to gain insight into the phenomenon. As a researcher, it was also my role that when exploring phenomenon of youth gun violence, to make sure that the participants were comfortable and not distressed by my questions. For that reason, I provided participants with information on places that they could seek counseling. Due to my role a supervising probation officer that has worked with this population for over 29 years, I bring certain biases to the study. Although every effort was made to ensure objectivity, my prior knowledge of the subject matter may shape the way I viewed and understood the data. I did not use my personal beliefs to influence participants or in interpreting their views when extracting themes.

Setting and Sample

The research process involved a purposive sample collecting data via interviews with ten female parents who have children involved in the juvenile court system and meet the specific criteria. I used the phenomenological approach which allowed for a sample size of 10, a number sufficient to reach saturation of data. Only a small number of subjects are needed for prolonged engagement to develop patterns of relationships (Moustakas, 1994). My participant sample included single female parents' ages 29 to 59 with whom the children resided, and the father had no contact within the last ten years. This is important as the dynamics of two-parent family would produce different results. The youths were required to have had a previous a gun case before the juvenile court. The youths were on a period of probation for 12 months to 18 years. The period of probation is, usually, a period of 12 to 24 months for a gun case; when there is a victim or injury to the victim it may be as much as five years. Currently, the Cook County Juvenile

Court has over 200 gun cases on the active court call in the combined areas (JEMS, 2013). I excluded murder cases, attempted murder cases, or cases involving injury (JEMS, 2013)

I selected the single female parents from that pool of over 200 gun cases in Cook County Illinois. From that pool, only 60 cases were closed gun cases. I obtained the participant's names from the JEMS program. This program is a database that tracks all cases filed in the Juvenile court system. The JEMS number identifies the youth, and the petition numbers identify the delinquent case. The single female parents resided in the Chicago area and met the criteria. I conducted all interviews over a period of 12 weeks. It was my intention to finish at least in three weeks, but due to inclement weather and numerous cancelations and rescheduling it took much longer

Eligibility Criteria

Each case had a petition number and a JEMS number as a means of identifying participants. The list generated from JEMS system had all the necessary information to contact participants such as addresses and phone numbers. The main requirement will be that the parent interviewed was female. Another requirement was that the father had no contact in the past ten years. At initial contact with a parent, I verified qualifying information by phone. I excluded those who did not meet these criteria for the study. All other criteria were established based on the JEMS list of all eligible cases. This area in Chicago area was an ideal population for the current study based on the demographics and the number of incidents of youth gun crimes. More details of the demographics of the area are discussed later in Chapter 4.

Recruitment

After gaining initial approval from Walden University IRB to conduct the study in June 2013 (Approval number 06-10-13-0073628), I began recruitment. First, lists of all the eligible cases were generated from the JEMS system. This system has a list of all the cases that come into the Juvenile court. The list was of a particular area in Chicago. The list was given to the intern that was responsible for creating a list with all the participants. The cases all involved the unlawful use of a weapon. The list compiled of approximately 60 names of the mothers of youth that were previously on probation for a gun charge. I had an intern to do this so that I would not have access to the name of the youth attached to the case. The intern created a spreadsheet that had the name of the mother, address and phone number. On a separate sheet, the intern included demographics such as age and race. After this list was completed I took the list reviewed it and had labels made up for mailing. In the first week of December, I mailed out half the letters and the second week the rest were mailed out. The letter of invitation asked that the participants contact me. I waited several weeks, and no one called.

As a result of not receiving any calls from participant, I contacted IRB for a change in plan. I requested permission to contact the participants that had phone numbers. I obtained permission to call participants whom I had previously sent letters. I attempted to call all the participants on the list. During the call before committing to an interview, I verified that they were single mothers where the fathers had not been active in the lives of their son for the past eight years. During this process, I had to leave several messages for participants, and most of them did not return the call. There were several

cases where the phone numbers were disconnected or no longer the same. I was able to get ten people to agree to the interviews. Five of the 10 participants acknowledged that they had received a mail with the invitation letter but were not planning to call. Two of them indicated that they were planning to call but just did not get around to it. The others indicated that they did not receive the letters. I then set up appointments spreading it over a two-week period. I told the participants to review the letter and consent form and that I would pick it up at the time of the interview as well as answering any questions. The meetings did not go as scheduled. I had much weather related cancelations and other delays. Instead of the interviews lasting 2-week period, it took over six weeks to complete all the interviews.

There were significant gaps between interviews due to various scheduling problems related to the weather and other conflicts. Participants were mailed the consent forms prior to the interview and had the opportunity to review the information about the study. At the time of the interview, I brought consent forms with me just in case the participants had misplaced the ones sent to them. They signed consent forms at the time of the interview, and I sent signed copies to their residence. The interviews were in a secluded area in the library and allowed for privacy and quiet. I established rapport in the beginning by talking about the severe weather we were experiencing in Chicago. All the participants appeared comfortable and at ease

Data Collection and Procedure

The probation department granted the initial contact with the participants. I retrieved contact information from the list from the JEMS System. The names of the

youths attached to the parent were blocked out. Letters were sent to single female parents who met the preliminary criteria requesting participation in the study. Participants were asked to respond within seven days. The letters had detailed information about the purpose and reason for the study. Participants were asked to call to accept the invitation and schedule interviews. Interviews were scheduled once participation was confirmed. Interviews took place at a local library so as to provide neutral surroundings. When conducting the interviews, I followed protocol procedures. Trochim and Donnelly (2008) pointed out some crucial features in conducting an interview. The researcher must have a plan on how to gain access to the participant and in doing so should be professional. After entry, the interviewer should briefly explain the purpose of the study and ensure the confidentiality of the study (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The phenomenological investigation is a method that collects data through a long interview on a topic or question (Moustakas, 1994). In advance, the primary researcher may develop a series of questions aimed at evoking a comprehensive account of the person's experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) pointed out that often the phenomenological interview begins with a social conversation or a brief meditative activity aimed at creating a relaxed and trusting atmosphere. The interviewer was responsible for creating a climate in which the research participant will feel comfortable and will respond honestly and comprehensively (Moustakas, 1994). It was important to do probing if the response is not adequate. All responses were recorded and included the answers received after probing. At the end of the interview, it was important to thank the participant (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). After each interview I wrote my impression

about the interview. Measures were set in place to replace participants who dropped out of the study or are found to be ineligible. In the event, this occurred a new participant from the sample was recruited. I developed the questions used for my interview and had it reviewed for quality and dependability. Simon (2011) pointed out the importance of triangulation of information among different sources of data. Questions were reviewed by independent experts in the field to address the issues of quality, rigor, trustworthiness and dependability. Simon (2011) also pointed out the importance of member checking qualitative studies as a process of verifying information with a targeted group. I also reviewed the questions with a few probation officers that worked with a similar population as my participants to obtain feedback. Trochim and Donnelly (2011) stated that the confirmability of the study was dependent to the degree of which other can confirm and corroborate the results of the study. Therefore, it was necessary for there to be a data collection audit and an analysis of the procedures to make judgments for potential bias. The data collection was revised due to lack of response to letters of invitation. Chapter 3 was updated to include changes approved by IRB I continued data collection based on the availability of participants. I changed the number of participants due to extreme difficulty recruiting the final 2 participants.

Participants

Participants were ten female parents of youths previously involved in a gun crime. The cases were all closed for a minimum of a year. The minors were at least on a period of 18 months' probation and completed that period either successfully or unsuccessfully. Participants were screened to assure that fathers were not active in the youth's life for the

past eight years, meaning that the child was primarily raised by a single female parent. The table below shows the breakdown of the participants. Participant ranged from 29 to 59. The fact that I used closed cases proved to be very challenging in the recruitment process. The interview process took much longer than I expected due to lack of interest by the participant pool. I assumed the lack of interest was due to me drawing from a pool that had completed their requirement with the courts. The gun violence problem is rampant in the Chicago area, and I was sure that I would have a lot of interest in this study. My purpose for using closed cases was to avoid the issue of coercion since I also work in the probation department, and I did not want participants to feel that they had an obligation to comply with my request. I did not however expect this reaction. It took four weeks just to do for interviews, and that was with multiple attempts. Several participants just disappeared and stopped answering their phones. It took a period of 12 weeks to get all interviews completed. As indicated, I conducted the interviews at a local library in the area. That too was a challenge because it was very inconvenient for some participants. As a result, I picked up most of the participants and took them to the library. At the library if a private room was not available, I found a secluded area to conduct the interview. I informed the participants that the interview would take between 30-45 minutes and that they could stop me anytime especially if the questions were uncomfortable. I also discussed with them the social service agencies available if they need counseling after the interview. All the participants completed follow-up interviews where they reviewed transcript and provided clarification of information from the first interviews. I obtained data saturation with the last two interviews. There was a gap between the first eight

interviews and the last interviews and therefore I had time to transcribe data for themes and topics.

