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# Determinants of State Firearms Policy Variation

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Determinants of State Firearms Policy Variation

by

Brandon Paul Kaskawal

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for a degree of

Bachelors of Science

in

Political Science and University Honors

Thesis Adviser:

Bruce Gilley

Portland State University

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## Abstract

The public policy landscape within the United States in regards to firearms is one which is inhabited by a large variation in policies. While many studies, such as those conducted by Azrael, Cook and Miller or O'Brien, Forrest, Lynott, and Daly, have looked at aspects of a states given firearms policy, little research has be conducted looking at why such a variation among state firearms policies exist. In order to uncover possible reasons for state firearms policy variation, this study looked at nine states as case studies along with six variables which are known to influence public policy. Utilizing the Mill Method of Agreement, Difference, and Joint, the six variables of the nine case studies were analyzed. The results of the study indicated that the variable of ideas may play the largest role in determining a state's firearms policy, however the study also revealed that other variables such as population and inter-state diffusion may play a role at varying degree.

## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my loving wife Heather who has supported me through this long journey as well as my Parents who have given me the chance to become what I am today.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the help of my thesis advisor, Dr. Bruce Gilley, for without whose help this thesis would never have come in to existence.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	9
Methodology.....	22
Literature Review of Methods.....	22
Methodology for this Study.....	24
Data and Analysis.....	35
Data.....	35
Analysis.....	40
Method of Agreement Analysis.....	42
Joint Method of Agreement and Difference Analysis.....	48
Levels of Certainty.....	51
Conclusion.....	53
Bibliography.....	59
Appendix A.....	66

## List of Tables

Table	Page
1a. Levels of Restrictiveness of States, 2010-2015, Blank.....	31
1b. Measurements of Independent Variables, Blank .....	32
2a. Method of Agreement Analysis for Highly Restrictive Dependent Variable, Blank.....	32
2b. Method of Agreement Analysis for Moderately Restrictive Dependent Variable, Blank.....	33
2c. Method of Agreement Analysis for Low Restrictive Dependent Variable, Blank.....	33
3. Method of Difference Analysis for All Three Levels of Dependent Variables .....	34
1a. Levels of Restrictiveness of States, 2010-2015 .....	35
1b. Measurements of Independent Variables.....	37
2a. Method of Agreement Analysis for Highly Restrictive Dependent Variable .....	42
2b. Method of Agreement Analysis for Moderately Restrictive Dependent Variable, .....	43
2c. Method of Agreement Analysis for Low Restrictive Dependent Variable .....	44
3. Method of Difference Analysis for All Three Levels of Dependent Variables .....	46

## Introduction

Throughout the history of the United States public policy regarding firearms, both federal and state, has had eras where it becomes extremely contentious. Early public policy regarding firearms, both state and federal, can be seen as having their foundations laid in both English common law, which had long held that men have a right to keep and bear arms<sup>1</sup>, and the years leading up to the American Revolution in which the British attempted to keep the colonists in control with gun powder embargos, as well as, direct attempts at disarming the colonial militias<sup>2</sup>. The common law history of a right to bear arms along with the attempts by the British to subdue the colonists by disarmament led to the belief by many of the newly founded countries' architects that a right to bear arms was essential to the keeping of a free state; this belief was then enshrined in the new state and federal constitutions with wording which protected the right to bear arms from government interference<sup>3</sup>. And while the years following the revolution saw a rather open policy to the ownership and use of firearms, this open policy was short lived with states, in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, passing regulations which could be seen as shifting from an early more expansive view. Some of the earliest examples of this can be seen

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas B. Mcaffee and Michael J. Quinlan, "Bringing Forward the Right to Keep and Bear Arms: Do Text, History, or Precedent Stand in the Way?," *North Carolina Law Review* 75, no. 3 (1997): 781–899.

<sup>2</sup> United States. Naval History Division, *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, vol. 1 (Washington, District of Columbia: Naval History Division, Deptof the Navy, 1964), 204–234.

<sup>3</sup> Eugene Volokh, "State Constitutional Rights to Keep and Bear Arms," *Texas Review of Law and Politics* Vol. 11 (n.d.): 191–217.



with the state of Kentucky passing laws in an attempt to “curb the practice of carrying concealed weapons in 1813”<sup>4</sup>. Consequently and somewhat ironically this attempt to regulate firearms, as pointed out by historian Saul Cornell, begat the belief that the Second Amendment consisted of an individual right<sup>5</sup>. While the Kentucky legislature sought a policy, which mildly sought to regulate some aspects of firearms, this attempt at a more regulated policy was somewhat halted by the Kentucky High Court in *Bliss v. Commonwealth* (1822), in which the Court held that the right to bear arms was beyond reproach, writing:

But it should not be forgotten, that it is not only a part of the right that is secured by the constitution; it is the right entire and complete, as it existed at the adoption of the constitution; and if any portion of that right be impaired, immaterial how small the part may be, and immaterial the order of time at which it be done, it is equally forbidden by the constitution.

Not all states, however, were as divided as Kentucky in regards to the direction of firearms policy. *State v. Buzzard* (1842), saw the Arkansas High Court adopt a collectivist view of the state’s second amendment, a view which would allow for a much more regulated firearms policy; they held that, “that the free white men of this State shall have a right to keep and bear arms for their

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<sup>4</sup> Saul Cornell, *A Well-Regulated Militia : The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

common defense”, however unlike the Kentucky court the rejected a challenge against a statute which prohibited the carrying of concealed weapons.

The latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, especially the end of the American Civil war saw further evolutions in both state and federal firearms policy, especially in regards to the questions of the newly freed slaves owning firearms as well as participating in state militias. *United States v. Cruikshank* (1875) illustrate the ways in which firearms policies at the state level were able to remain heavily regulated with the United States Supreme Court holding “ the Second Amendment has no other effect than to restrict the powers of the national government.”

While the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw an evolution of state firearms policy towards being more restrictive and regulated, the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw an evolution in federal firearms policy towards being more restricted and regulated with the passing of National Firearms Act of 1934 (NFA), which saw machine guns, short barreled rifles, shotguns, and other weapons becomes heavily regulated and fall under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tabaco and Firearms<sup>6</sup> as well as *United States v. Miller* (1939), in which the United States Supreme Court upheld the NFA as constitutional and not violating the second Amendment.

The change in firearms policy was not contained in the early parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but continued to change throughout. The Gun Control Act of 1968 (GCA) was

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<sup>6</sup> “National Firearms Act of 1934,” 2005.

passed in response to the assassinations of John F. Kennedy as well as Malcom X and Martin Luther King Jr., which restricted firearms transactions between states to only those between licensed manufacturers, dealers, and importers and also prohibited the selling of firearms to certain individuals such as felons. The 1980's saw a slight reversal in federal firearms policy with Firearms Owners Protection Act which repealed much of what was passed in the GCA, though this policy shift was short lived and once again both federal as well as state firearms policies shifted with the introduction of the Assault Weapons Ban in 1994 as well as the school shooting in Columbine in 1999.

Now once again due to the media attention given to recent mass shootings in the United States, such as the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary in 2012 and Umpqua Community College in 2015, as well as to landmark Supreme Court decisions addressing the Second Amendment (*District of Columbia v. Heller*, 2008; *McDonald v. Chicago*, 2010), national firearms policy has come into the American spotlight with both sides of the debate vehemently defending their positions. And while on the surface much of the discussion would appear to be centered on federal firearms policy, in reality the debate often surrounds the firearms policy of the individual states.

Although certain state laws have necessarily had to comply with federal law as established by the Supremacy Clause in the US Constitution and ruled by the Supreme Court in cases such as *Martin v. Hunter's Lessee* (1816), which held that the U.S. Supreme Court has jurisdiction and authority over state courts in matters of federal law,

and *Edgar v. MITE Corp.* (1982) in which it was held that “a state statute is void to the extent that it actually conflicts with a valid Federal statute”, it was not until 2010, with *McDonald v. Chicago*, that the Second Amendment was incorporated, a process by which the Amendments of the Bill of Rights are made applicable to the states through the Due Process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment; therefore while state law had to comply with federal firearm statutes, the states were at the same time free to pursue a firearms policy consistent with the views of their own policy actors, while simply having to be compliant with their own state constitutions. In turn this freedom of states to establish their own firearm policies has led to a vast array of state-specific policies, ranging from barely regulated to heavily restricted gun policy.

While the myriad of state firearms policies illustrates the “laboratories of democracy” as envisioned by Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, the extent in which firearms policy differentiate between States becomes clear and the question becomes why these States, which in many ways have become similar in many attributes, still seek vastly different firearms policies? Things have changed drastically since the founding of the country in which states could be seen as much more autonomous, the growth of the Federal power<sup>7</sup> has shrunk this autonomy of the states in many ways and yet firearms policies still remain vastly different. While some may ascribe the variations in firearms policy to regional cultures, much like regional dialects, the types of firearms policies

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<sup>7</sup> Gail Sunderman and James Kim, “The Expansion of Federal Power and the Politics of Implementing the No Child Left Behind Act,” *Teachers COLlege Record* 109, no. 5 (n.d.): 1057–85.

pursued by the states are not confined to geographic locations; rather states inhabiting the same region can have vastly different firearms laws. California, for instance, which can be seen to pursue one of the most restrictive firearms policy, along with states such as New York or Hawaii, differ from Oregon, which can be seen as moderately restrictive or from Nevada, which can be seen as less restrictive. The question then becomes are the differences in firearms policy differ due to the ideas held by the policy actors. While it would be natural to try explain the variations in firearms policy on the political beliefs of the policy actors, such as Texas being dominantly conservative and less restrictive, while Connecticut is more liberal as very restrictive, these types of classifications do not always work as Vermont can be seen as leaning liberal and yet has a less restrictive policy towards firearms.

Despite the fact that there have been many studies in recent as well as past years regarding federal firearms regulations and policies along with many studies regarding individual state firearms policy and laws, there has been little research done looking at why states may differ in relation to the firearms policy, even if they inhabit the same geographical region such as California and Nevada or regional culture such as New Hampshire and Connecticut. The purpose of this paper then is to identify the differences as well as similarities within the firearms policies of six select states and determine why these differences or similarities may exist by analyzing them under the context of attributes which are known to influence public policy.

