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The District of Columbia and Gun Control Laws: Homicides and Social Impacts

Richard Ghislain Mbakop
Walden University

Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Richard G. Mbakop

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Dr. George Kieh, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Howard Henderson, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Daniel Jones, University Reviewer,
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Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

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Abstract

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The District of Columbia has one of the toughest gun laws in the United States, yet the city has one of the highest homicide rates in the nation and much of this gun violence is concentrated in southeastern part of the city. The framework for the study was comprised of (a) the psychological theory based on many arguments, such as labeling weapons as symbols of male superiority and power, and (b) the social contract theory. Finding the perceptions about the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in Washington D.C. was the essential aim of the study. This qualitative case study examined the perceptions of 8 people relative to the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in the southeast section of the District of Columbia. Results revealed that the manufacturing and legal acquisition of firearms did not pose any problem for the participants, given the legitimate purpose of using guns. Rather, owners who use guns to perpetrate violent acts due to ineffective distribution and lack of enforcement of laws, added to gun proliferation pose a serious problem. The findings may be used by policy makers to develop policies in controlling, managing, producing, distributing, and owning guns as well as decreasing gun violence across the nation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Gun violence and its impact on the population has and continues to be a divisive

issue among Americans, in spite of the various gun control laws that have been enacted at

the local, state, and federal levels. According to the National Crime Victimization

Survey, as cited in the National Institute of Justice (2013), in 2011, there were 467,321

victims related to gun violence. Furthermore, findings from the Federal Bureau of

Investigation (FBI) show that, of the overall nationwide crimes using guns that same

year, 68% were homicides, 41% were robbery-based crimes, and 21% were aggravated

assaults (National Institute of Justice, 2013). A fluctuation in the number of murders

related to firearms has been observed throughout the years. According to National

Institute of Justice (2013), almost all murders committed using guns reached its peak in

1993 at 17,075, declined progressively to an all-time low at 10,117 in 1999; it then

increased to 11,547 in 2006 before falling again in 2008.

According to Halbrook (2013b), both nonviolent and violent crimes such as

homicide, suicide, and armed robberies have been perpetrated using firearms. This

growing crisis has pushed the federal government to enact heterogeneous regulations like

promoting the prohibition of firearms among high-risk groups – like violent offenders or

victims of violence – or school-wide programs to encourage children in communities

with a high risk of gun violence to choose to focus more on education and useful social programs and to stay away from violence. Despite these efforts, however, one of the most fundamental means of regulating guns is to establish policies that rigorously govern the creation, distribution, and ownership of firearms.

In order to create efficacious, effective, and safer policies, additional research needs to be done on the topic of gun violence today. As a result, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge relative to gun violence. To do so, I used a qualitative, phenomenological case study to examine the perspectives of high-risk gun violence population.

This chapter introduces the study through several major sections. The Background section illustrates some previous studies done on this topic, while providing a scope of work, and a brief history of gun violence. In doing so, the section will map out the government's continued efforts to reduce if not eradicate gun violence in the country. The Problem Statement identifies the problem and addresses the depth of the issue that triggered the research. To provide the relevance of the research, in the Purpose of the Study, I lay out the perception of the population of the District of Columbia relative to the impact of gun laws on the homicides rates. As the Research Question section helps narrow the focus of the research, Nature of the Study focuses on the methodology that used for the study. I close with a discussion of the theoretical framework, which provides the analytical roadmap for the study, and the significance, which articulates the implications of the research on social change.

Background

According to Halbrook (2013a), no communities or cultures are exempt from the fatalities of gun violence. Nation-wide in the United States, gun violence is a major threat to safety that affects counties, large cities, and small communities alike (Halbrook, 2013a). Whether used for intimidation or to create casualties, firearms are the main weapons used for homicide despite the different terms of classification assigned to these firearms. Firearms as weapons are also, in general, perceived as violent, due to their ability to inflict harm on a single person and/or several people, as well as the individual in custody of the weapon, whether intentional or accidental. However, the term "crime" when related to gun violence, only appears in association with homicide and death attempts and in situations when an assault, suicide, or attempted suicide involves a deadly weapon (Gray, 2014). Other crimes involving firearms, like accidental or unintended deaths or injury, are labeled simply as "nonviolent" (Jackson & Sorenson, 2014). The categorization of violent or nonviolent crimes is based on the intent of the person carrying the firearm rather than the firearm itself. Though many claim self-defense as the reason to bear firearms, the repercussion of tragic events, such as the Las Vegas mass shootings, illustrate the damaging impact of firearms as well as the level of danger facing communities, states, and the nation at large. Violence due to guns poses a specific threat to the nation's youth (Godbold, 2014). Events like the death of a friend or a relative mostly explain the exposure of children to gun violence.

According to Wolf and Rosen (2015), vicinities with alarming gun violence rates generate childhood mental challenges, and cases of childhood mental illness are

especially high in areas with gun violence high gun violence rates. The consequences of gun violence impact a substantial number of young people living in gun-violent communities. Living in a gun-violent community calls for ways to cope with tragedies resulting from gun violence as a country, as well as communities, specifically within areas of higher crime rates.

As the citizenry become more and more vulnerable to violence due to gun in the society where the phenomenon tends to rise continually, the role of the government becomes extremely critical in finding solutions to protect its citizens with more emphasis on children and teenagers. Webster and Vernick (2013) stated that it is the government's responsibility to protect children and teens from gun-related crimes. According to Stowell (2014), enforcing laws and strategies aimed at protecting the public constitutes a viable solution to this situation. However, in the past decade, this has proven unsuccessful, and many Americans continue to voice their dissatisfaction with the glorification of guns in modern-day society particularly among the country's youth (Calhoun, 2014). Regardless, the need for social change is crucial for the people, as argued by Cook (2013). In communities characterized by a chronic level of poverty, problems generated by gun violence may be extremely difficult to regulate or resolve. Federal laws and social agencies, such as community policing, have thus far been ineffective in managing gun violence. Consequently, it has been difficult to find solutions to violence, thus encouraging youth to acquire guns for self-protection for themselves and for their households. This has continued the cycle of gun violence in these neighborhoods

(Malley-Morrison et al., 2015). This phenomenon urged me to further explore the relentlessness of gun violence in the United States and its social repercussions.

Christoffel, Katherine Kaufer (1998) examined how people exposed to violence relate to the way it impacts their behaviors. The study incorporated the context of both poverty and racial identity into the broader issue and shows these two contexts are related to firearm violence. With the focus mainly on children exposed to gun violence early on, the information for Christoffel's study was derived from data collected by various individuals, thus contributing to analyzing gun control policy.

Murakawa (2014) examined the influence of racial change on gun violence, from the 1940s to 1960s. Further, the author examined the politics of the United States and its impact on the nation. Policies enacted then, aimed at targeting the marginalized population, led to a lengthier jail ruling and triggered the genesis of the examination of racial integration in the United States and help in understanding the effects of gun policies on the marginalized group of people.

Cook and Ludwig (2003) convened a diverse group of scholars from various disciplines to study the issues related to gun rulebooks. Law, economics, criminology, and medicine were among the disciplines from which the researches came. The resulting book from the study not only examines different policies that have been laid out, but it also proposes a variety of changes needed to be achieved.

Problem Statement

Whenever the issue of gun control emerges in the body politics of the United States, gun supporters and owners in order to solidify their rights to bear and keep arms,

refer to the following amendment to the U.S. Constitution that states that "*A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a Free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed*" (U.S. Const. amend. II). But, as has been evident in the United States, individual as well as group or mass killings have continued unabated. Also, as is constantly reported and substantiated by statistics (VerBruggen, 2015), gun ownership and killings in the United States are the highest in the world. According to (Grinshteyn as cited in Preidt), Americans are 10 times more likely than people in other developed countries to be killed by guns. According to (Grinshbeyn, 2016), compared to 22 other high-income nations, the gun-related murder rate in the United States is 25 times higher. Grinshbeyn went on to affirm that the United States, which has the most firearms per capita in the world, suffers disproportionately from firearms compared with other high-income countries. Grinshbeyn went on to affirm that even though it has half the population of the other 22 high-income nations combined, the United States accounted for 82% of all gun deaths, 90% of all women killed by guns, 91% of children under 14 killed by gun violence, and 92% of young people between ages 15 and 24 killed by guns.

VerBruggen (2015) stated, "the United States has a much higher homicide rate than just about any other highly developed country, and it, also, has much more civilian gun ownership." Furthermore, the American people are much more likely to be killed by guns compared to citizens of other industrialized countries, as a survey of global homicide rates affirms. Homicide rates in the United States were 7 times higher than an average of other high-income countries, largely fueled by a gun homicide rate in the

United States that is about 25 times higher than that of others (White, 2015). Findings suggest that there have been growing concerns about this hike in homicide rates. Because of this, certain sectors of the population have been yearning for regulations.

As a means of beginning to resolve this societal problem, the U.S. Congress enacted the Gun Control Act in 1968. According to the Congressional Research Service (2013), the objective of the Act is to keep firearms out of the hands of those not legally entitled to possess them because of reasons of age, criminal background, mental and emotional instability, as well as incompetency; and to assist law enforcement authorities in the states and their subdivisions in combating the increasing prevalence of crime in the United States.

In the southeastern area of the District of Columbia, the number of gun homicides has spiked. According to McDermott (2015), in Washington, DC, 105 murders were committed in 2014, 104 in 2013, and 88 in 2012 compared to 162 in 2015. Of these 162 homicides, 119 occurred in the 5th, 6th, and 8th Police Districts, which are located in the southeastern part of the city. Officials have stated that there is no single reason for the increase in homicides in 2015. The Metropolitan Police Department reported 162 homicides in 2015 — a 54% increase over 2014 (McDermott, 2015). Adjacent to the District is Baltimore, which became a theatre of a serious uprising in 2015, due to police mishandling of a young black man, situation that according to Chappell (2015), pushed, the homicide rate in Baltimore to a new high for the city within just six weeks in 2015, surpassing the previous record set of 353 in 1993. Furthermore, investigative research as to the causes of high gun violence and deaths in some specific cities, have focused on the

growing number of homicides, but have not examined the perceptions about the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in the District of Columbia. Therefore, using the District of Columbia as a case study, the aim of this study was to help fill the gap in the scholarly literature through an exploration of the perceptions of 8 participant residents of the District of Columbia regarding the relationship between homicide rates and gun laws.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the perceptions about the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in the District of Columbia. Even though the District of Columbia has one of the toughest gun laws in the United States, the nation's capital has had one of the highest homicide rates in the nation for many years, mainly in the southeast part of the city. The growing homicide in this high gun related crime area will trigger the study to help explore whether more gun laws can lower the homicide rates.

Despite various efforts to decrease the incidence of gun violence over the years – such as the Gun Control Act of 1968 and the Hand Brady Violation Act of 1998 – gun violence has significantly increased. Particularly, in the same year that the latter act was enforced, there were 30,708 American casualties of gun violence (Corlin, 2001). This number included 17,424 suicides, 12,102 homicides, and 866 accidental shootings, with an additional 64,000 individuals receiving emergency room treatment for non-fatal injuries from a firearm (Corlin, 2001). By comparison, during this same year, according to Corlin (2001), the number of firearm fatalities in Germany was 1,164, followed by

1,034 in Canada, 391 in Australia, 211 in England and Wales and 83 in Japan. In other words, the incidence of gun violence in the United States in 1998 was more than 30 times that in other developed countries. Despite the various measures, this number has not decreased. According to the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (n.d.), an international initiative to end gun violence, there are more than 89 firearm casualties every day. This sums up to an average of 32,485 fatalities annually; a number that excludes non-fatal firearm injuries. The hope of conducting this research was to find out whether the various gun laws have had a positive impact on the homicide rates in the United States in general and in southeast Washington, D.C. in particular.

Given the unsuccessful efforts to regulate gun violence efficiently, understanding the reasoning conducive to the ineffectiveness of prior policies, as well as the reasons why gun violence has been closely related to communities that are of lower socioeconomic status becomes important. In order to better comprehend the severity of gun violence in these communities, gathering information directly from those within the District of Columbia is crucial.

Research Question

The study will examine the following question: What are the perceptions of the residents of the District of Columbia about the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in Washington D.C.?

Theoretical Framework

As events and circumstances unfold in life, many times they are incomprehensible to humans who struggle to find reasons for those occurrences. It is for this explicit reason

that theories are proposed and are used to analyze situations that are incomprehensible. Two theories will serve as the frameworks for the study: the psychological theory and social contract theory. The psychological theory is based on several arguments. One is that weapons have been labeled as symbols of male supremacy and power; so, in order to counter the mindset, there is the need for the formulation and implementation of viable policy frameworks that will guide and help make gun control laws successful (Abawajy, 2012). This theory also provides a strategic mechanism whereby the behavior of people can be studied. The social contract theory is implemented when a group of individuals voluntarily agree to get together and live as an organized society, according to Hobbes, Locke, or Rousseau, with the right to secure mutual protection and welfare or to regulate the relations among its members, based on the central argument that through a shared contract amongst members of a society, social order can exist. In this way, a platform can be created to plan for the implementation of other acts.

Further, social contract theory postulates that the state exists to serve the will of the general population. The roots of social contract theory were first developed by Hobbes in 1651, and expanded upon by Locke in 1689, and Rousseau in 1762 (Clark & Moore, 2012). In addition, the social contract model argues that gun violence can best be resolved or limited with active contribution from community members (Conway, 2014). Similarly, according to Crooker (2003), this theory entails that members of the society are rendered specific rights in return for certain freedoms that they would otherwise possess in the state of nature or through standing alone. In this framework of gun control, citizens have natural rights, including the rights to protect themselves. This theory,

therefore, entails that the society must prove or provide valuable staples in exchange for the rights accorded to society members. Are the heightened societal protections genuine or simply theoretical? If just theoretical, then that the society has failed to honor its duties, and therefore should not expect any returns.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative methodology, based on the case study approach, as well as policy techniques were used in this study. This method provided a reliable and consistent path at every stage of this study. For instance, it ensured that data gathered as well as an effective analysis would be helpful in addressing the puzzle in the problem statement. The exploration of the output for each activity proved key in this technique so that the research problem could continue to be the main purpose of the project.

Even though a variety of ways to gather information can be used in this study, only one was utilized. This qualitative research case study involved the collection of firsthand perceptions of gun violence among the population, which can provide law enforcement agencies – the policies established by the government – with a profound understanding of the depth and breadth of gun violence, as well as insight into how to reduce its occurrence. I collected data for this study through an interview process that included 8 participants who were residents of the District of Columbia who either collected reports on victims of gun violence or who are familiar with the devastation of gun violence. Relative to this critical topic, the following terms are referenced throughout the study.

Definitions

Assault weapons: This refers to semi- and fully automated weapons that incorporate a detachable magazine and may include a pistol grip. On certain occasions, they are specialized to allow flash suppressor and barrel shroud. Flash suppressor increases the visibility for the shooter, hence, increasing the accuracy (Frantz et al., 2016).

Automatic: This refers to the practice whereby the action of firing is repeated once the trigger is held down (McPhedran, 2016).

Background checks: This requires that a person, who purchases a gun from licensed dealers, to undergo a background check as stipulated by the federal law called Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (Hemenway & Arbor, 2014).

Gun show loophole: This refers to the unlawful transfer or exchange of weapons between or amongst people whereby one of the parties does not qualify legally to use a gun, which may be due to mental health, drug use, or other reasons under the law (Conway, 2014).

High-capacity magazine: These are guns that hold a high number of ammunition (more than 10 bullets) and allow for the use of semiautomatic techniques (Conway, 2014).

Private party transfer: This refers to a situation whereby one person owns a gun and lends it to another person for a fee. In this case, the third party could illegally be able to access a firearm and may engage in inappropriate acts of gun violence (Lott, 2012).

Second Amendment: This amendment to the U.S. Constitution ensures the right to keep and bear arms. A state militia has the right to hold and use weapons for the security of a free state (Hemenway & Arbor, 2014).

Semiautomatic: This refers to a situation where a weapon has a loading action; hence, each pull of trigger results in firing, (Lott, 2012).

Strawman purchase: An action that occurs when a person purchases a gun through another person, who lives in a legalized state because the initial buyer lives in a banned state. (Frantz et al., 2016).

Victims: Refers to the participant of the study, who have either been personally shot, or have family members who have been personally shot within 10 years of data collection.

Assumptions

The aim of this qualitative case study was to understand the perceptions of people who have experienced, witnessed, or have a profound knowledge of the impact of gun violence on the community of the District of Columbia. Consequently, a few assumptions are considered in this study. First and foremost, it is assumed that there exists a definite relationship between firearms and violence. I made the presumption that gun violence is a societal threat and that it has impacted the nation's populace over time. Also, there is an assumption that participants will provide honest and credible responses to the interview questions that will allow an accurate portrayal of their lived or witnessed experiences. Finally, there is a strong belief that the role of community members is critical in reducing gun violence as well as ensuring that peace and harmony are maintained in society.

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, I explored the impact of gun violence within the specific geographical vicinity of research, which is the District of Columbia. Data were collected using purposive sampling. Samples were taken within regions that surround 3 square miles of the southeastern community of Washington, DC. Subsequently, I analyzed the data to help understand the strategies, impact, and measures that the participants believe can be implemented in order to reduce gun violence.

Limitations

As described by Yin (2012), limitations are restrictions on the methodology over which the researcher has limited control. These restrictions affect data analysis and results. Therefore, it is incumbent on the I to find appropriate measures that can help keep focus and achieve the primary objectives of the research.

However, this study is subject to some limitations such as a greater amount of time, financial and other resources. Accordingly, given the considerable amount of data required for this study, it may be both expensive and time-consuming. The complexity of automating qualitative data may make the research less efficient. Also, the interviews may demand a substantial amount of time, as well as the canalization and examination processes. Besides the acquisition of reliable information, there exists a need for the collection of data from different sources, in order to conduct adequate analysis and make policy-relevant recommendations.

Significance

The significance of this topic lies in the level of political and social divides that the United States is experiencing, as well as the level of passion shown by both the proponents and opponents of the current gun laws. On the one hand, the main argument of the proponents of gun control is that more regulations and less gun ownership will reduce the homicide rate. On the other hand, the opponents argue that there is no need for more regulations or less ownership. The rationale is that people kill and not guns. Most importantly, the significance of this case study is heavily aimed at the dramatic homicide rates in the District of Columbia where the highest rate is registered year after year. Even though the District of Columbia has one of the toughest gun laws in the United States, the nation's capital has had one of the highest homicide rates in the nation for many years, mainly in the southeast part of the city. For this reason, the focus of this study was on the District of Columbia, specifically the southeast area where the number of gun homicide has spiked.

