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## Finding a Frame that Fits: Analyzing Rival Framing of American Gun Control Policy in 2013

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**Finding a Frame that Fits: Analyzing Rival Framing of American Gun Control Policy**

**in 2013**

**by**

**Alexander Booker**

**Pepperdine University**

**April 9, 2014**

## **Abstract**

This paper uses political framing theory to analyze the messages employed by different gun lobby groups during the early 2013 debate on gun control legislation proposed in the United States Congress. I asked two questions with my research. First, what type of political action frames did gun interest groups use in the debate over expanded background checks in the spring of 2013? Second, which frames affected public opinion regarding expanded background checks for gun purchases? I use a mixed-methods research approach to answer these questions. First, I conducted a content analysis of both pro- and anti-gun control messaging that came from the major gun lobby groups during the early part of 2013. Second, I conducted a survey experiment in which individuals were randomly assigned one of four potential frames, and I analyzed the effects of these frames on attitudes towards background checks. The paper finds that pro-gun control interest groups frame gun control in the context of safety and emotions, while anti-gun control groups use an anti-elite argument against expanded background checks. In addition, I find that there is high support for expanded background checks no matter which frame is presented to individuals, but using the Second Amendment in a negative framing fashion does somewhat diminish support.

## Introduction

One of the most important theories in the social sciences comes from a sociologist named W.I. Thomas ([1925] 1967), who stated, "if men define their situations as real, they are real in their consequences." The quotation above describes the "Thomas theorem"; it is considered to be the "essence" of framing theory, with the core idea that if a group of individuals can successfully define a situation as "real," that newly defined situation can have real-world consequences for the greater society (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; McAdam and et al. 1996; Druckman 2001). In the political world, most use the term "political spin" as a layman's term for framing. Framing is important because political actors can use it in ways that shift public opinion on pieces of public policy such as expanded background checks for gun purchases. Over the course of this paper, I use political framing theory to better understand how public opinion regarding background checks was potentially influenced by different framing arguments utilized by gun interest groups.

In this paper, I look at how framing theory can help explain how different arguments and messages, articulated by different political actors (specifically interest groups), influence public opinion on legislation, such as the Toomey- Manchin gun amendment, debated in the United States Senate in the summer of 2013 (Blake 2013), which tried to expand background checks for gun purchase. I ask two questions with my research. First, what type of political action frames did gun interest groups use in the debate over expanded background checks in the spring of 2013? Second, which frames affected public opinion regarding expanded background checks for gun purchases? I answer these

research questions by employing a mixed-methods research design, including content analysis and experimental design.

My research is based on the expansive political framing literature that looks at how political advocacy frames are constructed and used by “political actors”, such as “interest groups” (McGrath 2007; Miceli 2005), the different types of frames that are typically used in a political setting (Gamson 1992), and the effectiveness that political framing can have in shaping the political viewpoint of citizens (Druckman 2001). These literatures explain what is the political framing process and how it works. However, a lack of literature has applied framing theory to recent political debates of public policy, such as gun control policies. The literature that has specifically looked at gun control framing has not been updated to take into account a pro gun-control political environment after the traumatizing events of the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007 and the Aurora, Colorado and Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in 2012. For this paper, I am specifically looking at the recent political debate regarding gun control since framing findings may have changed since the last major study on this issue done by Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2001). In addition, research done by Slothuus and de Vreese (2010) argue that most of the literature ignores framing by “charged political groups” (642). Since interest groups are in the business of creating frames, it is essential to understand the effects of their frames, which I assess herein.

I address my research question in a mixed-methods research design. More narrowly, through content analysis, I examined how relevant political actors, such as the National Rifle Association or Mayors Against Illegal Guns, frame proposed public policy, and then compared which particular frames changed opinions regarding background checks. To carry out this content analysis of frames, I examined media materials from

different gun policy organizations to determine how those organizations frame their arguments. I then conducted an experiment in February of 2014, using Pepperdine University undergraduates as my research population, to show how the different frames can potentially influence the level of support of the legislation among the public.

