



Tactical Talk

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"Firearms have been around for over 400 years, yet it is only in the last 20 years that people have begun shouting 'gun control.' Why then, only recently, has this become such an issue? Moreover, why are there more mass-murderers than at any other time in our known history? It is not because weapons are more powerful -- 200-year-old muzzle-loaders have a much greater force-per-round than today's "assault rifles". It is not because weapons are semi- or fully-automatic -- rapid-fire weapons have been available for most of the last century. It is not due to a lack of laws -- we have more "gun control" laws than ever. It IS, however, because we have chosen to focus on "gun control" instead of crime control or "thug control." It IS because only recently has the public become complacent enough to accept, by inaction, the violence present in our society."

**Kevin Langston,
October 29, 1991**

Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network

The ACLDN is an organization dedicated to defending law abiding citizens who are charged criminally or sued civilly after a legitimate self defense shooting. I have written previously recommending membership in this organization, which just recently turned three years old. The legal defense fund now has over \$100,000 dollars in it, a sizeable sum to accumulate in such a short time.

In return for an \$85.00 per year membership fee, members are entitled to expert witness support and direct payment of legal fees in the event of an unmeritorious prosecution. The advisory committee of experts consists of some of the most experienced and knowledgeable trainers in



the self defense field, including: Massad Ayoob, John Farnam, Tom Givens, Jim Fleming, Esq, and Dennis Tueller. Members also receive several professionally produced DVD's as part of their benefits. These DVD's are an excellent source of training in both legal and practical issues of self defense. For more information see www.armedcitizensnetwork.org.

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Training DVD's, Price Now Reduced

Rangemaster has two professionally produced DVD's to augment our live training. *Concealed Carry for Self Defense* is over two hours in length, and offers a wealth of information on equipment, including handguns, holsters, and ammunition for self defense. Gun safety and shooting technique are also covered. *Defensive Shotgun* is also two hours long, and covers selection, modification, and shooting technique, as well as ammunition selection, patterning, and much more. Either of these DVD's are now available for just \$19.95, a real bargain. Order yours today.



Houston Jeweler Kills Three Armed Robbers

In December, three armed men entered Ramon Castillo's jewelry store in Houston, brandishing handguns. At gunpoint they tied up Mr. Castillo's wife and took her to a back room. One of the robbers was attempting to tie up Mr. Castillo in the back room when he drew a concealed handgun from his waistband and killed the thug who was nearest him. Mr. Castillo then grabbed a shotgun and engaged the other two robbers in a furious gunbattle in the front of the store. Despite being shot in the left shoulder, left abdomen and legs, the heroic Castillo killed both of those thugs, as well. He is expected to recover from his wounds.

Houston police indicated the episode lasted two to three minutes and that there were a large number of shots exchanged between Castillo and the three hold-up men. His wife was not injured and police consider the shooting a clear cut case of self defense.

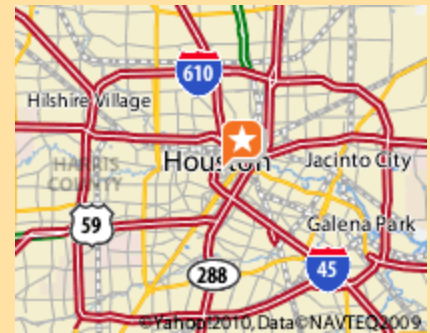
Comments:

When robbers tie up your wife and take her to a back room, it's time to act. In many cases, this is the prelude to murder. If all they want is money or valuables, there is no reason to tie you up or move you to a more concealed location. If you wait to see whether they are really going to kill you, it's too late to do anything about it.

Fight back! The last thing thugs expect is a determined, explosive, aggressive counter-attack. This really upsets their mental apple cart, and puts them behind the curve mentally.

Be prepared for a "non-average" fight. You may be faced with multiple adversaries, who move, maneuver, and shoot back. Have an adequate weapon and an adequate amount of ammo.

Be mentally prepared for the fact that you may be shot. In any exchange of gunfire you may be hit, but you can still fight on and prevail. Congratulations to Mr. Castillo on bravely handling a desperate and dangerous situation.



