Are We Ready and Willing to Get Involved in this Work?

An Exploration of Social Workers' Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs, and

Practices Related to Gun Violence

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ABSTRACT

Gun violence, and specifically community gun violence, has deleterious effects in the United States and notably within the population of African American males. With gun violence often termed a public health crisis, there is an importance to understand social workers' readiness and willingness to respond to it. However, there is a limited number of existing studies and literature on social workers' preparation, comfortability, and involvement with preventive and interventive responses related to community gun violence. This qualitative and exploratory study examined social workers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to gun violence and community gun violence, in particular. The findings provided insight into social workers' experiences, awareness, understandings, positions, apprehensions, and current practices, along with their willingness to engage in work related to community gun violence. Findings highlighted the learning interests, the nascent social work competency on the subject, and a need to increase social work competency on community gun violence. The discussion includes strengths and limitations of the study, with implications for social work education, social work practice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels, and social work research.

Keywords: Gun violence, community gun violence, social workers, social work education, social work practice, social work research

Signature of Investigator: <u>Lauren Weber Wolf</u>   Date: <u>4/28/2023</u>

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the thousands of survivors of trauma and the bereaved. This work has been an honor and privilege that will always guide me.

I also dedicate this dissertation to all the women and mothers that have guided me. The wise and inspirational women I lost during this journey were my mentor friends Shonda and Jan and I will forever be grateful for their support and encouragement.

I dedicate this dissertation in memory of my late grandmother, Donna Lesniak, who I also lost during my educational journey. As my light and my strength, my grandmother always knew my hopes, my soul, and my purpose. She was my everything, and she encouraged me, taught me leadership, and loved me dearly. I will continue to spread her sunshine, as promised.

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Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful husband, number one fan, and biggest supporter, Jon Wolf. I love you immensely. There is wonderful work ahead for us together. Here we go forward.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The United States has the highest rate of gun-related injuries and deaths, with a gun homicide rate 26 times greater than those of the world's developed countries (Everytown, 2023; Gramlich, 2022). In 2022, gun violence accounted for over 44,000 deaths in the United States, with more than 20,000 deaths attributed to murder, homicide, or unintentional shootings and over 24,000 gun deaths attributed to suicide (Gramlich, 2022; Gun Violence Archive, 2023). International studies have found that U.S. youth homicides are 15 times greater than the average accounted for youth murders occurring in other major Western countries (Pritchard et al., 2019). Between 2000 and 2016, approximately 547,000 people in the United States required hospitalization resulting from gun injuries (Smart et al., 2021) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics researchers reported 326,890 firearm victimizations occurred in 2021 (Thompson & Tapp, 2023). Unlike gun-related deaths, which have a single national database to track their occurrence, there are no aggregated statistics on non-fatal injuries statistics and thus are likely underreported (Smart et al., 2021). A KFF (2023) (formerly known as Kaiser Family Foundation) health tracking poll found that 54% of U.S. adults report they or a family member have experienced at least one gun-related incident including threatened with a gun, losing a family member to suicide, or homicide by a gun, or witnessing one or more shooting (Schumacher et al., 2023).

Chicago, Illinois is in Cook County, which has exceedingly more gun homicides than any other county, at approximately 600 per year, with a gun homicide rate of 11.62 per 100,000 (The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence [EFSGV], 2021). This gun homicide rate places Cook County, Illinois, at 13th, across the nation's counties per capita, given the population of 5.2 million residents (EFSGV, 2021).

Problem Statement

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 80% of all homicide victims are men and gun-related homicide is the leading cause of death for African American men under the age of 55 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2022-b). Homicide by use of a gun remains the second leading cause of death for Hispanic men and it places as the third leading cause of death among Alaskan Natives and American Indian men in the United States (CDC, 2022-b). For non-Hispanic white males, homicides do not fall in the top leading causes of death for all ages, but 2018 leading cause of death data showed homicides as 5th in ages 20-44 year and 4th in ages 1-19 (CDC, 2022-a). The disproportionate impact of community gun violence on racial and ethnic minority groups makes this a fundamental racial and social justice issue and a public health crisis.

For women, there is a strong association between intimate partner violence (IPV) and gun violence with 50% of IPV-related homicides resulting from firearms (Tobin-Tyler, 2023). Murder by a male intimate partner accounts for more than half of the female gun violence victims' deaths (CDC, 2023). The Violence Policy Center (2018) reports 96% of murder-suicide victims are women. According to Wallace et al. (2021) gun violence is the leading cause of death for women during pregnancy and postpartum periods.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual, non-binary, and pansexual (LQBTQIA+) people experience high rates of IPV, and gun violence as compared to other populations (Tobin-Tyler, 2023; Messinger, 2017). Duval (2021) reports that in 2020, gun-injuries caused the death of 75% of transgender murder

victims. Recent data reported the murders of 35 transgender or gender-expansive people in the United States in 2023, and 80% with a gun (Everytown, 2024b). Fifty percent of those murdered were Black trans women, according to Everytown (2024b).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into social workers' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs to understand stances towards preventive and interventive practices related to community gun violence that will help fill a gap in social work education and research. Social workers interface with diverse people across ages and cultures, and it is likely that in their practice, they will inevitably encounter clients who have directly or indirectly experienced the impacts of gun violence. Currently, there is a paucity of knowledge, continuing education, and training for social workers in this critical area despite increasing local and national episodes of community gun violence in the United States and its associated effects. This study is important to determine if social workers are ready and willing to engage in work related to community gun violence. The inordinate number of gun-related deaths requires an exploration of social workers' perceptions of the issue. To date, the social work profession has largely relegated work related to gun violence, to other disciplines and professionals.

This study focuses explicitly on the state of community gun violence in metropolitan and adjacent suburbs of Chicago, known locally as Chicagoland, and it is where the study data collection occurred. The study sought to better understand the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices of social workers in Chicagoland as they relate to community gun violence. Data gleaned from the research is meant to inform curricular gaps in social work undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education and

contribute to a better understanding of the emotional and social exigencies of community gun violence faced by victims, communities, and families.

Research aims include:

1. Gain insight into the social challenges that both lead to and result from community gun violence to inform social work curriculum and improve preventive and interventive social work methodologies.

2. Increase awareness of macro (public health) issues affecting community gun violence that will inform the actions of social work practitioners.

Defining Violence

Definitions of what constitutes violence, and its contextual effects vary in specificity and standardization. The CDC defines community violence as a public health issue that affects people, populations, and groups across the lifespan, with the potential for sustained impact and problems across physical and socio-economic domains (CDC, 2021). The World Health Organization (WHO) expands on this definition viewing community violence as the: "intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, against another person or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation" (World Health Organization, 2002, p.5).

Despite the lack of a standardized definition, researchers identify that community gun violence is primarily an urban problem, occurring primarily in urban settings, that includes acts of interpersonal gun violence, and which may or may not include gang involvement (Arp et al., 2017; Hardiman, 2019; The BulletPoints Project, 2021). Gun violence is on the rise in rural areas of the United States; this issue deserves focus in

other studies (Dittmer et al., 2021; Lynch et al., 2018). This study, however, will concentrate on urban community gun violence.

The U.S. Bureau of Justice defines firearm victimizations as "violent victimizations where the offender possessed, showed, or used a firearm" (Thompson & Tapp, 2023). Frequently, the term 'gun' replaces 'firearm' despite firearm being the technical term used to describe a weapon with a projectile (Sperlich et al., 2019). In this dissertation, 'gun' is the term used throughout in reporting on violence and violent injury from a firearm.

Community Gun Violence

Community gun violence is a complex social issue. There is not a singular or linear set of risk factors which delineate who will perpetrate community gun violence or become a victim (Arp et al., 2017; Hardiman, 2019). Examples of situations where community gun violence occurs include youth and young adults engaged in conflict, gang or clique rivalry and retaliation, drug dealing and gun trafficking, interpersonal disputes (Arp et al., 2017; Hardiman et al., 2019; The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2020). Causes associated with the commission of gun violence include early and ongoing exposure to violence and subsequent trauma, failing school systems, early exit from formal education, disinvested community environments, and disrupted familial and community ties (Arp et al., 2017; Hardiman et al., 2019).

Community gun violence disproportionately impacts racial and ethnic minority groups and is a viewed as a public health crisis and a critical racial justice issue (Arp et al., 2017; Brady, 2021b; Byrdsong & Devan, 2016; Hardiman et al., 2019). "Black Americans are twice as likely as white Americans to die from gun violence and 14 times

more likely than white Americans to be wounded" (Brady, 2021b, para. 2). Apart from all other life-affecting circumstances, gun violence reduces Black Americans' life expectancy by four years (Brady, 2021b).

Black American youth face exponential negative effects. The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (2023) reports that 47% (n=4,000) of the firearm fatalities in the United States took the lives of Black youth. Dr. Nancy Boyd-Franklin, a renowned psychologist and prolific author, describes the urgency of addressing the deaths of young Black men imploring social workers and other professions to address the systemic issues of violence for Black youth, their families, and communities (Cohen Konrad, 2019). Thus far, however, the United States has yet to focus sufficient attention on the external and systemic factors driving gun violence in Black neighborhoods. Understanding the variables or root causes associated with community gun violence is critical to identify, address, and prioritize the most effective approaches to mitigate its prevalence and the aftermath.

Gun Violence Survivors

Over 200 people survive gun-related injuries every day in America (Brady, 2021a). That number represents low-level injuries, life-altering impairments, and disabilities from severe physical trauma (Brady, 2021a). Gun violence deaths and non-fatal injuries accrue associated massive financial and emotional costs from long-term treatment for recovery, lost productivity for those with functional impairments and disabilities, quality of life impacts over a lifetime, and legal fees including criminal investigations (Everytown Research & Policy, 2022b; Song, 2022). According to Everytown Research & Policy (2022b, as cited in Executive Summary Report) "the

economic cost of gun violence is $557 billion annually". This amounts to 2.6% of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and approximately $30,000 a year in health insurance payments per individual survivor. Song (2022) makes the case that these staggering health insurance costs should incentivize businesses to attend to the ramifications of gun violence and ways in which they might play a role in prevention.

Family involvement in the medical crisis, recovery, and aftercare for a survivor creates financial instability within family systems with additional time off needed, unfulfilled absences, and leaving the workforce to become caregivers (Everytown Research & Policy, 2022b; Song, 2022). Aspholm et al. (2019) conducted a literature review of studies that interviewed survivors, their families, and witnesses to community violence to determine common post-injury themes. They found that in 60% of the studies reviewed, participants reported negative outcomes, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), behavioral health issues, and decreased academic achievement.

Gun Violence as Personal and Public Health Issues

The intersectionality of health, psychosocial, unemployment and underemployment, and material losses faced by gun violence survivors, family systems, and the greater community defines community gun violence as both a personal and public health issue. Gun violence survivors and their families embrace new hardships, persevere, and move through post-traumatic growth encountering an array of health, legal, mental health, social service, and rehabilitation professionals in their recovery journey. Supporting gun violence survivors and their families as they navigate a myriad of systems and services is well within the scope of the social work profession. Social workers receive training to contextualize human problems- thus the inseparable linking of

the person in the environment. Social workers are also skilled in collaborative practice and thus are key players in cross-disciplinary teamwork (Rubin et al., 2018). This blending of micro and macro knowledge situates social workers to understand the broader view of gun violence causality and effects. This study utilized a public health framework to explore the phenomenon and to gain insight through the analysis. Descriptions of the various approaches to mitigating gun violence aids in an understanding of the critical roles in these efforts.

Multidisciplinary Work to Mitigate Community Gun Violence

Community-based or collaborative efforts to mitigate community gun violence have existed for decades (Braga & Weisburd, 2015; EFSGV, 2021; McGarrell, 2020). Beyond the involvement of law enforcement, multidisciplinary work currently includes community violence intervention and focused deterrence, public health approaches, non-carceral community-based approaches, and responses from government workers and medical, mental health, and social work professionals (Center for American Progress [CAP], 2022; Hardiman et al., 2019). Some community gun violence prevention approaches overlap, and some programs have reoriented their focus after their grassroots efforts gained attention, they completed evaluation outcomes analyses, and they received increased funding (CAP, 2022). In recent years, there has been a proliferation of grassroots organizations focused on various aspects of community gun violence (CAP, 2022; Office of Justice Programs [OJP], 2023). Reasons cited for the increase in grassroots efforts include frustration with the pace and focus of governmental and criminal justice systems prevention and interventive initiatives (CAP, 2022; Goodwin &

Grayson, 2020). The following discussion offers brief descriptions of approaches to addressing gun violence.

Community Violence Interventions (CVI)

Community Violence Intervention (CVI) is an evidence-based approach that deploys community resources, services, and public entities to reduce violence through tailored multidisciplinary, community-centered strategies (Bureau of Justice Assistance [BJA], 2023). CVI initiatives work with interconnected community networks to design and implement prevention focused interventions to disrupt and reduce cycles of violence (Dawson et al., 2023). Based in concepts of social determinants of health, CVIs forge relationships among individual community members to deliver services that address the trauma of gun violence while also seeking to improve social, economic, educational, and a lack of opportunities that are drivers of community gun violence (BJA, 2023; Corburn et al., 2020; Pugliese et al., 2022).

Focused Deterrence & Group Violence Reduction Strategy. Focused deterrence strategies, otherwise known as Group Violence Reduction Strategies, are a type of CVI programing with aims to alter the behaviors of individuals most at risk for committing gun crimes. They include social service involvement, community pressure, and law enforcement reinforcement strategies that explain to those identified as at risk that severe sanctions will occur should they reengage with gun offenses (Braga et al., 2018; Chalfin & Braga, 2023; Corburn et al., 2020; EFSGV, 2021). Law enforcement reinforcement strategies include call-in meetings or custom notifications delivered by law enforcement officers to highlight the outcomes to offenders for continued offenses (McGarrell, 2020).

Non-carceral Community-Based Approaches

Non-carceral community-based approaches are proactive, rooted in harm-reduction models and designed to prevent or deter harmful consequences of actions or behaviors (Coburn et al., 2020). These approaches seek to reduce the likelihood of gun violence and decrease the need for consequences connected to the criminal legal system, including law enforcement, criminal courts, or other punitive measures associated with the unlawful use of firearms (Coburn et al., 2020).

Public Health Approaches

Public health is an evidenced-informed profession with aims of wellness, protection, and improved health for all. Public health is population focused, taking into consideration social determinants of health (SDOH) that underscore social and environmental problems (Arp et al., 2017). The workers and researchers serving in public health address the root causes of problems rather than focusing on individual pathologies or circumstance alone and effect policies, prevention initiatives, and engage in research to meet these ends (Arp et al., 2017; CDC Foundation, 2023). In the United States, public health researchers consider community gun violence a public health epidemic and call for adequate funding to aggregate the data needed to inform public health interventions (Arp et al., 2017; Butts et al., 2015; CDC, 2022-b; Corburn et al., 2020; Hardiman et al., 2019).

Social Determinants of Health and Gun Violence. Social determinants of health are critical factors affecting gun violence and victimization (Hardiman, 2019; Kim, 2019; Mancini et al., 2023). For example, urban areas experiencing material deprivation with concentrated poverty, underfunded schools, low access to health care and social services,

and lack of housing show a disproportionate likelihood of experiencing community gun violence (Abt, 2019; EFSGV, 2021; Mancini et al., 2023). A city's relationship to local and state politics, access to capital, and community disinvestment also are notable factors affecting urban areas with concentrated community gun violence (Brady, 2021b; EFSGV, 2021).

Collaboration. Interdisciplinary collaboration is a cornerstone of public health approaches to reduce gun violence (Abdalla et al., 2021). Research groups, along with public health workers, non-profit violence intervention organizations, and victim recovery programs work together to deconstruct gun-related tragedies and firearm violence at the intersections of inequities in education, housing, economic opportunities, and within health, mental health, and social services (Abdalla et al., 2020; Byrdsong et al., 2016; Butts et al., 2015; Mancini et al., 2023). Public health approaches systemically focus on including mezzo level community work and micro level practice with individuals.

Legal Professionals and Government Workers

Partisan politics and profound polarization in Congress have historically obstructed meaningful legislative changes in gun violence legislation. However, in June 2022, the U.S. House joined the Senate to pass the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA), a reform package totaling $13 billion that addressed the nationwide epidemic of gun violence in the country (The White House, 2023). Shifting the narrative from gun control to gun safety as a public health issue propelled a historic $250 million grant investment in the Community-Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIPI) over five years according to Giffords (2022a) and Wilson et al. (2023). The

CVIPI commits to evidence based CVI programming for community residents, victim recovery programs, community organizations, hospitals, researchers, stakeholders, and government offices (OJP,2022; Wilson et al., 2023). Such initiatives rooted in bipartisan reform also reveal a paradigm shift for reforming gun crime sentencing that focuses on rehabilitation during and after serving time rather than the current harsh penalties of lengthy sentencing (Jouet, 2023).

In addition to the passage of the BSCA, in 2023, President Biden appointed social worker Eddie Bocanegra as a senior advisor for the Community Violence Intervention office within the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) (Heartland Alliance, 2022). Bocanegra is a lifelong Chicagoan and a leader in violence interruption work who speaks on his lived life experiences. Bocanegra completed his MSW, worked as a violence interrupter and started the Urban Warriors program with the YMCA, which connected veteran mentors with youth (Solomon, 2022). In addition, he founded the unique Heartland Alliance READI program which promotes cognitive behavioral intervention combined with CVI programming pursuits to offer resources to those at high risk of violence and incarceration (Heartland Alliance, 2022). Researchers and government workers like Bocanegra work to humanize the most marginalized individuals in the penal system and are thus integral informants to anti-gun violence legislation (Solomon, 2022).

Medical Professionals

The American Academy of Family Physicians (American Academy of Family Physicians [AAFP], 2018) named gun violence as a public health epidemic deserving of federally funded research on par with allocations for other leading causes of death. As one of their prevention mandates, the AAFP (2018) encourages physicians to self-educate

on gun violence impacts and to have conversations with patients regarding direct and familial access to guns. Of note, the AAFP favors policies aimed at gun control, including prohibiting the manufacture and sale of high-capacity magazines that substantially debilitate and cause fatal injury (AAFP, 2018). They further call on physicians to speak out publicly on the dangers of gun violence, promote and practice intervention, prevention, treatment, and recovery work, and engage in advocacy and policy change on local, state, and federal levels.

Mental Health Professionals

Public perceptions of gun violence are in part promulgated by extensive and repetitive social media coverage of mass shootings, which often strongly associate psychiatric illness, including suicide (Swanson & Rosenberg, 2023). Determining a causal pathway between mental health disorders and engagement in gun violence is highly complex, seen by some epidemiologists as reductionistic and indicative more of stigma attached to mental illness than to an accurate representation of the problem (Swanson & Rosenberg; 2023). Violence researchers often view the causes of gun violence as a confluence of diverse factors, including economics, unemployment, social determinants, and low access to health and mental health care, among others (Braveman & Gottlieb, 2014). According to Swanson and Rosenberg (2023) addressing gun violence must include a commitment to public safety and a balance between destigmatizing mental illness, respect for persons struggling with lifelong psychiatric disorders, and the constitutionally protected rights of lawful gun owners.

Social Workers Responding to Community Gun Violence

At present, there is a dearth of social work research and literature on community gun violence, community violence interventions, and social work practice related to gun violence solutions. Aspholm et al. (2019) reviewed 200 peer-reviewed journals spanning 25 years of social work literature and found only 41 articles on interpersonal gun violence. The primary theme that emerged focused on negative emotional and behavioral outcomes for gun violence survivors (Aspholm et al., 2019). The second most common theme found identified risk factors for gun violence exposure, victimization, or perpetration (Aspholm et al., 2019). Rates of community gun violence in the United States are the impetus to gather evidence to inform social work education and compel social work researchers to engage in that can inform professional curriculums and guide micro and macro best practices (Aspholm et al., 2019; Sperlich et al., 2021).

Rationale and Significance to Social Work

With over 44,000 United States gun deaths in 2022 alone including murders, suicides, accidental shootings, and undetermined circumstances (Gramlich, 2022), there is compelling reason to more fully explore social workers' knowledge, attitudes, practices, and beliefs related to the intersecting and multifaceted issues that underlie gun violence. There is a need for further critical understanding to learn the social work profession's position on gun violence and to establish professional roles and responsibilities in this area of practice. The 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) assert goals of competency-based education for social workers (CSWE, 2022, p. 7). Competency 1 highlights that social workers must "understand that ethics are informed by principals of

human rights and apply them toward realizing social, racial, economic, and environmental justice in their practice" and as such consider Competency 2, and "advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice" (CSWE, 2022, p. 8-9).

An early study by Slovak et al. (2008) found that only 34% of 700 social workers surveyed routinely engaged in assessment for gun access and ownership and 15.4% engaged in counseling related to affiliated safety issues. Factors reported by social workers for lack of gun safety assessment included discomfort with the subject, lack of education and training, deferral of professional responsibility, and beliefs about level of risk (Slovak et al., 2008). Slovak et al. (2008) concluded that social workers and their clients would benefit from continuing education and training focused on suicidal and homicidal ideation, intent, and lethality, to build knowledge and confidence for conducting gun safety assessments. Roszcko et al. (2016) among other researchers (BulletPoints Project, 2022; Sperlich et al., 2022) found that the field of social work has done relatively little to reinforce the need for routine gun safety assessment as a routine assessment (Jennissen et al., 2015). A study conducted in 2015 study however found that 92% of the social workers surveyed believed gun storage safety laws are necessary, especially to protect vulnerable children (Jennissen et al., 2015).

Understanding gun violence must also include data gathered from those with lived experience. Aspholm et al. (2019) found that only one out of 41 reviewed social work articles studied a sample population of victims and perpetrators of community gun violence. First person studies conducted thus far have found that community residents feel disempowered and become disinvested in their neighborhoods because of the

normalization of gun violence (Hardiman et al., 2019). They further express despair over unrelenting gun and drug dealing, citing the need for community centers, mental health services, financial resources, job opportunities, and pro-social activities for youth (Hardiman et al., 2019). There is a need for community residents' voices to identify the root causes of widespread gun violence and promote collaborative decision-making, leading to relevant preventive and interventive approaches.

In 2022, a team of researchers Sperlich, Logan Greene, and Finucane published their recent influential study that gathered further perspectives on gun violence from frontline social workers in New York (Sperlich et al., 2022). The qualitative study by Sperlich et al. (2022) gathered impactful data on whether dialogue was occurring with clients, the nature of it, or barriers to discussion. The social workers shared their training backgrounds and thoughts on their roles related to this issue (Sperlich et al., 2022). Study findings highlighted the insufficiency of training, but an interest in learning, according to Sperlich et al. (2022). The study also highlighted the influence of positional stances on guns in relation to limiting discussions, along with the social workers' interest in moving through biases (Sperlich et al., 2022).

Facets of Social Work Practice

The next section describes different branches of social work practice and the efforts to address gun violence. While there are many domains of social work practice, this section explores public health, political, and community-based social work.

Public Health Social Work

Public health social work emphasizes systemic change. It does this by focusing on prevention deploying "multiple methods, including research, policy, advocacy,

clinical, and macro approaches; works across population levels, from individuals to groups, communities, and entire populations; is strengths-based; and emphasizes resilience and positive factors to promote health and reduce risk" (Arp et al., 2017, p. 2). With gun violence, public health social workers support approaches to safety through sensible gun laws, concept mapping, securing funds to raise public awareness and effect policy change, and evaluate gun violence prevention programming (Arp et al., 2017; Hardiman et al., 2019; Lanyi et al., 2019; Logan-Greene et al., 2019; Reardon, 2020). Public health campaigns frame community gun violence as a public health crisis not to be circumvented by political divisiveness, but one that promotes opportunities to work toward the greater good to eradicate this pervasive form of violence that affects all people (Arp et al., 2017).

One example of public health social work is the Hospital-Based Violence Intervention (HBVI) program Healing Hurt People of Chicago (HHPC) which began in Philadelphia (Healing Hurt People Chicago [HHPC], 2023). HBVI focuses on wrap-around support for violently injured patients at the time of initial hospitalization, with services extending past hospital discharge (HHPC, 2023). Healing Hurt People Chicago (2023), a multi-grant-funded program, employs social workers to engage with gun violence survivors and their families in supportive case management and trauma informed counseling which may continue over an extended length of time (HHPC, 2023). The unpredictability of grant funding, staff turnover, and burnout are challenges to sustainability faced by HBVI programs (Mancini et al., 2023).

Political Social Work

Throughout the history of the profession, and during times of turmoil, social workers have provided important perspectives and insights supporting political actions, policy creation, and policy reforms. President Biden's 2022 Safer America Plan (The White House, 2022) specifically called upon social workers to advise policy and practice and campaign for resources to address various forms of gun violence. The 2022 statements and releases fact sheet of President Biden's Safer America Plan noted a need to "invest in mental health and substance use treatment services, crisis responders, and social workers to reduce the burden on police officers, connect people with community resources, and prevent violent crime" (The White House, 2022, para.1). This release also highlighted the launching of the 988-crisis response line for those experiencing a mental health crisis. It states that funding is to "expand co-responder or alternate responder programs so calls that should be answered by a mental health or substance use disorder providers or social workers- along or in partnership with police- are not solely the responsibility of law enforcement" (The White House, 2022, para. 20 & 23).

Social justice advocates simultaneously questioned the plan given extensive funding budgeted for law enforcement (Human Rights Watch, 2022; Leadership Council on Civil and Human Rights, 2022). The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022 identifies social work researchers as agents to study community gun violence causality, prevention, and intervention on community and individual levels. Given the critical roles expected of social work by national leaders, among others, there is an important reason for the field to forge a critical alignment with others working towards the prevention of community gun violence.

Community Based Social Work

The social work profession is historically community-based and versed in both theory and skills to serve as vital community-based resources to individuals, families, and systems experiencing varied forms of community violence (Mancini et al., 2023). The 2022 EPAS of the CSWE ensure social workers are prepared to "apply knowledge of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, to engage with clients and constituencies" (CSWE, 2022, p. 11) in an array of community settings. As such, social workers are familiar with social, economic, relational, circumstantial, and cultural factors that impact individual and community functional health and well-being and poised to provide or help access micro and macro services when people are in need (Mancini et al., 2023). Social workers receive training on community collaboration and become equipped with skills to foster community dialogue, manage conflict, and work with others to establish or improve prevention work aimed at supporting individuals, families, neighborhoods, and other stakeholders. Community based social work focuses on community dialogue, engagement, social cohesion, community action, and just practice.

Community based social workers also collaborate with other professions and communities to conduct community engaged research (CER) that integrates public health and community action to approach community gun violence (Hardiman et al., 2019). Community engaged research and community-based participatory research (CBPR) support understanding the roles and responsibilities of individuals, communities, and government (Ohmer et al., 2023). For example, CBPR could explore the role government plays in revitalizing disinvested communities, those who have become resigned to

community violence, resulting from redlining policies. Other research could investigate governmental versus community (non-profit) oversight of prevention programs.

Specific to social work practice, needed research includes gaining insight into the field's practice knowledge of violence risk, conflict management and de-escalation of potentially violent conflicts (Johnson & Barsky, 2020). Some documented risks of victimization and perpetration of gun violence include illegal arms dealing, selling illicit substances, and correlations to conflict management, along with the potential for escalated interactions (Aspholm et al., 2019; Brennan & Moore, 2009; EFSGV, 2021).

Considerations on Equity, Justice, and Dismantling Harms

EPAS Competency 3 requires that social workers gain competency to engage in anti-racist practice and to work from a culturally informed platform that recognizes diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) in all aspects of their profession (CSWE, 2022, p. 9). Focus on ADEI is a distinctive feature of social work and makes workers especially aware of inequities and injustices in the gun violence conversation, for example, the disparate number of gun deaths and gun-related injuries affecting racial and ethnic minority groups across the United States. The past several years have highlighted high-profile police involved shootings and further identified the long-standing issue of unjustified police murders of racial and ethnic minority individuals in the United States and racial injustices. Exploring social work attitudes on collaborations with law enforcement can also provide data for future education and practice. Social workers also understand the effects of globalization and the intersecting issues of gun violence and human rights violations.

Working for the Social Good

A research study offers the opportunity to draw out social work interpretations of the uprisings of nationalism, attacks on democratic processes and to question social workers' beliefs on whether this affects community violence. As the divide between socioeconomic classes is widening in the United States, social workers may provide insights and knowledge on the intersection and connections to community gun violence. While Americans often value competitiveness, individualism, having copious goods, and capitalism, national social work ethics call for centering on human rights, which includes both individual and collective rights (Androff, 2016; Kohls, 1984, p.1-8). Social workers can provide insight on how they view personal rights and individualism to offer perspectives on those social constructs placed above the common good (Douglass, 1980). According to Kohls (1984), there are many in the United States that would consider human rights, such as safety and the welfare of all, as key societal values in connection with historical gun control laws, policies, and regulations.

Theoretical Frameworks

The next section describes theories and frameworks that guided this study of social workers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to community gun violence to determine readiness and willingness to engage in the work. These frameworks include social constructivism, social constructionism, and the social-ecological model. These frameworks, individually and in combination, provide methods for exploring the research questions and interpreting and analyzing data offered by the study participants.

Social Constructivist Theory

Social constructivism, a sociological theory, views knowledge as contextual, culturally situated, and actively created through human interactions (Akpan et al., 2020).

Social constructivists privilege collaborative, iterative learning as opposed to the traditional didactic reissuance of facts (Andrews, 2012). Dr. Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, advanced social constructivism, postulating that a confluence of factors, including human interaction, culture, and social factors influence developing knowledge (Vygotsky, 1968). His sociocultural cognitive learning theory emphasizes the critical roles of language and culture in knowledge acquisition and how they assist learners to communicate and make sense of life experiences (Akpan et al., 2020; Andrews, 2012; Mercadal, 2023). Collaborative knowledge development takes place in a range of contexts, including but not limited to formal instructional interactions, teamwork, or in discussion groups where an exchange of existing beliefs and new ideas intersect (Akpan et al., 2020; Mercadal, 2023). Within these contexts, individuals have the capacity to control or change their attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and perspectives. Social constructivist theory views knowledge development as participatory, iterative, and interactive among, not as an individual endeavor (Akpan et al., 2020).

Social Constructionist Theory

Like social constructivism, social constructionism views learning as a method of collaborative, culturally responsive meaning making (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Social constructionists propose the social construction of knowledge as shared meanings, created through artifacts (including those that are web-based), production, personal perceptions, and ever-growing experiences (Andrews, 2012; Cunliffe, 2008; Galea, 2019; Parmaxi & Zaphiris, 2015; Vaičiūnienė & Kazlauskienė, 2022). There is exploration of the relationship between people's diverse perceptions of reality through social discourse and continual revising to generate a better understanding of the social phenomenon

(Cunliffe, 2008; Mercadal, 2023; Vaičiūnienė & Kazlauskienė, 2022). Social

constructionism as a learning theory is fluid and developing, highlighting that attitudes

and knowledge construction are both personal and collectively created (Galbin, 2015;

Vaičiūnienė & Kazlauskienė, 2022).

      Comparing and Applying Theories. Social constructivism and social

constructionism contain similar philosophies and meanings and are often interchangeable

in social science literature. Both have received criticism because of their relativistic

stance and failure to acknowledge an objective reality (Andrews, 2012; Mercadal, 2023).

Qualitative researchers argue, however, that bringing forth varied and multitude accounts

advance knowledge of the variability of human experience (Andrews, 2012; Cunliffe,

2008; Nowell et al., 2017).

      Kathy Charmaz (2014), originator of constructivist grounded theory, a research

method used to generate new ideas inductively and theories from study participants,

contends that the need to recognize the researcher's role as intrinsic to research analysis

and findings. Constructivist researchers come into their studies with their own ideas,

experiences, and values and believe that complete objectivity is impossible. Thus,

reasonable confidence or trustworthiness of findings must be rigorous and built into

studies by distinguishing what study participants report as their knowledge, beliefs,

values, and perceptions from various sources versus commonsense knowledge regarding

the social phenomenon (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Andrews; 2012; Galbin; 2015).

      The study will examine how individual social workers are discerning both

experiences and social narratives on community gun violence. As constructivism

considers culture and interchanges that continually shape knowledge, there is an

anticipation of disclosures, utterances, and emerging knowledge production as the study progresses. Applying social constructivism theory is useful in delineating the research questions on social workers' attitudes and beliefs to aid in understanding the influence of these on their present practices.

Social constructionism considers culture, politics, economics, history, power differentials, and shared values in the construction of knowledge (Şahİn, 2006). These intersections contribute to the social constructs of the time and places in which events such as community gun violence occur and continue. Through the social constructionism framework, it is possible to consider that the topic of community gun violence summons preconceived notions and fears from both experiences and the narratives that push America away from creating a more equitable and inclusive society.

Social constructionism further calls for accountability towards ethical dialogue and respectful listening in the collective creating of social realities (Vaičiūnienė & Kazlauskienė, 2022). Discourse is vital in co-creation of the social world, which includes "knowledge, identities, and social relationships" (p. 223). When examining whose narrative dominates, and what actions lead to change, it is necessary to consider issues of power and privilege.

