

The History of Gun Control in the United  
States

A Senior Honors Thesis

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Gun control is one of today's most controversial topics, bringing about two different, yet passionate arguments. Those who are "pro-gun" argue that firearms are a basic fundamental right given to American citizens by the Second Amendment of the Constitution. Advocates for gun control argue that firearms lead to more deaths, and should be restricted to avoid shooting tragedies. Regardless of one's personal stance on this issue, it is undeniable that gun control is one of the United States' most debated topics.

This paper will take a historical approach to gun control in the United States, and will be broken down into four sections. The first is solely on gun control and the Second Amendment. This section will show the historical background of the Second Amendment, and the legality of gun control legislation. The second section takes a look into America's most influential gun control movements since 1980, showing the effects they have had on the American public. Have shooting tragedies increased the number of Americans in favor of gun control? The third and fourth sections take a very different approach to gun control. These sections will seek to assess the potential effects of gun control legislation. The third is a state-by-state approach, looking at different states across the U.S., to see if there is a correlation between the number of guns, and homicides committed by firearms. The fourth section takes the same analysis on guns, as the third, but at the international level. The third and fourth parts to this paper will reveal whether or not there is a strong correlation between the number of guns, and homicides committed by firearms. After reading all four sections of this paper, my opinions on this controversial topic will be clear, and be backed up by cold hard facts.

## I: Gun Control and the Second Amendment

Critics against gun control have many reasons why they believe guns should not be restricted amongst the American public. Those critics often point to the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution as their number one reason why gun control should not be allowed in the U.S. The Second Amendment states that as Americans have the right to have “A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.”<sup>1</sup> This section explores why our Founding Fathers put this Amendment into the Bill of Rights. In other words, why was this necessary? We will also explore the legality of gun control, pertaining to the Second Amendment. By viewing the reasons the Second Amendment was created, as well as by looking at the consistent rulings of Supreme Court Cases, it will be clear that passing legislation restricting the right for Americans to bear arms, is in fact legal.

Why was the Second Amendment created? The simple answer to that question is that the Amendment was passed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a much different time than the 21<sup>st</sup> century. During the revolutionary era, colonists were petrified of standing armies, because of the abuse and mistreatment British soldiers often posed towards Americans. Many colonists felt that they needed guns, and other weapons, to protect their civil liberties. Samuel Adams wrote, that a “standing army, however necessary it may be at sometimes, is always dangerous to the liberties of the people.”<sup>2</sup> The British obviously needed to keep a standing army in the Colonies, especially in the Boston area, because Americans were revolting against the Mother country, even though it made many Colonists feel that they had lost their civil liberties.

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<sup>1</sup> Spitzer, Robert J. “The Politics of Gun Control.” *Chatman House Publishers Inc.* Chatman, New Jersey. 1995. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Spitzer, Robert J. “The Politics of Gun Control.” *Chatman House Publishers Inc.* Chatman, New Jersey. 1995. 29.

The fear of standing armies strongly encouraged the need for the Second Amendment. In order to make their citizens feel that they could still protect their liberties, the State of Virginia passed the Virginia Bill of Rights. Written in 1776, the document provided a list of rights entitled to all Americans living in the State. Amongst the liberties that would be protected by the Virginia Bill of Rights was that, “standing armies, in time of peace, should be avoided, as dangerous to liberty.”<sup>3</sup>

The fear of standing armies was voiced yet again by another famous Virginian, in the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson was given the difficult task of compiling a list of the abuses the British had made towards the Colonists. Among the complaints, Jefferson wrote, “He (the King) has kept among us, in Times of Peace, Standing Armies, without the consent of our Legislatures.”<sup>4</sup> It is clear that Colonists were terrified of standing armies, and when they defeated the British in the Revolutionary War, Americans made sure that their new government would not be given the power to have a standing army.

America’s first attempt at having an effective form of government was the Articles of Confederation. The main goal of the writers of the Articles was to make sure that the States had more power than the Federal Government. Article VI stated that, “every state shall always keep up a well regulated and disciplined militia, sufficiently armed and accoutred.”<sup>5</sup> No provision in the Articles of Confederation was ever made to create a national standing army.

The United States no longer has the Articles of Confederation for many reasons, one being that it did not create a strong American army. Perhaps the most famous

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<sup>3</sup>. Spitzer, Robert J. “The Politics of Gun Control.” *Chatman House Publishers Inc.* Chatman, New Jersey. 1995. 35.

<sup>4</sup>. Spitzer, Robert J. “The Politics of Gun Control.” *Chatman House Publishers Inc.* Chatman, New Jersey. 1995. 35.

<sup>5</sup>. Spitzer, Robert J. “The Politics of Gun Control.” *Chatman House Publishers Inc.* Chatman, New Jersey. 1995. 31.

example that showed the weakness of the Articles of Confederation can be shown from Shay's Rebellion. A former soldier in the Revolutionary War, Daniel Shays, started the Rebellion, which was eventually crushed by the Massachusetts militia. Shay's Rebellion was important because it showed Americans that the Federal Government did not have enough power. It took far too long for the Massachusetts' militia to shut down the Rebellion. Colonial historian Max Farrand noted, "Shay's Rebellion had taught a much needed lesson. It was not sufficient to place the state militia under some central control. The central government must be empowered to maintain an efficient army and navy to protect the states against internal disorders, as well as against external danger."<sup>6</sup> Shay's Rebellion was the wake-up call Americans needed to create a stronger centralized government, which paved the way for the United States Constitution.

The main purpose of the U.S. Constitution was to strengthen the Federal Government, but not at the abuse of the citizens. In the famous Federalist Papers, leaders such as Alexander Hamilton and James Madison made arguments for strengthening the federal government, including the need for a national standing army. In Federalist No. 24, Hamilton argued that it would be a mistake for the United States to ban standing armies, even during times of peace.<sup>7</sup> Hamilton's main concern with the state Militia is that it was not nearly powerful enough to defend the country from attack, writing, "In proportion to our increase in strength, it is probable, nay, it may be said certain, that Britain and Spain would augment their military establishments in our neighborhood."<sup>8</sup> Federalists believed that the state militias were not strong enough to

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<sup>6</sup> Spitzer, Robert J. "The Politics of Gun Control." *Chatman House Publishers Inc.* Chatman, New Jersey. 1995. 31.

