Six Important Research Findings about Guns and Crime/Crime Prevention

- Centers for Disease Control Review (2003)

This comprehensive survey of 51 scientific studies by an organization with a definite anti-Second Amendment orientation found that there is no statistically significant evidence that gun control is effective in preventing crime.

- Research by Dr. Gary Kleck (1991)

Dr. Kleck, as close to an unbiased scientist as you can find in the debate, estimated that up to 2.5 million individuals use guns for self-defense every year. In the majority of these cases, no shots are fired.

- Research by Dr. John Lott and Dr. David Mustard (2000)

This study, which looked at every county in the United States, concluded that "shall issue" concealed carry laws reduce the incidence of murder, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery.

- National Academy of Sciences Review (2004)

The Academy panel studied 253 scientific journal articles, 99 books, 43 government publications and some of its own research and could not establish a cause and effect relationship between civilian gun ownership and violence. This finding is remarkable in that an overwhelming number of the panel members had a history of pro-gun control sentiment.

- Small Arms Survey, Geneva, Switzerland (2007)

This organization, which is affiliated with the UN, has never been accused of ~~on~~ a bias toward civilian ownership of firearms. The conclusion reached by the report published in 2007 states, "There is no clear relationship between more guns and higher levels of violence."

- Research by Dr. James Wright and Dr. Peter Rossi (1983)

These two doctors, engaged in research for the US Department of Justice, initially believed that gun control reduced crime. Based on the results of their research with incarcerated felons, the two concluded that armed citizens have a deterrent effect on criminal behavior.

Gun Control Research: The CDC Study

A comprehensive study done by one of the most prestigious scientific organizations in the country has found no statistically significant evidence that gun control has prevented a single violent crime.

If you believe that scientific research is the most logical way to understand the reality of the world, then you pay attention to studies done by groups and individuals. You also give weight to surveys that attempt to draw conclusions by reviewing numbers of studies.

The survey in question was done by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to determine if gun control has made a difference in the crime rate in the United States. There are some important things to remember about this study, which was published in 2003.

The CDC is a governmental organization that generally favors strict gun control laws. The panel doing the review of studies on these laws was largely made up of advocates for restricting or banning the citizen ownership of firearms in the United States.

The purpose of the survey was to evaluate gun control laws with regard to effectiveness in controlling crime and violence. Given the institutional and individual bias in favor of restrictive gun laws, the conclusions of the CDC study are remarkable.

The CDC panel reviewed 51 studies regarding the effectiveness of gun control laws. Based on that review, they could not say that gun laws had prevented a single crime. The survey included, among other issues, studies of the effectiveness of gun and ammunition bans, licensing and registration laws, child access laws, and waiting periods. There was some slight evidence that waiting periods to purchase a firearm may reduce the gun suicide rate in older persons, while not affecting the overall suicide rate.

You would think that out of 51 scientific studies there would be more evidence of the effectiveness of gun control, if gun control were effective in preventing crime and violence. It is a tribute to the honesty of the CDC panel, given their preconceived ideas that they were willing to issue this report at all. The survey did say in somewhat Orwellian fashion that "insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness should not be interpreted as evidence of ineffectiveness." (Just because 50 studies failed to find a significant result, it doesn't mean that the result isn't there.)

The panel recommended additional research. This CDC survey is corroborated by the results of an even more exhaustive review done by the National Academy of Sciences.

Thacker, Steven, M.D., Dixon, Richard E., M.D., *First Reports evaluating the effectiveness of strategies for preventing violence: Firearms Laws*, Task Force on Community Preventive Services, Centers for Disease Control.
http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5214a2.htm

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Gun Control Research- Dr. Gary Kleck- Gun most effective way to resist robbery and assault- up to 2.5 million defensive gun uses per year by U.S. adults

Dr. Kleck, a professor of criminology at Florida State University is a registered Democrat, a member of the ACLU, does not own guns, and takes no money from anyone on either side in the debate. In 1988, Kleck published an article in the journal, *Social Relations.* This article, the first major research effort that measured defensive gun use, was based on state and national studies.

Dr. Kleck estimated that about 1 million adults per year use a gun for self-defense in the U.S. Kleck's research included studies done for the anti-gun National Alliance Against Violence, and the National Crime Victimization Surveys. Kleck concluded that gun use was the most effective and safest way of resisting a robbery or assault, safer than not resisting, running away, or using another method of resistance.

In 1991, Dr. Kleck published *Point Blank: guns and violence in America.* The book won an award in 1993 from the American Society of Criminology for an "outstanding contribution" to the field.

