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School Shootings and Its Influence on Gun Control Policy Making

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By

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Abstract

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The number of school shootings that our nation has experienced throughout the past few years has significantly increased. What has also increased is the amount of news coverage that these shootings continue to receive. We will explore data that has analyzed the public's outcry in other states in regards to school shootings. We will attempt to seek out patterns in policy formation throughout other states. Through the collection of this data, we will get a better understanding of how influential these tragic events have been on the formation of gun control policy. Further, the data will display the amount of influence media coverage has on both the public's perception and policymakers' perception after the fact that these tragic incidents occur. Lastly, this paper will provide a framework for future scholars to conduct ongoing research and allow them to deliver various approaches to the issue of gun control policy.

Section 1: Introduction

The Second Amendment to the United States Constitution reads that its citizens have the right to bear arms. However, huge controversy has erupted throughout the past few years regarding the possible violation and disregard of this particular amendment. Further, many have questioned our nation's ability to develop policy around gun control, especially when it involves our citizens' right to bear arms and ability to address the concerns of people after a school shooting occurs.

The United States has recently been the focal point and witness to several mass shootings, including, school shootings across the nation. Tragic events like these can shape and influence the public's perception of gun control policy. The following paper will focus on how school shootings influence policy around gun control. We will explore whether or not these tragic events have any influence on gun control policy. Further, we will explore what other influential factors account for the formation or redevelopment of gun control policies. Nationally, the debate is whether or not guns should be entirely banned. However, we first want to determine whether or not school shootings play a critical role in the development of gun control policies. If not, then what other factors do policymakers take into account when pursuing change and safety for schools and the general public? Throughout the research, we will also cover reasons as to why these school shootings may occur and how they play a critical role in the development of gun control policy.

This paper will attempt to determine how school shootings influence gun control policy development at the state level. Since public administration may also be a contributing factor to the effectiveness of gun control policies, we will also analyze the effectiveness of policies related to gun control. The role of a public administrator is to meet and satisfy the

public's needs. Therefore, it is important to know what approach policymakers are taking when developing any form of policy. Is it the public interest that influences the development of policy? Do policymakers already have a set agenda regardless of what incidents occur around them? Many argue that the state legislature should be focused on not only meeting the public's needs but also take precaution in securing the public's constitutional rights. This is important to mention, particularly when dealing with the public sector because citizens of the public will always expect the highest level of service and due diligence. In our case, gun control will always be a controversial topic, especially when it involves student safety and the right to bear arms.

As mentioned, school shootings have been a trending subject in today's news coverage, receiving more attention than ever. It appears, however, that the media has often focused on the act rather than the underlying causes. The availability and access of guns often seem to take the spotlight. Media appears to be appalled about how individuals are able to get their hands on such dangerous and lethal weapons. This leads us to explore whether or not, the act of a school shooting, is enough to influence policymakers and their decisions on policy formation. It also allows us to uncover other underlying issues we may be unfamiliar with, but yet have a great level of influence on the policy development process.

In 2017, the approximate rate of gun ownership in the state of California was at 20 percent. Further, California is currently the leading state in the nation with the most school shooting occurrence. This statistic has kept its place since 1990 and has not shown any signs of a decline. In California, law enforcement agencies have implemented programs, such as Buying Guns Back by the Los Angeles Police Department, which many argue that policies and implementations as such are simply not enough. Given the fact that California has been

the leading state in school shootings, this certainly questions the state's policymakers and their motives behind creating policies around this issue. Hence, we decide to explore how school shootings influence or impact the development of gun control policy.

Student safety is at jeopardy when these incidents occur on school premises. Interestingly, when school shootings occur, it is rare to see no casualties involved. More often, when a school shooting occurs there are multiple victims and casualties. It is then that the public reacts and begins to demand action or legislation to be passed to make schools a safe haven for students. Although school shootings may not be a daily occurrence, security measures still need to be taken for students who may bring guns on campus. Needless to say, the following paper will also analyze the various factors as to why these tragedies may occur. Further, we will determine whether or not these incidents influence gun control policy development.

