

ATTITUDES TOWARD GUN CONTROL LAWS: EXPLORING RELATIONSHIPS  
IN RECENTLY GATHERED DATA

by

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Christina Mancini, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the College for Design and Social Inquiry and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

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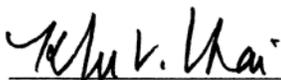
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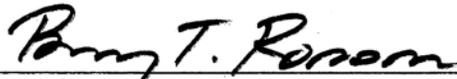
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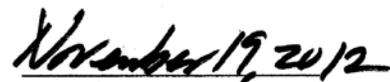
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## ABSTRACT

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Recently, empirical attention has been directed toward understanding public opinion about gun control laws. Despite this focus, three gaps are evident in extant scholarship. First, few current examinations have relied on recently collected, national data to explore predictors of public attitudes. Second, relatively little work systematically investigates whether type of weapon bans (e.g. handgun versus semi-automatic weapon) affects public support for a given gun control initiative. Third, and importantly, the general focus in predicting support for gun control measures has been on social and demographic factors. Little is known from a theoretical perspective about how other variables—such as knowledge of Constitutional issues or perceptions of the U.S. Supreme Court—affect public attitudes toward gun control. Using national poll data collected in 2011 by *Time* magazine, this study addresses these research gaps by

estimating several logistic regression analyses. Research and policy implications are discussed.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, particularly to my siblings, Katie and Michael, who have offered encouragement from the beginning of this manuscript. I also dedicate this work to my parents, Michael and Nancy, for supporting me to continue my education.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In democracies, public views matter. Indeed, it has been recognized by scholars that public opinion impacts public policy (Burstein, 2009). This connection is perhaps most evident when the focus is on gun control. Since the late 1980s, the issue of gun control has sparked debates among policymakers and the public. On the one hand, proponents of gun control believe that laws and policies should be altered to reduce the amount of violence that guns putatively cause society (Moorhouse & Wanner, 2006; Kleck, Gertz, & Bratton, 2009). Put differently, this perspective emphasizes that such laws are necessary to prevent gun-related violence. On the other side of the debate, opponents of gun control claim that laws designed to limit guns infringe on constitutional rights (Wheeler, 2001; Tushnet, 2008) and that ultimately guns do not cause crime (Kleck, et. al., 2009). Public opinion scholarship has recognized this debate. Findings from this thirty year old literature indicate that there continues to be variation in public views.

Although prior studies have analyzed public views about gun control, the literature remains underdeveloped. Three gaps are evident in extant scholarship. First, data needs to continuously be collected and analyzed to ensure that previous predictors

are currently reflecting the views of the American public. Second, the prior literature has not yet systematically addressed whether public support is affected by the type of gun control initiative. For example, previous literature has shown that the majority of the public in the United States support the proposal that handguns should not be banned or controlled by the government and that every citizen has the right to own one (Winkler, 2006). However, this literature neglects the issue of a ban of semi-automatic weapons which has more recently become prevalent in the gun control debate. Lastly, prior studies have neglected to study the impact of other variables that might affect public perceptions about gun control. Previous research and literature have analyzed social and demographic differences (e.g. age, sex, race, etc.) of the public to understand the perceptions of gun control. However, it is important to study additional differences since other variables might affect perceptions of gun control. Therefore, exploring relationships between other variables, especially those involving Constitutional issues might be theoretically influential to the perceptions about gun control, in addition to studying social and demographic variables.

To address these gaps, the current study analyzes recently gathered data that builds upon the previous literature regarding the gun control debate. Public opinion research needs to be continually evaluated in order to determine whether the perceptions of the public are consistent with policies of the United States (New, 2009). The current study draws on 2011 national data from *Time* magazine focusing on public views about gun control topics, as well as other Constitutional issues that might affect the gun control

debate. This recent 2011 data can help advance the previous literature about gun control by analyzing the recent opinions of the public. Also, the current study can help establish whether a specific type of gun control measure (e.g., the banning of handguns versus other types of weapons) affects attitudes about gun control. Exploring these nuances in views can help inform extant public opinion scholarship focused on gun control support. Lastly, other factors, beyond social and demographic variables, need to be analyzed. For example, given the debate regarding the Second Amendment and gun control, knowledge of the Constitution might affect attitudes of gun control. Exploring the extent of perceived knowledge about the Constitution can better help interpret whether Americans are informed about the Second Amendment and also whether such views impact gun control support. Relatedly, this study will explore how the public perceives decisions of the Supreme Court, and whether such judgments impact public support for gun control measures. Although the Supreme Court is not an official policymaker, its decisions have the potential to significantly impact criminal justice laws (Epstein, Knight, & Martin, 2001). These two correlates have not been explored in prior studies and are important in understanding public opinion about gun control. The next section of the study outlines the specific research goals, questions, and strategies of the study.

### **Research Goal, Questions, and Strategies**

The overarching goal of this study is to contribute to the research about the gun control debate in the United States. In particular, this study systematically explores recent

public attitudes towards various aspects of gun control. To achieve these goals, this study asks four research questions.

Q. 1: Do the same social and demographic differences for gun control support identified in extant research emerge when using recently collected data?

Q. 2: Do social and demographic differences exist when the focus is on certain types of gun control measures (handgun vs. semi-automatic gun ban)?

Q. 3: Do additional, previously unexplored variables (knowledge of the Constitution and perceptions of the U.S. Supreme Court) predict support for gun control?

Q. 4: Does knowledge of the Constitution and the perceptions of the U.S. Supreme Court reduce the effect of other social and demographic variables?

The following are brief descriptions of the chapters of the study:

*Chapter 2:* Examines the history and background of gun control efforts in the United States.

*Chapter 3:* Reviews extant literature regarding previous public opinion scholarship addressing gun control.

*Chapter 4:* Describes the hypotheses of the variables, the data, and the methods of the recently collected data to build upon previous literature regarding gun control.

*Chapter 5:* The findings of hypotheses using logistic regression are discussed.

*Chapter 6:* Conclusions summing up major findings of this study, as well as limitations, policy implications, and future directions.

## **Structure of the Study**

This study is structured around six chapters, three of which are devoted to answering the specific research questions stated above. Briefly, the chapters are organized as follows.

Chapter 1 describes the goals and objectives of the study, the research questions that will be address, the strategies that will be used to analyze those questions, and the structure of the study.

Chapter 2 provides a historical background of gun control the United States.

Chapter 3 presents a review of gun control and extant public opinion literature.

Chapter 4 explores the hypotheses used in the study, as well as the data and methods that are utilized to address the research questions.

Chapter 5 provides the findings of the logistic regression analyses.

Chapter 6 summarizes the findings of the study and concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations for research and policy.

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORY OF GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION

Efforts to limit the availability of firearms in the U.S. have been evident since the establishment of the United States. The framers of the Constitution attempted to address possession of firearms as a way to protect certain liberties for citizens. However, gun control continues to be debated. Understanding why this issue has become passionately debated among policymakers, law enforcement, and the American public requires a historical perspective. This chapter will review certain periods in United States history to explain why gun control continues to be debated.

#### **Early Colonial Days: 1700s-1800s**

The United States of America fought in the Revolutionary War until 1776 to gain its independence from England. Being a newly created country, the United States needed to implement a new government that would preside over its citizens. In 1789, the United States adopted its own Constitution which became the foundation of the federal government. The framers of the Constitution believed that citizens need to have certain liberties protected from the powers of government (Croddy, 1991). The Bill of Rights was created to safeguard these liberties, including the Second Amendment, which allows each citizen to own a firearm. The Bill of Rights is considered the centerpiece of our

Constitution (Amar, 1991). More specifically, the Second Amendment clearly states: “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed” (U.S. Const. amend. II). Therefore, the right to bear arms laid out in the Second Amendment conveys an important significance when it comes to the law in the United States (Alonso, 2003). Although the Constitution clearly states that every citizen should have the right to own firearms, the debate about gun control continues.

States then became influential in creating and implementing their own laws that govern the citizens within their borders. For example, Georgia did not incorporate the right to bear arms in their state Constitution (Divine, 1959). And in, 1837, Georgia passed a law that banned handguns. However, the Georgia Supreme Court, in 1846, heard the case of *Nunn v. State of Georgia* and decided that the ban was unconstitutional and forced Georgia to repeal the ban on handguns. However, according to scholars, states saw this ban on firearms as a way to potentially control the minorities within the United States (Cottrol & Diamond, 1994).

After the Civil War ended, many states were still trying to find ways to limit the amount of rights that the African American community could have compared to the White community (Berry, 1994). Therefore, several southern states implemented “black codes” which required African Americans to obtain a license in order to own or possess firearms which allowed for the White Night Riders to assault newly freed Blacks without a concern of returned fire (Cramer, 1995). Black codes became a potential stepping ground for the gun control debate (Cramer, 1995).

In 1871, the National Rifle Association, more commonly known as The NRA, was formed to help promote marksmanship for troops and the National Guard as a preparation for upcoming wars (Lagayette, 1995). Scholars claim the NRA has become a powerful organization in the gun control debate (Gibeaut, 2007). Specifically, the NRA and its members continue to be an opposition for gun control in the United States because it believes that the Second Amendment allows every citizen to have the right to own a firearm. However, powerful organizations that are opposed to gun control are not capable of determining how laws should be interpreted about gun control.