Not satisfied with the sources for his previous work, Dr. Kleck and his colleague Marc Gertz created a new survey with a sample size of about 5,000 individuals to better measure defensive gun use. With the new survey, Kleck and Gertz estimated between 2.2 to 2.5 million defensive gun uses per year in the U.S. Women were the defenders in about 46% of the cases reported. Less than 25% of the reporting defensive users indicated that they fired a shot during the incident under consideration.

Dr. Marvin Wolfgang was asked to critique the Kleck/Gertz Study. Dr. Wolfgang's review included the following: "I am as strong a gun-control advocate as can be found among… criminologists… they (Kleck and Gertz) have provided an almost clear-cut case of methodologically sound research in support of something I have theoretically opposed for years… the use of a gun in defense against a criminal perpetrator… I do not like their conclusions that having a gun can be useful, but I cannot fault their methodology."

The absolute lowest estimates of about 100,000 defensive gun uses per year in this country come from the Department of Justice, using U.S. Census information. There is no question in the survey that asks about defensive firearms' use. This estimate is probably a serious undercount.

The Clinton Justice Department funded what was supposed to be a counter study debunking the Kleck/Gertz research. In 1996, anti-gun researchers Ludwig and Cook came up with about 3 million defensive gun uses per year. They then decided that it is impossible to measure the true number of persons who use guns in America for self-defense.

The research done by Kleck and Gertz indicates that defensive use of firearms by private citizens is a significant factor in stopping criminal violence. The research also lends itself to the conclusion that in the vast majority of cases where a gun is used to resist robbery or assault, no shots are fired.

Sources:

- Blackman, Paul H., Ph.D., "Armed Citizens and Crime Control," http://www.nraila.org/issues/articles/read.aspx?id=125.
- Kopel, David, Independence Institute, panel discussion on guns and self-defense, Warwick Hotel, Denver, Colorado, July, 2009. http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&VideoID=60107462
- "How Often Are Firearms Used in Self-Defense?" http://www.guncite.com/gun_control_gcdguse.html.
- Stevens, Richard W., "Statistics and 'Gun Control," Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership, Inc, http://www.jpfo.org/filegen-a-m/data-docs.htm.

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Gun Control Research- Lott/Mustard- "More Guns-Less Crime"
2009

Dr. John Lott has a Doctor's Degree in Economics from UCLA. He is a research scientist at the University of Maryland at the time of this writing. He has held research positions at Yale and the University of Chicago. He has published at least 96 articles in academic journals. He has published two books: *More Guns, Less Crime* (University of Chicago Press, 2000) and *The Bias Against Guns: Why Almost Everything You've Heard About Gun Control Is Wrong*, (Regnery Publishing, 2003.)

Dr. David Mustard has been a professor at the University of Georgia. Dr. Mustard, in 1999, authored a working paper, *The Impact of Gun Laws on Police Deaths*, which supports the concept that concealed carry laws may enhance officer safety.

Drs. Lott and Mustard, in a study associated with the University of Chicago Law School, researched crime statistics for every county in the United States from 1977 to 1992. Lott estimated that "shall issue" concealed carry laws reduced murder by 8.5%, rape by 5%, aggravated assault by 7%, and robbery by 3%.

Lot and Mustard's conclusions dovetail with those of Professors Wright and Rossi, who found that criminals are risk averse and "respond rationally to deterrence threats..." Wright and Rossi did extensive research with prison inmates.

John Lott's work is impressive in that Mustard and he looked at the entire universe of U.S. counties, rather than a smaller sample. This approach avoids problems with sample sizes or random selection of cases for examination. Lott has also made his data set available to anyone who wants to look at it.

The 2004 National Academy of Sciences study on gun control reported that Lott's results were not statistically significant. This review of the literature was paid for by the well-known, anti-gun Joyce Foundation. Noted Second Amendment Scholar David Kopel protested the makeup of the review panel at its creation, because all but one of the panel members had reputations indicating anti-Second Amendment bias. The "neutral" panel member filed a minority report in favor of Lott's findings regarding reductions in homicides following passage of "shall issue" laws. James Wilson pointed out that only Lott's work was subject to strict scrutiny by the committee. Research by his critics was taken more or less at face value.

Lott came out with another study in 1999 that indicated that concealed carry deters would-be spree killers who perpetrate "multiple victim" shootings. Again, this information corroborated the work of Wright and Rossi, which came to the conclusion that criminals, in effect, do risk/benefit analyses before committing crimes. No non-suicidal felon would try to shoot up a gun show or a police station.

Lott has been attacked for loss of research data that occurred during a reported computer crash in 1997, but he has responded forcefully to his critics. He has produced evidence from colleagues and other sources to support his contentions that the original survey and the resulting data did, in fact, exist.