Interview Process

Over 60 participants were mailed letters of invitation and were required to call in order to set up interviews. No one answered, and several letters returned because the family had moved. A few had forwarding addresses, but most had none. All the letters were sent out in the first week in December and by the end of December no one had responded. Due to the Holidays, I gave it a little more time, hoping that people were just busy with holiday. By the second week in January no one had responded. As a result, I contacted IRB and requested a change in plan. My request was to contact participants by phone since I had phone numbers listed for most participants. This change was very fruitful. I called approximately 40 participants. Some of the phone numbers were disconnected, some belonged to different people, and some numbers just kept ringing. There were a number of people who were not interested and stated they did not wish to participate in the study. One person hung the phone up on me and stated she did not want to talk. I explained to her that I was conducting a study and quickly let her know that she did not have to participate, and I was sorry for the interruption. The other interviews occurred over a period and after several contacts over the phone. There was a lot of rescheduling due to the harsh winter. During this period inclement weather was a factor in scheduling. Prior to the interviews, there were at least four people who canceled, and interviews were rescheduled. One person did not show up at the library on at least two occasions. There were three people that did not have transportation and had to be picked

up by me to take to the location of the interview. One parent was concerned about putting her signature on anything. I assured her that the consent form was only for the purpose of granting me permission to interview her for the study, and I kept information in a secure place. I also informed the participants that I would record interviews and the interviews would last between 30-45 minutes and that they can interrupt at any time for clarification. Some participant gave a lot of other information but for the most part the participants only answered what I asked. Some required follow-up questions to get clarification. For the most part, the interviews lasted 30-45 minutes. I manually transcribed tapes from the interviews. On the second meeting with the participants, member checking was completed. I read the interviews that I transcribed and asked the participant to indicate if the information was correct. The participants were given a written version of the transcribed interview to look over and make corrections or additions. Participants received a \$10 gift card at that time. I also told mothers that I will contact them if needed further clarification of any statements.

Data Recording

I kept the typed transcript on a flash drive in a locked file in my office. All interviews were audio taped. Initially, I used a digital audio tape for the first two interviews; however, I had tremendous difficulty manipulating the equipment. I was afraid of losing the data and therefore I switched to the old fashion tape recorder. After each interview, I placed the cassette tape in a locked file in my office until I was ready to transcribe. Along with audio recording interviews I also took notes. I stored my note pad in a secure file. After each interview, I transcribed the information on the tape on

notepad. I also compared the information with my hand written notes. I typed each interview on Microsoft word so that the information could be easily read by participant to confirm the accuracy.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In accordance with the phenomenological research, data analyzed was collected from in-depth interviews. I manually analyzed and categorized data into themes. Field notes were taken to capture nonverbal impressions for assistance with the data analysis. Information gathered to provide insight on parental attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the causes and influences on their children's behavior in terms of gun crimes. I asked the participants two main research questions. I asked about their experience with the phenomenon of youth gun violence and how this experience has affected their lives. The participants in the study were representative of the population in terms of typical demographics such as age and gender. There was an ongoing process of categorizing during the data analysis process. I also documented how initial codes lead to more elaborate codes and linkages for the data analysis (Simon, 2011). Using a phenomenological approach entailed going through the data from the interviews transcription and highlighting the significant statements, sentences or quotes that provided an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The significant statements and the themes were used to write the description of participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007). I also wrote a further description that presented the essence of the phenomenon. The idea behind the phenomenological research was to get a better understanding of the experiencing the

phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The information gathered answered questions of parental perceptions of what influenced or caused the youth gun violence (Creswell, 2007).

Overall, the research sought to provide increased knowledge in the area of youth gun violence and provide a vehicle for positive social change. Further the research aided in addressing policies that will lead to a reduction in youth gun violence.

Ethical Considerations

Human research is required to begin with informed consent. Ulin, Robinson & Tolley (2005) defined informed consent as a study where participants were aware of possible risk factors, and participation was voluntary. There was assurance of confidentiality, purpose of research was clearly presented, there was transparency as to the selection of participants and data collection procedures are explained. Participants were provided with information as to who to contact in the case of emergency. Ulin et al. (2005) pointed out that the potential harm to study participants is not just physical but can be psychological, social, economic, or professional. Participation was voluntary, and participants were fully informed as to their role in the study and the purpose of the study. As I work for the juvenile probation department, there might be concerns about researcher bias. I had a second-party review questions to control for any bias.

As indicated earlier, I work in the capacity of a supervisor and have no direct contact with the children of the parents involved. I currently work in the suburban area of Chicago, and participants are from the city. In order to maintain anonymity of the youth, I did not know the name of the youth associated with the parent. I asked the mothers not to mention the name of the youth. I provided the criteria for cases, and the Juvenile Court

designee (intern) prepared the list of cases from the JEMS system. Originally I made contact with participants from the list by mail, however due to lack of response. IRB granted permission to call and schedule interviews.

Summary

This research provides additional information as to female parents' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the causes of youth gun crimes. Because I work with the Probation Department, and I am familiar with the subject matter, it was important to avoid the pitfall that threatens the validity of the study. I was careful that my opinions and prior knowledge of the subject matter did not bias my research. I incorporated most of the strategies for reliability and validity outlined by Creswell (2007) to ensure a valid study. I presented the results in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

The information provided in this chapter includes the data collection process and the results of the data collection. Findings are of a phenomenological, qualitative study exploring the female parents' attitudes, beliefs and perceptions about youth gun crimes. I completed open-ended interviews with from ten mothers living in the Chicago area. I designed the interview questions to match the research questions closely. There were additional interview questions that were designed specifically to allow participants to elaborate on issues. Interviews took place in a local library close to the homes of the participants. I informed the participants of the confidentiality of the interviews, and that information would be recorded and transcribed later

There were gaps in between conducted interviews and therefore after each interview I transcribed audiotape verbatim, however left out things such as “umhs” and “aahs”. Some words were changed only to correct grammar and to make readable but did not change the meaning. I manually analyzed for themes. The gaps were due to inclement weather and the need for several rescheduling. The participants were aware of my role as a probation officer as well as a student researcher. They were willing to provide me with answers to the questions. They appeared comfortable during the interview but mostly limited responses to questions asked. The participants are described in detail as well as an interview and recruitment process.

Demographics

I derived data for this study from interviews with ten mothers of youths who had committed a gun crime. All mothers are single and between the ages of 29 to 59. Basic

demographic information such as age, gender and where participants resided was already available via the JEM system where I obtain the participant's list. I established marital status when I spoke to participants to set up interviewed. I reconfirmed demographic information at the time of interview.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	RACE	AGE	MARITAL STATUS	EDUCATION
MOM 1	Black	59	Single	HS
MOM 2	Black	33	Single	HS
MOM 3	Black	40	Single	2 Years College
MOM 4	White	37	Single	HS
MOM 5	Black	38	Single	HS
MOM 6	Black	34	Single	HS
MOM 7	Black	36	Single	HS
MOM 8	Black	34	Single	HS
MOM 9	Black	39	Single	HS
MOM 10	Black	37	Single	HS

Data Analysis

I used the manual method of coding. To do this, I followed the principle of Tesch (1990), Bogdan and Biklen (1992) as cited in Creswell (2007). I read each transcript several times reflecting on the data while taking notes. I was able to get a sense of the information and the overall meaning of what the participants were saying. To complete the coding process, Tesch (1990) recommends that you get a sense of the data by reading all the transcripts, pick the most interesting interview and take notes in the margin,

complete this task on all participants, make list of topic and cluster topics, abbreviate the topic as codes and write the codes next to them, make categories from the most descriptive code and finally assembly data and perform preliminary analysis.

Credibility

I obtained approval from IRB to make a significant change in my data collection methods. I was allowed to contact the participants instead of waiting for them to contact me. It was necessary for me to move on in the study. For the rest of the study, I followed the procedures as outlined in Chapter 3. I remained neutral in the interviews and refrained from interjecting my comments. I did add comments such as uh huh, I see and I understand. It was hard not to add a comment or two, but it was only to acknowledge that I was familiar with what they were saying. Since I work in the probation department, I came to interview with knowledge about the subject matter, so it was imperative that I let the participants speak freely and not to interject my opinion. I also made sure to remind participants that they were not obligated to participate in the study. I handed participants a list of counseling agencies that they could call if they needed to do so after the interview. There was a concern that some of the questions may have caused emotional distress during the interview. I also mailed participants this same information. At the time of the interview, I agreed that I would come back out on a second time with a summary of the interview for participants to check for accuracy and me to obtain any clarification. No one chose the option of email for review. I indicated to them that I wanted to make sure that I quoted them correctly. At the time of the member checking, I gave each participant copies of the transcript to review. One person asked that I read it aloud

because she did not have her glasses. I read it aloud and provided her with a copy to read later.

Only three people had minor corrections and two people clarified some information. This process adds to the credibility of the study. For further credibility, I had my interview questions reviewed by three experts not affiliated with Walden. These experts are Ph.D. in the field of criminal justice and psychology and are also authors to articles used in this dissertation

Dependability

I followed all measures cited in Chapter 3. It was unforeseen that this population would be difficult to recruit, so I made a change in the original recruitment process. For future study, I would suggest that the researcher complete a focus group for this type of population

Confirmability

For conformability in this study, I used member checking. I gave participants a summary of the interview to ensure that I quoted correctly. I further had two colleagues listen to a sample of recordings and compared it to my notes to confirm the accuracy.

