

Young Americans and Gun Control

Section 2

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Introduction

According to Marc Racy and David M. Herszenhorn in “In Attack’s Wake, Political Repercussion” from the New York Times, one young man killed 6 people including 9-year-old girl and wounded 12 people including a congresswoman in the Tucson, Arizona. The congresswomen, Gabrielle Giffords is a moderate Democrat who strongly supports gun rights.

The shocking gun murder like this have happened several times in America, such as the mass killing at Columbine High School and Virginia Tech. However, according to Michael Grunwald and Jay Newton-Small in “Fire Away” from Time, the gun control policy has not changed so much at the political level, and the reason of that is the powerful connection between politics and National Rifle Association (NRA).

Grunwald also says that gun is an “American” thing for Americans (1). This means that guns are rooted in them. For me, as a Japanese citizen who does not have the right to have any gun in my country, it sounds strange. Can tragic gun murders such as shooting in Tucson happen without guns? Why do Americans still keep having guns in spite of tragic gun violence? I think if all guns are prohibited like Japan, crime will

decrease in America. Thus I am interested in the reason why Americans have guns. As Grunwald says, is the NRA the only reason preventing strict gun policy? I also want to know individual opinion for gun control is whether from political influence or own thought.

In this paper, I am going to survey how Americans, especially college students, think about guns and the gun control. College students will be members of society soon, so it would be good subject in order to know how next generation thinks about gun control. I believe that young American do not want strict gun control because it must be natural for them to have guns in the present situation.

Body

In "Fire Away" from Time, Michael Grunwald and Jay Newton-Small show some data about gun violence. According to them, 31,224 people die because of gun violence in a year and from gun violence 86 people die in a day (11). In spite of tragic shootings, why have not the gun control in America changed so much?

Grunwald and Newton-Small point out the relationship between politics and the NRA in federal level. When Bill Clinton, who belongs to the Democrats, was the

president of United States, in 1993, the Brady Bill was passed by congress. It was required licensed gun dealers to show their records in order to prevent gun possesses by dangerous or mentally illness persons. Moreover, in 1994, Clinton proposed the bill contained the ban of many assault guns and huge magazines for 10 years. However the Democrats lost the election to Republicans because the policies of Clinton were thought not to reflect a million of Americans include “working-class, beer-track rural voters”(6). Even in administration of Republicans, during George W. Bush’s presidency, gun policy was not pushed forward. President Barack Obama, who belongs to Democrats, also does not try to make gun control stricter.

Because of the NRA’s campaigns, politics have to carefully pay attention to gun control. Grunwald and Newton-Small mention a comment of Paul Helmke, who is the Brady Campaign president: “Republicans march in lockstep with the NRA, and Democrats are scared to death”(5).

However, does only the NRA have an affect on preventing strict gun control? If people believe that they need stricter gun control, they would decide the government that they require in spite of the NRA’s negative campaign. Then what do Americans think

about gun control?

According to Matt Richtel in “San Francisco Gun Vote: Tough Law or Thin Gesture” of The New York Times, in summer 2005, poll data showed that citizens agree with new proposal in San Francisco (2). It would contain ban possession, disposition and production of handguns. This poll data show that citizens in San Francisco want stricter gun control. However, Richtel also mentions that NRA would criticize this proposal and a few months later court stated the new law violated the citizen’s right to have guns (15). Then stricter gun control was not pushed forward because of political factors.

As a result, citizens want stricter gun control though the policies of gun restriction do not progress at the federal level.

Next, in order to make sure that people in America want stricter gun control and to know how do young Americans, who will be member of society soon, think about gun control, I am going to use my survey data.

I conducted my survey on the Stanford University campus. 20 people answered. 67% of survey respondents were men and 33% were women. The range of age was 16-30 years old. 67% of survey respondents were undergraduate and 33% were graduate.

I prepared two questions to know how deeply guns are rooted in young Americans. In question 1, no one answered, "I have a gun" and in question 2, 67% of survey respondents answered that they have never shot any guns. These results show that guns are not rooted in young Americans so much. Some people have shot guns ever but no one has a gun.

The reason may be they are college students living in dormitories and they do not have to have guns to protect themselves or their families. In question 3, 29% of undergraduate answered that they have shot a gun while 50 % of graduate answered they have. This means that young Americans concern with guns little by little. Then, how do they think about gun control? Do they think it is not concerned with them because they do not have guns?

I prepared two questions about gun control. In question 4, 20% of survey respondents answered that they think the gun control in California is strict. 47% answered it is not strict and 33% answered that they do not know about gun control. In question 5, 53% of survey respondents answered that they think California should have stricter gun control and 27% answered they do not need. According to the results of these

questions, about 50% of people think the gun control in California is not strict enough and they want stricter gun control than the present. On the other hand, about 33% of people do not know about the gun control or are not interested in it.

