Chicago Gun Violence Research Collaborative: Research Project Abstracts

Title: Understanding Changes in Fatal Firearm Injuries during the COVID-19 Pandemic and "Stay at Home" Order in Chicago

Marisela Angulo, Brice Jones, Farah Rahman, and Ashley Wolf*

Background: Firearm injuries are a major cause of morbidity and mortality in Chicago. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, residents of Chicago were placed under a "stay at home" order during the Spring of 2020. The full impact of these "stay at home" orders is unknown, but previous social and economic stressors have been associated with increased rates of violence. Additionally, studies demonstrate increased firearm purchases during this time period, a known risk factor for homicide and suicide. We sought to describe firearm associated deaths in Chicago during the COVID-19 pandemic and "stay at home" order.

Methods: We will conduct a retrospective review of the Cook County Medical Examiner's database. We will collect information on all firearm associated deaths. We will compare data from 2020 during Chicago's "stay at home" order to data from the previous 4 years to determine if there were differences that occurred during these time periods.

Anticipated Results and Contribution: We hypothesize that there was an increase in deaths, particularly homicides, during Chicago's stay at home order compared to prior years. Describing these changes in injury patterns could guide and direct public health initiatives focused on injury prevention.

Title: Community Outreach / Violence Interruption

Shaun Bhatia, Jazmin Morales, and Terry Williams*

Background: The COVID-19 health crisis has placed tremendous strain on the infrastructure of metropolitan cities such as Chicago. Consequences of the pandemic and subsequent shelter in place orders have extended beyond healthcare systems, affecting our city's neighborhoods' social and psychological fabric, compared to 2019. Nonetheless, issues such as gun violence continue to be prevalent. During the shelter in place order, Chicago has seen an increase in homicides and aggravated assaults, placing Chicago's "violence interrupters" in a challenging position as frontline community health workers. As such, the proposed aim for this study is to examine the association between Chicago's shelter in place orders with violent crime incidence, nonfatal firearm injury, and mortality rates. Specifically, this study will examine the Greater Englewood, South Shore, and Woodlawn neighborhoods serviced by the City's violence interrupters.

Methods: A mixed-methods approach will be undertaken to achieve study aims. Researchers will conduct virtual and/or physically distanced qualitative interviews with individuals who are currently serving as violence interrupters in specified Chicago community areas. The qualitative interview data collection will allow researchers to gain a better understanding into how these targeted communities have dealt with increased homicides and aggravated battery incidents. Additionally, it will allow researchers to gain understanding of lived experiences from individuals impacted. In these same areas, quantitative geocoded crime incident data spanning 2019-2020 will be gathered from the Chicago Data Portal and validated through the Cook County Medical Examiner's records. These data will be aggregated and analyzed for spatial and temporal patterns and trends. Exploratory and inferential spatial methodologies will be utilized. Supplementary demographic data, as needed, will be gathered using American Community Survey data.

Anticipated Results and Contribution: This preliminary work will lend insight into violent crime in Chicago during COVID-19. With the collection of qualitative interviews from violence interrupters, we hope to gain experiential insight into how communities have been handling the increase in violent crimes. We hypothesize that the incidence of violent crimes will be lower in areas served by violence interrupters.

Title: Addressing Gun Violence through a Health Disparities Lens

Myles Castro*, Ruthie Charendoff, and Caitlyn Silhavy

Background: Gun violence is a complex issue exacerbated by health disparities and inequities, oftentimes having a greater impact in communities of color. This is exemplified in the Chicago community of Brighton Park, a predominantly Latinx community which has an age-adjusted rate of 11.5 firearm-related homicides per 100,000, compared to the United States (4.3) and Illinois (6.4).

Methods: To determine the landscape of gun violence prevention (GVP) efforts in Brighton Park, we will first systematically develop a Community Asset Map of current GVP-related resources by leveraging online information related to faith, education, parks and recreation, community services, and health care. We will then conduct key informant interviews with Brighton Park residents and leaders to identify additional community GVP resources and the efficacy of GVP efforts in Brighton Park.

Anticipated Results and Contribution: Findings from this study will aid in developing a robust and comprehensive Community Asset Map of GVP-related resources in Brighton Park. Additionally, a thematic analysis of community input will enable us to identify barriers and limitations to GVP-related resources and provide community-specific recommendations to improve GVP-related efforts. These recommendations will guide the next steps of a community-based approach to holistically addressing gun violence.

Title: Building Consensus on Calls to Defund the Police

Amanda Barry, Michael Harley, and Dan Schober*

Background: In May of 2020, George Floyd was killed by Minneapolis police, sparking national protests and calls to "defund the police." However, there is a lack of consensus on

what this means. The purpose of this study is to examine these calls to defund the police across the three largest cities in the United States – New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. These cities have a history of high-profile cases of police violence and face higher than national disparities in Black-White homicides.

Methods: For this study, we will systematically examine articles from a large newspaper in New York (*The New York Times*), Los Angeles (*The Los Angeles Times*) and Chicago (*The Chicago Tribune*) for 30 days following the date George Floyd was killed (May 25th, 2020). We will code articles for themes related to defunding the police and present the key themes that emerge.

Anticipated Results and Contribution: This thematic analysis will contribute to a consensus on what "defund the police" means to various stakeholders. This analysis will also support discourse on how to best prevent and address urban violence, including urban gun violence.

Note: *CGVRC Faculty Fellow