Christmas Eve in *Memphis*

On Christmas Eve in Memphis, a man whose initials were CB (name withheld for family's sake) brought a semiautomatic pistol to the kitchen table. Apparently intending to clean it, he ejected the cartridge from the chamber, then removed the magazine, and put the gun on the table. His wife, who was also in the kitchen, told him to put the gun away. In the process of picking it up, he swept his wife with the muzzle, which prompted a sharp response from her.

He protested that he had just unloaded the gun and it was therefore harmless. He said to his wife, "If it was dangerous, would I do this?" He then put the gun to his temple and pulled the trigger. Of course, since he unloaded it incorrectly, it discharged, killing him on the spot. His funeral was Monday, Dec 27 in Halls, Tn.

I would be willing to bet a week's pay that CB had never had any formal training with handguns, but "grew up around guns". Here at the school we hear that constantly from ignorant people who don't know how much they don't know. If you have friends and relatives who own handguns and have "been around guns all their lives" urge, cajole, and berate them into getting some formal handgun training. This type of incident is entirely preventable.



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Handgun Permits, Reciprocity, Non-Resident Permits, etc.

Almost daily we get questions from customers about permits. Today, we had a guy stop by who apparently has been scammed by a local “instructor”, who told him that for a fee he could attach a seal to his Tennessee permit and make it valid in all 50 states. The dumbass fell for it. To help you understand the US permit system, here are some guidelines.

1. There is no such thing as a Federal Carry Permit. Theoretically, a non-law enforcement person can be sworn in as a Special Deputy US Marshal, which would allow carry anywhere in the US, but that is almost 100% restricted to federal prosecutors and police officers assigned to federal task forces. Civilian handgun carry permits are considered a states’ rights matter, and are issued by an individual state government, usually to residents of that state.

2. Therefore, currently there is no legal way for a private citizen to legally carry in all 50 states.

There are 2 states, Illinois and Wisconsin, which have no permit system and will not honor any other state’s permit. There is no legal way to carry concealed in those two states.

There are 9 or 10 states that issue permits to their own residents, but will NOT honor a permit from any other state. California and New York are examples. They won’t issue non-resident permits, and they don’t honor any other state’s permits—so, no person from out of state can legally carry there.

Some states, like Tennessee, will honor any state issued permit, from any state. That does *not* mean that every state will honor a Tennessee permit. A Tennessee permit is currently good in 36 other states. Iowa was just added to that list on Jan 1st.

Many states, like Colorado, issue permits and will recognize CERTAIN other state’s permits. Colorado honors permits from a list of 28 states, but not any others.

3. Non-Resident Permits

Some states issue permits to non-residents, some states do not.

Tennessee will only issue a non-resident permit if the applicant:

- ◆ Works in TN at least 6 months out of the year, AND
- ◆ Lives in a state that does not issue permits.



Some states, like Utah, will issue a non-resident permit to a resident of any state, BUT the applicant must take a class from a Utah certified instructor. At present, there is only one Utah certified instructor in Tennessee, and he is on the far end of the state.

Florida, on the other hand, will issue a non-resident permit to anyone, and our Level 1 certificate will satisfy Florida’s training requirement.

The best current source of information on laws state to state is the website handgunlaw.us. If you will be visiting another state, check that website for information on that state’s laws and regulations before you go.

Rangemaster Road Classes

Early 2011

Combative Pistol, Two Day Format, February 19-20, 2011, LSU Police Range, near Baton Rouge, Louisiana. *This is a very nice police range with a comfortable modern classroom. We did a course there this past September, and it was HOT! The weather should be a lot nicer in February.*

