**A Future without Gun Violence: An essay competition for EPA student members\***

EPA hereby announces an essay competition for student members to address the question:

What does the science of psychology have to contribute to an understanding of violence directed at the young? Submissions in the areas of social, clinical, neuroscience, developmental psychology would be especially encouraged, though no area would be excluded (e.g., history). The essay must be in the form of either: 1] a literature review of current research that concludes with suggestions for action; or 2] a proposal for a research project that can be completed (i.e., data collected and analyzed) within one year.

Winners of the contest will be invited to present their essay at the annual meeting, post their essay on the EPA website, honored at an awards ceremony and given a travel award to attend the meeting.

The Context for this Competition

In an alarming essay in the NY Times (It’s Not Deaths of Despair. It’s the Death of Children, April 6, 2023), David Wallace-Wells writes “Americans are now dying younger on average than they used to, breaking from all global and historical patterns of predictable improvement. They are dying younger than in any peer countries, even accounting for the larger impact of the pandemic here. They are dying younger than in China, Cuba, the Czech Republic or Lebanon.”

Wallace-Wells continues: “ . . . increasingly the American mortality anomaly, which is still growing, is explained not by the middle-aged or elderly but by the deaths of children and teenagers. One in 25 American 5-year-olds now won’t live to see 40, a death rate about four times as high as in other wealthy nations.”

In a recent analysis published in *JAMA Network Open*, firearms - homicide and suicide – account for almost half of the increase in death rates among those 19 years or younger. Car crashes and accidental drug overdoses also contribute to the mortality seen in the young. (doi:[10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.53590](http://jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?doi=10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.53590))

The tragedies in Columbine, Sandy Hook, Parkland, Uvalde and Nashville and many others remind us that children disproportionately are bearing the cost of our country’s inability to address gun violence.

According to a study by Florida Atlantic University’s Schmidt College of Medicine (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjmed.2019.02.012>),  in 2017, there were 144 police officers who died in the line of duty and about 1,000 active duty military throughout the world who died, whereas 2,462 school-age children were killed by firearms. Moreover, the 2017 study found that children are being gunned down in staggering numbers, with the death rate six to nine times higher than other developed nations. The gun deaths included 6,464 children between the ages of 5 and 14 years old (an average of 340 deaths per year), and 32,478 deaths in children between 15 and 18years old (an average of 2,050 deaths per year), according to the study. Of the deaths, 86% involved boys, the study found.  Black children accounted for 41% of those killed, though in recent years they’ve comprised just 14% of the US population.

The violent, premature death of young people is tragic and, in the richest country in the world, it is a travesty.

The Competition: Rules and deadlines

1. Essays (literature reviews or research proposals) must be no longer than 15 pages (double spaced and not including the bibliography) and follow APA style.
2. All writing must be original (Chat GPT4 not welcome!)
3. Collaboration is encouraged, as are multiple student authors.
4. Separate awards will be made for undergraduate students and graduate students
5. Application forms and additional details will be available in this space in June.
6. The deadline for submission is August 31, 2023.

\*You do not have to be a student member of EPA to enter the competition. However, if you are a finalist, then you must join EPA to accept an award.