

UC Irvine

UC Irvine Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Opposing Movement Strategy, Critical Events, and Policy Change: How the Gun Control and Gun Rights Movements Capitalize on Mass Shootings

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3xn713ft>

Author

Laschever, Eulalie

Publication Date

2017

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Opposing Movement Strategy, Critical Events, and Policy Change:
How the Gun Control and Gun Rights Movements Capitalize on Mass Shootings

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Sociology

by

Eulalie Ida Jean Laschever

Dissertation Committee:
Professor David S. Meyer, Chair
Professor Charles Ragin
Professor David Snow

2017

DEDICATION

For my family:
Eulalie Sullivan, Eric Laschever, Beth Laschever,
and Max Friedman

And for all the victims of gun violence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	v
LIST OF TABLES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
CURRICULUM VITAE	viii
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	xiv
INTRODUCTION: CAPITALIZING ON ATTENTION-GRABBING EVENTS	1
The Politics of Attention	1
Contending with Opponents	3
Organizational Strategy and Venue Selection	3
Organizational and Contextual Constraints on Movement Strategy.....	7
The Sandy Hook Shooting and American Gun Politics.....	11
Overview of the Dissertation	14
CHAPTER 1: EVENTS AND THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT	18
An Opportunity or a Threat?.....	18
Examining the Political and Cultural Context	18
American Gun Politics in Comparative Context	20
The Evolution of American Gun Politics.....	23
The Sandy Hook Shooting, a Critical Event for Gun Politics	39
Conclusions.....	45
CHAPTER 2: EVENTS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY	47
An Opportunity for Whom?.....	47
Examining Organizational Capacity	47
Gun Control Organizations	52
Gun Rights Organizations.....	56
Increased Organizational Capacity After Sandy Hook.....	60
Assessing Organizational Strategy	70
Conclusions.....	75
CHAPTER 3: MAXIMIZING EVENT OPPORTUNITIES	77
Capitalizing on an Opportunity.....	77
Flooding Favorite Venues After a Critical Event	81
Primed to Act, But Where to Go?.....	86

Organizational Strategy at the End of the Sandy Hook Moment.....	89
Conclusion	92
CHAPTER 4: MINIMIZING THREATENING EVENTS	95
Minimizing a Threat	95
Picking Your Battles, and Playing to Your Strengths.....	99
Staying the Course, With Small Shifts	102
Organizational Strategy at the End of the Sandy Hook Moment.....	105
Differences from Pre-Sandy-Hook Strategy?	110
Conclusions.....	111
CHAPTER 5: STATE LEGISLATIVE OUTCOMES	114
State Legislative Consequences of Shifting Contextual and Organizational Conditions	114
Why Laws Sometimes Change	115
Politically Mediated Impact.....	118
The Analytical Advantages of Qualitative Comparative Analysis.....	118
Operationalizing Causal Conditions and Outcomes	120
More State-Level Legislative Change After Sandy Hook	125
Conditions for Legislative Change Before Sandy Hook.....	127
Conditions for Legislative Change After Sandy Hook.....	129
Conclusions.....	134
CONCLUSION: MAXIMIZING GAINS AND MINIMIZING LOSSES BY TARGETING CERTAIN VENUES	137
What Kind of Opportunity?	137
An Opportunity for Whom?.....	138
An Opportunity for What?.....	139
Maximizing Gains: Side Benefits, Reevaluating, and Targeting Select State Contexts.	141
Minimizing Losses: Obstruction, Mobilization, and Targeting Select State Contexts...	142
National Movements Targeting State Legislative Venues.....	143
Avenues for Future Research.....	144
Gun Politics Going Forward.....	145
REFERENCES	147

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 1	Google Trends Interest in the Subject of "Gun Control," Jan 2011 to Dec 2014	13
Figure 2	Cross-National Comparison, Firearms per 100 People, 2007	21
Figure 3	Cross-National Comparison, Rates of Firearms-Related Deaths per 100,000 People	22
Figure 4	Number of New York Times Articles Referencing "Gun Violence," 1945 – 2016	29
Figure 5	Percent of Americans Who Believe "The Laws Covering the Sale of Firearms Should be Made 'More Strict,'" or Not, 1975 – 2014	31
Figure 6	Percent of Households with a Gun, 1972 – 2014	34
Figure 7	NICS Background Checks Performed and Firearms Manufactured per 1,000 People, 1986 - 2014	35
Figure 8	Articles in the New York Times Referencing "Gun Violence," "Gun Control," and "Gun Rights," January 2011 – December 2014	40
Figure 9	Public Attention to "Gun Control," "Gun Violence," and "Gun Rights," January 2011 – December 2014	43
Figure 10	Percent of Americans Who Think it is More Important to "Protect the Right of Americans to Own Guns," versus "Control Gun Ownership," January 2011 – December 2014	44

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 1	Historic Firearms Legislation and Partisan Government Control	37
Table 2	Organizational Revenue, 2011 – 2014	61
Table 3	Organizational Staff Members, 2011 – 2014	63
Table 4	Organizational Volunteers, 2011 – 2014	64
Table 5	State Chapters and Local Affiliates, 2011 – 2014	66
Table 6	Number of New York Times Articles that Referenced Each Organization, 2011 – 2014	68
Table 7	Number of Organizational Press Communications Issued Annually, 2011 – 2014	71
Table 8	Components of an Agenda Item	72
Table 9	Total Agenda Items per Year, 2011 – 2014	73
Table 10	Changes to State Firearms Restrictions in the 2011 – 2012 Legislative Session and the 2013 – 2014 Legislative Session	125
Table 11	Conditions Under Which States Tightened or Relaxed Firearms Restrictions During the 2011-2012 Legislative Session	127
Table 12	Conditions Under Which States Tightened or Relaxed Firearms Restrictions During the 2013-2014 Legislative Session	129

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not exist without the support of those I have worked with throughout graduate study at the University of California, Irvine. I am indebted, first and foremost to my Dissertation Chair and mentor, David Meyer. David read countless drafts of every piece of this project. His feedback always pushed me towards a more precise and rigorous understanding of the questions I was asking, the case of gun politics, the theories I rely on, and the claims I make. My achievement here is to his credit.

My other dissertation committee members, David Snow and Charles Ragin, also provided invaluable support throughout the research process. Without their instruction in Ethnographic, Qualitative Comparative, and Comparative Historical Methods, I would not have known how to conduct the research necessary to produce this dissertation. I am also thankful for the valuable feedback that Edwin Amenta and Graeme Boushey provided in conceptualizing this project. Their early insights strongly inform the theoretical underpinnings of this dissertation.

Thank you to my colleagues and friends at the University of California, and especially to those of you who were both. Anna Tan, Rottem Sagi, Amanda Pullum, and Nolan Philips, I could not have made it through grad school without you. Special thanks also to the members of the Social Movements & Social Justice workgroup at UCI for providing patient and constructive feedback on numerous drafts across the research process, and to the members of my intramural sports teams for keeping me sane.

I am eternally grateful for the support of UCI staff, John Sommerhauser, Shani Brasier, Maryann Zovak-Wieder, Brenda Fitzjarrald, Ekua Arhin, and Hannah Absher who helped me navigate the bureaucratic complexities of UCI, and without whom I would have missed many more deadlines.

I was fortunate to have received grants and fellowships in support for this research from the National Science Foundation; the UCI Center for the Study of Democracy; the UCI Center for Citizen Peacebuilding; the UCI Center in Law, Society and Culture; the UCI Graduate Dean's Office; and the UCI Associate Dean's Office. Thank you for believing that my research was worth funding.

I could not have made it to grad school, much less through it, without the tireless, unwavering, support of my family and friends. To my friends, Adina Mangubat, Peter Leahey, Alenna Nilsen, Beth Egan, Jon Eggers, Jessica Ritter, and Jules Boykoff, thank you for helping me figure out what ideas are, supporting me when things are hard, celebrating with me, and helping me to be a better person. To my parents, Eulalie Sullivan and Eric Laschever, thank you for giving me every opportunity, and, more importantly, for your unconditional love and support. To my sister Beth, thank you for either keeping me humble, and for trying to convince me that I'm superwoman, depending on which is called for. And to my husband, Max Friedman, words are inadequate to thank you for everything you have given in support of both this project and me. Without you, I would not be who I am.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Eulalie Laschever

3151 Social Sciences Plaza ● University of California, Irvine ● Irvine, CA 92627
Phone: (206) 963-1199, Email: elashev@uci.edu

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Department of Sociology, University of California, Irvine, December 2017

Dissertation: *Opposing Movement Strategy, Critical Events, and Policy Change: How the Gun Control and Gun Rights Movements Capitalized on the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting*

Committee: David S. Meyer (chair), Charles Ragin, David Snow

Areas of Expertise: Public Policy, Organizational Theory, Social Movements, Gun Politics, American Political Institutions, Political Sociology, Media Sociology, Qualitative and Mixed Methods

M.A. Department of Sociology, University of California, Irvine, June 2014

Thesis: "Are They Not Worthy? Social Movements, Legitimacy, and Partisan Media."

B.A. Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, Pacific University, 2009

Thesis, Sociology Major: "The Buzz About the Birds and the Bees: Parental Reproductive Health Capital."

Thesis, Social Work Major: "But High Schoolers Don't Have Sex!": A Resource and Needs Assessment of Washington County Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention."

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

2017 **Laschever, Eulalie.** "Are They Not Worthy? How Partisan Political Blogs Legitimize the Tea Party Movement and Occupy Wall Street." *Sociological Forum*.

2011 Boykoff, Jules, and **Eulalie Laschever.** "The TEA Party Movement, Framing, and the U.S. Media." *Social Movement Studies* 10(4):341-366.

Book Chapters

2016 Meyer, David S., and **Eulalie Laschever.** "Social Movements and the Institutionalization of Dissent in America" in *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Development*,

edited by Richard Valelly, Suzanne Mettler, and Robert Lieberman. Oxford University Press.

Book Reviews

- 2016 **Laschever, Eulalie.** “Movements in Times of Democratic Transitions.” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 21(2):249-250.
- 2014 **Laschever, Eulalie.** “Contesting Patriotism: Culture, Power, and Strategy in the Peace Movement.” *Peace & Change*, 29(1).

Work in Progress

Laschever, Eulalie, and David S. Meyer. “Growth and Decay of Social Movement Sectors: Gun Control and Gun Rights Organizations from 1945 to 2014.” (Revise & Resubmit)

Laschever, Eulalie. “Critical Events, Opposing Social Movements, and Legislative Change: How the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting Influenced State Gun Laws.” (Under Review)

FELLOWSHIPS & GRANTS

2016	Graduate Dean’s Dissertation Fellowship, UC Irvine	(\$11,500)
2016	Associate Dean’s Dissertation Fellowship, UC Irvine	(\$11,500)
2016	National Science Foundation – Dissertation Improvement Award	(\$11,447)
2015	Summer Research Fellowship, Center for the Study of Democracy, UC Irvine	(\$2,500)
2014	Kugelman Research Fellowship, Center for Citizen Peacebuilding, UC Irvine	(\$1,500)
2014	Collaborative Research Grant, Center in Law, Society and Culture, UC Irvine	(\$700)
2013	National Science Foundation – Graduate Research Fellowship	(\$100,000)
2013	Summer Research Fellowship, Center for the Study of Democracy, UC Irvine	(\$1,500)
2012	Center for the Study of Democracy, Summer Research Fellowship	(\$1,500)
2009	Fulbright U.S. Student Program – Student Research Grant (India)	(\$11,000)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of California, Irvine

Instructor

Undergraduate Research Methods in Sociology (Summer 2016)

Certificate in Teaching Excellence, The Center for Engaged Instruction (Fall 2015)

Teaching Assistant

Undergraduate Research Methods (Winter 2017)
Sociology Major Seminar (Fall 2012, Spring 2013)
Small Group Behavior (Winter 2013)
Global Cultures & Societies (Fall 2011, Spring 2012)
Intro to Socio-Cultural Anthropology (Winter 2012)

Pacific University, Forest Grove, Oregon

Assisting Instructor

Gender and Society in India (January 2016)
Co-led a three-week travel class in Madurai, India

INVITED TALKS

- 2016 “Expectations Lost: What’s Next for the 2016 Election? Part Two” *Expert Speaker Series*. University of California, Irvine, CA, Oct. 5.
- 2016 “Expectations Lost: What’s Next for the 2016 Election?” *Expert Speaker Series*. University of California, Irvine, CA, May 11.
- 2016 “The Character of United States Social Institutions.” Lady Doak College, Madurai India, Jan. 18.
- 2010 “HIV/AIDS Prevention Education in Tamil Nadu India: A Cultural Change Perspective.” Pacific University, Forest Grove OR, Nov. 9.
- 2009 “Social Change in India: A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Macro-Level Changes.” Lady Doak College, Madurai India, Oct. 15.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- 2017 “When Events are Opportunities: The Gun Control Movement’s Response to the Sandy Hook Shooting.” American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Montreal, Canada, Aug. 12.
- 2017 “Capitalizing on Event Opportunities: How Gun Control Groups Responded to the Sandy Hook Shooting.” Conference on Social Movements: Nonviolent Strategies and the State, San Diego, CA, May 5.
- 2017 “Why States Changed Their Gun Laws Before and After the Sandy Hook Shooting.” Eastern Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, Feb. 24

- 2016 “Determinants of Changes to State-Level Firearms Restrictions Before and After the Sandy Hook Shooting.” American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA, Aug. 23
- 2016 “Determinants of Changes to State-Level Firearms Restrictions Before and After the Sandy Hook Shooting.” American Sociological Association Meeting, Comparative Historical Sociology Pre-Conference, Seattle, WA, Aug. 18.
- 2016 “Determinants of Changes to State-Level Firearms Restrictions Before and After the Sandy Hook Shooting.” Young Scholars in Social Movements Annual Conference, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN, May 6.
- 2016 “Determinants of Changes to State-Level Firearms Restrictions Before and After the Sandy Hook Shooting.” Pacific Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Oakland CA, April 1.
- 2015 “Growth and Decay of Social Movement Sectors: Gun Control and Gun Rights Organizations from 1945 to 2014.” American Sociological Association Meeting, Collective Behavior and Social Movement Pre-Conference, Chicago, IL, Aug. 20.
- 2015 “The Perpetuation of Gender Inequality: The Gendering of Political Discourse in Partisan New Media.” Pacific Sociological Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA, April 4.
- 2015 “Growth and Decay of Social Movement Sectors: Gun Control and Gun Rights Organizations from 1945 to 2014.” Pacific Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Long Beach, CA, April 3.
- 2014 “Growth and Decay of Social Movement Sectors: Gun Control and Gun Rights Organizations from 1945 to 2014.” American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA, Aug. 17.
- 2014 “The Perpetuation of Gender Inequality: The Gendering of Political Discourse in Partisan New Media.” American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA, Aug 16.
- 2014 “Are They Not Worthy? Social Movements, Legitimacy, and Partisan Media.” American Sociological Association Media Pre-Conference, San Francisco, CA, Aug 15.
- 2013 “Are They Not Worthy? Social Movements, Legitimacy, and Partisan Media.” American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, New York, NY, Aug 10.
- 2013 “Are They Not Worthy? Social Movements, Legitimacy, and Partisan Media.” Pacific Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Reno, NV, March 22.

- 2011 “The TEA Party Movement and the US Prestige Press.” Pacific Sociological Association Annual Conference, Seattle WA, March 11.
- 2009 “HIV/AIDS Prevention Education in Tamil Nadu: Policy and Implementation.” Fulbright Conference, Pondicherry, India, Nov. 26.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- 2013 Center for the Study of Democracy, Jack W. Peltason Fellow
- 2009 Senior Thesis Theory Award, Pacific University Sociology Department
- 2009 Sociology Honor Society – Alpha Kappa Delta
- 2009 Social Work Honor Society – Phi Alpha, Omicron Kappa Chapter

SERVICE

Professional Service

- 2016 – Present Reviewer, *American Sociological Review*
- 2015 – Present Reviewer, *American Journal of Sociology*
- 2014 – Present Reviewer, *Mobilization: An International Journal*
- 2014 – Present Reviewer, *Qualitative Sociology*

Institutional Service

- 2017 Reviewer, Dean’s Fellowship Advisory Committee, UC-Irvine, since 2013
- 2017 Member, Social Movements & Social Justice Workshop, UC-Irvine, since 2013
- 2016 Mentor, Grant Writing Workshop Series, Sociology Department, UC-Irvine, since 2013
- 2016 Co-Editor, *Tran-Scripts—Online Interdisciplinary Humanities and Social Science Journal*, UC-Irvine, since 2013
- 2015 Alumni Coordinator, Sociology Graduate Student Government, UC-Irvine
- 2014 Faculty Committee Representative, Sociology Graduate Student Government, UC-Irvine
- 2012 Organizer, Democracy and Conflict Lunch Series, Center for the Study of Democracy, UC-Irvine
- 2012 Cohort Representative for Class 2011, Sociology Graduate Student Government, UC-Irvine, since 2011
- 2008 Student Representative, Search Committee for Social Work Professor, Pacific University

2006 Orientation Leader, Pre-Orientation Voyages, Outback Outdoor Adventure, Pacific University

Professional Associations

American Sociological Association (Since 2013)

Pacific Sociological Association (Since 2013)

Eastern Sociological Society (Since 2017)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2017 Research Assistant to Catherine Bolzendahl, UC-Irvine Sociology Department, since 2015

2011 Independent Program Evaluator, Living Earth Institute (Kathmandu, Nepal)

2011 Independent Program Evaluator, A Child's Right (Kathmandu, Nepal)

2011 Research Assistant to Professor Jules Boykoff, Pacific University Political Science Department (Forest Grove, Oregon), since 2010

2010 Data Collector, Portland State University's Center for Improvement of Child and Family Services (Portland, Oregon)

2010 Research Assistant, Pacific Research & Evaluation (Portland, Oregon)

2009 Intern, Washington County Commission on Children & Families (Hillsboro, Oregon), since 2008

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Opposing Movement Strategy, Critical Events, and Policy Change:
How the Gun Control and Gun Rights Movements Capitalize on Mass Shootings

By

Eulalie Jean Laschever

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Irvine, 2017

Professor David S. Meyer, Chair

This dissertation explains why both sides of an opposing movement pair make political gains in the contentious, crowded, and shifting political context that follows attention-grabbing, agenda-disrupting events. The literature on policy change in political science and sociology contend that “critical events” are an opportunity to mobilize supporters and secure policy change. But existing research does not explain why, where, or under what conditions opposing political organizations do so. To address this shortcoming, this dissertation uses historical-comparative and ethnographic techniques to analyze over 100 hours of fieldwork; thousands of organizational documents, newspaper articles, and government reports; and informal interviews to determine how gun control and gun rights groups both sought to maximize policy gains in the years after the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

The analysis demonstrates that gun control groups maximized political gains by shifting their attention to state legislative venues after their initial efforts to secure national legislation failed. Gun rights groups, however, maximized political gains by trusting their allies in Congress to block new gun control legislation and continuing to push legislative goals in favorable state contexts, while using the threat of gun control to mobilize their supporters. This dissertation

contributes the literatures on social movements, organizational strategy, and policy changes by elaborating a theory of selected contexts, whereby national political organizations prioritize key policy fights in certain state legislatures. A theory of selected contexts is necessary to understand how national political organizations influence local politics under conditions of national political gridlock. This dissertation also contributes to our broader understanding of the politics of violence, particularly the politics of mass shootings.

INTRODUCTION: CAPITALIZING ON ATTENTION-GRABBING EVENTS

The Politics of Attention

Political organizations strive to bring attention to their cause so that they can mobilize supporters and advance their goals, but this can be a difficult task. There are many important issues that compete for our attention, and lawmakers, media outlets, and the public can only focus on so many issues at a time (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). Getting on the agenda is the first step in the multistage policy process (Kolb 2007), so attracting attention to its issue is an essential task for an organization that is looking to advance its policy goals. Therefore, when a movement's issue does rise to the top of the agenda this represents a valuable opportunity for the movement to mobilize supporters and advance its goals.

One way that an issue rises to the top of the agenda is that an attention-grabbing event underscores that issue (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Birkland 1997; Kingdon 1984). These events can take a variety of forms, with movements having more control over some events than others, and different kinds of events paving the way for different potential movement outcomes, but "the general significance of critical events lies in their impact on public and elite attention and receptivity to movement issues" (Staggenborg 1993:321). Movements, for example, can sometimes attract attention to themselves and their issue by staging a successful march or rally, and they tend to have a lot of control over planning their own strategic initiatives. Policy outcomes also tend to generate attention and shift the priorities of various political actors. If the movement was involved in a policy fight, then it partially influenced the event.

Other attention-grabbing events, though, are unplanned. Movements cannot control when these events will occur or what the nature of the event will be, only how they respond to the

event. Take, for example, how the meltdown at Three Mile Island directed attention to the dangers of nuclear power, the Exxon Valdez oil spill directed attention to environmental degradation, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire directed attention to workplace safety, and the shooting at Sandy Hook elementary school directed attention to gun violence (Birkland 1997; McEvoy 1995; Schildkraut, Elsass, and Meredith 2017). An unplanned event has the potential to refocus the agenda when it is a “rare, harmful, sudden event that becomes known to the mass public and policy elites virtually simultaneously” (Birkland 1997: 3). These kinds of events present a mobilizing opportunity because they disrupt the public’s normal complacency on an issue and they can motivate bystanders to join the movement’s cause (Jasper and Poulsen 1995; Mariel and Arthur 2007; Walsh 1988).

Many unplanned, attention-grabbing events have no lasting impact, though. For example, half a dozen accidents occurred at nuclear power plants in the United States and abroad throughout the 1960s and 70s without sparking the widespread mobilization that followed the Three Mile Island accident in 1979 (Gamson 1988; Walsh 1981). Likewise, the birth of the gay rights movement is often attributed to the riots at the Stonewall Inn in New York City in 1969, despite the occurrence of other similar events throughout the 1960’s that could have played the same role (Armstrong and Cragg 2006). And major gun control legislation introduced in Congress after attention-grabbing school shootings is rarely enacted (Schildkraut and Hernandez 2013). Events do not translate directly into mobilization or policy change.

It is how political actors like social movement organizations, individual activists, and lawmakers *use* an event that determines what kind of impact that event will have. The reason we remember the Stonewall Riots as the start of the gay rights movement, for example, is because of a strategic choice that activists made in response to this event. Activists chose to commemorate

the event with a parade, a tactic that was emotionally resonant and that was easy to replicate and institutionalize (Armstrong and Cragg 2006). As a central mobilizing tactic of the movement, pride parades provide an annual link that connects the movement, the parade, and the parade's origin. This raises the question: *how can political organizations capitalize on an unplanned, attention-grabbing event that thrusts their issue into the spotlight?*

Contending with Opponents

While an unplanned, attention-grabbing event may help a movement gain political influence, this potential advantage is complicated by the fact that both increased opportunity and increased threat are mobilizing forces (Tilly 1978). As one side moves to capitalize on what it perceives as a newly sympathetic context that might be more receptive to its efforts, its opponent moves to defend against what it perceives as an increasingly hostile context that might threaten its interests (Goldstone and Tilly 2001). Indeed, Laschever and Meyer (2015) find that new gun control and new gun rights organizations are both founded in the wake of attention-grabbing shootings, meaning that these types of events are a mobilizing opportunity for both sides of the gun debate. A movement's political gains after an event must therefore be considered in relation to any gains its opponents also make. This raises the question: *how do opposing movement pairs maximize gains and minimize losses after an event that brings attention to their shared cause? And under what conditions does each side get what it wants?*

Organizational Strategy and Venue Selection

There are countless choices that movement actors need to make about which issues to focus on, what demands to make, which venues engage with, whom to target in those venues, and what tactics they should use to try and persuade those targets. Most political actors have a strategy, or an "overall plan of action" or "blueprint of activities with regard to the mobilization

of resources and the series of collective actions” (Jenkins 1981:135), that guides their choices. Scholars often treat strategy as an umbrella term that encompasses the many smaller choices that political actors make (Jasper 2008; Meyer and Staggenborg 2012), and it is also a framework that can limit their choices as they privilege some approaches over others. These limitations exist because every choice requires tradeoffs (Jasper 2004, 2008). For example, there are numerous available venues ¹ in which movement actors can press their claims, and they often must choose to focus on only a few venues at a time. I examine organizational strategy by analyzing venue selection.

Venue Selection

Federalism and separation of powers create multiple channels through which political actors can pursue political and cultural change, and in which their opponents may attempt to block them. The different formal rules and implicit norms that guide each venue create different institutional logics. For example, legislative venues often require compromise, judicial venues are constrained by legal precedence, and elections are intermittent but regular (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Complicating this matter, the diverse cultural, political, and economic conditions across the 50 states mean that the same kind of political venue represents a different kind of opportunity in different states (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Each venue comes with benefits and costs that movement actors must weigh before choosing to devote resources to a fight in that venue. Venue selection, therefore, represents a crucial strategic choice that movement actors make in the wake of a critical event.

¹ I choose to use the term “venue,” which is the term more commonly used by political scientists. Some social movement scholars use the term “arena” in a similar way (Jasper and Duyvendak 2014; Meyer and Staggenborg 2012).

Venue Options

There are several venues in which movement actors can choose to press their agenda. For simplicity's sake, scholars often distinguish between "state" and "non-state" venues (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008). Movement actors can try to change policy in political venues like the legislature, the courts, or the bureaucracy by pressuring allies in these institutions to pass or enforce policies that they want or to overturn or ignore existing policies they disapprove of.

They can also try to increase their long-term chances of success in some of these venues by helping to elect strong allies to positions in these institutions. To do so, they can contribute money to political campaigns, endorse candidates who are strong on their issue, and mobilize voters to vote for their preferred candidates. In 26 states, political actors can also use ballot initiative and referendum options to secure policy change (Ballotpedia 2017). In these states, political actors can use elections to bypass unresponsive political institutions by taking an issue directly to the voters.

A common organizational strategy is pressuring Congress to pass national legislation. The advantage of working at the national level is that victories won here apply broadly to the whole country, but partisanship and gridlock can make it difficult to win on contentious issues. Alternatively, movement actors can press their agenda in state legislatures. While policy-gains are limited by the smaller geographic reach, in a sympathetic political context it may be possible to win landmark legislation and secure larger policy changes than would have been possible in the contested national context.

Movement actors can also work within the courts to overturn laws they do not like or within the bureaucracy to block the implementation of these laws. Alternatively, movement actors may need to pressure these institutions to implement and enforce existing laws that the

movement likes. Movement actors often use the courts to advance their policy goals (Meyer and Boutcher 2007), and there are two main way to do this. First, a group can work to block and overturn laws that it perceives as unconstitutional. One advantage of using the courts to challenge the constitutionality of state laws is that movement actors can work their way up through the appeals process, which allows them to use undesirable state laws, or even local ordinances, to change national policies. Second, if movement actors believe that an individual, business, organization, or agency is breaking the law, movement representatives can use the courts to sue to force compliance and levy penalties.

Bureaucratic agencies—e.g., the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Bureau of Land Management; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives—are responsible for interpreting, implementing, and enforcing the laws that legislatures pass. But how agencies prioritize and enforce certain policies fluctuates with the priorities of the current agency director (Wood and Waterman 1991). And there is evidence to suggest that the power and influence of state and national bureaucracies has increased as legislatures have become less professionalized and more gridlocked (Boushey and McGrath 2015; Boushey and McGrath 2017). Consequently, a substantial amount of policy-making occurs through bureaucratic agencies, making it an increasingly important venue for social movements to target.

Movement actors can also pressure non-state venues, like cultural institutions (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008), and work to change the culture by influencing the beliefs and behaviors of individuals and the practices of non-political institutions like media outlets and private businesses (Earl 2004; Manheim 2001). Control of these cultural venues is more diffuse, which means that they provide movement actors with a way to advance their cause even when political institutions are blocked.

To facilitate their work in all venues, political groups must sustain themselves and build the movement. Movement-building efforts include nurturing leadership, raising money, promoting organization programs, motivating members, and recruiting sympathetic bystanders. An organization's movement-building efforts contribute to the long-term strength of the organization and to the strength of the movement more broadly (Edwards and McCarthy 2004).

Organizational and Contextual Constraints on Movement Strategy

Movement actors do not respond to events in a vacuum. A movement's strategic options are constrained by features external to the movement, like the political and cultural context, as well as internal factors, like the existing capabilities and strategies of organizations within the movement (Meyer and Staggenborg 2012). When choosing which venues to focus on, political organizations must weigh their position in the changing political context against their own internal organizational constraints.

Internal Constraints: Organizational Character and Capacity

A movement's existing organizational capabilities will constrain its strategic options. One reason anti-nuclear activists could mobilize attention-sustaining protests after Three Mile Island meltdown was that they had built a strong local infrastructure after previous nuclear incidents (Gamson 1988; Walsh 1981). Activists, therefore, had greater capacity to respond to the Three Mile Island accident than they did after previous accidents. To respond effectively to an unplanned event, activists must first have the capacity to act.

Organizations are typically designed to pursue change in specific venues and using specific tactics. As discussed above, different venues have different institutional logics. As a result of these differences, a political actor must invest significant time, effort, and expense to develop the "domain-relevant skills" necessary to be an influential player in each venue (Ganz 2004:185–

86). This cost means that it is often more efficient and effective for an organization to specialize and focus its efforts in some venues and forgo pursuing action in others (Buffardi, Pekkanen, and Smith 2014). When a critical event occurs, an organization is typically best equipped to respond using strategies it already uses in venues that it is already familiar with.

This limitation means that organizations that already have a comprehensive organizational structure that is designed to operate in multiple venues will have the most strategic options available to them. Professional organizations need to declare a tax status for filing revenue and spending reports to the IRS, and certain tax statuses come with certain restrictions on the kinds of tactics that a group can pursue (Meyer 2007). Many of the more professional political organizations, like those I profile in this dissertation, get around this constraint by having multiple affiliated units. Each of these units works in designated venues, loosely coordinating their work with other units under one organizational identity. Organizations with more affiliated units have more strategic options available to them.

Social movement organizing also typically occurs at multiple political levels, including the neighborhood, city, state, and national level. Many of the more formal political organizations include distinct organizational units to manage organizing at multiple levels (Lofland and Jamison 1985; Oliver and Furman 1989; Young 1989). One reason a group might want a centralized national office, preferably in Washington, D.C., paired with a federated local membership base, is that mirroring the organization of the American political system allows the group to pressure political representatives across multiple congressional districts and at multiple points of access (Skocpol 1992). Organizations operating in more places have more strategic options available to them.

An organization's financial and human capacities will also dictate its strategic options. Well-resourced organizations, those with more members and better funding, typically have more strategic options available to them (McCarthy and Zald 1977). The more money, staff members, and volunteers an organization has at its disposal, the more work it will be able to do. Also, some political strategies are more expensive than others; they may require funding to execute effectively or require specialized expertise from professional staff members. For example, electioneering and litigation can be particularly costly, and litigation is highly technical and requires expensive professional credentials from the people participating (Gyorgy 1979). With more resources, an organization will be able to engage in more fights in more places.

Organizational leadership can also influence strategic flexibility, because in an organization made up of many individuals, those in leadership positions typically have the most power and influence. Leadership style can influence organizational character, strategy, and survival (Andrews et al. 2010; Ganz 2000; Reger and Staggenborg 2006; Voss and Sherman 2000). One reason, for example, that the United Farm Workers had more "strategic capacity" than rivals that were better funded was that its leadership contained a better mix of insiders from the movement's constituency and outsiders with political expertise (Ganz 2000). With more diverse leadership, an organization may pursue a more diverse set of strategic options.

An organization's character and capacity are the product of the choices it has made over time about who it is, what it wants, and how it wants to accomplish its goals, as well as how effectively it has secured resources. As a political organization decides which venues to focus on, its character and capacity will drive its choices.

External Constraints: The Political and Cultural Context and Other Actors

Political organizations operate in a complex political and cultural context that contains both adversarial and supportive politicians, organizations, and bystanders. Historical trends and the existing balance of power between various political forces will influence what kind of opportunity an event presents. As a group decides which fights to engage in and where to focus its attention, it must also account for who the other political actors are and what they are doing.

The actions of individual elected officials, and the composition of the political bodies of which they are a part, may influence where a group focuses its attention. When politicians announce that they are considering a policy change, this signal can attract attention and spur action by groups that both support (McAdam 1982) and oppose (Meyer 1990) the policy. In a federal system like the United States, groups can choose to fight for or against proposed policies in many different venues. Groups must, therefore, decide where to focus their efforts.

Mobilization typically occurs in contexts where it is believed to be both “necessary and potentially effective,” and there is a curvilinear relationship between openness and movement emergence (Meyer 1999:82), so it would make sense for movement organizations to focus on contested venues. In other words, contested venues should draw the most attention from both sides of an opposing movement pair, especially those contested venues in which major policy proposals are being considered, and it is unclear whether the proposal will pass.

The activities of opposing organizations may also influence where a group focuses its attention. Opposing movement pairs engage in “a continuous dialectic of social change” as they respond to each other’s activities (Mottl 1980:631). Opposing movements can influence one another’s political claims, resource availability, organizational structures, and political agendas (Fetner 2008). And when one side “enters a particular venue, if there is the possibility of contest,

an opposing movement is virtually forced to act in the same arena” (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996:1649).

Countermovement opposition can effectively block a movement’s ability to secure desired changes in its preferred venue (Dixon 2010). If a group is blocked in its preferred venue, it must figure out how to adapt its strategy. Shifting to a new venue is one way for a group to deal with having been blocked by its opponent (Meyer and Staggenborg 2008). This question of second steps is especially important if public attention to an organization’s issue, or public support for its goals, are still elevated. Elevated attention or support may signal that there is still an opportunity to act, just not in the venue that the group initially thought.