Discrepant Cases

All participants were in originally in the city; however at the time of the interview 2 of the participants had relocated to a suburban area. I still included those that relocated. It was not a factor in the information retrieved.

In the proceeding paragraphs, I have included the statements of the mothers as they describe their experience with the phenomenon of youth gun violence. The

phenomenon is youth gun violence, and this study describes the experiences of a single female parent. To maintain anonymity, I referred to each participant as Mom 1-10. I aligned the interview questions as close as possible to the research questions.

Responses from Participants

Research Question 1

What past experiences do single female parents have with gun violence?

Mom 1-

Well- my oldest son was a good kid and he was killed by gun violence. Yes, it has been tough, and I will never forget but it gets better as time goes on—"It took a long time for me to talk about my feelings. It's been difficult having to bury a child, so I am real worried about my youngest son...all I can do is hope that he avoids the wrong crowd and listen to what I tell him," I try to be careful but I can't be everywhere I can only tell him to mind who he hangs with "I tell him to stay focused on school, mind your own business and he should be ok-- sure you can't control other people but you can control what you do.

Mom 2-

I have been around a long time, and this is the worst I have seen gun violence. I have no direct contact with the exception of my son having a gun case. It is a shame what is happening out there how these kids are killing each other. It hurts me to see this happening.

Mom 3-

I have not had much experience with gun violence other than what I hear on the news and what happens in the neighborhood. My most experience with gun violence was with my son's involvement with the court, and it has not been a good one -There was no reason for this to happen, but it did, and I had to deal with it.

Mom 4-

I had my son at 18 years old, and I think I did my best, I do wonder where I failed with him picking up this gun case" I can't be a father to my children but I try to raise them the best way I can. My only experience with guns is with my son's case, and I do believe my son was set up in this situation. There were several other kids in the car, and I don't know why my son was singled out. I think because the police knew it would be easier to pin a case on my son that they did" Kids are constantly losing their life's, kids are killing each other, and it's out of control. I think it is the grown folks that need to do something about this. They are the ones selling the guns to the kids," They need to for after the adults that are putting these guns on the streets.

Mom 5-

My experience with gun violence was when my son got this case; he found a gun and picked it up. The police found him with a gun and ever since then my son has been harassed. He can't walk down the street without being pulled over. Yes we live in a dangerous neighborhood, and there are a lot of shootings but goodness

gracious, he doesn't take all of that! The police don't need to be singling out my son all the time. Something need to be done about this problem [because] black kids are unfairly [targeted].

Mom 7-

Different family members help out but it is rough on a single parent. Thanks for extended family members. It is rough waking up every day wondering if your son or child is safe. It is crazy what's going on in Chicago. I tell my kids to come straight home and not [linger] around on the streets. I do the best that I can to raise my children right but there are a lot of things that I have no control over.

Mom 8-

Personally I didn't have much experience with gun violence "thank God but I have had relatives that have been shot before." The closest I have come is with my son [having a gun case] I don't know what he was thinking- they need to change the laws no one should be able to carry guns if they are not the police- yeah I know that with all the gun violence people feel the need to protect themselves, but I just think that they are just making it too easy for the [children] to get guns.

Mom 9-

It's not been hard for me as I have[done] this for a long time, I manage to do the best I can as single parent., My only experience with gun violence is what goes on in the community, There is a lot of shooting on the block. It's hard for me and my

kids to walk down the street on my block without worrying about some shooting taking place. It is always in the back of my mind.

Mom 10-

Gun violence is all around the community, and I have had relatives that have been either shot or shot at... just the other day a lady not too far from here was shot just sitting in the living room. It is always a constant worry ...you are always wondering what block they are going have the next shooting ...all week long it's on the news ...someone got shot...it is really [ridiculous].

Research Question 2

Do single parents past experiences with gun crimes affect their beliefs about gun violence?

Mom 1-

My son was a kid, and he was gunned down on the streets, because of this experience it was difficult for my younger son. I think he was trying to protect himself why he had a gun because I don't know why he would do it... He knows how gun violence has affected our family... it took me a long time to talk about it". I emphasis to my younger son of what happen when his brother got killed and for that reason he shouldn't want to mess with guns.

Mom 2-

When I was growing up people didn't use guns, they use to fight with fist. This is all new to me. I am a scared to go outside, and I am scared for my children. So yes gun violence has affected the way I live, you can't sit by a window in your

house for fear of getting shot. As a result of all this violence, my son feels like he needs to have a gun – I don't agree with it –but I understand it.

Mom 3-

I am really worried about my son,[him]having a gun, and the things that are going on in the city is scary to me-" I don't want to see my son in jail or dead.. the violence is so rampant especially in Chicago"-I have moved out of the area to a safer place for my son-but gun violence is everywhere, and no place is safe-our children are dying and this has to stop—it's hard –as a mother you tell your child guns are dangerous and stay away from it- but then they can't walk down the street –it's almost like these kids don't have choice-the gangs have taken over the streets and when they get a hold of your child it's hard for them to get out.

Mom 4-

My family has been affected by this situation, I don't care about guns I don't own them but now I have to deal with this," I think my son was unfairly [targeted]. This issue is not sitting right with me. My kid was" set up"! Why did they only arrest my kid and not the others? I think that you can't trust the police. They pick and choose who they want to arrest [depending] on how it is going to benefit them. I think that the other boy that was in the car with my son must have been working with the police because why did they not arrest him?

Mom 5-

I always have to tell my son to stay away from trouble, watch your surroundings". If you see someone doing something wrong, keep moving, get away from that

area. I tell my son –there is nothing on the streets for you but bad news and that you need to leave out there. I tell him not to trust anyone not even the police. But as a black male I let him know he needs to respect the police and do what they tell him. I don't want my child ending up dead.

Mom 6-

Every day I get up somebody get shot, my son has had a lot of friends who have been shot or killed by gun violence, so naturally I am [fearful] for my son. We stay in the house most of the time; I don't let them go anywhere unless I am with them. I send my son to the corner store but even when I do that I worry. I tell to go straight there and comeback. There is a lot of gang activity in the neighborhood, and a lot of the shooting is from some gang retaliation and lot of innocent kids get killed—a lot of the kids in the neighborhood feel like they need to be in a gang for safety—this what my son tells me “

Mom 7-

My experience with gun violence has made me afraid of walking down the street. Because of what happen to my son, them charging him with having a gun, I have an issue with the police, You just don't know who to trust so the best thing I can tell my son is not to put yourself in a position where you around guns,”
Sometimes my son is [stubborn] and just My experience with gun violence has made me afraid of walking down the street. Because of what happen to my son, them charging him with having a gun, I have an issue with the police, You just don't know who to trust so the best thing I can tell my son is not to put yourself in

a position where you around guns,” Sometimes my son is [stubborn] and don’t listen to what I tell him. I tell him not to trust [no one] and not be around people he [doesn’t know...but does he listen? No! ” I don’t think my son is in a gang, but I can’t tell for sure but I know the gangs are a big problem and somehow these kids in the neighborhood are [gravitate] towards gang activity to feel cool.

Mom 8-

I definitely don’t feel safe due to the increase gun violence. Every day it’s a different story [about] some kid getting shot somewhere. Can you blame me? --" look around the neighborhood- all those abandoned buildings and all you see every day is kids hanging out on the street-" It’s a good thing it’s so cold because there would be a lot of people hanging out.”—the gangs pretty much take over certain corners and there is a lot of drug activity.

Mom 9-

Since my son got a gun case, it has been a wakeup call for me-Every day you hear it on the news-this person shot...this person killed and then my son gets caught with a gun.. yeah I am real worried-I am worried that he can kill somebody or even worst get killed-if he feels the need to have a gun then he must be doing something he is not supposed to be doing” I think the gangs probably got a hold of him, but he has always been a follower, and that’s what I need to break him out of that.

Mom 10-

I don't know anyone who has not been affected by gun violence...my son has 2 of his friend's shot ... I am afraid to send the kids to the store after a certain time.. I don't let my son out of my sight especially since he got placed on probation... I know it's tough on the kids because they don't feel safe in their own neighborhood.. and it is really bad over here- all you see are the gang bangers hanging out- its cold know so you don't see a lot of them, but wait until it gets warm... you can't sit on your porch.

Research Question 3

What other factors does a single parent believe may have influenced youths in gun violence?

Mom 1-

I don't know for sure, but I think it is the crowd they hang out with, he had just started to hang out with this crowd when he got in trouble. When I ask him why he had a gun, he did say he felt safer and especially after what happen to his brother I guess he wanted it for protection.”” But as far I am concerned he should know better when you have a gun more than likely you going to be killed by a gun because that's the lifestyle you lead

Mom 2-

I don't know why all I can say I don't have guns in my home, and I never seen him with any guns... the only thing I can think of is that he is following the

crowd. He is a good kid and nev3er been in trouble before... I don't know why these young people are shooting each other.

Mom 3-

My son was trying to protect himself; he had gotten into with so with someone. ... but I always tell my son if he you have any problems come to me but they don't listen that is the problem.-"he says he doesn't feel safe, and having a gun makes him feel better." I think that was stupid, and I hope he learned his lesson.

