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### **Critique of Wayne LaPierre's "Guns, Crime, and Freedom"**

Gun control has long been an issue in American politics. With gun control, gun manufacturers, enthusiasts, and gun control advocates clash over what manufacturers and firearm enthusiasts believe to be protection of our constitutional right to bear arms, and what gun control advocates claim to help reduce crime. The most recently expired gun control law called for a 10-year ban of roughly 118 model and caliber variations of pistols, rifles, and shotguns with the intentions of reducing crime in the U.S. Gun makers and enthusiasts deeply opposed the ban, most commonly citing the Bill of Rights, while many citizens, victims, and almost all police agencies fight to protect society, and themselves, from guns and crime.

***Notice how in this first paragraph Ron has introduced his topic and established its significance, as required by the assignment. He***

***has set up the conflict that will be the focus of this paper by showing us “both sides” of the argument.***

Wayne LaPierre has had a direct relationship with National Rifle Association (NRA) since 1978 when he took a position as a lobbyist. In 1991, LaPierre accepted the position of Chief Executive Officer of the NRA, and at the same time also became the chief national spokesman. LaPierre is strongly against gun control. In his book Guns, Crime, and Freedom, LaPierre provides insight for those who may not understand the consequences of gun control, as he feels that our constitutional right to bear arms is put in jeopardy, and that guns themselves do not have an effect on crime. His arguments raise several questions, but do not provide the simple answer that many people might seek.

***In this second paragraph Ron introduces the source he’s critiquing and the source’s author, and he succinctly and objectively summarizes the argument in the source. Finally, and very importantly, Ron states an appropriate thesis of his own in the last sentence of the paragraph. This is his overall impression of the source.***

LaPierre’s work depicts gun control as an ineffective manner to control crime, which undermines the Second Amendment. LaPierre states “Gun laws--gun bans, waiting periods, registration, licensing, gun and ammunition taxes, and a litany of restrictive measures--only divert the attention of

American from true crime solutions...the inescapable fact is: criminals don't obey laws, criminals range the street because of a failed criminal justice system" (118). LaPierre explains that gun control itself will not stop crime, claiming that crime is the result of "governmental failure" and "decay in morality". In the author's opinion, morals and effective government will reduce crime much greater than putting restrictions on firearms.

***This third paragraph summarizes the source. Notice that it is completely objective. It shows neither favor nor disfavor; rather, it simply explains what the source argues. Notice also the effective use of "attributive tags" (Chapter 17) to guide us through the summary.***

LaPierre's argument is shared by many people. According to David Newton, another firearm enthusiast, "Between the years 1937 and 1963...gun ownership in the United States increased by 250%. In that same period, the number of homicides decreased by 35.7 percent" (Newton 40). Like LaPierre, Newton explains that if more guns get out on our streets, it does not have a definite impact on the crime rate--he actually quotes specifically that the number of homicides dropped by a significant percentage while the percentage of gun ownership increased significantly. These figures lead one to believe that it is possible to have an increase in guns on our streets, and have no effect on the crime rate.

***This fourth paragraph is Ron's first paragraph of analysis. Notice how he uses another source (Newton) to show support for LaPierre's argument. Not only that, he also starts off with an effective topic sentence to show us that "many people" agree with LaPierre.***

And yet when James Alan Fox compiled a report about homicide trends, the rate in 1950, at 4.6, was the same as in 1963 (Fox 9). Most would wonder what happened before 1950 or after 1963 to account for the 35.7% drop in homicides that Newton was referring to in his book. Well, simply, the answer is the baby boom. Newton's quoted crime rate took into consideration population size and calculated in a ratio form, while Fox's figure was purely based on the total number. The United States experienced the baby boom during the years referenced by Newton, making the homicide rate look as if it simply dropped, but the number of homicide deaths did not. According to Fox's report, the number of homicides increased by 23.1% from 1950 to 1963 alone (Fox 9). According to the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "After a 20-year rise, the use of firearms in serious crimes in the United States dropped by 50 percent from 1993, when the Brady Handgun Violence Protection Act was passed, until 2003 (quoted in Adams, incl. in graph #3).

***In this fifth paragraph Ron "turns the tables" on the source by using two other sources to question LaPierre's use of evidence. This***

***is a very effective strategy for putting LaPierre's argument in context. It suggests that while LaPierre's numbers might be accurate, he may be manipulating them to make them suit his own purpose—telling only a partial truth, in other words.***

Regardless of the number of guns on the streets, the many gun control bills presented to congress may make sense. Dealer licensing, gun registration, gun permits, restrictive licensing (background checks) can all help to make sure that firearm owners are "fit" to possess such dangerous articles. It might make sense to deny a firearm license to a convicted criminal. It also might make sense to monitor the number of dealers to help manage the number of illegal weapons that enter the United States.

