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## The Gun Control Debate: Why Experience and Culture Matters

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### ABSTRACT

The article revisits the gun control debate policy comparing the varied and diverse perspectives and viewpoints held by both the culturalist and empiricist, pro-gun society and gun less society on how the gun debate may be properly resolved through a pragmatic approach of policy-making- putting emphasis on culture, experience and observation with regards to gun control. In the process of employing an idea-based coalition approach and argumentative discourse analysis towards the brewing gun control debate, the article consequently realizes the convergent role of both cultural worldviews and public opinion plays at the very heart of deliberation on gun debate.

### KEYWORDS

Culturalist; empiricist; gun less society; gun control; pro-gun society

The recent series of crimes associated with gun violence has basically enabled the reinvigoration of gun debates and discourses. On January 8, 2011, U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords and 18 others were shot during a constituent meeting held in a supermarket parking lot in Casas Adobes, Arizona, in the Tucson metropolitan area. Six people died, including Arizona District Court Chief Judge John Roll; Gabe Zimmerman, one of Rep. Giffords' staffers; and a 9-year-old girl, Christina-Taylor Green. On Friday, July 20, 2012, a mass shooting happened inside of a Century movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, during a midnight screening of the film *The Dark Knight Rises*. A gunman, dressed in tactical clothing, set off tear gas grenades and shot into the audience with multiple firearms, killing 12 people and injuring 58 others. On December 14, 2012, the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting occur in Newton, Connecticut—in which Adam Lanza shot and killed 20 school children, 6 teachers, his mother, and then himself—received attention around the world.

These series of tragic gun focusing events in Tucson, Aurora, and Newton have led the American society bewildered, beleaguered, and polarized. But it likewise prodded lawmakers, politicians, civil society groups, and ordinary citizens to posit and ask questions? Will these senseless killings and violence be averted if guns do not proliferate? Will these crimes of impunity be deterred by stricter gun control regulation? Or is it now an opportune time for the formulation and imposition of a total gun ban policy to correct and prevent such occurrences of gun deaths and violence?

So what is the gun debate about? If one peruses academic journals or tunes in to the debates that pervade legislative chambers, the gun debate appears to hinge on a narrow factual question: whether more guns make society less safe or more. Control supporters, we are told, believe that the ready availability of guns diminishes public safety by facilitating violent crimes and accidental shootings; opponents, that such availability enhances public safety by enabling potential crime victims to ward off violent predation (Braman & Kahan, 2006, pp. 570–571).

The gun debate issues have been viewed as a contestation and discourse among several factions, parties, and lobbyist groups. There are gun-less society protagonists who consider guns as the main catalysts of murders, homicides, and other forms of crimes associated with senseless killings and violent deaths. This society clamors for the outright gun ban and aspires to confine the use of licensed gun within one's personal home, dwelling, and residence and such license and permit to carry a gun may not be held applicable in public places.

On the other side of the fence are the pro-gun society which refutes the notion that carrying guns and firearms are not necessarily the primary factor in the occurrences of crimes, it is the user and owner of the gun. That is why this society prides itself to be called as people responsible owners of guns as what the acronym pro-gun seems to suggest. This society believes that gun ownership education is necessary to protect the citizens against any threats, violence, and

attacks perpetrated by criminals and felonious individuals. Although there are laws which regulates the ownership, possession, and use of guns, these two societies namely the gun-free society and the pro-gun society are at odds on what would be the content, how would it be implemented, and where would be the scope of application of such gun control law.

In the United States, there is the Constitution's Second Amendment which invokes the right of the citizen to bear and carry arms against any oppression and tyranny perpetrated by any person including their very own government. As the Court recognized in *Heller*, the right of the people to keep and bear arms was necessary not only to preserve the security of the individual within his home, but also to secure the freedom of the polity from all foes—including the tyranny of a strong, centralized government. At ratification, it was understood across the political spectrum that the right helped to secure the ideal of a citizen militia, which might be necessary to oppose an oppressive military force if the constitutional order broke down (McGovern, 2012, p. 496).

The diverse and differentiated considerations on what persuasion and conviction one holds with regards to gun debate policy became necessarily important and significant in fashioning a law, policy, principle, and regulation that must govern the affairs of gun debate. And the thing is that the answers and responses to these gun debate issues and questions may not be culled from within but would require an incorporation and integration of various theories, programs, policies, and interventions which may be derived from the entire gamut of experiential and cultural world views to fashion out and draft a viable, rational, and effective gun ban or gun control measures.

The argument has, of course, become polarized and is at present dominated by two equal and opposite sets of shrill extremists. On one side are those convinced that the right (possibly the responsibility) to own and carry guns is a national patrimony handed down from the framers; their core constituency is a fairly recently politicized group formerly called "sportsmen" and now popularly known as "right-wing gun nuts." On the other side are those who believe it a moral and legal imperative that the government do whatever it must to prevent gun related violence by further restricting the purchase and ownership of guns; this group, whose ranks include the fundamentally well intentioned million marching moms, differ in their experience with firearms but have in common conviction that we'd all be better off without them (Casteen, 2004, p. 210).

The "Great American Gun Debate" (Kates & Kleck, 1997) is not really one debate but two. The first is

empirical. Gun-control supporters argue that the ready availability of firearms diminishes public safety by facilitating violent crimes and accidental shootings; control opponents reply that the ready availability of guns enhances public safety by enabling potential crime victims to ward off violent predation (Duggan, 2001; Lott, 2000).

The second debate is cultural. Control opponents (who tend to be rural, southern or western, Protestant, male, and white) venerate guns as symbols of personal honor, individual self-sufficiency, and respect for social authority. Control supporters (who are disproportionately urban, eastern, Catholic or Jewish, female, and African American) despise firearms, which to them symbolize the perpetuation of illicit social hierarchies, the elevation of force over reason, and collective indifference to the well-being of strangers (Dizard, Muth, & Andrews, 1999; Hofstadter, 1970; Kahan, 1999; Kleck, 1996; Slotkin, 1998; Tonso, 1982). Conducted in legislative chambers and courtrooms, on street corners and op-ed pages, the gun debate alternates between clashing positions on what guns do and what guns mean (Braman, Kahan, & Grimmelmann, 2005, p. 284).