As guns do not concern with their daily lives, they may not be interested in gun control. 43% of undergraduate answered I do not know while 25% of graduate answered I do not know. So I can say that young Americans concerns with guns gradually and know about gun control as well.

By the way, in “Fire Away”, Grunwald and Newton-Small mention a remark by Congressman Trent Franks, who is a Republican and gun owner. “Criminals always prefer unarmed victims”(3). This may be the reason why Americans have guns so I prepared two questions, which are related to the remark.

In question 6, 73% of survey respondents answered that both armed citizens and non-armed become targets of gun violence equally and 27% answered that non-armed citizens are apt to be targets of gun violence more than armed citizens. In question 7, 67% of survey respondents answered that gun violence will decrease if all guns are prohibited while 6% answered gun violence will increase.

These results show that most young Americans disagree with what Franks said about non-armed citizens tending to be targets of gun violence. In other words, they think people do not have guns in order to protect his or herself from gun violence. They also think gun violence will decrease if all guns are prohibited. Then I can say that they want all guns to be prohibited because they think guns do not protect themselves but just cause gun violence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, many young Americans think the present gun control is not strict enough and want stricter gun control. Then why cannot their opinion change the present policy? As I have already mentioned, first, because the NRA has great connection with politics and prevents changing policy, gun control have not changed. Second the NRA's negative campaign may have affect on the public opinion, especially in the election. Why does NRA affect people easily? I think, because people, especially young people, do not know about gun control and are not interested in it. My survey showed that.

Because I took my survey on the Stanford University campus, the data may not reflect all of young Americans opinions accurately. According to data that Grunwald and

Newton Small mentioned in "Fire Away", the gun control in California is the strongest in America (15). So the results may become opposite if I take the survey in another place in America. However it is important that I could find some young Americans' ignorance about gun control. What does cause gun violence? It may not only guns or mentally illness criminals, but also their ignorance about guns and gun control.

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Appendix

<Survey Form>

I am student from VIA ALC (American Language and Culture) program, and I am working on developing a research paper about the gun control. If you can spare a minute to answer these questions, we would really appreciate your help.

Gender: Male Female

Age: Below 15 16-20 21-25 26-30 Above 31

Status: Undergraduate Graduated Not student

Nationality: American From another countries

Question

Q1 Do you have a gun?

Yes No

Q2 If yes, what is your purpose for having them?

Self protection Hobby Hunt Others_____

Q3 Have you ever shot a gun?

Yes No

Q4 Do you think the gun control in California is strict?

Yes No

Q5 Do you think California should have stricter gun control than the present?

Yes No

Q6 Do you think non-armed citizens tend to be targets of gun violence more than armed citizens? ("Non-armed citizens" mean people who do not have any guns.)

Yes No

Q7 If all guns are prohibited, do you think the gun violence will increase or decrease?

Increase Decrease I do not know

Q8 What is the most important factor to cause gun violence?

