Mothers Under the Gun:

Stemming the Tide of Youth Gun Homicide

Dannetta B. Sparks

Beulah Heights University

Abstract

Expressions of grief only a mother knows reflect the experience of physical pain suffered by her dead child or the pain of knowing her child took the life of another child. The tragic position of a homicide victim's mother or the mother of the perpetrator of youth gun homicide endows the opposing mothers with a sense of despair that connects the two. Victim blaming of parents-especially mothers- is the catalyst that propels women's mother-based instincts to act in sync to stem the tide of youth gun homicide. This phenomenological study examined the mothers of African American sons perceptions of the influences and causes of youth gun crimes, and the leadership roles mothers will take in the decrease of youth-on youth gun homicide. This research draws on female knowledge-making, long overlooked by policymakers and often overlooked by researchers, to lead the African-American communities in Metropolitan Atlanta in preventing youth gun homicide.

Keywords: mothers, homicide, race, gun violence, youth, victims, perpetrators

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Chapter: Introduction to the Study

Research Background

The voices of children, youth, and families who are most affected by violence must be front and center. Collectively, the outcry of the affected youths and families can prevent and eliminate violence and improve well-being. The introduction to the research is framed by certain elements to lead the inquiry. The components include the discussion of the research problem or need for study based on real-life issues or discussion in the literature, the summary of recent scholarly literature that has addressed this research problem, the review of the deficiencies in the existing literature pointing to a need for this study, and the explanation of how specific audiences or stakeholders will profit from the study.

The effects of gun violence extend far beyond those struck by a bullet: An estimated three million children witness a shooting each year. Youth gun violence shapes the lives of the children who witness it, know someone who was shot, or live in fear of the next shooting. The current study focused on the response of mothers of the victims and the mothers of the perpetrators of youth gun homicide. The introduction to the research is framed by certain elements to lead the investigation: discussion of the research problem or need for study based on real-life issues or discussion in the literature, a summary of recent scholarly literature that has addressed this research problem, analysis of the deficiencies in the existing literature pointing to a need for this study, explanation of how specific audiences or stakeholders will profit from the study.

Youth violence is a significant problem that affects thousands of young people each day, and in turn, their families, schools, and communities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC), 2018). Youth violence and crime affect a community's economic health, as well as individuals' physical and mental health and well-being. Homicide is the third leading cause of death for youth in the United States (CDC, 2018). In 2016, more than 530,000 young people ages 10-24 were treated in emergency departments for injuries sustained from violence (CDC, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2018). The findings underscore the need for sound solutions to address this critical public problem.

Problem Statement

Knowledge production by women deserves increased attention; doing so contributes to better interpreting the domains and conditions of our lives. Marginalization of African American women's perspectives continues within academic and popular discourse. One occasion, when the public pays attention to African American women, is upon the tragic deaths of their children. Specifically, mothers of urban homicide victims face important rhetorical moments that facilitate how individuals and urban communities respond to such violence.

The local and national news media add to the response to gun homicide, as reports feature the reactions of victims' mothers, placing them in the position of having to make meaning of their children's deaths and thereby endow these children's lives with value. African American youth are the most likely victims of gun violence (Beard, 2017; Ferdman, Reeves & Holmes, 2015).

Youth- on-youth gun violence leading to homicide and its associated personal and criminal repercussions pose a significant threat to the African American community, especially in lower-socioeconomic areas. Although researchers have gathered many numerical data concerning gun violence incidence in the United States and Atlanta, few researchers have conducted qualitative studies on best policies based on the perceptions of the major stakeholders.

For example, prior research may have revealed how prevalent gun violence has become within Metropolitan Atlanta. Still, little research has explored how gun violence has personally affected the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of mothers that buried their children and mothers that lost their children to the prison systems. After objectively assessing the facts and working collaboratively for common-sense solutions, the revelation is clear that mothers are key to the answer to youth gun violence.

To address the problem in the study , the researcher gathered a collecting of information on the perspectives of 10 participants, all mothers in the Metropolitan Atlanta community. Each mother lost a son to youth gun homicide within the last eight years. If the voices of mothers are included in the prevention symposiums addressing youth gun homicide, they might help to control and manage issues contributing to its incidences, such as gun production, distribution, and ownership and the social parameters that drive youth gun violence.

The call to end gun violence is a call to end structural violence. Intercultural violence exists as long as false allegiances and the fictional –then-real borders remain between us. Mothers' laments, decrying the devastation and destruction caused by youth gun violence, move the status quo to pains that need to be felt and then addressed. Mothers' pains are healed when a corporate and communal experience of pain causes healing of the ills of youth gun violence and homicide.

Literature Review Search Strategy

The literature review focuses on intentional gun violence involving youths ages 10 to 24. The homicide includes (victimization and perpetration), nonfatal injuries, suicides, community violence, and school violence/school shootings. Not explored is unintentional gun violence (including accidental injuries or deaths from guns).

A systematic process locates literature on adolescent homicide, adolescent suicide, and adolescent firearm deaths. The research on these topics was summarized to provide an overview of the issues.

The literature consulted to establish the relevance of youth gun violence ending in a homicide was selected from various sources. I conducted a literature search using electronic data sources that included the databases of Columbia Theological University Seminary, Atlanta University, Emory University, and Google Scholar. Databases that I accessed online included ProQuest Digital Dissertations, EBSCOhost, and Sage Publications, the CDC, and various medical journals. Keywords and phrases searched contained gun violence in the United States, gun violence in Atlanta, repercussions of gun violence, the aftermath of gun violence, effects of gun violence, the incidence of gun violence, victims of gun violence in the United States, victims of gun violence in Metropolitan Atlanta, the city of Atlanta Police Department statistics on youth gun homicide, the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice statistics on youth gun homicide, statistics on youth gun homicide in urban areas, causes of gun violence, and slight variations of these terms. The literature review included peer-reviewed articles, books, studies, and dissertations. Subtopics discussed included the extent of gun violence and strategies t to decrease the incidence of gun violence in the modern-day.

Rationale and Significance

In the two weeks before June 1, 2018, at least eight teens died as a result of youth gun homicide in metro Atlanta. Ironically, though the numbers of gun homicides sound like a lot during a short period, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation surmised that the number of deaths was not unusual. The agency tracks the number of child homicides by gun up to age 17. But the string of recent incidents has left people in the metro Atlanta area feeling discouraged.

Youth violence is collective**.** Nearly 1 in 5 high school students reported being bullied on school property in the last year, and about 1 in 7 were electronically bullied (texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media). The impact of youth violence goes beyond physical consequences. Adverse childhood experiences, like youth violence, are associated with adverse health and well-being outcomes across the life course. Youth violence increases the risk of behavioral and mental health difficulties. The hazards include future violence, perpetration and victimization, smoking, substance use, obesity, high-risk sexual behavior, depression, academic challenges, school dropout, and suicide.

Youth violence kills and injures**.** Homicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24. Each day, about 14 young people are victims of murder, and about 1,300 treated in emergency departments for nonfatal assault-related injuries.

