



Frequency of Positive and Negative Tones In the Mental Health Subreddit

Olivia Zhu, Reese Hyzer, Megan A. Moreno, Hannah Fleischmann,
University of Wisconsin – Madison
School of Medicine and Public Health, Department of Pediatrics

INTRODUCTION

- Reddit can be used for mental health support among youth
- Past studies regarding emotional tone on mental health related subreddit discussions state conflicting findings:
 - One found that across three mental health subreddits, all discussions shared expressions of gratitude (a positive emotion) for emotional support
 - Another showed that negative tones were more prevalent than positive tones in mental health subreddits
- It is unknown what types of comments are found on mental health related subreddits
- It is unclear if there is a correlation between positive and negative posts and the emotional tone of comments on mental health related subreddits
- **The purpose of this study was to understand the frequency of positive and negative emotions/tones of comments under positive and negative posts in the mental health subreddit**

METHODS

Design

- Content analysis and Linguistic Inquiry Word Count (LIWC) were used
- Up to 50 of the oldest comments from two positive and two negative posts were selected (187 comments selected in total)
- Comments that were direct replies to posts, were relevant, not from automatic moderators, and contained only text were included

Content Analysis Variables

- A codebook of 5 variables was developed to sort comments that made references to:
 - negative experiences
 - positive experiences
 - no experience
 - both positive and negative experiences
 - emotional support/encouragement

LIWC Variables

- Using LIWC, positive emotion, negative emotion, and the overall tone of each comment was assessed

Analysis

- A direct comparison of the number of comments sorted under each content analysis variable was made using a chi-square test
- A direct comparison of the average of frequency of words related to positive and negative emotion of the comments was made using a T-test
- Overall emotional tone of the comments was assessed on a 0-100 point scale

