

RELEASE



*A student news collaborative focusing on
the impact of incarceration in Connecticut*

[FOCUS ON] *Gun Control*



Brought to you by students at Central Connecticut State University,
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welcome to **RELEASE**

Welcome to Release, a publication devoted to collecting stories about citizens with criminal histories and the organizations that serve them. Produced by the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) and created by students from Central Connecticut State University, the newsletter provides profiles, general features, interviews, videos, informative graphs and more. Our goal: to empower ex-offenders and to educate the larger Connecticut community on what it can do to stem recidivism. Release covers employment, housing, education, children of incarcerated parents and other subject areas that relate to building a productive life with a criminal history. For your free subscription to Release, which will be distributed online on a monthly basis and also published in print on a quarterly basis, please register at www.releasenews.org.

Stop GAP

The State of Connecticut's Search for Immediate Answers to Gang Violence

By Dave Baker



The body count piled up on the streets of Boston. Gangland rule became law during the early 1990s, each crew carved out the borders of their territories with pistols and tech-nines. Youth homicides, a statistic accounting for individuals ages 24 and under, reached epidemic proportions – 95 victims were reported between 1987-1990 – and Boston landed near the top of the national average with 44 youth homicides per year. City officials

and the community had enough. In 1996, the Boston Police Department launched Operation Cease Fire, a project aimed at reducing gun violence by blending qualitative research, aggressive policing, and community support into a cohesive effort. Working in conjunction with the National Institute of Justice and Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Governance, the Boston PD indentified and targeted individuals closely associated with gang violence – young, repeat offenders with lengthy rap sheets – and personally delivered to them the message that the city was adopting a zero-tolerance policy on gang activity. Word spread; the penalties, longer prison sentences and

stricter probations, became highly publicized and the youth homicide rate dropped 63 percent in the months following the execution of Operation Ceases Fire.

As countless U.S. cities endure through waves of gun violence, hybrid models of Operation Cease Fire have been implemented to curb the body count. The latest city to join the movement is New Haven, Connecticut. Backed by unprecedented federal support, Project Longevity was introduced by U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder at press conference held on November 27, 2012. A collaborative effort between the New Haven Police Department, the federal court

system, and various social service agencies, Holder remained adamant that Project Longevity's innovative approach would produce results and make the city safer.

“Project Longevity will send a powerful message to those who would harm their fellow citizens: that such acts will not be tolerated; that they will be swiftly met with clear, predictable consequences, and that help is available for all those who wish to break the cycle of violence and gang activity,” Holder told the assembled press.

The first measures of Project Longevity were “call-ins.” Twenty-seven alleged gang members from New Haven’s Newhallville and Dwight-Kensington neighborhoods parleyed with law enforcement, city officials, social services, and members

of the clergy in the basement of the Hall of Records on Orange Street to receive the new rules of engagement: if a body drops, the entire crew is going down. Law enforcement will target those responsible, the shooter and any of his associates, and prosecute them to the absolute highest extent of the law. Governor Malloy’s administration and the city of New Haven are hopeful this dogged approach will reduce shootings among young black males in Connecticut, a stubbornly high statistic. Plans to spread Project Longevity into other cities ravaged by gang-fueled carnage, like Hartford and Bridgeport, are in on-going discussions.

Project Longevity offers various alternative solution to mass arrests and incarceration, something it’s predecessors lacked. Previous attempts at ending gang wars have resulted in veritable witch hunts through the streets that demonize gang members and lock up anyone

wearing colors or throwing up a gang sign. Social service providers plan to offer those wishing to defect from the criminal lifestyle a chance to better themselves through state-sponsored assistance in housing, education, drug addiction counseling, and job placement. Gang members will be given preferential treatment and placed at the top of the list. Gangs remain firmly entrenched in New Haven – there are a reported 19 active gangs with over 600 members – and certain levels of patience, diligence, and cooperation will be needed to loosen their stranglehold on areas like the Tre and Ville, where over the years shell casings and yellow tape have become part of the landscape.



The roll out of Project Longevity and a recent drop in violent crimes – a 16 percent reduction between 2011 and 2012 – coincides directly with sweeping changes at the top of New Haven law enforcement, notably the return of Police Chief Dean Esserman in 2011. His arrival came at a time of flux: the department cycled through four chiefs in a three and a half year span and the murder rate rose to a record-setting pace. Esserman's reputation for committing fully to the concept of "community policing" made him ideal to restore stability and promote change. He assigned officers to regular walking beats, ran several guns-for-cash drives, allowing people a chance turn in illegal firearms without recrimination, and negotiated with gang leaders to reduce violence while also amassing intelligence from the public to help put several gangs out of business. In Stamford and Providence, Rhode Island, cities where Esserman

previously held the office of chief, he cut crime literally in half, earning him a national reputation as an apostle of community policing.

