

YOUTH GUN OWNERSHIP COMPARED TO YOUNG ADULT OWNERSHIP¹

Sociology

Cameron McDowell, Marian University
B.A. in Sociology
Class of 2011

ABSTRACT

This research study aims to explore the role socialization plays in the development of beliefs and perceptions about guns for young adults. It was discovered that young adults today receive extensive exposure to firearms at a very young age. This is due to the kind of interactions they have with guns throughout their lives. This interaction socializes them to be more familiar with guns; as a result they develop either positive or negative perceptions about guns before the legal age of gun possession, which is eighteen. This research study examines college-aged students and compares their amount of gun interaction to other youth from previous studies. It also explores young adults' beliefs about guns. By surveying college-aged students and comparing their reported amount of gun interaction to youth from previous studies, this study found that many young adults are exposed to guns at young ages, which influence their perceptions about guns later in life.

¹ Thank you to all my colleagues who helped to support me throughout this experience. Also, thank you to Dr. Devon Hensel and Dr. Heather Rodriguez for your guidance and expertise. Please direct all questions or concerns to Cameron McDowell at cmcdowell1548@marian.edu

INTRODUCTION

Gun ownership and use is a controversial social issue. Gun accessibility for the youth in America has increased (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001); the role that guns play in society is ever becoming more influential as a result of constant exposure and interaction that the youth have with guns and gun violence (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001). This interaction has led to increases in youth gun violence and has become more prevalent over the last two decades. Youth are becoming familiar with guns in their everyday lives through socialization, defined as the process in which norms, values and beliefs are established through interaction. As a result, their attitudes and behaviors toward guns have begun to emerge at an ever-lowering age (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001). It appears as though youth develop their perceptions about guns before the legal age of possession. This may be linked to the high level of accessibility of possession of guns for youth.

According to a report article by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), there are currently more than 200 million privately owned guns in the hands of U.S. citizens (I Have A Right To 2010). Guns are accessible and available for many youth (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001). There continues to be controversy over the interaction youth should have with guns. We know from previous research that most youth have had significant amount of interactions with firearms before the legal age of gun possession of eighteen years old. This study aims to explore if college students who attend a private Midwestern university have the same gun accessibility as the youth studied in the gun accessibility survey in the study by Zun and Downey (2003). This brings forth the question of whether gun interaction for youth is greater, less than, or equal to the amount of gun interaction for college-aged young adults. If gun interaction were based upon accessibility and availability, it would seem that the amount of gun interaction between these two age groups would have no significant difference.

Past research has shown that youth ages ten to twenty-four are less likely to be gun owners but have high levels of gun accessibility and availability (Zun and Downey 2003). Youth have had interactions with guns; this can include holding guns, owning guns, firing guns, having guns in households (Zun and

Downey 2003). Zun and Downey found that up to 42 % of high school students have gun accessibility or ownership, and that 55% of parents had a gun in the household (2003). Other national research has shown that 20.8 % of males in high school have carried a gun to school in the last thirty days (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001). The research shows that even though it is not legal for youth under the age of eighteen to own or carry guns many youth still do. However, no research has examined when or how attitudes, thoughts and beliefs about guns are established. If youth interaction with guns is evident at a young age, does that mean that youth who have interacted have already established their attitudes about guns? In addition, do attitudes about guns determine future gun behavior?

This study explores the relationship between youth gun interaction and young adult, eighteen years and older, gun interaction of students at a private Midwestern university with changes in accessibility and availability. A survey was conducted of university students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six who currently attend the private institution. The survey covered categories such as gun interaction, attitude towards guns, gun availability, gun accessibility, and roles legal gun ownership plays in gun accessibility for others. The results were compared to the results from a previous study on gun availability and accessibility (Zun and Downey 2003) for youth. In previous studies, 'youth' is defined as a person in the age range of ten to twenty-four years old. The original research plan was to compare youth to young adults aged twenty-four or older. However, the limitations of a college campus required the age range be changed to eighteen to twenty-four years old in order to ease sampling.

Gun violence in the United States has increased over the last 30 years (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001). This has been attributed to a number of different factors, namely: more guns on both the legal and illegal markets than ever before, youth having more opportunities for gun interaction than any other time, and the undeniable gun culture that is sweeping the United States, which has the most significant affect on the youth within the population (Stolzenberg and D'Alessio 2000). It is becoming extremely common for one's first exposure to guns to come at a younger age (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001). Though perhaps not obviously evident, one could conclude that the

prevalence of gun interaction and experiences come from youth exposure to guns by faulty gun storage, parental interaction, and most importantly youth possession in areas such as their schools and homes through various forms of socialization, such as exposure to firearms which influences their perceptions about firearms. The sum of these experiences form popular societal views of youth's firearm ownership. In addition, in many cases people lack responsibility and awareness in regards to gun ownership behavior (Shapiro *et al* 1997).