It is in this context that this article would attempt to search for a policy response to this nagging and yet controversial topic of gun debate through its following content and structure one that of empirical and cultural. First, it conjectures and synthesizes the prevailing propositions and suppositions between gun-less society and pro-gun society enunciating their primary key points as an empirical observation and analysis in resolving the gun crimes and violence in experiential and cultural dimensions as matter of perspective. Second, the article would also seek to position itself that a gun ban policy may be a more viable option and strategy given the strings and series of gun violence and senseless killings associated with the use of guns. Third, the article would also seek to reinforce and strengthen its gun ban position by borrowing and substantiating other cultural world views where gun ban or gun control policy is regarded or disregarded as a basis for policy-making and law implementation in deterring gun deaths and violence as an international or global perspective.

Finally, the article would conclude and end up in asserting that a gun ban policy and gun control measure resolved and addressed in a more rational objective manner as matter of policy based on cultural understanding and cultural worldviews about gun as reflected and shared by people's experiences, values, perceptions, and attitudes about gun control in order to ensure public safety, public security,

public peace, and order. The context of the article involves and applies only a gun ban on civilians to carry licensed firearms outside of their homes and military carrying firearms even though not in uniform and in the performance of their duty. The gun ban proposition does not cover in any other way prohibiting civilians to carry licensed firearms within their homes and military while wearing their uniform and in the call or performance of their duty.

## Methodology

In the analysis and discussion of the gun policy, this article would utilize significant pieces of work in the field of critical policy analysis which adopts the idea based coalition approach and argumentative discourse analysis as theoretical bases for understanding and conceptualizing.

Memmler (2003) analyzes the German forest policy subsystem particularly giving emphasis on the discursive struggle involving the proposed amendments to the Federal Forest Law which intends to introduce new standards of forest sustainable management. Memmler went on delineating and differentiating the actor coalitions involved in the competition and contestation of ideas and interests with regards to forest sustainable management and analyze the persuasion and convictions present in the respective coalition's frame of mind and reference.

The theory and methodology espouse by Memmler (2003) will be the same theoretical path and trajectory that the article would embrace specifically with the interpretative analysis and discussion on the contestations and discourses held by rival coalitions in the gun debate policy namely the pro-gun society and the gun-less society. It is also in this same theory predicament, that the article analyzes the amendments for a stricter gun control law be enacted which the gun-less society proposes and the pro-gun society disposes.

Finally, the article also would also employ a synthesis integrative review in which references will be made on the existing literatures in the eighties, nineties, and much recent works which tackles the gun control policy debate in the context of both opponents of gun control in both empirical and cultural perspectives as well. The article assumes that there is consistency across these perspectives and groups in maintaining their views and positions in the gun control policy debate more specifically that of for and against gun control.

## *The pro-gun control versus anti-gun control debate*

The gun-less society believes that a society which is not readily accessible to guns and firearms are most

likely less prone and susceptible to murder, homicide, suicide, and other crimes connected to the use of gun. It based its belief on the following main crucial points: (1) license and permit to carry firearms may only be restricted within the confines of one's home or residence, (2) the military may only carry firearms while in uniform and in the call or performance of duty, (3) the empowerment of the police and military in protecting the safety, security, and sovereignty of the individuals and the state as its paramount goal and objective, (4) granting amnesty to those carrying unlicensed and loose firearms and incentivize them, (5) imposition of a higher and stiffer punishment and penalty for unlawful and illegal possession of firearms, and (6) universal background check

The gun-less society based these considerations and factors on proposals which sponsor the legislation of gun ban policy and stricter gun control and regulation. Taking a closer look at these five factors, the first factor which is confining the license and permit to carry firearms within one's own residence rests on two conditions, first that the gun must be licensed and second that it must be locked in a safe place inaccessible to children with corresponding code number to unlocked the gun. The purpose of this factor is to limit the reachability and accessibility of guns as a tool for crime in public places.

Zakaria (2012) observes the accessibility of guns and its connections to firearms homicides when he asserts that:

There are 88.8 firearms per 100 people in the U.S. In second place is Yemen, with 54.8, then Switzerland with 45.7, and Finland with 45.3. No other country has a rate above 40. The U.S. handgun-ownership rate is 70% higher than that of the country with the next highest rate. The effect of the increasing ease with which Americans can buy ever more deadly weapons is also obvious. Over the past few decades, crime has been declining, except in one category. In the decade since 2000, violent-crime rates have fallen by 20%, aggravated assault by 21%, motor-vehicle theft by 44.5%, and nonfirearm homicides by 22%. But the number of firearm homicides is essentially unchanged. What can explain this anomaly except easier access to guns? (August 20, 2012)

The second factor, which requires the military to use and carry firearms while in uniform and in the call of duty, may be superfluous by the fact that some military and policeman misfits and scalawags which are involved in syndicated crimes such as robbery, holdup, and kidnap for ransom gangs mostly operate when they are not in uniform and in the performance of duty. This would enable the police and military leadership to

identify, track down, and detect the possible violators within their ranks particularly some policemen and military that makes criminal activities as moonlighting and sideline activity such as drug trafficking, prostitution, robbery, kidnap for ransom activity, and other illegal and underworld activities.

The third factor which posits that a gun-less society would essentially empower the police, the military, and other law-enforcement agencies to curb criminal elements of the society and activities because it would weaken and take away to the civilian populace the right to carry firearms in public places thereby cementing and solidifying the role of the police and military as the sole protector and defender of the safety, security, and sovereignty of the state and its people.

Unlicensed and loose firearms within the hands of unlawful and law-disobeying civilians make them in an equal footing and playing field in gun battle which undermines the law-enforcement capacities and efforts of the policemen and military to get rid of criminals who have potentially equal or even more superior weapons and ammunitions than the law enforcers.

This would also prevent the proliferation of high-powered and high caliber ammunitions, weapons, and guns falling into the hands of lawless elements and syndicates. NACLA (2008) states that:

Throughout the few weeks of media time, the gun lobby's message was simple but effective. In fact they rarely mentioned guns or violence when they did; they stressed the need for guns to provide personal safety. Their message was you may not want a gun today, but no one can tell what tomorrow may bring. Guns are not only for self-defense, they argued, but for protecting loved ones. The gun lobby also exploited the lack of faith in the police to provide public security. In this, the No campaign turned the stockpile research of Viva Rio on its head and argued that if there were a total ban on arms commerce, the police would create a black market of their own. (pp. 30–31)

The fourth crucial point which granting amnesty to those who would voluntarily give up their firearms and guns and providing a mechanism to incentivize them as a source of motivation evokes the state and government's expression and commitment for peace and reconciliation not just to those political offenders, rebels, and insurgents but also for ordinary citizens to diminish their chance and opportunity to take the law into their hands through the barrel of the gun.

de Souza et al. (2007) has this to say on the Brazilian government efforts to disarm the populace in its quest for peace:

Sometimes vindictive individual and groups may find themselves at the opposite side of the law with a gun at

its perusal because it could no longer wait for the proper dispensation of justice which it may find slow and turtle like. National legislation also imposed new penalties, including fines and tougher prison sentences, for people found in violation of these laws. In July 2004 additional measures took place, including a country-wide voluntary disarmament program. (p. 575)

The last and final key point is the imposition of a much higher imprisonment and penalty from a minimum of 6 months to a minimum of 12 years and making it a non-bailable offense. Ordinarily, illegal possession of firearms under Penal Criminal Code is punishable only by a lighter penalty minimum of 6 months with the illegal possession of firearms classified as bailable offense. Moreso, the act of illegal possession of firearms is considered as a separate or isolated offense from the criminal offense, thus a person arrested of illegal possession of firearms which resulted to homicide may still remain scot free because the latter offense is a bailable offense.