The state of California has been the capital of many underserved and low-income communities. In these communities, many educational institutions ranging from elementary to the university level have experienced their share of school shootings. In the early 1990s, the majority of murders that occurred in urban schools were gang-related or were stabbings over girlfriends (Hemenway, 2017). This may lead individuals to think that these incidents occur due to dangerous settings and environments. Others may argue that it is due to the current legislation and political climate. The underlying factors and explanations behind school shooting motives are endless. Yet, when dealing with a tragic event like this, it is important for public servants and administrators to understand the public's interest and encourage positive community relationships. Further, it is important that they meet public expectations and meet their responsibilities as public employees. Controversy can certainly

spark when the public's requests are not met or acknowledged. In the context of this paper, student safety is at stake if these events are not addressed and continuing to disregard these types of tragedies can lead to serious repercussions.

The work of the public administrator is certainly not an easy one. Expectations are not only high, but the demand that comes from the public can seem never-ending. In today's political climate, public expectations seem to constantly change. A gap exists between what the public wants and what policymakers decide to implement. Moreover, there appears to be an ongoing debate on whether or not it is safe for our citizens to possess firearms. In California, protestors argue that the statistics should validate the necessity of a ban on guns. In 2017, guns were used in approximately 72 percent of homicides in the state of California. Anti-gun protestors would argue that this statistic can be decreased if a ban on gun possession were to be passed through legislation. However, there will always be pushback from those individuals who seek to practice their second amendment right.

We now begin to realize that the push back from individuals who strongly support their constitutional right to bear arms is clear and necessary to address. Of course, the safety of one is always the first thing that comes to mind. Individuals will claim that having the right to bear arms is what actually makes them feel safe. Their ability to own or possess a gun, aside from the strict scrutiny that they face, can make an individual feel safe. There are also organizations that have taken it upon themselves to spread advocacy on the importance of gun ownership. In the state of California, organizations such as the California Rifle & Pistol Association (CRPA) and Gun Owners of California stand in their due diligence to *“defend their second amendment.”*

Is it reasonable for citizens to expect California policymakers to take immediate action after a school shooting occurs? As public administrators, is it their responsibility to develop or redevelop policy? Due to the fact that the majority of California deaths related to gun violence do not result from school shootings, there may be no influence correlated between school shootings and gun policy development. Yet, this shall not disregard the fact that school shootings can potentially have some form of influential impact on policy. Whether it is simply bringing attention to policymakers, or provoke gun violence awareness, all underlying factors shall be closely analyzed. Therefore, we ask, at what extent will policymakers take action and develop a strategy to address the public's demand and concerns?

Throughout this paper, we will begin by exploring school shootings and other tragic events that have occurred and influenced policy in various forms. Further, we will also explore the current political climate by analyzing any past or current policies that went into effect and the reasons behind why they were implemented. We will also explore literature and research to seek any patterns or trends that policymakers have displayed throughout the development process for policymaking. This will assist us in our attempt to bridge any gaps in research and provide an analytical discussion on what policymakers take into account when developing or implementing policy. Next, we will discuss what type of data was collected to allow the opportunity for further analytical discussion. We will also describe the type of data that was collected and discuss why the qualitative research design was the most appropriate for this paper. Concluding our paper, we will summarize all the literature that was collected, address any literature and research gaps, and attempt to analyze any patterns that policymakers displayed when such incidents occurred.

Section 2: Literature Review

Historically, gun control policy in the past was not an issue of concern because of school shootings. According to Sugarman (1992), the New York State's Sullivan Law was passed during an era in which the public was seeking prohibition for drugs and alcohol. As a result, along with the public's fear of crime and an increased population of new immigrants, the law was passed. The New York State's Sullivan Law set the tone for the regulation of firearms. Although the state of New York was dealing with gun-related crimes at the time, mass shootings, school shootings, and other similar tragic events were not their main concern. It was not until the assassination of President John Kennedy that interest shifted to the passage of the Gun Control Act in 1968 (Vizzard, 1995).

