

Columbia University
Graduate School of Arts & Sciences
Human Rights Studies Master of Arts Program

“Applying the Youth, Peace, and Security Framework to Gun Violence in the United States”

Jaime Panton

Thesis Adviser: Dr. Tracey Holland

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Spring 2024

Abstract

Gun violence in the United States is not only a public health epidemic, but also a widespread example of human rights violations. Gun violence is now *the* leading cause of death in young people. Gun violence threatens the right to health, both physical and mental, and also undermines the right to education. Utilizing human rights principles, and applying the Youth, Peace, Security (YPS) agenda to the issue of gun violence in the United States, this thesis generates new knowledge by approaching gun violence through this lens. I demonstrate how the YPS pillars of participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and disengagement and reintegration can be applied to incorporate multidisciplinary strategies to prevent gun violence.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Chapter One: Introduction..... | 4 |
| Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Methodology..... | 8 |
| Chapter Three: Review of Literature..... | 11 |
| Chapter Four: Applying the YPS to Gun Violence..... | 23 |
| Defining the Youth, Peace, Security Agenda | 23 |
| Application of Pillar One: Participation..... | 28 |
| Application of Pillar Two: Protection..... | 30 |
| Application of Pillar Three: Prevention..... | 32 |
| Application of Pillar Four: Partnerships..... | 35 |
| Application of Pillar Five: Disengagement and Reintegration..... | 36 |
| Chapter Five: Conclusion..... | 39 |
| References..... | 41 |

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The most fundamental human right is the right to life. Yet within the human rights space, rights are typically only talked about when there is an issue, such as when the right is threatened or denied (Donnelly, 2013). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) serves as overarching principles for basic human rights and underpin many of the human rights treaties and other crucial nonbinding documents. Article 3 of the UDHR states “everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” (United Nations, 1948). Additionally, children are afforded special protection as outlined in the UDHR. Another leading human rights treaty, the Convention on the Rights of the Child’s (CRC), states in Article 6 that States must work to secure survival and development of the child (United Nations, 1989). The International Covenant on Civil and Politic Rights (ICCPR) Article 6 reiterates the UDHR by stating every human has and inherent right to life (United Nations, 1966). The International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) also mandates that “the right to security of person and protection by the State against violence or bodily harm, whether inflicted by the government officials or by any individual group or institution” be upheld (United Nations, 1965).

Not only are people entitled to the right to life, but also the right to health, both physical and mental, and the right to education. The right to health is inextricably linked to the right to life, and as such, is not a new concept within human rights space (United Nations, n.d.). The World Health Organization’s constitution defines health as a” state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (United Nations, n.d., p. 1) and this definition underpins definitions found in the UDHR and other treaties. Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) also states everyone has the right to “highest attainable standard of physical and mental health” (United

Nations, 1976). Other international human rights treaties have also enshrined the right to health and expanded this right to include right to healthcare. Additionally, all States have ratified at least one international treaty that includes the right to health/healthcare. Expanding on this work, in 2002, the UN designated a Special Rapporteur on the right to attaining the highest standard of health (United Nations, n.d.).

Along with the right to health, the UDHR also guarantees the right to education and “education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace” (United Nations, 1948). The right to education is guaranteed in multiple human rights treaties. The right to education puts the individual at the center of the right and also makes education a high priority and obligation the States must uphold (UNESCO, 2019).

Yet, the right to life, the right to highest physical and mental health, and the right to education are in great jeopardy for many young people across the globe. Currently, young people make up the greatest portion of the global population and over 400 million people between 15 and 29 years of age live in an area where armed conflict or other forms of organized violence have taken place (Altiok, et al., 2020). Gun violence is widespread globally and also domestically. Most gun violence occurs outside of the context of armed conflict (Amnesty International, n.d.). From a global human rights perspective, the U.N. Secretary General has called firearms “weapons of mass destruction” (U.N. Human Rights Council [HRC], 2016). The prolific access to and use of firearms is an egregious and wide scale human rights violation that is also largely preventable.

Research Question and Significance

Guns are ubiquitous. One only has to turn on the news, open up social media, or pick up a newspaper to realize the negative impact of guns, especially regarding the assault on youth.

Estimates suggest that there are over one billion firearms across the world, the majority of these owned by civilians, and that these are linked to over half a million deaths annually (Feinstein & Choonara, 2020). More Americans have died in the past half century as a result of firearms than from all the U.S. wars combined (Sadat & George, 2019).

Domestically, gun violence is now *the* leading cause of death in young people in both the United States (National Institute of Health, 2022; Lee et al. 2022). In the U.S., gun deaths have reached historical records since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (Magee et al., 2022).

Individual instances of gun violence in communities and widespread mass shootings within America have drastically increased over the past several years. The definition of what constitutes a mass shooting remains up for debate; however, according to the Gun Violence Archive, there were over 600 mass shootings in 2023 alone (Gun Violence Research Archive, 2024; Choi, 2023). While the media most often portrays mass shootings as the impetus for gun control, most youth who die by firearms do so outside of the context of mass shootings. The United States is the only country, when compared to similar nations, in which guns are the leading cause of mortality in children, adolescents, and young adults (McGough et al., 2023).

The stockpile of firearms within individual homes is a contributing factor to increase gun violence rates within the U.S. The United States is the top firearm manufacturer in the world (Thrall, Cohen, Dorminey, 2020). One study (Azareal et al., 2017) estimates that nearly 54 million American adults own guns and that this equates to a stockpile of about 265,000,000 guns in the U.S. Of these, about 40% are handguns with the remaining being long guns or classified as

“other”. There are roughly 121 guns in circulation for every 100 people (Raissian et al., 2022). Additionally, there is a subculture in America where gun owners often purchase more guns than what is reasonably needed for protection (Brock & Routon, 2020). Buttrick (2020) states that nearly 70% of new gun owners purchased their weapon for personal protection. Yet research suggests that only 1% of victims that report crimes actually report using their guns defensively (Buttrick, 2020).

The purpose of this thesis is to critically analyze the impact of gun violence on American youth through the human rights framework. The overarching research question guiding this thesis is: What is the impact of gun violence in the United States on youth and what can be done on a national level to mitigate the harm of gun violence? While this is an area that has been largely researched in public health and legal scholarship, there is a lack of evidence on the nuances of gun violence and American youth from a human rights perspective. This thesis aims to contribute uniquely to the body of literature on this topic by analyzing the specific nature of U.S. gun violence through the Youth, Security and Peace framework. I also specifically focus on how the right to life, health, and education are violated by the gun violence epidemic in America.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

I answer the research question by examining existing evidence on the impact of gun violence from a youth rights perspective. As such, the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis is grounded in Youth, Peace, and Security agenda. Research is evolving on how young people can inform geopolitics and global peace and security (Altiok, et al., 2020). The UN has increasingly recognized how youth play a key role in peace and security on a global level. Often young people can be portrayed as a threat to peace and security but this flawed view does not factor in that the overwhelming majority of young people do not engage in violence. Many young people are actively involved in peacebuilding and conflict resolution yet their work and viewpoints are often left out in strategic planning for peace. Seeking to understand young people's diverse life experiences related to violence, insecurity, and injustice, is a critical first step in gaining momentum to move the needle forward in global peace and security work (UN & Folke Bernadotte Academy, 2021).

In 2015, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2250. The original youth, peace, and security resolution emphasized five foundational principles for action: "participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and disengagement and reintegration" (UNSC, 2015). Through the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Youth Envoy, the Youth, Peace, and Security agenda has fueled forward the notion that youth are key stakeholders in global peace and are working to increase awareness of the YPS agenda through advocacy and strengthening partnerships to will advance the mission of the YPS agenda (UN, n.d.,b).

In order to incorporate the YPS framework into this work, it is important to first begin with defining these three concepts. The definition of what constitutes youth is a variable one. In this thesis, I draw definitions both from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as well as the UN. When presenting national prevalence data on gun violence, I utilize the

definition from the CDC. Much of the U.S. prevalence data categories youth as children, adolescents, and young adults between ages 10 and 24 years. When presenting analysis findings from the YPS, I use definitions from the UN. The UN defines a “child” as any person under the age of 18 and also defines “youth” as people ages 15 to 24 years. Additionally, Resolution 2250, which is the foundation for the YPS, defines youth as individuals between ages 18 and 29 years. Within the UN system, definitions of child and youth vary but for purposes of the findings I present, youth will largely be considered people ages 15-29 to align with the YPS definition but also including those adolescents in high school.