Under the proposal of the gun-less society, the mere possession of illegal firearms may warrant of 12–20 years of imprisonment and outright making it a non-bailable offense. Casteen (2004) captures this view of gun-less society of exacting and imposing a stiffer punishment for illegal possession of firearms as a result of cultural backlash when he uttered that:

For gun control people, guns are freighted with a meaning beyond their function: the gun is a symbol of what is worst in us and makes possible the primacy of the lowest common denominator in the culture. It is a totem of brute force, of unreason. They're deeply suspicious of the gun lobby's resistance to gun registration, licensing requirements, background checks, concealed-carry laws, and one-a-month purchase limits; these seem like commonsense measures that can and should become the law of the land. (p. 213)

The pro-gun society on the other hand refutes all the crucial points the gun-less society advances, its contention hinges on four crucial points: (1) responsible gun ownership, (2) strict enforcement and implementation of gun control law, (3) the right to carry firearms as a right to self-defense, and (4) it will held innocent civilians more vulnerable and defenseless against criminals. The first crucial point basically obliterates the notion that guns kills people, it is the owner and user of the gun that kills people. The pro-gun society which resembles that of the National rifle Association in the United States believes that banning guns and firearms in public places could not be proven as deterrence to crime rather awareness and education on the possession of guns will since it will make people socially and technically aware on how to use guns properly and understand the consequences of its use.



Because gun control evokes a distinct set of values collectively known as the gun culture, the term gun culture refers to the sentimental attachment of many Americans to firearms. This attachment is rooted between guns and the country's early struggle for survival and independence, the frontier experience, the hunting and sports ethos, and the cultural tradition that has grown about these experiences. In contemporary society, the gun culture revolves around those who continue to use guns for hunting, sporting, and related purposes (Spitzer, 1995).

The second crucial point the pro-gun society raise concerns itself with the strict enforcement and implementation of gun control law. It asserts that there is already an existing law specifically geared to curb the illegal and unlawful possession of firearms, it is just that the law-enforcement agencies and authorities lack the political will to pursue and go against citizens and groups harboring such illegal firearms. Under the gun control law, gun importing companies are exempt from the provision of the law but the question is how to ensure that these imported firearms do not go into the hands of lawless criminals and goes only to law-abiding citizens?

How come private body guards of politicians and celebrities are made to possess a handful of guns while an ordinary citizen goes to possess only a solitary gun? Why loose highly sophisticated and high-powered guns are within the reachability and accessibility of criminal syndicates which engages into bank robberies, kidnap for ransom, and other heinous crimes? Why a habitual drug addict and mentally unstable person manage to still secure licenses to carry firearms in spite of being psychologically and mentally unfit to possess such one? These are just of the questions which the society poses as a challenge as to the implementation of gun control law.

Moorhouse and Wanner (2006) seem to grapple with the answers to the questions when they posit that:

Assuming that gun control is ineffective, the question remains—why? The answer may be twofold. One, it might be that gun control simply does not influence the behavior of criminals in their efforts to obtain and use firearms. Law-abiding citizens can be expected to conform to the law and obtain permits, register guns, and enroll in firearm safety courses. By contrast, there would be no surprise if it were found that criminals regularly violate the law by purchasing guns on illegal black markets or by stealing them. Two, contemporary gun control measures typically attempt to influence the process of purchasing firearms at the point of sale between licensed dealers and their customers. Federal background checks, and often state background checks, waiting periods, and registration, are part of the process. (p. 122)

Spitzer (1988) on his part implies that the gun control debate is not only a cultural dimension but also possesses political underpinnings and partisanship as well insinuating that it is also a legislative battle between the Republicans and the Democrats with the former leaning against gun control, when he opines that:

Opponents of gun control, including the National Rifle Association, deliberately cast the gun control issue in moral terms to evoke the fundamental and personal values underlying the gun culture. The values associated with gun culture are ideologically related to individualism and opposition to governmental intrusion into private citizen's lives. Politically they are connected with the Republican Party, which has historically opposed gun control legislation.

Many social and political controversies in America center on the tension between protecting individual rights and fulfilling the needs and interests of a larger community. Both contends that American collectivism has been steadily declining as Americans focus more and more exclusively on their self-own interests (Celinska, 2007).

The third crucial point tackles the right to carry firearms as matter of self-defense. Assuming that one's life, liberty, and property are threatened or attacked, it is the right of every person to carry firearms to protect and shield itself to such possible threats or attacks by any person, group, or even by its own government. Similarly, the equal protection clause mandates that the issuance of firearms and guns shall be granted to those similarly situated and should be based on reasonable classification. Therefore a society which is not contrary to the purposes of the law such as the pro-gun society shall not be denied to carry firearms if other organizations, societies, and associations were granted license to carry firearms.

McGovern (2012) concurs that the right to bear arms is a basic and fundamental right when he stresses that:

First, there can be no absolute bans on the exercise of the fundamental right of the people to keep and bear arms. This applies to each provision of the Amendment. As such, the second takeaway is that the Second Amendment protects the right to bear Arms as well as the right to keep Arms. No reading of the Amendment's ratification history can possibly support the City of Chicago's complete prohibition on carrying guns outside of one's home. Restricting the right to bear Arms to a person's abode not only renders it redundant with the right to keep Arms, but also conflicts with the need for a well-regulated militia and the ability of the people to exercise their fundamental right to self-defense—the core of the Second Amendment. (p. 496)

Even if the tangible impact of gun control regulation on individual conduct is not great, the National Rifle Association and other gun control opponents stress the slippery slope argument that minimal restrictions on gun ownership could eventually lead to more prohibitive measures later—including an outright denial of the right to bear arms (Kleck, 1996).

