

A Content Analysis of Emotions Present in Instagram Comments on NRA and Everytown for Gun Safety Posts

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Introduction

- Gun violence is a pressing issue in the US, there were 656 mass shootings in 2023
- Studies have analyzed Twitter discourse about gun violence and gun control
- Few studies examined emotions in social media discourse related to gun control and gun violence
- Instagram is a popular social media platform among adolescents

The **purpose** of this study is to **analyze the emotions prevalent in comments** on posts from two Instagram accounts: the NRA, a top gun rights organization, and Everytown for Gun Safety, a top gun control organization.

Methods

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) was used to perform a content analysis.

Instagram comments were selected from:

- 5 most recent NRA and Everytown for Gun Safety posts (10 total)
- Top 10 comments on each post.

Each comment was assessed for the following

variables using LIWC:

LIWC variables	Examples
Positive Emotion	good, love, happy, hope
Negative Emotion	bad, hate, hurt, tired
Anxiety	worry, fear, afraid, nervous
Anger	hate, angry, mad, frustr*
Sadness	:(, sad, dissappoint*, cry

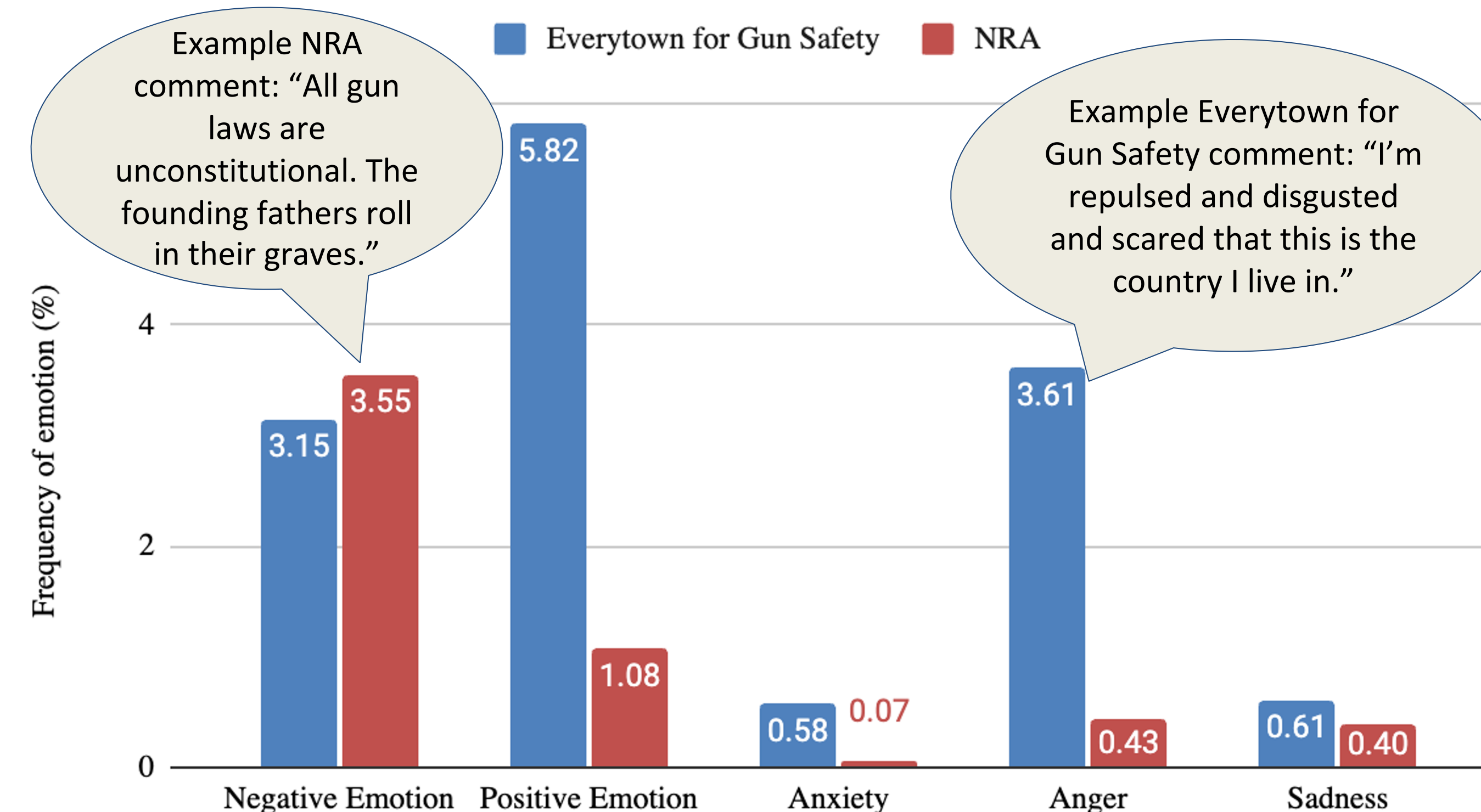
Engagement was also recorded for each post (likes and comments) and comment (likes and replies)

Analysis

This study measured the most prevalent emotions in the comments of each account by comparing the frequency (measured in percentage of comments featuring the emotion) of each emotion. Engagement was also measured using likes and comments.

