



Copyright © 2024 *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*  
All rights reserved.  
ISSN: 1070-8286

---

The Blame Game:  
Examining Media Framing, Blame Attribution and Public Response  
to the Uvalde School Shooting on Twitter

Daniel Sailofsky

University of Toronto

Paul Bleakley

University of New Haven

### Abstract

Though rare events from a statistical standpoint, the occurrence rate of mass shootings in the United States are unparalleled worldwide. As such, it is vital we understand how these shootings are framed by media and understood by the public, as this can impact how blame for these tragic events is attributed and can alter public views and eventually public policy on how best to reduce this violence. To understand this progression of news coverage and blame attribution, we examined mainstream media coverage and public reaction on Twitter in response to the May 2022 mass school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, where two teachers and 19 students aged 9-to-11 were killed. Fourteen breaking news tweets – split evenly between CNN and Fox News – were analyzed, , as well as the 2,182 replies to these tweets. Hand-coding these replies, we found that in the absence of more information, blame initially coalesced around gun access and politician inaction on gun control. This blame attribution changed drastically once mainstream media shifted focus to police failures. As this story progressed, police emerged as the most frequent target of blame, with all other criticism falling into the background. Interestingly, no clear differences were observed in the coding and blame attribution of replies to CNN or Fox News tweets, likely due to Twitter users’ apparent preference for ‘crossing the aisle’ to mock and insult their political opponents for their views on gun violence and the police, once again demonstrating the polarized and pernicious nature of US political discourse.

*Keywords:* mass shootings, guns, gun violence, blame, Twitter, police

## Introduction

With a firearms-related homicide rate 26 times that of other developed nations, the United States of America faces gun control debate that is fundamentally different from that which occurs in similar countries (Everytown, 2022). This debate is routinely reignited due to the prevalence of mass shootings in the United States which is generally defined as an event of gun violence where four or more people are injured or killed (Geller et al., 2021). Data compiled by Everytown<sup>1</sup> shows that 1,363 people were killed in 240 mass shootings that occurred in the United States between 2009 and 2020, with a further 947 wounded. Of the total number of victims, around one-in-four were children — a rate augmented by the relative commonality of schools as venues for incidents of gun violence (Everytown, 2022; Schildkraut et al., 2018; Vidgerman & Turner, 2022). Vidgerman and Turner (2022) report that 392 people have been killed (and 1,119 injured) in K-12 school shootings since the April 1999 mass shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, where 13 people were killed.

The trend of mass shootings at American schools tragically continued on 24 May 2022 at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, when two teachers and 19 students aged between 9- and 11-years-old were murdered in their classroom (Dreier et al., 2022). Due to the young age of the students targeted and the high casualty total, the Uvalde school shooting once again reignited public discourse around the root causes of this type of violence as well as how to prevent mass shootings, especially in schools, from occurring in the future. Previous studies of public responses to mass shootings assert that partisan politics plays a significant role in shaping views on the causes of gun violence. For example, in their study of 4.1 million tweets pertaining to 21 separate mass shooting incidents, Demszky et al. (2019) found a clear divergence between the responses of Republicans, who focused more on event-specific details and the shooter's identity, and Democrats, who tended to focus more on gun control and policy issues. More than simply representing different interpretations of events, the public response to incidents like the Uvalde shooting is consequential in the sense that it frames debates about gun control in the United States, with a potentially repressive effect on reform where blame for mass shootings shifts from guns to other factors (Guggenheim et al., 2015).

In this paper, we explore mainstream news media coverage as well as public reaction to the Uvalde school shooting to determine the trajectory of public sentiment surrounding the event, with a particular focus on how attribution of blame evolved and changed in the aftermath of the shooting. It is important to look at both mainstream and social media public reaction due to the reciprocal relationship between traditional mainstream and social media framing around mass shootings, where “tweets tend to be responsive to traditional media reporting, but traditional media framing of these incidents also seems to resonate from public framing in the Twitterverse” (Guggenheim et al., 2015, p. 207). To achieve this, we isolated seven key news-breaking events that occurred in the days and weeks following the Uvalde shooting and gathered one tweet for each event from two large mainstream media organizations (CNN and Fox News), for a total of 14 tweets. These news-breaking events depict how mainstream coverage of the Uvalde shooting evolved as new information came to light. We then collected all the Twitter replies on these 14 tweets for analysis, to track how public response and blame attribution evolved with it. This process yielded a dataset of 2,182 tweets and 106 unique codes, which provide insight into the interplay between developing events, media framing, and public sentiment in the Uvalde case. This insight is crucial to identifying the changing dimensions of social discourse after a mass school shooting and provides for more effective interpretation of how blame evolves, and is collectively allocated, in a social media environment.

---

<sup>1</sup> Everytown is a registered non-profit formed in 2013 which advocates for gun control, and against gun violence.

### Literature Review

Monroe and Malle (2019) characterize blame as a process which “emerged in human history as a socially costly tool for regulating other’s behavior” and concluded that “people are relatively calibrated and evenhanded [sic] in utilizing evidence that either mitigates or amplifies blame” (p. 215). While asserting that most people are able to effectively draw on evidence when making determinations on where blame for an event should be ascribed, Monroe and Malle (2019) also add the caveat that biases in judgment can occur when the subject of blame is a stranger, or member of an *outgroup*. In such scenarios, where the social demand for evidence of blame is less stringent, Monroe and Malle argue that blame attribution processes may become less “calibrated.” What is most important about this observation is the role that the relationship between *blamer* and *blamed* plays in the process, which has been a focus of much previous research in the field — particularly the work of Scanlon (2013).

Scanlon’s interpretation of blame effectively rejects the foundational position, expressed by Hume, that blame serves as an objective moral evaluation of another’s behavior (Taylor, 2002). Hume’s moral position was that the practice of blaming someone for an action was not just based on actual harm caused, but also required an impartial assessment about whether the underlying motivations for those actions were well-intentioned or not. For Scanlon and many others, it is impossible to treat blame as the product of pure, objective evaluation: instead, he constructs blame as a subjective process which, though based on some analysis of evidence, is also influenced by personal factors such as relationship to the blamed and/or their victims. While research on mass shootings has identified other personal factors - such as political orientation or gun ownership (Demszky et al., 2019; Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2017; Stroebe et al., 2022) – which impact blame attribution, Scanlon theorizes that blame attribution is linked to whether people feel that the expectations they have for a certain person, group, or institution have been violated. Linking blame to relationship expectation violation (REV) is supported by Monroe and Malle’s (2019) empirical work, which notes a lower threshold of evidence required for judgements of outgroup members, as opposed to the higher standard of evidence required when ascribing blame to individuals where a personal relationship exists (Clark et al., 2015; Halabi et al., 2015; Miron & Branscombe, 2008)

Scanlon (2013) asserts that “blame and blameworthiness ... are always relative to some relationship or relationships ... a person is *blameworthy*, in [Scanlon’s] view if he does something that indicates intentions or attitudes that are faulty by the standards of a relationship” (p. 88). Taking the concept of Scanlonian blame to its logical conclusion, a person cannot be blamed for an act if it does not violate an existing relationship, or if that act was reasonably foreseeable (e.g., an expected behavior). For Scanlon, blame is context-dependent, as the intensity of sentiment – and subsequent sanctions applied to violations – are intrinsically-linked to the nature of the relationship being violated in the first place. This conceptualization of blame, however, is not without its critics. Sher (2013) claims that tying blame so closely to REV does not account for its allocation among strangers where no prior “relationship” exists and, as such, there are no pre-existing intentions or expectations that can be violated. Sher’s criticism is important to consider in the context of this research, given its focus on how blame is ascribed to individuals and groups (e.g., police, politicians, offenders) by a general public with whom, in most cases, there is no direct interpersonal relationship. However, this lack of interpersonal relationship does not preclude the existence of structurally-mediated expectations of behavior for those in public institutions like the police (Gagnon & Fox, 2021)<sup>2</sup> or elected office (Nadeau et al., 2019), or even for other strangers in society.

Scanlonian blame introduces the concept of the *moral relationship* as one that “does not apply only to people who know of or are acquainted with one another or who actually have certain attitudes toward one another” (2013, p. 87). Rather than a relationship between two individuals (with its own set of expectations), the moral relationship is a more abstract relational formation in which there exists a set of general intentions and expectations about how groups should act toward each other and, while there is no personal connection, these

---

<sup>2</sup> Especially when police are called to the scene of a crime (Skogan, 2005).

general terms of relationship can still be violated, and blame ascribed. In short, even though we might not have a personal relationship with a particular police officer or politician, we can still have an expectation for how someone in that position should act.