<sup>7</sup> "The Federalist Papers." *The Library of Congress*. Retrieved from: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fedpapers.html>

<sup>8</sup> Spitzer, Robert J. "The Politics of Gun Control." *Chatman House Publishers Inc.* Chatman, New Jersey. 1995. 31.

fight off other countries during times of war, and argued that the federal government should have the power to create a national army to defend the country.

With help by federalists such as Hamilton and Madison, the United States passed the Constitution. Professor Robert Spitzer wrote about the effects the Constitution had on the military perfectly, saying, "The adoption of the Constitution codified the dual militia-standing army military system, but it did not resolve the nagging question of federalism; that is, the New Constitution not only countenanced a national standing army but gave the federal government vast new power over the militia."<sup>9</sup> A national army would be controlled by the federal government, causing many Americans to become afraid that their rights would start deteriorating, just as they did with British tyranny.

Antifederalists, people who opposed giving more power to the federal government, felt their civil liberties would be at jeopardy, and were afraid of the adoption of the Constitution. Famous revolutionist Patrick Henry voiced his concern over a standing army, speaking, "Have we (in Virginia) the means of resisting disciplined armies, when our only defense, the militia, is put into the hands of Congress?"<sup>10</sup> To comfort Americans that their liberties would not be violated, Congress passed the Second Amendment, along with nine others, in the Bill of Rights. Its purpose was to create a balance between the state and federal government, to make sure that the federal government did not have too much power of the states. A national standing army would be created for the federal government, but citizens were given the right to bear arms, to protect themselves from the newly created national standing army.

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<sup>9</sup>. Spitzer, Robert J. "The Politics of Gun Control." *Chatman House Publishers Inc.* Chatman, New Jersey. 1995. 33.

<sup>10</sup>. Spitzer, Robert J. "The Politics of Gun Control." *Chatman House Publishers Inc.* Chatman, New Jersey. 1995. 34.

Now that we know the roots and creation of the Second Amendment, is gun control legal? Does passing legislation for limiting and controlling the number and types of guns directly violate the Second Amendment? In a series of different court cases, the Supreme Court has consistently stated that gun control is legal, and does not violate the Second Amendment. I am by no means stating that banning guns is constitutional, because the Second Amendment clearly states that as America citizens, we have the right to bear arms. However, according to several Supreme Court cases, states do have the right to regulate guns, pass gun control legislation, to limit the types of guns that are available to the public.

Before getting into the two most current examples of Supreme Court cases dealing with gun control, a brief discussion on the three earliest cases will take place. The first Supreme Court case that dealt solely with the Second Amendment was in 1876: *U.S. v. Cruikshank*. Just after the passage of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which made African Americans citizens, Cruikshank, a southerner accused of depriving blacks of their Constitutional rights, was accused of depriving blacks of firearm possession.<sup>11</sup> The Court ruled that Congress had no right to restrict the right to bear arms for citizens, but states did have that right.<sup>12</sup> The Supreme Court Justices said that Cruikshank had the right to restrict firearm possession because he was not a member of Congress, states had the right to control guns, not the federal government. According to Spitzer, this Supreme Court case set two precedents that would be followed in future Court cases dealing with the Second Amendment; “that the second amendment does not simply afford any individual a right to bear arms free from government control; and that the

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<sup>11</sup> Spitzer, Robert J. “The Politics of Gun Control.” *Chatman House Publishers Inc.* Chatman, New Jersey. 1995. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Fischman, Harris. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*. Oct 2012, Vol. 39 Issue 5. 1341.

Second Amendment is not incorporated, meaning it pertains only to Federal power, not state power.”<sup>13</sup>.

The second Supreme Court Case occurred in 1886, *Presser v. Illinois*. The case was over an Illinois state law, which forbade groups of men to join together, with firearms, in cities.<sup>14</sup> Again, the law did not ban guns, but controlled how they could be used. Like the previous case, the Supreme Court found that the law was constitutional because it was made by the state, not Congress. The federal government ruled again that states had the right to regulate guns.

In 1939, another state law was examined by the Supreme Court. The Miller Case challenged the National Firearms Act (1934), which, “regulated the interstate transport of various weapons.”<sup>15</sup> Jack Miller and Frank Layton were found guilty of this law, and challenged whether or not it was constitutional in the Supreme Court case, *U.S. v. Miller*. The Court ruled that the Second Amendment only applied to citizens who served in the militia. It also reaffirmed the right of the states to regulate firearms.<sup>16</sup> All three of these landmark cases ruled that gun control was legal, if regulated by the states. These cases by no means stated that it was constitutional to ban guns.

Since the three landmark gun control cases, there were not any Supreme Court cases that dealt directly with the Second Amendment, until 2010. The District of Columbia had laws that required the registration of handguns.<sup>17</sup> It is important to note the differences in this case compared with the previous three, this case was dealing with

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<sup>13</sup>. Spitzer, Robert J. “The Politics of Gun Control.” *Chatman House Publishers Inc.* Chatman, New Jersey. 1995. 39.

<sup>14</sup>. Fischman, Harris. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*. Oct 2012, Vol. 39 Issue 5. 1341.

<sup>15</sup>. Spitzer, Robert J. “The Politics of Gun Control.” *Chatman House Publishers Inc.* Chatman, New Jersey. 1995. 40.

<sup>16</sup>. Spitzer, Robert J. “The Politics of Gun Control.” *Chatman House Publishers Inc.* Chatman, New Jersey. 1995. 41.

<sup>17</sup>. Fischman, Harris. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*. Oct 2012, Vol. 39 Issue 5. 1342.

a law that completely banned the registration of handguns in the District of Columbia. The law also required lawful owners of guns to have all of their weapons, “unloaded and disassembled or bound by a trigger lock or similar device.”<sup>18</sup> The Supreme Court ruled, in *Columbia v. Heller*, that it was unconstitutional to ban the sale of handguns in the District of Columbia, because it violated the Second Amendment. Assistant United States Attorney Harris Fischman wrote, “After the majority holding in *Heller*, it is now clear that the Second Amendment protects an individual's right to bear arms in the home for the lawful purpose of self-defense.”<sup>19</sup> A similar Supreme Court Case a few months later, *McDonald v. City of Chicago*, reaffirmed *Columbia v. Heller*. Chicago had similar handgun registration laws as the District of Columbia. The Court ruled that the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, as well as the Second Amendment, made the law unconstitutional under the Due Process Clause.<sup>20</sup>

The two most recent Supreme Court rulings were much different than the first three cases discussed earlier. *Columbia v. Heller*, and *McDonald v. Chicago* ruled that laws banning the registration of handguns was unconstitutional, which is not an argument of this paper. This paper is arguing that gun control is legal, to a certain extent, not gun banning. *U.S. v. Cruikshank*, *Presser v. Illinois*, and *Miller v. Texas* all ruled that Congress did not have the right to pass legislation against the ownership of guns, but states do! All three cases set the precedent that states have the right to restrict guns. This section shows the origin of the Second Amendment, how and why it was created, to give us the necessary background information we need to fully understand the purpose of the Second Amendment. This section also proved that states do not have the ability to

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<sup>18</sup> Fischman, Harris. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*. Oct 2012, Vol. 39 Issue 5. 1343.