The fourth crucial point focuses on the potential vulnerability of law-abiding citizens against gun toting criminals and lawless elements. The gun society argues that disarming the civilians would do more harm than cure. It will leave them defenseless against possible harms and injuries that criminals may inflict on them. Suppose we limit the carry and use of firearms to homes and dwellings, what would happen to now to the person once in a public place when threatened and attacked by a criminal, since most of the crime incidents occurred not at home but in public places.

An argument which Huemer (2003) supports pronouncing that gun control do not provide deterrence to crime incidences and such policy is a policy that enhances and not diminishes crime:

So laws that prevent law-abiding citizens from carrying concealed weapons, or from owning handguns at all, effectively eliminate self-defense uses of guns outside the home, to the extent that the laws are obeyed. We have seen that the best available evidence indicates that such laws increase rather than decrease crime; thus, there is no case for overriding victims' self-defense rights. All mentally competent, noncriminal adults should therefore be allowed to own and carry concealed handguns. The fewer impediments or costs that are placed in the way of their doing so, the better, since any such impediments can be expected to decrease the rate at which victims defend themselves much more than they can be expected to decrease the rate at which criminals carry. (pp. 323–324)

The pro-gun society further contends that banning and disarming civilians of their guns would be enable criminals to violate that law even more and would result into more tragic consequences of criminal impunity. Kauder (1993) sees the need to strike equilibrium and balance approach between individualism and collectivism, between private interest and public interest in dealing with gun control, when he argues that:

Most citizens would agree that the purpose of gun control is to keep guns, usually handguns, out of the hands of criminals. In the case here, the goal was to deter would-be gun traffickers from buying large quantities of handguns. The debate arises, however, when specific methods are introduced in an attempt to achieve this goal. Any restrictions placed on the attainment of firearms must be balanced against the need to preserve the legitimate uses of firearms by individual groups. The extent to which the monthly handgun

limit maintains this balance should be examined in the period following the enactment of the law. (p. 359)

Finally, Wolpert and Gimpel (1998) underscore the collective influence of America's National Rifle Association in perpetuating its self-interest and advancing its political mobility to set and create public perception in favorable to gun ownership when they narrate that:

The National Rifle Association's public relations campaign makes two arguments that highlight the self-interested concerns of gun owners. The first argument is that gun regulations will not keep firearms out of the hands of criminals and other high-risk individuals—they will only create burdens for law-abiding citizens and infringe on Second Amendment rights. The second argument is that widespread gun ownership is one of the best deterrents to and defenses against crime. These arguments, coupled with the high visibility of the NRA and the NRA's ability to mobilize its members, may help trigger self-interested concerns among gun owners. (p. 225)

### ***The four differences: why not a gun ban style?***

Based on the above discussion with regards to the arguments advance by both gun-less society and pro-gun society, it appears that the two opposing camps differ on four crucial points in terms of (1) the locus or place where guns may be used and carried (house versus public place), (2) the focus or object as the source and deterrent of crime (gun versus owner), (3) the empowered agency as a result of gun ban or gun-free policies (police/military versus criminals), and (4) the Legislative agenda (policy-making versus policy-implementation).

On the other hand both societies agreed that much has to be desired with the existing gun control law with the gun-less society batting for its amendments and revisions while the pro-gun society gunning for strict implementation. I would now dwell on the distinct differences which both societies share as an added dimension to the gun theoretical debate and hope to reconcile these differences taking the cue and borrowing some key concepts and theories from other societies worldviews as an aid of literature in the analysis and discussion of these growing literature of gun debate. As I have mentioned, I would draw and heed lessons, resolutions, and experiences from these countries in attempting to search for a common ground on how the gun debate policy may be approached as a matter of incorporation and integration.

### **The first difference: the locus-house versus public place?**

The first difference lies on the locus of operation as to where the guns may be used and carried. The civilians are allowed to carry a gun primarily for the purpose of private protection not for public purposes. The notion that crimes do happen most of the time in public place is a result of the law-enforcement agencies failure to serve and protect the citizenry and is not an outcome of a disarmed and gun-less citizenry or society. The promotion of the common good and general welfare are within the scope and authority of the state through its police and military authorities unless the people decides to take up arms and becomes vigilantes and militias groups engaging in vendetta killings.

The recognition that crimes do occur anywhere, anytime outside of its home or dwellings is beyond the control of an ordinary citizen, what is within its jurisdiction and control which is essentially is duty to protect is its own homes. But the right and duty to make the public place safe, secure, and peaceful belongs within the purview and jurisdiction of the state, police, and the military.

LaFollette (As cited in Stell, 2001, p. 31) on his part is unimpressed by the fact that a gun ban would enrich assaulters and disproportionately impoverish smaller, weaker, and less well-connected potential victims of assault by reducing the costs of assaulting them. Nor, apparently, would he see any fundamental incoherence in a situation in which a person wins a homicide acquittal by successfully invoking his self-defense privilege, but yet is convicted for violating a gun-possession ban, despite the fact that, at trial, his gun-use counted as “necessary but not excessive” force when he exercised his defensive privilege.

Perhaps LaFollette thinks that, in a civilized society, the state has a duty to provide individuals all the physical protection they deserve. If so, individuals deserve no protection because the state owes them none (Stell, 2001, p. 31).

### **The second difference: the focus-gun versus owner?**

The second difference poses a question whether it is the mere possession gun or the gun owner itself are more likely responsible in gun killings and violence. Let us assume that the person is a drug addict, hot-tempered, insane, or psychotic individuals in other words morally, physically, and psychologically unfit, he or she would have not killed anyone without a gun in sight or a firearm within its reach. Logically, the accessibility of

the guns becomes an inducement and precursor in killing others or even killing one’s self. Even assuming that the owner is able-bodied, responsible, law-abiding, intelligent, and educated, it is not a guarantee and an assurance that it would not use it against his enemies, innocents, and strangers given the volatility and unpredictability of human emotions, desires, and passions.

When guns are removed from the visual eye it practically makes gun crimes invisible. Therefore, uprooting the cause would essentially destroy the potentiality and actuality of gun deaths and violence. Gun is which the cause of the crime is the cause of the crime. But Grillot (2011) sounds pessimistic about the possibility of eliminating gun and firearms from human consumption and utilizations when she advances that:

Controlling the spread of small arms and light weapons is, however, extremely difficult for a number of reasons. First, small arms are considered “legitimate” weapons that serve a variety of purposes such as policing, providing for the national defense, and sport shooting. It is not possible, therefore, to discuss ban on these weapons—and their legal trade is difficult to limit given their legitimate uses. Second, these weapons are available in vast numbers. The Small Arms Survey estimates that there are approximately 875 million small arms available around the world—divided among militaries, police forces, militias, and civilians, among others. Third, there are a large number of weapons producers around the world. More than 1,000 companies operating in approximately 100 states manufacture small arms and ammunition. (p. 230)

### **The third difference: the empowered agency—the law enforcers versus criminals?**

The third difference dwells on the question which will be more empowered as a result of gun ban policy, is it the law enforcers comprising of the police and military or the criminals themselves? A gun ban believes otherwise that it would be more beneficial, necessary, and practical for the criminals to impose such policy as what pro-gun society would like to believe. The theory that disarming the civilians would basically shift the firepower to the criminals veering away from the police and military is baseless and unfounded.