It was not until the assassination of Kennedy, that the nation's perspective and demand for gun control policy began to show. Vizzard (1995) explains that the elements that have molded the history of gun control policy, and likely most other policies, are far more complex than mere special interest manipulation of Congress. This statement can certainly pave the way for the purpose of this paper, as we seek influential factors that have shed light on gun control policy; in our case, we are seeking the influence of California school shootings on the state's policy.

According to (Vizzard, 1995), in the case of gun control, the dynamics of the issue will likely change when the public's paradigms shift adequately to change the incentives and paradigms of legislators. Vizzard's statement provides us with the possibility that the act of the school shootings may have no influence, but instead, it is the public's ability to influence policymakers. What Vizzard is reinforcing here is how significant and influential the public's perception and paradigm can be to policymakers. In our case, it may not be the school

shootings, but rather the public's reaction to the incidents occurring that move the policymakers.

Not all literature, of course, shares the same perception. Moore (1983) argued that the debate among policymakers has generally concentrated on measures to restrict the quantity of guns. Further, Moore explains that the various contentions have produced political impasse, accompanied by increasing bitterness among the adversaries. By any test of practical value, then, policy-making has failed. As mentioned before, the public's perception is certainly crucial to the way policymakers decide on certain regulations. This leads to our previous analysis that explains how the decisions of policymakers can impact the reaction of the public. In the case of California, the state is leading in the number of school shootings occurring per year, yet there appears to be no ongoing development on the gun control policy.

The question, however, remains the same as to how much influence do California school shootings have on the state's gun policy development? As we begin to realize, the public's interest and perception are highly needed to influence policy formulation, possibly not the act in itself. According to Moore (1983), by failing to take the existing political debate seriously enough, however, the analyst often ignores important social values that the disputants see at stake. Interestingly enough, Moore brings a great idealistic approach to explain how public policy can certainly become complex, especially when the social value is disregarded. This also allows us to better understand how social value and norms may possibly influence policymakers and their agenda. The social value is what disrupts the way in which policy-making happens, although the outcomes and results that stem from it may not always be what the public wants.

The complexity is also discussed in Kleck and Patterson. According to Kleck and Patterson (1993), thinking seriously about violence reduction requires going beyond what currently seems politically easy or “realistic.” Orthodox crime control programs devised within the framework of traditional political realities have been failures and similar proposals for the future show no prospects of doing any better. The complexity of gun control policy in itself can be complex. Nonetheless, the creativity and strategic planning that goes into play by public administrators can obviously become stale and unproductive. In more recent history, with millennials introducing a new wave of social value and social thinking, and policymakers debating over what is politically correct, the situation of meeting the public’s needs only get more oblivious.

The fact is, the discussion of gun policy can also become extremely patriotic, but can also serve for a discussion of determining whether it is even important and necessary to address. If we were to have this discussion today, the conversation would be much different if we were to have it during the days prior to the Kennedy assassination. Sometimes, the impression is that what is of concern to the public now, should and is expected to be of concern to policymakers as well. However, that is not always the case. According to (Cook & Ludwig, 2006), they argue that in particular, policymakers might be tempted to ignore the problem because gun violence, specifically gun assaults and homicides, is concentrated among those segments of society that do not carry much influence in the policymaking process – young, poor members of racial or ethnic minority groups, a large percentage of whom have criminal records.

Even in today’s current political state, we have seen a huge turn and shift on what our current national policy is focused on. Even after events such as the 2017 Las Vegas Shooting,

the Nikolas Cruz Florida shooting, the 2017 Texas church shooting the current political climate seems to be more focused on international affairs and immigration policy. Further, in (Cook & Ludwig, 2006) they go on to state that with respect to the conceptualization of the problem, the usual measures in public health assessments have focused on the body counts: the number of people killed and injured by guns. While a useful start, this measure of the problem has the unfortunate consequence of suggesting that the “problem” is rather limited with respect to which demographic groups are affected. Unfortunately, we have witnessed our political leaders "blame" certain populations for these tragic events instead of accepting that the issue can possibly be that of national concern. Instead of political leaders and influencers accepting or taking into consideration the fact that there might be a greater issue, and not a demographical one, this also creates complexity within public policy and administration.