In the theoretical model of blame developed by Malle et al. (2014), blame processes begin with a recognized “norm violation” in relation to which people must consider (a) first, if the prospective blamed *caused* the violation; (b) if they *intended* to cause the violation, and then; (c) the extent to which the subject’s actions were *justified*, or the blameworthy act was *preventable*. While this model hinges on a rational, objective evaluation of facts before assigning blame, research from Nadler and McDonnell (2011) argues that individuals come to all decision-making (including regarding blame) with pre-existing biases and beliefs that make a truly objective evaluative process impossible to achieve. This complements Scanlon’s concept of blame (2013), where he also notes that the attribution and extent of blame is *always* dependent on the context of the relationship being violated in the first place. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the model set out by Malle et al. is entirely unhelpful — indeed, the emphasis on norm violation from the outset speaks to the centrality of REV which, when viewed from the Scanlonian perspective, is naturally inclusive of the natural biases and pre-existing views that come with all relationships (interpersonal and “moral”).

### Social Media and Blame Attribution

Researchers are in general agreement that rising use of social media has resulted in an increased prevalence of blame attribution, especially with regards to collective decision-making around the *blameworthiness* of people in the public eye, or who have been involved in prominent events (Dingwall & Hillier, 2008) like the Uvalde school shooting. In their study of Twitter reactions to major disaster events, Canales et al. (2019) identified patterns of public response wherein “when a catastrophe occurs, media and the public grapple with understanding the reasons why, whether it arose from controllable human choice or behavior, or whether it arose from inevitable and uncontrollable forces of nature” (p. 2596). They found that, in situations where human error caused or contributed to a disaster, this precipitated a higher degree of emotional anger from the public, and more support for punitive action toward those people seen to be at fault. Gino and colleagues (2010) claim that social media’s equalizing effect and its democratization of information makes this blaming process easier than it was previously, especially in relation to the public attributing blame to higher-status persons such as politicians. This has much to do with online anonymity lowering the risk of potential repercussions the public face when blaming those with greater power than themselves.

These conclusions align with Suler’s (2004) online disinhibition theory which, similarly, asserts that the specific conditions of the internet (including anonymity) permit users to behave in a manner that they would not in the corporeal world, unrestrained by traditional societal norms. Feeling empowered to openly criticize the powerful would fall into Suler’s categorization of *benign disinhibition*, referring to disinhibited behaviors that could be considered pro-social. The conceptualization of social media as empowering and positive has been disputed by many however, including Walsh (2020), who argues that “contra claims of their empowering and deflationary consequences ... on balance, recent technological transformations unleash and intensify collective alarm” (p. 840). Walsh notes that this collective alarm can transition into moral panic and, from there, collective negotiations related to the vilification (or *blame*) of specific people (individuals and groups) held “responsible” for events. The anonymity and depersonalized nature of social media may also result in the increased use of sarcasm and humour, even in moments of incredible tragedy (Bleakley and Sailofsky, 2024).

For Rothschild and colleagues (2012, p. 1148) this vilification or scapegoating process is driven by dual motives: first, “maintaining perceived personal moral value by minimizing feelings of guilt” (i.e., absolving oneself of responsibility by blaming others) and, secondly, “maintaining perceived personal control by obtaining a clear explanation for a negative outcome” (i.e., making sense of the world through determining an explanation

for events). These two motivations drive scapegoating and provide some level of explanation for the phenomena of collective blame-attribution in the online world, where both standards of evidence and levels of inhibition are lowered.

### Blame and Mass Shootings

Following a mass shooting event, the media is faced with a dynamic and developing narrative. In her study of media responses to such events in the United States, Schildkraut (2016) noted several limits on the media when it comes to telling complex stories, especially those involving mass shooters. While this often prevents a broader framing of the issues related to a mass shooting, Schildkraut (2016) asserts there are also benefits to this limited focus, as it prevents discussion around an event from being diffused and thus “allows for a more complete, full-bodied discussion to take place in both the public and media discourses” (4). What is important to acknowledge in discussing media and public responses to mass shootings is that the prevalence of such incidents in the United States has resulted in what is characterized by Guggenheim et al. (2015) as thematic framing, rather than episodic framing (i.e., being treated as part of a larger pattern, rather than isolated cases). This perspective is shared by Croitoru et al. (2020), whose research determined the public views mass shootings more as part of a *sequence* rather than as an individual event, given the relatively frequent rate at which they occur.

The frequency of mass shootings has allowed for meta-analysis of framing patterns of gun violence in mass media (Jashinsky et al., 2017). As this Jashinsky and colleagues state, “through the process of framing, the media defines the problem, diagnoses the cause, and offers or justifies solutions for the problem” (p. 291)—their results highlight how media framing shifts after an incident of gun violence, with a preference toward holding government, not individuals, primarily responsible for events. However, as Croitoru et al. (2020) noted, public interest in a mass shooting peaks in the first 24-to-48 hours and begins to wane thereafter, impacting the longitudinal impact of media framing post-event.

Further complicating public response is the role that political and/or ideological orientations serve in shaping discourse and blame attribution (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2001). In Demszky and colleagues’ (2019) analysis of 4.1 million tweets related to 21 mass shootings, they found that in general, Republicans tended to focus more on event-specific details and the shooter’s identity, whereas Democrats focused more on political policy and gun control frames. In addition, a study conducted by Zhang et al. (2022) also noted differences in social media reactions among political conservatives and progressives, where conservatives were more likely to politicize an event and attack social media users with opposing views, while progressives were more likely to maintain focus on an event’s broader implications (e.g., gun control, policy reform). Considering this body of research, the conclusions reached by Holody and Shaugnessy (2022) in their research on news framing after the Parkland mass shooting are particularly striking: they found that the public discourse around mass shooting events remained “complicated” and evaded simple characterization, and was more dependent on the individual circumstances and context of an event than previous research indicated. This contradicts past research that has found mass shooting media coverage to be framed sequentially and could point to the different ways that certain mass shootings with unique event details are framed by media and the public.

## Methods

### Data Collection

To conduct this analysis, a purposeful sample of tweets was collected from two American news organizations (CNN and Fox News), as well as the replies to these tweets. As Patton (2002) explains, purposive sampling allows for the selection of “information-rich [cases]... from which one can learn a great deal about issues

of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (p. 264). This meant collecting an equal number of news-breaking social media posts from mainstream American media outlets representing both conservative and more centrist-liberal political orientations, to assess how both these news organizations and their followers framed news about the Uvalde shooting as the story progressed. Past research has shown that FOX News has a broadly politically conservative viewership which moves even further to the political right with increased exposure to the channel (Schroeder & Stone, 2015), while CNN presents itself as more centrist and ‘objective’ (Parks, 2023)<sup>3</sup>, with viewership generally identifying as liberal (Hollander, 2008; Hyun & Moon, 2016). Twitter was chosen for its widespread use in fast breaking news and eliciting public feedback (Nazir et al., 2019), as well as the effective use of Twitter posts and replies in previous research to analyze public discourse around mass shootings (Demszky et al., 2019; Guggenheim et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2022) and other disasters (Canales et al., 2019).

To search for news-breaking tweets about the Uvalde shooting, Twitter’s advanced search function was used to sift through all tweets posted by the official accounts of CNN and Fox News which contained the word “Uvalde” starting from the day the shooting happened (May 24, 2022) and continuing until the time the data was collected (July 14, 2022). This resulted in a total of 35 tweets — 14 from CNN and 21 from Fox News. These tweets were initially coded for their meaning, resulting in the identification of 17 different “events” throughout the progression of Uvalde media coverage. To ensure that we had an equal number of tweets from each source, as close to an equal number of replies as possible from each source (for comparability purposes), and a sample that could feasibly be coded by hand, these 17 different events were filtered down to seven (7) key events that we felt encapsulated the way this story progressed in the media. These 7 key events in the development of the Uvalde case were as follows: (1) first announcement of the shooting, (2) initial questioning of the police response, (3) reports that police waited to engage the shooter, (4) reports centering local residents and parents’ reactions to failures, (5) state government tells public that the Police misled them and/or did not tell the truth, (6) reports defending the police response, and (7) video footage of police not acting and waiting in the hallways of the school. We then gathered each individual reply to these tweets, resulting in 2,182 unique replies (1,142 from CNN, and 1,040 from Fox News) for analysis.

---

<sup>3</sup> This description of CNN as ‘objective’ reflects how CNN would self-identify; we do not believe that purely objective journalism (or science, for that matter) is even possible given the many ways that news coverage is framed and imbued with ideology at every level. Moreover, those on the political left would likely suggest that CNN is a center-right news platform that supports American hegemony and the capitalist status quo, while those on the political right might suggest that CNN is catered to liberals and supports the Democratic party. For the purposes of this analysis, however, we are using CNN as an ideological counterweight to FOX News due to the broadly held understanding among the North American public that CNN is a more centrist, liberal outlet compared to FOX News.

