SR 950-32 Clinical and Applied Sociology

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September 23, 2024

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**Assignment #3 – Essay**

1. Write a 5-page essay addressing the following:

a. Select a social issue or problem relevant to your profession. Clearly state your thesis

(purpose) for your essay.

b. Critique the issue through the lens of one or more of the major sociological theories

(Structural Functionalism, Conflict Theory, Symbolic Interactionism, Postmodernism).

c. Draw on Christian perspectives of cultural critique to consider where your chosen

sociological theories might fall short or might affirm Christian principles from your faith

tradition.

d. Answer the question, ““How can sociology foster understanding of this issue”?”

e. Construct potential ““constructive”” approaches to the problem through a sociological

lens.

f. Synthesize and integrate sources from your developmental reading.

g. Compose a succinct conclusion and restate your thesis.

h. Include your references.

Every day, life in America is being upended by the constant threat of gun violence. According to Sanchez, et al. (2020), “Approximately 100 lives are lost each day because of gun violence in the United States (US), with civilian mass shootings increasing annually. Gun violence in the US is almost 20 times higher than other comparable developed countries, and it has the most gun ownership per capita of any nation in the world. Understanding the causes and risk factors are paramount in understanding gun violence and reducing its incidence” (abstract).

Our country is in the throes of an internal war regarding guns and gun violence, and despite national campaigns and mass shootings, gun sales continue to rise (Cassino & Bessen-Casino, 2020). Even with the apparent rise of violence, comprehensive policies to combat the gun violence epidemic have not been implemented or enforced successfully (Wallace et al., 2023). One side insists that mechanisms should be implemented to reduce access to guns. The other side stands firm on its position that guns are not the problem. Instead, people are. The National Rifle Association (NRA) and other pro-gun activists often invoke the familiar slogan, “Guns do not kill people; people kill people” (Braga et al., 2021, p.148). Nonetheless, innocent people, especially kids, are frequently the casualty of the aforesaid internal war. This poses the question, how did society get to a place where unease is solved by using guns and hurting innocent people (Sheehan, 2023)? Secondly, the question should be a call to action to determine what should be done to address the predicament we are currently in. Although there may not be a simple answer, there is a solution to be considered; as stated by Rebach and Bruhn, “The role of the clinical sociologist is to recognize that human problems are rooted in social systems and apply the methods of scientific sociology to examine and analyze a case” (Rebach & Bruhn, 1991, p. 14).

Therefore, clinical socialists can help address this epidemic is a viable option. If the gun violence issue goes unaddressed, headlines in my local paper and papers across America will continue to include statements such as the following. On September 8, 2024, the headline in my local paper, The Desert Sun, read: “Teen arrested after violent online threats against Rancho Mirage High School”.

“Threats as such are becoming common, and yet worse, too many are followed by horrific actions. Gun violence (GV), which includes School and other mass shootings, should not be an acceptable norm in America; however, to a certain extent, it appears that the country has grown numb or somewhat comfortable with this horrific epidemic.

Since 1970, 1373 K-12 school gun violence incidents have injured 1403 people and killed another 728. These incidents have changed the education landscape (Kolbe, 2020).

Although more than 2,000 children have been killed or injured due to school gun violence, It appears as if a growing number of Americans in leadership positions are comfortable with this heinous crisis, which may not be expressed in words that are often said following an incident, as when the leaders say something to the effect, such as “Our hearts go out to the victims and families.” However, the ’leaders’ actions, or in this case, inaction, speak much louder than those well-intended yet hollow words. Now more than ever, we need societal leaders to step in and intervene with relevant policies that may make a difference.

As stated by Wallace, “Ongoing efforts to address issues related to gun violence too often fail to incorporate the perspectives of children impacted by the violence. Voting is an integral way for citizens in a democracy to address societal issues that affect them.

Still, children are primarily excluded from the voting process, so there is a risk that ’children’s views on issues such as GV will go unheard without intentional efforts to include them” (Wallace et al., 2023, p.3). Regarding social deficits, the parties impacted by them should have a seat and voice at the table. Children shouldn’t be excluded from the complex, candid, political, and very uncomfortable conversation we need to have regarding guns and gun violence. As is supported by research, gun violence is on the uptick and has no signs of going away soon. Therefore, we must work together, children and adults, to do whatever it takes to keep our children safe (Harris, 2024; Zimmerman et al., 2021).