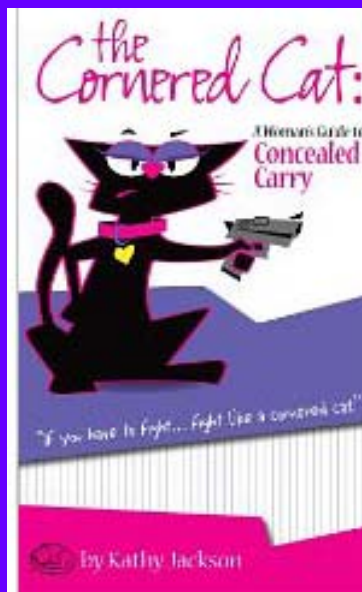
Combative Pistol, Two-Day Format, April 2-3, 2011, East Texas Rifle Pistol Club, Longview, Texas. *ETRPC is one of the largest private gun clubs in the country, with an excellent range complex.*

Combative Pistol, Two-Day Format, April 16-17, 2011, Sheriff's Dept Range, Florence, SC.

Dynamic Marksmanship Course, Two-Day Format, April 9-10 2011, *The Bullet Hole*, indoor range facility near Kansas City, Kansas. *This is a large indoor range complex. We'll be using a range separate from the public, and a modern classroom.*



The Cornered Cat: A Woman's Guide to Concealed Carry



This is a brand new book by our friend and associate, Kathy Jackson. Kathy is an instructor at the Firearms Academy of Seattle, and the Managing Editor of Concealed Carry Magazine. She has trained with many of the country's top firearms instructors, and is quite knowledgeable and skillful.

Kathy's new book consists of almost 400 pages of solid information, on a wide variety of topics related to concealed carry for personal defense. Although the book is aimed directly at women, I highly recommend it for anyone of any gender who contemplates carrying a gun for self defense. Available at Rangemaster for only \$19.95, this is a real deal. Order your copy today.

Short Fingers and Fat Butts, or Handgun Fit for Defensive Shooting

by Tom Givens

Have you noticed how many shooters these days have fat butts? I'm sorry—I meant their pistols have fat butts. The proliferation of pistols with high capacity, double column magazines has created problems for many shooters, who simply have handguns that do not fit their hands. This makes proper performance difficult, especially when attempting to shoot at speed or under stress. Unfortunately, both of these circumstances are likely in a defensive situation. Let's look at the problems caused by poor grip frame to hand fit.

One often overlooked aspect of this problem is the compromising of mechanical reliability. Especially on pistols with plastic or aluminum frames, the shooter's wrist bones and forearm bones need to be behind the frame, to provide resistance against rearward movement of the frame during the cycling of the slide. If the frame moves to the rear as the slide does, the slide will not come back hard enough to reliably eject the spent round or feed the next one from the magazine. The term "limp wristing" is often used to describe the cause of this malfunction, but it is a misnomer. The shooter may have plenty of grip strength and a locked wrist, but if the bore line is significantly offset from the wrist bones and forearm bones, these malfunctions may occur. If, however, the gun is gripped correctly, the palm covers the backstrap from top to bottom, and the wrist bones are directly behind the backstrap. This offers resistance against the frame's tendency to recoil to the rear with the slide. If you're having "stovepipe" malfunctions, one of the first things you should check for is this lack of bone structure behind the grip frame. Many times, simply changing your grip a bit cures the reliability problem.

The next issue is being able to press the trigger straight to the rear, while maintaining the correct grip, as described above. Lateral pressure on the trigger causes lateral movement of the muzzle. Ideally, the trigger should move in a straight line to the rear until the sear releases the hammer/striker, and continue in a straight line to the rear throughout whatever over-travel the particular pistol design includes. Ideally, the center of the fingerprint of the trigger finger should be centered on the trigger, to enable the shooter to apply this straight to the rear trigger pressure. This trigger finger placement is often not possible when the handgun's grip frame is too large for the shooter. The distance from the backstrap of the pistol's grip frame to the center of the trigger is called the "trigger reach". One of the most common problems I see among students is a trigger reach too long for their hand size and finger length. If your shots are impacting to the left or right of the desired point of impact, this is often the root cause of the problem.

