Keep Gun Control on the Table: Stories of Women Affected by Gun Violence

A Social Action Project by Sarah Pomeranz
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The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to practice leadership through action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women’s Leadership’s website at http://iwl.rutgers.edu.
Project Abstract

The goal of “Keep Gun Control on the Table” has been to collect female narratives pertaining to gun violence, explore women’s unique experiences and perspectives on gun safety and violence prevention, and raise awareness of actionable steps that can be taken to achieve common sense gun control. My primary objective of this project has been to engage women in order to shift the trajectory of the gun control issue, which has been moving further away from gun control, and bring it closer to gun safety initiatives. The outcome of these interviews will be the creation of a compilation of stories from women affected by gun violence, in the form of a testimonial book. The distribution of this book will contribute to the gun legislation conversation in an impactful way, amplify women’s voices and keep gun control on the table for years to come.
Scope of Project

Step 1: Research Approval

Step 2: Acquire Interviewees and Build Partnerships

Step 3: Interview Women and Collect Narratives

[Source: eIRB Rutgers University]

[Source: Thrive Global]

[Source: Rutgers Twitter]
Partnerships
Demographics of the Interviewees

Interviews Completed: 6

Future Interviews Scheduled: 10+

Home States of Interviewees: 8+

Organization Affiliation: Safe Horizon, Black Lives Matter, Rutgers Veteran Services, Everytown, University of Michigan, NJ Survivors Network, Brady Project

Racial Diversity, Age Diversity and Varying Relationships to Gun Violence Prevention
Guns and Gender

- To read any set of statistics about guns in the United States is to read about men (Carlson, 2018).
- For decades, women have been far more likely than men to favor gun control, but considerably less likely than men to do anything to further their preferences (Stucky, 2008).
- Women who see gun control as a child safety issue were more likely to participate in the Million Mom March and participate more fully than those who saw it as a crime control issue (Piepenbrock, 2014).
Role of Culture

Guns and gun ownership are as core to American values as religious freedom for many people and there are no other developed countries on the planet with nearly as many guns as we have here in the United States. (Price, 2014)

“I have an older brother who has a few guns and likes to hunt and his opinion is that he should be allowed to have any weapon that the military has because it's in our Constitution”

-Anne Treadaway

[Source: Harper West]
Interpersonal Violence

About 4.5 million U.S. women have had an intimate partner threaten them with a gun and nearly 1 million have been shot or shot at by an intimate partner. (Sorenson, 2018)

Interview

Jennifer Gonzales <jgonzalez991@gmail.com>

Hi Sarah,

My name is Jennifer Gonzales. I live in Hillsdale, NJ. Charlene Hoverta forwarded me your email.

I lost my 17 year old son Jack several years ago. He got a hold of his police officer father’s unlocked gun. A gun that a Bergen County Judge ordered the father to look up. My son shot himself in the head and died.

I would be happy to interview with you if you’d like.

I am available after 4:00 during the week and anytime on the weekend.

Jennifer Gonzales
201-666-7111

[Source: everytownresearch.org]
Accounting for Intersectionality

“With criminal justice being very racially biased...if you make guns illegal then you give police another reason to put black man in jail... the way that black women get affected by gun violence is profound. I mean it kills their sons, and it puts their partners in jail and leave them to be single parents.”- Dr. Stephanie Bonne

[Source: NPR.org]
Key Takeaways

- The importance of language (gun control, DV)
- Normalize guns in conversation
- Gun violence is a preventable public health issue
- Vote for pro-gun safety elected officials and speak with people from other parts of the country
- Research your state’s gun laws
- Account for Intersectional Issues
- “Hurting People, Hurt People”
- Gun violence has a ripple effect

[Source: Women’s March Twitter]
Lessons Learned About Women’s Leadership

- Resilience is key
- Self Awareness
  - Team Based Work
  - IRB Process
- Listen First, Hold Nuance
- Joining the Family that No One Wants to Join
  - My personal connection
Please participate

NJ Survivor Team

Hello, Dear Friends,

Below is a copy of a letter I received from a young woman at Rutgers. The letter will explain everything. Yesterday I interviewed with her. Her questions and responses are astute and compassionate. I think your stories are important to this body of work. Please contact her.

Her email is sarah.pomeranz@rutgers.edu

Thank you, Beautiful women!!

Blessings,
Charlene

Current Impact and Next Phases of the Project

Summer 2019- Finish Interviewing Remaining Interviewees

Fall 2019- Compile, Edit, Print and Distribute Testimonial Book
Bibliography


