



# Political Content on Social Media

Elsie Ng'eno, Megan A. Moreno MD MEd MPH, Reese Hyzer  
Choate Rosemary Hall and University of Wisconsin – Madison  
School of Medicine and Public Health, Department of Pediatrics

**UW Health**  
American Family  
Children's Hospital

Department of Pediatrics  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

## INTRODUCTION

- Social media is widely used in this day and age, especially by adolescents and young adults (AYA's)
- Many studies have found a link between social media use and reduced amount and quality of sleep in youth
- Studies have also supported the claim that sleep deprivation is related to increased anxiety, fatigue, and other mental health issues
- Increased use of social media in young adults (18-22) has been linked to increased symptoms of anxiety
- Youth that are exposed to political content/news have increased worry and anxiety symptoms
- Though social media has a negative effect on AYA's, the role political posts on social media has played on the sleep and emotions of AYA's has not been investigated

**The purpose of this study was to determine whether political content on social media affects the emotions and sleep patterns of AYA's.**

## METHODS

### Survey Recruitment

- This 5-10 minute survey on Google Forms was spread random subjects over social media through Instagram and Reddit. AYA's (ages 14-24) were the target subject pool

### Variables

- The study primarily investigated the subjects' interaction with political content on social media:



Subjects were asked to assess their social media use in the previous week in their most frequented social media site:

- "In the past week, how many hours did you spend on this site per day?"

Subjects were asked to reflect on their social media use and the political content that they came across in the previous week:

- "Last week, roughly how many political-related news posts did you see in your feed per day?"



Lastly, the subjects were asked to assess how political posts (focus was on positive and negative news surrounding George Floyd's murder) affected their sleep and their emotions:

- "Do you think your sleep was impacted by the news of the murder?"
- "In general, how did the murder and its consequences make you feel (use three words)?"

### Data Analysis

- The reaction to the positive and negative news stories (free-response) were run through the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) and a T-test was used to compare the values across age, gender, and race. Only respondents who answered were included in the data
- The Chi square test was used to compare the average hours of sleep per day that the respondents reported last week and the amount of political posts followed on their frequented social media