Table 1. Tweets for the Evolution of the Uvalde Shooting Discourse

Event	Tweet text	Link	Date	Replies	Source
First announcement of the shooting	BREAKING: 14 students and a teacher are dead after an 18-year-old man opened fire at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, the governor says. The gunman is also dead.	<a href="https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1529211070140846083">https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1529211070140846083</a>	24-May	197	CNN
	BREAKING: Uvalde, Texas elementary school reports 'active shooter'	<a href="https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1529161567689908224?s=20&amp;t=AbHv6QcKKfXIAt5mhinvNQ">https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1529161567689908224?s=20&amp;t=AbHv6QcKKfXIAt5mhinvNQ</a>	24-May	138	Fox
Initial questioning of police response	Police struggle to explain the response to the gunman at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas. @edlavaCNN reports on the shifting timeline. Watch:	<a href="https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1529991937968820235?s=20&amp;t=pjL7odUOHYdwRh5xbmBoLg">https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1529991937968820235?s=20&amp;t=pjL7odUOHYdwRh5xbmBoLg</a>	26-May	189	CNN
	'WE SHOULD NOT IGNORE IT': @TuckerCarlson vows to keep questioning what happened during police response to the Uvalde, Texas elementary school shooting as recently uncovered facts point to a 'scandal.'	<a href="https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1530014825950203904?s=20&amp;t=AbHv6QcKKfXIAt5mhinvNQ">https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1530014825950203904?s=20&amp;t=AbHv6QcKKfXIAt5mhinvNQ</a>	26-May	212	Fox
Reports that police waited to engage the shooter	The decision by police to wait before confronting the gunman at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde was a	<a href="https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1530836389184536576?s=20&amp;t=pjL7odUOHYdwRh5xbmBoLg">https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1530836389184536576?s=20&amp;t=pjL7odUOHYdwRh5xbmBoLg</a>	29-May	190	CNN



	failure with catastrophic consequences, experts say.				
	Uvalde, Texas, residents respond to revelation police waited to engage mass shooter	<a href="https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1530295942678777858?s=20&amp;t=AbHv6QcKKfXIAt5mhinvNQ">https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1530295942678777858?s=20&amp;t=AbHv6QcKKfXIAt5mhinvNQ</a>	27-May	65	Fox
Reports centering local residents and parents' reactions to failures	Jessie Rodriguez, who lost his daughter, Annabell, and his niece, Jacklyn Cazares, during the Uvalde school shooting reacts to reports that the gunman was inside the classroom for an hour before being killed by tactical officers. Watch here:	<a href="https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1530001983494553607?s=20&amp;t=pjL7odUOHYdwRh5xbmBoLg">https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1530001983494553607?s=20&amp;t=pjL7odUOHYdwRh5xbmBoLg</a>	26-May	68	CNN
	Uvalde, Texas, residents respond to revelation police waited to engage mass shooter	<a href="https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1530295942678777858?s=20&amp;t=AbHv6QcKKfXIAt5mhinvNQ">https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1530295942678777858?s=20&amp;t=AbHv6QcKKfXIAt5mhinvNQ</a>	27-May	83	Fox
State government tells public that the Police misled them and/or did not tell the truth	Texas @GovAbbott says he was "misled" about the circumstances of the deadly Uvalde school shooting. Watch here:	<a href="https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1530309616256548864?s=20&amp;t=pjL7odUOHYdwRh5xbmBoLg">https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1530309616256548864?s=20&amp;t=pjL7odUOHYdwRh5xbmBoLg</a>	27-May	190	CNN
	NOT TOLD THE TRUTH': Texas Lt. Governor reacts to new shooting details emerging, says Uvalde police response 'cost lives.' <a href="https://fxn.ws/3mbcVzT">https://fxn.ws/3mbcVzT</a>	<a href="https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1530606265810014208?s=20&amp;t=AbHv6QcKKfXIAt5mhinvNQ">https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1530606265810014208?s=20&amp;t=AbHv6QcKKfXIAt5mhinvNQ</a>	28-May	178	Fox

<p>Reports defending the police response</p>	<p>Uvalde School District Police Chief Pete Arredondo continues defending his response to the mass shooting at Robb Elementary in a new interview with a local paper. CNN's @OmarJimenez reports. Watch here:</p>	<p><a href="https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1535381202219192323?s=20&amp;t=pjL7odUOHYdwRh5xbmBoLg">https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1535381202219192323?s=20&amp;t=pjL7odUOHYdwRh5xbmBoLg</a></p>	<p>10-Jun</p>	<p>109</p>	<p>CNN</p>
	<p>Uvalde, Texas shooting: Blaming police for waiting is 'destructive, distracting, and unfair,' Sen. Cornyn says</p>	<p><a href="https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1530871577583181825?s=20&amp;t=TLX9uRCtrnf4v98HoOy_BQ">https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1530871577583181825?s=20&amp;t=TLX9uRCtrnf4v98HoOy_BQ</a></p>	<p>29-May</p>	<p>188</p>	<p>Fox</p>
<p>Video footage of police not acting and waiting in the hallways of the school</p>	<p>Newly published video recorded inside Robb Elementary in Uvalde, Texas, during the May 24 attack, shows officers approaching the classroom where Salvador Ramos killed 21 people, but then retreating down the hallway and taking cover when gunfire is heard.</p>	<p><a href="https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1546988473680265216?s=20&amp;t=SVpk00Rq4GfcmGwNqo-mA">https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1546988473680265216?s=20&amp;t=SVpk00Rq4GfcmGwNqo-mA</a></p>	<p>12-Jul</p>	<p>199</p>	<p>CNN</p>
	<p>Uvalde surveillance footage shows police response as gunman murdered 19 children and 2 adults</p>	<p><a href="https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1546980494629376003">https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1546980494629376003</a></p>	<p>12-Jul</p>	<p>76</p>	<p>FOX</p>

## Data Analysis

We then engaged in a thematic content analysis (Frederick et al., 2020), coding each tweet reply for its “core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 264) to assess how public response evolved as the media’s framing of the Uvalde shooting unfolded. This includes coding text-only replies, text and picture/video replies, and replies that contained only a video or picture. Coding was done by both authors in Excel, and data was subsequently cleaned and analyzed using both Excel and R. Content analysis of Twitter data has been used previously to understand media coverage of deviant and criminal behavior (Kostakos, 2018; Quinn et al., 2019) and, specifically, of mass shootings (Croitoru et al., 2020; Kwon et al., 2019). Many of these studies relied on algorithm-based machine-coding software and artificial intelligence (AI), rather than line-by-line hand-coding (Demszky et al., 2019; Guggenheim et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2022). In this case, however, we felt it was necessary to hand-code each tweet, to properly examine blame attribution (Atkeson & Maestas, 2012). As Atkeson and Maestas (2012) explain, it is difficult to assess how social media users attribute blame, especially in short snippets of text like tweets. Moreover, due to the nuances of tone and especially sarcasm, as well as the use of pictures, GIFs, videos and memes in Twitter replies and on social media more broadly, it is most accurate to (when feasible) rely on human coding to discern how Twitter users are attributing blame.

The above is especially true in the case of a polarizing issue like gun violence, with Twitter users in our sample frequently deployed sarcasm to mock what they perceived to be faulty arguments about the cause of the Uvalde shooting that was being propagated by political opponents. There were also many tweets that included pictures, GIFs, or other image and video-based content, whether combined with a text comment or by themselves. Lastly, Twitter replies are not standalone messages, but are replying to another tweet; they must be coded in relation to the initial tweet. Using line-by-line human coding, we were better able to account for language, tone, sarcasm, and the meaning of the words, images, and videos in tweet replies, allowing for a more accurate assessment of the content.

Both authors engaged separately in an initial round of inductive coding. Though blame attribution theories and literature helped frame our study, coding was left open-ended to allow for the emergence of a variety of content categories — including those unrelated to blame attribution (Altheide & Schneider, 2012). The second author coded replies for the first three events (e.g., six paired tweets), while the first author simultaneously coded the other four events (e.g., eight paired tweets). After this initial round, codebooks were combined to create one master codebook incorporating both author’s codes, for a total of 106 unique codes. Using this master list, each author deductively coded the other’s initially coded replies. All changes and/or questions about the initial codes were dealt with via peer debriefing meetings and notes (Scharp & Sanders, 2019). Lastly, the first author grouped codes together into themes, which were then reviewed by the second author, before a final round of peer debriefing to ensure clarity and consistency in codes and themes.