Peace is not merely the absence of war. Peace is “dignity and well-being for all” (UN, 2014). Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stated that peace cannot be enforced only through treaties but that peace must be cultivated in order to become a way of life. Secretary Ban Ki-moon also defined peace as having access to education and health, living with tolerance and respect of others (UN, 2014). Peace must be at the heart of all UN goals. According to the Missing Peace Report, discussed later, young people view peace as a right that depends on a rights-based protection and redress, especially within societies where violence occurs. Young people agree that conflict is not always avoidable but it is important to have social and political avenues for managing conflict and that this is a key step to violence prevention. Youth also feel the notion of peace is deeply personal and associated with well-being (UN Population Fund, 2018).

Lastly, security is defined as to “live free from the fear of attack, loss of life, arbitrary arrest, detention or coercive interrogation” (Lazarus, 2015, p. 423). This right is woven throughout various human rights treaties and also coincides with the right to be free from violence from non-state actors. The ideals of peace and security play an integral role in the

prevention of gun violence in the U.S. Young people are entitled to both peace and security; gun violence, directly and indirectly, threatens these rights and has long lasting consequences.

Methodology

I utilize an analytic approach by examining the Youth, Security, and Peace agenda in the context of gun violence in the U.S. While the YSP agenda does not specifically address gun violence in the U.S., I aim to apply this framework to the central issue. I begin with describing the foundational UN resolutions, the 2018 progress report on the YPS agenda, and the 2020 report on “Missing Peace”. I provide this detailed description to demonstrate how the YPS agenda has evolved since 2015 and because the principles and concepts in these important documents largely guides the recommended strategies provided within the YPS program handbook. The YPS handbook provides a very detailed approach to incorporating the YPS pillars into global efforts to advance peace and security. I take much liberty in utilizing these same pillars and draw from them in order to discuss how these strategies can be implemented within the U.S. to decrease the prevalence of gun violence and mitigate the overall effects, thereby promoting right to life, health, and education for American youth. This is a novel approach and one that has not been utilized frequently in the body of gun violence prevention research and scholarship.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to further discuss the overall prevalence of gun violence and how it impacts young people in the U.S. I describe quantitative statistical data provided by national databases and I draw from gun violence scholarship to highlight ways in which gun violence threatens the right to education and health. This literature review serves to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the issue and provide justification for why addressing this issue from a human rights perspective is necessary.

Overall Prevalence of Gun Violence

Prevalence data is obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Gun Violence Archive (GVA). The GVA was founded in 2013 as a nonprofit and its mission is to provide the public with free access to public and accurate information about gun related violence in America. The GVA collects data from thousands of law enforcement, media, government and other sources every day in order to provide the most up-to-date information about gun violence incidents. In order to provide independent data, the GVA by default is not an advocacy organization. (GVA, 2024). GVA reports that in 2023, there were a total of 18,854 gun-related deaths. These are classified as willful, malicious, and unintentional. There were also 36,338 gun injuries. Of these, 1682 children and teens were killed and another 4512 were injured (GVA, 2024). It is important to note this data does not provide information on these statistics based on race/ethnicity or gender/sex.

Since this thesis primarily focuses on gun violence among youth, it is important to include household data. Data from 2021 indicate that over 30 million children and youth live in homes with at least one gun. In a household survey examining firearm storage in America households, over 4 million children and youth live in homes with guns that are loaded and

unlocked. The majority of households with guns were white families with parents or adults in the home between 30 and 59 years of age. The majority of survey respondents also reported high school or some college as their level of education, living in the South, and half of participants report living in suburban area (Miller & Azrael, 2022). This data has significant implications on young people's access to guns as this access is a contributing factor to the rise in youth firearm related suicide and homicide deaths.

Another important source of robust data on gun violence is the CDC. The CDC report referenced below is the most up-to-date compiled data and of note, includes the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which there was an initial spike in gun related injuries and death. The report combined data from the National Vital Statistics System mortality data, the National Center for Health Statistics Census Bureau (race population estimates and county urbanization designations), and the U.S. Census Bureau (poverty data by county). Causes of death were extrapolated from International Classification of Disease codes (medical recording coding). The CDC report demonstrates the following:

- Between 2019 to 2020, the overall age-adjusted firearm homicide rate increased substantially, from 4.6 to 6.1 per 100,000 persons (relative change = 34.6%)
- Rates increased across all age groups, with the highest rates and increases observed among those aged 10–24 (from 7.0 to 9.8 per 100,000) and 25–44 years (8.2 to 11.0).
- Rates also increased for both sexes, with a greater increase observed among males (7.6 to 10.4).
- By race and ethnicity, the highest rates and increases occurred among Black (19.0 to 26.6) and AI/AN populations (6.4 to 8.1).

- Rates increased across all U.S. Census divisions (relative changes ranged from 24.6% [South Atlantic] to 51.0% [Middle Atlantic]) and across all levels of urbanization (28.5% [nonmetropolitan] to 36.9% [large metropolitan]). The largest increases in firearm homicide rates were among Black males aged 10–24 (54.9 to 77.3) and 25–44 years (66.5 to 90.6) and among AI/AN males aged 25–44 years (18.9 to 28.7).
- Among females, the highest rates and largest increases were among those who were Black, aged 10–24 (6.4 to 9.1) and 25–44 years (6.9 to 10.2) (Kegler et al., 2024).

The data above is specific to one year and with gun violence research, it is important to examine the trends. Johns Hopkins School of Public Health reported on CDC provisional data to more closely look at pre and post pandemic effects. In 2022, one person died every 11 minutes as a result of a gun. While overall gun death rates decreased nearly 2% in 2022 from the previous year, the overall number of deaths only declined by 713 total fatalities. The data shows that the spike in gun violence during the pandemic has not returned to pre-pandemic rates. When comparing the overall trend from 2019 to 2022, the overall increase in gun related deaths was 21%. (Johns Hopkins, n.d.)

One additional consideration is that often gun related deaths either include both homicide and suicide or the data breaks down the deaths by these categories. Johns Hopkins School of Public Health examined the most recent preliminary data from the CDC. Overall, gun deaths increased by 87% in children and youth between 2013 and 2023. Most recently, homicide specific data shows that these rates increased by about 7% in 2022, which led to the second-highest gun homicide rate in the past nearly 30 years. Black children were also twenty times more likely to die from gun homicide compared to White children. Gun suicide rates continue to climb. Nearly 27,000 people died by gun suicide in 2022 alone. Of particular significance is that

in 2022, suicide by firearm rates in Black youth were higher than suicide rates of White youth for the first time in history (Johns Hopkins, n.d.).

When considering prevalence of gun violence, it is also important to include data on how young people access firearms. A 2024 study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* conducted a cross-sectional study on over 250 school shootings from 1990 to 2016 to examine what type of gun was used (e.g. handgun, rifle, or shotgun; semiautomatic or fully automatic) and more importantly, where the shooter acquired the gun. Researchers, using descriptive statistics and logistic regression, included 262 adolescents with a mean age of 16.2 years and were overwhelmingly male (nearly 98%). Handguns were the most common weapon used. The most common means of acquiring a firearm was from family members (about 42%), illegal market (about 30%), friends (22%). A small percentage, less than 5%, took the gun off of someone who had been shot (Klein, et al., 2023). These findings have significant policy implications regarding adult ownership of guns in homes where adolescents and young adults reside.

Impact of Gun Violence on the Right to Physical and Mental Health

The right to health is enshrined in multiple international treaties. As previously mentioned, death by firearms is the leading cause of mortality in American youth (NIH, 2022). Gun violence significantly impacts physical and mental health of those directly and indirectly impacted. In an editorial published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the gun violence epidemic is likened to “war-zone mentality”, especially in the ways in which this violence impacts young people (Garbarino, 2022). In the majority of cases of a singular traumatic event, the mental health consequences resolve within a year. Yet these singular traumatic events, such as school or other mass shootings, do not account for the majority of gun violence trauma

experienced by most American youth. In some communities, gun violence, or the threat of it, is an unfortunately part of daily life (Garbarino, 2022).

Survivors of gun violence are often left to manage the physical and psychological sequelae of their injuries. They also have increased mental health needs. As many as half of gunshot survivors have PTSD and substance use (Magee, et al., 2022; Williams, 2024). Among youth specifically, one study found nearly 40% of those surviving gunshots had prior mental health diagnosis and 25% of survivors had a new mental health diagnosis, most commonly stress-related, substance use, or conduct disorders, after their injury (Magee et al., 2022). Survivors, especially those in racial minority groups, often encounter numerous barriers when attempting to navigate the healthcare system. Some survivors also face stigma related to lack of economic resources, difficulties with transportation, and stigma related to mental health. All of these factors contribute to decrease engagement with the mental healthcare system (Williams, 2024).

