**The Political Sociology of the US Gun Ownership**

**Addressing the Broken Links in Cultural Communication**

**COM 803-12: Hermeneutics and**

**Communication (Fall 2023)**

**Assignment No. 3**

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**Professor**

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**Instructor Assigned Essay or Project**

**Assignment #3 - Essay on a case study**

Write a 5-page paper on a specific event or phenomenon (e.g., a historical event, cultural practice, a legal decision), and interpret it from a hermeneutic perspective. This would involve understanding the event within its context and recognizing the role of your prejudices in shaping your interpretation.

The student should direct developmental readings from Assignment #2 on the hermeneutic issue for this assignment.

2. Paper Outline

a. Begin with an introductory paragraph with a succinct thesis statement.

b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.

c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.

d. Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two books and the remaining scholarly

 peer-reviewed journal articles).

**Point of Note: DV** refers to: Domestic Violence.

1. **DVPO** is aDomestic Violence Protective Order.
2. **ERPOs** are Extreme risk protective orders.

 **iv) GVROs** refer toGun Violence Restraining Orders

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 **Introduction**

 The culture of gun ownership is strong and shares the same frenzy of hyper, cultural excitements associated with the US Superbowl, the Grand Prix, Formula One motor racing, Halloween, the frightening blood-dripping hoaxes, and the Kiddy Tricker-Treat-galore. The culture is here to stay and not going anywhere, as some law-abiding citizens would wish otherwise in their seeming tall ideas. It is not surprising to scholars, sociologists, or historians.

**On CNN today**, Trump, a Presidential candidate, was seen posing with two admirers in a gun shop holding a Glock 45 imprinted with his photo in South Carolina. In an era of US guns and political violence, that P.R.O. may have far-reaching implications for law-abiding and non-law-abiding citizens. Such political ads or stunts are misguided and can be misconstrued negatively.

The sociological history of gun brutality soon became endless in the 20th and 21st centuries; police racial brutality, alongside mafia criminal rivalry and criminal gang activities unduly exploited, came to the limelight when Rodney King was brutally beaten by the police in 1991 and died in 2012. Police officer Derek Chauvin openly murdered George Floyd in May 2021. The exploitation among hundreds of thousands of such police brutality has been swept under the rugs for centuries. However, typical among the ruthless police brutalities was in Chicago. According to Hagan J. et al. (2022), "the scandals that came to light was about Police Commander & detective Jon Burge and the midnight crews of officersor decades from the 1970s lasting several decades, they came to light through lawyers, reporters, and activists (Baer, 2020; Conroy, 2000; Ralph, 2020)". Commander Jon Burge and the midnight Crews of Officers engaged in the brutal torture of black and brown men and women for decades. The reckless shootings by law enforcement were no secret. The community, law enforcement leadership, and the government political authorities simply turned blind eyes to the gun violence and atrocities.

The sales of guns became pieces of merchandise between the North and the Southern American states to arm and protect themselves, till this day. The culture of gun ownership is indelible, and it cannot be erased by any public outcry, at least for now, or through any legal sanctions; not even the US Constitution will dare it. Why? Simply because many of the US Judges and Justices, legislators, and policymakers love guns. They celebrate gun ownership; some pass them as gifts to their friends, parents, juvenile children, and spouses as birthday giftings. It is not surprising to scholars, sociologists, and historians. Gun violence in America had its historical roots and relics from the American Civil War between the United States and the Southern Confederate states from 1861 to 1865 (The 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution abolished Slavery in 1865). The mafia gang-style executions and gun-brandishing movies gradually crept into the US socio-cultural fabric psyche.

**Socio-Cultural Resistance to Guns’ Control and Amended Laws**

Many families of victims of Gun violence blame the NRA for getting the US cities and streets awash with guns in the hands of felons. Moreover, for supporting the laws of 1965 and 1986, which allow felons and ex-convicts relief from ATF, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Agency to apply for and purchase guns despite their criminal past. NRA is in some protracted legal battles with New York State amid its illegal financial transactions and the seeming haphazard court application for failed bankruptcy suits, attempting to move its business to Texas in 2020. “The NRA is 150 years old. -New York’s legislature granted the NRA a corporate charter in 1871, and the organization continues to operate under the New York laws governing corporations. NRA revenue declined in 2020 by 4% from $296 million to $284 million, -Revenue fell another 18% to under $234 million in 2021. (Millhiser, 2021). According to recent BBC US Canada Business publications in April 2023, OpenSecrets' figures suggest that since 2010, the NRA has directed more than $140m to pro-gun election candidates. Many of The NRA members will vote for a candidate based solely on their gun stance. It grades members of Congress from A to F on their perceived friendliness to gun rights. Those ratings can cost pro-gun control candidates their seats. The NRA has aggressively opposed measures restricting gun ownership for decades despite high-profile mass shootings, including many in schools. Charlton Heston was the president and spokesperson of the NRA from 1998 until he resigned in 2003. At the 2000 NRA convention, Heston raised a rifle over his head and said that a potential Al Gore administration would have to take away his Second Amendment rights "from my cold, dead hands." This statement angered gun control supporters.