Another problem directly connected to trigger reach issues is deflecting shots laterally by placing pressure on one side of the pistol frame while moving the trigger finger to the rear to fire the gun. This is a common issue among Glock shooters, who if right handed shoot to the left whenever they speed up. Of course, if left handed, they shoot to the right. The problem is what we at Rangemaster call the "trigger finger bicep". Try this: make a fist with your right hand and draw your forearm up to flex your bicep. As the forearm moves up, your bicep bulges atop your upper arm. Now, look at your trigger finger. Move it as if pressing a trigger. You will notice that the first joint, the part that joins to your palm, is bulging up, just like your bicep. The Glock, and many other polymer framed pistols, have a distinct corner behind the trigger guard, since the grip frame is rectangular in cross section, and considerably wider than the trigger guard. If your finger is in contact with that corner on the frame, as you press the trigger to the rear the "finger bicep" bulges, pushing against the frame, moving the gun laterally. Actually, the only place one's trigger finger should touch the pistol is on the face of the trigger. If we wanted it to touch the frame, we'd call it the frame finger. If the butt of the gun is too big for you, or the trigger reach is too long, this lateral pressure on the frame will cause the sideways shot dispersion. A

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simple test for this is to aim in on a target and place your finger on the trigger. If you look down on your hands, you should be able to see a gap between the trigger finger and the pistol's frame. You should be able to insert a ball point pen into that gap without undue pressure.

Yet another issue with a grip frame that is too large for the shooter is reliably working other controls, such as a safety/decocker or a magazine catch. We continually see shooters struggling with these issues, because someone convinced them they had to have X or Y brand or model of handgun, although it clearly does not fit them properly. This applies very often to female shooters, but we also see a lot of men with smaller hands who suffer from the same issues. Let's



say you are a female shooter with small hands struggling with a SIG P229, for example. You might try a SIG P239, instead. Both pistols operate identically, but the grip frame and trigger reach on the P239 are considerably smaller.

These problems are not limited to autopistol users. I believe the medium frame revolver (K frame in Smith & Wesson terminology) is far better suited as a primary defensive arm than the smaller, 5 shot J frame guns. I think of the J frame guns as back-up guns, a role for which they are well suited. The K frame wheelguns hold 6 rounds instead of 5, usually have better sights, and the trigger action is usually smoother. The trigger reach is longer on the K-frame guns, though. Since the double action trigger pull weight usually runs from 12 to 13 pounds on these guns, the shooter needs some leverage on the trigger. This is made difficult if the trigger reach is too long. If the trigger finger is not long enough for proper placement, we see a lot of lateral muzzle whip in double action shooting.

So, how do we determine whether a particular pistol fits our hand? First, with a verified unloaded pistol, grasp the pistol correctly, with the backstrap of the grip frame in contact with the length of the palm, and the wrist bones and forearm bones directly behind the grip, in line with the barrel. Now, place the pad of the trigger finger on the trigger. From above, you should be able to see a clear air gap between the trigger finger and the frame of the pistol, behind the trigger guard (see photos). Next, try to cycle the trigger straight to the rear. Next, see if you can access the controls (safety/decocker, magazine button) without excessively compromising your master grip on the pistol.



Minor fit issues can be addressed sometimes by changing stocks, especially on revolvers and certain autos, like the 1911. On the 1911, slimmer stocks can be installed. Really thin stocks will require shorter stock screw bushings, but that is not a big deal. On Glock handguns, a "grip reduction" can be performed by a gunsmith, making the grip both smaller and better shaped for a small hand. The photos illustrate some of these options. Get a pistol that fits your hand, and your shooting will definitely improve.

Media Bias Against Guns

John R. Lott, Jr., *Resident Scholar, American Enterprise Institute*

The following is adapted from a speech delivered on May 25, 2004, at a Hillsdale College National Leadership Seminar in Seattle, Washington.

People are very surprised to learn that survey data show that guns are used defensively by private citizens in the U.S. from 1.5 to 3.4 million times a year, at least three times more frequently than guns are used to commit crimes. A question I hear repeatedly is: "If defensive gun use occurs so often, why haven't I ever heard of even one story?"