It is essential to acknowledge the positionality of the authors, given that application of codes is an inherently interpretive process consisting of decisions that could have been unintentionally influenced by personal biases. The first author is a white male from Canada with a background in law and a terminal qualification in sociology; the second author is a white male from Australia, with a terminal degree in criminology and an expertise in online deviance. Given that both authors who participated in the coding process were white men, there is a small possibility that some gendered nuances may have been lost in the coding process. Another potential arising from the authors’ positionality is that neither is American, and we thus bring to this topic a perspective that is more opposed to the American belief in unfettered public access to firearms<sup>4</sup>. In spite of this, both authors are incredibly familiar with the United States from both living and working in the country at various

---

<sup>4</sup> It is also important to stress that this belief in unfettered access to firearms is not held universally by Americans, and may actually be the minority view on this matter.

times, and we feel confident we were able to address this deficit for the most part. Nonetheless, the authors' shared cultural predispositions in favor of more rigorous gun control is something to highlight when considering how positionality impacted the interpretation of Twitter replies in this research, and the findings drawn from that coding process.

## Results

Two rounds of coding (outlined above) resulted in 106 unique codes, which were then grouped into ten (10) themes, listed in descending order, with total code mentions in parentheses: *Blaming police* (1448), *Blaming guns* (929), *Democratic party political points* (897), *Blaming politics and politicians* (713), *Other blame* (474), *Sarcasm and mocking* (415), *Critical of media* (223), *Republican party political points* (144), *Sadness* (79), and *Pro-police points* (55). Codes could be grouped into more than one theme.

It is not within the scope of this specific paper to explain the results and codes for each of the ten (10) themes — to do so risks diluting the findings by attempting to address too many distinct issues at once. While other emergent themes may be addressed in other work, this paper will focus on the thematic groups associated with blame attribution, as well as limited analysis of the *Democratic* and *Republican party political talking points* and *Sarcasm and mocking* themes where relevant.

Blame Attribution Themes: Blaming Police, Guns, Politics and Politicians, and Other Factors.

*Blaming police* was the most common theme across all replies. Codes in this thematic group were mentioned 1,448 times, across a total of 862 tweets<sup>5</sup>. *Blaming police* accounted for 39.5% of all tweets coded, making it by far the highest percentage in the sample. In terms of blame attribution themes, *Blaming guns* was next highest in terms of mentions and total tweets, with these codes identified 929 times in a total of 578 tweets. In total, 26.5% of tweets were coded as *Blaming guns*.

*Blaming politics and politicians* was next, with 713 mentions across 434 tweets, representing 19.9% of total tweets. Lastly, codes under the theme *Other blame* – which included blaming a lack of securitization infrastructure in the school, mental health issues, a range of conspiracy theories, racial background, and terrorism and immigration, among other factors – were mentioned 318 times in 265 total tweets. In total, 12.1% of tweets were coded as *Other blame*. Overall, 80% of tweets (1,701 of 2,182) attributed some form of blame for the mass shooting in Uvalde to a particular actor, entity, or contributing factor<sup>6</sup>.

Beyond the total mentions of each theme, it is important to assess how each theme evolved as new information about the case came to light. Figure 1 shows how the attribution of blame evolved across the seven events that were considered in this study.

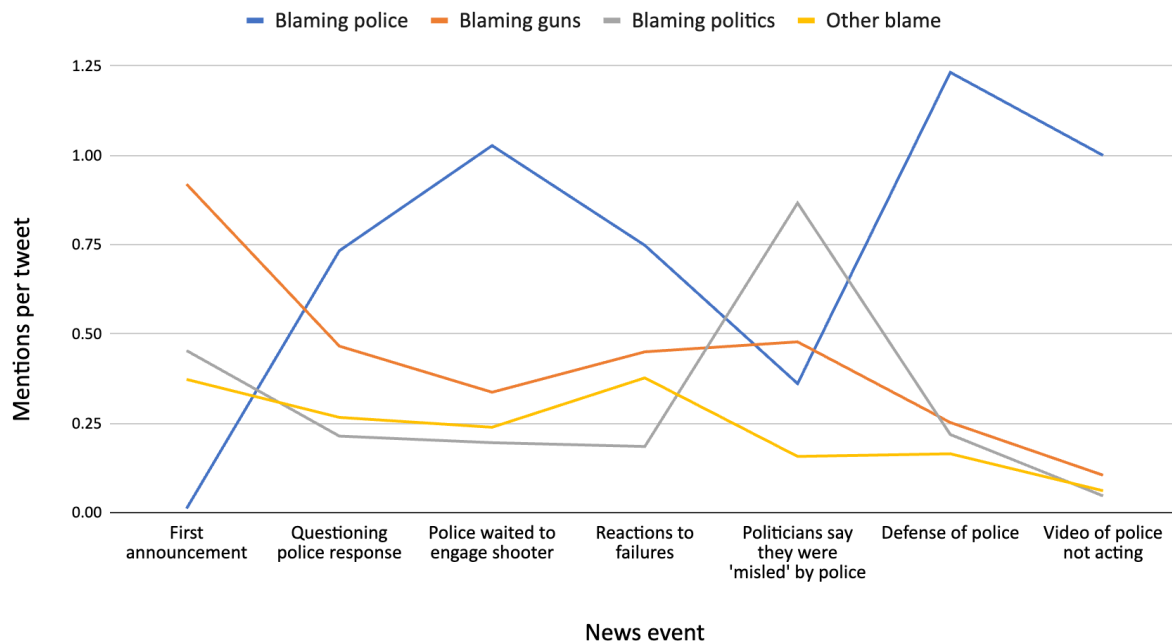
---

<sup>5</sup> Total code appearances are higher than the number of tweet replies in which a code was present because individual tweet replies could contain more than one code from the same theme. For example, if a tweet reply contained two *Blaming police* themed codes, this would count as two *Blaming police* themed code mentions, but only one tweet with this theme.

<sup>6</sup> The total number of tweets attributing some form of blame is not just the sum of the blame-themed tweets because individual tweets could have attributed blame to multiple different actors/factors.

Figure 1. Blame attribution as Uvalde news progressed

Blame attribution across time - Tweet replies to both news outlets (FOX, CNN)



When both CNN and Fox News first posted tweets announcing the shooting, replies focused predominantly on blaming gun access and gun violence in the United States. This can be seen in replies like “America, where guns are more valuable than human life”; “Insane. Ban Weapons Right Now”, and; “This is insane, and law makers are so old with no young kids so they don’t care. Laws will never pass against gun rights as money is stronger than lives!”.

As seen in this last reply, replies on the first tweet focused on gun accessibility, and/or on politician and political blame for continued gun violence. Replies like “Congress needs to stop mucking around and pass gun control” and “When is enough going to be enough? When is something ACTUALLY going to be done to prevent this from happening? I don’t want to hear shit about Republican or Democrat. I want to hear an actual, tangible, feasible plan from BOTH sides on what is going to be done to end this shit” exemplify the perceived connection between blame of American politics and politicians, and easy access to guns in the United States.