The potential impact of an attention-grabbing event therefore depends on the relative strength and readiness of actors to take advantage of the event, and the incentives they have for doing so. In fact, when they identify attention-grabbing mass shootings as a mobilizing opportunity for both sides of the gun debate, Laschever and Meyer (2015) also conclude that the enduring resource-imbalance between the gun control and gun rights movements suggests that these events may represent a very different *type* of opportunity for each side. This means that to determine how opposing movement pairs maximize gains and minimize losses after an attention-grabbing event, it is first necessary to determine, based on existing contextual and organizational constraints, *what kind of opportunity does an event represent for each side of an opposing movement pair, and for individual organizations within each movement?*

The Sandy Hook Shooting and American Gun Politics

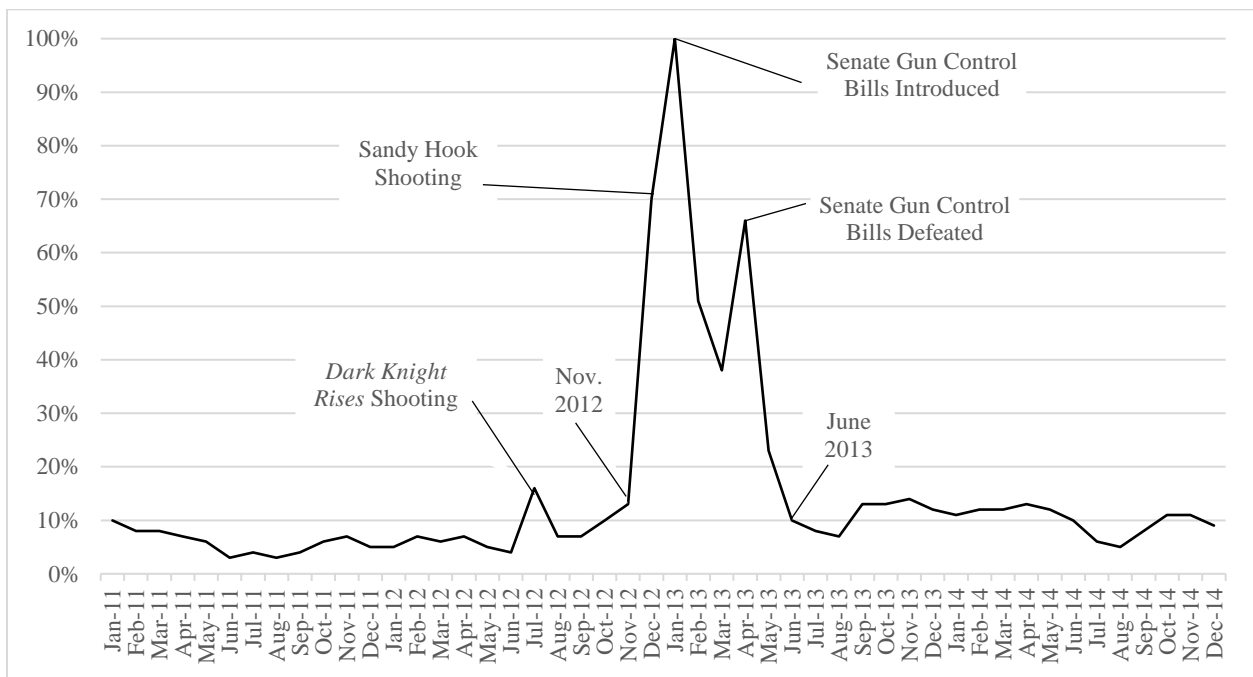
To understand how opposing movements capitalize on attention-grabbing events, I examine how the gun control and gun rights movements responded to the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012 in Newtown, Connecticut (Barron 2012). The

tragic slaughter of 20 young elementary school children and six of their teachers shocked the nation and directed media, political, and public attention to the issue of guns in America. Gun control advocates responded immediately. The day of the shooting, gun control groups issued press releases that expressed their condolences, but also that called for political action on gun control (Brady Campaign 2012a; Mayors Against Illegal Guns 2012a). And in his statement the day of the shooting, a visibly tearful President Obama, called for people “to come together and take meaningful action to prevent more tragedies like this, regardless of the politics” (Obama 2012a). Two days later, during his speech at the prayer vigil in Newtown, President Obama reiterated that while “the causes of such violence are complex . . . that can’t be an excuse for inaction” (Obama 2012b). He promised to use all resources available to his office to pursue all options to combat gun violence.

After four days of pointed silence, gun rights proponents responded with calls for a period of respectful mourning, and tried to redirect the conversation to the problem of mental illness and the purported danger of “gun-free zones” (National Rifle Association 2012a; Second Amendment Foundation 2012a). By the time Wayne LaPierre issued the National Rifle Association’s formal response to the shooting in a press conference on Dec. 21 (National Rifle Association 2012b), President Obama had already announced that Vice President Joe Biden would be heading a White House task force on gun violence (Sink 2012). Gun control advocates, and their elected allies like President Obama, called for new policies to expand background checks and regulate semi-automatic weapons (Shear 2012), and gun rights advocates countered with calls for new policies to arm teachers and station armed guards in schools (Lichtblau and Rich 2012).

The public’s interest in an issue associated with a shocking event can fade quickly, though. Figure 1 shows the public attention paid to the topic of “Gun Control,” according to Google Trends, between January 2011 and December 2014. Interest in gun control peaked in January 2013 when Senate Democrats introduced three significant gun control bills: one to ban assault weapons, a second to ban “high-capacity” magazines,² and a third to expand background checks to all gun sales. After these bills were introduced, the public’s interest in gun control fell.

Figure 1: Google Trends Interest in the Subject of "Gun Control," Jan 2011 to Dec 2014



“Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. Likewise a score of 0 means the term was less than 1% as popular as the peak” (Google Trends, accessed January, 10, 2017 from <https://www.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&geo=US&q=Gun%20Control>)

Public interest in gun control rebounded slightly in April when the three gun-control bills came up for a vote in the Senate. But on April 17, 2013, the Senate defeated the assault weapons

² “High-capacity” magazine usually refers to any magazine that holds more than ten rounds of ammunition.

and high-capacity magazine bans. The same day, Majority Leader Senator Harry Reid pulled the background-check bill when it became clear that it would not clear the 60-vote threshold needed to overcome a filibuster (Weisman 2013). By June 2013, interest in gun control had crashed to pre-Sandy Hook levels.

While Congress passed no national gun laws after Sandy Hook, 35 states changed their gun laws in the two-year legislative session that followed the shooting. More states changed their gun laws during the two-year legislative session that followed the shooting than during the two-year legislative session that preceded it, and these states made bigger policy changes. Both sides of this opposing movement pair secured desirable legislative change in more states, and both sides won larger policy victories (see Chapter 5). States therefore represent a crucial arena to understand opposing movement mobilization and influence after an attention-grabbing event like the Sandy Hook shooting. To understand this outcome, though, it is first necessary to understand what advantages the shooting presented to each side of this opposing movement pair, what advantages it presented to individual organizations within each movement, and how movement strategies reflected these contextual and organizational constraints.

Overview of the Dissertation

I examine why opposing movement organizations are both able to make political gains in the contentious, crowded, and shifting political context that follows an attention-grabbing event. This dissertation provides a contextual analysis of the political activities of four groups over a four-year period that features a mid-way inflection-point created by the Sandy Hook shooting. I use historical-comparative and ethnographic techniques to analyze over 100 hours of fieldwork, thousands of organizational documents and newspaper articles, and informal interviews to determine how gun control and gun rights groups maximize gains and minimize losses. In so

doing, I examine how the organizational strategies and relative political influence of opposing movements vary in response to shifting contextual and organizational constraints.

I find that the gun control movement first responded to the opportunity that the shooting presented by shifting to an aggressively offensive stance and by focusing on pressuring Congress to enact new gun control legislation. When these efforts failed, the movement redirected and diversified its efforts, focusing instead on advancing its agenda in the states through state-level mobilization, state legislatures, courts, and electoral referendums. By contrast, the gun rights movement initially responded by assuming a far more defensive stance and focusing on using the threat of gun control to mobilize supporters and build up the national gun rights movement. It devoted relatively little attention to blocking the gun control movement's efforts to secure national legislation, and instead split its attention between advancing its own state-level legislative goals and defending against state legislation that favored its opponents. When the gun control movement took its fight to the states, the gun rights movement used this threat to engage in state-level movement mobilization.

I use qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to demonstrate the conditions under which each side secured desired state-level legislative change. I find that both the gun control movement and gun rights movement secured more policy change after the shooting. But after the shooting, the gun control movement overcame a previous legislative disadvantage by securing far bigger legislative victories. This outcome, however, hinged partially on these states receiving support from these national gun control organizations.

This dissertation is comprised of two parts. Part I establishes what it means for the Sandy Hook shooting to have been a "critical event" for gun politics. Chapter 1, "Critical Events and the Political and Cultural Context," defines the nature of the opportunity/threat presented by the

Sandy Hook shooting by tracing the long-term historical evolution of the gun debate and detailing the short-term shifts that surrounded the shooting. Chapter 2, “Critical Events and Organizational Capacity,” outlines the characteristics and capabilities of two key groups on either side of this opposing movement pair and details how the organizational capacities of these groups increased after Sandy Hook. In this chapter, I also discuss how I analyze organizational press communications to create measures of organizational strategy to assess the patterns and outcomes that I elaborate in Part II.

Part II addresses how the gun control and gun rights movements responded strategically to the shifts in contextual conditions and organizational capacity detailed in Part I, as well as the state-level legislative consequences of these movement and contextual factors. Chapter 3, “Responding to Event Opportunities,” shows how two key gun control groups—The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence and Everytown for Gun Safety—tried to maximize gains by shifting their attention to favorable state legislative venues after their initial efforts to secure national legislation failed. Chapter 4, “Responding to Threatening Events,” shows how two key gun rights groups—The National Rifle Association and the Second Amendment Foundation—tried to minimize losses by trusting their allies in the House of Representatives to block new gun control legislation and by focusing instead on continuing to push legislative goals in favorable state contexts and using the threat of gun control to mobilize supporters. Variations between organizations within each movement, though, point to important ways that organizational character and capacity limit strategic options.

Chapter 5, “State Legislative Outcomes,” uses qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to detail the conditions under which states either tightened or relaxed their firearms restrictions in the years before and after the Sandy Hook shooting. The findings highlight the importance of the

venue selection choices that national opposing movements make, but also the structural advantages the gun rights movement has built for itself through sustained electoral engagement.

I conclude with a discussion of why both sides of an opposing movement pair can use an attention-grabbing event to make political gains. I emphasize how differences in political opportunities and organizational capabilities influenced the strategic responses of key gun control and gun rights groups. My findings underscore the importance of attending to why, how, and in what ways groups divide their attention between challenging opponents in a contested venue and maneuver around opponents by targeting alternative venues.

CHAPTER 1: EVENTS AND THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

An Opportunity or a Threat?

When an event draws attention to a movement's cause, this can present either an opportunity for, or a threat to, the movement (Staggenborg 1993). The nature of this threat or opportunity depends on the existing political and cultural context that surrounds the issue at the time of the event, as well as how this context shifts in favor of one side or the other after the event occurs. For example, when one side enjoys a political advantage most of the time, an event that shakes up the status quo is a threat to that side, but for the other side this disruption represents an opportunity (Birkland 1998). While some contextual conditions may shift after an attention-grabbing event, other conditions may not. To understand what kind of opportunity an event presents to either side of an opposing movement pair, it is first necessary to understand *how did the context favor either the gun control movement or the gun rights movement at the time of the Sandy Hook shooting? And how did this opportunity structure shift after the shooting?*

Examining the Political and Cultural Context

The political and cultural context is comprised of everything from formal rules of governance and bureaucratic procedures (Kriesi 2004) to norms and values about what makes a desirable society (Williams 2004). Partisan control of government, for example, changes on a semi-regular cycle that is dictated by electoral rules and procedures. Other conditions, though, are more mutable and could shift in the wake of an event or in response to movement activities. For example, media attention and public opinion, which are two representations of cultural norms and values (Earl 2004; Gamson 2004), can shift in response to movement-generated

events and in response to unexpected events (Staggenborg 1993). For parsimony's sake, I will often refer to the "political and cultural context" simply as the "context." In this dissertation, I focus on several different contextual conditions across the political and cultural spectrum, which I select for their centrality to the issue of gun violence and the fight over gun policy. Specifically, I examine historical trends in gun violence, media coverage, public opinion, gun ownership, and policy change.

When an event like Sandy Hook happens, the configuration of these contextual conditions may favor one opposing movement over the other. Since certain strategies are more effective in certain contexts (Amenta, Caren, and Olasky 2005), the context will determine how a movement can most effectively capitalize on such an event. As the context shifts, for example if public opinion changes and more people suddenly support tighter firearms restrictions, both sides of an opposing movement pair experience this shift. This shift, though, means something different to each side. To determine why a movement advanced its policy goals after an event, it is first necessary to understand which side of the opposing movement pair the context favored, and whether any key contextual conditions changed after the event.

In this chapter, I establish the political and cultural context of the gun debate in America. I begin by situating the case of American gun politics in a comparative context, and then an historical one. I then demonstrate how several key contextual indicators map onto the historical development of American gun politics. I devote special attention to changes in media attention and public support, the role of mass shootings in the development of gun politics, and major changes to U.S. gun control laws. I use this discussion to establish the contextual advantages enjoyed by the gun rights movement at the time of the Sandy Hook shooting. This overview relies on data adapted from reports issued by government agencies and public interest

foundations (e.g., the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; Gallup Polling; the Small Arms Survey), existing literature on the gun control and gun rights movements (e.g., Goss 2006; Schildkraut, Elsass, and Meredith 2017; Spitzer 2004), and original data collected through the *Proquest Historical Newspapers* database.

After placing the Sandy Hook shooting in context, I focus in on the period from 2011 through 2014. I show how the Sandy Hook shooting was a critical event in the case of gun politics that shifted some, but certainly not all, contextual conditions related to gun politics. I focus on how more mutable contextual conditions like media attention and public opinion shifted in the wake of the shooting. I contrast these changes with the long-term trends in gun politics, as well as with more fixed features of the context, like partisan control of government.

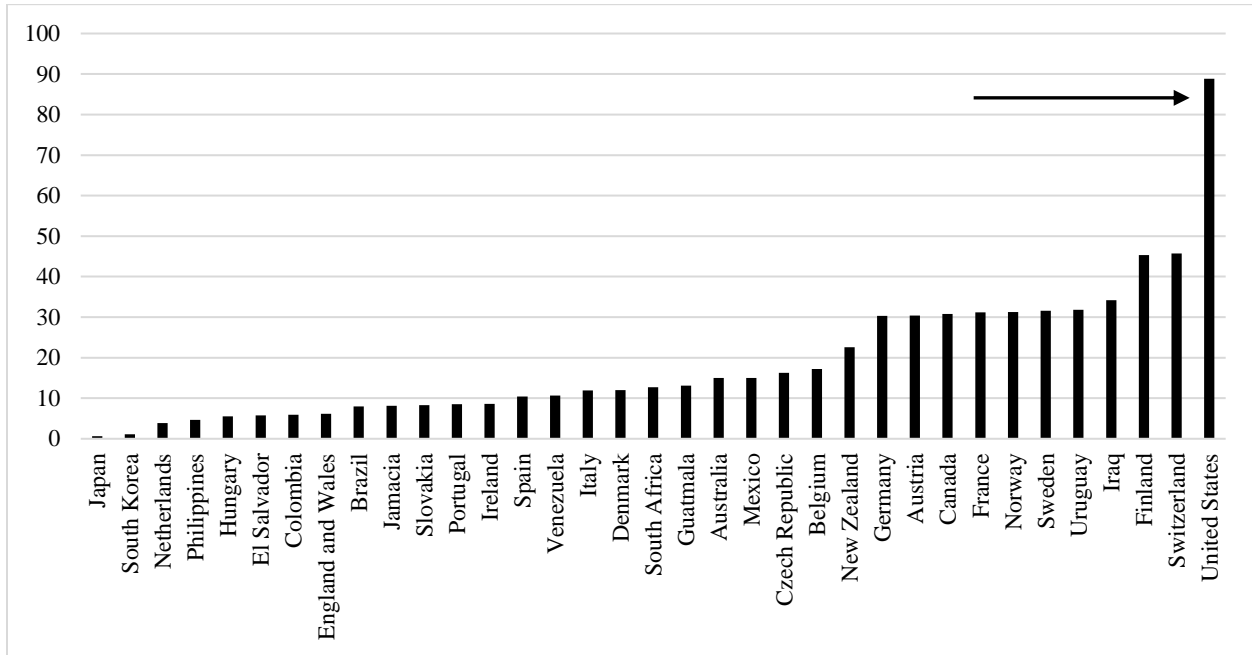
I conclude that at the time of the Sandy Hook shooting, the gun rights movement enjoyed a strong contextual advantage. The gun rights movement has made steady gains in public support and public policy since the mid-1990s, especially during moments when attention to gun violence is low. Part of why Sandy Hook became a critical event for gun politics is that certain contextual conditions reversed favor after the shooting, and the gun control movement enjoyed a temporary advantage over the gun rights movement. Consequently, for the gun control movement this event represented a rare opportunity to regain lost ground, but for the gun rights movement this event represented a temporary reversal of favor that just needed to be weathered.

American Gun Politics in Comparative Context

The United States has more guns and more protections on gun ownership than any other country in the world. The most comprehensive, recent data on global civilian gun ownership comes from the Small Arms Survey, a “global center of excellence” based at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland (Small Arms Survey

n.d.). As of 2007, there were an estimated 88.8 firearms per 100 people in the United States (see Figure 2). Yemen, the country with the next highest prevalence, had an estimated 54.8 firearms per 100 people. Most other high-income, western-industrial countries—e.g., France, Canada, Germany, Australia—all had rates of less than half those of the United States.

Figure 2: Cross-National Comparison, Firearms per 100 People, 2007

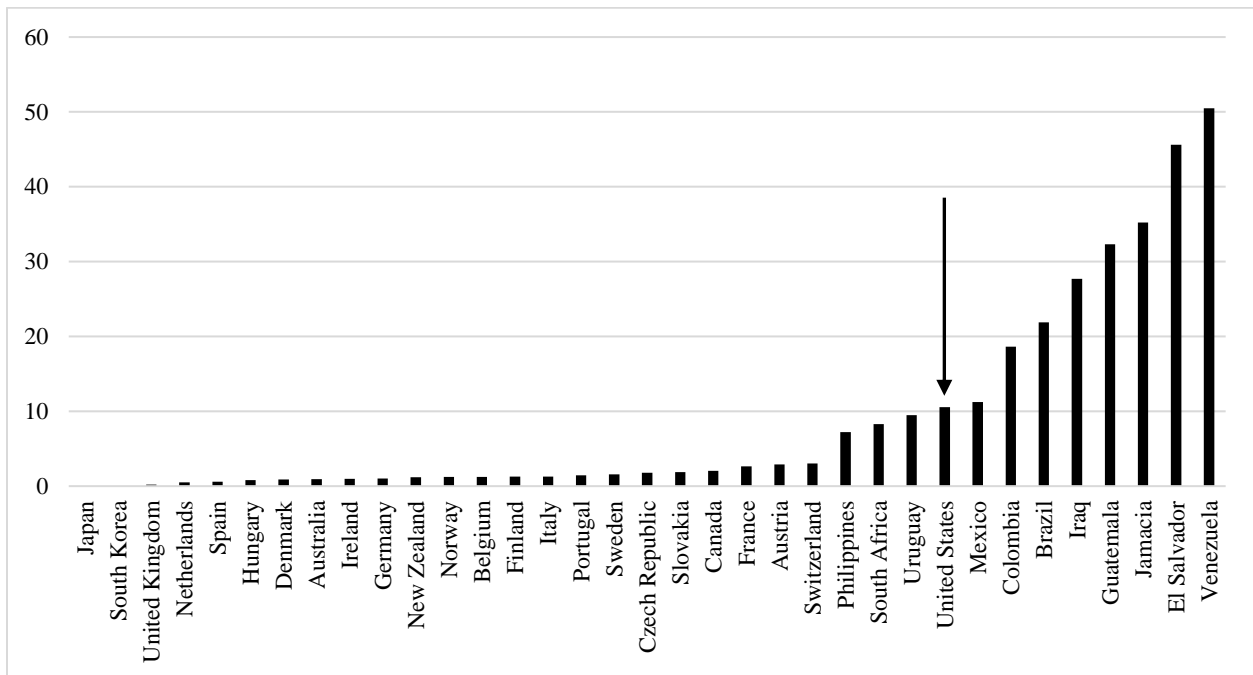


Data adapted from the Small Arms Survey (2007)

The United States also has unusually strong protections for gun ownership. Since the 1800s, only nine countries have included provisions in their constitutions that protect the right to keep and bear arms: Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Liberia, Mexico, Nicaragua, and the United States (Ginsburg, Elkins, and Melton 2016). But as of 2016, the United States was one of only three countries in the world with a constitutional right to bear arms, and protections in the United States go farther than any other country. The United States is the only country for which there are no explicit restrictions to this right (Ginsburg, Elkins, and Melton 2013). The goals of the gun rights movement are to promote and protect gun ownership; no country in the world does this better than the United States.

Firearms-related deaths are also relatively common in the United States. Most other high-income, western-industrial countries—e.g., Australia, Canada, France, Germany—have rates of firearms-related deaths that are less than a third the rate of the United States (see Figure 3). Other countries with similar rates of firearms-related deaths include Mexico, Uruguay, the Philippines, and South Africa. Countries with much higher rates of firearms-related deaths than the United States include Guatemala, Jamaica, El Salvador, and Venezuela. Gun control advocates point to a correlation between firearm prevalence and rates of firearms-related deaths to support their efforts, while gun rights advocates warn of spurious correlations and measurement errors (Crime Prevention Research Center 2014). By and large, though, countries with similar political and economic conditions to the United States have lower rates of gun violence.

Figure 3: Cross-National Comparison, Rates of Firearms-Related Deaths per 100,000 People



Data are from Alpers, Rossetti, and Salinas (2016), most recent year of available data, 2008 – 2016.

The Evolution of American Gun Politics

The politics of firearms regulation in America has not always been as partisan and contentious as it was after the Sandy Hook shooting. In fact, when the first gun rights group, the National Rifle Association, was founded in 1871, its mission of promoting civilian marksmanship in the name of national defense was notably apolitical. The first major national gun control laws, the 1934 Federal Firearms Act, which regulated “gangster-type weapons,” and the 1938 National Firearms Act, which established licensing procedures for firearms dealers, passed through Congress with little public attention or congressional debate (Spitzer 2004).

Gun control started to become more contentious in the 1960s. A controversial bill to curb the purchase of mail-order firearms by minors was introduced in early 1963. After President Kennedy was assassinated that November with a mail-order rifle, Congress expanded the bill to ban all mail-order shotguns and rifles. But due to pressure from gun rights groups, the bill died in committee (Spitzer 2004).

President Lyndon Johnson (D) proposed new gun control legislation every year, but nothing passed until 1968. On June 6th, the day after Senator Robert Kennedy’s assassination and two months after Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination, Congress passed the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, which contained a small gun control section. Immediately after this bill passed, Congress introduced the Gun Control Act of 1968, a comprehensive bill that, among other things, restricted firearms sales to certain prohibited persons, strengthened gun dealer licensing and record-keeping requirements, and banned interstate shipment of firearms and ammunition to individuals. The law was enacted that October (Spitzer 2004).

National gun politics remained relatively stable through the 1970s, with two exceptions. The first was a structural change. In 1972, as a provision of the 1968 Gun Control Act, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) was established. Previously, firearms regulation had occurred through the Internal Revenue Service's Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Division. The division had been commissioned in 1941 to enforce the Federal Firearms Act and the National Firearms Act (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives n.d.). This rooted the politics of gun control in the executive branch and provided a formal bureaucratic channel through which to address firearms restrictions.

The second change was political. In the mid-1970s there was an internal power struggle within the NRA. The moderates that controlled the group at the time had been trying to step away from politics and return the group to its hunting and sporting roots. But in 1977, hard-liners from the group's political wing, the Institute for Legislative Action (ILA), staged a dramatic "revolt" at the NRA's annual convention. They deposed the moderates from leadership positions, and consolidated power within the ILA. After this event the NRA assumed a more absolutist stance against all firearms restrictions (Davidson 1998).

After the NRA's political turn, the gun rights movement lobbied Congress to relax firearms restrictions. In 1986, Congress passed the Firearms Owners' Protection Act (FOPA). The FOPA relaxed various restrictions on gun dealers, and prohibited the ATF from establishing comprehensive firearms registration or a centralized record of gun dealers, among other provisions. While it initially looked like Democrats in the House of Representatives might block the bill, proponents used a bureaucratic procedure to force the bill out of committee and up for a vote. After adding compromise provisions to restrict interstate firearms sales and ban machine

guns, the bill passed the House. The Republican-controlled Senate easily passed the House version of the bill, and President Ronald Reagan (R) signed it into law (Spitzer 2004).

Right after Congress enacted the Firearms Owners' Protection Act, gun control proponents started fighting for what came to be known as the Brady bill. The bill would implement a national waiting period and a background check requirement for handgun purchases. It was named for President Reagan's press secretary James Brady, who was crippled in the attempted assassination of President Reagan in 1981. Gun control proponents also started pursuing an assault weapons ban in 1989, after a gunman used an AK-47 to kill five children and wound 29 others in a Stockton, California schoolyard (Spitzer 2004).

Gun control proponents lobbied for years to get Congress to pass the Brady bill and the Assault Weapon Ban, but they made no progress until President Bill Clinton (D) was elected in 1992. After a heated Congressional fight—the bill just barely overcame threats of a filibuster and NRA-backed amendments to strip the bill of its power—President Clinton signed The Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act in November 1993. In September 1994, a five-year fight to ban assault weapons culminated in an assault weapons ban being enacted as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. The bill contained a sunset provision, though, that required Congress to renew the ban in 2004 (Spitzer 2004). A wave midterm election in November 1994 returned the Senate to Republican control (Berke 1994). It was an election in which the NRA campaigned aggressively to unseat candidates who had voted for these two bills (Gonyea 2017).

Congress made only small changes to gun policy between 1994 and 2012, and most of these changes favored gun rights. For example, Congress included the “Dickey Amendment” in the 1996 Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Bill, which prevented funds from a research

center at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention from being used to “advocate or promote gun control.” The amendment also reallocated funding for firearm injury research to research on traumatic brain injuries instead. This amendment was to appease the gun rights movement, which started pressuring Congress to shut down the center after a study funded by one of its grants linked a gun in the home to an increased risk of homicide (Jamieson 2013). While the center survived, funding for research on gun violence became more limited.

The late 1990s were marked by concern over high crime rates and a rash of school shootings (Cook and Goss 2014). This concern peaked in April 1999 when two boys killed 15 fellow classmates and a teacher and wounded 23 others at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. The shooters were minors, and unable to legally buy guns, so they had bought them through a friend in what is known as a “straw purchase.” The friend that purchased the guns for the shooters had initially refused to make the purchase when she was asked to fill out a background check form at a gun dealership. But she acquiesced to making the purchase at a gun show, which would not produce the same sort of paper trail. In responding to the shooting, gun control proponents focused on extending background checks to gun shows, while the gun rights movement redirected attention to other problems that the shooting underscored, namely mental illness and violent videogames. Despite public outcry for stronger gun control and a legislative push by gun control proponents, the Republican-controlled Congress enacted no new federal gun control laws (Goss 2006).

After failing to secure new national gun control legislation after Columbine, the gun control movement shifted its attention to other venues. It fought (successfully) to pass ballot measures in Colorado and Oregon that extended background checks to gun show sales in 2000. And throughout the early 2000s, the gun control movement brought lawsuits against firearms

manufacturers like Smith & Wesson and Bushmaster. The movement used this litigation to reform business practices and win settlements for victims of gun violence (Brady Campaign 2016b).

Recognizing this vulnerability, the gun rights movement lobbied the Republican-controlled Congresses for several measures that would limit the gun control movement's ability to pursue this litigation strategy. The Tiahrt Amendments, which first appeared on a 2003 U.S. Department of Justice appropriation bill, restricted access to data on how firearms moved from legal markets to illegal ones. The amendment prohibited the ATF National Tracing Center from sharing its data with cities, states, researchers, litigants, and members of the public. The amendments also required the FBI to destroy all records related to approved gun purchasers within 24 hours, and prohibited the ATF from requiring gun dealers to submit inventory records to law enforcement (Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence 2017). The gun rights movement kept lobbying Congress to go further, and in 2005, Congress enacted the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA) (Curtius and Alonso-Zaldivar 2005). This law prohibited civil suits against gun manufacturers, distributors, dealers, and importers of firearms and ammunition, except for under limited circumstances (Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act 2005). These laws hinder the gun control movement's litigation efforts and efforts by cities and states to develop their own evidence-based gun control laws, and gun control groups were still advocate for repealing these laws at the time of the Sandy Hook shooting.

A Democratic-controlled Congress did pass a small bipartisan compromise law in 2007 after an attention-grabbing mass shooting in which a gunman killed 32 teachers and fellow students at Virginia Tech University. The shooter's ability to buy a firearm that he should have been prohibited from buying underscored a loophole in National Instant Criminal Background

Check System (NICS). The NICS should have prevented the shooter from buying a gun, but the mental health records that would have barred him were never submitted (Reynolds and Meyer 2007). The bill that the Congress passed both rewarded states that submitted records of people who were prohibited from buying a gun to the NICS, and established a new process through which someone could get their name removed from the NICS list of prohibited persons (Marks 2007; NICS Improvement Amendments Act 2007). The law was enacted in January 2008, with the support of both prominent gun control and gun rights groups (Brady Campaign; National Rifle Association 2007).³

Congress passed no new laws after 2007, but the policy landscape worsened for the gun control movement. In June 2008, the Supreme Court overturned the District of Columbia's ban on handguns. Its *District of Columbia v. Heller* ruling affirmed for the first time that the Second Amendment guarantees an individual right to bear arms (Barnes 2008). In a second landmark decision on *McDonald v. City of Chicago* in June 2010, the Supreme Court extended the *D.C. v. Heller* decision to the states (Liptak 2010). The courts, however, have upheld other restrictions, including prohibitions on who can get a gun, what kinds of guns people can own, and where people can carry guns (Brady Campaign 2011).

There are several key contextual indicators that help explain this evolution. The evolution of American gun politics especially underscores the complex relationships between media

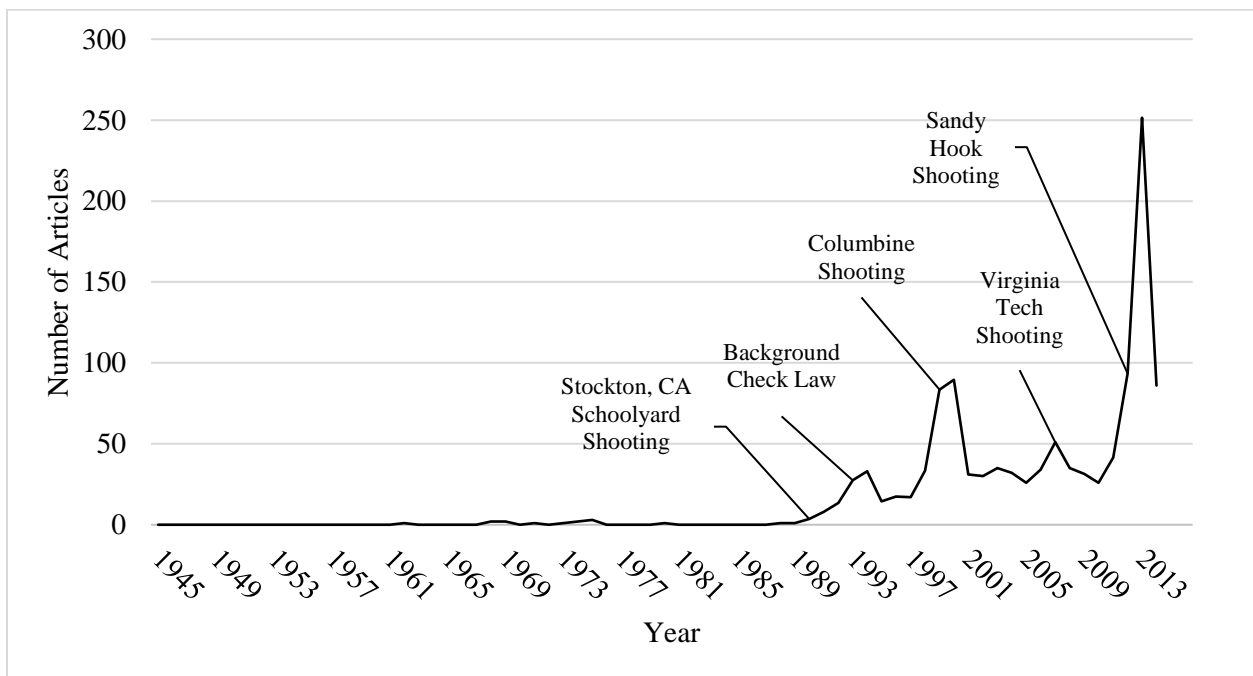
³ Some argue that the NRA decided to collaborate with Democratic leadership on this bill because they saw the writing on the wall. The group was trying to reposition itself to seem more reasonable in light of a new Congressional landscape that was controlled by Democrats and they were attempting (successfully, I might add) to head off more dramatic gun control efforts. Some gun control groups opposed the NICS Improvement Act because they felt that the appeals process would make it easier for dangerous people to get a gun, and other gun rights groups opposed the bill because they thought the appeals process was too cumbersome and they wanted the background checks removed altogether (Marks 2007).

attention, events, public opinion, opposing movement mobilization, partisan control, and policy change.

Episodic and Increasing Media Attention to Gun Violence

Figure 4 shows the number of articles per year in *The New York Times* that referenced “gun violence” between 1945 and 2016. The term “gun violence” was virtually non-existent before the 1990s, even during debates over firearms legislation in 1968 and 1986. This changed after the Stockton, CA schoolyard in January 1989. Other shootings, like one in 1991 at Luby’s Cafeteria in Killeen, Texas, kept gun violence on the public agenda. This first cycle of attention to gun violence peaked in 1993 and 1994, when President Clinton signed the Brady bill and the assault weapon ban. After these two laws passed, media attention to gun violence returned to a new elevated normal.

Figure 4: Number of New York Times Articles Referencing “Gun Violence,” 1945 – 2014



Original data collected from Proquest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

Since *The New York Times* first started paying attention to the issue of gun violence, its attention to the subject has been cyclical and event-based. It's attention to gun violence has also increased exponentially. Marking the heightened concern the rash of school shootings that plagued the late 1990s (Cook and Goss 2014), attention to gun violence started rising again in 1998. This concern spiked after the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School. The fight over how to respond to the Columbine shooting kept gun violence on the agenda through 2000, but attention turned to other issues in 2001. Attention to gun violence remained relatively low through 2010, interrupted only by a small spike in attention after the 2007 shooting at Virginia Tech. Attention to gun violence started to rise again in 2011, when a shooter tried to assassinate U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords at a Tucson, Arizona political event in January (Lacey and Herszenhorn 2011).

Even before the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012, other shootings kept gun violence on the agenda throughout 2012. A shooting in April at a midnight premiere of *The Dark Knight Rises* in Aurora, Colorado drew particular attention (Brown 2012). Media attention to gun violence doubled again in 2013, as the Senate considered three gun control bills in its first post-Sandy Hook legislative session (Barron 2012). In 2014, attention crashed to pre-Sandy Hook levels.