RESULTS

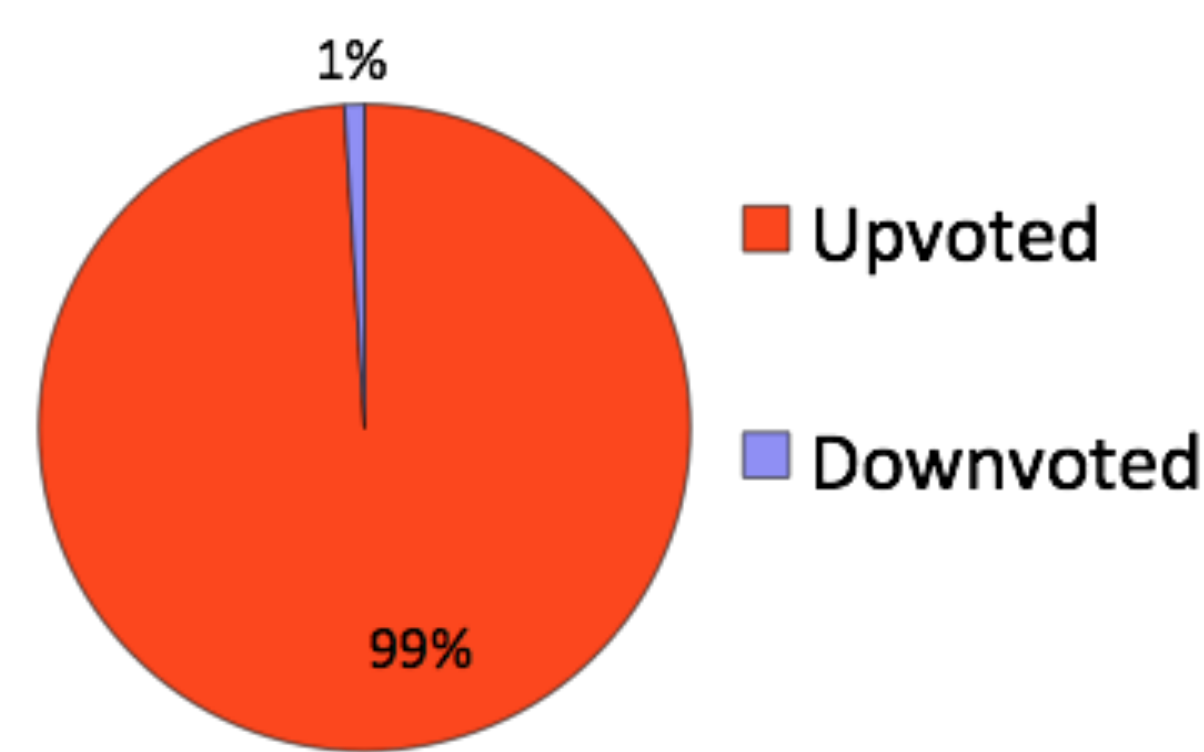
Sample

- 4 total posts were analyzed:
 - 2 positive posts
 - 2 negative posts
- 187 total comments were analyzed:
 - 49 comments from Positive Post 1
 - 48 comments from Positive Post 2
 - 39 comments from Negative Post 1
 - 51 comments from Negative Post 2

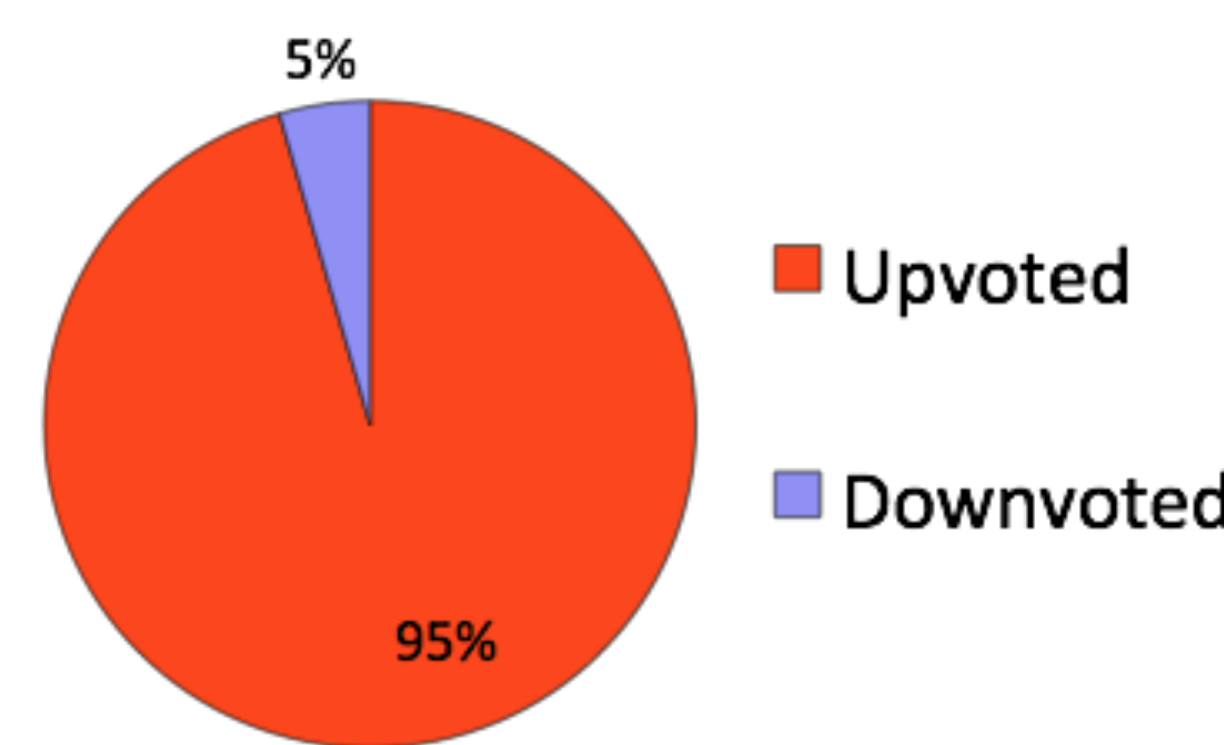
Findings

Demographics:

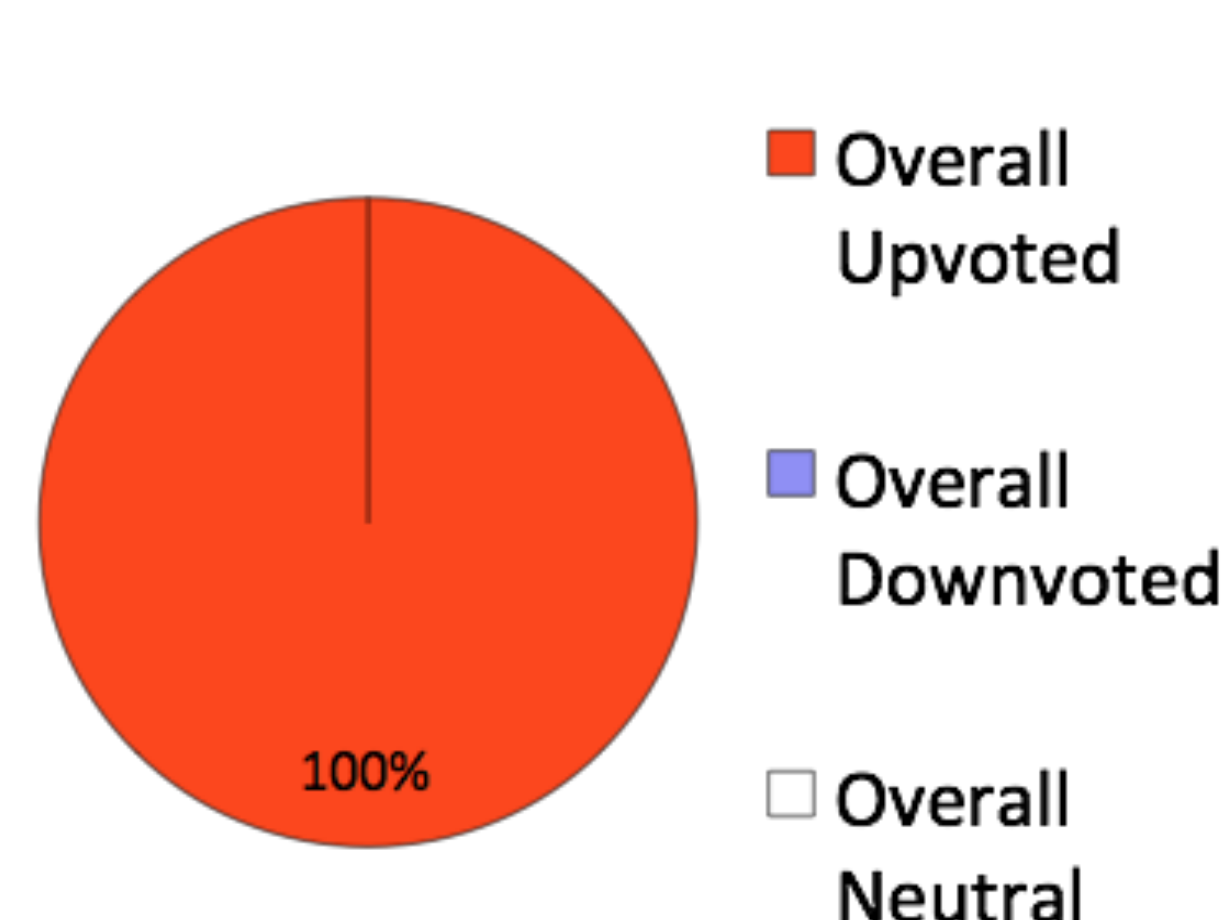
Average Percentage of Upvotes and Downvotes for Negative Posts