<sup>19</sup> Fischman, Harris. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*. Oct 2012, Vol. 39 Issue 5. 1346.

<sup>20</sup> Fischman, Harris. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*. Oct 2012, Vol. 39 Issue 5. 1348.

ban guns, but have the legal right to control guns through legislation, as evident in *U.S. v. Cruikshank*, *Presser v. Illinois*, and *Miller v. Texas*.

## **II. American Gun Control Movements since 1980**

Since 1980, several key events in the United States have led to a great gun control movement. Amazingly, it takes a lot more than one terrible tragedy to convince Americans that consideration should be taken into controlling the number and types of guns available to the public. This section will explore the movement towards gun control since 1980, looking at terrible shooting tragedies, as well as different gun control legislation attempts. I argue that an investigation into gun control needs to be taken because of the overwhelmingly increase in public support for gun control legislation after such terrible shooting tragedies.

The first major wave of gun control movement started during the presidency of one of the most “pro gun” presidents in American history, Ronald Reagan. During President Reagan’s first few months of presidency, an infamous assassination attempt almost ended his life. On March 30, 1981, President Reagan delivered a speech at the Washington Hilton Hotel, to union members of the AFL-CIO.<sup>21</sup> Unknown to the President’s Secret Service was that 25 year-old John Hinckley Jr. was standing outside the hotel, with the intent of killing Reagan.

According to FBI records, at 2:25 P.M., the President exited the hotel through the VIP entrance, to walk to his limousine.<sup>22</sup> As he was walking towards his limo, six consecutive shots were fired from a handgun in the hands of Hinckley, towards the

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<sup>21</sup>. “Attempted Assassination of President Ronald Reagan.” *The Federal Bureau of Investigation*. April 2, 1981. 4

<sup>22</sup>. “Attempted Assassination of President Ronald Reagan.” *The Federal Bureau of Investigation*. April 2, 1981. 5

direction of the President and his Secret Service staff. The FBI records state, "President Reagan was struck in the left chest area by a bullet that ricocheted off of the right rear quarter panel of his limousine. Press Secretary Brady was struck by a bullet that entered his brain above his left eye."<sup>23</sup> Two shots also hit Secret Service Agent McCarthy and officer Delahanty. The other two shots missed all targets completely. Reagan, Brady, McCarthy and Delahanty were rushed to the hospital, as officers subdued Hinckley. Hinckley fired six shots in 1.7 seconds, only fifteen feet away from the President.<sup>24</sup>

Luckily, no one was killed in this attack, but it became an instant cry of many for states to pass gun control laws. Americans do not like seeing assassination attempts on their President. If it can happen to a man protected by Secret Service agents, why couldn't it happen to the ordinary citizen? A *New York Times* article, the day after the attempt on Reagan's life, captured the fear of Americans. The article stated, "The attempted assassination of President Reagan by a suspect carrying a .22 caliber revolver today was expected to bring another flurry of a strong national law for control of pistols."<sup>25</sup> The gun control movement accelerated after the assassination attempt on Reagan, not by the President, but by another victim of the assassination attempt, Press Secretary Brady.

As mentioned in the FBI records, James Brady was hit by one of the bullets fired by Hinckley, which entered his brain above the left eye. An article in the *New York Times* discussed the seriousness of Brady's injury, saying that Brady "showed signs of recovering from the bullet that had pierced his brain. There were a number of

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<sup>23</sup>. "Attempted Assassination of President Ronald Reagan." *The Federal Bureau of Investigation*. April 2, 1981. 5.

<sup>24</sup>. "Attempted Assassination of President Ronald Reagan." *The Federal Bureau of Investigation*. April 2, 1981. 5.

<sup>25</sup>. "New Push for Antigun Law is Expected: Reagan a 'Pro-Gun President.'" *The New York Times*. March 31, 1981.

encouraging signs, but several neurosurgeons expressed doubt that he would be able to resume a post as intellectually taxing as the President's spokesman."<sup>26</sup> Brady was never able to fully recover from the injury, staying permanently physically disabled for the rest of his life. Although James Brady was not able to affect politics anymore as the Press Secretary to the President, Brady and his wife certainly changed the gun control movement in the United States because of their desire to pass a law limiting handguns.

James Brady's efforts to increase gun control was rewarded in November 1993, when President Bill Clinton signed the Brady Bill into law. The purpose of the Bill was to limit the number of handguns in the United States by providing stricter background checks on all Americans who wanted to purchase a gun.<sup>27</sup> James Brady had his fair share of supporters, but as he pressed to have his bill become a law, more and more "pro-gun" advocates became upset with the new proposed gun control legislation.

The law made it a lot tougher for criminals to obtain guns, by enforcing stricter background checks. Brady wanted to make sure that only citizens who had a clean criminal record, and were mentally fit to have guns, could purchase a firearm. Before the background checks started being mandated by this law, over twenty states already had laws, which required background checks on every purchase of a firearm.<sup>28</sup> The success of these background checks is evident when looking at the state of Florida. In a study found by Witkin, Gest, Cooper and Johnson, it was found that from February 1991, to November 1993, Florida conducted 738,332 background checks. Of those checks, the state of Florida denied 18,797 potential purchases.<sup>29</sup> There is no way to say that of all

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<sup>26</sup>. "News Summary: After the Shooting International Metropolitan." *The New York Times*. April 1, 1981.

<sup>27</sup>. Witkin, Gordon. Gest, Ted. "Gun Control's Limits." *U.S. News & World Report*. November 28, 1993. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Witkin, Gordon. Gest, Ted. "Gun Control's Limits." *U.S. News & World Report*. November 28, 1993. 1.

