**Theoretical Perspectives applied to Gun Control**

There are three main theoretical perspectives that can be applied to a wide variety of situations. In this paper Team 4 demonstrates their understanding of the functionalism, conflict, and symbolic interaction theoretical approaches introduced in our class textbooks, Essentials of Sociology, 3rd edition, Giddens, et al., by providing examples of each perspective when applied to the issue of gun control.

When looking at the functionalist perspective pertaining to gun control you have to look at how strict gun control laws and loose gun control laws will affect society, and then you have to look at the dysfunctions of each.

The U.S. would be considered a country that has loose gun control laws. Most law abiding citizens are able to go to a gun shop, do a background check and walk away with a new firearm. The loose gun control laws function as a means for citizens to protect themselves and their property. The dysfunction of loose gun control laws is that you have a lot more firearms sitting around which provide opportunities for accidents to happen.

Strict gun control laws function as a way to prevent people hurting themselves and others. That is the idea but it doesn’t always work that way. The dysfunction is that a black market for firearms does exist and if someone wants to get a hold of a firearm they are going to be able to.

When looking at the conflict theory we chose to ask the question, “How do gun control regulations contribute to or decrease gun related crimes and violence?”

Unfortunately, the legal ownership of guns by law-abiding citizens inevitably leads to many unnecessary and tragic deaths. Legally held guns are stolen and end up in the hands of criminals, who would have greater difficulty in obtaining such weapons if firearms were less prevalent in society. Also, there is a correlation between the laxity of a country’s gun laws and its suicide rate. This is not because gun owners are more depressed, but because the means of quick and effective suicide is easily at hand. Suicide-prone individuals seldom substitute other means or go outside legal channels for suicide weapons. Firearm restrictions may decrease the ready accessibility of firearms enough to allow the peak period of suicidal feelings to pass.

When looking at the symbolic interaction theory, the symbolic value of guns to some gun owners is the affirmation of individualism and equality. These two values are American values as well; therefore some may see gun ownership has a way to symbolize their patriotism. Given the guns symbolic role within the American culture, gun control in some respects seems to be out of step with many elements of American culture.

Of the three theories presented in this paper, the Symbolic-Interaction theory is the view held by team to be the most likely explanation why an individual is either for or against gun control. Gun control is a personal issue for most individuals and is viewed from a micro sociological perspective (Giddens, 2011) and this perspective views that individuals react to things based on what they mean to themselves, how the situation affects them directly. Individuals act toward or have feelings about things based on the meaning those things have for them; these meanings are derived from social interaction and those experiences would most likely to lead to an individual to be either for or against gun control.

# Works Cited

(1789). *U.S. Constitution* .

Giddens, e. a. (2011). *Essentials of Sociology.* New York City: W. W. Norton & Company.