The gang issue, whether acknowledged or not, is woven into the national fabric. Gang violence has rocked cities, torn families a part, and contributed to making the United States the leading nation in incarcerated citizens per capita. There are no quick fixes.

Introducing new legislation like Project Longevity is not always met with widespread acceptance or enthusiasm from the community. Many New Haven residents see the initiative as covert racism and a blatant attack on black citizens. Dixwell Avenue resident William Baker remains skeptical and actively opposes to the goals of Project Longevity. "These are laws that are passed by white folks, and if they really wanted guns out of the community they could, but they are making their money off the deaths of

young black men in this capitalistic society," Baker said. Statements such as these reflect suspicion, fear, and the hostility towards a perceived notion that campaigns such as Project Longevity unfairly target black youths. But it's impossible to ignore a racial component involved in gun violence. According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice, between 1976-2005 blacks were over-represented in homicides involving gangs, drugs, or guns. The statistics showed that in 51 percent of all gun



homicides, the victims were black, as were 56 percent of the offenders. All told, 39 percent of all gang-related homicides involved black-on-black crimes.

Baker's stance, while extreme, does reflect a noted absence in legislation clearing the streets of guns and disarming gangs. Project Longevity is a stopgap, a method that may cut down violence, but weapons still flood the streets. As is often the case in the wake of tragedy, the Aurora, Colorado movie theatre shooting and the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School being at the forefront, gun control laws are thrust into the national spotlight and carefully reevaluated by lawmakers at the state and federal levels. The solutions have followed typical patterns: stricter regulations for purchasing firearms, thorough background checks on prospective buyers, and adding further restrictions on the sale of assault weapons. In Connecticut, Governor Malloy recently signed into effect

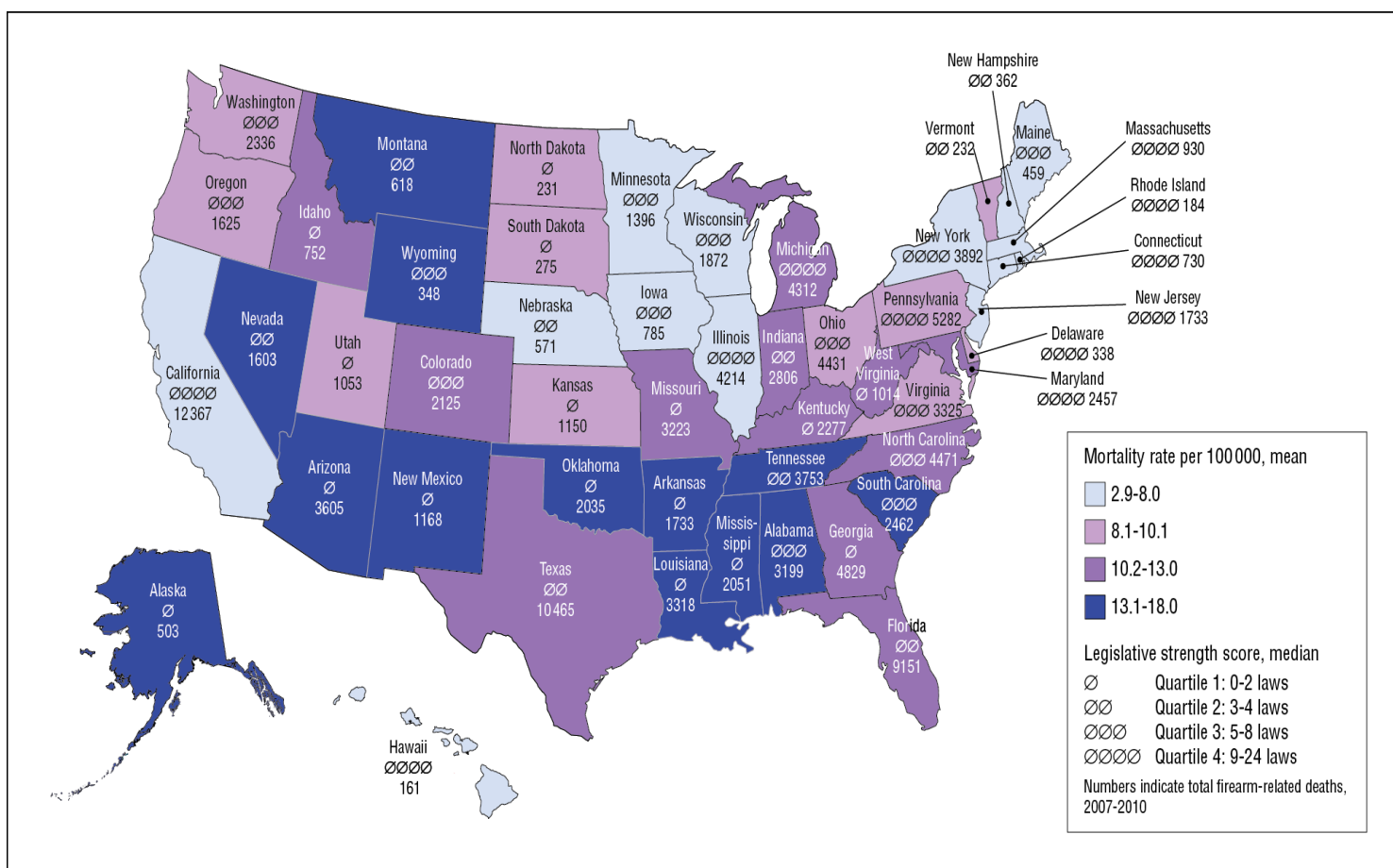
what politicians and advocacy groups are regarding as the nation's most comprehensive and stringent gun control regulations. Assault rifles, semi-automatic pistols with magazines exceeding ten rounds, and assault-style shotguns are now banned. Manufacturers of assault weapons, like PTR Industries based