Anecdotal stories published in newspapers obviously can't prove how numerous these events are, but they can at least answer the question of whether these events even occur. Here are a few examples of the 20 cases that I found reported in newspapers as occurring during the first two weeks of May 2004:

* Lawrenceville, Georgia—At 3:00 a.m., an estranged former boyfriend kicked in a woman's front door. She had received a protective order against the ex-boyfriend because of "a history of drug addiction, violent behavior and threats." He was shot four times as he entered the apartment. Police said that the attacker, if he survived his injuries, would likely face charges of burglary and aggravated stalking.

* Albuquerque, New Mexico—At just after 5:00 a.m., a homeowner called police saying that someone was trying to break into his home. Police reported that while waiting for help to arrive, the homeowner defended himself by shooting the intruder in the arm.

* Louisville, Kentucky—As a robber tried to hold up a Shelby Food Mart, he was shot by a store clerk. The judge who heard the case said that the clerk had acted responsibly and that he "was viciously attacked by this animal."

* Raceland, Louisiana—A man and his girlfriend offered two men a ride. One of the hitchhikers drew a gun and told the girlfriend to stop the car. The man then drew his own gun, fatally shooting the hitchhiker who was threatening them.

* Toledo, Ohio—A store employee wounded one of two men who tried to rob a West Toledo carryout. The employee had received his concealed handgun permit just three days earlier. The employee's father said, "My son did what he had to do ... Money can be replaced; lives can't."

These life and death stories represent only a tiny fraction of defensive gun uses. A survey of 1,015 people I conducted during November 2002 indicates that about 2.3 million defensive gun uses occurred nationwide over the previous year. Larger surveys have found similar results. Guns do make it easier to commit bad deeds, but they also make it easier for people to defend themselves where few alternatives are available. That is why it is so important that people receive an accurate, balanced accounting of how guns are used. Unfortunately, the media are doing a very poor job of that today.

Though my survey indicates that simply brandishing a gun stops crimes 95 percent of the time, it is very rare to see a story of such an event reported in the media. A dead gunshot victim on the ground

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is highly newsworthy, while a criminal fleeing after a woman points a gun is often not considered news at all. That's not impossible to understand; after all, no shots were fired, no crime was committed, and no one is even sure what crime would have been committed had a weapon not been drawn.

Even though fewer than one out of 1,000 defensive gun uses result in the death of the attacker, the newsman's penchant for drama means that the bloodier cases are usually covered. Even in the rare cases in which guns are used to shoot someone, injuries are about six times more frequent than deaths. You wouldn't know this from the stories the media choose to report.

A Case Study in Bias

But much more than a bias toward bad news and drama goes into the media's selective reporting on gun usage. Why, for instance, does the torrential coverage of public shooting sprees fail to acknowledge when such attacks are aborted by citizens with guns? In January 2002, a shooting left three dead at the Appalachian Law School in Virginia. The event made international headlines and produced more calls for gun control. Yet one critical fact was missing from virtually all the news coverage: The attack was stopped by two students who had guns in their cars.

The fast responses of Mikael Gross and Tracy Bridges undoubtedly saved many lives. Mikael was outside the law school returning from lunch when Peter Odighizuwa started shooting. Tracy was in a classroom waiting for class to start. When the shots rang out, chaos erupted. Mikael and Tracy were prepared to do something more constructive: Both immediately ran to their cars and got their guns, then approached the shooter from different sides. Thus confronted, the attacker threw his gun down.

Isn't it remarkable that out of 218 unique news stories (from a LexisNexis search) in the week after the event, just four mentioned that the students who stopped the shooter had guns? Here is a typical description of the event from the Washington Post: "Three students pounced on the gunman and held him until help arrived." New York's Newsday noted only that the attacker was "restrained by students." Many stories mentioned the law-enforcement or military backgrounds of these student heroes, but virtually all of the media, in discussing how the killer was stopped, failed to mention the students' guns.

A week and a half after the assault, I appeared on a radio program in Los Angeles along with Tracy Bridges, one of the Appalachian Law School heroes. Tracy related how he had carefully described to over 50 reporters what had happened, explaining how he had to point his gun at the attacker and yell at him to drop his gun. Yet the media had consistently reported that the incident had ended by the students "tackling" the killer. Tracy specifically mentioned that he had spent a considerable amount of time talking face-to-face with reporter Maria Glod of the Washington Post. He seemed stunned that this conversation had not resulted in a more accurate rendition of what had occurred.