Youth violence is costly**.** Youth homicides and nonfatal physical assault-related injuries result in more than $21 billion annually in combined medical and lost productivity costs alone, not including costs associated with the criminal justice system, psychological and social consequences for victims, perpetrators, and their families, or expenses incurred by communities.

Youth violence starts early. Physical aggression can be common among toddlers, but most children learn alternatives to using force to solve problems and express their emotions before starting school. Some children may remain aggressive and become more violent. Some early childhood risk factors include impulsive behavior, poor emotional control, and lack of social and problem-solving skills. Many risk factors are the result of experiencing chronic stress, which can alter and or harm the brain development of children and youth.

Youth violence is an adverse childhood experience connected to other forms of violence, including child abuse and neglect, teen dating violence, adult intimate partner violence, sexual

violence, and suicide. Different types of violence have shared risk and protective factors, and victims of one form of violence are more likely to experience other forms of violence.

When youth use guns to kill others, it is only natural for citizens and policymakers to seek to identify the cause. However, as President Obama noted, violent behavior is very complicated. Evidence, as well as theories about the origins of youth violence, implicate multiple influences occurring in complex combinations over differing time scales (from distal to immediate) that lead to acts of violence (David- Ferdon & Simon, 2019). There is considerable interest in identifying critical risk and protective factors for youth violence, and particularly those influences that may be malleable.

Parents have a great deal of influence on their children. Studies have shown that parents influence their children based on the attitudes and beliefs that they model to their children. Sutherland's differential association theory highlighted that children learn through association and that criminal behavior emerges when exposed to more social messages favoring criminal behavior (Sutherland, 1974).

If Sutherland's differential association theory is valid, children learn through association, and criminal behavior emerges when exposed to more social messages favoring criminal behavior (Sutherland, 1974). At the time of Edwin H. Sutherland's work, social structure theories – social disorganization and strain – were prevalent. However, Sutherland asserted that delinquent behavior is a function of learning and not a function of either the ability to obtain economic success or of living in a socially disorganized area of a city. He made formal propositions that demonstrate that social interaction and learning lead to delinquency. 1. Crime behavior is learned. 2. Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in the process of communication. The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs with

intimate personal groups. 4. When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes techniques

of committing the crime, specific directions of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes. 5.

The particular directions of motives and drives come from definitions of the legal codes as

favorable or unfavorable. 6. A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions

favorable to violation of the law over definitions unfavorable to violation of the law.

7. Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity. 8. The

process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns

involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning. 9. While criminal

behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs

and values, since non-criminal behavior is an expression of the same needs and values (Taylor,

Fritsch 2011, p 130-131).

Sutherland's (1974) Subculture Theory is a set of values, norms, and beliefs that differs

from those within the dominant culture:

- Biological and Personal History

  The first level identifies biological and personal history factors that increase the

  likelihood of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence. Some of these factors are age,

  education, income, substance use, or history of abuse. Prevention strategies, at this level,

  promote attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that prevent violence. Specific approaches may

  include education and life skills training.

- Relationship

  The second level examines close relationships that may increase the risk of experiencing

  violence as a victim or perpetrator. A person's closest social circle-peers, partners, and

  family members-influences their behavior and contributes to their experience. Prevention

strategies at this level may include parenting or family-focused prevention programs and

mentoring, and peer programs designed to reduce conflict, foster problem-solving skills,

and promote healthy relationships.

- Community

The third level explores the settings, such as schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods, in

which social relationships occur and seeks to identify the characteristics of these settings

that are associated with becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. Prevention

strategies at this level impact the social and physical environment – for example, by

reducing social isolation, improving economic and housing opportunities in

neighborhoods, as well as the climate, processes, and policies within school and

workplace settings.

- Societal

The fourth level looks at the broad societal factors that help create a climate in which

violence is encouraged or inhibited. These factors include social and cultural norms that

support violence as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts. Other significant societal

factors include the health, economic, educational and social policies that help to maintain

economic or social inequalities between groups in society

Statistics show a disproportionate number of youth perpetrators of youth gun homicide

live in single-parent households led by females. The present study enhanced knowledge in the

area of female parents' role in the area of youth gun crimes.

Many types of violence are interconnected, and firearm violence does not stand in

isolation when developing preventive interventions. There are several strategies to prevent

violence. It is also important to address poverty and the other contextual factors that mediate and

moderate the risk for these forms of violence. The strategies include street outreach approaches

which when implemented entirely associate with reductions in gun violence, gang-related

violence, homicide, and nonfatal assault-related injuries universal school-based programs as

noted previously; early childhood education, which has demonstrated long-term effects on youth

involvement in serious violence and delinquency, and therapeutic approaches, which have shown

impacts on adolescent suicidal behavior, youth gang involvement, felony arrests for

violence, and the harms of violence exposures (Wilkins, Tsao, Hertz, Davis, & Klevens,

2014).

Family support, community intervention, and policy and social change efforts focused on

providing support are integral to coping (Bailey, Hannays-King, Clarke, Lester, & Velasco,

2013; Bailey, Sharma, & Jubin, 2013; Bryant   Davis, Adams, & Gray, 2017; Santilli, O'Connor,

Duffany, Carroll-Scott, Thomas, Greene, Arora, & Ickovic, 2017). Researchers examining

coping behaviors have shown that positive, problem-focused strategies are related to better

outcomes (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017).

Resistance, a step beyond coping (e.g., protesting, organizing, advocating for policy

reform), is a means of actively working to interrupt traumatic experiences and their

consequences (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017) and can be instrumental in recovering from experiences

of gun violence. A key issue is also the recognition of how society distinguishes gun violence in

White, suburban neighborhoods from gun violence in the minority, urban communities. To

create better physical and emotional outcomes for all, we must acknowledge that gun violence in

minority neighborhoods is not a Black or Brown problem-it's a national one.

Youths in the United States can be involved with violence as perpetrators, victims, or

witnesses bystanders (David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014; OJJDP 2014). Violence is the "intentional

use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either result in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation" (David, Ferdon, Corinne & R. Simon, 2014: CDC, 2017).

Moreover, youth gun violence is when a gun or firearm is present in the process of youth (ages 10–24) intentionally using force or power to threaten or harm others. A child is a victim of gun violence when he or she is injured or killed as a consequence of someone (a youth or an adult) intentionally using a gun to threaten or harm someone (whether the youth victim was the intended target or not.

Research Site

The research site under review is the community meeting room of the State of Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice located on Covington Highway, Decatur, GA.

Existing Evidence

The incidences of children and teens in metropolitan Atlanta who experience gun deaths and injuries mirror the staggeringly high percentage rates of youth-on-youth gun violence in the United States. 2:1 is the ratio of American children and youth killed by guns versus the number of American children and youth killed by cancer. According to an analysis by the University of Michigan Injury Prevention Center, the United States' rate of gun death among children is 36.5 times the overall rate observed in other high-income countries. A deeper dive into the American figures shows us that guns claim more children's lives annually than cancer. Car crashes remain the top cause of death among children, but the gap is shrinking. While the rate of vehicular fatalities has dropped dramatically in recent years, the gun death rate is on the rise.