Mom 4-

I don't know why my son did this... but it was a dumb idea to me, and there are no reasons for kids to have guns. Someone is selling these guns to the teenagers. I honestly don't know why but as I don't think that it was fair what happen to my son, as there were others with him that did not get arrested.

Mom 5-

I don't know of any reasons why my son would want to carry a gun. He found a gun picked it up and was arrested.-he knows better-because I thought him better-when kids do wrong they are quick to blame it on the parents –but they don't know what we have to deal with-especially raising a boy on your own..” I know kids are easily influenced, and he does hang out with some kids who I don't approve off –and I can see how he got caught up in this.

Mom 6-

My son said he got involved because of protection and to feel safe. But I am sure there are other reasons such as who he hangs out with. When you hang out with

the wrong crowd that will always get you in trouble... and then there is nothing for the kids to do in the neighborhood. Children need things when they get a certain age, and if they can't get it, they figure out ways of getting it and this leads them to committing crimes. To me minimum wage is ok but to the kids that can't get them what they need, not to say I am encouraging it, but that's just how it is. So yes there are certain factors that cause them to do crime.

Mom 7-

I know my son did it because of peer pressure. Its people on the outside that the influence [my] child. They do things because other kids are doing it... they just want to fit in and be like the rest. When I ask him, he said for protection because he feels if he has a gun no one will "mess" with him.

Mom 8-

Being in the wrong place at the wrong time.... My son did not have a gun, they found a gun in the car, and he was blamed for it because the gun was on the same side that he was on. My son knows better, but you know they are going to hang with their friends and you can't stop that.

Mom 9-

We live in a bad neighborhood and the only reason I can think that my son would feel the need for a gun is for self-protection." He[considers] himself being in some gang, and that's what they[are doing out there—sticking people up and stealing phones and what not—but I tell my son he can choose to be a man and

think for himself or be a punk and gang bang"-if you live by the streets you die by the streets.

Mom 10-

I don't quite know, but I think these kids just trying to fit in and be cool...there is a lot of peer pressure...I also think that it is because of all the gun violence and all the people getting killed why these kids feel they need to have a gun.. I tell my son this is foolishness and that he is going to end up in jail ...I hope he learned his lesson.

Research Question 4

How do single female parents believe that their attitudes and beliefs about gun violence influence their adolescent's behavior?

Mom 1-

I think my opinion about things count....My son is a good kid, and he listens to me if I tell him not to do something he won't do it. He knows how I feel about guns especially after what happened to his brother ... How he got caught up in that situation, I don't know.. I know I can't control when he is not with me-- I tell him to do things that will keep him safe, don't follow be a leader, watch the company you keep and stay away from guns ... if you know, one is where you are get far away as possible

Mom 2-

It's hard to say-you tell them one thing, and they do something else...I don't know if I have any influence on my son... I don't think there is anything I can do

If a kid wants a gun he is [going to] get a gun, and I can tell my son what to do but in the end it is all up to him.

Mom 3-

My son thinks I don't know what I am talking about, I tell my son about how dangerous it is on the streets and what to avoid, but you know what kids are going to do what they want to do anyway. I still instill things in my son and hope that he will follow my lead anyway, but I have to fight with what he is dealing with on the streets.

Mom 4-

My son listens to me, and I don't know what happen that he picked up this case." He knows that this hurts me. As a mom, I take my time to teach my son right from wrong, and I try to lead by example...I don't do anything illegal, and I respect the law, and that's how I teach all my children to be... I don't blame my son entirely as I know the police setup my son.. I stay home and keep a close I on my kids I don't believe in partying and leaving my children alone.. kids need supervision, and you can only hope that I have some influence"

Mom 5-

My son usually listens to what I tell him but to be honest, when it comes to stupid things like having a gun... he is more influenced by what his friends were doing--when one of his friends had a bb gun, he wanted one- I try my best but as a single mom sometimes you don't know everything your child is doing." I probably

should move, but I can't afford to go anywhere -else the gangs are all over this area, and I tell my son to stay away.

Mom 6-

My son made his own decision. You can be the best parent, but the child can still go astray. I think I try to influence my child to do the right thing.... I teach them right from wrong but in the end it's their decision, My son has made a total turn around now but it's not from my influence, I think he did it because he is afraid of getting in trouble... he did it on his own.

Mom 7-

I instill in my kids, and my son to do right and not to be a follower-my son knows how I feel about guns but that didn't stop him from getting one- there are outside influence that interfere with what you do at home. Despite this, I still tell me son what to do in situations.. I tell him be a leader don't follow anyone ...I ask him if someone tell you to jump over a cliff you wouldn't right so why would you get a gun that can kill people and get you locked up.

Mom 8-

My son sometimes listens, but that doesn't mean he is not going to go out there and do what he is not supposed to do I try to tell him the right thing to--not to follow the crowd but to have a mind of his own.. I tell him to think himself-he knows how I feel about guns especially when I tell him my fears for him.. My battle with my son is the streets-- It's about survival--- sometimes the street wins.

Mom 9-

It would be great if I told you that all I have to do is look at my son-- he does right-but that is not the case—my son know what I believe in, I don't like guns, and all I want is for him to stay in school and get a good education but like I said earlier when the gangs get a hold of your child-that who they listen to— so no.

Mom 10

Well, I was never in trouble when I was growing up – but I have always instilled in my son to be respectful and to be honest- I can't show him how to be in a man but I tell him a thing that I believe are right—to me that's all you can do to influence your kid tell them right from wrong and lead by example.

Research Question 5

How do single female parents believe they can be influential in preventing youth gun violence?

Mom 1-

I think that as I am victim of gun violence in that one of my sons got killed by gun violence, I can speak out against it to others by letting people know what I have been through--I am just beginning to talk about it know.. I go to community impact panel and speak but really believe that we just have to keep a strong hold on our kids and make them stay away from guns and pray that they are not victims. I don't think I am able to influence my son to do right—I have to discipline him to do right.

Mom 2-

I tell everyone to stay away from guns, and I can only hope my kid and grandkids will listen, it is so hard these days--these kids don't want to listen ...they think that we they know everything” – and parents are the first to get blamed when somebody gets shot – they wonder where the mother was when this happened— but what they don't stop to find out is what we as mothers go through with [limited]resources to raise children.— it's not just one person's problem- it's everybody's problem and we are [going] to have to come together.

Mom3-

I don't know how anyone can control gun violence. The problem is out of control I don't know if there is anything I can do, but I can focus on my son and make sure he stays away from guns but like I said I could only try to do that and hope that he stays away from guns and violence but if he really wants to do it, there is nothing I can do. They need to have better gun control--you can't get rid of all the guns, but we have to do a better job so that these kids will stop killing each other.

Mom 4-

I think that all I can do has a mom to prevent gun violence is to make sure my kids are not involved in gun –violence-- that means that I need to be responsible and don't let me kids hang in the streets, if they are in the streets then the streets will rule them, the only thing that can stop gun violence is to get rid of the guns.”

Mom 5-

No, I don't think there is anything I can do, I can teach my children that guns are dangerous, and they should stay away but to prevent it...nah it would take everybody coming together, and I don't see that happening.

Mom 6-

I am not sure—but I can continue to [emphasize] that if he doesn't want to end up dead on the streets – then he had to make better choices- I tell him that there is nothing good in having a gun –either you are [going] to kill or be killed—I really feel [helpless] at times because the gun violence out of control and it just seem to be getting worst We can't let these thugs take over the neighborhood—by son included everybody has to watch out for each other.

Mom 7-

Frankly all I can do as I said earlier is [teaching] my kid how to act and behave and I have to show them by example... In terms of my role, I can only control my kids but then I lose control when they get with their friends, I don't think there is anything anyone person, or any group can do to prevent what is going on,you can reduce it but gun violence is here to stay so long as someone is selling guns, and kids are getting their hands on guns.

Mom 8-

No, there is nothing I can do--they need to get rid of the guns and change the laws- I am nobody I can only focus on my kids, but they [are] still going to be shooting out there. I think I have done everything with my son to prevent him

from getting in trouble, but he still got caught up and now he is still dealing with a similar situation in adult court.. I guess if his father was more involved it may have helped, but I can't even get child support much less help raising my son.

Mom9-

The problem has gotten so bad in this neighborhood as a mom the only thing I can do is to look after my children and keep them away from guns—I can't keep them locked up but I can continue to instill my child to avoid gangs, and people that don't mean them any good-if I can prevent my son from being a victim and prevent him from using a gun then I guess I can have some[impact] on gun violence—but I tell you everyone got to be on the same page- all the parents have to speak up and not be silent.

Mom 10-

I can only control what I do for my kids, I can't control what happens outside of my home.. You have to say on top of your kids, make sure they go to school every day and that they have something to do-- Of course it's easier said than done because I have to work and I am not always able to keep tabs on my children but I try. I talk to my son and I tell him not to be around guns or people with guns. I tell him to focus on his education so he can get a job and go to college—I think gun violence is out of control and the government got to do something.

Research Question 6

What specific roles can single female parents play in preventing youth gun violence?