In fact, it would expand and give much leeway to the law-enforcement agencies especially the issuing agency of license and firearms to monitor, survey, identify, detect, and prevent the proliferation of firearms. If one gun is to one home is to be enforced, then it would be easier for the government to run after political dynasties who are possessing hundreds or even thousands of illegal and unlicensed firearms. It would even be more fair and rational to the spirit and intent



of the equal protection clause provision of the Constitution.

The thing is widespread crimes occur because the strengthening and the capacity-building of law-enforcement institutions remain to be seen. If the law-enforcement agencies are trusted, and empowered by the citizenry then that is where real progress in crime prevention begins and it begins with the recognition and confidence that the police and military institutions do matter in the fight against crime.

LaFollette (2001) reiterates that the paramount goal of arming the citizenry is to counteract and combat any form of oppression and violence perpetrated and inflicted by the state to its people as a matter of right to self-defense and self-preservation. Gun and firearm ownership are politically justified if the state themselves are the chief and main source of oppression, intimidation, repression, and injustice otherwise it is not politically justified when it does not serve this purpose when he exclaims that:

On the other hand, it is true that an armed citizenry can make the oppressor (or more precisely, the oppressor's army) pay for its oppression. This could discourage some potential oppressors who would be unwilling to pay that cost. However, if the main benefit of an armed citizenry is not to stop governmental threats, but merely to raise the cost of oppression and genocide, then that goal is compatible with strict gun control—far stricter than that I have advocated. First, it would be compatible with the complete abolition of all handguns since handguns would be the least successful defense against governmental aggression. Second, it would be compatible with stringent restrictions on long guns. For instance, we might require that all long guns be stored in locked cabinets, with criminal penalties for those who do not comply. (p. 4)

#### **The fourth difference: the legislative agenda—policy-making versus policy-implementation**

The pro-gun society maintains that there is already a law in place, it just lacks a strict and stringent implementation of the law and a strong political will to enforce it. But if the law itself is defective and inadequate to address the issue of gun with regards to control, crime, and punishment. The reason why there is a propagation and proliferation of loose and unlicensed firearms and the reason why criminals are not afraid to possess such one may be attributed to the fact that corresponding penalty and imprisonment for such crime are lighter compared to other crimes.

A minimum imprisonment for example of 6 months instead of 12 years would not turn off criminals from possessing a deadly unlicensed firearms couple with the

fact that such felonious offense is considered aailable offense. In addition, the law does not specifically embark on a national voluntary disarmament program in which citizens are implored to surrender their arms to the government as part of the amnesty campaign plus an incentive that corresponds to such gun disarmament program.

Moorhouse and Wanner (2006) analyze the link and establish the connection of the incidence of crimes with that of the prevalence of firearms when they remark that:

Advocates argue that gun control laws reduce the incidence of violent crimes by reducing the prevalence of firearms. Gun laws control the types of firearms that may be purchased, designate the qualifications of those who may purchase and own a firearm, and restrict the safe storage and use of firearms. On this view, fewer guns mean less crime. Thus, there is a two-step linkage between gun control and crime rates: (1) the impact of gun control on the availability and accessibility of firearms, particularly handguns and (2) the effect of the prevalence of guns on the commission of crimes. The direction of the effect runs from gun control to crime rates. (p. 103)

#### ***A plethora of voices: the empiricist versus the culturalist debate***

I mentioned that there are two contending forces and participants in the gun debate—the gun-less society and the pro-gun society. Their adversarial arguments were even made more pronounced with the contemporary setbacks and failures of an existing gun control legislation in checking, detecting, and preventing the occurrence of crimes associated with the use of loose and unlicensed firearms and guns. But before dwelling on the groups lobbying for and against gun control, there is recognition that gun debate issues may assume several theories and factors as the basis of for crystallization and clarification for policy-making.

These theories have taken dichotomous and adversarial viewpoints on how the gun debate may be best viewed and understood. There are point of disparities, diversities, and discords in the juxtaposition and interpretation of the causes and effects, of the antecedents and consequents of gun ban and pro-gun agenda and policies but it cannot be denied that there are also similarities, convergences, and commonalities which the two theories share.

In this section, I would assign and pit theories with respect to the understanding of gun control namely the empiricists and the culturalists using the orientation of Frank Fischer (1995) as a basis for policy analysis and evaluation. There are three alternative orientations in Fischer's mind for the lack of serious policy analysis:

the usable knowledge approach, emphasizing the coordination of analysis and decision making; the enlightenment model, stressing the deliberative process itself; and the critique of the policy philosophers, focusing on the deeper methodological implications of integrating facts and values. Fischer concludes with an outline of logic of policy deliberation designed to integrate systematically both empirical and normative evaluation.

The empiricists try to explain gun control on the basis of its effects, results, outputs, and outcomes as input for policy-development, the culturalists on the other hand attempt to explain gun control on the basis of people's attitudes, behaviors, and values and see these cultural variables as an input for gun control policy. Cook and Ludwig (2003) recognize the significant approaches of both empirical and cultural analysis in addressing the gun control debate when they conclude that:

In sum culture clearly matter for public opinion about gun policy in America, but there is also room for empirical analysis to affect policy development not only through its influence on public opinion, but also through its direct influence on judges, regulatory agencies, and legislators. Of course reasonable people will assign different values to the benefits that a given gun policy might achieved in terms of improved safety and health, and to the costs that such program might entail in terms of government budget and foregone liberty or conscience, but empirical analysis can, and should be undertaken to provide some sense of the magnitude to these tradeoffs. (p. 1337)

Taking the cue from Cook and Ludwig, it is necessary to view gun control policy not on holistic manner but on a pragmatic approach, not on absolutist view but more of a relativist way of understanding the gun control debate policy. In other words, the gun control policy may rely or rests not only to solid or exclusive field of approaches but must borrow to a multi-disciplinary and eclectic field of both empirical analysis and cultural worldviews to fashion out a more robust and comprehensive policy on gun control. Furthermore, such assertions of Cook and Ludwig (2003) validate the idea that empirical analysis and cultural worldviews are the bases and assumptions which does not thrive on adversarial and hostile relationships but would work well under the circumstances and conditions of complementary and reciprocal obligations. In as much as public opinion is shaped by an accumulation of peoples personal views, behaviors, values, and attitudes toward gun, but such public opinion may also be reflected, balanced, and tempered by the societal results and outcomes of such gun control.

