

supported with soft loans and training schemes with adequate resources and evaluation. <sup>62</sup>

### The Culture of Violence

Some have suggested that efforts to reduce gun death and injury must also consider primary demand. It has been suggested that "gun culture" is largely an American construct<sup>63</sup> which is reinforced by the absence of effective laws and the normalization of violence. Much of the demand for guns, particularly military weapons and handguns which serve little practical purpose, may be fueled by violent movies and television which tends to link heroism with guns and violence.<sup>64</sup> In passing their recent firearms regulation law, the British were explicit: they saw in it a rejection of American style "gun culture." The suggestion that there is a link between values and gun violence is not new.

By our readiness to allow arms to be purchased at will and fired at whim; by allowing our movies and television screens to teach our children that the hero is one who masters the art of shooting and the technique of killing... we have created an atmosphere in which violence and hatred have become popular past times

- Martin Luther King, November, 1963 <sup>65</sup>

Gartner has suggested that the effects of gun control laws are, therefore, both direct and indirect because of the important interaction between laws and values: countries with stricter controls send a signal about the acceptability of violence in the same way legislation has been observed to have long term effects on other behaviours such as smoking, drunk driving, and drug abuse<sup>66</sup> Stricter controls on firearms both shape and reflect values.

The irony in this is that countries with strict controls, such as Great Britain, tend to be able to pass additional controls on firearms quickly and with relative ease. Countries without effective controls, such as the United States, have more guns and higher rates of gun death and injury. They also have effective opposition to stricter controls. This principle also operates within countries. For example, in Canada the strongest opposition to changes to the law came from Alberta, the province with the highest rate of gun ownership and one of the highest rates of gun-related death and injury.

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<sup>62</sup> Tara Kartha, op.cit.

<sup>63</sup> Andrew D. Herz, Gun Crazy: Constitutional False Consciousness and the Dereliction of Dialogic Responsibility, Boston University Law Review 75,1, January 1995.

<sup>64</sup> Andrew Herz, op.cit.

<sup>65</sup> Cited in Firearm Violence in America: an annotated bibliography, Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma, Violence Prevention Task Force, Spring 1994.

<sup>66</sup> Rosemary Gartner et. al, Homicide and the death penalty: a Cross national test of a deterrence hypothesis, Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, 1984, 75 and Rosemary Gartner, Affidavit of Rosemary Gartner, Court of Appeal of Alberta, Vol. 39.