The paper finds that pro-gun control interest groups frame gun control within the context of safety and emotions, while anti-gun control groups have been using an “anti-elite” argument against expanded background check. In addition, I find high support for expanded background checks no matter which frame is presented to individuals, but negative framing related to the Second Amendment does somewhat diminish support. These findings are important in that they apply political framing theory to very recent political debates, such as expanded background checks for guns, and it also updates the work of Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2001). Therefore, my paper ties political framing theory to a closer analysis of how certain political frames can shape public opinion. This paper offers a better understanding of how frames can shape public opinion, which may play a role in the success or failure of some public policy proposals.

### **Literature and Theory Overview on Political Framing Theory**

The literature that deals with framing theory in political science consists of theoretical explanations of how framing works, practical applications of framing to political science research, and “real world” examples of political actors framing specific policies. The purpose of this literature review is to present the current state of framing theory within political science, moving from a large picture of framing theory and then focusing on specific applications of framing theory, such as how interest groups utilize framing to

better argue for their political ideas. After laying out the current state of political framing theory, I point out deficiencies in the framing literature.

### *What is Framing?*

One of the most popular definitions of framing theory comes from Gamson and Modigliani (1989), who suggest that a frame is a “central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (143). Another strong definition of framing theory comes from Druckman (2001), who states, “a framing effect occurs when in the course of describing an issue or event, a speaker's emphasis on a subset of potentially relevant considerations causes individuals to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions” (226).

When political debates involve competing ideals, political elites create frames to advance their arguments. One of the main goals for political advocacy and interest groups is control over the “frame” of a particular public policy issue. Successful framing of an issue can turn a piece of legislation, such as the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, into something that will bring affordable health care coverage to millions of Americans or into something that will eliminate hundreds of thousands of jobs and create a bureaucratic government-run health care system (Porter 2013). In a much more extreme case, Druckman (2001) makes the point that “people's opinions about a Ku Klux Klan rally can depend on whether it is framed as a free speech or public safety issue” (225). In terms of gun policy, framing can play an important role in shifting personal opinions about gun regulations from a manner of individual protection and liberty, to a collective thought

about protection and safety for our community against guns (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2001).

### *Real World Examples of Framing and the Impact of Framing in Politics*

A major strength of the current body of literature is its ability to find ways to apply the theoretical definition of framing to major American political issues. Some examples of “real-world framing” that have been shown in the recent literature include specific case studies of framing used by political interest groups and studies on just how effective frames are in shaping public opinion. Looking at examples of framing showcases how political framing has already been used in other policy areas, which is applicable to analyzing the current framing by political actors regarding gun policy.

An example of how different interest groups use framing to best sell their argument comes from a study by Rohlinger and Quadagno (2009), in which they look at the Conservative Christian political movement of the United States, also known as the “Evangelical Right,” and how it shaped certain public policy issues. There are two strong examples of interest framing by the “Evangelical Right”; the first example involves framing of abortion issues. Instead of focusing on the pregnant woman and her right to make personal choices about her reproductive system, the Conservative Christian movement employed the “pro-life” frame to shift the issue towards protecting the life of an innocent baby at all costs. This particular frame asserts that every human from all stages of life, including biological conception, has a “right to life without exception or compromise” (347).



Another major example of framing being used by political interest groups is the strong political struggle between the LGBT social movement community and the same Conservative Christian movement. Melinda Miceli (2005) shows how both movements used completely different types of political frames within the same debate, the acceptance and rights of LGBT people in modern society. According to Miceil, the LGBT community uses “framing strategies centered firmly in the arena of identity politics,” while the evangelical right focused their specific framing on “morality politics” (591), using a strong literal interpretation of the Holy Bible as the rationale for its frame.

The evangelical framing is in direct contrast with the framing from the LGBT community that focuses more on identity politics and the civil liberties at stake for the LGBT community. This is important, because according to Miceil (2005), “frames that resonate with existing cultural beliefs and values are generally more successful than those that do not” (601). By using this new frame of fighting for constitutional and civil rights of the oppressed LGBT minority group, the LGBT movement has seen a success in shifting public opinion in a more positive light for their causes. The never-ending clash within the LGBT-Evangelical Right example is similar to the difference between pro- and anti-gun control interest groups, and their radically different beliefs on gun regulations.