In 1886, the United States Supreme Court ruled on *Presser v. Illinois* about the Second Amendment's ability to only regulate firearms with controlling the power of the federal government (Vernick, Rutkow, Webster, & Teret, 2011) in regards to protecting the members of state militias (Palmiotto, 1991). With the first instrumental Supreme Court case heard, this allowed for other cases to become added to the Supreme Court docket to determine how the Second Amendment should be interpreted. Tyrey-Jefferson (1995) states that according to Supreme Court decisions the Second Amendment does not guarantee citizens to possess firearms without regulation and control. Also, Constitutional amendments should only be enforced by the federal government which should allow state governments to use their own discretion for gun control measures (Tyrey-Jefferson, 1995). Therefore, per scholars, the Second Amendment should be understood that the right to bear arms should be treated as a privilege more than a right for the public (Freedman, 1989).

### **Rise in Crime: 1900s-1950s**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century sparked the beginning of modern gun control debates. In 1927, the United States Congress passed the Mailing of Firearms Act which prohibited individuals from mailing concealable handguns (Batey, 1986). The Mailing of Firearms Act became the first occurrence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century regarding gun control. With the new form of power, Congress once again attempted to assert their power when it came to enacting law and policy, especially when it centered on regulating guns (DiSalvo, 2009).

Since much of gun control regulation typically stems around concern about gun-related crime from crime waves (Philipson & Posner, 1996), this gave an opportunity for the federal government to attempt to limit the use of weapons. The 1929 St. Valentine's Day Massacre became a violent, public incident that helped spark the public awareness about gangster style weapons and their potential threatening outcomes when used by criminals (Cavendish, 2009). A police investigation concluded that gangsters used machine guns and shotguns to ambush the rival Moran gang (Cavendish, 2009). In 1934, Congress passed the National Firearms Act as an attempt through its taxing power to regulate the traffic of criminal weapons, such as sub-machine guns and sawed-off shotguns (Leff & Leff, 1981). This law was originally implemented because of the rise in organized crime in the United States which is why the act clearly focuses on typical "gangster" weapons (Vizzard, 1999), but also stated that firearms require registration for certain types of weapons.

However, with new gun control legislation being passed, the Supreme Court continued to hear cases which subsequently change the gun control policy landscape. For

example, in 1939, the US Supreme Court heard *United States v. Miller* which concluded that certain weapons, such as shotguns that are modified do not fall under the protection of the Second Amendment since such a weapon is not considered a weapon for defense in a militia (Gunn, 1998). *United States v. Miller* was a watershed case as it marked an influential ban on firearms.

Congress then passed the Federal Firearms Act of 1938 which is the first documented attempt to place limitations on the selling of firearms. The law established a mandatory licensing system for manufacturers, importers, and dealers of firearms', the law also gave the government the power to prosecute manufacturers who sold firearms to fugitives or convicted criminals (Zimring, 1975; Leff & Leff, 1981).

### **Gun Control Awareness: 1960s-1970s**

The gun control debate began in earnest during the 1960s and 1970s. The US Supreme Court ruled on *Haynes v. United States* in 1968 regarding National Firearms Act of 1934 and its constitutionality in regards to both the Second and Fifth Amendments. The Supreme Court held in *Haynes* that Haynes, a convicted felon, would have violated his Fifth Amendment right of self-incrimination if he would have registered his firearm in correspondence with this act (Batey, 1986). However, the Supreme Court did not change the statute prohibiting convicted felons to own firearms. Rather it ruled on whether this specific defendant should have his conviction overturned for failure to register his firearm.

Events that gained a lot of public attention began to influence the gun control debate during the 1960s and 1970s. For example, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, per experts, created uproar among the public given that a gun was used in the crime (Hunsaker & Smith, 1976). A few years later, the Gun Control Act of 1968 was passed as a way to keep firearms out of the hands of individuals who were not legally allowed to possess them because of age, criminal background, or incompetence (Vizzard, 1999). According to scholars, this effort was intended to show the American public that the government was not completely revoking the right to own firearms, while at the same time emphasizing that firearms need to be regulated to prevent incidents, such as assassinations (Jones & Olken, 2009). In 1971, the Supreme Court ruled in *United States v. Freed* that certain weapons, in the interest of public safety, are not considered innocent weapons and are going to be subjected to criminal liability (Caplan, 1976).

In 1977, the District of Columbia officially enacted a ban on handguns for its residents. This ban also required those who owned rifles and shotguns to register with the District of Columbia (Winkler, 2009). Although the Constitution allows for citizens to own a firearm, this ban became a significant example of states using their own authority to regulate firearms. At the time, federal law did allow for possession of firearms, but states became able to regulate firearms within their own jurisdiction (Kwon & Baack, 2005).

### **Current Gun Control Debate: 1980s-2010s**

The 1980s marked an era of increasing concern about gun control. *Lewis v. United States* heard by the Supreme Court in 1980 gave a generalized finding to the constitutionality of gun control regulations from the Second Amendment (Powell, 1989). The Supreme Court held that the restrictions addressed in the Gun Control Act of 1968 of prohibiting felons from possessing firearms were constitutional since this regulation does not include the relationship between these individuals and their support for participating in a militia.

In 1986, the United States passed three influential laws that controlled the use of firearms in this country. The Armed Career Criminal Act (1986) increased the penalties for those individuals who were not legally allowed to possess a firearm. The Firearms Owners Protection Act (1986) decreased some of the restrictions on gun and ammunition sales, but it also established mandatory penalties for those who used a firearm during the commission of a crime (Hardy, 1986). The last law passed in 1986 that regulated firearms was the Law Enforcement Officers Protection Act (1986) which banned the possession of bullets that were capable of penetrating bulletproof clothing. Public opinion of this law generally supported it because of the ability to protect law enforcement during their jobs (Healey, 1998).

After seeing the District of Columbia successfully place a ban on, other states began to implement similar strategies. In 1989, five children were murdered on a school playground in Stockton, CA (Dingerson, 1990), and as a result, California legislature enacted a ban the possession of semi-automatic assault weapons. After California

effectively banned semi-automatic assault weapons, Congress passed the Crime Control Act of 1990 banning the manufacturing and importing of semi-automatic assault weapons throughout the entire United States.

Like mentioned earlier, events that generate a good deal of public attention, such as the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan, helped support the government's motivation for gun control (Vizzard, 1999). Also, during the early 1990s, the crime rate in the United States spiked, and, according to experts, as an attempt to combat the rising crime rate, Congress attempted to implement new laws (Kovandzic, Sloan, Vieraitis, 2006). To illustrate, in 1994, the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act enforced a strict five-day waiting period to purchase handguns and required all local law enforcement agencies to conduct thorough background checks on gun purchasers. Also in 1994, the Violence Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act banned all sales, manufacturing, importing, or possession of specific types of assault weapons (Roth, et. al., 1997).

However, with new gun control legislation there becomes a need for interpretation of these laws by the Supreme Court. In 1994, the Supreme Court ruled in *Staples v. United States* that law abiding citizens should not be subject to a possible long-term imprisonment for genuinely not knowing that semi-automatic weapons have been modified or worn down into automatic weapons which the National Firearm Act (1994) had criminalized.

Yet, in 1997 the Supreme Court declared that the requirement of background checks from the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act to be unconstitutional (*Printz*

*v. United States*). Nonetheless, Congress tried to implement a new amendment forcing all manufacturers to put a safety trigger on all handguns, and eventually was defeated, but, in turn, an amendment requiring gun dealers to have trigger locks available was passed (Teret, DeFrancesco, Hargarten, & Robinson, 1998). As a way to work together to control gun violence, major manufacturers voluntarily agreed to include child safety triggers on all new handguns (McClurg, 1999).

One of the most influential Supreme Court cases regarding gun control is *District of Columbia v. Heller* because it was the first Supreme Court case in US history that ruled on whether the Second Amendment should be interpreted to protect an individual right to keep and bear arms (Solum, 2009). The court held that an individual has the right to possess a firearm for lawful purposes such as self-defense within their own home. In another landmark Supreme Court case heard, in 2010, in *McDonald v. Chicago* the court determined whether the Second Amendment applied to individual states. The court held that local handgun bans were unconstitutional, in compliance with the decision in *Heller*, because the Fourteenth Amendment incorporated the Second Amendment (Nieto, 2011). These two Supreme Court cases are influential to the gun control debate in regards to the Second Amendment because the Supreme Court ultimately ruled on whether an individual's right to bear arms should be protected under the Second Amendment.

## CHAPTER 3

### PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF GUN CONTROL LAWS

Noticeably, there has been a change in policies to restrict guns in the United States during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Originally starting as what scholars have described as lenient legislation (Kwon & Baack, 2005), now gun control has become much “tougher”. In short, the public appears to have played, and continues to play an integral role in gun control policymaking. Given this, the study will now focus on how the public views general gun control laws implemented by public policy, state rights versus federal rights in enacting gun control, and the social and demographic differences previously focused on in public opinion.

#### **Gun Laws and Public Attitudes**

Historically, information about public perceptions and gun control in the United States has been limited. Public opinion research focusing on gun control is an underdeveloped literature with relatively few published studies prior to 1959 (Young, Hemenway, Blendon, & Benson, 1996). As evidenced by this void, it does not appear that exploring relationships of gun control support was an empirical focus for early scholars. However, the increasing concern about crime, more specifically gun violence, generated more attention regarding gun control (Gius, 2008). Public opinion polling

about gun control appeared to follow an increase in violent crime, assassinations (and, attempted assassinations) of presidents and other political figures (Young et. al., 1996). Therefore, the increase in violence in the 1990s allowed for public opinion research to build upon itself to address the issue of gun control in the United States.