As we previously mentioned, there is a sense of social value when gun control policy comes into play. Policy makers need to take into account the way policy is being written and interpreted. For example, in (Sarosy, 2018) he differentiates the difference between banning "open carry" policy and instead pursuing a concealed carry policy. He goes on to explain that due to the fact that openly carrying a gun is often not socially acceptable, it may be a better approach to combine openly carrying and concealed carrying policy together to control the carrying of guns in public places. According to (Sarosy, 2018), if this approach was implemented, the negative social consequences that the public will display would naturally deter people from actually openly carrying a gun. This is important because Sarosy claims that if California’s ultimate goal was gun control policy enforcement, banning an action that

is a less socially acceptable way of openly carrying a weapon may have been an unwise choice.

School administrators may have a different perception of why these acts of violence occur on their campus. For example, school administrators may be more concerned over the causes behind these acts, not the policies behind gun control policy. Further, their interest might be focused on strictly school safety, rather than focusing on how gun control policy in the general public is being developed. According to (McKinney, 2001) at least three-quarters of all schools in the state of California have zero tolerance policies for that mandate predetermined consequences or punishments for specific offenses. Other forms of security measures in schools include students wearing uniforms, increasing the presence of security guards on campus, and implementing technological security devices such as metal detectors. This is important to take into account as it may explain why there might not be much influence on gun control policy when a school shooting occurs.

There is also a possibility that policymakers may feel that there is simply no correlation between school shootings and gun control policy. For example, (Sarosy, 2018) reports that in densely populated areas, such as Los Angeles County, the dangers of having more concealed weapons in public areas significantly increase. Dangers include but are not limited to potential for verbal or physical conflicts turning deadly, a misfired shot hitting a bystander and unsuccessful attempts by individuals trying to prevent crimes. According to (Sarosy, 2018) he goes on to explain how these dangers may be the possible justification for the differentiating rates of permit issuance between sparsely and densely populated counties. As we realize, it is the general public's safety that policymakers are more concerned about.

Although school shootings are events of concern, their influence on gun control may actually be very minimal.

There is, however, contrary research that argues otherwise. Whether it is the presence of a school shooting in a neighborhood or a tragic event happening at a school, the idea of pupil safety can go a long way. According to (Katsiyannis, Whitford, & Ennis, 2018), the Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990 imposed criminal charges for the possession or discharge of a firearm in a school zone. Further, they explain how the act significantly reduced gun violence in schools while fewer students also reported carrying guns.

Interestingly enough, it appears that the federal government also got involved when this act went into play. According to (Katsiyannis et al.,2018) the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 requires states receiving federal funds to have a law requiring school districts to expel, for at least 1 year, any student carrying a gun to school unless a chief administering officer may modify such expulsion on a case by case basis. Although not necessarily gun control policy, it contributes to the idea of taking preventative measures to control gun violence and pursue pupil safety.

The accessibility of guns has also been an ongoing discussion in regards to school shootings and gun control policy. Many argue that the accessibility of guns has not been well regulated and monitored; hence, leading to the discussion of the necessity of acts and policies around gun control. In (Katsiyannis et al., 2018) they report that the majority of 21st-century shooters were adolescents, suggesting that it is now easier for adolescents to access guns. Further, they conclude that this trend may be a result of the easy accessibility to high power firearms used in many of the mass shootings occurring in the 21st century. As a policy maker and a servant to the public, it is necessary to be mindful of these types of findings. Without

doing so, these tragic events will continue to occur and the public will continue to only build remorse towards their political constituents. Continuing on the discussion of the easy accessibility of guns, however, researchers also argue that this is only part of the problem, not the actual problem. According to (Newman, Fox, Roth, Mehta, & Harding, 2004) they argue that although the number of guns has increased, the number of people with guns has actually not increased in recent years.

As previously mentioned, there is also a possibility that school shootings may be misinterpreted or are receiving the wrong depiction by media outlets. This can certainly cause for the public and policymakers to have complete different depictions and understandings of a school shooting. According to (Henry, 2000) he reports that empirical study of primary source documents for targeted school attacks suggests that, when comparing to investigative and court documentation, the depiction of school shootings that the media delivers are in many cases incomplete or inaccurate. This can certainly cause the development of ineffective policy, due to the inaccurate information that is being disseminated. Further, it avoids addressing the root causes of the school shootings, while also create a disservice to the public.