Social constructionism theory, in the context of community gun violence, calls for the recognition that identifying root causes and working to address them are critically important to mitigate its consequences. Enhancing the methods offered to address gun violence can occur simultaneously to these strengthening social standards and perspectival political shifts. A research study investigating knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to community gun violence framed through social constructionism

will produce findings generated by those with lived experience or work experience that advance our current knowledge. Understanding the relationship between social worker's similar or diverse perceptions of the realities of gun violence through discourse will generate a better understanding of the social phenomenon. As a learning theory (Galbin, 2015), social constructionism applies to the research questions seeking to document social workers' attitudes and knowledge of community gun violence from the personal to collective.

Social Ecological Model

The Social Ecological Model (SEM) is a framework often used to frame violence prevention and developmental trajectories in public health social work. Urie Bronfenbrenner conceived the social ecological model in the 1970s following the earlier work of social scientists curious about how behavior, attitudes, learning, and development transferred from the personal to the social environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Cederbaum et al., 2018). Bronfenbrenner found that colleagues in related fields acknowledged that people and their environments interact but paid little attention to the SDOH (Cederbaum et al., 2018). Bronfenbrenner felt that health care, the environment, education, and safe shelter were integral to healthy lives, communities, and societies (Cederbaum et al., 2018; Ungar, 2002).

A four-level Social Ecological Model used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (see Figure 1) includes individual, relational, community, and societal levels. Social Ecological theory focuses on prevention by identifying intrapersonal characteristics, such as attitudes and the contexts surrounding people that influence

behaviors (Schölmerich & Kawach, 2016). Studies have found that increasing knowledge and modifying social norms creates change (Schölmerich & Kawach, 2016).

Figure 1

Social-Ecological Model: A Framework for Prevention, CDC, 2022

SEM parallels the person-in-environment (PIE) framework used in social work practice (Cederbaum et al., 2018; Ruth & Marshall, 2017). It considers the individual, their social relationships and affiliations, organizations that surround them or that they are a part of, and the environmental context of their community at large, which includes the physical and social environment (Durkin et al., 2020). SEM conceptualizes multiple risk and protective factors in health and those that influence outlooks, behaviors, and social norms (Schölmerich & Kawach, 2016). SEM also offers a lens for studying risk and protective factors that influence the commission of community gun violence and those who might fall victim to it (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Durkin et al., 2020; Eisenman & Flavahan, 2017). Building trust is critical to SEM and methods to do so are intrinsic to determining approaches (Eisenman & Flavahan, 2017).

The CDC and its National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) underscore that gun violence is a critical public health issue taking its toll on Americans, their perceived sense of and physical safety, and their overall wellness (CDC, n.d.-c). SEM is a public health approach critical to addressing issues connected to gun violence and working towards a healthier and safer future for society (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002).

The CDC (2023) views community gun violence as an urgent public health concern in need of cross-disciplinary research that explores constructive solutions to ameliorate its effects (CDC, 2023).

Relevance of SEM to Social Work

Social justice is a key ethic of social work practice. SEM recognizes the intersectional nature of the human experience, including how oppression, hierarchy, and power overtly and covertly affect individuals, groups, and communities. The SEM is consistent with social work values and contextual models of assessment, intervention, and care. Bronfenbrenner's SEM framework (Ungar, 2002) attends to oppression and power dynamics and to the intersectional identities they affect including power differentials, cultural and economic differences, and economic disparities that exist between social workers and those they serve (Ruth and Marshall, 2017; Ungar, 2002). Unger (2002) states that the overall aims for communities are to avoid hierarchical relationships, to question power and authority, and to take accountability for "the objectification of communities as an extension of services rather than understanding formal services as an extension of the community" (Ungar, 2002, p. 491). This position aligns well with the National Association of Social Worker [NASW] (2017) core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth, and the importance of human relationships within the study of community gun violence described within the SEM levels. These values, amongst others, are foundational to the profession's purpose and outlook.

SEM Levels

The social ecological framework depiction varies with slight differences between models. The SEM framework identifies four or five nested and hierarchical levels. This

study will use a model by McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, & Glanz (1988) (see Figure 2).

These show how multilevel interventions link and are necessary for engagement in

prevention work among collaborating professionals, resulting in the strongest impact

(Cederbaum et al., 2018; Schölmerich & Kawach, 2016; Ruth & Marshall, 2017).

Figure 2

Social Ecological Model, adapted from McLeroy et al. (1988)

This study uses the five-level SEM proposed by McLeroy et al. (1988) to explore

the research questions of social work knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related

to community violence. Levels for study include the intrapersonal, interpersonal,

institutional-organizational, community, and policy-enabling environment factors

influential in community gun violence (CDC, n.d.-c; Global Polio Eradication Initiative,

2017; Schölmerich & Kawach, 2016). Of note, some iterations of this framework

combine the community and organizational levels. Incorporating personal, networks,

organizational, and environmental factors as leverage points is an effective approach for

interventions across the continuum of this theoretical framing. The SEM is useful to the

study, as it begins at the intrapersonal or individual level that informs what needs

consideration and questioning. For example, the SEM framework supports viewing

interpersonal violence as an outcome of multiple interactions among many factors (Eisenman & Flavahan, 2017). The following sections describe the distinctive levels included in the McLeroy et al. (1988) model.

Intrapersonal. The individual level of the SEM framework focuses on the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices of the person (Petit, 2019) accounting for characteristics, such as intersectional identities, personal history, economic status, values, and goals (Eisenman & Flavahan, 2017; Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Global Polio Eradication Initiative, 2017; Schölmerich & Kawach, 2016). For social workers, the individual level asks them to reflect upon their beliefs and how it influences the susceptibility of being affected by gun violence and personal risk. Such factors, while not the only ones that influence attitudinal and perspectival change, address previous assumptions that influence work roles and decision making when working with those affected by community gun violence (Schölmerich & Kawach, 2016).

Interpersonal. At the interpersonal level, relationships can be formal or informal and social networks may include primary and secondary groups, including family, close friends, neighbors, and colleagues **(**Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Eisenman & Flavahan, 2017; Global Polio Eradication Initiative, 2017; Petit, 2019). Neighborhood driven discussions, norm setting, and social action among those within close social networks are imperative to building collective efficacy and social capital, thus decreasing the risk of violent occurrences (Cerulli et al., 2019). For social workers, the interpersonal level must consider both self-management and self-awareness, social awareness, social connectedness, opportunities to develop and offer conflict resolutions skills, and civic engagement (Cerulli et al., 2019).

Trauma-informed models are important to note at this level. Trauma-informed practice promotes coping skills and resilience, building towards prevention and reoccurrence of violence. Social workers use a variety of frameworks when applying trauma-informed practices in their work with victims of community gun violence at the intrapersonal level. Each, however, incorporates common principles and skill sets that are person-centered, respectful, and support the victim to find solutions. From a macro perspective, trauma-informed community practice recognizes the impacts of historical and community trauma caused by gun violence in their city and neighborhoods, especially in Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities (Brave Heart et al., 2011). A trauma-informed perspective prioritizes the prevention of community gun violence, and fosters community led trauma healing (Getgen-Kestenbaum et al., 2021). When working with communities, social workers with trauma histories should be cognizant of not allowing their experience to influence their assessment and actions. As EPAS Competency 1 requires social workers to care for themselves as a part of ethical practice (CSWE, 2022, p. 8), it is critical that they be self-reflective, mindful, and work to restore their own sense of peace and safety amidst their developing attitudes and beliefs on this social phenomenon.

In addition to practice, there is a need for trauma-informed research to advance understanding of the broader social effects of community gun violence. "… violence in disinvested and minoritized communities has particularly devastating effects and negative health outcomes, including premature death. The strengths within communities, and community members' roles in creating safer neighborhoods are often overlook and left

out of research" (Ohmer et al., 2016, p. 608). Working with the community ensures sustainability and implementation of community-level interventions.

Poised to conduct community-based research, social work researchers contribute to greater knowledge of community gun violence etiology and explore factors of race in victimization (Evans and Thompson, 2019). Researchers consistently find that community gun violence disproportionally affects racial and ethnic minority individuals throughout the United States (Goodwin & Grayson, 2020). Working in tandem with community members, social work researchers can provide evidence to help determine what a response to gun violence should look like in their neighborhoods and support "evidence-based community endorsed violence prevention programs that are already being implemented by people of color throughout the nation" (Goodwin & Grayson, 2020, p. 164).

Institutional-Organizational. At the institutional-organizational level, SEM identifies and works with organizations and institutions that serve as authorities and those which enact rules and operational standards (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Petit, 2019). Organizations comprise human players whose lack of knowledge or beliefs may uphold systems of power that stagnate actions from moving towards community gun violence prevention and intervention policy efforts. National and regional social work organizations such as the National Association of Social Workers local chapters, CSWE, the School Social Work Association of America, the Society for Social Work Leadership in Healthcare, and other professional associations have the power to educate and encourage further social work involvement in the prevention of community gun violence. Achieving this is possible through clear and consistent messaging, education, and

leadership on the topic. Hypothetically, more enthusiasm and less recalcitrance are possible through a united front of professional associations to support social work involvement in community gun violence prevention work given common ethics and practice guidelines. Bussey et al. (2021) however, conclude that social work educators must address a lack of social justice content in curriculum and the paucity of attention to community violence writ large.

Community. The community level of SEM explores relationships between organizations (Petit, 2019). In cities experiencing high rates of gun-related crimes and injuries, collaborative efforts between community members and the organizations that provide services are vital. This level describes mezzo practice including engagement in and building coalitions, using social media to amplify messaging, and building public health campaigns around safety which are steps that social workers, in collaboration with other professions, can take towards preventing community gun violence (Cerulli et al., 2019; Ruth & Marshall, 2017).

While social workers practicing at the community level may be effective at brokering dialogue between community members and organizations, or between organizations, it is important to avoid pitfalls of saviorism, defined as acting from a position as rescuer as opposed to working collaboratively and humbly with people and communities. Rather, social workers need to work in tandem with the communities and enter relationships with curiosity and a desire to understand the perspectives and wishes of community members. According to Ohmer et al. (2016), critical roles played by social workers in supporting communities include leveraging social capital, creating opportunities to discuss structural causes of community violence, and offering

connections to external resources as needed or requested. Social workers should understand and call attention to community resilience that comes from achieving high levels of social capital. It is important that social workers from outside communities not assume they will solve community gun violence.

Social workers practicing in settings such as schools, community-based nonprofits, and hospitals may enact organizational relationships or strengthen existing connections (Eisenman & Flavahan, 2017; Goodwin & Grayson, 2020). General social service organizations, violence interrupter organizations, and schools may collaborate through discussions and connect to local resources while recognizing that violence in the community may stem from a multitude of drivers and factors and span across a wide age group. Social workers may take part in intersectoral work groups that involve community members in efforts to enact gun violence resolutions.

Connections may exist between community and health care facilities, along with connections between various health care facilities. Considerations at the community level include accurate and consistent record keeping of gun-related injuries and deaths. Social work practice at this level may include administrative and policy practice, crisis management work, cultural navigating, and complex care management (Melinder, 2002; Ruth & Marshall, 2017). At the community level, social workers can offer their community assessment skill sets to help evaluate the effectiveness of various community driven programs to mitigate gun violence (Cederbaum et al., 2018). Practicing social workers and those just entering the field would be more likely to take part in this work if hospitals, coalitions, advocacy groups, academic partners, schools, social institutions, and

social service groups developed explicit social work roles in gun violence prevention efforts and crisis support.

      Public Policy - Enabling Environment. The policy and enabling environment level describes local, state, national, and global laws, and policies (Petit, 2019). Decades of neglect and underinvestment in public health have resulted in substantial breakdowns in social cohesion (Getgen-Kestenbaum et al., 2021; Goodwin & Grayson, 2020). Policy makers at local, state, and federal levels hold great responsibility and have the authority to take actions that improve lives across the lifespan (Getgen-Kestenbaum et al., 2021; Goodwin & Grayson, 2020). According to Goodwin and Grayson (2020), lawmakers need to understand a range of approaches to violence prevention, including those that exclude policing and punitive measures.

      Historically, those who control access to funding have inhibited the resources to establish prevention and intervention services. Communities often grapple with limited access to essential funds, limited control over local priorities, and discrimination over the multiplicity of constructions of family and community life (Ungar, 2002). Well-established risk factors and violence prevention methods, not power or politics, should inform public policy aimed at mitigating community gun violence, and place personal safety at the forefront of appropriations decision-making (Cerulli et al., 2019).

      Social workers can play a greater role in shaping policy through joining campaigns, think tanks, nonpartisan associations, or encouraging their organizations to take a political stance on community gun violence (Cerulli et al., 2019). They can also engage in macro-level research that looks at national financial, educational, health and social policies, and international politics in search of evidence to guide data driven

solutions to community gun violence (Cerulli et al., 2019; Durkin et al., 2020; Eisenman & Flavahan, 2017).

Social workers have capacities, and strengths, to serve as leaders in reducing gun violence. Legislative advocacy must prioritize public safety, with federal, state, and city funds allocated to community-based gun violence intervention programs that understand root causes, are evidence-based, and innovative with track records of success (Cederbaum et al., 2018; Ruth & Marshall, 2017). At a federal policy level, social workers in administrative roles (Leadership Council on Civil and Human Rights, 2022) may work towards sustained multi-year funding. Comprehensive agendas for prevention programs fit at this level, as suggested by Goodwin and Grayson (2020).

Conclusion

This research names community gun violence as an urgent social problem, as it jeopardizes and violates human rights for all. With gun-related homicide as the leading cause of death of youth through middle-aged African American men and within the top three leading causes of death for racial and ethnic minority groups of Hispanic, Alaskan Native, and American Indian men (CDC, 2022-b), it is important for social work practice to consider population health and social policy (Ruth & Marshall, 2017). Thus, the study of social workers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices will explore competency and interest as they relate to readiness and willingness to engage in practice related to community gun violence. For the social work profession to remain relevant in the nationwide conversation on community gun violence, intentional shifts will be necessary in social work curricular content and continuing education offers to further emphasize community oriented public health social work (Cederbaum et al., 2018).

Social constructivism and social constructionism theories will support the exploration of the research questions in this social work study. Social science literature by Andrews (2012) and Mercadal (2023) provides the basis for emphasizing a relativistic stance in the consideration of multiple social work perspectives on community gun violence to further knowledge in the profession. Learning with and from those who support individuals and communities most affected will contribute to a deeper understanding of the social structures, issues, beliefs, and actions that contribute to ongoing community gun violence. Knowledge generation is valuable for social workers and allied professionals to improve preventive and interventive strategies when working with those most affected by community gun violence.

The SEM is an integrative theory for social work that highlights the merits of critical consciousness, critical dialogue, accountability, and social responsibility (Bussey et al., 2021). The SEM offers opportunities for social workers to leverage actions to combat community gun violence. However, successful implementation of social work knowledge and engagement in the prevention of community gun violence will take effort. Incorporating SEM as a theoretical approach will investigate intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional- organizational, community, and policy-enabling environment levels and personal, managerial, and environmental factors as ways to approach effective and equitable interventions across the continuum (Bussey et al., 2021; Ruth & Marshall, 2017). For the social work profession to remain relevant in the nationwide conversation on community gun violence, intentional shifts will be necessary in social work curricular content to further emphasize community oriented public health social work (Cederbaum et al., 2018).

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the knowledge of social workers related to community gun violence?

Research Question 2: What are the attitudes of social workers regarding community gun violence?

Research Question 3: What beliefs do social workers hold regarding community gun violence?

Research Question 4: What practices are social workers engaging in related to community gun violence?

Sub-question: What type of education would social workers consider useful in relation to this social phenomenon?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review explores the many forms and outcomes that community gun violence takes, and the people and populations affected. Incidence of gun violence and the subsequent tragedies they incur are vast and variable. They involve individuals who are both perpetrators and victims of diverse races, genders, ages, identities, sexual orientation, sociocultural and economic status, religions, and ethnicities. The individuals found to be most affected as primary victims in the United States are men, including Black, Brown, and Indigenous men and specifically Black men under the age of 55 (CDC, 2022-b). U.S. youth homicides are also substantially higher than those accounted for in other major Western Countries including Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, and the UK (Pritchard et al., 2019).

The following sections provide research and scholarship associated with community gun violence that provides context for this study. These sections will elucidate the range of ways gun violence takes place in the United States, describe interventions and policies effected to mitigate gun violence and its impacts, and conclude with a discussion of how the social work field has responded to gun violence and the gaps in education, practice, and organizational policy that currently exist. The first section examines the literature on the many forms of gun violence.

Forms of Gun Violence

Gun violence takes many forms across an array of venues including in mass shootings, police involved shootings, accidental or unintentional gun-injury deaths, intimate partner gun violence, death by suicide with the use of a gun, and community gun violence. The majority of gun-related fatalities are determined as suicide and community gun violence (CDC, 2022-b; Gramlich, 2022).

Mass Shootings

Societies across the world view mass shootings as abhorrent acts that unfortunately garner widespread public attention through media coverage. At this current writing, there is a lack of definitional consensus on what constitutes a mass shooting, making it difficult to fully capture their pervasiveness and scope. Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund (2022) defines a mass shooting as "any incident in which four or more people are shot and killed, excluding the shooter". While according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (as cited in Krouse & Richardson, 2015) mass shootings are a "multiple homicide in which four or more victims are murdered, within one event, and in one or more locations in close geographical proximity". Compared to all gun-related deaths, mass shootings total less than 1% of all U.S. deaths by firearms (Arp et al., 2017; CDC, 2022-a, Gramlich, 2022). It is worth acknowledging that episodic mass shootings continue to occur at rates not seen in other high-income countries, and frequently attributed to easy access to guns and ammunition, mental health issues, personal conflicts, or lenient gun laws in the United States (Giffords, 2024). Meanwhile, the gun manufacturing industry nearly doubled in size between 2009-2016 (Winker et al., 2016). For decades, constant public outcry for legislative reforms has met with an iron wall of resistance as the gun lobby, and an offering of hopes and prayers for the lives lost and the surviving families.

Police Involved Shootings

In 2021, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) described how U.S. policing began in the 1700s and included patrols to mitigate retaliations by enslaved people and apprehended those who fled from owners.

These policing groups later enforced Black Codes that restricted African Americans from equal rights, protections, and access (NAACP, 2021). Racist values have since taken root in gun laws, policies, and regulations in the United States, dating back to the Jim Crow era (Spitzer, 2017). In this racial caste system that existed from the 1870s through 1960s, this legalized and legitimized anti-black racism took shape in all aspects of life in which African Americans received treatment as second-class citizens (Pilgrim, 2012). Formal police departments of the early 1900s in part took ownership for enforcing Jim Crow Laws (NAACP, 2021).

For decades, black and brown individuals, and particularly Black men, have been subject to stop and frisk abuses, illegal searches, and excessive use of force by law enforcement. During a period of increased racial reckoning throughout the United States from the 2010s and more specifically from 2019 to the present, the Black Lives Matter Movement, local and national anti-discrimination groups, and racial justice organizations campaigned to bring greater awareness to lives lost through police involved shootings (Brady, 2021b; Menasce Horowitz et al., 2020; NAACP, 2020; Sacks & Chow, 2018). The heavy media focus on the death of Breonna Taylor, a Kentucky EMT asleep in her bed at the time of death, deepened the nationwide conversation regarding policing in American, the role of police, and police involved murders with the use of a gun, and bring attention to pervasive inequities in law enforcement policies and procedures (NAACP, 2020). Taylor's death occurred just over two months before the police-involved killing of George Floyd, with both incidents garnering worldwide attention (Brady, 2021b; NAACP, 2020).

Despite public outrage and calls to "defund the police", police involved shootings have continued to occur with startling frequency and with social media amplifying their prevalence. Some instances rendered convictions and prison sentences to the police officers involved with the killings (Everytown, 2024; Jewel & Owens, 2017; Sacks & Chow, 2018). No charges were filed in other cases or the individuals were not found guilty. Such variable outcomes show the public's widely different views of police accountability in cases of violent deaths involving firearms and people of color.

At present, there remains an absence of a centralized recording system for allegations of police brutality and thus limited publicly available research or statistical evidence to fully depict the dynamics occurring between police and citizens. Police involved gun deaths account for 1-2% of yearly gun-related homicides (Everytown, n.d.). There are increasing nationwide conversations encompassing the use of force, systemic racism within policing, deaths, dismantling of carceral systems, abolition, funding reallocation, and police murders of citizens (NAACP, 2020; Sacks & Chow, 2018).

The media and the public have been mostly empathic towards the impacts of mass shootings, while there is less collective outcry regarding frequent incidents of community gun violence and deaths that occur daily in communities of color (Reardon, 2020). Hardiman (2019) calls attention to the need for public health approaches that frame community gun violence as a social justice issue. This framework promotes solution-focused prevention models that do not rely solely on law enforcement to manage community violence but seek collaborative, community models as more promising approaches. For example, the National Network for Safe Communities organization looks to involve law enforcement in collaborative efforts that deploy

collective healing, progressive community policing, and focused deterrence strategies

(National Network for Safe Communities, 2018). They assert that improved relationships

between police and communities are essential to restoring faith and trust in the police to

serve and protect all citizens (Pizzaro, as cited in Reardon, 2020). Research additionally

highlights the importance of training police officers in cultural humility and non-violent

policing approaches to improve community relations and lead to increased case clearance

rates (Engel et al., 2020; Fix, 2020).

Accidental or Unintentional Shootings

Accidental or unintentional shootings account for 1% of gun-related deaths (CDC,

2023). Children at three years old have the strength to pull a trigger and yet studies find

that most parents believe they can trust their children to handle a loaded firearm or not

touch it (Jennissen et a., 2019). Thus, experts offer public messaging needs to go past gun

safety training, according to Jennissen et al. (2019). The Everytown for Gun Safety

Support Fund program BeSMART, https://besmartforkids.org/, is one example of a

campaign that aims to normalize discussions on safe gun storage and provide talking

points for adults to engage children and teens in conversations on guns and gun usage.

Safe gun storage discussions are being amplified through public education, like

how drinking under the influence necessitated discussions and subsequent laws on the use

of seatbelts and the dangers of drinking (Pritchard, 2019). So too could the increase in

community gun violence spur education and public discourse to raise awareness and

promote change in risk behaviors about individual and public firearm safety. Researchers

highlight that the focus must be on the misconceptions about normal child and youth

development, which include natural curiosities and limited impulse control (Jennissen et

al., 2019). Jennissen et al. (2019) completed a national survey of child welfare social workers and determined that most child welfare social workers surveyed would render findings for child neglect, when children have access to unlocked and loaded guns in the home, especially when their state of residence has a child access prevention (CAP) law in effect.

Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is pervasive in the United States. From 2018 to 2020, an average of 51 women per month died in IPV incidents with the use of a gun (WISQARS National Violent Death Reporting System, 2020). IPV researchers contend intimate partner gun-injury and death disproportionately claims the lives of Black, Brown, and Indigenous women and transgender women in the United States with approximately 4.5 million women having experienced threats that included a gun (Niolon et al., 2017; Sorenson and Schut, 2018; Tobin-Tyler, 2023). Researchers also find that male intimate partners are responsible, for over half of female gun violence murders (CDC, 2023; Tobin-Tyler, 2023).

Until the 1970s, U.S. laws considered the intersection of gun access, gun ownership, and IPV as private matters *(Gun Control Act of 1968,* 1968; Tobin-Tyler 2023). Applauded protections include the Gun Control Act of 1968 and the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (Tobin-Tyler, 2023). In Illinois, advocates are working towards IPV interventions and safety measures through the 'Karina Bill' (Gun Violence Prevention PAC, 2023) with aims of improving the Firearm Remedy for the Domestic Violence Act. This act will increase the scope of the Firearm Restraining Order Act

(Weins, 2023) and close loopholes in existing legislation to better protect the human rights and safety of women and LQBTQIA+ people (Tobin-Tyler, 2023).

Suicide

Out of 45,000 gun-related deaths per year, suicide deaths by use of a gun account for 54% of fatalities (Arp et al., 2017; Gramlich, 2022). Older adult males, and those who are American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and whites living in rural areas, have the highest rate of gun-related suicide deaths (Arp et al., 2017; CDC, 2022). For American Indians, the" suicide rates are 50% higher than the national average "(US DHHS 2001- US Department of Health and Human Services -Brave Heart et al., 2011).

For children and young adults ages 10-14 and 25-34, suicide death by self-inflicted gun injury (CDC, 2020) is the second leading cause of death. In a comparison study, the youth suicide rate in the U.S. exceeds by double the rate of the seven other major Western countries (Pritchard, 2019). As Jennissen et al. (2019) highlight, while research shows that youth may experience transient suicidal ideation with intent, having the means of a firearm shifts the risk level, with gun-inflicted injuries having a 90% mortality rate. Studies over the past three decades have shown a correlation between a decrease in suicide death rates with the use of a firearm through implementing state CAP laws. According to Knopf (2023), access to firearms and as well as the increasing use of street and controlled substances have escalated the number of child suicide deaths in the United States.

Community Gun Violence

Community gun violence is a complex and intersectional issue for which there is no singular or linear set of variables that explain who will perpetrate it or become its

victims (Arp et al., 2017; Hardiman, 2019). Community gun violence root causes are socially constructed in that they consider diverse and often conflicting perceptions, experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and values, which are then paired with known facts to make sense of its etiology (Andrews, 2012; Cunliffe, 2008; Galbin; 2015; Galea, 2019; Parmaxi & Zaphiris, 2015; Vaičiūnienė & Kazlauskienė, 2022). Community gun violence may involve myriad of factors related to violence amongst youth and young adults, gang or clique involvement, retaliation shootings, drugs and gun trafficking, exposure to violence and trauma, failing school systems, early exit from formal education, disinvested community environments, broken familial and community ties, and availability and accessibility of guns (Arp et al., 2017; Hardiman et al., 2019). Lenient U.S. gun regulations and easy access to firearms including their availability, illegal means to obtain them, straw-purchasing, ghost guns, and the varying state policies and laws on background checks and gun ownership have also influenced the exponential increase in community violence episodes.

Community gun violence has significantly increased over the last decade in youth and adult populations. The following section will develop further understanding of the approaches to mitigating community gun violence across the lifespan.

Approaches to Mitigating Community Gun Violence

There are myriad approaches used to mitigate and decrease community gun violence. They include community violence interventions, focused deterrence strategies which fall under, community violence interventions, non-carceral community-based approaches, public health approaches, and the work of medical, mental health, and social work professionals. The following sections describe some of these approaches.

Community Violence Interventions

Community Violence Intervention (CVI) approaches seek community-centered solutions to address the growing public health problem of gun violence (Blackburn et al., 2023). Most engage community members with lived experience to act as *Credible Messengers* to those at risk of gun violence in their local neighborhoods (Corburn et al., 2020; Pugliese et al., 2022). Credible messengers are individuals with a strong desire to restore justice to their communities and mitigate gun violence through building connections with youth and young adults to steer them from away from the use of violence (Blackburn et al., 2023; Dawson et al., 2023). CVI programs deploy harm reduction methods, defined as non-punitive approaches to helping people lessen behaviors that negatively affect them and/or the community from a humanistic perspective of understanding, kindness, valuing, and respect (Hawk et al., 2017; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2021). Studies find that approximately 1% of a city's population perpetrates 50% of gun-related homicides (The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, 2021). Credible messengers work with this population using their histories of conflict with the law, threatening violence, or engaging in known violent acts to identify them (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2023; Corburn et al., 2020; Pugliese et al., 2022).

The CVI model aligns with Travis and Leech's (2014) Empowerment-Based Positive Youth Development framework, which highlights the critical nature of connection in mitigating youth and young adult violence. The authors employ the Five Cs of positive youth development (Bowers et al., 2010), as a core set of value-based attitudes and actions, to build positive relationships with at risk African American youth through promoting resilience, adaptability, and overall well-being. They note that although their

research primarily focused on Black youth and adolescents, it generalizes to other disenfranchised populations as well. The Five C's include: Competence, Confidence, Connection, Caring, and Character as components of youth empowerment. Travis and Leech (2014) offer evidence of a successful model similar to the one used by CVI's Credible Messengers who intervene at the local level to promote positive and systemic change.

Challenges within CVI. Limited funding or multi-grant funded organizations struggle to maintain an adequately sized workforce and provide adequately for their workforce both in pay and the staffing support and supervision necessary for ongoing safety planning and mitigation of vicarious trauma and burnout. One overall challenge within the 5 Cs model is the disadvantages inherent to lower quality school as an enduring structural inequity in disinvested neighborhoods.

Focused Deterrence & Group Violence Reduction Strategy

Focused deterrence is the work of David Kennedy and the Boston Miracle and Operation Ceasefire, which began in the early 1990s (Braga et al., 2018; Chalfin & Braga, 2023). The Ceasefire program originated in Baltimore where it developed into Baltimore Ceasefire 365 to represent a community-driven and non-governmental approach to reducing gun violence and drug markets (Corburn et al., 2020). Kennedy's approach gained nationwide recognition as research data on the program showed positive effects at the community level in reducing group and gang-related violence (McGarrell, 2020).

Focused deterrence and group violence reduction strategies are a sub-type of CVI. This strategy focuses on behavior change of those known gun violence offenders

through the involvement of law enforcement who take the role of emphasizing the sanctions that will take place should they engage in future gun offenses (Braga et al., 2018; Chalfin & Braga, 2023; Corburn et al., 2020; The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, 2021). Operation Ceasefire is one example of a focused deterrence violence reduction program. The goal of Operation Ceasefire programs is to bring communities together to help them work on behavioral change, including a commitment to abstinence from gun use and violence. According to its founders, Operation Ceasefire does not promote forgiveness for gun offenses; it is a program that meets individuals where they are in their change process to prevent further harm (Department of Justice, 2021; Operation Ceasefire, 2024). Those continuing to offend receive information on the repercussions, including prosecution to the full extent of the law.

Operation Ceasefire has encountered challenges and mixed reviews. Program efficacy has been varied, and high employee turnover and burnout have inhibited its functions. These, among other problems, including insufficient funding, have contributed to difficulties with program sustainability (Corburn et al., 2020). Challenges have arisen where there have been city interests in focusing funds on community policing instead, challenges with police agreement to working with formerly incarcerated individuals, or difficulty maintaining fidelity to the original model with decreased or limited funding (Childress, 2013; City of Oakland, 2018).

Non-carceral Community-Based Approaches

Non-carceral community based (NCC) approaches seek to reduce community gun violence by recognizing and addressing the underlying individual, structural, and

systemic causes that lead to gun violence and influence those most at risk. NCC models are person-centered and do not support punitive and prosecutorial methods.

Advance Peace (AP) is a non-profit, evidence-informed program in Richmond, California contends that it's particular people, not entire communities, that engage in greatest preponderance of gun violence (Weisburd, 2015). AP data have produced similar findings identifying a relatively low percentage of men who commit an estimated 70% of gun offenses (Advance Peace, 2017). Advance Peace focuses on providing proactive opportunities to individuals, mostly young men, with histories of involvement in lethal gun offenses including a personalized fellowship program, the Peacemaker Fellowship® (Advance Peace, 2017). The Peacemaker Fellowship® comprises individuals who have themselves committed lethal gun crimes, paired with individuals at risk. The goals of the Advance Peace Fellowship are to "bridge the gap between anti-violence programming and a hard-to-reach population at the center of violence in urban areas, thus breaking the cycle of gun hostilities and altering the trajectory of these men's lives" (Advance Peace, 2017, np).

Groups taking non-carceral approaches may or may not choose to avoid establishing themselves as a nonprofit organization, as their abolition principals may guide the decision. For example, Advance Peace (AP) started in California and is a 501(c)(3) while Stick Talk is a Chicago-based group, but is not a nonprofit. Stick talk recognizes that people carry guns for protection and focuses its work on firearm harm reduction principles. Lived experience elevation occurs while centering empathy, recognizing individuals' self-determination to self-protect, and drawing linkages to history involving both police violence and an infusion of opioids into the community,

alongside the emergency first aid training offered (Stick Talk, 2023). As with many entities with a multitude of partners and funding streams, the viability of programming is challenging without a consistent funding source.

Public Health Approaches

Public health approaches community gun violence from systemic, cross-disciplinary, and multivariate perspectives, focusing on the roles and effects of individuals and community networks, institutions, resources, and services (Eisenman & Flavahan, 2017). Cure Violence and Albany SNUG (Butts et al., 2015; Hardiman et al., 2019) are two examples of organizations that employ public health approaches to mitigate gun violence.

Cure Violence, a nationwide program, targets gun violence deterrence from both community and individual levels, working to change perceptions and stereotypical responses to violence, with the goals of prioritizing conflict resolution methods, and minimizing law enforcement involvement (Butts et al., 2015; Corburn et al., 2020; Hardiman et al., 2019).

Cure Violence Critiques. Evaluative studies of the Cure Violence program have shown mixed results. Hardiman et al. (2019) note progress in reducing gun violence in some areas where the program is operating. However, a strong association between Cure Violence programming and reduced gun violence has yet to be identified (Hardiman et al., 2019). Other studies have found sufficient crime reduction evidence stemming from Cure Violence's programs to warrant new iterations of their model or processes in place that can lead to continued rigorous evaluation, according to Butts et

al. (2015). Additional research may parse out and better understand the effects of Cure Violence's public health methodology (Hardiman et al., 2019).