Mom1-

Specifically... the only thing I can think that I can continue to do is to drill in my kids the dangers of guns--prepare them for life and how to avoid situations that would put them in dangers. Especially my younger son after what happen to his brother and what our family went through ...I hope that he listens to me---all I believe as mom you can only do your part and pray that your child do right.

Mom 2-

I tell everyone to stay away from guns, and I can only hope they will listen to me... that am the only thing I can do.. I hope they listen to me and not to their friends. My son is one way at home but when he gets around his friends, it's a different story. ... the bible says you have to train your child, and that s all I can so and hopefully that will keep them out of trouble and hopefully my son will never get into this situation again.. I don't know of any other thing I can do other than what I am doing.

Mom 3-

I don't know if anyone can control gun violence-- the city is under attack--there are so many shootings every week --guns should not be made legal, one thing I know if the kids want guns they can get them and there is nothing that can be done to stop it.. I don't think as a mom we get heard-- they are always putting the blame on us for what our kids do.

Mom 4-

Parents need to be more responsible for their child.. and as a mom I try to know what my son and other children are doing at all times--I have 6 kids and my son that had the gun is the oldest-since the incident I keep even closer watch on him.. I tell him not to hang with those older kids he got in trouble with.. I only hope he listens- I can't be with him 24/7 but I hope he learned his lesson.

Mom 5-

I don't know if there is anything I can do as one person to prevent gun violence, but I can certainly do my best to make sure my son don't have a gun, I check his room and make sure he doesn't have anything he is not supposed to ...so I guess that is something I could do--and if every mother does that then it could help.

Mom 6-

Like I said before I don't think, I can do anything but to teach my kid the right thing. Yes, I do think that it would take everyone in the community to get together, and there should be more social service centers and more and better jobs for the teens.

Mom 7-

I don't think that there is much I can to do to prevent gun violence...gun violence is such a bigger issue than me and my son... I know I can tell my son not to have a gun and not to use a gun, and I can do my part like that.. I think most of the time the media is busy blaming parent and the first thing you hear "is where was the

parent but I keep my children close and I teach them right but they have to deal with a lot of outside influence.

Mom 8-

What needs to be done to curve gun violence is for there to be more jobs so these kids won't be out there on the street with too much idle time.. the kids need something to do. I feel that I have done everything that I could with my child... I do it all on my own, and, my son's father is not involved, I don't even get child support.

Mom 9-

Everything starts at home, and I can make sure my child don't get involved with the wrong crowd-I can make sure my child has adequate supervision--outside of that there is not much I can do... they need to get the guns of the streets and stop these people from selling to our kids"-they also need to target the gangs that are recruiting our children.

Mom 10-

I don't think what I do will prevent gun violence but hopefully I can prevent my kid from doing it again... my son was only found with a gun, and he didn't use it so I hope that I can get him to understand how stupid it was and never to do anything like this again.

Research Question 7

What do single female parents recommend with regard to individual, community, school and criminal justice fronts for preventing youth gun violence?

Mom 1-

As a mother I have to do my part to teach my kids the right thing--what is right from wrong, but we also have to go back to the old ways where the community raises the child. [These]you can't say anything to the kids or you will get cursed out and that is where the problem is" --I don't know if the community can do anything if the people don't get together.

Mom 2-

I think it is a shame what going on with the kids today, but I know I do my part. There is not enough police on the streets, I feel they do the best they can but I think they let a lot of things go, and they don't do anything about it. The gang bangers and drug dealers have too much control over the street, As far as what the government can do, and they need better laws that will keep the guns off the street." As a community we don't work together everyone mind their own business instead of coming together.

Mom 3-

I don't think there is anything I can do but I think more policing the street would help- there can also be a neighborhood watch where we can look out for each other.. Schools already have a metal detector so that can help on keeping guns out of school but I don't know how much that would really help- I don't think that the police are targeting criminals not just gun crimes. I don't think that their focus is on guns-- so much-You hear about sweeps, but it seems to me that they are more after drug dealers.

Mom 4-

I take full responsibility for my kids. I am ready to leave this community because they don't do anything. The mothers let their kids run wild and out of control, We don't take responsibility for our children and that's the problem. We have to work together and take back our streets.. They are letting the streets raise the child over here--Police are not doing their job and most of the times they are unfair. My child was unfairly arrested; I don't trust the police as they don't arrest everybody.

Mom 5-

Personally I don't think there is anything I can do, there is nothing any one person can do, but I do know that there is not enough resources in the community, they need boys and girls club, there is nothing like that in the community, there are no places for the kids to go to. They don't have enough jobs- there are a few but not enough. There are no guarantees that kids will get a job. They look at the kid's background, and they can't get a job. The schools have their role but even the schools don't want to deal with your kids... if they know your kid has been in trouble they don't want to have nothing to do with them. Every little thing they do the school calling you and threatening to expel your child. They don't want to work with your kid.' As for the police, they should not judge There is a lot of gun violence in Chicago, and no one seems to know what to do--all you here are a lot of talk. They need to open more social service centers in the community-- have more places for kids to go after school-- there need to be more police [presence].. As a community we have to work together...As far the schools they are doing

what they can, but they need to put more guards to cut down on fights in schools. The school does call to leave a recording when your child skips school. I also think having police on every corner after school I let out will make it safer for the kids to walk home... they have a safe passage with parents walking the kid's home, but I heard someone got shot at one of those so called safe passage... They need to create more jobs, and that will give the kids something to instead of gang banging.

Mom 7-

Right now there are so many young men in jail and when they get out there are no jobs. There needs to be more jobs in the community, and it needs to be more than minimum wage, minimum wage is not enough, and that's why a lot of kids go out there selling drugs-.cost of living is so high and crime rate is [going] to go up- but I say having jobs is[significant] and employees often discriminate when people have a background. It's not so much as what the school can do but how the parents can help --you can't depend on teachers to do everything-- As far as the police is concerned...there is a lot of mistrust- I do not trust the police.-you have some crooked officers and some good officers. But some of the officers are lazy and don't care...I have called the police, and they say things like "oh like "oh well" I am not saying they are all bad, but some of them are lazy and don't do their jobs.. They are always blaming parents all the time when you don't know what the parents is going through-- in my for instance-you can raise your child to the best of your ability and still they go out and do things like get a gun- but it is

all based on outside influence and peer pressure-- having more jobs will make your kids have no excuse not to work, and they will want to work- I can't say it enough there needs to be more jobs-.as apparent working from paycheck to paycheck it is hard, and the kids have no excuse not to work, and they will want to work- I can't say it enough there needs to be more jobs-as apparent working from paycheck to paycheck it is hard and the government need to do something.”
We all have to play our part and come together.

Mom 8-

As a community, we all need to work together in order to stop the violence-we can't be afraid to tell what is going on or to call the police when we see something happening. It can't just be one person, and everybody has to look out for each other and not be afraid to tell what is going on. Schools need to have more after school program and make them go, give them more classes and won't have to worry about anything-they need to have longer school day- kids are not safe at home, not safe at school and not safe on the streets, Everyone should get together, churches, schools, parents. Everyone should have a role, including the police.”
They need to have more police on the streets, and police are never on time, once someone got shot on the block, and it took half an hour for the police to come..
The government has to do more, and kids need jobs, more activities that will keep them off the streets- they need to have more mentors -- people that can teach them about the dangers of guns.

Mom 9-

I think that it would be good to have community watch groups to try to target gun violence-- Everyone one in the community needs to take turns an walk down the streets. Just be visible, and we can help the police out-but the police have to be present and willing to work with the parents- that's probably will be hard because a lot of people including myself don't trust the police. The police tend to target your kid and pick on them once they know they involved with the courts- but we still have to work together.. We have to call when we see problems in the community and the police need to respond.

Mom 10-

We have to take back our streets, and the only way we are going to do that is to make a sacrifice, we have to take the time to get our voices heard we have to plea to the politicians to put more police in our neighborhoods-- Parents have to come together and have a plan as to what to do-we need the police to help, but we really don't trust all of them so we have to figure out how to work with them--we have to not be afraid to snitch. Call anonymously- There are too many guns on the streets, and we have to take a stand and take back the community.

Participants Response to Gun Ownership

I asked all the mothers if they owned guns and they all indicated that they did not own weapons, and did not have weapons in their homes. I thought that this question would shed additional light on the home environment of the youths. All the mothers were against guns and did not want them around.

How Themes Emerged

I reviewed all at the transcripts carefully to determine themes and categories of the mothers' experiences. I looked through the transcripts for common themes and categories discussed and jotted down the information. I then clustered together similar topics. In doing this, there were several topics that came up and so I did my best to narrow the topics down while focusing on how the topics related to each other. I did this by going line by line through each interview response. One helpful thing I did was to highlight all similar words in each transcript. I followed the guidelines of Bogdan and Bilken (1990) as stated earlier, and I used index cards for the different topics and categories from each participant interview. It was very time-consuming to this by hand, but taking the notes on the index cards and reviewing each card based on research questions made it much easier. I developed my codes based only on emerging information.