From a research standpoint, understanding why state firearms policy differ will researchers understand why firearms policy at the state and especially federal level has difficulty in being established. As noted, public policy regarding firearms is highly contentious with rhetoric on either side often inhibiting any meaningful change<sup>8</sup>. In essence the federal policy actors are deeply influenced by the state from which they come, thus at the federal level you often have a clash of beliefs in what type of policy should be pursued. Identifying the reasons as to why variations in State firearms policy exist may work help policy actors at the federal level pursue a firearms policy that would have a higher chance of success by allowing the individual policy actors to recognize other actor's reasons and shape a firearms policy that is acceptable to all.

This study will begin with a literature review of previous state-by-state comparative studies, studies attempting to explain state variation in public policy, as well as looking at previous literature attempting to explain these variations. Having reviewed previous research the study will then turn to methodology. The methodology will begin with a brief literature review of methods used in previous comparative studies. Having discussed previous methodologies used by prior studies, this paper will turn to the process of comparative policy and completing a state vs state comparison. Having covered the general comparative policy process, this paper will then turn to the explaining the reasoning behind the selection of the case studies as well as the selection

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<sup>8</sup> J. Michael Hogan and Craig Rood, "Rhetorical Studies and the Gun Debate: A Public Policy Perspective," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 359–71.

of the methods by which the case studies are to be analyzed. Having looked into the methodology of the research this paper will then turn to the data and results section. This will begin with an overall view of the descriptive statistics of both the dependent variables as well as independent variables. Having illustrated the data collected, the paper will then turn to an analysis of this data, culminating with a look into the likely causes of state firearms policy variation as well as levels of uncertainty. Finally this paper will conclude with a brief synopsis of what was found, limitations of the study, the policy importance of the findings and future research which could be conducted to clarify the findings.

## Literature Review

Comparative public policy, as defined by Dodds, is the use of the comparative approach to investigate policy processes, outputs and outcomes<sup>9</sup>. However, comparative public policy cannot be considered necessarily a new phenomenon with philosophers such as Aristotle in 305BC attempting to compare the political institutions as well as policies from among the ancient Greek city states<sup>10</sup> and Montesquieu who looked into the relation of a states 'national character' with that of its form of government in the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>11</sup>. And while it would appear that comparative public policy and thus on a broader scope comparative research has existed since time immemorial, arguments abound as to whether comparative research can be considered its own field or if it is constitutes the field itself. One side of the argument sees comparative research as inherent in every discipline as Max Weber argues that every social phenomenon may be examined comparatively<sup>12</sup> and philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre arguing that in regard to political science there can be nothing but comparative political science<sup>13</sup>. In contrast to this view that comparative research is nothing more than the derivative of or what constitutes the discipline itself, some hold that comparative research constitutes its own types of research, for example Peter Mair argues that comparative political science can be seen as

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<sup>9</sup> Anneliese Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 10.

<sup>10</sup>BC-BC Aristotle, *Politics: A Treatise on Government*, 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Charles de Secondat Montesquie and Thomas Nugent, *The Spirit of Laws*, vol. Volume 1, 2 vols. (London : Printed for J. Nourse and P. Vaillant, 1750).

<sup>12</sup> Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen, Mohr, 1922), <http://archive.org/details/wirtschaftundges00webeuoft>.

<sup>13</sup> Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Against the Self-Images of the Age: Essays on Ideology and Philosophy* (London, Duckworth, 1971), 261.



being made up of two different parts, one of substance and one of method<sup>14</sup>. As Dodds illustrates, “this combinative character of comparative research distinguishes it from other types of research which may use the comparative method, but fail to compare similar phenomena across two or more units”<sup>15</sup>. While an argument can be made for the fact that comparative research may or may not be its own field, Dodds in her book on comparative public policy takes a similar approach to that of Øyen, who broke comparative researchers into four types and which position to take depends “on our awareness of the particular challenges facing comparative research”<sup>16</sup>.

While there is an ongoing debate about whether comparative research constitutes its own field, there also is an ongoing debate surrounding what exactly comparative public policy research entails. There are some authors who believe that a study can only be considered comparative if it is comprised of certain elements must, this view can be seen being illustrated by Hantrais and Mangen who argue that a study must be a cross-national research study were data collection takes place for two or more countries on a particular phenomenon, the tools used to gather this data must be the same, and the data must be compared within a cross-national research team<sup>17</sup>. While Dodds acknowledges this view, she instead insists on a definition that encompasses a broader description. For Dodds “any research which either explicitly or implicitly contrasts policy

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<sup>14</sup> Robert E. Goodin and Hans Dieter Klingemann, *A New Handbook of Political Science* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 311.

<sup>15</sup> Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 9–10.

<sup>17</sup> Linda Hantrais and Steen Mangen, *Cross-National Research Methodology and Practice* (Routledge, 2013), 1.

process, outputs, or outcomes from one or more units” can be seen as comparative public policy<sup>18</sup>, furthermore this broader definition allows for research to qualify as comparative even if it is based on “secondary analysis of research produced by separate nation-ally-based researchers”<sup>19</sup>. An important piece of Dodds definition is the fact that it allows you to not only analyze the positive aspects of a policy, which are events that actually happened, but it also allows you to evaluate decisions that did not happen, which very much follows the beliefs of Feldman<sup>20</sup>, in which even ‘inaction is policy’ due to the fact that involves government control<sup>21</sup>.

The question of what actually constitutes a policy can be seen explained once again by Dodds, who finds that policy is not simply governmental activities, but rather that it is expanded to include “activities of non- or quasi-state actors” as long as the activities are government sanctioned<sup>22</sup>. Additionally in distinguishing policy, Dodds borrows from Parsons<sup>23</sup>, in which to distinguish policy from administration one must look to see if there is “an attempt to define and structure a rational basis for in action” in the case of policy, whereas administration is not “impelled by such an explicit intention”<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy*, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Elliot J. Feldman, “Comparative Public Policy: Field or Method?,” ed. Arnold J. Heidenheimer et al., *Comparative Politics* 10, no. 2 (1978): 287–305, doi:10.2307/421650.

<sup>21</sup> Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy*, 14.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Wayne Parsons, *Understanding Public Policy: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Policy Analysis*. (Cheltenham:Edward Elgar, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy*, 14.

The units by which to compare public policy are numerous with many authors looking at country to country comparisons such as Heidenheimer et al.<sup>25</sup> and Castles<sup>26</sup> or different groupings of nations such as Joseph Nye<sup>27</sup> or Bernhard Ebbinghaus<sup>28</sup>. While these examples illustrate comparative public policy research which looks to explain phenomenon on a large scale, there is also research which looks to explain phenomenon on a sub-national level. As Dodds points out, reiterating Yetano<sup>29</sup>, that by comparing phenomenon between objects such as cities or states within a nation “can help screen out” (or in the language of experimental design to “control for”) intervening variables such as national administrative culture, which might prevent the appropriate identification of casual processes<sup>30</sup>. Within the sub-national context you can look also at sub-national governments which can also give insight into how different governmental levels as illustrated by Bartlett et al.<sup>31</sup> Comparing phenomenon between sub-national governments allows not only identify differences in policy between various levels of government, such as states vs. federal government in the context of the United

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<sup>25</sup> Arnold J. Heidenheimer, *Comparative Public Policy: The Politics of Social Choice in Europe and America*, 2nd ed. (New York: StMartin’s Press, 1983).

<sup>26</sup> Francis G. Castles, *Comparative Public Policy: Patterns of Post-War Transformation* (Northampton, Mass: Edward Elgar Publ, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Peace in Parts; Integration and Conflict in Regional Organization*, Perspectives on International Relations (Boston, Little, Brown, 1971).

<sup>28</sup> Bernhard Ebbinghaus, “Europe Through the Looking-Glass: Comparative and Multi-Level Perspectives,” *Acta Sociologica (Taylor & Francis Ltd)* 41, no. 4 (December 1998): 301–13, doi:10.1080/00016999850079980.

<sup>29</sup> Ana Yetano, “Managing Performance at Local Government Level: The Cases of the City of Brisbane and the City of Melbourne,” *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 68, no. 2 (June 2009): 167–81, doi:10.1111/j.1467-8500.2009.00632.x.

<sup>30</sup> Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy*, 16.

<sup>31</sup> Dean Bartlett et al., “Preparing for Best Value,” *Local Government Studies* 25, no. 2 (June 1, 1999): 102–18, doi:10.1080/03003939908433950.

States, but it also allows you to examine why a certain sub-national government may choose to pursue a certain policy, while a neighboring sub-national government may choose to pursue the exact opposite.

Naturally the United States is a fertile bed in which to compare phenomenon between sub-national governments. This can be attributed to the federal nature of the United States government and the fact that states to an extent are considered sovereign and to the large number of sub-national states compared to other countries. Such as Lascher et al. who looked at the effectiveness of ballot initiatives in the ability of the public to influence policy change with regard to state policy, finding that in effect the initiative process within states did not have a noticeable effect on the ability of the public to influence or even change the public policy of a given state<sup>32</sup>.

This makes the comparative method a potentially very powerful approach to understanding firearms policy in the United States. By confining ourselves to the U.S., we control for many factors such as national institutions, national history, and national political culture that might otherwise confound comparative explanations. At the same time, we can carefully select cases to ensure the widest variations in independent and dependent variables.

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<sup>32</sup> Edward L. Lascher Jr., Michael G. Hagen, and Steven A. Rochlin, "Gun Behind the Door? Ballot Initiatives, State Policies and Public Opinion," *The Journal of Politics* 58, no. 3 (August 1, 1996): 760–75, doi:10.2307/2960443.