## RESULTS

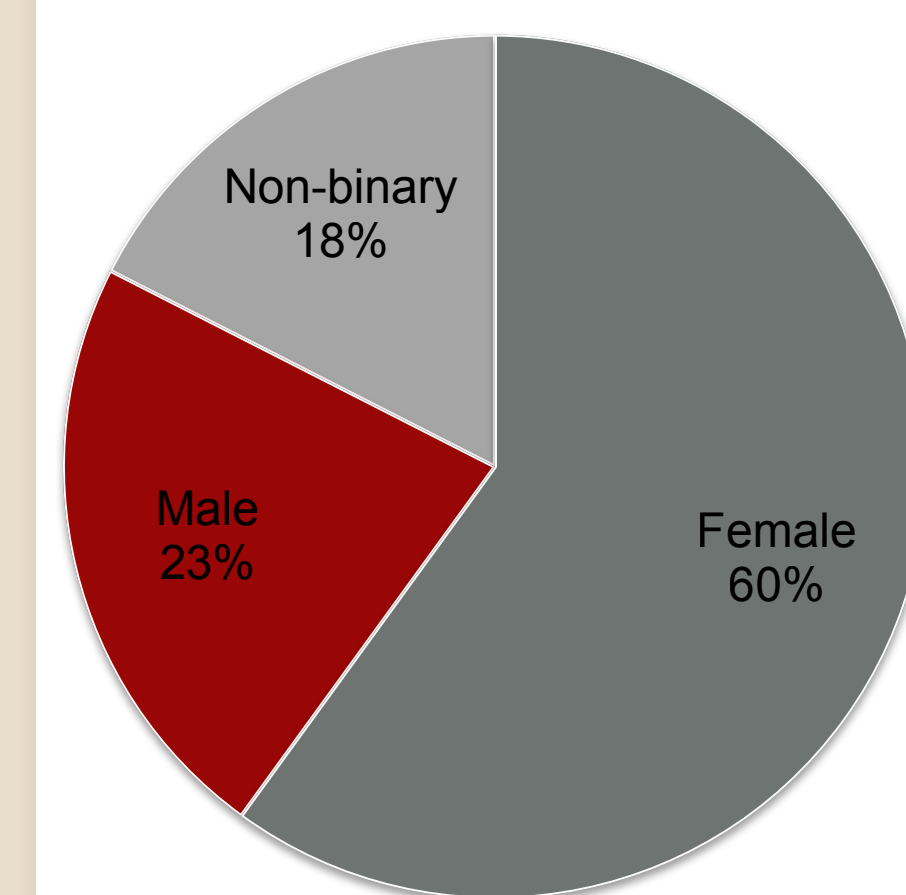
### Demographics

Total Responses: 40

Grade	n	%
High School 9	1	2.5
10	5	12.5
11	7	17.5
12	6	15
College Freshman	7	17.5
Sophomore	1	2.5
Junior	2	5
Senior	1	2.5
5th Year or Above	1	2.5
Not applicable (not in school)	9	22.5

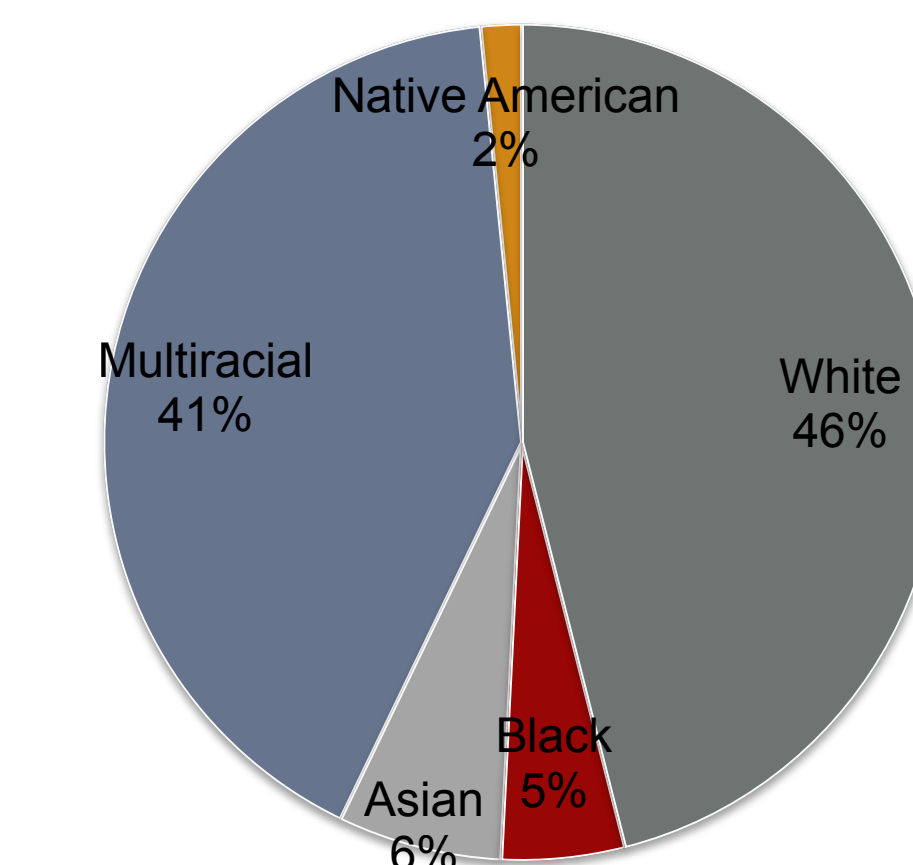
Age	n	%
14	2	5
15	4	10
16	5	12.5
17	11	27.5
18	5	12.5
19	4	10
22	3	7.5
23	1	2.5
24	5	12.5

### Gender Identity



Hispanic?	N	%
Yes	4	10
No	36	90

### Racial Identity



### Political Post Exposure

- About 32.6% of respondents saw 6-10 political-related posts on their feed in the past week, 30% saw 0-5 posts, 22.5% saw 16+ posts, and 15% saw 11-15 posts.