The following themes emerged from my analysis:

- Better gun laws (reoccurring phrase).
- Working together (reoccurring phrase).
- Mistrust of police (reoccurring phrase).
- Government involvement (reoccurring phrase).
- Community resources (reoccurring phrase).
- community safety (reoccurring phrase)
- peer influence (reoccurring phrase)
- youths not listening to parents (reoccurring phrase)

In the proceeding paragraphs, I will discuss the above themes and how they were developed.

Better Gun Laws

All participants indicated that to aid in the problem of gun violence they believed the laws needed to be changed; they indicated their disgust with the fact that the laws have leaned towards more people having access to guns. One mother felt that her son's involvement was a result of adults with guns. Steinman and Zimmerman (2003) suggested that youths being exposed to guns and in an environment where gun carrying is encouraged are more likely to use that weapon. In contrast, Makarios and Pratt (2012) asserted that certain gun violence reduction interventions do not work, some work, and some work better than others. Their study showed that popular gun laws have had very little effect on reducing the amount of guns on the streets and gun violence (Makarios & Pratt, 2012). The authors found that certain types of policies and programs showed considerable promise for reducing gun violence. For instance, law enforcement programs are more effective than gun laws. Prosecutorial strategies and probation-based strategies were more effective than policing strategies in reducing gun violence (Makarios & Pratt, 2012).

Community Working Together

Working together emerged as all the mothers suggested that everyone in the community will have to work together to reduce gun violence. The mothers felt that it was important for everyone to have the same goal and to pool resources. All facets of the community should communicate. Bryant (2013) referred to this process as sustainable

cross-system partnerships between public youth serving systems (such as schools districts, child welfare, public health department, and the Department of Labor). Community providers, the business community, and private foundations are critical to developing mechanisms all to work together (Bryant, 2013).

Youths Not Listening

The mothers, in their response to a question about the influence they have on their children, all seemed to feel that they can only control things within in their limits. The mothers can control behavior in their homes and provide adequate guidance; however, at the same time many mothers felt that once that child leaves their home it was out of their control what they did. The mothers did not appear confident that the value they instilled in the youth would continue when they were with their peers. All the mothers claimed to send the right messages to their children about gun violence. In contrast, research has suggested that parental attitudes toward violence have a strong influence on children's attitudes and behavior towards violence (Lindstrom-Johnson et al., 2010). I will be addressing the discrepancy in Chapter 5.

Mistrust of Police

This theme emerged as mothers, in expressing their concerns about gun violence, felt that the police were not always trustworthy. At least three mothers said that they feared that sometimes the police were not always honest and that they may be a part of the problem. One mother said that she thought the police were not always where they should be and that they would show up late to the crime scene. One mother felt that the police may have planted evidence just to arrest her son.

Government Participation in Solution

All the mothers were of the impression that the government, meaning politicians, should do more to address the issue of gun violence. The mothers were distinct in that they felt that the government needed to do more about gun violence. It was clear that they felt that the one thing the government could do was to change the laws that would prevent youths from getting weapons. Changing the laws would get the illegal weapons off the street.

More Job Opportunities

Another common point was that parents thought that with more jobs youth would not have time to get into trouble. One parent was concerned that the minimum wage job may not be an incentive for the kids, but it certainly is better than having no jobs at all. Jobs allow the youths to have their money, and this may prevent them from getting involved in activities requiring having a gun and stealing. All the mothers felt that jobs would be important in reducing crime in the neighborhood. Several mothers pointed out that having a job may not always be enough to prevent delinquent behavior but it is better than the alternative. Some youths are not impressed by a minimum wage job because it may not be enough to buy that expensive gym shoe. It then becomes the mother's responsibility to teach that child that it is best to work for the things he or she wants, even if it takes working a minimum wage job. Bryant (2013) pointed out that there must be significant political leadership and substantial policy and investment to create comprehensive youth employment that puts Black male citizens to work. Bryant (2013) further stated that a robust set of work experiences is crucial to avoid poverty. It is also

important for the community to have job creation programs and job training and summer job opportunity as this is critical in advancing safety in the communities of concentrated poverty.

Community Resources

Mothers mentioned the need to have recreational activities in the community to aid in violence prevention. Several mothers stated that there is nothing in the neighborhood for the kids to do. Ironically she also was one of the mothers that did not let her kids go out because of the violence in the community. Some of the suggestions the mothers had were boys and girls club, skating rink and community recreational center such as the YMCA. One parent suggested more social service agencies. Social service agencies are, usually, a venue that provides resources to community members. I got the impression that the mothers believed that having their child engaged in as many activities as possible who make it more difficult for them to become engaged in youth gun crimes. Research supports the concept that communities are stronger with adequate resources. Bryant (2013) indicated that communities need to build capacity across systems to create comprehensive service delivery mechanisms. Federal, state and private resources should be used to create and strengthen these comprehensive systems that can serve large numbers of struggling youth (Bryant, 2013).

Community Safety

Many of the mothers mentioned safety as an issue because of the violence. One mother stated being fearful of walking on the block or letting her kids sit on the porch. The participants live in areas where it is common place to hear of shootings and someone

getting murdered. Many mothers have children who have friends that were victims of gun violence. One mother talked about not even being safe inside the home and described situations of the individuals being shot while sitting by the window in their home. A neighborhood engulfed with violence is not only unsafe but contributes to the socialization of children living in that environment. A series of studies have shown that youth who are exposed to community violence tend to develop an aggressively biased social information processing style (Lindstrom-Johnson et al., 2011). Social information processing refers to the process by which individuals interpret ambiguous social situations, infer others' motivations, and in turn make decisions about how to respond (Lindstrom-Johnson et al., 2011). Further, youth exposed to neighborhood violence are more likely to perceive a situation as threatening and respond in ways to protect themselves from this perceived threat (Lindstrom-Johnson et al., 2011).

Peer Influence

Peer pressure is a known factor in delinquency, and all the mothers suggested that peer influence was a big factor in their child's involvement in gun crime. It was clear that the mothers felt that peer influence was stronger than their influence when it came to gun violence. All the mothers mentioned the youths having contact with the wrong crowd, and, as a result, they engaged in the behaviors that led to their court involvement. The mothers in this study felt that peer influence was the primary reason for their children's involvement in gun violence, as the messages consistent with non-violence. This view was different from the premise that parental attitudes are transmitted to the youth through

parental coaching or the advice that parents give their children about how to resolve interpersonal conflict (Lindstrom et al., 2011)

Summary

For this phenomenological study, I interviewed ten mothers of youths who had committed a gun crime. My participants are mothers of youths who were on probation for at least 12 months. It was from a sample of cases that were closed meaning that the youths were no longer on probation. The purpose was to understand the phenomenon of youth gun crimes based on the lived experience of the mothers. The mothers provided information as it directly related to their child's involvement in gun crime and their impression, beliefs and attitudes about the phenomenon. I interviewed the mothers in the local library in their community during January and March of 2014. It was a very harsh winter in Chicago I had extreme difficulty connecting with participants; however after numerous rescheduling I was able to complete the interviews.

The mothers all shared their beliefs about youth gun violence and pointed out that for gun violence can reduce by changing the laws to limit guns on the street. The mothers suggested that the community need together to fight gun violence. To keep the community safe parents should work together. Even though most parents had a sense of mistrust for the police, they believed that the police was an important catalyst in curbing gun violence. There needs to be more police presence in the neighborhoods. A common theme was the need for more resources such as jobs and recreational activities in the neighborhood for the youths. The mothers felt they had no influence in preventing their child from involvement in gun violence. They felt that peer pressure had a strong hold on

the youths. The mother's felt that they can only do their best by instilling values in their children. In the end it will be up to that youth to make the right choice. All the mothers were adamant about not having guns in their home. However, based on the epidemic of gun violence; some of the mothers understood that their children might feel protected with a gun. It was evident that all the mothers felt they lived in an atmosphere of constant fear. Fear mostly for the lives of their children, while feeling a sense of hopelessness as they were not empowered to prevent this phenomenon. I presented the conclusion in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of youth gun crimes as experienced by single female parents. The aim is to examine the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the influences and causes of youth gun crimes. In order to provide insights on measures that can be taken to provide information to improve and change the outcome of youth's behavior and attitude towards youth gun violence. Mothers are the primary caretakers raising young boys in the inner city and so they deal with the consequences of the child that has committed a gun crime. Sutherland suggests that the youth that are in the situation favorable. This study was conducted using a qualitative phenomenological methodology to gather data to examine the problem of youth gun crimes and to highlight parental attitudes and beliefs about factors that cause youth gun violence. The central research question asked the following: What factors do single parents (mother) describe as the contributing to youth gun crimes? I employed Moustakas (1994) methods to explore youth gun crimes through the lived experiences often single mothers in the Chicago area. All the mothers have a son that had committed a youth gun crime and served a period of probation. This population was very difficult to recruit and for future researchers, my suggestion with this population would be to do focus groups. I think getting everyone together for one time only in a setting where they are encouraged to share with each other, and complete surveys may have been more fruitful. Because this population is no longer court involved, they did not feel bound to comply with a request for research. It is a double edged sword as the selection of this

population was for that reason. I did not want the participants who would feel obligated or coerced given the fact the researcher was a probation officer. As a result, it took readjustment to the original method in order to obtain the ten recruits. For the study, I conducted ten semi-structured interviews and manually transcribed and coded.