Another public health approach to reduce gun violence, Violence Interrupters (VIs), engages community outreach workers (OWs) in their initiatives. VIs and OWs build relationships with residents of neighborhoods where together they identify concerns, brainstorm solutions, and offer alternatives to help individuals who may be at risk of engaging in gun violence (Corburn et al., 2020; Hardiman et al., 2019). Hardiman et al. (2019) highlight the importance of OWs in building trusting relationships with the community. Being present and staffing the program 24/7 conveys commitment to community change and is foundational to intervene in escalating disputes. Trusting relationships and human connections additionally aid in helping individuals prone to gun violence develop new thought patterns that promote alternative problem-solving and conflict resolution (Hardiman et al., 2019).

VIs and OWs also engage in community outreach and education efforts with neighborhood residents to raise awareness of the exigencies of gun violence and determine methods to deescalate its occurrence. Along with community members, they help make connections to resources such as job training, job placement, housing, recreation, after-school activities, and educational opportunities. Making connections with resources that help individuals have purpose and meaning in their lives is deterring the risk of engagement in gun violence (Corburn et al., 2020; Hardiman et al., 2019).

Challenges with Violence Interrupters. Like other approaches, challenges include staff retention, employee burnout out, supervision needs, and funding. Local

media has highlighted the importance of caring for the wellbeing of the Violence Interrupters engaged in the complex work.

The Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) launched in 1994 by the Chicago Department of Public Health reports using a public health approach that specifically addresses the city's considerable gun violence rate. In the past, the OVP has expressed intentions of citywide reach embedding a broad range of evidence-based violence prevention programming in neighborhoods through organizations that support direct work with communities (City of Chicago, 2024; Mayor's Press Office, 2022).

Challenges with Violence Prevention Offices. Challenges remain in that each mayor sets violence prevention priorities alongside their campaign strategies. This results in changes or inconsistencies with the office from one mayor to the next. Local reporting on this has showed that new priorities, agenda setting, and collaborative discussion will need to resume under the leadership of the new mayor who took office in mid-2023.

Cross-disciplinary public health approaches integrate many fields, including psychiatry, medicine, and social work, among others. Swanson and Rosenberg's (2023) research offer a multi-perspectival view which unpacks assumptions about the association between mental illness and gun violence to better inform intervention strategies. According to the authors, "mental illness and gun homicides are two different public health problems that intersect on their edges" (Swanson & Rosenberg, 2023, p. 45). They argue that what's needed to reduce gun violence are policy changes that set parameters for gun design, laws that regulate their use, and greater attention to causal the roots that perpetuate community gun violence such as social and economic deprivation, racism,

discrimination, unemployment, and inequities in education and access to healthcare (Swanson & Rosenberg, 2023).

As an example, a statistically significant reduction in transportation related deaths has occurred in major Western countries through public health approaches, with international researchers questioning ease of access to guns in the United States as inherently problematic paired with historical state and federal inaction at preventive approaches (Pritchard et al., 2019).

Medical and Mental Health Approaches

The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP, 2018), in collaboration with the American College of Physicians, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Psychiatric Association recommend calling gun violence a public health epidemic to help fund research, subsequently reduce the prevalence with studied and proven approaches, and move away from considering it a political or individual rights issue. They have urged federal and state entities to address gun violence using cross-disciplinary research and evidence-based strategies that inform education and interventions aimed at reducing morbidity and mortality (AAFP, 2018). Further incorporating aspects of harm reduction principles such as humanism, pragmatism, autonomy, and incrementalism into mental health and health care settings is worth consideration (Hawk et al., 2017). An example of an investigative instrument used toward this end is the Gun Behaviors and Beliefs Scale (GBBS) (Wamser-Nanney, 2021). The GBBS is a reliable and valid instrument that identifies individuals most at risk for perpetrating gun violence and clarifies associations

between gun violence and critical variables including gun beliefs, trauma exposure, and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Wamser-Nanney, 2021).

Like other health and mental health professions associations, The American Counseling Association (ACA) takes a public-health and human rights informed position on gun violence. In their Gun Violence Statement issued in 2018 the ACA identified gun violence as "a major threat to the physical, emotional, and mental health of individuals and that it is a human right to be safe and free from fear" (ACA, 2018, para. 1). Advocacy, gun violence research, enhanced training, and interventions related to mental illness and health are key to reducing the profound tolls that gun violence takes on communities, individuals, and systems (Bruns & Brubaker, 2022). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is additionally elevating their scope to include designated legislative efforts to advocate for sensible gun laws (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2019).

Like other medical and health organizations, national social work organizations lean heavily on macro/public health approaches and partnerships. The NASW has collaborated with the national organization Brady to become a campaign partner (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2024). Other national organizations for the NASW and CSWE to consider partnering with include: Amnesty International, Brady, Everytown for Gun Safety, Giffords, the John Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions, Mom's Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, Sandy Hook Promise, Third Way, and the Violence Policy Center. These are just a few of the many U.S. organizations working towards resolutions of gun tragedies and gun violence. While the NASW and the Brady Center have discussed issues of gun violence and gun tragedies,

the Council on Social Work Education (2018) has not disclosed partnerships but published a brief statement with limited scope that focused on expanding mental health and behavioral health services, thus exemplifying how far the social work profession must go in taking an active role with this social issue.

Of note, while considering the varied approaches discussed, some researchers suggest that rather than creating added responses to community gun violence, the goals can instead shift to organize resources and mobilize communities to be in control of achieving their own established goals and accepting support as needed through evidence-based programs currently available (Getgen-Kestenbaum et al., 2021; Goodwin & Grayson, 2020; Ungar, 2002). According to Ungar (2002), approaches should view individuals as empowered partners in developing and deploying community services. Race equity expertise is imperative with this complex issue and the longstanding punitive approaches that have not eradicated gun violence as a pernicious social issue (Goodwin and Grayson, 2020). As such, community members on the front lines should be entrusted with distributing funds to meet the basic needs of those at risk of surviving through or perpetuating the cycle (Goodwin & Grayson, 2020).

Major Gun Policies and Legislative Efforts

America has a long history of firearms laws that protect the rights of individuals to gun ownership and use. The U.S. government has enacted thousands of gun regulations, some of which predate the U.S. Constitution (Spitzer, 2017). Ratified in 1791, The Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution cites that: "a well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed" (U.S. Const. amend. II). The National Rifle

Association (NRA) came into existence in 1871 during the Civil War, with aims to improve the skill set of Union troops in the United States (National Rifle Association, n.d.-a). In 1934 and revised in 1968, the National Firearms Act codified the regulation of firearm manufacturing, firearm transfers; brought about imposing taxes, and later instituted registration requirements and revisions for gun ownership (Giffords, 2020). The Federal Firearms Act of 1938 mandated licensing requirements for guns used for businesses and, of important note, made it illegal to transfer of firearms to those convicted of felonies (Giffords, 2020). The Gun Control Act of 1968 delineated the use of guns for sporting, a minimum age for purchase, required serial numbers, enhancements on prohibitions on gun ownership (Giffords, 2020). Progressive implementation of these laws through the mid- 1900s took the focus of collective human rights to safety.

The next sections describe organizations that influence regulations around gun usage in the United States and affect policy decisions, legislation, and the rule of public opinion about the rights of gun ownership.

The National Rifle Association

Although a minority of Americans fight for unrestricted access to lethal weapons, their voices carry among policymakers and in the political arena. For decades, Harlon Carter led the National Rifle Association (NRA) and yet, as a teen, Harlon received a murder conviction in the killing of an immigrant teen (Lacombe; 2021). Released after a successful appeal, Carter served as the chief of the U.S. Border Patrol before leading the NRA (Lacombe, 2021). In 1977, a strong but powerful group of NRA stakeholders shifted the NRA's organizational focus to a stalwart gun ownership position using messaging with religious fervor towards the organization's purported aims

(Dawson, 2019; Lacombe, 2021). Top-level leaders, including Harlon and ultra conservative, gun rights activists fired staff and board members believed to oppose their plan in the 'Revolt at Cincinnati' (Lacombe, 2021). Their new direction aligned well with the Republican Party's agenda, catalyzing an enduring politically partisan connection between the conservative wing of the Party and the NRA (Dawson, 2019; Lacombe, 2021). In the last decade, the NRA's agenda has proven to be significantly influential and divisive (Dawson, 2019; Lacombe, 2021).

The political polarization of gun laws in the United States has been a subject of study over the years (Jacobs et al., 2022). Lacombe (2019) suggests that the NRA cultivated a group social and political identity that prioritized Second Amendment rights and concentrated its lobbying on protecting the rights of individuals to own and use guns (National Rifle Association, n.d.-a). Over decades, the NRA diligently and deliberately promoted this social identity "which enables it to influence politics by mobilizing its supporters into frequent and intense political action on its behalf. The NRA's use of this identity may be an often overlooked but distinct form of "outside lobbying" (Lacombe, 2019, p.1342). The outside lobbying referenced by Lacombe (2019) are the interest groups that aim to impact politics through changing behaviors of the masses towards collectivist action.

The establishment of strong coalitions of conservative Republican and rural, conservative Democrat politicians has continued its successful influence in Washington. Melzer (2004) described how the gun manufacturing industry and the NRA historically catered to white male hegemony, however, a recent study by Sugarmann et al. (2022) found that NRA marketing tactics have broadened their appeal to enlist women, adults,

and children throughout the United States. A strong cohort of Americans continues to fight against laws, policies, and regulations on gun manufacturing and against government infringement on the right to bear arms as purchasing, open carrying, or maintaining full access to guns (Jacobs et al., 2022; Lacombe, 2019; Macia, 2022; Moore, 2021). After decades of advertising to appeal to white males, the market has become saturated and stagnated, thus this change in strategy breeds the opportunity to capitalize on previous untapped consumer bases.

The NRA, non-profit organization 501(c)(4), may lobby on behalf of its stakeholders, however, by definition, it should do so without the intent to profit from their efforts. Yet, according to study data, the organization has netted millions in assets despite the recent spate of lawsuits, a denied bankruptcy claim, leadership conflicts and changes, and multiple controversies, including the January 2024 resignation of the executive VP (Brady, n.d.-a; Giffords, 2022; GuideStar, 2019; Sugarmann, 2024). Between 2019 and 2020, the NRA spent $5.42 million on political campaigns of individuals who oppose legislation for sensible gun safety measures (Brady, n.d.-b; OpenSecrets, 2022). They have accrued substantial assets through increased revenue streams, such as memberships, business and advertising income, and grants (Lacombe, 2019; Lacombe, 2021) and through donations from gun manufacturers and individuals who self-identify as hunting and gun enthusiasts, and those who justify gun rights as a means of personal protection (Lacombe, 2019; The A-MARK Foundation, 2015).

The Brady Organization

Dr. Mark Borinsky founded the National Council to Control Handguns in 1974 after he survived a gun violence incident (Brady, n.d.-a). In 1981, then U.S. Press

Secretary Jim Brady and his wife joined the NCCH following a life-threatening injury he suffered during the attempted assassination of President Reagan (Brady, n.d.-a). The 1986 Firearms Owners Protection Act loosened many earlier gun restrictions (Giffords, 2020). In 1993, the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act offered amendments to the 1986 Act to counteract less restrictive gun legislation that proposed waiting periods on purchases to allow for background checks and vetting who may purchase a gun (Brady, n.d.-a). In 2000, the organization took on the names of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence and The Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, commonly known as Brady (Brady, n.d.-a).

Assault Weapon Legislation

The Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Act of 1994 was enacted as part of passing the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act and it barred the manufacture, transfer, or possession of semiautomatic assault weapons (Giffords, 2020). Because of a ten-year sunset clause, the prohibitions under the Act expired in 2004 (Giffords, 2020). In the decade after its lapse, there was a 347% increase in mass shootings (Jacobs et al., 2022; Macia, 2022). Between 2009 and 2020, another 1,353 people in the United States were killed in mass shooting incidents, and 947 suffered gun-related injuries (Everytown for Gun Safety, n.d.). Semi-automatic firearms remain the most lethal type of weapon based on magazine capacity, legal or illegal modifications, and the bodily harm, injury, disability, and death they cause (Macia, 2022).

The Dickey Amendment

In 1996, the Dickey Amendment cut federal funding to support research on root causes of gun violence. Yet according to Mark Rosenberg, a former director fired by

the CDC, the Dickey Amendment did not place a federal ban on gun violence research but left leaders within the CDC concerned about taking a primary role on the subject given the political divisions that exist (R. Rubin, 2016). Despite nationwide conversations on pervasive gun tragedies, there has been a paucity of publicly funded and social science research investigating factors that lead to gun violence (Logan-Greene, 2019). Large philanthropic organizations such as the Joyce Foundation and Kaiser Permanente have supported a modicum of funding for gun violence research since the passage of the Dickey Amendment, as noted by Gurrey et al. (2021). Ultimately, even Jack Dickey, who pressed for the amendment, expressed regret in the years since the Dickey Amendment and has urged congress to make changes.

Other Gun Violence Legislation

Congress has passed several Acts aimed at mitigating gun violence and ensure the safety of U.S. citizens (Gifford, 2020). These include the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (2005) that protects gun manufacturers from liability associated with the use of their products, the Child Safety Lock Act (2005), which requires a licensed gun importer, manufacturer, or retailer to provide secure gun storage or safety device to the purchaser of the handgun, and the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Act Record Improvement Program (NARIP) (2007) (Giffords, 2020). The NICS and NARIP enactment stemmed from a mass shooting at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, in which the shooter's mental health history was not in the system and he legally obtained the firearms that murdered 32 people and wounded 17 more. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2021; Virginia Tech, 2024).

In 2020, Congress allocated $25 million dollars to resume gun violence research (Brownlee, 2022; Logan-Greene et al., 2019). Experts asserted that a public-health epidemic of this magnitude required a much larger budget to collate data driven prevention methods (Brownlee, 2022; Logan-Greene et al., 2019). Data from 2020 found handguns usage in at least 59% of murders and non-negligent manslaughter cases, while mass shootings with assault weapons or semi-automatic guns accounted for 3% of the murders and 36% of cases recorded as not able to identify (Gramlich, 2022).

Seventy-eight percent of an estimated 330 million Americans do not own guns, and most Americans support sensible gun control measures proven to reduce gun-related deaths (Jacob et al., 2022; Moore, 2021). In the wake of many highly publicized mass shootings in recent years, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (2022) gained enough votes to pass in the House and Senate and President Joe Biden signed it into law on June 25, 2022. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act will fund violence intervention programs, mental health supports, and school safety measures (The White House, 2021). The legislation specifically includes crisis intervention orders, further protections for intimate partner violence victims, penalties for straw purchasing, stringent licensing regulations for firearm dealers, background check enhancements and increased age requirements, community violence prevention funding, child and family mental health services funding, and expansion of funding for prevention programming within schools and enactment of school safety measures. Commonly considered the most progressive gun legislation reform in 30 years, the act responds to rising rates of suicide, community violence, and mass shootings. The passage of this act demonstrates an emergence of centering a public health response.

Social Work and Community Gun Violence

Social workers, regardless of workplace setting, are likely to encounter individuals affected either directly or indirectly by gun violence. Currently, there is no systematic effort to assess whether U.S. social workers have sufficient education and professional training to address the needs of these clients, correct false narratives surrounding gun violence, and grapple both personally and professionally with the high rates of gun deaths and injuries in the United States (Barsky, 2019; Brownlee, 2022; Lanyi et al., 2019; Reardon, 2020; Sperlich et al., 2019; Spitzer, 2017). In addition, there are increasing calls for social workers to provide racial bias training for gun owners, as studies have found that gun owners demonstrate higher levels of racial bias towards people of color (Gearhart et al., 2019). A qualitative study conducted by Beck et al. (2019) found that urban Midwestern teens' perceptions ~~of~~ are that racism and poor relationships with police were closely associated with gun violence. Sub-themes cited as influencing neighborhood gun violence included an inequitable justice system, inequitable access to economic and leisure opportunities, and pervasive issues of power and privilege that perpetuate racial and economic inequities (Beck et al., 2019). Methods to prevent or mitigate gun violence identified by participants were building trust and bettering relations with law enforcement and improving relationships with adults in their communities.

The next section summarizes a brief social work history and contextual current views on community gun violence in social work education and practice. Understanding the background offers clarity on changes needed and the role creation options ahead.

Social Work History

Literature on the history of social work helps frame the profession's position on the U.S. community gun violence crisis. Decades ago, Specht and Courtney (1995) foretold of ethical conundrums and other problems that would be generated by trends in U.S. social work education towards clinical knowledge and skills in diagnosis and individual treatment (micro) rather than those needed for community-based social work and advocacy (macro). Their foretelling was prescient as a tentative coexistence between macro and micro practice emerged that does not celebrate the complementarity between macro and micro practice but fosters underlying contention between practitioners who work in clinical settings and those whose work focuses on community-based practice, social justice and policy work, and macro practice. To effectively address community gun violence, the social work profession must find a collaborative balance between its various practice directions and build a cohesive coalition that works with individuals, groups, communities, organizations, and in the political arena.

During its formative years, the social work profession closely linked to public health values and principles of social wellbeing. During the first half of the 20th century, social workers in health care settings adopted a position akin to the World Health Organization's (WHO) position that "health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (World Health Organization, 1948, n.p.). The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), originally published in 1948, declared that human rights should be universal, allotted to all people regardless of "who they are or where they live" (UNDHR, 1948, n.p.). Both public health doctrines recommended community-based approaches guided by

theories of resilience, capacity, and strength that integrated consideration of SDOH into their practices (Cederbaum et al., 2018; Durkin et al., 2020; Ruth & Marshall, 2017; Ungar, 2002).

Social work practice aligned well with public health principles and practices as evidenced by their national leadership in promoting the U.S. War on Poverty and Social Security Administration Title V (1935) programming, which guaranteed programs for mothers and children to improve their health and health care needs (Ruth & Marshall, 2017). Social workers were instrumental in enacting New Deal legislation (1933) and the creation of significant social welfare programs, including food stamps (1939), and in 1965, Medicare, Medicaid, and Head Start (1965) (Cederbaum et al., 2018; Ruth & Marshall, 2017).

The 1970s saw an era of disinvestment in innovative and community-based support as a conservative political climate spread across the United States and the social work profession moved towards private practice to maintain the profession's existence (Ruth & Marshall, 2017). A national push to reconnect U.S. social work to public health arose in the 1980s and highlighted the profession's aims, emphasizing cultural humility, community connections, and engagement in dual social work and public health curriculum (Ruth & Marshall, 2017). Health inequities, system fragmentation, a widening divide among economic classes, increasing national and community violence, collective trauma, and the unmet needs of clients spurred the professions to adopt additional frameworks for best practice by the millennium (Ruth & Marshall, 2017).

Social work at the intersection of public health offers a framework for research that will guide deeper understanding of the realities of community gun violence and its

root causes. This framework, inclusive of the person in environment and macro, mezzo, and micro approaches, can envision a roadmap for collective use by social workers to reduce community gun violence and mitigate its insidious effects on individuals, groups, and communities. Community gun violence is a social justice issue, and one that the social work profession has historically failed to engage through. Understanding where the profession currently stands will help direct the educational expectations.

Social Work Education

Social workers must be prepared for myriad social challenges, including gun violence. Schools of social work play a vital role in shaping the next generation of future practitioners, researchers, leaders, and educators. Social workers have vital roles in addressing the exigencies of community gun violence because the education includes use critical thinking skills, foster group dialogue and intra and interprofessional collaboration; respond to crises and provide support through person-in-environment, trauma informed, social justice, and social-environment lenses. They are skilled in managing difficult conversations, conflict, and unanticipated challenges. Such broad skills can be deployed with individuals who have been victims or perpetrators of gun violence. However, social workers must also be prepared to engage in macro-level work related to the prevention and resolution of community gun violence writ large.

It has been 30 years since Specht and Courtney (1995) urged the field to bridge the micro-macro divide within social work education and practice. Given the increasing rates of gun violence, social work practitioners and leaders urgently need to inform policymakers or to become policy makers themselves to change the course of gun violence escalation. The first step includes infusing content about guns, violence, and

effects on social work education to prepare the future workforce. If elementary and high school classrooms across the country are regularly running active shooter drills, schools of social worker should educate future professionals on the subject at hand, in all its forms. Knowledge gained is the difference between being ill prepared and prepared to act, should work roles or life experiences call upon the need for action.

Social Work Profession and Response to Gun Violence

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has partnered with the Brady Campaign to explore the prevention and resolution of gun tragedies (Lanyi et al., 2019). As of 2017, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021) reported approximately 700,000 employed social workers who serve individuals, families, and communities across the nation. Given the vast number of gun related injuries and deaths in the United States, there are multivariate and critical reasons for social workers to be prepared for work within the intersecting personal, professional, policy, and political issues related to gun tragedies.

While there are is no singular database for statistics, various reports indicate that approximately 50-60% of mental health professionals are social workers with a clinical background (Health Resources and Services Administration, n.d.; United States Government Accountability Office, 2022). A research study by Slovak et al. (2008) found that in a random sample of approximately 700 social workers surveyed, only 34% reported engaging in assessment for gun access and ownership regularly. The reasons provided for lack of safety counseling and assessment included discomfort, lack of education and training, deferral of professional responsibility, and beliefs about level of risk (Slovak et al., 2008). The study concluded that direct practice social workers would

benefit from early education and ongoing training regarding assessment for gun safety, suicidal and homicidal ideation, intent, and lethality (Slovak et al., 2008). It is vital to include education on safety assessments in social work curriculums to prepare social workers with the necessary skillset, knowledge, problem solving, and applicable resources.

Social work education requires experiential internships, and field educators are key to connecting social work students with community organizations that support marginalized and underserved populations most affected by gun violence. Social work coalition building at the community level supports programming, education, research, advocacy, and activism to join others in locally and nationally addressing sensible gun laws.

Sperlich et al. (2021) encourage social work educators to bring gun violence content into their classrooms and social work researchers to study the exigencies of gun violence and gun tragedies. At present, literature on gun violence specific content embedded in social work education has not been located. This study fills a gap in understanding the scope of social workers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to community gun violence. Results of the study will inform curriculum development and CEUs, inclusive of content and skills for micro and macro practice when working with individuals and communities affected by gun violence. Various approaches will guide the proposed study, including macro social work and human rights, through a public health framework to practice and will integrate concepts of social and economic justice, intersectionality, and respect for multiple political and cultural perspectives.

Continuing Education: Social Work Trainings

A search of PESI, a national platform that provides continuing education reviews, found four out of 2100+ options from keyword searches that included content on *guns, gun violence*, or *firearms.* The PESI online course catalogue currently lists Suicide & Self-Harm: Stopping the Pain and Disarming the Suicidal Mind: Evidence-Based Assessment and Intervention, Crisis Response Planning and Lethal Means Counseling to Reduce Military and Veteran Suicide and Working with Military and Veteran Clients: Effective Treatment of Military-Related Trauma, Suicidality, Substance Abuse, and More. Expanding the keyword search to *community violence* yielded an additional 12 trainings including Trauma-Focused Addiction Certification, Trauma-Informed Motivational Interviewing, Culture and Race in Health Care, Trauma in the Urban Community: Exploring the Wider Context, Making the Invisible Visible: Addressing Power, Privilege, and Oppression in Trauma-Informed Practices, Mass Violence: Risk Identification and Intervention Strategies for Potentially Violent Clients and Effective Treatment Techniques for Survivors, Trauma-Informed Responses to Racial Injustice: Interventions for Immigrant, Diverse or Vulnerable Populations, Trauma, Grief and Loss in the Classroom: Supporting Students When Tragedy or Loss Occurs, and Trauma Informed Clinical Strategies for Equity, Inclusivity and Client Empowerment: Social Justice, Ethics, & Diversity in Therapy. PESI Packaged Full-Day Seminar Offerings included: Bessel A. van der Kolk's 30th Annual Trauma Conference: Psychological Trauma, Neuroscience, Embodiment, and the Restoration of the Self, and Psychotherapy Networker Symposium: Creating Meaningful Change: The Quest for Healing in Anxious Time and 3-Day: Dialectical Behavior Therapy Certification Training.

The NASW national website offers six continuing education offerings under the search terms *guns, gun violence*, or *firearms* which include**:** Tools for Social Workers to Prevent Gun Violence, Guns Grief and Grace, Preventing Gun Violence in Urban Areas, and Fearful and Distracted in School: Predicting Bullying Among Youths, and Extreme Risk Protection Order (Red Flag Law), and Duty to Warn and Mandatory Reporting Requirements: Ethical Considerations Through Case Studies. Expanding the keyword search to *community violence* yielded an additional 20 trainings with nine potentially highlighting community gun violence which include: Gender Based Violence in AAPI Communities: A Culturally Responsive Trauma Informed Approach, How Social Workers Can Become More Culturally Intelligent About Black People, An Overview of Black-Female Relationships, Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, and Partner Violence: Implications for Culturally Specific Social Work Interventions, Social Justice, Civility and Dialogue, Interactive Exercises to Promote Peaceful School Environments, Political Social Work What's That?, Asian Pacific Islander America in Crisis: Forgotten Histories and Violent Otherings, It's All About Who You Know Using Social Networks to Decrease Mental Health Disparities In Low Income Communities, and What Does Trauma Sensitive Look Like?

Advocating for Sensible Gun Laws

Social workers serve alongside other mental health providers and first responders when tragedies occur. Social workers already involved in the crisis and micro-level work as trauma informed advocates, counselors, and case managers in roles related to interpersonal violence, school violence, community violence, and counseling (Kalesan & Galea, 2015; Lanyi et al., 2019; Logan-Greene et al., 2019; Reardon, 2022). Social

workers can provide community services in neighborhoods experiencing pervasive post-traumatic stress amongst children, youth, and adults (Arp et al., 2017; Reardon, 2022). At present, there is a gap in literature describing social workers working in gun violence prevention efforts.

As gun violence and gun tragedies continue in communities across the country, localized efforts often focus on disaster based financial support and trauma informed mental health services to individuals, families, and systems. There is an opportunity for social workers to gain further knowledge to address the needs of communities rendered these supports following a gun violence episode. Further, social workers can help to provide evidence-based preventive strategies to those who will be at the frontline of service should gun violence occur.

Social workers may also engage in gun violence research, policy creation, and work within political systems and backing campaigns that advocate for sensible gun control (Logan-Greene et al., 2019). Social workers can engage in policy advocacy and advocate for the creation of roles and sustained Offices of Violence Prevention and Neighborhood Safety (OVP/ONS) that focus on peace and public safety centers in the spirit of macro practice (Moore, 2021; National Association of Social Workers, 2022; Reardon, 2022). Social work advocacy may include building or taking part in coalitions, public speaking on the topic, testifying based on their work with survivors and families of victims, and engagement in internal change work within their places of employment. Barsky (2019) suggests that social workers can help educate the public and dispel myths and support survivors and families affected by gun tragedies and gun violence by engagement in research on prevention methods and share data, which may

highlight how intersectional issues of inequities, institutional racism, redlining, mass incarceration, and community disinvestment may contribute to community gun violence.

Sperlich et al. (2021) highlight the limited social work research related to the prevention of gun violence and the implications for future study and work. Questions remain: are social workers educated, capable, interested, and ready to engage in gun violence work? What will prepare social work practitioners and the next generation of social worker students for roles focused on decreasing gun related injuries and gun-related deaths? And what are the barriers that impede the development of knowledge and skills to be proficient in this area of practice?

Conclusion

This study seeks to advance social work knowledge and skills to combat the pernicious impacts of gun violence. In addition, it proposes to advocate for exposing future social work professionals to curricular content and CEUs that aid in understanding the root causes that gestate an environment for gun violence and thus be able to address them proactively. As an iterative process, the literature review developed the research questions and built a study framework positioned within an unpredictable and complex globalized world (Luker, 2008). Social workers serve in a wide range of settings that cover micro to macro levels of practice and with an interest in serving the wellbeing of populations and society. Many social workers will at some point serve individuals at risk of engaging in, witnessing, losing family to, losing their lives to, or surviving some form of gun violence and gun injury. The social work profession focuses attention on attending

to the expressed needs of marginalized and oppressed communities facing frequent gun violence (Bussey et al., 2021; Cederbaum et al., 2018; Ruth & Marshall, 2017).

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) messaging on gun violence has been extremely limited. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has expressed interest in partnering with organizations already on the front lines, but social work driven research and literature on gun violence is substantially lacking. Literature that is available does not presently reflect widespread efforts to encourage social workers to engage in community gun violence prevention work, nor widespread efforts to provide social workers with education and training to work with affected individuals and communities. The Grand Challenges for Social Work were initiatives established in 2013 to identify, prioritize, and solve complex social problems through transdisciplinary work does yet did not historically include gun violence as one of the prioritized grand challenges of our times (Cederbaum et al., 2018; The Grand Challenges for Social Work, 2023). At the completion of this literature review, the Grand Challenge has just announced an intention to include 'Prevent Gun Violence' under the challenge of building a 'Stronger Social Fabric' (The Grand Challenges for Social Work, 2024). Alternatively, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16.4 includes advancing disarmament and reducing illegal arms, and gun control as a part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Chopra, 2022).

Intractable U.S. gun violence occurrences and politically divisive perspectives inextricably link with SDOH and systemic factors such as educational quality and access, health care quality and access, neighborhood and built environments, the social and community context, and economic stability, racism, inequalities, and inequities

(Braveman & Gottlieb, 2014; Cederbaum et al., 2018; Durkin et al., 2020; Ungar, 2002). As issues surrounding community gun violence and gun injuries continue to increase in the United States, there is value in exploring if and how social workers express being involved in community gun violence prevention work or post-crisis services.

It is ineffectual to assume that social workers will take an interest in work related to community gun violence prevention or that they are prepared for it without exposure to its root causes and outcomes in their education. Needed as well, is knowledge of the national and local policies, and laws supporting preventive and interventive efforts. Literature on community gun violence highlights the importance and necessity of transdisciplinary and interprofessional approaches and evidence-based solutions (Braveman & Gottlieb, 2014; Cederbaum et al., 2018; Durkin et al., 2020; Ruth & Marshall, 2017; Ungar, 2002). Exploring current social work education, attitudes, and beliefs associated with community gun violence will illuminate current trends and foresee future needs to enhance social workers' education and training to address competent approaches to community gun violence, an urgent and timely issue for the field.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Approach

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory study was to gather data on social workers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to community gun violence through semi-structured interviews. Professional social work practice aims are to improve quality of life for individuals and families, thus causing exploration of understandings, apprehensions, stances, convictions, and actions around this relevant topic. While many disciplines engage in producing knowledge and data on gun violence, social work research is nascent and limited, particularly in discussing how to develop social workers' competence in interventive and preventive methodologies in BSW and MSW programs and in CEU offers. Social workers are new to practice in relation to this phenomenon at the micro level and even more so at mezzo and macro levels (Aspholm et al., 2019; Logan-Greene et al., 2018; Sperlich et al., 2022).

With a research aim to explore the personal and professional aspects of social worker readiness and willingness to engage in work involving community gun violence perpetrators, survivors, and concerned community members, qualitative research methods offered an opportunity to obtain 'thick' descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Padgett, 2017). As the social work profession's engagement with this issue is at the formative stage, a qualitative design was useful for exploring the under-studied issues to gain a deeper and more comprehensive explication (Rubin & Babbie, 2016). Given the multidisciplinary work occurring in relation to community gun violence, it was important to understand social workers' openness to learning through a public health framing of the issue. This chapter will include operationalizing the variables of the study, the research design and rationale, the research setting, recruitment and sample, data collection and

analysis, confidentiality, and ethics. The chapter will conclude with a reflexivity statement by the researcher.

Operationalizing Variables

Professional disciplines frequently assess practitioners' current knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs through qualitative research to understand current trends and support further education and practice directions for the future. Some examples are as follows. Ibrahim (2018) employed a qualitative study to explore academic social workers' perceptions of current social work education standards. A study by Tower (2003) showed a high correlation between social work student's practices in screening for intimate partner violence and education on the issue during their master's program. Professional experience and training had a substantive impact on social workers' beliefs about violence against women, according to Postmus et al. (2011), and their attitudes and behaviors in relation to assessing for firearms and safety (Slovak et al., 2008). Johnson and Barsky (2020) qualitatively studied social workers' perspectives on prevention of gun violence within schools, and the findings highlighted the need for consensus on the role of social workers in relation to gun violence. Hence, an examination of the intersection of social work and community gun violence is necessary, given the shortage of relevant research on the topic.

Operationalizing Knowledge

In the standard definition of the word, knowledge is the "facts, information, and skills acquired by a person through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject" (Oxford Dictionary, 2024). Akpan et al. (2020) and Mercadal (2023) discuss that developing collaborative knowledge can occur in various contexts,

with participatory interactive knowledge development occurring through exchanged ideas. Social work education in school may incorporate engagement in multi-level practice (such as responding to the complicated issue of gun violence). Thus, social workers gain knowledge and are more effectively able to explore how to prevent complex social issues as opposed to only reacting to them (Mattocks, 2017). Similarly, postgraduate social workers often take an interest in acquiring knowledge that brings "intellectual refreshment, critical reflection, and [acknowledges] successful work" (Beddoe, 2009, p. 722). Social workers typically want to invest in learning that is empowering, allows for ongoing dialogue outside the confines of their own organization, and can center social work voices in policy and decision making at the organizational, the local governmental, or national level (Beddoe, 2009; Smith & Loya, 2020).