Firearm violence in the United States is the third leading cause of death and the second leading cause of injury-related death among 0-17-year-old children. Boys account for 82% of all firearm deaths among children. Youth aged 13-17 have a firearm injury rate that is 12 times higher than that of children below 13 years old (Fowler, Dahlberg, Haileyesus, Gutierrez, & Bacon, 2017). In 2016, approximately one out of every three United States households contained a firearm; only 46% of these gun owners stored their guns safely, and almost 40% of these homes had children under the age of 18 (Crifasi, Doucette, McGinty, Webster, & Barry, 2018). While firearms related to 74% of all homicides during 2015-2016, they were the cause of death in 87% of all youth homicides; firearm deaths have shown a recent increase in frequency, with the highest rates measured in large metropolitan areas (Kegler, Dahlberg, & Mercy, 2018).

Guns kill about ten times more black children than they do white children each year, according to a new analysis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report, published in the journal *Pediatrics,* analyzed the number of gun-related homicides, suicides, and unintentional deaths and injuries among U.S. children from 2002 to 2014. Researchers looked at hospital reports and death certificates, as well as overall patterns and trends.

Black children faced the highest rates of gun-related homicides, at 3.5 for every 100,000, researchers found. That's nearly ten times the rate for white children, at .4 for 100,000. In many cases, researchers noted, gun-related deaths occur "in multi-victim events and involved an intimate partner or family conflict." Gun-related deaths also disproportionately affected young boys and older children. Researchers found that gun-related deaths, injuries, and homicides are higher among boys ages 13 to 17 than teen girls and younger boys (Fowler, Dahlberg, Haileyesus, Gutierrez, & Bacon, 2017).

Each episode of violence between young people ruins lives forever. The grief of victims' families cannot be imagined by those who have not experienced it. However, they are not the only ones who grieve. Perpetrators and their families must mourn the life that could have been, without jail sentences and lifelong punishments, which, while justified, come with their loss. While firearms related to 74% of all homicides during 2015-2016, they were the cause of death in 87% of all youth homicides. Firearm deaths have shown a recent increase in frequency, with the highest rates measured in large metropolitan areas. Estimates suggest that between victims and perpetrators, 1 million years of potential life are lost annually due to gun homicides. That is a devastating chasm for society to cross.

Youth violence is the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10-24. It typically involves young people hurting other peers who are unrelated to them and who they may or may not know well. Youth violence takes different forms. Examples include fights, bullying, threats with weapons, and gang-related violence. A young person can be involved with youth violence as a victim, offender, or witness.

The CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention (2018) made the following observations; 1. Children and teens that live in cities are at a significantly higher risk of gun homicides and assaults compared to their peers in rural areas, 2. Ninety-two percent of all hospitalizations of children for firearm injuries occur in urban areas (counties with over 50,000 residents), 3. These injuries have lifelong consequences: Almost 50 percent of the wounded have a disability when discharged from the hospital, 4. Fifteen- to 19-year-olds in urban areas are hospitalized for firearm assaults at a rate eight times higher than 15-to 19-year-olds in rural areas, 5. Urban and low-income youth are much more likely to witness gun violence than suburban and higher-income youth, 6.

However, among youth 15 to 24 years of age, homicide remains the leading cause of death for black males and the third leading cause of death for white males, with the crude rate of gun homicides for black males being over ten times that of their white counterparts. Furthermore, the devastating effect of firearm violence on youth in America does not just involve homicides; for every young person killed with a gun, there are about four other youths who are victims of nonfatal gun assaults (Vittes, Vernick, &Webster, 2013).

The willingness to use lethal force exacerbates the problems associated with high levels of poverty, single-parent households, educational failures, and a widespread sense of economic hopelessness. This hypothesized process suggested by national data has been tested with Atlanta city-level data on juvenile arrests for drugs and homicides, taking advantage of the fact that drug markets flourished at different times in different cities. Sadly, the connection between the recruitment of juveniles into the crack markets and the rise in handgun homicides coincide with the rising rates of youth deaths by gun homicide.

Annually, nearly 2,900 children and teens (ages 0 to 19) are shot and killed, and approximately 12,706 shot and injured represents an average of 51 American young people every day. And the effects of gun violence extend far beyond those struck by a bullet: An estimated three million children witness a shooting each year. Gun violence shapes the lives of the children who see it, know someone shot, or live in fear of the next shooting (Shattuck, & Hamby, 2015).

While little research exists on specific risk factors for youth gun violence, the risk factors associated with severe youth violence are relevant to any discussion of youth gun violence. Among the known risk factors for youth violence, emotional distress, violence exposure, alcohol use, and peer delinquency, links to youth gun violence. Of these risk factors, the most reliable

and most consistent predictor of youth gun violence is the exposure to or a history of violence

(Barnert, Perry, Azzi, Shetgiri, et al. 2016).

Purpose of the Study

This phenomenological study explores female parental roles as leaders against youth gun

crimes. The study provides insight into measures to improve and change the outcome of youth

behavior and attitudes toward gun violence. How mothers of the victims of gun homicide and the

mothers of the perpetrators can join together to stem the tide of youth gun violence undergirds

the study.

Researchers suggest that parents have a tremendous influence on children (Karriker-Jaffe,

Foshee, Ennett & Suchindran, 2012). Further, exploring how female parents' attitudes and beliefs

can guide youths in terms of gun violence may reveal the impact of youth resilience on gun

crimes. The research aims at exploring and describing the phenomenon from the female parents'

(mothers') perspectives. Further, the current study expands upon the lack of research showing

that mothers' roles as the primary parent are effective at reaching the primary goal of reducing

shootings and homicides in high-violence communities. By exploring whether a primary

hypothesized mechanism by which these reductions occur notably shifts in community norms

and attitudes related to violence perpetration and retaliation, the findings in this study offer

promising insights into future community violence prevention efforts.

Research Question

The central research question that this study aims to answer is how mothers who

experienced gun violence in an upfront and personal way perceive problems and solutions

associated with the production, distribution, and ownership of guns. This study will also address

the following research sub-questions: 1. How did single mothers' perceptions about being absent

from the tables of the decision-makers on solutions to youth gun violence affect the mothers?

2. What did single mothers recommend concerning individual, community, school, and criminal

justice fronts for preventing youth gun crimes? 3. How did single mothers believe they were

influential in preventing their youth from engaging in gun crimes?

The female parents, mothers, are the key to leading the strategies and approaches

intended to shape individual behaviors as well as the relationship, family, school, community,

and societal factors that influence risk and protective factors for violence. Mothers mean to work

together and to work in combination in a multi-level, multi-sector effort to prevent violence. The

simple presence of parents is a protective factor against adverse outcomes, suggesting that

resilience-based interventions should focus on improving the quality of child-parent relationships

(Jain, Buka, Subramanian, & Molnar, 2012).

Relying on identification through motherhood and mothers' responsibility to preserve

individual and community life fosters a connection between the mothers of the victims and the

mothers of the perpetrators of youth gun violence leading to homicide. Mothers on both sides of

the issues of youth gun homicide generally have knowledge about life in the neighborhoods

experiencing the most murders as well as access to information from the police, including

statistics on the demographics of those affected by gun violence in Metropolitan Atlanta.