**:** It is an open secret that the 2nd Amendment in the U.S. Constitution has emboldened millions of Americans to claim their inalienable rights to gun ownership. However, the fine print in the 2nd Amendment is apparent. However, they are vaguely and grossly misinterpreting most times as an unquestionable right to bear arms, and even some courts do the same. The Second Amendment Rights of the U.S. Constitution" states that,

*"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*."

The interpretation of the 2nd amendment right is vague, and it does not express its legal limitations contingent on deliberate or unconscious criminal abuse or in self-defense or to a mentally deranged having access to it. According to Shutro, C. (2022), "Gun owners embrace the U.S. Constitution's Second Amendment Rights, claiming it guarantees that civilians can own and use guns." Yes & NO: The Second Amendment right is an open-ended statement. It has divergent interpretations, referring to "regulated Militia" (as Armed forces, private army, Law enforcement) ("security of a free state": Law enforcement/ National Army & National Guards). The clause, "the right of the people to "keep" and bear arms," does not imply killing innocent people. Yes, for responsible hunting and protection, not for offending, vindictive, or offensive criminality.

offers a realistic meaning to the issue of gun ownership and why the curtailing of its proliferation might be a mirage after all. According to Fox, J. A., Drakulich, K. & McDevitt, J. (2023), “There is a group of Americans for whom guns have become symbolic. This group feels as though their privileges as Americans are being threatened, and as a result, the debate is no longer about guns; it is about their perceived standing in America.” – The study found that when three specific privileged identities (white, US-born, and male) intersected with feelings of those identities being threatened, whether by social justice movements or other political movements, subjects were likely to feel strong attachments to guns and be staunchly opposed to gun control measures. Drakulich described this group’s relationship to guns as gun culture 2.0, the notion that gun culture used to be tied to activities like hunting or marksmanship, but a new relationship with guns has emerged that is fundamentally different”. Drakulich seems to let the cat out of the bag. This study shows that the red states dominated by the hardcore conservative right are “revolutionary and culturally resistant to reforms, redemption or alternative policy” and mental health options about gun ownership and control. The blue states’ progressives are sympathetic to victims of gun violence and are pursuing social and legal reforms.

According toKatsafanas et al. (2023: On May 24, 2022, an 18-year-old man killed 19 students and two teachers and wounded 17 individuals at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, TX, using an AR-15-style rifle. - The Robb Elementary School mass shooting, the second deadliest school mass shooting in American history. In 2021, gun violence claimed 45,027 lives (including 20,937 suicides), with 313 children aged 0–11 killed and 750 injured and 1247 youth aged 12–17 killed and 3385 injured.

In 2020, there were 19,384 gun murders, representing a 34% increase from the year before, a 49% increase over five years, and a 75% increase over ten years (Pew Research Center, 2022). Additionally, 58% of perpetrators had a connection to the school, 70% were White males, 73 to 80% obtained guns from home or relatives or friends, and 100% exhibited warning signs or showed behavior that was of cause for concern; also, in 77% of school shootings, at least one person knew about the shooter’s plan before the shooting events occurred (Everytown Research & Policy, 2021).

**:** According to Lockwood, K., Rowe, C., & Sager, E. (2023), With 393,000,000 civilian firearms in circulation, more guns than people are in the United States. Decades of powerful gun lobbying have made the Second Amendment a household name- Americans are 25 times more likely to die by gun homicide than those in any other high-income country; - One in four homicides in the United States is DV-related, and the presence of a firearm in a DV incident raises the risk of homicide by 500%.