Moorhouse and Wanner (2006) seem to concur with such observations that in crafting a gun control policy,

a more pragmatic and practical approach to strike a balancing act between empirical analysis and cultural outlook are needed to objectivize and rationalize gun control policy:

Firearms are passed down through generations of family members. They are bought and sold, traded, parted out, and given away among friends, acquaintances, and strangers. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to constrain and regulate the transfer of firearms between non-dealer private parties. Gun control, while politically attractive because it appears to deal directly with the problem, may in fact be a blunt instrument for reducing crime. Effective gun control may entail significant unintended consequences. Government extensive and intrusive enough to regulate all private transfers of firearms would raise significant civil liberties issues. (p. 122)

While gun control policy would yield possible tangible results of having fewer deaths and violence through the use of guns, it cannot overlook also the potential clash of such gun policy with the infringement of human rights made more pronounced by cultural backlash and predilections of group of people. The intention and the spirit of the gun policy may be noble and inevitably good, but if there are cultural rights and freedoms which may have been unintentionally transgressed by the policy the result would still be contestation and collision of competing interests. The gun policy therefore, while advancing and promoting its legitimate purposes, cannot afford to be indifferent and insensitive to other people's cultural temperaments. Just like Cook and Ludwig (2003), Moorhouse and Wanner (2006) stress the importance of analyzing and explaining the gun control debate from both an empirical and cultural perspective. Empirical in a sense that it should be able to lay down the principles and objectives of such gun policy without disregarding the cultural worldviews of the people that may be affected by it. Cultural in a sense that while understanding background assumptions of the people which may be affected by it, it should not lose sight of its primary and paramount goal—that is to prevent the occurrences of crimes and violence connected with the use of guns.

Braman, Kahman, and Grimmelman (2005) on the other hand give the empirical-cultural pragmatic approach certain twist by prescribing a normative approach favoring cultural worldviews and cultural meanings as a basis of resolving the gun debate when they stated that, "The normative upshot, we argued, was that policymakers and analysts who desire to resolve the gun debate should focus less on amassing and presenting data on the consequences of gun control and more on formulating gun policies rich enough in

social meaning to appeal to a broad range of cultural outlooks.” (p. 284)

For these authors, the cultural interpretation, signification, and meaning of gun is by far a more paramount importance in assessing whether a gun control is necessary because each culture have their varied interpretation and meanings of a gun. The intended consequences of a gun policy on an empirical mode, meaning presenting data, information, and knowledge would be irrelevant and inconsequential if policy-makers would create a blurred vision on how guns are viewed and understood on the basis of cultural worldviews.

The public opinion poll indicated a consensus of support among Virginia’s citizens for a monthly limit on handgun purchases. Proponents of the proposed law were most likely to be older, females, and non-white, while opponents were most likely to be males, whites, younger, from rural areas, and handgun owners (Kauder, 1993, p. 359). Earlier research at the national level on public attitudes toward specific gun control measures revealed the importance of these same factors when determining levels of support (Crocker, 1982).

This would clearly indicate why the gun debate is a cultural debate. Group or class of people has diverse views and interpretation of the meaning of a gun into their lives. Before policy-makers on the gun debate speculate or anticipate the consequences of a gun control or gun ban law, they must first immerse and identify themselves with the cultural outlook, attitudes, behaviors, and tendencies of the group of people which may be affected by such enactment and implementation of the law. They have to dig deeper on what cultural background assumptions and where does lobbying for and against gun control policy is coming from because only by understanding them beneath their cultural predispositions and predilections that policy-makers can have a better and objective grasp of what the gun debate is all about. Consider this plethora of voices emanating from various groups and stakeholders in the gun control debate.

In the current political environment, realistic alternatives would not come from political leaders but from committed and compassionate people of faith at the grass root levels who act and speak boldly. While many pastor remain reluctant to address the gun debate gun violence prevention, other clergy and lay leaders are experiencing spiritual renewal as they proclaim a message of life in the midst of the culture of death (Boyd, 2011).

Members of the American Association of School Administrators voted to pass one such resolution during a meeting of delegates last month. The resolution

was by no means an explicit endorsement of gun control, stating only that such strategies as raising the minimum age for gun ownership, limiting the availability of ammunition, requiring child-safety locks, and securing privately owned guns must be considered (Sandham, 2000).

Gun owners are likely to be from the South and live in rural rather than urban areas (Dixon & Lizotte, 1987; Bankston et al., 1990; Ellison, 1991; Marciniak & Loftin, 1991; Marshall & Webb, 1992; Young, 1986). Protestants are more likely to own guns than those of other religious traditions (Marciniak & Loftin, 1991; Sheley et al., 1994). Whites are more likely to be gun owners than blacks (Marciniak & Loftin, 1991; Marshall & Webb, 1992). Gun ownership tends to increase in income and age and is more prevalent among men than women (Bankston, Thomson, Jenkins, & Forsyth, 1990; Branscombe & Owen, 1991; Marciniak & Loftin, 1991; Marshall & Webb, 1992; Young, 1986).

Blacks are more supportive of gun control than whites, Protestants and those without religious affiliations are more opposed to gun control than Catholics and Jews. Women are more consistently supportive of gun control than men, perhaps because traditional female upbringing generally includes values such as pacifism and sympathy (Smith, 1980).

Kleck (1996) however finds that the Jews are more supportive of requiring police permits for gun ownership but the membership in Protestant groups is unrelated to attitudes toward permit. He also indicates that gender is not significantly associated with police permit requirements on gun ownership, suggesting that the strong bivariate between gender and permit opinion is attributable to the fact that women are less likely to own guns.

In restrictive states, residents may have become accustomed to state laws, regulating the sale and ownership of firearms. The passage of an additional law may not seem like too great a departure from the status quo. In states, where there are few or no restrictions, there may be more opposition to gun control because the passage of the hand gun ban or other restrictions would be considered an extraordinary measure contrary to local tradition and history (Wolpert & Gimpel, 1998).