The major piece of literature that deals with political framing of gun policy comes from Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2001), in which they test the influence of framing of gun control in the political aftermath of the Columbine High School Massacre in 1999. Their research is highly relevant to this paper because it showed that framing affects opinions about gun control legislation. For example, the authors found that

“Opponents of gun control raised the specter of big government usurping individual rights while proponents underscored public safety, especially the security of school-age children. Our results indicated that alternative gun frames do in fact influence respondent opinion” (537).

In addition, because the authors were analyzing framing in a post- Columbine High School shooting environment, they also compared two competing frames for why the shooting happened, framing media violence, a cultural explanation, versus weak gun laws, a structural explanation (537).

Although frames can influence public opinion on political issues, frames do not have the power to radically change public opinion, and must take into account the rational choice that individuals typically make when making political decisions. Druckman (2001) shows that individuals may not be affected by a frame if it was clearly constructed by a source those individuals do not trust. According to Druckman.

“citizens appear to consciously weigh the considerations suggested by elite frames, compare these considerations to their predispositions and information, and contemplate about the source of the frame... citizens deal with elite frames in a relatively competent and well-reasoned manner” (246).

Druckman’s findings are important since they show that the average citizen is able to deal with elite framing in a competent manner, sometimes resisting framing’s influence. The basis for my experiment comes from a study by Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2001), in which they randomly selected individuals to hear a message framing gun policy from a gun safety perspective or a message framing gun policy from the standpoint of individual liberty.

Those who heard the gun safety frame were significantly more likely to support additional

regulations compared to those who heard the individual liberty frame. The research done by Haider-Markel and Joslyn is critical for this research topic, since it creates a base for my own research to stand on, and I then expand upon their work by adding a qualitative element and takes into account the political context of this debate in 2013.

### *Deficiency in the Literature*

While the literature in political framing theory is typically strong, deficiencies exist. The first major issue is the lack of focus on how the political advocacy frames of political interest groups (e.g. advocacy groups, think tanks, political parties, etc., an exception, see Gerrity 2006) intersect with Congressional framing and issues, such as proposed pieces of legislation and policy. Most of the literature is very good at explaining how frames are constructed, how average citizens receive these frames, and how other political interest groups generally use framing to advance their own agenda. However, the literature fails to analyze how the political framing process affects a specific piece of public policy in the sphere of public opinion, for better or worse. Also, there has not been much work on using a dual-qualitative and quantitative approach on recent examples of political advocacy framing, such as with the recent debate on American gun policy, for the mixed-methods approach is important in that it allows us to track the political framing process from the initial messaging of interest groups to the effects of those messages on the average citizen. My paper tackles those deficiencies by utilizing a mixed-methods approach and applying it to competing frames from gun interest groups during the congressional debate for expanded background checks in 2013.

In addition, Slothuus and de Vreese (2013) argue that the literature largely ignores the effects of framing by “charged political groups”, such as political parties or interest groups. A recent study by the authors developed a way to examine how citizens receive the issue frames that are sponsored by major political parties. Their research “revise[s] conventional wisdom on framing, parties, and public opinion” by shifting the focus to how political parties use framing to push their own agenda (643). Specifically, the effects of framing a particular issue are at their strongest when citizens already have some ideological connection with a political party that is trying to establish said frame, instead of with average citizens that have a low sense of political awareness. My paper will address this specific deficiency in the framing literature by looking how “charged political groups” within the realm of gun policy used issue framing to shift public opinion for or against expanded background checks.

Furthermore, recent literature focusing on political advocacy framing for gun control policies in a post-Aurora and Sandy Hook world is lacking. While there have been many notable incidents of gun violence over the past decade, it seems that the literature, for example, Haider-Markel & Joslyn (2001), has not been updated to take into account how interest groups have reacted to these recent events of gun violence, and reshaped their messages from fallout of these events. Therefore, this thesis examines how after these (and other) horrific massacres, political actors may have changed their framing strategies, and if those new strategies are effective in shaping public opinion.