As the education of social workers includes developing and promoting "evidence-informed practice through scientific inquiry" (CSWE, 2022, p.5), academic classroom learning as well as continuing education offers and seminars may include didactic presentations and interactive learning methods. Interactive learning may include different modalities, such as live real time interactive word clouds or polling. Examples of additional learning techniques are cooperative and collaborative learning, such as interactive breakout group discussions and case study learning to increase knowledge. **Research Question:** What is the knowledge of social workers related to community gun violence? Sub-question: What type of education would social workers consider useful in relation to this social phenomenon?

Operationalizing Knowledge on Guns. There are many ways to measure knowledge. Common ways of measuring knowledge at the beginning and end of courses

or trainings are direct inquiry, mixed method pre and post testing, or qualitative surveys (Davis et al., 2018; Finn & Molloy, 2021; Gordon et al., 2018; Gray, 2020; Larmar, 2019). This accessible option allows participants to self-assess and contribute to quantitative data and to provide qualitative data as feedback in their owns words on the new learning gained (Dobbins et al., 2019; Regnault et al., 2018; Speer et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022).

Operationalizing Attitudes

Olson and Stone (2005) define attitudes as objective thoughts, guided by one's feelings on a subject, that incorporate the enmeshed components (Simonson & Maushak, 2001) of affect, cognition, behavior, and behavioral intention.

Research Question: What are the attitudes of social workers regarding community gun violence?

Operationalizing Attitudes on Guns. Research by Stark and Sachau (2016) found in a nationally representative study that explored U.S. citizen's attitudes towards guns and knowledge regarding gun safety, the populace consistently over inflates its competency on guns and subsequently takes less safety measures to reduce risks. The constructs of attitudes and beliefs have similar roots but take shape in different ways. Direct social work practice experience and experiential learning have the potential to influence the attitudes and beliefs of workers, according to Munhall (2008) and Postmus et al. (2011). This is an important concept as it highlights social workers' attitudes may influence their interests in work pertaining to community gun violence.

Operationalizing Beliefs

Conversely, the construct of beliefs is accepting or proposing something as a truth without absolute proof, regardless of whether presented with evidence to the contrary and which often presents with strong convictions attached (Camina et al., 2021). **Research Question:** What beliefs do social workers hold regarding community gun violence?

Operationalizing Beliefs on Gun Violence. Responses to questions on beliefs pertaining to gun violence frequently come with strongly polarized stances, with or without political influence (Sperlich et al., 2022). Thus, it is important for the research to include social work practitioners' beliefs as a variable for study. Indirect experiences and media may also factor into social workers' beliefs and their attitudes, or knowledge related to gun violence. Akpan et al. (2020) highlight the capacity of individuals to change attitudes and beliefs through sharing in questions and thoughts. These variables embedded in the research questions can provide direction for social work education and practice.

Operationalizing Practices

As previously explored in the literature review, social work practice may range from the micro, mezzo, to macro actions and work.

Research Question: What practices are social workers engaging in related to community gun violence?

Operationalizing Practices Related to Gun Violence. Assessments, interventions, multi-disciplinary collaboration, building coalitions, community engagement, research, policy creation, and research are a few of the many examples of

what social workers may define as their current or future practice actions related to community gun violence described by researchers (Arp et al., 2017; Cerulli et al., 2019; Hardiman et al., 2019; Jennissen et al., 2015; Lanyi et al., 2019; Reardon, 2020; Sperlich et al., 2022 Ungar, 2002).

Gaps in Literature

Exploring social workers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to gun violence can provide a direction for future social work education, training, and practice. While there is a considerable amount of multidisciplinary research on community gun violence, the overall volume and pace of that literature sharply declined at the enactment of the Dickey Amendment in 1996 (Gurrey et al.; 2021; Logan-Greene, 2019). The research study provided new data to fill the gaps in social work literature.

Research Design and Rationale

This study utilized a qualitative design to explore social worker's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to community gun violence. Epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge, the methods, validity, and scope (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using the interpretive framework of social constructivism positioned the qualitative research in subjective lived life experiences, while staying open to evolving realities and new learning as ontological assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Holstein & Gubrium, 2007; Sun, 2019).

The study's theoretical frameworks of social constructionism and the social ecological model focus on advancing knowledge and engagement, while considering the additional influences of culture, economics, power differentials, history, politics,

attitudes, and beliefs (Finn & Malloy, 2021, Şahín, 2006, VeLure-Roholt & Fisher, 2013). This framework complements social work, as practitioners typically share an interest in having freedom to explore social issues, practice, policies, prevention models, and responses to social challenges through dialogue with other social workers (Beddoe, 2009; Davis et al., 2019; Keeney et al., 2014; Larmar, 2019; Smith & Loya, 2020).

Setting and Recruitment

Individuals who met the inclusion criteria were practicing social workers living within the metropolitan area of Chicago, who possessed a CSWE accredited MSW degree, and had at least two years of experience actively practicing within the field and were over the age of 18. Study participants had roles or affiliations within community based non-profit organizations, local health care organizations, social service listservs, and/or were members of various social service oriented private Facebook groups.

The researcher contacted managers at various places of business to inquire privately about posting a study flyer or sharing it through listserv distribution for voluntary participation, as members were interested. The scope of reach within each group and listserv varied.

Exploring Facebook social media groups oriented towards social workers helped gathered the names of current local connections and known listservs for social workers. Prior to acceptance into the Facebook groups, new members must answer general questions about social service background and questions regarding established norms of respect in an online group. Online social media groups allow free and accessible connections for those with internet access, which strengthened the rationale for recruiting

individuals through these sites and group pages, increasing visibility of the flyer

(Ventola, 2014).

After a group administrator for a social media site or a manager provided

approval, a screen shot captured the permission to distribute the recruitment flyer within

the network and the researcher collated all screen shots (see Appendix A). Several more

groups and agencies did not respond to an initial or follow-up request for permission to

post a study flyer. The table below (see Table 1) identifies the group administrators and

managers who responded. The researcher sent a study flyer to the managers and

administrators for posting in listservs and groups to initiate the recruitment.

Given the group numbers noted in Table 1, it is reasonable to assert about 1,000

social workers in the Chicagoland area had access to viewing the study flyer through a

listserv or Facebook post, offering a large sample of potential study participants within

the inclusion criteria for the study. Contacting a wide range of different social work

groups and agencies offered the possibility of reaching a diverse study population with

many living and working in the Chicagoland area. The scope of reach within each group

and listserv varied, from the Chicago area groups to the state of Illinois and nationwide

groups.

Table 1

Groups that Agreed to Post Study Flyer

Group Name	Location	Number of Members
Chicago Bridge	Google Listserv- Chicago	1172
Social Change	Nationwide Listserv	~8,000
Social Service Workers United	Facebook Group- Chicago	976
Reddit Social Workers	Nationwide Network Site	~80,000
Social Welfare Action Alliance	Facebook Group- Nationwide	~1,400
Shirley Ryan AbilityLab	Local Listserv-Chicago	~30

Case Management Department		
Chicago Public Schools Social Workers	Facebook Group- Chicago	~200
University of IL Chicago Jane Addams College of SW	Local Listserv- Chicago	~100
Brighton Park Community Wellness, Health, and Violence Prevention Program	Local Listserv- Chicago	~100
American Case Management Association (ACMA IL)	Statewide Listserv- Illinois	~400
Division of Specialized Care for Children	Local Listserv- Chicago	~150
PDCSW	Local Listserv- Chicago	~200 members
LinkedIn Profile	Networking Site - Personal Page	~350 members

Sample

The research study design included a purposive strategy (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Padgett, 2017; Rubin & Babbie, 2016). Recruitment and selection of these individuals was based on the research study's aim to build an understanding of social work knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to community gun violence. The rationale for research with social workers in this geographical area is based on the high incidence rates of gun violence within Cook County, Illinois (The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, 2021). The researcher has also worked and lived within Chicagoland for nearly 20 years.

Purposive sampling was useful to reach saturation, which in qualitative research is the period at which information, meanings of codes and themes reach maximization (Hennick et al., 2017). Literature on qualitative research shies away from asserting an exact or adequate sample size, and instead points to code saturation at 9 interviews, and code meaning saturation between 16-24 interviews (Hennick et al., 2017).

The planned group for recruitment included individuals with access to the study flyer shared among 13 listservs and Facebook groups. Twenty-three individuals affiliated

with the organizations, listservs, and Facebook groups initially responded to the recruitment flyer and completed an informed consent (see Appendix E) and demographic form within the first week. Another 12 individuals responded within the second week and nine individuals responded the third week of the study. The researcher paused collection of further participant interest by week four, at which point 49 individuals had completed the online demographic survey and consent form expressing initial interest.

In following the prior social work study in New York by Sperlich et al. (2022) that included a research team who conducted eight interviews and five focus groups with 27 participants, it was necessary to consider upwards of eight to nine study participants, but reaching points of saturation was the final guide. Reaching coding saturation at interview 10 was beneficial, but it was necessary to interview four more participants thereafter to obtain a more diverse sample of practice backgrounds and reach code meaning saturation "defined as the point when we fully understand issues, and when no further dimensions, nuances, or insights of issues can be found" (Hennick et al., 2017, p. 6).

Initially, twenty-four individuals received an email to set up an interview time and nine did not further respond. Ultimately, 14 participants responded and completed an interviewed. These individuals signed an informed consent and received the recruitment letter detailing information regarding their participation in the study (see Appendix B). One of the initial confirmed respondents did not follow-up with the researcher at two different scheduled interview times. Another 11 individuals received emails during the study's 5th week to recognize their interest in the study and inform that the study reached

data saturation and interviews concluded. Finally, 14 individuals received notifications they did not meet eligibility for the study.

This study developed through a learning and sharing model to increase equitable power dynamics while promoting empowerment and centering participant voices and values (Larmar et al., 2019; Şahín, 2006). The prior research study out of New York a few years earlier provided 27 participants with $25 gift cards. Given these considerations, all study participants who completed an interview received a $50 gift card as a token of gratitude for their participation. It is common to find research studies posted throughout public spaces in Chicago offering compensation up to $100 for participating in studies.

Procedures

Every individual who took an interest in the study and believed they were eligible (based on the previously stated criteria) had access to an embedded link to review the study design of one-to-one interviews, the consent form, and the demographic data survey. A survey to determine eligibility and a consent form were generated using Qualtrics software, [Version 2020] (https://www.qualtrics.com) and included a free text area for a requested electronic signature (see Appendix C). The consent form and demographic survey (see Appendix D) took approximately five minutes for interested individuals to complete. The researcher received daily email notifications of completed informed consents and demographic surveys stored in Qualtrics (2020). Millersville University selected the online survey tool, Qualtrics (2020), for research use as it requires student login and password. The university's firewalls help protect data in Qualtrics.

The researcher thoroughly reviewed each completed Qualtrics (2020) submission to determine if the interested parties met the inclusion criteria and signed a consent form.

After the review, the researcher contacted all eligible study participants through the email address noted on the form. The researcher made contact within 24 hours to reiterate the study plan for one-to-one interviews and offered interview time slots planned conveniently throughout the day and night with flexibility to provide additional times as needed. The researcher provided their Millersville University student email address to discuss questions regarding the interview process. Upon notification of a potential study participants' preferred interview time, the researcher sent a follow-up email to confirm the appointment date, time, and private link to location.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred with practicing social workers through semi-structured interviews that included primarily open-ended questions and prompts to ensure clear understanding (Dillman et al., 2014). The researcher clarified questions and answers as needed. The data collection of the one-to-one interviews used the Zoom® web conferencing platform to engage with the study participants. Participants received a private link to join the online meeting. Participants provided consent to use of the recording feature with cameras enabled, along with the auto-transcription tool, as this is a well-utilized and reliable option for lengthy recordings. An average interview was 45 minutes and interviews ultimately spanned between 31 minutes to 66 minutes. The study took place fully online via the Zoom® platform to increase response rate and account for the large geographical location of the Chicagoland area.

The researcher held one interview with each of the 14 study participants. Dillman et al. (2014) suggest that a qualitative design with open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview allows for a deeper exploration of the topic and more detailed

answers than close-ended questions (see Appendix F). An interview guide was available for the researcher to take notes. After turning on the recording functions, the researcher started the scripted dialogue with each study participant regarding the recorded nature of the interview, the three sections of questions that would follow, and the plan to articulate the conclusion of the interview and stop the recording at that point. The researcher did not plan follow-up sessions with participants.

Confidentiality

The researcher ensured uninterrupted privacy by conducting the interviews while alone in a home office. A private meeting link used for the admission to room function ensured only the researcher and participant would have access to the online meeting. The interviews were each audio-visually recorded through Zoom® and saved in the password protected cloud. Rendered videos were available for review in less than an hour, with the transcription function enabled.

A transcription option on Zoom® was useful in conducting multiple interviews and a thorough review of the recordings ensured transcription accuracy. The researcher protected the participants' anonymity by removing all identifying information from transcriptions and the researcher selected pseudonyms from popular gender-neutral names for ease of presenting findings. Categorizing the pseudonyms and participant numbers in separate and secured files protected the confidentiality of the participants. It was important to redact transcription documents to ensure that identifying information, such as the unprompted sharing of places of employment, to protect their identities. Only the researcher maintains the names of the study participants. A saved copy of non-identifying transcriptions is on a password protected computer in the researcher's office

and uploaded to NVivo under a password protected account. Additional handwritten notes and documentation remain secured in a locked cabinet in the researcher's secured home office. To maintain proper Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols, the transcribed audio files, notes, and interview transcriptions will remain in possession for three years and then destroyed.

Data Analysis

As any qualitative researcher must learn, the research required an intensive time commitment to gain insights and justifications for the analysis. With the research questions to guide the study and seek to answer the questions, a coordinated review process ensued. The automatic transcription tool embedded within the Zoom® platform offered a starting point.

First, the Zoom® closed captioning file download required conversion to a text file, and then copying into a word document for editing. Next, a thorough review of the transcriptions while viewing the recorded interviews supported greater accuracy, as researchers suggest (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Padgett, 2017; Saldaña, 2009). The researcher then went through all interviews two more times to further correct the transcribed interview data. Intelligent transcription included removal of the stutters and filler words (McMullin, 2023). The data analysis process was an iterative process of repeatedly combing through each interview, re-reading the transcriptions, and contemplating on the responses given (Padgett, 2017).

Memos

The interview guide was available for the researcher to take notes and make connections and observations over the course of each interview. Memo writing during the

interview process drew linkages during one interview to the next and proved useful after upon completing all interviews. Ongoing reflection on the thoughts, questions raised, and new ideas emerging from the data (Charmaz, 2014; Nowell et al., 2017; Saldaña, 2009) needed balance against potential biases (Nowell et al., 2017; Padgett, 2017). Critical thinking occurred during memo writing as the code notes and theory notes deepened the understanding of the data collected and higher-level analytical thinking ensued (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Padgett, 2017). Operational notes that included logistical questions and concerns, as described by Padgett (2017) were part of discussions with the research study dissertation chair.

Coding

Codes are the words and phrases that aggregate understandings and experiences in qualitative research (Saldaña, 2009). These codes help to connect the collected data to the later developed meanings described by the researcher (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher implemented an a priori codebook prior to engagement in the coding, as suggested by Saldaña (2009). Creating an a priori code book (see Appendix G) included deductive coding. Deductive coding, as discussed by Miles et al. (2014) was a variable oriented strategy that supported late stages of the analysis process. Deductive codes came from further consideration of the literature review with attention paid to the study results, articles, the semi-structured interview guide implemented, and the 2022 semi-structured interview guide provided by the researchers Logan-Greene, Sperlich, and Finucane from their study.

The first cycle of coding occurred within a word document with interviews coded line by line and by hand with an in-vivo approach (Saldaña; 2009). As the iterative

process continued, the deductive codes did not capture the full breadth of the data. Thus, it was necessary to develop a more extensive list of codes following the initial interviews, as suggested by Saldaña (2009). A hybrid coding approach then captured the depth of the qualitative data into a final code book (see Appendix H). Coding by paragraph was useful in subsequent rounds of coding to bring forward the most salient points into a single or limited number of codes, as highlighted by Saldaña (2009). The inductive coding followed in subsequent rounds to allow for the additional codes.

The researcher used the QSR International Pty Ltd. (2023) Nvivo14 qualitative data analysis software to complete subsequent rounds of coding (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2009). The purpose of the study called for values coding, along with the researcher's interest in capturing an emic perspective. The second phase of the coding process included additional line-by-line coding and a values coding approach with the support of the NVivo software tool. It was important to consider the participant's worldviews and incorporate excerpts with their attitudes and beliefs in alignment with the study aims. This also supported their explication of values, expressed intrapersonal skills, and experiences in practice. This process shaped the reorganization of codes in the developing code book. Coding line by line allowed for systematic analysis to ensure transparency and in the preparation for inter-rater coding that followed. Grouping and labeling similar types of data and codes together led to patterns becoming clearer, with some codes becoming subcodes, and better positioned beneath the top codes, as explained by Saldaña (2009). Color coded stripes during the analysis phase helped with visualization of the data, as the researcher began paring down the quantity of codes to increase the organization and quality of the data.

Through an intentional study of the participants' explanations of how the phenomenon has intersected both within their personal and professional lives, determined the unit of meaning and patterns described by Nowell et al. (2017). These responses spanned from single words and short phrases to lengthy sentences and full paragraphs. This factored into uncovering the basic sub-themes and primary organizing themes in the data. The variance from single words and short phrases to lengthier passages was an intentional decision made by the researcher to fully capture the responses and meanings. The study participants explicated meanings and connections between experiences and offered information deemed compelling, nuanced, and often challenging the status quo. Throughout this process, the researcher needed to read closely to make associations and synthesize what the study participants shared to interpret explicit and implicit meanings.

The a priori code book became refined into the completed code book as the coding process proceeded through additional rounds. The a priori code book included 32 top codes and 15 subcodes, the developed final code book included 62 top codes and 57 subcodes in the first iteration, and 67 top codes and 53 child codes in the second iteration. With a need to set further boundaries on codes and eliminate redundancy, further winnowing down was necessary (Attride-Stirling, 2001), with codes collapsed for a final code book 61 primary (top) codes and 41 subcodes. Amassing significant codes and the coding notes guided the research towards pattern development and supported theme development, as highlighted by Elliott (2018) and Saldaña (2009). Establishing the themes was a further iterative process amidst managing the large quantity of date. Discussion of themes will take place in the next chapter.

Establishing Trustworthiness

The study aimed to establish the trustworthiness offered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) of credibility, confirmability, transferability, dependability through audit trails and reflexivity following memo keeping and code documenting. The research on the necessity of an inter-rater in qualitative researcher inter-coder is mixed (Armstrong, 1997; McDonald et al., 2019; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). However, trustworthiness is an important element in qualitative research studies and an inter-rater process was worth consideration to establish credibility by triangulating data as highlighted by researchers (Nowell et al., 2017; Lincoln & Guba,1985).

An inter-coding reliability (ICR) percentage supports the establishment of trustworthiness in research, as described by O'Connor and Joffe (2020). The IRB approved an independent party's collaboration and the inter-rater was a DSW graduate with experience in qualitative research. Literature suggests that a sample of 10-25% of the data set is acceptable for conducting the inter-coder reliability (ICR) process (Campbell et al., 2013). The independent party received a NVivo generated code book and three non-identifying and randomly selected interview files (21% of the total files or 3/14). The researcher conducted a meeting with the inter-rater over Zoom to review the codebook used for this study. Through the inter-rater coding and evaluation process, the ICR calculation was at 81% agreement, which is within standards offered of an 80% minimum offered by Miles and Huberman (1994) and the 66.7% in a study by Marques and McCall (2005).

This percentage calculation considered use of the same division of phrases or portions of paragraphs and found reliability if the codes fell within the same theme or top code or its subcode. While this percentage still falls within an acceptable range, the ICR

may have fallen on the lower end of the range because of one-half hour norming session may not have been sufficient, a single round of coding by the independent party versus multiple rounds of coding by the researcher, and an extensive code book that may have required further code collapsing prior to engagement. Additional rounds of collaborative dialogue and coding may have yielded a higher ICR.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher followed all the guidelines on maintaining confidentiality of participants set forth by the Millersville University IRB, who approved the research study. The researcher and the independent party who served as the inter-rater completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program) training for research with human subjects and ethics.

Participants in this research study were practicing social workers who did not fall under a category of a vulnerable population. However, as with any research study, the potential risks to the study participants required consideration. Given the increasing occurrence and media coverage of incidents of gun violence and gun deaths, this social phenomenon remains an important and sensitive topic for many. The researcher notified all participants that they could end the interview at any point during. Although none deemed it necessary, study participants would have received information on counseling options should they have needed support in relation to completing the interview. By upholding all internet related ethics, it was possible to safeguard the participants' disclosed identifying information.

Reflexivity Statement

Reflexivity is essential in qualitative research. As the researcher has long been engaged in work spanning micro, mezzo, and macro practice and has engaged in international learning collaborations, is important to highlight the influence of these intentional role choices throughout a nearly twenty-year career. As a globally oriented social worker who has engaged in international experiential learning, the researcher uses learning and developed knowledge, leadership skills, and collaborations. The researcher ascribes to values and ethical principles laid forth by the NASW and the International Federation of Social Workers.

As a researcher positioned within the context of the study and intrinsically linked to the community engaged approach, the findings did not develop from an observationist lens. Social work researchers seek to explore and understand the world from the stance of both their personal and professional lives as they serve the public, and according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), lived experiences, practices, knowledge, and teachings intertwine. The paradigm was based in multiple realities of truth and knowledge. The research study focused on balancing ethical objectivity amidst a sensitive topic that the United States grapples with.

The researcher's past seven years of direct practice work have included engagement with community gun violence survivors and their families along with mezzo and macro level engagement related to these issues. Thus, it is important to recognize that bias may remain, and the researcher's own knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices come from experiences and developed meanings. The researcher's two lived life experiences, one indirectly connected to a mass shooting incident of gun violence, and one directly connected to community gun violence is relevant to this

research, along with an acknowledged position as a White, middle-class female, and resident of Chicago. Thus, the researcher engaged in reflexivity and remain aware of this positionality in relationship to the subject.

The research findings in the next chapter highlight themes stemming from the embedded quotes that spoke to the researcher as both a social worker and as a musician. As both, this research includes writing, recording, self-disclosure, rhythm, timing, pacing, and tone and evocation of feelings and emotions in representing the research to a larger audience, bringing ethics and "cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 228). "Successful researchers have a rhythmic quality… the researcher-as-instrument lends an air of humility and sincerity to the report" (Padgett, 2017, p.244).

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the qualitative research study findings. The study produced

multiple themes for analysis from the rich descriptions, insightful perspectives, and a

compelling story from the participants. Data produced approximately 100 codes requiring

continual review to understand which series of codes fit with the topics stemming from

both research questions and interview questions towards developing the abstract

concepts. Many codes required iterative review, as the researcher remained immersed in

the project for data analysis until able to decide upon the common themes. A word cloud

developed for the project provided a preliminary visualization (see Figure 3) and mind

mapping brought clarity to the process.

Figure 3

Word Cloud Developed from Interview Data
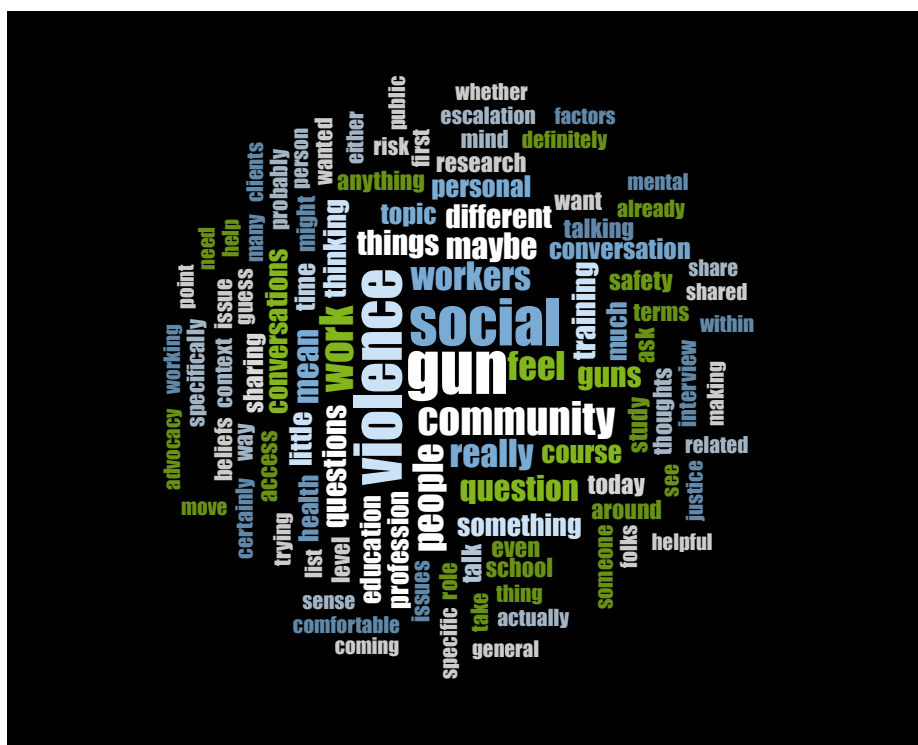
Study Participants Demographics

Qualtrics (see Appendix D) collected the quantitative data of the study

participants' demographics shown (see Table 2). This included their gender, ethnicity,

age range, place of residence, highest educational degree(s), and areas of practice.

Table 2

Participant Demographics   (n=14)

Characteristic	Category	N	%
Gender	Female	12	85.7
	Nonbinary	1	7.1
	Male	1	7.1
Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	8	57.1
	Latina/Latinx	2	14.3
	Asian/East Asian	2	14.3
	White & Asian	1	7.1
	American Indian	1	7.1
Citizenship	American	13	92.9
	Canadian	1	7.1
Ages	18-29	4	28.6
	30-45	8	57.1
	46-60	1	7.1
	60+	1	7.1
Residence	Andersonville	1	7.1
	Archer Heights	1	7.1
	Blue Island	1	7.1
	Humboldt Park	1	7.1
	Northbrook	1	7.1
	Oak Park	2	14.3
	River North	1	7.1
	Roscoe Village	1	7.1
	Ukrainian Village	1	7.1
	Rogers Park/West Ridge	3	21.4
	West Town	1	7.1
Education	MSW	11	78.6
	MSW & MPH	2	14.3
	MSW & PhD student	1	7.1

Area of Practice	Psychotherapy	2	14.3
	Geriatrics/Older adults	2	14.3
	Family caregivers	1	7.1
	Health Care/Medical/Community	1	7.1
	Community based & Administrative	1	7.1
	Substance Abuse	1	7.1
	Trauma and Violence	1	7.1
	Mental Health/Psychiatric	2	14.3
	Residential/Foster Care/Case	1	7.1
	Management	1	7.1
	Home Visiting with Teen Parents	1	7.1
	School Social Worker/Counselor		

The participant study sample (*n*=14) was predominantly female *(n=12)* and male (*n*=1) and nonbinary (*n*=1). Eight out of the fourteen (57.1%) study participants described themselves as White or Caucasian, two described themselves as Latina or Latinx (14.3%), two described themselves as Asian or East Asian (14.3%), one described themself as predominantly White and Asian (7.1%), and one described themself as American Indian (7.1%). One individual additionally identified as being born and raised in Canada (7.1%). Four participants were between ages 18-29 (28.6%); eight were between ages 30-45 (57.1%); one individual was between ages 46- 65 (7.1%); one individual was over 60 (7.1%). Individuals identified as residing in the following city of Chicago and Chicagoland neighborhoods, with some describing neighborhoods of residence as more or less safe in relation to gun violence: Andersonville, Archer Heights, Blue Island, Humboldt Park, Northbrook, Oak Park, River North, Roscoe Village, Ukrainian Village, West Rogers Park/West Ridge, and West Town.

Eleven individuals identified as having a master's in social work (MSW) (78.6%). Two individuals identified as having an MSW and a master's in public health (MPH) (14.3%), and one individual identified as having an MSW plus partially completing a

social work doctoral program (7.1%). The mean for time in practice with an MSW was 10.79 years, with a median of eight years. The time in practice ranged from 2 to 45 years. Study participants self-described their social work practice areas and offered overlapping and multiple roles including psychotherapy, working with geriatric or older adult populations, family caregivers, health care or medical settings, community based, administrative social work, substance abuse, trauma and violence support roles, community mental health or psychiatric, residential, foster care, case management, home visiting with teen parents, and school social work.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was an appropriate choice in this exploratory research to understand attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and practices, with a focus on centering the participants' experiences and voices (Braun & Clark, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). It was a useful method to identify, analyze, and organize the data, as well as describing it and reporting on the different levels of the themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). This also connects to the social construction framing of this study. The findings answered the research questions through exploration of the participants' experiences, awareness, understandings, learning needs, apprehensions, interests, and their competency on community gun violence.

First Technique Attempted

Initially, the thematic analysis began with categorizing codes under the research questions and sub-questions. As the iterative process continued, it was necessary to discard this approach in favor of a deeper level of analysis. Thus, the analysis moved from codes to basic themes from grouped codes and then to the next level of primary

organizing themes, without constraints. Through an iterative review of all the interview

data, the participant responses to the first interview question, asking for their thoughts

upon hearing the term *community gun violence* (see Table 3) became important. The

initial responses set the tone for the rich descriptions that followed. Gender neutral

pseudonyms used throughout the transcribed interview data protect participants'

confidentiality and the table notes participant pseudonyms with corresponding responses.

Table 3

Answers Provided for Interview Question One

Participant Pseudonyms	Q 1: Initial thoughts upon hearing the term 'community gun violence'
Arlo	"Maybe it's just an onslaught of thoughts. Okay. I think about access to guns. And who and how and why folks have access to guns, or at least why they feel like they, should? I, my current perception of community gun violence is that I feel like it's rising. It's at least what I'm seeing in the news reading about, at least in the Chicagoland area where I am. I feel like it's been, more prevalent. Like the most recent case of a 9-year-old being shot to death for being too loud in her neighborhood. And when I think about that as well, like the reasons for the use of gun violence or the reason for gun violence seems more and more senseless. Yeah, and more rampant and just, arbitrary, sometimes it feels like."
Felice	"The first things that comes to mind is gang violence and shootings due to different things and domestic violence."
Stevie	"It makes me think of communities like Sandy Hook, Uvalde, Texas, El Paso, Buffalo, it makes me think of towns and cities that have experienced gun violence, of course, Chicago. And yeah, in neighborhoods and communities that are so close by and that are everywhere, just everywhere, in the U.S."
Neely	"I think that's where there's just a lot of guns available to like the people living in a specific community, and they're using these guns to either, I think part of it's like for protection of like themselves and their families. But ultimately like, it just ends up being conflict with other people."

Shay	"I would say I think personally and probably partially biased from my work, but just having, living in a community where you feel unsafe or feel in danger of going out of your house or doing typical activities like going to the grocery store because of that threat of community gun violence. I also start to think of all of the different parameters and influences that kind of go into community gun violence, you know, whether that's, you know, gang involvement, mental health care, you know, community resources, homelessness, things like that I think kind of all can tie into that kind of like intersectionality of issues when in regards to gun violence."
Alex	"What comes to my mind is, seeing people in hospital beds, because that's where I work. So, I always think about people's being injured. And typically, when I see people who have been shot, or injured by community violence, which is generally being shot, I usually see them in a hospital bed. So I usually, images of people and hospital beds come up in my head."
Ever	"Well, the feelings that emerge are sadness and anger. And what comes to mind is largely communities of color. I work in an area that is. Well, I work at [a hospital], that is surrounded on the west and south sides by communities of color and poverty. So that's what I think about. Although, where I live, there's gun violence here, too. But you know, I think disproportionately the people who are impacted are living in communities of color, with fewer resources."
Laken	"So interestingly, what comes to mind as like a personal reaction, not a professional one, but closely followed by like a professional experience. I think it is people, I guess in the communities where they live, having to fear that they, that there will be guns used in a way that might impact them, or their loved ones. Thinking about my own, hearing you say that, and having the thought, 'oh, it's July in my neighborhood' and over the course of the month last there was generally at least a few times where I'm like 'are those gunshots', and it's probably firecrackers, but I'm not quite sure. I live in a part of the city where it gets written about, gun violence gets written about. So that comes to mind and then the other thing that comes to mind is just experiences that I had working in intensive care at a [children's] Hospital in their PICU/NICU, and children coming in with gunshot wounds, because guns were being used in a neighborhood, that got them shot."