The two sides of the gun control debate have clear, distinct arguments regarding their beliefs on gun control. While on one side there was the liberal agenda, which believe that gun control is necessary to help reduce the amount of violence in the United States (Loftin, Heumann, & McDowall, 1983). On the other hand, conservative groups believe that individuals have the right to own guns and strive to ensure rights remain protected (Chemerinsky, 2004). According to DeConde (2001), authorities attempted to control gun ownership of its citizens, but gun owners were able to overpower these attempts by becoming more politically cohesive. Public opinion research then has become more vital in determining American public opinion of gun control.

In the first attempts to research public perspectives of gun control, results from survey research suggest that public perceptions of crime and violence are significant in creating a debate for gun control because most members of the public did not feel that gun bans were disarming criminals, but rather decreasing the potential for protection (Tyler & Lavrakas, 1983). Thus, prior studies focused on the factors that would attribute to a support for a gun ban in the United States. Fear of crime and violence are thought to be important factors that predict gun control. For instance, Kleck (1996) studied fear and its relation to gun control, but found that although fear can be an important predictor in support for gun control, fear is not the only predictor affecting support for gun control.

Therefore, it is important to study other variables that contribute to the debate about gun control.

By focusing on gun control, public opinion literature is able to separate different aspects of opinions to better understand the gun control debate. The support for banning handguns is believed to be an effective method for reducing violence among the public (Kleck et. al., 2009), but prior literature does not address the explanation (i.e. whether the public perceives gun control as an effective measure in crime control and prevention) in its entirety. That is, prior efforts to focus on specific facets of gun control perceptions (e.g. the banning of certain weapons) are noticeably absent. This is potentially a limiting conceptual and research gap, as in recent times, these weapons have become viewed as being more readily available (Boor & Bair, 1990), but public views about them, or more specifically, their banning, remain a “black box.”

Through studying views about specific types of weapons, a greater contribution to the understanding of general gun control can be gained. Research cannot make conclusions about the general gun control issue without analyzing the other side of the spectrum when it comes to the type of gun control. For example, looking at the laws that are a part of gun control, such as registration of firearms and the waiting period, can allow a more generalized conclusion about public perceptions of gun control in the United States.

### **State vs. Federal Laws and Public Views**

The United States has a special approach in enforcing the laws that are created by policymakers. For every law that has been implemented on the federal level, each state

has their particular way of implementing it. Nowhere is this more evident than in each state's own laws about firearms and their use. Moorhouse & Wanner (2006) believe that gun control is effective only to the degree that the states enforce each statute. Therefore, the federal government can pass gun control legislation, but states individual implementation of these laws will affect the impact of the policy.

For every law that is passed, there will be a debate of whether the federal government has the right to impose certain laws. The argument continues to occur especially when focusing on the gun control debate. Policymakers want to ensure that their constituents are content with the laws they have to abide by which makes it difficult to generalize one law at the federal level to each state (Hart, 1954). For example, the strict ban on handguns in Washington D.C. has no influence on Maryland, which allows for the sale of handguns (Koper, 2005). Also, in the influential Supreme Court case of *District of Columbia v. Heller* in 2008, the argument of whether the constitutional "right to bear arms" should be determined as a collective right or an individual right made little practical differences in the states' government to regulate gun control (Burkett, 2008). This court case is important because the Supreme Court now had to make a decision about whether the state governments had the right to set forth their own gun control policies. Before then, policymakers were influenced by the citizens in their jurisdictions to pass and enforce laws about gun control. However, the federal government intervened concluding that it should not be up to states if the Second Amendment allows for citizens to own firearms. The debate of whether the federal government should have the right to

generalize gun control policies will continue to occur regardless of one Supreme Court decision.

State-level policymakers are believed to be best suited for gun control since they are more aware of the problems that are most prevalent within its state (Wintemute & Braga, 2011). In California, the “straw purchases” continue to be a problem within the gun markets. So the state-level policymakers have required not only background checks on all gun sales, but also directly regulate gun retailers, which has led to a decrease in the risk for a firearm owner to be arrested for later crimes involving gun violence (Wintemute & Braga, 2011). However, what one state might consider their biggest problem when it comes to guns might not be the same for other states. There will continue to be a differential support among the characteristics of each state for gun control. Therefore, the debate of whether the federal government has the right to make the final decision on gun control will continue to be pressed. State policymakers need to utilize public opinion data to determine how they need to implement gun control laws, and each state has vital differences among its citizens which need to continuously be addressed to ensure the fairness of each statute (Page, & Shapiro, 1983).

### **Social and Demographic Differences in Public Support for Gun Control Laws**

Public opinion literature about gun control is vast and will continue to grow as scholars assess if policies being implemented are supported by the public. Social and demographic variations are evident in public opinion literature focused on gun control support.

Although many studies are aware that there are social and demographic differences, prior studies are limited when generalizing the findings. Social and demographic variables have been studied in previous literature (Smith, 2002; Kleck et. al., 2009), but to generalize these findings can create potential problems for future research and policies since some of the findings continue to be mixed. Prior work has identified age, sex, race, and political ideology as significant variables when it comes to addressing public perceptions towards gun control (Smith, 1980; Smith, 2002; Kleck et. al., 2009). However, other variables have been looked into regarding their impact on public attitudes towards gun control, such as region, education, income. Although many of those variables have already been looked into regarding gun control, the variable of Fundamentalist Protestant affiliation has had limited research conducted on it, especially for gun control (Kleck, 1996).

Age. Age continues to be a variable in previous literature that has garnered mixed results. Some studies have found that older respondents are more likely to support gun control policies (Dowler, 2002; Kleck et. al., 2009). However, other research has shown that gun ownership continues to be higher with middle-aged adults (Saad, 2011) implying that individuals who fall into this specific age category are more likely to oppose gun control measures.

In addition, other studies fail to address how age might influence the public perceptions of gun control. Age is a correlate that has mixed results in public opinion literature possibly because of the way certain questions are asked and coded (Fitzgerald,

2002; Kleck et. al., 2009). The way public opinion surveys are questioned play an important role in determining how a respondent will answer.

Sex. The membership into various social groups affects opinions about gun control and the different beliefs that each group has towards gun control (Kleck et. al., 2009). Generally, public opinion research has found that White, conservatives, and males are less likely to support general gun control because the groups believe, more strongly compared to other groups, that they have a constitutional right to own a firearm (Stell, 2001; Smith, 2002). At the same time, some demographic correlates are associated with greater support for gun control. For example, women support general gun control measures (Smith, 2002). In addition, previous research has explored the idea that guns and gun ownership might be a representation of an individual's masculinity (Stroud, 2012), suggesting that males are more likely to support the rights of gun owners more so than gun control measures.

Previous literature has studied sex and the endorsement of support for gun control. The findings of these studies have concluded that males are less likely to support any form of gun control (Smith, 1980; Moriarty & Hearne, 1998; Smith, 2002). Males are believed to be more passionate about gun control and believe that they have the right to own guns (Cornell, 2004). Also, some studies have found that males generally use guns more for recreational activities, such as hunting, which makes them significantly less likely to support gun control compared to females (Smith, 1980; Celinka, 2007).

Race. Race has been identified as a significant factor in public perceptions of gun control. Prior studies have found that generally Whites are less supportive of gun control

(Dixon & Lizotte, 1987; Brennan, Lizotte, & McDowall, 1993) possibly due to the feeling that it is their constitutional right to own firearms (Tushnet, 2008). Smith (1980) concluded that Blacks appear to be less opposed than Whites on gun control. According to previous literature, it has been concluded that Whites are generally less supportive of gun control measures in the United States compared to the other race groups (Kleck et. al., 2009).

Political Ideology. A conservative ideology has been seen as an opposition to gun control because of its hostility towards government intervention. Conservatives are seen as having little faith in government officials being able to not abuse their power (Jiobu & Curry, 2001). Therefore, previous studies have looked at how the Constitution was set up to limit the amount government power when it came to intervening in individuals lives (Barnet, 1998). Therefore, conservatives believe that government intervention needs to be strictly prohibited, which concludes them to be less likely to support gun control measures in the United States.

Conversely, liberals tend to believe the opposite than conservatism, especially when it comes to gun control (Kleck et. al., 2009). Liberals believe that stricter gun control initiatives will help reduce the amount of gun related violence (Kleck & Patterson, 1993). Thus, the literature regarding both conservatives and liberals needs to be developed more in order to understand the two sides of the gun control debate.

Residents in Gun Heavy States. The area in which the respondent resides is also thought to affect public opinion. Although some studies have looked specifically at the type of area a respondent lives in (e.g. suburban and urban), others studies have

addressed the region in which the respondents lives in within the United States (Smith, 1980; Smith, 2002; Kleck et. al., 2009). Overall, research has shown that Southern residents typically oppose gun control (Smith, 1980; Smith, 2002; Kleck et. al., 2009). However, focusing on states where gun ownership is higher has been significantly overlooked when it comes to attitudes on gun control. Thus, understanding the importance of how individuals residing in certain states where the majority of the general population are gun owners could potentially help understand how the majority of the general American perceives gun control efforts.

Education. Research on educational attainment for gun control support is mixed. Although some studies have found that higher levels of education has no direct effect of the public perceptions of gun control, other research has found that better educated people are in favor of supporting a ban, especially on handguns (Singh, 1998; Kleck et. al., 2009). However, prior literature has argued that education alone, as well as income and age, are not able to determine the appropriate conclusions about attitudes towards gun control (Kleck et. al., 2009). Thus, education is a potential variable to better understand individuals' attitudes towards gun control, but should not be looked at as the only predictor.

Income. Income is a variable that has been vastly underreported in public opinion literature, especially in regards to gun control. Some studies have found that higher income increases the chances of an individual supporting gun control (Celinska, 2007). Also, prior literature has argued that blue-collar individuals have a higher disposition for potential violence (Wright & Marston, 1975) which would increase their likelihood of

gun ownership reducing their support for gun control (Murray, 1975). Thus, income can be viewed as a significant variable in determining an individual's attitude towards gun control in the United States.