In terms of firearms and public policy, numerous studies have been conducted. As illustrated by Stucky et al. in their article *Gender, Guns, and Legislating: An Analysis of State Legislative Policy Preferences* look at the way in gender may affect the way in which policy choices are chosen in state legislatures, in particular firearms policy, in which they find that female legislators are more likely to support policies which support gun control over their male counterparts<sup>33</sup>. Furthermore many comparative state to state firearms policy research has looked into specific aspects of firearms policies, such as the laws which are drafted to carry out said policy; for example *Gun Control in the United States: A Comparative Survey of State Firearm Laws* which looked at the connection between firearms laws between select states and firearms deaths, finding that often states with strict firearms laws were often negatively affect by neighboring states with laxer firearms laws<sup>34</sup>. While other studies have looked at the relation between firearms within a state and deaths attributed to firearms, both due to homicide and suicide, within the selected state such as the study conducted by Rodríguez Andrés and Hempstead which looked specifically at the impact of state firearms laws on suicide rates<sup>35</sup> or the study conducted by Deborah Azrael et al, which looked more broadly at the prevalence of

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<sup>33</sup> Stucky D. Thomas, GERALYN M. MILLER, and LINDA M. MURPHY, "Gender, Guns, and Legislating: An Analysis of State Legislative Policy Preferences," *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 29, no. 4 (November 1, 2008): 477–95, doi:10.1080/15544770802092626.

<sup>34</sup> "Gun Control in the United States: A Comparative Survey of State Firearm Laws," *Spectrum: Journal of State Government* 73, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 16.

<sup>35</sup> Antonio Rodríguez Andrés and Katherine Hempstead, "Gun Control and Suicide: The Impact of State Firearm Regulations in the United States, 1995–2004," *Health Policy* 101, no. 1 (June 2011): 95–103, doi:10.1016/j.healthpol.2010.10.005.

firearms within a given state and the impact of this prevalence of firearms on both firearms suicides and homicides<sup>36</sup>.

Although, as evidenced above, there have been numerous state to state comparative studies looking into the *descriptive* aspects of firearms policy and its *consequences*, comparative studies examining the *causes* of these variations are almost non-existent. Most studies conducting a comparative study regarding firearms policy have centered on the connection between the firearms policy and deaths attributed to firearms in some form or another.

Examining the influences of public policy can be difficult to distinguish. Dodds in her book *Comparative Public Policy*, identifies four things which may be said to influence public policy: interests, ideas, institutions, and inter-unit learning and diffusion. Interest theory, as Dodds points out, can be seen as taking one of many forms<sup>37</sup>. For instance rational choice theorists, “interests simply are the preferences which rational actors seek to maximize or, depending on the exact theoretical position taken, optimize. The rational model interest theory can be seen playing out in the studies of Ostrom who looked at resources which are often looked at as “common pool resources” and the way in which these resources were treated between nations as well as regions<sup>38</sup>,

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<sup>36</sup> Deborah Azrael, Philip J. Cook, and Matthew Miller, “State and Local Prevalence of Firearms Ownership Measurement, Structure, and Trends,” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 20, no. 1 (March 2004): 43–62.

<sup>37</sup> Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy*, 189.

<sup>38</sup> author Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons : The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Olson who looked into the rise and decline of nations from an economic perspective<sup>39</sup>, or Hoefler who looked to explain the effect of local interest groups on the firearms policy debate<sup>40</sup>. As noted by Dodds however, interest based approaches to explaining policy can ruin to issues as they often fail “to explain the content of interests and mechanisms whereby interests are translated into policy<sup>41</sup>

The thought that ideas can influence public policy, like interests, can be seen as being broken down into numerous theories. For instance policy design, policy-oriented research and policy learning are focused on “the role of the individual policy makers and how they take decisions” rather the collective interests groups<sup>42</sup>. This orientation to ideas can be seen in the studies done by Vickers<sup>43</sup> or Jacob and Genard<sup>44</sup>, in which the policy process as composed primarily of “experts”. Regardless of the theory followed, Dodds points out that many theorists looking at ideas as a driver for public policy do not rely singularly on ideas, but rather combine ideas with interests, institutions, and groups<sup>45</sup>.

Institutions as illustrated by Dodds are not as complicated as either ideas or interests and instead can be seen as “formal or informal sets of rules and norms”<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations : Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

<sup>40</sup> Richard Hoefler, “Altering State Policy: Interest Group Effectiveness among State-Level Advocacy Groups,” *Social Work* 50, no. 3 (July 2005): 219–27.

<sup>41</sup> Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy*, 212.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>43</sup> Geoffrey Vickers, *The Art of Judgement* (London: Sage, 1965).

<sup>44</sup> Steve Jacob et al., “En guise de conclusion. Les métamorphoses de l’expertise,” 2004, 145–62.

<sup>45</sup> Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy*.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

Institutional influence on public policy can be seen being played out by the study done by March and Olsen which looked at the impact of institutions on politics as well as public policy<sup>47</sup>. In general institutionalists of comparative policy look at the impact “of a variety of institutions on policy-making, including different types of state, electoral institutions, and property institutions”<sup>48</sup>. Institutions as witness by Dodds can have significant influence on public policy, with institutions sometimes acting as gate keepers, whereas a monolithic institution prevents dramatic change to policy<sup>49</sup>.

While institutions are generally thought of as coming from the country in which the policy is developed, inter-unit learning looks to explain some policy change by looking at the ways in which the policies of one country or state, or region may be learned by other countries, state, or regions. While policy transfer is often seen as “over theorized and under applied”<sup>50</sup>, it can be seen as important in explaining why a state would pursue a policy unnatural to it through coercion as illustrated by Rose<sup>51</sup> or Bomberg<sup>52</sup>. But as illustrated by Dodds, policy learning does not necessarily mean coercion and instead can be seen as being made up of teachers and learners who are

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<sup>47</sup> James G. March, *Rediscovering Institutions : The Organizational Basis of Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1989).

<sup>48</sup> Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy*, 248.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>50</sup> Colin J. Bennett and Michael Howlett, “The Lessons of Learning: Reconciling Theories of Policy Learning and Policy Change,” *Policy Sciences* 25, no. 3 (1992): 275–94.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Rose, *Learning From Comparative Public Policy: A Practical Guide* (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2004).

<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Bomberg, “Policy Learning in an Enlarged European Union: Environmental NGOs and New Policy Instruments,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 14, no. 2 (March 1, 2007): 248–68, doi:10.1080/13501760601122522.



“ideologically, linguistically, culturally, and/or geographically proximate”<sup>53</sup>. This aspect is illustrated by Nicholson-Crotty who looked at the way in which public policy was diffused among the states within the U.S.<sup>54</sup>. However, Dodds also makes the point that in general policy learning is not something can be directly proven, but rather it is inferred and thus makes it much more difficult to observe<sup>55</sup>.

Although Dodds covers four influences which may affect public policy, there are two other influences which can prove important; one is industrialization/urbanization, the other focussing events or incidents. Generally industrialization or urbanization looks at the impact that modernization or urbanization has on a public policy. This impact can be seen in the study done by Hipp and Roussell which found that levels of urbanization have an impact crime rates<sup>56</sup>. Incidents on the other hand are spontaneous events or “focussing events” which occur, that can sway a policy actors to change public policy, such as the BP oil spill, 9/11, or mass school shootings. As Thomas A. Birkland points out in his article *Focusing Events, Mobilization, and Agenda Setting*, focusing events are important due to the fact that they can “change the dominant issues on the agenda in a policy domain”<sup>57</sup>. These events, which are often sudden and unexpected can help “in advancing issues on the agenda and

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<sup>53</sup> Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy*, 268.

<sup>54</sup> Sean Nicholson-Crotty, “The Politics of Diffusion: Public Policy in the American States,” *Journal of Politics* 71, no. 1 (January 2009): 192–205.

<sup>55</sup> Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy*, 268.

<sup>56</sup> John R. Hipp and Aaron Roussell, “Micro- and Macro-Environment Population and the Consequences for Crime Rates,” *Social Forces* 92, no. 2 (December 2013): 563–95.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas A. Birkland, “Focusing Events, Mobilization, and Agenda Setting,” *Journal of Public Policy* 18, no. 1 (1998): 53–74.

[act] as potential triggers for policy change<sup>58</sup>. The impact of incidents in the real world of policy making can be seen illustrated in studies such as the study conducted Bradford Bishop, which focused on the way in which events can create “self-interested responses by the communities which are impacted”, both physically as well as economically<sup>59</sup> as well as the study carried out by Kodate which looked at the impact of incidents on health reforms in both the UK and Japan<sup>60</sup>.

Often times, however, as Dodds notes at the end of her chapter on ideas, comparative public policy analysts do not focus on one particular cause within the realm of the six I’s, but rather they rely on a combination of influences to explain the policy process<sup>61</sup>; and as Béland and Howlett point out, ideas, interests and institutions together play a role in determining why policies may differ between two entities or why a policy has changed over time<sup>62</sup>. Firearms policy is no different in this regard and thus researchers often rely on different types of policy processes to explain policy variation among case studies or change among a single case study itself. For instance in Kleck et al. study of why individuals favor gun control, they found what could be considered the

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Bradford Bishop, “Focusing Events and Public Opinion: Evidence from the Deepwater Horizon Disaster,” *Political Behavior* 36, no. 1 (March 2014): 1–22, doi:10.1007/s11109-013-9223-7.

<sup>60</sup> Naonori Kodate, “Events, Politics and Patterns of Policy-Making: Impact of Major Incidents on Health Sector Regulatory Reforms in the UK and Japan,” *Social Policy & Administration* 46, no. 3 (June 1, 2012): 280–301, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9515.2011.00814.x.

<sup>61</sup> Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy*, 230.

<sup>62</sup> Daniel Béland and Michael Howlett, “Kingdon Reconsidered: Ideas, Interests and Institutions in Comparative Policy Analysis,” *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, September 24, 2015, 1–15, doi:10.1080/13876988.2015.1029770.

‘garbage can’ model of policy making put forth by Cohen et al.<sup>63</sup>. What Kleck et al. found was that policy and support for certain firearms policies were not due the fact that a certain policy would reduce firearms related crime, but rather due to cultural conflict consistent with the time<sup>64</sup>. Similarly in *Successful Public Policy Change in California: Firearms and Youth Resources*, Wallack et al. found that it was primarily an advocacy coalition, as coined by Paul Sabatier<sup>65</sup>, that could be said to initiate a change in California’s firearms policy, while at the same time focusing events also played an important role.