In this study, I found that all of the mothers had many things in common, but they were most fearful for their sons being killed in the midst of the epidemic of gun violence. One thing that was different from my expectation was the sense of hopelessness and helplessness the mother's felt about the issue of gun crimes. The communities are severely affected by gun violence and all the mothers expressed feeling unsafe in the neighborhoods but unable to leave or relocate. Feeling unsafe means not wanting to children walking in the area, yet the mother also expressed frustration about the lack of resources in the community. I got the idea that the mothers felt that these resources would be a safety net for their children. In that, if they would be kept occupied and not having the free time to engage in gang activity and gun crimes. I also noticed that the mothers had a desire for the community to come together to solve the problem. My impression was that the participants felt that mothers needed to form a bond and to work together to develop solutions to the problem of youth gun crimes. The mothers also felt that the police and other social service agencies need to work together to combat the problem.

Interpretation of the Findings

I used a phenomenological research approach in this study. The Differential Association theory guided the conceptual framework to add insight as to the workings of youth gun violence. Sutherland's (1974) differential association theory asserted that a

person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to law violation over definitions unfavorable to law violation (Sutherland, 1974). In this study, almost all the mothers indicated not being very influential in the decisions made by their sons to carry weapons or in the use of the weapons. However, they implied that the influence of their peers was much more powerful in their decision-making process, making this finding consistent with Sutherland's differential association theory. The mothers appear to send consistent messages about their beliefs and about having guns and the dangers of guns, but that did not change the behavior of the child. Youths are likely following peers in order to fit in and, as a result, they engage in delinquent activities. All the youth also lived in high crime neighborhoods where gun violence occurred each day, therefore, living in situations where there was excessive law-breaking. The mother's responses to the questions were emotionally charged and even though they were all the mothers of perpetrators of gun violence their responses resembled those of victims. The mothers seemed to be resigned to the fact that they had no control over the environmental factors that influenced the youth nor did they have control over the external influence of negative peers. Even though, the mothers felt that their sons made their decision about having gun, this was also because they were the victim of their environment that has limited resources. Ineffective parenting skills or adults who parent with poor social skills increase the likelihood those children will learn maladaptive behaviors and inappropriate social skills ((Wesley et al., 2012). Differential Association theory shows the importance of familial cohesion, parental stressors, parental discipline and neighborhood environment in the development of prosocial behavior in deterring negative behavior

(Wesley et al., 2012). The study found that though neighborhood environment contributed to negative prosocial behavior, peer influence was an overarching factor. This study also found that the stresses placed on the individual mother can lead to their belief in the inability to parent on accordance with the norms of the society. The findings support the differential association theory that predicts that the individual youth will choose a negative path when the balance of the definitions for law breaking exceeds those definitions for law abiding. In this study, this is generated by the excess violence and law breaking in the neighborhood and the mothers' inability to communicate a different message to the youth. I will highlight the recommendations of mothers later in the chapter.

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to get information from single mothers of youths that had committed gun crimes. The primary research question sought to the determine insights from mothers by their lived experiences as to what factors contributes to youth.

Research Question 1

What experiences did single female parents have with gun crime? All the mothers had experience with gun crimes based mostly on the fact that they had a child that was involved with a gun crime. In addition, they lived in gun violence riddled neighborhoods. They experience the phenomenon of gun violence by being related in some way to victims of gun violence and in some ways feeling that they are victims due to the environment they reside. Youths are constantly surrounded by violence, and this

exposure makes the youth prone to committing violent acts. In a study by Henrich et.al (2005) it was confirmed that exposure to weapon violence is directly linked to more weapon violence over time. They did find that overtime adolescence who were more connected to parents were less likely to commit weapon violence. Close relationship with parents can serve as a protective buffer against gun violence. The mothers' experiences also stem from daily lives

Research Question 2

Do single female parents past experiences with gun crimes affect their beliefs about gun violence?

The mothers indicated that they had experience with gun violence. This experience was personal where someone they knew was impacted by gun violence. It was also environmental based on their experience of living in neighborhoods with gun violence. This experience made them afraid for their children's safety and their own. It affected decisions made to allow their children to outside and created anxiety when their children walked to school or elsewhere. One mother expressed fear of sitting by the window in her home. For the most part parents showed heighten awareness of the safety if their children. Being aware of gun violence gave them a better understanding of how children feel about walking by themselves. Some parent could understand the fascination with gangs that youths have and feeling the need to carry a weapon for protection.

Research Question 3

Who did single female parents believe were the influences in their child's life? All the participants indicated that the peers were the primary influences in their child's

life in terms of their involvement with gun crimes. They felt that the youth does this to fit in with the crowd. Some parents suggested that these peers were gang affiliated and that their sons are more drawn to the peers and not necessary listen to their directions. In fact in areas with constant gun violence most of the mothers pointed out discouraging the child to be involved in gun crimes and talk about the dangers of guns.

Research Question 4

How do single female parents believe their attitudes and beliefs about gun violence influenced their adolescents' behavior? The responses suggested that mothers thought that their attitudes and beliefs about gun violence were made very clear to their children, but it does not translate into the youth avoiding gun violence. The youth becomes involved in incidents of gun violence despite being constantly told of the dangers. Some mothers stated that their children did listen to them and follow their household rules however they are environmental factors that are more powerful and therefore more influential in the decisions of the youth to carry a weapon. Khron et al. (2014) in their study believed that parents (mothers) can be successful in controlling whether youths carry weapons

Parents may have success if they are educated to send consistent and clear messages of the dangers of guns. In this study, however, the mothers described themselves as sending consistent messages but external factors such as peers, fear of community violence and lack of safety are rendering that message unheard. Previous findings of Howard et al. (2002), confirm that parents can be very influential in changing behavior of youths. They can do so by giving the right messages about the dangers of

guns and cues on how to avoid violence. The same study also found that youths became ambivalent about obeying those messages when they were drawn to where other youths socialized. This further is consistent with the mother's views that peers had a very strong influence on their kid's decisions to engage in gun crimes.

Research Question 5

How did single female parents believe they can be influential in preventing their youth from engaging in gun crimes? The responses suggested that parents felt helpless in preventing gun violence. The mothers felt that the issue of gun violence in the Chicago area is big, and they had some suggestion of things they can do individually to curtail the activities of their individual children. Some suggestions were simple as being more vigilant in the supervision of their children such as monitoring activities, checking their rooms and knowing the company they keep. The mothers felt that the government had the primary role in making changes in gun violence, and it needed to start with changing the gun laws. The government could make new laws that would make it harder for youths to get hold of guns. Reduced access to guns by teens would prevent the amount of teens with guns. Many of the mothers indicated feeling that it was almost impossible that their kids would not engage in gun violence based on how easy it appears for them to gain access. The mother's ideas of the importance of reducing access to guns are consistent with the findings of Thompson (2012). The extent to which gun policies reduce gun violence; policies have the potential to reduce the number of firearm fatalities is unknown. The reduction of gun carrying is a focal point for the primary prevention of

youth gun violence (Spano, 2011) Availability of guns is the single most-important factor that distinguishes youth gun violence.

The Mothers also implied that factors such as safety and the youths need to feel protected, a predominate factor for the appeal of having weapons

Research Question 6

What specific roles did single female parents play in preventing youth gun crimes? In this area the mothers were not sure that they can have a role, however they were felt they individually be accountable for the activities of their individual children. Accountability can include but not limited to careful monitoring of their children's activities. They can be responsible for instilling values in their children that would prevent them from wanting to engage in gun violence. Taylor et al. (2007) concluded in their study parents played a vital role in socialization of children that include instilling values that shape behavior. Parental supervision and monitoring are predicted to be important in preventing violence in the face of risk (Khron, Lizotte Bushway Schmidt, & Phillips, 2014). Providing recreational activities and mentors for children were also ways that parents can individually have an impact. Parental involvement in their children's activities reduces the probability of violent behavior (Khron et al. 2014). In a comparative study, Kerry and Berry (2008) found that effective parenting played a role in a youth's decision to carry a weapon. Khron et al. (2014) also found that increasing the level of positive feelings youths have for their parents and themselves can reduce the violence of at-risk youths. My findings indicated that the mothers tried to be effective in their parenting, but external factors interfered with their success. One can argue that the

parents either lacked the skills, were not providing proper supervision or that the cycle of violence was to the point where the parents missed their opportunity to stop it.

Research Question 7

What did single female parents recommend about individual, community, school, and criminal justice fronts for preventing youth gun crimes? Female parents recommended that as Individuals, they can be responsible for teaching their children proper behavior by instilling values in them that would prevent them from engaging in delinquent behavior. All the mothers felt that getting their voices heard would be essential in raising awareness to the problem. As far as the community, the participants in their responses suggested that community members including themselves would need to come together and work together to make the necessary changes in the community. Community equipped with resources will keep them engaged and out of trouble. The community needed more recreational activities such as the boy and girls club and the YMCA. Youths need outlets to go after school, to teach them positive ways of coping with community violence. The task of public health officials has been to identify and focus on at-risk youth by building resilience and resistance to youth violence through proven programs (Blanchard et al. 2009). Mothers also referred to need for having a better relationship with the police as this create an avenue to improve on the trust issues and give the mothers a forum to address problems.