More troubling, from a credibility standpoint, is the allegation that Lott used the pseudonym, "Mary Rosh," to praise his own work in on-line forums. Michelle Malkin discussed this issue in a post on WorldNetDaily.com, "The other Lott controversy." Her article has a link to Dr. Lott's response to her post.

Lott's work was cited in the Amicus Curiae brief of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons Inc., in the landmark Supreme Court Case, *D.C. v. Heller*. A new edition of his first book is coming out this year. Lott remains a relevant, if controversial, figure in the debate on individual rights.

In any event, the most negative possible interpretation of his work is that "shall issue" concealed carry laws do not increase the probability of criminal behavior, as is often claimed by opponents of the right to self-defense against crime, tyranny, corruption, and genocide recognized by the Second Amendment.

Sources:

Kopel, David, "Damn Lies-Or Statistics," Book review of *More guns, Less Crime*, by John Lott, originally published in *Chronicles*, Dec. 1999." http://www.davekopel.com/2A/Mags/LottReview.htm

"Liberalized Concealed Carry Laws," http://www.guncite.com/gun_control_gdcgcon.html. (If you are entering the letters from a keyboard, there is an underlined space "_" before and after the word "control" in the website address.

Lott, John R., Jr., "More Guns, Less Violent Crime," "The Rule of Law Column," *The Wall Street Journal*, NY, NY, August 28th, 1996.

Malkin, Michelle, "The other Lott controversy, WorldNetDaily.com, 02-05-03. http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=30873

Schlafly, Andrew, L., Brief for Amicus Curiae Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, Inc. in Support of Respondent, No. 07-290, *District of Columbia, et al., v. Dick Anthony Heller*, Far Hills, NJ, page 16.

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Gun Control Research-The NAS Study
(No credible causal relationship between gun ownership and violence)

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) was created by Abraham Lincoln to "examine, experiment, and report" on "science and art" when asked to do so by any government department. A panel of NAS scientists began formal hearings on "Improving Research Information and data on firearms" during the summer of 2001. The study was funded in part by the virulently anti-gun Joyce Foundation and the anti-gun David and Lucille Packard Foundation.

David Kopel, Colorado author and expert on Second Amendment issues, and co-author Glenn Reynolds criticized the study at its inception for the anti-gun bias of most of its members and the bias of its funding sources. Surprisingly, given the prejudiced atmosphere of the NAS study, the results, like those of the CDC Study, do not support the premise that gun ownership promotes crime or increases the overall risk of suicide.

The panel reviewed 253 scientific journal articles, 99 books, 43 government publications and some of its own research. The committee found that they could not determine if there was a cause and effect relationship between guns and violence. The below quotation comes from the panel's Executive Summary, which was published in 2004.

"In summary, the committee concludes that existing research studies and data include a wealth of descriptive information on homicide, suicide, and firearms, but because of the limitations of existing data and methods, do not credibly demonstrate a causal relationship between the ownership of firearms and the causes or prevention of criminal violence or suicide."

The NAS panel predictably recommended more research. The committee also concluded that there is no definitive information regarding defensive uses of firearms or the positive or negative effects on crime of concealed carry laws. James Q. Wilson, the only relatively neutral member of the panel, according to Kopel and Reynolds, issued a minority report in which he argued that John R. Lott's extensive research does establish that "shall issue" concealed carry laws reduce homicide rates.

Like the CDC Study, the Swiss-based Small Arms Survey, and the Kates and Mauser Study of international gun ownership and crime, the NAS exhaustive review of the literature in the gun control field does not find a credible cause and effect relationship between honest gun owners and violence. You would think that if there were causation, nearly 400 scientific studies, books, and government reports would have found one example.

The committee also looked at possible methods of government intervention into the "problem" of guns, crime, and suicide. Restricting access to guns? Needs more research. (Keep in mind that Prohibition didn't work. It fostered the rise of criminal gangs, corrupted police, and promoted general lawlessness.) Prevention programs? Don't seem to work and seem to increase children's interest in guns. (What does this say about sexual education programs?) Criminal justice system solutions, such as policing, sentencing, and Project Exile? Need more research. Keep in mind that murders occur in prison.

If restricting access to firearms has had an effect on U.S. gun crime, the anti-gun NAS panel was apparently not able to find it in almost 400 sources. If firearms cause crime, or if gun control laws work, why did this massive review of research fail to find credible evidence? The variables are complex, but if the proof were there, would not one study out of almost 400 have discovered it? Will the NAS continue to review literature in the gun control field until they find even a single study that gives them the results that they are seeking?