As for the bans of certain firearms, one might question why various features are necessary. According to Principle Investigator Christopher Koper, in a report to the National Institute of Justice about the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (discussing part of this specific gun control law), "the ban is directed at semiautomatic firearms having features that appear useful in military and criminal applications, but unnecessary in shooting sports or self defense (examples include flash hiders, folding rifle stocks, and threaded barrels for attaching silencers) (Koper 1). This could be a moral and ethical issue for the people to decide, and not government, but equally important to aid in the protection of our society. Even though it might seem inconvenient to have gun control, it is

important to monitor the types of weapons that are in our country, the source of the weapons, as well as the owners of the weapons themselves.

***After suggesting in paragraph five that the homicide rate didn't really decline in the absence of gun control—then implying that the Brady Bill (a gun control measure initiated in the 1990s) really did reduce gun violence (and that contradicts LaPierre's claim)—Ron uses a "reasoned sequence of ideas" argument in paragraphs six and seven to challenge the implied premise in LaPierre's argument that gun control will have an effect on law-abiding citizens who own guns. What hunter needs to own a semiautomatic weapon?***

However, if we allow gun control, then the question becomes how far will we go? In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks on our country, society is realizing that there is truly a cost to freedom. There is a cost to freedom in today's society more so than that of our founding father's. We are losing privacy to gain security, we are paying more money for safety and security, and we are realizing that we have to be willing to compromise to be able to tackle the issue of crime and terrorism. There is an old saying that comes to mind talking about gun control laws, and the various weapons that people can get their hands on. That is, "moderation is key".

It seems that LaPierre's argument that government should not place restrictions on our constitutional right to bear arms is somewhat exaggerated. What is the purpose of a silencer in self-protection? What is

the purpose of large capacity magazines when sport hunting? Are these things necessary? Furthermore, how can government protect society from criminals if they cannot control and monitor the types of weapons that are traded within the country? The less control laws we have, the more freedom we have using firearms, but we can clearly see that, unless you have a criminal record, they do not interfere with our right to defend ourselves, nor do they interfere with any sport.

If we allow government to place gun controls, how far will they go? Would gun controls now set a precedent for further controls in the future? LaPierre opened our eyes to see that there could be consequences allowing gun control, but did not successfully support his claim that gun controls do not reduce crime. We remain cognizant that a free society without gun control can put our safety in jeopardy. We also realize that by allowing government to regulate our constitutional right to bear arms, we can be jeopardizing our freedom.

If we stop banning military weapons they could end up in the wrong hands. If we stop requiring licenses and background checks, guns could end up in the wrong hands. Without gun control we could be putting a weapon in the hands of the next mastermind of another school massacre. If we continue to allow our constitutional right to be manipulated, would we be sacrificing freedom? There is no simple answer, but I believe moderation is the key.

*In paragraphs eight, nine, ten, and eleven, Ron concedes to what he sees as a legitimate concern expressed by LaPierre: that a little gun control will lead inevitably to too much gun control. Notice, in particular, the nifty use of the motivational (emotional) appeal in the reference to September 11th in paragraph eight. Ron's response to LaPierre's concern is that gun control "in moderation" should not pose a threat to the average gun owner. He suggests that LaPierre's "slippery slope" argument that gun control measures of any kind will lead to the banning of all guns is ill founded.*

*A final note: This critique presents a nicely balanced view of its source. While it disagrees with the source's "facts" (Ron obviously does not agree that having no gun control is more effective in combating gun violence than imposing some limitations on gun ownership), and it also does not accept the assumption that imposing limited gun control will inevitably lead to a ban on all weapons, it also acknowledges the source's concern for excessive governmental control over our lives and advocates "moderation." This critique also follows the outline for the Source Critique explicitly (introduce topic and source, state a thesis, summarize, then analyze) and makes fine use of other sources to support its analysis. It documents its use of other sources clearly and thoroughly, making effective use of attributive tags. And, of course, it lists all the*

*sources cited on a properly formatted "works cited" page. Finally, and very importantly, notice the concise writing and professional tone. Ron is able to express disagreement with his source's argument without resorting to sarcasm or derision, and at the same time he expresses sympathy with the concern shown by the source for our individual rights. Well done!*