<sup>29</sup>. Witkin, Gordon. Gest, Ted. "Gun Control's Limits." *U.S. News & World Report*. November 28, 1993. 1.

738,332 people, only 18,797 were unsuited to have guns, but the background checks did help block 2.5% of potential buyers get turned down. This portion of the Brady Bill by no means solved the problem of guns in the United States, but is a piece of legislation that has potentially saved some American lives.

Although the Brady Bill focused on providing stricter background checks for all gun purchases, the Bill had many more effects on how Americans could obtain guns. After the Brady Bill became a law, it was required that all handgun buyers must wait five days before obtaining their firearms. States also were up to \$200 million a year in federal aid to help upgrade criminal record keeping for background checks, gun thefts could now be prosecuted in federal court, and fees for obtaining a firearms license went from \$30 to \$200.<sup>30</sup> These provisions clearly made it tougher for criminals to obtain firearms. The Brady Bill has not solved the issue of guns in the United States, but is a prime example of how a shooting tragedy has led to the passage of gun control legislation.

Just one year after the Brady Bill became a law, the United States increased its legislation on gun control with the creation of the Federal Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, more commonly known as the Assault Weapons Ban of 1994. Although an assault weapon was not used in the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan, tragedies such as the event on March 30, 1981 helped raise support for gun control legislation. By examining laws such as the Brady Bill and the Assault Weapons Ban of 1994, we will be able to discover the effectiveness of potential gun control laws.

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<sup>30</sup>. Witkin, Gordon. Gest, Ted. "Gun Control's Limits." *U.S. News & World Report*. November 28, 1993. 3.

On January 17, 1989, Patrick Purdy returned to his childhood elementary school, with his AK-47, and opened fire on several students and staff.<sup>31</sup> Purdy was able to squeeze out more than 100 rounds in just one minute, killing five children, and wounding more than 30. The fact that Purdy was able to kill five children and injure 30 is incredible, especially because it happened in one minute. This was perhaps the major reason why the Federal Government passed the Assault Weapons Ban of 1994. According to researchers Roth and Koper, "During the 1980s and early 1990s, this tragedy and other similar acts of seemingly senseless violence, coupled with escalating turf and drug wars waged by urban gangs, sparked a national debate over whether legislation was needed to end, or at least restrict, the market for imported and domestic assault weapons."<sup>32</sup> A few states started creating assault weapon bans, but a Federal law was not passed until 1994.

The Federal Government took control of the assault weapons issue on September 13, 1994, when Title XI of the Federal Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 began.<sup>33</sup> The law "banned the manufacture, transfer, and possession of certain semiautomatic firearms designated as assault weapons and 'large capacity' ammunition magazines."<sup>34</sup> The creation of this law intended to limit the number of casualties in mass shootings, such as the one committed by Purdy, but how effective was this law? One unfortunate effect of the law is that legal substitute assault weapons rose significantly, by more than 120%!<sup>35</sup> Legal substitutes were purchased on an

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<sup>31</sup>. Roth, Jeffrey A, Koper, Christopher S. "Impacts of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban: 1994-1996." *National Institute of Justice*. March 1999. 1.

<sup>32</sup>. Roth, Jeffrey A, Koper, Christopher S. "Impacts of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban: 1994-1996." *National Institute of Justice*. March 1999. 1.

<sup>33</sup>. Roth, Jeffrey A, Koper, Christopher S. "Impacts of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban: 1994-1996." *National Institute of Justice*. March 1999. 1.

<sup>34</sup>. Roth, Jeffrey A, Koper, Christopher S. "Impacts of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban: 1994-1996." *National Institute of Justice*. March 1999. 1.

<sup>35</sup>. Roth, Jeffrey A, Koper, Christopher S. "Impacts of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban: 1994-1996." *National Institute of Justice*. March 1999. 1.

estimated average of 90,000 before the ban on assault weapons, to about 204,000 annually.

The mass increase in purchases of substitute guns was clearly an unintentional effect of the Assault Weapons Ban, but the law did have some positive consequences. Studies were conducted in two large cities that did not belong to states having preexisting assault weapons bans before 1994. It was found that in St. Louis and Boston, assault weapons recovered in crimes decreased by 29% and 24% respectively.<sup>36</sup> This was a major victory in the eyes of gun control enthusiasts because it showed that there were fewer crimes committed using dangerous assault weapons that could kill a large number of people in a short period of time.

A study in 1995 showed statistics that proved this piece of legislations' positive effects around the entire country. The study compared actual 1995 state gun murder rates with projected rates in the absence of the Assault Weapons Ban.<sup>37</sup> Roth and Koper wrote, "overall, 1995 gun murder rates were 9 percent lower than the projection."<sup>38</sup> Gun murder rates fell by over 10% in states that did not have any assault weapons ban prior to the Assault Weapons Ban of 1994, and stayed just about the same in states that previously had assault weapon bans.<sup>39</sup> This proves the effectiveness the Assault Weapons Ban of 1994 had on the murder rate in the United States because it shows a drastic decrease in the number of murders committed with a gun in states that never had an assault weapons ban. Although there is some statistical evidence that shows that the Assault Weapons ban in 1994 did more harm than good, the fact that the gun murder

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<sup>36</sup>. Roth, Jeffrey A, Koper, Christopher S. "Impacts of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban: 1994-1996." *National Institute of Justice*. March 1999. 7.

<sup>37</sup>. Roth, Jeffrey A, Koper, Christopher S. "Impacts of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban: 1994-1996." *National Institute of Justice*. March 1999. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Roth, Jeffrey A, Koper, Christopher S. "Impacts of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban: 1994-1996." *National Institute of Justice*. March 1999. 8.

<sup>39</sup>. Roth, Jeffrey A, Koper, Christopher S. "Impacts of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban: 1994-1996." *National Institute of Justice*. March 1999. 8.

rates was 9% less than the projected statistics of murder rates without the law proves that this piece of gun control legislation worked, and probably saved the lives of Americans.

Next, we will examine different school shootings that made the country even more prone to gun control legislation. There have been dozens of school shooting tragedies over the last 30 years. It is vital to reflect on a few of the most deadly shootings in order to gain an appreciation for the seriousness associated with gun control in today's culture. School shootings such as the one at Columbine High School, Virginia Tech, and Sandy Hook Elementary have all had obvious repercussions to their respective communities, but they have also affected the way Americans view the Second Amendment, and gun control laws such as the Brady Bill and the Assault Weapons Ban of 1994.