After finishing the radio show, I telephoned the Post, and Ms. Glod confirmed that she had talked to both Tracy Bridges and Mikael Gross, and that both had told her the same story. She said that describing the students as pouncing, and failing to mention their guns, was not "intentional." It had been due to space constraints.

I later spoke with Mike Getler, the ombudsman for the Post. Getler was quoted in the Kansas City Star as saying that the reporters simply did not know that bystanders had gotten their guns. After I informed him that Glod had been told by the students about using their guns, Getler said, "She should have included it." But he said that he had no power to do anything about it. He noted that readers had sent in letters expressing concern about how the attack had been covered. But none of these letters was ever published.

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It was not until February 28, 2004, after the preliminary hearing where testimony verified again what had happened, that the Washington Post published one brief sentence containing the truth: “[The killer] was subdued without incident by armed students.”

The Kansas City Star printed a particularly telling interview with Jack Stokes, media relations manager at the Associated Press, who “dismissed accusations that news groups deliberately downplayed the role gun owners may have played in stopping” the shooting. But Stokes “did acknowledge being ‘shocked’ upon learning that students carrying guns had helped subdue the gunman. ‘I thought, my God, they’re putting into jeopardy even more people by bringing out these guns.’”

Selective reporting of crimes such as the Appalachian Law School incident isn’t just poor journalism; it could actually endanger people’s lives. By turning a case of defensive gun use into a situation where students merely “overpowered a gunman,” the media give potential victims the wrong impression about what works when confronted with violence. Research consistently shows that having a gun (usually just brandishing it is enough) is the safest way to respond to any type of criminal assault.

Evidence of Unbalanced Coverage

I conducted searches of the nation’s three largest newspapers—USA Today, the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times—for the year 2001 and found that only the Times carried even a single news story on defensive gun use. (The instance involved a retired New York City Department of Corrections worker who shot a man attempting to hold up a gas station.) Broadening my search to the top ten newspapers in the country, I learned that the Los Angeles Times, Washington Post and Chicago Tribune each managed to report three such stories in a year.

During 2001, the New York Times published 104 gun crime news articles—ranging from a short blurb about a bar fight to a front-page story on a school shooting—for a total of 50,745 words. In comparison, its single story about a gun used in self-defense amounted to all of 163 words. USA Today printed 5,660 words on crimes committed with guns, and not a single word on defensive gun use. The least lopsided coverage was provided by the Washington Post, with 46,884 words on crimes committed with guns and 953 words on defensive stories—again, not exactly a balanced treatment.

Moreover, the few defensive gun-use incidents that received coverage were almost all reported locally. Though articles about gun crimes are treated as both local and national stories, defensive uses of guns are given only local coverage in the rare instances they run at all. In the full sample of defensive gun-use stories I have collected, less than one percent ran outside the local coverage area. News about guns only seems to travel if it’s bad.

This helps explain why residents of urban areas favor gun control. Most crime occurs in big cities, and urbanites are bombarded with tales of gun-facilitated crime. It happens that most defensive gun uses also occur in these same cities, but they simply aren’t reported.

The 1999 special issue of Newsweek entitled “America Under the Gun” provided over 15,000 words and numerous graphics on the topic of gun ownership, but not one mention of self-defense with a firearm. Under the heading “America’s Weapons of Choice,” the table captions were: “Top firearms traced to crimes, 1998”; “Firearm deaths per 100,000 people”; and “Percent of homicides using firearms.” There was nothing at all on “Top firearms used in self-defense” or “Rapes, homicides, and other crimes averted with firearms.” The magazine’s graphic, gut-wrenching pictures all showed people who had been wounded by guns. No images were offered of people who had used guns to save lives or prevent injuries.