Gun violence not only affects those who have died or survived injury, but also those exposed to the gun violence. One has a 99.9% chance of knowing someone in their social circle who has been impacted by gun violence, including suicide and homicide (Smith et al., 2020). A plethora of medical and population health prevention research has been published over the past several years because of the rise of gun related deaths. There is a small, but growing, body of research on examining mental health outcomes on those who have experienced the death of a loved one from gun violence. Smith et al. 2020 found experiencing such a loss has been shown to be associated with prolonged grief, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) depression. The loss and grief can be longstanding and lasting up to two years in some cases (Smith et al., 2020).

Leibbrand et al. (2020) conducted a study to examine impact of community gun violence on adolescent mental health outcomes. Researchers examined data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, which includes a population of adolescents from 20 cities. This study investigated the relationship between gun homicides in close proximity to an adolescent's home or school and the development of mental health symptoms. Examples of these symptoms included aggressive behavior, peer conflict (externalizing symptoms), anxiety or depression (internalizing symptoms). Researchers also examined whether this relationship of gun homicide proximity and symptoms varied by gender. Of note, study authors use the terms girl and boy for gender and as a binary concept for research purposes. Researchers found while not all relationships reached statistical significance, they did find the relationship between anxiety and gun homicide distance was highest when the homicide occurred within a half a mile from the young person's home or school. This finding was consistent in both girls and boys (Leibbrand, et al., 2020). This demonstrates that even indirect exposure to gun violence can negative impact mental health of young people.

Another way in which guns and gun violence negatively impacts mental health impact is related to the phenomenon of the "weapons effect". This is defined as the notion that simply the presence a gun increases aggression. A meta-analysis published in 2018 by Benjamin et al. examined this effect. Researchers hypothesized that being in the presence of a weapon/gun would trigger aggressive thoughts and hostile feelings. They found that people who may have more aggressive thoughts at baseline may be more likely to act aggressively in the presence of a weapon. Their findings also suggest that having a weapon may lead people to think they are more aggressive and therefore act accordingly (Benjamin et al., 2018). The concurrent crises of both gun violence and mental health have made a perfect storm in which violence proliferates.

While there is not yet unrefuted evidence that shows a causal relationship between mental illness and those who commit acts of violence, a 2020 systematic review by Sanchez et al. found youth with history of physical aggressive behaviors, substance use, or bullying were associated with higher risk of having access to a gun. Those with diagnoses of conduct disorder, substance use, and impulse control disorder, along with socioeconomic factors, are also at higher risk of being involved in gun violence. This writer notes that data does study did not stipulate whether one's involvement was as a victim or perpetrator of gun violence (Sanchez et al., 2020).

When considering broader and more long-term health outcomes, in communities experiencing higher rates of nonfatal shootings, obesity rates were increased and people in these communities had higher rates of smoking, sleeping difficulties, and higher levels of disabilities. Research also suggests youth who live within close proximity of shootings were more likely to seek care for mental health concerns when compared to children who did not live close to areas with shootings (Magee et al., 2022; Vasan et al., 2021).

Impact of Gun Violence and Education

As previously stated, the UDHR says all humans are entitled to the right to education. This right is often violated because of the rise of both community gun violence and school shootings over the past decade. The most robust body of evidence on the impact of gun violence and education is through the lens of school shootings. Sonali Rajan, and Associate Professor at Teacher's College, is a leading expert on gun violence in schools. Rajan and colleagues (2022) most recent work demonstrates that gun violence in schools is increasing and is a significant public health concern. From 2015 to 2022, there were about 275 intentional school shootings in K-12 schools across the country. Looking back further, since the Columbine school shooting in 1999, a recent estimate suggests that over 311,000 children have been exposed to gun violence in

schools. Even indirect forms of exposure such as hearing gunshots or witnessing a shooting, have negative consequences for students (Rajan et al., 2022). Unfortunately, despite schools closing down during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, school shootings continued to occur once schools opened again (Rajan, et al., 2022).

Another important aspect to consider when discussion gun violence and education is the prevalence of gun violence on the way to and from school. Historically, most school shooting research has focused on shootings that happen inside the school building. There has been a lack of scholarship on shootings that happen in close proximity to schools (Barboza-Salerno & Meshelemiah, 2023). Barboza-Salerno and Meshelmemiah conducted a study examining how spatial distribution of schools and gun violence in a Compton, California school district. The study found evidence that gun violence is clustered all along the pedestrian paths in which students travel to and from school. Nearly all schools within the area had at least one shooting within a five-minute walk and over one-third of schools had a shooting distance of under 400 meters. This study has important policy implications, some of which will be addressed in the findings section of this thesis (Barboza-Salerno & Meshelemiah, 2023).

Gun violence and educational outcomes also work in the opposite direction (Jackson, et al., 2022). Bray et al. (2020) found in a study in Baltimore that increased reading proficiency in elementary school was linked to decrease in neighborhood homicide rates among youth. For every nearly 2% increase of proportion of third graders who had reading proficiency, there was one fewer homicides for every 100,000 people (Bray et al., 2020).

Intersection of Gun Violence, Mental Health, and Education

Attending school in the U.S. remains largely still compulsory, despite the fear of school that can exist because of gun violence (Sadat, 2022). Gun violence, both in the context of school

shootings and community violence, have potentially long-lasting impacts on students. Gun violence can lead to physical bodily harm and threaten one's psychological wellbeing. Schools across the country have rolled out a variety of security measures, including armed guards, metal detectors, video surveillance, and active shooter drills. These measures are employed to make students feel safer but often, the opposite is true. These heightened security protocols can make students feel more fearful at school (Stevenson, 2020). Among students in inner-city schools, these security measures may have even more damaging effects. In areas where Black and Brown students reside, there can be trauma related to frequent gun violence exposure and also trauma resulting from these increase security measures, often rooted in fear and racial discrimination, make the school "feel like a prison". Evidence suggests this heightened level of monitoring and surveillance and presence of police in schools (such as school resource officers) can worsen violence (Stevenson, 2020).

The impact of active shooter drills, which are increasingly commonplace among K-12 schools in the U.S., on mental health is also an area of research. Building off of Benjamin et al. (2018) work and looking at the weapons effect, Stevenson's work also shows that children from communities where violence is more prevalent, may have difficulty assessing their own safety in a school where adults may be armed. Armed guards in combination with active shooter drills often exacerbates pre-existing trauma in students. In fact, Florida has investigated active shooter policies following the Parkland mass shooting, and recommended that active shooter drills decrease in frequency as they may traumatize students (Stevenson, 2020).

A 2023 study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* looked at the effect of school shootings on students. Researchers used data from the Youth Risk Behavioral Survey, which included data from over 200,000 14 to 18 year-olds and linked this to data on shootings

occurring at high schools from the Center for Homeland Defense and Security. These researchers found that youth with an exposure to a school shooting were more likely to miss school because they felt unsafe. There was also some evidence, although only minimally statistically significant, to suggest those exposed to a school shooting were also more likely to carry a weapon to school. The most notable effects were seen in Black and Brown students. These researchers also note that they were not able to control for community violence, which also may impact feelings of safety or the need to bring a weapon to school (Hodges et al., 2023).

In another 2021 longitudinal cohort study on adolescents and school shootings, Reihm and colleagues found that about 30% of adolescents in the study sample reported feeling very concerned, worried, and stressed about school shootings and other violence both in their own schools or other schools. Increased levels of concern were associated with meeting criteria for generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder, even when adjusting for previous level of worry or concern. Among Black students, the association between concern and major depressive disorder was higher compared to other racial and ethnic groups. An important potential limitation in this research is that for Black youth, the measure of concerns did not specific sources of violence in school nor ascertained the role of school resource officers play into feelings of concern or safety. Scholars have previously described “anticipatory trauma” that results from chronic exposure to violence and the hypervigilance associated with this that lead to prerequisite feelings of anxiety and worry (Reihm et al., 2021).

The effects of school shootings also impact family members. In addition to the above-mentioned findings, mental trauma alongside survivor’s guilt, can lead to deaths in the following years after the trauma was experienced. An important example of this phenomena was in the wake of the Parkland, Florida high school shooting. Two students committed suicide in just over

one year after the shooting occurred. In another tragic example, the dad of a child victim of the Sandy Hook shooting also committed suicide (Reeping et al., 2021).