However, there are many other factors that might attribute to public opinion. For example, income can have a significant impact on public attitudes and gun control, but there are other variables that can affect the outcome of income that studies fail to address the importance it might have on their findings (Kleck et. al., 2009). Therefore, prior studies have concluded that other variables increase the levels of income significantly impacting attitudes towards gun control, such as education and social status, compared to income alone (Wright, 1981; Kleck et. al., 2009). Consequently, income continues to be a variable that is considerably underreported in gun control literature.

Fundamentalist Protestant. Fundamentalist Protestants are more likely to favor more punitive justice measures (Grasmick, Davenport, Chamlin, & Bursik, 2006). Although much of the literature about punitive justice is not specifically about gun control, Fundamentalist Protestantism might also affect gun control attitudes. For example, religion has not been significantly focused on in prior studies about gun control; some studies have found that Fundamentalist Protestants are typically less likely to support gun control (Brennan et. al., 1993). However, other studies have found that religion, especially Fundamentalist Protestantism seems to have no effect on public attitudes about gun control (Kleck et. al., 2009). Little literature about Fundamentalist Protestantism and gun control currently exists.

Public opinion data will continue to address the debate of gun control given the gaps in extant literature. In order to be more informed about gun control these gaps need to be addressed. Specifically, there are three important gaps that are apparent in the literature about gun control.

Essentially, public opinion data needs to continuously be studied to make sure that public policies are reflecting current public views.

Another important gap that needs to be addressed is that public opinion data needs to systematically investigate whether the type of weapon ban (e.g. handgun versus semi-automatic weapon) affects public support for a given gun control initiative. A ban on semi-automatic weapons have become a more recent issue for policymakers. By understanding how the public perceives these firearms can help with gun control measures.

The last, and important, gap is that prior literature fails to address other predictors that potentially affect public perceptions about gun control. By having the general focus on social and demographic differences, there becomes a discrepancy in the conclusions about previous public opinion data. Exploring additional variables, in addition to the social and demographic differences, allows for upcoming research to understand other predictors that potentially influence public perception of gun control.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE PRESENT STUDY

This study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning attitudes towards gun control.

#### **Data**

Given the current study's focus—to explore current views about gun control—this study draws on responses from a national poll. The data are derived from the June 2011 “Time Constitution Poll” conducted by *Time* magazine. The “Time Constitution Poll” is a random telephone survey of adults ( $n=1,003$ ), who reside in the United States. The survey included the use of landlines (953), as well as cell phones (50). The poll was conducted by Abt SRBI, Inc. (Schulman, Ronca, & Bucuvalas, Inc.) and is currently housed in the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.

The purpose of the “Time Constitution Poll” is to provide knowledge about Americans' attitudes toward gun control, as well as other policy issues. The survey explores various topics, specifically views about gun control, the Constitution, and the Supreme Court. These data are uniquely suited for the present research because they include responses to questions that were used to gauge public opinion about gun control. In addition, the survey also asked about the Constitution and the Supreme Court.

The “Time Constitution Poll” collects data about the social and demographic variables previously used in prior studies, and also includes information about how respondents perceive the Supreme Court’s handling of cases, their perceived knowledge of the Constitution, as well as other variables that might affect public perceptions about gun control. The poll was designed to assess public opinion about a broad set of policy issues as part of its longstanding efforts to inform debates about gun control. The central strength of the data, for the purposes of this study, lies in the fact that they provide information about current views, specifically about recent gun control initiatives.

### **Hypotheses, Measures, and Coding**

The focus here is not to only identify the extent in which the public supports gun control in the United States. More specifically, the data provides an insight into the debate about whether specific types of weapon might affect the public perceptions about gun control. It also is able to explore whether social and demographic differences continue to exist in support for recent gun control. The current study explores two other possibilities about public perceptions of gun control. First, how do Americans perceive the general effort of gun control? Second, does differential support in public views emerge when the focus is on specific types of gun control? Put differently, do public views differ when asked about limiting handguns versus semi-automatic weapons?

Given the focus of the study and the vast amount of research on how the public views gun control in the United States, this study draws on additional variables to address other potential differences in public opinion. For example, the gun control literature provides a reasonable foundation for developing hypotheses about the effects of social

and demographic variables. However, this study is able to address the public's perceived knowledge of the Constitution, as well as their perceptions on how the Supreme Court is handling their job, as a means to understand additional variables that might alter support for gun control. Accordingly, in describing the measures used in this study, the paper also discusses this literature to identify hypothesized relationships between these measures and support for gun control when focusing on weapon type.

### **Dependent Variables**

The study addresses how public opinion supports gun control in the United States. However, the study also addresses how bans on handguns and semi-automatic weapons affect public opinion. The measures for these outcomes in this study are described below.

Support for General Gun Control. This measure derives from a question similarly used in prior literature (Kleck et. al., 2009): "Overall, do you think that gun control laws in this country should be stricter than they are now, less strict, or are gun control laws about right now?" Understanding if the dependent variables are in support for more gun control laws, less strict and about right gun control laws were categorized into the same group. The coding for this variable was "0=less strict/about right gun control laws" and "1=more strict gun control laws."

Support for the Banning of Handguns. The survey asked respondents how they felt about a ban on handguns as a form of gun control. The specific question was "Please tell me if you personally strongly agree with each position, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following: to protect the Constitutional rights of gun owners, state and local governments are NOT allowed to ban handguns and

concealed weapons, even in high crime areas” was measured for this study. Responses were recorded as strongly agree, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed, or strongly disagreed. This study then placed responses that strongly and somewhat agree together, while placing strongly and somewhat disagree into their own category. The coding for this variable “0=disagree with ban/protect the rights of gun owners” and “1=support for a ban on handguns.”

Support for a Ban on Semi-Automatic Weapons. The last outcome measure was support for a ban on semi-automatic weapons. The survey asked “Should the federal government be allowed to ban the sale of semi-automatic assault weapons, except for use by the military or police...or is it more important to protect the rights of gun owners to purchase any guns they wish to purchase?” Due to the dichotomous nature of the answers given by the respondents, this variable was coded to accord with the prior coding of the handgun ban (“0=disagree with ban/protect the rights of gun owners” and “1=support for ban”).

### **Social and Demographic Factors: Hypotheses and Coding**

Prior work has suggested that strong social and demographic variation in public opinion about gun control exists (Brace, Sims-Butler, Arceneaux, & Johnson, 2002). Here, the focus of the paper is on factors that consistently have been associated with support of gun control in the United States or have been discussed. The discussion elaborates on the earlier research and, at the same time, integrates the literature on public perceptions towards gun control on handguns and semi-automatic weapons.

Age. Given the limited and mixed (Dowler, 2002; Kleck et. al., 2009) research findings regarding age, this paper hypothesizes that age will have a significant impact on public perceptions of gun control. Respondents with higher age will be more likely to support gun control compared to respondents with lower age. Age was coded using categories: “1=18-29,” “2=30-39,” “3=40-44,” “4=45-54,” “5=55-64,” and “6=65 and older.”

Sex. Research consistently indicates that men are less supportive of gun control laws compared to women (Smith, 1980; Stell, 2001; Smith, 2002). On this basis, it can be predicted that females will be more likely to support not only general gun control, but also gun control that is focused on a ban of handguns and semi-automatic weapons compared to males (Moriarty & Hearne, 1998). Conversely, males will be less likely to support gun control measures compared to females. In the analyses, sex was dummy coded (“0=female” and “1=male”).

Race. Race is a variable that has been consistently examined in prior public opinion studies. The findings have revealed non-Whites are more likely to support gun control measures compared to Whites (Smith, 1980; Brennan, Lizotte, & McDowall, 1993). Thus, Whites can be expected to be less likely to support gun control measures compared to non-Whites. Therefore, race was coded as “0=non-White” and “1=White.”

Political Conservative. Political ideology has consistently been identified as a major indicator of support, or lack thereof, for gun control (Jobu & Curry, 2001). Although prior literature has studied both conservatism, as well as a political party group that respondents have been affiliated with, this study will focus on the respondents’

relationship of conservatism. This study focuses on the political ideology of conservatism rather than party affiliation due to the limitations that arise from using party affiliation, such as some respondents labeling themselves as Republicans, while siding with Democrats on certain issues. Therefore, it can be anticipated that conservatism will be less likely to support gun control measures compared to liberalism and moderates. Political conservative was coded as: “0=liberal/moderate” and “1=conservative”.

Political Liberal. As previously mentioned, political ideology has been found to be a significant factor in determining how the public perceives gun control (Jiobu & Curry, 2001). By adding the variable of political liberal, this study is able to differentiate directly between conservatism and liberalism. Liberalism is hypothesized to be more likely to support gun control compared to conservatism and moderates. Liberalism was coded the same as conservatism (“0=conservative/moderate” and “1=liberal”).

Residents of Gun Heavy States. Findings regarding where an individual resides consistently has been addressed in previous literature (Smith, 1980). By focusing on the specific state that an individual resides in can help build upon the prior gun control. This study looked at the last completed census information about the adult population legally able to obtain a firearm per state (which is 18 years old and older) and compared it to the firearm background checks per state for 2009. This study then equalized each background check to the purchase of one firearm. Thus, this study hypothesizes that the states with gun ownership at 8% or above are going to be less likely to support gun control measures compared to all other states. Residents was coded as “0=all other states” and “1=gun heavy states”.