in Bristol, are feeling the heat and closing up shop; a bold move either motivated by simple economics or a ploy to back pro-gun lobbyists and activist groups.

The law can deal a blow to the gun industry. It can tighten the parameters on gun ownership and set into motion the slow process of disarming future generations of Americans. Regulating the gun market, however, presents an easier task than shutting down the black

market arms dealers providing nearly half of all firearms used by criminals. With complete backing from the federal government, the city of New Haven is gradually working towards eradicating their streets of gun violence and implementing long-term solutions. Both may prove more elusive than Project Longevity's initial success would suggest. Since the initial "call-in" of 27 Newhallville and Dwight-Kensington gangbangers, New Haven police have found no evidence linking those present at the Hall of Records to any recent shootings. To the city's disappointment, only two of them have reached out to the city to take advantage of any aid programs – one individual sought employment placement, the other applied for section 8 housing. For now, New Haven remains diligent, while the state and the nation look on, waiting to see what will come of Project Longevity.



By Lisa Martinelli

The CDC's Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System released this map to evaluate the effects of firearm legislation in each state. While the country remains divided over gun control regulations, one thing each state has in common is the strong voice of its people posing the question of what role the

government should play. The CDC's Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System conducted a survey in 2002 that determined the most recent data on firearm ownership rates in the United States. Alaska's household gun ownership rate was 60.6%, while Hawaii's was 9.7%. The map indicates Hawaii's strong legislative score, along with states like New

Jersey (11.3%), Massachusetts (12.8%), Rhode Island (13.3%), and Connecticut (16.2%). Comparing these states with those holding a lower legislative score shows that stronger gun regulations coincide with fewer gun-related fatalities, and a high percentage of gun ownership leads to more incidents.

Consider the ALTERNATIVE

*Anti-Gun Traffacking Legislation in the Storm
of Post-Sandy Hook Shooting*

By Jesse Duthrie



The “NO STRAW PURCHASING” sign is big and the letters are printed in capitol bold letters. It’s attached to the wall and plainly visible within seconds of walking in Hoffman’s Guns in Newington, one of the largest and most popular gun stores in Connecticut. For someone like me, taking his first visit into one of these shops, less than one hundred dollars in my pocket, only window shopping for the day yet with a new

NRA safe shooter-license, I pay the sign no head and am instantly more allured to the glass cases with flashy 9mms, .45s, the exotic Desert Eagle 50 calibers, the shelves aligned with 12 gauge tactical shotguns, and AR-15s. I know very little, only what I’velearned in the condensed five hour course and the twenty rounds or so rounds I’ve dispersed at the shooting range to complete my certificate, and even with my NRA certificate I still would have to wait the two week waiting period to purchase a weapon. I ask questions to the shop owners, handle a few pistols, and walk out the door. I still do not know what “NO STRAW PURCHASING” means. This is June 2012.

I haven’t walked into Hoffman’s since that afternoon, on account of putting off getting my license until I had the time and patience to go through the process (which, as any gun licensee will tell you, is expensive and laborious). Since December 14 I see the grey building, amid the Berlin turnpike traffic, at least once a week on local news. It began slowly at first; the media pondering how legislative bodies and anti-gun lobbyist groups would react in the wake of the horrific Sandy Hook shooting. But within a month it became clear that legislation would move towards the banning of assault weapons. With this brought more camera crews outside the streets of Hoffman’s,

where camera men and women stood in the frigid New England winter, their condensation foretelling that testimonials of Sandy Hook families, anti-gun lobbyists, and senior politicians could very well put an end to assault weapon sales in stores like the one they stood behind.