Toby	"I think, even just breaking down like those words or like what connotations may come from that. When I think about the community piece, I think sometimes people tend to think of this as something that's maybe specific to a community or are issues that stem from a community, and I think it's a lot more complicated than that. When I think of gun violence in the community, a lot of times people may think of things like gangs or different groups. And again, this connotation that issues are coming from within the community. And I largely don't agree with a lot of that. A lot of those, real root causes of community violence, gun violence, really comes from the larger systems of racism, oppression, socioeconomic oppression. Those would be like the big ones I'm thinking of that really put communities and individuals in positions to like, organize in certain ways and, take action in certain ways that, often lead to gun violence."
Arya	"I think of just like a scary increase and I think I used to think of community gun violence as happening, in like "certain" neighborhoods. I think probably like a lot of people. And now I think of community gun violence as something that's sort of like ever-present in communities, like all over the country. And something maybe with clients I would be talking about, but not something that would like personally impact me, based on where I live. I don't think that's at all true anymore."
Arden	Yeah, you know, I think all the incidents, right? The news, the Highland Park shooting from last summer, the school shootings, the ones that, you know, a long list of incidents unfortunately are the first thing that comes to my mind. The events themselves.
Bellamy	"Something happening in a relatively small, I don't want to overuse the word community, but, you know, within either like a neighborhood or a section of the city. Whether it's like north, south, east, west, whatever it is. And gun violence. What first comes to mind is civilian. my mind doesn't automatically go to like police involvement in that."
Jordyn	"A community organization where I worked prior. It's an organization that serves survivors of gender-based violence in particular, Asian, Asian and or Asian American woman. Given just like the nature of the work that I was doing, I saw a lot of experiences with violence. Not all had to do with gun violence, but domestic violence is one of the leading causes of gun violence."
Haven	"Gangs, south and west sides, summer, warm weather, school to prison pipeline."

Second Technique: Thematic Networks

This study used thematic analysis proposed by qualitative researchers (Braun & Clark, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017) from initial coding through the theme reporting phases. As recommended by Braun and Clark (2006) the findings include outlier and deviating perspectives. A thematic networks analysis map was a useful visual tool to support establishing the basic themes, organizing themes and the global theme as described by Attride-Stirling (2001). Completing a thematic analysis with the use of thematic networks uncovered text at varying levels of importance. Thematic networks as an analytical tool offers the opportunity to systematize, organize, and explore the dynamics involved with social phenomena (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Nowell et al., 2017).

This level of transparency in the data analysis is necessary to share for future researchers interested in the topic and to support the trustworthiness of the research, according to multiple researchers (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clark, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). After confirming credibility, transferability, and dependability by reviewing overall theory, methodology, and analysis throughout a study, confirmability is the established interpretations (Nowell et al., 2017; Lincoln & Guba,1985). The second half of this chapter discusses transferability throughout the thick narrative descriptions. Dependability is concerned with traceable and documented audit trails and continual reflexivity described by Koch (1994) as follows.

Audit Trail of the Thematic Analysis

In the next phase of searching for themes, the first step of thematic analysis was placing all codes on a mind-map tool and shifting codes to positions of similar groupings. The map includes connection lines drawn as the ties between them as patterns, subject

matter, and relationships as they became transparent. Appendix H includes all the codes placed on the preparatory mind map. This preparatory mind map (see Figure 4) map supported the establishment of the *basic themes* of the research, also referenced as sub-themes throughout the literature. With the text broken up in this way, it was possible to rationalize the implied relevance and meaning of the data.

Figure 4

Preparatory Mind Map
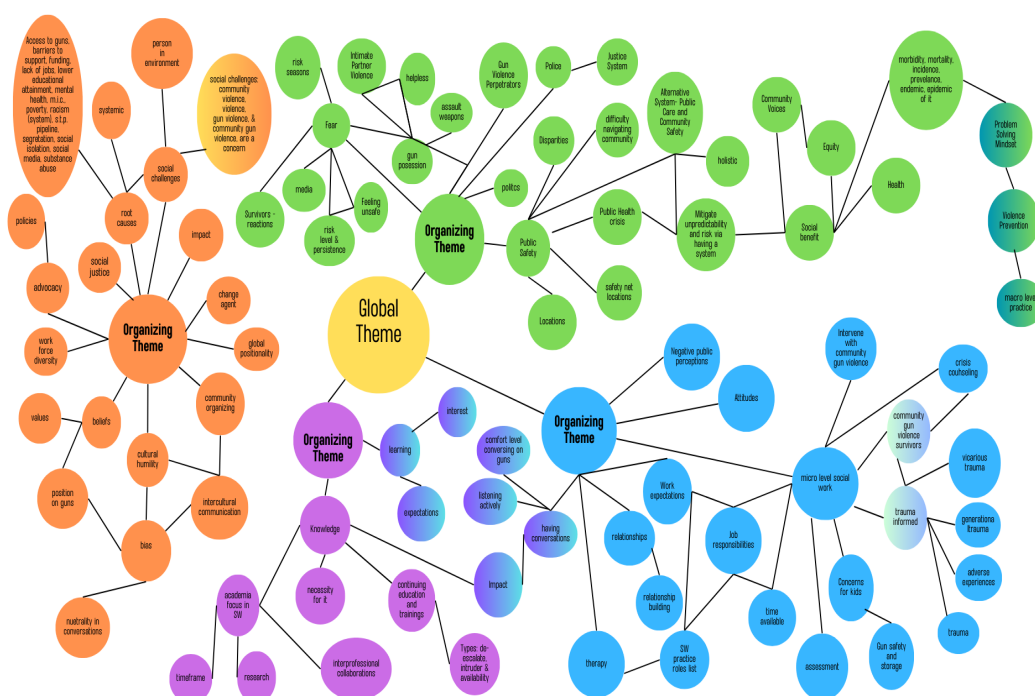
Viewing the weblike presentation, the second step was to consider what to name the basic sub themes. The codes ultimately became 14 basic subthemes which included: root causes of community gun violence, impact, ethics and levels of comfort, cultural humility and bias, knowledge through formal education, knowledge through trainings, knowledge through experience, enthusiastically seeking knowledge, micro practice of

assessment and intervention, elevating macro practice, job market focus, fear, power, and public safety is service.

Four primary organizing themes came from the basic subthemes as they triangulated, forming the nexus of primary organizing themes, which also required further consideration and re-wording through iterative review (Attride-Stirling; 2001). The primary organizing themes were more abstract and portrayed overall meaning from various parts of the data as text. With final decisions made regarding the primary organizing themes, rearrangements occurred in relationship to each other, as Attride-Stirling (2001) emphasized (see Table 4 and Figure 5). The four primary organizing themes as shown in Table 4 included: 1) social justice comes with ethical implications, 2) nascent competency, 3) willingness to engage in micro practice, and 4) changing narratives.

Table 4

Thematic Analysis Network as a Table

(Issues Discussed as) Basic Sub-themes	(Themes Identified as) Primary Organizing Themes [Step 2]
Root Causes of Community Gun Violence Impact Levels of Comfort *Cultural Humility and Bias*	Social Justice Comes with Ethical Implications
Knowledge Through Formal Education Knowledge Through Trainings Knowledge Through Experience Enthusiastically Seeking Knowledge	Nascent Competency
Micro Practice: Assessment and Intervention Elevating Macro Practice Job Market Focus	Willingness to Engage in Micro Practice
Fear Power Public Safety is Service	Narrative Change

Figure 5

Thematic Analysis Network as Visual Mind Map

The last step was delineating a *global theme* from the group of primary organizing themes, and that which emanated the collective meaning of the data as a whole, as stated by Attride-Stirling (2001). The global theme of this research was established from the four primary organizing themes (see Table 5). With the global theme as the central point, it needed to:

> encompass the principal metaphors in the data as a whole… [grouping] sets of
> Organizing Themes that together present a…position or assertion about a given
> issue or reality… supported by the data… [telling] is what the texts as a whole are
> about…revealing interpretation of the texts (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 389).

Table 5

Basic to Organizing to Global Themes

Basic Sub-themes	Primary Organizing Themes	Global Theme
Root Causes of Community Gun Violence Impact Levels of Comfort *Cultural Humility and Bias*	Social Justice Comes with Ethical Implications	Core Values
Knowledge Through Formal Education Knowledge Through Trainings Knowledge Through Experience Enthusiastically Seeking Knowledge	Nascent Competency	
Micro Practice: Assessment and Intervention Elevating Macro Practice Job Market Focus	Willingness to Engage in Micro Practice	
Fear Power Public Safety is Service	Narrative Change	

The global theme of *Core Values* came from the four organizing themes (see Table 6). The participant responses demonstrated an adherence to core values of the

social work profession, which include service, social justice, dignity and worth of the

person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competency (NASW, 2017).

Table 6

Core Values in Social Work

Core Values in Social Work	Connection to Themes
Social Justice	Social justice becomes a theme in principle and practice as a social work value in challenging injustices. (as Theme 1: Social Justice Comes with Ethical Implications)
Dignity and Worth of the Person	Dignity and worth of the person, is exemplified through cultural humility incorporating the concepts of respect for diversity and all cultures and identities, recognizing bias, selecting to remain neutral in difficult conversations, and balancing clients' values and societal needs, as safety in this study (found under Theme 1: Social Justice Comes with Ethical Implications)
Integrity	Integrity shows up in the trustworthiness of upholding necessary ethics within the profession. (Theme 1: Social Justice Comes with Ethical Implications)
Competence	Competence resonates in the theme regarding knowledge and the subtheme as the participants enthusiastically sought knowledge to increase readiness to engage in work related to the community gun violence. (Theme 2: Nascent Competency)
Importance of Human Relationships	Human relationships are the focus in micro practice work (Theme 3: Willingness to Engage in Micro Practice)
Service	Service draws on knowledge, values, and skills to address social problems: changing narratives and working to address the social problem in practice is an example of this. (found under Theme 4: Narrative Change)

A visual depiction of the overall data (see Figure 6) has core values above all else

as a cloud in the sky, positioned over a train with the primary organizing themes as the

words on train cars. Envisioning the basic sub-themes as the wheels on the train, the

smaller concepts beneath the sub-themes are the bolts securing the wheels to the train

cars.

Figure 6

Depiction of Organizing Themes and Global Theme
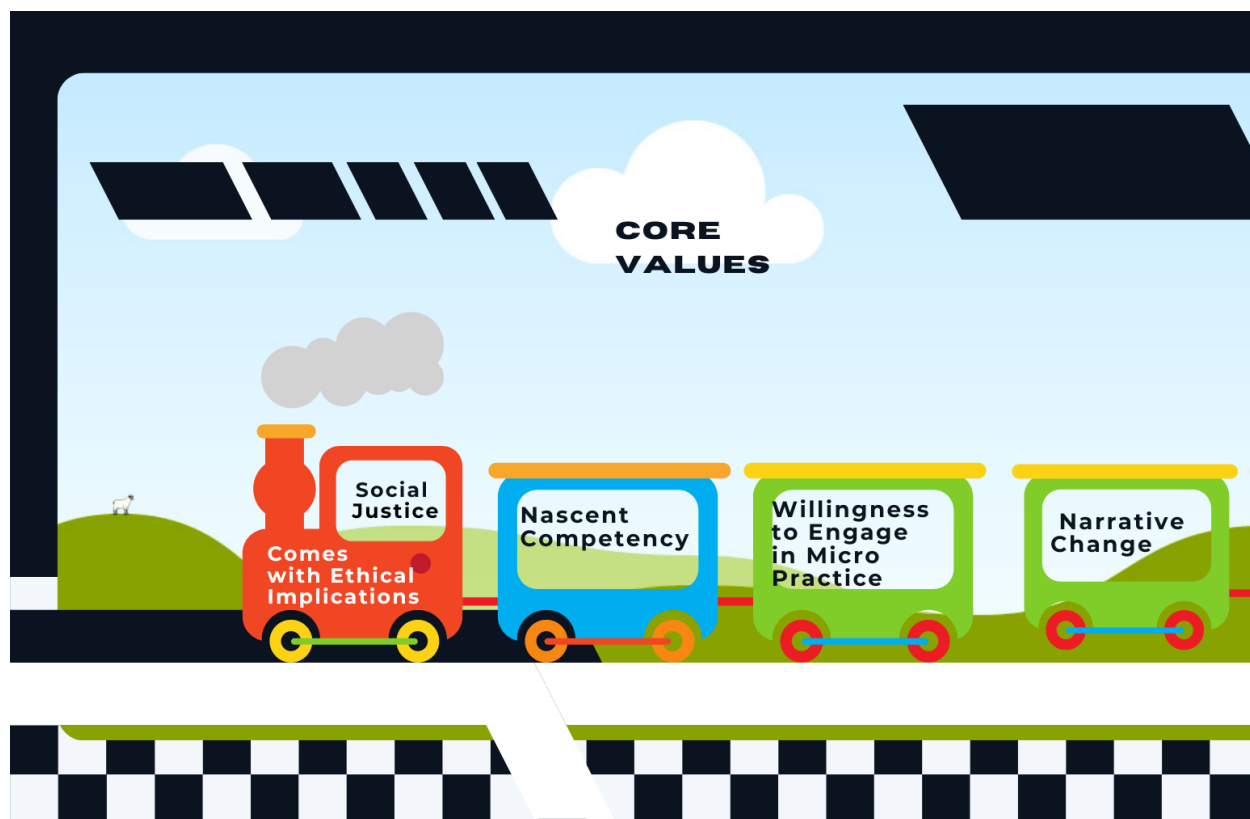
Descriptions of Themes as Findings

Each of the four organizing themes and the basic sub themes are the findings

further described in the following narratives for analysis. These descriptions of the

themes are the full disclosure and understandings drawn, made explicitly clear, as

Attride-Sterling (2001) suggested.

Theme #1: Social Justice Comes with Ethical Implications

The first primary organizing theme identified was social justice comes with

ethical implications. The basic sub-themes included: ethics, root causes of community

gun violence, impact, levels of comfort, and cultural humility and bias. All study

participants (*n*=14) expressed a belief that community gun violence is a social justice issue with many (10/14) emphatically stating this with a bold tone of voice. Following this question, participants shared their thoughts on the profession's ethical obligations. The responses detailed deep commitments to the core values of social work and particularly to social justice in response to several interview questions. Relating this value to the study, the participants described the importance of challenging injustices and providing critical information, while opening pathways to resources, opportunities, power, and rights. Responses also emphasized economic and political leverage for vulnerable and oppressed people and groups. Study participants offered similar statements to Bellamy, who spoke of:

> Our duty is to help others and when we see injustice to point it out, try to do something about it…I think it's pretty clear that when we look at where community gun violence comes from, the underlying factors has a lot to do with it. We are not giving enough care to these communities for multiple generations. And it's easier to ignore them…

And Felice expressed this as,

> I feel like *at the very bare minimum*… a social work profession, should not be judgmental in working with community members that have experienced or have any relation to gun use… we should be open to working this issue. And, trying to see multiple perspectives and all sides to it… to get to the root of the issue to prevent deaths and harm to people.

Finally, participant Stevie framed the profession's ethical obligations to address community gun violence as a social justice issue and stated,

… the social work code of ethics and our core values, social justice, respecting the

dignity and worth of every person. And that is part of social justice and making

sure that people feel safe in their neighborhoods and their communities… I feel

like it's my duty to go and, you know, make it safer. That's part of our core

values… we're going to respect human beings, respect human life, respect

individuals, and let people live, *my god*. I don't know. It seems so basic…we are

obligated to help mitigate this enormous national problem and community

problem… if we're upholding those core values, we have to.

Of note, all participants (14/14) constructed definitions and provided examples of

community gun violence as a "diffuse issue, with no single cause," as Alex asserted.

Root Causes of Community Gun Violence. The participants expressed their

beliefs when questioned on the root causes of community gun violence. The term

'beliefs' references accepting something as a truth without having absolute proof. A few

participants (3/14) used the phrase root causes of community gun violence when asked

about their beliefs about the causes of or predicating factors of community gun violence.

An open-ended question came early in the interview and later a prompt to share thoughts

from a list developed from the literature. The study participants addressed the following

topics as they articulated root causes as access to guns, gang involvement, racism,

systemic racism, and segregation, poverty and economics as scarcity, and mental health.

Access to guns. Nearly every study participant (13/14) emphasized or strongly

emphasized access to guns, and the affiliated laws and policies related to guns as the root

causes of community gun violence. The participants consequently believed risks of

victimization and perpetration of gun violence to flow directly from the extent to which

guns are available, allowed, and the ease at which people obtain guns legally or illegally in the U.S.

Gang Involvement. Gang involvement was a topic noted by over half the participants (8/14) in connection to community gun violence. None of the study participants expanded upon this issue with add context.

Racism, Systemic Racism, and Segregation. All study participant interviews highlighted racism and systemic racism as the root causes of community gun violence. Some of the study participants (4/14) emphasized inappropriate policing, injustices built into the carceral system, and the overuse of police. Thus, Alex shared a belief that "the cause of community violence is the fact that those who are in positions of power do not value the lives of people of color… which I would label as like just systemic racism". A few (4/14) of the participants directly or indirectly addressed segregation and the history of red lining in Chicago. The participants' responses on historical disinvestment in neighborhoods plagued by violence highlighted systemic racism. Toby therefore expressed thoughts on this in stating,

> …people tend to think of this as…specific to a community, or…issues that stem from a community… it's a lot more complicated than that... a lot of times people may think of things like gangs or different groups. And I… think that a lot of those, the real root causes of a lot of community violence, gun violence, really comes from the larger systems of racism, oppression, socioeconomic oppression…that really put communities and individuals in positions to organize in certain ways and take action in certain ways that often lead to gun violence.

Poverty and Economics as Scarcity. Most of the study participants (10/14) expressed a belief that poverty is a major contributor to community gun violence, and they highlighted that poverty was not a sign of personal failings, but widespread governmental failings, patriarchy, and colonial capitalism. Descriptions of poverty included *barriers to support, accessing to funding, community disinvestment, lack of economic development, lack of jobs and a livable wage, lack of access to social capital, lower socioeconomic status, lack of access to quality schools and health care: geographically and financially*. Examples that included poverty of education also noted "not receiving right information about guns" and "lack of education on… how to safely have a firearm," as Arden stated.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse. Some study participants mentioned mental health disorders when asked without prompting to share their beliefs on root causes of community gun violence. Some participants (4/14) considered the possibility of social isolation because of mental health conditions, but frequently dismissed this as a major contributing factor in community gun violence. Two participants conversely noted this may factor into root causes of mass shootings. When directly asked about beliefs on whether mental health conditions are a root cause of community gun violence, most participants expressed sentiments similar to what Arya mentioned:

> I understand that, that's a component and I feel like I'm sensitive to mental health just being brushed off as being 1) the thing that's going to fix the gun violence, is if we have more mental health, resources and 2) being the cause of all gun violence.

An outlier root cause mentioned by two participants was substance abuse. One study participant highlighted that much of her work centers on those with substance use disorders and noted frequently working with clients with comorbid substance use and mental health conditions. The participant expressed ideas that increasing access to harm reduction options and substance use prevention resources would help support individuals to move away from harmful activities associated with illicit substance abuse. Bellamy shared,

> Not only the activities… dangerous lifestyles, that can come along with substance use sometimes. But also, how substance use, and mental health issues go hand in hand, and the generational trauma of substance use, I think probably plays a big role in this issue.

The other outlier root causes mentioned included school-to-prison pipeline (2/14), toxic masculinity (2/14), and (1/14) military industrial complex.

Impact. Participants shared that community gun violence had a significant effect on the violently injured individuals and loved ones and families. Participants described personal trauma experienced by their clients and their loved ones. Two participants noted their clients described *generational trauma* and a long history of *family violence*, along with socio-economic challenges of a *lack of supports, opportunities, and resources* in neighborhoods that have experienced *severe disinvestment* and long-standing *community violence.* A few study participants (4/14) identified trauma as a root cause of community gun violence. Laken also shared about working with those who have been victims of different gun crimes,

Who've been directly impacted either in terms of like stray bullets…because of where they live…more armed robbery or armed mugging…who come to me for a sort of more 'single incident' trauma…And then I would say amongst those folks a big concern is for them, in the context of individual therapy is, guilt and /or shame, that they did the wrong thing in the moment…. It's just not uncommon to other kinds of trauma, and sort of immediate trauma response… and feel flinch-y when someone approaches. So feeling judgment around themselves about how it will be perceived…not wanting to be judgmental.

Meanwhile, study participant Jordyn highlighted the effects related to the perpetrator's family,

The impact that it has… [on] those close to the person who perpetrated it... There are loved ones of those who perpetrate violence…are not given adequate space to process their grief, sadness, and anger, about the person who perpetrated it [and]…sort of expected to take on the, 'you know, we should have done better'…. take responsibility on the person's behalf. But they are equally victims of violence, community violence.

Levels of Comfort. *Integrity* as a concept found in the study participants' responses, emphasized trustworthiness of upholding necessary ethics within the profession and came through the spontaneous discussions of ethics and the responses to the interview question about *ethical responsibilities.* Most of the study participants showed throughout their interview responses that they are having conversations about community gun violence related to, or despite, their various levels of comfort and some caveats to the extent of their comfortability. A few participants (3/14) stated they are not

comfortable as: *don't have experience, really strong feelings,* and *discomfort starting conversations.* Half of the participants (7/14) stated they were fairly comfortable discussing gun violence in certain ways and used phrases such as, *for the most part*, *generally yes, comfortable enough*, and *pretty comfortable*. Finally, a few (4/14) expressed having substantial comfort in discussing gun violence and stated: *it's necessary*, *super comfortable*, and *having lots of conversations*.

Participant responses also included the challenges involved with having tough conversations with their own friends or family members that do not share similar stances on gun rights. Participant Felice described some nuances and challenges in these conversations:

I would say it's different for each group of people that I talk to. Like for example, my family, they support having guns, which I don't agree with. We do have conversations on the safety issues of having a gun in the house. And them saying, it's for protection. And then with my students, I do work with a lot of gang related families; it's a lot about shootings or getting revenge. Or just having this thing, I mean, also having a gun for protection in case, you know, something happens….

Cultural Humility and Bias. Study participants highlighted that cultural humility was central to their work and thus discussed their perceived levels of bias around the subject of guns and gun violence. Participants made connections between attitudes and biases within their responses. Arden offered thoughts on the essence of cultural humility:

It's a profession, that's well equipped in many ways from, the empathy and compassion piece, and not necessarily coming in with the 'I'm right, your wrong'

standpoint, but…from a place of trying to understand or meeting the person where

they're at…about community gun violence and ownership…

While Laken offered,

> In terms of like facilitating broader conversations, I think my barrier is it doesn't
>
> feel like I have certain areas of knowledge… knowing in this city in particular
>
> that, black and brown folks tend to be more impacted by gun violence, then, my
>
> sort of knee jerk reaction is, I don't know that I'm the right professional to
>
> facilitate that conversation or to take up space in that way?

Participants framed a need to monitor biases and implicit biases as a need for

neutrality in conversations with clients on guns and gun rights. Some reflected on the

subsequent challenges of remaining neutral in conversations with family, friends, or

clients, as Arya explained:

> [My] opinion of 'yes, you are a respectable gun owner, you like hunting, and all
>
> those things'…I might not understand, but I can respect that. But I wish that those
>
> folks would stand up to and say like what's happening right now in our
>
> communities is outrageous.

Shay shared the following;

> I can feel more uncomfortable bringing it up, because of the controversial nature
>
> of it… but at work…it doesn't influence how I'm talking with the families. It will,
>
> like in the back of my mind, I can feel my own biases…wishing they just didn't
>
> have a gun in the home with their child, rather than maybe if I had a more neutral
>
> bias on it.

Study participant Laken offered an exploration of global positionality on this topic,

…in a certain respect, pretty comfortable…this is where I do think my

bias,…reinforced by my cultural upbringing, is that nobody needs to own a gun,

actually, no individual person…. But… trying to understand 'what is it about

America and guns?' I think I feel a sense of kind of more emotional safety

because… I'm Canadian,…help me understand… 'why does that feel important

to you?…I feel pretty comfortable because I think I have this protective kind of

'other', And then have a conversation that lives more in curiosity than, 'here's my

position and bias'.

Global positionality on the topic was not an intentional inclusion for the study, but it

offered an interesting topic for future consideration.

Social justice comes with ethical implications, was the first organizing theme

given how frequently the participants prioritized discussing social justice throughout their

interview responses and the emphasis placed on this topic through their tone and affect

while discussing. The study participants expressed that regardless of their level of formal

education, training, or knowledge, they are having conversations with individuals on gun

violence with varying degrees of comfort in doing so. For many, these conversations

include their clients recounting their trauma histories and adverse experiences. To this

effect, study participants shared pushing through their initial discomfort to open the

dialogue, especially when their clients expressed having or carrying guns and the reasons.

Social workers participants related this to centering the person-in-environment and their

ability to have difficult conversations because of their general experience and training on

intercultural communication and other forms of violence and trauma. Comfortability with

discussions connected to their competency on the subject.

Theme #2: Nascent Competency

The second primary organizing theme identified was nascent competency. The basic subthemes under this included: *knowledge through formal education, knowledge through trainings*, *knowledge through experience,* and *enthusiastically seeking knowledge*. As both readiness and willingness to engage in community gun violence work was of interest in this study, the design of interview questions helped explore what knowledge social workers had on the subject and if they were curious to learn more. The study participants described their knowledge as gained through different avenues of learning in academic courses or trainings, through general reading, or listening media, and learning through experiences in working with clients.

While the literature has defined the term community violence and differentiated community gun violence and other forms of gun violence, the study participants did not consistently delineate types of gun violence. Almost half of the social participants (6/14) conflated the terms, such as referencing acts of gun violence that fit the definition as community gun violence as 'community violence' and 'gun violence', or in referencing incidents of mass shootings as 'community gun violence'. In this, the participants did not consistently define these terms in alignment with the literature definitions or FBI definitions.

The social workers who took part in the research study provided frequent and direct statements on taking their ethical responsibilities seriously. A couple of participants (2/14) specifically expressed this as a need to be competent in their work with clients and prioritize cultural competence by having the necessary education and training on community gun violence. Most participants specifically spoke of this when

directly asked about the profession's ethical responsibilities to clients. All participants discussed the link between education to competence on a subject, and specifically, community gun violence.

The participants' responses highlighted varied competency on the statistics, historical issues, and current practice related to community gun violence. Study participants expressed having limited general knowledge of guns or using a gun. A few (3/14) study participants brought up sentiments on different types of gun violence and opposition to the circulation of assault weapons in general society. A few participants indicated a belief that police involved shootings, intimate partner involved shootings, and mass shootings occur as the most frequent types of gun violence. Statistics show that these categories of gun violence each account for 1% or less of U.S. gun violence deaths. While over half of the participants (8/14) brought up policies, laws, and lawmaking, none of the participants shared knowledge on history of laws, nor details of current laws, and none addressed topics related to the gun manufacturing industry. Only one participant specifically mentioned the NRA and politics for inclusion under the final theme.

Knowledge Through Formal Education. The study revealed that almost half (6/14) of the study participants discussed gun violence while in school, but to varying degrees. Only two participants expressed discussing gun violence during their MSW program, 8-10 years prior. The MSW programs of the two participants provided social work students with a minimum base level of education and incorporated topics of trauma, community violence, and different forms of gun violence, including community gun violence. The social work participants who also had MPH degrees (2/14) specified that gun violence and community gun violence repeatedly came up in their MPH programs

and not social work programs within the past 10 years. A couple of participants (2/14) shared having minimal discussions on the topic during their undergraduate studies within sociology courses.

The other participants (8/14) stated they did not discuss gun violence during their formal education or if they did, it was insignificant to the point of barely recalling the topic within the context of curriculum on community violence, trauma, or suicide. Those individuals reported attending programs 2-40 years prior, some in-state and others attended school out of the state of Illinois. Some participants questioned whether another track in their MSW might have included some content but were mostly unsure if any content was available in their MSW program.

The timeframe in which social workers completed their formal social work education and the location of their school offered some clues on inclusion or exclusion of this subject, and proximity to the issue, but the varied responses did not lead to concrete conclusions. When participants pondered why their programs did not incorporate topics of gun violence or minimally so, most expressed strong feelings and lamented that they should have. Most study participants (12/14) specified that community gun violence and gun violence discussions did not occur or minimally occurred during their BSW or other bachelor's level of education. When study participants stated that gun violence and community gun violence were not part of their formal undergraduate or graduate level education, they pondered if the limited content had to do with the timeframe of their schooling, their school location out of state, a lack of interest in the topic by the profession, or the courses they had the freedom to elect. Participants shared alternative focuses of social work programs including: *theoretical technical focus rather than*

*application, impacts of trauma as opposed to role in preve*ntion, *generalized topics rather than prevention or intervention, focus on child development, licensure exam preparation, and individual behaviors and relationships as opposed to systems work with marginalized or minoritized groups.* Program critiques included *bias and maintaining the status quo.* Participant Arden explained some complex reasons for the lack of gun violence content in the curriculum:

> Maybe it's that it felt out of the lane, right, that they were in? It's a really good question. *I've gotta hope that they're talking about it now, right?* With how big of, not that it wasn't then, right? I think Sandy Hook happened while I was there or maybe just right after…I can't really fathom why it wasn't part of our [curriculum]…we were certainly talking about the impacts of trauma and tragedies and gun violence, more than it like the, how do you know how to…[and], what's our role in this?

A challenge that a few participants (3/14) expressed was their capacity to meet a call to action in the event of an emergency, such as a mass shooting, given their lack of education on forms of gun violence. Study participant Haven offered,

> Perhaps it's a question of is there a universal expectation that social workers can address a trauma?… community gun violence? And I think the answer is, no… at least I certainly wouldn't feel prepared, to be a social worker, and go into help folks in the aftermath…

> Many of the study participants offered critiques of their formal education as leaving gaps in their knowledge on a myriad of topics and practice issues. Most expressed expectations for changes to current social work curriculums. Most study

participants expressed an expectation for incorporating gun violence and community gun violence topics into the core curriculums at least at the graduate level in MSW programs. Thus, it was important to ask about postgraduate learning through trainings next.

Knowledge Through Trainings. It was clear from the study participants' responses that there are limited trainings, learning sessions, or CEUs related to community gun violence available in the Chicagoland area or online, or specifically marketed to social work audiences. One participant stated that they have attended many interdisciplinary trainings and conferences that included discussions on gun violence. To this effect, Arya stated,

> I think the fact that you asked the question, *have I been to any trainings? Do I remember seeing any trainings that were specifically related to gun violence?* And the answer is no, I feel like that says a lot right there…I wonder if social work as a profession is just trying to figure out, gain our footing and where we can look at this or provide interventions, at a macro level versus just individual therapy, as a means to prevent a gun violence.

Most study participants (12/14) expressed having some level of knowledge or access to workplace-initiated trainings of the ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) training, www.alicetraining.com pertaining to emergency protocols for an active shooter response plan, CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute) www.crisisprevention.com and emotional and behavioral conflict resolution oriented de-escalation training, or safety planning with IPV, or suicidal ideation. Five participants expressed having both seen a post graduate training or learning session, with a few (3/14) indicating past attendance in a training, round table session, or conference.

Knowledge Through Experience. A few (4/14) study participants emphasized the importance of centering community voices and uplifting race equity expertise because of the intersectional nature of community violence and community gun violence, the myriad of root causes they expressed, and the historical approaches that have not substantially resolved these social issues. Several participants considered centering the voices of those most impacted by community gun violence as essential as Jordyn, who shared,

> Representation and community voice is something I feel *really strongly about,* generally, and in particular when it comes to policymaking. I think policies are made often without those who are most intimately impacted by the issues that it's trying to address. I would absolutely want, you know, folks with experience with gun violence, you know, people who are families, loved ones of perpetrators of gun violence, right?

Participants frequently addressed collaboration, like what Neely offered,

> I think as long as community organizations are willing to work together. And…with the residents of that area. Then they are able to get a better sense of what's going on, and problem solve in an appropriate way.

> The research findings related to knowledge varied. The findings showed an overall need for comprehensive knowledge to pertaining to gun violence and community gun violence to increase competency on prevention and intervention.

Enthusiastically Seeking Knowledge. As the fourth basic subtheme identified under nascent competency, this addresses the social workers' willingness to be involved in work related to community gun violence. Most study participants did not have

substantial knowledge through education or training on community gun violence, but nearly every participant (13/14) expressed a wish to increase their competency and learn more about gun violence and community gun violence. One participant already had substantial knowledge and competency in micro practice with survivors. The participants repeatedly stated 'great question' or made utterances of enthusiasm when asked what content they would find helpful to start conversations and further engage in preventing gun violence. Even the few (3/14) who noted that community gun violence training was not relevant to their current work role or client population still expressed interest in attending continued education on the topic should one become available. As stated by Haven: "My day doesn't really include it. If it comes up, it's in the context of risk. Other folks in someone's community, whether it's often neighbors".

Most participants offered that, given the complexity and prevalence of this issue throughout the U.S., a lengthier training or conference would be of interest and valuable to their current and future work. When asked about content that would be helpful towards their learning, study participants offered useful insights on what may be necessary to include, as seen in Table 7. The table includes a collated list of responses on learning interests for incorporation into academic or CEU content. Combining similar responses produced the following list as expressed learning needs and interests to increase competency in order of frequency.

Table 7

Learning Interests to Increase Competency

• Discussion on root causes with an evidence base to help understand what might lead someone to resort to gun violence.