**Figure 1. Census Estimates of Firearm Background Check and Resident Population  
for the United States (2009)**

<b>State</b>	<b>NICS Firearm Background Check*</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Total Percentage of Gun Ownership</b>	<b>Total Residents Over 18</b>	<b>Percent of Gun Ownership per Capita</b>
Alabama	317,868	4,757,938	6.68%	3,622,899	9%*
Alaska	60,780	698,895	8.70%	513,207	12%*
Arizona	215,379	6,343,154	3.40%	4,716,615	5%
Arkansas	209,842	2,896,843	7.24%	2,188,442	10%*
California	788,164	36,961,229	2.13%	27,667,625	3%
Colorado	313,641	4,972,195	6.31%	3,754,798	8%*
Connecticut	202,454	3,561,807	5.68%	2,740,650	7%
Delaware	20,530	891,730	2.30%	685,624	3%
D.C.	369	592,228	0.06%	489,992	0%
Florida	556,540	18,652,644	2.98%	14,655,082	4%
Georgia	373,237	9,620,846	3.88%	7,135,150	5%
Hawaii	10,511	1,346,717	0.78%	1,044,478	1%
Idaho	99,243	1,554,439	6.38%	1,128,181	9%*
Illinois	752,071	12,796,778	5.88%	9,658,244	8%*
Indiana	273,803	6,459,325	4.24%	4,849,510	6%
Iowa	120,233	3,032,870	3.96%	2,307,305	5%
Kansas	142,984	2,832,704	5.05%	2,111,278	7%
Kentucky	2,189,578	4,317,074	50.72%	3,295,014	66%*
Louisiana	247,084	4,491,648	5.50%	3,375,592	7%
Maine	60,955	1,329,590	4.58%	1,051,859	6%
Maryland	95,191	5,730,388	1.66%	4,376,621	2%
Massachusetts	98,864	6,517,613	1.52%	5,094,768	2%
Michigan	362,172	9,901,591	3.66%	7,529,086	5%
Minnesota	285,130	5,281,203	5.40%	3,998,886	7%
Mississippi	167,057	2,958,774	5.65%	2,198,219	8%*
Missouri	355,678	5,961,088	5.97%	4,534,059	8%*
Montana	101,976	983,982	10.36%	760,601	13%*
Nebraska	59,328	1,812,683	3.27%	1,357,169	4%
Nevada	107,343	2,684,665	4.00%	2,018,762	5%

Figure 1. (continued)

State	NICS Firearm Background Check*	Total Population	Total Percentage of Gun Ownership	Total Residents Over 18	Percent of Gun Ownership per Capita
New Hampshire	76,102	1,316,102	5.78%	1,025,341	7%
New Jersey	55,533	8,755,602	0.63%	6,686,011	1%
New Mexico	106,854	2,036,802	5.25%	1,520,738	7%
New York	241,165	19,307,066	1.25%	14,960,906	2%
North Carolina	368,460	9,449,566	3.90%	7,176,284	5%
North Dakota	47,962	664,968	7.21%	517,065	9%*
Ohio	395,580	11,528,896	3.43%	8,780,813	5%
Oklahoma	234,562	3,717,572	6.31%	2,794,904	8%*
Oregon	185,043	3,808,600	4.86%	2,943,027	6%
Pennsylvania	641,696	12,666,858	5.07%	9,861,991	7%
Rhode Island	14,799	1,053,646	1.40%	827,601	2%
South Carolina	214,584	4,589,872	4.68%	3,510,425	6%
South Dakota	63,748	807,067	7.90%	607,284	10%*
Tennessee	408,991	6,306,019	6.49%	4,811,286	9%*
Texas	1,014,015	24,801,761	4.09%	18,007,613	6%
Utah	256,136	2,723,421	9.40%	1,866,800	14%*
Vermont	23,085	624,817	3.69%	494,460	5%
Virginia	296,463	7,925,937	3.74%	6,079,941	5%
Washington	336,732	6,667,426	5.05%	5,093,445	7%
West Virginia	156,831	1,847,775	8.49%	1,458,774	11%*
Wisconsin	196,951	5,669,264	3.47%	4,327,997	5%
Wyoming	51,395	559,851	9.18%	424,940	12%*
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>13,974,692</b>	<b>306,771,529</b>		<b>232,637,362</b>	

\* One background check is equal to the sale of one firearm

Education. Education has been generally linked consistently to support for gun control. This study addresses the notion that higher levels of education by a respondent will have an effect on their perceptions of gun control. This study hypothesizes that respondents with higher levels of education will be more likely to support gun control compared to respondents with lower levels of education. Education was coded as: “1=some high school or less,” “2=high school graduate,” “3=some college,” “4=college graduate,” and “5=postgraduate study.”

Income. Since there are many factors that might attribute to a respondent’s level of income, many studies omit the inclusion of this variable in the gun control debate (Kleck et. al., 2009). However, this study will address how income directly affects public opinion and the views about gun control. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that respondents’ with higher levels of income are more likely to support gun control measures compared to respondents with lower levels of income. Income was measured as: “1=less than \$20,000”, “2=\$20,000 to \$34,999”, “3=\$35,000 to \$49,999”, “4=\$50,000 to \$74,999”, “5=\$75,000 to \$99,999”, “6=\$100,000 to \$149,999”, and “7=\$150,000 or more.”

Fundamentalist Protestantism. Previous literature on Fundamentalist Protestantism and gun control beliefs is vastly underdeveloped. Although it can be argued that Fundamentalist Protestants are generally more supportive of punitive measures (Grasmick & McGill, 1994), limited research has looked at gun control. Since Fundamentalist Protestantism is associated with more punitive views, this study hypothesizes that Fundamentalist Protestant affiliation will be less likely to support gun

control compared to respondents who were not Fundamentalist Protestants. The measure of Fundamentalist Protestant was developed from two questions. Similar to measures examined in prior studies (Unnever, Benson, & Cullen, 2008; Kleck et. al., 2009) respondents were coded as either Protestant or non-Protestant. Respondents were then asked if they were born-again, if the respondent answered “yes” to both questions they were then coded: “0=Non-Fundamentalist Protestant” and “1=Fundamentalist Protestant.”

### **Views about Constitution and the Job of the Supreme Court**

As previously mentioned, prior studies have found that views and perceptions of the Constitution might influence the level of support for gun control, although the literature is scarce. Building upon that literature, this study focuses on variables that extend research by examining two new variables. First, perceived knowledge of the Constitution, and second, views about whether the Supreme Court is handling cases appropriately. These two variables are important in understanding how public opinion might be influenced by other contributing factors that affect public views regarding gun control.

Knowledge of the Constitution. Prior studies have looked into public opinion of the Constitution to determine how the Second Amendment is perceived by the American public (Wright, 1981). The Constitution offers rights and liberties to all of its citizens, but how the perceived amount of knowledge that respondents have about the Constitution can affect their perceptions about gun control.

This study attempts to look at the knowledge of Constitution as it pertains to public opinion about gun control. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that individuals with greater perceived knowledge of the Constitution will be less likely to support gun control compared to individuals with little to no perceived knowledge of the Constitution. The respondents were asked “how much would you say you know about the U.S. Constitution, which was ratified over 200 years ago. Would you say that you know a great deal about the Constitution, some, not much, or nothing at all?” Respondents could choose: “1=great deal”, “2=some”, “3=not much”, and “4=nothing at all”. Knowledge of the Constitution was re-coded as: “0=un-knowledgeable” and “1=knowledgeable.” This study grouped the respondents of whether they had any sort of perceived knowledge of the U.S. constitution as knowledgeable and those who were perceived of either did not know much or nothing at all as un-knowledgeable of the U.S. Constitution.

Supreme Court Handling of Cases. Prior literature does not address how the public views the Supreme Court and its handling of cases. A vast amount of prior studies have focused on the public perceives the outcome of the Supreme Courts’ interpretation of the cases they hear (Hetherington & Smith, 2007; Ramirez, 2008). Although the Supreme Court is not an official policymaker in the United States, they are the final court and their interpretation of laws and statutes affect policy. Wells (2007) indicates that analyzing the opinions of the Supreme Court allows for society to become more informed about the laws that they are required to follow.

How respondents feel about the Supreme Court can allow for a better understanding of how it might affect the public views on gun control. This study

anticipates that of those individuals who approve how the Supreme Court is handling their job will be more likely to support gun control compared to individuals who disapprove of the Supreme Court's job. In the survey conducted by *Time* magazine respondents were asked "In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way the Supreme Court is handling its job?" Responses were dichotomous in nature, thus coding was recorded: "0=disapprove" and "1=approve."