### Hours of Sleep v Number of Political Accounts Followed

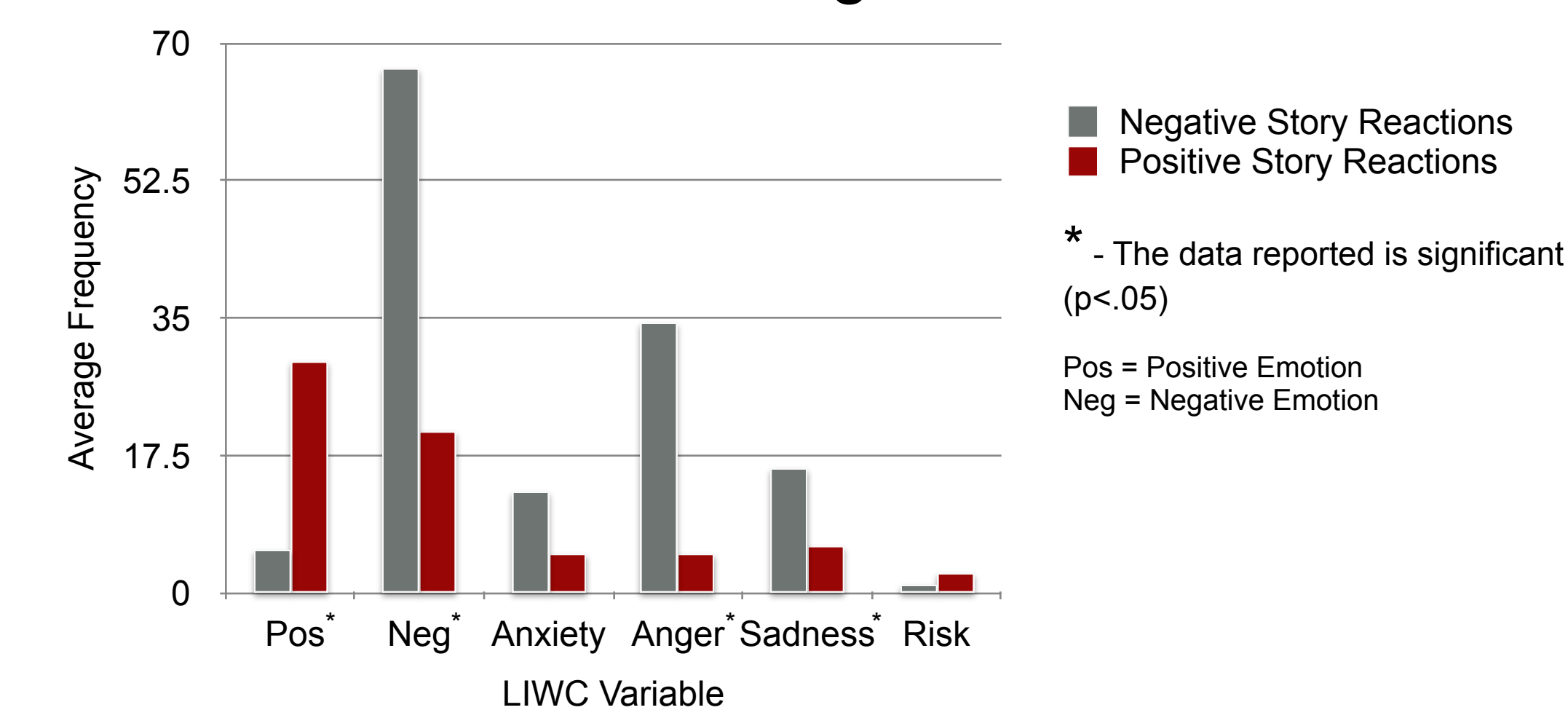
	Political Accounts Followed			Total
	0-10	11-20	21	
< 7 hours of sleep	9	2	2	13
> 7 Hours of Sleep	21	4	2	27
Total	30	6	4	40