SOCIAL RELEVANCE

The public acceptance of guns is an important factor when considering the views youth will develop throughout their lifetime concerning guns. The more exposure to guns a person has, the more accepting of guns they are. A number of studies conclude that more than 45% of U.S. homes have a gun, and of these homes, 50% possess more than one type of gun. As a result of the large number of guns in the population provides, there is an increased opportunity for people to acquire firearms legally or illegally. In addition to this, children are much more likely to interact with guns if they live in a home where guns are present (Schuster and Franke 2000). Furthermore, the typical gun owner will not stop their munitions purchases at one; in fact, the average gun owner over the age of 18 has 4.5 guns (Glaeser and Glendon 1998). The statistics suggest how acceptable and common gun ownership has become in the United States. According to a report article by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), there are currently more than 200 million privately owned guns in the hands of U.S. citizens (I Have A Right To 2010). Further illustrating the availability of guns, one wonders whether such a large presence of guns in the population is threatening the safety of Americans.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH GUN OWNERSHIP

Gender. The majority of adult gun owners are middle-aged men who have graduated high school. Ownership of guns for these men is often a result of personal protection or hunting purposes. Recreational use of firearms precludes many urban dwellers from needing a gun for hunting purposes; thus, gun owners are much less common in larger cities, among

minorities, and among college graduates (Glaeser and Glendon 1998). Between the sexes, 40% of men as compared to 10% of women own guns in the United States (Cook and Sorenson 2006).

Age. Studies conducted on the implications of youth exposure to firearms have returned very diverse results depending on the population sample; in other words, the results of these studies vary significantly depending in the sample of the youth surveyed. Confirming the gender divide stated previously, boys are more likely to own firearms than girls (Cook and Sorenson 2006). Also, youth from rural settings are more likely to own a firearm than youth from urban settings; however, urban youth are more likely to carry and have more ease in gun acquisition (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001). Other work suggests that 6% to 22% of youth under the age of eighteen own a firearm in the United States (Cunningham and Henggeler 2000, Cook and Sorenson 2006).

The degree of difficulty regarding gun acquisition may be one of the most important factors to consider when investigating youth gun interactions; on average 50% of youth stated they could get a firearm if they need to (Cunningham and Henggeler 2000). On average 10% to 20% of students had carried a gun in a community or at school, or both. (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001, Sprinkle 2007). These statistics illustrate increased gun availability. In addition to increased freedom to tangibly obtain guns, the overall access to guns suggest a loosening of attitudes. If youth have such ready access to guns, it may be that they are consequently more comfortable with guns in general. Since youth gun owners are becoming more comfortable with guns, they will increasingly interact in ways they previously would not, such as bringing them to school or showing other peers (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001).

GUN INTERACTION

This study differentiates between gun ownership and gun interaction: gun interaction is the amount of personal interaction a person will have with a firearm. This includes holding guns, firing guns, being in the presence of guns and having guns in the household. One of the most common interactions that youth experience with guns is through hunting. It is reported that more than 33% of children have been hunting with a gun in their lifetime (Cook and

Sorenson 2006). This compares to the reported 51% of youth who have said they have held a gun (Zun and Downey 2003). Thus, we see that though children may not own guns, they are interacting with guns in various ways. This shows the importance of proper gun use and ownership by society as a whole (Shapiro *et al* 1998). The relationship children have with guns, owners of guns, and the different gun uses serves as an indicator of future firearm understanding (Cook and Sorenson 2006). These different types of gun interaction lead to the larger and more important factor of how interaction affects attitude and views towards firearms through socialization.

Family and Peers. In many cases the storage and housing of guns in homes is an overlooked detail for firearm owners. As many as 34% of U.S. children live in a household with one or more guns, and of these households, 55% have an unlocked firearm in the house. Of the households with unlocked firearms, 13% keep the guns and ammunition together. However, 9% of the families kept the guns unlocked and loaded (Schuster and Franke 2000), leaving many children, teens and young adults open to a source of firearms. These statistics demonstrate a certain exposure to guns which leaves one wondering if there is a relationship between gun availability and gun violence in the U.S. Some research has sought to address this potential relationship. For example, Sprinkle found in his study that “Gun possession is greatest among children and adolescents who are exposed to guns in the home or community of origin” (2007).

The attitudes developed by youth are a result of different influential factors including parents, peers, sex of the individual, violence in the home, and reasons for owning a gun. Parental beliefs are the most influential factors for predisposing attitudes concerning guns for youth. For example, parents who do not believe in gun possession will raise children in homes where guns are not allowed, this will predispose their children to not support the idea of gun possession. Children often reproduce their parents’ belief systems. This is done through the socialization process. Parents who own guns often create the attitude in their children that guns and ownership is acceptable (Slovak and Carlson 2007).