This qualitative case study provides an analysis of guns violence from the perceptions of residents of the District of Columbia. According to Vizzard et al. (2014), some gun violence problems can be linked to some human conditions such as but not limited to, mental illnesses, history of substance abuse, poverty, illiteracy, other socioeconomic, environmental, and sociological hardship. This research entails a discussion on actions that the federal government took in regulating and controlling unlawful ownership and movements of guns. According to Vizzard et al., public

awareness needs to be stimulated in order to positively and impactfully fight for social change.

Besides, by examining both the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (P. L. 103-159) and the Gun Control Act of 1968 (P. L. 90-618), this study aims at helping better understand why policies to regulate gun control have always been ineffective. Furthermore, through the history of the nation, the research explored the triggers of the high gun violence rate and showed the efforts of Gun Control Act of 1968 to reduce gun violence, followed by information about the Brady Act, that requires a mandatory background check for every potential firearm buyer in order to prevent it from inappropriate use.

Furthermore, the social change impact of this study is positive. In general, although the findings cannot be generalized, they may impact future policies in controlling, managing, producing, distributing, and owning guns as well as gun violence across the nation. In particular, the communities concerned may witness an appeasement in the level of fear and anxiety experienced by the residents due to swift policies implemented by policy makers and enforced by the competent authorities. Businesses may regain a considerable level of activities that was existent prior to gun violence. Homes could appreciate in value faster than during the period of increased gun violence. The flow of residents fleeing the community could diminish and the economic toll and burden endured by businesses could decrease. The overall government spending for security may diminish as well.

Summary

As gun violence represents a complex and critical social issue in the United States, its devastating effects are obvious through the federal government's efforts to implement measures that can reduce it in various communities, especially where the occurrence of violent crime is high. The focus of this study is on the need to establish and implement new policies that strive to control and manage the phenomena of gun production, distribution, and ownership, in order to ultimately decrease the incidence of gun violence across the country.

The study focuses specifically on the efficacy of gun control laws in reducing gun violence in the United States. In this vein, this study is significant because it addresses the effects of gun violence. Specifically, understanding the extent of gun violence in the Northeast United States remains the goal of this phenomenological case study.

Tonry (2013) argued that an increase in the number of fatalities would be evident if the problem is not addressed properly. Exploring southeast Washington, D.C., this study used a purposive sampling method to collect data.

The Organization of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1, the general introduction, provides an overview of the research problem, the background, the nature of the study, the scope and delimitations, the limitations and the significance. In Chapter 2, I review the extant literature on gun violence to situate the study within the broader context of the scholarly literature. One of the resulting benefits is to understand the connections between the literature and practice. The aim is to identify gaps that need to be addressed.

Chapter 3 focuses on the research design, laying out major areas such as the research tradition, the research methods, data collection, and data analysis. In other words, this chapter provides the guidelines for conducting the study. In Chapter 4, I provide the findings of the study, including a detailed description of the interviewees and the synthesis of their responses, with the overarching purpose of answering the research question. Chapter 5 is focused on two major issues: (a) to draw conclusions from the findings of the study and (b) to proffer recommendations for addressing gun violence in the United States.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Whenever the issue of gun control emerges in the body politic of the United States, gun advocates and owners cite the 2nd amendment to solidify their rights to own a firearm. Also, as is reported and substantiated by statistics, gun ownership and killings in the United States are the highest in the world (VerBruggen, 2015).

According to (VerBruggen, 2015), the homicide rate in the United States is higher than that of just about any other highly developed country, and it also has much more civilian gun ownership. Furthermore, the American people are much more likely to be killed by guns compared to citizens of other industrialized countries, as a survey of global homicide rates affirms. In 2010, homicide rates in the United States were 7 times higher than an average of the rates of other high-income countries; this rate is largely fueled by the gun homicide rate in the U.S. that is about 25 times higher than others (White, 2015). The findings suggest that there have been growing concerns about the increase in homicide rates. Because of the concerns due to the increase in homicide rates, certain sectors of the population seek greater regulations for gun ownership.

Investigative research as to the causes of higher gun violence and deaths in particular cities have looked at the growing homicides but have not examined the perceptions about the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in the District of Columbia.

Against this background, using Washington D.C. as a case study, I sought to help fill the gap in the scholarly literature on the relationship between homicide rates and gun

laws. In this study, I identified the subjective experiences of gun violence according to 8 participants from the District of Columbia. Information shows that approximately 30 Americans are killed with a gun daily and another 151 are taken to healing centers as a consequence of firearms (National Crime Victimization Survey, 2015). Likewise, each day, approximately 55 individuals commit suicide with a weapon, and 46 individuals are killed accidently with guns (National Crime Victimization Survey, 2015).

In this chapter, I describe the strategic search for relevant materials for the literature review. Studies related to how gun violence are directly linked to failed regulations in the District of Columbia were pertinent to the literature review. The literature review contains research on several aspects of gun violence, recent and former studies that surround gun violence in the United States, the debates on the constitutionality of gun control, and the arguments for and against gun control's efficacy, starting with the theoretical framework. The main sections of this chapter are the Literature Search Strategy, Organization of the Literature Review, Literature Review Related to key Variables, Summary and Conclusions, and Theoretical Framework. With exploration and review of the literature, the policy paradox in gun control in the United States is revealed as an essential issue challenging the implementation of gun control policies. More importantly, this exploration of past literature can reveal the need for additional clarity and additional information on gun violence problem and solutions from the standpoint of those who encountered or witnessed gun violence.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the perceptions about the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in the District of Columbia.

Even though the District of Columbia has one of the toughest gun laws in the United States due to state level policies, the nation's capital has had one of the highest homicide rates in the nation for many years, mainly in the southeast part of the city. In exploring the homicide rates using this high gun related crime area, the study helped explore whether more gun laws can lower the homicide rates.

Literature Search Strategy

Literature Sources

A variety of sources constitute the actual literature that illustrates the significance of the problem in this study. I used electronic literature retrieval engines such as Google Scholar and the Walden University library. I searched for literature using the databases EBSCOhost, ProQuest Digital Dissertations, and Sage Publications.

Literature Key Search Terms Used

I used keywords and phrases to identify literature, including the following:

Impacts of Gun Violence

Incidence of Gun Violence

Aftermath of Gun Violence

Effects of Gun Violence

Victims of Gun Violence

Gun Violence in Urban Areas

Causes of Gun Violence.

Gun Violence in the United States

Costs of Gun Violence

Debates on Gun Control

Effects of Gun Control on Crime Rates

Gun Control Politics

Barriers to Gun Control Regulations

Research Approaches to Gun Control

Criminal Approaches to Gun Control

Legal Approaches to Gun Control

Behavioral Construct and its Correlation to Gun Controversy

Effectiveness of the Current Gun Control Policies

Effects of the Style of Regulation.

The literature review encompassed peer-reviewed articles, books, studies, and dissertations. Subtopics reviewed resulted directly from references to specific authors and studies, such as the extent of gun violence, and find the most suitable measures and strategies that can be adopted in solving the problem of gun violence. More than 95% of the literature review comprised sources that were published within 5 years of data collection.

The Iterative Search Process

The current literature that establishes the relevance of the problem in this study is derived from various sources. The literature review included peer-reviewed articles, books, monographs, and dissertations. Subtopics reviewed were a direct result of references to specific authors and studies, such as the extent of gun violence, and finding

the most appropriate measures and strategies that can be adopted to solve the problem of gun violence. More than 95% of the literature reviewed was from sources published within 5 years of data collection. The literature includes research on various aspects of gun violence, current and previous studies that surround gun violence in the United States, the debates on the constitutionality of gun control, and the arguments for and against gun control's effectiveness, starting with the theoretical framework.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this study is the social contract theory (Clark & Moore, 2012) coupled with the psychological theory. In this section, I will discuss the major tenets of each theory. Collectively, the major elements of the two theories will serve as the theoretical roadmap for the study.

Social Contract Theory

According to Clark and Moore (2015), social contract theory is the conviction that social requests exist through a mutual contract among individuals and the state to serve the will of the community and its underlying foundations began with Hobbes in 1651, followed by Locke in 1689, and later by Rousseau in 1762. As Clark and Moore continue, Hobbs explained that individuals refrain from their normally warlike inclinations by realizing that war was devastating and that their best interest in the long run is to come together and submit to an authority capable of assuring their security. Later, Locke and Rousseau emphasized the same. Rousseau noted that the legislature gets its power from the assent of the general population. Locke accentuated the role of the person in the public arena and posited that insurgency was the general population's

recourse if the state mishandled its primary duty of providing protection and guaranteeing the security and rights of each member of the population as a citizen. To guarantee open security to all residents, numerous governments, such as that of the United States and the United Kingdom, deemed the best choice is to surrender some of their rights for administrative control over this assurance. The social contract theory is an indispensable part in the current criminal justice framework.

This idea of the social contract hypothesis, particularly that of Locke, Hume, and Rousseau, shows current state of gun violence, including the criminal equity framework. The social contract hypothesis of Locke et al. depended on the possibility that people lived in a condition of nature, which, as Locke saw it, was a position of peace that did not have any sort of common initiative or power (Moustakas, 1994). In these individuals had their own rights to look for equity for violations submitted against them in whatever mold they felt were fitting. In Locke's Second Treatise, he wrote about the possibility that because each and every individual is not similarly suited to go up against the part of being the judge, jury, and killer, it is to the greatest advantage of society to surrender these rights for a common society where the state went up against the part of looking after request (Moustakas, 1994).

Substantial portions of the thoughts in the essays shaped Locke, Hume, and Rousseau cited in Barker, E. (1962) social contract hypothesis emulates the cutting edge of criminal equity framework. Under this state represented society, people would have the flexibility to experience their lives without worrying about assurance. In any case, Locke et al. likewise raised the thoughts that people have the rights to engage in conflict

with the state's power, when the security from the state is no more accessible or has gotten to be tainted. As per Locke et al, if the official force of a public breaks into oppression and natives are no longer capable of making laws for their own safeguarding, the official power returns to a condition of nature furthermore in a condition of war with the general population (Copes & Miller, 2015). Locke trusted that under these conditions, residents had the privilege and commitment to oppose power and remake a superior government (Clark & Moore, 2012).

The condition that Locke et al. examined in which a subject has the privilege to conflict with state power is an issue that is exceptionally common in today's public and a noteworthy issue in the criminal equity group, particularly in law implementation. Citizens no longer feel safe even within their communities because of the high crime and violence rates. Notwithstanding, these same groups and occupants felt that nearby law authorization and government organizations are in charge of these issues because they are neglecting to give sufficient assurance (Locke et al., 1960). At the point when circumstances such as this emerge in groups, natives return to what Locke (1960) portrayed as a condition of nature. Besides, Locke (1960) recommended that when nationals no longer feel protected by the state, they may opt to deal with matters in their own hands, even in the illegal and illicit manner (Clark & Moore, 2012).

Notwithstanding, the length of the legislature secures and permits the nationals the privilege to gently battle and sort out changes in insurance and government control. In this instance, the administration would not have disintegrated under the conditions depicted by Locke, and natives would be committed to complying with the laws of the

state (Clark & Moore, 2012). Bound by the government implementation of Social

Contract that is aimed at protecting the citizens, individuals felt let down as there has

been a perception of insecurity relative to gun violence, creating a psychological impact

on citizens.

The Psychological Theory

The psychological theory is based on several arguments. One is that weapons

have been labeled as symbols of male supremacy and power; so, in order to counter the

mindset, there is the need for the formulation and implementation of viable policy

frameworks that will guide and help make gun control laws successful (Abawajy, 2012).

This theory also provides a strategic mechanism whereby the behavior of people can be

studied. In this way, a platform can be created to plan for the implementation of other

acts.

The Theory-Practice Nexus

In qualitative research methodology, a researcher is required to incorporate a

theory that guides the research study for the purpose of appropriate study decisions

(Monette et al., 2011). In this sense, the study conducted by Clark and Moore (2012) is of

relevance to the present study. Throughout the research of Clark and Moore, the term

"multilevel" is used to describe a form of data structuring that enables the I to categorize

individual observations into areas that are of interest to the I or study in focus. With a

similar theoretical framework, the collection of individual observations is similar to the

structure of the participants offering their perspectives about gun violence. However, this

study requires an adequate understanding of the causes, effects, and aftermath of gun

violence. In this study, it is important to have a good knowledge of the stimuli, impacts, and consequences of gun violence. Several theories have a clear and comprehensive explanation of events and reasons for existing actions and happenings. The social contract theory entails that gun violence is best or rather can be examined via four levels of concern. The first level is the international one with most historical concern about peace. The second level concerns the central government or ruling power. The third level involves group relations within states. The fourth level revolves around interpersonal relationships among individuals. Because of this, there was four levels of influence to describe a framework that can determine factors placing a person at risk of gun violence (Wolf & Rosen, 2015).

The individual or intrapersonal level control entails that the strong resentful or angry feelings cause a person to use a gun. A form of interpersonal-level awareness is that which communicates awareness to another person or to a group of individuals with regard to gun violence. A form of community or societal level influence is where society members advocate for safe and appropriate child raising methods to prevent any cases of gun violence. Technically, it includes individual responsibility and cultivating of the mind of the child during growth and developmental stages. The fourth framework level entails the societal level influence considering the media offering a significant platform to educate society members about the importance of reducing gun violence (Wolf & Rosen 2015).

Literature Review

Research Approaches to Gun Control

Immediately following a tragedy involving a firearm, there are more calls for more gun control, despite the fact that none of the proposed solutions ever prevented or even mitigated those events (Wozniak, 2015). In response to this, some researchers seem to be swayed by emotional argument (Dierenfeldt et al. 2016; Freilich et al., 2014; Kriesburg, 2012). According to Hargrove (2015), the polarization of Americans regarding the control of firearms has evolved into a complex social and political conundrum that evokes emotional reaction among individuals and groups. There are few, if any, simple perspectives that lead to clear, collaborative, proactive measures that may be taken to move toward a broadly acceptable solution. Generally, a significant portion of the population insists on the right to own and use weapons. They claim that the Second Amendment to the Constitution protects the right of individuals and militia to keep and bear arms. Opposition to this perspective centers on a perceived increase in violence in the United States and focuses particularly on the consequences of the use of weapons in a range of criminal behavior, including robbery, domestic violence, and mass shootings, such as at schools and institutions. It is easy to see a myriad of seemingly logic-based gun cases, which are available in the form of studies and reports conducted both by anti-gun and pro-gun Is (Winkler, 2013; Wolfson, et al., 2016; Woodard, 2015). Criminal and legal strategies are two more approaches upon which these Is based their respective arguments.

Criminal Approaches to Gun Control

Numerous studies contain detailed information about crimes committed with guns (Wolfson, et al., 2016; Woodard, 2015). Victims' police reports and records provided this information. However, it is easy to identify the approach of the I just by looking at various constructs and variables explored within the scope of the study.

From the criminal approach, researchers have shown that the overall use of firearms is not purposed for recreation and sport but have reported an increased use in violent crimes (Killingley, 2014; Woodard, 2015). Handguns have been cited as used for self-defense, particularly among people, who encounter gangs, and in drug markets (Brent, et al, 2013; Cook, 2013; Gray (2014).

Legal Approaches to Gun Control

This study explored legal approaches to gun control, which includes issues of gun ownership, illegal possession, background checks, and gun licensing. Americans highly value their constitutional right to bear firearms, as there exists a state provision recognizing the right of every citizen to legally possess a firearm, though with some exceptions. As it was discussed later, this power expands to gun ownership for security and legitimate self-defense.

Behavioral Construct and its Correlation to Gun Controversy

Most of the times, legal regulations aim at changing the way people behave. Laws might seek to increase or decrease various activities within the community, and owning guns is one of them. Paradoxically, this long course can be the most efficient one, mostly if the regulation changes attitudes regarding an underlying moral behavior. According to

Kriesberg and Dayton (2012), gun control laws can change people's moral attitudes. The need for state or federal government to scrutinize regulated players can also decline drastically (Kriesberg, & Dayton, 2012). For example, regulators of gun violence always wish to reduce the rate of violence by controlling illegitimate gun use, because they feel it is offensive., But still holding that gun possession is relevant for self-defense would associate behaviors involved with a more inoffensive one (Krouse, 2011).

Spitzer's (2015) study focused on behavioral influences on gun policies. He demonstrated that a shared expectation for behavior that came with stricter sanctions in case people disobeyed gun laws was at the heart of the significant attempts to change gun policies. Though norms can be important in influencing people's behaviors, changing social norms about people's safety is hard, especially with the increased rate of crimes and terrorism. In many ways, a behavioral construct, which is explored here, is an element that attempts to explain why opponents or supporters of gun control had been consistently trying to ensure stricter gun control laws in the United States. With the increased rates of violence and incidents of terrorism, Americans believe that their safety is at stake and, therefore, possessing a gun is a human right for self-defense (Brent, et al., 2013; Dierenfeldt et al., 2016; Freilich et al., 2014; Kriesburg, 2012). In that case, promoting self-defense with a gun is a variable attributed to the observed behaviors among the opponents.

Simply put, the success of gun control laws in transforming people's moral behaviors and attitudes is dependent on a variety of variables. Discussed in this study are those relative to cultural identity, which refers to the American gun culture and whether

existing laws address the underlying issues, especially those concerning self-defense and individualism. Lott (2013) found that with the increasing rates of crime and acts of terrorism, people find a need to possess a gun for self-defense. This belief triggered negative attitudes within gun control opponents, leading to the question of what was paramount, whether it was to protect the citizenry rights or to control gun possession when making decisions. As per Blocher (2014), most Americans think they should possess weapons because of their Second Amendments rights. Blocher explained that perhaps one of those reasons could be based on the aspect of individualism and self-reliance. For centuries, owning a gun in America symbolized individualism and self-reliance. From an individualistic perspective, Americans own guns for the purpose of defending themselves or thwarting crimes they are likely to face. For this purpose, gun owners argue that gun-control policies could move this advantage to criminals while others claim that possessing a gun is not the most efficient means of protection.