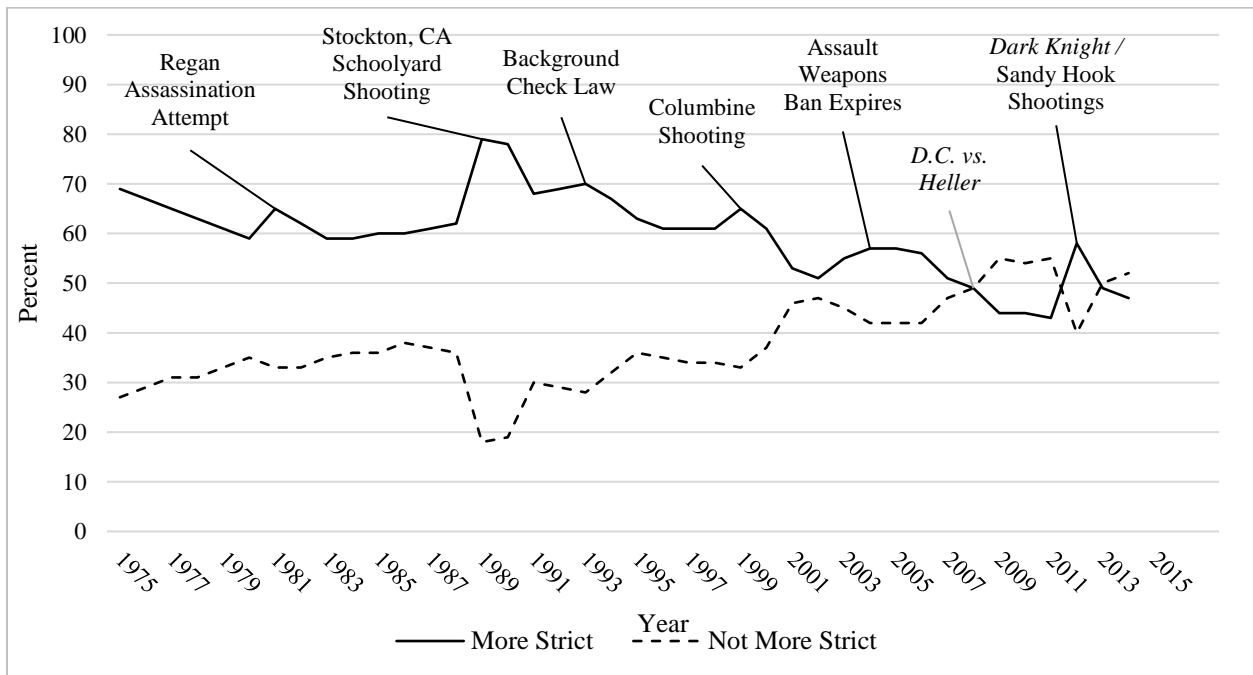
Not all shootings generate spikes in media attention to the issue of gun violence. Part of this discrepancy stems from journalistic norms; newspapers do not consider all events equally newsworthy. For example, in their examination of the coverage that 90 shootings received in *The New York Times* between 2000 and 2012, Schildkraut, Klsass, and Meredith (2017) found that shootings where the perpetrators were non-Caucasian, shootings at schools, and shootings with higher victim-counts generate more coverage. It is therefore notable that at the time the Sandy

Hook shooting occurred, attention to the issue of gun violence was already near an all-time high. When the Sandy Hook shooting occurred, the issue of gun violence was more salient than it had ever been before an attention-grabbing shooting, and attention to gun violence still doubled the year after the shooting.

Fickle and Declining Support for Gun Control

Support for gun control has fall since the last major gun control laws were passed in the mid-1990s. When the Brady bill passed in 1993, 70 percent of Americans thought “the laws covering the sale of firearms should be made more strict” (see Figure 5). But throughout the 1990s and 2000s support for tighter restrictions declined dramatically, before bottoming out at 43 percent in 2011.

Figure 5: Percent of Americans Who Believe "The Laws Covering the Sale of Firearms Should be Made 'More Strict,'" or Not, 1975 – 2014



The data used here were originally collected by the Gallup Polling Organization. Data between 1990 and 2016 was collected from the Gallup organization’s website, and data before 1990 was adapted from McAneny, Leslie. 1993. “Americans Tell Congress: Pass Brady Bill, Other Tough Gun Laws.” *Gallup Poll Monthly*, March.

Support for tighter restrictions did not decline steadily, though. Support for gun control increased after the 1989 in a Stockton, California schoolyard shooting, the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, and the shootings at *The Dark Knight Rises* premier and at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012, all of which were discussed above as having generated media attention to the issue of gun violence. Increased public support for firearms restrictions also accompanied the assassination attempt on President Ronald Regan in 1981.

While public opinion on firearm policy shifts after attention-grabbing shootings, the connection between policy changes and public opinion about gun policy is more tenuous. While support for tighter restrictions fell notably after the 1993 background check bill passed, as one might expect after a significant tightening of firearms restrictions, other major policy changes preceded more counterintuitive public opinion trends. For example, in the years leading up to the expiration of the assault weapons ban in 2004, support for tighter firearms restrictions increased, but as soon as the ban expired, support for tighter restrictions decreased. Parity between support for, and opposition to, tighter restrictions coincided with the 2008 *DC. vs. Heller* Supreme Court case that relaxed handgun restrictions. Nonetheless, support for tighter restrictions continued to erode after this decision. This mismatch between existing restrictions and support for tighter restrictions stems, in part, from people erroneously believing that certain laws they support already exist. One study conducted in 2014, for example, found that while only 53 percent of respondents supported stricter gun control laws, 77 percent of respondents supported universal background checks, a restriction that did not currently exist (Aonow and Miller 2016).

These public opinion trends suggest that before the Sandy Hook shooting, the gun rights movement enjoyed broader cultural support than it ever had before. While the gun control movement sometimes benefits from a temporary influx in support after an attention-grabbing

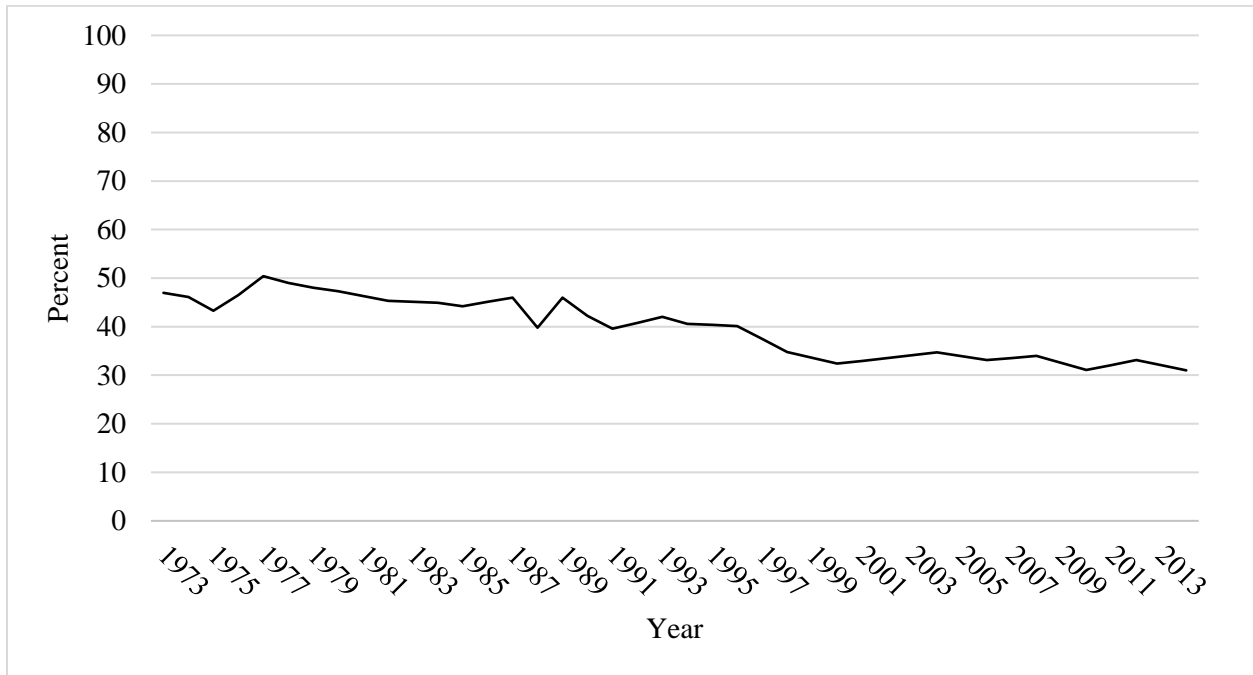
shooting, this support is fickle. A temporary reversal in its long-term erosion of support, therefore, represents only a small window of opportunity for the gun control movement. These trends also suggest that when support for tighter restrictions increases after a shooting, the gun rights movement just needs to hold the line until public opinion slides back in its favor, which tends to happen when attention turns away from the issue.

Gun Owners, the Firearms Industry, and the Strength of the Gun Rights Constituency

The gun rights constituency is more engaged in the fight over gun politics than the gun control constituency. Gun rights supporters are more likely than gun control supporters to donate money to organizations that represents their interests, more likely to contact elected representatives to lobby on policy proposals, and more likely to vote against a candidate who does not share their position on gun control (Aronow and Miller 2016; Schuman and Presser 2013). This is at least partially a mobilization issue over which the gun control movement should have some influence, but the gun rights movement benefits from two particularly well-defined and invested constituencies: gun owners and the firearms and ammunition industry.

Gun owners represent a reliable core constituency for the gun rights movement. While the percent of American households with a gun has declined, roughly a third reported owning a gun at the time of the Sandy Hook shooting (see Figure 6). This represents a third of the population personally invested in the right to own a gun, and this might be a conservative estimate. Other measures, like polling from Gallup (2017), suggest that at the time of the Sandy Hook shooting 43 percent of Americans owned a gun. Gun rights leaders contend that this still underestimates gun ownership, arguing that gun owners are suspicious of telling strangers over the phone that there is a gun in the house. This is, after all, a suspicion that groups like the NRA actively cultivate with their warnings of a gun registry leading to gun confiscation.

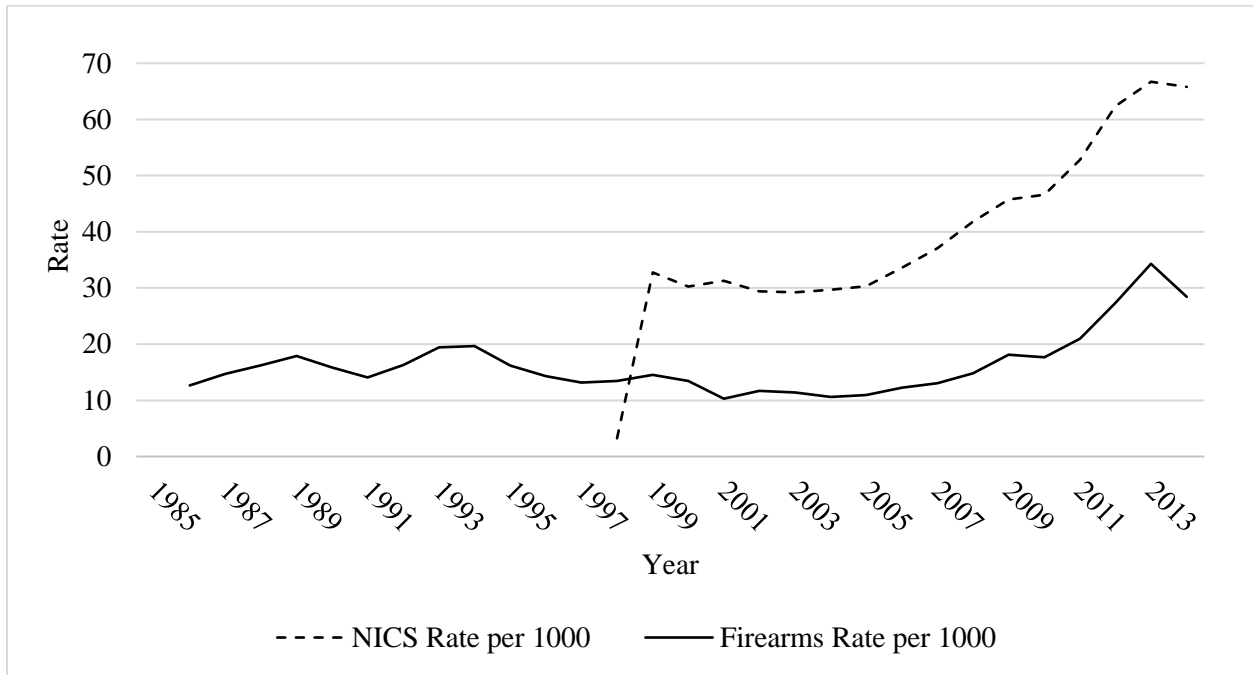
Figure 6: Percent of Households with a Gun, 1972 – 2014



The data used here were originally collected by the General Social Survey (2015).

While fewer Americans may own guns, those who do own guns own more of them. Figure 7 shows the rate of firearms manufactured and the rate of NICS background checks performed. Both rates are per 1,000, and both measures are common proxies for the number of guns that people own. Using similar measures of gun ownership and firearm production, True and Utter (2002) argue that even though the percent of Americans that owned guns declined between 1978 and 1998, the people who did own guns were buying more of them. Figures 6 and Figure 7 suggest that this trend only intensified between 1998 and 2012. By buying more guns, individual gun owners strengthen their identity as a gun owner and increase their investment in gun culture, both of which strengthen the gun rights movement.

Figure 7: NICS Background Checks Performed and Firearms Manufactured per 1,000 People, 1986 - 2014



NICS Check Rate data collected from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2017); Firearm Production Rate data collected from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (2016).

The higher rate of firearm production not only indicates greater investment from individual gun owners, but also a stronger firearms and ammunitions industry constituency and more potential financial resources for the gun rights movement. The gun rights movement enjoys a close relationship with the gun industry. While the National Shooting Sports Foundation benefits directly as the official trade association and advocacy organization for the industry, the industry also contributes directly to many other gun rights organizations, like the National Rifle Association and the Second Amendment Foundation (e.g., Second Amendment Foundation 2012b). The gun industry also contributes indirectly to organizations like the National Rifle Association by selling NRA memberships in gun shops, donating items and services for NRA auctions, and advertising in NRA magazines (Cook and Goss 2014).

Political Parties and Guns

One of the most important features of the political context, especially for legislative change, is which party controls the government (Meyer and Minkoff 2004). Gun control officially became a partisan issue in 1968, when the Democrats added a provision favoring stronger gun control to their national party platform and the Republicans added an opposing provision to theirs (Democratic Party 1968; Republican Party 1968). While each party's official commitments change periodically with election cycles, for the most part, the Democratic Party supports gun control, while the Republican Party supports gun rights (Spitzer 2004). These official positions reflect a real, and intensifying, partisan division on the issue of gun ownership. Republican voters have increasingly favored protecting gun rights over controlling gun ownership, and Democratic voters have moved in the opposite direction. At the time of the Sandy Hook shooting, for example, 72 percent of Democratic voters thought controlling gun ownership was more important, and 71 percent of Republican voters thought protecting gun rights was more important (Pew Research Center 2017).

The history of firearms legislation reflects these party divisions, but party control is not definitive. As Table 1 shows, major gun control legislation has only passed when Congress and the presidency are both under the control of the Democratic Party. A Democratic-controlled Congress also passed the 2007 NICS Improvement compromise measure that Republican President George W. Bush signed. But while a Republican-controlled government helps the gun rights movement win policy concessions, complete Republican control is not always necessary. President Clinton, a Democrat and a champion of gun control who signed the Brady bill and the Assault Weapons Ban, also signed off on the Dickey Amendment, which was on an appropriations bill that his Republican-controlled Congress sent him. More significantly, through

bureaucratic maneuvering and compromise amendments, gun rights proponents also shepherded the 1986 Firearm Owners Protection Act through a House of Representatives that was under Democratic control. Historically, elected Republicans have had a stronger commitment to protecting gun rights than elected Democrats do to controlling gun ownership.

Table 1: Historic Firearms Legislation and Partisan Government Control

Year	Name	Direction	Congress	President
1934	Federal Firearms Act	Control	Democrats	Democrat
1938	National Firearms Act	Compromise	Democrats	Democrat
1968	Gun Control Act	Control	Democrats	Democrat
1986	Firearm Owners Protection Act	Rights	Spit	Republican
1993	Brady Bill	Control	Democrats	Democrat
1994	Assault Weapons Ban	Control	Democrats	Democrat
1996	Dickey Amendment	Rights	Republicans	Democrat
2003	Tiahrt Amendments	Rights	Republicans	Republican
2004	Assault Weapon Ban expires	Rights	Republicans	Republican
2005	Protection of Lawful Commerce of Arms	Rights	Republicans	Republican
2007	NICS Improvement Act	Compromise	Democrats	Republican

One explanation for this discrepancy is that the gun rights movement far outspends the gun control movement in elections. A key way that social movements can influence the favorability of their political context is by working to elect politicians who support their interests (Meyer and Minkoff 2004). The gun rights movement funds both incumbent Republicans and incumbent Democrats who vote in its favor, and it funds primary challengers looking to unseat those who do not, regardless of party (Martinelli and Merlin 2012).

These electoral efforts matter. Campaign contributions are a strong predictor of how elected officials have voted on previous firearms legislation, regardless of party (Langbein and

Lotwis 1990; Lipford 2000). Democrats who receive contributions from the gun rights movement, and who represent states and districts with strong hunting traditions, are more likely to vote against gun control legislation and for gun rights legislation. Through its electioneering efforts, the gun rights movement has secured nearly hegemonic support for gun rights within the Republican Party, and has softened commitment to gun control within the Democratic Party.

When considering the favorability of the political context after Sandy Hook, especially for securing gun control legislation, it is therefore important to consider the partisan control of the government at the time of the event. At the time of the shooting, gun control proponents had an ally in President Barack Obama (D), but Congress was split between Republican and Democratic control. The Republican Party had reclaimed control of the House of Representatives in January 2011 after clobbering the Democrats in a landslide midterm election (Campbell 2010). The gun control movement had never secured desirable legislative change under conditions like these.

The openness of Congress to gun control looks even less promising after considering the political commitments of individual Senators and Representatives. At the start of the 113th Congress in January 2013, 51 Senators had at least an A- rating from the NRA. Partisan control and commitment in the House of Representatives favored the gun rights movement even more (Bloch et al. 2012). These ratings mean that, in the legislative session after the Sandy Hook shooting, a majority of elected officials in both houses of Congress typically voted in line with the NRA's interests most of the time.

Federalism and Gun Politics

United States federalism poses additional structural challenges for the gun control movement. While more liberal Democratic states have stricter firearms restrictions, the porous

boundaries between states undermine these restrictions. Trace data from the ATF suggests that firearms often flow from states with weaker restrictions to states with stronger restrictions through illegal markets (Berke 2016; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives 2016b). An implication of these illegal pathways is that the strength of any one state's restrictions is limited by the weakness of any other state's restrictions. Consequently, the gun control movement may have a greater imperative to secure national legislation than the gun rights movement.

In addition to these structural limitations to state-level gun control, at the time of the Sandy Hook shooting, the gun control movement also enjoyed fewer sympathetic state contexts. During the 2013-2014 legislative session, Democrats controlled the legislature and the governor was a Democrat in 15 states. By contrast, 24 states were under Republican control. Eleven states were under split-party control (National Conference of State Legislatures 2017). Like with national-level elections, the gun rights movement outspends the gun control movement in state-level races (Martinelli and Merlin 2012). This persistent discrepancy suggests that the gun rights movement will enjoy more commitment from Republicans than the gun control movement will from Democrats. Conservative, Democratic-controlled states may be more likely to support gun rights than liberal, Republican-controlled states are to support gun rights.

The Sandy Hook Shooting, a Critical Event for Gun Politics

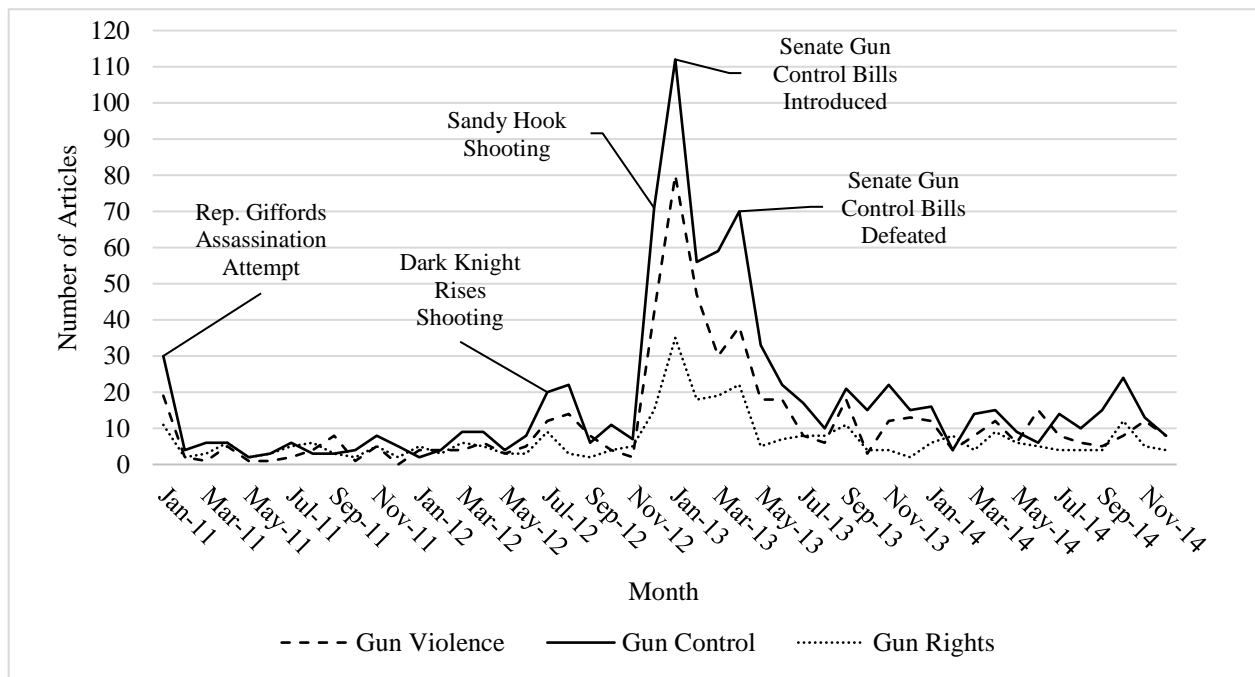
Certain contextual conditions shifted after Sandy Hook, and many of these changes reflected similar shifts that had occurred after other key shootings in the history of gun politics. The most notable changes were that attention to issues of gun violence and gun politics increased, as did support for gun control. Other notable conditions remained the same, though: the House of Representatives was still under Republican Party control, the gun rights

constituency was still stronger, and the gun rights movement still enjoyed the advantage of more Republican-controlled state legislatures.

Media Attention

Media attention to “gun violence,” “gun control,” and “gun rights” all increased after the Sandy Hook shooting (see Figure 8). It is also worth noting that while Sandy Hook was the most attention-grabbing shooting between January 2011 and December 2014, it was not the only shooting that attracted attention during this period. This timeframe actually starts with gun violence and gun politics on the media agenda, because of the January 21, 2011 assassination attempt on Representative Giffords. Attention to these topics also spiked in July and August of 2012 after the shooting at the midnight premiere of *The Dark Knight Rises* in Aurora, Colorado. Sandy Hook is notable, though, because of how much more attention it brought to these issues, and also because these changes were more enduring.

Figure 8: Articles in the New York Times Referencing "Gun Violence," "Gun Control," and "Gun Rights," January 2011 – December 2014



Original data collected from *Proquest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times*

There are three distinct patterns that offer insight into what this increased attention might mean for the political opportunities of the gun control and gun rights movements. First, while all three terms receive a similar amount of attention most of the time, after attention-grabbing shootings, the topic of gun control become more salient than the other two terms. By contrast, the topic of gun rights is noticeably less salient than the topics of gun control or gun rights. This distinction is most pronounced after the Sandy Hook shooting, when attention to gun control peaked at 112 articles in January 2013, and at only 35 articles for gun rights. This discrepancy suggests that when media outlets focus on the issue of gun violence after a mass shooting, the gun control movement's goals are more salient than those of the gun rights movement. In other words, while both sides of this opposing-movement-pair receive a visibility-boost after certain shootings, media attention shifts notably in favor of gun control.

The second distinct pattern in media attention between January 2011 and December 2014 is that this increased attention usually did not last long. Media attention after the assassination attempt on Rep. Giffords faded within 10 days, and attention after *The Dark Knight Rises* shooting lasted just into the next month. Part of what makes Sandy Hook noteworthy is that media attention lasted until the Senate gun control bills failed in April 2013, almost four months after the shooting. In other words, while media attention favors the gun control movement after these events, this advantage is typically short-lived. If the gun control movement's goals become institutionalized through debate over legislation, though, the movement keeps media attention on its issue.

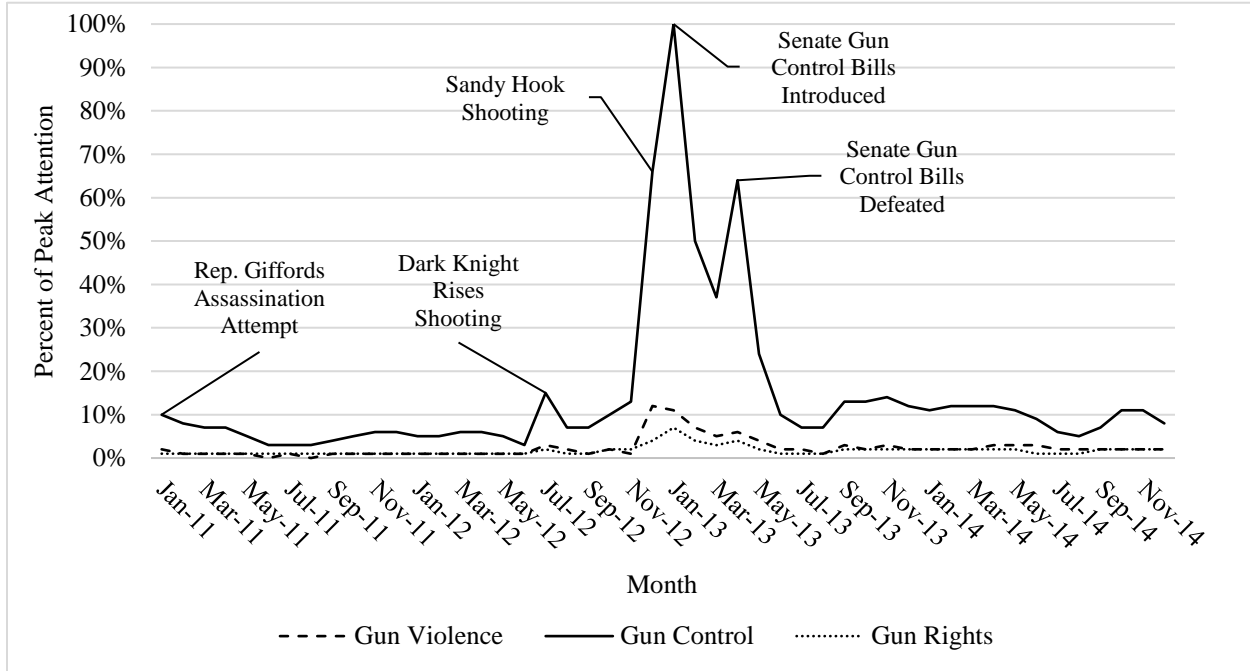
The third distinct pattern concerns a difference between pre-Sandy Hook media attention and post-Sandy Hook media attention. While attention to these issues evaporated after the Senate gun control bills died, attention did remain slightly elevated over pre-Sandy Hook levels. After

falling steadily to 10 articles in August 2013, attention to gun control vacillated between four and 24 articles a month through December 2014. The issue of gun rights was noticeably less salient, with media attention ranging between two and twelve article-mentions a month during the same timeframe. In other words, while the gains the gun control movement made in media attention were short-lived, a small but persistent advantage remained for years after the shooting. In these post-Sandy Hook years, these issues were more salient, and therefore events related to these issues received more attention after Sandy Hook than similar events had beforehand. These post-shooting gains in media attention after Sandy Hook underscore the role that these sorts of attention-grabbing shootings have played in the creation of gun violence as a social problem since *The New York Times* first started to really pay attention to the issue after the 1989 Stockton, California schoolyard shooting.

Public Attention

Public attention to the issue of “gun control” followed a similar pattern as media attention (see Figure 9). As with media attention, public attention rose and fell quickly in response to the shooting at *The Dark Knight Rises* screening in Aurora, Colorado. It also spiked right after the Sandy Hook shooting and remained elevated into January 2013. As with media attention, public attention to gun control waned in February and March, before rebounding in April when the Senate gun control bills died. Public attention, like media attention, remained slightly elevated over pre-Sandy Hook levels through the end of 2014. As with media attention, the public paid less attention to issues of “gun rights” and “gun violence” than it did to “gun control.” The public, though, devoted relatively less attention to issues of gun violence and gun rights than media outlets like *The New York Times* devoted to these issues during this time.

Figure 9: Public Attention to “Gun Control,” “Gun Violence,” and “Gun Rights,” January 2011 – December 2014

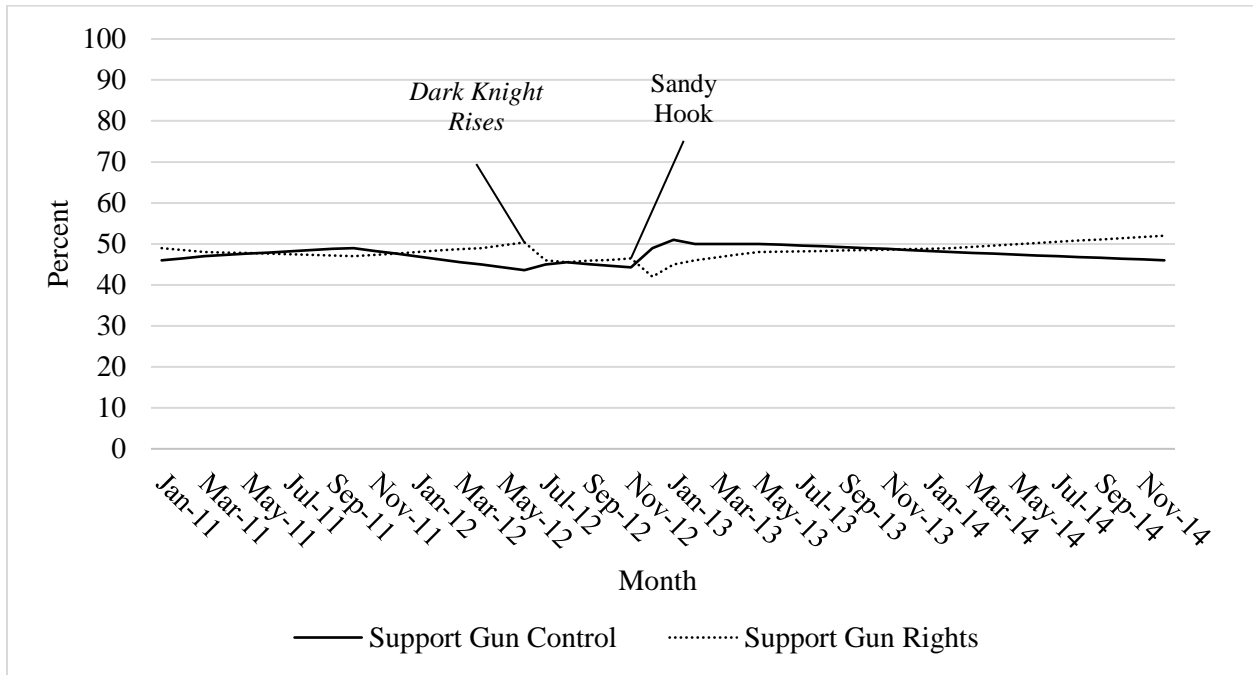


“Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. Likewise a score of 0 means the term was less than 1% as popular as the peak” (Google Trends, accessed December 1, 2017 from <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=2008-01-01%202016-12-31&geo=US&q=Gun%20Control,gun%20rights,gun%20violence>)

Public Opinion

Compared to the Gallup poll used above to represent historical trends in public opinion, the Pew Research Center polled more frequently between January 2011 and December 2014; therefore, it is better for examining short-term shifts in opinion. Public support for gun control increased after the Sandy Hook shooting (see Figure 10). It is also worth noting, that the public had started shifting in favor of the gun control movement after the shooting at *The Dark Knight Rises* premier in July 2012, though the shift after Sandy Hook was larger. Also, while support for gun control increased after the July shooting, it was only after Sandy Hook that the gun control movement had more support than the gun rights movement.

Figure 10: Percent of Americans Who Think it is More Important to "Protect the Right of Americans to Own Guns," versus "Control Gun Ownership," January 2011 - December 2014



The data used here were originally collected by the Pew Research Center (2017). Poll asked: “which do you think it is more important – to protect the right of Americans to own guns, OR to control gun ownership”

The gun control movement continued to gain support through January 2013. But after January, public support for the gun control declined steadily through December 2014. In fact, the gun rights movement peaked at an all-time high of 52 percent support in December 2014,⁴ enjoying a six percent advantage over the gun control movement. While contextual conditions became more favorable for the gun control movement, this advantage was temporary. These public opinion trends underscore the short-term nature of the gun control movement’s gains, as well as the longer-term gains the gun rights movement is making.

⁴ According to Pew data collected since December 1993, but not necessarily according to historical Gallup data.

Conclusions

Moving forward with an analysis of why the gun control and gun rights movements were both able to capitalize on the Sandy Hook shooting, there are three key contextual characteristics that are important to consider. First, it is essential to consider who had the contextual advantage when the shooting occurred. At the time of Sandy Hook, the gun rights movement enjoyed a strong advantage. While the gun control movement had an ally in President Obama, the Republican Party controlled the House of Representatives. No gun control legislation has every passed without the Democratic Party controlling both the Senate and the House. Moreover, elected Democrats were less committed to gun control than elected Republicans were to gun rights. In addition to this partisan advantage, the gun rights movement also enjoyed more public support than the gun control movement at the time of the Sandy Hook shooting and had a stronger constituency.

The second important contextual advantage for the gun rights movement is that it has been consistently winning the policy battle ever since 1994. Since that time, the gun rights movement has won successive little policy victories, including the 1996 Dickey Amendment, the 2003 Tiahrt Amendments, the 2004 expiration of the assault weapons ban, the 2005 Protection of Lawful Commerce of Arms Act, the 2008 *D.C. vs. Heller* ruling, and the 2010 *McDonald vs. Chicago* ruling. These victories both expand gun rights and block non-legislative strategies that the gun control movement had turned to in the face of the gun rights movement's legislative advantage. At the time of the Sandy Hook shooting, the gun control movement was desperate for a major policy win, but the gun rights movement just needed to hold the ground it had gained for the last 20 years.

Finally, part of why Sandy Hook became a critical event for gun politics is that some contextual conditions reverse favor after the shooting, and the gun control movement enjoyed a temporary advantage over the gun rights movement. Specifically, the gun control movement's goals received more media attention and more public support than those of the gun rights movement. Importantly, though, this advantage was short-lived and the disruption from the event was not strong enough to shift more structural, political conditions like partisan control of government, which remained split, and therefore favored inaction.

Media attention increased, public support shifted, and the Senate debated gun control legislation, all of which presented a mobilizing opportunity for both sides of the gun debate. But due to its repeated losses, the gun control movement is more desperate for this opportunity. It needs a win and it needs one quickly because once attention turns away from the issue of gun control any advantage that it might have had starts to fade quickly. The status-quo favors the gun rights movement, and this means that the gun rights movement can simply play defense and focus on returning conditions to the way they were. I detail the strategic consequences of these contextual conditions for both the gun control movement and the gun rights movement in Part II.

CHAPTER 2: EVENTS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

An Opportunity for Whom?