Mothers make their meaning of their role and create the possibilities of engaging various publics

that address gun violence from mother-based perspectives.

Although various efforts were made to decrease the incidence of youth gun violence over

the years, this number of frequencies has not reduced. Sadly, statistics show a significant

increase in youth-on youth-gun homicide over the last 12 years. The majority of gun violence

incidents concentrate in areas of lower socioeconomic status. It's essential to understand the reasons for the ineffectiveness policies and the reasons why youth gun violence closely associates with communities of lower socioeconomic status. To better understand the gravity of youth gun violence leading to homicides, it is advantageous to gather information directly from the mothers of victims, and the perpetrators of the devastation youth gun violence leave in its wake.

Definition of Terms

African American-a member of a race of people with dark skin that originally came from Africa

African-American Male- a boy or man living in the United States who is

a member of   a race of people with dark skin that originally came from Africa. For the purpose of this study African-American Males are comprised of Black youth ages 10 - 24 years old.

Gun Violence- describes the results of all incidents of death or injury or threat with firearms without pejorative judgment within the definition. Violence is defined without intent or consequence as a consideration.

Homicide- the act of one human killing another. A homicide requires only a volitional act by another person that results in death, and thus a homicide may result from accidental, reckless, or negligent acts even if there is no intent to cause harm.

Metropolitan Atlanta- the area designated by the United States Office of Management and Budget as the Atlanta–Sandy Springs–Alpharetta, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area

Perpetrator- a person who perpetrates, or commits, an illegal, criminal, or evil act

Victim- one who is harmed or killed by another, especially by someone committing a criminal or unlawful act.

<u>Youth violence</u> -the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10-24.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

The key assumption of African American mothers' perspectives is that the effectiveness of public health and public education efforts - in addressing Black homicide victimization - could be strengthened with experiential insights from the family and friends of violence involved young men. Such knowledge should allow for the development of more effective interventions to halt the violence.

A second primary assumption is that to address the underlying causes of the current violence effectively, as well as prevent future incidents, a better understanding of the African American mother's perspectives should inform efforts to promote Black youths' well-being, growth, and optimal development at the individual, family, and community levels.

Research is needed on how the cumulative effects of intersecting social inequalities are shaping the disproportionate Black male involvement in homicide victimization and alternative ways to support vulnerable individuals and communities.

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Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to describe personal experiences of gun violence for mothers of the victims and the perpetrators of gun violence leading to homicide. Homicide was the third-leading cause of death among youths 10 to 24 years old in 2014. The research reflects a decline from 1999 when the homicide was the second-leading cause of death among youth (CDC, 2016). Between 1993 and 2010, the firearm homicide rate declined by 51 percent for 18- to 24-year-olds and by 65 percent for 12- to 17-year-olds (Planty & Truman 2013). Similarly, between 1994 and 2010, severe violent crime against 12- to 17-year-olds involving a firearm declined by 95 percent (White & Lauritsen 2012).

Researchers suggest that parents have a tremendous influence on children (Karriker-Jaffe, Foshee, Ennett & Suchindran, 2013). Moreover, exploring how female parents' attitudes and beliefs can guide youths in terms of gun violence may reveal the impact of youth resilience on gun crimes. The research aims at exploring and describing the phenomenon from the female parents' (mothers') perspectives.

Further, the current study expands upon the lack of research showing that mothers' roles as the primary parent are effective at reaching the primary goal of reducing shootings and homicides in high-violence communities. By exploring whether a primary hypothesized mechanism by which these reductions occur notably shifts in community norms and attitudes related to violence perpetration and retaliation, the findings in this study offer promising insights into future community violence prevention efforts.

The major sections of this chapter address the literature search strategy, the organization of the literature review, the study's theoretical framework, and literature related to critical variables. The chapter ends with a summary and conclusions.

This literature review will focus on intentional gun violence involving youths ages 10 to 24. The subject includes homicides (victimization and perpetration), nonfatal injuries, suicides, community violence, and school violence/school shootings.

Scope of the Problem

In urban areas, gun violence takes a particularly heavy toll, as vastly disproportionate numbers of young minority males are killed and injured, and increasing fear drives out businesses and disrupts community social life. Research has linked urban youth gun violence to gang conflicts, street drug markets, and gun availability. Youth gun violence is usually concentrated among groups of serious offenders and in particular places. Statistics show a disproportionate number of youth perpetrators of youth gun homicide live in single-parent households led by females. The present study enhanced knowledge in the area of female parents' role in the field of youth gun crimes.

Further, the scope of the problem of youth gun violence in the United States is reflected by the incidence and prevalence of gun-related homicides, suicides, and nonfatal injuries of youths. There are as many as 33,000 gun-related deaths every year in the United States, and youths 24 and younger represent about 20 percent of that number (Kochanek, Murphy, Xu, & Tejada–Vera, 2016). Even youths who are not hurt or killed by guns but who witness gun violence are likely to experience adverse outcomes later in life (Finkelhor et al. 2015b). While mass shootings tend to be the focus of national news stories, they account for less than half of 1 percent of gun deaths each year (Luca, Malhotra, & Poliquin, 2016).

The UCR SHR demographic data cannot be broken down by ethnicity (Hispanic versus non-Hispanic).

- Males accounted for more than 90 percent of the known 12- to 24-year-olds who committed homicide with a firearm in 2014 (Puzzanchera, Chamberlin, and Kang 2016).
- The estimated number of firearm-related homicides committed by known juvenile offenders (ages 12–17) more than quadrupled between 1984 and 1994, from 543 to 2,271. However, between 1994 and 2001, the rate of firearm-related homicides committed by juveniles declined. Firearm-related homicides by juveniles increased by 50 percent from 2001 to 2007 but decreased from 2007 to 2014 by 39 percent (OJJDP, 2016a). Overall, these trends reflect that the majority of firearm-related homicides involving known youths are perpetrated by African Americans males.

Firearms were the murder weapon in 86 percent of youth homicides in 2014 (CDC, 2016). Motor vehicle crashes were the leading cause of death for children and adolescents, representing 20% of all deaths; firearm-related injuries were the second leading cause of death, responsible for 15% of deaths. Among firearm deaths, 59% were homicides, 35% were suicides, and 4% were unintentional injuries (e.g., accidental discharge). (The intent was undetermined in 2% of firearm deaths.) In contrast, among U.S. adults ($\geq$20 years of age), 62% of firearm deaths were from suicide, and 37% were from homicide. Furthermore, although unintentional firearm deaths were responsible for less than 2% of all U.S. firearm deaths, 26% occurred among children and adolescents. The following information, using a variety of data sources, provides greater detail on youth homicides attributable to firearms:

- During 2014, homicides with a firearm accounted for 3,702 homicides committed against youths ages 10 to 24 (CDC, 2016; Child Trends Databank, 2015).

- Of the 3,702 firearm homicides committed against youth, 68 percent were carried out against African Americans, 19 percent against Hispanics, 12 percent against whites, and 1 percent against American Indians/Alaskan Natives or Asians/Pacific Islanders (CDC, 2016).