If one were to actually take into account the actual root causes of school shootings, the number of proposed root causes and the debate on which cause is the most appropriate would be ongoing. In our case, gun control policy advocates may argue that it is an issue greater than just school shootings. According to (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010) most school-associated homicides, like other juvenile homicides, tend to be gang-related, drug-related, or otherwise linked to criminal activity or interpersonal disputes where the school is simply a site of opportunity for the attack. It appears that gun control policy has

no potential influential factor on school shootings and neither vice versa. Further, (Borum et al., 2010) argues that schools shootings such as Columbine High School in Colorado only represent a particularly rare subset of school-related violent deaths. Yet, the media depicts the individuals responsible for these attacks as “classroom avengers” and “rampage killers.”

In the case of media depiction of school shootings, many argue that there is some sort of influence. However, the influence that the media and the public are depicting is actually misleading and uninformed. According to (Rocque, 2011) the argument of some is that the media has created a sort of moral panic when it comes to rampage shootings, even the fact that their occurrences are rare. Rocque goes on to argue that perhaps a more appropriate solution to this moral panic is to educate the public on the actual threat concerning school shootings. The impression here is that school shootings may, in fact, be evitable if we were to take preventative measures. When the media decides to shed light on the issue and shift the focus on moral concern, they are creating a disservice to the public in not addressing the real issue at hand. This influences the public to shift their focus and advocate for policies that may actually have no impact on preventing future shootings.

As we continue to find ongoing data on gun control policy, we realize that the range of ideas and approaches to school shootings and gun control seem endless. Nonetheless, there appears to be advocacy for policy development on both sides of the spectrum – pro and anti-gun policy. In (Barry, McGinty, Vernick, & Webster, 2013) they report that in 2013 they found that a large majority of Americans, including both gun owners and non-gun owners, supported a wide range of gun violence prevention policies, including those policies that aim to enhance background checks processes for gun sales, policies that prohibit certain dangerous individuals from possessing guns, policies that aim to improve oversight of gun

dealers, and policies that advocate for the prevention of gun ownership to those individuals with mental health illnesses. This is important to note, especially for policy developers who are responsible for responding to the demand of the citizens. Although possibly not the easiest task to accomplish, developers need to realize the amount of advocacy there is from both sides of the spectrum. Individuals may want the ban on guns, while others may be concerned only of certain individuals possessing guns, while others may advocate for pro-gun possession, but want extensive control on the legal process of obtaining and using a gun.

There is, however, data showing that school shootings may provoke the public and policymakers to pursue policy change and development. Yet, the question remains whether individuals are reacting to the incident at the moment it occurs or are they pursuing long-term change. For example (Barry et al., 2013) reports that a concern that was raised during their 2013 study was that public attitudes in the months following the Sandy Hook were uniquely shaped by the tragedy. According to (Barry et al., 2013) this statement was fair to make given that the horrific loss of elementary school children could immediately prompt public outcry for policy change in a way that can eventually change once the public moves past the grieving stage of the unfortunate incident. Although policymakers may respond to the public's outcry, individuals also debate and challenge the effectiveness of the policies that come forth after these tragic incidents. As a public servant, one is responsible to ensure the public that the services and processes you are implementing are ones to be trusted. Yet, opponents argue that many of the policies that are developed after these tragic incidents are only "*feel good policies.*"

We must realize that there is an important difference between what media depicts and what Congress actually deems valid enough to discuss when these tragic events occur.

According to (Lawrence & Birkland, 2004) they define media as an arena of discourse and define congressional arena as a setting that involves both discourse and action. Further, they explain how congress settles disputable ideas and then converts them into policies, therefore concluding that those prominent ideas in media discourse are not prominent in legislation as they may appear to be. Here, we get a better understanding as to why the public might be shifted to think a certain way, or why they might feel inclined to advocate for a specific policy or proposition to be passed. With that said, we continue to notice that media may have a greater influence on the policy development that occurs, yet does not promise any guarantee that any of their depictions may, in fact, fall through Congress.