In Brazil, de Souza et al. (2007) found out that gun control legislation also implies the civil society involvement and participation in the policy-legitimization process when they noted that:

There had been similar laws banning the possession of unregistered handguns. However, these policies were

not widely or consistently enforced. The variation in effectiveness of the new measures regionally and in different metropolitan areas shows that expected policy impacts are likely to differ depending on the geography and demographics, political commitment, and overall climate of that city or municipality. Nevertheless, the results of this study suggest that even in the absence of legislation altogether banning firearms, tougher gun laws coupled with mobilization of civil society have made a difference in reducing gun-related violence in Brazil. (p. 582)

These reveal that the gun the debate issues cannot be resolved by policy-making alone which relies on legalistic or empirical norms, but it has to weigh in the multifarious factors cultural and political norms such as geography, demography, popular support, confidence, and legitimacy of civil society participation. A gun policy which drew solid support from the people and where the civil society could rally behind yields effective results as what the Brazilian models have proven which also launched a national voluntary disarmament program to reduce the occurrences of gun violence and gun crimes.

Wolpert and Gimpel (1998) citing Schuman and Presser (1981) seem to concur with the assertion that civil society lobbyists, interest, and pressure groups play a cogent role in the agenda setting and policy-making attributes of gun control singling out the National Rifle Association as an epitome of collectivism and mobilism in the pursuit of self-interest or group-interest as against public interest:

It also submitted to the people through a referendum a gun ban legislation which suffers a setback primarily because of the massive National Rifle Association's campaign and lobby success to influence voter's decisions which somehow validates Schuman and Presser (1981) findings that although supporters of gun control have more intense feelings than opponents, opponents were much more likely to engage in collective action—writing letters, contributing money—than supporters. If, as Schuman and Presser argue, it is the superior organizational effectiveness of gun rights groups that explains this differential, it may also explain why self-interested attitudes are triggered on gun control. It is true, of course, that we do not provide a direct test of group mobilization on self-interest. (p. 261)

In Canada, Snider, Ovens, Drummond, and Kapur (2009) suggest that gun registration and stringent gun control provide deterrence to the decline of gun violence and death usually associated with suicide and intimate partner homicide:

Firearm-related injury and death continue to be a significant problem. Since the 1990s Canadian emergency physicians (EPs) have played an active role in advocating for gun control. This article updates the

Canadian Association of Emergency Physician's (CAEP's) position on gun control. Despite a media focus on homicide, the majority of firearm-related deaths are a result of suicide. Less than 40% of firearm-related injuries are intentionally inflicted by another person. Since the implementation of Canada's gun registry in 1995, there has been a significant reduction in firearm-related suicides and intimate partner homicides. Proposed weakening of gun laws in Canada will have a significant impact on firearm-related mortality and injury. There must be instead an expansion of programs focused on prevention of suicide, intimate partner violence, and gang-related violence. (p. 64)

Where there is a high incidence of suicide rates and intimate partner homicide which is a psychological and a cultural challenge, gun control would be a cultural thing to do particularly if such deaths are attributable to the use of firearms and there is more likely a correlation with the reduction of such deaths with the gun control policies. A number of suicide and intimate partner violence could then be averted by stringent and tougher gun control laws and policies which prevent the occurrence of such by eliminating the opportunity on the part of the victim and the offender to obtain firearms in his or her perusal and use it as an instrument for crime.

Korblum (1994, p. 230) asserts that, "In a study comparing rates of violent crime in Denmark and northeastern Ohio, investigators found that rates of assault did not differ in the two areas. What did differ were rates of homicide using firearms; such crimes were much more frequent in Ohio. In Denmark the possession of handguns is banned, whereas in the United States "50% of all households have guns and one in five has a handgun." Obviously, the message is that guns are troublesome, but Korblum's position is contradicted by the bar chart below it that shows Switzerland with 32.6% of its households possessing guns has a homicide rate almost identical to The Netherlands where only 2% of households possess guns (Tonso, 2004, p. 69).

This comparative study suggests that the gun debate and gun policy cuts both ways, it may be a deterrent to the commission of crimes or it may be a non-deterrent. It is deterrent in the case of Denmark as compared to the United States, but it may be a non-deterrent as in the case between Switzerland and The Netherlands. But one thing may be evident, a society's cultural and attitudinal values toward the use of firearms and guns varies and these variation must be understood by policy-makers in formulating and crafting policy which they think would be custom-built for a given society considering the data, evidences, and challenges that it



poses for the necessity, practicability, and beneficiality of the laws or policies.

In the study of cultural variation Palen (2001, pp. 327–328) also contends that the recognition of cultural variation is of crucial importance in tackling the gun debate policy when he stresses that: “There are, of course, cultural variations among the United States, Japan, and England. However, while Japan may be culturally different from the United States, the same argument cannot as easily be applied to Canada. In Canada, where handguns also are banned [which is not true], there were 128 handgun deaths in 1994. The vastly higher U.S. figures are largely due not to cultural differences but to the ready availability of guns in the United States, where there are now more than 200 million guns (Tonso, 2004, pp. 69–70).

On the other hand, Cockerham (1995, p. 451) asserts that, “There is also much greater drug abuse and availability of handguns in the United States than in low-crime countries like Japan.” In 1996, Kendall (1996, p. 86) wrote: “Many people consider owning a gun to be a constitutional right, however, widespread ownership of guns tends to produce more deadly violence in a society.”

Schaefer and Lamm (1998, p. 206) likewise cited gun control as “a factor in the comparatively low rates of serious crime in Japan. No one may keep a handgun at home, not even police officers. While shotguns and hunting rifles are allowed, there are strict restrictions on their ownership and use. A person caught with a loaded gun faces a 15-year prison term; so many street criminals do not carry guns. Consequently, in 1995, only 32 people in Japan were murdered by a person using a firearm.

All these authors sounded with unanimity that gun control works effectively well in the Japan cultural setting where gun control is clearly shown as a strong deterrence to crime incidence attributable to the restrictions of gun prevalence and graver punishment for illegal possession of firearms. Hence, a gun control policy is culture friendly and is customized for Japan considering the mitigating effects it brings to the occurrences of crimes.

In Australia, Christie (1999) sees the gun control issue as a law of diminishing returns which is necessarily tied up to a whole gamut of social, cultural, economic, and health issues when he opines that:

Firearm ownership increases the likelihood that a violent death will occur by gunshot, and firearm availability in the setting of widespread social dysfunction will raise overall rates of violent death. However, there is little evidence that further reducing firearm ownership in Australia will reduce our overall homicide or suicide

rates. Firearm control is subject to a law of diminishing returns, and can form only a small part of a successful strategy to minimize violent death in Australia. This strategy will also need to address a variety of issues, including a culture of alcohol and drug abuse, the cultural acceptance of “entertainment” violence and issues of poverty and mental illness. To do this properly, we must resist the temptation to short-circuit the need for any other explanation. While a culture of impunity or culture of violence may occur, it does not necessarily imply and entail that it is attributable to the culture of gun but includes a lot of cultural and social issues such as drug abuse, poverty, unemployment, lack of education, and health problems. (p. 200)

The challenge is to identify the gun policy which may be best suited for a particular culture underscoring the social, political, moral, historical, economic, and physical underpinnings which a particular society is made and built upon.