In addition to the mental health impact gun violence has on young people as it relates to education, young people can also suffer academically. Youth exposed to gun violence often have poorer educational outcomes secondary to the mental impact of violence. Students exposed to gun violence, regardless of setting violence takes place, can suffer from PTSD, memory problems, intrusive thoughts, and difficulty sleeping. All of these factors can contribute to poor academic performance. Gun violence exposure can lead to behavioral problems that impact the student's ability to learn. Recent evidence shows feeling unsafe also contributes to negative test scores especially on math and English tests and also contributes to higher absenteeism compared to students who feel safe (Stevenson, 2020).

I want to conclude my literature review on one of the most thought-provoking scholarly works I have read while researching this thesis. Leila Sadat, a prominent legal expert in gun violence and Yale Law School research scholar, published a critical essay that claims “the suffering of America’s school children from uncontrolled gun violence may be significant enough in scale and kind to rise to the level of ill-treatment under international law, violating U.S. treaty obligations and customary international law” (p. 512). This essay helps draw together the multiple facets of gun violence: human rights, law, education, and public health. Sadat, using evidence and similar statistical data presented in this thesis, argues that this form of suffering is tantamount to “ill-treatment” as defined in the Convention Against Torture (CAT). Sadat outlines the criteria that meet torture and inhumane treatment and describes the suffering of the victim. Where her argument is thought provoking is around the States negative obligation, in particular States are obligated to “eliminate any legal or other obstacles that impeded the

eradication” of such ill-treatment and take positive steps to prevent such ill-treatment” (Sadat, 2021, p. 521). One important point to note, the CAT obligates States to prevent ill-treatment from State actors and nonstate actors, and in this case, the nonstate actors are the school shooters. The legal obligations should include appropriate legislative measures to prevent this ill-treatment.

Sadat also argues that the U.S. owes a unique duty of care to students because students mostly attend public schools which are funded by local and state governments. The CAT specifies the States obligation to prevent ill-treatment in all circumstances, and she argues this should include ill-treatment in schools and other entities that children receive care (Sadat, 2022). One essential piece I think is missing from the essay is the issue of exposure to gun violence in the community. There is much research to demonstrate that the majority of gun violence exposures and gun related homicides occur outside the context of mass or school shootings. Focusing solely on mass shootings does not fully address the wide breath of the gun violence epidemic and leave out marginalized children, such as Brown and Black children living in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities where gun violence is more prevalent.

CHAPTER FOUR: APPLYING THE YPS TO GUN VIOLENCE

In the previous literature review section, I presented important data and viewpoints on gun violence and its impact on the right to education and the right to health. The existing literature demonstrates the criticality of this issue but it is not enough to simply report facts and data. I now present the findings on my analysis of the Youth, Peace, and Security agenda framework and the application of these principles to gun violence prevention in the U.S., also while recalling the previously discussed definitions of youth, peace, and security. I begin with outlining the evolution of the YPS agenda and provide a description of the foundational principles. Next, I analyze how these principles can be applied to gun violence prevention in the United States. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze every detailed recommendation in the YPS Program Handbook. There is also considerable overlap in some of the recommendations. Therefore, I focus on the strategies that can best apply to gun violence prevention in the U.S.

A note on terminology

Conflict is an important term to define when analyzing YPS agenda. Conflict is part of every society and can be a useful tool to promote certain human rights but non-violent conflict management is important (UN and Folke Bernadotte Academy, 2021). I utilize conflict in this thesis, not in the traditional definition of armed conflict, but as a play on words, in that armed refers to the use of firearms, and conflict describes the tension that occurs at the community level. Even though armed conflict has not been previously described as such, I take some liberty to consider that the U.S. gun violence epidemic is in a way, its own unique form of armed conflict. I allow for this in order to extrapolate strategies from the YPS to demonstrate how these some of these same strategies, even when referring to armed conflict, can be used to prevent or reduce gun violence and decrease negative outcomes on gun violence among youth.

The next section outlines how the YPS agenda was developed and the important resolutions and reports that serve as the foundation for the agenda. It is also important to recognize that much of this work has been done over the past ten years and that the YPS movement continues to gain traction and that young people across the world continue to be key actors in the advance of peace and security.

Resolutions 2250

As previously discussed, in 2015, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2250. This resolution was the first to recognize the role young people play in maintaining peace. There are five key pillars. First, participation is defined as incorporating young people's views in decision-making, including when developing violence prevention strategies or negotiating peace treaties. Second, protection means to work to protect young people's lives and human rights as well as holding accountable those who violate these rights. Next, the prevention pillar is defined as preventing violence while also promoting culture of acceptance and across culture dialogue. Partnership, the fourth key pillar, is engaging youth in peacebuilding strategies alongside community actors and UN bodies. Last, disengagement and reintegration address the investment of resources, such as employment opportunities and education, into those impacted by armed conflict (UNSC, 2015).

Resolution 2419

As a follow up to Resolution 2250, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2419 three years later. This was the second resolution on youth, peace, and security, and requested the UN Secretary General to submit a report on how resolution 2250 was carried out. Resolution 2419 again defines youth as a person ages 18-29 years, reaffirms the UN's commitment to the right to education because education promotes peace and security. Resolution 2419 also calls on States to

promote violence free educational spaces. Building on the work of Resolution 2250, other key elements of Resolution 2419 as they related to the prevention of gun violence include:

- Calling on important actors to examine ways in which young people’s voices are heard and included in methods aimed at preventing and resolving conflict and recognizing the absence of doing so is detrimental to peace building
- Recognizing ways in which youth can promote a culture of peace, tolerance, and intercultural and interfaith discussions that discourage violent acts, xenophobia and other discrimination
- Emphasizing the need to develop and adopt policies to promote peacebuilding work, improve local economies, promote youth in the workforce
- Encouraging youth led civil society organizations
- Recommending a Peacebuilding Commission in which youth are encouraged to formulate strategies for peacebuilding (UNSC, 2018).

“Missing Peace” Report

In response to Resolution 2250, a 2018 progress study called “The Missing Peace: independent progress study on youth and peace and security” was published. This report included viewpoints obtained after consulting with over 4000 youth, with fairly equal distribution of men and women, and data was extracted from focus group discussion with youth from a variety of countries. Young people who are refugees also participated in focus group discussions (UNPF, 2018). Including such a diverse population in the Missing Peace report really strengthens the validity of the findings and addresses the overall YPS agenda mission to include lived experience of a diverse young global population.

The Missing Peace report also discusses “youth bulge” and the implications of this. Youth bulge was originally defined as the concept in which where there was a large cohort of young people, the levels of violence were increased. This school of thought was contradicted in areas such as Botswana and Nicaragua, and in other countries where a large population of youth existed but also countries continued to experience peace. Other research demonstrated that age was not the most significant factor in violence participation because economic, social and political factors also played a role. These factors are intertwined, however, because research suggests that in areas with youth bulges that correlated with violence also were areas where economic and educational opportunities were lacking (UNPF, 2018). Another important consideration of youth bulge theory is the State government’s response to anticipated violence perpetrated by young people. According to the Missing Peace Report, there is research that indicates many governments pre-emptively implement more repressive strategies to head off any potential youth violence outbreaks (UNPF, 2018). This is similar to the way in which schools have responded to threats of violence by preemptively securitizing schools, especially schools in communities of color. I include the concept of “youth bulge” here to lay groundwork for why strengthening employment and economic opportunities for young people is an important strategy in violence prevention.

Youth 2030 Agenda

One of the foundational principles of the YPS agenda is recognizing young people’s distinctive role in peacebuilding because of their unique knowledge and experiences of violence and injustice, including outside of the context of war. Young people are increasingly engaging in mobilization and advocacy to have a voice in local, national, and international policies (UN and Folk Bernadotte Academy, 2021). The Youth 2030 agenda also recognizes the critical role youth

have in driving forward positive change and young people are increasingly recognized as important actors in the carrying out of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Youth 2030 agenda outlines five priorities: “1) engagement, participation, and advocacy; 2) informed and healthy foundations; 3) economic empowerment through decent work; 4) youth and human rights; 5) peace and resilience-building” (UN and Folk Bernadotte Academy, 2021). These priorities, along with the five key pillars of the overall YPS agenda, underpin the violence prevention recommendations outlined in the YPS Program Handbook.