- How to understand safety elements, incorporate de-escalation techniques, how to work with somebody who might be in crisis, and tailor the learning to the roles/setting of the worker as needed to have a role in prevention
- Thinking about how to position questions about access to a weapon beyond just asking about access when concerned for self-harm
- Escalation warning signs for potential escalation of violence, including that which relates to social isolation or radicalization and with access to a weapon
- Myth busting
- Trauma recovery support that is evidence based and developed in collaboration with community gun violence survivors.
- Placing the information shared needs into historical context, including systematized racial policies in the U.S. to be incorporated into a collective understanding of what led to how the country operates and including a focus on housing policies that continue to affect communities and populations.
- Data on effectiveness of current intervention programs and sharing of anecdotal experiences as well
- How to formulate a case plan or treatment plan, from an individual level or a more macro level
- Discussion on how to talk about and understanding people's relationship, to guns
- Bias and Implicit Bias related to this issue
- Assessing for escalation of violence with weapons in the context of IPV or DV
- Terms to help social workers.
- A toolkit to help understand the topic in broadly conceptualizing it.
- Safety planning that does not include law enforcement interventions.
- Planning local task forces.
- Discussions on civil rights and self defense

As the study flyer advertised the topic of discussion, the researcher expected the participants would have a base level of interest in the topic. The study provided insight into the various attitudes on interest and awareness at the individual level to the profession level. Interview question responses on interest from the profession at large included "limited" "emerging" "somewhat" and "very". And participant Ever shared, "I think that it's, it's an issue that we're all affected by. It may not be in a very overt way. But since it's a collective society, these are issues *that affect everyone."* Finally, Bellamy mentioned thoughts on the social work profession:

I think if anything, social work would probably be the field that would care the most about it, or be the most interested in, you know, how we can help. But yeah, other than that, I don't know how much is really being done?

Theme #3: Willingness to Engage in Micro Practice

The fourth primary organizing theme identified was a willingness to engage in micro level practice. The basic sub-themes identified included: *micro practice as assessment and intervention*, *elevating macro practice*, and *job market focus*. A willingness to engage in micro practice related to community gun violence resonated throughout responses. All (14/14) participant interviews emphasized human relationships are central to the core values in social work. Participants expressed a willingness to engage in post-trauma support roles, while a few participants indicated engaging in mezzo level practice. While the participants deemed macro social work practice and prevention work as necessary and stated this is much needed, most participants expressed a personal orientation or intention to engage in micro level roles.

Micro Practice: Assessment and Intervention. Assessment, intervention, education on gun safety and storage, and therapy provision were the most frequently described practice roles of social workers. Participant Arya offered positionality on the nature of interventions,

Before I became a social worker, I actually went to public health school and in public health school, we talk a lot about community gun violence. I think social workers have opportunities in their own community to impact gun violence, similar to programs like the Interrupters. I think the key being that we are fostering and growing those skill sets within their own community. Maybe I could

have an impact in my community… just owning my whiteness. I might not be the

right person to go into a different community and start telling people…why they

shouldn't be using guns… I think the social work profession in general needs to

become more diverse.

Most study participants offered the context that when or if their current roles

related to community gun violence, those roles would include helping to supporting

survivors heal through trauma and adverse experiences in counseling. When asked about

what conversations may include, Bellamy offered "my work with individuals as a

therapist… it mostly involves them recounting traumatic events that they've been through

and why they feel the necessity to have a weapon…". A few participants shared

knowledge that their clients carry guns to increase their sense of safety. A few of the

study participants brought up an outlier topic of their experiences with vicarious trauma

through micro-oriented work.

Some participants also discussed the importance of also helping gun violence

perpetrators heal through trauma and adverse experiences. Alex shared,

I've met thousands of people who've been shot, several thousand... Most of them

are young men of color…some have shot somebody. Not always. But some are

involved in street organizations…people will think that group doesn't want to talk

about what's going on with them…so wildly, not the case. It takes very minimal

effort to get somebody to open up... you can tell that there's a hunger. They've

been waiting, for this moment, for somebody just to… to process that…if you're

competent…through your assessment and asking if there is a need for ongoing

support…they really, really want that. And typically, have not had access to free

quality mental health care that again, understands what they've been through, understands complex trauma…

Elevating Macro Social Work. Study participants unanimously (14/14) and emphatically expressed a belief that social workers should be involved in research, advocacy, and policy-making roles. The participants shared thoughts similar to Toby, "especially social workers who are willing and able… not only obviously that they're in contact with folks…most personally directly affected, but really social workers who are willing and able to center their voices". Haven offered the importance of a,

> Macro perspective, management, policy, impacting kind of larger systems, that's really important…because the…clinical settings vary so much… it's pretty typical for folks who start in a clinical space to "graduate" into something that's more macro…there's a reason for that. Because then you have applicable skills and experience that can translate into those into those bigger spaces to impact broader change… and decision making.

Bellamy pondered whether,

> …might be effective if we can somehow educate social workers better on this subject. I really feel like we need to do that first. Then if there's any sort of intervention that seems to be effective, working in small groups in communities in neighborhoods, first. I think on a macro level…people have been trying to get that done for a long time…starting in communities in whatever capacity would be good.

Arya highlighted, "we tend to focus very much on this micro and then macro approach, but really, social workers putting pressure on lawmakers and helping organized

communities to do so. To really have some meaningful change in legislation." Finally, Haven stated,

> It's pretty typical for folks who start in a clinical space to kind of "graduate" into something that's more macro. And I think that there's a reason for that. Because then you have applicable skills and experience that can translate into those into those bigger spaces to impact broader change, perhaps. Or broader influence and decision making.

Job Market Focus. The job market has focuses and aims that dictate expectations upon workplaces. This leads to the creation of roles and responsibilities for social workers. Workplaces have a certain level of control over the provision of knowledge and the learning development of employees. These realities offered some clues as to the frequency of social workers taking on micro-oriented social work roles, or roles supporting survivors and families in post trauma reactionary roles versus roles to prevent gun violence.

Prevention Roles Versus Post-Trauma Roles. The research participants frequently spoke of social work practice roles as a dichotomy between micro level social work practice and macro level practice. A few participants could envision job roles of having the time available to engage in macro-level roles and responsibilities beyond the requirements of their ascribed micro-level roles or outside of their paid work hours. The tensions between consideration of micro and macro social work were clear and social workers frequently referenced themselves as *therapists* and their work, as *therapy provision*, be that in private practice, through a medical system, or in working for an organization offering telehealth therapy services.

Within the participant responses, there were frequent expressions of dichotomous interest in macro level practice while building relationships with clients and processing their trauma within micro-oriented roles. Arden stated the following regarding the social work practice as a whole: "I have questions about how much interest is there from the prevention and education and advocacy work, versus the aftermath and healing. Proactive versus reactive, right?" Study participant Ever noted,

> When I started working at the hospital with African American people…who had histories that involved a lot of violence, either with guns or domestic violence… it was really a turning point in my career. I had to think about what am I really doing…by working with people and helping them feel less depressed or less anxious, I'm not really getting at the root cause of this. And am I actually helping to perpetuate the problem? I'm helping people sort of live with it... I can do what I can. To talk about it and to raise awareness. I can get educated myself more to help and…I encourage people to vote, vote, vote. And some of them say 'my voice won't be heard'…And listen to how that fits with some of their other experiences.

Arya offered,

> …you just feel like *kind of gutted* by something that you heard on the news related to gun violence. I've had conversations… Is what I'm doing every day important, that I'm not specifically addressing… bigger picture things, that we're seeing impacting our communities specifically like gun violence? Folks that I work with… [are] feeling like yes, and the same way. I'm so mad, I'm infuriated, I'm so sad.

And Haven expressed,

> …it feels like… social workers are there to address, sort of less prevention. It's sort of like, we're responders… We're reactive to situations either as therapists…Or as folks developing community programs. Or influencing policy… How do you deal with things that are already there? And that have already impacted people? Versus specific prevention… work or training that I know of that social workers are mostly doing that reactive work, instead of the prevention work.

Theme #4: Narrative Change

The fifth and final primary organizing theme identified was narrative change. The basic sub-themes included: *fear, power,* and *public safety is service*. Narrative change considers the connection between culture, policy, stories, and attitudes in shifting towards social change. Participants shared their past and present dialogue with clients and their work experiences and practices in relation to the topic. Many of the interviews entailed discussions of fear and the current and future work needing to center on healing trauma of survivors, families, and of communities affected by gun violence. Only two of the study participants discussed working with perpetrators of violence. One participant noted working with individuals who were both perpetrators and survivors of gun violence. There were clear tensions around responses that addressed power and public safety. The participants did not describe the root causes of community gun violence resulting from individual issues, value deficits, or moral failings in community gun violence perpetrators. Rather, the emphasis from participants centered on structural issues. Participant responses addressed changing narratives on public safety solutions through

being of service and connecting to services to meet the basic needs of those most affected by the issue.

  Fear. All study participants (14/14) described fear as the top concern in the narratives of clients as survivors, client family members, and clients living in communities affected by community gun violence. Descriptions of fear included *feeling unsafe, safety concerns, inability to navigate/access neighborhood, danger, threat, threatening behavior, and brutality.* The study detailed and involved descriptive examples of the concerns throughout, as study participant Arya stated:

  I think, fundamentally people have a right to live to feel safe in their communities. And that, at its core, is a social justice issue…If you don't feel safe in your own community, what are we doing? It's so foundational to people's mental health and people's ability to grow, and thrive, and have a functioning healthy community, country, all of the above.

Study participant Alex, who has worked extensively with gun violence survivors and the families of victims who have died from gun injuries, shared patient's top concerns as,

  …the inability to feel safe. It can come across as anger, at an injustice and the fact that someone might be like, 'it's not fair that I'm unable to just live my life the way that I want'… Usually someone will say, 'I just want to live a normal life and not worry about this', and can be very angry about the inability to just navigate your world, like the majority of people do, and not worrying about being shot... If somebody dies and we tell their family members… people will say something like, 'you know this f'in city, you know, this city like I can't take this anymore'.

It's like a grappling with a great, persistent injustice…the yearning to feel

safe…the unfairness…

Perceptions of Risk. Many study participants also discussed their own

perceptions of persistent low-to-moderate levels of risk in living in Chicagoland, while

only a couple (2/14) specified concerns for social workers being at risk of gun-related

injuries in their work roles. Study participants' attitudes on risk of harm to themselves

within the context of their work or daily lives varied, as well as attitudes on the risk to

their clients, students, or patients, as well as others. Arlo offered,

My current perception of community gun violence is it's rising… at least what I'm

seeing in the news reading about, at least in the Chicagoland area…it's been more

prevalent… my conversations with families and students center around the safety

of, in our surrounding neighborhoods…where we get these alerts quite frequently

about attempted robberies where there were weapons brandished. There have

been a couple of shootings, near… a golf course…. it's actual first degree lived

trauma of seeing a drive by shooting... So, gun violence conversations happen

pretty frequently…if there's any gun violence that happens…in our surrounding

neighborhoods, then again, a security alert, everyone in the community gets it.

And we're sort of on high alert… the perceived danger. And how we can do our

best to try and mitigate, like making assumptions, but it's set within a perception

or fear of gun violence.

Shay additionally expressed these thoughts:

…my team at work…see the similar effects of it, but I would say other social

workers and just people outside of my role and my setting might not understand it

quite as well and might not understand how these factors kind of play into it. I think a lot of people just think like, guns. Bad people… their choice to get involved with something like that… social workers and especially people in roles similar to mine, see all those different factors that play into how a kid might end up with a gun and end up shooting someone. Or end up a victim of gun violence.

And study participant Toby related the impact on the work environment following nearby incidents of gun violence and leadership who:

Decide those things…I've got to imagine they're feeling a pretty significant level of risk if they're closing down services... it's certainly interrupted my ability to, provide services both those times that happened… it seems like the risk outweighs those factors in leadership's decisions. So, that's just been on my mind a lot. I think some of that does carry on to me too, when I'm in that community and knowing what's happened recently, I think especially not knowing some more of the roots of like what's going on there…level of risk is going on.

And when asked about perceptions of risk to self or others, Arlo stressed,

…as I'm walking around, for the most part… I don't feel that imminent threat. But in the school setting…there's a whole security team… there are protocols and plans in place, but for some reason…I think about where my office is positioned on the first floor…how many kids can I hide in my office?

Power. The participants expressed thoughts on having and holding power. While some discussed the power held by politicians and interest groups such as the NRA, others discussed those committing acts of violence with weapons, as trying to take power.

Participant responses brought to the forefront the idea that morbidity and mortality are not political. Half of the study participants brought up politics with no interview questions, referencing these activities or decisions. All those that did shared an ethos that politics have contributed to confusion, debate, and created myths and mistruths on a subject that should not be political. Participant Ever expressed issues with politics stating, "we need to think about the role of money in politics. And the lobbying in politics. And to work toward getting rid of the influence of funders, with politicians." When asked about salient points when having conversations on community gun violence, Arya subsequently shared,

> I think probably just like the complete inaction of lawmakers on making any sort of meaningful change in preventing gun violence. And lawmakers who are like clearly for lack of a better term, like in bed with the NRA… it's almost like this general systemic acceptance, that this is just like part of the world that we live in now, is that our communities and our families and the people that we love are you know, potentially a victim of gun violence any day, no matter where that they might be… when Sandy Hook happened, when Trayvon Martin happened, there are all these, really salient events in our country of unarmed innocent people…this happens in Chicago every day- being killed…after Sandy Hook happened, why as a country we didn't just stand up and be like *absolutely not,* we are not going to stand for that or like the shootings in El Paso…you can name so many.

The idea of feeling overwhelmed came out of the views expressed by participants, such as stating violence seems "more and more senseless… rampant… arbitrary" according to

participant Arlo. The results of a study within a place of employment offered insights, as Alex reported,

> We did a study in my hospital of people who were shot. And out of the people who were shot, 95% of them had a close friend or relative who had been killed before. So, if you have you been shot, you have almost a hundred percent guarantee that you have someone that you love, has been murdered.

Looking at power from a different perspective, Arlo offered their beliefs,

> My belief for the cause of gun violence, fear…needing a sense of power within certain situations, where perhaps folks feel need something and the best way to obtain it is to either brandish or use a gun… there's a need for a resource of some kind… and [they] use violence in some shape or form to get those resources.

Public Safety is Service. The participants frequently addressed matters of public safety as intertwined with the value of service in working to address social problems in practice. Participants shared thoughts on their ability to intervene with the issue, given their knowledge, values, and skills. Participants also offered context around their work and what they do within their roles and practices, hoping to prevent gun harm as suicide or homicidal acts of violence or retaliation. Felice offered:

> *…well, I am a social worker!* So, I do think that we are able to intervene. And have those open conversations… as long as there is trust… [it's] a big issue and if they're able to trust you, and even disclose that this is an issue…you can have those conversations of safety and thinking about the consequences. And…make a change in that way.

Meanwhile, there were a few dichotomous responses. Arden noted,

If I think about my training and my master's degree…over 10 years ago. I don't feel I'm necessarily equipped to tackle this.... But if we look at, the community organizing aspects of the work and the individual aspects of the work, trying to understand…this is not a one individual issue. It's from a systemic point of view too…

Study participant Alex described doubts on the ability of social workers to intervene or potentially prevent gun violence given a belief of the root cause of gun violence as,

Blatant racism and disregard for the lives of people of color… those in positions of power do not value the lives of people of color, who are the people who are generally victims of community violence… we are not really going to prevent very much because I don't believe, [Prolonged pause] Social workers are not very capable of convincing politicians to not be racist.

While only a few participants mentioned the media in relation to public safety, the impact was worth describing. Participant Ever stated, seeing:

An enormous discrepancy between gun violence being reported on news, in white neighborhoods versus black neighborhoods. It's a shocking thing when it happens in a white neighborhood, and we have to find the perpetrator. And in black neighborhoods, I think it's just accepted. Which is part of, I think, people being seen as expendable. So, I get pretty passionate about this.

The study participants expressed consistent concerns regarding what has long been in place as public safety support in Chicagoland and what the government currently funds as a social safety net. Interview questions did not include reference to law enforcement or police. But participants shared experiences and insights on public safety

predominantly delivered as police reacting to physical harms. Failures to ensure public

safety included not having enough funding or services to address aspects of what

contribute to public safety. Study participants discussed alternatives to the carceral

system in relation to survivors and families of gun violence perpetrators interact with.

Study participant Jordyn offered,

> …there are a lot of social workers who believe that, as a profession, we are well
>
> positioned to address gun violence, community gun violence. Or…be an
>
> important part of the movement to address community gun violence…there is a
>
> distinction between being part of an *alternative* system that addresses gun
>
> violence, and being part of *the* system that is currently addressing gun violence. I
>
> think there are a lot of questions whether, for example, it is possible to defund the
>
> police. And you know, if we should, or if we can replace police officers, as a kind
>
> of first responders…there is a lot of discussions…And a lot of concerns around…
>
> can social workers be called into de-escalate a situation or can social workers be
>
> part of conversations that take place after the fact with perpetrators as well as, you
>
> know, loved ones and victims? I do think there is pretty great interest.

Felice expressed,

> I believe there are other obligations…around advocating for justice in the form
>
> that is desired by the survivor loved ones, victims… I think in the current system,
>
> it's…carceral, and… very intimately interrelated with dealing with the police
>
> force or…the existing justice system…for example, if they…were in need of a
>
> healing circle… I do believe that social workers as a profession should commit to
>
> exploring those options fully.

Others expressed nuanced thoughts about social workers working in the space of public

safety Bellamy felt: "it needs to start on a more macro level. I know they've been talking

about working with police forces… sending social workers out on wellness checks…not

just police officers. But I guess I have some doubts about the effectiveness." And

participant Ever noted: "I think the idea of social workers intervening when there's a

mental health concern, within police calls, certainly raises the risk." Participant Toby

shared, "I've had multiple patients now tell me about police use of gun brutality,

incorrectly targeting them and, you know, putting hands on them… [drawing] a

gun,…wrongfully," and went onto also mention being "able to address those

things…advocating for various resources…policy changes, advocating for defunding

police…there's various… [ways of] allocating funds, towards those preventative factors."

Among others, participant Laken shared thoughts on "the intersection between

beliefs about…police intervention, and community violence…. people [in] the space of

police reform, more police abolition, or having those values seem to… be more

thoughtful or engaged in a broader conversation about violence or community violence."

Haven spoke of educational interests, "especially considering attitude about police, to

think of about other first responder inventions. And informal or other community based-

things unrelated to police. With… safety planning in general, there just are so few

options…that don't involve calling police."

This study included discussions on narrative change, including public safety as

service. Many of the questions asked led to participant responses that incorporated the

concept and word safety and its derivatives, including feeling safe or unsafe, public

safety, safety access, safety planning, and safety nets. The study participants engaged in

a nuanced discussion on this topic and fluctuating levels of safety, with many who expressed feeling at least a constant low-level risk of being affected by gun violence in Chicago. They also offered that their clients express moderate to high levels of concern for their safety in navigating their communities. The study participants described work with those who are survivors of gun violence, older adults concerned about neighborhood violence, youth at risk of perpetration who obtain weapons for self-defense, those who have been the victim of a gun crimes without physical injury, youth who have witnessed shootings, and those who are perpetrators of gun violence and survivors of it.

While most study participants did not express current personal engagement in community gun violence advocacy work, all (14/14) expressed that advocacy was critical to addressing this social issue and pointed to the need for high level, top down, systemic changes, such as putting pressure on lawmakers to make legislative changes. Most participants offered thoughts on working as change agents to achieve goals alongside community residents most affected by these issues. Engagement in advocacy was limited if their job roles did not provide designated time to devote to advocacy related work. Participants also noted having the time and necessary energy to engage in advocacy outside of working hours as major limiting factors in doing so, noting that attending to their personal family lives makes this difficult. Participants also highlighted the complexity of caring for their own wellness as practitioners involved in challenging work, sometimes as survivors themselves, while continuing to serve the public in the Chicago metropolitan urban environment.

Connecting Findings to Research Questions

Again, the research questions are:

1. What is the knowledge of social workers related to community gun violence?

2. Sub-question: What type of education would social workers consider useful in relation to this social phenomenon?

3. What are the attitudes of social workers regarding community gun violence?

4. What beliefs do social workers hold regarding community gun violence?

5. What practices are social workers engaging in related to community gun violence?

As such, this study of social workers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices explored competency and interest as they relate to readiness and willingness to engage in practice related to community gun violence.

Social Workers' Knowledge

As the data analysis process is immersive and iterative, Table 8 includes the research questions and points out answer to the research questions through the themes and subthemes found in the thematic analysis process. The participants' knowledge on the topic wove throughout the interviews and included their varied competency on terminology, statistics, history of gun laws and policies related to gun violence and community gun violence. The study participants' competency varied from undergraduate and graduate levels, along with limited trainings and work experience. Competency on the subject naturally was higher among those participants who had multiple and ongoing experiences of listening to community members detail their concerns and perspectives on root causes. The study participants were collectively enthusiastic about learning more about the topic. This study found that social workers are not fully competent in

community gun violence issues and thus not ready to fully engage in this work at all

levels considered within the socio-ecological model.

Social Workers Attitudes

Study participants expressed a strong willingness towards narrative change and

addressing social problems. The study participants' *attitudes* came through responses on

their comfort in speaking to people about guns, their perceptions regarding risk, and their

opinions on the profession's interest and awareness of the issue. The participants in the

study described the significant ripple effects that community gun violence has on

individuals, families, and communities. Consistently mentioned were participants'

attitudes that bias had an influence on discussing guns and the potential for a hesitancy,

shying away from, or forgoing conversations with clients about guns and gun violence.

Yet, they did not feel that the morbidity and mortality related to gun violence was a

political issue. The participants felt strong ethical responsibilities to their clients, and this

included aspects of service in public safety.

Social Workers Beliefs

Study participants expressed their *beliefs* when questioned on their stance on guns

and gun rights and attitudes came through responses of how their stance may influence

conversations. The study found that a few participants were strongly against guns and

gun rights (3/14), the majority (8/14) were against guns and gun rights, one individual

was neutral (1/14), and a couple expressed having a nuanced stance (2/14). Study

participants expressed beliefs centered on social justice, affiliated ethics, and challenging

injustices. The social workers constructed their beliefs and positions on systemic issues

such as access to guns, racism, and oppression as the root causes of community gun

violence rather than personal mental health issues. Social workers also shared their beliefs in the importance of uplifting macro practices but currently relegate that type of work to others already engaging at the macro level of practice. The participants' beliefs in the dignity and worth of the person were clear in their cultural humility, incorporating the concepts of respect and recognizing biases.

Social Workers' Practices

Social workers are currently engaging in practice, ranging from minimally to fully in micro practice work with the potential to intervene in this social issue. And they are centering human relationships in their micro practice work, which includes assessment, intervention, crisis work. This study found that social workers are helping individuals to heal through trauma and adverse experiences through counseling. With a strong emphasis placed on micro practice, it was necessary to consider the job market focus, the boundaries of job roles, the lack of designated time provided by employers to engage in macro practice. Currently, engagement in practice is overall focused in reactionary roles rather than prevention roles.

Table 8

Research Questions Connected to Findings

Research Questions	Interpretations of Patterns
What is the knowledge of social workers related to community gun violence?	• Varied competency on terminology, statistics, laws, and policies • Varied competency given limited education at undergraduate or graduate level, post-graduate training opportunities, or practice. • Centering community voices and concerns demonstrated humility and interest in learning more through all channels. • There is a need to increase social work competency on the issue

Sub-question: What type of education would social workers consider useful in relation to this social phenomenon?	• Strong learning interests • Thus, social workers are willing to engage in learning related to gun violence and community violence and will engage further in this work once they increase their competency on the topic at hand.
What are the attitudes of social workers regarding community gun violence?	• Impact • Levels of Comfort and Ability to Intervene • Ethical Responsibilities to Clients • Morbidity and Mortality is Not Political • Media Viewed as Problematic • Perceptions of Risk • Interest and Awareness • Public Safety is Service: This draws on knowledge, values, and skills to address social problems, changing narratives, and working to address the social problem in practice
What beliefs do social workers hold regarding community gun violence?	• Belief systems centered in social justice and ethics. • Cultural humility and recognizing biases. • Social workers construct or position systemic issues. • Social workers believe in uplifting macro practices but currently relegate that type of work to others already engaging at the macro level of practice. • Dignity and worth of the person
What practices are social workers engaging in related to community gun violence?	• Social workers are currently engaging in practice. • Social workers are centering human relationships in their micro practice work. • The micro practice includes assessment, intervention, crisis work. • Helping individuals to heal through trauma and adverse experiences through counseling. • Strong emphasis on micro practice work included the job market focus, the boundaries of job roles, the lack of designated time provided by employers to engage in macro practice. • Current engagement in practice is overall focused on reactionary roles rather than prevention roles.

Developing Social Work Practice Through the Frameworks

Social constructivism and social constructionism were useful theories with the

study and supported aims to incorporate rigorous analysis to build confidence and

trustworthiness in the findings with explicit and transparent analysis of what the
participants reported on where they gained knowledge, and their beliefs, and values,
related to the social phenomenon of community gun violence. The co-creation of
knowledge was participatory and iterative as the participants expounded provided
detailed responses to interview questions, as anticipated within a constructivist
framework. The interviews progressed iteratively, providing layered descriptions with
answers to questions referenced backed upon or woven throughout the narratives of the
participants. Participants reported on their knowledge positioned within their values in
the present time of a 2023 study based within Chicagoland, which intertwined with a
social constructionist framework.

The SEM offers theory driven thinking around the interrelation between the topic
and existent research and the research questions developed. Within a public health
framing of the issue, the SEM offered a way to structure the semi-structured interviews to
uncover current social worker knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices along with a
rationale for future research ahead, which is discussed in the final chapter.

SEM and Public Health Example

All study participants (14/14) offered affirmative responses of capacity for
themselves or the profession at large to engage in community gun violence at the first
level of the SEM once they have received the education and training. All participants
(14/14) expressed it was within their capacity to take part in dialogue on community gun
violence as a public health issue. Moving into higher levels of the work within the SEM
would take added layers of interprofessional education and training. According to Arya,

I think it's actually like a really sort of beautiful pairing between public health and social work in that way… There are so many different places that public health folks might be coming up with more broad interventions. But you can have social workers who are really in those settings and able to help disseminate the information in a culturally appropriate way, for whatever setting or community that they're working with.

Summary of Findings

This exploratory qualitative research study with Chicagoland social workers emanated many themes interconnected to each research question. The first theme was social justice comes with ethical implications which highlighted root causes, impact, ethics, and levels of comfort with the topics, and cultural humility and bias. The second theme was nascent competency highlighting knowledge through formal education, trainings, and experience, and enthusiastically seeking knowledge. This theme also offered a collated a long list of content deemed useful for learning more about community gun violence through continued education and social work curriculum inclusion. The fourth theme of willingness to engage in micro practice included interest in micro practice of assessment and intervention, elevating macro practice, and job market focus. Last, the fifth theme was narrative change and included fear, power, and public safety is service. Profound statements provided thick descriptions and necessitated the inclusion of longer quotes to provide sufficient subsistence in articulating the themes or subthemes that emanated from the study.

As this study follows the research of Logan-Greene, Sperlich, and Finucane (2022), the results now offer data from the Chicagoland area. The study also provided

insights on how to support future community-based participatory research (CBPR) to build knowledge on the subject. From the fourteen interviews on social worker's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, practices related to gun violence, the data produced answered the study's research questions. The data collected is useful for community-based trainings or continuing education offerings, curriculum and knowledge building embedded in the formal academic BSW and MSW education levels. Finally, raising this social justice issue further into the conscious of the profession at large, through the NASW and the CSWE is possible given that the data and findings. The findings from this study offer information on what social workers need to gain deeper insights and increased competence in community gun violence prevention and support work, as well as the ethical implications in social work practice.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

The qualitative research study provided important information on the social work profession's preparation, response, comfortability, role, and stance on community gun violence. This study focused on Chicagoland social workers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to gun violence and community gun violence specifically. This chapter will discuss the study findings and synthesize the findings within the literature and theoretical frameworks of social constructivism, social constructionism, and the social ecological model (SEM). Connections to prior literature on the subject will be highlighted. Finally, the chapter will explore the strengths and limitations of the study, and implications for social work education, practice, and future research considerations.

Theoretical Frameworks Support

The research findings supported the theory of social constructionism. The participants shared detailed descriptions of their knowledge on gun violence and community gun violence, and how their social construction of it developed from perceptions of their daily realities and social interactions, the conversations they have with others, and in particular, the conversations they have had with their clients, patients, or their students that have been most affected by it. This finding aligns with the research on social constructionism as a learning theory (Cunliffe, 2008; Mercadal, 2023; Vaičiūnienė & Kazlauskienė, 2022). The few participants that had access to significant formal education on the subject had engaged in more trainings, continued education, and subsequent professional dialogue. These study participants were more readily able to offer insights during the interview, which meaningfully advances knowledge and

supports the theoretical framework (Andrews, 2012; Cunliffe, 2008; Schölmerich & Kawach, 2016).

To build social workers' knowledge on community gun violence, social constructivism is a useful framework to consider as a learning theory for which active participation would be required among the co-learners, as described by Akpan et al. (2020). This might include not only social work professors and students but also bringing in the individuals with lived life experience related to community gun violence. Some the participants expressed having experienced this in past academic courses or at trainings and found it quite helpful to engage as co-learners in this way, which was affirmed in the literature (Akpan et al., 2020; Mercadal, 2023). This learning theory would support the curriculum design, instructional interactions, and discussions to engage social work learners in discussing their current beliefs and new ideas as described (Akpan et al., 2020; Mercadal, 2023). In framing the research study through social constructionism as described by Cunliffe (2008), the findings affirmed discourse on the topic and inspired necessary debate in considering how to incorporate this work into social work practice while the second amendment remains and social workers across Chicagoland and likely the U.S., will have varying stances on guns and gun rights.

Within the framework of social constructionism, all study participants could readily describe their beliefs and referenced how they are accountable to those they serve through prioritizing cultural humility in having ethical dialogue, building relationships, active listening, and learning from those most affected by this issue as described by Vaičiūnienė and Kazlauskienė (2022). As social constructionism takes politics, economics, history, power differentials and shared values into consideration, the study

findings included descriptions of preconceptions, fears, and in identification of root causes (Şahİn, 2006). Meanwhile, the study findings highlight that there remains a need to create a more equitable and inclusive society that works to address the intersectional root causes of gun violence. Social work practice methods pertaining to gun violence prevention and trauma informed intervention are critically necessary while standards develop, perspectives shift, and laws evolve.

Model Support

The study findings supported the model selected and discussed throughout. Within the first level of the SEM, beliefs are a key element to acknowledge and explore starting at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels to reach towards engagement at organizational and community levels where built relationships and networks increase collective efficacy, increase social capital, and help limit the risk of violent occurrences (Cerulli et al., 2019). The work of helping through healing trauma, promoting coping skills and sustainable peace building takes shape through this level of the SEM (Getgen-Kestenbaum et al., 2021).

The study provides a better understanding of how social workers define community gun violence and their acceptance of the first level of the social ecological model in supporting survivors of community gun violence. At the individual level of the SEM framework, the findings supported the importance of centering attitudes, identities, and personal histories, and knowledge has great potential to influence attitudes on work roles (Eisenman & Flavahan, 2017; Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Petit, 2019; Schölmerich & Kawach, 2016). Findings that supported the SEM include consistent participant responses highlighting persistent concerns regarding safety of the person, safety of the environment,

and person-in-environment. The participants expressed that a sizable number of their clients also live with amplified levels of persistent safety risks, and experience feelings of fear and being unsafe in their geographical areas of residence, especially for those clients identifying as being a black or brown youth through middle-aged adults.

The forthright way that the participants expressed their attitudes and beliefs showed their agency, defined as the capacity to shape the communities and environments in which they live and practice social work. Study participants who took part in the research study are presently engaging with issues of community violence, gun violence, and community gun violence at the individual/intrapersonal level, with some also practicing well within the domain of the interpersonal and relationship level of the SEM. Although some participants seemed to work in mezzo or macro capacities through the community, institutional, and policy/enabling environments of the SEM, they did not mention these levels of practice action.

Connections to Literature

This research contributes to closing the gap of social work voices in a conversation that is long overdue. To date, the social work profession has minimally taken part in this national conversation in an intentional, well-defined, or consistent manner. Meanwhile, gun violence has been occurring throughout Chicagoland, the state of Illinois, and the nation, for decades. The findings connected to the literature as participants expressed beliefs that micro-oriented practice does not adequately mitigate injustices at a societal level and engaging in macro practice requires a different training and skill set than micro-oriented education (Bransford, 2011; Finn & Malloy, 2021; Mattocks, 2017). Study participants identified the person-in-environment principle which

guides their practice. This related to the research of Braveman and colleagues who stated that "systems, laws, and policies have created racial inequities in health and its determinants; systems, laws, and policies can eliminate those inequities" (Braveman et al., 2022, p. 175). Social workers need to continue to ask why they are upholding certain practices within the profession and challenge the funding gaps for necessary service provision that often remain unchecked.