On April 20, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold changed the way many Americans viewed the Second Amendment. *New York Times* journalist wrote, "In the deadliest school massacre in the nation's history, two young men stormed into a suburban high school here at lunch time today with guns and explosives, killing as many as 23 students and teachers and wounding at least 20 in a five-hour siege, the authorities said."<sup>40</sup> At the time, the massacre at Columbine High School was the deadliest school shooting in the history of the United States, officially killing 12 students, a teacher, and ultimately themselves. Students told stories about how they saw bodies lying on staircases, as they hid themselves in classrooms, bathrooms, and other hideouts for safety. One student is famously quoted as saying, "Blood was going all over!"<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup>. Brooke, James. "Suicide Mission." *The New York Times*. April 21, 1999. A1.

<sup>41</sup>. Brooke, James. "Suicide Mission." *The New York Times*. April 21, 1999. A16.

This school shooting tore the hearts of millions Americans around the country, and also created fear over the Second Amendment. The shooting at Columbine High School swept the over news, having more than two-thirds of Americans following the story very closely.<sup>42</sup> Because so many people were tuning in to the massacre at Columbine, support for stricter gun control laws started becoming more of a popular idea in the eyes of Americans. Many public opinion polls were conducted in the wake of the shooting, in an attempt to find statistical evidence that showed this trend. According to *Pew Research*, after Columbine, 65% of Americans said it was more important to control gun ownership, while only 30% said it was more important to protect the right of Americans to own gun.<sup>43</sup> *Pew Research* asked that same exact question just a few years prior to the shooting, in December of 1993, and only 57% of Americans claimed it was more important to control gun ownership, showing an 8% jump!<sup>44</sup> *Gallup* asked a similar question to the American public after the shooting, and found very similar results, claiming 66% of Americans saying that legislation should be created, controlling the sale of firearms.<sup>45</sup> Both of these polls show how afraid Americans were of firearms after the tragedy at Columbine High School. How many more massacres will it take for all Americans to be in favor of stricter gun control laws?

Tragedy struck yet again in the United States on April 16, 2007, at Virginia Tech. The large college in Blacksburg, Virginia surpassed Columbine as the deadliest school shooting in the History of the United States.<sup>46</sup> A *New York Times* front cover story by

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<sup>42</sup>. "Gun Control Polls Show Longterm Decline in Support, Despite Columbine Bump." *Huffington Post*. 7/20/2012.

<sup>43</sup>. "Gun Control Polls Show Longterm Decline in Support, Despite Columbine Bump." *Huffington Post*. 7/20/2012.

<sup>44</sup>. "Gun Control Polls Show Longterm Decline in Support, Despite Columbine Bump." *Huffington Post*. 7/20/2012.

<sup>45</sup>. "Gun Control Polls Show Longterm Decline in Support, Despite Columbine Bump." *Huffington Post*. 7/20/2012.

<sup>46</sup>. "32 Shot Dead in Virginia; Worst U.S. Gun Rampage." *The New York Times*. 2007.

John Broder started, “Thirty-two people were killed, including the gunman, and at least 15 injured in two shooting attacks at Virginia Polytechnic Institute on Monday during three hours of horror and chaos on this sprawling campus.”<sup>47</sup> After several witnesses told their stories of the murders from first hand accounts, the talk over gun control increased even more.

The shooter, Seung-Hui Cho planned two separate attacks at Virginia Tech. The first happened at 7:15 AM that Monday morning, at Johnston Hall. He was searching “room to room” for his ex-girlfriend, killing 2 students in the process.<sup>48</sup> At 9:45, the next target was Norris Hall, an engineering building. A witness to the shooting stated, “I saw bullets hit people’s bodies. There was blood everywhere. People in the class were passed out, I don’t know maybe from shock from the pain. But I was one of only four that made it out of that classroom. The rest were dead or injured.”<sup>49</sup>

Many pro gun control advocates started using Virginia Tech as another example for stricter gun legislation. Politicians all over the country pointed to Virginia’s gun laws as the potential reason for the massacre. Josh Horwitz, the executive director of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence was quoted as saying, “Virginia’s gun laws are some of the weakest laws in the country.”<sup>50</sup> In his article, Broder briefly discusses the procedures it takes in Virginia to purchase a gun, many arguing that the background checks are not strict enough. Critics against Virginia’s weak background checks argued that Cho was mentally ill, and never should have been able to buy a gun. Students who knew Cho at Virginia Tech agreed. Journalist Gerald Amada wrote, “Based on the accounts of the many students and faculty who observed him, we can justly conclude that he chronically

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47. “32 Shot Dead in Virginia; Worst U.S. Gun Rampage.” *The New York Times*. 2007.

48. “32 Shot Dead in Virginia; Worst U.S. Gun Rampage.” *The New York Times*. 2007.

49. “32 Shot Dead in Virginia; Worst U.S. Gun Rampage.” *The New York Times*. 2007.

50. “32 Shot Dead in Virginia; Worst U.S. Gun Rampage.” *The New York Times*. 2007.

evinced a menacing form of antisociality in demeanor and behavior that was for understandable reasons truly terrifying for those who regularly encountered him on campus.”<sup>51</sup> Could laws requiring stricter background checks for all purchases of guns avoided the possibility of the massacre at Virginia Tech?

Perhaps the biggest example of a school shooting influencing the support for gun control is the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary. On December 14, 2012, the United States experienced its second deadliest school shooting in history.<sup>52</sup> The shooting occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary, a school located in Newtown Connecticut. Many viewed the shooter, 20 year-old Adam Lanza, as a troubled young man, who was clearly mentally ill. Nonetheless, he was able to receive a high capacity gun, and change the lives of Americans all over the country. Lanza fired 154 bullets, killing 20 first graders, and six teachers.<sup>53</sup> This massacre received so much extra attention than most shootings in the U.S., because Lanza killed first graders, little children who were robbed of the chance to grow up.

Family members of those who perished on December 14, 2012 made their mark on history by writing a letter to Congress, pleading with them to create a law for more gun control. The letter introduces the family members’ familiarity with the Second Amendment. They state, “But no rights are absolute; with all rights come responsibilities. As parents and grandparents, sisters and brothers of the children and spouses and children of the educators lost at Sandy Hook, we believe that responsible improvements to our laws will help prevent future tragedies like Sandy Hook and save some of the tens

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<sup>51</sup>. Amada, Gerald. “The Massacre at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University: Some Thoughts and Considerations.” *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*. Haworth Press. 2007.