Recent scholars on expressive law have explained that gun laws can be used to express value, which, in turn, can influence people's attitudes toward self-reliance (Blocher, 2014; Dreier, 2013). Some earlier studies on expressive law looked at the different mechanisms by which gun laws influenced behavior expressively, for example, by controlling peoples' drive to maintain order within the society (McAdams, 2015). Some literature emphasized that some expressive laws provided an important central point in circumstances where coming together was required (McAdams, 2015; Wolfson, et al., 2016).

Bloomberg (2013) noted that although gun ownership had gradually declined, current regulations on guns still permitted Americans to own more guns. He further explained that in early 2000, more than half of all households were reported to have at least one gun. By the end of 2015, this trend was reported to have changed, where the average number of guns an individual could own had already increased. According to Bloomberg, in the 19th century, a single household was allowed to possess only one gun. Bloomberg also showed that through the 20th century, this number had increased to more than four guns per household. These statistics make the point that whatever views people may have about gun control policies, the federal government has a critical obligation to consider these in their policymaking.

Spitzer (2015) highlighted an issue that fueled people's perceptions of the implementation of gun regulations. He explained that through policy coercion, the government would seek to control the behaviors of people who possessed guns. It is a hypothetical construct that aids in the understanding of people's reactions toward their personal security and need to possess guns. Vernick and Webster (2013) reported that for every 100 Americans, there were 89 registered guns. Among the numerous policies developed in the country, regulatory gun policies receive critical controversies because gun owners feel that immediate application of those policies would enact specific rules or sanctions, which would be accompanied by punishments and hefty fines or even long-term imprisonment.

Gun Violence in the United States

Squires (2012) claimed that part of the American culture seems to accommodate what is identified as "gun culture," a phrase that was apparently adapted from Richard Hofstadter's writings that explored America as a gun culture. The majority of Americans who support gun control proposals tend to condemn the long-held gun culture (Brent, et al., 2013). Their argument is that gun culture in America is truly a barrier that has been preventing the enactment of gun control policies (Spitzer, 2015). It is critical to explore the long-held gun culture, for it is one of the main reasons that help in challenging the enactment of new gun regulations. Furthermore, individualism and self-reliance, which seem to be triggered by these long-held beliefs, appear to be the concept accepted by many.

However, in a complex way, gun culture can comprehensively explain pro-gun behaviors, which may pose as a safety concern (Brent, et al., 2013). It is clear that gun culture in America has an undoubted impact on citizens' decisions relative to the regulation of gun use. Besides, the phrase itself summarizes the lengthy connection of Americans and their guns, which can be traced back to the inception of the nation. And has further impacted the American society in which most have adopted guns as part of their culture. Although this is just a small number of the general population, a majority of them are aware of the risks this culture poses to the larger community (Brent, et al., 2013).

The prior section laid out a phenomenological approach toward the deep-rooted (seated) attitudes toward guns. The rationale of individualism and self-reliance, two

constructs that have been examined earlier in this study, are both engraved in the long-held gun culture. This exploration has clearly depicted a hidden path that maybe guides the decisions people make toward gun possession. Research has it that the highest number of crimes committed in the United States are perpetrated with illegally obtained guns (Freilich et al., 2014; Hogan & Rood, 2013; McGinty et al., 2013; Swedler et al., 2015; Wozniak, 2015). Guns averted to criminals are likely to be purchased from unlicensed dealers operating from the black market (Halbrook, 2013b).

Illegally owned firearms are obtained from domestic gun dealers (Jackson, & Sorenson, (2014). This is even more evident from the black market for guns, which is dominated not by organized crimes, but rather by a looser system of gangsters who obtain illegal firearms from domestic manufacturers (Killingley, 2014). Research findings also indicate that criminals get firearms from other people who organize small-scale transfers of firearms from one state to another out of the legal pool (Krouse, 2011; Murphy & Rubio, 2014; Vittes et al., 2013; Wolfson et al., 2016).

Gun Violence in Washington, D.C.

Many studies have been made about gun violence in the District of Columbia in Washington most of which have given the statistics on homicides in the nation's capital. According to McDermott (2015), 105 murders were committed in 2014, 104 in 2013, and 88 in 2012 compared to 162 in 2015. Of the 162 homicides, 119 occurred in the 5th, 6th, and 8th Police Districts located within the southeast. According to the statistics from the Metropolitan Police Department, 51 homicides have been committed from July 31, 2016 to July 31, 2017, 62 from July 31, 2017 to July 31, 2018 inward 8 alone. In ward 7, from

July 31, 2016 to July 31, 2017, 27 homicides have been perpetrated and 25 from July 31,

2017 to July 31, 2018. As these two wards represent the southeast of Washington, D.C.,

the cumulative homicide rates from July 31, 2016 to July 31, 2018 in this part of the city

is estimated at 165. In spite of the multiple of studies done on gun violence in the District

of Columbia, the exploration of the perceptions of the homicide rates in Washington.

D.C. in general and in the southeast have not been addressed.

Costs of Gun Violence

Cases of gun violence are estimated to cost the United States Security Sector

approximately $229 billion each year (Secretariat, 2015; The United States Congress,

2014). However, the lack of stricter gun policies will push criminals to persist in

committing crimes using guns. Kellner (2015) noted that an interdisciplinary background

check on those purchasing new guns had not been critically exercised; thus, many guns

fall into the arms of criminals. Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (P. L. 103-159)

calls for every person purchasing a new gun to undergo a critical background check.

Consistent with Kellner's (2015) observation, Hemenway and Arbor (2014) reported that

despite Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, 40 percent of gun transactions are

conducted without critical background checks in the United States. Therefore, to control

gun violence, there is an urgent need to seriously improve the security systems that will

refrain criminals from acquiring firearms to destabilize public safety. Most states use less

stringent gun policies that they perceive to be less effective (which they feel are less

efficient). Sophisticated and systematic research based on gun policies can help to better

understand the challenges that these systems have been facing in attempts to restrain gun violence.

Recent studies indicate that gun control policies, such as the Gun Control Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-618) and Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (P.L. 103-159), do not reduce the rate of gun-related crimes. A study conducted by Santaella et al. (2016) clearly indicated that there exists a substantial correlation between increased gun crime rates and state gun control laws. It is true that the United States has nearly four times more gun violence than all other developed countries. In a recent study, Mann and Michel (2016) reported that although the United States made up less than 5 percent of the global population, it owned 42 percent of the world's privately-owned firearms. In addition, states with the highest crime rates also have the highest gun ownership rates (Mann & Michel, 2016; Santaella et al., 2016). Mann and Michel (2016) blamed poor gun control policies for these crimes and argued that the existing gun laws and gun control proposals no longer worked as expected.

Mann and Michel (2016) scrutinized some variables that tended to deter proper enactment of stricter policies in some states, in order to support the above argument. Negligence was the most significant variable explored. Their study revealed that gun control lobbyists had a stranglehold on the right for people to own guns, and a restriction to gun ownership could mean a violation of the right to self-defense. Mann and Michel (2016) cited that gun control opponents argued that further restrictions and policies could invade on legal rights and the inherent rights of the citizenry in a free nation. Here, negligence was found to exist where opponents failed to consider the risks that guns pose

to the society beyond self-defense and living in a free country. The lawful standard requirements of people's safety are not met by such reasoning.

The statistics documenting the incidence of gun violence and their effects on citizens are critical and disturbing. Presently, patients visiting hospitals for gunshots comprise about 53.8 percent (Abu-Lughod, 2015; Heide, 2014; Killingley, 2014; Suzan et al., 2012). Previous literature was driven more by the level of violence rather than on procedures that could be implemented in order to reduce the unlawful use of firearms. For example, policies that require gun users to pay hefty fines may reduce the rate of gun violence as well as the costs of treating firearm injuries. Is have not fully explored ways in which the American gun culture makes it even harder for the implementation of such sanctions (Abu-Lughod, 2015; Heide, 2014; Killingley, 2014; Suzan et al., 2012).

The controversial debate relative to gun control has triggered many issues such as, but not limited to, individual behaviors and the role of both state and federal governments in controlling gun-related crimes. Nonetheless, the foremost concern relative to public policies and their influence on order as well as citizens' behaviors appear to always be at the center of the debate. Consistent with this perception, the following section addresses the first construct, which is the behavioral construct that is based on individual response to gun policies and regulations.

Tonry (2013) argued that an increase in the number of fatalities would be evident if the problem persists. The literature review focuses on illustrating, recapitulating, appraising, scrutinizing, and synthesizing the literature on gun violence in the United States, specifically in the District of Columbia. The chapter will provide an account of

previous studies on the subject matter of gun control and violation acts. A literature review goes beyond the investigation for information and includes the expression of the relationships, which merge the literature and research findings (Tonry, 2013). Although considering some of the major extant literature and treatise on the American gun culture and the effectiveness or otherwise of gun control laws, and measures to curb rising gun-related crimes even with strong enforcement of laws, including the need for licenses and thorough background checks, the fact remains that laws are just not enough to enforce gun control and prevention of firearm-induced violence. Furthermore, the research will explore the Gun Control Act of 1968 (P. L. 90-618) and the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (P. L. 103-159) for their impact, effectiveness, and barriers.

According to Phillip et al. (2015), the question is whether adults should be allowed to carry guns, which are concealed, or store guns in safety away from children. Winkler (2013) argued that over the last few decades, guns have contributed to the depreciation of the American culture and ownership of guns can be rooted in the birth of the United States of America. The activity has resulted in cultural changes that concur with the people's belief that the American Constitution protects gun ownership.

According to Whitlock (2012), gun control measures were initially meant to oppress African Americans. However, after the Civil War, the North allowed soldiers to take firearms irrespective of their ethnicity. Since then, even the African Americans who did not fight in the war were allowed to not only purchase but also own guns (Whitlock, 2012). Today, the United States has become a victim of a series of gun violence that has resulted in increased criminal activities leading to the death of innocent citizens. These

activities include homicidal events, robbery with violence and suicide actions. The government has made efforts aimed at developing the best policies to govern the nation and reduce gun violence at a significant rate (Wilson & Petersilia, 2012), such as the Gun Control Act of 1968 (P. L., 90-618) and the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (P. L. 103-159). In the United States, gun control and gun rights are operating at mutually exclusive premises. While one side takes a state of tyranny, the other side assumes a state of benevolence. One of the sides argues modern progress, while the other side rests its claims on tradition. Anthropologists established that defensive use of guns in deterring crime is more frequent than official data released by the government indicates (Greene & Marsh, 2013; Metzi & MacLeish, 2015). Accumulating statistics shows that widespread ownership of guns reduces the rate of crime because the cost of committing this criminal crime is increased. Armed crime victims lead to a high stake, limbs and lives. Some Is claimed that it is evident that gun control has the likelihood of reducing crimes related to gun ownership (Kleck & Barnes, 2014; Lacombe & Ross, 2014).

From a cultural perspective, high crime rates are cumbersome because it means the government needs to commit a significant pool of public resources toward enforcement, legislation and adjudication of gun control laws (Hamilton & Kposowa, 2015; O'Brien, Forrest, Lynott, & Daly, 2013). As deemed by the topic of the study in focus, the presence of both new and more stringent gun cultural policies is necessary in this country for the safety of its citizens, as well as for the successful decrease in the incidence of gun violence. The gravity of this issue, however, can also trigger a culturally polarizing impact, resulting in major division across government ranks for combat

(Hamilton & Kposowa, 2015; O'Brien et al., 2013). Due to this notion, gun control issues are also referred to as "wedge" issues. In fact, according to Is, there are few issues as polarizing as the issue of guns and gun control (Hamilton & Kposowa, 2015; O'Brien et al., 2013). Guns can evoke deep feelings among Americans, sparking debates left and right. High profile gun violence cases like mass school shootings have swayed many Americans toward believing that guns are unsafe to own, while others feel strongly about guns as safety measures, whenever there are proposals to reduce the number of guns that can circulate in the public (Hamilton & Kposowa, 2015; O'Brien et al., 2013). According to some, guns are labeled as deadly, and ownership immediately deems those that come into contact with the owner as susceptible to a potential risk of gun-related violence (Hamilton & Kposowa, 2015; O'Brien et al., 2013). For this reason, the creation and enforcement of government-enforced policies surrounding gun ownership are complicated, involving debate from two sides with opposing perspectives.

Due to the heated debate and the ongoing concerns surrounding gun control, studies remain ongoing about factors associated with the development of more stringent policies (Newman & Hartman, 2015; Spitzer, 2015). This country has more pro-gun advocates than anti-gun activists. For example, Republicans tend to side with the anti-gun control defenders, while Democrats tend to support the pro-gun control advocates. (Jones & Stone, 2015; Singh, 2015). Party lines have only offered rough guidelines that contradict each other nationwide. Even with the efforts supporting the fight against gun ownership, some citizens are politically apathetic about using constitutional powers to kill. This is because this country has become one where people relish in the freedom to

equip themselves to kill, whether for matters of self-defense or otherwise, even whether it is even necessary or not (Kleck & Barnes, 2014; Kleck, 2015). With time, it would be farcical for the government to reduce the number of legally used bullets in a magazine of semi-automatic guns, hence the gun control (Kleck & Barnes, 2014; Kleck, 2015). Currently, citizens can still freely purchase and exchange weaponry online (Kleck & Barnes, 2014; Kleck, 2015).

Guns have been reported as the main cause of deaths in this country, with high rates of people expected to die annually from complications due to gunshot wounds (Kleck & Barnes, 2014; Kleck, 2015). Reports indicate that a portion of these deaths occurs in relatively tiny urban areas. The' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015) has asserted that, on average, 93 Americans die from gun violence each day. Every Town Research gathered five-year-average of data from the CDC, which demonstrated that seven children and teens are killed with guns in the country every day. According to this same study, approximately 50 women were killed by their partners, due to the use of a firearm every month. Black men were found to be 14 times more at risk than white men of suffering from a fatal gunshot wound (Every Town Research, 2017). Additionally, the country's gun homicide rate is 25 times higher than other high-income countries' average rates (Every Town Research, 2017). Certain statistics may convince citizens that they have a limited chance of falling victim to gun violence. However, in order for people to become interested in an issue, they must be convinced there is a high likelihood of them being directly affected by the issue (Devi, 2016).

Debates on Gun Control

Mass shootings that have caused tragedy, such as the ones that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, where most of the victims were children, and the movie theater at Century Center in Aurora, Colorado, have triggered even more political debates about the effectiveness of existing gun control laws (Faria, 2013; Fox & DeLateur, 2014; Jena, Sun, & Prasad, 2014). Usually, these debates focus on the constitutionality and the effectiveness of regulating firearm and ammunition possession and use (Cooper, 2015; Swanson et al., 2016). Unfortunately, most of the debates contain fallacious arguments expressed in poor rhetoric, with complete disregard for scholarly studies done on the issue (Duerringer & Justus, 2016; Gray, 2014). The debate over gun control has now spanned more than two decades and evidence-based studies remain lacking (Gray, 2014). Recognizing a need for firearm-related studies as mass shootings happen in higher frequency, former President Barack Obama issued 23 executive orders linked to firearms and asked federal government agencies to be more aware and knowledgeable about gun violence, from its causes to the strategies that can minimize the health problems brought associated with gun-related complications (Lang, 2016; Tzoumis, Bennett, & Stoffel, 2015).

The very definition of gun control has been subject to debate, as it is quite vague and therefore associated with a range of meanings and interpretations (Cooper, 2015; Swanson et al., 2016). Despite the differing definitions, gun control laws generally prohibit the possession, sale, or use of specific firearms. However, some gun activists claimed that this runs counter to the Second Amendment's protection for owning firearms

(Blocher & Miller, 2016; Rosenthal, 2014; Stroebe, 2015), which is why the constitutionality debate arose. This debate is based around various interpretations of the Second Amendment of the United States Constitution, which states that, "a well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed" (Hill, 2016). Two key perspectives surround this debate (Gray, 2014; Thompson, 2016; Weissman, 2013). These perspectives include the right of the people to possess and use arms, wherein to prohibit anyone from owning guns is not considered constitutional. The second perspective contends that because the constitution stated, "a well-regulated militia;" the framers of the Constitution intended this to only restrict Congress from passing laws prohibiting the state's right to self-defense but does not grant individuals the right to possess or own firearms themselves (Thompson, 2016; Weissman, 2013).

The United States vs. Miller (1939) case can be considered a landmark ruling because many acknowledged it as the first ever Second Amendment test case (Harrison, 2016; Schildkraut & Hernandez, 2014). In 1934, Congress enacted the National Firearms Act (NFA), which was a tax on firearms. The NFA focused on the so-called "gangster weapons," by taxing the manufacture, sale, and transference of silencers, machine guns, and both shotguns and short-barreled rifles. The NFA mandated that these firearms be registered (Appelbaum, 2016; Hill, 2016; Schildkraut & Hernandez, 2014). More importantly, because the taxes levied against these gangster weapons were so high, even more than the price of the firearm itself, ownership has become unattainable to many. The registration requirement was also directed at "gangsters," because legislators knew it

was doubtful that any criminal would even come forward and register their firearms, being they would also have to provide fingerprints (Appelbaum, 2016; Hill, 2016; Schildkraut & Hernandez, 2014). Several cases took place after the NFA was enacted, such as cases when the Court strengthened the Second Amendment's ability to protect individuals' right to own and bear firearms (Johnson, 2015). The McDonald v. Chicago (2010) is a known case, whereas in 1983, the city of Chicago, Illinois enforced a law banning individuals from possessing unregistered firearms and for all gun owners to register firearms on a yearly basis (Arthur & Asher, 2016; Johnson, 2015; Patton et al., 2016). The Supreme Court overturned the ruling of the lower Court with a vote of 5-4, holding that individuals may own firearms under the Second Amendment and that the Second Amendment is fully applicable to states (Arthur & Asher, 2016; Johnson, 2015; Patton et al., 2016).