Gender. Cook and Sorenson loosely define ‘the masculinity instinct’ as the men’s natural

inclinations to lead and provide for their clan or families (2006). This instinct in hunting and the resulting amount of exposure males have to guns serves as a clear example of the differing norms that dictate gun interaction. Boys are three times more likely to hunt with guns than girls are (Cook and Sorenson 2006). Most gun injuries and crimes are a result of males owning a gun; it is also a norm that men/boys have more interaction with guns (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001). Because of this, men and boys are the focus of many gun surveys and research projects; men seem to contribute most to the problems associated with gun possession or ownership, so they receive the majority of the attention, even though women and girls face the same potential outcomes as men.

Location. Differing norms regarding gun use between urban and rural populations have developed in strong contrast to one another; however, both geographic areas have faced similar issues regarding gun presence in educational institutions (Cunningham and Henggeler 2000). On average 9% of middle and high school students have carried a gun to school more than once, and 3% of these students are taking a gun to school every day (Cunningham and Henggeler 2000). This fact is especially disturbing because schools are typically considered safe and secure places for children.

Increased Exposure. Many researchers argue that constant exposure to the culture of guns has resulted in negative consequences. The amount of gun violence has been steadily increasing over the last 2 decades (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001). The issue of violence is strongly affected by handguns (Shapiro *et al* 1997). The medical community has seen a dramatic increase in death, injury and long term disabilities related to firearms in the U.S. (Cassel and Nelson 1998); more than 57% of youth have been injured or have a relative that has been injured by a gun (Kahn and Kazimi 2001). The ever-increasing interaction with firearms is not only creating a culture where guns are accepted for youth, we also see increased numbers of deaths and injuries as a result of the increased interaction with guns. A relationship has developed between gun violence and injury and gun interaction among youth. The more gun interaction youth experience, the more likely it becomes that violence and injury will occur.

In addition, the youth's perceptions and beliefs about guns are beginning to be established at younger ages due to their interaction with guns (Shapiro *et al* 1998). Their attitudes and beliefs are being molded by their exposure and interaction with guns, due to socialization from others. These attitudes are what they are going to take into adulthood. Instead of youth developing a perception of guns at the legal age of 18, they are doing so much earlier, which is contributing more to the growing gun culture the United States is facing today (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001).

YOUTH REASONING FOR GUN POSSESSION

Location can have a significant effect on reasons for gun possession. One study suggests youth feel they need guns for aggressive response to shame, comfort with aggression, excitement and power and safety (Shapiro *et al* 1997); while still another study purports that youth have guns for hunting and target practice, safety, for respect, or to scare others (Cunningham and Henggeler 2000). Depending on the sample, gun owners produce a varied response between 60 and 70%. Youth from rural areas have a majority of guns for hunting and target practice reason. However, in urban setting youth most often own guns for personal protection (Cunningham and Henggeler 2000). More than 50% of people own guns for protection, while another 14% have one for their image (Wilkinson and Fagan 2001). The atmosphere and culture youth grow up in greatly impacts their reasons for owning guns.

It is often argued that violent attitudes are one of the contributions of youth's interactions with guns, "youth gun ownership seems to be a violence-related behavior of much functional importance" (Shapiro *et al* 1998). If true, violence becoming associated with youth gun interaction may explain the steady increase in violence and injury because of the increase of total interaction with guns (Cassel and Nelson 1998). Little research has been presented on this topic but it would be irresponsible to not note that the correlation exists.

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

This information presented in this study, could mean that gun ownership and violence have similar processes of socialization. Both of these behaviors are

learned through experiences and socialization, and both are strongly influenced by parental figures. This is an example of the social learning theory, which can be defined as "human thought, affect, and behavior can be modeled vicariously and through direct experiences" (Slovak and Carlson 2007). Either visual or physical experience behaviors, such as physical interactions of holding or firing a gun, can be learned and repeated. A macro view of gun exposure allows one to consider the natural progression of gun exposure as it is occurring today. As norms and mores develop through socialization, the informal knowledge of guns will undoubtedly grow. This is why it is important to examine how youth are predisposed to guns. If it is done so in a safe and responsible environment at home youth are more likely to act responsibly around them (Cunningham and Henggeler 2000). The current project acknowledges that although guns are not the root of criminal and socially undesirable behavior or actions, they serve as tools for fulfilling criminal behavior; thus, the greater number of guns in the populace the greater the odds of firearm abuse (Cunningham and Henggeler 2000, Sprinkle 2007). It would seem that the gun culture has provided popularity to the violence that can come from gun abuse, but if responsible use of guns was more prevalent, then the gun culture could lose its negative connotation. As a result the social learning theory could have a positive rather than a negative effect on the influence of youth gun interaction.