“The CDC and National Center for Health Statistics (2022) state that in 2020, firearm-related injuries became the leading cause of death for children and adolescents (aged 1 to 19 years) in the United States. Additionally, children and adolescents in this age group were twice as likely to die from firearm-related injuries than the general population” (CDC and National Center for Health Statistics, 2022; Sheehan, 2023, p.1).

Losing children to gun violence should not be tolerated in the United States! As quoted in a local newspaper article titled: *Gun lobby targeted as Ga. Churches mourn,* reads: During an appearance on NBC News Meet the Press, U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock, D-Ga, said the shooting in Winder, GA, shows “we are all sitting ducks.” We can do better than this, he said. This is a tragic form of American exceptionalism. This does not happen all over the world” (Bacon, 2024, p.A6). Losing people, especially children, demands that America pause and look in the mirror. What portion of our societal norms have been infiltrated with the notion that violence against innocent people will be left unchecked? Unchecked in the sense that mass shootings continue to take place. As stated by Maher et al. (2022). “Mass shootings in the USA have risen in the last decade and have permeated everyday life, including, but not limited to, active shooter drills at elementary schools, syllabus statements on active shooters in college and university courses, universal screening and baggage constraints at significant cultural and sporting events, and workplace active shooter safety measures” (introduction).

Although there have been measures to respond to possible threats of gun violence in real-time, it appears that the political landscape is reluctant to enact laws to restrict certain firearms from being purchased by the public, in particular the AR-15, which appears to be the gun of choice by many mass shooters.

In a USA online publication (inserted in the Desert Sun), on September 5, 2024, there was an article written by C.A. Bridges titled *Apalachee High School shooting: AR-15, the gun used for mass shootings. Why are they popular?* Bridges pens, “On Wednesday, Georgia authorities say a 14-year-old boy brought an AR-platform-style rifle into Apalachee High School near Atlanta and killed two students and two teachers. He also wounded nine more people, eight of them students. Since the end of the assault weapons ban in 2004, the AR-15 has become one of America’s most popular firearms used in some of the most horrid mass shootings.” When is enough is enough?

When do we take a stand and address this rapidly growing gun violence and convey a solid message to suggest that our children will no longer be sitting ducks (Harris, 2024)? When do we start taking steps to reverse this societal norm of traumatic occurrences that impact all of us (especially children) in one way or another (Koepke et al., 2023; Harris, 2024)? Regardless of which side of the equation you are on, most will agree that gun violence, a problem deeply rooted in the fabric of ’America’s society, needs to be addressed immediately.

Since the gun violence problem is prolific, it will take a collaborative intervention/process that should include numerous experts (especially sociologists) working together to develop theories, methods, and measurable practices to address this pressing issue (Rebach & Bruhn, 1991; de Gauleja, 2021). Although it may take time to work through this conflict and reach an acceptable solution, doing nothing is not an option (Folger et al., 2021).

America’s (societal) internal war regarding guns and gun violence is highly complex in that it contains several interrelated factors, with the main two being that one side of the argument is that guns should be readily available for purchase with minimal controls because they believe that guns do not kill people; people do. The opposing ’side’s stance is that if people have limited access to guns, gun violence will be reduced. Regardless of who is wrong or right, currently, gun violence is traumatizing people, especially kids and more kids of color (Swanson, 2020; Ormerod, 2020). Again, perhaps the starting point would be to assemble a robust bi-partisan group of sociologists (and other noteworthy stakeholders) to analyze the problem and develop policies and procedures containing probable solutions (Smith, 2022).

The right to bear arms (for various uses) is an American right (Malcolm, 2023). As stated by Braga et al. (2021)“Guns are obviously designed to be lethal instruments. Although guns in civilian hands are used for sport shooting, hunting, and dealing with animal pests, they can also be deployed against people for legal self-defense or criminal purposes; furthermore, the risk of death is elevated when a gun is involved” (pp. 149 & 152). America is in the throes of an internal war regarding guns and gun violence; too many lives are lost daily, calling for an immediate solution to address this horrific societal epidemic.

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