Apart from constitutionality, the debate centers on effectiveness. The debate on the effectiveness of gun control laws naturally has two sides: those who believe laws are an effective deterrent to gun violence; and those who claim that gun control is not a solution to less violence (Gius, 2014; Jones & Stone, 2015; Lott, 2013; Spitzer, 2015). Gun control advocates, in particular, claimed that the country could look to Australia to see how effective fewer and regulated firearms are in reducing crimes. Australia is a good example because the two countries have many cultural similarities, including their histories of private gun ownership and frontier mentality (Sarre, 2015). In addition, like Australia, the United States has a large population of people living in urban areas. In Australia, it could be seen that the passing of the National Firearms Program in 1996,

which means firearm laws were no longer left to states and territories, led to several positive changes. For instance, following the passing of NFPIA, Australia's suicide and homicide rates were significantly reduced, figures show the following percentage changes in police-recorded crime across Australia from 2001 to 2011: fraud down 12%, arson down 14%, criminal damage down 22%, theft down more than 30% and burglaries and robberies down 50%. Even the numbers of homicides, which usually remain relatively stable, decreased by 23%. Car theft was down a staggering 60%, a trend that continues today (Sarre, 2016).

More studies showed a link exists between high levels of fatal violence and visibility of firearms, concluding that gun control laws must be effective in curtailing gun violence (Gabor, 2016; Schaechter & Alvarez, 2016). Apart from Australia, both Canada and New Zealand were often cited as examples that restrictive firearm regulations are important for reducing violence, especially those involving the use of firearms (Allan, 2015; McPhedran, Baker, & Singh, 2014). The Is concluded that firearm regulations can only lead to less violence because firearms would stay out of the wrong hands and criminals will not have guns to use to carry out ill intentions (Gabor, 2016; Schaechter & Alvarez, 2016). However, there are also strong oppositions made against gun control laws, which range from claiming firearm ownership is a constitutional right, is defensive protection, and is a crime deterrent. Those who claimed that owning guns is a constitutional right often cite the fact that in the 20th century, between 100 and 170 million people suffered and died from the actions of their own governments (Benton et al., 2016; Gray, 2014; Lott, 2013). For them, firearms may act as a deterrent for rogue

government behavior that can put them and their families in danger. Those who made

crime deterrent as their main reason claimed that personal security can longer be

guaranteed by the state. Citizens need to buy guns so that they can survive in a society

with high rates of violent crime as well as civil disorder. An armed victim is believed to

be a deterrent for criminals (Braga & Weisburd, 2015; Kleck, Kovandzic, & Bellows,

2016; Nobles, 2014). Lastly, several studies showed that gun control laws do not lead to

the reduction in violent gun-related crimes. According to them, a majority of crimes are

not carried out with the use of firearms. Statistics show that even though in the 1990s,

violent crime rate fell significantly from the rate in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the

number of firearms owned privately has continuously increased by millions since the

number was measured and monitored from the 1950s (Braga & Weisburd, 2015; Kleck et

al., 2016; Nobles, 2014). These Is implied that firearm regulations have had little or no

impact on crime. Therefore, according to these perspectives, gun violence is not going to

be resolved through gun control laws.

Effects of Gun Control on Crime Rates

Studies on the effects of gun control on crime rates have reached inconclusive

findings. Some Is found gun violence to have little impact on crime rates. In particular, as

previously stated, requiring a license to possess a gun in ones' home had no effect

whatsoever on reducing violent crimes and neither did requirements on an application to

purchase a gun have an effect on reducing violent crimes (Jones & Stone, 2015; Kleck &

Patterson, 1993; Pederson, Hall, Foster, & Coates, 2015). Bans on the possession of guns

by addicts and alcoholics, the purchase of guns by a minor, or on the carrying of

concealed weapons and open handgun carrying permits were also not found to reduce gun-related crime rates. A mandatory add-on penalty for crimes committed with a gun was not found to be an effective deterrent either (Lott, 2013; Matt & Michel, 2016).

This section has reviewed the most pertinent published reports regarding how effective gun control laws are at reducing murder rates. The findings in this study unequivocally showed that bans on gun ownership do not reduce homicide rates. Rather, they, in fact, appeared to do the contrary, resulting in higher homicide rates. The rationale stated in the studies reviewed assumed that individuals committing crimes are deterred by the thought that victims may be in possession of a gun to protect themselves, their family, their property, and also that this fact deters many would-be criminals. Findings of these studies included that bans on gun ownership did not reduce the numbers of criminals who own guns, but instead reduced the numbers of law-abiding citizens who own guns, which would explain the rationale for the reduction of crimes in states that do not have bans on gun ownership (Lott, 2013; Matt & Michel, 2016). In other words, in states where gun ownership is banned, law-abiding citizens will abide by the law and be without the advantage of the protection of a gun, whereas criminals, who do not abide by the laws and who have no regards for what is or is not legal, will purchase guns off the black market and own a gun, despite bans on gun ownership (Jones & Stone, 2015; Kleck & Patterson, 1993; Pederson et al., 2015). For some Is, it was found that the outcome of laws that ban gun ownership seems to be that the individuals who need the gun to protect themselves, their family, and their property are left defenseless against the criminal

element, who will own guns, regardless of any laws banning gun ownership (Bangalore
& Messerli, 2013; Kalesan et al., 2016; Siegel, Ross, & King, 2013; 2014).

Some studies have concluded that gun ownership is not nearly as dangerous or
unsafe as assumed (Bangalore & Messerli, 2013; Kalesan et al., 2016; Siegel et al., 2013;
2014). It would seem that the causative correlation between gun ownership and crime
rates does not move in the direction assumed by gun control advocates. Rather, calls for
legislation on gun control is more often the result of higher crime rates instead of the
answer to them (Bangalore & Messerli, 2013; Kalesan et al., 2016; Siegel et al., 2013;
2014). An early study conducted by Hunt (2001) suggested that the argument for strict
gun control is based in part on the moral repugnance toward the use of violence. Since
guns are designed with violence as their ultimate aim, it stands that guns should be
viewed as morally repugnant. However, such a position necessitates divorcing the
violence employed from the context in which it is used, self-defense being the most
obvious (p. 44). Although gun control is often discussed in a context involving
perspective, the reality is that all citizens, regardless of whether they are hunters or if they
are gangsters, observe the degree to which guns negatively affect the community
(Bangalore & Messerli, 2013; Kalesan et al., 2016; Siegel et al., 2013; 2014). The fact
that gun supporters can have different reasons for wanting to own guns brings even more
confusion to the matter. Some individuals live in risk-free areas, but simply wish to own
guns, while others live in dangerous conditions and require guns to remain safe
(Bangalore & Messerli, 2013; Kalesan et al., 2016; Siegel et al., 2013; 2014).

Halbrook (2013b) surveyed many kinds of literature on the effects of gun control on crime rates. As a component of this extensive study, Halbrook (2013b) reviewed numerous studies that use state and national data. He observed that the majority of those studies found that gun control could lead to a significant reduction of crimes. A distinct characteristic of pro-gun studies clearly indicates negligence in the examination of relevant control variables. For example, Woodard (2015) concluded his study on the foundation of an active zero-order relationship between gun possession and gun-related violence. Woodard's (2015) study tended to suffer from omitted variables, hence, leaving some gaps in the literature.

This study helped bridge these deficiencies by examining every possible variable and constructs that would be of great significance in drawing a certain inference. Given the fact that empirical literature has consistently failed to resolve controversies surrounding gun control, this study explored this topic further. The application of stand-your-ground laws in some states was also explored to present some of the inconsistencies in law application. Approaches studied here required that this assumption be explicitly examined to help provide the most efficient solution to the issues facing gun control.

Gun Control Politics

In today's ever-changing society, public opinion on matters regarding security should be critically considered in policy-making processes. Political agendas shape contentious debates concerning gun control issues rather than rational reasoning (La Valle, 2013). Policymakers are called to seek out, analyze and use the best available approaches for policy development and implementation to achieve optimal results for the

best interests of the people. La Valle (2013) argued that some gun control opponents, such as the National Rifle Association (NRA), should change their self-centered reasoning to ensure that people do not have access to more guns. In this regard, the creation of stricter policies that regulate gun use, as well as the sale of guns, is a requirement that policymakers must meet. Numerous Is have also highlighted the presence of different motivators for gun control opponents to oppose efforts proposed to solve issues regarding gun violence.

Although not discussed in this study, pork barrel legislation is a motivator used by politicians to give tangible benefits to various pro-gun groups in hopes of winning their votes in return (La Valle, 2013). According to Investopedia, pork barrel politics has been existent in the United States' legislative and, to a lesser degree, executive branches since the 1800s. Generally used in a derogatory way, it refers to the practice of politicians trading favors granted to constituents or special interest groups in exchange for political support, such as in the form of votes or campaign contributions. Also known as patronage, pork barrel politics generally is funded by the larger community but primarily or exclusively benefits just a particular segment of people. Examples of wasteful government spending are found each year in the budget proposed by Congress. One such pork barrel project funded in 2011 benefited Montana State University, which was awarded more than $740,000 to research the use of sheep grazing as a means of weed control.

The gun debate has come to have a specific political nature. The country currently has approximately 20,000 laws and regulations aimed at controlling firearms. In spite of

this, tens of thousands of people die on a yearly basis as a result of guns. As the number

of firearms is constantly increasing, the authorities have attempted to respond by

installing harsher regulations and trying to identify flaws in the system (Kwon et al, 41).

Gun control activists consider the National Rifle Association as one of the principal

reasons why the legislative process is corrupted in its mission to achieve goals associated

with laws meant to limit the number of guns (Anestis et al., 2015; Hardy, 2015; Steidley

& Colen, 2016). According to Jacobson (2017), the Post's focus on members of Congress

also means it doesn't include NRA donations to candidates for federal offices other than

Congress, or to parties or party committees. If you add together all of the NRA's

contributions to candidates, parties and leaders of political action committees between

1998 and 2016, it comes to more than $13 million, according to calculations from the

Center for Responsive Politics' database. That's more than three and a half times larger

than their direct contributions to current members of Congress. But there's more. NRA

spends millions more intervening in campaigns and lobbying. This influenced the

activists to go to courts themselves in hopes of achieving justice in the matter and further

make gun laws harsher. "In response to these lawsuits, the gun industry, with help from

the NRA, has turned to state legislatures and Congress for protection" (Lytton, 2014, p.

152). A number of bills emerged from this conflict, as state legislatures and Congress

devised a system that would continue to promote gun ownership among the masses.

Although the NRA has been known to have an influence on the legislative

process, many individuals are skeptical about the exact level of involvement of the

association. The need for guns can also be perceived as a general need – one that comes

from people rather than the NRA in particular. In a way, many individuals who criticize the NRA for its involvement in the gun industry do so because they are not necessarily interested in going through a complex legislative process addressing gun laws in general (Lytton, 2014). Gun control activists often argue that "the NRA mobilizes grassroots opposition to gun control using extremist rhetoric, engages in intensive lobbying at all levels of government, and uses campaign contributions to reelect its allies and punish its enemies." (Lytton, 2014, p. 154)

The way that the gun control community deals with the legal environment in the country is intriguing because it proves that these people trust courts more than they trust the authorities. From their point of view, attempting to control gun ownership through a series of lawsuits can be more effective than attempting to have state legislators and Congress implement harsher gun laws (Lytton, 2014). Even with the fact that concepts such as the Second Amendment are interpretable, both sides involved have strong arguments to support their positions. "Advocates of control use a diverse array of methods-not just econometrics, in fact, but contingent valuation studies, public health risk-factor analyses, and the like to quantify the physical and economic harm that guns inflict on our society" (Kahan, 2003, p. 3). Individuals opposing gun control are similarly prepared to support their convictions, one of their principal arguments being that gun control can actually cause more physical and economic negative effects as victims find it difficult to defend themselves against a potential predator (Kahan, 2003).

Many researchers fail to understand that culture is the main reason why gun-related problems exist in the first place. This also means that individuals who feel closer

to traditions associated with the country's background are more likely to oppose gun control. "Control opponents tend to be rural, Southern or Western, Protestant, male, and white" (Kahan, 2003, p. 4). These people think of guns as being a symbol of positive values, with the most important being the right to self-sufficiency. "Control proponents, in contrast, are disproportionately urban, Eastern, Catholic or Jewish, female, and African American" (Kahan, 2003, p.4). Control supporters also concentrate on the cultural aspect of guns, but they tend to catalogue it as one of the reasons why the country experiences so many problems. They promote values like nonaggression and social solidarity when trying to demonstrate that their position is the correct one.

The debate is surprising when considering that both camps tend to emphasize the same values in some cases. Both groups relate to values like equality and solidarity. It is thus difficult to relate to these values, as they seem to support both positions and only bring more confusion to the matter (Kahan, 2003). Both groups of individuals supporting gun ownership and those who want the government to control it acknowledge the connection between guns and the idea of the power of protection. According to Kopel (1995), "people's taking the law into their own hands has always been a core principle of the American legal system, and the American attitude towards guns is simply one manifestation of that principle." According to this notion, no one can argue that it would be wrong for a person to defend him or herself using a firearm in a situation when this is the only solution available. A criminal performs an illegal act when using any kind of force, regardless whether such force is a firearm or not, while a citizen enforces the law when using force in order to prevent a criminal act from taking place. Although

vigilances are not always appreciated, studies have shown that the majority of the public has the tendency to support such activities, regardless of the circumstances in which it occurs (Kopel, 1995).

Barriers to Gun Control Regulations

Besides Dunn (2015), many researchers have consistently examined a variety of constructs based on individual responses to gun regulations that are established to control gun violence. These constructs have helped to identify the reasons why it has been too difficult for the implementation or the enactment of new gun policies.

For example, Spitzer's (2015) study conducted on politics of gun control noted that whenever policymakers seek to create or enact law stricter gun policies, they tend to receive greater controversy based on the concept of individualism and self-reliance. Individualism and self-reliance are two important variables that cannot be directly measured, but ones that help to infer challenges faced by policymakers over gun control regulations. According to Spitzer (2015), it has become even more difficult for both the state and national government to legislate gun control policies, because pro-gun groups continue to overreact because they feel they are directly affected. It has been evident that from the recent gun debates, politicians seem to center their arguments on protecting individual rights and satisfying needs. Within these arguments, the struggle for personal safety seems to have received more research attention compared to the sake of the broader community (Spitzer, 2015).

The Effectiveness of Current Gun Control Policies

The majority of pro-gun groups are still objecting to the full adoption and reformation of the existing gun laws (Butkus & Weissman, 2014). A wide variety of literature reports that the majority of firearm legislation is ineffective (Calhoun, 2014). For example, with a porous border with Mexico and vast stockpiles of weapons accessible from states with less strict gun control policies, anyone with enough money can buy any weapon freely (DeGrazia, 2014). With the boom of the black market for guns, people can now have access to ghost guns which have no serial numbers and can be transported from one state to another (DeGrazia, 2014). It makes it even more challenging to trace guns used to commit crimes. Therefore, new restrictive policies should address various areas which range from prohibited possession, import restrictions, marking requirements and legal change of ownership (Dunn, 2015)

Research indicates that through restrictive policies, gun control can become more effective and therefore, it is highly recommended that policymakers consider proper reformation of the existing gun laws (Fleming et al., 2016). The establishment of restrictive gun regulations can reduce gun violence in the country as evidenced by Fleming et al., (2016). The same study reported that the reformation of the existing gun laws would lead to a reduction in the access to guns.

Effects of the Style of Regulation

Is Anderson (2014) and Fantz et al. (2016) argued that failure to regulate guns occurs because some policymakers are uninterested or are funded by gun lobbyists not to enact gun policies if those policies would affect them directly. This is to mean that any

attempts to enact stricter gun policies are not likely to succeed due to lack of resources or because of lobbyists, who tend to contend against changes made in gun policies. Therefore, gun control needs a society that supports and facilitates transformative changes (Fantz et al., 2016). These changes require a culture that encourages acceptance, and one that is ready to shed off long-held traditions (Gray, 2014). Gun control also needs leaders who are willing to lead by example. When these requirements go uncorrected, the country will never be able to control gun violence (Gray, 2014). Restrictive gun policies provide frameworks for systematically reducing gun possession, the sale of illegal guns, and, perhaps, provide a framework for imposing sanctions to those who violate those restrictive laws (DeSimone et al., 2013; Santaella-Tenorio et al., 2016).

Summary

The review of the literature found that changes that would help in decision-making should be included in proposals relative to gun control policies. Policymakers should first consider the severity of gun violence in the United States and then consider the intent of the policies developed to ensure that those policies address the widespread issue. Their efforts should be proactively based on the three approaches that are discussed in this study, which are rational, criminal and legal approaches. Focusing on these approaches will ensure that gun control regulation is left to the national and state governments to decide because it is an issue that affects both policymakers and the public alike.

The study has explicitly explored the assumption that stricter gun control laws can be primarily used to monitor gun bearer's behaviors. With that, numerous studies have shown that stricter gun laws can change people's attitude with the assumption that through sanctions accompanied by those laws, policymakers can inflict fear; hence, they can change people's attitudes toward the gun. Therefore, legal strategy has been demonstrated as the most effective means of controlling gun violence. The initial assumption is that stricter regulations can eliminate most of the challenges policymakers have been facing when trying to enact and implement gun-control policies. Considerable research on American culture has shown that in many ways the long-held gun culture plays a significant role in framing challenges faced by law enforcers. The American gun culture tends to model people's reasoning toward gun control, and an amorphous group of people tends to blame this culture for the difficulties that have been experienced in gun control efforts.

However, the establishment of new gun control policies can only be effective if only the ineffective security structures are collapsed and rebuilt afresh. America seems to suffer from an appalling number of gun laws and related deaths each year where thousands of people die from gun injuries. Unfortunately, every time gun control advocates try to look for ways to reduce the increasing number of gun violence, those opposed to gun control feel like their constitutional rights are being violated. The Second Amendment determines the legitimacy of their argument, which specifically allows people to use guns in whichever way they deem right. For that reason, this study is designed to show that policymakers need to call for the reformation of the entire

legislative amendment to ensure that it does not place barriers for the creation of new gun regulation policies that are less likely to be even more efficient.

Finally, the contemporary debate in the country has failed to determine whether gun control is effective. While supporters from both sides have strong arguments, the country's cultural values and background make it difficult for the authorities to actually do something regarding the debate. Many individuals and groups turn to courts to address this issue as they prefer to take direct action instead of having Congress implement new laws (Barnhizer & Barnhizer, 2016; Fleming et al., 2016; Hilgard et al., 2016).