Public policy research and even comparative public policy research can be as quite broad encompassing many different policy areas. While policy areas such as education or healthcare have been studied exhaustively, comparative firearms policy is not as explored. While there have been numerous studies on firearms policies, these studies usually focus on a singular state as in the case of Wallack et al.<sup>66</sup> or they look at firearms policy from a broader national view as illustrated by O’Brein et al<sup>67</sup> or Hogan and Rood<sup>68</sup>; thus the comparative literature on why states differ in firearms policy is

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<sup>63</sup> Michael D. Cohen, James G. March, and Johan P. Olsen, “A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1972): 1–25, doi:10.2307/2392088.

<sup>64</sup> Gary Kleck, Marc Gertz, and Jason Bratton, “Why Do People Support Gun Control?: Alternative Explanations of Support for Handgun Bans,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 37, no. 5 (September 2009): 496–504, doi:10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2009.07.010.

<sup>65</sup> Paul A. Sabatier, “An Advocacy Coalition Framework of Policy Change and the Role of Policy-Oriented Learning Therein,” *Policy Sciences* 21, no. 2–3 (June 1988): 129–68, doi:10.1007/BF00136406.

<sup>66</sup> Lawrence Wallack, Liana Winett, and Amy Lee, “Successful Public Policy Change in California: Firearms and Youth Resources,” *Journal of Public Health Policy* 26, no. 2 (2005): 206–26.

<sup>67</sup> Kerry O’Brien et al., “Racism, Gun Ownership and Gun Control: Biased Attitudes in US Whites May Influence Policy Decisions,” *PLoS ONE* 8, no. 10 (October 2013): 1–10, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0077552.

<sup>68</sup> Hogan and Rood, “Rhetorical Studies and the Gun Debate.”

relatively thin. Due to the relatively thin nature of comparative literature regarding state firearms policy causes, a gap in the research needs to be filled.

## Methodology

### Literature Review of Methods

Methodologies used in previous state-to-state comparative public policy research, though covering vastly different areas, often have several elements in common. State selection for case studies are usually picked due to a list of qualifying factors. An example is the research done by the Ohio State University Governance Project in the study *State Policy Making for the Public Schools a Comparative Analysis*, which sought states that were similar based on: population, governmental structures, court intervention into educational decision making and which were broadly representative of the U.S. as a whole<sup>69</sup>. However, depending on the scope of the project state selection can be seen as markedly less selective as evidenced by Hoefler in *The impact of state policy on teen dating violence prevalence*, in which all states were considered for inclusion in the study, with the exception of the District of Columbia, which was excluded from the study<sup>70</sup>.

While some sort of selection process is shared by all state to state comparative research, the actual gathering of data can vary significantly depending on the field of study, however data collection often falls in one of several categories. The first commonly used by researchers in comparative policy research is collection through

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<sup>69</sup> Roald F. Campbell and Tim L. Mazzoni, "State Policy Making for the Public Schools: A Comparative Analysis," August 1974, 15–28, <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED095666>.

<sup>70</sup> Richard Hoefler, Beverly Black, and Mark Ricard, "The Impact of State Policy on Teen Dating Violence Prevalence," *Journal of Adolescence* 44 (October 2015): 88–96, doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2015.07.006.

primary research as seen in studies conducted by Hemenway et al.<sup>71</sup> or Azrael et al.<sup>72</sup> in the use of targeted surveys, while other times gathering data is more reliant on secondary sources as evidenced by Jennings<sup>73</sup>; lastly data can be seen as coming from third party sources as seen by Hoefler, who used grades of dating violence policies given to all states by an advocacy group dealing with dating violence called ‘Break the Cycle’<sup>74</sup> or Zimring who used polls from Project Vote Smart in determining the influence of gender in legislative actions regarding firearms<sup>75</sup>. However, it can generally be said that most studies gather data from several sources such as field work, surveys, or third party data sets. They seek data from a multitude of sources to construct their own data sets.

Unlike the gathering of data which often appears varied and dependent on the particular study being done, analysis of the data often follows similar patterns. More often than not when dealing with quantifiable data a letter grade or score is assigned to each case study as seen by Campbell and Mazzoni<sup>76</sup>. While some studies rely on a particular linear model as employed by Hoefler<sup>77</sup>, other analysis can be seen as consisting of both is quantitative correlations as well as linear and non-linear regression models as

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<sup>71</sup> David Hemenway et al., “Firearm Prevalence and Social Capital,” *Annals of Epidemiology* 11, no. 7 (October 2001): 484–90, doi:10.1016/S1047-2797(01)00235-6.

<sup>72</sup> Azrael, Cook, and Miller, “State and Local Prevalence of Firearms Ownership Measurement, Structure, and Trends.”

<sup>73</sup> Edward T. Jennings Jr., “Civil Turmoil and the Growth of Welfare Rolls: A Comparative State Policy Analysis,” *Policy Studies Journal* 7, no. 4 (Summer 1979): 739–45, doi:10.1111/1541-0072.ep11787585.

<sup>74</sup> Hoefler, Black, and Ricard, “The Impact of State Policy on Teen Dating Violence Prevalence.”

<sup>75</sup> Franklin Zimring, “Firearms, Violence, and Public Policy,” *Scientific American* 265, no. 5 (1991): 48–54.

<sup>76</sup> Campbell and Mazzoni, “State Policy Making for the Public Schools.”

<sup>77</sup> Hoefler, Black, and Ricard, “The Impact of State Policy on Teen Dating Violence Prevalence.”

seen by Dillard<sup>78</sup> Emerson<sup>79</sup>. However, due to the comparative nature of the studies analysis of the data revolve entirely around the comparisons of the case studies against one another in answering the questions posed by the authors.

### Methodology for this Study

The case selections for this study will be based on a pattern which matches the needs of Mill's methods, which in turn means that cases will be selected based on whether they share or do not share both dependent and independent variables. Mill devised these methods in his 1843 book, *A System of Logic*, in an attempt to use inductive reasoning to show possible instances of causation. While Mill originally devised five methods which could be used to show a causal relationship, this study will rely on Mill's Joint method of agreement and difference, which can be seen as a combination of his method of agreement and method of difference. In employing the Method of Agreement, in which the cases share the same outcome, if it can be determined that all the case studies share one attribute then it can be said that that attribute is the likely cause.<sup>80</sup> However the Method of Agreement is problematic in its ability to only establish a sufficient and not necessary connection, further it cannot account for plural causations.

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<sup>78</sup> Jan Elizabeth Dillard, "Determinants of State Land Use Policies: A Comparative State Policy Study" (Ph.D., Emory University, 1982), <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/docview/303259617/abstract/20B3603E57394C13PQ/1>.

<sup>79</sup> Kirk Emerson, "The Emergence of State Property Rights Legislation: A Comparative State Policy Analysis" (Ph.D., Indiana University, 1997), <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/docview/304386090/abstract/4EAFFFB8E60545D2PQ/1>.

<sup>80</sup> John Stuart Mill, *A System Of Logic, Ratiocinative And Inductive (Vol. 1 of 2)*, 2008. Put original date here and publisher information

The Method of Difference in which the cases have different outcomes. This can be seen as the opposite of the Method of Agreement because among the case studies if they share every factor but one, then the factor that they do not share is a possible cause<sup>81</sup>. However, much like the Method of Agreement, the Method of Difference is weakened by its inability to explain cases in which there may be a plural causation. The Joint Method of Agreement and Difference seeks to rectify some of the problems with either one of the first two methods. By highlighting what all cases share and then isolating what they do not, the method allows the researcher to determine what is most likely the cause. Symbolically the joint method can be explained in that if A B C occur together with x y z and A D E occur together with x w v, but B C also occur with y z, then A could be said to be the probable cause of x. The use of the joint method is important in that it will allow analysis of the case studies in which the cases do not share similar outcomes, but at the same time may share similar causes. When analyzing by the Mill Method of Agreement, the three dependent variables will be separated and the independent variables of each group will undergo a cluster analysis and the comparison. The Mill Method of Difference will then look at all three dependent variables and their corresponding independent variables in totality and finally the Joint Method will be applied which looks at the results from the Method of Agreement and Difference as a cohesive group to highlight any overlap.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.



The dependent variable for this study will be the designation of a state as seeking a very strict, moderately strict, or mildly strict firearms policy. The designation of a state as strict, moderate, or mild is based on the context of the laws which each state have been passed; the amount of laws passed within a state regarding firearms is not necessarily a reliable indication of the firearms policy that the state seeks to achieve, as two states could pass an equal amount of laws in which the context of the laws for either state are drastically different. While assumptions must be made in order to assign a label to a state's firearms policy, looking at the nature of the laws passed in regards to firearms gives a good perspective of the public policy the states are attempting to achieve. The data sources used to determine the context of the laws will be the state legislatures themselves, as well as compilations of state laws brought forward by interest groups in firearms policy, notably the Brady Campaign.

Nine states will be selected, three of the nine states will be designated with the dependent variable of having a very strict, moderately strict, or mildly strict firearms policy. The selection of states which are to be examined are selected from the Brady Campaign 2013 State Scorecard. In partnership with the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, the Brady Campaign evaluated and compared the firearms laws of the fifty states. They ultimately ranked the states 1-50 by comparing 30 variables which indicate their policy approach to the regulation of firearms as well as ammunition. These variables included background checks and access to firearms, gun owner accountability, and classes of weapons and ammunition/magazines which are banned. Each of the 30

variables are assigned points, for example states with background checks were given 11 points, while states that had an assault weapons ban were granted 3 points or states which banned large capacity magazines (those holding more than 10 rounds) awarded 3 points; in total the maximum amount of points a state could garner would be 100. In addition to being numerically ranked, the states were awarded a letter grade based on their totals, with 80-100 earning an A, 45-79 earning a B, 27-44 earning a C, 18-26 earning a D, and 0-17 earning an F. States which have received a grade in the range of A can be seen as seeking a strict firearm policy, those awarded a grade in the range of C can be seen as seeking a moderate firearms policy, and lastly those awarded a grade in the range of F can be seen as seeking a mild firearms policy. In addition to the letter grade assigned to each, states will be selected based on their geographic location. The purpose for selecting states which inhabit the same geographic region is to rule out the possibility that a regional culture plays a leading role in the direction of firearms policy for a particular state and instead determine whether the firearms policy may, instead, be attributed the culture of the individual state.