### **Methods**

The data and analysis section of this paper is broken up into two main sections. The first section reviews the data I collected from content analysis to analyze the different

frames interest groups use in the recent gun control debate, and the second section reviews the data collected from the experimental questionnaire showing that support for expanded background checks is high, but can be deflated with certain negative framing examples, such as using the Second Amendment as a way to go against potential gun control policies.

### *Content Analysis Methods*

The units of analysis for the content analysis were each piece of media I collected from three different major forms of media (video, non-op-ed newspaper articles, and websites). I selected these forms of media because they arguably are the most popular forms of media that deliver political information and opinion to an average citizen. In addition, each piece of media I analyzed for this paper are easy and short to digest, making it so that anyone can identify the argument it makes.

I examine four different lobbying organizations that are involved with gun regulation and politics. Two are best defined as “pro-gun control”: “Mayors Against Illegal Guns” and “The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence”; the other two groups would be best defined as “pro-gun rights”: the “National Rifle Association” and “the National Association for Gun Rights”. I selected the organizations by looking at the top two gun control group (MAIG and Brady) and the top two gun rights (NRA and NAGR) groups that donated the most money to members of Congress for the past two election cycles (2010, 2012).<sup>i</sup> In addition, I focused on general gun rights issues or gun control issues, and not specialized and niche elements of gun policy, such as hunting or shooting for sport.

For the video portion of my content analysis, I used the most popular online video website, YouTube.com, to find political advertisements from each of the four gun policy organizations. The reasoning for selecting YouTube as a media source of my content

analysis is that the rise of online video and political TV advertisements makes video one of the most popular ways for individuals to learn about political topics. For the purpose of the video content, I analyze videos created for the sole purpose of short political advertisements, which were uploaded to YouTube between the dates of December 15, 2012, the day after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, to April 17, 2013, the day that the Toomey-Manchin Gun Background Check Amendment failed in the U.S. Senate. The reasoning for the four-month timeframe of video content is because many consider the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting to be the political spark that started our nationwide debate on gun control policies, and “universal background checks” were mentioned in these early advertisements. I am looking at a variety of online videos from each gun policy organization.<sup>ii</sup>

To content analyze newspaper articles, I utilized the Factiva Search Engine to find non-op-ed newspaper articles that were published between March 14, 2013, a week before Senator Harry Reid formally introduced the gun control bill that contained the Toomey-Manchin Amendment, and April 18, 2013, the day after the Toomey-Manchin Amendment failed in the U.S. Senate. However, when collecting content sources from Dow Jones Factiva newswires, I noticed that newspaper articles that were highly relevant to the Toomey-Manchin Amendment, started around April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013; therefore, the newspaper articles that I analyzed come from a time period of April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013 to April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Using Factiva, I searched major U.S. newspapers with the following search terms: “Mayors Against Illegal Guns OR National Rifle Association OR Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence OR National Association for Gun Rights AND Senate AND Background Checks”. I used the Factiva database to pull up the archive of the old newspaper articles and I asked the search

engine to only use “Major U.S. Newspapers” as its sources. Therefore, I aimed to find stories that contain quotes and statements from those organizations, and how those statements are framed in the articles. After taking into account duplicates, letter to the editors, and op-eds, I analyzed 75 articles, which met my criteria, from the larger sample of over 200 search results.

I also analyzed the websites the aforementioned four organizations and press releases posted on said websites. Using the Internet Archive web service and the Google Search Engine, I looked at the messaging of the homepage, and “About Us” page of each website. I selected content of the websites from March 14, 2013 to April 20, 2013; because the original gun control bill was introduced into the United States Senate on March 14th. The reasoning for applying this exact timeframe is because I believe that if an average citizen was to conduct research on the legislation while it was still being debated within the Senate and then find themselves on one of these four websites, they would likely have seen some sort of argument for/against the proposed legislation. In addition, the press releases posted on these websites would be clear examples of content addressing the legislation and the organization’s opinion of it. Therefore, I analyze all available press releases within that same time period above.