- Youth firearm homicide victims are more likely to be male, with 89 percent of homicides against youths ages 10 to 24 in 2014 committed against males (CDC, 2016).

- Youths ages 15 to 24 experienced a higher rate of homicides with a firearm than any other age group, at about 8.2 per 100,000 people (CDC, 2016; Kochanek, Murphy, Xu & Tejada–Vera; 2016).

- During 2009–10, 70 percent of all firearm homicides of 10- to 19-year-olds were committed in the most populous metropolitan statistical areas in the country (Kegler and Mercy 2013). Overall, these trends reflect that youth homicide victims ages 15 to 24 are more likely to be male and African American or Hispanic and to live in highly populous/ urban areas of the country (Planty and Truman 2013, 2015).

- Youths Who Commit Gun Homicides. Based on the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHRs), there were an estimated 3,374 homicides with a firearm committed by known 12- to 24-year-olds in 2014 (Puzzanchera, Chamberlin, & Kang 2016).

- Of the estimated 3,374 homicides committed by known youths, 70 percent of the cases involved an African American individual, 27 percent of cases involved a white individual, and 1 percent were American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Asians, or Pacific Islanders (Puzzanchera, Chamberlin, & Kang 2016).

Methodology

A systematic process locates literature on adolescent homicide, adolescent suicide, and adolescent firearm deaths. The research on these topics was summarized to provide an overview of the issues.

The literature consulted to establish the relevance of youth gun violence ending in a homicide was selected from various sources. I conducted a literature search using electronic data sources that included the databases of Columbia Theological University Seminary, Atlanta University, Emory University, and Google Scholar. Databases that I accessed online included ProQuest Digital Dissertations, EBSCOhost, and Sage Publications, the CDC, and various medical journals. Keywords and phrases searched contained gun violence in the United States, gun violence in Atlanta, repercussions of gun violence, the aftermath of gun violence, effects of gun violence, the incidence of gun violence, victims of gun violence in the United States, victims of gun violence in Metropolitan Atlanta, the city of Atlanta Police Department statistics on youth gun homicide, the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice statistics on youth gun homicide, statistics on youth gun homicide in urban areas, causes of gun violence, and slight variations of these terms. The literature review included peer-reviewed articles, books, studies, and dissertations. Subtopics discussed included the extent of gun violence and strategies t to decrease the incidence of gun violence in the modern-day.

Data on circumstances and other incident characteristics for firearm homicide, firearm suicide, and unintentional firearm deaths among children, came from the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS). NVDRS is an active, state-based surveillance system that started in 2003 that collects information on all violent deaths and unintentional firearm deaths within participating states from 3 primary sources: death certificates, coroner and medical examiner

records, and law enforcement reports. NVDRS collects detailed information about the context

and circumstances of these deaths, including victim and perpetrator characteristics.

Results: Approximately 10% of all arrests in a year for murder and non-negligent

manslaughter are by a youth younger than 18 years of age; 92% of these are males. African

American male teens are 20 times more likely than white male teens to be victims of homicides.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

The explanation of homicide is complicated because the pathway to homicide offending

potentially begins early in childhood, and includes cumulative risk factors. Moreover, as

reviewed in Corrado and Cohen (2014), there are critical neighborhood and national risk factors

associated with risky lifestyles related to homicide, including the availability of guns and formal

intergenerational adult/youth gangs.

The convergence of youthful impulsivity, the declining socioeconomic conditions of

many families, the growing availability of handguns, and the emergence of street subcultures

have made adolescence a far deadlier time. Personal risk factors, family risk factors, community

risk factors, and per and school risk factors drive the socioeconomic dynamics key to youth gun

homicide.

Risk Factors

Gun violence is pervasive and multi-factorial. Interventions aimed at reducing gun

violence should target the most common risk factors cited in the literature, such

as Williamson, Guerra, and Tynan (2014) suggest risk factors are categorized as having the

ability to increase the likelihood of youth violence. There is no single risk factor or a specific

combination of risk factors that can predict who is more likely to engage in violent behavior.
However, the more individual, family, peer, school, and community risk factors present in the
child, the higher the probability of youth violence.

For example, "Sixty percent of all U.S. youths report exposure to some form of violence in a given year" (Zimmerman & Posick 2016; p. 178).

While the individual is influenced by definitions provided by friends and family members, learning can also occur at school or through the media. The exposure to this media may impact the individual's learning because it includes some messages that favor breaking the law. If an individual focuses on those messages, they could contribute to an individual's choice to engage in criminal behavior. A significant body of research suggests that youth engagement in the most severe forms of violence links to the convergence and interaction of individual, family, peer, school, and community risk factors (Herrenkohl, Lee, & Hawkins, 2012).

Personal Risk Factors

Matsueda (2010) presents the following information on Sutherland's differential association theory. Sutherland's theory does not account for why an individual becomes a criminal but how it happens. He summarized the principles of differential association theory with nine propositions:

1. All criminal behavior is learned.

2. Criminal behavior is learned through interactions with others via a process of communication.

3. Most learning about criminal behavior happens in intimate personal groups and relationships.

4. The process of learning criminal behavior may include learning about techniques to carry out the behavior as well as the motives and rationalizations that would justify illegal activity and the attitudes necessary to orient an individual towards such activity.

5. The direction of motives and drives towards criminal behavior is learned through the interpretation of legal codes in one's geographical area as favorable or unfavorable.

6. When the numbers of favorable interpretations that support violating the law outweigh the unfavorable critiques that don't, an individual will choose to become a criminal.

7. All differential associations aren't equal. They can vary in frequency, intensity, priority, and duration.

8. The process of learning criminal behaviors through interactions with others relies on the same mechanisms used in learning about any other behavior.

9. Criminal behavior could be an expression of generalized needs and values, but they don't explain the behavior because non-criminal behavior expresses the same needs and values.

Until more recently, studies of personal risk factors and family risk factors dominated individual level homicide research. Professor Kathleen Heide (2003) summarized this research and identified two sets of risk factors. The initial set included prior arrest histories, being the victim of child abuse or neglect, parental alcoholism, divided and violent families, running away from home, low school achievement, early or frequent truancy, and early or frequent suspensions from school. Heide (1999) also asserted that there were additional significant risk factors for homicide, including poor judgment, an inability to deal with negative feelings, access to firearms, use of illicit substances, and witnessing violence as a child.

Indirect Personal Risk Factors

While youths can be directly exposed to gun violence - through victimization or perpetration- they can also be indirectly exposed, by witnessing gun violence in their communities (Listenbee et al. 2012). Youths who witness gun violence experience similar negative psychological and physical harm as youths who have had direct exposure (Futures

Without Violence, 2016). There are various forms of violence that youths may witness in their lifetimes, including assaults, physical abuse, thefts, and shootings. According to the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (most recently conducted in 2014), about 38 percent of children age 17 and younger have witnessed violence in the family or the community in their lifetimes (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck, Hamby, S., &. Kracke, 2015a).