Social movement organizations can use events that receive high levels of media, public, and political attention to mobilize resources (Staggenborg 1993). Any potential advantage that an organization might gain, though, is complicated by the fact that both increased opportunity and increased threat are potentially mobilizing forces (Tilly 1978). One side mobilizes to capitalize on what it perceives as a newly sympathetic political context; the other side mobilizes to defend its interests against what it characterizes as an increasingly hostile and threatening context (Goldstone and Tilly 2001). Indeed, Laschever and Meyer (2015) find that the gun control movement and gun rights movement both add new organizations after mass shootings, thereby increasing the overall organizational capacities of these movements. In this way, these kinds of attention-grabbing shootings appear to provide a mobilizing opportunity for both sides of this opposing movement pair. This raises the question, though, *how do the capabilities of individual organizations within these movements change after an attention-grabbing event like the Sandy Hook shooting?*

Examining Organizational Capacity

Social movements are comprised of everything from individual, autonomous activists to highly formal organizations. I focus on professional, formal organizations as political actors. These types of groups are helpful for understanding social movement strategy and influence because they play a large role in the overall strategic direction a movement takes (Davis et al. 2005). When an event like Sandy Hook happens, the leaders of these organizations decide which fights the organization will engage in. This response will depend largely on the existing character

of the organization at the time of the event and the resources the organization mobilizes after the event. In general, the more resources an organization has, the more strategic options are available to it (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Kraatz and Zajac 2017). An organization's structure and resources will therefore determine how it can respond effectively to shifting contextual conditions (Morris 1984; Staggenborg 1988). To determine why an organization advanced its policy goals after an attention-grabbing event, it is first necessary to understand how, or even whether, an organization's structure or resources changed after the event.

In Chapter 1, I discussed the relationship between the Sandy Hook shooting and the political and cultural context, and in this chapter, I discuss the relationship between the shooting and organizational capacity. I start with a general discussion of key features of organizational character and capacity. Next, I outline the overall organizational composition of the gun control and gun rights movements, and identify the flagship groups that lead these movements. I use this discussion to justify my selection of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, Everytown for Gun Safety, the National Rifle Association, and the Second Amendment Foundation as my organizational case studies. This overview adapts data obtained from Laschever and Meyer (2015) on the overall organizational capacities of, and leadership patterns within, the gun control and gun rights movements.

After justifying the selection of these four organizations, I detail how the organizational character and capacity of these groups changed after Sandy Hook. To determine these changes, I analyze the forms these groups filed with the Internal Revenue Service and the Federal Election Commission between 2011 and 2014, as well as screen captures from these groups' websites during this timeframe. I collected and analyzed the I-990 Tax Return forms that each group submitted to the IRS for each of its operating divisions, which I retrieved through the National

Center for Charitable Statistics online database. I also collected and analyzed the Form 3x that each group filed with the Federal Election Commission, which I accessed through the commission's online database. I used the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine to access old versions of each organization's website, and I analyzed each available iteration of each group's website during the 2011-2014 timeframe. Finally, I outline how I collected and analyzed the data on organizational strategy that I detail in Part II.

I conclude that after the Sandy Hook shooting, all four groups grew across all available measures of organizational capacity. This widespread growth suggests that both sides of an opposing movement pair can use the same event to mobilize resources. In fact, within-movement variation is often greater than the between-movement variation, meaning that existing organizational character matters more than political stance in determining the resources a group mobilizes after an attention-grabbing event. However, the enduring resource disparity between the two sides favors the gun rights movement, and this will limit the gun control movement's viable strategic options. I detail the strategic consequences of these organizational factors for both the gun control movement and the gun rights movement in Part II of the dissertation.

Professional Political Organizations

Social movement scholars commonly distinguish between more formal, professional groups and more informal, insurgent ones because these structural differences influence organizational strategy (Morris 1984; Staggenborg 1988). Professional movement organizations typically try to influence policy directly through formal channels using more institutional tactics, like lobbying legislators, filing court cases, and campaigning in elections. Insurgent groups, on the other hand, tend to use more disruptive direct-action tactics. While professional groups do use protest-style tactics that are outside of formal institutional channels, their activities tend to be

more orderly (e.g., marches, rallies, and education campaigns) than the more disruptive tactics used by less professional groups. These more professional social movement organizations may have more in common with other professional advocacy organizations like interest groups and non-profits than they do with more informal grassroots groups (Andrews and Edwards 2004). In general, though, institutional tactics are typically more expensive and often require specialized expertise to execute effectively (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004), meaning that they are not available to all groups. This means that professional organizations, like those I analyze in this study, may have greater strategic flexibility, but be more likely to engage in certain tactics over others.

Formal organizations are also more durable and typically last longer than informal grassroots groups (Edwards and Marullo 1995; Minkoff 1999; Staggenborg 1988; Taylor 1989). The groups that endure are waiting and ready to mobilize at a moment's notice. This endurance is essential for maintaining a movement during lean times (Taylor 1989) so that it can capitalize on unplanned, attention-grabbing events, like a school shooting, when they occur (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Walsh 1981). This durability is also essential for assessing whether groups change their strategy to respond to events. More professional organizations also are more likely to have multiple operating divisions and a federated structure with affiliated local and state membership. A wider reach that mirrors the federated structure of the United States makes it easier for groups to operate in a wider selection of venues (Skocpol 2003). This strategic flexibility is essential for understanding why groups prioritize certain fights over others.

Flagship Movement Organizations

Within most movement sectors, there are flagship organizations—groups that enjoy a lion's share of the available funding, media visibility, and influence (Amenta et al. 2009). Take,

for example, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the civil rights movement, Planned Parenthood in the fight for reproductive rights, and of course the National Rifle Association (NRA) for gun rights. One of the defining features of leadership in the gun control movement is that it changes from group to group (Laschever and Meyer 2015). In fact, movement leadership has changed seven times between 1967, when the first formal group was founded, and 2014. But the Brady Campaign has been one of the leading groups since the group first rose to prominence in 1986. Leadership changed after the Sandy Hook shooting, though, with Everytown overtaking the Brady Campaign in size and prominence. Understanding the strategic responses of these two groups, therefore offers the most information about how the movement capitalized on this shooting, as well as insight into leadership changes within the gun control movement, which is an enduring feature of the movement.

Like the Brady Campaign and Everytown, I chose the National Rifle Association (NRA) and the Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) because they are both key organizational leaders in their movement, and because they also represent key leadership dynamics. While leadership within the gun control movement is shared and temporary, leadership in the gun rights movement is always and completely dominated by the NRA (Laschever and Meyer 2015). This dominance means that to understand how the gun rights movement capitalized on the Sandy Hook shooting, it is necessary to know how the NRA responded. The SAF is one of several long-standing groups—along with Gun Owners of America and the National Shooting Sports Foundation—that has shared the position of second-most-prominent gun rights group (Laschever and Meyer 2015). I selected the SAF as the second gun rights group for its two methodological advantages. First, its Annual Gun Rights Policy Conference makes it the most accessible gun rights group. The conference brings together leaders of numerous different gun rights groups for

an annual two-day summit of political analysis and strategizing. At these meetings, which I attended in 2014, 2015, and 2016, I observed movement leaders share their perspectives on the current state of the movement and the nature of the fight for gun rights. Second, of all the gun rights groups, the SAF's organizational structure most closely mirrors that of the Brady Campaign, which makes it the best group for between-movement comparisons. Due to their structural similarities, comparing these two groups can most clearly distinguish between contextual and organizational influences on resource mobilization and strategy.

Gun Control Organizations

The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence

The Brady Campaign is one of the oldest, most enduring, and arguably the most influential gun control groups (Laschever and Meyer 2015). When the group was originally founded in 1974 by Dr. Mark Borinsky, it went by the name "National Council to Control Handguns" (Brady Campaign 2016a). Since its founding, this group has been a key player in many of the significant events in gun politics history that I outlined in Chapter 1. The group changed its name to Handgun Control, Inc. (HCI) in 1980. And after failing to secure new firearms legislation following the assassination attempt on President Reagan in 1981, HCI started an education and outreach division called The Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, which produced research on the causes of gun violence (Associated Press 1988). In 1989, still blocked by president George H.W. Bush (R), the Center started bringing liability lawsuits against firearms dealers and manufacturers when their guns were used in crimes (Brady Campaign 2016b). After fighting for background check requirements and assault weapons restrictions for years, HCI finally secured these policies once President Clinton (D) was elected (Spitzer 2004).

HCI tried and failed to extend background checks to guns sold at gun shows after the Columbine High School Shooting in 1999 (Brady Campaign 2016c). And when the gun control movement contracted after the attention from the Columbine shooting waned, HCI merged with The Million Mom March (MMM), a new, high-profile, grassroots group founded in response to the shooting (Goss 2006; Laschever and Meyer 2015). After merging in 2001, HCI and MMM rebranded as The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. The Brady Campaign also adopted MMM's "ASK Campaign," which focused on "promoting a peer to peer inquiry into the presence of unlocked and loaded guns in the home" (Internal Revenue Service 2014: Part III, 4b). Specifically, the group encouraged parents to ask one another whether there were any unlocked guns near where their child had playdates. From 2001 through 2010, the Brady Campaign litigated court cases against gun dealers and manufacturers, conducted research on gun violence and gun laws, lobbied for background check expansions, and supported Democratic candidates in elections.

The organizational structure of the Brady Campaign remained largely unchanged between 2011 and 2014. The same three operating divisions that had worked together since 2001—The Brady Campaign, The Brady Center, and The Million Mom March—continued to manage the group's different initiatives. The Brady Center kept carrying out research projects and legal action; Million Mom March continued managing the group's public awareness initiatives like the ASK Campaign; and the Brady Campaign managed the group's ongoing legislative and electoral initiatives, as well as various movement-building efforts after high-profile shootings.

Everytown for Gun Safety

Everytown is a relatively young, but rapidly growing and increasingly influential gun control group (Laschever and Meyer 2015). The group was originally founded under the name

“Mayors Against Illegal Guns” (MAIG) in 2006 by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Boston Mayor Thomas Menino (Mayors Against Illegal Guns 2007a; Sewell 2006). A group of 15 mayors met in New York City in April of that year for an inaugural Summit, at which time the group drafted a Statement of Principles. According to this document, these mayors founded MAIG to combat illegal gun trafficking through several mechanisms. At the time of its founding, one of the group’s main objectives was fighting to repeal the Tiahrt Amendments. These mayors argued that they needed access to the FBI trace data that were blocked by the Tiahrt Amendments because these data were essential for identifying effective and ineffective gun laws and for tracking and punishing criminals.

MAIG expanded its agenda a little bit every year. When the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) was under the spotlight following the Virginia Tech shooting in April 2007, MAIG lobbied Congress (unsuccessfully) to include suspects from the “terror watch list” on the NICS list of prohibited persons (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2006; Mayors Against Illegal Guns 2007b). Following a similar model to its campaign against the Tiahrt Amendments, MAIG produced research reports using available FBI data and conducted public education media campaigns to support annual lobby efforts to close “the Terror Gap” (Mayors Against Illegal Guns 2009a, 2009b). The group repeated this pattern in 2008 with a campaign to extend NICS checks to guns sold at gun shows, and in 2009 with a successful fight against the Thune Amendment, which would have established concealed carry reciprocity (Mayors Against Illegal Guns 2008a, 2009c, 2009d). Concealed carry reciprocity is the shorthand phrase commonly used for policies that would require states to recognize concealed carry handgun permits from other states.

Unlike the Brady Campaign, Everytown dramatically changed its organizational structure between 2011 and 2014. These changes were deliberately in response to the Sandy Hook shooting and extended to all components of the group’s character and capacity. Before the shooting, MAIG split its operations relatively evenly between a division that managed the group’s research initiatives ⁵ and another that managed its lobbying efforts. ⁶ Both divisions also ran public education campaigns that complemented these tactics.

After the shooting, MAIG expanded its organizational structure and rebranded the group’s identity. In December 2013, MAIG merged with a new grassroots group called Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America (MDA) that had been founded right after the Sandy Hook shooting by “stay-at-home mom” Shannon Watts (Moms Demand Action 2013a). MAIG and MDA remained relatively autonomous and, for the most part, continued the kind of work they had done before they merged. MDA brought to the new organization its campaigns to promote “Domestic Gun Violence Awareness,” pressure companies like Staples to prohibit guns in their stores, spread research about gun violence, fight against the gun rights movement’s campus carry campaigns, and hold “Stroller Jam” protests at the local offices of U.S. Senators “to encourage Congress to vote yes on common-sense gun measures” (Moms Demand Action 2013b.) When MAIG and MDA merged, they rebranded under a new umbrella organization called Everytown for Gun Safety (Everytown). This new umbrella group claimed to put “survivors [of gun violence] at the center of the Everytown movement” by empowering them “to share their stories and take action to spare other families pain” (Everytown 2014). The new name

⁵ a 501(c)3 division called United Against Illegal Guns Support Fund

⁶ a 501(c)4 division called Mayors Against Illegal Guns Action Fund

was a reference to the city where the Sandy Hook shooting had happened: Newtown, Connecticut.

Gun Rights Organizations

The National Rifle Association

The National Rifle Association is the oldest, most enduring, and undeniably the most influential gun rights group (Cook and Goss 2014; Laschever and Meyer 2015; Spitzer 2004). It was originally founded in 1871 with a notably apolitical mission of promoting civilian marksmanship in the name of national defense (Winkler 2011). The NRA became more political as it fought to soften the firearms restrictions that Congress proposed, and eventually passed, as part of the 1968 Gun Control Act. An internal power struggle between the moderates who wanted to focus on hunting, conservation, and marksmanship, and the political hardliners from the NRA's Institute for Legislative Action (ILA) came to a head in 1977. The hardliners staged a dramatic "revolt" at the NRA's 1977 annual convention, deposed the moderates from leadership positions, and consolidated power within the ILA (Winkler 2011). After this event, the ILA became the NRA's power center and the NRA began opposing all new firearms regulations and fighting to scale back existing restrictions (Davidson 1998).

The NRA operates on a membership model, and individuals pay anywhere from \$40 for a one-year membership to \$1,500 for a lifetime membership (National Rifle Association 2017a). In many ways, the organization operates as a total institution. Membership provides access to benefits that meet a diverse set of needs, and reinforce an identity as an NRA member and a primary identity as "Gun Owner." Formal membership benefits include a gun owner insurance plan; a magazine subscription; discounts on car rentals, hotels, and travel; deals on NRA-

operated firearms trainings; and admission to events like the Annual Meeting and the Guns, Gear, & Outfitter Show (National Rifle Association 2017b).

In my ethnographic fieldwork at the NRA's annual conventions in 2015 and 2016, I observed that the NRA is a cradle-to-grave institution. At the member's meeting, Executive Vice President and CEO Wayne LaPierre takes a moment to acknowledge the oldest and youngest lifetime member in attendance. The first thing that happens once the meeting is brought to order is that La Pierre instructs people who think they might be the oldest member to stand; he then counts up in various increments starting in the 60's. In both 2015 and 2016, the person who won was a stooped old man with white hair and a white beard, who wore a hat from a branch of the military. LaPierre then invites the winner on stage for a picture and a handshake. This process is then repeated to find the youngest member. Both years, the winners were newborn babies only a few months old. The mom, dad, and baby are then invited on stage for their handshakes and photo opportunity.

Like the Brady Campaign, the NRA's organizational structure remained largely unchanged between 2011 and 2014. The same six operating divisions that worked together since the NRA established its Freedom Action Foundation in 2008 continued to manage the group's different initiatives (Internal Revenue Service 2011a). The group's main operating division—the National Rifle Association of America—managed most of the group's human and financial capital and program spending. Changes in this division drove most of the increases in the group's organizational capacity.

The NRA divides its initiatives across its different operating divisions. The main operating division lobbies national and state legislatures; communicates with members; and provides various educational, competitive, service, and training programs. Some of these

programs, though, are also managed through the group's Foundation and the Whittington Center, which is an NRA-affiliated recreation facility near Raton, New Mexico (NRA Whittington Center 2015).

The NRA divides its electioneering between its Freedom Action Foundation (FAF), which manages voter registration and education efforts, and its Political Victory Fund (PVF), which endorses candidates and contributes to their campaigns. The group's Civil Rights Defense Fund (CRDF) manages most of the group's legal services, though the group's Foundation also hosts an annual National Firearms Law Seminar. The complexity of the NRA's organizational structure has led to a more notable division of labor than the other three groups.

The Second Amendment Foundation

The Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) is one of several long-standing groups that shares the position as the second most prominent gun rights organization (Laschever and Meyer 2015). Alan Gottlieb established the group in 1971 as a sub-committee within the Young Americans for Freedom group, which Gottlieb helped lead at the time (Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms 2017a; Godwin 2012; SourceWatch 2008). At the time, the group was called the National Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms (NCCRKBA). The NCCRKBA's incorporation papers declared that the group's mission was to "operate exclusively for the purpose of defending the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution" (Halpin and de Armond 1995). In 1973, the group dropped "National" from its name and the following year Gottlieb established a partner 501(c)4 legal and education division called the Second Amendment Foundation (Encyclopedia of Associations 2014).

Between 1973 and 2011, the CCRKBA and the SAF split the group's work. The CCRKBA focused on the group's "grass-roots" and "direct" lobbying efforts (Internal Revenue

Service 2010a) and the SAF focused on “legal action in defense of gun owners, including constitutional challenge of legislation in the courts” (Internal Revenue Service 2010b). Both divisions also carried out public education campaigns supporting these efforts. Until 2008, the CCRKBA was the more prominent of the group’s two divisions. After the SAF helped win the 2008 *D.C. vs. Heller* Supreme Court case, the SAF litigation wing became the group’s more prominent division. The group reinforced this shift from lobbying to litigation when it helped win the 2010 *McDonald vs. Chicago* Supreme Court case to extend the *D.C. vs. Heller* decision to the states.

Unlike the NRA, the SAF added new operating divisions between 2011 and 2014. This was the group’s first real structural growth since the early 1970s. And like Everytown, the SAF absorbed other existing groups rather than creating completely new operating divisions. In 2012, the SAF announced that it was establishing a new affiliation with a group called Doctors for Responsible Gun Ownership (DRGO) that was founded in 1994 to fight “organized medicine’s attempts to promote gun control” (Doctors for Responsible Gun Ownership 2012). The group had previously been affiliated with a southern California think tank, but its leader felt that SAF would “allow more timely and direct involvement in the political movement against public health activists” (ibid) At the time, the SAF was defending against a legal challenge from the Brady Campaign brought against a Florida law that, among other prohibitions, limited doctors from asking patients about gun ownership (Greenlee 2016; Nielsen 2017).

Then in 2014, the SAF announced a merger with Jews for the Preservation of Firearm Ownership (JPFO) (Second Amendment Foundation 2014a). JPFO was founded in 1989 to “educat[e] the Jewish community about the historical evils that Jews have suffered when they have been disarmed,” but after its founder died in 2010, the group suffered financial and

leadership problems (Jews for the Preservation of Firearm Ownerships. At the time of the merger, JPFO announced that becoming “operated independently as a project of SAF” was the best way for JPFO to continue serving its members (Second Amendment Foundation 2014a). These new divisions are notable for how they may have influenced the issue areas that the SAF focuses on, but, unlike the structural changes that Everytown underwent during this time, they are not connected to the specific contextual changes that surrounded the Sandy Hook shooting.

Increased Organizational Capacity After Sandy Hook

All four groups benefited from a marked increase in organizational capacity after the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting. Both threat and opportunity were mobilizing forces, and gun control and gun rights organizations both secured more revenue, hired more staff members, attracted more volunteers, and added more state chapters and/or local affiliates.

More Revenue

All four groups enjoyed an immediate funding boost after the shooting and enjoyed elevated funding through 2014 (see Table 2). But the size and durability of this increase varied across groups. The Brady Campaign’s reported revenue surged immediately after the shooting, growing by just over \$3 million between 2011 and 2012. Since the shooting happened on December 14, 2012, the first two weeks of the post-shooting donation surge took place at the end of the 2012 reporting period.⁷ While the Brady Campaign’s revenue remained elevated through 2014, it fell by about \$400,000 in 2013 and another \$40,000 in 2014.

⁷ This claim is supported by three independent sources: 1) a conversation with a Brady Campaign staff member at the group’s 2014 Annual Summit, 2) the fact that all increases in expenditures occurred in 2013 rather than in 2012, and 3) Google Trends, interest in the Brady Campaign spiked the week after the shooting and evaporated almost completely by the beginning of January 2013. Indeed, the program expenditures in the group’s IRS report suggests that before the Sandy Hook Shooting the group may have actually been on pace for a lower revenue in 2012 than it had in 2011.

Table 2: Organizational Revenue, 2011 – 2014

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011 → 2014
Brady Campaign	\$5,798,303	\$8,396,187	\$7,996,577	\$7,954,884	+ 37.19 %
Everytown	\$6,582,065	\$12,003,126	\$37,037,000	\$46,097,826	+ 600.36 %
NRA	\$259,084,466	\$315,743,146	\$407,280,980	\$374,312,759	+ 44.48 %
SAF	\$6,325,351	\$6,687,550	\$8,740,341	\$6,865,787	+ 8.54 %

Original data collected from I-990 Tax Return forms filed with the Internal Revenue Service and Form 3x and Form 5 filed with the Federal Election Commission. Reported answers to I-900 Tax Return Question 12, “Total revenue,” Form 3x Question 6(c), “Total Receipts,” and Form 5 Question 6, “Total Contributions.” Accessed through the FEC online database and the National Center for Charitable Statistics Database.

Everytown’s reported revenue also grew dramatically after the Sandy Hook shooting. Like the Brady Campaign, Everytown’s annual reported revenue grew by \$3.5 million between 2011 and 2012. But unlike the Brady Campaign, Everytown maintained substantial revenue growth in both 2013 and 2014. The group’s annual revenue grew from about \$12 million in 2012 to about \$37 million in 2013. Revenue grew by an additional \$9 million dollars in 2014. This sort of sustained revenue growth after a high-profile shooting is uncommon for the gun control movement (Laschever and Meyer 2015).

Not only the scale of Everytown’s revenue-growth, but also the source of this growth in 2013 and 2014, is noteworthy. A substantial portion of Everytown’s funding in both 2013 and 2014 came directly from the large personal fortune of the group’s president, Michael Bloomberg. In March 2013, Bloomberg personally funded a twelve-million-dollar public awareness campaign to pressure U.S. Senators in key swing states to vote in favor of the national legislation to expand background checks, and restrict access to assault weapons and high capacity magazines (Harding 2013). Then, in April 2014, he pledged another \$50 million to the fight for stronger gun control (Peters 2014). This means that, once the heightened attention and funding

from the Sandy Hook shooting subsided, Bloomberg himself took personal responsibility for sustaining Everytown's funding.

Like the gun control groups, the revenue that the gun rights groups mobilized also increased. The NRA enjoyed a funding surge right after the shooting, with reported revenue growing by about \$56.7 million between 2011 and the end of 2012. Unlike the Brady Campaign, the NRA's revenue continued increasing in 2013, jumping another \$91.5 million. But while reported revenue in 2014 remained elevated above 2012 levels, it fell by about \$33 million from the previous year.

The SAF's reported revenue also increased dramatically after the shooting. And like the other three groups, this increase was immediate. The SAF reported roughly \$360,000 more at the end of 2012 than it did at the end of 2011. And, like the NRA, the SAF's reported revenue grew even more in 2013, jumping from about \$6.7 million in 2012 to about \$8.7 million in 2013. Like the Brady Campaign and the NRA, the SAF's reported revenue fell in 2014, though, also like the other groups, revenue remained elevated over 2011 levels. In fact, the group even pulled in slightly more revenue than it had right after the shooting at the end of 2012, due in part to about \$200,000 that the new JPFO division brought in.

While the reported revenue for all groups remained elevated in 2014, these gains were unequal. Everytown's revenue remained by far the most elevated, up over 600 percent from 2011. It was the NRA, though, and not the Brady Campaign, that made the second largest gains. While the Brady Campaign remained up about 37 percent in 2014, the NRA was up just over 44 percent, a disparity that is even more substantial in absolute terms. The SAF trailed far behind, up only about 9 percent, most of which came from the new organizations it absorbed.

More Paid Staff Members

All four groups hired more staff members the year after the shooting (see Table 3). The Brady Campaign hired 16 new employees between 2012 and 2013. This growth is even more notable given that the group lost four staff members the previous year. However, while the group did continue to grow in 2014, this growth fell off markedly; the Brady Campaign added only three new employees in 2014. Like the Brady Campaign, the number of paid staffers that Everytown employed decreased slightly between 2011 and 2012, before jumping in 2013. But Everytown underwent substantially more growth than the Brady Campaign. When the group changed from being MAIG in 2012 to being Everytown in December 2013, it hired 112 new people. Everytown hired an additional 12 people in 2014.

Table 3: Organizational Staff Members, 2011 – 2014

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011 → 2014
Brady Campaign	30	26	42	45	+ 50.00 %
Everytown	7	6	118	130	+ 1,757.14 %
NRA	800	813	837	895	+ 11.88 %
SAF	24	24	31	24	No Change

Original data collected from I-990 Tax Return forms filed annual with the Internal Revenue Service. Reported answer to Question 5, “Total number of individuals employed in calendar year.” Accessed through the National Center for Charitable Statistics online database.

Gun rights groups also hired more staff members. The number of NRA employees grew steadily between 2011 and 2014. The group hired 13 people in 2012, 24 people in 2013, and 58 people in 2014. The SAF also employed more people after the shooting, but unlike the other groups, this growth was temporary. The organization employed 24 people in 2011 and 2012, and hired seven more people in 2013, but shrank back to 24 employees in 2014.

Variations in growth between 2011 and 2014 also highlight how organizational structure and stance influence resource mobilization in the wake of a shooting. Everytown, again, grew the most; in 2014, the number of employees was up over 1,700 percent from 2011. This time, the Brady Campaign (up 50 percent) registered greater proportional growth from 2011 to 2014 than did the NRA (up only about 12 percent). However, this may again be a feature of organizational capacity rather than organizational stance. In general, the growth of organizations as large as the NRA typically slows (Whetten 1987). There are practical limits to the new kinds of positions of that scale can create.

More Volunteers

All four groups also recruited more volunteers right after the shooting (see Table 4). After losing 300 volunteers between 2011 and 2012, the Brady Campaign recruited 1,300 additional volunteers in 2013. But while this growth was dramatic, it was also short-lived. The following year, the Brady Campaign lost 800 volunteers. While this was still 500 more than the group reported pre-Sandy Hook, it is a notable drop-off from 2013.

Table 4: Organizational Volunteers, 2011 – 2014

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011 → 2014
Brady Campaign	1,000	700	2,000	1,200	+ 20.00 %
Everytown	0	0	0	1,026,272	Complete Change
NRA	135,618	160,358	160,474	172,013	+ 26.84 %
SAF	47	67	0*	46	- 2.12 %

Original data collected from I-990 Tax Return forms filed annual with the Internal Revenue Service. Reported answer to Question 6, “Total number of volunteers (estimate if necessary).” Accessed through the National Center for Charitable Statistics online database.

The number of volunteers helping Everytown also increased dramatically after the shooting. The group went from zero reported volunteers before the shooting to more than one

million in 2014. While the group's name-change and staff-growth appeared formally on paper in the group's 2013 tax returns (along with increased revenue), volunteer growth lagged. While Everytown could use its immediate influx in revenue to hire more paid staffers right away, it took longer to use this money and staff to mobilize volunteers for the first time. When this mobilization finally occurred in 2014, though, it constituted a fundamental change in the character of the group's human capacity. With the mobilization of volunteers, Everytown started tapping into an entirely new resource stream.

The gun rights groups benefited from a more immediate increase in volunteer support than the gun control groups did. The number of NRA volunteers jumped by almost 24,740 between 2011 and the end of 2012, mostly through the NRA's main operating division. And while the group recruited only 116 more volunteers in 2013, volunteer support jumped again in 2014 as the Whittington Center added about 11,500 volunteers.

Unfortunately, it is hard to determine how the SAF's volunteer capacity changed around the shooting. Like the NRA, the SAF reported an immediate increase in volunteers right after the Sandy Hook Shooting. By the end of the 2012 reporting period, the SAF had 20 more volunteers than the previous year. But the SAF reported no volunteers in 2013, despite describing robust volunteer support in its efforts to get a measure on the ballot in Washington State in its newsletter (Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms 2013). It is likely that the zero volunteers reported in 2013 is a clerical omission rather than an accurate account, especially since the group reported 46 volunteers in 2014. Despite the report of zero volunteers in 2013, it is more likely that the increase in volunteer support that the SAF reported at the end of 2012 carried into 2013 before returning to pre-Sandy Hook shooting levels in 2014.

It is possible to determine, though, that the SAF, as with other measures of organizational capacity, benefited the least from the Sandy Hook shooting. In fact, the amount of volunteer support that the SAF reported in 2014 was actually down from what it reported in 2011. The relative gains in volunteer support that the other three groups made from 2011 to 2014 mirrored the revenue gains these groups reported during the same time. Everytown underwent a complete change in its volunteer structure from 2011 to 2014, and the NRA reported slightly higher proportional growth in this resource than did the Brady Campaign.

More State Chapters and Local Affiliates

The local reach of all four organizations increased the year after the shooting, with the Brady Campaign, Everytown, the NRA, and the SAF all adding new local affiliates and state chapters (see Table 5). The Brady Campaign expanded rapidly the year after Sandy Hook, but this growth slowed dramatically the following year. It added 13 new chapters between 2012 and 2013, and another 2 chapters in 2014.

Table 5: State Chapters and Local Affiliates, 2011 – 2014

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011 → 2014
Brady Campaign	53	53	69	71	+ 33.96 %
Affiliated Mayors	625	730	999	944	+ 51.04 %
Everytown					
State MDA Chapters	n/a	n/a	n/a	75	Complete Change
NRA	2398	3452	3560	3547	+ 47.91 %
SAF	217	217	220	164	- 24.42 %

Original data collected from counts presented on old, archived organizational websites. Accessed through The Internet Archive's Wayback Machine.

Like the Brady Campaign, Everytown also added more local affiliates after the shooting. MAIG had maintained a steady growth of about 100 new affiliated mayors every year since its founding in 2006 (Mayors Against Illegal Guns; Internal Revenue Service 2007, 2008). But

between 2012 and 2013 the group added 269 new affiliates. This growth was short-lived, though, and MAIG actually lost 55 affiliates in 2014, falling back down to 944 mayors. But while this growth stalled in 2014, the new umbrella organization under which MAIG operated, Everytown, did extend its local reach in other ways. Namely, the group incorporated the state chapters of its new division, Moms Demand Action (MDA), which brought the group 75 chapters across 37 states (Moms Demand Action 2013).

Like the gun control groups, the NRA's local reach also increased after the shooting. And unlike the other three groups, this growth was immediate. The number of affiliates in the NRA's business alliance grew from 2,398 in 2011 to 3,452 by the end of 2012. And the NRA kept expanding into 2013, adding another 108 affiliates. But this growth had stalled by the end of 2014, and the NRA lost a few affiliates. I examine affiliates in the NRA's business alliance to assess changes in its local capacity rather than looking at the state NRA chapters because the NRA designates one state-level group as its local chapter in each state (NRA Business Alliance 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014).

Like the other three groups, the SAF's state-level infrastructure grew after Sandy Hook. The group had held steady at 217 chapters in 2011 and 2012, but then added three new chapters in 2013. This growth was short-lived, though, and, like the NRA and Everytown, the SAF lost chapters in 2014. In fact, since the SAF fell to only 164 chapters in 2014, it was the group that contracted the most after the attention from the shooting waned.

The relative proportional growth in local reach that each group reported from 2011 to 2014 mirrors, and actually exaggerates, growth in volunteer support. The SAF, as with other measures of organizational capacity, benefited the least from the Sandy Hook shooting. In fact, the number of local chapters that the SAF reported in 2014 actually fell about 24 percent from

2011. In addition to adding about 50 percent more affiliated mayors, Everytown added a completely new local infrastructure through its Moms Demand Action chapters. And, as with other measures, the NRA reported higher proportional growth than did the Brady Campaign.

Increased Organizational Visibility

The visibility of all four groups increased the year after the shooting, as measured by the number of *New York Times* articles that referenced each group (see Table 6). Media attention to the Brady Campaign increased immediately after the shooting, with coverage in the last two weeks of December 2012 pushing attention higher than it had been in 2011. The Brady Campaign continued attracting more attention into 2013, with the number of articles referencing the “Brady Campaign,” the “Brady Center,” and/or the “Million Mom March” increasing slightly, from 13 articles in 2012 to 15 articles in 2013. There were four fewer articles referencing the group in 2014, with attention dropping back to pre-Sandy Hook levels.

Table 6: Number of New York Times Articles that Referenced Each Organization, 2011 – 2014

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011 → 2014
Brady Campaign	10	13	15	11	+ 10.00 %
Everytown	4	12	23	21	+ 425.00 %
NRA	33	66	113	81	+ 145.45 %
SAF	3	1	4	1	- 66.67 %

Original data collected from *Proquest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times*

Like the Brady Campaign, Everytown also attracted more attention right after the shooting. The number of *New York Times* articles that referenced “Mayors Against Illegal Guns” quadrupled between 2011 and 2012, jumping from four to twelve articles. And the group attracted almost twice as much attention in 2013 as it had in 2012. Like the Brady Campaign, attention only fell by a few articles in 2014. Unlike the Brady Campaign, though, this was still

much higher than the group's pre-Sandy Hook coverage. To determine Everytown's visibility in 2014, I also searched *Proquest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times* for reference to "Everytown" and "Moms Demand Action," in addition to "Mayors Against Illegal Guns." Many of the 21 *New York Times* articles from 2014 mentioned more than one of these divisions.

Like the gun control groups, the NRA also attracted more media attention after the shooting. And like the gun control groups, this increased attention came immediately in late December 2012. The number of *New York Times* articles that referenced the "National Rifle Association" increased from 33 articles in 2011 to 66 articles by the end of 2012. Attention doubled again in 2013, jumping to 113 articles. Like the Brady Campaign and Everytown, the NRA attracted less media attention in 2014 than it had in 2013, but the group was still referenced in 81 articles.

Like the other three groups, the SAF also attracted more media attention after the shooting, but like with other measures of capacity, the SAF attracted far less media attention. The SAF did not benefit from the end-of-the-year attention bump in 2012 that the other three groups received post-Sandy Hook. In fact, only one article in 2012 mentioned either the "Second Amendment Foundation" or the "Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms." The group did attract more attention in 2013—four *New York Times* articles—than it had the previous two years combined. But attention fell back to only one article in 2014.

The relative proportional growth in attention that each group enjoyed from 2011 to 2014 mirrors the growth across other measures of organizational capacity. As with other measures, the SAF benefited the least from the Sandy Hook shooting. In fact, the amount of media attention the group received actually fell about 66.68 percent between 2011 and 2014, despite its brief surge in 2013. The Brady Campaign came out only slightly ahead of where it had been in 2011.

Everytown was the real winner, receiving about 425 percent more attention in 2014 than it had in 2011. It went from receiving about half as much attention as the Brady Campaign in 2011 to receiving almost twice as much attention as the Brady Campaign in 2014, replacing the Brady Campaign as the most prominent gun control group. The NRA also attracted about 2.5 times as much attention in 2014 as it had in 2011, and remained by far the most prominent group in the gun debate.

Assessing Organizational Strategy

To determine how opposing-movements respond to critical events, I conduct intensive case studies of how the agendas of these four groups evolved between 2011 and 2014. I selected the Brady Campaign, Everytown, the NRA, and the SAF because all four groups are flagship organizations in their movements, they are also all well-resourced, professional, high-profile groups that have a federated organizational structure and multiple divisions that operate in different political and cultural venues. I use a comparative-historical approach and most-similar systems design. This method is appropriate for discerning how different causal conditions produce particular outcomes using a small number of in-depth cases (Ragin 2008).