SUMMARY

It is likely that children and adolescents who own and interact with guns come from homes where guns are present (Slovak and Carlson 2007). Youth gun possession, interaction and attitudes are greatly shaped by a number of factors, including socialization from family, friends, and media. Other influences such as location, sex of individual, availability of guns, exposure, use of guns, and reasons for owning guns affect gun interaction. This paper examines today's youth and how they are affected both negatively and positively as a result of growing amounts of gun interaction they face in society. This information may yield results to better inform gun safety or injury reduction programs.

METHODS

Sample

Data for this quantitative study was collected in April of 2010 from students attending a private Catholic Midwestern University. The sample is 76 undergraduate students (N=76) roughly split in half by sex. As a result, 42 men and 34 women were recruited through a convenience sample method. The surveys were distributed to five unique groups of people and at two separate time periods. The five different areas where the surveys were distributed were in three residence halls, one of which houses freshman aged eighteen to twenty. The other two are reserved for sophomores, juniors, and seniors aged nineteen to twenty-six. Campus apartments house students over the age of twenty-one and the commuter student lounge, which has students of all ages. These include both living quarters on campus as well as lounging areas. These halls represent each of the student types (resident and commuter) and the place of residents for different aged students. This allows for students of all ages and student types to have an equal chance of being a part of the survey.

The surveys were distributed on Monday April 5th between the hours of 11:00 AM and 2:00 PM as well as the hours between 6:00 PM and 9:00 PM. These are the same hours used for the survey distribution on Tuesday April 6th. These times gave an opportunity to get a varied response. At each location and time, approximately five members from each sex filled out the survey. This is important because a varied sample is vital. With all the locations, days and times a limit must be set as to how many people were surveyed at a particular place. The age limits were discussed and understood with the use of the disclaimer at the beginning of the survey. In addition to this a verbal check ensured the accurate age of participants. Those individuals who did not fit the age credentials were unfortunately turned away from the survey. The surveys contained a number of different questions involving gun interaction and attitudes towards guns posed in a variety of forms.

Measures

The study measures include original items (Appendix A) as well as questions drawn from previous research (Kahn and Kazimi 2001, Zun and Downey 2003). Most items are Likert five point scale, Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, based on the

participants agreement or disagreement with a statement provided. This particular structure shows the intensity of the participants beliefs.

Interactions with guns. This variable is measured using a number of different kinds of questions including multiple choice (three questions), multiple response (two questions), yes/no (seven questions) and three questions with item response with the possibility of a free text response. These 12 questions were posed to explore what amount of gun interaction the survey participants had experienced.

Attitudes towards guns. This variable is also measured using a number of different kinds of questions including a Likert five point scale, Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (seven questions). This gave the survey participants a variety of options when selecting their opinion of the questions asked. Questions in the form of yes/no were also posed to assess the participants' attitudes towards guns (four questions). These nine questions were meant to examine how the participants felt about guns for both themselves, but also how they felt about others interactions with guns.

Demographics. The demographics assess the age of the survey participants, their current year in school and their sex. They are the first three questions on the survey. These questions contain the only demographic requirements that participants are required to follow to participate in this survey. All of these variables are being studied as factors for an individual's attitude and involvement with guns. The questions are used for the sole purpose of describing of the characteristics of the survey participant and not to identify them.

Hypotheses

Drawing from previous research, I expect to find the following:

- Gun interaction is more likely among older adolescents than younger.
- The younger the student the more positive attitude they will have concerning guns.
- Accessibility is positively related to gun interaction.

RESULTS

The respondents mean age was 20.68 years with a standard deviation of 1.906 years, while the mode

grade was juniors. Of the 76 respondents over half were male, 42 (55.3%). 34.2% of the sample claimed they shared ownership of a gun, the mean shared ownership was 3.69 guns with a range 19. Of the respondents 28.9% said they personally owned a gun while another 43.4% of students who did not own a gun said they “could get one easily”. Half of the respondents (50%) said they were in close proximity to a gun. Most guns are used for target/hunting (62.1%), and the second most common use was personal safety at 24%. Nearly 70% of respondents have heard gun shots in their neighborhood growing up and 65.7% have shot a gun themselves. Lastly 80.3% of respondents have interacted with a gun (holding, firing, or seeing somebody fire in real time) before the age of eighteen.

Age and Gun Interaction

The age of the respondent was found to be significant when determining the amount of shared ownership of guns (Table 2), as well as hearing gunshot in neighborhoods (Table 4). The younger the respondents' age the more likely they were to share ownership of a gun with someone ($p \leq .032$). Age was also a factor when analyzing hearing gun shots. Younger students were more likely to have heard gun shots in their life than older students ($p \leq .020$). 68% of the students have heard gun shots. Of that 68%, students who identified themselves as twenty-two years old or younger accounted for 80.1% (Table 4). The respondent's grade also was determined as a significant factor when sharing ownership of a gun (Table 8). In contrast to above, the greater the grade of the individuals the more likely they were to share a gun ($p \leq .042$). Of those students who owned a gun, 57.7% were juniors and seniors. Seniors were the mostly likely to share a gun with 38% (10 out of 26) sharing ownership of a gun (Table 8). This shows that age has a positive correlation to the level of gun ownership; younger respondents more often share gun ownership, while older respondents own guns themselves.