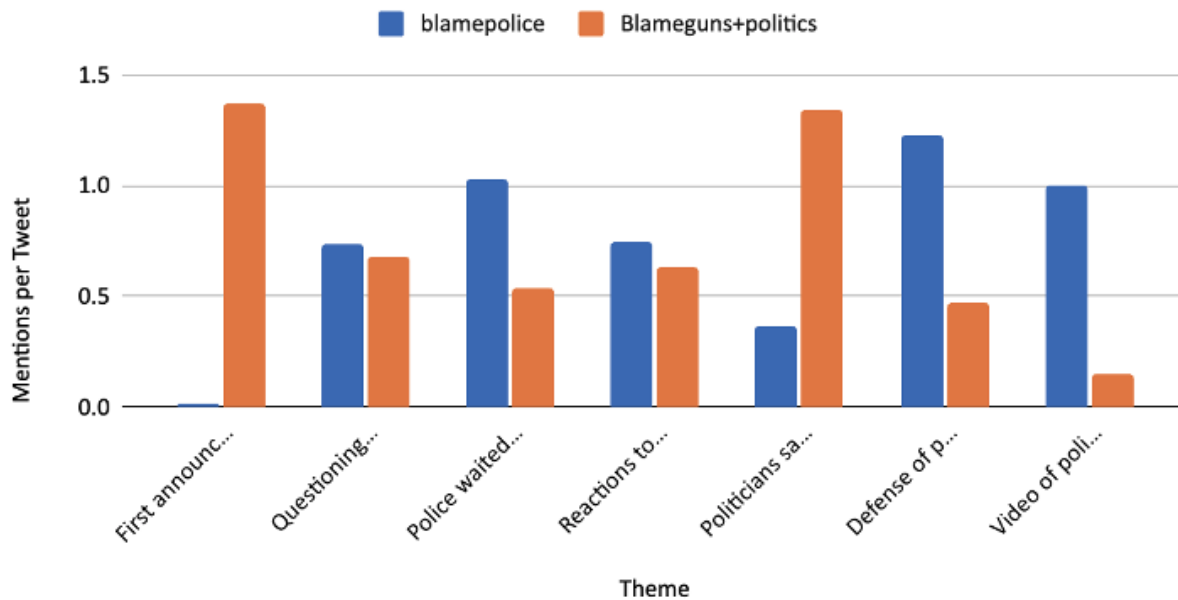
However, as both CNN and Fox News posted updates about this developing story largely centered on the police response and inaction, as well as subsequent reactions to this failure, a significant change in blame attribution can be observed which mirrors this changing media framing. Replies blaming police coalesce around six main codes: *Bad policing*; *police inaction*; *these police are cowards*; *accountability for police*; *questioning police leadership*, and; *questioning the narratives presented by police*. These are seen in tweets like “they [police] should be ashamed of their response”; “the police FAILED to stop the threat per active shooter training that has been standard in America since the middle 2000s, someone better be held accountable,” and; “Charges should be filed. Careers should be ended. Ppl [people] calling 911 from inside school while they sat there doing nothing. These cops would rather be labeled liars than cowards.”

We also see a near-linear downward trajectory with how much the public blame guns for the shooting in Uvalde. This trend is mirrored by the rise in tweets blaming police, except for a deviation in our fifth event,

wherein we see a significant rise in blame for politics and politicians. For the fifth event, both the CNN and Fox News tweets focused on the reactions of Texas state politicians (Lieutenant Governor and Governor, respectively) as the subject of their update. This focus on state politicians – who are discursively linked more closely to gun control and gun legislation than they are to the behavior of police – could also explain why slightly more blame towards guns than police is observable in the replies for this event. Excluding the initial announcement, this was the only event where either guns or politicians were blamed more often than the police. For all other events aside from the fifth, police blame is even more common than gun and politician blame combined (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Blame Attribution: Blaming Police vs. Blaming Guns or Politics

### Blame attribution across time - Police blame vs. guns and politics blame



In replies to all tweets, less common targets of blame (represented by the *Other blame* theme) were commented on much less frequently. Only 12.1% of replies were coded with *Other blame*. This theme includes replies that blamed any entity or factor other than guns, police, or politics. There was also no clear trend observed in terms of differences between replies to CNN and Fox News tweets. This lack of political polarization in the replies to tweets from news outlets with seemingly entrenched political positionality and audiences (Gaultney et al., 2022) is interesting, and will be discussed in the next section. It is also interesting to note that 14.5% of tweets were coded as containing *Sarcasm or mocking* — a high number given the tragic nature of the news story being discussed.

## Discussion

### Default Blame on Guns and Politicians

The first reaction of most Twitter respondents to news breaking about the Uvalde shooting was to link it to other mass shootings that have occurred over the past twenty years in the United States, including other school shootings. This provides more evidence of the tendency for both media and the public to think about mass shootings thematically, as part of a sequence of events rather than its own unique event (Croitoru et al., 2020; Guggenheim et al., 2015). In the absence of any detail beyond the announcement that an active shooter was in an elementary school, issues like gun access and lack of gun control, as well inaction by (particularly, conservative) politicians on gun violence, were framed as major sources of blame for both the Uvalde shooting, and previous shootings. With both CNN and Fox News offering very neutral headlines in their initial announcements - merely stating that the shooting was ongoing - these issues became the default foci in tweets responding to the first event.

Though the literature suggests that blame attribution differs based on political orientation and personal gun ownership, a generalized blaming of guns and politicians is also well supported: previous research has established links between United States legislative policy and gun culture, and high levels of gun violence (J. S. Lee & Kwak, 2017; Lemieux, 2014). This connection has also been made based on simple anecdotal correlation: the United States has exponentially more fatal gun violence than any country in the world, as well as some of the most lax gun laws and highest rates of gun ownership (Bauchner et al., 2017; Hemenway & Nelson, 2020). The fact that initial blame attribution focused on gun availability and a perceived lack of political action on gun violence supports existing evidence about initial public responses to mass shooting incidences, which could be galvanized to push politicians (another common target of blame) to make significant and substantial change to gun legislation and control.

However, as more details emerged following the initial announcement of the shooting (the first event) and, specifically, as critical information about the police response came to light, we see a notable change in where blame is attributed both by the media and, subsequently, the public. This shift demonstrates the way that media framing of an issue (and the event's specific details) impacts public perception and blame attribution, the way mass shooting discourse can move from thematic to episodic framing, and how the violation of expectations about institutions like the police can result in increased blame for these institutions.

### Shifting Blame – Blaming Police as a Form of Relationship Expectation Violation (REV)

While the initial response of Twitter users to breaking news of the Uvalde shooting was to blame guns, the rate of *blame guns* in response to this first tweet also represents the highest level recorded for the theme across all seven events. From the second event on, *blame guns* returned a lower recorded rate than *blame police* in all except one event (which will be discussed below). The fall in *blame guns* commenced with responses to the second tweet, which was the first to suggest that questions may exist about the police response to the shooting. As new details about the police emerged and then continued to emerge, we see a change from thematic framing (Croitoru et al., 2020; Guggenheim et al., 2015) to the more episodic framing and that Holody and Shaugnessy (2022) found in their analysis of the Parkland, Florida, shooting. The police's inaction, dishonesty, and overall failure to intervene when they had the chance was a unique quality of this particular shooting, altering the way it was framed by the media and how blame was attributed by the public. The incentives of contemporary news organizations – which must respond to capitalist profit imperatives by producing content that generates views and clicks – also play a part here, as CNN, Fox News, and any other privately owned news organization is incentivized to focus on the more provocative or unique qualities of the stories they cover.

All subsequent tweets focused on this police response aspect, resulting in the Uvalde school shooting ultimately being inextricably linked to police failures, more than any other factor in the Twitter discourse. This is supported by research conducted by Guggenheim and colleagues (2015) which indicated that framing of issues in the mainstream media and on social media after mass shootings is reciprocal, with mainstream media framing influencing the foci of Twitter discourse and vice versa. With the *blame police* theme recorded at a much higher rate than other related themes, including those which blamed the shooter, it raises questions as to why the police failures in this case occupied so much of the Twitter response. Beyond profit-related motives related to the newsworthiness of police failures, it is useful to consider this response as a product of Scanlonian blame. Scanlonian blame is context-dependent and occurs where the expectations of a pre-existing relationship are disrupted in a way that cannot be justified by the person who is casting blame (e.g., REV). Importantly, Scanlonian blame also incorporates *moral relationships* where no personal connection exists, yet an individual (the *blamer*) nevertheless has a symbolic and/or conceptual relationship to a person, group, or institution like the police. Expectations are central to this conceptualization: where expectations are low to begin with, individuals are less likely to apportion blame because the action is seen as “expected” and, thus, less of a relational violation.

As noted, the first reaction from Twitter users to news of the Uvalde shooting was to overwhelmingly blame guns, at a time when there were few details to base judgment on; this indicates that a lack of gun control, or easy access to guns in the United States, is an expected cause of mass shootings. Scanlon (2013) might argue that this would constitute a *weaker* blame relationship because of the expectation that already exists. However, when reports of police failures began to emerge, this dominated the discourse on both Twitter and in the mainstream media because of the unique (or, unanticipated) angle it brought to this event. A stronger blame response toward police could be linked to REV, as the public expectations of police are higher than they are of guns, or other potential blame targets. Police failures in Uvalde would therefore constitute a more serious REV under this model and, in turn, a more intense blame response among Twitter users. Applying REV might also explain why those replying to Fox News tweets, who are expected to be more politically conservative and more supportive of the police, engaged in nearly equal levels of police blaming as those responding to CNN tweets (Figures 3+4). For those who support the police and have higher expectations about their capabilities, courage, and ability to provide public service to society, the failures of the police force in Uvalde would strongly violate these expectations, and result in the kind of blame observed in this research. It is also possible, however, that the blame attributed to police reflects Canales and colleagues’ (2019) findings, where they determined that in a disaster, there is more emotional anger directed at those deemed responsible for any *human* error (like the police’s failure to intervene effectively) that occurred. Lastly, it is also possible that higher levels of police blame based in the upsurge of anti-police sentiment and calls for defunding or abolishing the police following the murder of George Floyd and subsequent Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in the summer of 2020.