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to determine the perceptions about the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in the District of Columbia, specifically in the southeast section of that city. Even though the District of Columbia has one of the toughest gun laws in the United States, the nation's capital has had one of the highest homicide rates in the nation for many years, mainly in the southeast part of the city in Wards 7 and 8. As these two wards represent the southeast of Washington, D.C., the cumulative homicide rates from July 31, 2016 to July 31, 2018 in this part of the city is estimated at 165 (Metropolitan Police Department, 2018). Despite the prevalence of gun violence, debates and divides continue over the impact of more regulations on gun violence. This research will address the research question: In determining the homicide rates using this high gun related crime area, the study will help illustrate whether more gun laws can lower the homicide rates.

The various sections of Chapter 3 provide the steps that were taken to collect data for the study. The main sections of the chapter include the research design and rationale, the role of the I, methodology including data collection and analysis, and ethical issues. These steps are interrelated and interconnected in that they build on one another. For example, I present the selection of participants and logic when discussing the process of data collection and analysis. Finally, I address ethical issues such as trustworthiness and ethical considerations in obtaining access as well as providing participants' protection.

Research Design and Rationale

In this study, I explored the perceptions of the residents of the District of Columbia about gun violence within their vicinity. The importance of this study resides in the fact that despite the many gun laws enacted by policy makers, the statistics on homicides due to gun violence are alarming. Although many prior studies have been done on this topic, they addressed the gun laws and failed to find out the perceptions of the population. As qualitative research was the appropriate design, this study was driven by the following research question: What are the perceptions of residents of the District of Columbia regarding the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in Washington D.C.?

Research Tradition

I used the qualitative research approach as the overarching framework for the collection, processing, and analysis of the data. Within this tradition, I employed the case study method. Achieving a deep understanding of processes and other concept variables, such as participants' self-perceptions of their own thinking processes, intentions, and contextual influences, are identified as the principal objective of case study research (Woodside, 2010). Case studies provide a better understanding of phenomena regarding concrete context-dependent knowledge (Andersen & Kragh 2010; Flyvbjerg 2006: 224). Woodside (2010) affirmed that case study is an inquiry that focuses on describing, understanding, predicting, and/or controlling the individual (i.e., process, animal, person, household, organization, group, industry, culture, or nationality). A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context,

especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not evident (Yin, 1994).

In a case study, the researcher approaches a theme without assumptions or desires and creates a question that extends the examination (Anfara & Mertz, 2006; Moustakas, 1994). According to Creswell et al. (2007), a case study is an inquiry that examines an issue through one or more cases within a bounded system. Case studies provide a better understanding of phenomena regarding concrete context-dependent knowledge (Andersen & Kragh 2010; Flyvbjerg 2006: 224). Case study research involves scientific investigation of a real-life phenomenon in-depth and within its environmental context. Such a case can be an individual, a group, an organization, an event, a problem, or an anomaly (Burawoy 2009; Stake 2005; Yin 2014 as cited in Woodside, 2010).

In this study, understanding the impact of legislation and how it contributes to the reduction of gun violence in the District of Columbia may create awareness of the underlying problem, which is regulating gun violence.

Using the case study design allowed me to collect participants' responses of their interview and to obtain accurate depictions that demonstrated the details of their perceptions. This awareness from my findings, in turn, could be utilized separately, on behalf of the participant, and inside group settings, such as when shared with others. This design allows the analyst to thoroughly portray how people or groups encounter a phenomenon that according to Finlay (2012) influences the way they see it, depict it, feel about it, judge it, recollect it, comprehend it, and discuss it with others.

According to Range (2013), the researcher seeks to obtain in-depth knowledge and presents a clear picture of an individual, a program, or a situation in research using case study methodology.

The essential learning target is to recognize the phenomenon of enthusiasm from the members' recognition and not that of the analyst (Lewis, 2015). Through this case study research design, I was able to explore the perceptions of participants in terms of the phenomenon that affect their environment. The laws have provided me with an in-depth description of procedures, beliefs, and knowledge on exploring the reasons behind gun violence by looking at what these laws attribute to use of gun violence and get the perceptions of the residents to say what they think greater gun violence is due to, in order to compare it to the law.

The Rationale for Choosing the Research Tradition

To choose the proper design for this study, I reviewed several qualitative designs: a narrative study, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. However, the choice of the most appropriate design for the research was determined by the intention of the study and the nature of the data to be gathered. The study involved exploring an individual's life from the past and present, and perceptions of their future. This case study tends to deeply investigate how a person's life in the context of the up-to-date cultural and structural establishment. However, it is limited in that it focuses on the history of individuals to determine a given activity or event. As a result, chances are that the past may not have direct connections with the current life and thus does not provide sufficient materials to draw a valid conclusion (Huber et al., 2016). Narrative inquiry is

the 'study of experience as story' (Hamilton et al., 2008). Furthermore, Hamilton et al. (2008) affirmed that narratives can take biographical or autobiographical forms and be guided by theoretical lens, such as feminism. This research design was not compatible with this study as I was not exploring the biography or autobiography of individuals. The aim of grounded theory is to 'generate or discover a theory' (Creswell, 1998). This theory is grounded in qualitative data from the field (Anderson, 2006; McGhee et al., 2007). This research approach is incompatible with this study given that I was not attempting to discover a theory. As the ethnographic research is a methodical study of persons and their way of life, which aims to investigate cultural occurrence, it is not compatible with my research because it is not predestined to recognize the behavior of a particular group and does not aim at cultural group. Instead, as the study is exploring the perception of the residents of the District of Columbia regarding gun violence, a case study is most appropriate to explore the phenomenon.

The Role of the Researcher

An essential undertaking of any researcher is to convince others with respect to the comfort of the proposed investigation (Seidman, 2013). A scientist can contend that qualitative research prompts rich, point-by-point conclusions and suggestions. It is important that scientists recognize their suppositions as well as biases identified within the study (Pascal et al., 2011). In addition, due to my role as the research instrument, I described any assumptions, expectations, biases, or experiences that could have affected my interpretations of the research. As the essential research apparatus in this case study, I utilized a few iterative measures to maintain a receptive outlook and eliminate individual

biases in the gathering, investigation, and translation of the information. With a specific

end goal in mind, I used Husserl's (1982) idea of the epoch, which regularly alluded to as

"bracketing." Bracketing connotes the disassociation of one's encounters and perspectives

and instead, being mindful of the end goal, to acknowledge the phenomenon from an

objective and novel point of view (Moustakas, 1994). Using bracketing minimized the

impact of my inclinations and improved the objectivity of the examination.

     With the goal of investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life

context, case studies may include observations, interviews, anecdotes, vignettes, direct

quotes, audiovisual materials, psychological testing, documents and reports, analysis, and

naturalistic summaries (Woodside, 2010). Furthermore, Woodside affirmed, "The

richness of detail from these multiple sources makes case studies fascinating. In addition,

the researcher typically provides key issues to illustrate the complexity of the situation.

Often, the researcher ends with lessons learned or implications that might be applicable to

similar cases."

     The analyst needs to recognize the core of the request to determine a strategy that

would yield the best responses to the exploration questions (Palinkas et al., 2015). It is

important that the participants' encounters be expressed in their own particular voices and

not mine. A content investigation was utilized for the portrayal and importance of the

perception through the distinguishing proof of fundamental subjects. I scanned for

repeating regularities, subjects and examples in the information and endeavor to mesh the

topical sorts out into a coordinated entirety. Using Palinkas et al.'s (2015) strategy to

control the investigation, the technique guaranteed the participants' portrayals of their

perceptions are precisely transcribed. Data was evaluated repeatedly for accuracy to guarantee that the correct subjects are connected. Spitzer, (2015) proposed that genuine investigation of data begins with a quest for subjects, which includes the revealing of shared characteristics, common variety and examples crosswise over members. The information was explained by using the accompanying seven stages determined by Spitzer (2015) as an aide:

- Read all the participants' illustrations of the issue under study

- Extract major articulations that relate specifically to the issue

- Make sense of the notable assertions

- Categorize the issues that make sense into groups or subjects

- Integrate the discoveries into a thorough portrayal of the phenomenon being contemplated

- Formulate a scope account of the phenomenon under study

- Validate the thorough account by returning to a few or the greater part of the participants to ask them about their perceptions and evaluate the precision of the discoveries; part checking

- Fuse any progressions offered by the members into the last depiction of the quintessence of the phenomenon

Methodology

Case studies are tailor-made for exploring new processes or behaviors or ones that are little understood (Hartley 1994 as cited in Meyer, 2001). Hence, the approach is

particularly useful for responding to how and why questions about a contemporary set of events (Leonard-Barton 1990 as cited in Meyer, 2001). Moreover, Is have argued that certain kinds of information can be difficult or even impossible to tackle by means other than qualitative approaches such as the case study (Sykes 1990 as cited in Meyer, 2001). Gummesson (1988) argues that an important advantage of case study research is the opportunity for a holistic view of the process: "The detailed observations entailed in the case study method enable us to study many various aspects, examine them in relation to each other, view the process within its total environment and also use the researchers' capacity for 'verstehen'" as cited in (Meyer, 2001).

Achieving a deep understanding of processes and other concepts variables, such as participants' self-perceptions (an "emic view" of what is happening and "why I did what I did") of their own thinking processes, intentions, and the contextual influences, is identified as the principal objective of a case study research (Woodside, 2010). Next, the issues of trustworthiness as well as the ethical issues was thoroughly depicted below, followed by the summary.

Participants Selection Logic

The sampling method was used for having a uniform collection of subject matter for examination and analysis. Criterion sampling was adapted to select cases that convene some prearranged decisive factors of significance (Palinkas et al., 2015). I utilized snowball sampling, which required participants to recruit potential future subjects from their pool of acquaintances. This sampling approach was utilized to select additional participants to provide information that was valuable to this research. Using the approach,

a few participants was approached and asked if they have contact information of others who may share the same characteristics with the requirements of the research (Marcus, et al, 2016). The following predetermined criteria of selection were applied to participants:

- Age 18 or older

- A resident of the District of Columbia

- Directly or indirectly affected by gun violence either personally or through a family member.

- Eight participants

The participants' information was obtained through selection from the residents of the District of Columbia. Those who simultaneously satisfied the inclusion standard and easily open were selected in priority through convenience sampling, thus, serving as a starting point for the me who, in turn, began with convenience sampling, followed by snowball sampling. These participants then formed the sample and offered their opinions, views, and perceptions through personal interviews and answers to open-ended questions. The research consistently noted reoccurring similarities and statements to unveil overarching themes in the participants' experiences. The method was limited to only those who are young members of the District of Columbia Law Enforcement Community in Washington who have clear perceptions of gun violence in southeast D.C. The choice of this population was based on the notion that they may be knowledgeable of the topic under investigation as well as the dynamics surrounding the issue of gun violence. The selected groups of participants were involved in providing a diverse form of perceptions

that developed a holistic picture of the issue under deliberation. Participants offered a detailed review of the topic based on their knowledge and or experience.

Data Collection

Semi structured interviews were the plan for data collection. Once I obtained participants' informed consent, I audiotaped the interviews followed by immediate broad questions. This made the participants comfortable with me before they provided their perceptions on gun violence. Their preliminary answer served as a guide for developing more focused on subsequent questions. I in turn, applied written topic guides to make sure that all aspects of the questions were covered. By interviewing the participants, researchers gain an understanding as far as their experience on the topic to be studied (Mason, 2012)

During these interviews, I was obligated to make the environment as comfortable as possible to allow the participants to discuss topics as freely and as naturally as possible. Researchers' encounters with participants may turn out to be a conversation rather than an interview when the environment is natural (Mason, 2012). According to Mason, interviews conducted by researchers should be almost identical to everyday life conversations. By maintaining an adequate comfort level during the interview, I then probed for greater depth with the interview questions with little to no resistance.

The approval (approval # 06-05-19-0537474) from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained was obtained before data was collected for this study. The approval first occurred at the level of the committee chairperson and the committee members, prior to moving onto the IRB. I completed an application for

submission to the IRB, as well as created PowerPoint presentation outlining the study for the IRB. After the approval was granted by the IRB, I shared the approval number via email to ensure that it was accessible by all stakeholders of the study. Upon fulfilling the IRB requirements, easily approachable participants and those who satisfied the inclusion standard were selected first using convenience sampling. This served as a starting point for convenience sampling. I provided a consent form to all participants and thoroughly read and signed it, confirming their approval to partake in the study. Before the beginning of the interview, participants obtained a written permission for me to audiotape the meeting. Demographic information was obtained, which included the age, the number of years in Washington, DC, the level of education, the gender, the ethnicity, the approximate number of gun violence incidences witnessed if applicable. At this juncture, the semi structured interviews followed at a venue of the participants' discretion, depending on where he or she felt most comfortable, such as their private residence. Then, participants were asked general questions at the beginning to allow them to feel comfortable as they told their insights about their perceptions relative to gun violence. In-depth interviews were conducted to collect data. Besides, other secondary and specialized methods utilized during data collection that supplement the above ones were included.

Qualitative researchers depend relatively broadly on in-depth interviewing. Finlay (2012) describes interviewing as "a conversation with a purpose" (p. 29). In qualitative research, an interview can be compared to the likes of having a conversation with a prearranged response group. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2013), the quantitative research often utilizes structured questions in situations that may otherwise utilize close-

ended questions. As such, participants can only select from answers that are part of a provided list of responses. In this research study about gun violence, however, although numeric data are available about the topic, the quantitative method is not appropriate because it may limit the information collected. This is such because the quantitative method limits the information to be acquired from participants, especially because the researcher is unable to seek clarification on certain aspects of the discussion (Carvalho & White, 2014). Rather than conduct interpersonal interviews via face to face or over the phone, quantitative method utilizes questionnaires, surveys or other informal methods of collecting information that prohibit the researcher from further elaborating (Carvalho & White, 2014). Taking this into consideration, the researcher believes that qualitative methodology is the most suitable technique to use for the research study. Not only does it provide a procedural and systematic way to achieve the objectives, but it also establishes a platform to allow participants to freely discuss their experiences (Birnbaum, 2013), which was fundamental to this research.

This study required four steps to carry out the interview process. These steps included developing a sampling strategy, writing an in-depth guide, conducting the interviews and analyzing the data collected. I started by developing a sampling strategy, which involved determining whom to interview, as well as how to find the people to be interviewed. The target population was any citizen that is 18 years and older who has perceptions on gun violence. Potential participants were contacted in two stages. Recruitment to participate in an in-depth interview was the first stage and those who had

agreed to participate at a prearranged time suitable for them to complete the interview constituted the second stage. I utilized three strategies to recruit potential participants.

The first strategy was by intercept recruiting, which involved inviting potential participants to complete an interpersonal interview. I explained the purpose of the study to the potential participants and scheduled a time for the potential participants and I to complete the research. The second strategy involved the use of posters and advertisements to display throughout the local community. I placed an advertisement in the local newspaper outlining the characteristics of the potential participants and inviting them for an in-depth interview. The third strategy was an invitation to the potential participants by phone. These three strategies represented the requirements of a qualitative, phenomenological case study, which sought to obtain three means of information to use throughout the study.

Following this step was the development of an interview guide. I introduced myself and provided the reasons that prompted this research to be conducted. The introduction topic was expected to be sufficiently informative. I laid more emphasis on the social value of the research. Following the second step, the third step consisted of conducting the interviews. After being recruited for the interview, the participants were offered the opportunity to select the location where the interview was conducted, which may include home, workplace or an appropriate public place as long as it is private. The appointments were scheduled in advance so that the participant and I have adequate time to thoroughly discuss the topic. I started the interview by introducing myself and the study topic, with the objective of putting the participant at ease. Each interview took

between 30 to 60 minutes. During the interview, I explained to the participants that I was only going to be reading the questions and I was not going to be speaking interpersonally to him or her. I asked all participants to turn off all electronic devices, as well as sign an informed consent in my presence after having discussed the material presented via the consent form.

Next, I turned on the recording device, read, and subsequently questioned without inflections or without showing any indication of personal judgment or emotion. I recorded notes about the participant's body language in a journal and read every question in the same order with every participant. I recorded every exchange, from the initial comments to the end remarks.

Upon completion of the interview, I switched off the recorder and spent approximately 10 minutes ensuring the participant did not have any follow-up questions and thanked him or her for the time spent. It was imperative for me to be close to the participants in case they were not willing to offer more details because they were uncomfortable in providing the details I was exploring. In this case, I ought to have excellent listening proficiency and be skillful when it comes to personal relations, structuring of the questions and the moderate inquiring for an explanation (Rubin & Babbie, 2016).

It was possible to obtain unique information that was imperative to the research study in focus during the interviewing process, though it required a considerable amount of time to analyze the participants' responses. Building on Mason (2012), when I utilized the in-depth interviews as the only method of data collection, I established, throughout

the conceptual framework that the principle of the research was to unearth and portray the participants' viewpoints on proceedings. In other words, this meant that the personal outlook of the participant was what deemed most substantial. While executing the actual interview, it was prudent for the me to familiarize myself with the interview schedule, for this assisted in the process of appearing more natural and less rehearsed. Nonetheless, to ensure that the interview was as prolific as possible, I had to convey a collection of skills and practices to ensure that wide-ranging and reprehensive data were collected throughout the interview process. At the end of the interview, I thanked the participants for their time and contribution and asked them whether they had anything else in mind that they would like to share. Depending on the response, the interviewing process would either continue with these final statements on behalf of the participant or conclude.

I prepared memos based on the initial analysis preceding the collection of data. I also listened to the audiotapes collected from the interview and made note of essential or interesting topics that were raised and entirely transcribed the passage. Data then were labeled so that all stakeholders were aware of who provided the information and how it was collected. This data collection and organizing were conducted via the use of Excel. The basic information included:

- The name of the participant

- The location of the interview

- The date and time of the interview

- The methodology applied to data collection, interviews

l created an exclusive identification number, designed a record database for basic information, and developed a filing system. Before these were analyzed, I evaluated the goals of the study, which assisted in organizing data and focused on the analysis. I examined contextual and demographic data. This information assisted in the analysis and the comprehension of the collected data. I started the process of analysis by carefully reading the field notes and interview transcripts and commenting on the margins on the key patterns, issues, and themes in the data. I used colored pens and post-it notes to code the various themes and issues in the data. Once I had developed a preliminary list of codes, I began to organize data in corresponding categories.

The next step which was to recapitulate the main themes as well as draw on appropriate information assisted me in better understanding the findings. I then interpreted the findings, assessed the contributions to impact and summarize, which involved transitioning the data into realistic perspective. This required the process of comparing my results with the initial achievement expectations.