Concerning specific exposure to gun violence:

- About 8 percent of children reported being exposed to a shooting (including hearing gunshots or seeing someone shot) in their lifetimes, with children 14 to 17 years reporting the highest levels of exposure to a shooting (13 percent). Additionally, boys were more likely than girls to report exposure to shootings (Finkelhor et al. 2015a).

- Youth exposure to shootings has decreased between 2008 and 2014, although this change has been minimal (Finkelhor et al., 2015a).

- Youths are more likely to witness assault in their communities in their lifetimes than to be exposed to a shooting (28 percent compared with 8 percent, respectively) [Finkelhor et al. 2015a].

- Although the national level of youth exposure to shootings is low, violent crimes in urban areas are more likely to involve guns than those in suburban or rural areas (Duhart, 2000).

Family Risk Factors

A significant predictor of youth well-being and resilience is the presence of nurturing adults in a youth's life. Parents are ideally situated to fulfill this role but often face challenges and stressors that impede their ability to provide adequate support and guidance.

Mrug and Windle (2010) propose that youth violence and its consequences not only change the life of the immediate victim but also affect their family members and friends. Relatives and close friends of youth violence victims are significantly more likely to show symptoms of depression, negative behaviors directed towards the environment, such as disobeying rules, physical aggression, vandalism, or threatening others, and drug use and harmful use of alcohol.

A significant predictor of youth well-being and resilience is the presence of nurturing adults in a youth's life. Parents are ideally situated to fulfill this role but often face challenges and stressors that impede their ability to provide adequate support and guidance. Pardini, Waller, and Hawes (2014) suggest that youth with disengaged parents are at risk for engaging in adolescent gun carrying because they begin engaging in antisocial behaviors within the context of deviant peer groups. Given the expansive body of work on parenting, peers, and adolescent conduct problems and links being demonstrated in the existing literature between peer group affiliation, conduct problems, and gun carrying,

Research suggests there is a cumulative effect of risk factors across individual, family, peer, school, and community domains that increase the probability of youth gun violence (Mmari, Blum, & Teufel–Shone, 2010).

Peer Risk Factors

In terms of guardianship, Schreck and Fisher (2004) found that tightly-knit families are better situated to provide direct protection for children, as well as to reduce their exposure to motivated offenders. Children who associated with delinquent peers tended to experience enhanced exposure to motivated offenders and to be ineffectively supervised and were seen as more suitable targets for violence. The effects of peer context, however, did not seem to detract

from the influence of family variables; each appears to predict violent victimization independently. The findings also revealed that demographic variables remain, significant predictors, net of the routine activities, family, and peer variables. Similarly, Spano (2005) concluded that, overall, regular activities theory receives mixed support in terms of the influence of deviant lifestyles as a risk factor and social guardianship as a protective factor, with these factors exerting inconsistent influence depending on race and sex.

Community Risk Factors

Variations in levels of violent crime link to complex characteristics of neighborhoods, including disadvantage, segregation, land use, social control, social capital, and social trust, as well as the characteristics of nearby communities. Identifying the root causes of violent crime can also point to promising strategies to reduce its incidence and impact.

As parental supervision declines and independence is increasingly granted by parents and exercised by youth, more distal neighborhood influences may gain prominence for development. With increasing autonomy afforded to adolescents, neighborhoods become more accessible; therefore, adolescents are more likely to notice and be influenced by characteristics of their neighborhoods (Witherspoon, & Ennett, 2011; Chilenski, 2011). However, families do remain of central importance to adolescents, and family characteristics may potentially alter negative influences on adolescents either by exacerbating or buffering those other influences.

Cantillon, Davidson, and Schweitzer (2003) utilized an updated systemic model of social disorganization to investigate neighborhood effects on both positive and negative youth outcomes. They argue that updated social disorganization models facilitate the assessment of essential social processes and dynamics that result in cohesive and supportive neighborhoods. These authors hypothesized that a sense of community was a more valid, comprehensive, and

applicable measure for the mediating variables in social disorganization theory. A sense of community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and the group, and a shared faith that members' needs are met by their commitment to being together" (324).

Violent crime wreaks a terrible impact not only on individual victims, their families, and friends but also on nearby residents and the fabric of their neighborhoods (Sharkey & Sampson, 2015). Exposure to violent crime can damage people's health and development, and violence can push communities into vicious circles of decay (Hardin, 2009). Rates of violent crime in the United States have declined significantly over the past 20 years. Disadvantaged neighborhoods have experienced larger drops in crime, although significant disparities persist.

Violent crime also has a uniquely powerful role in defining neighborhoods. A study of neighborhoods in 22 cities indicates that levels of violent crime in a neighborhood, particularly robbery and aggravated assault, strongly predict residents' perceptions of crime. In contrast, property crime has little effect (Hipp, 2010). An array of studies also suggest that violent crime reduces neighborhood property values more than property crime does (Hipp, Tita, & Greenbaum, 2009). Perceptions also differ among groups. Residents with children and longer-term residents, for instance, consistently perceive higher levels of crime and disorder than do their neighbors (Hipp, 2010). Decisions on where to move often reflect safety concerns. People with housing choice vouchers, for example, consistently rate a safer neighborhood as their top priority (Healy & Lepley, 2016).

School Risk Factors

The findings of Viner, Ozer, Denny, Marmot, Resnick, Fatusi, and Currie (2012)

highlight the need for implementing universal, cross-domain prevention programs early on, particularly school-based prevention programs that foster positive environments in school settings. Given the importance of school protective factors in reducing violence among the two risk groups, it is imperative that prevention programming reaches these populations.

To understand trends and characteristics in school-associated homicides involving youths, Holland, Hall, Wang, Gaylor, Johnson, Shelby and Simon (2019) presented data from CDC's School-Associated Violent Death Surveillance System analyzing 393 single-victim incidents that occurred during July 1994–June 2016 and 38 multiple-victim incidents (resulting in 121 youth homicides) during July 1994–June 2018. School-associated homicides consistently represent <2% of all youth homicides in the United States (1, 2). The overall 22-year trend for single-victim homicide rates did not change significantly. However, multiple-victim incidence rates increased dramatically from July 2009 to June 2018. Many school-associated homicides, particularly single-victim incidents, are similar to youth homicides unrelated to schools, often involving male, racial/ethnic minority youth victims, and occurring in urban settings. The majority of both single-victim (62.8%) and multiple-victim (95.0%) homicides were from a firearm-related injury. A comprehensive approach to violence prevention is needed to reduce the risk of violence on and off school grounds.

Overall, although exposure to gun violence isn't as prevalent as other forms of community violence, it is still a potentially traumatic event that many youths will experience in their lifetimes. During the school year of 2011–12, school-related homicides accounted for less than 2 percent of all homicides (Child Trends Databank 2015; Robers, Zhang, Truman, &. Snyder, 2012; Planty & Truman 2013). While school shootings are rare, most homicides against youth at school were committed with a firearm (Planty &Truman 2013). Gun violence manifests

in a myriad of ways in American schools, and school shootings have created new anxieties for the younger generation of students.

- During the 2009-10 school year, there were 1,749 reports of firearm possession incidents at schools (a rate of 3.5 per 100,000 people). During the 2013–14 school year, this number decreased to 1,501 (a rate of 3.0 per 100,000) [Zhang, Musu–Gillette, & Oudekerk, 2016].