For each piece of content, I recorded elements such as the basic message of the content, who was speaking or quoted, and whether the content mention any particular subjects and were those subjects portrayed positively or negatively. In addition, I also looked to see whether the content mentioned a certain social class of people, whether it mentioned past events of gun violence, whether it featured victims of, or those affected by, gun violence, and whether the Second Amendment and/or expanded background checks

was mentioned within the content. Regarding my coding results, I had an intercoder reliability score of 97%. The coding sheets for my content analysis are presented in Appendix C.

### *Quantitative Experiment Methods*

To answer my second question, I conducted a survey experiment in which participants of the experiment were randomly selected to receive one of four questionnaires, each questionnaire having its own type of framing on the issue of gun control.

The survey consisted of a one-page survey, which was completed by test subjects within five minutes or less. The questionnaires featured the main experimental question, asking the individual's opinion on the Toomey- Manchin gun proposal, which would have required criminal and mental background checks for individuals if they wanted to purchase a gun from an online website or gun show (see Appendix A). The dependent variable is individuals' opinions about background checks and the key independent variable is the frame that subjects are presented with (neutral, gun violence, victims, or Second Amendment). It is important to note that although I did not find much Second Amendment rights framing within my content analysis, use of the Second Amendment as a way to be "anti-gun control" is very common within American political debate. I opted to employ a Second Amendment frame instead of an anti-elite frame, similar to what was found in my content analysis; because, the subjects, university students, may not have been as receptive to anti-elite framing as the rest of the United States, since these students are typically in a social class, middle-class or above, that does not look at elites in a negative/combative



fashion. The third frame aims to be opinion-neutral and the fourth frame is also positive towards the policy, but frames its in the manner of finding ways to protect “loved ones” and preventing future victims of gun violence. For each of the frame, the participants will have a range of opinion choices to choose from: strongly disagree to strongly agree (see Appendix A). I then converted their opinion choices to a 1 to 6 scale, with “1” equaling “I would be strongly against” the proposed expanded background checks legislation, to “6” equaling “I would be strongly for it”. In addition, I collected demographic information such as gender, age, hometown, and political leanings, to then see if there is any kind of correlation between demographic and/or political leanings, and acceptance of the frames that I tested.

The sample consisted of 224 students taking the Pepperdine University Political Science 104 GE courses in the Spring 2014 semester. I entered each different section of Political Science 104 to conduct the experiment. However, it is important to note that some students were international students, and I removed their data from the sample, because of their possible lack of American cultural or political knowledge; therefore I removed around an average of four international student surveys from each experimental condition. I printed out the four different version of the questionnaire, randomly shuffled them by using a random number generator to randomize selection into experimental conditions, and then distribute the questionnaires to the students.

## Results and Discussion

### *Content Analysis Findings*

In the video part of the content analysis, I looked at 22 different videos from the four major gun policy organizations. Six videos were from Mayors Against Illegal Guns, five from the National Rifle Association, five from the Brady Campaign, and another six from the National Association for Gun Rights. Half of the videos were around thirty-seconds in length, with eight videos around one minute, and only three videos were eighty seconds or longer.

The most notable contrast was between the content of pro-gun control groups versus anti-gun control groups was their use of “elites”<sup>iii</sup> in their videos. The pro-gun control groups use “regular people” and “elites” somewhat evenly, with five videos featuring “regular” people and seven video featuring “elites”. In addition, when pro-gun control content mentioned “elites” they were typically portrayed in a positive or neutral fashion. An example of the positive use of “elites” typically involved using their fame and influence to argue for better gun safety policies. However, when looking at the videos from the anti-gun control groups, ten of their videos featured elites, while only four videos features “regular people”. Yet the major difference was that the anti-gun control groups treated “elites” in a universally negative fashion<sup>iv</sup>. For example, the ads typically included the idea “Washington Elites” like President Obama or some Members of Congress, were passing “regulations” that were unwanted and only benefited themselves, or that they were hypocritical for trying to limit gun access to law-abiding average citizens, because they were able afford security detail who had guns to protect them. Both anti-gun control and

pro-gun control groups presented “regular people” in a positive fashion, if they were mentioned at all in their content (see Appendix C – Table 1).