When it comes to school shootings, we also learn that everything media feeds the public is not necessarily to the public's advantage. In (Lawrence & Birkland, 2004), they explain that just because media and Congress pursue, cover, and dispute the same issue at hand, as like when the Columbine High School shooting occurred, it does not exactly ensure that they will both define and depict the issue at hand in similar ways. This argument contributes to the fact that legislation and media may not even have a significant and positive impact all together on each other. In the event, they do coincide, it may not be in the public's best interest to rely on what lands on the hands of policymakers.

Although not explaining its pros and cons, many believe that the simplicity of these school shootings having an impact of policy formation is good enough in itself. For example, (Spitzer, 1998) argues that focusing events like the Columbine High School shooting help set the tone and framework for policymakers disputing issues dealing with gun violence. Further, he explains how after school shootings occur, various groups actually take advantage of the event to advance and promote their goals for policy work by putting a focus on public safety,

second amendment rights, and other preexisting factors that others may deem as responsible for the shootings. Fairly enough Spitzer also agrees, just as we have previously explained, that there has been no further evidence examining the quality of the influence that spills over to policymakers. Fortunately, the previous literature provided explains that this can work against the public's interest.

In the state of California, there is a need to gain a better understanding of how the state has decided to develop and handle policy post-school shootings. According to (Godwin & Schroedel, 2000) in the 1990s, school shootings were the main factor for the formation of interest groups and policy alternatives rather than immediate direct change or redevelopment of gun control policy. The only exception to this claim was the city of Pomona, where their city council adopted an immediate gun control ordinance after six individuals were murdered during the span of just one weekend in 1997. Although not a school shooting, it provides us an idea as to how a city can take immediately to gun-related issues if and when deemed necessary. Further, (Godwin & Schroedel, 2000) state that they found local government policymaking involving gun control to be a smoother and more accepting process, right after the idea of gun violence was depicted as a public health concern. This statement reaffirms the idea that school shootings can consist and stem from a variety of factors, and depending on the framework from which it is displayed, will the public and policymakers then either accept or reject to pursue a proposed solution.

Section 3: Research Gap and Question

As we realize, the literature provides us with extensive information pertaining to school shootings and its effect on gun control policy. Yet there is no evidence explaining whether or not the policies developed for gun control stemmed from a school shooting. In the event there was, there is no evidence determining whether or not these policies were positively effective. On the contrary, it appears that media outlets have had a greater impact on the public's perception, rather than the public's perception on policy development. As we previously stated, the research question was to determine whether or not school shootings in California had any influence on gun control policy development at the state level.

There is extensive research in the literature we collected that explains school shootings and its influence on policymakers. The consistency is that, even if policies were to be developed due to a school shooting, they are mostly short-term solutions. These policies are developed based on the public's immediate outcry as a response to these tragic events. As mentioned, the media's depiction on both the events and the perpetrators has a strong influence on what the public demands from their politicians. It appears as if school administrators have taken policy into their own hands, by attempting to create a safer educational setting. The spectrum between school shootings and gun control policy for the general public is one that is too broad to attempt and bridge.

An area that also deserves coverage, but was excluded in our research was the mental health component of school shootings. As we discussed, there is a spectrum of conclusions one may argue as to why school shootings occur. Nonetheless, mental health has been an issue that has recently received more coverage in today's era. Individuals argue that mental health is predominantly the main reason why school shootings are occurring. Yet as we

mentioned, the coverage on mental health issues was excluded in this research but is important to share that it certainly can shape the conclusion and research determination of the study. With that said, the following are our proposed research questions:

- Is there a relationship between school shootings and the development of gun control policy?
- What influential factors are there post-school shootings that are relevant and influential to gun control policy development?
- What are current gun control policies that were put into effect post-school shootings and what is the public's perception of their effectiveness?