p > .05

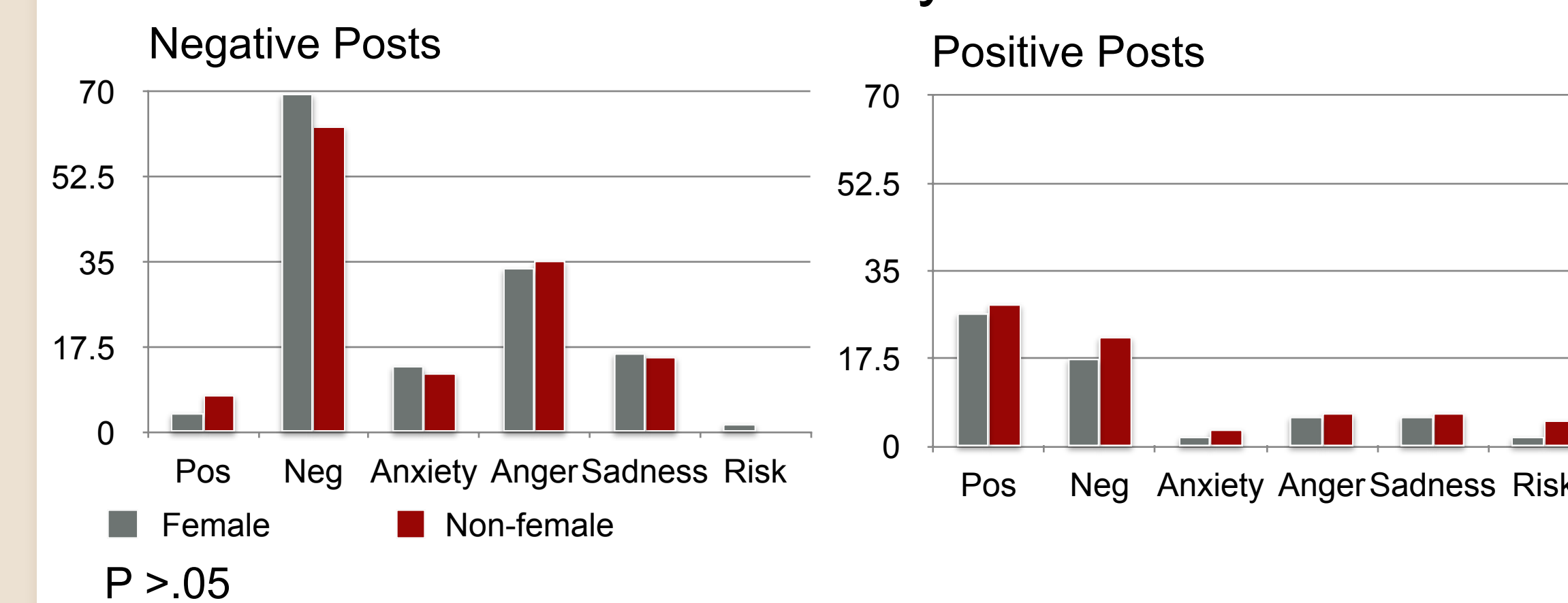
## RESULTS

### Emotional Reaction

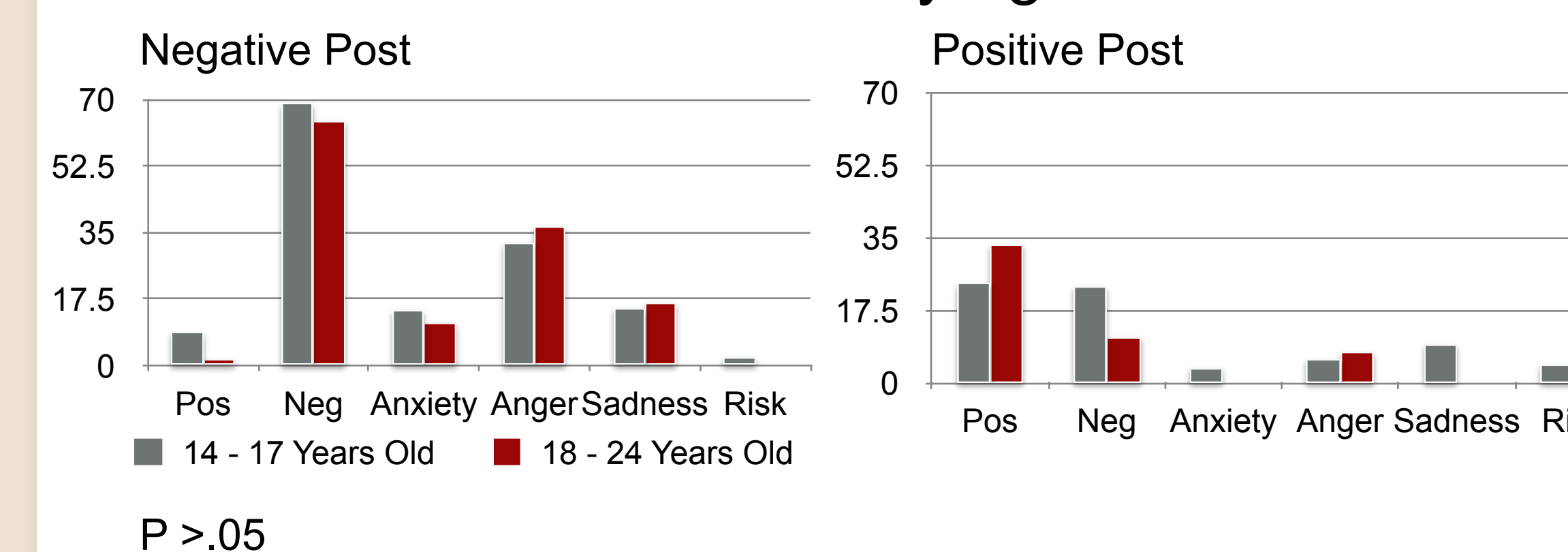
#### Emotions on Positive v Negative News