UN 2020 Report on Youth and Peace and Security

Most recently, the UN issued a 2020 report on YPS. This report states that although there has been some progress made globally to include young people in public life, participation in peace and security measures continues to be difficult. There needs to be more effort placed into creating spaces at the local level and in digital spaces where young people feel welcomed and are encouraged to use their voices and to be viewed as citizens with equal rights and equal influence. The report states all young people can participate in public life and advocate for peace. Unfortunately, however, despite the hundreds of peace agreements that have been signed, young people have been excluded from this process (UN, 2020).

There has also been slow growth in youth participation in political spaces. Worldwide, there tends to be decreasing levels of voter turnout and growing distrust towards democratic processes. The report recognizes that it is not enough have listen to young people; they must be allowed to have to opportunity to create and carry out policies and programs that address their needs and rights (UN, 2020).

Applying the YPS pillars to US gun violence

My contribution to the body of scholarship on gun violence in youth stems from applying the global YPS agenda pillars to U.S. specific gun violence. While the YPS agenda does not mention directly the U.S. or gun violence, many of these pillars and key principles can apply to addressing gun violence prevention. American youth need national peace and security and the YPS agenda applies to this crucial issue.

Pillar One: Participation

The YPS agenda has a particular emphasis on youth-participatory approaches. Participation is grounded in the notion that young people are actively involved in all stages of both informal and formal peace and security processes. (UN and Folk Bernadotte Academy, 2021). One key strategy to promote youth participation include identifying youth needs and aspirations. As gun violence is now the leading killer of young people, having the voices of youth heard on ways in which gun violence can be addressed is necessary. I acknowledge that youth are considered a vulnerable population and therefore young survivors of gun violence require even more care. However, learning from their lived experiences and elevating the voices of the communities most affected is a strong starting point to preventing widespread violence.

It was not until 2023, that three organizations, EveryTown, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and the Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab, collaborated to publish a report on American youth's views on guns. This landmark report demonstrated that nearly 75% of American young people think guns are a problem and 58% of youth feel gun control laws should be more strict (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2023). Incorporating this national data into future legislation is one way to ensure the needs of youth are heard.

Additionally, when developing future studies, researchers could also inquire about what youth think are effective ways to reduce gun violence ensures their perspectives are considered.

Another strategy to increase youth participation is to promote political activism. Since age 18 is the legal voting age, young people are a key group of voters and constituents. Youth should be encouraged to vote for legislators who support violence prevention legislation. The gun debate is highly politically divisive but young people can have their voices heard by voting. The March for Our Lives organization conducted a midterm poll in 2022. Over 800 young people between 18 and 35 years of age were surveyed. The poll showed that over half of majority voters aged 34 and younger worry about their own personal safety from gun violence and from mass shootings. Sixty-two percent of voters fear mass shooting. Women who were surveyed had more concerns about personal safety. Of those surveyed, nearly three-quarters believed they had at least a 50% chance of being a gun violence victim and about half believe there is a 50% chance they will be involved in a mass shooting. These underlying beliefs are a scary, but powerful motivator for young voters to cast their ballot for those who favor gun control legislation. Most young voters feel that passing laws to require background checks and increasing legal age to purchase a gun to 21 years are the most important considerations when determining who to vote for (March for Our Lives, n.d.). This data, although not explicitly stated, also points to the fact that the right to health and to education are impacted with the threat of gun violence. Most young people in the U.S. want more to be done in order to protect overall safety and security, and thereby also protecting right to health and education.

Another way youth can participate are through advocacy group. Since gun violence is rampant in the U.S, there has been an increase in advocacy efforts that focus on gun violence. One important example is Everytown. Everytown also has a youth advocacy group, Students Demand Action (SDA). The SDA website says that today's youth have been named the "school shooting generation" because of the epidemic of American gun violence (SDA, 2024). This

characterization of the current generation is a powerful driving force for advocacy. The SDA group's tactics include advocating for "common-sense gun laws", electing candidates that support these types of laws, educating young people about gun safety and violence prevention solutions, promoting voter registration, and mobilizing their group members and other youth. These strategies have helped SDA defeat detrimental gun legislation in Indiana, Maryland, and Wyoming. SDA also campaigned in the 2020 election, and these officials are now influencing current gun policy (SDA, 2024). This is a prime example of youth participation and the impact this has on election outcomes.

Pillar Two: Protection, justice and human rights

This pillar is based on fostering inclusive, safe, and gender responsive environment in which diverse youth are supported and protected in order to carry out the work on violence prevention. While the YPS agenda has a gender-responsive framing that is based on the widespread global occurrence of gender-based violence, I approach this pillar through the intersection of race and youth. This is the preferred approach for this thesis since the prevalence data overwhelmingly illustrates the disproportionate impact of gun violence against Black youth. Both homicide and suicide by firearm, disproportionately affect young people of color (National Institute of Health, 2023). The National Association on the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has called for gun violence and gun homicides to be recognized as more than just death but as a public health epidemic and national health crisis. Black people are fourteen times more likely to be killed by a gun than White people and firearm deaths are the leading cause of death in young Black men, despite Black Americans making up only 13.6% of the U.S. population (NAACP, 2024; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). This data demonstrates the need for

young people of color to be actively involved in the decision-making process as it relates to any type of violence prevention program or gun legislation.

Another key YPS agenda strategy to promote protection is to promote and support awareness campaigns. I again extrapolate from the recommendation to have a more nuanced gender-based approach to instead look at this strategy through a racial justice approach. One way in which this is done in the U.S. is through the Brady Campaign. The Brady Campaign states they are the only national organization working to address gun violence through racial justice initiatives. The Campaign states we must recognize how public policy has been developed that contributes to the disproportionate impact of gun violence on Black communities. Gun homicides are often clustered in areas with highest rates of poverty and a history of disinvestment. Poverty is directly linked to racist housing policies, which then further exacerbates income inequality, leading back to poverty. The Brady Campaign recognizes addressing this fundamental issue is required to fully address gun violence (Brady Campaign, 2024).

Another strategy that can be used to foster a racial justice approach is to incorporate the use of the Racial Equity Framework to prevent gun violence. This framework was a collaboration between multiple organizations, including March for Our Lives (MFOL), and recommends using racial equity impact assessments to help inform policy makers, advocacy groups, and researchers by calling for the examining of decisions and policies through a racial equity lens. Some, but not all, of the key questions to consider when evaluating gun violence policies include: 1) Are there racial disparities that could result from the way in which the policy is designed and implemented; 2) Is racial inequity informing the overall policy?; 3) Are the proposed solutions to ending violence sustainable? (Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence,

2022). This is a key framework as it directly includes the voices March for Our Lives, a youth-led organization. This framework could easily be included in a variety of policy and legislative spaces and would also serve to, albeit perhaps more indirectly, incorporate the viewpoints of young people if these policies were evaluated through this framework. This framework also would potentially improve the right to health and education since young people of color are disproportionately impacted by gun violence. This framework addresses both the voices of youth and also has the potential to improve life for youth of color.

Pillar Three: Prevention

The prevention principle is similar to the protection principle in that this pillar promotes inclusive atmospheres where young people can implement violence prevention strategies and can support reconciliation (UN and Folk Bernadotte Academy, 2021). One strategy that can be applied is to create platforms for young media content creators to express their vision for society, share their voices, and make recommendations for community issues, in this case, community gun violence (UN and Folk Bernadotte Academy, 2021).

One example of where this strategy was used in the U.S. was with the March for Our Lives movement. MFOL movement was born out of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida during 2018 (Dziobak, 2023). This movement was described as one of the biggest protests since the War in Vietnam. This movement was powerful largely because the use of social media platforms to raise awareness and demand a call for action. In March 2018, the MFOL movement was trending on multiple social media platforms and the hashtag #MarchForOurLives was tagged on Twitter almost four million times in just one day. There was a shift with this movement because whereas previously politicians, celebrities and other well-known figures were the prominent posters prior to this mass shooting, after the

shooting took place it was young people who claimed the top spots of social media posters on this issue. Alongside Twitter, Facebook was an important platform to advance the MFOL cause. The MFOL Facebook account gained over 300,000 followers and thousands were able to respond to whether or not they would attend the national march in Washington D.C. This allowed people with common values to connect. Instagram was also the platform of choice for celebrities to promote gun control content, which received millions of “likes”. Dziobak argues that MFOL would have not had the same far reaching impact without the use of social media. These platforms allowed march organizers to reach a much more global audience (Dziobak, 2023). This is one important example of how social media can be used by young people to advance the movement on gun control. This also ties back to the right to education as this social movement was driven out of the mass shooting that occurred at a public high school. Students demanded their voices be heard and demanded action be taken so they do not have to attend school under an umbrella of fear.