The study findings supported prior literature and expanded upon and were in alignment with the New York study findings from Logan-Greene et al. (2022) as participants expressed various stances on guns and gun rights. Most of the study participants discussed cultural humility, and an expressed ethos of neutrality in dialogue with clients, as found in prior research (Logan-Greene et al., 2022). The findings from the study related to attitudes paralleled the findings from Logan-Greene et al. (2022) as the narratives wove between personal perceptions of risk believed to be low, but often considered persistent. The study findings support the research of others, as few participants had training on guns during formal education, few participants had formal training on community gun violence assessment, intervention, or prevention (Johnson & Barsky, 2020; Logan-Greene et al.; 2022). As prior research found, the study participants desired further knowledge on the topic, as described by Logan-Greene et al. (2022).

Strengths and Limitations

Highlighting both the strengths and limitations of a study is necessary and prudent. The qualitative study provided an opportunity for social workers to engage in an interview regarding their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to community gun violence which is an issue actively positioned in the forefront of social

conscious, media coverage, and political and policy debate. The following offerings can support future research studies pertaining to this social phenomenon. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research may offer varied data necessary for the collective work of preventing gun violence.

Strengths of the Study

One strength of this research study is the collection of rich and descriptive data from participants across the Chicagoland area. Another strength is the contribution of new findings on a social issue with limited studies by the social work profession. The social work profession has historically shifted away from its collaboration in public health aligned and prevention-oriented work (Ruth & Marshall, 2017). Subsequently, the profession's involvement in work related to community gun violence is new and limited, which offers implications for developing knowledge in social work education, trainings for the current workforce, and emerging social work research to guide these efforts.

The detailed categorization of the findings was a strength where there is a dearth of profession specific literature as detailed reporting of responses regarding participants' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs, and direct statements of their values and perceptions of the social phenomenon as described by Andrews (2012) and Galbin (2015). There is strength in this study finding a multitude of similarities to the study results by researchers Logan-Greene et al. (2022) with 27 New York participants as compared to 14 Chicagoland participants. There is the opportunity for future studies to ask the same or similar primary and probing questions with a population of practicing social workers. The probing questions supported in collecting deeper connotations from responses as Padgett (2016) encourages using.

Limitations of the Study

There are several study limitations presented for consideration in further research studies on this issue. Qualitative research studies may include social desirability bias, as described by Rubin and Babbie (2017) as the participant's attempt to look good within the study. Given responses from the first participant interview, it was necessary to note the first limitation and give further thought to minimizing social desirability bias. The researcher attempted to navigate this through the introduction letter and explaining the purpose of the study as each interview began. All subsequent interviews included a statement to participants that the questions were without correct or incorrect answers and personal disclosure of attitudes, beliefs, and practices would fall under the measures to consider confidentiality.

Additional limitations were the determined as challenges of holding in-person interviews, including frequently securing a physical location, the time constraints of all, and the travel and financial implications for the researcher and participants. Another limitation was the inability to compare and validate the results against multiple studies with social workers on community gun violence. Even though generalizability is not a goal within a qualitative research study, it is worth nothing that the study conducted is not generalizable but it offers a starting point in understanding how social workers socially constructed the issue.

As qualitative research necessitates reflexivity from the researcher, it remains necessary to consider researcher bias as a limitation (Tracy, 2010). Although the research did not know any of the study participants in advance, research engagement occurred with Chicagoland social workers practicing in similar roles, settings, or with similar

populations. This limitation was exemplified in the interview question that asked about ethics at the profession level rather than personal, and without judgement or expectation, but in hopes to explore this topic as nascent within the field. Thus, the researcher engaged in ongoing and continued efforts toward neutrality in asking interview questions, in responding to statements, neutrality in tone, and in recording participants' responses.

Another limitation was the diversity of the study participants in ethnicity and gender. Despite attempts at a wide sample reach and snowball sampling, a limitation remained that most of the research study participants identified as female (12/14) and none of the study participants identified as Black or African American. Purposive sampling offered the greatest diversity possible in gender, race/ethnicity, age, year in practice and roles, given that twice as many participants as needed to reach saturation initially expressed interest and completed the form in Qualtrics (2020). While the percentages within the participant population reflected the demographics in the social work profession at large (NASW, 2020), future studies should continue to aim to include the most diverse participant group possible.

Implications for Social Work Education, Practice, and Research

The findings from the study provide new education and leadership implications alongside social work practice and research. The study participants identified opportunities for the social work profession at large, for social work professionals within Chicagoland, and for those who have survived community gun violence, or those considered being at the highest risk of impact. This study found that while community gun violence is widespread and participants firmly believed this to be a social justice issue, the social work profession's education, knowledge, training, and involvement in

this issue is nascent. This speaks to both the lack of evidence-based trauma interventions specific to community gun violence survivors and the lack of social work involvement in widespread prevention efforts. The stark, descriptive, and striking examples shared by the study participants were very useful in explicating the following recommendations for social work education, practice, and research.

Social Work Education Recommendations

Social work practice in the US has at times engaged in more reactionary support to social challenges and the results of the study show an opportunity for prevention efforts connected to the Social Ecological Model. Educators can encourage critical dialogue and critical consciousness raising that may lead to consideration of proactive forms of care and support. Increasing social work education in macro practice is a place to start and this education should orient around leadership, community planning, policy, advocacy, administration, and program development (Pritzker & Applewhite, 2015). Social workers serving in macro roles will fulfill the profession's promise to promote social change through their power to influence, and access to educating policymakers and the public on systemic racism, and the systems, policies, and laws needed to eliminate profound inequities and root causes believed to contribute to community gun violence. The results of the study demonstrate a need for the following education considerations:

1. Curriculums and professional education on gun violence.

2. Putting ethical responsibilities into education for practice including experiential learning opportunities and performing arts experiences

3. The profession taking a position on guns and guns rights.

4. Push macro education, macro practice and adjacency of public health social work alongside political education of social workers.

5. Diversify the social work workforce.

Social Work Practice Recommendations

The base motives behind governmental policies, action, or inaction, are not a mystery, but are often "arrogant hoarding of wealth or even a basic 'deadly sin' such as greed…clearly defined financial drives such as unethical manipulation or exploiting with impunity" (Saldaña, 2013, p.249). Therefore, it is necessary for social workers to ask: do the practices laid forth always achieve the goal and what could be gained from changing the approach or perspective towards enacting macro-level solutions to social challenges in the interest of social justice? The research with Chicagoland social workers also revealed a vision for the future of alternative forms of public safety that goes beyond normative of bodily harm from violence which police and paramedic reactively respond to. The study participants described something of a Public Care and Community Safety System as a future alternative to the current model and provisions of public safety. The following recommendations are for consideration in social work practice stemming from the study:

1. Re-examination of current job role expectations, highlighting whether emphasis is placed on mezzo or macro.

2. Practice in multidisciplinary settings.

3. Create a local task force hosted by a university social work department.

4. Local opportunities to discuss new versions of sustainable public safety as public care and community safety systems or expanding local offices of

violence prevention or neighborhood safety (OVP/ONS) to include social
workers.

To achieve this, intercultural communication is critical, and an alternative care and safety system will be impossible to develop without it. Intercultural communications are that within which there is understanding and respect for all cultures, a mutual exchange of thoughts, and strong relationships (Schriefer, 2020).

Future Social Work Research Recommendations

While a larger scale study quantitative study may be necessary to consider generalizability, the study highlighted social workers working in different settings and roles, who expressed that both themselves and their clients persistently feel unsafe. Research ahead needs to further explore:

1. Work with gun violence perpetrators.

2. The current practice of social workers in connection to gun violence.

3. Inclusion of rural populations.

4. Replicating the study as a community engaged research study in Chicago.

5. Human rights: Knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Treaties.

6. Interviewing social policy focused social workers.

7. Vicarious trauma in direct relation to community gun violence.

Conclusion

This dissertation developed around the complexity of community gun violence, root causes of it, and how to problem solve ahead. Narratives and debates that offering a singular focus will not resolve it, nor will the work of a few siloed disciplines.

Resolving community gun violence will take a financial investment from the government and working in favor of the common good will include a future with far fewer guns. Breaking down structural inequities and systemic racism throughout Chicagoland and the nation will be an ongoing, long-term endeavor that requires a collective willingness for change.

This exploratory research study provided an opportunity for the social work profession to reflect on its historical roots intrinsically tied to public health, as well as mezzo and macro practice orientation necessary to support change processes in structures. While the tension remains, the pendulum has swung far toward the job market driving and creating the micro-oriented social work roles held by many. As a result, the profession is not adequately creating or staffing roles, nor providing protected time, for advocacy and prevention-oriented work. It is reasonable to assume that in the next decade, there will be a sizeable number of social workers to inspire, mentor, educate, train, hire, and thus practice in collaboration with other disciplines and community members most affected by community gun violence.

At present, social workers are not the experts on community gun violence. It will be a slight upon the CSWE and NASW if these professional entities remain on the sidelines of this issue and remain without a positional stance on guns and gun rights, despite the increasing pervasiveness of gun violence and community gun violence in the United States. Social work education must include education on gun violence prevention and trauma-informed support. This is the collision point of people and their social environments. It is time for the social work profession to decide if it is ready to lead and take action on this social justice issue. Gun violence is a nationwide public health crisis

that is significantly affecting the lives of not only the tens of thousands who survive gunshot injuries or die from them, but also the hundreds of thousands of family members, friends, bystanders, and witnesses who are also survivors. Social workers can engage in work alongside impacted community members, to help lead the country out of the pervasive and overwhelming dissolution of public safety and societal acceptance of black male and other minoritized male deaths and disabilities resulting from community gun violence.

If the social work profession further relegates the prevention work required, it will risk absconding on a blaring ethical duty to respond to this social injustice. The work of eradicating community gun violence will take courage, honesty, authenticity, cultural humility, and compassion. As Harry F. Wolcott states, "only understanding matters. We must not just transform our data, we must transcend them. Insight is our forté. The whole purpose of the enterprise is discovery and revelation" (as cited in Saldaña, 2013, p.260). This research concludes with the hope to be of value to the profession and to inspire social work engagement in learning and actions towards profound social changes ahead. The question and the challenges remain for social workers across the nation to consider: *Are you ready and willing to get involved in this work?*

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&r=0&e=0&rl=1&rl=5&pc=0&pr=0&h=0&ml=0&a=ALL&a1=0&a2=199&g1=

0&g2=199&r1=NVDRS-INTENT&r2=NONE&r3=NONE&r4=NONE

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Appendix A

Approvals to Distribute Recruitment Flyer and Webform Link

There were multiple sources considered for recruitment. Communications were sent to

seek approval for dissemination of a recruitment flyer with Qualtrics link, upon IRB

approval.

Permission was granted by the group moderators of the following groups:

The Chicago Bridge-Google group listserv (Approved)

Re: Chicago Bridge Group Member Request to Post a Study Flyer

Hi Elyse,
Thank you so much for your response and willingness to allow posting of information on the study and flyer upon IRB approval. I will be submitting everything to the IRB soon and will reach out again once my study is approved. Thank you again!

Kindly,
Lauren Wolf, LCSW
ABD, Doctoral Candidate

From: Chicago Bridge <chicagobridge@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 5, 2023 7:51 PM
To: Lauren W Wolf <lwwolf@millersville.edu>
Subject: Re: Chicago Bridge Group Member Request to Post a Study Flyer

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Millersville. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi, Lauren. Sure, you can send the study info and flyer to chicago-bridge@googlegroups.com, and I can approve it to be sent to the group.

Thanks,
Elyse

On Sun, Jun 4, 2023 at 2:52 PM Lauren W Wolf <lwwolf@millersville.edu> wrote:
Hello! I am Lauren Wolf, a member of the google group via my google email address laurenweberwolf@gmail.com. I am a Chicago social work doctoral student and a long time medical social worker. My dissertation involves conducting research as 1:1 interviews with Chicagoland social workers on the topic of community gun violence. Anyone who completes the interview will receive a $50 Lettuce Entertain You restaurant gift card as a token of gratitude for their participation. Please let me know if it would be appropriate and possible to post a flyer to your group once I receive IRB approval for my study. I can also provide you with additional information on my proposed study or contact anyone else that may handle these requests. Thank you in advance for your consideration of permission to post a flyer for my study upon IRB approval.

Kindly,
Lauren Wolf

Facebook Group: Social Change (Chicago) (Approved)

Re: Member Request to Post Study Flyer

LW Lauren W Wolf
To: socialchange socialchange.site <socialchange@socialchange.site>; Design Change <design@socialchange.site>

Mon 6/12/2023 3:10 PM

Hello again! Thank you so much for your response and willingness to allow me to post my flyer, upon IRB approval. I will be submitting everything soon, and share the flyer with the group upon IRB approval. Thank you again!

Kindly,
Lauren

P.S. No relation to Damon Wolf!

___

From: socialchange socialchange.site <socialchange@socialchange.site>
Sent: Sunday, June 4, 2023 7:17 PM
To: Design Change <design@socialchange.site>; Lauren W Wolf <lwwolf@millersville.edu>
Subject: Re: Member Request to Post Study Flyer

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Millersville. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello! Any relation to Damon Wolf, by chance?

And yes, please send the flier along and our media director, Felisha (cc'ed above), will post it to our stories on our various Illinois pages.

Best,

Todd

On Sun, Jun 4, 2023 at 2:35 PM Lauren W Wolf <lwwolf@millersville.edu> wrote:
Hello! I am Lauren Wolf, a member of the group on Facebook, a Chicago social work doctoral student and a long time medical social worker. My dissertation involves conducting research as 1:1 interviews with Chicagoland social workers on the topic of community gun violence. Anyone who completes the interview will receive a $50 Lettuce Entertain You restaurant gift card as a token of gratitude for their participation. Please let me know if it would be appropriate and possible to post a flyer to your group once I receive IRB approval for my study. I can also provide you with additional information on my proposed study or contact anyone else in the admin group that may handle these requests. Thank you in advance for your consideration of permission to post a flyer for my study upon IRB approval.

Kindly,
Lauren Wolf

Facebook Group: Social Service Workers United, Chicago (Approved)

Reddit: Social Workers (Approved)

r/socialwork **Community Member Request to Post a Study Flyer:**
expand all collapse all

[–] to /r/socialwork sent 3 days ago

Hello! I am Lauren Wolf, a member of the group, a Chicago social work doctoral student and a long time medical social worker. My dissertation involves conducting research as 1:1 interviews with Chicagoland social workers on the topic of community gun violence. Anyone who completes the interview will receive a $50 Lettuce Entertain You restaurant gift card as a token of gratitude for their participation. Please let me know if it would be appropriate and possible to post a flyer to the group thread, once I receive IRB approval for my study. I can also provide you with additional information on my proposed study. Thank you in advance for your consideration of permission to post a flyer for my study upon IRB approval.

Kindly, Lauren Wolf

Permalink Reply

[–] subreddit message via **/r/socialwork** [M] sent 2 days ago

Hello, thank you for reaching out. I would be okay with it once IRB approval is demonstrated. Good luck with the study and please feel free to reach out once you get the approval.

Permalink Delete Report Block Subreddit Mark Unread Reply

[–] to /r/socialwork sent 19 hours ago

Thank you so much! I greatly appreciate your support in this request. Kindly, Lauren Wolf

Permalink Reply

Social Welfare Action Alliance (Approved)

Re: Member Request to Post Study Flyer

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Millersville. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi again - thanks for your additional information. If you send a flyer in jpg or png format we can post it on our page. I understand that you are only interested in Chicago area social workers so I don't know how many folks might see it. We do have a longstanding member in Chicago who might have some ideas and I could share the flyer with her. Thank you!

On Wed, Jun 7, 2023 at 11:36 AM Lauren W Wolf <lwwolf@millersville.edu> wrote:
Good morning and thank you for your response! I am a paid member of SWAA. I have followed the work of SWAA for some time, primarily through the Facebook group communications. I am a Chicago social worker and doctoral student with a long work history in roles that involve advocacy, connecting with individuals and families through crises, and I have worked in several medical settings over the past nearly 15+ years. As a long-time resident of Chicago, I have found my way into work with those who have survived gun violence, hence my dissertation research interests.

As noted, my research study aims are to engage with Chicagoland social workers. I am seeking participants who are willing to share about their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices as it relates to community gun violence. It is my belief that this may contribute to social work research on this topic, future social work education, and engagement in practice related to this issue. Part of my IRB process requires that I seek out pathways to find a diverse sample within my selected population, which is, Chicagoland social workers. Anyone may complete the initial survey that will be linked in my future flyer, but as I am completing this as qualitative research and without a research team, I am seeking out those within the generalized area of which I live, as a Chicagoan. All interviews will take place on Zoom. I have sent out these advanced requests for consideration to many different groups with an understanding that groups must vet what they allow to be posted within their platforms of communication, such as Facebook. I am hopeful to submit my proposed research study to my IRB very soon, and thus once approved, I will have a flyer with that IRB approval noted. I am hopeful this will all allow me to begin my research as early as July. Thank you again for responding and I am happy to proceed forward however you determine is appropriate.

Kindly,
Lauren Wolf, LCSW
ABD, Doctoral Candidate

From: National SWAA <nsc@socialwelfareactionalliance.org>
Sent: Monday, June 5, 2023 4:06 PM
To: Lauren W Wolf <lwwolf@millersville.edu>
Subject: Re: Member Request to Post Study Flyer

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Millersville. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello - are you a paid member of SWAA? It's a little unclear what your connection is. Thanks!

On Sun, Jun 4, 2023 at 3:39 PM Lauren W Wolf <lwwolf@millersville.edu> wrote:
Hello! I am Lauren Wolf, a member of the group on Facebook, a Chicago social work doctoral student and a long time medical social worker. My dissertation involves conducting research as 1:1 interviews with Chicagoland social workers on the topic of community gun violence. Anyone who completes the interview will receive a $50 Lettuce Entertain You restaurant gift card as a token of gratitude for their participation. Please let me know if it would be appropriate and possible to post a flyer to your group once I receive IRB approval for my study. I can also provide you with additional information on my proposed study or contact anyone else in the admin group that may handle these requests. Thank you in advance for your consideration of permission to post a flyer for my study upon IRB approval.

Kindly,
Lauren Wolf

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab Case Management Department (Approved)

Sent: Tuesday, July 18, 2023 3:40 PM
To: Lauren Wolf <lwolf@sralab.org>; Gwendolyn Sturt <gsturt@sralab.org>; Anna Mirkin <amirkin@sralab.org>
Subject: RE: Request to distribute research study flyer

Hi Lauren,

I'd be happy to forward this along to my team to see if there are interested social workers who would like to participate. How long is your study running? I'd be interested to learn about some of your results. Are you hoping to learn more about what interventions/resources exist for victims of gun violence?

Amanda Workman, LCSW, ACM-SW
Director - IP Care Coordination and Resource Utilization

355 E. Erie St, Chicago, IL 60611
312-238-7703 **office**
312-238-1198 **fax**
aworkman02@sralab.org

Shirley Ryan
Abilitylab
Formerly the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago
sralab.org

Facebook | Twitter | YouTube

From: Lauren Wolf <lwolf@sralab.org>
Sent: Tuesday, July 18, 2023 3:35 PM
To: Gwendolyn Sturt <gsturt@sralab.org>; Anna Mirkin <amirkin@sralab.org>; Amanda Workman <aworkman02@sralab.org>
Subject: Request to distribute research study flyer

Hello Gwen, Anna, and Amanda!
Amanda, I'll briefly introduce myself- I am Lauren Wolf, the social worker at the Streeterville DayRehab clinic and I began my employment within Shirley Ryan as an inpatient care manager. I am currently a social work doctoral candidate through Millersville University of Pennsylvania and recently r for my research study.

I am sending this message today as I am now recruiting participants for a research study regarding Chicagoland social workers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to community gun violence. Please let me know if it would be appropriate and possible to distribute my flyer and recruitm department listservs, now that I have received IRB approval. I can also provide you with additional information on my study.

Thank you in advance for your consideration to distribute my study recruitment information!

Kindly,

Lauren Wolf, LCSW
Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Doctoral Candidate, DSW ABD

Facebook Group: Chicago Public Schools Social Workers (Approved)

Laura Rubenstein

Jun 3, 2023, 5:30 PM

Hello! I am Lauren Wolf, a Chicago social work doctoral student and long time medical social worker. My dissertation involves conducting research as 1:1 interviews with Chicagoland social workers, on the topic of community gun violence. Anyone who completes the interview will receive a $50 Lettuce Entertain You restaurant gift card as a token of gratitude for their participation. While I am not a member of your group, as I am not a school based social worker, I feel that school social workers could provide keen insights on this topic and contribute to social work driven research on this topic. Please let me know if it would be appropriate and possible to post a flyer to your group once I receive IRB approval for my study. I can also provide you with additional information on my proposed study. Thank you in advance for your consideration of permission to post a flyer for my study upon IRB approval.
Kindly,
Lauren Wolf

Recruitment Letter_Wolf 2023.docx
14.63 KB

7:51 AM

Hi. I think this should be okay. Thanks for the ask.
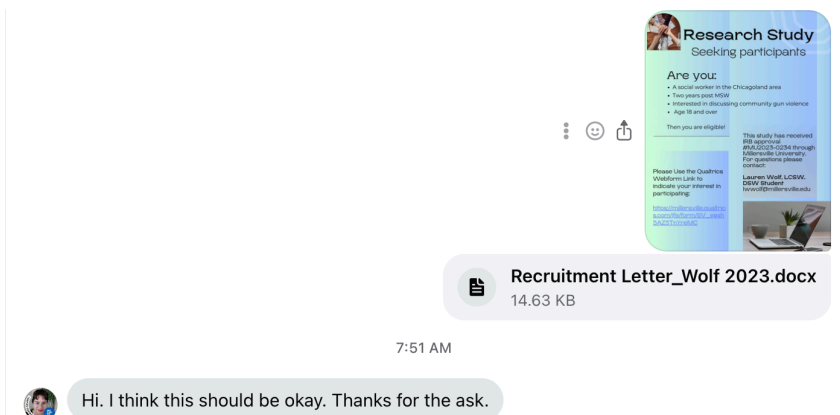
University of Illinois Chicago Jane Addams College of Social Work (Approved)

Re: Email from Lauren Wolf regarding research study

Chastity Owens <chowens@uic.edu>
To: Lauren W Wolf

Tue 6/20/2023 1:27 PM

UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS CH

Jane Addams Col
of Social Work

Start reply with: [Thank you!] [Thank you. I appreciate it.] [That would be great, thank you!]

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Millersville. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Lauren,

Thanks for reaching out about this. I would be happy to help.

Warmly,
Chaz

On Mon, Jun 12, 2023 at 4:05 PM Lauren W Wolf <lwwolf@millersville.edu> wrote:
Hi Chastity! I hope this message finds you doing well. As you know, I am a social work doctoral student with aims to complete my dissertation research here in Chicago. My dissertation involves conducting research as 1:1 interviews with Chicagoland social workers on the topic of community gun violence. Anyone who completes the interview will receive a $50 Lettuce Entertain You restaurant gift card as a token of gratitude for their participation. Part of my IRB process includes reaching out through groups, organizations, or collations before my study to inquire about the possibility of sharing a recruitment flyer. Please let me know if it would be appropriate and possible to share a flyer to your UIC or CPS networks or listserv, once I receive IRB approval for my study. I can also provide you with additional information on my proposed study. Thank you in advance for your consideration of permission to post a flyer for my study upon IRB approval.

Kindly,
Lauren Wolf

--
Chastity (Chaz) Owens, AM, LCSW
Lecturer
Jane Addams College of Social Work
University of Illinois Chicago

"America's future will be determined by the home and the school. The child becomes largely what he is taught; hence, we must watch what we teach, and how we live" - Jane Addams

Brighton Park, Health and Violence Prevention Program (Approved)

Re: Email from Lauren Wolf regarding research study

From: Arturo Carrillo <acarrillo@bpncchicago.org>
Sent: Tuesday, June 13, 2023 4:12 PM
To: Lauren W Wolf <lwwolf@millersville.edu>
Subject: Re: Email from Lauren Wolf regarding research study

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Millersville. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Yes, of course you can. Feel free to share it with me once you are ready. Happy to hear you are making progress. Look forward to hearing more about it!

Arturo

On Mon, Jun 12, 2023 at 3:40 PM Lauren W Wolf <lwwolf@millersville.edu> wrote:
Hi Arturo! I hope this message finds you doing well. As you know, I am a social work doctoral student with aims to complete my dissertation research here in Chicago. My dissertation involves conducting research as 1:1 interviews with Chicagoland social workers on the topic of community gun violence. Anyone who completes the interview will receive a $50 Lettuce Entertain You restaurant gift card as a token of gratitude for their participation. Part of my IRB process includes reaching out through groups, organizations, or collations before my study to inquire about the possibility of sharing a recruitment flyer. Please let me know if it would be appropriate and possible to post a flyer with your group or listserv once I receive IRB approval for my study. I can also provide you with additional information on my proposed study. Thank you in advance for your consideration of permission to post a flyer for my study upon IRB approval.

Kindly,
Lauren Wolf

--

Arturo Carrillo, PhD, LCSW
Director of Health and Violence Prevention

Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
www.bpncchicago.org

Collaborative for Community Wellness
www.collaborativeforcommunitywellness.org

↩ Reply   → Forward

American Case Management Association (ACMA) IL chapter (Approved)
Division of Specialized Care for Children (Approved)

FW: Email from Lauren Wolf regarding research study

LW **Lauren Wolf** <lwolf@sralab.org>
To: Lauren W Wolf

Wed 7/5/2023 2:18 PM

Start reply with: [Thank you!] [Got it, thanks!] [Received, thank you.]

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Millersville. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

From: Booth, Cynthia L <cbooth@uic.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, July 5, 2023 9:44 AM
To: Lauren Wolf <lwolf@sralab.org>
Subject: RE: Email from Lauren Wolf regarding research study

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab email system. Please exercise caution before opening attachments, clicking links, replying, or providing information to the sender. Contact the Help Desk at 81234 if you have any questions.

Thanks Lauren! I did receive a response from ACMA National, asking for a copy of the flyer. Please let me know once you have received approval of your flyer and I will share with ACMA (in pursuit of approval)

From: Booth, Cynthia L <cbooth@uic.edu>
Sent: Thursday, June 22, 2023 6:14 PM
To: Lauren Wolf <lwolf@sralab.org>
Subject: RE: Email from Lauren Wolf regarding research study

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab email system. Please exercise caution before opening attachments, clicking links, replying, or providing information to the sender. Contact the Help Desk at 81234 if you have any questions.

Hello Lauren

I received approval for you to post your flyer with DSCC.

I did bring your request to the local board, who asked me to address the National organization. I am awaiting a response. The local group suggested reaching out to trauma centers.

Hope this is a successful study!

Cynthia

From: Lauren Wolf <lwolf@sralab.org>
Sent: Monday, June 12, 2023 3:55 PM
To: Booth, Cynthia L <cbooth@uic.edu>
Subject: Email from Lauren Wolf regarding research study

Hi Cynthia! I hope this message finds you doing well. As you know, I am a social work doctoral student with aims to complete my dissertation research here in Chicago. My dissertation involves conducting research as 1:1 interviews with Chicagoland social workers on the topic of community gun violence. Anyone who completes the interview will receive a $50 Lettuce Entertain You restaurant gift card as a token of gratitude for their participation. Part of my IRB process includes reaching out through organizations, groups, or coalitions before my study to inquire about the possibility of sharing a recruitment flyer. Please let me know if it would be appropriate and possible to share the flyer within the DSCC or possibly ACMA organizations/ list serves, once I receive IRB approval for my study. I can also contact anyone else who may need to discuss this request. I can additionally provide you with any needed information on my proposed study.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of permission to share a flyer for my study upon IRB approval.

Kindly,
Lauren Wolf

↩ Reply   → Forward

PDCSW, Chicago (Approved)

From: PDCSW <PDCSW@nm.org>
Sent: Thursday, July 27, 2023 2:04 PM
To: Lauren Wolf <lwolf@sralab.org>
Subject: RE: Outreaching to share study recruitment flyer

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab email system. Please exercise caution before opening attachments, clicking links, replying, or providing information to the sender. Contact the Help Desk at 81234 if you have any questions.

Hi Lauren,

Apologies for my delayed reply! I received a response from our education coordinators who shared that we can send out the information of your recruitment! If okay with you, I will send an email from this PDC account and will CC you.

With regard to scheduling for social work grand rounds in 2024, could we potentially schedule you to present on community gun violence in mid-late 2024? I realize that these dates are nearly a year away so this can be tentative if you are interested. The dates we have available are;

Kind regards,

Emily

From: Lauren Wolf <lwolf@sralab.org>
Sent: Friday, July 14, 2023 6:14 PM
To: PDCSW <PDCSW@nm.org>
Subject: Re: Outreaching to share study recruitment flyer

CAUTION: External email, please be mindful before clicking links, opening attachments, or replying.

Hello Gabbie and Emily! I wanted to reach out again regarding the possibility of sharing my recruitment flyer, as I have received IRB approval for my study. I am including the recruitment flyer and a recruitment letter to share alongside the flyer if permission is granted to distribute. Thank you again for your consideration!

Kindly,
Lauren Wolf

Text from recruitment letter:

Hello!
My name is Lauren Wolf, and I am a social work doctoral candidate at Millersville University of Pennsylvania. I am recruiting participants for a research study regarding social worker knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to community gun violence. Study participants will be invited to complete an approximately 45 minute, individual, and recorded interview via zoom, on the topic of community gun violence. All interviewees will be provided a $50 Lettuce Entertain You gift card as a token of gratitude for their time.

There is no job title or specific experience with this issue required to be eligible to participate. To participate, you must hold a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited master's degree in social work or beyond, be at least 18 years of age, reside in the Chicagoland area. We do not anticipate more than minimal risk from participating in the study. No deception or omission of information will be utilized in writing or presenting the final results. There are no explicit benefits to participating except that all interviewees will be provided a gift card.

Thank you in advance for considering this research opportunity! If you are interested in participating, please click the link to begin by completing a consent form for the interview. Thereafter I will contact you to set up an interview. This link will take you to the consent and background information form:
https://millersville.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_egsh5AZ5TnYreMC

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions. I can be reached via email at lwwolf@millersville.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may also contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at MU-irb@millersville.edu or by phone 717.871.4457

Thank you,

Lauren Wolf, LCSW, ABD Doctoral Candidate
She/Her

LinkedIn Profile: Flyer posted on personal page

Search

Home My Network Jobs Messaging Notifications

PREMIUM TELL ME WHAT IT IS YOU PLAN TO YOUR ONE WILD AND LIFE? - MARY OLIVER

Lauren Weber Wolf, LCSW
Doctor of Social Work candidate 2023, DSW ABD

View full profile

Lauren Weber Wolf, LCSW (She/Her) • You
Doctor of Social Work candidate 2023, DSW ABD
2mo • Edited • 🌐

My research study has been approved! Please contact me and share among your networks if administratively approved.

If you believe you meet the eligibility and are interested in participating, please click the link to begin by completing a consent form for the interview. Thereafter I will contact you to set up an interview. This link will take you to the consent and background information form:

https://lnkd.in/gqtvJMUS

IRB: MU2023-0234 | Date Approved: 7/14/23

Research Study
Seeking Participants

Social Workers' Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Practices Related to Gun Violence

You are eligible to participate if you are:
- A social worker in the Chicagoland area
- Two years post MSW from a CSWE accredited school
- Interested in discussing community gun violence
- Age 18 and over

Please use the Qualtrics Webform link to indicate your interest in participating in a one-to-one interview on Zoom. The interview will be ~45 minutes in length:
https://millersville.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_egsh5AZ5TnYreMC

Study participants will receive a $50 gift card to the Lettuce Entertain You restaurant group

For questions please the contact the principal investigator:
Lauren Wolf, LCSW, ABD
Doctoral Candidate
lwwolf@millersville.edu
312-238-7027

Dissertation Chair:
Dr. Laura Granruth
717-871-5956

IRB approval: Millersville University IRB office contact information:
(717) 871-4457
MU-irb@millersville.edu

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Appendix B

Recruitment Letter

Hello!

My name is Lauren Wolf, and I am a doctoral student in Social Work at Millersville University of Pennsylvania. I am beginning to recruit participants for a qualitative research study regarding social worker knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to community gun violence. Study participants will be invited to complete an approximately 45 minute, individual, and recorded zoom conference regarding community gun violence. All interviewees will be provided a $50 Lettuce Entertain You gift card as a token of gratitude for their time.

There is no job title or specific experience with this issue required to be eligible to participate. To participate, you must hold a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited master's degree in social work or beyond, be at least 18 years of age, reside in the Chicagoland area of Illinois, United States. You must also have access to zoom (free download available) via phone, tablet, or computer.

We do not anticipate more than minimal risk from participating in the study. No deception or omission of information will be utilized in writing or presenting the final results.
There are no explicit benefits to participating except that all interviewees will be provided a $50 Lettuce Entertain You gift card.