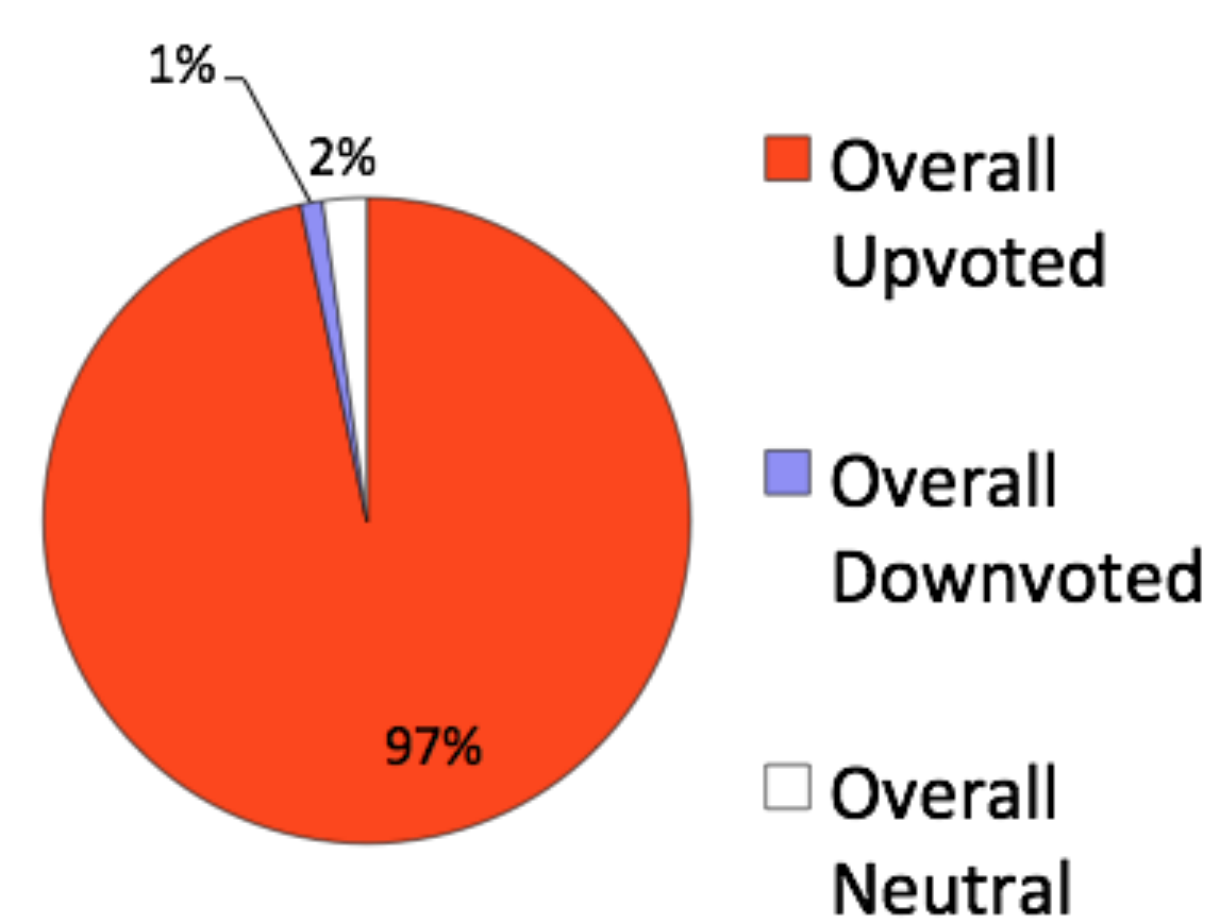
Average Percentage of Upvotes and Downvotes for Positive Posts



Comments of Positive Posts



Comments of Negative Posts



Example of a positive comment: "Every little thing you do matters. Well done dude!"
Example of a negative comment: "I actually swear to God, I don't know how I'm functioning nor how long I can take this anymore."