(INSERT TABLES 2, 4 and 8 HERE)

Age and Attitude

The class status of the respondent was seen to be significant when determining their attitudes toward anyone owning guns (Table 21) and the belief that children are exposed too early to guns (Table 28). The class status of the individual played a significant role

in determining their views on anyone owning guns, the younger the student the more accepting they were to anyone owning a gun ($p \leq .011$). 57% of the freshman and sophomore respondents were in support of anyone owning a gun (Table 21). The class status of the respondent was also significant when exploring whether they believed that children are exposed too early to guns ($p \leq .023$). 60% of freshman students disagreed with the belief that children are exposed too early. Only 35.3% percent of the seniors disagreed with this belief (Table 28). This shows that younger respondents are more accepting of gun ownership and disagree with the belief that children are exposed too early as compared to the older respondents.

(INSERT TABLES 21 and 28 HERE)

Accessibility and Gun Interaction

The accessibility of guns was seen as significant for a number of interactions that the respondents faced. Respondents' close proximity to guns was found to be significant in determining the shared ownership of a gun ($p \leq .000$). 84.6 % of those who shared ownership of a gun were in close proximity of a gun (Table 36). Close proximity, being within immediate possessions, was also found significant when being compared to hearing gun shots in the neighborhoods of respondents ($p \leq .048$). 57.7% of respondents in close proximity of guns have heard gun shots (Table 38). Respondents' interaction with guns in the form of actually firing guns was also found significant in relation to their close proximity to guns ($p \leq .002$). 75% of respondents who are in close proximity to guns have fired a gun in the last 6 months. Of the 34.4% of respondents who have never fired a gun, 73% of those are not in close proximity to guns (Table 39). Finally, the close proximity to guns was found significant in determining when first interaction with guns would occur ($p \leq .026$). Respondents who were in close proximity to guns had increased interaction with guns. Of the respondents who have never interacted with a gun, 91.7% of them were not in close proximity to a gun (Table 40).

Accessibility in the form of either having or getting a gun was found to be significant in determining the shared ownership of a gun and when a gun was fired last. The ability to get a gun was significant when determining whether there was shared ownership of a gun ($p \leq .000$). Of those

respondents who do not share or own a gun, 61.2% said it would be easy to get a gun (Table 30). The accessibility to a gun was also significant in determining when a gun was fired last ($p \leq .000$). Of those respondents who owned a gun, 100% have shot a gun, and 77.3% of those were in the last six months. Of those respondents who felt it would be impossible to get a gun, none, 0% had fired a gun (Table 33). (INSTER TABLES 30, 33, 36, 38, 39 and 40 HERE)

DISCUSSION

The results of this study varied greatly from what was expected. The influence of age and class status appeared to not have a significant influence on the overall amount of gun interaction a person faced. It was hypothesized that gun interaction would be more likely among older adolescents than younger. This appears to be an incorrect hypothesis. However, a significant link was discovered between the age and class status of an individual when looking at their shared gun ownership. This is true even though they provided contrasting claims about when shared gun ownership is most affected. The most interesting relationship between these two variables was the relation age and class status had to hearing gunshots. It was proven that the younger a person is the more likely they are to have heard gunshots.

The second hypothesis tested included the variables age and attitude. It was hypothesized that the younger the student the more positive attitude they will state concerning guns. This hypothesis again was proven to be inaccurate in this sample of respondents. The only significant relationships discovered were between grade and the respondents view on anyone owning gun, in addition to grade and the belief that youth are exposed to guns too early in life. The significant findings showed that younger students (freshman and sophomores) have a more open view concerning guns. They not only believed more people should be allowed to have guns, but they disagreed with the belief that children are exposed to guns too early. As a whole, there was not enough evidence to claim that the hypothesis was correct.

The third and final hypothesis included the variables accessibility and gun interaction. It was hypothesized that accessibility is positively related to gun interaction; in other words with increased accessibility comes increased gun interaction. The

respondents showed a number of significant relationships between these two sets of variables. The close proximity variable showed the most significance with the gun interaction variables; this included shared ownership, heard gun shots, fired gun, and first interaction. Individuals who were in close proximity to a gun were more likely to share ownership of a gun, more likely to have heard gun shots in the neighborhood, more likely to have fired a gun in the past six months, and were far more likely to have interacted with a gun. These results show that there is a significant relationship between a person's proximity to a gun and their amount of interaction with guns.