The entire state of Connecticut worked itself into a panic and a debate simultaneously; NRA members and gun advocates, as well as people who deemed gun legislation “unconstitutional,” testified and rallied against the proposed notion of banning weapons. Emotionally painful testimony was given by parents of children lost at Sandy Hook in favor of passing legislation. Marches were held by the thousands in favor of legislation one day, only to be superceded by their opponent the next. Nothing had been put on paper, not a bill nor proposition, and already the state was divided.

It was around this time that ulterior gun-related legislation started to make headway. It had seemed that the horror of Sandy Hook had prompted Connecticut citizens into demanding the boldest legislation possible. But, ultimately, with the civic outcry from opponents (e.g. NRA, conservatives, etc.) there might be other, more subtle tacts to take.

Of these new proposed ideas was the increase in penalties for straw purchasing. Straw purchasing is the illegal firearm purchase of a weapon where a proxy buyer purchases a gun from



a gun store, then sells that weapon second hand to somebody who, otherwise, would not be able to buy that gun at the original gun store

“Straw purchasing is already a serious federal crime; the penalty for committing a straw purchase is punishable by a \$250,000 fine and 10 years in prison”

(due to circumstances of required background check).

The National Sports and Shooting Foundation (NSSF) is the key watchdog of Straw Purchasing in the United States. In a campaign with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the NSSF established the “Don’t Lie to the Other Guy” campaign in 2000 to “better educate America’s firearms retailers on how to detect would-be buyers and raise public awareness that it is a serious crime to buy a firearm for a prohibited person or for someone who does now otherwise want his or her name associated with the transaction.” The operation between the NSSF and the ATF is a balance

between the two agencies. The ATF identifies key cities they think could benefit most from the campaign, while the NSSF goes into to each city, disperses “training materials on identifying straw purchasers,” and leads a public awareness campaign through the city to alert the public of the severness and consequences of straw purchasing.

Straw purchasing is a big time deal in the United States. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 40 percent of criminals obtain their firearms from friends or family while another 40 percent obtain their weapons from illegal sources on the streets.

So, as new-gun legislation brewed in Connecticut, the question became “How would straw purchasing legislation affect Connecticut citizens?” A call for more stringent penalties on straw purchasing could deter crime, stop

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the process itself, and ease the minds of those affected by the Sandy Hook shooting. But it’s a national policy, and legislation would go through D.C., not Hartford. Reported in a March 5 New Haven Register article, both Connecticut Senators Chris Murphy and Richard Blumenthal backed anti-gun legislation that would put severe penalties on straw purchases on guns. The new bill is called the “Stop Illegal Trafficking in Firearms Act of 2013” and the “Leahy Bill.” Both senators are pushing for penalties as severe as 20 to 30 years. Blumenthal remarked, “The measure goes to the core of many cases of gun violence.”

What’s interesting about this bill is the amount of bipartisan support it’s drumming up in its early stages. Monitoring straw purchasing at the state level is difficult, Murphy says, because different states have different laws pertaining to gun laws. Therefore, “If you want to want to give them the necessary tools you can’t do it at a state by

state level, you have to do it at a federal level.” What comes as a surprise is how soft the penalties have been for those arrested for straw purchasing. Though the maximum, as stated earlier, is 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, the actual punishments handed out have been less severe. In the same Register article, Murphy claims that “one-third of convicted people don’t serve jail time” and “another third serve less than two years.”

In the week preceding April 4, people seemingly forgot alternatives to banning assault weapons, because no longer was the ban an abstract notion or a plea from parents of slain children or a political motive from a lobbyist agency or a politician with a microphone standing outside a tall building with monstrous columns; there was actual legislation written down on paper and, with the right sway of words, the right momentum of opinion, the outweighing of years to now, Connecticut would be the first

state in the country to outwardly ban assault weapons and seemingly begin the first of many inevitably changes in gun policy that had been preordained since December 14.

On the day before the vote, I watched the six o'clock news. The top story on Channel 8 took place outside of Hoffman's guns, where pretaped from earlier that day showed the various full parking and people walking down the ever-busy Berlin Turnpike to get a chance to get inside the store. It was like Black Friday, except without the discounts. I had heard earlier that gun sales on assault weapons were skyrocketing, but I had to see it to believe it. Secondary interviews were conducted with men all sadly aware that, yes, this bill was probably going to pass, and that they, the NRA card carrying men they were, were not responsible for any crimes in this state, and that yes, this bill is ridiculous and non-preventative of gun violence. More footage of men walking out the store with long

brown boxes slung under their arms, trudging down the Berlin turnpike to walk whatever distance they walked to get to the store, in their minds knowing that this is the end of an era for gun ownership in this state. Foreseeably in this country.