Data Collection

To examine how each group's strategy changed between 2011 and 2014, I collected and coded all press communications that each group issued during this time. Organizations issue press communications to draw media and public attention to issues, events, and other actors that are important to them. Press communications are therefore one of the best public accountings that an organization provides to the public of what its priorities are.

These groups posted their press releases in "press room" or "news" sections of their websites. I accessed most press communications directly from each group's website. I obtained

those that were unavailable on a group’s website through the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine, which captures and archives a website’s appearance and content as it changes over time. These groups all sometimes wrote longer commentary pieces that offered a more detailed accounting of broader organizational priorities, and I included these in the sample as well. In total, between January 2011 and December 2014, the Brady Campaign issued 347 press communications, Everytown issued 270, the NRA issued 824, and the SAF issued 325. Table 7 summarizes how many of these communications were issued each year.

Table 7: Number of Organizational Press Communications Issued Annually, 2011 – 2014

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011 → 2014
Brady Campaign	75	90	71	111	+ 48.00 %
Everytown	39	20	32	179	+ 358.97 %
NRA	92	216	272	244	+ 165.22 %
SAF	85	77	88	75	- 11.76 %

The number of press communications that these groups issued followed similar patterns as the measures of organizational capacity discussed above. The only unusual pattern was that the number of press communications that the Brady Campaign issued fell between 2012 and 2013, before rising sharply in 2014. This is the only measure for any group that fell in 2013 and rose in 2014. The four-year proportional growth trends in this rough measure of organizational activity, though, otherwise reflected similar growth patterns as those in organizational capacity. Everytown grew the most, by about 359 percent between 2011 and 2014. The NRA grew the second most, by about 165 percent, and then the Brady Campaign, which grew by 48 percent. As with some measures of organizational capacity, the SAF ended up below 2011 levels.

Coding and Analysis

To use these media communications to assess organizational strategy, I coded all 1,766 documents for three components of an agenda item: venue, target, and issue area. I used an inductive-based, open-closed coding method to identify the contours of this political fight. The first time through the documents, I read to identify all possible venues, targets, and issue areas, building a comprehensive list. In the second reading, I consolidated these items into categories. In the third reading, I determined which items appeared in each document. In Table 8, I show the venues, the targets, and examples of some of the issue areas that I identified as important in the gun debate between January 2011 and December 2014.

Table 8: Components of an Agenda Item

Venue	Target	Issue Area ⁸
Business	National	Background Checks
Courts	State (unspecified)	Concealed Carry Restrictions
Electoral	Specific State	Prohibited Persons
Executive	(e.g., California, Illinois, Texas)	Dealer Restrictions
Legislative		Owner Responsibilities
Movement		Fundraising
Personal		Opponent Activities

Individual press communications could include numerous agenda items. To count as an agenda item, the press communication needed to connect a specific issue area to a distinct venue type and indicate whether the group was targeting that venue at the national or state level. For example, a press communication that discussed Congressional legislation to expand background

⁸ While the lists for Venue and Target are complete, this is just a small set of examples from a much broader and more fine-grained list of Issue Areas.

checks, ban assault weapons, and restrict the capacity of magazines would be coded as attention to three agenda items in the National Legislature. While a press communication could contain numerous agenda items, it could only contain each individual agenda item once. I coded whether each agenda item was focused on advancing the group's own goals or on blocking the goals of its opponents. For example, if the NRA or the SAF advocated for national concealed carry reciprocity, I coded this as an "offensive" agenda item. But if the NRA or the SAF criticized expanding background checks to all gun sales, I coded this as a "defensive" agenda item.

The size of each organization's agenda represents both a breadth of attention devoted to many different agenda items and a depth of attention devoted to the same agenda item again and again. For example, a press communication that mentions national legislation related to expanding background checks, restricting magazine capacities over 10 rounds, and banning assault weapons would represent three counts of attention to the legislative venue targeted at the national level. A press communication that mentions movement-building activities in Tennessee, Ohio, and Arizona would represent three counts of attention to the movement-building venue targeted at states. And if the group issued three different press releases that referenced expanding background checks in Congress, this would represent three counts of attention to the legislative venue targeted at the national level. These all represent different ways to get to three agenda items.

The number of agenda items is a relatively consistent measure of how intensely each group engaged with fights targeted at particular national and state venues. In total, the 347 Brady Campaign media communications yielded 689 agenda items, the 270 Everytown communications yielded 869 agenda items, the 824 NRA communications yielded 2,029 agenda items, and the 325 SAF communications yielded 534 agenda items. Table 9 summarizes the

number of agenda items each year; these annual patterns mirror those in the press communication themselves.

Table 9: Total Agenda Items per Year, 2011 – 2014

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011 → 2014
Brady Campaign	168	206	139	176	+ 4.76 %
Everytown	90	65	193	521	+ 478.89 %
NRA	236	482	751	560	+ 137.29 %
SAF	147	112	164	111	- 24.49 %

Based on insights generated by my iterative readings of these documents, I determined that these annual break-downs of organizational strategy obscure important differences between the first and second half of each year, particularly in 2013 and 2014. To balance complexity and parsimony, I assessed whether an agenda item was targeted at a “national” or “state” target and I determined which three venue-targets received the most attention from each group for each six-month period between January 2011 and 2014.

After analyzing how these priorities evolved over time, I reread each group’s press communications for a fourth time, and triangulated these trends. First, I searched newspaper archives for articles referencing each organization. And second, I compared these patterns against observations I made at the Brady Campaign’s National Policy Summit in 2014 and 2015, the NRA’s Annual Meeting in 2015 and 2016, and the SAF’s Annual Gun Rights Policy Conference in 2014, 2015, and 2016. During these meetings, prominent members, leaders, and allies gathered for several days to discuss organizational and movement activities, victories, and defeats from the previous few years, as well as priorities for the upcoming year. At these meetings, I observed how leaders in each movement characterized the various changes that these groups and these movements, underwent over the previous few years, and why they thought

these changes had occurred. Through this process, I produced the narrative analyses in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

Conclusions

Groups on both sides of an opposing movement pair can grow their organizational capacity after shocking events that place their issue on the agenda. Gun control and gun rights groups both experienced growth across all measures of organizational capacity immediately after the shooting. While all four groups grew after the shooting, the distinct changes that each group underwent, reflect its distinct position in fight over gun politics.

Despite being on the same side of the issue, the Brady Campaign and Everytown underwent different changes in organizational capacity. Everytown's capacity grew more, and in more ways, than the Brady Campaign. These more dramatic changes reflect Everytown's relative youth, as well as the patronage it enjoyed from its leader Mayor Bloomberg. Similarly, the differences in resource growth between the NRA and the SAF reflect the NRA's more prominent role within the gun rights movement. Across most measures of organizational capacity, the NRA enjoys more stable and steady growth than the SAF. This difference is a function of how much larger and better resourced the NRA is to begin with. In many ways, the within-movement differences in organizational capacity growth are greater than the between-movement variation.

These variations suggest that an organization's structure, more so than which side of the debate it is on, determine the resources a group mobilizes after an attention-grabbing event. These gains in organizational capacity provided all groups with more strategic options after the shooting, but not all groups necessarily increased their activities at the same time or in the same places. Moreover, the enduring resource-disparity between the two sides favors the gun rights movement and will limit the viable strategic option of gun control organizations. I discuss the

strategic consequences of these organizational factors for both the gun control movement and the gun rights movement in greater detail in Chapters 3-5.

CHAPTER 3: MAXIMIZING EVENT OPPORTUNITIES

Capitalizing on an Opportunity

Mass shootings, like the one at Sandy Hook Elementary School, can present an opportunity for gun control groups. By drawing media, public, and political attention to the chronic, but usually invisible, problem of gun violence, these shootings disrupt the public's normal complacency on this issue. A mass shooting as shocking as the one at Sandy Hook, where a gunman murdered twenty elementary school children and six of their teachers (Barron 2012), is especially attention-grabbing and emotionally resonant.

Such events can present an opportunity for a political organization when, in addition to elevating the group's issue to the top of the public agenda, the event also generates more public support for the group's goals (Laschever and Meyer 2015; Staggenborg 1993), especially if the group's political allies control the government. Events that receive high levels of media, public, and political attention, and that shift the funding and public opinion landscape can become "critical events" when social movement actors use them to mobilize support and press for policy change. But many potentially significant events never become "critical" ones, in part because, it is how activists *use* an event that makes it critical (Armstrong and Cragg 2006; Gamson 1988; Walsh 1981). For a high-profile shooting to matter for gun politics, gun control groups need to use that shooting to advance their goals. A group's ability to use such an event to advance its agenda is further constrained by the group's organizational capacity, and the existing political context at the time of the event, such as which party is in control of various political venues.

Mobilizing in the wake of a tragic mass shooting requires gun control groups to walk a fine line. If the group proceeds too quickly or aggressively with trying to capitalize on the

strategic benefits conferred by a mass shooting, then opponents might dismiss its call-to-action as callous and opportunistic. Indeed, this is exactly how gun rights opponents portray the mobilizing efforts of gun control groups in the wake of mass shootings. Take, for example, how Alan Gottlieb, president of the Second Amendment Foundation (the SAF), refers to the strategy of mobilizing after a mass shootings as “dancing in blood” (Gottlieb and Workman 2014). And Wayne LaPierre, Executive Vice President of the National Rifle Association (the NRA), similarly criticizes gun control groups that mobilized in response to shootings like Sandy Hook for “try[ing] to exploit tragedy for political gain” (National Rifle Association 2012b). If gun control groups are not careful, potential supporters might agree with these assessments.

The press releases that gun control groups issue in the wake of mass shootings suggest that these groups do indeed perceive these shootings as an opportunity for action, and also recognize the balance they must strike. On December 14, 2012, the day of the Sandy Hook Shooting, the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (Brady Campaign) and Everytown for Gun Safety (Everytown), which at that time went by the name Mayors Against Illegal Guns (MAIG), both issued press releases within hours of the shooting. Right in their initial responses, both groups used “motivational framing” to issue calls-to-action (Snow and Benford 1988), though they called for different kinds of action. While Brady Campaign President Dan Gross focused on building the gun control movement by suggesting supporters “go to WeAreBetterThanThis.org and sign the letter of condolence to the families of the victims in Connecticut” (Brady Campaign 2012), MAIG’s co-chair Mayor Bloomberg demanded more

concrete actions, saying that “the country needs [President Obama] to send a bill to Congress to fix this problem” (Mayors Against Illegal Guns 2012).⁹

To balance its more assertive demands, Everytown attempted to undercut anticipated criticism from gun rights opponents that it was too soon to act. Mayor Bloomberg pointed out that this type of criticism is a specific stalling tactic that gun rights groups always use and that there is a human cost to delaying action. He reminded us that “we heard after Columbine that it was too soon to talk about gun laws. We heard it after Virginia Tech. After Tucson and Aurora and Oak Creek. And now we are hearing it again” and that “[f]or every day we wait, 34 more people are murdered with guns” (Mayors Against Illegal Guns 2012). These groups may have mobilized immediately, but policy change takes time, and political organizations continue to fight even as public attention wanes. Even after the attention from an event like the Sandy Hook shooting dissipates, a movement may remain newly revitalized and freshly flush with cash. Indeed, the quantity of annual press releases and agenda items discussed in Chapter 2 suggest that these two gun-control groups were more active in 2014 than they were in 2013, even though media and public attention had turned away from the issue of gun control and gun violence (Chapter 1). These groups must determine how to maximize their gains under these circumstances.

This chapter contributes to the literature on social movement strategy by exploring how political organizations respond to an event that shifts the context in their favor. Specifically, I

⁹ The “We Are Better Than This” campaign was originally started by the Brady Campaign in response to the high-profile shooting at the midnight premiere of *The Dark Knight Rises* at an Aurora, Colorado movie theater in April 2012. Shootings like this in Colorado may have a heightened national salience and definitely have a heightened local salience because of the high-profile shooting at Columbine High School in 1999.

ask: What political fights did these groups engage with? How did this engagement change to reflect evolving contextual and organizational constraints? To what extent did these groups change their strategies after Sandy Hook? And why did they respond with this strategy?

To answer these questions, I examine press communications issued by the Brady Campaign and Everytown. I use these documents to trace how each group's agenda evolved in the two years after Sandy Hook. I compare their agendas in the two years after the shooting to the two years before the shooting to determine how the shooting affected their strategies. I support this analysis with observations made during ethnographic fieldwork, news accounts of related organizational and political developments, government documents, IRS 990 tax return forms, archived organizational websites, and accounts from opposing organizations.

I find that both groups initially responded to the shooting by devoting more attention to targeting their top venue priorities from before the shooting, especially Congress. Once their efforts to secure policy change in Congress, failed, both groups took time to reevaluate the political landscape. This period of evaluation, which happened in the second half of 2013, accounts for why the Brady Campaign's agenda shrank between 2012 and 2013 (see Chapter 2). Even in 2014, the Brady Campaign was slow to adapt its strategy to bypass the blocked Congressional venue, but Everytown's dramatic overhaul of its organizational structure allowed it to deploy an entirely new strategy. In the end, though, both groups shifted their attention to trying to improve the national political and cultural context, specifically through national campaigns to change personal behavior and efforts to support Democratic candidates in national elections. They also both shifted to targeting state venues through state legislative fights and ballot initiatives in state elections. I therefore conclude that these gun control groups tried to

maximize gains after the Sandy Hook shooting by attempting to secure broad-reaching national legislation, focusing on organizational revitalization, and targeting select state venues.

Flooding Favorite Venues After a Critical Event

Congress: Where All the (In)Action is

In the first six months of 2013, the Brady Campaign and Mayors Against Illegal Guns (MAIG) both focused their attention on securing policy change through the national legislature. Congress was the only venue that both groups focused on during this time. In January, Senate Democrats introduced three significant gun control bills: one to ban assault weapons, a second to ban “high-capacity” magazines, and a third to expand background checks to all gun sales. These three policies had been top priorities of both groups for years, and all three policies were popular with most Americans when the bills were introduced (Pew Research Center 2013). During the first half of 2013, the Brady Campaign and MAIG both focused on pressuring Congress to pass these bills.

This focus on Congress meant that the initial strategic push that these two groups made after the Sandy Hook shooting was to intensify their existing efforts. Both groups had focused on lobbying Congress throughout 2011 and 2012. The attention these groups devoted to this fight did shift in two small ways, though. First, both groups devoted more attention to these fights than they had during the previous two years. And second, instead of splitting their attention between defending against efforts by their opponents to secure concealed carry reciprocity legislation and advocating for their own policy priorities, the Brady Campaign and MAIG focused almost exclusively on advancing their own goals.

It is important to note that these groups focused on Congress even though their chance of securing a legislative victory here was small. The Republican Party had reclaimed control of the

House of Representatives in a landslide midterm election. No major gun control legislation has ever passed without Democratic control of Congress (Chapter 1). It is unlikely that this Congress would have passed major new gun control restrictions, no matter how hard these groups lobbied. And indeed, Democrats in the Senate tabled the bills once it became clear that they would not meet the 60-vote threshold needed to overcome a filibuster, which had become necessary to pass legislation in the Senate. The House of Representatives during that session never debated gun control legislation.

The shared focus on Congress made targeting this venue the main priority for the gun control movement, but the Brady Campaign and MAIG also both had their own personal fights that they focused on. In addition to focusing on Congress in the first six months after the shooting, the Brady Campaign also targeted state courts and state legislatures. MAIG, on the other hand, focused on national- and state-level movement building. As with Congress, though, targeting these venues was a continuation of these groups' existing strategies.

The Brady Campaign: Steady in the Courts, Going Bigger in State Legislatures

While Congress was by far the Brady Campaign's biggest priority in the months after the shooting, the group also continued devoting attention to some of its other favorite fights: state courts and state legislatures. As with previous years, the Brady Campaign primarily continued to bring liability suits against gun dealers when their guns were used in crimes, while also continuing to defend against efforts by the gun rights movement to overturn local concealed carry restrictions. These were mostly ongoing cases that had started before the Sandy Hook shooting, many of which the Brady Center (the group's 501c3 division) had been litigating for years.

The Brady Campaign also focused on several key state-level legislative fights in the months after the shooting. Specifically, the group supported successful efforts in Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, and New York to extend background checks, ban assault weapons, and limit magazine capacity. The Brady Campaign also supported efforts in California to strengthen existing restrictions on assault weapons. Notably, after the shooting, the group targeted states that were under Democratic control (National Conference of State Legislatures 2017), and that therefore had political contexts that were favorable for gun control. Colorado and Connecticut had also both experienced horrible mass shootings the previous year that made the issue of gun violence especially salient in these states during this time.

By focusing on state legislative fights, the Brady Campaign continued an existing organizational strategy. Pressuring state legislatures had also been a main focus in the first half of 2011. But the group focused on very different kinds of fights. In 2013, the Brady Campaign worked to secure major legislative victories in liberal states, but in 2011 it had focused mainly on defending against laws to expand concealed carry rights in conservative states like Arizona and Texas. Additionally, the Seventh Circuit court of appeals had struck down as unconstitutional an Illinois law that prohibited concealed carry at the end of 2010. So even though the Illinois government was under Democratic control, the Brady Campaign was fighting to preserve as many of the existing restrictions on concealed carry as it could.

Arizona and Texas, on the other hand, were both completely under Republican control, so the group was choosing to try to hold its ground in unfavorable contexts. The issue of gun control was especially salient in Arizona at the time, because in January 2011 a shooter had killed six people in a Tucson, Arizona supermarket parking lot when he tried to assassinate U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords. The Arizona case underscores how these kinds of high-profile

shootings represent a different sort of opportunity in Republican-controlled versus Democratic-controlled contexts.

The biggest change in the Brady Campaign's agenda during the first half of 2013 was that it did not focus on movement-building. Throughout 2011 and 2012, the group had supplemented its efforts to secure or prevent policy change through Congress, the courts, and state legislatures with movement-building at either the national or state level. These efforts took several forms. A main movement-building strategy was to mourn the victims of shootings the group thought had the potential to become high-profile, attention-grabbing shootings. For example, the January 2011 assassination attempt on Representative Gabby Giffords in Tucson, Arizona, the February 2012 shooting of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, and the July 2012 shooting at *The Dark Knight Rises* premiere in Aurora, Colorado all drew attention from the Brady Campaign.

Another major movement-building strategy was to recognize the anniversaries of past high-profile shootings. The group's main movement-building effort in 2012, for example, was its "Too Many Victims" campaign. This campaign featured screenings of *Living for 32*, a documentary about the April 2007 Virginia Tech shooting, and candle-light vigils around the country. The group timed this action to coincide with the 1- year anniversary of the January 2011 shooting in Tucson and the 5-year anniversary of the Virginia Tech shooting. But in the first half of 2013, the Brady Campaign did not focus on concerted movement-building efforts. Instead, the Brady Campaign focused on promoting its lobbying and litigation work, relying on the public's generally higher interest in, and support for, gun control to sustain the organization and the movement.

MAIG: Continued Multi-Level Movement-Building After Sandy Hook

Like the Brady Campaign, MAIG also intensified its existing efforts after the shooting. But unlike the Brady Campaign, this meant that MAIG intensified its movement-building efforts. Mostly, this took the form of persistent and wide-spread television advertising in 25 states.¹⁰ In these ads, MAIG encouraged viewers to mobilize locally for gun control and to call their Senators about the pending bills in the Senate. In other words, the group's movement-building was closely connected to, and directly in support of, its efforts to lobby the national legislature. Television advertising like this is more diffuse, though; in addition to pressuring Congress, these efforts also aimed to build up local support for gun control efforts across the country.

This focus on movement-building was a continuation of the group's existing strategy before Sandy Hook. In early 2011, under the name MAIG, the group launched a "Fix Gun Checks" tour to raise awareness about, and support for, expanding background checks. For two months, the group had someone drive a truck around the country, stopping in major cities for rallies in states like New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. The truck had a clock that counted the number of people who had been killed by a gun since the shooting in Tucson, Arizona on January 8th; the group was trying to connect that attention-grabbing, high-profile shooting to the daily toll of gun violence.

Mobilization efforts in the second half of 2011 and in the first half of 2012 were more modest. The group had engaged intensely in numerous political fights right after the Tucson shooting, but this effort fell off completely after this initial response. While the group engaged in

¹⁰ Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin

81 fights in the first half of 2011, it engaged in only nine in the second half of the year, and engagement remained low (only six fights) during the first half of 2012. In January 2012, the group released an online memorial video of Tucson Shooting survivors telling their stories; it responded with condolences and calls to action after the shooting at *The Dark Knight Rises* in Aurora, Colorado on July 20th; and shortly after the Aurora shooting, MAIG promoted a poll that showed that NRA members supported policies like background checks even though the NRA's leadership opposed these measures. Otherwise, much of the group's 2012 movement-building efforts came at the end of December, after the Sandy Hook shooting.

Primed to Act, But Where to Go?

Even after media and public attention to gun control waned in the second half of 2013, and the movement's main push in Congress failed, these organizations remained primed for action. Public opinion on gun control was still (mostly) on their side (see Chapter 1) and their organizations were flush with cash and volunteers (see Chapter 2). Consequently, the Brady Campaign and MAIG adapted their strategy in a few key ways. First, in the second half of 2013, both groups took a step back from the fight. While the Brady Campaign remained engaged in a few fights, MAIG withdrew almost completely. Second, the Brady Campaign intensified its efforts in state legislatures, while also shifting its attention to new venues that it had not focused on during the first half of the year. And third, after taking time to assess its position in the gun debate, MAIG completely overhauled its whole organizational structure and strategy, and by extension, pulled the gun control movement in a new strategic direction.

The Brady Campaign: Small Strategic Shifts

In the second half of 2013, the Brady Campaign made several small strategic shifts. First, it intensified its engagement in state-level legislative fights. Mostly, though, this was to continue

encouraging the California legislature to pass a number of bills that made small improvements to existing firearms restrictions. The group also returned to defending against the expansion of concealed-carry rights in Illinois and defending against major gun rights legislation in Missouri (a Republican-controlled state).

As the issue of gun control fell off the public agenda, the Brady Campaign also rededicated itself to maintaining the national gun control movement's strength. As with 2011 and 2012, the group mainly tried to mobilize supporters by drawing attention to the anniversaries of previous high-profile shootings and by acknowledging and mourning the victims of shootings it thought had the potential to become high-profile. In the second half of 2013, this included shootings at a Navel Yard in Washington, D.C., at a middle school in Sparks, NV, and at the Los Angeles Airport.

The biggest shift that the Brady Campaign made in the second half of 2013 was that it targeted state-level elections. Specifically, the Brady Campaign supported Democratic candidates for state legislature, governor, and lieutenant governor in Virginia's off-year election. It cited the importance of strengthening background checks as the reason to support these candidates. Focusing on a state election was a notable shift for the group, given that state elections had not been a main target in 2011 or 2012. The closest the group had come in recent years was supporting President Obama's reelection campaign in the second half of 2012.

MAIG/Everytown: Assessing and Adapting

After failing to secure national legislative change during the first half of 2013, MAIG completely withdrew from the fight. This mirrored a similar pattern of engagement that had followed group's wide-spread mobilization efforts after the January 2011 shooting in Tucson,

Arizona. This time, though, MAIG reevaluated the gun control landscape, reassessed its position in the gun debate, and overhauled its structure and strategy.

After remaining largely quiet for the second half of 2013, the group announced on December 19th that it would merge with a new grassroots group called Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America (MDA). As discussed in Chapter 2, MDA had been founded right after the Sandy Hook shooting, and the merger brought a slew of new policy priorities and tactics into the organization. MAIG and MDA rebranded under a new umbrella organization called Everytown for Gun Safety (Everytown). One year after the Sandy Hook shooting, MAIG become an entirely different organization.

It is important to note that the Brady Campaign underwent similar restructuring after the April 1999 Columbine High School shooting, one of the most high-profile events in the history of gun politics (see Chapter 1). In fact, at the time of the Columbine shooting, the Brady Campaign went by the name Handgun Control, Inc. As with after Sandy Hook, the gun control movement fought unsuccessfully to persuade an unreceptive Congress to extend background checks to guns sold at gun shows (Brady Campaign 2016c). By 2001, the increased attention, support, and funding that had followed the Columbine High School shooting had subsided and the gun control movement contracted (Laschever and Meyer 2015). HCI merged with The Million Mom March. The Million Mom March (MMM) was a new, high-profile, grassroots gun control group that had been founded directly in response to Columbine and that had dominated the post-Columbine political landscape (Goss 2006; Laschever and Meyer 2015). Following their merger, HCI and MMM rebranded as The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, in honor of Jim and Sarah Brady. The Brady Campaign adopted local Million Mom March chapters, as well as the Million Mom March's "ASK Campaign," which encouraged parents of friends their

children had playdates with whether there were any unlocked guns near where their children played. These parallels suggest that these types of mergers may be characteristic of the boom and bust style of politics that gun control typifies. This dynamic played out more quickly for Everytown after Sandy Hook than it had for the Brady Campaign after Columbine.

Organizational Strategy at the End of the Sandy Hook Moment

A Return to Movement-Building

By February 2014, public opinion had returned to favoring gun rights over gun control. While the gun control movement had regained a public support advantage after the attention-grabbing shootings in 2012, the gun control movement had started losing ground to the gun rights movement in January 2013 (see Chapter 1). Coinciding with this loss of public support, the gun control movement reprioritized national movement-building, and this became the top priority of both groups during the first half of 2014. As usual, the Brady Campaign mainly tried to build the gun control movement by drawing attention to shootings that the group believed should receive more attention from the public and from the media.

For example, a shooting at the University of California, Santa Barbara in Isla Vista, California drew particular attention. The shooter had produced a series of misogynistic YouTube rants in the months before the shooting, which provided viral video content for people to distribute over social media. Instead of focusing on gun control and gun violence, though, national media and public attention homed in on the problem of misogyny with the #YesAllWomen social media campaign, and the #NotAllMen response.

Everytown also started commenting more on shootings as a movement-building strategy, addressing eight different shootings in the first half of 2014. The group also kept a running tally

of the number of school shootings that had occurred since Sandy Hook and produced a report on how the NRA had changed since its founding (Everytown for Gun Safety 2014b).

Everytown: New Structure, New Strategy

Everytown's strategy changed dramatically in the first half of 2014. Acknowledging that Congress was not a receptive venue for political action, Everytown instead focused on targeting state legislatures. Lobbying state legislatures was by far the group's top priority in the first half of 2014, and this was the first time that Everytown devoted more attention to targeting state legislatures than Congress. This shift in priorities was a direct consequence of MAIG's merger with MDA; all of Everytown's state legislative efforts were spearheaded by its local MDA chapters.

The second major strategic change that Everytown made in the first half of 2014 was that it started to focus on targeting private companies to change their businesses practices. Specifically, the group encouraged companies like Facebook and Instagram to crack down on people selling guns online through their platforms. And, in response to open-carry demonstrations by gun rights activists, Everytown encouraged companies like Target, Chipotle, and Jack-in-the-Box to prohibit openly carrying firearms in their stores. This new focus is another example of how the merger with MDA changed MAIG's agenda. Pressuring business was one of MDA's main initiatives before the merger, and it brought this strategy with it when it joined with MAIG. As with the shift to targeting state legislatures, the decision to target national business practices was another way that Everytown bypassed the blocked Congress in its efforts to combat gun violence.

The Brady Campaign: Still Lobbying an Unreceptive Congress, Still Litigating Court Cases

Unlike Everytown, the Brady Campaign kept lobbying Congress. In the first half of 2014, the Brady Campaign focused on three of its normal priorities: the courts, national movement-building, and Congress. But the group engaged less in these fights than it had during the first half of 2011, 2012, or 2013. The group was less engaged in the political fights overall, because it devoted less than half as much attention to lobbying Congress than it usually did during the first half of the year. There was a sense that if this Congress had not passed new gun control laws after Sandy Hook, it probably was never going to do so. But the Brady Campaign was not ready to implement a new strategy, so it just kept doing what it had been doing. That said, as with the previous year, the attention that the group did devote to Congress was offensive; it did not bother defending against gun rights legislation, like the Concealed Carry Reciprocity bill that was introduced in the Senate.

Through the courts, the group primarily remained focused on bringing liability suits against dealers whose guns ended up used in crimes, as it had been in previous years. In 2014, it focused on these kinds of cases in Alaska, Mississippi, New York, Virginia, and Wisconsin. The Brady Campaign also tried to block new cases that the gun rights movement brought against the recent assault weapon ban passed in Connecticut, a prohibition on people charged with domestic violence from buying guns in Tennessee, and concealed carry restrictions in New Jersey and California. It also brought a case against the New Jersey attorney general to force compliance with a law passed in 2002 that required bi-annual reports on the availability of personalized handguns that include technology to ensure that only the gun's owner can fire it. Such a report had not been issued since 2003. Litigation remained a focus of the group through the end of 2014. In the second half of the year, the group continued to focus on the "smart gun" technology

case in New Jersey, as well as dealer liability suits in Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Using Elections to Change State Policy and the National Context, Influencing Personal Behavior

In the second half of 2014, both the Brady Campaign and Everytown adapted their strategy and shifted their attention away from the unreceptive Congress. First, both groups focused on campaigning in support of favorable ballot initiatives in state elections. Specifically, both groups supported a successful effort in Washington State to pass I-594, a ballot initiative to extend background checks to guns sold at gun shows and through private transfers. This strategy mirrored one the Brady Campaign had used after the Columbine High School shooting to pass similar ballot initiatives in Oregon and Colorado in 2000, after it had lobbied unsuccessfully to get Congress to pass national background check legislation.

Both groups also focused their efforts on changing the broader national context, though they did so in different ways. Everytown focused on trying to change the national political context by supporting Democratic candidates for Congress. The Brady Campaign, on the other hand, resurrected its old ASK Campaign, which aimed to influence the national culture by changing individual behavior around safe firearm storage practices. This was a campaign that the Brady Campaign had also employed after similarly failing to secure national legislation after the Columbine High School shooting. In this way, both groups acknowledged that they were not going to get national legislation without a change in the national context and that their resources would be better spent targeting different national venues.

Conclusion

The similarities in how these two gun-control groups responded to Sandy Hook underscore their shared position on the side of the debate that usually suffers from an

unfavorable political context that is has become, for a short time, slightly more favorable. Both groups used the increased interest in, and support for, their movement to intensify their push for national legislation. When this effort failed, both groups withdrew from the fight to reassess their approach. And when these groups reengaged in the fight, they both devoted more of attention to new venues, bypassing a Congress that had proven unreceptive to their efforts. The strategies of both groups shifted as they attempted to capitalize on this essential political opportunity in any way they could.

The differences in how these two gun-control groups responded to Sandy Hook, though, highlight the profound mediating effect of organizational character and capacity on movement strategy. Both groups withdrew from the fight to reevaluate their strategies, but when they reengaged in the fight, MAIG had completely revamped its whole organizational structure and strategy in a way that the Brady Campaign did not. Two organizational characteristics may help explain this difference. First, MAIG benefited from a patronage relationship with Mayor Bloomberg, one of its leaders. Bloomberg's financial contributions meant that Everytown's revenue continued to increase into 2014, even after attention faded. The Brady Campaign did not benefit from similar, sustained financial support. Everytown's financial advantage afforded it greater strategic adaptability than the Brady Campaign. Through Mayor Bloomberg, MAIG's leadership was more centralized than the Brady Campaign's, which also would have made it possible to make larger strategic changes.

Second, Everytown is a younger organization than the Brady Campaign. Everytown was founded several years after the 1999 Columbine shooting. The Columbine shooting was the last time that a shooting disrupted the public agenda in in a similar way that the Sandy Hook shooting did. Columbine was the last time a shooting received this kind of attention, was

followed by this kind of shift in public opinion, and resulted in such intense mobilization that ultimately failed to secure legislative change in an unreceptive Congress. The Brady Campaign had already made the structural changes after Columbine that Everytown made after Sandy Hook, when it merged with Million Mom March and adopted that group's state chapters and strategic initiatives. Instead of overhauling its structure and strategy, as it had done last time, and as Everytown did this time, it fell back on experience, resurrecting old strategies that it had used in a previous similar context. As a younger organization, Everytown did not have old strategies to resurrect, and this ended up allowing for greater adaptability.

CHAPTER 4: MINIMIZING THREATENING EVENTS

Minimizing a Threat

When the public is ignoring guns, the gun rights movement has an advantage over the gun control movement. Support for the gun control movement is episodic, rising and falling with high-profile shootings, but support for the gun rights movement is more consistent (Goss 2006; Laschever and Meyer 2015). As the mugs, t-shirts, and bumper-stickers sold by the National Rifle Association (NRA) and the Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) profess, many gun rights supporters are proud “single-issue voters.” Moreover, long-term trends in public support favor the gun rights movement, as does a Congress that is under split-party control; the gun rights movement has managed to consistently secure small legislative victories that are slowly but surely advancing its goals (Chapter 1). This advantage means that gun rights movement can bide its time. The gun rights movement has every incentive to deflect the public’s attention away from the issue of gun violence so that the political and cultural context can return to the status quo. Since what makes a potentially significant event into a “critical” one is how activists use it to mobilize support for their goals (Armstrong and Cragg 2006), gun rights groups may be able to prevent gun control groups from using an event to advance their agenda if they successfully deflect attention.

When a tragic mass shooting occurs, gun rights groups can use several de-escalation tactics to minimize political fallout from an attention-grabbing shooting. First, gun rights groups can remain silent on the event. Mass shootings often include multiple contentious social problems converging in a single event. While guns are part of the equation in any mass shooting, so too are many other important issues, such as mental illness, sexism, and racism. As media and

public narratives about the shooting coalesce, attention may focus on one of the other issues. Take for example how, in the wake of the racially-motivated shooting at Emanuel AME Church in Charlette, South Carolina in July 2015, public and media attention coalesced around racism and focused on removing the Confederate flag from government grounds. Or how the public debate in the wake of a 2014 shooting in Isla Vista, California focused on the problem of misogyny with the waring #NotAllMen and #YesAllWomen hashtags on Twitter. If gun rights groups remain silent they avoid drawing more attention to their organization and to the issue of guns. If public attention starts to settle on the role of guns in the event, gun rights groups can try to redirect attention back to these other issues, undermine the mobilizing efforts of gun control groups, and/or offer their own solution.

The NRA and the SAF responded to the Sandy Hook shooting using all these de-escalation tactics. While the Brady Campaign and Everytown issued press releases on the day of the Sandy Hook shooting, the NRA and the SAF both waited four days before issuing a formal statement. They wanted to see what direction attention turned in, and take time to craft their responses. In its December 18th press statement, the SAF attempted to undermine mobilizing efforts by the gun control movement by cautioning that while “a national dialogue on violence has already begun...a national commission [to study the causes of violence in America] would be more able to address the complexity of this dilemma” (Second Amendment Foundation 2012a). The SAF’s founder and Executive Vice President, Alan Gottlieb, went on to assert that “any meaningful discussion on violence... would need to include mental health, violent video games, television shows and films, media malpractice that sensationalizes violence and the dangerously false sense of security created by so-called ‘gun-free zones.’” In this way, Gottlieb

directed attention to other related problems and suggested that the real problem with guns was that there were still places they were not allowed.