The independent variables of the case studies will consist of six elements which are known to influence the development and implementation of public policy. They will consist of urbanization, ideas, interests, institutions, incidents, and intra-state learning.

Following Dillard<sup>82</sup>, urbanization will focus the percentage of individuals living in an urban setting within the state<sup>83</sup>, the population density of the state<sup>84</sup>, as well as the overall total population of the state<sup>85</sup>; which will be gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The independent variable of ideas will be focused on the ideas held by key policy actors such as legislatures which sit on relevant committees within state legislatures. In addition to looking at specific policy actors within the state legislatures, the impact of ideas on state firearms policy be looked at by looking at the number of laws either brought to a vote or passed in the given state legislature after an incident involving firearms. Each state will be given a number dependent upon the answers given by the policy actors as well as the number of laws voted upon or enacted in the wake of an incident.

A common element among all state firearms policies is that they seek to limit the violence caused by firearms, therefore the independent variable of interests will be measured by the amount of violence involves a firearm, to include both lethal and non-lethal assaults as well as homicides. These numbers will be gathered from the Center for Disease Control and Preventions underlying causes of death 1999-2014 in regards to

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<sup>82</sup> Dillard, "Determinants of State Land Use Policies."

<sup>83</sup> Center for New Media and Promotions and US Census Bureau Public Information Staff, "US Census Bureau 2010 Census," accessed May 18, 2016, <http://www.census.gov/2010census/data/>.

<sup>84</sup> "United States Summary: 2010 Population and Housing Unit Counts," accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/cph-2-1.pdf>.

<sup>85</sup> "Population Estimates, July 1, 2015, (V2015)," accessed January 22, 2016, <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>.

firearms deaths, as well as state and local police incident reports for data on non-lethal instances in which firearms were involved.

Institutions, as noted by Dodds<sup>86</sup>, are a powerful influence in the formation and implementation of public policy. While state institutions can include the state courts, formal and informal state organizations as well as laws, for the purpose of this paper state constitutions will be the way in which institutions will be assessed. The states will then be assigned a number value for the strength of this protection, as well as the stance that the courts of taken on that right, between zero and ten, with a zero being awarded for an absence of any protections and a ten being unassailable protection by both the constitution as well as state courts..

Incidents, as witnessed by the policy change in the wake of disasters such as the BP oil spill or Katrina, can be a powerful factor in policy creation and implementation. In order to determine the impact of incidents on a states firearm policy the number of and frequency of mass shootings per a capita basis by state will be looked. Mass shootings for this study will be defined as “Four or more shot and/or killed in a single event [incident], at the same general time and location, not including the shooter”, which was used by the Congressional Research Service in their *Public Mass Shootings in the United States: Selected Implications for Federal Public Health and Safety Policy* report for congress<sup>87</sup>. These numbers will be compiled from third party groups such as the Gun Violence

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<sup>86</sup> Dodds, *Comparative Public Policy*.

<sup>87</sup> Jerome Bjelopera et al., “Public Mass Shootings in the United States: Selected Implications for Federal Public Health and Safety Policy” (Congressional Research Service, n.d.).

Archive, which compiles the data from multiple sources such as newspapers and officer incident reports. While it may be impossible to count every mass shooting as some may go unreported, the numbers given will nonetheless give enough evidence to determine whether incidents do play a factor in explaining gun policy variation.

Policy diffusion among states, while happening, can be difficult to detect. However, as demonstrated by Desmarais, Harden, and Boehmke it is possible. As noted by Desmarais et al. by using the latent network inference algorithm constructed (NetInf) by Gomez-Rodriguez, Leskovec and Krause, it is possible to gather empirical data which can measure the “full state-to-state policy diffusion network”<sup>88</sup>. Furthermore Desmarais et al. identify three main factors which can be used to identify the possibility that a given state is the policy source for another; they are: “The number of times state  $i$  adopts a policy before state  $j$ , the length of time between state  $i$ 's adoption and  $j$ 's adoptions, [and] the precision with which an adoption by  $i$  predicts an adoption by  $j$ ”<sup>89</sup>. In addition to the study done by Desmarais et al., Boehmke in a study conducted with Skinner, developed an innovation score which could be used to determine their ranking in regards to the probability of internal as well as external diffusion<sup>90</sup>. The higher the score, the more likely that a state would export their policy to other states as well as import policies of

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<sup>88</sup> Bruce A. Desmarais, Jeffrey J. Harden, and Frederick J. Boehmke, “Persistent Policy Pathways: Inferring Diffusion Networks in the American States,” *American Political Science Review* 109, no. 02 (May 2015): 392–406, doi:10.1017/S0003055415000040.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Frederick J. Boehmke and Paul Skinner, “The Determinants of State Policy Innovativeness” (2011 Midwest Political Science Association Meeting, Chicago, March 26, 2011), <http://myweb.uiowa.edu/bhlai/workshop/bp.pdf>.

other states. In looking at levels of diffusion, this study will look at the rankings assigned in the Boehmke and Skinner study, assigning a rank which correlates with their score.

Having explained the dependent variables, case selection, and independent variables which will be used in Mills’ Method of Agreement and Method of Difference, below is an illustration of the research design; with Tables 1a, 1b, illustrate dependent and independent variables respectively, Tables 2a, 2b, and 2c illustrate the three tables which will be used for the Mill Method of Agreement, figure 2 illustrates the table which will be used for the Mill Method of Difference.

Table 1a: Levels of Restrictiveness of States, 2010-2015

Dependent Variables

State	Level of Restrictiveness				
	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015
California					
Connecticut					
New York					
Pennsylvania					
Washington					
Colorado					
Nevada					
Vermont					
Arizona					

Table 1b: Measurements of Independent Variables

State	Independent Variables							
	Total Population	Population Density	Urbanization Percentages	Ideas	Interests	Institutions	Incidents	Inter-State Diffusion
California								
Connecticut								
New York								
Pennsylvania								
Washington								
Colorado								
Nevada								
Vermont								
Arizona								

Table 2a: Method of Agreement Analysis for Highly Restrictive Dependent Variable

State	Total Population	Population Density	Urban Percentages	Ideas	Interests	Institutions	Incidents	Inter-State Diffusion	Level of Restrictiveness
California									High
Connecticut									High
New York									High

Table 2b: Method of Agreement Analysis for Moderately Restrictive Dependent Variable

State	Total Population	Population Density	Urban Percentages	Ideas	Interests	Institutions	Incidents	Inter-State Diffusion	Level of Restrictiveness
Pennsylvania									Medium
Washington									Medium
Colorado									Medium

Table 2c: Method of Agreement Analysis for Low Restrictive Dependent Variable

State	Total Population	Population Density	Urban Percentages	Ideas	Interests	Institutions	Incidents	Inter-State Diffusion	Level of Restrictiveness
Nevada									Low
Vermont									Low
Arizona									Low



Table 3: Method of Difference Analysis for All Three Levels of Dependent Variables

State	Population Density	Ideas	Interests	Institutions	Incidents	Inter-State Diffusion	Level of Restrictiveness
California							High
Connecticut							High
New York							High
Pennsylvania							Medium
Washington							Medium
Colorado							Medium
Nevada							Low
Vermont							Low
Arizona							Low

## Data and Analysis

### Data

To begin, the data is presented for the dependent variable that was used to select cases for the analysis. While the 2013 Brady Campaign Score card is used as a starting date for the study, state policies can at time shift rapidly due to new circumstances and therefore a range of years are given here to illustrate that the selected states have remained stable in regards to the restrictiveness of their firearms policies both prior to the selected year of 2013 and continue into the year 2015. Below is table 1a showing the selected states and the corresponding dependent variables.

Table 1a: Levels of Restrictiveness of States, 2010-2015

### Dependent Variables

State	Level of Restrictiveness				
	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015
California	High	High	High	High	High
Connecticut	High	High	High	High	High
New York	High	High	High	High	High
Pennsylvania	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Washington	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Colorado	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Nevada	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Vermont	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Arizona	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low

Using the Brady Campaign score card as explained in the methodology section and in line with the dependent variables of High, Medium, or Low, the three states chosen to fulfill the very strict category are California, Connecticut, and New York. All three of these states earned A- from the Brady Campaign, with California coming in first

out of fifty with 89 points, Connecticut coming in second out of fifty with 84 points, and New York coming in fifth out of fifty 79.5 points. The states designated as moderately strict for this study are Pennsylvania, Washington, and Colorado. These states all received the grade of C by the Brady Campaign with Pennsylvania coming in eleventh out of fifty with 34 points, Washington coming in twelfth out of fifty with 33.5 points, and Colorado coming in fifteenth out of fifty with 28.5 points. Lastly for the mildly strict designation Nevada, Vermont, and Arizona were chosen. These three states all received the grade of F from the Brady campaign with Nevada coming thirty first out of fifty with 15.5 points, Vermont coming in forty-fourth with 10 points, and Arizona coming in last with 6 points.

Having shown the states which were selected based on the criteria of the dependent variable, table 1b below illustrates the raw data which was selected to operationalize or measure the six independent variables for this study.

Table 1b: Measurements of Independent Variables

Independent Variables								
State	Total Population <sup>91</sup>	Population Density <sup>92</sup>	Urbanization Percentages <sup>93</sup>	Ideas <sup>94</sup>	Interests <sup>95</sup>	Institutions <sup>96</sup>	Incidents <sup>97</sup>	Inter-State Diffusion <sup>98</sup>
California	39,144,818	239.1	95	0	4	0	0.095	High
Connecticut	3,590,886	738.1	88	0	0.6	9	0.055	High
New York	19,795,791	411.2	87.9	0	0.9	0	0.082	High
Pennsylvania	12,802,503	283.9	78.7	6.03	1.5	7	0.096	Medium
Washington	7,170,351	101.2	84.1	6.03	6.4	9	0.037	High
Colorado	5,456,574	48.5	86.2	4.33	4.3	9	0.043	High
Nevada	2,890,845	24.6	94.2	8.33	3.4	9	0.070	Low
Vermont	626,042	67.9	38.9	8	7.1	7	0.053	Low
Arizona	6,828,065	56.3	89.8	8.33	2.9	9	0.054	High

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<sup>91</sup> Population density data gathered from U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Census, people per mi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Total Populations based on data gathered by U.S. Census Bureau

<sup>93</sup> Urban Percentages based off of US Census Bureau 2010 Census

<sup>94</sup> Point awarded on 4.0 scale according to grades as assigned by the NRA

<sup>95</sup> Based on number of firearms related deaths, both suicides and homicides, per 100,000 population collected by CDC from 1999-2014, ICD-10 Codes: W32, W34, X72, X73, X93, X94, Y22, Y23

<sup>96</sup> Based on designations by Eugene Volokh. Codes: 0-No state constitutional right-to-bear-arms provision, 7-Court decisions treat the right as individual and aimed at least in part at self-defense, 9-An individual self-defense right is expressly secured, though keeping and bearing arms for other purposes may also be protected

<sup>97</sup> Based on number of mass shootings per total population, 2013-2015, mass shooting defined as four or more individuals killed or wounded due to firearms discharge not including gunman, gathered from Gun Violence Archive

<sup>98</sup> Rating based off ranking as assigned by Boehmke and Skinner in “The Determinants of State Policy Innovativeness.”