While the term “gun culture” may not be logically dichotomous, the language and images used by gun control advocates and gun rights supporters are intensely polarized. Advocates of stronger gun control identify what they consider a disturbing pattern of attitudes toward the use of firearms and their association with violence and death. Gun rights supporters find a similarly emotional set of beliefs among gun opponents that include what is considered an irrational fear of guns and a tendency to view firearms as evil forces independent of the individuals wielding them. Certain terms that have been used in the debates over the advisability of additional controls on firearms indicate this tendency to dichotomize the positions.

For instance, while postwar popular culture used the term “gun bug” to refer to those who have a fascination with firearms, today the term of reference is more likely to be “gun nut,” which conveys a far less favorable connotation. From the other side of the debate, those who favor additional gun control measures are referred to as “gun grabbers” (Utter & True, 2000, p. 67).

Casteen (2004) further draw the polarization and dichotomization of the actors and the protagonists in the gun control issue even, depicting the gun control debate as a battle of “right-wing gun nuts” versus the “marching moms” when he enunciated that:

The argument has, of course, become polarized and is at present dominated by two equal and opposite sets of shrill extremists. On one side are those convinced that the right (possibly the responsibility) to own and carry guns is a national patrimony handed down from the framers; their core constituency is a fairly recently politicized group formerly called “sportsmen” and now popularly known as “right-wing gun nuts.” On the other side are those who believe it a moral and legal imperative that the government do whatever it must to

prevent gun related violence by further restricting the purchase and ownership of guns; this group, whose ranks include the fundamentally well intentioned million marching moms, differ in their experience with firearms but have in common conviction that we'd all be better off without them. (p. 210)

The gun debate is not only a matter of politics and economics. But also a matter of semantics. Sometimes, it is the terms and meanings assign to gun-less and pro-gun society which makes society deeply divided. The worldviews and interpretations assigned and the signification attached to each other makes society's polarization and dichotomization even more pronounced, magnified, and exacerbated because the way interaction and discourse are done and the manner of treatment each side puts on the discussion table. The social labeling and stereotyping allows people to cast judgments and aspersions which may be baseless and unfounded but remains and endures because of the way they construe and interpret the meaning of a gun without cultural bases.

Just like Utter and True (2000) who clearly categorize and compare the focus of attitudes involved between a pro-gun and pro-control advocates toward firearms, second amendment, crime, government, national history, gun control, the opposition, publicized shootings, national defense, and firearms manufacturers to have a more comprehensive, robust, and broader cultural outlook of the gun debate; policy-makers too should be able to categorize and classify the cultural specifics and variables which would form and constitute an integral part in the continuum of gun debate coupled with the proper semantics attached to it.

## Conclusion

The gun debate would remain debatable and controversial as long as gun violence and gun crimes persist. While the existence of gun control talks is heightened by the fact that violence and crimes exist associated with the use of gun but such occurrences of violence and crimes connected with guns also contribute in a way for the passage and enactment of a stricter gun control policy, which may be ostensibly and reversibly wrong or right depending on whose side are you in the gun debate in the context of a gun as deterrent to criminality rates or incidence.

Whichever the way, the article suggests that a stricter gun control through gun ban approach may be considered if the paramount goals and objectives of a given society would be compatible with the reduction of crime occurrences associated with the use of guns. The gun ban approach is practical, necessary, and

beneficial in a number of ways, first, it eliminates the source of a crime occurrences on the part of a citizen or civilian user within the confines of homes and beyond it, second it promotes stricter laws on illegal possession of loose and unlicensed firearms, third, it empowers and builds confidence on the police and military as an institution whose goal is to serve and protect the citizenry, ensure public safety and security, and maintain peace and tranquility and lastly it practically prevents and stops the potential use of guns as tool for gun crimes and gun violence.

The gun-less society on its part would stick to its notion that guns are the source in the occurrence and prevalence of crimes while the pro-gun society would live and live in its perception that it is not the gun which is the culprit of the crime, it is the user of such gun. Although empirical analysis findings on gun would seem to concentrate on the consequences and implications of a strict or lax gun policies, gun ban or gun-free society, gun-less or pro-gun society, these results and outcomes hardly matter in terms of the qualitative outlook and world view of specific cultural group or classes of people affected by the enactment of preferred policy.

This chosen gun policy would not alter a person's understanding of a gun as long as the common cultural components such as values, beliefs, traditions, norms, folkways, history, mores, and customs have remain embedded to the who, what, why, and how they view guns. The cultural dimensions of the gun debate would always take its precedence and prevalence over other factors primarily because it consciously influence people and society on how guns and all other meanings assign to it on whether owning a gun is a matter of a lifestyle or a matter of taboo; a way of life or a way of perdition, whether it promotes a culture of peace or a culture of violence, fosters a culture of understanding or a culture of impunity, and creates a culture of life or a culture of death. It is a choice, but it is also a destiny.

Finally, allow me to end the article to cite the quotation culled from Fremling and Lott (2003) on how cultural values, attitudes, and cultural experiences matter in resolving the gun debate as basis for policy-making:

If values do not come from the facts that we encounter—either through our own experiences, those we learn from other individuals, or from evidence of scientific nature—where would they come from? Are values the result of pure randomness? Not likely. There must be some contributing factors. Are the values the result of innate human instinct? Possibly some. But if one were to argue that attitudes originate from religion, politics, or moral philosophy, would not these attitudes originate from the perceptions held by prophets, politicians, and philosophers? And these perceptions

would not be based on reason alone, but on these individual's experiences as well as experiences and facts related to them by other individuals. (p. 1341)

What is important on the issue of gun debate rests on the ability of experiences and culture of two competing group which is not anchored on dichotomous relationships but that harmonious understanding that they both originate from diverse experiences and cultures which may not be necessarily alike, but have capable connections of engaging in healthy discourse, debate, and deliberation. Because both camps believe that only through these discursive and deliberative process that both groups may educate and learn from each other and avoid the trapings of false judgments and disrespect in the searching and knowing the solution for the gun question on the basis of both their experience and culture.

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