### **Analyses**

The analyses are presented in four steps. First, descriptive statistics are presented. Second, a correlation matrix is presented to show the significance of the variables when only contrasted with only another single variable. Third, because of the dichotomous nature of the dependent variables, this study estimates logistic regression models to analyze whether support for general gun control is predicted by social and demographic variables used in previous studies. These results then are contrasted with those from two similar sets of analyses, one where the focus is on the ban of handguns using social and demographic variables, as well as constitutional issues. Lastly, logistic regression analyses are presented to understand whether public perceptions of a ban on semi-automatic firearms are influenced by social and demographic variables and constitutional issues.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS

This study first turns to the descriptive statistics presented in Table 1. Study findings first address the question of whether the level of public support for gun control laws varies by the type of gun in question. Looking at Table 1, in 2011, these statistics indicate an almost equal split (52 percent) between general gun control laws with the majority of the sample slightly preferring general gun control laws to be stricter. However, views are contingent on the type of gun control law. As shown in Table 1, approximately one-third (39 percent) of the sample support gun control measures when focusing on a ban of handguns. Put differently, a low majority of the sample (61 percent) opposes a ban on handguns for U.S. citizens and believes that gun owners should have the right to bear arms without restrictions for handguns. More recently the debates regarding gun control have included whether citizens should be granted the right to own semi-automatic weapons. Table 1 displays that more than half (64 percent) of the sample supports a ban on semi-automatic weapons. These results suggest that support for gun control laws in the United States varies by the specific type of weapon in question.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	S.D.	N
<u>Dependent variables—support rights of gun owners for. . .</u>			
Gun Control Laws (0=less strict/about right gun control laws, 1=more strict gun control laws)	0.52	0.50	978
Ban Handguns (0=disagree/protect rights of gun owners, 1=support ban on handguns)	0.39	0.49	980
Ban of Semi-Automatic Weapons (0=disagree/protect rights of gun owners, 1=support for ban of semi-auto weapons)	0.64	0.48	969
<u>Independent variables</u>			
<i>Social and demographic variables</i>			
Age (1=18-29, 2=30-39, 3=40-44, 5=55-64, and 6=65+)	4.84	2.66	993
Sex (0=female, 1=male)	0.49	0.50	1,003
Race (0=non-white, 1=white)	0.74	0.44	995
Political Conservative (1=conservative, 0=non-conservative)	0.25	0.43	978
Political Liberal (1=liberal, 0=conservative/moderate)	0.58	0.49	978
Residents of Gun Heavy States (0=all other states, 1=gun heavy states)	0.16	0.37	1,003
Education (1=some high school or less,” “2=high school graduate,” “3=some college,” “4=college graduate,” and “5=postgrad”)	3.32	1.20	1,000
Income (1=less than \$20,000,” “2=\$20,000 to \$34,999,” “3=\$35,000 to \$49,999,” “4=\$50,000 to \$74,999,” “5=\$75,000 to \$99,999,” “6=\$100,000 to \$149,999,” and “7=\$150,000 or more”)	3.89	1.88	891
Fundamentalist Protestant (0=no, 1=yes)	0.24	0.43	847
<i>Views about Constitutional Issues</i>			
Knowledge about Constitution (0=unknowledgeable, 1= knowledgeable)	0.85	0.35	1,002
Supreme Court Handling Job (0=disapprove, 1=approve)	0.58	0.49	809

Turning to Table 2, the correlation matrix shows significant correlations between social and demographic variables and Constitutional issues variables when analyzed individually. Not all of the variables are significantly correlated when compared to only one other variable. However, inspection of Table 2 indicates significant correlations among variables that have previously been considered insignificant in prior literature. Thus, it is important to analyze these variables using multivariate models.

**Table 2. Correlations among Social and Demographic Variables, and Constitutional Issue Variables**

Two-Tailed Tests of Significance in Parentheses

	<b>Gun Cont.</b>	<b>Hand</b>	<b>Semi</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Con.</b>	<b>Lib.</b>	<b>Resident</b>	<b>Ed.</b>	<b>Inc.</b>	<b>Fund. Prot.</b>	<b>Const.</b>	<b>S.C.</b>
<b>Gun Cont- rol Laws</b>	1.00 <i>N</i> =978													
<b>Ban Handg- uns</b>	0.38** (0.00) <i>N</i> =959	1.00 <i>N</i> =980												
<b>Ban Semi- Auto Weap- ons</b>	0.42** (0.00) <i>N</i> =947	0.32** (0.00) <i>N</i> =950	1.00 <i>N</i> =969											
<b>Age</b>	0.09** (0.01) <i>N</i> =968	0.03 (0.32) <i>N</i> =970	0.11** (0.00) <i>N</i> =963	1.00 <i>N</i> =993										
<b>Sex</b>	-0.20** (0.00) <i>N</i> =978	-0.14** (0.00) <i>N</i> =980	-0.22** (0.00) <i>N</i> =969	-0.05 (0.09) <i>N</i> =993	1.00 <i>N</i> =1,003									
<b>Race</b>	-0.23** (0.00) <i>N</i> =970	-0.13** (0.00) <i>N</i> =972	-0.03 (0.31) <i>N</i> =962	0.23** (0.00) <i>N</i> =986	0.12** (0.00) <i>N</i> =995	1.00 <i>N</i> =995								
<b>Conse- rvativ e</b>	-0.29** (0.00) <i>N</i> =955	-0.23** (0.00) <i>N</i> =957	-0.21** (0.00) <i>N</i> =945	0.13** (0.00) <i>N</i> =967	0.14** (0.00) <i>N</i> =978	0.19** (0.00) <i>N</i> =970	1.00 <i>N</i> =978							
<b>Liber- al</b>	0.21** (0.00) <i>N</i> =955	0.13** (0.00) <i>N</i> =957	0.14** (0.00) <i>N</i> =945	-0.14** (0.00) <i>N</i> =967	-0.15** (0.00) <i>N</i> =978	-0.11** (0.00) <i>N</i> =970	-0.26** (0.00) <i>N</i> =978	1.00 <i>N</i> =978						
<b>Gun Heavy State</b>	-0.12** (0.00) <i>N</i> =978	-0.07* (0.02) <i>N</i> =980	-0.05 (0.10) <i>N</i> =969	-0.04 (0.20) <i>N</i> =993	0.08* (0.02) <i>N</i> =1,003	0.04 (0.20) <i>N</i> =995	0.01 (0.69) <i>N</i> =978	-0.01 (0.73) <i>N</i> =978	1.00 <i>N</i> =1,003					

Table 2. (continued)

	<b>Gun Cont.</b>	<b>Hand</b>	<b>Semi</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Con.</b>	<b>Lib.</b>	<b>Resident</b>	<b>Ed.</b>	<b>Inc.</b>	<b>Fund. Prot.</b>	<b>Const.</b>	<b>S.C.</b>
<b>Educ- ation</b>	0.01 (0.70) <i>N</i> =976	0.10** (0.00) <i>N</i> =978	0.13** (0.00) <i>N</i> =966	0.03 (0.43) <i>N</i> =990	-0.01 (0.82) <i>N</i> =1,000	0.14** (0.00) <i>N</i> =992	0.07* (0.03) <i>N</i> =975	0.02 (0.55) <i>N</i> =975	-0.03 (0.38) <i>N</i> =1,000	1.00 <i>N</i> =1,000				
<b>Inco- me</b>	-0.04 (0.19) <i>N</i> =868	0.02 (0.55) <i>N</i> =871	0.00 (0.95) <i>N</i> =864	-0.07 (0.06) <i>N</i> =888	0.03 (0.33) <i>N</i> =891	0.20** (0.00) <i>N</i> =887	0.10** (0.00) <i>N</i> =875	0.02 (0.59) <i>N</i> =875	-0.07* (0.04) <i>N</i> =891	0.52** (0.00) <i>N</i> =891	1.00 <i>N</i> =891			
<b>Fund Prot</b>	-0.09** (0.01) <i>N</i> =826	-0.04 (0.30) <i>N</i> =829	0.02 (0.62) <i>N</i> =820	0.11** (0.00) <i>N</i> =839	0.04 (0.29) <i>N</i> =847	0.04 (0.21) <i>N</i> =844	0.14** (0.00) <i>N</i> =827	-0.09* (0.01) <i>N</i> =827	0.02 (0.58) <i>N</i> =847	0.04 (0.24) <i>N</i> =847	-0.01 (0.74) <i>N</i> =760	1.00 <i>N</i> =847		
<b>Know- ledge of Const- itution</b>	-0.09** (0.00) <i>N</i> =977	-0.07* (0.03) <i>N</i> =979	0.00 (0.92) <i>N</i> =968	-0.09** (0.01) <i>N</i> =992	0.05 (0.10) <i>N</i> =1,002	0.12** (0.00) <i>N</i> =994	0.05 (0.12) <i>N</i> =977	0.02 (0.60) <i>N</i> =977	0.06 (0.06) <i>N</i> =1,002	0.20** (0.00) <i>N</i> =999	0.16** (0.00) <i>N</i> =890	0.04 (0.29) <i>N</i> =846	1.00 <i>N</i> =1,002	
<b>Sup. Court Job</b>	-0.02 (0.64) <i>N</i> =792	-0.02 (0.53) <i>N</i> =795	0.01 (0.72) <i>N</i> =791	-0.03 (0.48) <i>N</i> =804	0.07 (0.06) <i>N</i> =809	0.05 (0.18) <i>N</i> =803	0.05 (0.14) <i>N</i> =791	-0.13** (0.00) <i>N</i> =791	-0.01 (0.84) <i>N</i> =809	0.07 (0.06) <i>N</i> =806	0.09* (0.01) <i>N</i> =719	-0.03 (0.50) <i>N</i> =692	0.03 (0.45) <i>N</i> =808	1.00 <i>N</i> =809

We turn now to the results of the logistic regression analysis. Analyses address the first research question regarding whether similar social and demographic differences found in previous research continue to emerge when recent data are analyzed. Collectively, findings across Tables 3, 4, and 5 suggest that they do, with some caveats. Specifically, model 1 of Table 3 examining public support for gun control laws to be stricter shows age, sex, race, conservatism, liberalism, residence in gun heavy states, and education as having a significant impact on public support for stricter gun control laws. Examination of model 1 suggests that conservatives, Whites, males, and those residing in the states that have a high gun ownership have greater odds of reduced support for more strict gun control laws as compared to their counterparts (odds' ratios=0.14, 0.47, 0.34, 0.62, and 0.44), respectively. In contrast, liberals, older age, and higher levels of education are associated with higher likelihood of support (odds' ratios=2.14, 1.32, and 1.19), respectively.