For purposes of looking at the ways in which populations have an influence on public policy, three different variables within population density were looked at; these were: total population, population density in comparison to the size of the state, and the percentage of the state's population which lives in an urban setting as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. As indicated in the above table out of the nine case studies, California is by far the largest in terms of population; however in terms of population density it falls behind four other states. However, the population density of California on its own is fairly misleading. While also being the largest in terms of total populations, California is also largest in terms of the land that it encapsulates; totaling 163,694.74 square miles, whereas the state with the second largest population, New York, only encompasses 54,554.98 square miles<sup>99</sup>. In terms of all three variables, Vermont was the smallest of the nine case studies.

As noted in the methodology section, the influence of ideas on firearms policy among the states was to be measured by the ideas held by the policy actors of the state. Ideas can be difficult to quantify, however the National Rifle Association (NRA) assigns a letter grade to legislators based on their support of different firearms legislation. For example a legislator who pushed for more restrictive firearms laws would be graded lower than one who pushed for laws which would be seen as protecting firearms. The numbers listed in ideas column of 1b shows the combined score of the leaders for both the House and Senate given to each state on a four point scale. The lower the numeric

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<sup>99</sup> "United States Summary: 2010 Population and Housing Unit Counts."

score the lower they were graded by the NRA and the more in favor the lead legislators in each of the legislatures would be of passing more restrictive firearms legislation.

Therefore as evidenced in the table above the policy actors, specifically legislators, of California, New York, and Connecticut generally hold ideas which would seek to impose more restrictive firearms policies, while policy actors in states such as Nevada, Arizona, and Vermont would hold ideas which are more congruent with policies which would be seen as less restrictive in terms of firearms.

A major goal that many, if not all, states seek in regards to a firearms policy is one which keeps firearms out of the hands of prohibited persons as defined by law and to lower deaths, both homicides and suicides, that may be attributed to firearms. The independent variable of interests was measured by the amount of deaths related to firearms per 100,000 people, the numbers in the interest's column representing this value. There does not seem to be a correlation between deaths and the restrictiveness of firearms policies.

Turning to the influence of institutions on explaining the variations among states in regards to firearms policy it was found that there was a large variation. While institutions can be defined in many terms, this paper looked at the influence of state constitutions on firearms policies. As noted in the above table, only two states, California and New York, had constitutions which listed no actual rights regarding firearms, while the majority of the nine states studied had specific state constitutional guarantees in

regards to self-defense as well as bearing arms for other purposes. This may suggest a sufficient but not necessary condition for restrictive policies.

Looking into the next independent variable of incidents it was found that Pennsylvania could be said to have the largest number of mass shootings, as defined by four or more individuals killed or wounded due to firearms discharge not including gunman per 100,000 people. The results show 0.096 in Pennsylvania, followed by California with 0.095, while states such as Washington and Colorado had lower numbers of mass shootings with .037 and .043 respectively.

Lastly inter-state diffusion was looked at. This refers to the extent to which a state tends to follow policy innovations in other states (it may also be followed by other states). The more “open” or “innovative” that a state is to inter-state policy diffusion, the more we expect to see more restrictive firearms policies. The measure used here is Boemke’s “internal and external innovativeness” measure (Figure 2 in <http://myweb.uiowa.edu/bhlai/workshop/bp.pdf>).

#### Analysis

Having illustrated the data found for the dependent and independent variables in the above section we now turn to an analysis of this data. As explained in the methodology section this study is utilizing the Joint Method of Agreement and Differences as laid out by John Stewart Mills in his book, *A System of Logic*. In order to analyze the data using the Joint Method it was first necessary to transform the data into something in which the independent variable data collected from the 9 case studies could be compared to one

another as well as to the dependent variable. In order to achieve these end, a cluster analysis was applied to each of the independent variables in which the data would fall into one of the three categories: High, Medium, or Low. Below, illustrated in table 2, is the results of this cluster analysis.

Due to the fact that the Joint method simply employs both the Mill's Method of Agreement and Method of Difference, we break down the analysis into two different steps. First employing the Method of Agreement within each category, i.e. the independent variables of California, Connecticut, and New York will become compared to the dependent variable of High. Having looked at each category separately we will then employ the Method of Difference which will then compare the independent variables found for each of the studies with a given dependent variable group to that of the other dependent variable group.



Method of Agreement Analysis

Table 2a: Method of Agreement Analysis for Highly Restrictive Dependent Variable

State	Total Population	Population Density	Urban Percentages	Ideas	Interests	Institutions	Incidents	Inter-State Diffusion	Level of Restrictiveness
California	High	Medium	High	High	Medium	High	High	High	High
Connecticut	Low	High	High	High	Low	Low	Low	High	High
New York	High	Medium	High	High	Low	High	Medium	High	High

42

Table 2a illustrates a cluster analysis of those case studies which could be classified as being highly restrictive; for the purposes of this study they are California, Connecticut, and New York. Applying the Mills Method of Agreement to this table it becomes clear that there are three independent variables which match that of the dependent variable: Urban Percentage, Density, Ideas, and Inter-State Diffusion. Therefore it would appear that looking simply at the states which have been classified as highly restrictive, Urban Percentages, Ideas, and Inter-State Diffusion many play a role in explaining why certain states select a highly restrictive firearms policy. In looking at the other independent variables such as Interests or Population density it becomes clear that not all three case studies share similar independent values and thus they are not likely to explain why a state has chosen a

particular policy path – or to put it another way none of these other factors are apparently necessary for a state to nonetheless enact highly restrictive (in the US context) firearms policies. However, two independent variables, Total Population Density and Institutions, are common among two of the three states.

Table 2b: Method of Agreement Analysis for Moderately Restrictive Dependent Variable

State	Total Population	Population Density	Urban Percentages	Ideas	Interests	Institutions	Incidents	Inter-State Diffusion	Level of Restrictiveness
Pennsylvania	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
Washington	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Low	Low	High	Medium
Colorado	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	High	Medium

43

Table 2b demonstrates the results of a cluster analysis of case studies classified as moderately restrictive in regards to state firearms policy. The states which fall into this category for the study were Pennsylvania, Washington, and Colorado. Using the Method of Agreement we can identify three independent variables which match the independent variable: Total Population, Urban Percentages, and Interests. Due to this we can surmise that in regards to states which seek a moderately restrictive firearms policy, Total Population, Urban Percentages, and Ideas may play a role in their choices. It would appear that in using the Method of

Agreement we can deduce that none of Population Density, Interests, Institutions, Incidents, or Inter-State Diffusion are necessary conditions in a medium-restrictive state firearms policy.

Table 2c: Method of Agreement Analysis for Low Restrictive Dependent Variable

State	Total Population	Population Density	Urban Percentages	Ideas	Interests	Institutions	Incidents	Inter-State Diffusion	Level of Restrictiveness
Nevada	Low	Low	High	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Vermont	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Arizona	Medium	Low	High	Low	Medium	Low	Low	High	Low

44

Much like the previous two tables, table 2c exhibits the results of the cluster analysis for the case studies which, for this study, would be categorized as having a low level of restrictiveness. The case studies that were classified as such for this study were Nevada, Vermont, and Arizona. Using the Method of Agreement, it can be seen that only two of the eight independent variables match the dependent variable for this category: Population Density and Ideas.

From this we can presume that in regards to states which exhibit firearms policies which may be classified as low, Population Densities and Ideas may be used to explain this classification. Using the Method of Agreement we can infer that neither Urban Percentages nor Interests play a role in explain why certain states select a firearms policy of low restrictiveness. However, four of the remaining six independent variables highlight that fact that at least two of the three case studies the independent variable matches the dependent variables: Total Population, Institutions, Incidents, and Inter-State Diffusion. From this we can construe that while these four independent variables may not be necessary conditions for a low level of restrictiveness, they prove to be sufficient.

Method of Difference Analysis

Table 3: Method of Difference Analysis for All Three Levels of Dependent Variables

State	Total Population	Population Density	Urban Percentages	Ideas	Interests	Institutions	Incidents	Inter-State Diffusion	Level of Restrictiveness
California	High	Medium	High	High	Med	High	High	High	High
Connecticut	Low	High	High	High	Low	Low	Low	High	High
New York	High	Medium	High	High	Low	High	Medium	High	High
Pennsylvania	Medium	Medium	Medium	Med	Low	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
Washington	Medium	Low	Medium	Med	High	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
Colorado	Medium	Low	Medium	Med	Med	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
Nevada	Low	Low	High	Low	Med	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Vermont	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Arizona	Medium	Low	High	Low	Med	Low	Low	Medium	Low

Table 3 shows the results of the combination of cluster analysis for all three restrictive categories: high, medium, and low. Unlike in the previous analysis which used the Method of Agreement, this table uses the analysis is derived from the Method of Difference. Therefore unlike in the three previous analyses, this one looks to determine if one independent variable is only found in one of the classifications. Using the Method of Difference we find that there is only one independent variable in which the independent variable value is the same in only one classification; this is the independent variable of ideas. Therefore we can hypothesize, that when using the Method of Difference, it appears that the independent variable of Ideas could be seen as the determinant in state firearms policy for all three levels of restrictiveness.