Despite the general pattern shifting from *blame guns* to *blame police*, there was one event in which responses did not conform to this trend. The fifth event included tweets focusing on Texas politicians claiming police had not told them the truth about what occurred at the Uvalde shooting. For this event, the data shows a significant drop in the *blame police* theme, with *blame guns* also remaining relatively low; instead, a third category - *blame politics and politicians* - demonstrated a clear spike in references. This is especially noteworthy given that the context of both CNN and Fox News tweets were not inherently negative toward the politicians referenced and, to some extent, depicted these politicians delivering the same criticism of the police that was reflected online. The implications of this spike of *blame politics and politicians* affirms a connection between the events reported and the respective Twitter response — if the Twitter response was generally detached from events and media coverage, the trend toward blaming police would have continued unabated, with the spike in *blame politicians* suggesting a more active engagement with developments in the media narrative and, again, a level of reciprocal framing (Guggenheim et al., 2015).



The spike in *blame politics and politicians* also supports the application of Scanlonian blame in this case. As with police, the public are more likely to have a moral (if not personal) relationship with political figures, including behavioral expectations that are able to be violated. While public relationships with politicians are not always built on a firm foundation of trust and respect, there is nevertheless a moral relationship that exists wherein politicians are, to some extent at least, expected to act in the best interests of their constituents. The insertion of political figures in the Uvalde narrative offered a secondary target of blame for Twitter users wherein REV could occur. The question is, however, why *blame police* returned immediately after event five, and *blame politics and politicians* did not return to the higher rates observed in this single event. Due to reciprocal framing, it is likely that the return of focus to police failures by CNN and Fox News in subsequent tweets shaped the blame attribution process, returning focus to police over politicians. Further, the nature of REV must again be considered. Given that REV suggests that higher expectations of behavior lead to stronger blame responses where REV occurs, it could be argued that the public expectations of politicians are *lower* than they are for police, resulting in police receiving a higher level of blameworthiness than the politicians from whom poor conduct is more expected (Gino et al., 2010).

#### Crossing the Twitter Aisle — Few Differences in Replies to CNN vs. Fox News

It was also notable that, although there are typically clear differences between liberal and conservative leaning voters on issues like gun access and control (Demszky et al., 2019; Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2017) and police (Chenane, 2022), as well as political divisions in the general viewership and/or ‘followership’ of CNN and Fox News (Bump, 2022; Mitchell, 2014), there were no substantive differences between the replies to tweets from either the CNN or Fox News accounts. Those replying to CNN tweets were *no more likely* to express views that were coded as pro-gun control or anti-police; similarly, those responding to Fox News tweets were *no more likely* than CNN respondents to express views coded as anti-gun control or pro-police. While those replying to CNN tweets recorded slightly more *blame police* codes in general, those replying to Fox News tweets also blamed police, and we see a similar progression of this blame across replies to both sources. Additionally, those replying to Fox News tweets blamed guns more often overall than CNN repliers, contrary to expectations regarding Fox News followers’ predicted pro-gun sentiments (Demszky et al., 2019; Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2017).

Figure 3 – Blame Attribution by Event (Tweet) and by Outlet

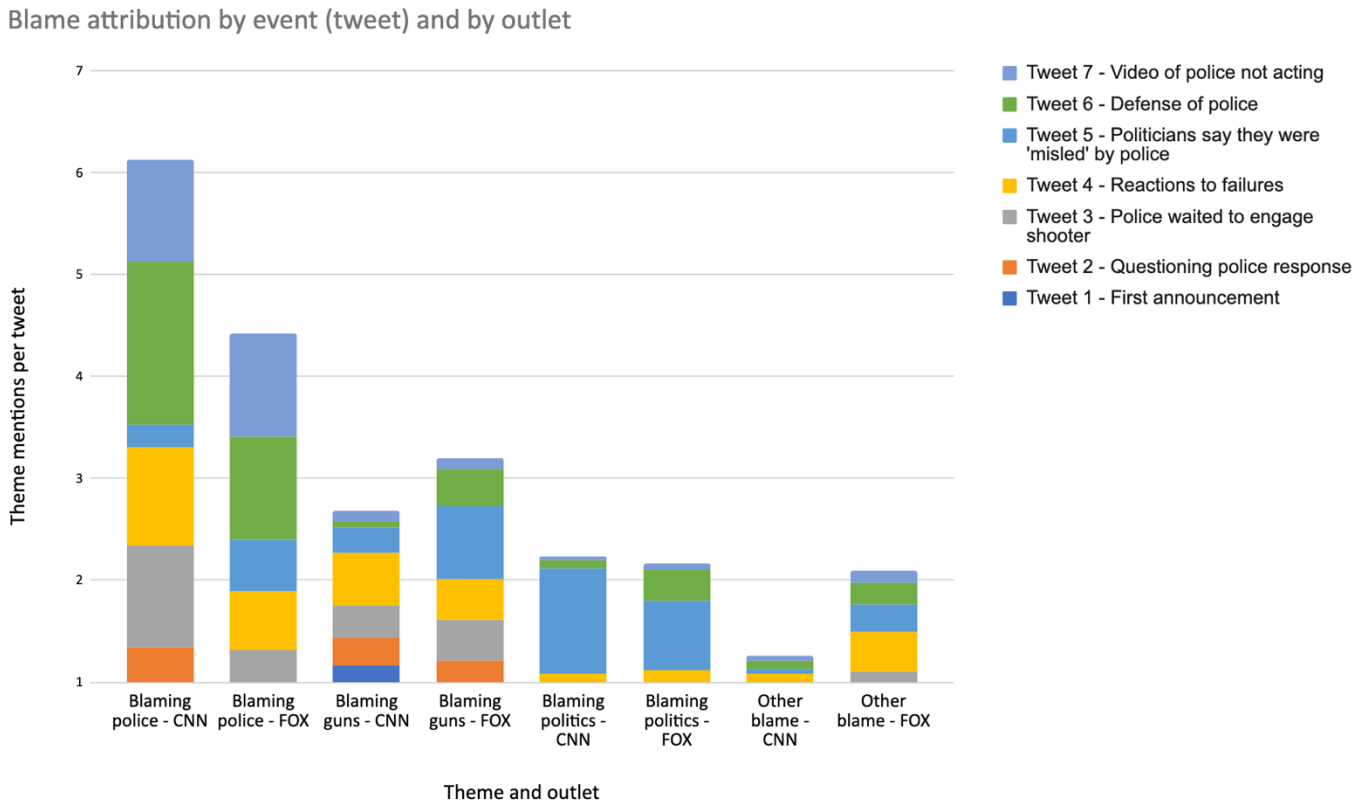
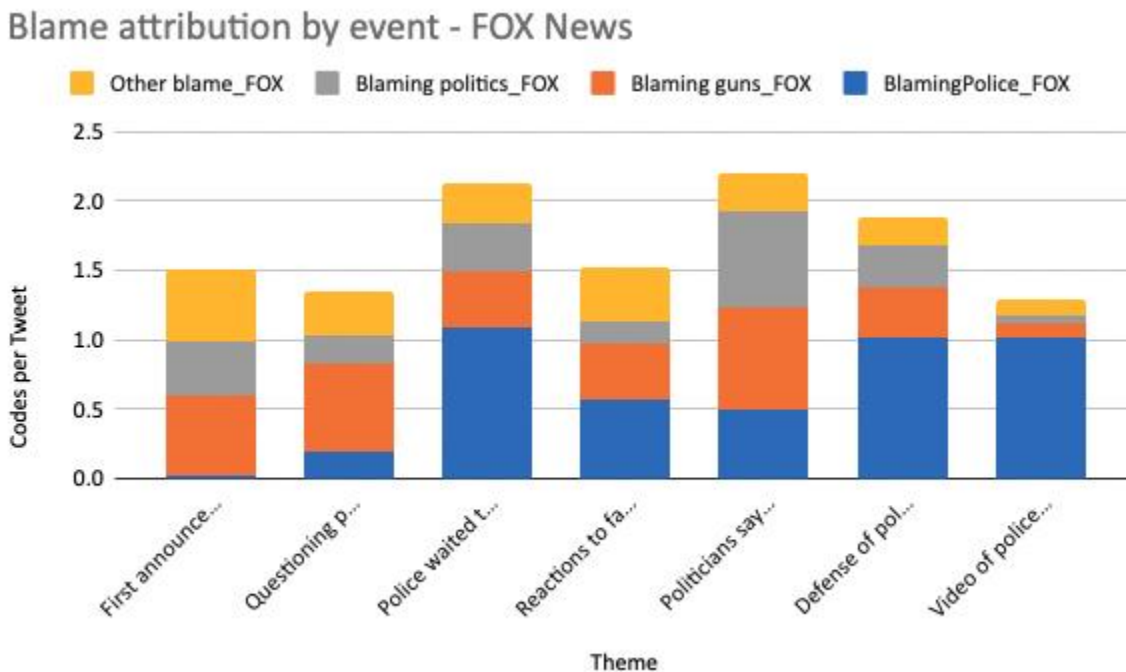