Another major difference with the pro-gun control and anti-gun control groups was their use of terminology related to families and/or loved ones (e.g. parents, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, relatives), and also their references to other previous acts of gun violence. Nine out of the eleven pro-gun control videos used some mention of “loved ones”, while only two of the eleven anti-gun control videos used that type of terminology in their media content. In addition, seven videos from the pro-gun control groups make note of past gun tragedies, with the most common tragedies mentioned are the 2012 Newtown shooting and the 1999 Columbine shooting. However, not one of advertisements I looked at from the anti-gun control groups had any mention of past events of gun violence.

A surprising finding from the videos that I analyzed was that mention of the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution was even between the videos from pro-gun groups and anti-gun groups, with six videos from both sides mentioning the Second Amendment. If a video did have any mention about the Second Amendment, it was neutral or positive. This is not surprising, because in American political culture, it is not popular to have negative feelings towards any part of the constitution.

I also looked at twenty-eight pieces of Internet content (online press releases, websites) from all of the different groups. 37% of anti-gun control web content had some terminology that focused on the idea that gun ownership is a sacred right, compared to only 12% of pro-gun control groups mentioning that idea in any of the web content. This comes into contrast with content trying to connect gun policy to stopping criminality. The pro-gun control groups made that connection in 89% of the content I selected, in

comparison to only 18% by the anti-gun groups. However, web content mentions of the terminology about “background checks” were nearly equal from both sides of the debate; 84% of the pro-gun control Internet content mentioned something about “background checks” or similar; the anti-gun control groups mentioned it 72% of the time. However, this similarity is not surprising because during the time period, the main goal of all of the groups was to promote or denounce the main background checks for gun purchases policy within the Senate, so it makes sense that they would be vocal about that topic within that time period. The web content also showed the major contrast between the treatment of “elites” in the content of interest groups from both sides of the issue. Anti-gun control groups used elites as threats and as those who were not understanding of average Americans and gun rights, while pro-gun control groups used elites as a way to portray authority and showcase why we need stronger gun laws. Past events of gun violence were only mentioned 29% of the time in the pro-gun control web content, while the anti-gun control web content only had 18% of those types of mentions (see Appendix C – Table 2).

Of the newspaper articles that I selected for analysis, 83% mentioned at least one of the four major gun groups used for this paper. When breaking down the mentions of each individual groups within the sample, the National Rifle Association (NRA) was the runaway leader with some sort of NRA mention in 51% of the articles, Mayors Against Illegal Guns was second in mentions with 24% of the articles mentioning that organization. The Brady Campaign and the National Association for Gun Rights (NAGR) were both mentioned in the single digits, with 7% and 3% respectively. Because of the small number of quotes and mentions from NAGR and the Brady Campaign, this section will not focus on them.

In addition, with each newspaper articles, I looked to see if there were any quotes from spokespersons from the respective gun policy groups. Once again, the NRA leads with the most quotes, with 23% of the articles featuring a quote from a person speaking on the behalf of the NRA. 76% of those NRA quotes argued against the background checks proposal that was under debate within the United States Senate. 18% of the quotes mentioned “elites”, such as the President or US Senate Majority Leader Reid, in a negative light. NRA quotes supporting the Second Amendment or bringing up past events of gun violence were in 6% of the articles featuring a NRA quote.

Fourteen articles included a quote from someone speaking on behalf of the pro-gun control group, Mayors Against Illegal Guns (MAIG). 50% of the quotes from MAIG featured positive mentions of the strong background checks for gun purchases, where 43% of the articles had a MAIG quote mentioning “elites”. What was interesting about the elite quotes was that the majority of them<sup>v</sup> were negative in fashion, criticizing members of Congress for not supporting background checks. 21% of the articles that had MAIG quotes had quotes that were tied to previous events of the gun violence.