There are two other variables however that can also be considered as likely causal factors because just one of the nine independent variables does not co-vary with the dependent variable: total population and inter-state diffusion/ Looking at the other independent variables we find varying independent variable values across the classification spectrum. For instance in looking at the independent variable of Total Population we find that all three states which can be classified as moderately restrictive also share the same value of medium. However, they are not the only one to possess this value. As evidenced in table 3 we see that Arizona also holds the value of medium in the Total Population independent variable, even though it is categorized as having low restrictiveness.

This method then allows us also to rule out the other IVs as sufficient factors to bring about the relevant outcome.

#### Joint Method of Agreement and Difference Analysis

Having conducted both the Method of Agreement and Method of Difference separately, we now turn to an analysis of these findings in combination to identify any overlap. Using the Joint Method of Agreement and Difference Analysis we see that there is only one independent variable in which all four analyses overlap; that is the independent variable of ideas. This provides a strong case for the argument **that ideas may be the main cause in explaining variation between states regarding their state firearms policy** and secondary role is played by total population and inter-state diffusion.

Although the independent variable of Ideas was found to be overlapping in all four analyses, several other independent variables overlapped in some regards, but not completely. This can be seen when looking at both Urban Percentages and Inter-State Diffusion. The independent variable of Urban Percentages, along with Total Population and Population Density, can be seen as an independent which makes up the over-arching independent variable of Urbanization. A more in-depth look at all three as parts to the larger variable of Urbanization indicates that urbanization may be a determinant of state firearms policy variation. There is also slight overlap in the independent variable of Inter-State Diffusion. While from this analysis it makes it difficult to determine if this independent variable is a determinant, the analysis shows that the variable may be a sufficient condition, rather than a necessary one.

While Ideas and Urbanization, to an extent, appear to be determinants in state firearms policy variation they do not all share the same level of certainty. However before discussing levels of certainty, it is important to note an interesting conclusion of the analysis. This conclusion being that incidents do not seem to play a role in state firearms policy variation. However, while the data from this study points to incidents not being a likely cause, real world reactions to incidents would appear to prove the opposite. The Sandy Hook School shooting pushed both Connecticut and New York to adopt stricter firearms legislation. The Sandy Hook School shooting took place December 14, 2012; Connecticut instituted a magazine capacity restriction as well as a strengthened the already implemented assault weapons ban in April of 2013 and New York implemented the New York Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement Act of 2013 (NY SAFE ACT) on January 15, 2013 which among many things banned possession of high capacity magazines, broadened the definition of what constitutes an assault weapon within the context of the assault weapons ban as well as create a registry for said assault weapons<sup>100</sup>. Furthermore, this point can be made in relation to California's response to the San Bernardino shooting on December 2, 2015. In response to this shooting California's state Senate is looking to enact 7 new bills which would further restrict firearms access and ownership. Some of these such as SB-880 would expand the definition of assault weapons to include semi-automatic, centerfire rifles with easily detachable magazines,

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<sup>100</sup> New York State Senate Bill S2230



while SB-1446 would further restrict access to high capacity magazines and SB-1235 would require that records be kept for purchase of ammunition.

Though on the surface it would appear that incidents play a large role in influencing firearms policy and thus may be used to explain why firearms policies differ, upon deeper examination this conclusion is not as solid. While California, Connecticut, and New York have all enacted new legislation which would further restrict firearms in response to high profile incidents, this reaction is not applicable to all states across the board. January 8, 2011 saw the shooting of Gabriel Giffords as well as 18 others by Jared Lee Loughner in Tucson Arizona, however this incident, while causing calls for firearms restrictions on the national level, did not spur Arizona to enact a new firearms policy. Another example of this can be seen in the aftermath of the Virginia Tech Shooting, which left 33 dead and 23 wounded on April 16, 2007. Much like in response of Arizona to the Tucson shooting, Virginia did not pass sweeping legislation in the wake of the Virginia Tech Shooting.

That fact that there is a myriad of responses from states in the aftermath of a shooting indicates that it is not necessarily the incident itself which spurs policy change, but rather it is another element in conjunction with the incident which can spur policy change. This suggests that incidents may be a sufficient, but not necessary condition for implementing policy change.

### Levels of Certainty

Although the analysis of the case studies strongly suggests that ideas and to a lesser degree urbanization levels are key determinants in a state's firearms policy and thus may be used to explain why variation between firearms policy exists, the levels of certainty are not overwhelmingly strong. The reasoning as to why the levels of certainty are not one hundred percent is mainly due to the limited amount of states that this study used in its analysis.

While the United States is comprised of fifty states as well as numerous territories, only nine states were used. Thus the findings from this study could stand in direct contradiction to findings from a study which used nine different states. The fact that both ideas as well as urbanization levels could be seen as determinants in state firearms policy for all nine case studies using the Mills Methods makes the likelihood that the data gathered from the nine states could be extrapolated to the fifty, however it is impossible to reach a concrete conclusion given the relative sample size.

Though the relatively small sample size lowers levels of certainty, the ratio between selected states and total states in certain categories further lowers the levels of certainty. The states were picked using letter designations awarded by the Brady Campaign based on the number as well as type of firearms laws enacted by each state. Five of the fifty states assessed by the Brady Campaign were assigned a score in the A range, five in the B range, seven in the C range, seven in the D range, and twenty-six in

the F range<sup>101</sup>. For the purposes of this study three states from the A, C, and F range were selected; while selecting three states from both the A and C range provided a number of states which were slightly over or under the total number of states, the three states selected from the F range represented a little more than 11 percent of the states which had been awarded that grade. While the analysis for this study demonstrated that for the three states which were awarded Fs and thus designated as low restrictive ideas and urbanization levels played a part, these findings could be contradicted if all twenty six states were analyzed.

Due to both the given sample size as well as the ratio of selected states to the total number of states which could be categorized as pursuing a low restrictive firearms policy it is impossible to make a concrete conclusion of what may explain for state firearms policy variation. What can be determined from the data is that the independent variables of Ideas as well as Urbanization levels may be determinants in a state's firearms policy and thus may account for variation in state firearms policy.

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<sup>101</sup> "2013 State Scorecard | Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence," accessed November 22, 2015, <http://www.bradycampaign.org/2013-state-scorecard>.

## Conclusion

This study set out to identify determinants of variations in state firearms policies using Mill's Joint Method of Agreement and Difference. The Method of Agreement was implemented by looking at each categorical dependent variable and determining if the independent variable matched that the relevant dependent variable. After identifying possible determinants using the Method of Agreement, the nine cases studies were compared as a whole using the Method of Difference. Here, the study considered whether there were independent data values that matched the variations in the dependent variable category. If a particular category exclusively shared an independent variable and the particular value which was shared was not found in any of the other two categories; under the Method of Difference that may be considered a possible determinant. Upon applying both the Method of Agreement and Method of Difference, the four analyses were looked at in combination to determine if there was any overlap between the three Method of Agreement analyses and the one Method of Difference analysis. The data from this Joint Method of analysis allowed us to conclude that out of the six influences known to public policy, ideas are the most likely the determinant in firearms policy variation. That is not to say that other influences such as Urbanization levels or Institutions have no impact on a state's firearms policy, but rather such variables may be sufficient conditions in *some* cases, while the ideas of a state can be seen as necessary in *all* cases.

Though there has not been much in the way of research in regards to identifying the determinants of state firearms variation it nonetheless shares importance with regards

to past research. Particularly within the realm of research looking at firearms, firearms policies, and their relation to deaths attributed to firearms. For instance the study, *State and Local Prevalence of Firearms Ownership Measurement, Structure, and Trends*, conducted by Azrael, Cook, and Miller found asserted that “determinants of gun prevalence have more to do with tradition, culture and childhood experience than with concern about crime or other relatively volatile matters”<sup>102</sup>. Although the study conducted by Azrael was looking at the prevalence of firearms within a state and its connection to homicides and suicides, the assertion in their study nonetheless coincides with the findings of this study which found ideas to be the most likely determinant of firearms policy variation, while interests as measured through deaths attributed to firearms did not seem as influential.

Similarly the study, *Why do people support gun control?: Alternative explanations of support for handgun bans*, carried out by Kleck, Gertz, and Bratton found that support or opposition for gun control could not be traced to instrumental effectiveness or even self-interest, but rather that it is most likely cultural and that “is difficult to alter levels of support for gun control because support or opposition is partly grounded in relatively inflexible cultural traits”<sup>103</sup>. Once again the findings from the current study are closely aligned with that of the study conducted by Kleck, et al. Whereas in the Kleck study cultural traits could be explained as the main determinant in

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<sup>102</sup> Azrael, Cook, and Miller, “State and Local Prevalence of Firearms Ownership Measurement, Structure, and Trends.”

<sup>103</sup> Kleck, Gertz, and Bratton, “Why Do People Support Gun Control?”

support or opposition to gun control, this study found that ideas, which could be seen as cultural were the likely determinant in state firearms policy variation. The importance of this research in regards to past research then is that it appears to confirm prior assertions, while showing that these ideas are not only on an individual level, but rather expand to that of state leadership.

The importance of this study however extends beyond just that of the scope of firearms policy, but rather to research regarding policy influence on a broader level. The findings of this study agree with previous studies which have shown the importance of ideas in public policy, particularly in areas of policy change. While some, such as Pierson<sup>104</sup> as well as Keohane<sup>105</sup>, have argued that institutions within the framework of historical institutionalism can account for the change or lack thereof of policy change in many areas, more recent works, such as those conducted by Kangas, Niemelä, and Varjonen<sup>106</sup> as well as Schmidt<sup>107</sup> and Campbell<sup>108</sup>, have come to the conclusion that ideas may be the main force in determining policy change as well as policy stability. This study then matches the general findings of the way in which ideas may act as a policy

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<sup>104</sup> Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State?: Reagan, Thatcher, and the Politics of Retrenchment*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge, England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>105</sup> Robert O. (Robert Owen) Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

<sup>106</sup> Olli E. Kangas, Mikko Niemelä, and Sampo Varjonen, "When and Why Do Ideas Matter? The Influence of Framing on Opinion Formation and Policy Change" 6, no. 1 (2014): 73–92, doi:10.1017/S1755773912000306.