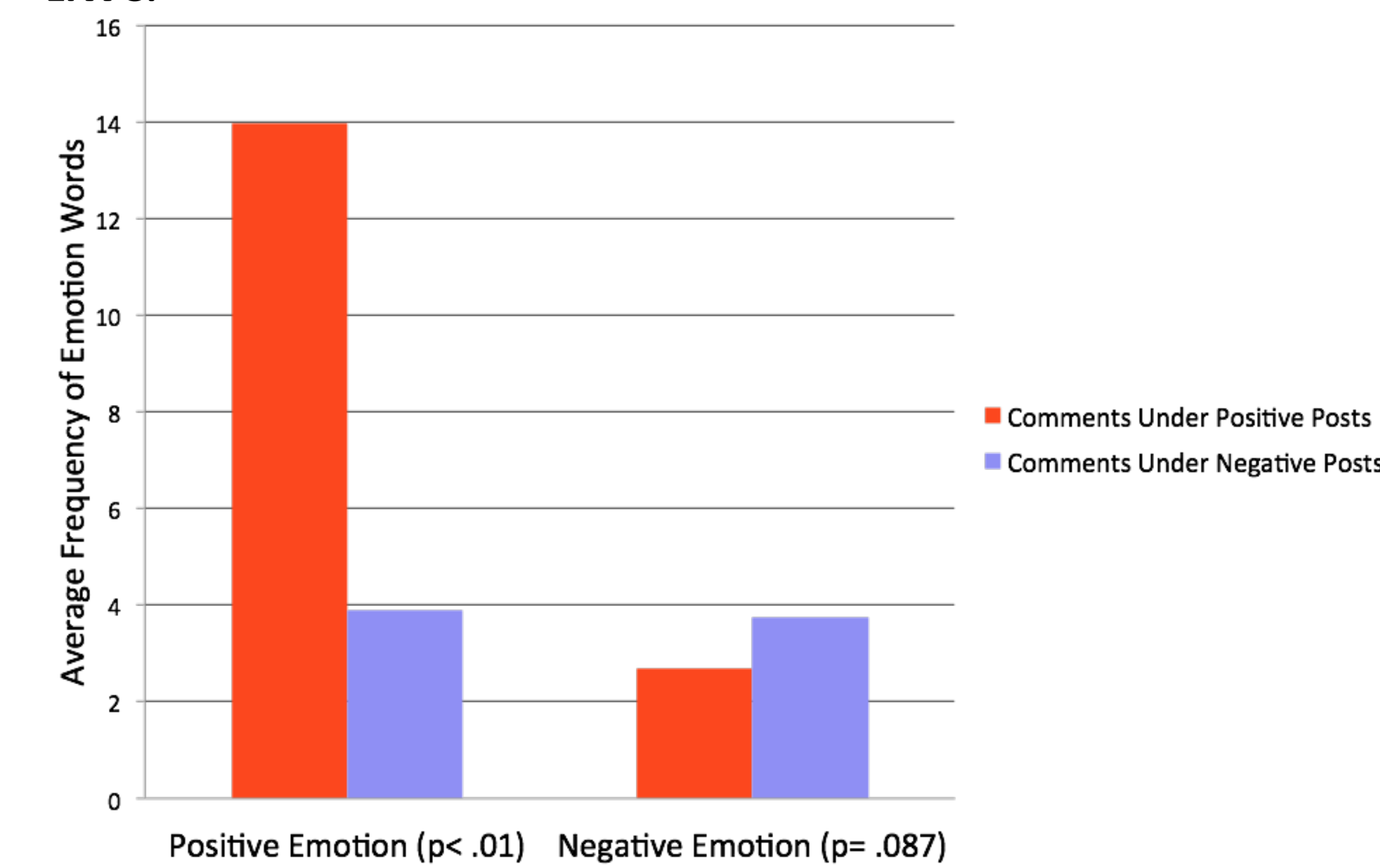
Content Analysis:

p= .063
f= 3

	Positive Experiences	Negative Experiences	No Reference to Experience	Both Positive and Negative Experiences
Comments Under Both Positive Posts	3	17	73	4
Comments Under Both Negative Posts	0	23	58	9