Following this was the triangulation of data sources, which entailed the grouping of multiple methods and perceptions with several data sources so as crosscheck the outcomes of the research. Once the analysis of the qualitative data was complete, I used various participatory techniques to measure similar indicators and then compared the outcomes. When the outcomes appeared to be similar, then they were likely to be accurate. I compared the themes in the observations and the archival data with the interview and noted the changes over time. I approached the participants and asked them

to explain the changes. This stage led to the conclusion, recommendations, and preparation of the draft report.

Data Analysis Method (Plan)

The case study used face-to-face in-depth interviews. After finishing the interviews with all participants of the proposed research, each of the participants' meetings was interpreted verbatim with the utilization of a PC support mechanism to evaluate the qualitative information correlation. In other words, technology was used to process the responses of all the participants and signify distinguish similarities that arose with the participants' collective shares. All participants were recorded as a number, for instance, Participant 1 for the first participant, to avoid using participants' name to maintain confidentiality. The transcribed information was printed and evaluated several times by me, to thoroughly comprehend the information about each of the participants' perception as it was depicted by the participant's point of view. All previous individual encounters, convictions, and states of mind of the participants was disregarded during the transcript reading, remaining mindful of the objective to fully comprehend the extent of the participants' encounters.

After translation of the information, data was returned to the participants for review. It was done to guarantee accuracy. All transcribed files and tape-recorded interviews were placed within a safety deposit box with Bank of America for a period of five years with no personal or identifying information relating the participants to this material. After five years, all paper data was shredded, and the thumb drives, hard drives, audio, and visual records were deleted and destroyed.

Once the codes were developed, all-encompassing and repeating codes were lessened to significant topics. Once the themes appeared and classes were given, I then made accurate findings with the encounters of the members. After the data was understood and coded, part-checking was used to guarantee legitimacy.

Issues of Trustworthiness

According to Yin (2013), reliability and validity in qualitative research do not maintain a similar significance as they do in quantitative research. The prerequisite for reliability is that a I should ensure that the conclusions are aligned with participants' opinions. I did not formulate that resolution but instead offered information to enable such estimations to be achievable. The procedure of confirmability necessitated that I test methods approved through collaboration and substantiate the conclusions.

Furthermore, other adequate measures included the use of several researchers, the use of various sources of information, lengthened commitment and continual surveillance in the area, operating with discrepant information, expounding investigator's bias, constituent examination, offering a wealthy substantial explanation, and external audit (Marcus et al., 2016). The use of numerous springs of information will enable the I to obtain verification of outcomes that will have materialized from diverse groups of participants (Rubin & Babbie, 2016). In addition, these measures are expected to provide quality standards for the procedure.

Ethical Procedures

Ensuring human subjects through examination of morals and controls is more common now than any other time in recent memory (Schultz & Avital, 2011). Applying

the Belmont standards to a study was a suitable start for the investigator. Besides, participants' welfare, security, and rights were guaranteed in priority by me before all individual and investigative concerns.

An additional point to acknowledge in examination ethics was to provide educated consent to participants who wished to withdraw from the study prior to its completion (Schultz & Avital, 2011). Appropriate IRB and moral issues for this proposed study included maintaining the participants' well-being, rights, and confidentiality. Every potential participant received an introductory letter, which clarified the purpose of the study. Consent was acquired prior to the interview. Participants neither incurred any expense nor exposed to any dangers relative to this study. No installment or another type of motivator offered to meet participants was allowed.

Confidentiality of the participant was secured by assigning a number to every participant. All information was transcribed by pseudonyms and this was the main source of recognition data that was connected to any of the participants. Privacy of the participants was ensured by locking the interpreted information in a secured file organizer for a period of five years. Only after then, all information was destroyed. Data was discharged as a major aspect of a doctoral dissertation and the outcomes was published. The information was utilized for auxiliary investigation as a part of future research. For this situation, the personalities of the participants were ensured, and the appropriate ethics review committee analyzed the venture. Publications resulting from the secondary analysis did not identify participants' statements with any description of them. Production

resulting from the auxiliary examination did not distinguish participants' declarations or any depiction of them.

Summary

The chapter has attempted to map out the roadmap that was used to collect and analyze the data for the study. In this vein, the chapter used the qualitative research tradition as its overarching approach. Within this tradition, the study used the case study method, which enabled the in-depth study of the research problem. A sample was selected based on a set of criteria and interviewed as the centerpiece of the data collection process. Thereafter, the data was analyzed.

Finally, in order to ensure that ethical standards are scrupulously observed, the data collection process did not commence, until approval has been received from the Walden University IRB. Once the approval was received, the population from which the sample was chosen was contacted.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Even though the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects the right to use firearms, gun violence has been and remains one of the major societal divides in the United States. Despite gun laws and major policies that have been implemented, the homicide rate in many cities with the toughest gun laws have increased drastically, triggering an outrage, especially whenever a major shooting is perpetrated. This is the case in some cities such as Chicago in the state of Illinois and Baltimore in the state of Maryland. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to determine people's perceptions about the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in the District of Columbia, specifically in the southeast section of the capital city. Even though the District of Columbia has one of the toughest gun laws in the United States, the nation's capital has had one of the highest homicide rates in the nation for many years, mainly in the southeast part of the city. The research question is as follows: What are the perceptions about the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in Washington D.C.?

This chapter consists of several major parts. One is the setting in which data were collected as well as the participants' demographic characteristics. In addition, in this chapter, I describe how both the data collection and analysis procedures described in Chapter 3 were implemented. Furthermore, the chapter includes discussion of the evidence of trustworthiness of the study's results, presentation of the results of the data analysis, and a summary of the results.

The Setting

At a convenient and most comfortable location chosen by the participants, I conducted semi structured interviews. Though some participants opted to use the church facility for their interviews, most of them preferred the public library setting. Relying on Mason (2012) guidelines, I strived for the most comfortable environment where the participants could discuss freely and naturally. Because I maintained a suitable comfort level during the interview, I was able to probe for greater depth with the interview questions.

The Demographics

The sample population for my study comprised 8 residents of the District of Columbia each of whom had been directly or indirectly impacted by gun violence. As some of the participants had observed shooting between gangs in their community, others had experienced gun violence in a variety of forms such as armed robbery. Two of the participants had experienced home violence with gun that led to suicide. Each participant was at least 18 years old. Six participants were female, and four were male. Three of the participants were between 18 and 40 years old, five were between 41 and 60 years old, and two were between 61 and 75 years old. Two of the participants had a high school diploma and 8 had college degrees. The sample contained a representation of all groups defined by me. Perceptions collected represented at least three generations of Americans, the baby boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y. The variation in generational perceptions provided depth in understanding the underlying phenomenon by allowing an insight into the perceptions of multiple generations.

Data Collection

I conducted a semi structured interview with 8 participants in a single one-on-one and face-to-face layout. Interviews were conducted in private rooms at the public library and church. The average time allocated to each interview was approximately 1 hour. I used a digital recording device to audio-record the interviews. During data collection process, no variations in the data collection plan described in Chapter 3 or any unusual circumstances were encountered.

Data Analysis

There were 37 pages of transcripts generated by recorded interviews transcribed ad verbum, uploaded into NVivo 11 software, and thematically analyzed. To analyze the data, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step procedure for thematic analysis. In the first phase, to familiarize myself with its content, I performed an in-depth review of the data collected. In the second phase, initial codes based on key descriptive words and phrases were generated, that referred to the most basic elements of the data that could be significantly evaluated. Through a thorough evaluation of the collected data, I was able to identify repeated patterns that was utilized for coding. The third phase, which consisted of searching for themes, allowed me to develop potential themes in the data, using the codes generated in the previous phase. During this phase, I used an analysis of the codes and the similarities between different codes to form themes. The fourth phase allowed me to review and refine the themes generated in the third phase. The process of refining themes was done by reviewing those identified and looking for any subthemes within the content. In the fifth phase, I defined and named themes. I also further refined themes as I

defined them. In the sixth and last phase, I generated the results presented later in this chapter. Even though I could not contact all participants again for member check, the four who were available provided their feedback regarding the validation and credibility of the data related to the identified themes and acknowledged the validity of the findings. Table 1 displays the themes that surfaced during data analysis, the codes that contributed to them, and a quotation derived from and representing each one. In the presentation of the results below, for the reader to arrive at an independent judgment of the validity of the analysis process, an additional sample quotation from each theme and code are provided.

Table 1

Themes, Codes Contributing to Themes, and Representative Quotations from Themes

Theme	Codes contributing to theme	Representative quotation from theme
Theme 1: Acceptance of legal firearms. This theme reveals that manufacturing and owning guns legally should not be perceived as a problem. The reason is not only constitutional, but also legitimate unlike their distribution that poses a serious problem, owners perpetrate violence with them.	Violence; population diversities; manufacturing; ownership; distribution	"By itself, gun cannot kill or cause harm to a person. It takes its owner to develop a twisted and dangerous mindset contrary to its prime purpose to push the trigger and create violent and tragic situations. (Participant7)
Theme 2: Poverty and inadequate execution of the law. Extensive poverty, ineffective gun policies, and ineffectual enforcement of enacted gun laws are perceived as the major risk factors contributing to violence due to gun.	Considerable high increase of gun violence within the community; high gun violence; correlation between violence and number of guns; inadequacy of current laws; implementation and enforcement of enacted laws; lack of police response; insufficient regulations; socioeconomic status	"There is no doubt that in communities impacted by serious economic hardships, young people are desperate to make a living find guns and crimes to be the only opportunities they have to survive and affirm they demonstration of power and worthiness. (Participant 1) "Current enacted guns laws are absolutely ineffective given the rampant crime rates that the District of Columbia has experienced so far this year (Participant 7)
Theme 3: Self-empowerment of the community. self-help. Perceived solutions to gun violence included community initiatives designed to educate and help potential offenders, to develop a culture of vigilance, and to increase collaboration between citizens and law enforcement	Education; trainings; vocational arts; more emphasis on high-risk groups; enhance more interactions between police and the community;	"A campaign of sensitization of citizens must be initiated, teaching them about the destructive impact of gun violence not only on an individual, but also on the community and showing them how the alternative can change their lives forever. (Participant 4)
Theme 4: Solution to gun violence. Serious mental evaluation of potential gun owners, implementation of stricter gun laws and their efficient enforcement, added to an uneasy process to own guns and targeting illegal acquisition of guns were perceived to constitute a potential solution to the crisis.	Distribution and oversight; enforcement; reduce the number of guns; revision of laws	"Sensible gun laws should be implemented, for instance, banning of high capacity magazines." (Participant 3)

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility is one of the four characteristics of trustworthiness. Establishing credibility is the first and important step to address trustworthiness. In a qualitative study, whenever the outcome of the study is validated by the viewpoint of the participants and triangulation is processed, credibility is established. From this standpoint, the function of the study was to explain the phenomena from the participants' perspective, and the participants, therefore, were the only subjects capable of legitimately judging the credibility of the outcome. Each participant received a copy of the outcome to validate the accuracy of his or her interview, ensuring member check aspect of credibility. As for triangulation, no other way of collecting and analyzing data was used besides the interview.

Transferability

As another one of the four characteristics of trustworthiness, transferability is the ability to transfer and successfully implement the conclusion of a study to a different environment regardless of the locations, times, or communities. It is also important to mitigate the researcher's bias, critical factor in establishing transferability. During the data collection process, the researcher's ability to see things solely in participants' lenses will help achieve that. However, one of the greatest challenges facing the researcher is the ability to hear, understand, and respect other people's point of views. I believe that I have taken the time to carefully listened, understood, and presented "thick description" of the participants as well as the research process. I also believe that I carefully analyzed the

collected data that led to an outcome validated by each of them. Although I believe that I have done my best, I cannot claim perfection. Others were able to confirm or disprove that transferability has been established. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016) asserted, rather than the original researcher, transferability of findings should be left to the reader and the future researcher.

Dependability

The third element of trustworthiness, dependability, is the assurance that the findings will remain stable over time. At the end of data collection and analysis, findings, interpretation, and recommendations have been sent to participants for evaluation, all of whom have manifested their satisfaction with the outcome. I have provided clear description of steps involved in this research throughout the process until its completion and kept the records of the path utilized, thus ensuring the dependability aspect of trustworthiness.

Conformability

Confirmability is the fourth element of trustworthiness. It represents the level at which other researchers could confirm the outcome of the study. Like with dependability, at the culmination of data collection and analysis, findings, interpretation, and recommendations have been sent to participants for evaluation, all of whom have manifested their satisfaction with the outcome. The data and findings in this study did not emanate from my fantasies, rather, undoubtedly from collected data, an essential condition to establish confirmability. However, it is left to other researchers to establish confirmability.

Results

The research question is as follows: What are the perceptions about the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in Washington D.C.? Themes that surfaced from the data analysis are structured to constitute findings. Data analysis generated four themes as depicted in Figure 1, which displays the percentage of participants who contributed to each one of the four themes.
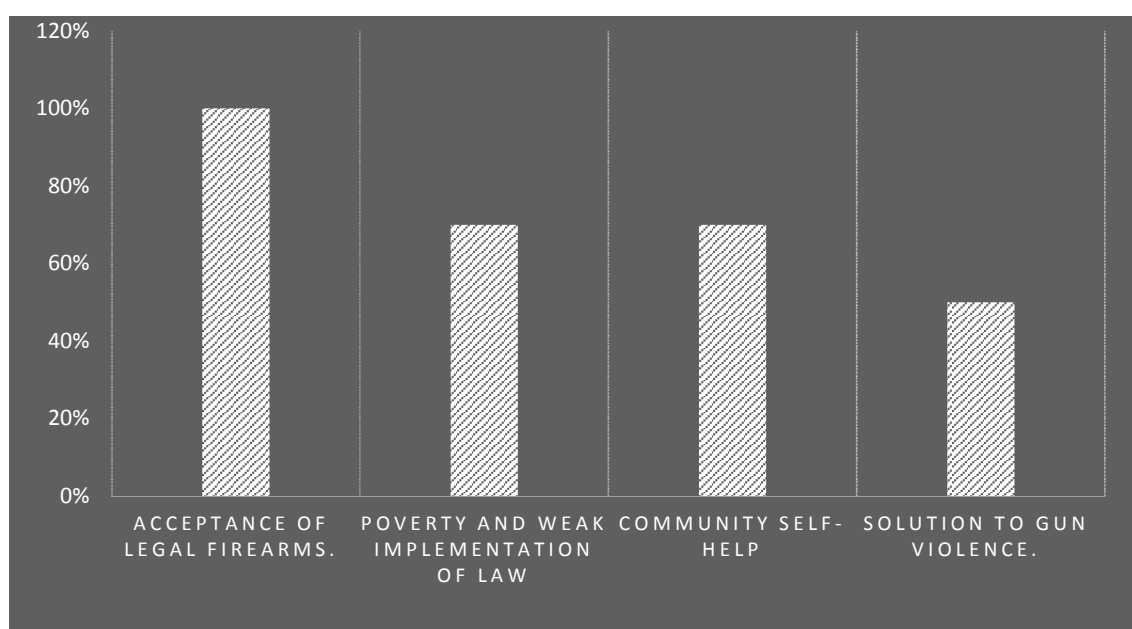
Figure 1. Four key themes emerged from the thematic analysis.

From this theme, coding shows that the manufacturing and legal acquisition of firearms did not pose any problem given the legitimate purpose of using guns. Rather, owners who use guns to perpetrate violent acts, added to gun proliferation pose a serious problem. Most participants perceived gun production to be ethical. Those who approved the legitimacy of gun manufacture found their justification from the standpoint of guns being used for target shooting, hunting, and self-defense. Participant 1 affirmed that

The transformation of raw material to produce finished, usable, and operational guns susceptible to be used for a variety of purposes explained gun production. Since the second amendment of the constitution allows citizens to bear harms, their production is legal given the purpose for which they are produced which are but not limited to, self-defense, hunting, and target shooting. The high demand for guns has triggered a staggering increase of gun production to satisfy the principle of demand and supply.

In an attempt to justify the legitimacy of gun manufacturing, Participant 4 used the legitimacy of their ethical purpose which he claims is first and foremost for all levels of government to protect their citizens and secure their localities. Participant 6 perceived gun manufacturing as a legitimate and acceptable since manufacturers had legitimate purposes of their products:

> Responsible to produce guns in bulks, it is obvious that the gun manufacturing industry is comprised of manufacturers with good intent who undoubtedly believed in the righteous use of their products. They perceived the use of gun to be used primarily for self-protection.

Participant 7 perceived the federal regulatory role in gun production as inevitable and legitimate. He stated that: "Even though guns are produced for security purposes, the government has the obligation and ultimate right to deliver manufacturing licenses to the manufacturers". By doing so, the government can track down the illegal gun producers.

As long as the distribution of guns is regulated to avoid falling into the hands of the "bad guys" as expressed by two participants, or to find themselves on the "black

market" as four participants suggested, most participants unanimously approved of the legitimacy of gun distribution. Consequently, the blameworthiness of gun violence and misuse of firearms has been attributed to ineffective enacted regulations and inefficient enforcement or the laws, rather than the distribution of gun that they don't perceive as being necessary responsible. According to Participant 1, even though gun distribution represents means through which manufacturers supply the users, there are many distribution canals some of which are illegal called "black market" where many illegal gun owners purchase guns for the crimes they commit.

Because some guns used to commit harm could not be identified by law enforcement as they are acquired through black market, Participant 6 found a problem with gun distribution:

Though guns are manufactured for specific purposes such as, but not limited to, hunting, security, and self-defense, in case they cause harm, they can only be traceable if they have been legally acquired. In case guns are bought through unidentified sources, it becomes impossible for the law enforcement to trace them, thus raising the problem of the distribution of guns as a real threat to the society rather than the manufacturing of gun perceived as ethical.

According to Participant 3, there have not been enough legislations to stop the gun distribution process from allowing some guns to be sold on the black market even though most crimes are committed with legally owned guns. The participant further believes that by not being able to be done without guns getting the wrong hands, the distribution of guns is a contributive problem to gun violence and calls for stricter and

more efficient legislative measures to if not put an end to this devastating situation, but to reduce its harmful impact on the society.