There is a contrast between the many mentions of the NRA in the newspaper articles to the more obvious framing examples of quotes from individuals involved with Mayors Against Illegal Guns. It seems that the NRA had more cultural mindshare with the newspapers and authors of the articles, so if any gun policies were brought up it was naturally thought that the NRA would be against it. While, any mentions of MAIG seemed to showcase their obvious pro-gun control framing. MAIG seemed to be the most prominent organization to speak on behalf of pro-gun control policies (see Appendix C – Table 3).

## *Content Analysis – Summary*

When looking at the findings from the content analysis, the most noticeable frame emerging was an anti-elite framing that was heavily used in the content from groups such as the National Rifle Association and the National Association for Gun Rights. Specifically that anti-elite framing of the debate sought to tie the policy of expanded background checks to the wishes of elites such as “President Obama and billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg”. Therefore, it seemed that the anti-gun control groups were working towards a fear of “elites” controlling Americans’ lives. This was somewhat surprising because conventional wisdom would assume that groups such as the NRA and NAGR would focus more on framing gun policy debate through the lens of a Second Amendment argument, and while protection of the Second Amendment was mentioned in media content of the anti-gun control groups, it was not as prominent as the anti-elite messaging. In addition, these groups avoided mention of past events of gun violence for their own argument’s benefit and did not seem to use framing that mentioned intimate family relationships or regard for the safety of loved ones.

The pro-gun control groups framed their argument for background checks in a few different ways, specifically using crime and safety, family relationships, references to past events of gun violence, and mentions of elite and regular people voicing their support. For example, one of the biggest differences was how the pro-gun control interest groups made a lot of references to crime and safety, tying that to how background checks would play a positive role in diminishing crime and keeping guns out of the “bad guys and the mentally unstable”. An obvious example of this emphasis of stopping criminality is obviously shown in the name of the interest group “Mayors Against *Illegal* Guns”, or how many of the pieces

of content I analyzed focused on trying to get “guns out of the hands of bad guys”. Another prominent pro-background checks frame utilized sympathy for family and loved ones, through which background checks were supported by individuals who lost a loved one to gun violence or were scared to lose someone to gun violence, who then frame supporting background checks as a way to protect loved ones. Also, “elites” were shown in a positive light, speaking from a place of fame or authority to extol the benefits of stronger background checks for gun purchases. For example, videos feature pop star Beyoncé Knowles and former Mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg, “demanding a plan” from Congress to stop gun violence. Finally, another major element of the pro-background checks frames was past events of gun violence, as a way to remind citizens of the Columbine High School shooting, the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, and/or the 2012 Aurora shooting.

The major elements of the pro-gun control content I sampled tied their arguments to a type of “emotional and sympathy frame”, potentially raising negative memories or fears about the use of guns by malicious individuals. This is in direct contrast with the anti-gun control groups who tried to style up negative emotions about political “elites” as overreaching and trying to enact policy that “regular people” did not want (see Appendix C for table layout of framing examples found in content analysis).

### *Quantitative Experiment Findings*

The mean responses for each condition were very high, signaling widespread support for the expanded background check policy. For the gun safety frame, the mean score was 5.09 ( $n=61$ ), the Second Amendment-frame mean was 4.63 ( $n=52$ ), the neutral-

frame mean was 5.19 ( $n=57$ ), and the victims-sympathy frame mean was 4.83 ( $n=54$ ) (see Appendix C – Table 4). Therefore, the overwhelming majority of individuals at least somewhat support the idea of expanded background checks for gun purchases.

I used a traditional two-sample one-tailed t-test to test whether the sample means of the different framing conditions are statistically significantly different at the .05 level. The difference of means test showed no statistically significant differences between the neutral frame and the gun safety frame or the sympathy for victim-sympathy and loved-ones frame<sup>vi</sup>. However, there was a statistically significant difference between the neutral frame and the Second Amendment frame with a *p-value of 0.007 and t-ratio of -2.49* (see Appendix C – Table 5). Therefore, we can conclude that the Second Amendment frame did have some effect on subjects by decreasing their positive opinion on the background check amendment.