The NRA's initial statement in response to the shooting was brief. It said simply that the NRA would hold a press conference on December 21st, but that "out of respect for the families, and as a matter of common decency" it was going to give "time for mourning, prayer and a full investigation of the facts before commenting" (National Rifle Association 2012a). In this way, the NRA implied the statements that the Brady Campaign and Everytown had issued, which included calls-to-action, were indecent and disrespectful. Then, during the press conference, the NRA's Executive Vice President and CEO Wayne LaPierre redirected blame to, among other sources, "a declining willingness to prosecute dangerous criminals," "vicious, violent video games," "blood-soaked slasher films," and, like the SAF, "Gun-Free School Zones." LaPierre went on to suggest that "the *only* thing that stops a *bad* guy with a gun is a *good* guy with a gun" (emphasis in original) and announced that the NRA would develop a model National School Shield Emergency Response Program, which, among other activities, would train armed guards for schools (National Rifle Association 2012b).

Despite intense pressure from the Obama Administration and gun control advocates, the three Senate gun control bills died in April 2013, and when they did, media and public attention did indeed turn away from gun politics. But political organizations continue to fight even as public attention wanes. And after an event like the Sandy Hook shooting, this movement needed to contend with a revitalized opponent that was freshly flush with cash. Political organizations must determine how to minimize their losses under these circumstances.

This chapter contributes to the literature on social movement strategy by exploring how political organizations attempt to minimize losses after an event that shifts the political and

cultural context against them. Specifically, I ask: Which political fights did these groups engage with? How did this engagement change in response to changing contextual and organizational constraints? To what extent did these groups change their strategies after Sandy Hook? And why did they respond with this strategy?

To answer these questions, I examine press communications issued by the National Rifle Association (NRA) and the Second Amendment Foundation (SAF). I use these documents to trace how each group's efforts evolved between January 2011 and December 2014, following the coding and analysis process detailed in Chapter 2. I support this analysis with observations made during ethnographic fieldwork at annual meetings that each of these groups held and archival analysis of news accounts of related organizational and political developments, government documents, IRS 990 tax return forms, digitally archived organizational websites, and accounts from opposing organizations.

I find that after the Sandy Hook shooting both the NRA and the SAF became more defensive, as they focused more on blocking their opponents and less on advancing their own goals. But these groups used the threat of the shooting and of the gun control movement to their advantage. They used these threats to motivate their supporters, and concentrated their attention on their national and state-level movement-building efforts and state-level legislative fights. These groups both made small adjustments, and shifted their attention between several favorite national and state-level venues. Overall, though both groups largely maintained a steady strategic course between January 2011 and December 2014. While some perceived the shooting as an opportunity for the gun control movement to secure major national legislative gains, these gun rights groups focused less on lobbying against the specific gun control bills being debated in the

Senate, and more on reinforcing the opposition of its supporters to these kinds of gun control policies in general.

Picking Your Battles, and Playing to Your Strengths

Legislative Threat as Movement-Building Opportunity

During the first six months of 2013, the NRA and the SAF both focused their attention on national movement-building and on state legislatures. They both portrayed the gun rights movement as under acute threat. They then used the threat of new firearms restrictions to encourage sympathizers to support the national gun rights movement. Specifically, both groups emphasized the dangers of background checks, assault weapons restrictions, and magazine capacity limits in general, but they rarely mentioned the specific bills that the Senate was debating. Instead, they used the idea that the movement was under threat to strengthen opposition to gun control move generally. As part of the strategy, the NRA and the SAF both warned that these kinds of gun controls would lead to registering gun owners, and, ultimately, confiscating their guns. In general, they warned gun owners against creating government paper-trails to their guns.

While national movement-building was usually a priority for one or both groups throughout 2011 and 2012, both groups intensified these efforts after Sandy Hook. The NRA and the SAF both more than doubled the attention they devoted to targeting this venue during the first six months of 2013. Both groups also became more defensive. This more defensive stance actually began after the shooting at the midnight premiere of *The Dark Knight Rises* in Aurora, Colorado, on June 20, 2012, but it intensified after Sandy Hook in December. These groups turned the threat of gun control into a mobilizing opportunity, but it meant that they devoted relatively less attention to building support for the movement's own policy goals. The NRA,

though, still managed to devote about 30 percent of its attention to promoting either its own organizational programming or its own political priorities, like putting armed guards in schools and prosecuting NICS fraud.

The SAF did not usually focus on lobbying Congress, and the group maintained this strategy after the Sandy Hook shooting. It did not devote much attention to the specific Senate bills. Instead the group devoted this attention to additional movement-building at the state level. For example, the SAF responded to the Mayors Against Illegal Guns (MAIG) “No More Names” bus tour with its own educational campaign. In this educational campaign, the group held screenings of a documentary movie about gun rights, with accompanying discussions across 13 states. This response was a continuation of an old strategy; the SAF had conducted similar education campaigns in response to previous MAIG bus tours. Most notably, it staged its own cross-country “Guns Save Lives” educational bus tour in response to a bus tour MAIG carried out following the assassination attempt against Representative Gabby Giffords in January 2011.

Addressing Congress directly was, however, usually a priority for the NRA, and the legislative session after Sandy Hook was no exception. The group usually focused on advocating for its own policy priorities; for example, a Congressional Investigation into program failures at the ATF and expanding hunting rights received particular attention before Sandy Hook. During the first half of 2013, though, its efforts became more defensive. After the shooting, the NRA focused on undermining the Senate bills that would expand background checks, ban assault weapons, and limit magazine capacities. Nonetheless, the NRA still managed to devote about 20 percent of this attention to promoting its own policy priorities, especially: placing armed guards in schools, national concealed carry reciprocity, and tougher criminal sentencing and enforcement. And while the NRA did lobby against the specific bills proposed in the Senate, the

group devoted more attention to using broader denunciations of these and other gun control policies to mobilize supporters against gun control more broadly.

Balancing Offense and Defense in State Legislatures

In addition to national movement-building, the NRA and the SAF also both focused on policy fights in state legislatures during the first half of 2013. While both groups had periodically engaged in state-level legislative fights throughout 2011 and 2012, state legislatures became much more important to both groups after Sandy Hook. In fact, the SAF devoted about as much attention to state legislatures in the first half of 2013 as it had throughout all of 2011 and 2012, and the NRA devoted more than twice as much attention to state legislatures in the first half of 2013 as it had in all of 2011 and 2012. In total, the NRA devoted attention to legislative fights in 39 specific states in between January and June of 2013, up from 29 states during the last period the NRA had focused on state legislatures (July – December 2011). The NRA and the SAF did not focus on all states equally and they did not always focus on the same kinds of fights.

Throughout 2011 and 2012, the SAF had alternated between advancing its own state-level policy preferences and defending against those of its opponents, but the group took a strongly defensive stance after Sandy Hook. Legislative fights in California, Colorado, and Illinois attracted the bulk of the group's attention, and the group fought against a variety of specific policies that ranged from ammunitions restrictions and background check requirements to the submission of mental health records to the NICS. This focus on blocking new state-level firearms restrictions meant that the SAF devoted relatively less attention to advocating for its own priorities, though it did still support fights for concealed carry rights and castle doctrine protections in states like Iowa and North Carolina.

While the NRA also shifted from an offensive stance to defensive one after Sandy Hook, it nonetheless continued to devote about 40 percent of its attention to advancing its own state-level legislative priorities. The NRA split its attention between defending against background check requirements, magazine capacity limits, and assault weapons bans in states like Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, and New York, and advocating for concealed carry rights in states like Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, and Mississippi. In Chapter 5, I detail the outcomes of these sorts of state level-legislative fights, the factors that contributed to those outcomes, and how these dynamics differed before and after Sandy Hook.

Staying the Course, With Small Shifts

Throughout the second half of 2013, media attention to gun violence and gun politics waned (Chapter 1) and key gun control organizations withdrew from the fight to reassess movement strategy after failing to secure new national gun control laws (Chapter 3). Public opinion had also started sliding slowly back in favor of the gun rights movement (Chapter 1). But even as attention shifted, all organizations remained relatively flush with cash, especially the NRA (Chapter 2).

Continued Attention to National Movement-Building and State Legislatures

As the context improved throughout the second half of 2013, the NRA and the SAF both maintained their focus on national movement-building and state legislative fights, though they scaled these efforts back down to more normal levels. The NRA kept mobilizing opposition to background checks, assault weapons bans, and magazine capacity limits, but it also devoted more attention to fundraising, promoting hunting and the shootings sports, and promoting organizational programming more generally. Both the NRA and the SAF also continued to

mobilize support for concealed carry protections, and both groups also started issuing more direct attacks on their political opponents, especially MAIG and President Obama.

While both groups continued to focus on state legislatures, both groups also significantly scaled back this attention. The NRA continued to divide its attention between fighting against gun control legislation (especially restrictions on assault weapons) in states like California, Connecticut, and Maryland, and fighting for gun rights legislation (especially castle doctrine protections) across Republican-controlled states. The SAF mainly focused on continuing to defend concealed carry rights in Illinois. While litigation efforts the group had helped with opened the way for carrying a concealed handgun in Illinois, the details of this new law were still being negotiated. The SAF focused on defending against the addition of new restrictive amendments to the concealed carry law.

Shifting from Defensive Lobbying to Offensive Litigation

The biggest change the NRA and the SAF made in the second half of 2013 was that they both started to focus more on state litigation. For the SAF, this reflected a return to business-as-usual. Emboldened by its 2010 *McDonald vs. Chicago* Supreme Court victory, the SAF devoted almost a third of its attention to state-level court cases in 2011. This focus on litigation allowed the SAF to carve out a niche and distinguish itself from the NRA, a necessary task for fundraising purposes (Meyer and Corrigan-Brown 2005). The SAF used these court cases to try to advance its own policy goals in more liberal states like California and New York, especially its goals to repeal concealed carry restrictions like “may issue” permitting¹¹ and extend gun

¹¹ State permitting of concealed handguns, states fall into one of two categories: “may issue” permitting and “shall issue” permitting. In states that have may issue permitting laws, officials can exercise personal discretion in issuing permits. In “shall issue” states, the official must issue the permit if all requirements are met.

ownership to certain categories of prohibited persons, like legal resident aliens. The SAF had put state litigation on the backburner since *The Dark Knight Rises* shooting happened in June 2012, but in the second half of 2013 the group refocused its attention on using the courts to attack state and local restrictions. The group focused on both new cases to pull back recent gun control laws like the New York SAFE Act passed in the first half of 2013, and also ongoing cases like *Pena v. Lindley* in California.

During the second half of 2013, the NRA shifted its attention away from Congress, and focused instead on bringing legal challenges against new state-level gun control laws. The NRA had not focused on state litigation in this way since the first half of 2011. At that time, the group had focused on advancing concealed carry rights in places like California, Illinois, and Ohio using cases against restrictions in cities like San Diego, San Francisco, Chicago, and Cleveland. The NRA, like the SAF, had perceived the 2010 *McDonald v. Chicago* decision, and before that the 2008 *D.C. v. Heller* decisions, as a signal that the Supreme Court was a sympathetic venue in which to advance its goals.

During the second half of 2013, though, the NRA focused on legal challenges against laws it had been unable to stop in states like Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, and New York from passing. The NRA also challenged recent storage requirements that California had passed and used the courts to push through delays in establishing concealed carry in Illinois. In other words, many of the Democratic-controlled states in which the gun rights movement lobbied against new gun control laws during the first half of 2013 had passed these laws over its objections. In the second half of the year, the gun rights movement shifted from defensive lobbying in state legislatures to offensive litigation against the legislation it had failed to stop.

Organizational Strategy at the End of the Sandy Hook Moment

Media and public attention to gun control and gun violence had faded six months earlier, but in January 2014, public opinion returned to favoring the gun rights movement (Chapter 1). And opposition to new gun control continued to increase steadily through the end of the 2014. As the midterm election ramped up through the end of 2014, campaigns and horseshoe politics dominated the public and political agenda, and redirected the strategies of key gun control groups (Chapter 3). While the NRA and the SAF faced similar contextual constraints, their internal organizational constraints were different. The NRA remained flush with cash, while the SAF was constrained by more limited funds and dampened fundraising.

More National Movement-Building, Reprioritizing State Mobilization

The NRA and the SAF both continued to prioritize national movement-building. Both groups kept the sense of threat alive for the gun rights movement, and while the SAF was just as defensive as it had been during the second half of 2013, the NRA was even more defensive than before. The NRA focused on undermining gun control policies like background checks, assault weapons bans, and concealed carry restrictions, and devoted only 20 percent of its attention to advancing its own concealed carry goals, and most of the group's offensive movement building efforts focused more on promoting the NRA organization and promoting gun ownership more generally. The SAF, on the other hand, focused on opposing gun registration and confiscation and it criticized political opponents like MAIG. That said, it still devoted 40 percent of its attention to promoting its own concealed carry goals and thanking industry sponsors that gave money to the group. Like the NRA, the SAF also defended concealed carry. Even as the threat of national gun control legislation waned and public opinion returned to the movement's favor,

these gun rights groups wanted to keep a sense of “threat” alive and use this to strengthen the movement.

In addition to building the national movement, the NRA and the SAF also both focused on state-level movement-building. This was the first time that the NRA had focused on these efforts since before 2011. The group focused mostly on opposing new requirements for gun dealers in Chicago, Illinois and changes to policing rules in Jersey City, New Jersey that would advance several gun control initiatives, as well as picking fights over gun control with New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. The NRA also devoted about 30 percent of its attention to promoting concealed carry and open carry initiatives, though, and these efforts spanned states as diverse as Maryland, Michigan, and Texas.

The SAF, though, had consistently engaged in state movement-building efforts, and it focused on a more diverse set of fights than the NRA. The group promoted concealed carry in Illinois; in Washington State (where the group’s headquarters were located), the SAF promoted itself; it defended against prohibiting domestic violence offenders from buying guns in Vermont; and leveled ad hominin attacks on California state senators. The group continued to focus on state-level movement-building through the end of 2014, though this effort became more offensive in the second half of the year. While the SAF still devoted about 30 percent of its attention to opposing new state level movement-building efforts of Everytown, it mostly focused on pressuring Utah City, Utah, to roll back local concealed carry restrictions and promoting concealed carry in California and Illinois.

The second half of 2014 concluded with national movement-building as a top priority for both the NRA and the SAF. The SAF maintained a consistent message of low-level threat, and, as the group’s overall activity decreased, national movement-building became the group’s top

priority. The group especially focused on reminding supporters that background checks would lead to registration and confiscation. While the SAF still devoted about 40 percent of its attention to supporting its own priorities, especially promoting concealed carry, the NRA cultivated a sense of perpetual, high-level threat, and intensified its national movement-building efforts in the second half of the year. It continued to mobilize opposition to the same gun control threats as previous years, but opposition to concealed carry restrictions, microstamping requirements, and liability laws that required gun owners to take safety training courses and report lost or stolen guns played a larger role in its agenda. The group also attacked MAIG leader Michael Bloomberg to intensify opposition to the gun control movement more generally. The NRA only devoted about 20 percent of its attention to advancing its own agenda, and as before the group split its attention between promoting concealed carry reciprocity and mocking the ATF, honoring allies, and promoting gun ownership and the organization.

The NRA: Back on Offense in State Legislatures, and Back to Lobbying Congress

In 2014, the NRA also continued to focus on state legislatures, as it had throughout 2013. But instead of splitting its attention between supporting gun rights initiatives and opposing gun control initiatives, as it had the previous year, the NRA devoted most of its attention to advancing its own legislative agenda. One of the main fights the NRA engaged in was promoting a comprehensive gun rights bill in Georgia that would expand various castle doctrine, concealed carry, and gun ownership protections. At the same time, the group also focused on several more modest gun rights bills in states like Michigan, Mississippi, and West Virginia. Almost 20 percent of the NRA's attention still went to opposing gun control bills, especially a bill in New Jersey to limit magazine capacity. The NRA's return to offensive in state legislatures represents

another small way that gun rights groups settled into familiar, stable strategies as the more acute sense of threat that followed the shooting subsided.

Another way that the NRA's legislative agenda returned to normal in 2014 was that the group started to focus on lobbying Congress again. As was the case before the Sandy Hook shooting, the group split its attention between supporting its own legislative priorities, mostly in the House of Representative, and opposing efforts in the Senate that it portrayed as undermining gun rights. Specifically, the NRA advocated for concealed carry reciprocity legislation in the House, while opposing various common gun control policies, including assault weapons restrictions, storage requirements for owners, and magazine capacity restrictions. The group also opposed Obama's selection for Surgeon General, who was being confirmed by the Senate.

The SAF: Back to Business-as-Usual in State Courts

The SAF, by contrast, continued to prioritize state litigation, and it intensified its focus on this venue during the first half of 2014. This was the first time that state litigation was the group's top priority since 2011. Just as the NRA's return to offensive lobbying in state legislatures signaled a return to normal, the SAF reprioritizing state litigation indicated another small return to business-as-usual. Undesirable concealed carry restrictions in states like California, Illinois, New Jersey, and New York drew particular attention. Many of the cases that the SAF focused on during this time had been ongoing since before Sandy Hook, but had not received much attention during the acute period of mobilization that followed the shooting. While the group had mostly returned to business-as-usual, the shooting left its mark in form of new challenges the group brought against new restrictions, such as a case against an assault weapons ban that Massachusetts had just passed and the 2013 NY SAFE Act. The SAF continued to prioritize state litigation through the end of the year, with challenges to industry

restrictions in California and zoning restrictions against gun dealerships in Illinois receiving particular attention in the second half of the year.

Electoral Politics, Nationally and in the States

The midterm elections dominated the political agenda during the second half of 2014, and the priorities of both groups reflected this contextual shift. While the NRA focused on both national and state electoral fights, the SAF only focused on state-level races. At the national level, the NRA endorsed Republican candidates for the Senate and for the House of Representatives from across the country, and it used the threat of assault weapons bans, background checks, liberal judges, and magazine capacity limits to motivate turnout. At the state level, the NRA split its attention between endorsing Republican governors in Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, and Maryland; supporting pro-gun ballot initiatives in states like Mississippi and Missouri; opposing the I-594 background check initiative in Washington State; and supporting Milwaukee Sheriff David Clarke, who had been an outspoken advocate for gun rights.

Unlike the NRA, the SAF focused its attention entirely on trying to defend against the I-594 ballot initiative in Washington State that would expand background checks to guns sold at gun shows and through private transfers. The SAF focused on defeating this bill both by opposing I-594 directly and by promoting its own countervailing ballot measure, I-591. Through a quirk of Washington State election law, if I-591 and I-594 both passed, because they were mutually exclusive, then both laws would go to the state supreme court for a decision. This would block the background check law from taking effect. Part of the SAF's heightened attention to this initiative stemmed from the fact that the SAF is headquartered in Bellevue, Washington, which makes policy fights in Washington State especially salient for the group. I-

594 passed and I-591 did not, and the SAF pivoted to the courts, announcing a case against I-594 at the end of 2014.

Differences from Pre-Sandy-Hook Strategy?

Much of the above analysis portrays patterns of remarkable consistency. The NRA and the SAF both spent most of 2013 and 2014 focusing on building the national movement and balancing offense and defense in state legislatures, and for both groups this represented a continuation of pre-Sandy Hook strategy. The NRA also continued its pre-Sandy-Hook focus on Congress, and the SAF also continued to focus on state litigation. Other than shifting between a few favorite national and state-level venues, the main difference was that the efforts of both groups became more defensive. The NRA and the SAF both devoted relatively less attention to advancing their own goals, and spent more relatively more time defending against gains that their political opponents were trying to achieve.

So as not to overstate the steadiness of the NRA's and the SAF's strategy, it is important to acknowledge that these groups focused on certain kinds of fights before Sandy Hook that they did not focus on afterwards. Specifically, during the second half of 2011, both groups opposed procedural changes in the federal bureaucracy. Reflecting the fact that President Obama controlled this venue, this fight was defensive. The main reason that both the NRA and the SAF focused on this venue was because the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) was considering a new restriction on gun dealers in southwest border states that would require them to report to the ATF when they sold multiple AR-15's in a single transaction. This restriction was aimed at curbing gun trafficking. Instead of focusing on the actual rule-change, though, the

NRA and the SAF both focused on the botched ATF program “Operation Fast and Furious”¹² on which the rule-change was based. In 2006, the ATF allowed gun dealers in southwest border states to sell guns to “straw purchasers” so that they could trace the guns and gather information on illegal gun markets and gun trafficking to Mexico. But the agency lost track of most of the guns, and in December 2010 one of these guns was used to kill a U.S. border patrol agent. The NRA and the SAF defended against the requirement that dealers report multiple sales by using Operation Fast and Furious as evidence of the agency’s incompetence.

Both groups also devoted some attention to pressuring President Obama not to sign on to international treaties, like the United Nation’s Arms Trade Treaty, expressing concerns that this might limit the rights of individual gun owners in the United States. The lack of attention to opposing rule change through the national executive after Sandy Hook is especially notable because President Obama announced and pursued various executive actions to advance gun control through bureaucratic regulation (Curtis 2013; The White House 2013).

Conclusions

Gun control mobilization in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting represented a threat to the gun rights movement, and the NRA and the SAF both responded to this threat by increasing their own mobilization efforts and by becoming more defensive. Both groups focused on more fights in more places throughout 2013, and both groups devoted more attention to defending past gains, and relatively less attention to advancing their own policy goals. While the gun control movement responded to the shifting context (Chapter 1), and the financial windfall (Chapter 2),

¹² This program became known as “Operation Fast and Furious” in 2010 when agents discovered that suspects in the operation belonged to a car club, and both the NRA and the SAF use the phrase “fast and furious” when discussing this program.

with dramatic strategic shifts (Chapter 3), the gun rights movement responded with remarkable consistency, and with small strategic shifts that favored existing organizational priorities and played to organizational strengths.

While the gun control movement tried to use the shooting to advance gun control legislation in Congress, the gun rights movement focused more on other fights. The House of Representatives was controlled by the Republican Party, and the movement's past electioneering ensured the loyalty of Republican politicians. Instead of focusing primarily on blocking the gun control movement's efforts to secure national legislation, the NRA and the SAF both focused on using the specter of new gun control legislation and the threat of the gun control movement to fundraise, mobilize supporters, and strengthen the gun rights movement at both the national and state-level. And both groups continued to deploy the same strategy through the end of 2014.

These gun rights groups also played to their strengths by balancing offense and defense in state legislatures. While these groups had both engaged in state legislative fights in the past, these targets became a bigger priority for these groups, especially as the gun control movement intensified its efforts in state legislative venues when its efforts to secure national legislation failed. When the gun control movement focused more on state legislatures (Chapter 3), this posed a greater threat to the gun rights movement. State legislatures had been a priority for the gun rights movement before the shooting because many of these states provided a favorable context in which the movement might be able advance its policy goals despite the blocked national context. After their efforts had been blocked at the national level, though, the gun control movement shifted its attention to state legislatures as well. The gun rights movement then split its attention between advancing its own state-level legislative agenda and defending against the gun control movement's state-level legislative push.

As the context slid back to status quo at the beginning of 2014 (Chapter 1), both gun rights groups returned to key priorities from before the Sandy Hook shooting, namely, offensive pressure on state legislatures for the NRA and offensive state litigation for the SAF. As electoral politics picked up over the second half of 2014, coming to dominate the public, media, and political attention, and attracting unusually high attention from gun control groups (Chapter 3), both the NRA and the SAF shifted their attention to electoral politics as well. The enduring focus of gun rights groups on state legislative venues, as well as gun control groups' decision to shift their focus to these venues after Sandy Hook suggests that, when faced with a contested Congress, state legislatures are the key venue for evaluating opposing movement outcomes in the wake of an attention-grabbing, agenda-disrupting event.

CHAPTER 5: STATE LEGISLATIVE OUTCOMES

State Legislative Consequences of Shifting Contextual and Organizational Conditions

While Congress passed no national gun laws after Sandy Hook, some states passed laws that tightened firearms restrictions, while other states passed laws that relaxed restrictions. Consequently, state legislatures are the key venue for understanding the conditions for legislative change after mass shootings. In this chapter, I examine the conditions under which states either tightened or relaxed firearms restrictions in the two-year legislative sessions immediately before and after the Sandy Hook shooting.

To determine the conditions for policy change, and how these conditions changed after the Sandy Hook shooting, I conduct a qualitative comparative analysis of how several contextual and mobilization conditions related to certain policy outcomes in state legislatures. I begin by reviewing theories of how these conditions might drive policy change, and discussing how I operationalized these conditions. Next, I detail the conditions under which states either tightened or relaxed their gun laws before the Sandy Hook shooting, and contrast these with the conditions under which states did so after the shooting. This chapter contributes to the literature on social movement strategy and influence by comparing the conditions under which each side of this opposing movement pair secured desired policy change, and exploring how these conditions change after a critical event.

By analyzing changes to state firearms policies immediately before and after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, I demonstrate the conditions under which states either tightened or relaxed restrictions after this critical event. I find that these conditions were similar, but not identical, to those that facilitated similar policy change before the shooting. Also, while

the gun rights movement enjoyed a state-level legislative advantage over the gun control movement, this shooting had an equalizing effect on state legislative outcomes. While the gun control and gun rights movements both secured more policy change after the shooting, the gun control movement secured larger policy changes, and experienced a greater shift in the magnitude of policy change that it secured. I conclude that while attention-grabbing events like Sandy Hook do not fundamentally alter the conditions for policy change, they can amplify a movement's influence, shifting the balance of power between two opposing movements, and allowing a previously outmatched movement to secure larger policy gains than might have otherwise been possible.

Why Laws Sometimes Change

Social movement scholars offer many explanations for why policies change; I look at how the importance of these proposed conditions for policy-change differ before and after a critical event, and how they differ for opposing movements. The social movement and policy process literatures suggest that factors related both to social movements and to state context may influence what laws pass (Amenta et al. 2010). I examine the role that movement mobilization, state context, and countermovement mobilization play in facilitating the passage of legislation. I briefly explain each of these factors before discussing the value of the QCA method for analyzing these conditions and how I operationalize these factors for this analysis.

Movement Mobilization

Strong movement mobilization can influence what laws a state passes (Amenta et al. 2010). Movements are generally most influential where they have an extensive and well-financed network of organizations (McCarthy and Zald 1997; McVeigh, Cunningham, and Farrell 2014). Formal organizations help movements influence the policy process by providing a

channel through which individuals can communicate their grievances to policy makers and movement leaders, and also a vehicle through which movement leaders can access and mobilize supporters (Amenta et al. 2010). *I expect states with a strong gun control infrastructure to tighten their firearms restrictions, and states with a strong gun rights infrastructure to relax their firearms restrictions.*

While a local organizational infrastructure helps mobilize supporters with its ties to the community, attention from prominent national organizations associated with the broader national movement can provide an influx of money and leaders with specialized skills or added political pressure. National organizations, however, cannot compete effectively in all available venues, so they must select certain venues in which to focus their attention (Constantelos 2010; Holyoke 2003). National movement organizations typically devote more support in places with policy fights that they perceive as particularly important. *I expect states that received support from the national gun control movement to tighten their firearms restrictions, and states that received support from the national gun rights movement to relax their firearms restrictions.*

State Contextual Factors

The context in which a movement operates may mediate its influence. Political parties have commitments to groups and to ideological positions. As a result, one of the most important determinants of policy change is usually which political party controls the government. Policies supported by a movement are far more likely to pass, and may even pass with little effort on the movement's part, if the party that controls the government is sympathetic to the movement's goals (Amenta, Caren, and Olasky 2005). States are unlikely, however, to pass such policies if a hostile political party controls either legislative branch or the governor's office; control over even one "veto point" can allow either party to stop legislation in its tracks (Chen 2007). The

Democratic and Republican parties have taken official stances on gun control since 1968, with Democrats supporting gun control and Republicans opposing it (Democratic Party 1968; Republican Party 1968), and polling reflects a persistent partisan division on the issue of gun control (Pew Research Center 2012). *I expect states under Democratic control to tighten their firearms restrictions and states under Republican control to relax their firearms restrictions.*

States also have their own distinct cultures, and a state's culture may influence what laws it passes. Specifically, the strength of a state's gun culture might influence the firearms legislation that a state passes. States with strong "gun cultures" are those with lots of gun owners, lots of guns, ready access to guns, and/or strong hunting traditions (Cook and Goss 2014; Utter and True 2000). A culture of gun ownership normalizes firearms as part of daily life, and represents a voting block that might punish politicians who vote against its interests (Kleck 1996). *I expect states with strong gun cultures to relax their firearms restrictions, and states with weak gun cultures to tighten their restrictions.*

Countermovement Mobilization

The opposing movement dynamic means that either the gun control movement or the gun rights movement can be considered the "countermovement" depending on the surrounding context and the character of the legislation under consideration. Countermovement mobilization may even arise to challenge policy-making activities of hostile lawmakers, rather than mobilization from their opposing movement. This tendency means that countermovement mobilization can exist even when its opposing movement has not targeted that venue.

Countermobilization can influence the gun laws a state passes by hurting its opponent's ability to win desired reforms (Dixon 2010; Jasper and Poulsen 1993). Even when opposing movements are unable to completely stop policies from passing, they may secure amendments

during the legislative process that weaken the policy. Opposing movements can also promote their own preferred policies, and if they are successful this can cause state laws to swing in their favor (Dixon 2008). *I expect states with strong opposition from the gun rights movement not to tighten their firearms restrictions, and states with strong opposition from the gun control movement not to relax their firearms restrictions.*

Politically Mediated Impact

Scholars have increasingly focused on how the potential for social movements to influence policy change is mediated by the political and cultural context in which it operates (e.g., Amenta et al. 2010; Amenta, Caren, and Olasky 2005; Giugni 2006; Kolb 2007). According to this political process perspective, movement activities and political context produce different outcomes when combined in different ways. And sometimes different factors combine to produce several different pathways to the same outcome. For example, in favorable political contexts, only minor levels of mobilization may produce the same outcome as high levels of mobilization in less favorable contexts. Following this perspective, I assume that the gun control and gun rights movements might each influence the passage of desirable legislation, but only under certain conditions and in combination with certain other political and cultural factors.

The Analytical Advantages of Qualitative Comparative Analysis

To examine the conditions under which states either tightened or relaxed restrictions, I use qualitative comparative analysis, which is a method that bridges quantitative and qualitative research by offering a formal analysis of a relatively small number of in-depth case studies. Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) uses Boolean algebra and the logic of set-theoretical relations to generate different sets of recipes that lead to certain outcomes (Ragin 1987). Instead

of looking at the net effects of key variable, QCA takes a more holistic approach and shows how different conditions combine to produce different outcomes.

This method is appropriate for analyzing legislative change across the states for two reasons. First, QCA assumes “multiple causation.” Multiple causation means that multiple causal conditions may be required for a certain outcome to occur, that there may be more than one set of causal conditions that result in a specific outcome, and that one condition may have a different effect when combined with different conditions (Ragin 2008). The conditions that lead to changes in firearms restrictions may be different before and after the Sandy Hook shooting, the conditions that lead a state to relax restrictions may be different than those that lead a state to tighten restrictions, and the conditions that lead a state to pass major legislation might be different than those that lead a state to make small policy changes. QCA’s logic of multiple causation closely mirrors the theoretical logic of the contextually mediated influence of social movements emphasized above. This theoretic perspective and methodological approach both view outcomes as a product of the complex interplay of multiple causal conditions that, depending on surrounding conditions, may have different effects. This ability to identify multiple causal pathways is both empirically and theoretically foundational to this project.

Second, QCA uses counterfactual analysis to consider logically and theoretically possible conditional combinations not empirically present in the data, which addresses problems of limited diversity in case research (Ragin 2008). This counterfactual analysis makes QCA especially well-suited for the analysis in this chapter, which compares legislative changes across 50 states, a sample that would be too small for most traditional statistical methods to work well.

Two measures are helpful for understanding QCA results: coverage and consistency. Coverage refers to the degree to which the sets of causal conditions explain the outcome in

question. It indicates the proportion of cases with the outcome that are explained by each “recipe.” For example, a coverage of 50 percent means that set of causal conditions accounts for half of all states with the outcome in question. Consistency refers to the degree that a particular “recipe” is a subset of the set of all cases that share the outcome in question. This measure indicates the proportion of cases that share a set of causal conditions that produce that outcome. For example, a consistency of 100 percent means that all cases with a given set of causal conditions had that outcome, while a consistency of zero percent means that none of the cases with a given set of causal conditions had that outcome.

Operationalizing Causal Conditions and Outcomes

Causal Conditions

I examine how causal conditions related to each state’s political and cultural context and movement and countermovement mobilization facilitated the changes in state gun policy shown below. To determine how state political context influenced the changes a state made to its firearms restrictions, I coded for which party controlled the state government. Any state where the Democratic Party controlled the governorship and both legislative branches was coded as having *Democratic Control*. Any state where the Republican Party controlled the governorship and both legislative branches was coded as having *Republican Control*.

The measures for establishing the strength of state gun culture and local gun control and gun rights infrastructures over-represent large states when taken as raw numbers and over-represent small states when taken as per capita numbers. To avoid over- or under-representing either large or small states, I examine both raw numbers and per capita numbers to determine whether the causal condition was present. I calculated the mean score for both the per capita

number and for the raw number and examined whether either, both, or neither was above the mean score.

To determine how the presence of a strong gun culture influenced the changes a state made to its firearms restrictions, I created a composite measure from the strength of the state's hunting tradition, prevalence of gun dealers, and level of gun ownership. I measured hunting tradition by the number of resident hunting permits issued in the state, prevalence of gun dealers by the number of federal firearms licenses (FFLs), and level of gun ownership by the number of checks run through the NICS. Data on hunting permits came from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports, data on FFLs came from Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives reports, and data on NICS background checks came from Federal Bureau of Investigation reports (see Chapter 1). For each state, I examined the spread from the mean for the raw and per capita numbers for each of the three measures. I coded states as having a *Gun Culture* if at least three of the six numbers were above the mean, and at least one of these was a raw number and at least one of these was a per capita number.

To determine how movement mobilization influenced the changes a state made to its firearms restrictions, I created composite measures for local infrastructure and for national support. I measured local gun control infrastructure by the number of local Brady Campaign chapters and the number of Mayors Against Illegal Guns (MAIG) affiliates in the state. Data on gun control infrastructure came from affiliate lists on each organization's website (Chapter 2). Using the composite raw number / per capita method outlined above, I determined whether each state had a higher than average number of either Brady Campaign groups or MAIG affiliates. I coded states that had either a higher than average Brady Campaign presence or a higher than average MAIG presence as having a strong *Local Gun Control Infrastructure*.

I measured national gun control movement pressure by the number of press communications issued by the Brady Campaign and by MAIG/Everytown that referenced legislative activities in the state. Data on press communications came from the media communications section of each group's website (see Chapter 2). I counted press communications regardless of whether they supported or opposed the proposed law, because in either case this indicated interest and involvement in that policy fight. I determined the average amount of attention that all states received across the four-year timeframe. I then assessed whether a given state in each of the two-year legislative sessions received greater than average attention. I coded states that had received higher than average attention as having received *National Gun Control Movement Pressure*.

I measured local gun rights infrastructure by the number of local Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) chapters and the number of National Rifle Association (NRA) affiliates. Data on gun rights infrastructure came from affiliate lists on each organization's website (see Chapter 2). Using the composite raw number / per capita method outlined above, I determined whether each state had a higher than average number of either SAF groups or NRA affiliates. I coded states that had either a higher than average SAF presence or a higher than average NRA presence as having a strong *Local Gun Rights Infrastructure*.