Unlike gun distribution that often gets into dangerous people's hands due to unproductive laws, Participant 7 perceived the production of guns to have a legitimate purpose:

> I believe that when firearms are distributed through legal avenues to those who fulfill all the requirements to own one, the society experience less adversities due to guns. However, it becomes unethical when bad citizens illegally acquire these firearms and make the community unsafe by perpetrating gun violence, defeating the initial good intentions for which manufacturers produced them.

Gun ownership was defined by six participants as a legal possession of firearms, making them perceive *gun ownership* as legitimate and ethical. One of them perceived gun ownership to be a possession of guns by potentially dangerous citizens who could jeopardize the safety of the community at large. Participant 7 perceived as most participants that owning a gun was ethical as long as it was not used for a purpose not far from its initial one: "By itself, gun cannot kill or harm anyone as someone has to pull the trigger. In another word, owning a gun because dangerous when the gun is used for violent activities, defeating the purpose for which it was manufactured which is far from causing harm or pain". Participant 3 perceived gun ownership to be both right and entitlement for every citizen:

> The second amendment of the constitution of the United States gives every citizen the right to bear arms. Possessing and keeping a gun is what owning is about.

Manufactured for the purpose of self-defense and military use, everyone is

entitled to owning and carrying a gun.

Participant 6 shared the same perception as Participant 4 by affirming that

Having the right to own firearms empowers the owner to self-defense. Although it

is a constitutional right for every citizen to carry guns, the federal, state, and local

governments have the responsibility to allow only people who are fit to own them

for their protection from eventual aggressive actions.

Participant 7 perceived owning a gun to be legal by definition:

I believe that owning a gun entails the acquisition and possession of firearms for

the purpose of protection within the guidelines of the laws. To own a gun,

everyone must comply with explicit requirements that safeguards their misuse for

harmful actions.

Participant 1 was the only participant who believed that the terms *ownership* and

possession are interchangeable and can be acquired illegally to perpetrate violent actions:

I believe that owning a gun is not different from possessing one. Owning a gun is

the right of every American citizen, bound by the 2nd Amendment of the

Constitution. However, this right has not only allowed citizens legal acquisition,

but also some illegal acquisition by dangerous and ill-intentioned citizens some of

whom suffer from mental illness and who threaten the safety of the society at

large by perpetrating crimes due to guns.

Theme 2: Poverty and Weak Implementation of the Law

In the quest to identify potential causes for gun violence, some factors such as, but not limited to, extensive poverty, inefficient gun laws, and unproductive enforcement of enacted laws have been singled out. Of all participants, seven participants had the perception that extensive poverty constituted a risk for high occurrence of violence due to guns. Social inequality, added to the absence of opportunity, and illegal acquisition of guns have been perceived by participants as contributors to high crime rate due to guns. Participant 1 strongly believed that poor neighborhoods are highly impacted by extreme violence due to guns:

It is obvious to observe that neighborhoods such as southeast in Washington is the most violent part of the district. It is also the less economically favored neighborhood, situation that justifies the high crime rate within that vicinity. As poverty ravages such neighborhoods experiencing economic hardships, gun acquisition replaces the lack of job opportunity. People illegally possess firearms that they use to search for means of survival. With that come the proliferation of drug deal, sales, and use which in turn create a highly unstable and dangerous environment characterized by high crime rate due to guns (Participant 1).

According to Participant 4, race plays an important role in poverty which in turn creates a violent environment difficult to live in as stated in the following:

In the district of Columbia, the highest crime area is the southeast of Washington, characterized by its concentration of blacks who live in poverty due to their economic hardships. When we observe the northwest part of the city like in

Georgetown, we discover a neighborhood of Caucasian citizens with a high economic ease who face mere frequency of crime due to guns. Unlike the southeast were less citizens are educated; the northwest has rate of educated citizens. This contrast clearly reveals how racial difference impact economic status and gun violence.

Participant 8 attempts to establish the factors responsible for violence in poor areas of the society in affirming the following:

Illegal possession of guns by criminals who should not have access to them often occur in poor neighborhoods and explains the exponential increase in gun violence. It is also observed that the level of violence in poor communities is proportional to the number of firearms that are illegally acquired in these vicinities. In contrast to the poor communities, are peaceful, less violent, and well-organized communities which are the reflection of educated people whose socioeconomic status is decent.

To establish the correlation between crime rate, illegal gun possession and poverty, Participant 6 used two neighborhoods in Washington, D.C. and affirmed that,

The higher the crime rate, the higher the illegal gun possession. While the crime rate is rampant in southeast due to a proliferation of illegal firearms, the lack of employment, and the heavy drug use, the northwest has less or no illegal gun owners and less or mere crimes due to the population's social class. (Participant 6)

Six out of eight participants perceived that the government failure to adequately

regulate the acquisition and distribution of firearms was one of the causes of the

recrudescence of violence due to guns. Seven of the participants indicated that gun

violence was in part a result of the inadequate regulation by the government of gun

distribution and ownership. Participant 4 affirms that: "It is observation that current

enacted gun regulations are inefficient and unable to eradicate or decrease the high rate of

violence due to guns in the District of Columbia." Participant 4 stated, "I think current

gun restrictions are not sufficient enough to moderate gun violence in the county."

Because the rate of violent crime due to gun is on the rise, Participant 3 asserts that: "The

gun laws at their current state cannot effectively impact the violence due to fact that there

are obsolete and need to be updated to adapt to the evolving communities." In observing

that most guns used in many crimes are legally owned, Participant 8 established the

inefficiency of current enacted laws in affirming that: "In their current form, gun

regulations are inadequate in either controlling or preventing the outrage increased

violence due to guns as it is known that most guns used in crimes have been legally

acquired by the perpetrators." Participant 7 perceived the legislation to control guns as

very weak and ineffective, causing the high gun violence rate that is seen in many

communities:

> I believe that officials of the District of Columbia are not doing enough to
>
> enhance the laws the control all aspects of gun use. It seems as they are putting
>
> their personal interest ahead of that of the population that they are supposed to
>
> serve. The sluggish control would have been strengthened by the fact that since a

license identifies a gun owner at purchase, he or she must be liable whenever his or her gun is used illegally to perpetrate violent crimes. With this approach, I believe each gun owner was mindful of the consequences of not protecting his or her property and we might see an impact on gun violence. The rampant rate of violence due to guns is a factual indication that the laws are not working.

As the debate to solve gun violence intensifies, Participant 8 envisioned the correlation between the rate of gun violence and the tougher gun laws in affirming the following:

> Although there is a serious divide relative to whether or not tougher gun regulations could solve violence, I strongly believe that it is urgent to revise current gun laws and make them tougher, for they will help decrease gun acquisition by potential criminals. Also, toughening the background check will help not only detect potential violent crime perpetrators, but it can spot some mentally ill citizens from acquiring guns.

Unlike others, two of the eight participants, Participant 5 and Participant 8 believed in current enacted gun regulations. Participant 5 perceived current gun laws not to be the cause of violence in asserting that

> I think that gun regulations should not be enacted to refrain citizens from exercising their constitutional right of bearing arms. Rather, they should regulate the sales, the possession, and the distribution of guns and their accessories. Guns by themselves do not kill, but cause harm when acquired by ill-intended people through pulling the trigger.

Participant 8 affirmed that "the District of Columbia is among states with the toughest gun laws in the United States. Therefore, there is no need for more gun laws."

The inadequacy of current gun regulations due to a lack or not enough enforcement were exposed as a potential contributing factor to gun violence by 5 out of 8 participants. Participant 2 affirmed,

When I was growing up there was a great harmony between police officers and citizens. Today, there is such a big disconnect that police officers are rarely seen in our neighborhoods. People walk the street with guns without any fear of apprehension and prosecution because the laws enforcers are not present. Despite the rampant instances of many people who have been killed or wounded on the street, investigations have not solved most of the cases. Citizens feel a sense of abandonment, many of whom clinch to their guns in homes, creating an unsafe environment for the community at large and exposing everyone to gun violence.

Participant 8 and Participant 7 perceived a correlation between the deficiency in security and the crime rate due to guns. Participant 8 believed that there is a proportionality relation linking the 2 phenomena: "If in a neighborhood there is a lower crime rate, it is obvious that there it enjoys a high level of security as well, for the two are inseparable." Participant 7 agrees with Participant 8 in asserting: "Wherever there is a constant or heavy police presence, crimes rate due to guns has always been either nonexistent or considerably decreased." For Participant 6, the perception is that the fast there exist a correlation between police intervention speed and the crime rate due to gun

violence, all linked to the socioeconomic situation of the community as indicted in the following:

> I have observed that the speed at which police responds to an adverse situation in poor neighborhood is quite different from that when it comes to wealthy neighborhood. To resolve this disparity, a fair measure should be applied to the two social environments. Unless the balance is established, the calls of distress from northwest Washington, D.C. will always prevail from those from southeast where poverty is rampant. Such climate can only favor the high crime rate in the later.

Theme 3: Community Self-Help

As members of affected communities struggle to solve the crisis of gun violence, they have the perception of taking matters into their own hands by initiating some thoughtful actions such as, but not limited to, creating the neighborhood watch group, educational programs that will benefit potential criminals, and enhance their collaboration with institutions of law and order. Regarding the impact that education programs can have on those likely to commit violence, 6 participants perceived its positively. Perceived solutions to fund violence included community initiatives designed to educate and help potential offenders, to develop a culture of vigilance, and to increase collaboration between citizens and law enforcement agencies.

Seven participants expressed the perception that community-based initiatives designed to educate and help potential perpetrators would reduce gun violence. To provide substantial help to those at risk of perpetrating violent acts, Participant 1

suggested a tree components solution as follows: I believe that with the pressure of the community, the district officials should help initiate programs that can be beneficial to the vulnerable people. Such programs could involve police officers who could share their knowledge from their background. The most important component was provided from home where parents have the duty and responsibility to constantly talk to their children about the importance of a positive moral behavior and the destructive consequences of gun violence. Also, as important is the medical component that requires parents or any citizen to denounce any mentally unstable person who deserves an evaluation by a health care professional (Participant 1). Participant 4 advocated an effective training offered to vulnerable citizens by the police department. Such training offered to both potential perpetrators and potential victims will entail shaping the mindset of those who could commit the crime as well as teaching potential victims how to detect the danger and how to counter potential crimes. This approach was helpful in saving innocent lives from gun violence (Participant 4).

Participant 8 asserted that: "If there is any hope to decrease or eradicate gun violence crisis in our communities, education through training programs must be designed and implemented for potential perpetrators. Living a modest and humble life mindset would also be useful".

Participant 7 agreed on educating citizens in stating that: "It is the responsibility of the district officials to initiate and implement actions such as rallies and seminars to sensitize the population about gun violence in order to curve the crime rate due to firearms." Participant 1's perception is geared toward spotting mental illness and act

upon: We should not rely solely on training programs. Rather, in addition, the county should engage the population into a vast campaign to identify and administer treatments to mentally ill citizens who already possess or are in the process of acquiring guns. This action will help prevent potential gun violence in the community (Participant 1).

Participant 7 believed that instances of gun misuse have contributed to the crisis of gun violence: Because some people don't know or don't understand primary purpose and the moral value of possessing firearms, they become threats to the society. It therefore become imperative that the district government to play a crucial role of engaging its citizens through training sessions focused on the right mindset of a gun owner and the danger of misusing guns (Participant 7). Participant 1 thought that the prison population should not be left behind in this societal effort to conquer the devil of gun violence: I believe that it is time for the District of Columbia government to initiate training program that will rehabilitate those already incarcerated. Otherwise, criminals who have complete their time in prison will not be easily reinstated within the society and therefore, will have no choice but to perpetrate that same violence that caused their incarceration. This situation will generate nothing but a vicious circle (Participant 1).

Of all participants, 6 had a positive view of both the community watch group and the close cooperation of the citizens and the law enforcement community. Most participants perceived community-based initiatives designed to create a culture of vigilance and encourage cooperation between citizens and law enforcement as a potential solution to gun violence. Participant 1 advocated the role of each citizen as crucial in caring for those with mental illness: "I believe that if each member of the community can

find a way to counsel and help people who are mentally ill get the appropriate treatment, it would considerably affect the number of casualties due to guns". Participant 4 believed in the mobilization of the population through campaigns against gun violence: If many people involve in campaigns to dissuade dangerous minds from acquiring firearms, society was better off. Also, by laying out the destructive effect of using guns to harm others, many minds will process gun use carefully and responsibly, decreasing the potential for violence due to guns while contributing to the safety of all members of the community.

Participant 3 perceived the urgency to engage in a campaign to sensitize every citizen of the District about a swift reconversion of mentality and the adjustment of the culture related to guns: I believe that if everyone gets involved in a campaign to change the way we see and deal with guns, we could watch over each other and talk to each other to reduce gun violence in the community (Participant 3). Participant 8 envisioned a community in which citizens can constitute their own defense and safety apparatus: Concerned community should not solely rely on law enforcement. Members should organize in a vigilant entity ready to identify and engage potential criminals before they strike. Such initiative could considerably attenuate the crime rate within the community (Participant 8). Participant 6 perceived youth engagement as a good asset toward achieving a successful goal for the community in asserting that,

> I believe that, as the future generation, our youth should be engaged in this
>
> process early. They must be shaped and equipped through mentoring programs to
>
> handle the task of helping identify potential violent citizens. They should also be

trained in the art of influencing their peers who are at risk of committing violent crimes.

Participant 2 perceived the critical role that citizens can play by collaborating with the law enforcement in affirming that: "I have no doubt that a collaboration between members of the community and law enforcement would be of tremendous outcome in the fight against gun violence." Participant 5 agrees with Participant 2 in stating that: "If people understand that no citizen is immune from gun violence, there was a rapid shift in the way we see each other and this crisis. Then, many was most likely to expose suspicious acts and criminals for the safety of all." According to Participant 8, any citizen who loves his or her community should care about its safety as well, for without security there is no neighborhood. There should be a strong sense of community in every single one of its members in working closely to eradicate threats within their midst. Participant 6 perceived the creation of different neighborhood watch groups that will interact will police officers: "I strongly believe that organizing neighbors into groups that was watching the community was a good idea. However, teaming these groups up with law enforcement was a great idea that was an effective result in this struggle against gun violence. We will then expect to see a decrease in crimes due to guns (Participant 6).

Theme 4: Solution to Gun Violence

As the District government, law makers, advocacy groups, and the population at large are eager to find the solution to this societal crisis, tougher gun laws on ownership as well as the effective enforcement of those laws are perceived as solution.

Four participants articulated their perception about the effectiveness of stringent enforcement of gun laws in attenuating violence due to guns. Participant 1 pointed fingers at gun dealers in affirming that: "Gun distribution starts with the dealers who sometimes are not forceful in enforcing a thorough background check. In such case, the dealer's license should be revoked without any compromise. It is obvious that if enforced, it will lower the opportunity for criminals to purchase firearms and, will also drastically decrease the crime rate due to guns." Participant 2 emphasized the importance of a strong relationship between law enforcement and the dealers in making the background check more effective: "The district police department obviously possess a database of criminals within the community. I believe that if it can be accessible to gun dealers before an individual purchase a gun, violence due to guns was tremendously impacted."

Enforcing laws before there are violated has been addressed by Participant 8 who affirmed: "Instead of reacting to a tragedy whenever a gun makes victims, it would be useful to initiate preemptive measures, some of which could involve making it difficult to acquire guns through a thorough and strict background check and a constant police presence in neighborhoods." Participant 7 shared Participant 8's insight on increased police presence in the community in stating that: It is obvious that whenever there is police presence in an area, potential criminals refrain from their actions because they are afraid of getting confronted and even defeated or killed. Mindful of this, the District officials should allocate more budget to dispatch enough police officers within the community, decision that will either prevent criminal activities from occurring or will tremendously diminish the probability of atrocities for the sake of a safe community

(Participant 7). Participant 7 perceived the discrepancy in the time taken by police officers in reacting to distress phone calls: The paradox is that calls from the poorest and high crime areas like southeast Washington take more time for intervention than those from more stable neighborhoods. I believe that if this aspect of the culture is revised positively and enhanced, the rate of crimes due to guns was decrease, making the neighborhoods safer (Participant 6).

The manufacturing of guns is one thing, their distribution is another. Restricting the distribution of firearms has been perceived by three participants as important to reduce gun violence: "It is the responsibility of the district officials to take a closer look at how gun purchase is operated in the community. The district government must do a better job to regulate the sales of heavy machine guns to individuals and be forceful in tracking down illegal sales and acquisitions of firearms." Participant 3 suggested to strengthen not only the laws on owning guns, but the laws on acquiring harmful gun accessories as well: I strongly believe that the number of crimes due to guns is proportional to the number of gun ownership. The more people own firearms, the higher the rate of gun violence. If the government can implement laws that will decrease the number of gun owners, it will most likely decrease the number of victims of gun violence. Also, a though regulation on all the channels of advertisement of firearms can mean a great deal to this fight (Participant 3). According to Participant 6, tougher gun laws will make it very difficult for potential criminals to acquire them. Consequently, the District will offer a safer environment to its citizens as well as its visitors.

Participant 5 perceived tougher or stricter gun regulations as not being the problem, rather an unrealistic approach in affirming that: "The District of Columbia has one the toughest gun laws in the United States. Implementing more and tougher laws was ineffective. Besides, a gun is just an object that has no mind of its own and cannot operate as stand alone. Someone must use it to cause harm to others. Therefore, officials should focus on gun owners rather than on gun laws. Lawmakers should never forget the Second Amendment of the Constitution that gives each citizen the right to bear arms (Participant 5).

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding gun violence by exploring the perspectives of gun violence and its impact on the society. This was achieved by conducting semi structured interviews with 8 residents of the District of Columbia in Washington, D.C. who have directly or directly been impacted by violence due to gun, or who knows someone who has been. The study was driven by the following research question: What are the perceptions about the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in Washington D.C.?

Results revealed that the manufacturing and legal acquisition of firearms did not pose any problem given the legitimate purpose of using guns. Rather, owners who use guns to perpetrate violent acts due to ineffective distribution and lack of enforcement of laws, added to gun proliferation pose a serious problem. Some participants identified citizens with mental illness, those involve in domestic violence, and criminals to be most likely to perpetrate violence due to guns. Some factors such as, but not limited to,

extensive poverty, inefficient gun laws, and unproductive enforcement of enacted laws have been singled out.