Another key strategy to address the prevention pillar is to increase social and economic opportunities for young people in order to foster resilience (UN and Folk Bernadotte Academy, 2021). One of the most common risk factors for any form of violence is social and economic disadvantage but is a particularly significant factor for gun violence in youth and young adults. Lack of equitable housing, poverty, poor wages, redlining housing practices (Uzzi et al., 2022), and lack of job opportunities can lead people in these communities to engage in more risky behaviors which can then lead to violence (Payne, 2017).

When examining the impact of economic disadvantage in students, there is evidence demonstrating the impact of unemployment and under-employment on drug and alcohol use in youth. Unemployment, both in the student themselves or the family, can affect the way one feels

about themselves and create a sense of loss of control (Pah et al., 2017). Research also indicates that the student may respond to the parent's joblessness, thus perpetuating feelings of dissatisfaction on future employment opportunities and earnings. Pah and colleagues also suggest that school gun violence may be a response to the ideal that continuing in school will eventually lead to improved economic status, when in reality, that may not be the case. This same study found that during the past 25 years, there have been two surges of school gun violence; both timeframes were associated with economic instability (Pah et al., 2017).

Beardslee and colleagues (2021) conducted a prospective longitudinal study on the impact of socioeconomic disadvantage and adolescent gun violence. This study found a strong association between socioeconomic disadvantage and gun violence, even when other variables such as race, delinquency and conduct problems were controlled for. This study also showed boys who were socioeconomically disadvantaged had an increased risk of associating with delinquent peers during early school years. This created a domino effect as early association with delinquent peers led to the boys themselves having increased conduct problems, which then increased their risk of adolescent gun violence (Beardslee et al, 2021). Conversely, the study by Kim in 2019, showed that economic mobility and better income equality was associated with less gun violence. Lastly, another study by Rowhani-Rahbar looked at the connection between income inequality and gun homicides across the U.S. counties with greater income inequality had higher rates of gun homicides in those ages 14-39 years. The higher the economic disadvantage and lower social capital, the higher the rates were of violent and non-violent crimes (Rowhani-Rahbar et al., 2019).

One way in which addressing economic disparities may lead to decrease in gun violence is through earned income tax credits. Lenhart reports that earned income tax credits have been

shown to be effective in violence reduction. These tax credits assist families with lower income increase their income. This study examined state earned income tax credits laws and found that states with higher tax credits correlated with a 10% drop in violent crime rates. Earned income tax credits have also been shown to help close the gap between White and Black households for certain percentiles of income distribution categories (Lenhart, 2021). Increased earnings are associated with lower recidivism odds. This is just one example of an economic policy that may improve income in disadvantaged communities and therefore can potentially decrease gun violence in those communities. However, this one strategy will not be enough to significantly reduce community gun violence. Additional research found Black and Latinx youth in households with high income still experienced community gun violence more frequently than white youth in low income households (Kravitz-Writz et al., 2022). This highlights the need for place-based investments in community life to strengthen the socioeconomic aspects of the community, especially in marginalized communities.

Pillar Four: Partnerships

Forming new partnerships and bolstering existing partnerships between young people and youth organizations, social movements, and advocacy groups is a foundational principle in advancing the YPS agenda. Funding for such partnerships is also essential (UN and Folk Bernadotte Academy, 2021). One tactic is to create YPS coalitions in order to promote the YPS agenda on local, national and global levels. Another strategy is to partner with philanthropists. There is a lack of academic literature on philanthropic involvement in gun violence prevention but funding is an important source for any social movement. One example of philanthropy and gun violence prevention is the Bloomberg Foundation. The Bloomberg Foundation supports a wide variety of public health issues, including prevention of gun violence. It is difficult to how

much of their financial resources the Bloomberg Foundation contributes to such programs but one CNBC report states that Bloomberg donated over \$38,000,000 to Everytown in 2018 alone (Schwartz, 2019).

In order to best meet the recommendations of this pillar, it would be important for youth to be involved with philanthropic boards and have a say into what programs are funded. One organization, Youth on Boards, out of Tulsa, Oklahoma was created to allow for young people to serve on boards in order to diversify of nonprofit organizations. Youth participate in a three-year long program where they choose a community project and then develop research, organizational, and planning skills in order to become experts in philanthropy. The Youth of Boards organization believes “teens are the voices of our future and it is imperative that we involved them in the making of decisions that will impact our society. A teen perspective will provide a non-profit with insight into how the mind of our current generation works and what we, as teens, would find most beneficial and effective” (Youthonboards.org, n.d.).

This type of organization and its mission could easily be used to incorporate youth into important positions on organization boards that fund the issue of gun violence prevention. To my knowledge, Bloomberg Foundation does not have youth involved in the board and I was not able to identify any prominent philanthropies that do have active youth involvement but this could be one potential step to elevate the views of young people into funding decisions.

Pillar Five: Disengagement and Reintegration

The final pillar, as defined by the YPS, is to “promote and support actions that ensure that the needs, concerns and aspirations of youth former combatants – in all their diversity – are taken into account in reintegration processes and that young women and men can play a positive role in co-leading or implementing disengagement and reintegration processes” (UN and Folk

Bernadotte Academy, 2021, p. 115). Instead of applying this principle to “enemy combatants”, I apply this principle to perpetrators of youth gun violence and show how their voices should be heard as well.

There is robust public health research on the impact of community-based programs to prevent gun violence. Community based violence reduction programs are an alternative to over-policing and are considered to be one of the most effective methods for reducing gun violence in young people. Many programs focus on firearm violence reduction by interrupting conflicts, changing social norms, and offer positive alternatives to life on the streets such as education and employment services (Corburn, 2022). One example of an effective community-based program is the Advanced Peace program. Advance Peace is a not-for-profit program using street workers and a trauma-informed healing-driven approach. Currently the program is located in Fresno, Richmond, Sacramento, Stockton, and Forth Wort. This program uses a model of “healing those at the center of gun violence in a city by using everyday intensive mentorship and engagement by formerly incarcerated, adult street outreach workers” (Corburn, Midam, & Fukutome-Lopez, 2022). These outreach workers, called Neighborhood Change Agents (NCAs) serve as credible messengers. The NCAs were either previously incarcerated, and/or affiliated with street groups. They are committed to doing the work on their own healing in order to help those enrolled in the program. The Advanced Peace program is an 18-month program and uses strategies of mentoring, life skills classes, assistance with navigating community resources and at the completion of at least six months of the program, participants, called fellows, are eligible to receive a monthly allowance of up to \$1000. This program was originally used in Richmond, California and in under a decade, gun crimes rates dropped by over 50% (Corburn, et al. 2022).

The monthly stipend may help decrease economic disparities and may contribute to the program's success.

The Advance Peace Program goal is to “end cyclical and retaliatory urban gun violence by investing in the development, health, and healing of highly influential individuals at the center of urban gun violence” (Advanced Peace, 2017). Working directly with these highly influential individuals that are central to gun hostilities, Advance Peace bridges the gap between anti-violence programming and populations at the center of violence in urban areas that are often difficult to reach, thus breaking the cycle of gun hostilities and altering the trajectory of these men's lives. Central to the program's success is the fellow's motivation and community outreach worker's mentorship (Corburn et al., 2022). Both of these factors can lead to a shift in attitudes and behavior change. It is often *not* the healthcare provider that is best suited to be the violence prevention messenger. It is more effective to have an intervention specialist who is a relatable community member that is a much more credible messenger in this situation (Bonne & Dicker, 2020). This may be the reason why the Advance Peace Program is successful since the outreach workers are formerly incarcerated members of the community. One fellow reported the mentorship provided from the NCA allowed the fellow to become aware of his trauma and how that trauma influenced his daily decisions. This helped him to get his life back on track (Corburn, et al., 2022).

This example shows that even those who have perpetrated violence in the past can still use their experiences to work with other at-risk young people in order to curb gun violence within local communities. This program involves young adults and therefore ties in with the overall YPS pillar.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

There is a robust body of literature on gun violence prevention and includes approaches, strategies, and recommendations across multiple disciplines. However, this thesis is a unique contribution to the field as it applies the Youth, Peace, and Security agenda pillars and key principles and extrapolates recommendations from the YPS agenda to addressing gun violence within the U.S. There are several tactics that the U.S. can draw from the YPS in order to reduce gun violence and the key focus must be active involvement on young people across all disciplines from policy making to advocacy to voting.