  • About 4 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported carrying a weapon at least one day during the previous 30 days in 2015, a decline from about 12 percent in 1993 (Zhang, Musu–Gillette, and Oudekerk 2016; Kann et al. 2016).

  • In 2013, 3.7 percent of students ages 12 to 18 reported having access to a loaded gun without adult permission, either at school or away from school, which is a decrease from 6.7 percent in 2007 (Zhang, Musu–Gillette, and Oudekerk 2016).

  White male students were more likely to have carried a gun than any other demographic (Kann, McManus, Harris, Shanklin, Flint, Hawkins, et al., 2016).

  According to an Everytown (2020) analysis, the following statistics represent school shootings:

- At least 549 incidents of gunfire on school grounds from 2013 to 2019.
- 347 shootings occurred on the grounds of elementary, middle, or high schools, resulting in 129 deaths and 270 people wounded.

  While mass shootings are not commonplace, schools are more likely to experience gun homicides and assaults, unintentional shootings resulting in injury or death, and gun suicide and self-harm injuries. All incidents of gun violence in schools, regardless of their intent or victim count, compromise the safety of students and staff (Everytown, 2020).

Furthermore, protective factors in the family domain during mid-adolescence were found in this study to play an essential role in reducing violence in later adolescence, supporting claims from others that family influences continue to reduce adolescent problem behaviors despite seemingly reduced. Thus, engaging families of middle school students in parenting programs could potentially have a lasting impact on reducing later violent behaviors.

Theories

This section briefly outlines the literature on the major theories that have examined the root causes of crime and violence. A full discussion of the studies and research results associated with each of these theoretical perspectives is well beyond the scope of this paper. It should be noted that this paper is not concerned with evaluating whether the crime prevention programs or initiatives associated with each theory are effective.

The Integrated Theory

The integrated theory merging biological- and developmental-stage theories speculates why adolescents act the way they do (Shulman, Steinberg, & Piquero, 2013a) is the latest resurrection of 19th-century notions that combined supposedly innate biological- and phylogenic-stage concepts into theories speculating why races, ethnicities, and genders acted the way they did. The conclusion that innate biological and developmental imperatives are at best marginal drivers of late adolescent and young adult offending.

Shulman et al. (2013a; 2013b) summarized new efforts by "developmental scientists from diverse backgrounds" who "have been making rapid progress toward an integrated theory" that would explain "at multiple levels" why "there is something about adolescence as a developmental period that inclines youth toward law-breaking behavior" and "increased willingness to engage in risky conduct" (pp. 848, 858-859).

Concluding a single, age-limited, methodologically flawed, and fatally confounded study effectively establishes that the age–crime curve in adolescence and early adulthood is not due to age differences in economic status, researchers welcome an integrated theory that incorporates findings from neuroscientific work investigating structural and functional changes in the brain that take place during adolescence and may facilitate risk-seeking, as well as results from psychological research examining age-related changes in traits (e.g., sensation-seeking, reward salience, and susceptibility to peer influence) related to this type of behavior. (Shulman et al., 2013a, pp. 858-859).

Differential Association Theory

If Sutherland's differential association theory is valid, children learn through association, and criminal behavior emerges when exposed to more social messages favoring criminal behavior (Sutherland, 1974). At the time of Edwin H. Sutherland's work, social structure theories – social disorganization and strain – were prevalent. However, Sutherland asserted that delinquent behavior is a function of learning and not a function of either the ability to obtain economic success or of living in a socially disorganized area of a city. He made formal propositions that demonstrate that social interaction and learning lead to delinquency. 1. Crime behavior is learned. 2. Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in the process of communication. The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs with intimate personal groups. 4. When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes techniques of committing the crime, specific directions of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes. 5. The particular directions of motives and drives are learned from definitions of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable. 6. A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of the law over definitions unfavorable to violation of the law.

7. Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity. 8. The

process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns

involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning. While criminal behavior

is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and

values, since non-criminal behavior is an expression of the same needs and values (Taylor &

Fritsch, 2011, pp. 130-131).

Subculture Theory A subculture is a set of values, norms, and beliefs that differs from those

within the dominant culture.

- The first level identifies biological and personal history factors that increase the

    likelihood of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence. Some of these factors are age,

    education, income, substance use, or history of abuse. Prevention strategies, at this level,

    promote attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that prevent violence. Specific approaches may

    include education and life skills training.

- Relationship

    The second level examines close relationships that may increase the risk of experiencing

    violence as a victim or perpetrator. A person's closest social circle-peers, partners, and

    family members-influences their behavior and contributes to their experience. Prevention

    strategies at this level may include parenting or family-focused prevention programs and

    mentoring, and peer programs designed to reduce conflict, foster problem-solving skills,

    and promote healthy relationships.

- Community

    The third level explores the settings, such as schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods, in

    which social relationships occur and seeks to identify the characteristics of these settings

that are associated with becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. Prevention

strategies at this level impact the social and physical environment – for example, by

reducing social isolation, improving economic and housing opportunities in

neighborhoods, as well as the climate, processes, and policies within school and

workplace settings.

- Societal

The fourth level looks at the broad societal factors that help create a climate in which

violence is encouraged or inhibited. These factors include social and cultural norms that

support violence as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts. Other significant societal

factors include the health, economic, educational, and social policies that help to maintain

economic or social inequalities between groups in society.

Psychological Theories

Over the past 100 years, psychological perspectives on violence had a significant impact

on crime control and crime prevention policy. Primary prevention programs that employ

psychological principles include strategies that seek to identify and treat personal problems and

disorders before they translate into criminal behavior. Organizations involved in such primary

prevention efforts include family therapy centers, mental health associations, school counseling

programs, and substance abuse clinics. School administrators, teachers, social workers, youth

courts, and employers frequently make referrals to these programs. Many argue that the

expansion of such psychological services will ultimately reduce the level of violent crime in

society (Seigel & McCormick, 2006).

Biosocial Theories

Many biologically based medical treatments or interventions worked to treat violent

offenders (Englander, 2007; Ellis, 2005). Prevention programs, for example, have sometimes

focused on improving the diets of at-risk youth. Other initiatives have treated specific allergies.

Neurosurgery removed brain tumors and corrected abnormal neurophysiological conditions

associated with aggression. However, the most common strategies for dealing with the biological

determinants of violent behavior involve the administration of prescription drugs. Drugs that

decrease testosterone levels or increase levels of female sex hormones, for example, have been

used to treat violent sexual offenders. Chemical castration has also been used in the United States

to diminish the threats posed by chronic pedophiles.

Similarly, the most common treatment for AD/HD involves the administration of

stimulants – including Ritalin and Dexedrine – that help control emotional or violent episodes.

Violence-prone individuals treated with antipsychotic drugs that help control neurotransmitter

levels. Finally, narcotics produced an elevated mood state in those with high arousal levels.