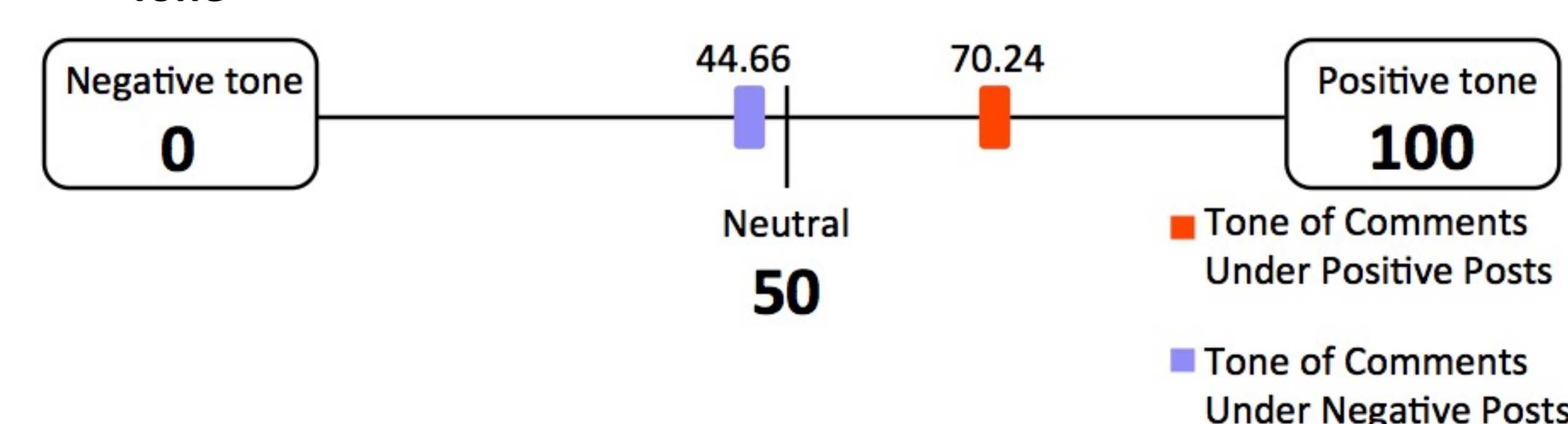
- Out of all of the comments from both positive and negative posts, 55% made reference to emotional support/encouragement

LIWC:



- For the comments under the positive posts, the average number of positive words was 13.98 and the average number of negative words was 2.68
- For the comments under the negative posts, the average number of positive words was 3.90 and the average number of negative words was 3.72

Tone



CONCLUSIONS

Major Findings

- There was no significant difference in the number of comments that referenced positive, negative, both positive and negative, or no experiences between the positive and negative posts
- The tone of comments under the positive posts was more positive than the comments under the negative posts
- The frequency of words related to positive emotion was higher for the comments under the positive posts than the negative posts

Limitations

- Demographics such as age, gender, and race were not known
- Sample size of both comments and posts was limited
- An unequal number of comments from each post was collected

Implications

- Reddit may be a social media platform that can be used as a source of emotional support and positivity, particularly if users are involved in positive posts and discussions
- Further studies should investigate:
 - The identification of different types of positive, negative, and emotionally supportive comments
 - The relationships between different types of posts (such as venting or seeking advice) and their comments

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Olivia Zhu, Reese Hyzer,
Hannah Fleischmann
pintree616@gmail.com

Megan A. Moreno, MD, MEd, MPH
moreno@wisc.edu

<http://smahrtresearch.com/>

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