The UN 2020 report on YPS agenda also demonstrates how applying the five pillars of participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and disengagement and reintegration, has advanced peace and security in other nations. Participation is the first pillar and one that is woven throughout the other four pillars. Without youth voices, insights, lived experiences, it is unlikely that any strategy used to advance peace and security among youth will be effective. Past experiences of young people participating in grassroots advocacy, such as with Everytown's Students Demand Action and March for Our Lives, have shown the impact young people have on social justice movements. Youth should be encouraged to continue advancing this movement and not wait to ride the wave of future mass shootings. Sustained momentum is key here to keep the issue fresh in the minds of those poised to make lasting change. Being active voters is Active participation in the voting process is another key method as youth make up a large percentage of the American population.

Protection, the second pillar, must include a racial justice perspective in order to fully address the harms of gun violence in communities of color. It is not enough to have young

people involved. There must be young people of color actively involved in any decisions made about advancing peace. More gun violence prevention organizations must focus on the intersection of gun violence, race, and age. Prevention must include addressing economic and social injustices that inevitably contribute to gun violence at the local level. Research shows that improving economic opportunities is associated with lower rates of violence. Partnerships is the fourth key pillar. Funding for public health research on gun violence and investing into community violence interventions that have demonstrated success will also advance peace and security. Yet, young people should have an active role in where this funding is allocated. Lastly, disengagement and reintegration, in this sense as it relates to young offenders, has been shown to be successful through the use of programs like Advanced Peace. Young people should be involved in the creation and implementation of community-based violence prevention programs and also recognize that the voices of those who have previously been perpetrators of gun violence, also offer unique insight into prevention strategies.

All of these combined strategies can work to address the violation of the right to health and right to education. By having youth actively involved in these prevention strategies, whether through grassroots advocacy, youth serving on boards, on community gun violence prevention programs, better health and improved education will be natural results. One may consider the fight to end gun violence a hopeless and never-ending battle. There is still much work that needs to be done. Yet Americans must not lose hope. The lives of young people across the country depend on older youth and adults to stand beside them in advocating for ending the gun violence epidemic. Incorporating some or all of the above-mentioned strategies derived from the YPS agenda is critical for stopping the destruction of young people's lives.

References

- Advanced Peace (2017). The Solution. <https://www.advancepeace.org/about/the-solution/>
- Altiok, A., Berents, H., Grizelj, I. & McEvoy-Levy, S. (2020). Youth, peace, and security. In F. Hampson, A. Oxerdem & J. Kent (Eds), *Routledge handbook of peace, security, and development* (1st ed., pp. 433-447). Routledge.
- Amnesty International (n.d.). *Gun Violence*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/gun-violence/#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20there%20were%2045%2C222,registry%20to%20monitor%20gun%20ownership>
- Azrael, D., Hepburn, L. Hemenway, D. & Miller, M. (2017). The stock and flow of U.S. firearms: Results from the 2015 National Firearms Survey. *RSF: Russel Sage Foundation Journal of Social Sciences*, 38-57.
- Barboza-Salerno, G. & Meshelemiah, J. (2023). Gun violence on walkable routes to and from school: Recommendations for policy and practice. *Journal of Urban Health*, 100, 1102-1117.
- Bearslee, J., Docherty, M., Mulvey, E. & Pardini, D. (2021). The direct and indirect Associations between childhood socioeconomic disadvantage and adolescent gun violence. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, 50(3), 326-336. doi: 10.1080/15374416.2019.1644646
- Benjamin, A. J., Kepes, S., & Bushman, B. J. (2018). Effects of weapons on aggressive thoughts, angry feelings, hostile appraisals, and aggressive behavior: A Meta-Analytic review of the weapons effect literature. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 22(4), 347-377. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1177/1088868317725419>
- Bonne, S. & Dicker, A. (2020). Hospital-Based violence intervention programs to address social

determinants of health and violence. *Current Trauma Reports*, 6, 23-28. doi:

<https://doi-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1007/s40719-020-00184-9>

Brady Campaign (2019a). *Brady's legislative blueprint for a safer America*.

<https://www.bradyunited.org/reports/legislative-blueprint>

Bray, M., Boulous, M. E., Shi, G., MacKrell, K. & Nestadt, P. S. (2020). Educational achievement and youth homicide mortality: A city-wide, neighborhood-based analysis. *Injury Epidemiology*, 7(20), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40621-020-00246-1>.

Brock, J. & Routon, P.W. (2020). The effect of mass shootings on the demand for guns.

Southern Economic Journal, 87, 50-69.

Buttrick, N. (2020). Protective gun ownership as a coping mechanism. *Perspectives on*

Psychological Science, 15(4), 835-855.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023, September). *Fast facts: Firearm violence*.

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/fastfact.html>

Choi, Annette. (2023, March). *Children and teens are more likely to die by guns than*

anything else. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/29/health/us-children-gun-deaths-dg/index.html>

Corburn, J., Midam, Y. & Fukutome-Lopez, A. (2022). The art and science of urban gun

Violence reduction: Evidence from the Advance Peace Program in Sacramento,

California. *Urban Science*, 6, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.3390/urbansci6010006>

Corburn, J., Bogan, D., Muttaqi, K., Vaughn, S., Houston, J., Thibodeaux, J. & Muhammed, B.

(2022). Advancing urban peace: Preventing gun violence and healing traumatized youth.

Youth Justice, 22(3), 272-290. <https://doi->

[org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1177/14732254211020138](https://doi-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1177/14732254211020138)

- Donnelly, J. (2013). *Universal human rights in theory and practice* (3rd edition). Cornell University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt1xx5q2>
- Dziobak, M. (2023). #NeveragainMSD and the March for Our Lives Movement: American youth For gun control. *Journal of American Studies*, 24, 16-32.
- Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, DC Justice Lab, Cities United, March for Our Lives, Community Justice Action Fund, Consortium for Risk-Based Firearm Policy, and Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Prevention (2022). *Racial Equity Framework For Gun Violence Prevention*. https://efsgv.org/wp-content/uploads/EFSGV_REIA_Framework.pdf
- Feinstein, A. & Choonara, I. (2020). Arms sales and child health. *BMJ Paediatrics Open*, 4, 1-5.
- Garbarino, J. (2022). The war-zone mentality- mental health effects of gun violence in U.S. children and adolescents. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 387(13), 1149-1151. doi:10.1056/NEJMp2209422
- Gun Violence Archive. (2024). *About us*. <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/about>
- Gun Violence Research Archive. (2024). *Mass shootings in 2024*. <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/reports/mass-shooting>.
- Hodges, J., Walker, D. Baum, C. F. & Hawkins, S. S. (2023). Impact of school shootings on adolescent safety, 2009-2019. *American Journal of Public Health*, 113(4), 438-441. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2022.307206>
- Jackson, A. Tiry, Em., Thompson, P. & Janetta, J. (2022, July). *Educational costs of gun Violence*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/Educational%20Costs%20of%20Gun%20Violence.pdf>

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (n.d.) CDC provisional data: Gun suicides reach an all-time high in 2022, gun homicides down slightly from 2021.

<https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2023/cdc-provisional-data-gun-suicides-reach-all-time-high-in-2022-gun-homicides-down-slightly-from-2021#:~:text=It%20remains%20near%20record%20highs,and%20suicides%20fueled%20this%20increase.>

Kegler, S. Simon, T. R., Zwalk, M.L. et al. (2022). *Vital signs: Changes in firearm homicide and suicide rates, United States, 2019-2020*. MMRW Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 71, 656-663.

Kim, D. (2019). Social determinants of health in relation to firearm-related homicides in the United States: A nationwide multilevel cross-sectional study. *Plos Medicine*, 1-26. 10.1371/journal.pmed.1002978

Klein, B. R., Trowbridge, J. Schnell, C., Lewis, K. (2024). Characteristics and obtainment methods of firearms used in adolescent school shootings. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 178(1), 73-79. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2023.5093

Kravitz-Wirtz, N., Bruns, A., Aubel, A., Zhang, X. & Buggs, S. (2022). Inequities in community exposure to deadly gun violence by race/ethnicity, poverty, and neighborhood disadvantage among youth in large US cities. *Journal of Urban Health*, 99, 610-625. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1007/s11524-022-00656-0>

Lazarus, L. (2015). The Right to Security. In R. Cruft, M. Liao, & M. Reonzo, M. (Eds). *Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights*. (1st ed., pp. 423-441). Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199688623.003.0024>

Lee, L. K., Fleegler, E. W., Goyal, M. K., Doh, K. F., Laraque-Arena, D., Hoffman, B. D.