Section 4: Research Design

To answer the proposed research questions, we decide that qualitative research is the most favorable and compatible research design to pursue. This is due to the fact that our intentions are not to provide one single *appropriate* solution or an alternative policy to gun control policies already in effect. Instead, the sole purpose of our research is to allow room for future researchers and scholars to conduct ongoing research on this topic. Further, we conclude that research, which was exploratory in nature, should allow the possibility to provide an open framework in which future scholars can use to conduct ongoing research.

We first analyze the effects of school shootings after they occur and then conclude whether policymakers were somehow influenced by these tragic events when developing gun control policy. The intention is to provide knowledge and analysis into these tragic events, with the possibility of also producing a quantitative research design. As public administrators, we should also be able to interpret this research in a way that will allow us to discover patterns throughout past research and develop innovative approaches to policy.

In our case, the purpose of collecting data is to identify any relationship between school shootings and gun control policy development. By using a non-experimental design, the data and research that we collected was not to be manipulated or redesigned in any form. This is due to the fact that our intention is to discover how school shootings play a critical role in gun control policy development.

Methodology and Data Collection Methods

For the purposes of qualitative research methods and to get a better understanding of potential future research for the context being discussed, data was collected by conducting surveys and interviews in a qualitative manner. Individuals taking part in these surveys and interviews would include the general public, media/news reporters, individuals who are in

office (policymakers), school administrators, and local law enforcement. It is important that these individuals be included in these surveys and interviews given that their experience and knowledge is directly aligned with the issues being discussed in this paper.

A series of interview questions were asked, which were also related to the patterns and research discovered in the literature review. Understanding how school shootings may impact the gun control policy development opens the door for future policymakers to make certain calls and decisions on gun control policy. Further, it allows the reader to get a better understanding as to why a policy may move in a certain direction. Also included and conducted is a survey that depicts individuals' perception of how strongly they believe school shootings may influence policymakers' gun control agenda.

We determined that although much of the research data has proven that school shootings may cause an immediate public outcry, whether that is positive or negative is still questionable. There is no concrete evidence proving the implementation of effective long term gun control policy post-school shootings. Hence, the most substantial data that we were able to collect was exploratory research. Through this, it allows the reader to realize any previous patterns in research, make informative conclusions, and open the possibility for future scholars to conduct ongoing research.

Section 5: Conclusion

If these tragic events that our nation is experiencing are not enough to move policymakers in the direction the public is asking for, then what will? As we read, there is not one single solution to solve the issue of school shootings. However, the research collected does imply that it will take more than one single proposed solution, including the public's perception, to instill change in the gun control policymaking process. Further, we must not conform to just past and present norms and expectations for the same policies and proposals to fix the problem.

As previously stated, we should also be able to accept the fact that there is no immediate or single solution to *the appropriate* gun control policy. This, in fact, is what makes public administration and policy extremely complex. In today's society, we seek the immediate solution, hoping that one particular change or shift will result in a solution that will meet an entirety of needs and wants. We should begin with an approach that will create micro steps, and begin influencing those around us. Nonetheless, it is necessary to say that the tragic events our nation has faced and continues to experience, are absolutely unfortunate. Yet, we must keep in mind that a simple change in policy might not be the exact or only solution.

As the literature collected depicts, there is a realm of issues that contribute to school shootings. Politicians and media depict certain issues, while experts and scholars argue otherwise, stating that school shootings and other criminal acts stem from other areas. For example, we saw issues like mental health, zero tolerance policies, and other unrelated issues to be possible root causes these tragic events.

Section 6: Appendix

Interview Questions

1. What is your stance on gun control policy?
2. What changes to gun control policy do you believe are necessary?
3. In what ways do you think school shootings have impacted gun control policy?
4. What other preventative measures can be implemented to prevent school shootings?
5. What steps can policymakers take to address the school shooting dilemma?
6. What are some factors that you believe lead to school shootings?
7. How do you think the sale and possession of guns impact school shootings?
8. When it comes to addressing school shootings, does it conflict with 2nd Amendment rights?
9. What influence, if any, do you believe media has on gun control policy?
10. Do you believe that school shootings receive more media coverage than other types of gun violence? If so, why?

Survey Question

How effective would you rate your state's current gun control legislation?

1	2	3	4	5
Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Neutral	Effective	Highly Effective

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