



# An analysis of New York Times and Fox News Instagram post comments regarding school-based gun violence

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## INTRODUCTION

- Since 2020, **firearms** have become the **leading cause of death** among U.S. **children and adolescents** aged 1–19, surpassing car crashes and cancer. From 2000 to 2023, **school-based gun violence** incidents **increased by 1029%**.
- Local exposure to school shootings **decreases academic performance**, enrollment, and attendance, and **increases depression and anxiety** symptoms.
- Given that **95% of adolescents use social media**, they are often **indirectly exposed** to distant school shooting events through online platforms. **Instagram** is known for **high adolescent engagement**.
- While the effects of local gun violence are documented, the **psychological impact** of unlimited exposure **via social media** is less understood.
- Differences in **how news organizations present** school-shooting related content and **who follows** those accounts may contribute to **varying discourse and emotions present** in comments.
- This study **examines how responses to school gun violence content** from The New York Times and Fox News **reflect emotions** and **differ by news account**.

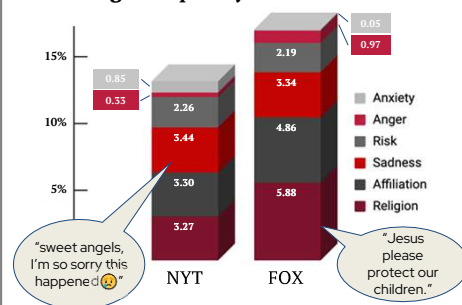
## METHODS

- This study was conducted using a **quantitative content-analysis** framework.
- Four U.S. school shooting incidents** were chosen for magnitude and recency. One **Instagram post** was pulled for **each event** from both **The New York Times (NYT)** and **Fox News** accounts to **ensure comparability** between the two accounts.
- The most recent **15 comments** were pulled from each of the **eight posts**, totaling **120 subjects** for analysis.
- Subject selection was **controlled for length** ( $\geq 10$  characters) and **content** (emoji-only comments excluded; emojis removed from selected comments).
- Comments were tagged for the variables below using **Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC)** software. This study **compares variable prevalence** between Fox News and NYT.

Variable	Example		
Anger	hate, mad	Anxiety	worry, fear
Sadness	heartbreak, :(	Religion	god, pray
Affiliation	we, us, help	Risk	protect, secure

## RESULTS

### Average Frequency of LIWC Variables

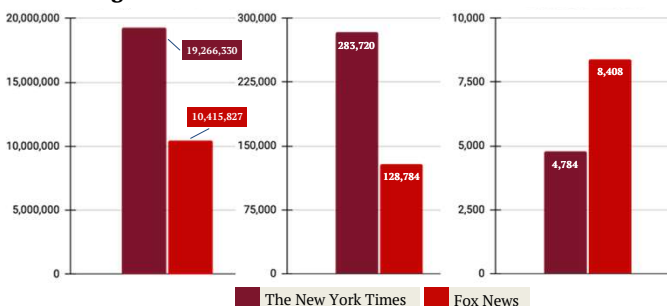


- For every 50,000 account followers, NYT receives 736 likes and 3 comments, while Fox News receives 618 likes and 10 comments.
- Thus Fox News has a greater engagement rate through comments (over 3x that of NYT), while Fox News and NYT have similar engagement rates through likes.

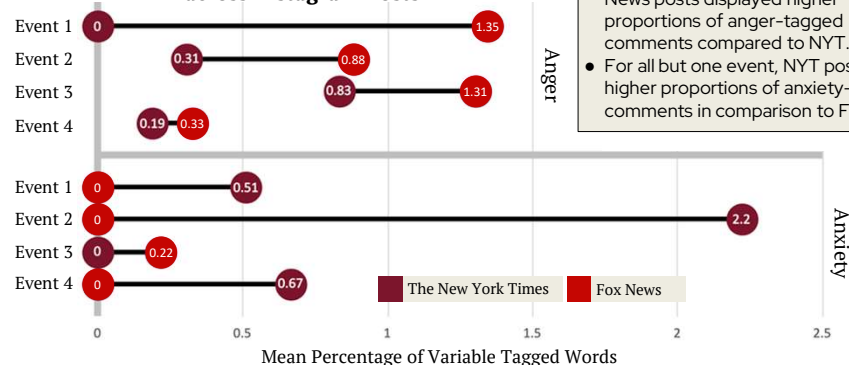
### Instagram Followers

### Total Likes

### Total Comments



### Comparing LIWC Variable Prevalence across Instagram Posts



- Across all four events analyzed, Fox News posts displayed higher proportions of anger-tagged comments compared to NYT.
- For all but one event, NYT posts had higher proportions of anxiety-tagged comments in comparison to Fox News.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Key Findings

- Religion, sadness, and affiliation** were the most common themes across all comments.
- Different news organizations **shape the emotional tone and content** of responses to school shootings.
- Religion-tagged comments** were the most common for **Fox News** posts, while **sadness-tagged comments** were the most common on **NYT** posts.
- Comparatively, **NYT** posts had **higher prevalence of anxiety-tagged comments**, while **Fox News** had **more religion and anger-tagged comments**.
- Fox News had over **3x the engagement rate via comments**. While NYT posts receive more likes, **Fox News posts** serve as a larger **platform for discussion**.

### Implications

- This study indicates that the impact of school-based gun violence incidents **travels far beyond the localized event**, eliciting comment responses containing **religious and emotional** responses related to sadness, risk, anger, and anxiety.
- Different news organizations prompt **differing comment-section discussions**, indicating that **Fox News** commenters respond to school shootings more frequently with **religion and anger**, while **NYT** commenters respond with **anxiety**.

### Limitations

- Comments** (datapoints) may have been **removed** for violating Instagram's **Community Guidelines**.
- LIWC's **inability** to process **emoji content** may have excluded valuable, **non-lexical contributions**.

### Future Research

- Examine **more social media platforms** and conduct **surveys** to better **determine the explicit impact** of school-based gun violence posts on **mental health**.

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