Figure 4 - Blame Attribution by Event: FOX News



There are several possible explanations for this. Despite stereotypical characterizations, it is possible people's political orientations do not fall as neatly in line with the news networks they watch and follow (Shafer et al., 2021), and that liberal-leaning voters actually watch and follow Fox News and vice versa. However, it could also be that news-followers proactively cross the proverbial aisle to the opposing political side's preferred news network to not only watch, but to insult, mock, or even blame that media when tragic events occur. Given that we coded 14.5% total replies as using a sarcastic or mocking tone, and 8.7% as explicitly critical of the media, this possibility cannot be discounted. This includes tweets where users mocked the argument they *expected* the other side to give, for example commenting on the fact that even several *good guys with a gun* (the necessity of which is argued by pro-gun advocates) did not stop this shooting, or saying that "thoughts and prayers are not enough" as a way of mocking gun-supporters' practice of stating that their thoughts and prayers are with the families of those affected while not offering any sort of gun reform or legislation. While some of the high total of mocking and sarcastic tweets can be explained by internet and social media culture and parlance, where humor, memes, and insults are common (Zappavigna, 2012), this is still a striking percentage, given that the subject matter in question was a mass shooting that killed elementary school students and teachers.

Moreover, the possibility that politically aligned viewers consume content produced by 'the other side' only to mock or insult that content and its consumers, may reflect ongoing and worsening political polarization in the United States and all over the world. With viewers entrenched in their political camps, and the culture of partisanship, they are better able to predict what the other side will argue in a specific situation, such as a mass shooting. This points to the continued tribalism of the political 'arena.' Many of the sarcastic and mocking replies seemed more like the kind of discourse one would hear at a sporting event or among people arguing about their favorite athlete or band, rather than commentary about a horrific mass shooting. While it is important to note that this tribalism could also be due to the limits of social media as a proper space for good political discourse, the seeming discursive transformation of some political parties into 'teams' that require unwavering loyalty and support (regardless of what ideas they espouse) likely plays a role as well. Anecdotally, throughout our data collection we noticed that Fox News tweets tended to garner more of a response when they mentioned President Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, or another politician by name, though not a qualitatively *different* response. Once again, this indicates a tribal conditioning of Twitter users, wherein the mere mention of a politician is enough to warrant a higher response rate. This is important in terms of qualifying the motivations of Twitter respondents to events like mass shootings, which may not always be driven by the event itself, but rather an underlying political partisanship.

### Limitations

There are several limitations to this research that must be noted. First, our sample only included one social media platform (Twitter), and only the replies on tweets from two major American media networks. We did not use AI or machine learning, as has been the case in other research contexts (Demszky et al., 2019; Qazi et al., 2020). To properly human code the content of each tweet, it was important to collect a manageable sample that covered initial tweets from both a (broadly perceived) liberal and conservative outlet, resulting in our sample of 2,182 replies.

Finally, what we have captured here is only blame attribution on social media, and it is possible that we are only measuring one part of Twitter users' blame attribution. However, while the platform's 280-character limit naturally precludes entirely nuanced articulation of views, it nevertheless provided enough space for many users to dole out blame toward multiple different parties, not limiting themselves to one person, entity, or institution. Moreover, we do not profess to be analyzing each user's views on the shooting but, rather, we are assessing how blame is attributed on social media during a developing story, and the influence that mainstream media framing has on this blame. Given the reciprocal nature of news framing between mainstream and social

media (Guggenheim et al., 2015), as well as the importance of media framing for how the public understands issues and events, it remains vital to study the way that large news events are covered and commented on by both mainstream and social media.

### Conclusion

The public response to mass shooting events like the 2022 Uvalde school shooting is consequential in the sense that public sentiment drives political action, and has an impact on the sociocultural responses to guns (Lee et al., 2022). Initial reactions of Twitter users almost exclusively demonstrated a pattern of blaming guns for this tragic event – in particular, a lack of gun control in the United States. However, this discursive focus began to shift as reports of police inaction started to be reported by mainstream media sources like CNN and Fox News. This was reciprocated in tweet replies that began to trend (with notable exceptions) toward blaming police, shifting away from rhetoric around blaming guns. The tendency to blame police over guns could be attributed to a Scanlonian interpretation of “blame” where blame is relational, and most strongly applies when the behavioral expectations of the blamed are higher (Scanlon, 2013). While the initial tweet response reflects an expectation that access to guns will result in mass shootings, the introduction of the police failure dynamic appears to have created an REV relationship expectation violation that resulted in more concerted and intense blame leveled toward police, from whom a higher standard is expected.

While the primary blame targets changed based on which news source users were responding to, this research indicates the existence of more complex social interactions on Twitter which are not in total alignment with the predicted partisan sentiment of news consumers. For example, at various points the level of blame expressed for police and/or guns was higher in replies to Fox News tweets than to CNN tweets, counter to the prediction that Fox News consumers would express more politically conservative views (e.g., pro-gun; pro-police). There are several possibilities to explain why Twitter users may ‘cross the aisle’ to engage with (or, many times, to insult, mock, or blame) news networks (and their consumers) promoting opposing views, which require further examination.

Also requiring further exploration is the use of sarcasm and mocking in responses to mass shooting incidents and other tragedies. Around 14.5% of tweets coded utilized these rhetorical techniques, often to preempt the anticipated response of political opponents in a mocking style that drew on repeated scripts used in mass shooting events, such as references to *thoughts and prayers* or the *good guy with a gun* narrative. That the public seems able to “predict” the responses of individuals on both sides of the gun debate indicates a normalization in the public discourse which raises questions about the diminishing impact of gun violence on public sentiment, as well as the entrenchment of partisan talking points on mass shootings in American public discourse. Tragically, if patterns in mass shootings in the United States persist at the current rate, there will likely be many more opportunities in future to study the public response to events like the 2022 Uvalde school shooting. It is our deepest hope that these opportunities for further research do not arise.

## References

- Altheide, D. L., & Schneider, C. J. (2012). *Qualitative media analysis* (Vol. 38). Sage publications.
- Atkeson, L. R., & Maestas, C. D. (2012). *Catastrophic politics: How extraordinary events redefine perceptions of government*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bauchner, H., Rivara, F. P., Bonow, R. O., Bressler, N. M., Disis, M. L. N., Heckers, S., Josephson, S. A., Kibbe, M. R., Piccirillo, J. F., & Redberg, R. F. (2017). Death by gun violence—A public health crisis. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 74(12), 1195–1196.
- Bleakley, P., & Sailofsky, D. (2023). Politics, jokes, and banter amid tragedy: the use of sarcasm and mocking on social media in response to the Uvalde school shooting. *The Journal of Social Media in Society*, 12(2), 62-81.
- Bump, P. (2022, April 4). Analysis | The unique, damaging role Fox News plays in American media. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/04/04/unique-damaging-role-fox-news-plays-american-media/>
- Canales, K. L., Pope, J. V., & Maestas, C. D. (2019). Tweeting Blame in a Federalist System: Attributions for Disaster Response in Social Media Following Hurricane Sandy. *Social Science Quarterly*, 100(7), 2594–2606. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12669>
- Chenane, J. L. (2022). Public opinion on immigration law enforcement, support for the police, and obligation to report undocumented immigrants to the police. *Race and Justice*, 21533687221120950.
- Clark, C. J., Chen, E. E., & Ditto, P. H. (2015). Moral coherence processes: Constructing culpability and consequences. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 6, 123–128.
- Croituru, A., Kien, S., Mahabir, R., Radzikowski, J., Crooks, A., Schuchard, R., Begay, T., Lee, A., Bettios, A., & Stefanidis, A. (2020). Responses to mass shooting events: The interplay between the media and the public. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 19(1), 335–360.
- Demszky, D., Garg, N., Voigt, R., Zou, J., Gentzkow, M., Shapiro, J., & Jurafsky, D. (2019). Analyzing polarization in social media: Method and application to tweets on 21 mass shootings. *arXiv Preprint arXiv:1904.01596*.
- Dingwall, G., & Hillier, T. (2008). *Blamestorming, blamemongers and scapegoats: Allocating blame in the criminal justice process*.
- Dreier, S. K., Gade, E. K., Card, D., & Smith, N. A. (2022). Patterns of Bias: How Mainstream Media Operationalize Links between Mass Shootings and Terrorism. *Political Communication*, 39(6), 755–778.
- Everytown. (2022, September 14). *Mass Shootings in America* [Everytown]. <https://everytownresearch.org/maps/mass-shootings-in-america/>
- Frederick, E. L., Pegoraro, A., & Schmidt, S. (2020). “I’m not going to the f\*\*\*ing White House”: Twitter Users React to Donald Trump and Megan Rapinoe. *Communication & Sport*, 2167479520950778.
- Gagnon, A., & Fox, K. A. (2021). Community satisfaction and police officer understanding of community expectations: A quantitative and observational analysis. *Criminology, Crim. Just. L & Soc’y*, 22, 1.
- Gaultney, I. B., Sherron, T., & Boden, C. (2022). Political polarization, misinformation, and media literacy. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 14(1), 59–81.
- Geller, L. B., Booty, M., & Crifasi, C. K. (2021). The role of domestic violence in fatal mass shootings in the United States, 2014–2019. *Injury Epidemiology*, 8(1), 1–8.
- Gino, F., Shu, L. L., & Bazerman, M. H. (2010). Nameless+ harmless= blameless: When seemingly irrelevant factors influence judgment of (un) ethical behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 111(2), 93–101.