<sup>52</sup>. “Scared Parents Hear Kids Tell of Shooting.” *The Journal News*. Dec 15, 2012.

<sup>53</sup>. Friedman, Dan. “Sandy Hook Parents Urge Gun Control.” *The Washington Bureau*. April, 2013.

of thousands of lives lost every year to gun violence.”<sup>54</sup> The family members go on to propose three possible provisions to a law that could be enacted to save lives in school shootings; stricter background checks, limiting the sale of high capacity guns, and making firearm trafficking and straw purchases become a federal crime.<sup>55</sup> The family members of the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting made it clear that they do not believe gun control legislation will stop all future massacres, but can severely limit the number of casualties in future shootings.

The impact of school shootings like the ones at Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Sandy Hook have been great. These tragedies have inevitably made more people in our country more in favor of gun control legislation. After the Sandy Hook shooting, a poll found that 58% of Americans believed gun control should be tightened, while the same poll conducted in 2012 showed only 44% believed gun control should be stronger, a fifteen percentage jump!<sup>56</sup> Some people believe that there should be stricter background check for gun purchases, while others believe there should be a ban on high capacity magazines. This paper does not attempt to determine what the extent of gun control should be in the United States. The purpose of pulling different shooting tragedies in the United States over the last 35 years was not to find a solution to the gun problem in the United States, but to show why gun control is needed, and desired by the majority of Americans.

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<sup>54</sup> Friedman, Dan. “Sandy Hook Parents Urge Gun Control.” *The Washington Bureau*. April, 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Friedman, Dan. “Sandy Hook Parents Urge Gun Control.” *The Washington Bureau*. April, 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Sadd, Lydia. “U.S. Remains divided Over Passing Stricter Gun Laws.” *Gallup Polls*. October 25, 2013.

### **III: Case Study at the State Level**

After proving that gun control in the United States is legal, and showing why gun control legislation has the support of the majority of Americans, an analysis on gun control laws in the different states of America will explore the number of firearms in each state and see if there is some correlation between the number of homicides by firearms per 100,000 people, and number of guns per state. Do states with stricter gun control laws have less firearm homicides per 100,000 people? This study will hope to show that by limiting the number of guns per state, there would be less murders committed by guns per 100,000 people.

Many studies have been conducted, showing the relationship between firearm death rate and the percentage of households with firearms. All data seems to point to there being a positive correlation in this relationship, showing that as the percentage of households with firearms increases, the firearm death rate also increases. To show this positive correlation, data will be shown from the Center of Disease Control and Prevention taken in 2005.

Data taken by the Center of Disease Control and Prevention shows the relationship between the firearm death rate, and the percentage of households with firearms. A complete list of all 50 states can be seen on the Center's website, but I will show you data from the top five states with the highest firearm death rate, and the five states with the lowest rate. Louisiana comes in first place out of all 50 states, having a firearm death rate of 19.0 per 100,000 people.<sup>57</sup> The national percentage of households

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<sup>57</sup>. "Strong Gun Laws and Low Gun Ownership Equal Low Firearm Death." *CT Against Gun Violence*. Retrieved from:  
<http://cagvedfund.org/CAGV%20OpEd%20Gun%20Death.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> "Strong Gun Laws and Low Gun Ownership Equal Low Firearm Death." *CT Against Gun Violence*. Retrieved from:  
<http://cagvedfund.org/CAGV%20OpEd%20Gun%20Death.pdf>

with firearms is 40.8%, while Louisiana has a percentage of 45.6%.<sup>58</sup> This shows that the state of Louisiana has more guns per household than the average state, and has the most firearm death rate in the country. Obviously there are a lot of different components that factor into this, but is this a coincidence? Let's keep looking at other states.

The next four states with the highest firearm death rate in order are: Alaska 17.5, Montana – 17.2, Tennessee – 16.4, and Alabama – 16.2.<sup>59</sup> Much like Louisiana, these states also have percentages of households with firearms well above the US average: 60.6%, 61.4%, 46.4%, and 57.2% respectively.<sup>60</sup> All four percentages are well above the 40.8% average for the entire country, suggesting that there is not a coincidence that the states with the five highest firearm death rates in the country also have percentages of households with firearms well above the national average.

Likewise, the states with the five lowest firearm death rates in the country also seem to have percentages of households with firearms less than the national average. Hawaii has the lowest firearm death rate at just 2.2 per 100,000 people, and also the lowest percentage of households with firearms, at just 9.2%, well below the 40.8% U.S. average.<sup>61</sup> The next four states with the lowest firearm death rates are Massachusetts – 3.5, Rhode Island – 3.6, New Jersey – 5.0, Connecticut – 5.3, and New York – 5.3.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "Strong Gun Laws and Low Gun Ownership Equal Low Firearm Death." *CT Against Gun Violence*. Retrieved from:

<http://cagvedfund.org/CAGV%20OpEd%20Gun%20Death.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> "Strong Gun Laws and Low Gun Ownership Equal Low Firearm Death." *CT Against Gun Violence*. Retrieved from:

<http://cagvedfund.org/CAGV%20OpEd%20Gun%20Death.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> "Strong Gun Laws and Low Gun Ownership Equal Low Firearm Death." *CT Against Gun Violence*. Retrieved from:

<http://cagvedfund.org/CAGV%20OpEd%20Gun%20Death.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> "Strong Gun Laws and Low Gun Ownership Equal Low Firearm Death." *CT Against Gun Violence*. Retrieved from:

<http://cagvedfund.org/CAGV%20OpEd%20Gun%20Death.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> "Strong Gun Laws and Low Gun Ownership Equal Low Firearm Death." *CT Against Gun Violence*. Retrieved from:

<http://cagvedfund.org/CAGV%20OpEd%20Gun%20Death.pdf>

Like Hawaii, these states also have the four next lowest percentages of households with firearms: 12.8%, 13.3%, 11.3%, 16.2%, and 18.1% respectively.<sup>63.</sup>

This study suggests that there is a great possibility that the number of guns per state influences the number of homicides committed with a firearm. The top five states with the highest firearm death rates have some of the highest percentages of households with firearms in the country. The same can be said with the five lowest states in the country, having the same relationship. The five states with the lowest firearm death rate also have the five lowest percentage of households with firearms. Many suggest that this is direct evidence that proves there are less murders committed with firearms when there are less guns available.