Models 2 and 3 of Table 3 address this study's fourth research question, do the two previously unexplored variables in previous literature, perceived knowledge of the Constitution and the perceptions of the U.S. Supreme Court reduce the effect of other social and demographic variables? Model 2 examined the effect of perceived knowledge of the Constitution has on the other social and demographic variables in the public support for general gun control laws. Model 3 examined the effect the views about the U.S. Supreme Court and their handling of cases with social and demographic variables. Model 3 indicates the same social and demographic variables remain significant, but

Fundamental Protestantism were less likely to support general control laws (odds' ratio=0.55).

Model 4 of Table 3 helps address this study's third research question are additional unexplored variables influential in predicting public support for gun control? Analyses shown in model 4 support the idea that conservatives, Whites, males, and those residing in gun heavy states are less likely to support stricter gun control laws (odds' ratios=0.14, 0.49, 0.47, 0.65, and 0.41), respectively. In model 4 of Table 3 which examines the effect of perceived Constitutional knowledge and Supreme Court perceptions—liberals, older, and higher levels of education respondents were more likely to support stricter gun control laws (odds ratios=2.05, 1.26, and 1.26). However, model 4 also indicates that Fundamentalist Protestants were less supportive of gun control laws than non-Fundamental Protestants (odds' ratio=0.55). Therefore, views about the Supreme Court handling its job appear to have an effect on Fundamental Protestantism when focus is on general gun control laws<sup>1</sup>. Recall that model 1 examined prior studies and their variables, whereas model 4 looked at the motivation behind the fourth research question.

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<sup>1</sup> Interactions were run through SPSS to see if there was a significant relationship for the following variables: Income\*Education, Income\*Supreme Court Handling Its Job, Fundamental Protestantism\*Supreme Court Handling Its Job. For all these multivariate models null effects emerged that no significant interaction exist.

**Table 3. Logistic Regression of Public Support for Gun Control Laws**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	<u>b</u>	<u>Odds Ratio</u>						
Intercept	-0.22 (0.36)	0.81	0.06 (0.39)	1.06	-0.51 (0.40)	0.60	-0.22 (0.45)	0.81
<i>Social and demographic variables</i>								
Age	0.28 (0.05)	1.32***	0.27 (0.05)	1.31***	0.24 (0.06)	1.27***	0.23 (0.06)	1.26***
Sex	-0.47 (0.17)	0.62**	-0.45 (0.17)	0.64**	-0.45 (0.19)	0.64*	-0.44 (0.19)	0.65*
Race	-1.09 (0.21)	0.34***	-1.06 (0.21)	0.35***	-0.79 (0.23)	0.45***	-0.75 (0.23)	0.47***
Conservative	-1.22 (0.21)	0.29***	-1.22 (0.21)	0.30***	-1.29 (0.24)	0.28***	-1.27 (0.24)	0.28***
Liberal	0.76 (0.27)	2.14**	0.79 (0.27)	2.20**	0.69 (0.28)	2.00**	0.72 (0.28)	2.05**
Resident	-0.83 (0.23)	0.44***	-0.82 (0.24)	0.44***	-0.91 (0.25)	0.40***	-0.90 (0.26)	0.41***
Education	0.17 (0.08)	1.19*	0.20 (0.09)	1.22*	0.21 (0.09)	1.23*	0.23 (0.09)	1.26*
Income	0.02 (0.06)	1.02	0.02 (0.06)	1.02	0.03 (0.06)	1.03	0.03 (0.06)	1.03
Fundamentalist Protestant	-0.37 (0.20)	0.69	-0.36 (0.20)	0.70	-0.59 (0.22)	0.55**	-0.60 (0.22)	0.55**
<i>Views about Constitutional Issues</i>								
Knowledge about Constitution			-0.45 (0.25)	0.64			-0.46 (0.28)	0.64
Supreme Court Handling Job					0.21 (0.19)	1.23	0.21 (0.19)	1.24
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0.26		0.27		0.26		0.26	
N	713		712		593		592	

\* p ≤ .05    \*\* p ≤ .01    \*\*\* p ≤ .001

Note: Unstandardized coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses) and odds ratios are presented.

The next set of analyses focused on views about banning handguns. An inspection of Table 4 shows four variables were significant in determining the public support for a ban of handguns in the United States. Evaluation of model 1 in Table 4 indicates that Whites, conservatives, and males were less likely to support a ban on handguns (odds' ratios=0.47, 0.30, and 0.57). In contrast, examination of model 1 also indicates that respondents with higher levels of education were significantly more supportive of a ban on handguns (odds' ratio=1.32).

Inspection of model 4 in Table 4 shows that the same variables, Whites, conservatism, and males, remain significant in opposing a ban on handguns when adding additional and unexplored variables about Constitutional issues (odds' ratios=0.56, 0.31, and 0.57), respectively . However, it also appears that higher levels of education respondents were more likely to support a ban on handguns (odds ratio=1.32). Table 4 has helped address this study's first, second, and third research questions.

**Table 4. Logistic Regression of Public Support for Banning Handguns**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	<u>b</u>	<u>Odds ratio</u>						
Intercept	-0.61 (0.35)	0.55	-0.27 (0.38)	0.76	-0.86 (0.39)	0.42*	-0.57 (0.43)	0.57
<i>Social and demographic variables</i>								
Age	0.10 (0.05)	1.10	0.08 (0.05)	1.09	0.11 (0.06)	1.12*	0.10 (0.06)	1.11
Sex	-0.56 (0.17)	0.57***	-0.55 (0.17)	0.58***	-0.56 (0.19)	0.57**	-0.56 (0.19)	0.57**
Race	-0.76 (0.20)	0.47***	-0.73 (0.20)	0.48***	-0.61 (0.22)	0.54**	-0.58 (0.22)	0.56**
Conservative	-1.20 (0.22)	0.30***	-1.20 (0.22)	0.30***	-1.19 (0.25)	0.30***	-1.18 (0.25)	0.31***
Liberal	0.30 (0.24)	1.35	0.29 (0.24)	1.33	0.26 (0.25)	1.30	0.24 (0.25)	1.27
Resident	-0.25 (0.23)	0.78	-0.24 (0.23)	0.79	-0.23 (0.25)	0.80	-0.21 (0.25)	0.81
Education	0.28 (0.08)	1.32***	0.30 (0.09)	1.35***	0.26 (0.09)	1.30**	0.28 (0.09)	1.32**
Income	-0.02 (0.06)	0.98	-0.01 (0.06)	0.99	0.02 (0.06)	1.02	0.03 (0.06)	1.03
Fundamentalist Protestant	0.02 (0.20)	1.02	0.04 (0.20)	1.04	-0.12 (0.22)	0.89	-0.12 (0.22)	0.89
<i>Views about Constitutional Issues</i>								
Knowledge about Constitution			-0.52 (0.24)	0.60*			-0.43 (0.26)	0.65
Supreme Court Handling Job					-0.00 (0.19)	1.00	-0.01 (0.19)	0.99
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0.18		0.19		0.17		0.17	
<i>N</i>	717		716		596		595	

\* p ≤ .05    \*\* p ≤ .01    \*\*\* p ≤ .001

Note: Unstandardized coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses) and odds ratios are presented.

The final set of analyses, addressed in Table 5, shows public support for banning semi-automatic weapons as a form of gun control. Inspection of model 1 in Table 5 show conservatives and males were less likely to support a ban on semi-automatic weapons (odds' ratios=0.47 and 0.37). However, the results in model 1 also suggest that older respondents and higher levels of education had greater odds of support for a banning semi-automatic weapons (odds' ratios=1.18 and 1.28).

Model 4 in Table 5 reported the same findings as model 1 which conservatives and males (odds' ratios=0.33, and 0.35) were less likely to support a ban on semi-automatic weapons. Model 4 also indicates that respondents who reside in the "gun heavy" states were less likely to support the ban on semi-automatic weapons with the addition of the variables addressing Constitutional issues (odds ratio=0.63), respectively. While older respondents and higher levels of education (odds' ratios=1.17, and 1.30), respectively were more supportive of a ban on semi-automatic weapons. Model 4 indicates that respondents who generally approved of how the Supreme Court handles its job were more likely to support a ban on semi-automatic weapons (odds' ratio=1.61), respectively.

Both Tables 4 and 5 help address the first, second, and third research questions of this study. These differences are clearly shown in both tables which indicate that certain social and demographic factors play significant roles in public opinion about gun control and how the previously unexplored variables affect public attitudes.

**Table 5. Logistic Regression of Public Support for Banning Semi-Auto Weapons**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	<u>b</u>	<u>Odds ratio</u>						
Intercept	0.13 (0.35)	1.14	0.08 (0.39)	1.08	-0.16 (0.40)	0.86	0.08 (0.44)	0.92
<i>Social and demographic variables</i>								
Age	0.16 (0.05)	1.18***	0.17 (0.05)	1.18***	0.16 (0.06)	1.17**	0.16 (0.06)	1.17**
Sex	-0.99 (0.17)	0.37***	-0.99 (0.17)	0.37***	-1.07 (0.19)	0.34***	-1.06 (0.19)	0.35***
Race	-0.20 (0.21)	0.82	-0.20 (0.21)	0.82	-0.11 (0.23)	0.89	-0.10 (0.23)	0.91
Conservative	-0.76 (0.19)	0.47***	-0.76 (0.19)	0.47***	-0.76 (0.22)	0.47***	-0.76 (0.22)	0.47***
Liberal	0.40 (0.28)	1.50	0.43 (0.28)	1.53	0.32 (0.29)	1.38	0.35 (0.29)	1.42
Resident	-0.16 (0.22)	0.86	-0.16 (0.22)	0.85	-0.46 (0.24)	0.63*	-0.46 (0.24)	0.63*
Education	0.25 (0.08)	1.28**	0.24 (0.08)	1.28**	0.26 (0.09)	1.29**	0.27 (0.09)	1.30**
Income	-0.04 (0.05)	0.96	-0.04 (0.06)	0.96	-0.03 (0.06)	0.97	-0.03 (0.06)	0.97
Fundamentalist Protestant	0.24 (0.20)	1.27	0.23 (0.20)	1.26	0.14 (0.22)	1.15	0.13 (0.22)	1.14
<i>Views about Constitutional Issues</i>								
Knowledge about Constitution			0.06 (0.24)	1.07			-0.14 (0.27)	0.87
Supreme Court Handling Job					0.47 (0.19)	1.60*	0.48 (0.19)	1.61*
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0.17		0.17		0.19		0.19	
N	710		709		591		590	

\* p ≤ .05    \*\* p ≤ .01    \*\*\* p ≤ .001

Note: Unstandardized coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses) and odds ratios are presented.