The accessibility and the ability to get a gun was also found to be significant in the shared ownership and the fired gun variables. The accessibility of guns made it possible for the majority of respondents to state it would be easy for them to get a gun. In addition to this, those respondents who had high accessibility responded they had fired a gun at some point, with a majority doing so in the past six months. These results show there is a strong significant relationship between a person's accessibility to guns and the amount of gun interaction they experience. This third hypothesis was supported by the data collected and proved accurate. Of the three, this hypothesis is the most influential and important to the study. It shows that with increased gun accessibility will result in increased gun interaction. This can now be applied not only to young adults but to youth as well. If youth are brought up in homes where guns are accessible and in close proximity, it is likely they will have increased interaction with guns.

This study also explored the similarities between youth's and young adult's interaction with guns. This is accomplished by comparing the results of this study on young adults to past studies that have been conducted on youth. The young adults from this study shared an average of 3.69 guns with another person. This is just shy of the national average of 4.5 guns per household (Glaeser and Glendon 1998). Young adult respondents reported that 65.8% of non-gun owners could get a gun if they needed to as compared to 50% of youth (Cunningham and Henggeler 2000). 51% of youth reported they have held a gun, while 74.2% of young adult respondents have interacted with a gun; this includes holding,

firing, or seeing somebody fire in real time (Zun and Downey 2003). The respondents reported 50% were in close proximity to a gun, while youth reported 34% lived in a house with a gun (Schuster and Franke 2000). The young adults surveyed responded that 35% of them had either been injured by a gun or had a relative injured by a gun, compared to the 57% of youth who reported injury in Kahn and Kazimi's study (2001). Previous research has shown that 60-70% of youth own a gun for hunting, and 50% own a gun for personal protection. The young adults of this study reported that 62.1% of respondents who owned a gun, used it for hunting, while only 24% used it for personal protection (Cunningham and Henggeler 2000, Wilkinson and Fagan 2001). These results show that even though the findings are similar, young adults have more interaction with guns than youth. This similar level of gun interaction could be contributed to children being introduced to guns at an early age. This would allow them to have had similar amounts of interaction to those older than them.

Some limitations faced during this process included finding information that was considered recent. Most research that has been collected on this topic was done so in the 1970's and 1980's. Since we are an ever-changing culture this information no longer applied to our current population. It was difficult to find updated information on the topic of gun interaction for any age groups. It was also difficult create a dependable research tool that would cover all the variables I thought were important in an efficient way. If it could be more precise and specific, it would prove to be more dependable. The research tool was utilized to the best of its abilities, but the results show there are some obvious imperfections.

CONCLUSION

This research study examined how gun interaction is affected by age, accessibility to guns, and attitudes towards guns. The results of the young adult study were then compared to the results of previous studies conducted on youth. The results showed that both young adults and youth had similar levels of gun interaction. This was most strongly influenced by the amount of accessibility each group had with guns. It was discovered that youth today receive extensive exposure to firearms at a very young age. This interaction socializes them to be more familiar with

guns; as a result, they develop either positive or negative perceptions about guns before the legal age for adulthood of eighteen. Overall youth and young adults have similar levels of gun interaction.

Future research might aim to explore the perceptions of firearms for youth. We know they have increased interaction with guns, but no research shows their attitudes either positive or negative in relation to guns. This would discover if attitudes play a significant role in the amount of gun interaction they choose to participate in, or if socialization is the main driving force.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (1997). Theoretical Perspectives. *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* (pp. 1-35). New York: W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Boeringer, S. & Shehan, C. (1991). "Social contexts and social learning in sexual coercion and aggression: assessing the contribution of fraternity membership." *Family Relations*, 58-64.
- Cassel, C. & Nelson, E. (1998). "Internists' and surgeons' attitudes toward guns and firearm injury prevention." *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 224-230.
- Cook, P. & Sorenson, S. (2006). "The gender gap among teen survey respondents: why are boys more likely to report a gun in the home than girls?" *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 61-76.
- Cunningham, P. & Henggeler, S. (2000). "Patterns and correlates of gun ownership among nonmetropolitan and rural middle school students." *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 432-442.
- Glaeser, E. & Glendon, S. (1998). "Who owns guns? criminals, victims, and the culture of violence." *The American Economic Review*, 458-462.
- I Have A Right To*. (2010). Retrieved February 20, 2010, from BBC World Service: http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/ihavearightto/four_b/casestudy_art2_9.shtml
- Kahn, D. & Kazimi, M. (2001). "Attitudes of new york city high school students regarding firearm violence." *Pediatrics*, 1125-1132.