- Guggenheim, L., Jang, S. M., Bae, S. Y., & Neuman, W. R. (2015). The dynamics of issue frame competition in traditional and social media. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 659(1), 207–224.
- Haider-Markel, D. P., & Joslyn, M. R. (2001). Gun policy, opinion, tragedy, and blame attribution: The conditional influence of issue frames. *Journal of Politics*, 63(2), 520–543.
- Halabi, S., Statman, Y., & Dovidio, J. F. (2015). Attributions of responsibility and punishment for ingroup and outgroup members: The role of just world beliefs. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 18(1), 104–115.
- Hemenway, D., & Nelson, E. (2020). The scope of the problem: Gun violence in the USA. *Current Trauma Reports*, 6(1), 29–35.
- Hollander, B. A. (2008). Tuning Out or Tuning Elsewhere? Partisanship, Polarization, and Media Migration from 1998 to 2006. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 85(1), 23–40.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900808500103>
- Holody, K. J., & Shaughnessy, B. (2022). # NEVERAGAIN: Framing in community and national news coverage of the Parkland mass shootings. *Journalism Practice*, 16(4), 637–659.
- Hyun, K. D., & Moon, S. J. (2016). Agenda Setting in the Partisan TV News Context: Attribute Agenda Setting and Polarized Evaluation of Presidential Candidates Among Viewers of NBC, CNN, and Fox News. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 93(3), 509–529.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699016628820>
- Jashinsky, J. M., Magnusson, B., Hanson, C., & Barnes, M. (2017). Media agenda setting regarding gun violence before and after a mass shooting. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 4, 291.
- Joslyn, M. R., & Haider-Markel, D. P. (2017). Gun ownership and self-serving attributions for mass shooting tragedies. *Social Science Quarterly*, 98(2), 429–442.
- Kostakos, P. (2018). Public perceptions on organised crime, mafia, and terrorism: A big data analysis based on twitter and Google trends. *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, 12(1), 282–299.
- Kwon, K. H., Chadha, M., & Wang, F. (2019). Proximity and networked news public: Structural topic modeling of global Twitter conversations about the 2017 Quebec mosque shooting. *International Journal of Communication*, 13, 24.
- Lee, H., Pickett, J. T., Burton, A. L., Cullen, F. T., Jonson, C. L., & Burton, V. S. (2022). Attributions as anchors: How the public explains school shootings and why it matters. *Justice Quarterly*, 39(3), 497–524.
- Lee, J. S., & Kwak, D. H. (2017). Can winning take care of everything? A longitudinal assessment of post-transgression actions on repairing trust in an athlete endorser. *Sport Management Review*, 20(3), 261–272.
- Lemieux, F. (2014). Effect of Gun Culture and Firearm Laws on Gun Violence and Mass Shootings in the United States: A Multi-Level Quantitative Analysis. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*, 9(1).
- Miron, A. M., & Branscombe, N. R. (2008). Social categorization, standards of justice, and collective guilt. *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Reconciliation*, 77–96.
- Mitchell, A. (2014, October 21). Section 1: Media Sources: Distinct Favorites Emerge on the Left and Right. *Pew Research Center's Journalism Project*.  
<https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2014/10/21/section-1-media-sources-distinct-favorites-emerge-on-the-left-and-right/>
- Monroe, A. E., & Malle, B. F. (2019). People systematically update moral judgments of blame. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 116(2), 215.

- Nadeau, R., Arel-Bundock, V., & Daoust, J.-F. (2019). Satisfaction with democracy and the American dream. *The Journal of Politics*, 81(3), 1080–1084.
- Nadler, J., & McDonnell, M.-H. (2011). Moral character, motive, and the psychology of blame. *Cornell L. Rev.*, 97, 255.
- Nazir, F., Ghazanfar, M. A., Maqsood, M., Aadil, F., Rho, S., & Mehmood, I. (2019). Social media signal detection using tweets volume, hashtag, and sentiment analysis. *Multimedia Tools and Applications*, 78(3), 3553–3586.
- Parks, P. (2023). “Down the Middle”: CNN 10 and the Ideology of Objectivity. *Journalism Practice*, 17(8), 1627–1644. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.2008812>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative Social Work*, 1(3), 261–283.
- Qazi, U., Imran, M., & Ofli, F. (2020). GeoCoV19: A dataset of hundreds of millions of multilingual COVID-19 tweets with location information. *SIGSPATIAL Special*, 12(1), 6–15.
- Quinn, F., Prendergast, M., & Galvin, A. (2019). Her name was Clodagh: Twitter and the news discourse of murder suicide. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 16(3), 312–329.
- Rothschild, Z. K., Landau, M. J., Sullivan, D., & Keefer, L. A. (2012). A dual-motive model of scapegoating: Displacing blame to reduce guilt or increase control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(6), 1148.
- Scanlon, T. M. (2013). Interpreting blame. *Blame. Its Nature and Norms*, 84–99.
- Scharp, K. M., & Sanders, M. L. (2019). What is a theme? Teaching thematic analysis in qualitative communication research methods. *Communication Teacher*, 33(2), 117–121.
- Schildkraut, J. (2016). *Mass murder and the mass media: Understanding the construction of the social problem of mass shootings in the US*.
- Schildkraut, J., Elsass, H. J., & Meredith, K. (2018). Mass shootings and the media: Why all events are not created equal. *Journal of Crime and Justice*, 41(3), 223–243.
- Schroeder, E., & Stone, D. F. (2015). Fox news and political knowledge. *Journal of Public Economics*, 126, 52–63.
- Shafer, K., Petts, R. J., & Scheibling, C. (2021). Variation in Masculinities and Fathering Behaviors: A Cross-National Comparison of the United States and Canada. *Sex Roles*, 84(7–8), 439–453. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-020-01177-3>
- Sher, G. (2013). Wrongdoing and relationships: The problem of the stranger. *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, 49–65.
- Skogan, W. G. (2005). Citizen satisfaction with police encounters. *Police Quarterly*, 8(3), 298–321.
- Stroebe, W., Agostini, M., Kreienkamp, J., & Leander, N. P. (2022). When mass shootings fail to change minds about the causes of violence: How gun beliefs shape causal attributions. *Psychology of Violence*, 12, 305–313. <https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000431>
- Suler, J. (2004). The online disinhibition effect. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, 7(3), 321–326.
- Taylor, J. (2002). Hume on the Standard of Virtue. *The Journal of Ethics*, 6(1), 43–62.
- Vidgerman, A., & Turner, G. (2022, November 3). A Timeline of School Shootings Since Columbine [Security.org]. *Trending Topics*. <https://www.security.org/blog/a-timeline-of-school-shootings-since-columbine/>
- Walsh, J. P. (2020). Social media and moral panics: Assessing the effects of technological change on societal reaction. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 23(6), 840–859.
- Zappavigna, M. (2012). *Discourse of Twitter and social media: How we use language to create affiliation on the web* (Vol. 6). A&C Black.

Zhang, Y., Shah, D., Pevehouse, J., & Valenzuela, S. (2022). Reactive and Asymmetric Communication Flows: Social Media Discourse and Partisan News Framing in the Wake of Mass Shootings. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 19401612211072793.