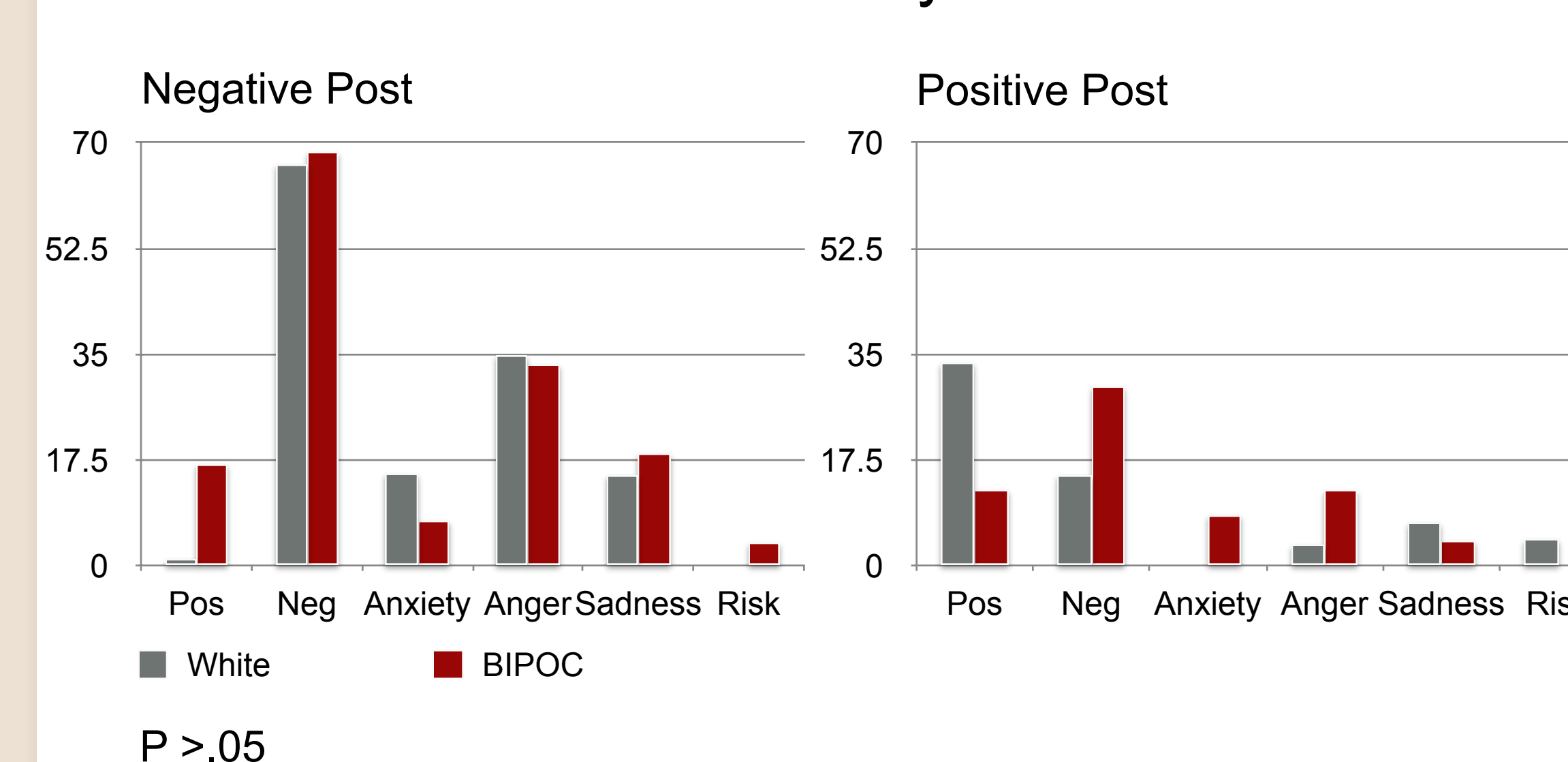
#### Emotions on Political Posts by Gender



#### Emotions on Political Posts by Age



#### Emotions on Political Posts by Race



## CONCLUSIONS

### Findings

- There wasn't a relationship in the amount of sleep the respondents got and the number of political accounts they followed
- The overall reaction to the negative story had a significant difference to that of the positive story in the negative emotion, positive emotion, anger, and sadness variables of LIWC
- The negative story provoked more anger, sadness, and negative emotions. The positive story provoked a more positive reaction
- There wasn't any statistically significant difference of how people responded to both the negative and positive news story across age, gender, and race groups

### Limitations

- The sample size was too small and not diverse enough to lead to significant results
- The question of the average hours of sleep respondents got last week was multiple choice, yet a free response question would have led to more accurate results and reduce the risk for recall bias
- The political posts chosen to measure emotional reaction were predictable, more controversial material could've been chosen

### Implications

- Adolescents do absorb the news stories they are exposed to, so mental health experts should take this into consideration when informing the public about social media and mental health
- Further studies should investigate the respondents reaction to more controversial topics and news stories

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## CONTACT

Elsie Ng'eno  
[engeno22@choate.edu](mailto:engeno22@choate.edu)

Megan A. Moreno, MD, MEd, MPH  
[moreno@wisc.edu](mailto:moreno@wisc.edu)

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