- Sandstrom, K., Martin, D., & Fine, G. (2003). *Symbols, Selves and Social Reality*. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company.
- Schuster, M. A. & Franke, T. M. (2000). "Firearm storage patterns in US homes with children." *American Journal of Public Health*, 588-594.
- Shapiro, J., Dorman, R., Welker, C., & Clough, J. (1997). "Development and factor analysis of a measure of youth attitudes toward guns and violence." *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 311-320.
- Shapiro, J., Dorman, R., Welker, C., & Clough, J. (1998). "Youth attitudes toward guns and violence: relations with sex, age, ethnic group, and firearm exposure." *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 98-108.
- Slovak, K. & Carlson, K. (2007). "The Influence of family violence on youth attitudes." *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 77-99.
- Sprinkle, J. E. (2007). "Domestic violence, gun ownership, and parental educational attainment: how do they affect the aggressive beliefs and behaviors of children?" *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 133-151.
- Stolzenberg, L. & D'Alessio, S. J. (2000). "Gun availability and violent crime: new evidence from the national incident-based reporting system." *Social Forces*, 1461-1482.
- Wilkinson, D. & Fagan, J. (2001, November 2). "What we know about gun use among adolescents." *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 109-132.
- Zun, L. S. & Downey, L. V. (2003, November 12). "Reliability of a short gun questionnaire." *Southern Medical Journal*, 1238-1242.

TABLES

HYPOTHESIS 1 - AGE AND GUN INTERACTION

TABLE 2 AGE * SHARED OWNERSHIP

		SHARED OWNERSHIP OF GUN		
		YES	NO	Total
AGE 18	Count	3	5	8
	% of Total	3.9%	6.6%	10.5%
19	Count	6	8	14
	% of Total	7.9%	10.5%	18.4%
20	Count	1	16	17
	% of Total	1.3%	21.1%	22.4%
21	Count	5	12	17
	% of Total	6.6%	15.8%	22.4%
22	Count	4	4	8
	% of Total	5.3%	5.3%	10.5%
23	Count	1	3	4
	% of Total	1.3%	3.9%	5.3%
24	Count	4	1	5
	% of Total	5.3%	1.3%	6.6%
25	Count	0	1	1
	% of Total	.0%	1.3%	1.3%
26	Count	2	0	2
	% of Total	2.6%	.0%	2.6%
Total	Count	26	50	76
	% of Total	34.2%	65.8%	100.0%

N= 76; Chi-Square= 16.800; df=8; $p \leq .032$

TABLE 4- AGE * GUN SHOTS

			HEARD GUN SHOTS		
			YES	NO	Total
AGE	18	Count	3	5	8
		% of Total	3.9%	6.6%	10.5%
	19	Count	10	4	14
		% of Total	13.2%	5.3%	18.4%
	20	Count	7	10	17
		% of Total	9.2%	13.2%	22.4%
	21	Count	15	2	17
		% of Total	19.7%	2.6%	22.4%
	22	Count	7	1	8
		% of Total	9.2%	1.3%	10.5%
	23	Count	2	2	4
		% of Total	2.6%	2.6%	5.3%
	24	Count	5	0	5
		% of Total	6.6%	.0%	6.6%
	25	Count	1	0	1
		% of Total	1.3%	.0%	1.3%
	26	Count	2	0	2
		% of Total	2.6%	.0%	2.6%
Total		Count	52	24	76
		% of Total	68.4%	31.6%	100.0%

N= 76; Chi-Square= 18.196; df=8; $p \leq .020$

TABLE 8- GRADE * SHARED OWN

		SHARED OWNERSHIP		
		YES	NO	Total
GRADE	FRESHMAN	8	8	16
	% of Total	10.5%	10.5%	21.1%
	SOPHOMORE	3	18	21
	% of Total	3.9%	23.7%	27.6%
	JUNIOR	5	14	19
	% of Total	6.6%	18.4%	25.0%
	SENIOR	10	10	20
	% of Total	13.2%	13.2%	26.3%
Total	Count	26	50	76
	% of Total	34.2%	65.8%	100.0%

N= 76; Chi-Square= 8.218; df=3; $p \leq .042$

HYPOTHESIS 2- AGE AND ATTITUDE

TABLE 21- GRADE * ANYONE OWN

		OKAY FOR ANYONE TO OWN GUN					Total
		SD	D	N	A	SA	
GRADE	FRESHMAN	1	3	3	5	4	16
	% of Total	1.3%	3.9%	3.9%	6.6%	5.3%	21.1%
	SOPHOMORE	0	7	7	7	0	21
	% of Total	.0%	9.2%	9.2%	9.2%	.0%	27.6%
	JUNIOR	5	8	1	3	2	19
	% of Total	6.6%	10.5%	1.3%	3.9%	2.6%	25.0%
	SENIOR	5	3	1	5	6	20
	% of Total	6.6%	3.9%	1.3%	6.6%	7.9%	26.3%
Total	Count	11	21	12	20	12	76
	% of Total	14.5%	27.6%	15.8%	26.3%	15.8%	100.0%