The Violence Policy Center (VPC) has stated its approval of potential gun control legislation after many of the shooting tragedies previously mentioned. The VPC acknowledges the positive correlation between firearm death rate and the percentage of households with firearms, and suggests gun control laws in different states directly effect this relationship.<sup>64.</sup> States with harsher gun control laws tend to have a smaller percentage of households with firearms, while states with less laws restricting firearms tend to have a higher percentage. The VPC defines these differences, stating, “states with ‘weak’ gun laws as those that add little or nothing to federal restrictions and have permissive concealed carry laws allowing civilians to carry concealed handguns.” States with strong gun laws are those “that add significant state regulation in addition to federal

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63. “Strong Gun Laws and Low Gun Ownership Equal Low Firearm Death.” *CT Against Gun Violence*. Retrieved from: <http://cagvedfund.org/CAGV%20OpEd%20Gun%20Death.pdf>

64. “Pro-Gun States Lead the Nation in Per Capita Firearm Death Rates.” *PR Newswire Association LLC* Retrieved from: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/pro-gun-states-lead-the-nation-in-per-capita-firearm-death-rates-57514947.html>

law, such as restricting access to particularly hazardous types of firearms.”<sup>65</sup> The data shown by the Center of Disease Control and Prevention begs the question: do states with “stronger” gun control laws decrease the likelihood of potential shooting tragedies?

By far the most extensive research done examining the correlation between gun ownership and firearm homicide rates in the United States was released in September, 2013. Michael Siegel, Craig Ross, and Charles King III found the estimated percentage of gun ownership per state, ranging from a low of 25.8% in Hawaii, to a high of 76.8% in Mississippi.<sup>66</sup> They also found the mean age-adjusted firearm homicide rate for all 50 states, ranging from a low of 0.9 per 100,000 people in New Hampshire, to a high of 10.8 per 100,000 people in Louisiana.<sup>67</sup>

The tricky part of this data collecting is the potential for outside variables affecting the results, because external factors can change the results of the firearm homicide rate in each state. After controlling all external factors, Siegel, Ross and King III found an undeniably strong correlation. For each one - percentage point increase in the gun ownership proxy, the firearm homicide rate increased by .9%!<sup>68</sup> Siegel, Ross and King III wrote, “The correlation of gun ownership with fire-arm homicide rates was substantial. Results from our model showed that a 1-SD difference in the gun ownership proxy

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<sup>65</sup>. “Pro-Gun States Lead the Nation in Per Capita Firearm Death Rates.” *PR Newswire Association LLC* Retrieved from: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/pro-gun-states-lead-the-nation-in-per-capita-firearm-death-rates-57514947.html>

<sup>66</sup>. “Pro-Gun States Lead the Nation in Per Capita Firearm Death Rates.” *PR Newswire Association LLC* Retrieved from: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/pro-gun-states-lead-the-nation-in-per-capita-firearm-death-rates-57514947.html>

<sup>67</sup>. “Pro-Gun States Lead the Nation in Per Capita Firearm Death Rates.” *PR Newswire Association LLC* Retrieved from: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/pro-gun-states-lead-the-nation-in-per-capita-firearm-death-rates-57514947.html>

<sup>68</sup> Siegel, Michael Craig S. Ross, and Charles King III. “The Relationship Between Gun Ownership and Firearm Homicide Rates in the United States.” 1981–2010. *American Journal of Public Health*: November 2013, Vol. 103, No. 11

measure, FS/S, was associated with a 12.9% difference in firearm homicide rates.”<sup>69</sup>

These results make it strikingly clear that there is a strong correlation between firearm homicide rates and the percentage of gun ownership: as the percentage of gun ownership in a state increases, the number of firearm homicides increases at almost exactly the same rate.

This section showed the relationship between the percentage of firearm ownership per state, and the firearm homicide rate per 100,000 people. Both studies showed a clear correlation: as the percentage of gun ownership in a state increases, the number of firearm homicides increases at almost exactly the same rate. There are a lot of different components that factor into this, but both studies reach the same result. By showing this data, I hope to show the potential effectiveness of limiting the number of firearms in the U.S. Next, similar data will be examined by different countries around the world.

#### **IV. Case Study at the International Level**

Much like last section, I have conducted research to discover if there was a correlation between the number of firearms and number of homicides committed with a firearm. I gathered as much of the data I could find on the number of guns per 100 people, and the number of homicides by guns per 100,000 people. Much of my research was conducted under the influence of *The Guardian*, by only counting countries with complete data. There are over 190 countries in the world today, but there are only 107

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<sup>69</sup>. Siegel, Michael Craig S. Ross, and Charles King III. “The Relationship Between Gun Ownership and Firearm Homicide Rates in the United States.” 1981–2010. *American Journal of Public Health*: November 2013, Vol. 103, No. 11

countries that have complete data recorded that could be analyzed for this case study.<sup>70</sup> After listing all 107 countries on a spreadsheet, a line graph was created to discover the correlation in this relationship. After plotting each of the 107 countries with sufficient data, there was no clear correlation between guns per 100 people, and the number of homicides by firearm per 100,000 people.<sup>71</sup>

The next step in finding out if there is a correlation between the two variables at the international level was eliminating the undeveloped countries of the 107 remaining. Many find it unfair to compare number of homicides by firearm per 100,000 people between the United States and countries that are undeveloped because there is clearly a different set of living standards between developed and undeveloped countries. A line graph was created, listing only developed countries, and again, no correlation.<sup>72</sup> Much like last time, this was an easy fix. There seemed to be some sort of correlation between the two variables, but there was a major outlier. South Africa averaged nearly 12 guns per 100 people, and over 17 homicides by firearm per 100,000 people!<sup>73</sup> These two numbers clearly went against the norm of this study, and the simple law of statistics says to delete the outliers. After taking out South Africa from the mix, a pretty clear correlation existed, which created cause to conduct further research on this study.

It would be counterproductive to go over all of the countries that were used for the lone graph, created by *The Guardian*. Instead, I focused on three different countries that were used for the study, to find the rationale for their numbers. I wanted to discover why limiting the number of guns in a country tends to limit the number of homicides by

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<sup>70</sup>. Berezow, Alex. "The Correlation Between Gun Ownership and Homicide Rate." *Pacific Standard*. April, 2013.