I measured national gun rights movement pressure by the number of press communications issued by the SAF and by the NRA that referenced legislative activities in the state. Data on press communications came from the media communications section of each group's website, and I used the same approach for assessing support from the national gun rights movement as I did for assessing support from the national gun control movement. I coded states

that had received higher than average attention as having received *National Gun Rights Movement Pressure*.

Because I follow Meyer and Staggenborg (1996) and treat these movements as “opposing movements,” either the gun control or gun rights movement can be the “countermovement,” depending on the surrounding conditions. To determine how countermovement opposition influenced state gun laws, I created a composite measure for the presence of a gun rights countermobilization and another composite measure for the presence of gun control countermobilization. I coded states that had either a gun rights infrastructure or that had received support from the national gun rights movement as having *Gun Rights Countermobilization*. I coded states that had either a gun control infrastructure or that had received support from the national gun control movement as having *Gun Control Countermobilization*.

Outcome Measure: Changes to State Firearms Restrictions

I identify conditions for four general outcomes: 1) tighter firearms restrictions in the 2011-2012 legislative session; 2) more relaxed firearms restrictions in the 2011-2012 legislative session; 3) tighter firearms restrictions in the 2013-2014 legislative session; and 4) more relaxed restrictions in the 2013-2014 legislative session. In QCA, cases are considered either inside or outside of the set of cases that meet a certain outcome or that have a certain causal condition. States that relaxed restrictions and states that made no changes to their firearms policy are out of the set of states that strengthened restrictions; states that tightened restrictions and states that made no changes to their firearms policy are out of the set of states that relaxed restrictions.

To determine whether a state was in or out of the set of states that tightened or relaxed firearms restrictions in each legislative session, I constructed outcome measures from changes that the state made to various policy provisions related to firearms restrictions. This outcome

measure was based on the “issue areas” identified through organizational press communications (see Chapter 2), and confirmed through documents produced by several other gun control and gun rights groups. Using these documents, I created a codebook of provisions governing what ammunition, firearms, and related devices people can get, who can legally own them, and what one has to do to legally purchase or sell these items; provisions governing the responsibilities of gun owners, restrictions on their conduct, and protections for rights of ownership and use; and several miscellaneous provisions like requirements that states submit mental health records to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), rules governing the operation of the firearms and ammunition industry, and restrictions on whether local governments, like cities, can pass laws different than the laws of that state.

Based on the general importance that gun control and gun rights groups attributed to each provision, I assigned it between 0.1 and 8.0 points. I draw these coding parameters from a coding scheme used by the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (LCPGV), an organization that focuses on cataloging and evaluating the strength of state gun laws. The LCPGV measure is revised to account for how much of a priority that policy area was for these movements, based on the issue’s prominence in the organizational press communications analyzed in Chapters 3 and 4. For example, banning someone with a drug conviction from buying a gun is a relatively small change of one point, while expanding background checks to cover firearms sold at gun shows is a large change of six points. I then searched several databases that aggregate state laws passed in recent legislative sessions (OpenStates 2017; LegiScan 2017) for any law passed between January 2011 and December 2014 that made any changes to any of these provisions.

I coded provision-changes as positive if they tightened firearms restrictions and negative if they relaxed them. For each provision change, if the law established a new provision or

completely removed it, that provision-change received the full amount of points the provision was worth. If the law changed an existing provision by amending it, the provision-change received half the total points the provision was worth. If the law made only technical, non-substantive changes to clarify the provision, it received no points. Many states passed laws that included both provisions that tightened firearms restrictions and provisions that relaxed them, but in all circumstances the policy-change was stronger in one direction or the other. For example, a state could tighten reporting requirements to the NICS database, but also allow someone with a concealed carry permit to carry their firearm into a house of worship. In the dataset, this would appear as the state relaxing restrictions.

For each time-period, I examine the conditions that led to any change in firearms restrictions, and those that led to a “large” change of more than four points in either direction. I chose a cut-off of plus-or-minus four points because there was a natural break at this value both before and after the shooting and for both tightening and relaxing restrictions. In total, I compare the conditions that facilitated eight specific outcomes.

More State-Level Legislative Change After Sandy Hook

After the Sandy Hook shooting, the *magnitude* of policy change increased in two ways. First, as Table 10 shows, more states changed their gun laws in the legislative session after Sandy Hook. In the 2011-2012 legislative session, 11 states tightened firearms restrictions, 27 states relaxed restrictions, and 12 states made no changes to their gun laws. By contrast, in the 2013-2014 legislative session, 16 states tightened restrictions, 29 states relaxed restrictions, and only five states made no changes to their gun laws. In other words, after the shooting, more states tightened their restrictions, but more states also relaxed their restrictions.

Table 10. Changes to State Firearms Restrictions in the 2011 – 2012 Legislative Session and the 2013 – 2014 Legislative Session

		2011 – 2012 Legislative Session	2013 – 2014 Legislative Session
States that Tightened Restrictions	Large Change	No States	9 States: MD: 21.1; NY: 18.5; CT: 16.8; DE: 11.5; CO: 10.7; MA: 10.5; CA: 9.9; WA: 9.5; IL: 8.8
	Small Change	11 States: CA: 1.9; AL: 1.5; VA: 1.0; HI: 1.0; IL: 0.9; DE: 0.6; MD: 0.6; IA: 0.5; MO: 0.5; CT: 0.1; WA: 0.1	7 States: VA: 1.8; HI: 1.3; AZ: 1.2; NE: 0.8; RI: 0.6; ME: 0.3; FL: 0.2
No Policy Changes		12 States: CO, MA, RI, PA, NJ, MN, SD, MT, AK, ID, MI, KS	5 States: OH, NM, NH, PA, IA
States that Relaxed Restrictions	Small Change	15 States: NE: 0.1; OR: 0.1; GA: 0.1; KY: 0.3; NH: 0.5; NY: 0.8; AZ: 0.8; NM: 1.0; TN: 1.0; WV: 1.1; UT: 1.3; FL: 1.5; ND: 1.7; OH: 2.3; AR: 2.3	18 States: NV: 0.1; KY: 0.1; NJ: 0.1; WY: 0.3; OR: 0.3; MN: 0.5; VT: 0.5; WI: 0.5; SD: 0.8; UT: 0.9; SC: 1.3; LA: 1.3; MT: 1.5; AK: 1.6; ND: 1.8; NC: 2.3; ID: 2.3; MS: 3.0
	Large Change	12 States: TX: 4.5; ME: 4.5; NV: 4.6; OK: 4.6; IN: 5.0; NC: 5.0; LA: 5.1; WI: 6.0; SC: 6.5; MS: 7.8; WY: 8.0; VT: 9.0	11 States: MI: 4.4; TX: 4.6; IN: 6.2; OK: 6.9; GA: 7.2; TN: 7.5; WV: 7.5; AR: 7.6; KS: 11.3; AL: 12.3; MO: 12.6

Second, the changes that states made to their firearms restrictions were bigger, especially for those states that tightened firearms restrictions. Of the 11 states that tightened restrictions before the shooting, none made large changes of more than four points. Of the 27 states that relaxed restrictions, though, 12 made large changes. After the shooting, though, nine of the 16 states that tightened restrictions made large changes, while 11 of the 29 states that relaxed restrictions did. Even so, the average amount by which states relaxed firearms restrictions increased slightly from -3.2 points in the 2011-2012 legislative session to -3.7 points in the 2013-2014 legislative session. This change was even more dramatic for states that tightened restrictions, for which the average grew from 0.8 points in the 2011-2012 legislative session to 7.7 points in the 2013-2014 legislative session. The Sandy Hook shooting therefore magnified how much states changed their gun laws, especially for states that tightened restrictions.

Overall, states went from relaxing gun laws by a total of -76.5 points in the two-year legislative session before Sandy Hook to tightening them by a total of 16.4 points in the two-year legislative session after Sandy Hook. Therefore, while both movements secured more policy change after the shooting, the gains made by the gun control movement were larger, though it still did not have as much state-level legislative success as the gun rights movement had during the two-year legislative session before the shooting.

Conditions for Legislative Change Before Sandy Hook

In the two-year legislative session before Sandy Hook, 11 states tightened their firearms restrictions and 27 states relaxed them. Of the states that tightened restrictions, none made a large policy-change of more than four points, but 12 of the 27 states that relaxed restrictions made large policy changes. Table 11 shows the one reliable pathway to any tighter restrictions before the shooting, the two reliable pathways to any looser restrictions, and the one reliable pathway to substantially looser restrictions, as well as the accompanying coverage and consistency scores for each pathway and for the total solution.

The coverage scores (discussed below as percentages) are modest, which indicate that the pathways I discuss account for only a portion of all states that relaxed restrictions. There is a pronounced tradeoff between coverage and consistency because the number of cases (50 states) is on the high end of what QCA is designed to analyze. In deciding between a less coherent understanding of a large portion of cases with the outcome, or a more coherent understanding of a smaller portion of cases with the outcome, I chose the latter.

Before the Sandy Hook shooting, there was only one reliable path through which the gun control movement secured any tighter firearms restrictions. Of the 11 states that tightened restrictions before the shooting, 45.5 percent: were under Democratic control, did not have a

strong gun culture, and had a strong local gun control infrastructure. This is a relatively modest coverage score, which indicates that there were other conditions under which the gun control movement achieved the outcome it wanted. Solution consistency for this pathway is 100 percent, though, meaning that when these conditions were present states always tightened restrictions.

These states were California, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, and Washington.

Table 11: Conditions Under Which States Tightened or Relaxed Firearms Restrictions During the 2011-2012 Legislative Session

	Any Policy Change			Large Policy Change	
	Tighten	Relax		Tighten	Relax
Sympathetic Party Control	X	X	X	-	X
Favorable Cultural Context	X	X	X	-	X
Local Infrastructure	X		X	-	X
National Pressure			X	-	X
Countermobilization		O		-	O
Raw Coverage	0.455	0.481	0.148	-	0.167
Unique Coverage	0.455	0.407	0.074	-	0.167
Consistency	1.000	0.867	1.000	-	1.000
Solution Coverage	0.455	0.556		-	0.167
Solution Consistency	1.000	0.882		-	1.000

Notes: X = condition is present; O = condition is absent; Frequency Cutoff = 2; Consistency Cutoff = 0.70; a Sympathetic Party Control for tightening restrictions = Democratic control, for relaxing restrictions = Republican control; Favorable Cultural Context = Gun Culture absent for tightening restrictions, and for relaxing restrictions = Gun Culture present; Local Infrastructure = Local Gun Control Infrastructure for tightening restrictions, for relaxing restrictions = Local Gun Rights Infrastructure; National Pressure = National Gun Rights Movement Pressure for tightening restrictions, for relaxing restrictions = National Gun Rights Movement Pressure; Countermobilization = Local Gun Rights Infrastructure OR National Gun Rights Pressure for tightening restrictions, for relaxing restrictions = Local Gun Control Infrastructure OR National Gun Control Movement Pressure.

The gun rights movements had two reliable pathways they could follow secure restrictions that were more relaxed. These two pathways accounted for 55.6 percent of all states

that relaxed restrictions before the shooting. Of the 27 states that relaxed restrictions, 40.7 percent of them (or 11 states): were under Republican control, had a strong gun culture, and faced no gun control countermobilization. If these three conditions were present, it did not matter whether gun rights mobilization was even present. Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Wyoming all took this path to weaker restrictions. This pathway was not 100 percent reliable, though, and two states that met these conditions did not relax restrictions.

A more reliable, but far less common pathway to looser firearms restrictions required: Republican control, a strong gun culture, a strong local gun rights infrastructure, and national gun rights movement pressure. Only two states—Arizona and Texas—met these conditions, and these two states accounted for 7.4 percent of all states that relaxed restrictions. An additional two states—Indiana and Wisconsin—met both sets of conditions. Meeting all five conditions, as these states did, was the only reliable route to substantially weaker restrictions before the shooting. This route to substantially weaker restrictions, while completely reliable, only accounted for 16.7 percent of all states that met this outcome. A main reason for the low coverage is that half of the time that states were under Republican control, had a strong gun culture, and faced no gun control countermobilization, they actually did substantially weaken restrictions. Consequently, this was a common pathway to this outcome, but an unreliable one.

Conditions for Legislative Change After Sandy Hook

In the two-year legislative session after Sandy Hook, 16 states tightened their firearms restrictions and 29 states relaxed them. Of the states that tightened restrictions, nine made a large policy-change of more than four points, and 11 states that relaxed restrictions also made large policy changes. Both sides also enjoyed more reliable routes to their desired legislative outcome.

Table 12 shows the two reliable pathways to any tighter restrictions before the shooting, the three reliable pathways to any looser restrictions, and the single reliable pathway to either substantially tighter or substantially weaker restrictions, as well as the accompanying coverage and consistency scores for each pathway and for the total solution.

Table 12: Conditions Under Which States Tightened or Relaxed Firearms Restrictions During the 2013-2014 Legislative Session

	Any Policy Change					Large Policy Change	
	Tighten		Relax			Tighten	Relax
Sympathetic Party Control	X	X	X	O	O	X	
Favorable Cultural Context	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Local Infrastructure	X	X		X		X	
National Movement Pressure	X				X	X	X
Countermobilization		O	O		O		O
Raw Coverage	0.438	0.188	0.345	0.207	0.069	0.778	0.455
Unique Coverage	0.375	0.125	0.345	0.207	0.069	0.778	0.455
Consistency	0.875	1.000	1.000	0.750	1.000	0.875	0.833
Solution Coverage	0.563		0.621			0.778	0.455
Solution Consistency	0.900		0.900			0.875	0.833

Notes: X = condition is present; O = condition is absent; Frequency Cutoff = 2; Consistency Cutoff = 0.75; a Sympathetic Party Control for tightening restrictions = Democratic control, for relaxing restrictions = Republican control; Favorable Cultural Context = Gun Culture absent for tightening restrictions, and for relaxing restrictions = Gun Culture present; Local Infrastructure = Local Gun Control Infrastructure for tightening restrictions, for relaxing restrictions = Local Gun Rights Infrastructure; National Pressure = National Gun Rights Movement Pressure for tightening restrictions, for relaxing restrictions = National Gun Rights Movement Pressure; Countermobilization = Local Gun Rights Infrastructure OR National Gun Rights Pressure for tightening restrictions, for relaxing restrictions = Local Gun Control Infrastructure OR National Gun Control Movement Pressure.

Gun Control After Sandy Hook

After the Sandy Hook shooting, there were two reliable paths to tighter firearms restrictions. The one reliable pathway to tighter restrictions before the shooting—Democratic control, a weak gun culture, and a strong local gun control infrastructure—formed the core of both pathways, but after the shooting, these conditions were no longer enough. For a state to tighten restrictions, the local gun rights movement either needed to face no gun rights countermobilization (12.5 percent of states), or needed the help of national gun control movement pressure to help overcome this opposition (37.5 percent of states). Delaware and Rhode Island followed the first path to tighter restrictions, while California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, New York, and Washington followed the latter. Massachusetts met both sets of conditions.

Of the 16 states that tightened restrictions, nine made major policy changes. But there was only one reliable route to this outcome: Democratic control, a weak gun culture, a strong local infrastructure, and pressure from the national gun control movement. All seven states that followed this pathway to slightly tighter restrictions—California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, and Washington—also made major policy changes. But while Delaware made major changes, Rhode Island did not, meaning that while the favorable conditions in those states were enough to ensure at least slightly tighter restrictions, they were not enough to ensure major policy change.

Colorado is the only other state that tightened restrictions that made major policy changes, and this distinction makes it worth discussing. With its relatively strong gun culture and relatively weak local gun control infrastructure, Colorado did not follow either of the conventional pathways to tighter restrictions. Two factors likely contributed to this state passing

big gun control laws anyways. First, while the overall gun control infrastructure was not particularly strong, Governor John Hickenlooper (D) was a particularly strong ally of the gun control movement. As mayor of Denver, Governor Hickenlooper had been an out-spoken member of Mayors Against Illegal Guns. Second, just five months before the Sand Hook shooting, another high-profile mass shooting occurred in Aurora, Colorado at a midnight screening of *The Dark Knight Rises*. Several major gun rights bills had been proceeding through the state legislature in 2012, but they were immediately tabled in committee after this shooting. This suggests that earlier outrage over *The Dark Knight Rises* shooting and a heightened salience of gun violence in the state might have helped the national gun control movement overcome other disadvantages in the state.

Gun Rights After Sandy Hook

The gun rights movements had three reliable pathways to weaken restrictions at all. These three pathways accounted for 62.1 percent of all states that relaxed restrictions after the shooting. The main pathway to weaker restrictions after the shooting was the same main pathway to weaker restrictions as before. Of the 29 states that relaxed restrictions, 34.5 percent were under Republican control, had a strong gun culture, and faced no gun control countermobilization. As before, if these three conditions were present, it did not matter whether gun rights mobilization was even present. But after the shooting, this pathway was more reliable. All states that met these conditions relaxed restrictions at least a little. Alabama, Alaska, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming all followed this path to weaker restrictions.

Not all 29 states that relaxed restrictions were under Republican control. There were two pathways that led states that were under either split-party control or Democratic control to relax

restrictions. In the more common of these two pathways, a strong gun culture paired with a strong local gun rights infrastructure forced enough Democratic state lawmakers to support gun rights over gun control. This was the path that Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Kentucky, Nevada, and Vermont all took to weaker restrictions. The other route, followed by Arkansas and West Virginia, also required a favorable gun culture, but here it was pressure from the national gun rights movement paired with a lack of gun control countermobilization that led to weaker restrictions.

Of the 29 states that relaxed restrictions, eleven made large policy changes. There was one reliable pathway and it accounted for 45.5 percent of states with this outcome. States with a strong gun culture that were pressured by the national gun rights movement, and that faced no gun control countermobilization passed major gun rights legislation, regardless of whether there was Republican control or a strong local gun rights infrastructure. Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Michigan, and West Virginia passed major gun rights legislation with these conditions.

Notably, the reliable pathway that led to substantially weaker restrictions before the shooting no longer existed. The national gun rights movement did not focus on pressuring any states that had a strong gun culture, a strong local gun rights infrastructure, and that were under Republican control. These states did, though, draw gun control countermobilization.

Consequently, while this was the second most common pathway to substantially weaker restrictions—Indiana, Tennessee, and Texas all followed this route—it was no longer reliable, and another three states with these conditions (Arizona, Florida, and Wisconsin) made only minor policy changes.

Conclusions

By analyzing changes to state firearms policies immediately before and after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, I demonstrate the conditions under which states either tightened or relaxed restrictions after this critical event. I also show that these conditions are similar, but not identical, to those that facilitated similar policy change before the shooting. I find that the gun control and gun rights movements both secured more policy change after the shooting. But while the gun rights movement secured legislative change in more states, the gun control movement secured bigger legislative changes. Consequently, while the gun rights movement enjoys a structural advantage over the gun control movements in the states, this shooting had an equalizing effect on state legislative outcomes.

Before Sandy Hook, it was far easier for the gun rights movement to secure desired policy change than it was for the gun control movement to do so. States relaxed restrictions if they were under Republican control, had strong gun cultures, and faced no gun control countermobilization, regardless of whether that state had strong local gun rights infrastructures or received pressure from the national gun rights movement. And this was actually the most common pathway to weaker restrictions. By contrast, for a state to tighten restrictions, it needed a strong local gun control infrastructure, aided by a favorable political and cultural climate. In other words, Republican lawmakers were happy to make small changes that relaxed restrictions regardless of whether the gun rights movement was pushing them to do so. But Democrats only did so when faced with gun control mobilization.

Furthermore, the gun control movement was unable to secure large policy gains before the shooting, but the gun rights movement could. However, unlike the conditions to secure policy-change in general, which the gun rights movement could win without mobilizing, the only

reliable route to large policy victories required both a strong local gun rights infrastructure and pressure from the national gun rights movement. The gun control movement could not secure these sorts of large policy changes, even in states that had strong gun control infrastructures. These differences led states, overall, to dramatically relax firearms restrictions in the 2011-2012 legislative session.

After Sandy Hook, guns became a more salient issue for everyone, but each side had a different set of policy solutions to deal with the problem of gun violence. Because salience was high, but the problem was interpreted differently, the gun control and gun rights movements both secured more legislative change after the shooting than they had beforehand. More states tightened restrictions and more states relaxed restrictions, and the average amount by which states either tightened or relaxed restrictions was greater. This supports the suggestion of some scholars that critical events can be an important mobilizing opportunity for both sides of an opposing movement pair (Laschever and Meyer 2015; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). But the gun rights movement did more than just mobilize to block the gains of its opponent and mitigate damages—it also fought for and won its own legislative victories. Therefore, this was not just an opportunity for both sides to mobilize, but for both sides to win policy change.

Both sides, however, did not benefit equally from this opportunity, and the balance shifted in favor of tighter restrictions. While both sides saw more states pass laws they wanted, and while more states still relaxed restrictions than tightened them, the gun control movement experienced larger gains. Furthermore, the average amount by which states tightened restrictions increased so much that state-level firearms restrictions, overall, tightened during the 2013-2014 legislative session. While states had relaxed restrictions before Sandy Hook by far more than

they tightened them afterwards, this nonetheless represents a huge overall shift in the *valence* of changes to state gun laws.

The gun control movement's increased influence came mainly from increased mobilization. Scholars of gun politics have long noted that the gun control movement lacks a strong state-level presence. Indeed, Goss (2006) goes so far as to claim that this lack of state-level mobilization suggests that gun control does not really even have a "movement." This post-Sandy Hook mobilization included the founding of new movement organizations and the expansion of a local organizational infrastructure, as is well anticipated by the literature (Gamson 1988; Walsh 1981).

Post-Sandy Hook mobilization also included increased pressure from the national gun control movement in specific state-level policy fights. Without this pressure from the national movement, local efforts typically could not overcome opposition from the gun rights movement. In the concluding chapter, I tie these findings about the conditions for state-level legislative change back to the changes in the broader national context, and particularly the strategic changes the gun control and gun rights movements made after the shooting. In doing so, I emphasize the importance of venue and target selection for understand how opposing national social movements can make political gains in a crowded, contentious, and gridlocked national political context.

CONCLUSION: MAXIMIZING GAINS AND MINIMIZING LOSSES BY TARGETING CERTAIN VENUES

When the Sandy Hook shooting thrust the issue of gun violence into the spotlight, it presented a mobilizing opportunity for political organizations on both sides of the issue. After Sandy Hook, media, public, and political attention to issues of gun violence, gun control, and gun rights all increased. And while public opinion shifted in favor of the gun control movement, both gun control and gun rights groups used the heightened attention to mobilize additional financial and human resources. While the shooting was a mobilizing opportunity for both sides, the nature of this opportunity depended on existing contextual and movement conditions (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2). Specifically, the availability of favorable political venues, existing organizational capabilities, and long-term trends that favored one side, shaped how these movements responded to the increased attention, support, and funding that followed this attention-grabbing event.

What Kind of Opportunity?

Long-term trends in public support increasingly favor the gun rights movement, but after the Sandy Hook shooting these trends reversed, and temporarily favored the gun control movement. This mirrored similar shifts that had followed previous attention-grabbing shootings, like the one at Columbine High School in 1999. Patterns of attention, support, and policy change that have followed other attention-grabbing shootings indicate that the gun control movement steadily loses ground to the gun rights movement when the issue of gun violence falls off the agenda. Shootings like Sandy Hook, therefore, represent a rare opportunity for the gun control movement to regain a slight cultural advantage over the gun rights movement. But, as attention to gun violence subsides, the gun rights movement regains its usual advantage (Chapter 1).

While attention-grabbing events present a mobilizing opportunity for both sides of an opposing movement pair, one side may need this opportunity more, and have more riding on it.

While the shooting shook up the agenda and shifted public support, it did not transform structural constraints like partisan control of government. The Democratic-controlled Senate introduced gun control bills for debate, but the House of Representatives, which was under Republican Party control, never put gun control legislation on its agenda (Chapter 1). The gun rights movement also enjoyed a structural advantage at the state level. More states were under Republican Party control, and several of the states that were under Democratic control were relatively conservative states that had strong gun cultures (Chapter 5). While attention-grabbing events present a mobilizing opportunity for both sides of an opposing movement pair, the potential for legislative victory is constrained by the availability of sympathetic venues to target.

An Opportunity for Whom?

The mobilizing opportunity that the Sandy Hook shooting presented to these movements also depended on the existing organizational capabilities of individual groups within each movement. The resources these leading gun control and gun rights groups mobilized and the structural changes they made depended more on each group's existing character and capacity than on which side of the gun debate it was on. A key distinction between the two gun-control groups was that the younger group that enjoyed a patronage relationship with its leader underwent a dramatic organizational transformation, while the older, more established group did not (having done so years before when it was at a similar developmental stage). The younger group became the most prominent gun control group after Sandy Hook, and as of December 2017, it had retained this prominence. The key distinction between the two gun-rights groups was that the more prominent group grew more and maintained this growth longer. The resources

that individual groups mobilize, and the changes they undergo reflect their distinct position in the fight (Chapter 2). While attention-grabbing events present a mobilizing opportunity, individual groups, regardless of which side of the issue they are on, experience this opportunity differently depending on their existing organizational capabilities.

An Opportunity for What?

The shooting, therefore, represented a different kind of opportunity for the gun control and gun rights movements, and for individual organizations within each movement. The influence of both contextual and organizational factors is evident in how both the gun control and the gun rights movements responded to the shooting. But the influence of organizational characteristics is more prominent in the gun control movement's response. The most striking difference between the responses of these opposing movements, was that the gun control movement's response was more volatile. Gun control groups first doubled down in a favorite, but blocked venue. They both then withdrew from the fight and reassessed organizational strategy after they were blocked. When they both reengaged in the fight, they had both retooled their strategies to target different, potentially more receptive, venues. The younger, nimbler group, though, completely reinvented its whole organizational structure and strategy in a way that the former flagship group, which was older and more established, did not. The changes the younger group made allowed it to take over as the most prominent gun control group, and in so doing shift the overall strategy of the gun control movement (Chapter 3). If a movement is outmatched, attention-grabbing events are not necessarily an opportunity for them to secure major national policy change, but they *are* an opportunity for nimble groups within the movement to shift the strategic direction of the movement by reinventing their own organizational structure and strategy.

The response of the gun rights movement, by contrast, was characterized by remarkable consistency. Both gun rights groups played to their strengths in four ways. First, they used the heightened sense of threat to help with their movement-building efforts. Second, they balanced offensive and defensive lobbying in state legislatures. Third, they shifted only slightly between preferred venues, rather than overhauling their strategies. And fourth, they returned to business-as-usual as soon as possible. The real strategic change that the gun rights movement made after the shooting was that both groups intensified their efforts and become more defensive. The only real strategic distinction between the two gun-rights groups was that, in an effort to distinguish itself from the larger group, the smaller group maintained its existing focus on different political venues (Chapter 4). While attention-grabbing events are a mobilizing opportunity for a stable, strong, winning movement, that movement has every incentive just to dig in and hold the line, but one way to do this is to continue fighting for wins in sympathetic venues.

While Congress passed no new firearms legislation after Sandy Hook, 45 states changed their gun laws in the two-year legislative session after Sandy Hook. This was up from 38 states that changed their gun laws in the two-year legislative session before Sandy Hook. Both sides did not benefit equally, though. More states relaxed restrictions, which reflected the contextual advantages the gun rights movement enjoyed at the state level. But while more states relaxed restrictions, the states that tightened restrictions made larger policy changes. The gun control movement's new advantage reflected the organizational and strategic changes that the movement had made. States were less likely to weaken firearms restrictions in places where the gun control movement fought back, and the gun control movement was only able to overcome opposition from the gun rights movement, and secure major gun control legislation, in states where the national gun control movement was also engaged in the fight (Chapter 5). While attention-

grabbing events are an opportunity for both sides to secure major state-level policy-change, the ability to do so is predicated on the existing political landscape and the mobilization choices each side makes.

Maximizing Gains: Side Benefits, Reevaluating, and Targeting Select State Contexts

After the Sandy Hook shooting, the gun control movement put everything it had into a doomed effort to secure major national legislation. Achieving this outcome would have maximized gains as much as possible. This effort failed, though, so the gun control movement ended up maximizing gains through indirect side benefits pursuing to this ultimate, unachieved goal. For example, one side benefit of the push for gun control in the Senate was that media and public attention to issues of gun control and gun violence remained elevated until the bills failed four months after the shooting. Remaining on the agenda is a beneficial outcome for the gun control movement because the gun rights movement has the upper hand when attention turns away from the issue of gun violence. The gun control movement did not get major national legislation, but the unsuccessful push for this legislation kept casual supporters of gun control attentive to the issue for longer.

The gun control movement also maximized gains after the Sandy Hook shooting by reevaluating its strategy when this push for national legislation failed. As attention to its issue collapsed and support for its goals eroded, the gun control movement changed its strategy. The gun control movement shifted its attention to other venues, bypassing Congress, which had already proven unresponsive. Instead, the movement focused on targeting alternative venues of policy-change, like ballot initiatives and state legislatures, diffuse points of influence like changing individual behaviors, and using the national electoral venue to chip away at its Congressional constraints.

The third way that the gun control movement maximized gains after Sandy Hook was by devoting more attention to targeting certain state legislative fights. While state legislative gains are geographically limited, the diversity of state contexts makes it possible to secure policy goals that are blocked at the national level. The national gun control movement had devoted limited attention to state legislative fights before Sandy Hook, but intensified its focus on this venue after the shooting. Before the shooting, no states passed major gun control laws, but after the shooting, nine states passed major gun control restrictions. And national pressure was important for helping local gun control forces in politically and culturally favorable states overcome gun rights opposition and secure major policy change.

Minimizing Losses: Obstruction, Mobilization, and Targeting Select State Contexts

As the gun control movement fought *for* major national legislation, the gun rights movement fought *against* it. In the case of gun politics after the Sandy Hook shooting, the fact that Congress did not pass major gun control legislation was a win for the gun rights movement. With past victories to defend and current rights to protect, the gun rights movement's posture was largely defensive. Minimizing losses means that sometimes obstruction is the goal. Indeed, there is a structural advantage that facilitates this outcome: control over one "veto point" significantly lessens the chance that legislation will pass (Chen 2007). After Sandy Hook, the gun rights movement benefited from Republican Party control in the House of Representatives. The gun rights movement also benefited from decades of consistent electoral efforts to reinforce the commitment of Republican policymakers to gun rights and undermine the commitment of Democratic policymakers to gun control. Reflecting this structural advantage, the gun rights movement lobbied against the Senate gun control bills, but defending against specific national

gun control legislation was not the movement's main priority, because it could afford to focus elsewhere.

The gun rights movement also minimized losses after Sandy Hook by translating the threat of gun control into a movement-building opportunity. In fact, during the two years after Sandy Hook, the NRA grew its funding and volunteer base by more than the Brady Campaign, which had been the largest and most prominent gun control group at the time of the shooting. The gun rights movement enjoys a financial and constituent advantage over the gun control movement during periods of inattention, and by focusing on movement-building in the wake of Sandy Hook, the gun rights movement preserved most of its advantage.

Another way the gun rights movement minimized losses after Sandy Hook was by balancing offensive and defensive state-level lobbying. While the gun control movement made larger state-level policy gains than the gun rights movement, the gun rights movement minimized losses in several ways. For example, more states relaxed restrictions after the shooting than before, these states made larger policy changes than they had before the shooting, and more states still relaxed restrictions than tightened them. More states also made large policy changes that relaxed restrictions than tightened them, and pressure from the national gun rights movement was a key part of the pathway to substantially weaker restrictions.

National Movements Targeting State Legislative Venues

Usually, when social movement scholars discuss the political context, it is treated as something external to the movement over which movement actors have little to no control. Movement actors can change the political context over time, for example by helping to elect legislators who are more sympathetic to their cause, but the existing political context in which a movement operates at a given time is outside of the movement's influence, and something that

movement actors must work within the confines of (Eisinger 1973; Kriesi 1989; McAdam 1982; Meyer and Minkoff 2004). When national movement organizations decide to devote some of their attention to specific state-level fights, though, they are choosing whether to target sympathetic, contested, or hostile contexts. In the case of gun politics after Sandy Hook, focusing on selected state-level contexts was a key way that the gun control movement tried to maximize gains (Chapter 3) and the gun rights movement tried to minimize losses (Chapter 4), and pressure from national movements support may have state-level legislative consequences (Chapter 5).

Examining how national movements target state legislatures offers a different vantage from which to explore how social movement strategy and political context interact. My findings point to further questions about why opposing political organizations focus on the states that they do, how national and state-level forces negotiate their respective roles in the fight, and the relative value movements gain by targeting certain fights. The rich body of literature on the interaction between local context and local forces (e.g. Amenta et al. 2005; Dixon 2008; McCammon et al. 2008), would benefit from interrogating the role of national mobilization in local fights, especially since large, nationally-federated political organizations play a role in state-level policy diffusion (Boushey 2010).

Avenues for Future Research

This study points to several avenues for future research. First, I selected the Sandy Hook shooting because it is an unusually dramatic, attention-grabbing shooting, and therefore offers an especially clear illustration of how events, contextual constraints, organizational capabilities, and policy-changes interact after critical events. But more comparative research on opposing movement responses to different events is required. Media outlets cover mass shootings differently depending on specific event characteristics like the victim count, shooting location,

and identity of the shooter (Schildraut 2014; Schildraut 2017). Do organizations also respond to the specific characteristics of an event? How do event characteristics influence political responses? How do organizational capabilities and contextual constraints shift around other events? Future research needs to determine under what circumstances event, strategy, context, and capabilities interact in the way found here.

Different opposing movement pairs may respond to attention-grabbing events differently than the gun control and gun rights movements. The nature of the opportunity/threat presented by the Sandy Hook shooting depended on the relative organizational and contextual constraints of these two opposing movements, and different opposing movement pairs face different constraints. Future research needs to determine how the effects found here might differ for other opposing political forces. For example, what differences exist in the responses of abortion rights and anti-abortion forces to a violent attack on an abortion clinic, or in the responses of #BlackLivesMatter advocates and their #AllLivesMatter opponents to a viral video of a violent confrontation with police?

Gun Politics Going Forward

Since the Sandy Hook shooting, mass shootings have continued to grab media and public attention. People may wonder how to respond to a shooting. If you support gun rights, you can just do what you usually do. You should give some money to the NRA, and then you can wait until the public's attention turns to other issues. Once people stop paying attention, you can begin to (quietly!) push for concealed carry reciprocity again. If you support gun control, though, you need to do something different than you have probably done before. You need to keep focusing on gun control. You need to do so loudly and publicly long after the shooting is no longer breaking news. You need to keep paying attention to Congress, because eventually gun

rights legislation will be back. (Indeed, as of writing, the Republican-controlled Congress is beginning to advance this issue again.) You need to donate to a gun control group on a day when gun control is not in the news, because gun rights supporters are constantly contributing to their movement. And you need to check and see what bills your state legislature is considering, because even when Congress does not pass major laws related to firearms, states sometimes do. Some lament that because Congress did not pass gun control after the Sandy Hook shooting, it probably never will. But social movement scholars know that major policy changes occur because activists have been working behind the scenes for years, positioning themselves to be ready to act when they finally get the chance.