The vote passed on April sixth, and Connecticut became the first state in the Union to ban assault weapons. Press coverage that day both praised and rejected the vote; some saw it as progressive, while others saw it as a defamation of Constitution rights. But the most straightforward and perhaps politically non-invested testimony came from the Jimmy Greene and Nelba Marquez-Greene, parents of slain child Ana Marquez-Greene, in a *60 Minutes* interview that was conducted before the vote but aired the day after. When asked by *60 Minutes* host Scot Pelley asked for their thoughts on banning assault weapons, both answers were humble and telling of the legislation process that had just preceded the following

four months.

"At first, [banning assault weapons] was where my heart was," Ana Marquez-Greene said. "'We've gotta get...a huge bonfire and burn everything. Let's burn all these damn guns.' I have learned that it's a more complex issue than just saying, 'Let's ban assault weapons.'" We're looking for real change and common sense solutions. Not things that sound good."

Her husband, Jimmy Green, responded by saying, "When we talk ban and confiscate we- it becomes a political argument. It's so much bigger than a political debate...I believe, in my humble opinion, this all transcends that."

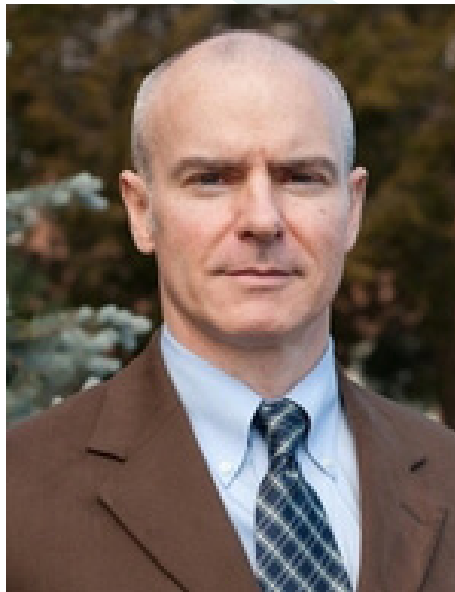


Reducing the Gaps IN GUN CONTROL

*An interview with Dr. Christopher Koper of
George Mason University*

By Casey Coughlin

Dr. Christopher Koper, a Criminology Professor at George Mason University, has over twenty years of criminological research experience. Throughout his career he has worked with such organizations as the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), the University of Pennsylvania, the Urban Institute, the RAND Corporation, the Police Foundation and published articles specifically on firearms, policing, federal crime prevention efforts, and various research methods. Dr. Koper was also formerly the Director of Research for the Police Executive Research Forum. For more information on Dr. Koper's work and a list of publications visit: amazonaws.com/chssweb/cvs/1604/.../KOPER_January_2013.pdf



Dr. Christopher Koper, a Criminology Professor at George Mason University,

COUGHLIN: What do you think is the most effective aspect of proposed policy change regarding gun control?

KOPER: First of all, some of my research involves looking at different enforcement type issues and the interventions that can be effective

there. We have research showing that things like the Focus Deterrence and “Pulling Levers” Approach can be successful. It’s a type of intervention that involves law enforcement, prosecutors, probation and parole officers, social service providers and alike at different levels working together collaboratively to focus their efforts on identifying high risk groups of gun violence and targeting them with a variety of interventions involving enhanced law enforcement, prosecutions, and provision of social services. This was an initiative that was first started in Boston in the 1990s and it has spread around the country. It has become a blue print for Project Safe Neighborhoods, which is a national

federal initiative. There have been a lot of studies of that approach that have shown it is effective in reducing gun violence.

I would say that the background check for private sales that they were trying to impose in Federal Law has a lot of potential to be effective. In principle, it would make it more difficult for offenders to find someone who would sell a gun to them without forcing them to go through a background check. It should make it harder to find people who will do this and lead to higher prices when they can connect with a seller and alike, so that of the different things [options] on the national level that would probably have the most potential impact.

COUGHLIN: What do you think is the most ineffective aspect of proposed legislation?