Mothers felt that the schools can play a role by providing a safer environment by making sure guns are not in the school, and kids screened and that the focus is on learning. The schools can make sure parents are aware of truancy and misbehavior so that

parents can act accordingly. They feel that schools should be a safe place for children to be but because of guns it is not always the case. They support the use of metal detectors when necessary as well as having adequate security in the schools. Many of the mothers were in favor of safe passage route as means to make children feel safe walking to and from school. The mothers did not see how they could impact school other than making sure that their child leaves for school each day. Losel and Farrington (2012) suggest that negative school relationships and experiences are important risk factors for serious violent youth offending. School can provide a protective and buffering effect in the presence of other risk or against aggravation of criminality (Losel & Farrington, 2012). Henrich et al., (2005) found no effects of parent and school connectedness on buffering adolescents from the cycle of violence. They found that once the cycle of violence has escalated to the point where the children are using weapons, parents may have missed their opportunity for effective intervention to stop it

The government should provide more jobs for youths so that they will be less inclined to engage in criminal activities. All the mothers felt that jobs would play an important role for young people. They would be able to buy the items they want and not feel the need to steal to get it. Many of the youths engaged in gun violence were from poor areas and jobs were crucial in aiding the family. Bryant (2013) in a review agreed that communities need more opportunities for employment. Bryant (2013) further stated that there must be significant political leadership and substantial policy and investment to create comprehensive youth employment policy that puts black males to work. Jobs are critical to advancing safety in communities of concentrated poverty (Bryant 2013). For

the most parts research supports these recommendations by the mothers on what is needed to ease the problem of gun violence. Makarios and Pratt (2012) looked at the effectiveness of policies and programs to reduce gun violence. They also looked at effective community interventions strategies that focused on developing partnerships and coordinated federal and state resources in reducing gun violence. A key factor in this study is the need to have a support system for the offenders (Makarios & Pratt, 2012). The most effective programs combined both punitive and supportive strategies to reduce gun violence (Makarios & Pratt, 2012).

Limitations of Study

The limitations of the study include the small sample size of mothers who have the experience of having a child who committed a gun crime. The sample was not intended to be a representative sample for generalization, but a means of collecting information. This sample was single female mothers, and other samples of two-parent household would have had a different dynamic and provided different results. Also, if the participant were not from the area in the city of Chicago where there were high incidents of gun violence, the experiences of the mothers and information would have been different. Based on the nature of the study, the mothers may not have shared all their experience since some information may have been personal and sensitive.

Recommendations

All the research suggested that parents played an important role in curtailing violence amongst adolescent; however the mothers in this study were fully aware of the impact they can have in modifying their children's behavior. There must be more

outreach to mothers that live in violent neighborhoods. The mothers need to be empowered and equipped with recourse and knowledge of things they can do to change the behavior of their children that are prone to violence. Fear of environmental factors such as the influence of gangs/peers and intrigue of guns rendered the mothers helpless. Previous research recommends educating parents on how to supervise and teach children about the dangers of guns. I think parent's especially single female parents have a unique issue. Mothers face many barriers that prevent them from skillfully creating an atmosphere at home that have a tremendous impact on the behavior of the youth. Not that they are not capable of doing this, but they require a great deal more support. This support could be as simple as providing mentors to at-risk family or providing a resource such as a support group for mothers in the community. Additionally I would suggest that future research explore how to empower single mother (parent) by providing them with resources that are unique based on individual, family and community needs. Information of the this research should be disseminated to community leaders, probation department, police department and all who have access to this select group of women who are raising youths involved in gun crimes.

Recommendation for Future Study

Future research in this area is needed, primarily because I did not find other studies on this population and regarding the phenomenon of youth gun violence. The population is a unique because they are mothers of children who have committed gun crimes and because of that their perspective was different. For the future researcher, my suggestion is that the study should be completed during the period of court involvement

or very shortly thereafter. This population was very transient, and it became difficult to keep track. I think that because these parents' children were considered the wrongdoers, they had some reluctance to provide information. They were very guarded, and the researcher needed time to build trust.

This research may work best in a focus group setting. The women can share their experience in an atmosphere of support and understanding. Because gun violence is a public health problem, it is crucial to probe the population that may have some impact in making changes in the behavior of our youth. Community input is important, and if mothers are empowered with the tools to curtail youth violence, they can ensure sustainability to the community.

Researchers Reflections

This research project had great significance to me. I went into it very optimistic about the information I could retrieve on the topic and how useful it would be to my colleagues and to my participant. I did not anticipate the difficulties I faced getting parents to talk about their experience with gun violence. Someone told me that my topic was ambitious, and now I know what they meant. If I had this to do again, my approach would be different. I think these participants were excellent, but they probably were ready to forget about the topic by the time I got to them. I think it would have been worth the while to obtain the IRB clearance and to interview the mothers while they were still active with the court.

I would like to do another study in the future and this time I will be much better informed and prepared. Overall I feel that this study will bring knowledge to stakeholders

as to what mothers want for their children and the issues they face dealing environmental factors of gun crimes and unsafe neighborhoods.

Implications for Social Change

This study created positive social change by providing new information on the problem of youth gun crimes from the perspective of a single female parent. Many lives are lost each year to gun crimes and mothers are in a unique position to effect change in the behavior of their children that are committing gun crimes. If mothers can make a change in these youths that are committing gun crimes then, there is a likelihood that it will result in behaviors that reduce incidents of gun violence. Mothers however will need to intervene early when reinforcing their message of the dangers of gun violence so that peers and environmental are not influential. Positive social change also occurs as mothers become vigilant and change childrearing practice that includes conversations on the dangers of negative peer influence and gun violence. In addition, mothers are conscious of their role in providing adequate supervision and guidance that counteracts the dangers of negative peer and environmental influences. The most significant social change is the empowerment the single female parent in their ability to be influential in changing the behavior of their children through positive guidance. A reduction in gun violence will create safer communities and preserve the lives of many.

Conclusion

In this study, I explored the problem of youth gun violence in the hope of obtaining new information from the perspective on a single female parent (mother). I did not find the information in previous research that provided information on the perspective

of a single female parent. Gun violence is a public health problem and a major epidemic in the Chicago area. From this study, there does not appear to be an easy solution to the problem but there are many ideas of what collectively may reduce the problem. The community needs to work together towards the common goal of reducing gun violence. That will require mothers, grandmother's aunts, uncles, police, social workers, clergy probation officers and any other interesting party coming together with ideas and executing them. The study revealed that the mothers do not feel that there is enough collaboration. Mothers are the primary caregivers and therefore should be first responders to the problem of gun violence in the community. Mothers or caregivers often provide necessary supervision and guidance to send the right messages to the youth to stay away from guns. The study showed that the mothers were attempting to send these messages, but they were not effective because of environmental factors as well as peer factors that the youths faced in the community.

Mothers felt that even though they instilled in their children not to have guns, the peers they hung around had stronger influence on their decisions. Youth listened to their peers as a way of fitting in with the crowd and possibly because of gang involvement. Another factor that lead to youths needs to have a gun was because of where they lived. All the mothers reported living in a violent neighborhood with high incidents of gun crimes, and their children were not safe and therefore carried weapons for protection. Because of this factor the mothers felt that the best way to attack the problem with gun violence was to change the laws making it impossible for youths to gain access to guns. Currently, the laws in the area recently changed in the area, and people can now carry

concealed weapon. Many of the mothers feared that this will only make the problem worst by putting more guns on the streets

In addition, several mothers mentioned that the youths with jobs are usually busy with something positive to keep them off the streets. They also cited that the lack of resources in the community was a major problem for youth engaging in gun violence. Most mothers indicated that there were no social service centers that provided after-school activity. There was a need for facilities that provided recreational activities. The idea is that if youths are actively engaged and always busy they are less likely to engage in gun crimes. In this area of study, the parents admit there are some limited resources; however they the neighborhoods are not safe, and they are more inclined to keep the kids at home.

Because neighborhoods are unsafe then, there must be police presence. More visibility of police and more timely response to incidents are important in reducing gun violence. This study found that there were a mistrust and lack of cooperative effort between the police and community. Therefore, it is safe to suggest that it is worthwhile for the police and community members work on improving their relationship as a means of attacking the problem of gun violence,

In this study, the parents brought up some important issues that they felt can impact gun violence in their community. The unique information I think came from this study is that the mothers appeared to be victims of their environment. All the mothers seemed to be making effort to change the behavior of their children, but the environmental and peer factors were winning the battle. In order for these mothers to be

effective in the curtailing the behavior of their individual children, they would need the support of all the entities in the community. Mothers need hands on help with the problem of youth gun violence and not just education about the issue. The public health approach involves strong problem-solving that has been effective and has resulted in success in prevention, intervention, and implementation. It is a process that required collaboration and participation. I hope that these findings will provide some direction for community stakeholders as they look into ways of empower parents (mothers) to be the vehicle in reducing gun crimes one child at a time.

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