Kopel, David, Reynolds, Glen, "Political Science, Doing science a grave injustice," nationalreview.com, August 29th, 2001.

National Academy of Sciences, Committee on Law and Justice, "Firearms and Violence, A critical review," nasonline.org, 2004.

Gun Control Research-Small Arms Survey-2007
No clear relationship between more guns and high levels of violence

Many people do not regard the Small Arms Survey (SAS), conducted out of Geneva, Switzerland as an advocate of civilian firearms' ownership. The Survey is probably best known for its August 2007 report (1), which indicated that there are an estimated nine guns for every ten people in the United States. This finding managed to find its way into many newspapers and to gain airtime on major networks.

A lesser-known conclusion of this report is the finding that "There's no clear relationship between more guns and higher levels of violence." For instance, many countries in Latin America have low levels of legal gun ownership and high rates of violence.

(Mexico is a prime example. A recent report in *The Denver Post* on 01-19-09 quotes the U.S. Joint Forces Command as describing the country south of our border as being in danger of "rapid and sudden collapse." This risk is caused by "criminal gangs and drug cartels" apparently unaffected by Mexico's draconian gun control laws.
Carl, Traci, "Lawlessness earns Mexico a spot on security-risk list," *The Associated Press, The Denver Post*, 01-19-09, page 10A.)

Keith Krause, Director of the Small Arms Survey, indicated that research seems to show that "gun violence often occurred in places undergoing rapid urban growth, and when lawless areas are created by extreme poverty and the absence of effective policing." Krause also decried the black market sale of guns and ammunition to criminals and gangs by military or police officials. (This involvement of government agency personnel is reminiscent of the corruption of American civil authorities by Prohibition and The War on Drugs.) Krause also said that European Union countries are experiencing increasing small arms smuggling activity.

The SAS findings are mirrored by a study done by the National Academy of the Sciences (2) and an international study done by researchers Kates and Mauser (3) (4), which find no credible causative relationships between gun ownership and violence.

(1) Associated Press, "Study: There Are 9 Guns for Every 10 Americans," August, 29th, 2007, http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,294976,00.html

(2) National Academy of Sciences, Committee on Law and Justice, "Firearms and Violence, a Critical Review," 2004, nasonline.org

(3) Kates, Don, Mauser, Gary, "Would Banning Firearms Reduce Murder and Suicide? A Review of International and Some Domestic Evidence," Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy, 2007.

(4) Lewin, Marshall, "Would Banning Firearms Reduce Murder and Suicide?" *America's 1st Freedom*, National Rifle Association, Palm Coast, FL, August 2007, page 32.

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Gun Control Research-Wright and Rossi Department of Justice Study
(Deterrent effect of armed citizens upon criminal behavior)

Professors James D. Wright and Peter Rossi of the Social and Demographic Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts conducted a study in 1982 and 1983 paid for by the U.S. Department of Justice. (Professor Rossi was a former President of the American Sociological Association.) The researchers interviewed 1,874 imprisoned felons in ten states.

Professors Wright and Rossi initially believed that strict gun control deterred crime. The results of their research led them to the conclusion that armed citizens have a beneficial effect in reducing criminal behavior and that harsh laws, such as handgun bans could result in criminals using sawed off rifles and shotguns with more deadly results. 88% of the criminals surveyed by Wright and Rossi agreed with the statement that, "A criminal who wants a handgun is going to get one."

A 1986 review of the professors' work, *Armed and Considered Dangerous*, by Raymond G. Kessler of the Department of Criminal Justice of Memphis State University, concluded, "Although *Armed and Considered Dangerous* is not free of methodological problems, it is the best policy-oriented study of criminals and their guns available."

Wright and Rossi reported that:
81% of interviewees agreed that a "smart criminal" will try to determine if a potential victim is armed.
74% indicated that burglars avoided occupied dwellings, because of fear of being shot.
57% said that most criminals feared armed citizens more than the police.
40% of the felons said that they had been deterred from committing a particular crime, because they believed that the potential victim was armed.
57% of the felons who had used guns themselves said that they had encountered potential victims who were armed.
34% of the criminal respondents said that they had been scared off, shot at, wounded, or captured by an armed citizen.

Based on this government-funded research by Wright and Rossi, it would appear that armed citizens do have a deterrent effect on crime.

Wright, James D., Rossi, Peter H., Daly, Kathleen, *Under the Gun, Weapons, Crime, and Violence in America*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York, 1983.

Wright, James D., Rossi, Peter H., *The Armed Criminal in America*, U.S. Department of Justice, 1985.

Wright, James D., Rossi, Peter H., *Armed and Considered Dangerous, a Survey of Felons and their Firearms*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York, 1986.

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