Criminal who has reason to commit a crime

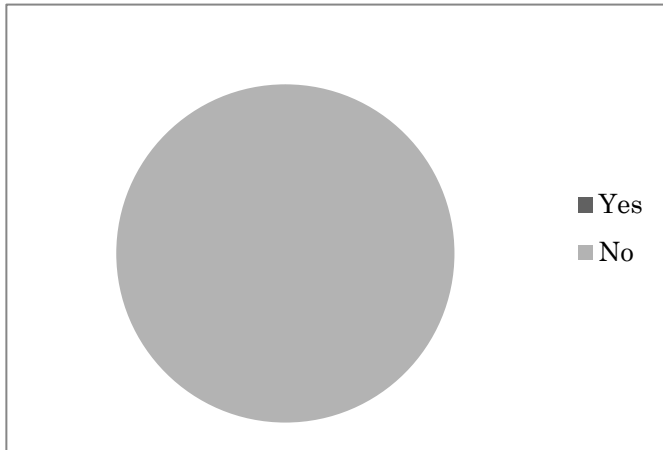
Careless person(a victim) Guns

A situation which does not have any supervisors or securities

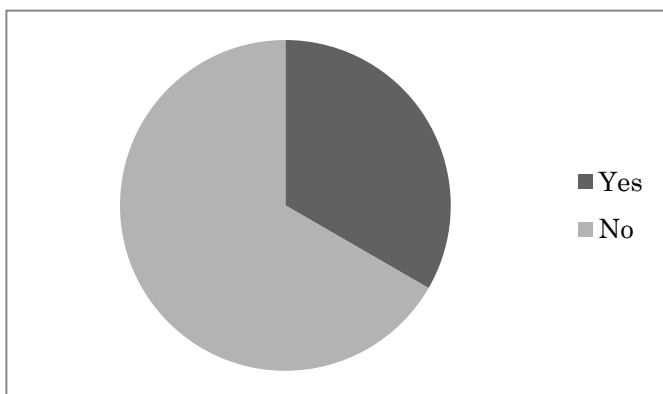
Others_____

<Results of Survey>

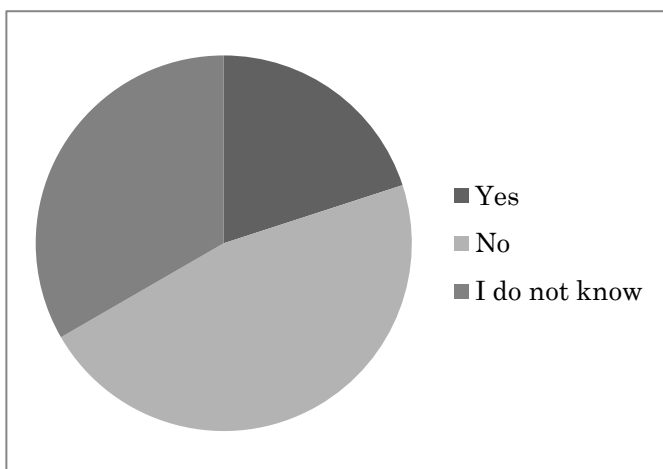
Question 1: Do you have a gun?



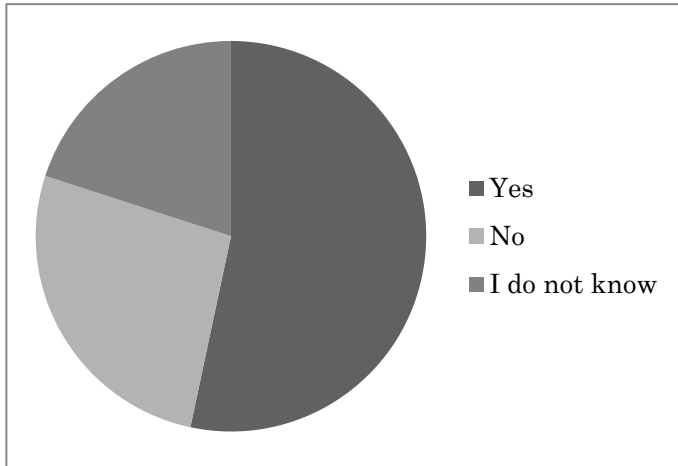
Question 3: Have you ever shot a gun?



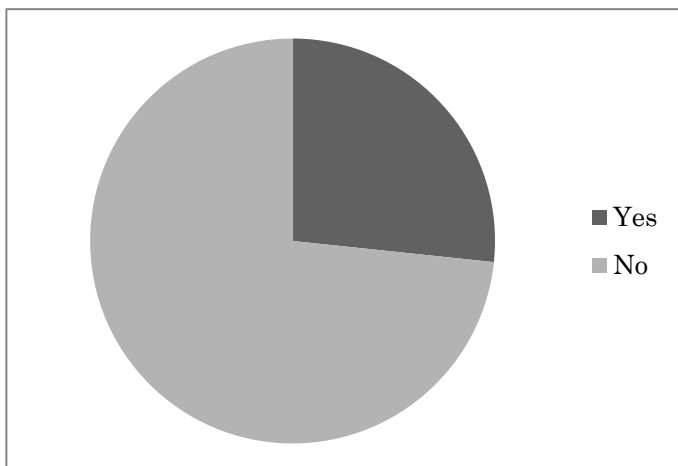
Question 4: Do you think the gun control in California is strict?



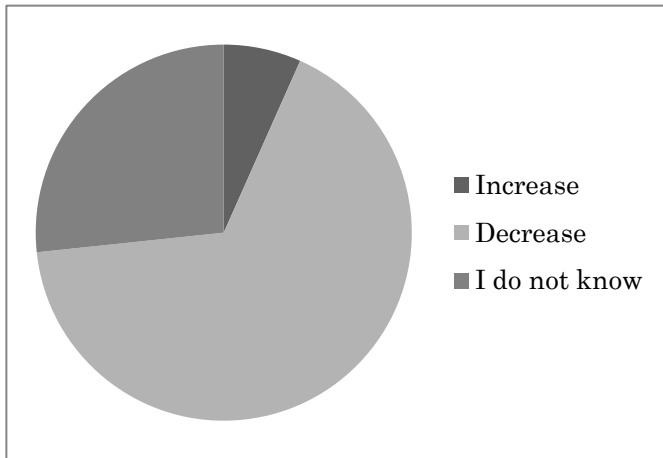
Question 5: Do you think California should have stricter gun control than the present?



Question 6: Do you think non-armed citizens tend to be targets of gun violence more than armed citizens? (“Non-armed citizens” mean people who do not have any guns.)



Question 7: If all guns are prohibited, do you think the gun violence will increase or decrease?



Question 8: What is the most important factor to cause gun violence?