Policy Recommendations**:** Lockwood adds that three simultaneous policy strategies are necessary to address the connection between DV and mass shootings: 1) increased implementation of existing firearm protections for DV survivors; 2) expansion of existing firearm relief to increase firearm removal in dangerous circumstances; and 3) preservation of existing firearm protections for DV survivors. Judges must also order the surrender of firearms, ammunition, and permits if they find that a person subject to a DVPO has either 1) used or threatened to use a firearm; 2) threatened to injure or kill a party or minor child seriously; 3) threatened to commit suicide; or 4) seriously injured a party or minor child.- Extreme risk protective orders (ERPOs) create a judicial process through which family or household members can ask a court to remove a person’s firearms if they are a risk to themselves or others.

**The Compelling Gun Safety Interventions**

, the Biden-Harris Administration announced historic investments in the life-saving work of community violence intervention (CVI) programs, including the 26 existing federal grant programs. There is a collaboration with Community Justice Action Fund, helping organizations and municipalities to access the funding they need to continue their life and saving gun violence intervention work at the community level**"**. In addition, there is the recent American Rescue Plan Funding, disbursed to help local officials counter the economic impact of COVID-19;used to bolster gun violence intervention programs".Men with legally purchased semi-automatic weapons have carried out most mass shootings in recent years” (National Institute of Justice, 2022).

The six most compelling and strategic actions taken include: i) Rein in the proliferation of ghost guns’ ii) Increase resources dedicated to district-specific violent crime strategies, iii) Legislate to stop the turning of pistols into short-barreled rifles subject to the National Firearms Act; iv) Publish model extreme risk protection order legislation to make it easier for states -to adopt these red flag laws to do so; v) Announce a new policy to underscore zero tolerance for willful violations of the law by federally licensed firearms dealers that put public safety at risk; vi) Launch five new law enforcement strike forces focused on addressing significant firearms trafficking corridors that have diverted guns to New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, the Bay Area, and Washington, D.C.

**iii) In September 2023, President Biden launched the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention,** to be overseen by Vice President Harris’ office, with longtime gun policy adviser Stefanie Feldman acting as director. Gun advocacy groups quickly endorsed this, including Community Justice Action Fund, Moms Demand Action, Students Demand Action, Everytown for Gun Safety Action Fund, and its grassroots networks, Giffords, Brady, and its youth-led arm, Team Enough.

**iv) On Jan. 13, 2023, Attorney General Merrick B. Garland** signed ATF final rule 2021R-08F, “Factoring Criteria for Firearms with Attached 'Stabilizing Braces,'” amending the federal agency's regulation on pistol braces. The new regulation reclassified guns with stabilizing accessories as short-barreled rifles.

**States, Counties, and Cities, Partnerships, and Social Collaboration**

**i) Red Flag Law: California was the first to enact a red flag law in 2016**. - allows law enforcement, family members, employers, coworkers, and school employees to file a Gun Violence Restraining Order (GVRO) against an individual suspected of danger to themselves and others and prohibits a person from possessing firearms. - In 2021, California was ranked as the #1 state for gun safety by the Giffords Law Center, and the state saw a 37% lower gun death rate than the national average. According to the CDC, California’s gun death rate was the 44th lowest in the nation, with 8.5 gun deaths per 100,000 people – compared to 13.7 deaths per 100,000 nationally, 28.6 in Mississippi, 20.7 in Oklahoma, and 14.2 in Texas. California’s gun death rate for children is 58% lower than the national average. From 2019 to 2021, Governor Newsom signed a package of laws to strengthen further GVROs, which increased from 85 to 1,284 – 1,410%.; a waiting period of 10 days for all gun purchases. -California’s waiting period is among the strictest. One study found that waiting period laws that delay the purchase of firearms by a few days can reduce gun homicides by roughly 17%.” California requires background checks on all gun purchases and transfers - you must be at least 21 to purchase firearms. (Office of Governor Newsom, 2022).

**:** On May 18, 2022, Governor Hochul signed an Executive Order requiring State Police to file for an Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) whenever they have probable cause to believe an individual is a threat to themselves or others.

Mayors against illegal guns, MAIG is leveraging its expertise with its legal and social programs (Benton & Craib, 2023; Doucet, 2020; Ellinor & Girard) to support victims of gun violence through collaborative and community partnership programs. According to Little W. et al. (2014), "We know that social movements can occur locally, nationally, or globally. Sociologist David Aberle (1966) addresses this question, “developing categories that distinguish among social movements based on what they want to change and how much change they want." The five types of a social movement are i) the reform, 2) revolutionary, 3) redemptive, 4) alternative, and 5) resistance movements."