Rational Choice and Routine Activities Theories

Initially postulated by Oscar Newman in the 1970s, situational crime prevention is

supposed to create defensible space, which suggests that crime can be prevented through the use

of architectural designs that reduce opportunity. Situational crime prevention is aimed at

convincing would-be criminals to avoid specific targets. Criminal acts are avoided if the

potential targets are carefully guarded, if the means to commit crime are controlled, if potential

offenders are carefully monitored, and if opportunities for crime are reduced (Siegel &

McCormick, 2006: 135). The difficulty with situational crime prevention strategies in general,

and closed-circuit television and public surveillance in particular, is that they tend to displace

offending behavior to locations that are not under surveillance

Social Disorganization Theories

The studies indicate that social disorganization is an important predictor of youth

violence and crime and that social disorganization has its impact on youth violence and crime by

affecting a number of mediating processes that facilitate youth violence (Pratt & Cullen, 2005).

The findings also indicate that researchers and practitioners need to consider the linkages

between economic deprivation and social disorganization when attempting to explain the genesis

of youth violence. By trying to attenuate youth violence, many policy implications demand

social disorganization theory.

Perceptions of Injustice, Crime and Violence Theories

Simons, Chen, Stewart and Brody (2003) provide the most recent related study. Their

study examines the relationship between exposure to racial-ethnic discrimination and delinquent

behavior, and the emotional and cognitive factors that mediate the association. The study uses

two waves of data collected in Georgia and Iowa, one in 1997 and the other in 1999, from self-

report questionnaires and interviews of 718 African-American children aged 10 to 12 and their

caregivers. After controlling for quality of parenting, affiliation with deviant peers, and prior

conduct problems, the study found that discrimination predicted delinquent behavior. Using

structural equation modeling, the study showed that, for boys, the association between

discrimination and delinquency is mediated by feelings of anger and depression and by the belief

that aggression is a necessary interpersonal strategy. Anger and depression mediate part of the

effect of discrimination on delinquency for girls, but discrimination continued to show a small

but significant direct impact. These findings extend strain theory by including depression as a

considerable negative emotion and by viewing racial discrimination as a stressor and signify the importance of including racial discrimination in explanations of delinquency, particularly among African-Americans. The study suggested that further investigations of the link between discrimination and delinquency focus on racial socialization practices within African-American families and peer groups. (Simons, Chen, Stewart, & Brody, 2003).

Social Control and Self-Control Theories

Social control theory situates among other sociological theories that focus on the role of social and familial bonds as constraints on offending. Social control theory proposes that for young people, a key aspect of social control is found within the family, mainly through interactions with and feelings towards parents. Of the studies that have examined the impact of social control on delinquency, a large proportion has found a negative relationship between parental attachment and delinquency. Findings show that the higher the attachment to parents, the lower the likelihood of involvement in delinquent behavior. Of all of the studies reviewed for this report, only one found that parental attachment did not affect delinquency (Brannigan, Pevalin, & Wade, 2002).

Social Learning, the Media and Violence Theories

Theories that do not suggest that there is a causal relationship between exposure to media violence and aggression or violent behavior are supported by substantial evidence. For example, research is said to generally support the notion that the enjoyment of media violence is highest for viewers who possess characteristics associated with aggression (Oliver, Kim & Sanders, 2006). Social learning theories are further plagued by research that suggests that the developmental stages of children greatly influence the impact of media violence, and media violence does not have the cumulative effects one may expect. For example, research on the

frightening effects of media suggests that the element that frightens children changes as they mature. With increasing maturity, children respond less to the perceptible characteristics of the media (e.g., the imagery and appearance) and respond more to the conceptual aspects of the media (Cantor, 2006). If such is the case for the frightening effects of media, one might hypothesize that the effects of media violence are likely similar. As such, the alleged underlying messages of violent content may not emphatically reach youth until they are somewhat older, effectively casting doubt on claims that young children learn long-term social messages from media violence.

The Scope of the Problem

In urban areas, gun violence takes a particularly heavy toll, as vastly disproportionate numbers of young minority males are killed and injured, and increasing fear drives out businesses and disrupts community social life. Research has linked urban youth gun violence to gang conflicts, street drug markets, and gun availability. Youth gun violence is usually concentrated among groups of serious offenders and in specific places. Statistics show a disproportionate number of youth perpetrators of youth gun homicide live in single-parent households led by females. The present study enhanced knowledge in the area of female parents' role in the area of youth gun crimes.

Further, the scope of the problem of youth gun violence in the United States is reflected by the incidence and prevalence of gun-related homicides, suicides, and nonfatal injuries of youths. There are as many as 33,000 gun-related deaths every year in the United States, and youths 24 and younger represent about 20 percent of that number (Kochanek et al. 2016). Even youths who are not hurt or killed by guns but who witness gun violence are likely to experience adverse outcomes later in life (Finkelhor et al. 2015b). While mass shootings tend to be the focus

of national news stories, they account for less than half of 1 percent of gun deaths each year

(Luca, Malhotra, and Poliquin 2016).

The UCR SHR demographic data cannot be broken down by ethnicity (Hispanic versus

non-Hispanic).

• Males accounted for more than 90 percent of the known 12- to 24-year-olds who

committed homicide with a firearm in 2014 (Puzzanchera, Chamberlin, and Kang 2016).

• The estimated number of firearm-related homicides committed by known juvenile

offenders (ages 12–17) more than quadrupled between 1984 and 1994, from 543 to 2,271.

However, between 1994 and 2001, the rate of firearm-related homicides committed by juveniles

declined. Firearm-related homicides by juveniles increased by 50 percent from 2001 to 2007 but

decreased from 2007 to 2014 by 39 percent (OJJDP, 2016a). Overall, these trends reflect that the

majority of firearm-related homicides involving known youths are perpetrated by males and

African Americans

Conclusion

In the literature, correlates for high homicide rates consistently include high rates of

poverty, larger proportions of Black and immigrant residents, and individuals aged 15–24

(Thompson & Gartner, 2014). These variables attract some research attention. However,

criminalization occurring because of the war on drugs and related policing practices is widely

ignored even though a deliberate policy choice is directly associated with more significant health

harms and related socioeconomic hardships. The federal and provincial policy decisions which

underpin structural criminalization, making race a risk factor and key health determinant gets

very little of the critical scientific attention it richly deserves. Communities are held almost

responsible for their vulnerable characteristics.

Although research has examined the risk and protective factors related to youth violence in general, gun violence is usually not explicitly focused on, but instead grouped with other forms of violence, such as school or community violence. Much about the complexity of youth gun violence still is not known. Specific and well-defined research examining the prevalence and predictors of youth gun violence would help inform future policies and programs designed to reduce gun violence involving youth.

An approach to this complex problem would be to develop a comprehensive, multi-level intervention, which aims to address the multiple inter-related factors simultaneously. The early years of development are important. Since schools have the most considerable number of touchpoints over the highest number of children, they might be central to effective intervention.

Knowledge production by women deserves increased attention; doing so contributes to better interpreting the domains and conditions of our lives. Research has explored how gun violence has personally affected the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of mothers that buried their children and mothers that lost their children to the prison systems. After objectively assessing the facts and working collaboratively for common-sense solutions, the revelation is clear that mothers are key to the answer to youth gun violence.

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