Overall, results from the study's analyses indicate that sex and conservatism were consistent factors in predicting public support for gun control. Although models varied slightly, conservatism and sex can be considered robust predictors of reduced support for gun control. In analyzing the logistic regressions of these variables, an interesting finding is that conservatism continues to be less likely to support gun control on all accounts. Conversely, liberalism is only significant when referring to general gun control laws. However, historically, arguments tend to be conservatives versus liberals, especially when referring to gun control. With that noted, why does conservatism consistently opposed to all gun control, whereas liberals are only supportive of general gun control measures? According to scholars, conservatives believe that gun control is government invasion into citizens' private lives (Spitzer, 1988; Wolpert & Gimpel, 1998).

By relying on 2011 data, the current study has been able to build upon previous literature addressing public perceptions about gun control and the more recent debates regarding specific gun bans.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Multicollinearity is a concern when modeling analyses (Allison, 2012). However, in this study multicollinearity did not appear to bias findings presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5. Tolerance levels for all models and Tables were consistently above 0.42 and variance inflation factor (VIF) values did not exceed 2.41.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

Although public opinion concerning gun control in the United States has been previously studied by scholars, it is also important to, over time, analyze recently gathered data regarding gun control since public perceptions of gun control may change. Events throughout history have played an important role in altering the way the public perceives certain gun control laws, from assassinations of public figures to mass shootings in public arenas (Jones & Olken, 2009). Below, the major findings of the study are summarized and implications for research and policy are discussed.

#### **Summary of Study Findings**

This study has found similar results to the previous literature regarding gun control. Overall, findings from the study accord with prior research indicating. That is, the current study found that Whites, conservatives, and males were less supportive of general gun control, and more specifically banning handguns. Thus, liberals and females, in tone with extant literature, had higher odds of supporting gun control. However, education was also a significant variable when discussing how the public perceives gun control. Overall, this study has concluded from its findings that the individuals who have higher levels of education were more supportive of gun control efforts, especially bans on

handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Therefore, education remains an important predictor in understanding public perceptions about gun control. Thus, social and demographic characteristics continue to be important predictors in determining attitudes about gun control policies, supporting the first research question.

Overall, the second research question addressed the social and demographic difference existing when there is a focus on specific types of gun control measures are present in recently collected data. Although there were slight variations within the models, similar social and demographic variables were robust predictors of gun control support. Also, the previously unexplored variables about perceived Constitutional knowledge and views about Supreme Court handling cases might not have a significant influence as a predictor for gun control, but a closer look into these variables might help better identify why the social and demographic divides continue to exist in the literature. Lastly, the final research question of this study addressing additional unexplored variables having a significant effect reduced the support for gun control efforts.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations follow from these findings. First, this study does not fully address why these social and demographic divides, specifically among males and females, and whites and non-whites, continue to appear in research about public opinion and gun control. This study only addressed direct effects of social and demographic variables on opinion. An interesting finding is that the gender gap continues to be prevalent in views about crime similar to prior literature (Applegate, Cullen, & Fisher,

2002). Thus, future research needs to further investigate the gender gap in public opinion research to address what are the intervening measures.

Also, this study did not address why conservatism consistently opposed all gun control, whereas liberalism only significantly supported general gun control measures. Typically, the argument of gun control is between conservatives and liberals, but this study indicates that conservatives are an outlier when it comes to gun control. Therefore, a better insight into why liberals only support general gun control laws, instead of more specific gun control measures.

This study did not explore a great deal of Constitutional issues that might arise in the gun control debates between those who oppose gun control compared to those who favor it. Expanding on more concerns about Constitutional issues when it comes to gun control might offer a better insight identifying other relevant variables. Looking into other variables of Constitutional perceptions can allow for future research to better understand predictors of gun control attitudes. For example, future research should address whether respondents are aware of certain cases being heard by the Supreme Court, as well as a more in depth look into how well they know the Constitution.

Lastly, this study did not inquire about specific weapons within each ban. The public might be aware of what a semi-automatic weapon is, but might be unaware of all of their uses, especially for hunters (Celinska, 2007). It is important to look into how the public perceives a ban on a generalized group of weapons, compared to how the public would perceive certain weapons within each group. Therefore, a more refined and precise

measure of the actual ban on these weapons would create a better understanding of public opinion on gun control.

### **Policy Implications**

In a democracy, public views are important to measure and understand. Indeed, public policy tends to change—according to experts—after a significant incident that creates concern (Vizzard, 1999). For example, the recent court case involving George Zimmerman of Florida who is charged with shooting a teenage boy, Trayvon Martin, on February 26, 2012, within an apartment complex. This case has gained national media attention, thus the public has become conscious about gun control policies. This court case involves the use of a handgun, in which Zimmerman possessed legally for self-protection (Alvarez, 2012). However, the public has created debates about handgun possession when these celebrated events occur.

Another important event that has occurred and may have contributed to recent debates is the theatre shooting in Aurora, Colorado allegedly committed by James Holmes on July 20, 2012. Holmes was able to obtain multiple semi-automatic weapons before the shooting (Frosch & Johnson, 2012). These events which occurred approximately a year from when the data for this study were collected, making it important to continue to gather public opinion data about gun control. These events help future public opinion research because celebrated cases like these, although rare, will continue to occur.

## **Future Directions**

Gun control and how the public perceives it will continue to be a heated debate between those who support it and those who oppose it. Although the two sides are believed to have concrete arguments about why their position makes for more effective policy, events will continue to occur that cause individuals and policymakers to question their beliefs. Even though the United States Constitution prohibits the government from completely infringing on an individual's right to own and possess a firearm, policymakers will need to protect society from the individuals who are dangerous with firearms.

A more qualitative look into why certain social and demographic predictors continue to split within the population about public opinion and gun control is needed. A qualitative study can address why individuals within the opposition group, as well as the group that support gun control, hold certain views about gun control laws and policies. From this study, future work might consider these research implications to better understand the predictors of gun control support and opposition. Inevitably, crimes will continue to occur, but it is important for the government to gain better understanding of public opinion attitudes concerning these offenses. Thus, future research would greatly benefit from using recently gathered public opinion data about gun control attitudes, particularly after celebrated and highly publicized crimes. Also, it is important to know how the public views current gun control efforts.

## APPENDICES

### A. List of Landmark Federal Laws

Mailing of Firearms Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1715 (1927)

National Firearms Act, 26 U.S.C. § 5854 (1934)

Federal Firearms Act, 26 U.S.C. § 5861 (1938)

Gun Control Act, 18 U.S.C. § 922 (1968)

Armed Career Criminal Act, 18 U.S.C. § 924 (1986)

Firearm Owners' Protection Act, 18 U.S.C. § 921 (1986)

Law Enforcement Officers Protection Act, 18 U.S.C. § (1986)

Crime Control Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5779 (1990)

Brady Handgun Violence Protection Act, 18 U.S.C § 992 (1994)

Violence Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1033 (1994)

B. U.S. Supreme Court Cases Cited

*Presser v. Illinois*, 116 U.S. 252

*United States v. Miller*, 307, U.S. 174

*Haynes v. United States*, 390 U.S. 85

*United States v. Freed*, 401 U.S. 601

*Lewis v. United States*, 445 U.S. 55

*Staples v. United States*, 511 U.S. 60

*Printz v. United States*, 521 U.S. 898

*District of Columbia v. Heller*, 554 U.S. 570

*McDonald v. Chicago*, 561 U.S. 3025

C. Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



FLORIDA  
ATLANTIC  
UNIVERSITY

**Institutional Review Board**

*Mailing Address:*

Division of Research  
777 Glades Rd., SU-80, Suite 106  
Boca Raton, FL 33431

Tel: 561.297.0777 Fax: 561.297.2573

<http://www.fau.edu/research/researchint>

Nancy Aaron Jones, Ph.D., Chair

DATE: May 14, 2012

TO: Christina Mancini, Ph.D.  
FROM: Florida Atlantic University IRB  
IRBNET ID #: 333937-1  
PROTOCOL TITLE: [333937-1] Public Perceptions of Gun Control Laws:  
Exploring Relationships in Recently Gathered Data  
SUBMISSION TYPE: Other  
ACTION: DETERMINATION OF NOT HUMAN SUBJECTS  
RESEARCH  
EFFECTIVE DATE: May 14, 2012

Thank you for your submission of other materials for this research study. The Florida Atlantic University IRB has determined this project does not meet the definition of human subjects research according to federal regulations. Therefore, it is not under the purview of the IRB.

We will keep a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. If you have any questions or comments about this correspondence, please contact Elisa Gaucher at: Institutional Review Board  
Research Integrity/Division of Research  
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