N= 76; Chi-Square= 25.869; df=12; $p \leq .011$

TABLE 28- GRADE * EXPOSED EARLY

		YOUTH ARE EXPOSED TOO EARLY TO GUNS					Total
		SD	D	N	A	SA	
GRADE	FRESHMAN	2	7	1	5	1	16
	% of Total	2.6%	9.2%	1.3%	6.6%	1.3%	21.1%
	SOPHOMORE	1	3	9	6	2	21
	% of Total	1.3%	3.9%	11.8%	7.9%	2.6%	27.6%
	JUNIOR	1	6	3	3	5	19
	% of Total	1.3%	7.9%	3.9%	3.9%	6.6%	25.0%
	SENIOR	3	3	3	11	0	20
	% of Total	3.9%	3.9%	3.9%	14.5%	.0%	26.3%
Total	Count	7	19	16	25	8	76
	% of Total	9.2%	25.0%	21.1%	32.9%	10.5%	100.0%

N= 76; Chi-Square= 27.734; df=15; $p \leq .023$

HYPOTHESIS 3 - ACCESSIBILITY AND INTERACTION

TABLE 30- HAVE/GET GUN * SHARED OWNERSHIP

		SHARED OWNERSHIP OF GUN		
		YES	NO	Total
HAVE/GET GUN	ALREADY HAVE GUN	21	1	22
	% of Total	27.6%	1.3%	28.9%
	EASY TO GET GUN	3	30	33
	% of Total	3.9%	39.5%	43.4%
	DIFFICULT TO GET GUN	2	15	17
	% of Total	2.6%	19.7%	22.4%
	IMPOSSIBLE TO GET GUN	0	4	4
	% of Total	.0%	5.3%	5.3%
Total	Count	26	50	76
	% of Total	34.2%	65.8%	100.0%

N= 76; Chi-Square= 51.801; df=3; $p \leq .000$

TABLE 33- HAVE/GET GUN * FIRED GUN

		FIRED GUN			
		NEVER	IN PAST 6 MONTHS	NOT IN PAST 6 MONTHS	Total
HAVE/GET GUN	ALREADY HAVE GUN % of Total	0 .0%	17 22.4%	5 6.6%	22 28.9%
	EASY TO GET GUN % of Total	16 21.1%	7 9.2%	10 13.2%	33 43.4%
	DIFFICULT TO GET GUN % of Total	6 7.9%	4 5.3%	7 9.2%	17 22.4%
	IMPOSSIBLE TO GET GUN % of Total	4 5.3%	0 .0%	0 .0%	4 5.3%
	Total Count % of Total	26 34.2%	28 36.8%	22 28.9%	76 100.0%

N= 76; Chi-Square= 31.150; df=6; $p \leq .000$

TABLE 36- CLOSE PROXIMITY * SHARED OWNERSHIP

		SHARED OWNERSHIP OF GUN		
		YES	NO	Total
CLOSE PROXIMITY	YES % of Total	22 28.9%	16 21.1%	38 50.0%
	NO % of Total	4 5.3%	34 44.7%	38 50.0%
	Total Count % of Total	26 34.2%	50 65.8%	76 100.0%

N= 76; Chi-Square= 18.942; df=1; $p \leq .000$

TABLE 38- CLOSE PROXIMITY * GUN SHOTS

		HEARD GUN SHOTS		
		YES	NO	Total
CLOSE PROXIMITY	YES	30	8	38
	% of Total	39.5%	10.5%	50.0%
	NO	22	16	38
	% of Total	28.9%	21.1%	50.0%
Total	Count	52	24	76
	% of Total	68.4%	31.6%	100.0%

N= 76; Chi-Square= 3.897; df=1; $p \leq .048$

TABLE 39- CLOSE PROXIMITY * FIRED GUN

		FIRED GUN			
		NEVER	IN PAST 6 MONTHS	NOT IN PAST 6 MONTHS	Total
CLOSE PROXIMITY	YES	7	21	10	38
	% of Total	9.2%	27.6%	13.2%	50.0%
	NO	19	7	12	38
	% of Total	25.0%	9.2%	15.8%	50.0%
Total	Count	26	28	22	76
	% of Total	34.2%	36.8%	28.9%	100.0%

N= 76; Chi-Square= 12.720; df=2; $p \leq .002$

TABLE 40- CLOSE PROXIMITY * FIRST INTERACTION

		FIRST INTERACTION IN YEARS						
		NEVER	0-6	7-12	13-18	19-22	Total	
CLOSE PROXIMITY	YES	1	8	15	13	1	38	
	% of Total	1.3%	10.5%	19.7%	17.1%	1.3%	50.0%	
	NO	11	4	11	10	2	38	
	% of Total	14.5%	5.3%	14.5%	13.2%	2.6%	50.0%	
	Total	Count	12	12	26	23	3	76
	% of Total		15.8%	15.8%	34.2%	30.3%	3.9%	100.0%

N= 76; Chi-Square= 11.007; df=4; $p \leq .026$