KOPER: Well, I may not be familiar with the full range of everything that they have been talking about but it's just a matter of degree. How much

impact are you going to get from different things? They are trying to revive the federal assault weapon ban that I studied a number of years ago. I studied the ban that was in place from '94 – '04, a measure like that can potentially reduce gun violence, potentially reduce shootings but the likely effect of something like that is going to be relatively small. That's not necessarily to say trivial, but my best estimates from those studies were that in the long run limiting particularly large capacity ammunition magazines might reduce shootings by a few percentage points in the long run. It might take a long time to see that effect materialize because it would depend on what sorts of exemptions they have in existing stock of large capacity magazines and assault weapons. But when you prepare those two different proposals against one another: the secondary market background check versus assault weapon legislation I think you

have better potential to reduce gun violence coming from the secondary market legislation. Which is not to say that assault weapon legislation ban could not have any impact, it would just be smaller and longer term.

COUGHLIN: Do you think we could have too much gun control?

KOPER: There has been this debate about whether we need more laws or better enforcement of the laws that are already on the books.

“I think one of the things we need to do is better understand the implementation of the laws that we have and to understand some of the limitations of those laws.”

Sometimes those laws might be written in ways that make them not particularly effective. It is a complicated question to answer; you would have to look at a variety of things: places where existing laws could be utilized more effectively

and in some cases having some additional laws.

COUGHLIN: Can you give me an example of a law that is not being implemented to its full ability?

KOPER: One example concerns background checks for private sales at the state level. There are a number of states that have background check requirements. There is some research showing that gun homicide is lower in states that have these

sorts of laws but there has been very little study of how these laws are implemented and enforced. In a recent study that I did with some colleges we surveyed big city police departments all over the country. These were police agencies serving cities of 100,000 or more people. We asked them a variety of questions about gun laws and enforcement of those laws and different gun violence prevention strategies. When

we looked at the enforcement of certain types of gun laws we found that it was often fairly modest. About one-third of the agencies in our sample were located in a state or locality that had a background check requirement of private sales. We had a follow up question for those agencies asking them how often they investigated cases involving potentially illegal private sales. We gave them a three point

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response scale; regularly, frequently, occasionally, or never. Only about one-quarter of the agencies said that they investigate those cases on regular bases. One-third of them said they never investigated these sorts of cases. This could be for a variety of reasons, some agencies cited resource restraints. This is not to say that no one enforces those laws because there could be state agencies that are enforcing them as well, but I think it is significant when the primary police agency in these urban areas are making very limited efforts to implement and enforce these particular laws. That is indicative of the sorts of things that we need to take a close look at.

Another issue that I think we need to examine more generally is criminal justice system response to a variety of gun crimes, not just gun violence, but even things like illegal gun possession and illegal gun carrying. I can't tell you the amount of Police Chiefs I've heard say that

in their jurisdictions people can be arrested over and over again for carrying a gun illegally and nothing really happens to them until they finally end up shooting someone. I think that is one reason why in our survey one of the top ranked strategies to reduce gun crime is referring cases to U.S. Attorney's Office for prosecution, because the penalties can be more certain and severe in the federal system than in the state system. So looking at how those cases are treated in the courts might require legislative changes or even establishing a special institution such as a gun court.

COUGHLIN: Do you think that banning or increasing our restrictions is a good plan in seeking reduction in violence or does it just create a bigger desire to carry/possess an illegal weapon?

KOPER: That's an interesting perspective; I don't think that I have ever seen anyone argue that outlawing or restricting fire arms

would necessarily have that sort of an impact. But I think more generally it's fair to say that there are the supply side efforts and there are the demand side efforts. Sometimes some of the good enforcement strategies are really oriented more towards demand than they are towards supply. But there are other sorts of approaches that people try and use to try to make people less likely to want to use fire arms, various types of prevention programs that have been tried. A lot of them have not been evaluated very carefully but there are programs of that sort that try to address that demand side issue.

COUGHLIN: We are really quick to focus on mass shootings and forget about the fact that gun violence is a really an everyday battle for some communities.

KOPER: That's right. I remember a few months back a Police Chief saying that we need to pay attention to the Newtown's that happen every day.

“Essentially a Newtown’s worth of young people are murdered everyday throughout the country, it’s an on-going thing.”

Of course the events like mass murders often really focus public attention on these issues and often bring it to the forefront of public debate but yes there is the ongoing, everyday toll of gun violence that is very important.

COUGHLIN: When you hear different people talking about gun control what do you think is one

thing that everyone forgets?

KOPER: I think I would come back again to details of implementing and enforcing gun laws and how that can affect the effectiveness of different laws and the general societal response to looking at a wide variety of gun crimes.

COUGHLIN: Typically, people cite their constitution right to bear arms; do you think that enforcing stricter bans is violating that constitutional right?