REFERENCES

- Alpers, Philip, Amélie Rossetti, and Daniel Salinas. 2016. "Guns in the United States: Rate of All Gun Deaths per 100,000 People." *Sydney School of Public Health, The University of Sydney*, Dec. 2. Accessed 30 October 2017 from http://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/compare/194/total_number_of_gun_deaths
- Amenta, Edwin, Neal Caren, and Sheera Joy Olasky. 2005. "Age for Leisure?: Political Mediation and the Impact of the Pension Movement on U.S. Old-Age Policy." *American Sociological Review* 70:516–38.
- Amenta, Edwin, Neal Caren, Sheera J. Olasky, and James E. Stobaugh. 2009. "All the Movements Fit to Print: Who, What, When, Where, and Why SMO Families Appeared in the New York Times in the Twentieth Century." *American Sociological Review* 74(4):636–56.
- Amenta, Edwin, Neal Caren, Elizabeth Chiarello, and Yang Su. 2010. "The Political Consequences of Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36(1):287–307.
- Andrews, Kenneth T. and Bob Edwards. 2004. "Advocacy Organizations in the U.S. Political Process." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30(1):479–506.
- Andrews, Kenneth T., Marshall Ganz, Matthew Baggetta, Hahrie Han, and Chaeyoon Lim. 2010. "Leadership, Membership, and Voice: Civic Associations That Work." *American Journal of Sociology* 115(4):1191–1242.
- Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Suzanna M. Crage. 2006. "Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth." *American Sociological Review* 71:724–51.
- Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Mary Bernstein. 2008. "Culture, Power, and Institutions: A Multi-Institutional Politics Approach to Social Movements." *Sociological Theory* 26(1):74–99.
- Aronow, Peter M. and Benjamin T. Miller. 2016. "Policy Misperceptions and Support for Gun Control Legislation." *Correspondence* 387:223.
- AssociatedPress. 1988. "Warning Is Issued on Guns." *New York Times*, July 4, p. 26.
- Austen-Smith, David and John R. Wright. 1994. "Counteractive Lobbying." *American Journal of Political Science* 38(1):25–44.
- Ballotpedia. 2017. *States With Initiative or Referendum*. Retrieved November 27, 2017 from https://ballotpedia.org/States_with_initiative_or_referendum.

- Barron, James. 2012. "Nation Reels After Gunman Massacres 20 Children at School in Connecticut." *The New York Times*. Retrieved July 25, 2014 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/15/nyregion/shooting-reported-at-connecticut-elementary-school.html?pagewanted=print>.
- Baumgartner, Frank R. and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Berke, Jeremy. 2016. "50 Maps that Show How Guns are Trafficked into Every State." *Business Insider*, January 24. Retrieved December 1, 2017 from <http://www.businessinsider.com/atf-maps-show-state-gun-trafficking-2015-11/>
- Berke, Richard. 1994. "The 1994 Election: The Overview." *The New York Times*, Nov. 9. Retrieved October 31, 2017 from <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/11/09/us/1994-elections-overview-gop-wins-control-senate-makes-big-gains-house-pataki.html?pagewanted=all&pagewanted=print>
- Bloch, Matthew, Hannah Fairfield, Jacob Harris, Josh Keller, and Derek Willis. 2012. "How the N.R.A. Rates Lawmakers." *The New York Times*, December 19. Retrieved December 1, 2017 from <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/12/19/us/politics/nra.html>.
- Boushey, Graeme. 2010. *Policy Diffusion Dynamics in America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boushey, Graeme T. and Robert J. Mcgrath. 2015. "The Gift of Gridlock: Divided Government, Bureaucratic Autonomy, and the Politics of Rulemaking in the American States." Presented at the *American Political Science Association* annual meeting. San Francisco, CA. Retrieved (http://mcgrath.gmu.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2016/01/BousheyMcGrath_DGRulemaking_v2.pdf).
- . 2017. "Experts, Amateurs, and Bureaucratic Influence in the American States." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 27(1):85–103.
- Brady Campaign. 2006. "Smith & Wesson Agrees to Reform Business Practices." *Our History*. Retrieved November 30, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20160216145227/http://www.bradycampaign.org/our-history>.
- . 2007. "Brady Campaign Endorses McCarthy Compromise Bill to Strengthen Brady Background Checks." *Media News Release*, June 13. Retrieved November 30, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20070626175412/http://bradycampaign.org/media/release.php?release=899>
- . 2011. "On Anniversaries of Supreme Court Rulings, Gun Lobby Failing to Strike Down Gun Laws, New Report Shows." *Media Press Release*, July 1. Retrieved November 22, 2015 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20130205204556/http://bradycampaign.org/media/press/view/1413>

- . 2012. "Statement from Brady Campaign President Dan Gross in Response to Newtown, CT School Shooting." *Media Press Release*, Dec. 14. Retrieved November 22, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20121219031758/http://www.bradycampaign.org/media/press/view/1549>
- . 2016a. "The National Council to Control Handguns (NCCH) is Founded." *Our History*. Retrieved December 2, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20160216145227/http://www.bradycampaign.org/our-history>
- . 2016b. "Smith & Wesson Agrees to Reform Business Practices." *Our History*. Retrieved November 30, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20160216145227/http://www.bradycampaign.org/our-history>
- . 2016c. "Columbine High School Massacre." *Our History*. Retrieved December 2, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20160216145227/http://www.bradycampaign.org/our-history>
- Brown, Jennifer. 2012. "12 Shot Dead, 58 Wounded in Aurora Movie Theater During Batman Premier." *The Denver Post*, July 21. Retrieved September 25, 2014 from (http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_21124893/12-shot-dead-58-wounded-aurora-movie-theater).
- Buffardi, Anne L., Robert J. Pekkanen, and Steven Rathgeb Smith. 2014. "Shopping or Specialization? Venue Targeting among Nonprofits Engaged in Advocacy." *Policy Studies Journal* 1–19.
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. n.d. "ATF History Timeline." *Our History*. Retrieved November 29, 2017 from <https://www.atf.gov/our-history/atf-history-timeline>.
- . 2016a. "Firearms Commerce in the United States: Annual Statistical Update." *United States Department of Justice*. Retrieved September 6, 2017 from <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/docs/2016-firearms-commerce-united-states/download>.
- . 2016b. "Number of Firearms Sourced and Recovered in the United States and Territories." *United States Department of Justice*. Retrieved December 1, 2017 from <https://www.atf.gov/about/firearms-trace-data-2014>.
- Campbell, James E. 2010. "The Midterm Landslide of 2010: A Triple Wave Election." *The Forum* 8(4):Article 3.
- Caren, Neal, Jennifer Earl, Edwin Amenta, and Sarah Soule. 2017. "Tactics, Favorability, and Issue Salience of U.S. Movements." Presented at *Social Movements and Protest: Nonviolent Strategies and the State*. San Diego, CA.

- Chen, Anthony S. 2007. "The Party of Lincoln and the Politics of State Fair Employment Practices Legislation in the North, 1945–1964." *American Journal of Sociology* 112(6):1713–74.
- Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms. 2013a. "CCRKBA in 'Battle of Initiatives' in WA." *Point Blank*, August. Retrieved April 5, 2017 from <https://www.ccrkba.org/2013-point-blank-issues/>
- . 2017. "About." *Facebook*. Retrieved December 4, 2017 from https://www.facebook.com/pg/CCRKBA/about/?ref=page_internal.
- Constantelos, John. 2010. "Playing the Field: Federalism and the Politics of Venue Shopping in the United States and Canada." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 40(3):460–83.
- Cook, Philip J. and Kristin A. Goss. 2014. *The Gun Debate: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Cornwall, Marie, Brayden G. King, Elizabeth M. Legerski, Eric C. Dahlin, and Kendra S. Schiffman. 2007. "Signals or Mixed Signals: Why Opportunities for Mobilization Are Not Opportunities for Policy Reform." *Mobilization* 12(3):239–54.
- Crime Prevention Research Center. 2014. "Comparing murder rates and gun ownership across countries." *CPRC Original Research*, March 31. Retrieved November 29, 2017 from <https://crimeresearch.org/2014/03/comparing-murder-rates-across-countries/>.
- Curtis, Colleen. 2013. "President Obama Announces New Measures to Prevent Gun Violence." *The New York Times*, January 16. Retrieved September 25, 2017 from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2013/01/16/president-obama-announces-new-measures-prevent-gun-violence>
- Davidson, Osha Gray. 1998. *Under Fire: The NRA and the Battle for Gun Control*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press.
- Davis, Gerald F., Doug McAdam, W. Richard Scott, and Mayer N. Zald. 2005. *Social Movements and Organizational Theory*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Democratic Party. 1968. "1968 Democratic Party Platform." *The American Presidency Project*. Retrieved December 5, 2017 from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29604>.
- Dimock, Michael, and Carroll Doherty. 2013. "In Gun Control Debate, Several Options Draw Majority Support." *The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press*. Washington, DC, Jan. 14, Retrieved November 6, 2017 from <http://www.people-press.org/2013/01/14/in-gun-control-debate-several-options-draw-majority-support/>

- Disney, Jennifer Leigh and Joyce Gleb. 2000. "Feminist Organizational 'Success': The State of U.S. Women's Movement Organizations in the 1990s." *Women & Politics* 21(4):39–76.
- Dixon, Marc. 2008. "Movements, Countermovements and Policy Adoption: The Case of Right-to-Work Activism." *Social Forces* 87(1):473–500.
- . 2010. "Union Threat, Countermovement Organizations, and Labor Policy in the States, 1944–1960." *Social Problems* 57(2):157–74.
- Doctors for Responsible Gun Ownership. 2012. "Doctors for Responsible Gun Ownership is now a project of the Second Amendment Foundation." *DRGO News*, May 7. Retrieved December 4, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20120824222516/http://www.drgo.us/?m=201205>
- Earl, Jennifer. 2004. "The Cultural Consequences of Social Movements." Pp. 508–30 in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, edited by D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, and H. Kriesi. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.
- Edwards, Bob and Sam Marullo. 1995. "Organizational Mortality in a Declining Social Movement: The Demise of Peace Movement Organizations in the End of the Cold War Era." *American Sociological Review* 60(6):908–27.
- Edwards, Bob and John D. McCarthy. 2004. "Resources and Social Movement Mobilization." Pp. 116–52 in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, edited by D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, and H. Kriesi. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Everytown for Gun Safety. 2014a. "Survivors." *Who We Are*. Retrieved December 4, 2014 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20140416200739/http://everytown.org/survivors/>
- . 2014b. "Not Your Grandparents' NRA." *Research Reports*. Retrieved December 5 2017 from <https://everytownresearch.org/reports/not-your-grandparents-nra/>.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2006. "National Criminal Background Check System (NICS): Operations 2006." *Criminal Justice Information Services Division*. Retrieved December 2, 2017 from https://web.archive.org/web/20090512015922/http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cjisd/nics/ops_report2006/ops_report2006.pdf
- . 2017. "NICS Firearm Background Checks: Month/Year." *United States Department of Justice*. Retrieved September 6, 2017 from https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/nics_firearm_checks_-_month_year.pdf/view
- Fetner, Tina. 2008. *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

- Eisinger, Peter K. 1973. "The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American Cities." *The American Political Science Review* 67(1):11–28.
- Fetner, Tina. 2008. *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gallup. 2017. "Gallup Historical Trends: Guns." *Gallup Polling Organization*. Retrieved September 5, 2017 from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1645/guns.aspx>.
- Gamson, William A. 1988. "Political Discourse and Collective Action." *International Social Movement Research* 1:219–44.
- . 2004. "Bystanders, Public Opinion, and the Media." Pp. 242–61 in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, edited by D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, and H. Kriesi. Blackwell Publishing.
- Gamson, William A. and Andre Modigliani. 1989. "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach." *American Journal of Sociology* 95(1):1–37.
- Ganz, Marshall. 2000. "Resources and Resourcefulness: Strategic Capacity in the Unionization of California Agriculture, 1959-1966." *American Journal of Sociology* 105(4):1003–62.
- . 2004. "Why David Sometimes Wins: Strategic Capacity in Social Movements." Pp. 177–98 in *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning and Emotion*, edited by J. Jasper and J. Goodwin. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- General Social Survey. 2015. "Trends in Gun Ownership in the United States." *NORC at the University of Chicago*, March. Retrieved November 1, 2017 from http://www.norc.org/PDFs/GSS%20Reports/GSS_Trends%20in%20Gun%20Ownership_US_1972-2014.pdf
- Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. 2017. "Tiahrt Amendments." *Other Federal Gun Laws*. Retrieved November 30, 2017 from <http://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/federal-law/other-laws/tiahrt-amendments/>.
- Ginsburg, Tom, Zachary Elkins, and James Melton. 2013. "U.S. Gun Rights Are Truly American Exceptionalism." *Bloomberg*, March 7. Retrieved October 29, 2017 from <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2013-03-07/u-s-gun-rights-truly-are-american-exceptionalism>
- . 2016. "Data Visualizations – Right to Bear Arms." *Comparative Constitutions Project*. Retrieved October 29, 2017 from <http://comparativeconstitutionsproject.org/ccp-visualizations/>.
- Giugni, Marco G. 2006. "Useless Protest?: A Time-Series Analysis of the Policy Outcomes of Ecology, Antinuclear, and Peace Movements in the United States, 1977-1995." *Mobilization* 12(1):53–77.

- Gonyea, Don. 2017. "How the NRA Uses Its Political Clout: An Early Lesson in Oklahoma." *National Public Radio*. October 17. Retrieved October 31, 2017 from <http://www.npr.org/2017/10/17/558202994/how-the-nra-uses-its-political-clout-an-early-lesson-in-oklahoma>
- Godwin, Marcia L. 2012. "Gottlieb, Alan Merrill (1947-)." in *Guns in American Society: An Encyclopedia of History, Politics, Culture, and the Law*, edited by G. Lee. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC.
- Goldstone, Jack A. and Charles Tilly. 2001. "Threat (and Opportunity)." Pp. 179–94 in *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, edited by R. Aminzade et al. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Goss, Kristin A. 2006. *Disarmed: The Missing Movement for Gun Control in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gottlieb, Alan and Dave Workman. 2014. *Dancing in Blood: Exposing the Gun Ban Lobby's Playbook to Destroy Your Rights*. Bellevue, WA: Merrill Press.
- Greenlee, Joseph. 2016. "'Docs vs. Glocks' and the Firearm Owners' Privacy Act." *The Federalist Society for Law & Public Policy Studies*, April 5. Retrieved August 27, 2017 from <http://www.fed-soc.org/blog/detail/docs-vs-glocks-and-the-firearm-owners-privacy-act>
- Gyorgy, Ann. 1979. *No Nukes: Everyone's Guide to Nuclear Power*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Hall, Richard L. and Frank L. Wayman. 1990. "Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees." *American Political Science Review* 84(3):797–820.
- Halpin, Jim and Paul de Armond. 1995. "Alan Gottlieb: The Merchant of Fear. *Wolves in Sheep's Clothing*. Retrieved December 4, 2017 from <http://www.sweetliberty.org/mof.htm#.WK4baRsrKM8>
- Harding, Robin. 2013. "Bloomberg Funds \$12m Gun Control Ads." *London*, March 24.
- Hilgartner, Stephen and Charles L. Bosk. 1988. "The Rise and Fall of Social Problems: A Public Arenas Model." *American Journal of Sociology* 94(1):53–78.
- Hojnacki, Marie and David C. Kimball. 1998. "Organized Interests and the Decision of Whom to Lobby in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 92(4):775–90.
- Holyoke, T. Thomas. 2003. "Choosing Battlegrounds: Interest Group Lobbying Across Multiple Venues." *Political Research Quarterly* 56(3):325–36.

- Internal Revenue Service. 2007. "Mayors Against Illegal Guns Action Fund (PKA Mayors Against Illegal Guns, Inc.) 990 Form." *Return of Organization Exempt Form Income Tax*. Retrieved February 16, 2009 from <http://nccs.urban.org/>.
- . 2008. "Mayors Against Illegal Guns Action Fund (PKA Mayors Against Illegal Guns, Inc.) 990 Form." *Return of Organization Exempt Form Income Tax*. Retrieved March 2, 2010 from <http://nccs.urban.org/>.
- . 2010a. "Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms 990 Form." *Return of Organization Exempt Form Income Tax*. Retrieved August 25, 2011 from <http://nccs.urban.org/>.
- . 2010b. "Second Amendment Foundation 990 Form." *Return of Organization Exempt Form Income Tax*. Retrieved August 27, 2011 from <http://nccs.urban.org/>.
- . 2011a. "NRA Freedom Action Foundation 990 Form." *Return of Organization Exempt Form Income Tax*. Retrieved April 6, 2017 from <http://nccs.urban.org/>.
- . 2014a. "Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence 990 Form." *Return of Organization Exempt from Tax Income*. Retrieved May 29, 2016 from <http://nccs.urban.org/>.
- Jamieson, Christine. 2013. "Gun Violence Research: History of the Federal Funding Freeze." *Psychological Science Agenda*. Retrieved November 30, 2017 from <http://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2013/02/gun-violence.aspx>
- Jasper, James. 1997. *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Jasper, James M. and Jane Poulsen. 1993. "Fighting Back: Vulnerabilities, Blunders, and Countermobilization by the Targets in Three Animal Rights Campaigns." *Sociological Forum* 8(4):639–57.
- Jasper, James M. 2004. "A Strategic Approach to Collective Action: Looking for Agency in Social-Movement Choices." *Mobilization* 9(1):1–16.
- Jasper, James M. 2008. *Getting Your Way*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Jasper, James M. and Jan Willem Duyvendak. 2014. *Players and Arenas: The Interactive Dynamics of Protest*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership 2014. "Fierce Defender of American Liberty." *About JPFO*. Retrieved April 3, 2017 from <http://jpfo.org/filegen-a-m/about.htm>.
- Kingdon, John W. 1984. *Agenda, Alternatives and Public Policies*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.

- Kingdon, John W. 1989. *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*. 3rd ed. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Kleck, Gary. 1996. "Crime, Culture Conflict and the Sources of Support for Gun Control: A Multilevel Application of the General Social Surveys." *American Behavioral Scientist* 39(4):387–404.
- Kolb, Felix. 2007. *Protest and Opportunities: The Political Outcomes of Social Movements*. New York, NY: Campus Verlag.
- Kraatz, Matthew S. and Edward J. Zajac. 2017. "How Organizational Resources Affect Strategic Change and Performance in Turbulent Environments." *Organization Science* 12(5):632–57.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter. 2004. "Political Context and Opportunity." Pp. 67–90 in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, edited by D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, and H. Kriesi. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter, Ruud Koopmans, Jan Wellem Duyvendak, and Marco G. Giugni. 1992. "New Social Movements and Political Opportunities and Western Europe." *European Journal of Political Research* 22:219–44.
- Langbein, Laura I. and Mark A. Lotwis. 1990. "The Political Efficacy of Lobbying and Money: Gun Control in the U.S. House, 1986." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 15(3):413–40.
- Laschever, Eulalie and David S. Meyer. 2015. "Growth and Decay of Social Movement Sectors: Gun Control and Gun Rights Organizations from 1945 to 2014." in *Pacific Sociological Association Annual Meeting*. Long Beach, CA.
- Lichtblau, Eric and Motoko Rich. 2012. "N.R.A. Envisions 'a Good Guy With a Gun' in Every School." *The New York Times*. Retrieved January 6, 2015 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/22/us/nra?calls?for?armed?guards?at?schools.html?pagewanted=all&pagewanted=print>).
- Lipford, Jody. 2000. "The Political Economy of Gun Control: An Analysis of Senatorial Votes on the 1993 Brady Bill." *Firearms & Public Policy* 33:33–63.
- LegiScan. 2017. "National and State Legislative Search." *GAITS and LegiScan API*. Retrieved December 5, 2017 from <https://legiscan.com/gaits/search>
- Lofland, John and Michael Jamison. 1985. "Structures of Movement Organization Locals." Pp. 201–18 in *Protest: Studies of Collective Behavior and Social Movements*, edited by J. Lofland. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

- Madison, James. 1787. "Federalist No. 10: 'The Same Subject Continued: The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection.'" *New York Daily Advertiser*, Nov 22.
- Manheim, Jarol B. 2001. *The Death of a Thousand Cuts: Corporate Campaigns and the Attack on the Corporation*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Mariel Lemonik Arthur, Mariel. 2007. "Moral Shocks and Self-Recruitment." *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeosm124/full>
- Martinelli, Michelle and Michelle Merlin. 2012. "Gun Rights Groups' Political Spending Crushes that of Gun Control Supporters." *Center for Responsive Politics: OpenSecrets Blog*, December 14. Retrieved December 1, 2017 from <https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2012/12/gun-control/>
- . 2006. "Coalition Expands to 123 Mayors from Around the Country." *Home*, November 30. Retrieved December 5, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20061230213914/http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/home/home.shtml>
- . 2007a. "Coalition History." *About the Coalition*. Retrieved December 2, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20070106145452/http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/about/history.shtml>
- . 2007b. "Mayor Bloomberg and Senator Lautenberg Announce Support for Sen. Frank Lautenber – Rep. Peter King Bill to Keep Guns out of Terrorist Hands." *MAIG Press Release*, September 17. Retrieved December 2, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20071205100632/http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/media-center/pr011-07.shtml>
- . 2008a. "2008 National Summit." *Coalition Events*, April. Retrieved December 3, 2017 from https://web.archive.org/web/20081226081559/http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/events/summit_2008.shtml
- . 2009a. "Data from the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System." May. Retrieved December 2, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20090510025100/http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/trace/nics.shtml>.
- . 2009b. "Mayors Against Illegal Guns Expands Efforts to Close the Terror Gap." November 23. Retrieved December 2, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20091208083230/http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/home/home.shtml>

- . 2009c. "Statement of Mayors Against Illegal Guns Co-Chairs on the Defeat of the Thune Amendment." *MAIG Press Release*, July 22. Retrieved December 3, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20090827141511/http://mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/media-center/pr009-09.shtml>
- . 2009d. "Mayors Against Illegal Guns Announces Support for New Federal Legislation to Close the Gun Show Loophole." *MAIG Press Release*, April 21. Retrieved December 3, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100706194423/http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/media-center/pr001-09.shtml>
- . 2010a. "Mayors Against Illegal Guns Launch New National Campaign to Close the Gun Show Loophole." *MAIG Press Release*, April 20. Retrieved December 3, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100706172333/http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/media-center/pr002-10.shtml>
- . 2012. "Statement of Mayors Against Illegal Guns Co-Chairs on Newtown, Connecticut Shooting." *Media Center Press Releases*, Dec. 14. Retrieved November 29, 2015 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20140326113543/http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/media-center/pr013-12.shtml>
- McAdam, Doug. 1982. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- McCarthy, John D. and Mayer N. Zald. 1977. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 82(6):1212-41.
- McEvoy, Arthur F. 1995. "The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911: Social Change, Industrial Accidents, and the Evolution of Commonsense Causality." *Law & Social Inquiry* 20(2):621-51.
- McVeigh, Rory, D. Cunningham, and J. Farrell. 2014. "Political Polarization as a Social Movement Outcome: 1960s Klan Activism and Its Enduring Impact on Political Realignment in Southern Counties, 1960 to 2000." *American Sociological Review* 79(6):1144-71.
- . 1990. *A Winter of Discontent: The Nuclear Freeze and American Politics*. New York, NY: Praeger.
- . 1999. "Tending the Vineyard: Cultivating Political Process Research." *Sociological Forum* 14(1):79-92.
- . 2004. "Protest and Political Opportunities." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30(1):125-45.
- . 2007. *The Politics of Protest*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Meyer, David S. and Steven A. Boutcher. 2007. "Signals and Spillover: Brown v. Board of Education and Other Social Movements." *Perspectives on Politics* 5(1):81–93.
- Meyer, David S. and Debra C. Minkoff. 2004. "Conceptualizing Political Opportunity." *Social Forces* 82(4):1457–92.
- Meyer, David S. and Catherine Corrigan-Brown. 2005. "Coalitions and Political Context: U.S. Movements Against Wars in Iraq." *Mobilization* 10(3):327–44.
- Meyer, David S. and Suzanne Staggenborg. 1996. "Movements, Countermovements, and the Structure of Political Opportunity." *American Journal of Sociology* 101(6): 1628-60.
- . 2008. "Opposing Movement Strategies in U.S. Abortion Politics." *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* 28(8):207–38.
- . 2012. "Thinking About Strategy." Pp. 3–22 in *Strategies for Social Change*, edited by G. M. Maney, R. V. Kutz-Flamenbaum, D. A. Rohlinger, and J. Goodwin. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Minkoff, Debra C. 1999. "Bending with the Wind: Strategic Change and Adaptation by Women's and Racial Minority Organization." *American Journal of Sociology* 104(6):1666–1703.
- Moms Demand Action. 2013a. "About Moms Demand Action For Gun Sense In America." Retrieved December 4, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20130323142116/http://momsdemandaction.org/about/>
- . 2013b. "Moms Demand Action Campaigns." Retrieved December 4, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20131028000546/http://momsdemandaction.org/moms-demand-action-campaigns/>.
- . 2013c. "Find Your Local Chapter of Mooms Demand Action." *Chapters*. Retrieved August 3, 2017 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20131116121434/http://action.momsdemandaction.org/page/content/chaptermap/>
- Morris, Aldon D. 1984. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Mottl, Tahi L. 1980. "The Analysis of Countermovements." *Social Problems* 27(5):620–35.
- National Center for Charitable Statistics. 2017. "The NCCS Data Archive." *The Urban Institute*. Retrieved December 1, 2017 from <http://nccs.urban.org/>.

- National Conference of State Legislatures. 2017. "State Partisan Composition." *Research: About State Legislatures*, November 8. Retrieved December 1, 2017 from <http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/partisan-composition.aspx>
- National Rifle Association. 2007. "The NICS Improvement Bill: Myth and Reality." *News*, Oct. 5. Retrieved November 30, 2017 from <https://www.nraila.org/articles/20071005/the-nics-improvement-bill-myth-and-rea>.
- . 2012a. "Important Statement from the National Rifle Association." *News*, December 18. Retrieved April 30, 2015 from <https://www.nraila.org/articles/20121218/important-statement-from-the-national-rifle-association>.
- . 2012b. "NRA Press Conference." *Wayne's Commentary*, December 21, 2012. Retrieved April 30, 2015 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20130130190007/http://home.nra.org/classic.aspx/blog/345>
- . 2017a. "Official Membership Application." *Join NRA*. Retrieved August 26, 2017 from <https://membership.nra.org/Join/Annuals>.
- . 2017b. "Why You Should Join." *NRA Membership*. Retrieved August 26, 2017 from <https://membership.nra.org/>
- NICS Improvement Amendments Act. 2007. Public Law 110-180—Jan. 8, 2008. 121 Statues at Large. 2559. 18 U.S. Code Chapter 922. Retrieved November 30, 2017 from <https://www.congress.gov/110/plaws/publ180/PLAW-110publ180.pdf>
- Nielsen, Allison. 2017. "State to Pay \$1.1 Million in Legal Fees for 'Docs vs. Glocks' Lawsuit." *Sunshine State News*, July 24. Retrieved August 27, 2017 from <http://sunshinestateneews.com/story/state-pay-11-million-legal-fees-docs-vs-glocks-lawsuit>
- NRA Business Alliance. 2011. "NRA Business Alliance Directory." Retrieved February 3, 2015 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20111219114219/http://www.nraba.org/directory.aspx>.
- . 2012. "NRA Business Alliance Directory." Retrieved February 3, 2015 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20121227104648/http://www.nraba.org/directory.aspx>
- . 2013. "NRA Business Alliance Directory." Retrieved February 3, 2015 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20131017044843/http://www.nraba.org/directory.aspx>
- . 2014. "NRA Business Alliance Directory." Retrieved February 3, 2015 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20141220182323/http://www.nraba.org/directory.aspx>
- NRA Whittington Center. 2015. "About Us." Retrieved December 4, 2017 from <http://www.nrawc.org/about-us/>.

- Obama, Barak. 2012a. "Statement by the President on the School Shooting in Newtown, CT." *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, December 14. Retrieved November 22 from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/12/14/statement-president-school-shooting-newtown-ct>.
- . 2012b. "Transcript: President Obama At Sandy Hook Prayer Vigil." *NPR*. December 16. Retrieved November 27, 2017 from <https://www.npr.org/2012/12/16/167412995/transcript-president-obama-at-sandy-hook-prayer-vigil>
- Open States. 2017. "Track Bill Progress." *Sunlight Foundation*. Retrieved December 5, 2017 from <https://openstates.org/>
- Oliver, Pamela and Mark Furman. 1989. "Contradictions between National and Local Organizational Strength: The Case of the John Birch Society." *International Social Movement Research* 2:155–77.
- Peters, Jeremy. 2014. "For Next Step, Bloomberg Sets His Sights on the N.R.A." *New York Times*, April 16, A.12.
- Pew Research Center. 2012. "After Newtown, Modest Change in Opinion about Gun Control." *The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press*. Washington, DC. Retrieved July 25, 2014 from <http://www.people-press.org/2012/12/20/after-newtown-modest-change-in-opinion-about-gun-control/>.
- . 2017. "Public Views About Guns." *Pew Research Center: U.S. Politics & Policy*, June 22. Retrieved September 17, 2017 from <http://www.people-press.org/2017/06/22/public-views-about-guns>
- Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act. 2005. Public Law 109–92—Oct. 26, 2005. 119 Statutes at Large. 2095. 15 U.S. Code Chapter 105. Retrieved November 30, 2017 from <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-119/pdf/STATUTE-119-Pg2095.pdf>
- Ragin, Charles C. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- . 2008. *Redesigning Social Inquiry: Fuzzy-Sets and Beyond*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Reger, Jo and Suzanne Staggenborg. 2006. "Patterns of Mobilization in Local Movement Organizations: Leadership and Strategy in Four National Organization for Women Chapters." *Sociological Perspectives* 49(3):297–323.
- Republican Party Platform. 1968. "Republican Party Platform of 1968." *The American Presidency Project*. Retrieved December 5, 2017 from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25841>

- Schildkraut, Jaclyn. 2014. "Mass Murder and the Mass Media: An Examination of the Media Discourse on U.S. Rampage Shootings, 2000-2012." Dissertation, Doctor of Philosophy in Criminal Justice, Department of Texas State University.
- Schildkraut, Jaclyn, H.Jaymi Elsass, and Kimberly Meredith. 2017. "Mass Shootings and the Media: Why All Events Are Not Created Equal." *Journal of Crime and Justice*. Retrieved (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0735648X.2017.1284689>).
- Second Amendment Foundation. 2012a. "Gun Rights Groups Call for National Commission to Study Causes of Violence." *News Press Release*, December 18. Retrieved December 23, 2015 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20130609102835/http://saf.org/viewprnew.asp?id=416>.
- . 2012b. "Crossbreed Holsters Becomes Bronze Level Sponsor in New SAF Corporate Sponsorship Program." *News Press Release*, January 30. Retrieved December 23, 2015 from <https://web.archive.org/web/201306091347/http://saf.org/viewpr-new.asp?id=388>.
- . 2014a. "SAF Announces Merger of Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership." Retrieved April 3, 2017 from <https://www.saf.org/saf-announces-merger-of-jews-for-preservation-of-firearms-ownership/>
- Sewell, Chan. 2006. "Seeking a National Voice , 15 Mayors Meet on Gun Violence." *The New York Times*, April 26, B1.
- Shear, Michael D. 2012. "Obama Vows Fast Action in New Push for Gun Control." *The New York Times*. Retrieved December 10, 2014 from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/20/us/politics/obama-to-give-congress-plan-on-gun-control-within-weeks.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0&pagewanted=print.
- Sink, Justin. 2012. "Obama to Announce Gun Violence Task Force Headed by VP Biden." *The Hill*. Retrieved May 25, 2017 from <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/273667-obama-to-announce-gun-violence-working-group>.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1992. *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press.
- . 2003. *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Small Arms Survey. n.d. "About the Small Arms Survey." *Graduate Institute of International and Development*. Retrieved November 29, 2017 from <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/about-us/mission.html>

- . 2007. "Guns and the City." *Graduate Institute of International and Development* Retrieved November 3, 2017 from <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/publications/by-type/yearbook.html>
- Snow, David A. and Robert D. Benford. 1988. "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization." *International Social Movement Research* 1:197–217.
- SourceWatch. 2008. "Citizen's Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms." Retrieved December 4, 2017 from https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Citizens_Committee_for_the_Right_to_Keep_and_Bear_Arms
- Spitzer, Robert J. 2004. *The Politics of Gun Control*. 3rd ed. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly.
- Staggenborg, Suzanne. 1988. "The Consequences of Professionalization and Formalization in the Pro-Choice Movement." *American Sociological Review* 53(4):585–605.
- . 1993. "Critical Events and the Mobilization of the Pro-Choice Movement." *Research in Political Sociology* 6:319–45.
- Taylor, Verta. 1989. "Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance." *American Sociological Review* 54(5):761–75.
- Taylor, Verta and Nella Van Dyke. 2004. "'Get Up, Stand Up': Tactical Repertoires of Social Movements." Pp. 262–93 in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, edited by D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, and H. Kriesi. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- The White House. 2013. "Fact Sheet: New Executive Actions to Reduce Gun Violence." *Office of the Press Secretary*, August 29. Retrieved September 25, 2017 from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/08/29/fact-sheet-new-executive-actions-reduce-gun-violence>
- Tilly, Charles. 1978. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- True, James L. and Glenn H. Utter. 2002. "Saying 'Yes,' 'No,' and 'Load Me Up' to Guns in America." *The American Review of Public Administration* 32(2):216–41.
- Utter, Glenn H. and James L. True. 2000. "The Evolving Gun Culture in America." *The Journal of American Culture* 23(2):67–79.
- Voss, Kim and Rachel Sherman. 2000. "Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy: Union Revitalization in the American Labor Movement." *American Journal of Sociology* 106(2):303–49.

- Walsh, Edward J. 1981. "Resource Mobilization and Citizen Protest in Communities around Three Mile Island." *Social Problems* 29(1):1–21.
- . 1988. *Democracy in the Shadows: Citizen Mobilization in the Wake of the Accident Three Mile Island*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Wayback Machine. 2017. "Advanced Search." *The Internet Archive*. Retrieved December 1, 2017 from <https://archive.org/web/web-advancedsearch.php>
- Weisman, Jonathan. 2013. "Senate Blocks Drive for Gun Control." *The New York Times*, April 17. Retrieved September 21, 2015 from (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/18/us/politics/senate-obama-gun-control.html?_r=0).
- Whetten, David A. 1987. "Organizational Growth and Decline Processes." *Annual Review of Sociology* 13:335–58.
- Williams, Rhys H. 2004. "The Cultural Contexts of Collective Action: Constraints, Opportunities, and the Symbolic Life of Social Movements." Pp. 91–115 in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, edited by D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, and H. Kriesi. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Winkler, Adam. 2011. *Gunfight: The Battle Over the Right to Bear Arms in America*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Wood, Dan B. and Richard W. Waterman. 1991. "The Dynamics of Political Control of the Bureaucracy." *American Political Science Review* 85(3):801–28.
- Young, Dennis R. 1989. "Local Autonomy in a Franchise Age: Structural Change in National Voluntary Associations." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 18(101–117).