To investigate television coverage, I collected stories reported during 2001 on the evening news broad-

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casts and morning news shows of ABC, CBS and NBC. Several segments focused on the increase in gun sales after September 11, and a few of these shows actually went so far as to list the desire for self-defense as a reason for that increase. But despite over 190,000 words of coverage on gun crimes, a mere 580 words, on a single news broadcast, were devoted to the use of a gun to prevent crime—a story about an off-duty police officer who helped stop a school shooting.

Another sign of bias is in the choice of authorities quoted. An analysis of New York Times news articles over a two-year period shows that Times reporters overwhelmingly cite pro-gun control academics in their articles. From February 2000 to February 2002, the Times cited nine strongly pro-control academics a total of 20 times; one neutral academic once; and no academic who was skeptical that gun control reduces crime.

It's not that anti-control academics are non-existent. In 1999, 294 academics from institutions as diverse as Harvard, Stanford, Northwestern, the University of Pennsylvania and UCLA released an open letter to Congress stating that the new gun laws being proposed at that time were "ill-advised." None of these academics was quoted in New York Times reports on guns over a two-year period.

Misleading Polls

While polls can provide us with important insights about people's views, they can also mislead in subtle ways. In the case of weapons, poll questions are almost always phrased with the assumption that gun control is either a good thing or, at worst, merely ineffective. The possibility that it could increase crime is never acknowledged. Consider these questions from some well-known national polls:

* Do you think that stricter gun control laws would reduce the amount of violent crime in this country a lot, a little, or not at all? (Pew Research Center/Newsweek)

* Do you think stricter gun control laws would reduce the amount of violent crime in this country, or not? (ABC News/Washington Post)

* Do you think stricter gun control laws would, or would not, reduce violent crime? (CBS News)

I reviewed 17 national and seven state surveys and found that not one offered respondents a chance to consider whether gun control might increase crime. This omission of a "would increase crime" option creates a bias in two different ways. First, there is an "anchoring" effect. We know that the range of options people are offered in a poll affects how they answer, because many respondents instinctively choose the "middle ground." By only providing the choices that gun control reduces crime somewhere between "a lot" to "not at all," the middle ground becomes "a little." Second, when the possibility that gun control could increase crime is removed from polls, this affects the terms of the national debate. When people who hold this view never even hear their opinions mentioned in polls and news stories, they begin to think no one else shares their view.

There are other subtle biases in the construction of these surveys. When a survey questions whether gun control will be "very important" for the respondent at the voting booth, the media often hear a "yes" answer as evidence that the person wants more gun control. Rarely do they consider that someone might regard a politician's position on gun control as important because he or she opposes it. This blurring of opposite positions in one question causes gun control to be ranked more highly as an election issue than it should be.

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Debunking the Myth of Accidental Shootings

A final area strongly affected by the media's anti-gun bias is that of accidental shootings. When it comes to this topic, reporters are eager to write about guns. Many of us have seen the public service ads showing the voices or pictures of children between the ages of four and eight, which imply that there is an epidemic of accidental deaths of these young children.

Data I have collected show that accidental shooters overwhelmingly are adults with long histories of arrests for violent crimes, alcoholism, suspended or revoked driver's licenses and involvement in car crashes. Meanwhile, the annual number of accidental gun deaths involving children under ten—most of these being cases where someone older shoots the child—is consistently a single digit number. It is a kind of media archetype story to report on “naturally curious” children shooting themselves or other children—though in the five years from 1997 to 2001 the entire United States averaged only ten cases a year where a child under ten accidentally shot himself or another child.

In contrast, in 2001 bicycles were much more likely to result in accidental deaths than guns. Fully 93 children under the age of ten drowned accidentally in bathtubs. Thirty-six children under five drowned in buckets in 1998. Yet few reporters crusade against buckets or bathtubs.

When crimes are committed with guns, there is a somewhat natural inclination toward eliminating all guns. While understandable, this reaction actually endangers people's lives because it ignores how important guns are in protecting people from harm. Unbalanced media coverage exaggerates this, leaving most Americans with a glaringly incomplete picture of the dangers and benefits of firearms. This is how the media bias against guns hurts society and costs lives.

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