KOPER: Not necessarily. The Supreme Court did lay down in a 2008 decision that (Heller vs. D.C.)

yes there is a basic fundamental right firearm ownership by individuals for ownership in the home for weapons that are commonly possessed and used for lawful purposes; normal handguns, rifles and shot guns. But as with any constitutional right it’s not without its limitations. It doesn’t give you the ability to own any sort of weapon. The court left open the possibility of limiting certain types of particularly dangerous or unusual weapons so we still have restrictions on fully automatic machine guns and other explosive devices. They left open that government could have an interest in regulating carrying of weapons as well. It is not an absolute right, it establishes the basic right to ownership but there are areas where it can be regulated.



The Sandy Hook **SYNDROME**

Assessing the often overlooked daily gun violence which continues to fly under the radar in three of Connecticut's biggest cities.

By Keith Dauch

In a quiet suburban home I sat down with John [whose name has been changed to protect his identity]. His wife cooks dinner in the kitchen, and his kids, slumped over the furniture, play video games.

“How much for a gun,” I ask in a conspiratorial whisper, even though I’m not actually looking for a gun.

He laughs. “Why are you whispering?” he asks. “It’s not a big deal. In fact everyone knows someone who can get them a gun.”

“Oh,” a bit taken back, I look around the house again and it loses the feel of criminality. It begins to feel simply like a home, which in retrospect I find a bit sicker. These transactions do not happen in dark alleyways and in hushed tones. They

happen in neighborhood homes, and the buyers and sellers many times are children. According to a 2009 Connecticut School Health Survey, an estimated 6,500 high school students carried a weapon (gun, knife, or club) on school property on at least one of the 30 days before the survey was conducted.

“So,” John continues, “the first thing the seller is gonna want to know is if you want bodies on it.”

My look of confusion prompts him to continue.

“If a gun has been used in other crimes that will drive the price way down. But, you have to be careful because if you are caught with that gun, you will be charged with the other crimes as well,” he informs me.

“How much will a gun cost with bodies?” I ask.

“Around 100 dollars. Or if you wanted a gun that is still in the package, never opened, never fired, that is gonna cost a lot more.”

I leave shocked at how easy it is to purchase a gun illegally. I wonder why this is all but forgotten by the same news sources that continuously write articles on stricter gun laws since the Sandy Hook shooting. I wonder why politicians wait to fight for the safety of the children until 26 students and teachers are slaughtered in Newtown, while the children in urban areas continue to suffer from gun related violence. It may very well be the unfathomable depth of the problem itself, but after a twelve year

study on child fatalities conducted by the Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate, Assistant Child Advocate and the Child Fatality Coordinator and author of the report Faith Vos Winkel, has learned that, “We may not be able to stop all of these deaths, but we have an obligation for the kids to try.”

The report, released in January of 2013, which studied twelve years of gun related deaths and injuries in the state, looked at the years between January 1, 2001 and December 31, 2012. Within that time, 94 children between the ages of two and 17 died from gunshot wounds, in addition to 924

children injured by guns.

Of the gun related deaths, 79% were homicides, 77% were boys, and 46% were white while 43% were black. Over all 47% of these gun related deaths occurred in one of three cities in Connecticut: Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport. At first glance, less than half of all gun related homicides might seem low for three of Connecticut’s largest cities, but since only 11% of the overall population resides in these cities, the numbers become far more menacing.

Even more disturbing are the facts surrounding gun related injuries. Roughly 88% involved were boys, 61.6% were black children and 63%

of these injuries occurred within the borders of Hartford, New Haven or Bridgeport.

On the national scale and when looking at the populations of Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven as a whole, the numbers become devastating. The total percentage of African-Americans in the U.S. is 13.6%. The city of Hartford is home to 38.7% of the African-American population in Connecticut. Bridgeport is home to 34.6%, and New Haven is home to 35.4%. But, combined, these three cities are the scenes for 67% of the state’s homicides, 62% of all armed robberies, and 81% of aggravated assaults.

Mrs. Vos Winkel wonders if, “we would be having such a substantial gun debate in Connecticut if it wasn’t for the tragedy of a massacre.” She goes on to say,

“It’s sort of the mass causality nature...that calls us to action in a way that other things may not.”



But her work with child fatality for over 12 years makes her believe that there is an, “unfortunate inherent bias when people in the city are shot. I think when it reaches the suburbs there are more alarms that go off.”

“Acceptance that inner cities are dangerous, and complacency about poverty, violence, and the children that become trapped in those webs, help excuse the turning of a blind eye to the gun violence that rages on in between the news coverage of the next mass shooting.”

