

[Student's Name]

[English Course]

[Date]

A Psychological Approach to Gun Control

At first glance the phrases “Man v. Food,” [*pause*] “hunting,” [*pause*] and “psychology” may seem to have nothing in common with each other. Yet many of your fellow [classmates] used these phrases on the first day of class to describe their favorite hobbies or interests. What our little experiment speaks to is a gun culture that is so intertwined in our lives that we choose to define ourselves by it. The question that I urge each and every one of you to consider is [*emphasize*] not whether Americans should have a right to bear arms. No, [*emphasize*] the Second Amendment and the Supreme Court have already answered that question. My question is instead how to fix an ailing system that allows mentally unstable characters, [...], to fall through the cracks and legally purchase firearms.

I'd like to first begin my discussion in an airport—a location that is infamous for big government prying into the privacy of ordinary Americans. As a country, we've become so accustomed to taking off our shoes and throwing out our water bottles that any other system appears foreign. That's precisely why my experience [in Airport] made me pause. I could keep my shoes, I didn't need to go through an invasive scanner, and I was able to move through security quickly. [The head of an Israeli Security Consulting group], explained it perfectly by saying “taking the water bottle from the 87-year-old woman at JFK, you will never find an explosive material coming from Bin Laden. You are concentrating on the wrong thing.” And, it was at that precise moment, that I realized that our country's gun control laws were concentrating on the wrong thing too.

The problem is that our country's gun control laws focus more on the type of gun or permit required than the person trying to purchase the firearm. Laws such as the Firearms Control Act of 1975, which restricted D.C. residents from purchasing handguns, statistically did nothing to decrease gun violence. This suggested that we needed to take a different approach. It is only logical then to focus much more on the mental state of the person buying the gun than the type or permit he requires. And, this system has been tried with great success in the [Airport], [pause] where security personnel interview each passenger without making them take off shoes or go through invasive full-body scanners. Accordingly, I've devised an innovative system with two goals: The first is to ensure that our rights as Americans to own guns are not infringed. And, the second is to prevent lunatics from ever getting their hands on firearms or ammunition.

When everyone in this classroom applied to the University of Michigan, you were required to verify that you hadn't faced any serious disciplinary action and you had to submit a teacher recommendation. The purpose of the teacher recommendation was to have a qualified individual vouch for your character and discuss your potential. If anything in the teacher recommendation stated that you were violent or moody in the classroom, then the university would likely have denied you admission. This sort of character check needs to be implemented in the process of buying guns.

If my plan were implanted, Jon would need to go through the following steps in order to purchase a firearm. Jon would first need to provide the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) a list of 10 adults who know him well and who haven't been convicted of a felony. Within seven days, the ATF would randomly contact two of the references and would ask questions about Jon's character, behavior, and integrity. Some sample questions could be "has Jon engaged in any illegal behavior," or has "Jon regularly shown up to work?" If the two

references provide glowing reviews, then the ATF would approve the purchase after contacting one additional person not on Jon's list. The additional person could be Jon's employer, a classmate, or a pastor. If all three reviews match up and Jon has no criminal record, Jon would be allowed to purchase a firearm. It would then be up to each state to determine whether to limit the type of firearm or the type of permit necessary. If both references were negative, Jon would need to have a psychological assessment performed by the ATF in order to prove his capability to use a firearm safely. If the reviewers disagree, the ATF would contact two additional people from Jon's list. All of the reviews would remain strictly confidential.

Once Jon passed the psychological assessment, the ATF would mail Jon a card stating that he could purchase a firearm and ammunition. The card would look and operate similarly to a driver's license. Whenever Jon would want to buy ammo or a weapon, he would need to present the card to the storeowner. The card would scan and would have his fingerprint on it. Perhaps most importantly, Jon's references could update the ATF if Jon appeared volatile or threatening. The ATF would then launch a professional investigation with the appropriate law enforcement agents. At this moment, it's important for you to realize that my plan is still in its beginning stage. I'll need your support and suggestions to make this a reality and to make our wonderful country safer. Therefore, I call upon you—not your neighbor, not your sister, not your father—but you to write your congressman and to gather support for my plan. Mention it at the dinner table, write your local newspaper, and of course write your suggestions to me. Only then, will we live in a society where gun violence occurs once in a blue moon and we can still mention that “Man V. Food,” “hunting,” and “psychology” are distinct parts of our culture.

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