<sup>71</sup>. Berezow, Alex. "The Correlation Between Gun Ownership and Homicide Rate." *Pacific Standard*. April, 2013.

<sup>72</sup>. Berezow, Alex. "The Correlation Between Gun Ownership and Homicide Rate." *Pacific Standard*. April, 2013.

<sup>73</sup>. Berezow, Alex. "The Correlation Between Gun Ownership and Homicide Rate." *Pacific Standard*. April, 2013.

firearm. The United States has over 270 million total guns in the hands of civilians, that's 88.8 guns per 100 people, easily the most in the world! The country with the most guns in circulation after the U.S. is India, with 46 million, but only having 4.2 guns per 100 people!<sup>74</sup>. Compared to other developed countries, The U.S. also has one of the worst number of homicides by guns per 100,000 people at 3.2, well above the world's average.<sup>75</sup> The United States clearly has the more guns than any other country in the world, and the most homicides by firearm. Next, we will compare how other countries' numbers compare with those of the U.S.

The most obvious country to first investigate was the one with the strictest gun control laws, and also the lowest gun-homicide rate in the world: Japan. Japan has some of the strictest gun control laws in the world. The Firearm and Sword Law severely limits the number and types of firearms allowed in the country. Furthermore, the law requires all citizens who want to purchase a firearm to pass a series of tests, (written, mental, and rug) including a strict background check.<sup>76</sup> The results of these strict gun control laws: Japan has the least amount of homicides committed with a firearm in the world (counting only developed countries.) Japan has 0.6 guns per 100 people, and .01 homicides by firearm per 100,000 people, while the U.S. totaled 88.8 guns per 100 people, and 3.2 homicides by gun per 100,000 people.<sup>77</sup> Many experts state that the reason for these major differences in statistics is due to gun control laws in these two countries. The

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<sup>74</sup>. "Gun Homicides and Gun Ownership by Country." *The Washington Post*. 2013. Retrieved from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/nation/gun-homicides-ownership/table/>

<sup>75</sup>. "Gun Homicides and Gun Ownership by Country." *The Washington Post*. 2013. Retrieved from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/nation/gun-homicides-ownership/table/>

<sup>76</sup>. Masters, Jonathan "U.S. Gun Policy: Global Comparisons." *Council on Foreign Relations*. July 15, 2013.

<sup>77</sup>. "Gun Homicides and Gun Ownership by Country." *The Washington Post*. 2013. Retrieved from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/nation/gun-homicides-ownership/table/>

United States has the Second Amendment, which gives Americans the right to bear arms, while Japan has the Firearm and Sword Law, which heavily limits the number, and types of firearms Japanese citizens can use.

Another country that the United States should model gun control legislation after is Australia. Like the United States, Australia has had devastating shooting massacres. In April 1996, a young man killed 35 people, and wounded 23 others, in the nation's deadliest massacre at Port Arthur.<sup>78</sup> Unlike the United States, the Australian government learned from its mistakes, and created some of the strictest gun control legislation in the world. The National Agreement on Firearms essentially prohibited all automatic and semi-automatic assault rifles, made it tougher to obtain licenses for firearms, and introduces a buyback program that took over 650,000 assault weapons from the Australian public.<sup>79</sup> After the strict gun control legislation passed, Australia had statistics to show the effectiveness it had on the country. As of 2009, Australia only had 15 guns per 100 people, and just .14 homicides by gun per 100,000 people!<sup>80</sup> Australia shows how stricter gun control legislation can greatly reduce the number of homicides committed by firearms, and can help save lives.

The last country that will be used to serve as a case study is the United Kingdom. The UK's gun control history is similar to that of Australia. Tragedies such as the Hungerford Massacre and the shooting in Dunblane, Scotland led to a push for stricter gun control laws.<sup>81</sup> After these incidents, Britain introduced the Firearms Act, which "expanded the list of banned weapons, including certain semi-automatic rifles, and

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<sup>78</sup> Masters, Jonathan "U.S. Gun Policy: Global Comparisons." *Council on Foreign Relations*. July 15, 2013.

<sup>79</sup> Masters, Jonathan "U.S. Gun Policy: Global Comparisons." *Council on Foreign Relations*. July 15, 2013.

<sup>80</sup> "Gun Homicides and Gun Ownership by Country." *The Washington Post*. 2013. Retrieved from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/nation/gun-homicides-ownership/table/>

increased registration requirements for other weapons.”<sup>82</sup> After strict gun control legislation passed, the U.K. had statistics similar to those in Japan and Australia. In 2010, The U.K. had 6.2 guns per 100 people, and only .07 homicides by gun per 100,000 people.<sup>83</sup> That means that just .07 murders were committed with a firearm for every 100,000 people!

By comparing gun data between the United States and other developed countries, it is clear that the U.S., by a wide margin, has the highest number of guns in the world. Not by coincidence, the U.S. also has one of the highest number of homicides by guns per 100,000 people among developed countries. After looking at data from a state approach, as well as studying different countries around the world, it is obvious that there is a clear correlation between the number of guns, and number of homicides committed by firearm: the more guns a state or country has, the higher the number of homicides committed by firearm. Hopefully this case study showed how limiting the number of available to the public can limit the number of homicides.

This paper did not attempt to come up with a resolution to the gun control debate. Instead, it took a much more historical approach to gun control in the United States, starting with the history of the Second Amendment, and the most influential gun control movements in the U.S, over the last 35 years. The first section proved that gun control is in fact legal inside the United States, by showing the purpose of the creation of the Second Amendment, and the results of each Supreme Court Case that ruled on the

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<sup>81</sup> Masters, Jonathan “U.S. Gun Policy: Global Comparisons.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. July 15, 2013.

<sup>82</sup> Masters, Jonathan “U.S. Gun Policy: Global Comparisons.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. July 15, 2013.

<sup>83</sup> Masters, Jonathan “U.S. Gun Policy: Global Comparisons.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. July 15, 2013.

topic of gun control. The second section showed the most influential gun control movements since 1980, and how they have affected the American public. Shooting tragedies such as Reagan's attempted assassination, Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Sandy Hook have caused the majority of Americans to be in favor of gun control legislation. The third and fourth sections took the same approach, just at different levels. The third focused on the potential effects of gun control at the state level, while the fourth studied the international effects of guns. By using arguments based on history and statistics, it is clear that gun control in the United States is legal, desired by the majority of Americans, and potentially life saving!