During Vos Winkel’s research she talked with youth throughout Connecticut, including some from the Manson Youth Correctional Institution, a high-security detention center for inmates under the age of 21. She found the prevailing idea shared by these kids was that they did not expect to live past their teenage years or early twenties.

Psychologically this can be

described as “learned helplessness.”

Simply put, when overwhelming obstacles and situations in life continue to defeat these children, they learn to no longer attempt to break free from their helpless situation and succumb to it.

Growing up in a combined area that holds 11% of Connecticut’s population and watching half of Connecticut’s gun related homicides happen in their neighborhoods, these kids quickly learn the impossibility of survival.

Vos Winkel goes on to explain that it is not just the gun violence rate that is disturbing, but it is also the ease with which a gun can find its way into the hands of a child. During one of her meetings with a young inmate she was told, “that he could get her a gun quicker then he could get her a joint.” The hope is that the new legislation will help end the influx of legal guns into this dangerous and illegal market.



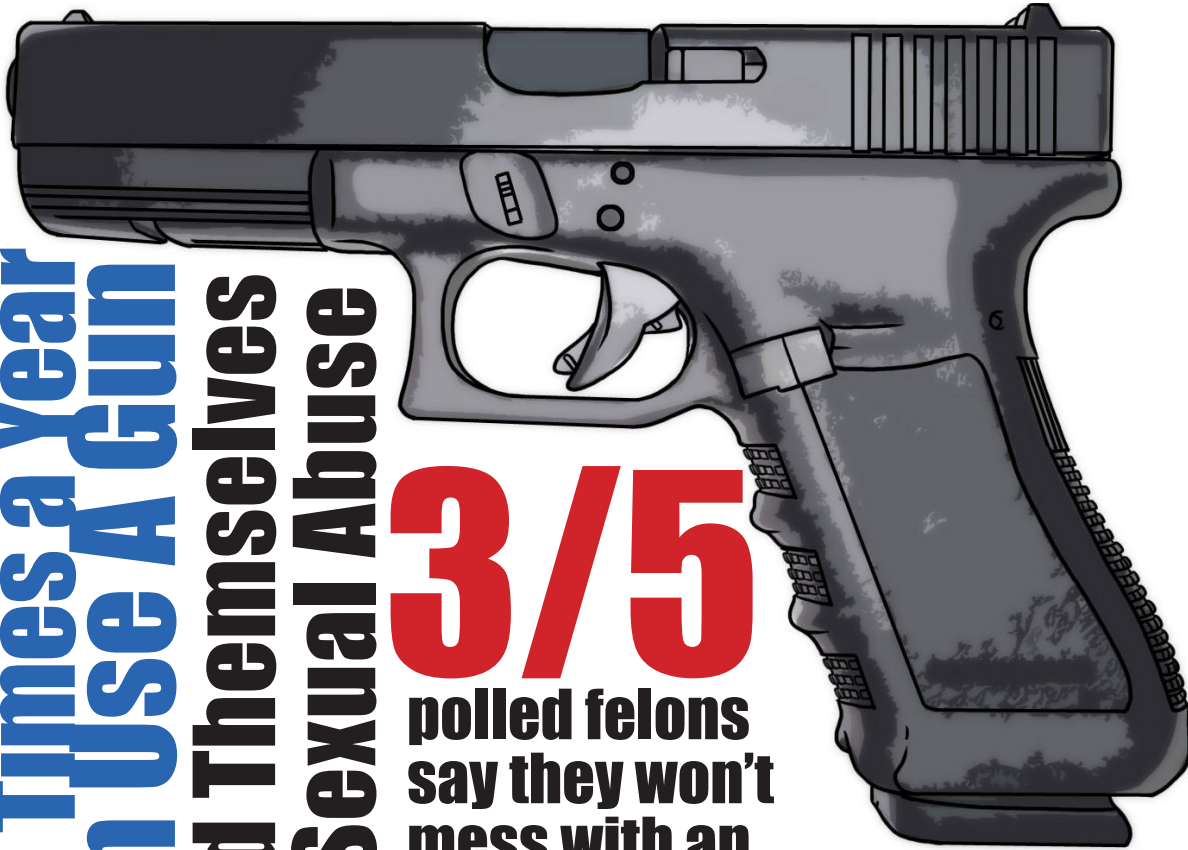
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Every year, guns are used over 80x more often to protect a life

than to take one

**Firearms Deaths Are Lower in States
With Strict Gun Control**



**200,000 Times a Year
Women Use A Gun
to Defend Themselves
Against Sexual Abuse**

3/5

polled felons
say they won't
mess with an
armed victim

1527

Criminals Are
Killed by Armed
Citizens Each
Year in the US

**270 Mill. Guns in America,
Equals 90 Guns for Every 100 People**



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