Thank you in advance for considering this research opportunity! If you are interested in participating, please click the link below to get begin by completing a consent form for the interview. Thereafter I will contact you to set up an interview.
This link will take you to the consent and background information form:
https://millersville.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_egsh5AZ5TnYreMC

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions. I can be reached via email at lwwolf@millersville.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may also contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at MU-irb@millersville.edu or by phone 717.871.4457

Thank you,

Lauren Wolf, LCSW
She/Her
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C

Research Flyer and Qualtrics Survey Link

https://millersville.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_egsh5AZ5TnYreMC

IRB: MU2023-0234 | Date Approved: 7/14/23

Research Study
Seeking Participants

Social Workers' Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Practices Related to Gun Violence

You are eligible to participate if you are:
- A social worker in the Chicagoland area
- Two years post MSW from a CSWE accredited school
- Interested in discussing community gun violence
- Age 18 and over

Please use the Qualtrics Webform link to indicate your interest in participating in a one-to-one interview on Zoom. The interview will be ~45 minutes in length:
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Dissertation Chair:
Dr. Laura Granruth
717-871-5956

IRB approval: Millersville University IRB office contact information:
(717) 871-4457
MU-irb@millersville.edu

Appendix D

Demographic Variables Collected

The following demographic and background information will be collected from the study participants. This information will be captured through the Qualtrics survey web-based form that study participants will complete prior to the 1:1 interviews. The background information and demographics from the participants will be divided into categories and shared at the completion of this research study.

- Gender (Fill in to self-describe) [Demographic data/Background]

- Race (Fill in to self-describe) [Demographic data/Background]

- Educational Attainment Level (Fill in to self-describe) [Demographic data/Background]

- Age (Numerically entered) [Demographic data/Background]

- Neighborhood of Residence (Fill in) [Demographic data/Background]

- Number of Years in Practice (Numerically entered) [Experience]

- Area of Social Work Practice (Fill in to self-describe) [Background]

Appendix E

Informed Consent to Participate as an Interviewee in Qualitative Research Study

<u>**Title of the Study**</u>:
Social Workers' Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Practices Related to Gun Violence

<u>**Purpose and General Description**</u>
The purpose of this study is to gather information on social work knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to community gun violence. This will be a qualitative study of semi-structured interviews with social workers and demographic and practice experience data will be additionally collected through a brief webform.

<u>**Participation**</u>
What we will ask you to do:
You will be asked to participate in an approximately 45-minute individual interview with the researcher. If you are interested and willing to participate in a study of this nature, you will first complete a prescreen survey to ensure you meet the inclusion criteria. This webform will also include questions on demographic information and background practice experience. Upon completed the webform survey, you may or may not be selected to participate in the full research interview.

Voluntary Participation: Participating in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose whether to participate. You may change your mind later and withdraw from participating at any time without repercussion.

Your answers will be confidential. The study records will be kept private, and your name will be excluded from transcripts. Any future public report will exclude any information that could identify you. The records affiliated with the research will be contained on a personal computer with password protection which only the research has access to.

<u>**Potential Risks**</u>
We do not anticipate more than minimal risk from participating in the study.

<u>**Potential Benefits**</u>
You will have the opportunity to contribute to emerging social work research. Participants who complete the study interview will receive a $50 Lettuce Entertain You restaurant gift card.

<u>**Compensation for Participation**</u>
There is no direct compensation for participation with the exception that all participants that complete the interview will receive a $50 Lettuce Entertain You restaurant gift card.

<u>**Alternatives to Participation**</u>

The only alternative to participating in the study is non-participation. All respondents can choose not to participate and can deny or withdraw from participating at any time without repercussion.

Information Withheld

There will be no information on the nature of the study or the intent that will be withheld from respondents.

Debriefing

In a study of this nature, it is not expected that participants will have negative feelings about their participation. Yet, if a participant wishes to address any negative feelings regarding participation, they may reach out to the researcher of this study. The contact information for the researcher is listed on the consent form. Participants may contact the researcher any point to obtain details about the study.

Anonymity: In this study, demographic information, email addresses, and participant names will be captured. Upon completing the interviews, names will be excluded from the transcripts and pseudonyms will be inserted during the initial data review. The email addresses will be removed upon completion of sending the e-gift card.

Confidentiality: Keeping all collected data confidential will be carefully considered. Interviews will be securely held through password protected Zoom® video conferencing software and the researcher will complete the recorded interviews on Zoom® interviews from a private home office. The interviews will be recorded with auto-transcription enabled which will be discussed again at the time of interviews. The consent form will include details of this process at the onset to ensure transparency. Interviews will take place individually and no communication or sharing of information is expected among the participants. The records of the interviews will be kept on file and stored for three years on a password protected personal computer.

Questions about the research and rights of research participants

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at MU-irb@millersville.edu or by phone 717.871.4457. The researcher, Lauren Wolf, may also be contacted at lwwolf@millersville.edu

Appendix F

Semi-Structured Qualitative Interview Research Questions

Personal

1) What comes to mind when you hear the term community gun violence?
2) When we use the word belief, we are referring to accepting something that as a truth, without absolute proof. What are your beliefs as to the causes of community gun violence?
3) Would you or do you find it comfortable to talk to individuals or groups about guns, and why or why not?
4) If you were to have a conversation about community gun violence, what would that conversation include?
5) Do you identify as anti-gun, neutral, or value guns or gun rights?
   - Prompt: What are your opinions on how this position on guns and gun rights may influence the conversation with clients, or the lack of conversations?
6) In reflecting on conversations held with your clients, what has been their top concerns regarding community gun violence?
7) What are your beliefs on the ability of social workers to intervene or potentially prevent gun violence?
   - Prompt: Some researchers have offered that community gun violence is predicated on the following factors: mental health, social isolation, relationship difficulties, access to supports, stress, lower educational attainment, social media, and access to guns. What are your thoughts, and would you add additional factors to this list?
8) What is your perception of risk to yourself, to social workers, to your clients, and to the greater society within this social phenomenon of community gun violence?

Education and Training

9) Did you discuss gun violence in your undergraduate or graduate program within the context of a course that included this as a social issue or as an intentional topic selected for classroom discussion?
10) If not, why do you think your social work program at the undergraduate or graduate level did not incorporate the topic of community gun violence into your social work education?
11) What types of deescalating training did you receive during your undergrad or graduate education.
12) Have you ever gone to a training regarding gun violence?
    - Prompts: Please tell me a little bit about the training content.
    - Prompts: Was there a key takeaway from the training?
    - Prompts: What do you think was missing from the conversation?

13) What content should educational offerings include that would be of value to social workers to prepare them for conversations on community gun violence?

Profession

14) What is your opinion on the social work profession's interest or awareness with gun violence?

15) What do you feel the profession's role should be in the prevention of gun violence?

- Prompt: Do you think social workers could play a part in making it commonplace to talk about community gun violence just like other public health issues such as drugs, drinking, seat belts, or other general safety conversations?

16) The profession prompts us to engage in advocacy around social justice issues. Do you consider community gun violence, a social justice issue?

- Prompt: Can you share what you believe is the ethical obligations for social workers are in this regard?

17) Should social workers have a place in broader research, advocacy, or policy-making roles?

18) Would you like to mention other issues or topics in relation to community gun violence that go beyond what we have discussed today?

Appendix G

A Priori Code Book

Top Codes Bolded

Sub-codes denoted with bullet point •

Code and Sub-code Names	Descriptions
Assessment	Evaluating the described circumstances and needs of potential perpetrator or potential victims Examples: Crisis assessment, threat assessments, questionnaires, or standardized questions either routinely asked as mandated by employer (which may or may not include asking about access to guns, SI/HI ideation, lockboxes, and gun safety locks) or self-initiated.
• Having conversations on guns	Actively talking about guns or expressing barriers to having conversations on guns
Attitudes	Positions that are guided by feelings on a subject and incorporates the enmeshed components of affect, cognition, behavior, and behavioral intention.
Beliefs	Accepting something as a truth without absolute proof and that which often develops with strong convictions attached. Examples: Relative influence of participants individual beliefs regarding causes of community gun violence, the relative influence of beliefs on gun ownership, relative influence of capacity to act as a change agent, the profession's stance, and perception of risk
Community Engaged Research	Research that engages a community of participants who may or may not take action, but a degree of actively engaging with the issues is possible.
Community Gun Violence (CGV)	Gun violence that occurs in an urban setting, which may or may not include gang involvement and is a social issue that is complex and intersectional, for which there is not a singular or linear set of variables regarding who will perpetrate community gun violence, or become the victim of it
Cultural Humility	Anti-oppressive social work education and social work practice. In this study, the conceptual definition of cultural humility "refers to the attitude and practice of working with clients at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels with a presence of humility while learning, communicating, offering help, and making decisions in professional practice and settings" (NASW, 2016). Detailed further as: Cultural humility is a choice one can repeatedly make. It is a continual opportunity for personal and

	professional growth, and it is an ongoing action. Sloane, et.al, (2018) discuss cultural humility as embodying the key concepts of considering people as experts in their own life and articulate that social workers must take interest in and seek to be change agents over a lifetime of learning and growing in cultural humility. Hook et al. (2013) defines cultural humility one's "ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [person]". Consideration of cultural humility education may simply begin in empathy, grow continually through humility, self-reflection, facing personal biases (and challenging them), intentionally engaging in personal reflection and dialogue with others, and taking action.
Core Values in Social Work	Service, social justice, dignity and worth of person, importance of human relationships, integrity, competence (NASW, 2017)
Equity	Discussion of race equity expertise because of the complexity of the issues amidst longstanding punitive approaches that have not eradicated this social issue
Global Positionality	Thinking about and understanding community gun violence as positioned within a global context
Gun Violence	May involve people of all gender identities and expressions, sexual orientation, ages, abilities, statuses, socio-economic status, religions, ethnicities and races, and other diverse backgrounds. There are several forms of gun violence including community gun violence, intimate partner gun violence, suicide, mass shootings, police involved shootings, and accidental or unintentional gun-injury deaths.
Health	The state of wellness. Capacity to function within society
Interest	Wanting to know more or learn more about gun violence
Interprofessional Collaboration	Engagement in interdisciplinary work to bring about social change
Job Market Focus	Workplace control of knowledge and learning development. That which speaks to social workers being primarily pushed towards micro-oriented roles.
Knowledge	Split code having ***substantial, some, or minimal* facts,** information, and information on the topic of gun violence
Learning	Opinions on all forms of knowledge development, learning for change, learning for freedom
• Academia	Higher Education
• Continuing Education	Single course or session, or larger scale program for practicing social workers to support lifelong learning and knowledge acquisition
• Education	Reference point to year in which formal education was completed

• Expectations	Post-graduate social work opinions on learning that needs to be included on CGV
• Training	The lack of it on this topic, or if it has been available, any practical knowledge building session, discussion, or course that has been taken and the influence of it
Mental Health	State of concern for the perpetrator, the victim, or of individual experiencing suicidal ideation
Neutrality in client discussions	Taking an unbiased approach within difficult discussion
Position on Guns/Gun Rights	May define as anti-gun, neutral, valuing of guns, valuing of gun rights. This may or may not also include expressions of or alluding to political affiliation in terms of democratic, republican, or independents (progressive, libertarian, conservative, socialist, communist)
Problem Solving Mindset	An ongoing, lifelong social work skill to be honed. (At present, it appears the field of social work is educating learners on how to help people reactively in dealing with and live trauma, rather than proactively trying to prevent social phenomenon such as community gun violence, through coming up with solutions, analyzing root causes, rational processes, creativity, innovation, and actions that includes implementation and evaluation)
Profession of Social Work	The NASW or CSWE, setting standards or requirements
Racism	May also be expressed as systemic racism. Prejudice, discrimination, and oppression of individuals and groups based on race or ethnicity, typically deemed marginalized groups. Systems, structures, policies, practices, and norms creating inequities based on race (CDC, Minority Health)
• Intercultural communication	An understanding and respect for cultures focusing on exchanging thoughts, cultural norms and developing close relationships (Schriefer, 2020)
Relationship Building	Includes active listening, asking thoughtful questions, engaging authentically, and being accountable to individuals and communities to foster respect, build rapport and trust, help feel understood, and share emotion.
Research	Graduate or Post-Graduate level academic study on the topic of CGV
Risk	Perception of level of concern for being impacted by community gun violence- applies to self or others
Social Benefit	Reducing trauma, reducing morbidity and mortality, saving lives, transforming communities, restoring hope
Social Challenges	Oppression, racism, social and economic injustices, current policies, current funding
Social Justice	As a social work value, with an ethical principal that social workers challenge social injustice. Ensuring the necessary

	information and opening pathways and access to equal support, resources, opportunities, power, rights, and economic and political leverage, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed people and groups (NASW, 2017).
Social Work Practice Roles	How social workers engage and use strategies to carry out the mission of the profession within the consideration of historical, environmental, cultural, religious, political, and economic factors
• Assessments and interventions	Engagement in asking questions related to risks, to reduce morbidity and mortality in the context of preventing suicide or homicide
• Crises Support and Counseling	Psychotherapy to support survivors which include trauma informed approaches
• Change agent	May speak to empowerment or disempowerment to engage in participation or action towards social change.
• Micro Level Social Work	Jobs or work which may place emphasis on 1:1 interventions not necessarily place emphasis on working decreasing, preventing, or addressing societal issues, or how to solve social ills. Engagement in democratic participation on behalf of the employer/workplace may not be encouraged or may be deemed inappropriate.
• Macro Level Social Work	Research, advocacy, or policy making roles. May also include discussion on voting.
• Gun safety discussions	Discussions on safety, safe storage, or collaborative provision of support such as gun locks or lock boxes
Time Available	Whether or not social work roles provide designated or protected hours to devote to extra projects, continued education, or advocacy work
Trauma	History of distressing, frightening, or disturbing experience(s). May include personal history of being impacted by this social issue.
• Adverse Experiences or Adversities	Domestic violence or Intimate Partner Violence, Educational Failures, Hunger, Joblessness, Mental Health concerns, Sexual abuse, Unhoused
Violence Prevention	Strategies and approaches that may reduce risks, and promote wellbeing and safety

Appendix H

Final Code Book

Top Codes Bolded

Sub-codes denoted with bullet point •

Code and Sub-code Names	Descriptions
Advocacy	Actions that speak in favor of, recommend, or argue for a cause, supports, or defends or pleads on behalf of others
Alternative System for Care and Public Safety	A coordinated system that would offer wholistic care, peace, and public safety to people living in an area/community through protective safety of environment, poverty alleviation, equitable access to care and supports. Also includes- Alternatives to carceral system or justice system involvement, could include things like healing circle if desired by survivor/family or future systems that are not yet realized. Reducing g trauma, reducing morbidity and mortality, saving lives, transforming communities, restoring hope.
Assault Weapons	High-powered semiautomatic firearms
Assessment	Evaluating the described circumstances and needs of potential perpetrator or potential victims
• Having conversations on guns	Actively talking about guns or expressing barriers to having conversations on guns
Attitudes	Positions that are guided by feelings on a subject and incorporates the enmeshed components of affect, cognition, behavior, and behavioral intention.
Beliefs	Accepting something as a truth without absolute proof and that which often develops with strong convictions, perceptions or assumptions attached. Affect morals and values. Examples: Relative influence of participants individual beliefs regarding causes of community gun violence, the relative influence of beliefs on gun ownership, relative influence of capacity to act as a change agent, the profession's stance, and perception of risk
Community Gun Violence	Gun violence that occurs in an urban setting, which may or may not include gang involvement and is a social issue that is complex and intersectional, for which there is not a

Code and Sub-code Names	Descriptions
	singular or linear set of variables regarding who will perpetrate community gun violence, or become the victim of it
• Community Gun Violence Perpetrators	People who engage in the act of community gun violence. Example: May or may not be referenced as gangs, gang members, cliques, or clique members
• Community Gun Violence Risk Season	summertime/warm weather months
• Community Gun Violence Survivors	Those that are injured by gunshots with non-fatal wounds and the families of gun violence survivors and those who die from gun violence, and bystanders and witnesses
• Intervene with Community Gun Violence	Contributions to the decrease or prevention of community gun violence
• Locations	Occurrences happening in Chicagoland, or occurrences happening elsewhere which may also be in reference to incidents of mass shootings. Example: Mention of North, South, East, West Sides, or other places in Chicagoland area.
Community Organizing	People in a proximity to each other coming together for shared interests, issues, and problem solving and social transformation
Community Violence	The World Health Organization 2002 report defines community violence as: the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, against another person or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002)
Community Voices	Inclusion of the voices of those most impacted by an issue. Example taking an active role in safety through advocacy, education, and awareness
Concerns for Children and Youth	Expressing ongoing concerns for risk of harm to children and youth in the context of U.S. history of school shootings, young people recruited into gangs, and young people at risk while navigating around their community
Conversations on Guns	Actively talking about guns and affiliated gun violence

Code and Sub-code Names	Descriptions
• Comfort Level Conversing About Guns	Expressing a relative degree of comfort in having conversations on guns or expressing discomfort or barriers to having conversations on guns, possibly due to lack of personal experience or knowledge on topics. Example: conflict adverse
• Listening (actively)	Prioritizing listening and asking questions for mutual understanding. Example: client perspectives, understandings, experiences
Core Values in Social Work	Service, social justice, dignity and worth of person, importance of human relationships, integrity, competence (NASW, 2017)
Cultural Humility	Anti-oppressive social work education and social work practice. In this study, the conceptual definition of cultural humility "refers to the attitude and practice of working with clients at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels with a presence of humility while learning, communicating, offering help, and making decisions in professional practice and settings" (NASW, 2016).
De-escalation Techniques	Working with those in a heightened emotional state, decreasing risk for physical harm to self or others. Example: Stance, posture, tone, minimizing number of people present, active listening to the person in crisis, and demonstrating lower energy/calm within a multidisciplinary setting
Disparities	Differences in level or treatment considered as unfair and may exist across race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, socioeconomic status, and location. Example: health disparities
Endemic-Epidemic	Regularly occurring withing an area or community and widely occurring within a community at a particular time
Equity	Discussion of race equity expertise because of the complexity of the issues amidst longstanding punitive approaches that have not eradicated this social issue
Ethical Obligations	A potentially large and overwhelming scope of possible ethical responsibilities, and a tension of which to prioritize in the scope of a role and/or time outside of work.
Fear	Emotionally feeling impending danger, threat, or pain whether legitimate or perceived. Example: in being afraid of something or someone

Code and Sub-code Names	Descriptions
Global Positionality	Thinking about and understanding community gun violence as positioned within a global context
Gun Possession	Acquiring, carrying, or owning a gun. A gun to be in the possession of a person. Example: A measure taken as felt necessary for either person safety readiness, a sense of power, or to provide a sense of safety, and peace of mind
Gun Violence	May involve people of all gender identities and expressions, ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, ages, disabilities, socio-economic statuses, religions, cultures, and other diverse backgrounds. There are several forms of gun violence including accidental gun-injury deaths, community gun violence, intimate partner gun violence, mass shootings, police involved shootings, and suicide.
Holistic Health	The state of complete mental, physical, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity (WHO, 1948). The parts of something are interconnected and must be considered within the whole. Examples may include capacity to function within society.
Impact of Gun Violence	The strong effect on individuals and groups. Example: impact on family of survivor or murdered person, impact on community, impact on the family of perpetrator, etc. May include mention of ripple effects
Incidence and Prevalence	Measure of occurrences at a period of time. And occurrences at a specific period usually as a percentage. Example: may come up in discussions about the probability of community gun violence and likelihood of community gun violence within a population.
Intercultural Communication	An understanding and respect for cultures focusing on exchanging thoughts, cultural norms and developing close relationships (Schriefer, 2020).
Interest	Wanting to know more or learn more about gun violence
Interprofessional Collaboration	Engagement in interdisciplinary work to bring about social change
Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)	Also code for Domestic Violence (DV). Abuse, behaviors, or aggression that occurs in romantic relationships, may include current or former partners and varying levels of frequency or severity. Used to maintain power and control over the current or former partner. May involve physical or sexual violence, stalking, or psychological aggression

Code and Sub-code Names	Descriptions
	(CDC).
Job Responsibilities	The job market has a focus that dictates expectations upon workplaces which in turn create job roles with job responsibilities for social workers. Employers may have the authority to control knowledge and learning development of their employees. Example: That which speaks to social workers being primarily geared towards micro-oriented roles that are more reactionary in terms of designing job responsibilities to support survivors and families, as opposed to job responsibilities to prevent gun violence.
Justice System	Also code for criminal justice system, criminal legal system, Or carceral system, describing policing through prosecution, courts, and corrections as the agencies, establishments, and institutions that enforce the law
Knowledge [Split Code]	Split code having substantial, some, or minimal facts, information, and information on the topic of gun violence
• Necessity for Knowledge	Speaking to necessity to increase personal knowledge on gun violence and community gun violence. Example: how germane this knowledge is to their social work role
Learning	Opinions on all forms of knowledge development, learning for change, learning for freedom
• Academia and Focus in Social Work	Higher Education. In social work, focus on theory, clinical modalities, clinical, and the technical. Lower or diminished focus on application.
• Education	Continuing Education: Single course or session, or larger scale program for practicing social workers to support lifelong learning and knowledge acquisition Timeframe: Reference point to years of formal education Expectations: post-graduate social work opinions that CGV should be a topic of discussion and the learning that needs to be included on CGV
• Trainings	Trainings may be noted as learning sessions that may not include CEU credit but offer beneficial content knowledge on the subject.
o De-escalation Training Completed	Completion of de-escalation training in any setting or context, on how to de-escalate people in complicated situations.
o Intruder-Active Shooter Training	Training such as ALICE to prepare to handle threat of intruder or active shooter

Code and Sub-code Names	Descriptions
○ Gun Violence Training	If training has been available on gun violence, noting any practical knowledge building session, discussion, or course that has been taken, or influence of it. Or the lack of training on gun violence
Media	The narrative that is publicly broadcasted. Examples: May utilize an over simplified narrative. May address gun violence through the lens of mental health problems that positions violent behaviors and a propensity for violence as inherent in sociopaths and dehumanizes
Morbidity-Mortality	Condition or Disability - Death
Neutrality in Discussions	Taking an unbiased approach within difficult discussion
Person-in-Environment	Perspective as a practice guiding principle that highlights the importance of understanding an individual and individual behavior considering environmental contexts in which they live and act (IFSW, 2017)
Police	Also code for law enforcement. Individuals generally considered to have a first order priority of safety of person and those who engage in policing as maintenance of law and order and enforcement of regulations. Examples: May also include mention of aggressive policing, over policing, inappropriate police conduct
Politics	Activities of governing area or country, often with debate or conflict among those having or hoping to gain power and influence over the way an city, state, or country is governed
Positions on Guns-Gun Rights	May define as anti-gun, neutral, valuing of guns, valuing of gun rights. This may or may not also include expressions of or alluding to political affiliation in terms of democratic, republican, or independents (progressive, libertarian, conservative, socialist, communist), may include the mention of the position of others.
• Bias	Naming a bias that is occurring automatically and unintentionally. Example: may affect judgements, decisions, and behaviors. Potentially leads to a shying away from, or a lack of having conversations with clients about guns and gun violence.
Problem Solving Mindset	An ongoing, lifelong social work skill to be honed. Trying to prevent social phenomenon such as community gun violence, through coming up with solutions, analyzing

Code and Sub-code Names	Descriptions
	root causes, rational processes, engaging creativity, innovation, and actions that includes implementation and evaluation.
Profession of Social Work	The NASW or CSWE, setting standards or requirements
Public Health Crisis	Calling community gun violence, a public health crisis as a difficult situation affecting humans in multiple areas, compromising the health and wellbeing of the population
Public Safety	Considered by politicians as first duty of the government, defined and funded as a public service of protecting individuals from violent harm to person or property from third parties or natural elements. In its current iteration, public safety does not necessarily incorporate elements such as: food, clean water and air, housing, a basic income, and the means to obtain it, meaning education and a job and may also include health care, health insurance to obtain it, or the freedom from discrimination (Friedman, 2021).
• Feeling Regarding Safety	Public safety as feeling safe in public, is not only a privilege but considered a basic human right vs. unsafe in public spaces based on violence happening or feeling public safety is lacking.
o Difficulty Navigating Community	Avoiding places or areas because of feeling unsafe. May also include hyper vigilance in navigating one's community or areas where violence has occurred.
Racism	May also be expressed as systemic racism. Prejudice, discrimination, and oppression of individuals and groups on the basis of race or ethnicity, typically deemed marginalized groups. Systems, structures, policies, practices, and norms creating inequities based on race (CDC, Minority Health)
Relationship Building	Includes active listening, asking thoughtful questions, engaging authentically, and being accountable to individuals and communities to foster respect, build rapport and trust, help feel understood, and share emotion.
Research	Graduate or Post-Graduate level academic study on the topic of CGV
Risk [Split Code]	Perception of level of concern for being impacted by community gun violence- applies to self or others
• Risk Level	For others and for self- may be quantified, as low to high

Code and Sub-code Names	Descriptions
• Persistence of Risk	Continued or prolonged existence of risk
Root Causes	Defined as social worker beliefs on the predicating factors for community gun violence, also expressed as fundamental reasons or factors for the occurrence of community gun violence
• Access to Guns	The laws and policies that currently exist which allow access to weapons as well as the proliferation of guns and availability and ease to obtain illegally
• Barriers to Supports	May include challenges with access and navigating logistical, physical, financial, and travel options available.
• Funding	May include disinvestment (underinvestment) in community needs or over funding sources deemed to ensure physical safety, such as police
• Lack of Available Jobs	Availability of jobs within a reachable distance or within the skillset of the individual, that pay a livable wage
• Lower Educational Attainment	A reduced amount completed formal education and often linked to lower socioeconomic status.
• Mental Health	Emotional, psychological, and social well-being and incorporates affects how people think, feel, and act/behave (CDC, SAMHSA) (and which may or may not come with violent actions). Examples: State of mind or threatening behaviors of the perpetrator, the victim, or of individual experiencing suicidal ideation or homicidal ideation
• Military Industrial Complex	Government entity relationships with defense manufacturers and organizations
• Poverty	Lacking resources to provide for life necessities including clean water, food, shelter, clothing due to lower socioeconomic status and inadequate financial means to afford.
• Racism as a root cause	Prejudice, discrimination, and oppression of individuals and groups based on race or ethnicity, typically deemed marginalized groups. Systems, structures, policies, practices, and norms creating inequities based on race (CDC Minority Health)
○ Systemic Racism	Racism which is embedded in systems, laws, written or unwritten policies, and entrenched practices and beliefs that produce, condone, and perpetuate widespread unfair treatment and oppression of people of color, with adverse

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	outcomes. Structural racism: with systems incorporating structures, systemic is often used to capture both (Braveman et al., 2022)
• School-to-Prison Pipeline	Trend occurring in the U.S. where youth are removed from or pushed out of public schools and funneled into juvenile and criminal legal systems. Statistics show many youth are Black or Brown, have disabilities, or histories of poverty, abuse, or neglect, and would benefit from additional supports and resources. (ACLU)
• Segregation	Separating people by racial or ethnic groups in regards to housing, education, institutions, facilities, services and more
• Social Isolation	Lacking social contacts, connections, and interactions
• Social Media	Online social networks that connect known and unknown individuals. Freedom of speech and content available may lead to disputes and threats between individuals and groups and algorithms may lead to display of similar content. Examples: Online disputes can turn into threats and real-life violence. In a negative sense, this may include content on violence that can factor into one becoming radicalized.
• Substance Abuse	Uncontrolled use of alcohol or a substance with impact on brain and behavior. Example: Engagement in SUD activities and lifestyle that comes with risks. May also intersect or be co-morbid with mental health and/or generational trauma.
Safety	A state of protection and freedom from occurrence or risk of injury, danger, or loss. Access to safety often obtained through means such as having necessary information, accessible and available pathways to equal support, resources opportunities, access to equal power and decision making, rights being upheld,, and economic and political leverage
Safety Planning	Often discussed in the context of domestic violence to identify actions to lower risk of harm and to identify safety options under various contexts. It is possible that some of the options involve contacting law enforcement for further support
Safety Net Locations	Schools or hospitals as a safety net for education that extends discussions on safety connected to violence prevention. Example- Having a robust workforce of

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	school social workers tasked with implementing an established curriculum that supports open conversations on guns, gun violence, why people are for or against them, impact on life, and what to do if they come into contact with a gun.
Social Challenges	Oppression, racism, social and economic injustices, poverty, substandard or lack of housing, health disparities, climate change impacts, substandard education, substance abuse, wage inequity, gender discrimination, disability discrimination, and LGBTQ+ rights, intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, and violation of the rights of children and more. Current policies, funding structures, and political leaders may be preventing these social challenges from decreasing or resolving.
Social Justice	As a social work value, an ethical principal that social workers challenge social injustice. Ensuring necessary information and opening pathways & access to equal support, resources, opportunities, power, rights, & economic and political leverage, particularly with &on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed people and groups (NASW, 2017)
Social Work Practice Roles	How social workers engage and use strategies to carry out the mission of the profession within the consideration of historical, environmental, cultural, religious, political, and economic factors
• Assessment and Intervention	Engagement in asking questions related to the described circumstances, needs, and risk factors to reduce morbidity and mortality in the context of preventing suicide or homicide by working with potential perpetrator or potential victims. Examples: Crisis assessment, threat assessments, questionnaires, or standardized questions routinely asked or part of mandatory screening
• Change Agent	May speak to empowerment to engage in participation or action towards social change.
• Crisis Support and Counseling	Psychotherapy to support survivors which include trauma informed approaches
• Gun Safety and Storage	Discussions on gun safety, safe storage, and/or provision of support, i.e.. gun locks or lock boxes
• Macro Level Social Work	Research, advocacy, or policy making roles. May also include discussion on voting. Example- Has the potential

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	to make systemic differences or impact widespread or top-level changes. May require applicable skills and experiences to impact broader change, influence, and decision making. May include contact with local and state lawmakers.
• Micro Level Social Work	Jobs or work roles which may place emphasis on 1:1 intervention that addresses social ills and challenges, and may not necessarily place emphasis on work focused on decreasing, preventing, or resolving them. Engagement in democratic participation on behalf of the employer/workplace may not be encouraged or may be deemed inappropriate.
• Therapy Provision	May include references to therapy/therapist, clinical work/clinician, psychotherapy/psychotherapist, or counseling as it pertains to ongoing support in the form of talking with a mental health professional
Stress	Emotional or physical tension in response to pressure or feeling threatened, with many different situations or events that can cause it.
Substance Use Disorder	Uncontrolled use of alcohol or a substance with impact on brain and behavior. Example: Engagement in SUD activities and lifestyle that comes with risks. May also intersect or be co-morbid with mental health and/or generational trauma.
Survivor Reactions	Survivors and the families or loved ones of survivors and those lost to gun violence, may experience grief, shock, numbness, fear, anger, deeply disturbed sense of safety, despair, helplessness, anxiety, hypervigilance, and more
Systemic	Of that which is incorporated and embedded into whole systems.
Time Available	Whether or not social work roles provide designated or protected hours to devote to extra projects, continued education, or advocacy work
Trauma	Historical distressing, frightening, or disturbing experience(s). May include personal history of being impacted by gun violence or otherwise adverse. Example: Extreme trauma from adverse experiences may manifest in act of violence
• Adverse Experiences	Experiences that create instability and can impact future violence victimization and perpetration, lifelong health,

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	and opportunities. Examples Include: Domestic violence or intimate partner violence, educational failures, experiencing housing instability hunger, joblessness, mental health concerns, neglect, sexual abuse, substance abuse concerns, & witnessing violence
• Generational Trauma	Trauma that compounds and is passed through generations while it persists through economic, cultural, and familial distress. Example: May include remaining in a community that experiences persistent violence and have impact on health and well-being.
• Vicarious Trauma in Social Work	Impact on the social worker as emotional residue of exposure from working with people and hearing trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured. State of tension and preoccupation of the stories/trauma experiences described by clients. Example: feelings guilt over inability to quell client fears, avoidance of subject/numbing (American Counseling Association, 2021).
Values	Individual principles, ideals, or standards that guide behaviors and motivate actions or affect character. As a value system, affect the ethical behavior of a person or become the base of intentional activities
Violence	Behavior pattern, reflection of behaviors, or learned attitude belief system.
Violence Prevention	Strategies and approaches that contribute to reduce risk or preventing community gun violence. Actions that instead promote wellbeing and safety
Workforce Diversity	Social work workforce could benefit from greater diversity of professionals and further representation on matters of importance to the populations engaged with social work services and supports. Example: Diversity in gender identities and expressions, ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, ages, disabilities, socio-economic statuses, religions, cultures, and other diverse backgrounds.

Epilogue as Poetry 6/22/23

Heat
Steam
Stop.
Go!

I am part of this fabric.
From Wacker Drive
to Lake Shore Drive
this is, my home.
I want to love this city
Sometimes I hate, this city,
but I like this city
so much.
And the allure,
of what a city
has the potential to
Become.
And what I have the potential to
become.

I am ready
to be part of the hope
of this city.
The vibration of
This city.
To say that you are a
dweller, a resident, or a
person of this space,
Do you have to bleed
And grieve in this place?
Must you take the risk
Of your joy or lose your life?
Or get in the race
At a frenetic pace?

I am unsure sometimes
of my safety,
of my capacity,
of my role.

I care about this city.
I serve and support
My city.
And sometimes,
this town is mad.

But in spite of it all,
I
am
home.

Chicago