This study shows that the Mayors Against Illegal Guns, MAIG, is more of an "alternative & reform” advocacy movement: It seeks to change something specific about the social structure" of illegal gun possession and criminality. MAIG also reflects a mix of the redemptive and the alternative by supporting gun violence victims through legal, social, funding, and vocational training programs, etc.). "An alternative movement goal is a partial change in individuals' behaviors. Instead, redemptive seeks total *change*" (Lee, 2019). The redemptive has guiding rules and regulations, like the Christian doctrines or moral principles reflected in behaviors and Christian worldviews. However, Feldmann D. (2016) states, "Modern social movements operate within a new paradigm. There must be a plan with the right people with the right skills for execution.”

**:** MAIG: Mayors Against Illegal Guns; MDAs: Moms Demand Action and EFGS: Everytown for Guns Safety collaborate as a corporate team and as legal and social advocacy partners. 1) These organizations' Advocacy on Background checks is intense: 21 states require background checks and licensed permits to own guns, and 29 states do not. 2) They have continually campaigned On Closing the Charleston Loopholes: "Under federal law, gun purchases may move forward by default after three business days—even if a background check has not been completed.  However, in 2015, the shooter of nine worshipers at Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, South Carolina, was able to purchase a gun because of a dangerous loophole in the background check system". 3) Community Advocacy for Secure Guns Storage: Gun owners can make their homes and communities safer by storing their guns securely. 4) Violence Intervention Programs: are available in most states". Identifies with three main social change models: 1) It has very cohesive and dynamic group values involving shared social ideals and combined vertical and horizontal collaboration structures with EFGS & MDS acting as its 'buffers' from within. 2) They share individual values involving self-consciousness and awareness of their goals, missions, and commitment to meeting individual goals and objectives. 3) Society and community share values, longing for change through citizenry (loyalty and service). They want to collaborate with governments, people, and the community to rid society of illegal guns often used for criminal fatalities and human carnages. Moreover, to have a very peaceful nation with law and order.

The Christian faith and vision integration is transformational. 1 Cor 13:11 is definite about this. "We are urged, in our thinking, to be mature; we need to teach and model this. Our understanding of our discipline, at its deepest levels, should be informed by our faith commitments". Mayors against illegal guns, MAIG and its affiliates, EFGS and MDA, seem to share the ideals of the Christian redemptive principles involving some rules and regulations, ethical codes of conduct, or perhaps universal code of ethics and conduct, to drive its multi-divergent legal and sociological (Drew, 2022) and transformational principles. However, the centerpiece of their principal values exemplifies legal advocacy: to eradicate, stop, or minimize illegal guns causing untold mass shooting fatalities and carnages in most cities across the United States.

**Conclusion**

 The greatest security fears ahead of the US population now and in the future are the 3D Ghost guns produced with a 3D printer. ATF agents are increasingly finding them in violent crime investigations; they have no serial numbers and are untraceable. ATF must educate and communicate this to the community (Schmidt, 2023; Grenny, 2015). They must be controlled and stopped immediately through legislation and high-tech security programs. The National Riffles Association, NRA’s influence may decline. However, it is still a formidable force. It has the ability and the firepower of lobbying to mobilize massive, loyal conservative groups of legislators and millions of people in mostly red states to favor gun legislation and increase its membership and funding at its beckon. To families of victims of mass shootings, it is unemphatic to find that the NRA’s convention was held on May 27th, 2022, in Houston, Texas, two days after the Robb Elementary School massacre of 21 people in Texas. However, the study's other surprises are the three university dons' statements, "There is a group of Americans for whom guns have become symbolic and feel - when three specific privileged identities (white, US-born, and male) intersected with feelings, those identities are being threatened.” This must be taken seriously and balanced with gun safety measures, laws, and controls. The anecdote is that the Mayors Against Illegal Guns (MAIG), with more than 8 million followers, volunteers, and social members, and its affiliated partners, EFGS and MDA, are vigorously advocating for life-saving gun safety reforms from local programs to state and federal legislation. Presently, "21 states require background checks and licensed permits to own guns, 29 states do not". There is advocacy On Closing the Charleston Loopholes to "balance two extremes” (Willinick J. et al., 2019; Stanier, B.M., 2016). MAIG and partners' strength is in the "decentralization and democratization of their valuable intervention resources, which is "more human-centered (Gartenstein, D., 2018)" and not autocratic.

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