As members of affected communities struggle to solve the crisis of gun violence, they have the perception of taking matters into their own hands by initiating some thoughtful actions such as, but not limited to, creating the neighborhood watch group, educational programs to benefit potential criminals, and enhance their collaboration with institutions of law and order to better detect and prevent crime. Implementing stricter enforcement of current gun laws through the increase of police presence in most affected communities and the toughening of policies related to gun dealers were also perceived as solutions to gun violence. A ban on assault weapons and making it difficult to obtain a license to own a gun were suggested as potential solutions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

As the previous chapter focused on data analysis and its results, this chapter presents the interpretation and limitations of the findings. It also lays out the implications on the society for positive change and provides the recommendations and conclusion based on the data analyzed in Chapter 4.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the perceptions about the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in the District of Columbia. Even though the District of Columbia has one of the toughest gun laws in the United States, the nation's capital has had one of the highest homicide rates in the nation for many years, mainly in the southeast part of the city. Using this high gun related crime area to determine the level of homicides, the study helped explores whether more gun laws can lower the homicide rates.

Although various efforts have been made to decrease the incidence of gun violence over the years, the phenomenon has nonetheless significantly increased. Conducting this research is a hope to find out whether or not the various gun laws have had a positive impact on the homicide rates in the United States in general and in southeast Washington, D.C. in particular.

Most gun violence incidents are concentrated in areas of lower socioeconomic status. Given the unsuccessful efforts to regulate gun violence efficiently, understanding the reasoning conducive to the ineffectiveness of prior policies, as well as the reasons why gun violence has been closely related to communities that are of lower

socioeconomic status becomes important. To better comprehend the severity of gun violence in these communities, gathering information directly from those within the District of Columbia is significantly needed.

The exploration of the output for each activity was proved key in this technique so that the research problem could continue to be the main purpose of the project.

This qualitative research case study involved the collection of firsthand perceptions of gun violence population with the goal of providing law enforcement agencies – the policies established by the government – with a profound understanding of the depth and breadth of gun violence, as well as insight into how to reduce its occurrence. As described in Chapter 3, information was gathered through an interview process that included 8 participants residents of the District of Columbia who either collected reports on victims of gun violence or who were familiar with the devastation of gun violence. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to contribute to the expansion of existing knowledge relative to gun violence by displaying residents' perception about gun violence in their community. Eight residents of the District of Columbia who have been directly or indirectly impacted by violence due to guns underwent semi structured interviews to establish these perceptions. The study examined the following research question: What are the perceptions of the residents of the District of Columbia about the relationship between gun control laws and homicide rates in Washington D.C.?

Results revealed that most participants did not perceive gun manufacturing and its legal ownership to be a problem. To the contrary, they believed that the problem lay with

the distribution of guns without proper or adequate regulations and enforcement as they most often wind up in the hands of those who could harm the society. Participants perceived citizens who have a criminal background, suffer from mental illness as well as those involved in domestic violence to be most likely the groups at risk of perpetrating gun violence. Some participants perceived the inability to enforce current enabled gun laws, the extensive poverty, and inefficient gun laws to constitute potential contributing factors to violence due to guns.

To solve the crisis of gun violence, most participants proposed community initiatives comprised of programs that will educate and positively shape potential perpetrators of gun violence, develop awareness by becoming vigilant, and enhance the relationship between law enforcement and the community at large. Some participants suggested that many neighborhood watch groups be created. Also, they pleaded for a strong collaboration with law enforcement in order to anticipate and prevent crimes. Others voiced the need for enhanced public awareness aimed at identifying and reporting potential gun violence perpetrators. Most participants advocated a rigorous enforcement and toughening of current enacted gun laws through increased police presence in distressed communities and the rigorous enforcement of laws applicable to gun dealers. A ban on heavy machinery and assault weapons added to a tough process in obtaining a license to own a gun were suggested as means to make gun regulations tougher.

Interpretation of the Findings

Acceptance of legal firearms, poverty, and weak implementation of the law, community self-help, and solutions to gun violence constituted the four themes identified

from the analysis of data. In these themes, 50 leading keywords intertwined, illustrating

the thoughts in participants' minds are shown in the word cloud in Figure 2. In place of

the key word *violence* it appeared fascinating to use words like people, ownership, and

community in a close association with the key word. The selection of these words

appears to lead afflicted communities to believe that they have been left out of the whole

process of finding the solution to the problems they endure.

Figure 2. The 50 top words participants shared to express their thoughts throughout the process.

The first theme which was the acceptance of legal firearms, yielded a perceptive,

yet unexpected outcomes as participants unanimously perceived both the production and

the legal ownership of guns acceptable. The surprising aspect of the results is illustrated

by the fact that even though participants have been directly or indirectly impacted by gun

violence or knew someone who has, they still all accepted the production and ownership of these weapons, creating a contrast with those who tend to portray extreme viewpoints of the phenomenon.

According to Squires (2012), the expression "gun culture", probably used by Richard Hofstadter in his work on exploring gun culture in America, appears to have become embedded in and accepted by a segment of the American culture. Conversely, most Americans who support gun control proposals tend to condemn the long-held gun culture (Brent et al., 2013). Victims of gun violence holds a paradoxical attitude about guns. Even though they have been impacted by inefficient enacted gun laws, they still believed in the use of legal guns as indispensable for their self-defense against violence due to guns.

Participants showed a mastery of the topic of gun violence, some due to their personal encounters, others due to either their proximity to a victim or their knowledge of the matter. The outcome from the second theme showed an illustration of participants' sharp distinction between legal and illegal ways that guns are sold. Participants addressed the fact that they were mindful of certain factors such as extensive poverty and the absence of education, both of which contribute to creating an ideal environment for illegal gun transactions where buyers and sellers operate. A simultaneous consideration of Theme 2 and Theme 3 revealed shared responsibilities between members of the concerned communities and law enforcement in the act of confronting violence due to guns. Regarding efficient monitoring and tougher surveillance of illegal gun sellers, Theme 2 reveals that community members have failed to organize, counting on law

enforcement. To stop criminals from acquiring guns illegally, limiting illegal gun sales may be one of the important assets. This theme laid out a remarkable focus on illegal gun sales. (From the lens of Theme 2, the participants seemed to have delegated to the law enforcement agencies the task of closer monitoring and a stricter vigilance against the illegal arms sellers. Participants' perceptions of how important the role of law enforcement is in implementing stricter gun polices and effective use of power in countering violence constituted a part of the solution suggested in the fourth theme.

Theme 3 revealed that participants became mindful that, to alleviate contributive factors to violence such as poverty and absence of education, they must get fully involved in the process as the afflicted community. Furthermore, they perceived that identifying and reporting potential criminals to law enforcement and or to appropriate institutions for help are their full responsibility for everyone's safety.

Theme 4 laid out the solution from interviews' results in which participants emphasized how important it was to establish a strong collaboration between law enforcement and organized communities to alleviate or eradicate violence due to guns. Answers revealed that participants acknowledged and understood the existence of flaws that must be overcome. Figure 3 displays the synthesis of emerging themes about a solution to alleviate violence due to guns. It shows how an efficient collaboration among communities, law enforcement, and social welfare organizations can be adequate in fighting gun violence.
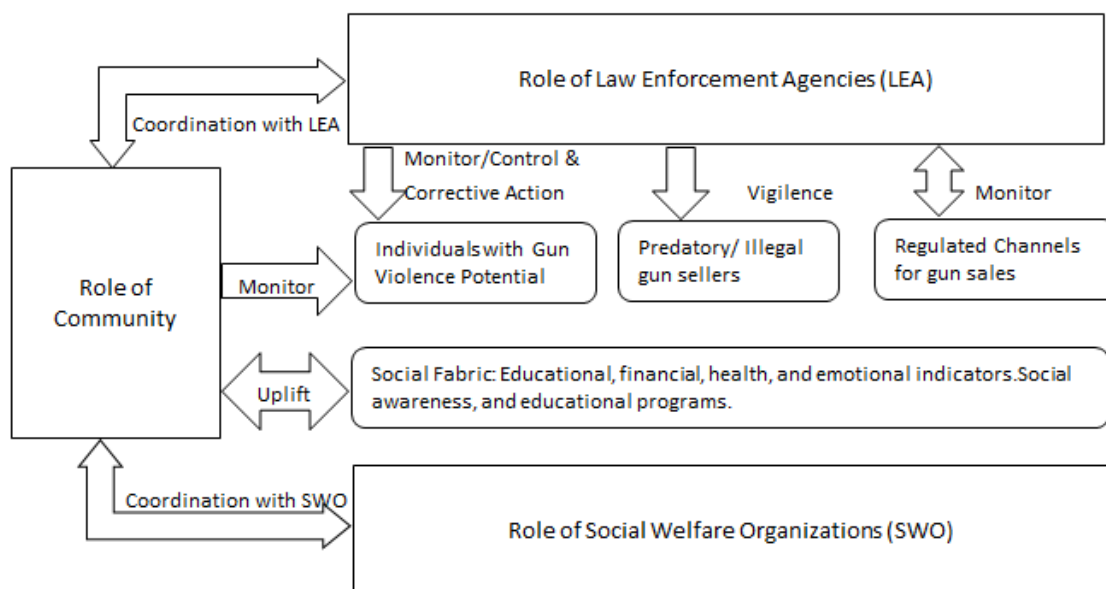
Figure 3. Conceptual solution of solving gun violation problems extracted from emerging themes.

Participants' focus on self-help is displayed by the word count of the top 50 words they used frequently. Throughout the interviews, one of the remarkable things was that participants did not convey the blame for the adverse situation to solely law enforcement and lawmakers. Gun control literature discussed in chapter 2 presented works of several whistleblowers like Mann and Michel (2016) that focus on the dynamics between gun lobbyists and the policymakers. In a community affected by gun violence, participants seemed not to see politics of structuring gun policies as a primary concern even though it is still very appealing to policymakers and gun lobbyists. Participants have given up hope of finding a solution relying on politicians who they believe don't have their interest at heart. This faded trust in politicians pushed the participants to understand that they should count on themselves by organizing and exploring other means to overcome their problems. Participants' shifted mindset to count on themselves rather than government

officials exposed the breach of the social contract by the same government that was supposed to preserve the well-being of its citizens.

As the alarming number of shootings such as the 22 high school shootings and more than 283 people killed so far in 2019 triggered a public outcry for more reform on gun policy, participants' shared responses and solutions seemed not in tune with public demand. The environment and events endured seem to explain the gap between participants and the public when it comes to the call for more gun regulations. As the public perceived mass shootings as traumatizing and highly terrifying actions, participants have a different perception due to the fact that they are used to such tragic events in their community, so much that they have become their way of life and therefore, react with less emotions.

As much as mass shootings trigger public outcry and outraged reactions in the society due to the pain, hurt, and shock that they generate, they usually account for less casualties than the overall deaths due to guns every year. For instance, as of September 30, 2019, there have been 316 deaths due to mass shootings compare to 11, 224 deaths other than mass shootings (GVA, 2019).

Since public outcry usually comes from communities that have experienced mere or no gun violence, participants in this study might consider their reactions ironic or hypocritical and exploitable by various groups for their own interest. Although these participants might have been victims or have suffered the loss of someone dear, they remain suspicious of the various groups that pursue their own interest and pretend to help

the inflicted. Choosing not to react on 97% of causalities and studying those cases to find a social solution can be viewed as a skewed reaction.

The trend of mass shootings has not ceased to drastically increase. Gun violence and frequency of mass shooting events are consistently on the rise. By the beginning of the century, Corlin (2001) described the consistent rise in deaths due to gun violence over the past 2 decades. Similarly, Tonry (2013) reported the same trend and predicted its continuous rise in case actions to counter the distribution of guns were not taken. The above two revelations from these scholars expose the exponential growth of gun violence throughout the country since the 1980s and how little improvement of gun policies have been made by lawmakers. This information allows a better understanding and appreciation of afflicted communities to relying on themselves rather than counting on policymakers who only serve their own interests.

Limitations

Like many studies, this one has its own limitations. Factors such as the complexity of automation in qualitative data may have impacted the effectiveness of the research. Also, during the interview process, the substantial amount of time required, and the examination may have hindered the effectiveness as well. The data analysis and the findings may have been impacted by these factors. Besides, there were many underlying assumptions were used throughout the study, one of which was the existence of a relationship between guns and violence. Despite the limitations proper to this study, it generated some recommendations that were based on the questions that emerged due to this research.

Recommendations

Numerous recommendations emerged from this study, further highlighting the challenges that society faces due to gun violence and control. Throughout this study, participants suggested to initiate grassroots organizations aimed at enhancing the lives of members of the community while identifying and seeking help for members that represent a potential danger through violence. Such initiatives were recommended to be implemented through a strong collaboration between members of the community, law enforcement agencies, and social welfare organizations each of which focusing on specific scope of responsibilities. The community will have the responsibility to engage their constituents in campaigns to sensitize citizens about the knowledge of gun safety and the adversity of gun violence. Also, the community will serve as the mediator between members seeking a variety of assistance and the social welfare organizations that will provide the necessary help. In addition, the community will play an important role in identifying potential perpetrators of violence and notify the law enforcement for necessary assistance. In general, the community will watch and report all illicit transactions between sellers and buyers of guns. As for law enforcement agencies, they were at the forefront of detecting, disrupting, and eradicating the illegal operations of gun acquisitions and sales. Also, they should scrutinize legal and strictly gun dealers to ensure that they comply with enacted gun laws. The social welfare organizations will have the responsibility to provide counseling as need arises as well as initiating some social programs that will help alleviate the struggle of the community while improving the life conditions of its members.

In the quest for solutions, participants in this study have laid out recommendations that believed to be the practical pragmatic approach capable of helping them solve their problems using resources at their disposal within the current extent of the law. Implementing the recommended framework within a community affected by a history of violence due to guns can help study the effectiveness of this method using a similar research. Through a qualitative method, this approach can be implemented within various communities nationwide to test its veracity within communities that might not have a history of violence due to guns but have endured mass shootings.

Implications

In general, although the findings cannot be generalized, they may impact future policies in controlling, managing, producing, distributing, and owning guns as well as gun violence across the nation.

Despite the seemingly logical aspect of the recommendations that participants suggested throughout this study, they might be extremely challenging to implement, for it may require social change at any level of application. Although recommendations suggested by the participants of this study seemed logical, they may not be very easy to implement. To be applicable at any level, the recommendations presented in the previous section may require initiating a social change. There may be a need for a strong activism at the grassroot level to make the community aware of the initiatives suggested by participants as well as to create committees of volunteers who was trained to run a test that will validate the implementation of organized efforts to eradicate gun violence in affected communities.

The general awareness about communities with a long history of gun violence may be triggered by the findings of this study. From these findings, afflicted communities could learn how to counter growing threats of gun violence created by both irresponsible gun sellers and gun owners. Affected communities could learn how to take their destiny in their own hands instead of waiting for lawmakers who care about themselves.

The epidemic of gun violence and the pain it inflicts on society is deeper than the few instances that the media portray at their convenience a certain number of times a year as every single day, many lives are taken and not reported due to guns. Being conscious of the broader picture of this phenomenon and knowing the struggles endured by communities with long history of gun violence may be of good help to Is and policymakers in identifying contributing factors to this crisis. The outcome of this study is likely to trigger a different mindset and push stakeholders to reject the destructive impact of blame games, rather understand that working united through combining everyone's effort and approach would help get the best out of the effort to eradicate violence due to guns.

The safety of the population is a daunting task that will require the mobilization of many forces at many levels. For instance, while politicians, policymakers, advocacy groups push for the implementation of stricter gun laws, law enforcement and other professionals or experts in the area of firearms can initiate various programs to train the people. Meanwhile, factors conducive to citizens' vulnerability to perpetrate gun violence could be identified and alleviated by the social welfare organizations through various programs and supports. Officials must think of ways to monitor the community for any

unhealthy behavior susceptible to make it easy for anyone to get involved in gun violence. With the recrudescence of violence due to guns, a need for intense communication with the population is unavoidable. This will help members of the community acquire a better knowledge of the circumstances able to cost them their lives through gun violence. Businesses may regain a considerable level of activities that was existent prior to gun violence. Homes will appreciate faster than during the period of increased gun violence. The flow of residents fleeing the community will diminish and the economic toll and burden endured by businesses will decrease. The overall government spending for security will diminish as well.

Conclusion

For centuries, gun control has triggered virulent and emotional debates within the American society. Deaths to guns have devastated the country, prompting lawmakers, advocacy groups, and communities at large to find a solution to this phenomenon. It has created and continues to create a great divide along political, judicial, and social lines. Many bloods have been shed. Like many other studies done prior to this, it has contributed to the expansion of the already existing body of research on the issue of gun violence in the United States. Throughout the study, the legitimacy to manufacture and use guns was acknowledged and agreed upon by all participants. However, while acknowledging that ethically, gun producers did not intend them for evil use, they directed the causes of rampant gun violence to many factors such as, but not limited to, mental illness, lack of initiatives and actions conducive to education and training programs, extreme poverty, and the absence of strong collaboration with law enforcement

and social welfare organizations. One of the predominant social worries is the search for

an efficient way to identify and stop good citizens who have become influenced by one or

more of gun violence contributing factors. For so many decades, experts and professional

in the field of firearms, lawmakers, advocacy groups, and scholars have worked to find a

solution to gun violence in various communities around the nation. So far, no substantial

solution has been found as crime rates due to guns continue to surge. The perceptions of

the residents of the District of Columbia who participated to this study could be useful in

helping similar communities influence policymakers to shape their society with better

distribution of guns. How to control access of firearms to individuals whose better

judgment may have become impaired by any of these social factors is a prevalent topic.

While nothing has yet worked to manage gun violence fully, the perceptions of the

victims of gun violence may contribute towards developing awareness about the role

communities can play in implementing a responsible distribution of firearms. In

conducting this study, it is the anticipation of the I to see other communities with high

rate of gun violence take advantage of the findings to understand the critical aspect of

uniting, organizing, and reclaim their neighborhoods back for the sake of a stronger and

safer community where violence due to guns is considerably eradicated. The issue of gun

has been a great divide in the United States since its inception. It is an undisputable fact

that America is hurting. Mass shootings as well as others are rampant. Advocacy groups,

politicians, and policy makers have so far been unable to come up with the solution to

this crisis. As many gun laws have been ineffective, it seems less likely that more gun

laws can solve this problem. If so, one would think that it is time for a nationwide

spiritual revival by returning to the words of GOD the Creator and live according to His

commandments.

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