Results

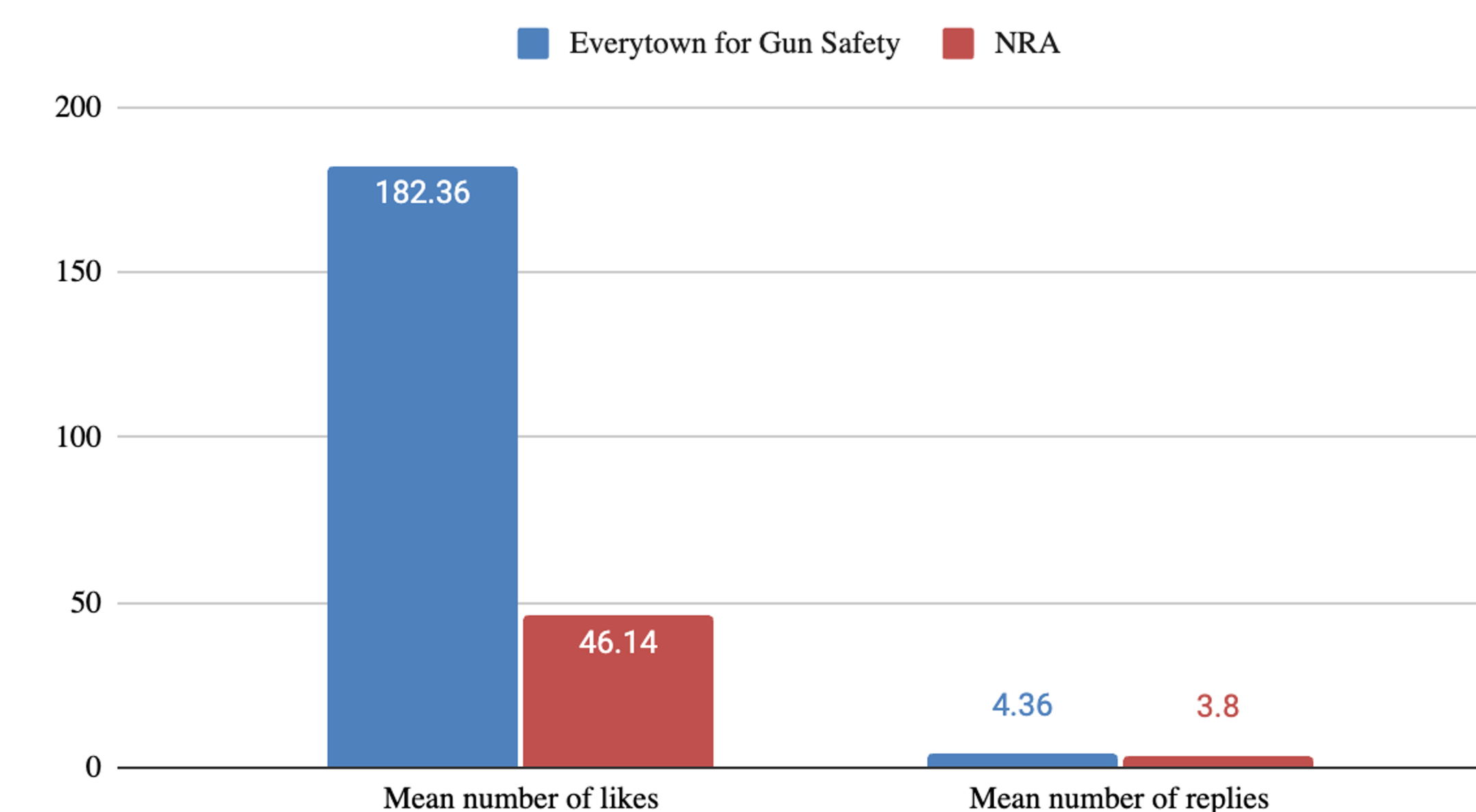
Frequency of Emotions in Comments



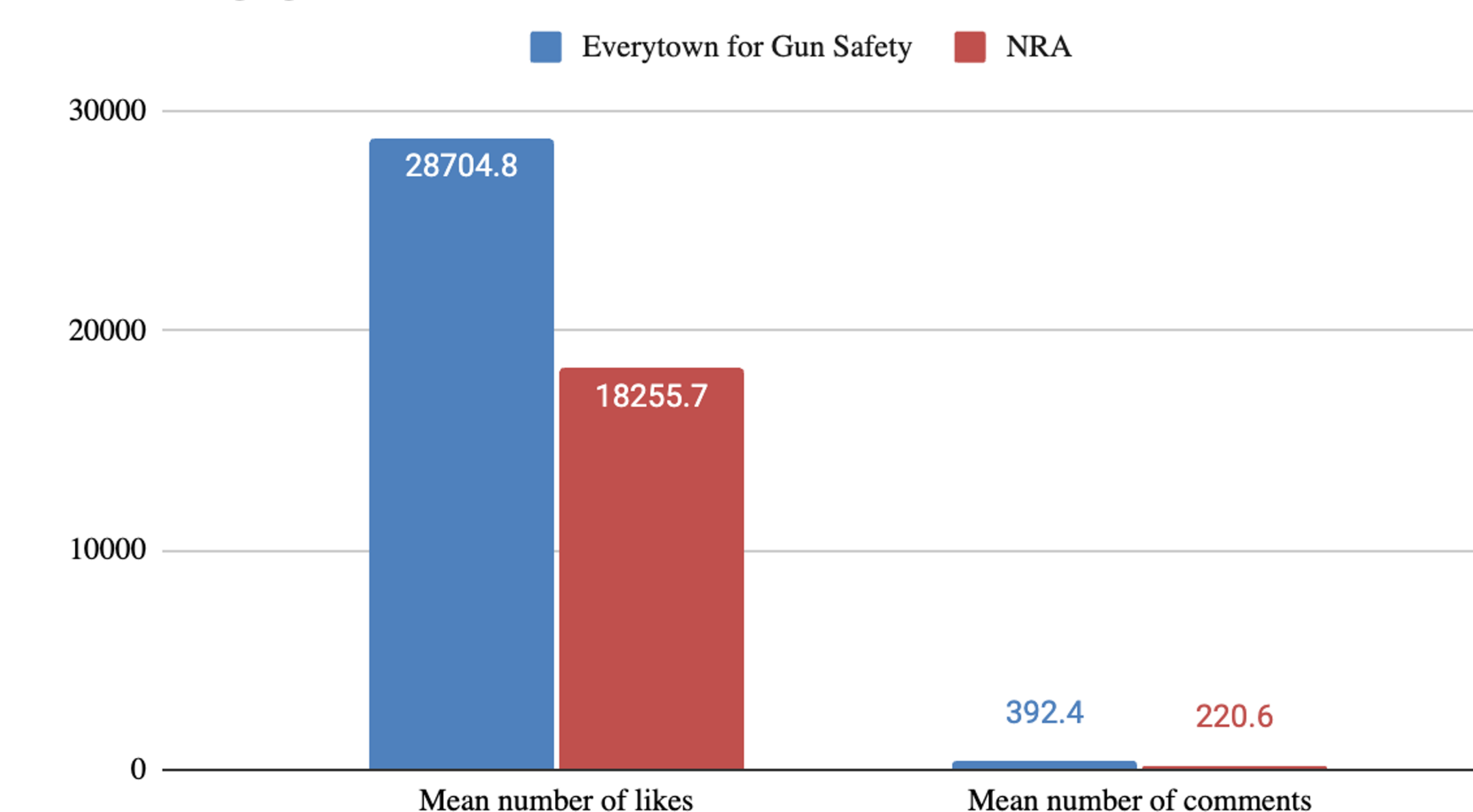
- Positive Emotion was much more frequent in Everytown for Gun Safety comments than NRA comments
- Anxiety, Anger and Sadness were all more frequent in Everytown for Gun Safety comments than in NRA comments
- However negative emotion as a whole was slightly more frequent in NRA comments than Everytown for Gun Safety comments

Demographic Variables

Comment Engagement



Post Engagement



Conclusions

- Positive emotions more prevalent in Everytown for Gun Safety comments
- There was also higher frequency of anxiety, anger, and sadness in the Everytown for Gun Safety comments
 - Could be because Everytown for Gun Safety supports stricter gun control, and thus commenters are more likely to have a negative view of guns or have a bad experience with them
- The engagement for the Everytown for Gun Safety posts was much higher than the engagement for the NRA
 - Could be because the younger generation present on Instagram has a progressive view on gun rights which more closely aligns with the views of Everytown for Gun Safety

Limitations

- Study only looks at content, can't actually confirm emotions of the commenter
- Post content was varied and not always focused on gun control or violence
- All posts were not focused on gun control/violence (Everytown endorsed Vice-President Harris which could have skewed data)

Future study

- A survey would allow researchers to gain more insight into the actual emotions of users
- A larger and more focused sample size would allow more conclusions to be drawn from results

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