<sup>107</sup> Vivien A. Schmidt, "Taking Ideas and Discourse Seriously: Explaining Change through Discursive Institutionalism as the Fourth 'new Institutionalism,'" *European Political Science Review* 2, no. 1 (2010): 1–25, doi:10.1017/S175577390999021X.

<sup>108</sup> John L. Campbell, "Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2002, 21.

stabilizer, ideas held by the policy makers limit the extent to which a policy may change. This is illustrated, particularly in firearms policy, by the changes made after a large incident; states with ideas which can be seen as pro-firearms are much less likely to enact sweeping firearms changes than states in which the ideas could be seen as anti-firearms. A real world example can be seen in the contrasting responses to two publicized shootings, the shooting of Gabriel Giffords in Arizona and the Sandy Hook shooting in Connecticut. The shooting in Arizona saw no real change in Arizonian firearms policy, while the shooting in Connecticut saw a change towards a more restrictive policy.

The findings from this study, that ideas may be the determinant in state firearms policy variation, may be used to explain why firearms policies at both the state and federal level are difficult to change. Ideas, generally, can be seen as deep seated beliefs which are not easily changed; thus the fact that federal policy actors can be seen as being deeply influenced by the state from which they come, illustrates why at the federal level policy development and enactment can be difficult due to the clash of beliefs in what type of policy should be pursued. Knowing that ideas may be the main determinant in a state firearms policy, coupled with the knowledge that federal policy actors are influenced largely by their originating state, the current clash in federal firearms policy may be abated by federal policy actors realizing the way in which ideas influence firearms policy thus allowing them to understand the reasoning of the opposing side.; the understanding of the opposing views may lead to more successful federal firearms policy due to the ability of both sides, once realizing each other reasons, coming to a compromise. While it

becomes clear that state firearms policy will not change unless there is a shift in the ideas held by the state policy actors, federal firearms policy could change significantly if the opposing viewpoints could better understand each other's arguments.

With this in mind, this study can be used to think about strategic options for changing firearms policies to incorporate restrictions in which there is already broad consensus among leaders across the political spectrum (such as gun ID systems that prevent non-owners from using a firearm and universal background checks). Furthermore this study could also be used to determine the extent to which we could expect the federal firearms policy to change in one direction (more restrictive) or another (less restrictive). While some firearms restrictions may be more palatable, such as implementing smart gun technology, to those policy actors who ideas lean towards a less restrictive firearms policy; these changes in policy are quite small when looking at firearms policy in its entirety. However, that is not to say that smaller changes in policy cannot lead to larger changes in the future, rather the time frame in which to expect larger firearms policy change is expanded. The importance of ideas implies that strategies of communication and education as well as deliberation with the public are needed in order to change policy; which may seem to be of smaller consequence in the present, but can lead to larger policy changes in the future.

For all intents and purposes the debates regarding firearms and firearms policies are all but over. This study attempted to uncover determinants of state firearms policy variation by looking at states with varying degrees of firearms policy restrictiveness;



however the number of states was rather low. Future research could look to include a larger number of case studies in which to validate the findings from this study.

Furthermore some independent variables such as Institutions as well as Interests were measured in only one way, while in reality they can be broken down into many sub-parts. Institutions for example, in this study, were measured by looking at state constitutions, however, institutions encompass a much larger field to include court decisions and state agencies. Similarly interests for this study were measured by looking at deaths attributed to firearms, however interests can be broken down into many subsections. There is the self-interest of the policy actors, which may influence or be influenced by ideas, while at the same time there are interests of the state which is to reduce the amount of violence attributed to firearms, and still there are interests groups which could play a role in influencing firearms policy. Therefore further research could look at the specific independent variables used in this study to determine the extent to which they may influence firearms policy. Expanding the study to include all fifty-states, while also expanding the independent variables into their various sub-sections may further support the findings from this study or may uncover that it is not only ideas, but rather it is a mixture of ideas with other influences.

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## Appendix A

### Case Study Statistics:

#### Population:

California: According to the US Census Bureau, California is comprised of 155,779.22 square miles; making it the largest in terms of overall size. The total population for California according to the US Census Bureau is 39,144,818, making it the state with the largest population as well. Combining these two statistics, the US Census Bureau states that the population density is 239.1 persons per a square mile, which places it fourth among the nine case study states. However, California has the largest percentage of individuals living with in an urbanized area as defined by the US Census Bureau, coming in at 95%.

Connecticut: According to the US Census Bureau, Connecticut covers 5,544 square miles; thus it is one of the smallest of the nine case studies. As stated by the US Census Bureau, the population of Connecticut is 3,590,886 individuals, making it the third smallest state in terms of population. However, the population density is the highest of the nine case studies with 738.1 people per a square mile and is fourth highest in terms of urbanization percentages coming in at fourth of the nine case studies with 88 percent.

New York: New York, as estimated by the US Census Bureau, encompasses 54,475 square miles; making its one of the larger states among the Nine case studies. The population of New York, according to the US Census Bureau, is comprised of 19,795,791 people; making it the second largest state in terms of overall population. The population density is then 411.2 people per a square mile, again making it the second largest state in

terms of population density. However, in terms of urbanization percentages, New York comes in at fifth with a percentage of 87.9%.

Pennsylvania: As stated by the US Census Bureau, Pennsylvania is comprised of 46,058 square miles and its population is made up of 12,802,503. This makes Pennsylvania one of the medium sized states in term of overall size and third in terms of total population. In terms of population density, Pennsylvania has 283.9 people per a square mile making it denser than California and fourth out of the nine case studies. However Pennsylvania has one of the lowest urbanization percentages, coming in at 78.7, making it second to last in terms of urbanization.

Washington: Washington encompasses, according to the US Census Bureau, 71,303 square miles and is comprised of 7,170,351; making it one of the larger states among the nine case studies, though having one of the smaller populations. In terms of population density, Washington come in at 101.2 people per a square mile, which makes it fifth when compared to the other nine states. While not as low as other states, Washington comes in with an urbanization percentage of 84.1, which places it within the middle of the nine case studies.

Colorado: As stated by the US Census bureau, Colorado is made up of 103,641.89 square miles with the total population comprised of 5,456,574 people. This makes the population density of Colorado 48.5, placing it at eighth among the nine case studies. The urbanization percentages, as stated by the US Census Bureau is 86.2%.

Nevada: Nevada is slightly bigger than Colorado coming in at 109,781.18 square miles according to the US Census Bureau. The total population for Nevada, though, is quite small, comprising 2,890,845 people, making it the third lowest total populations of the nine case studies. Out of the nine studies, Nevada had the lowest population density coming in at 24.6 people per a square mile, however it was the second highest in terms of urbanization percentages, coming in at 94.2%.

Vermont: Vermont is the smallest state among the nine case studies encompassing 9,615 square miles. The total population for Vermont is also the lowest made up of only 626,042 persons. The population density however was not the smallest coming in at 67.9, placing it sixth. However, the urbanization percentages is the lowest of the nine states with a percentage of 38.9%.

Arizona: Arizona is comprised on 114,006 square miles as stated by the US Census Bureau. The total population of Arizona is 6,828,065, placing it fifth out of the nine states in terms of total population. In terms of population density Arizona had 56.3 people per a square mile, making it only larger than Nevada and Colorado. The urbanization percentage, however, is one of the highest coming in at 89.8 making it third out of the nine case studies.

Ideas:

California: Legislators in California were ranked relatively low by the NRA in terms of pro-gun attitude. Anthony Rendon, Speaker of the State Assembly, Kevein, De'Leon,

President of the Senate, and Reginald B. Jone-Sawyer, Chair of the Committee of Public Safety all received a grade of F. However the Vice Chair of the Committee of Public Safety, Melissa A. Melendez received and A-.

Connecticut: The NRA graded key legislators in the legislator very low in regards to favorability towards firearms. Brendan Sharky, Speaker of the House, Martin M Looney, President of the Senate as well as Timothy Larson and Stephen Dargan, Co-Chairs of Public Safety received a letter grade of F.

New York: Legislators for the state of New York were mostly awarded low grades by the NRA. John J Flanagan, head of the Senate as well as chair of the Rules Committee, and Carl Heastie Speaker of the House, received a letter grade of F. However, John A Defransico, Vice Chair of the Rules Committee received an A.

Pennsylvania: The legislators of Pennsylvania generally received high marks from the NRA. Michael Turzai, Speaker of the House received an A+ rating; Ryan Aument, Vice Chair of Public Health and Welfare received an A; Patricia Vance, Chair of Public Health and Welfare, received an A-; Mike Stack, head of the Senate received a C-.

Washington: Washington, in general did not receive favorable marks from the NRA. Frank Chopp, Speaker of the House received a C-; Christine Kilduff, Vice Chair of Government Operations and Security, received a C, Laurie Jenkins, Chair of Government Operations and Security, received a D; However, Pam Roach President of the Senate received an A+.

Colorado: In general the NRA gave Colorado favorable marks. Head of the Senate, Bill Cadman was given an A+; Kevin Lundberg and Larry Crowder, Chair and Vice Chair of Health and Human Services, received an A; However Dickey Lee Hullinghorst, Speaker of the House, was awarded an F.

Nevada: Nevada was awarded high marks by the NRA. John Hambrick, Speaker of the House was awarded an A+. Both Mark Hutchison, head of the Senate, and Crescent Hardy, Chair of Health and Human Services received an A; Ben Kieckhefer, Vice Chair of Health and Human services, received the lowest grade with an A-.

Vermont: Vermont was generally awarded a high grade by the NRA in relation to firearms. Phil Scott, head of the Senate, Shap Smith, Speaker of the House and Clair Ayer, Chair of Health and Welfare, were awarded A's. Virginia Lyons, Vice Chair of Health and Welfare, however, was given a C.

Arizona: Arizona received the highest marks of the nine case studies by the NRA in relation to firearms. David Gowan, Speaker of the House, Steve Smith, Chair of Public Safety, Military and Technology, and John Kavanagh, Vice Chair of Public Safety, Military, and Technology, all received an A+ by the NRA. Andy Brigs, leader of the Senate was awarded an A.