- (2022). Firearm-related injuries and deaths in children and youth: Injury prevention and harm reduction. *Pediatrics*, 150(6), e2022060070.
- Leibbrand, C., Hill, H., Rowhani-Rahbar, A. & Rivara, F. (2020). Invisible wounds: Community exposure to gun homicides and adolescents' mental and behavioral outcomes. *SSM Population Health*, 12, 100689. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2020.100689>
- Lenhart, O. (2021). Earned income tax credit and crime. *Contemporary Economic Policy*, 39(3), 589–607. <https://doi.org/10.1111/coep.12522>.
- Magee, L. A., Aalsma, M. C., Fortenberry, J. D., Gharbi, S., & Wieche, S. E. (2022). Mental health outcomes from direct and indirect exposure to firearm violence: A cohort study of nonfatal shooting survivors and family members. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 83, 1-8.
- March Four Our Lives (2024). *The 2020 midterm poll: Gun violence drives youth to vote*. <https://marchforourlives.org/2022-poll/>
- McGough, M., Amin, K., Panchal, M. & Cox, C. (2023, July). *Child and teen firearm mortality in the U.S. and peer countries*. <https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/issue-brief/child-and-teen-firearm-mortality-in-the-u-s-and-peer-countries/>.
- Miller, M., Azrael D. (2022). Firearm storage in US household with children: Findings from the 2021 National Firearm Survey. *JAMA Network Open*, 5(2).
doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.48823
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (2024). *NAACP opposes gun homicide and calls for it to be rightfully seen as public health epidemic*. <https://naacp.org/resources/naacp-opposes-gun-homicide-and-calls-it-rightfully-be-seen-public-health-epidemic>

National Institute of Health (2022, July). *Preventing Gun Violence, the Leading Cause of Childhood Death.*

https://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/org/od/directors_corner/prev_updates/gun-violence-July2022.

National Institute of Health (2023, October). *Firearm-related deaths increases among youth in 2020, Greatest toll on black youth.* <https://www.nimhd.nih.gov/news-events/research-spotlights/racial-disparities-in-youth-firearm-deaths.html>.

Pah, J., Jennings, A., Jain, A. & Albrecht, K. (2017). Economic insecurity and the rise of gun Violence in schools. *Nature of Human Behavior, 1*(2), 1-7, doi:10.1038/s41562-016-0040

Payne, K., Brown-Iannuzzi, J. & Hannay, J. (2017). Economic inequality increases risk taking. *Proceedings from the National Academy of Sciences, 114*(18), 4643-4648, doi: 10.1073/pnas.1616453114

Raissan, K. M., Dineen, J., N. & Crifasi, C. (2022). “Gun violence and gun policy in the United States: Understanding American exceptionalism”. *Annals of the American Academy, 704*, 7-17.

Rajan, S., Reeping, P. M., Ladhani, Z., Vasudevan, L. M., & Branas, C. C. (2022). Gun violence in K-12 schools in the United States: Moving towards a preventive (versus reactive) framework. *Preventive Medicine, 165*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2022.107280>

Reeping, P. M., Gobaud, A. N., Branas, C. & Rajan, S. (2021). K-12 school shootings: Implications for policy, prevention, and child well-being. *Pediatric Clinics of North America, 68*(2), 413-426. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pcl.2020.12.005>

Riehm, K. E., Mojtabai, R., Adams, L. B., Krueger, E. A., Mattingly, D. T., Nestadt, P. S., &

- Leventhal, A. M. (2021). Adolescents' concerns about school violence or shootings and association with depressive, anxiety, and panic symptoms. *JAMA network open*, 4(11),
Doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.32131
- Rowhani-Robhar, A., Quistberg, D. A., Morgan, E., Hajat, A. & Rivara, F. (2019). Income Inequality and firearm homicide in the US: A county-level cohort study. *Injury Prevention*, 25, i25-230. doi:10.1136/injuryprev-2018-043080
- Sadat, L. & George, M. (2019). Gun violence and human rights. *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy*, 60.
- Sadat, L. (2022). Torture in our schools? *Harvard Law Review Forum*, 512-524.
<https://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/135-Harv.-L.-Rev.-F.-512.pdf>
- Sanchez, C., Jaguan, D., Shaikh, S., McKenney, M. & Elkbuli, A. (2020). A systematic review of the causes of prevention strategies in reducing gun violence in the United States. *American Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 38, 2169-2178.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajem.2020.06.062>
- Schwartz, B. (2019, November). *Bloomberg's huge donation helps his gun safety group raise record revenue in 2018*. CNBC.
<https://www.cnbc.com/2019/11/26/bloomberg-vs-nra-huge-donation-lifts-gun-safety-groups-revenue.html#:~:text=A%20source%20says%20Bloomberg%20donated,is%20at%20a%20slower%2012%25>.
- Smith, M. E., Sharpe, T. L., Richardson, J., Pahwa, R., Smith, D., & DeVlyder, J. (2020). The Impact of exposure to gun violence fatality on mental health outcomes in four urban U.S. settings. *Social science & medicine*, 246, 1-7.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.112587>

Southern Poverty Law Center (2023, July). *U.S. youth attitude on guns*.

<https://www.splcenter.org/peril-youth-attitudes-guns-report>.

Students Demand Action (n.d.). *What We Do*. <https://studentsdemandaction.org/about/#what-we-do>

Stevenson, D. (2020). Gun violence as an obstacle to educational equality. *The University Of Memphis Law Review*, 50, 1091-1143.

Thrall, T., Cohen, J., & Dorminey, C. (2020). Power, profit, or prudence? US arms sales since 9/11. *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, 14 (2), 100-12

United Nations (n.d.). *Factsheet 31: Right to Health*.

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Factsheet31.pdf>

United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

United Nations. (1966). *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english>.

United Nations (1965). *International Covenant on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>

United Nations (1976). *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

United Nations (2014). Peace means dignity, well-being for all, not just absence of war - UN officials

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2014/09/476992#:~:text=Audio%20Hub-.Peace%20means%20dignity%2C%20well%2Dbeing%20for%20all%2C%20not%20just,absence%20of%20war%20%E2%80%93%20UN%20officials>

United Nations and Folke Bernadotte Academy (2021). *Youth, Peace, and Security: A Handbook*. https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2021-02/YPS%20Programming%20Handbook_0.pdf

United Nations General Assembly- Human Rights Council. (15, April 2016).

Human Rights and the Regulation of Civilian Acquisition, Possession and Use of Firearms. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/human-rights-and-regulation-civilian-acquisition-possession-and-use-firearms>.

UNESCO (2019). *Right to Education Handbook*.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366556/PDF/366556eng.pdf.multi>

United Nations Population Fund (2020). *The missing peace: independent progress report on Youth, peace, and security*. <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/missing-peace-independent-progress-study-youth-and-peace-and-security>

United Nations Security Council (2015). *Resolution 2250 (2015)*.

<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n15/413/06/pdf/n1541306.pdf?token=NJMPVBcRAHalMFM1JV&fe=true>

United Nations Security Council (2018). *Resolution 2419 (2018)*.

<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n18/173/81/pdf/n1817381.pdf?token=cXS3FSUTf2lxo5QSst&fe=true>

United Nations Security Council (2020). *Youth, peace, and security. Report of the*

Secretary. https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2020-03/S_2020_167_E.pdf

United States Census Bureau (2023). *Quick Facts: United States*.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045223>

Uzzi, M., Aune, K., Marineua, L., Jones, F., Dean, L., Jackson, J. & Latkin, C. (2023).

An intersectional analysis of historical and contemporary structural racism on non-fatal shootings in Baltimore, Maryland. *Injury Prevention*, 1-6. doi: 10.1136/ip-2022-044700

Vasan, A., Mitchell, H. K., Fein, J. A., Buckler, D. G., Wiebe, D. J. & South, E. C. (2021).

association of neighborhood violence with mental health-related pediatric emergency department utilization. *JAMA pediatrics*, 175(12), 124401251.

<https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2021.3512>

Williams, J. L., Hambrick, E. P., Gleason, V. L., Hardt, M. M., Henschel, A. V., Wilfred, S. A.,

Wilson, E. J., Stratmann, S., Jamison-Petr, J. R., & Moncure, M. (2024). Evaluating skills for psychological recovery with gunshot injury survivors in a hospital-based early

intervention program. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 94(2), 159–168. <https://doi->

[org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1037/ort0000710](https://doi-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1037/ort0000710)

Youth On Boards (2024). *Youth on boards: Voices for the Future*.

<https://www.youthonboards.org/>