The framing effects may have been stronger or weaker for some groups compared to others, so I examined framing's effects by gender, political knowledge, and political ideology. Starting with gender identity, I looked to see if men or women were more accepting of frames. By comparing the average mean of support for expanded background checks among men, I was unable to find any statistically significant differences between the neutral frame and the gun safety frame or the sympathy for victims frame.<sup>vii</sup> In contrast, there was a statistically significant difference when using the Second Amendment frame. Men had an average score mean of 5.03 within the neutral frame, compared to a 4.09 mean in the Second Amendment frame (see Appendix C – Table 9). This is in direct contrast with women for whom there was no significant difference between their support across experimental groups.



However, I also looked for gender differences between the acceptances of the policy within each of the different conditions. A two-sample t-test showed a statistically significant difference using a 95% confidence interval where women were more likely to support the background checks policy, but it was highly dependent on the frame they were presented. For example, when looking at data from the gun safety and neutral frames, I was unable to find any meaningful differences; yet, when faced with the Second Amendment frame there is a statistically significant gender gap; with the male mean score of 4.09 compared to the female mean score of 5.00. The Second-Amendment frame difference was found to be statistically significant (see Appendix C – Table 6). In addition, the victim-sympathy and loved-ones frame had a female mean score of 5.09, while men mean score was 4.35, a statistically significant difference (see Appendix C – Table 6). It appears that the framing for expanded background checks creates a noticeable gender gap in opinion for the policy proposal. With the neutral frame, there's no gender gap, but there is a significant gender gap for two of the frames.

In addition, I looked to see if one's political ideology had an effect on one's acceptance of a particular frame. When comparing the different frames I looked to see if there an association between ideological viewpoint and support of background checks, I used a traditional two-sample t-test for ideological differences. I structured the experimental survey so there were six options for "political views", a 1 to 6 spectrum ranging from "Very Conservative" to "Very Liberal". This was done to force experimental participants to choose an ideological opinion, and not just pick "moderate" or "independent", and to make it easier for me to see a numerical mean that leaned one way or another. However, because of the small sample sizes of a little bit over fifty for each

comparison group, I had to compress the six different options into two main groups, “liberal” and “conservative”, and use those groups as my ways to conducting my ideological comparison.

I was unable to find a statistically significant difference when comparing the neutral frame and the positive pro-background checks frames among the ideological differences of conservatives and liberals. However, there was a statistically significant difference when comparing the Second-Amendment negative frames for both the liberal ideological group and conservative ideological group, where they both reported a lower mean score of support for the purposed policy when presented within that negative frame compared with the negative frame. According to the data, the liberal and conservative Second Amendment frames means were respectively 4.92 and 4.34 compared to 5.48 and 4.93 mean scores of the neutral frame (see Appendix C – Table 7).

I then tested to see if there was a relationship between one’s perceived personal amount of political knowledge and their feelings towards different types of background check framing. To do that, I broke the political knowledge groups into two major categories for testing, below average (very little and below average) and average and above (average, above average, a lot), this was done similarly to the ideological test to account for the small sample sizes for each comparison group. When comparing the neutral frame mean score for subjects with a “below average” amount of knowledge, there was no statistically significant difference in opinion when comparing any experimental frames with the neutral frame. In addition, when testing the “average and above” group, that group also had no significant differences when comparing the three different frames with the neutral frame (see Appendix C – Table 8).

### *Quantitative Experiment Analysis*

Although, the debate over background checks was thought to be somewhat contentious among political elites, by testing the different framing conditions, one can see there was strong support for the policy no matter the frame. However, the mean scores of the different framing conditions did have some meaningful differences, such as the Second-Amendment frame having decreased support for background checks. In addition, there is a small gender gap between supports of expanded background checks, which seems to support previous literature on the subject of women being more supportive of gun control policies than men (Wolpert and Gimpel, 1998; Haider Markel and Joslyn, 2001). However, when testing against other variables, such as ideology and political knowledge, I was unable to find a strong significance difference among the different demographic groups and acceptance of a frame. Potentially one's political knowledge and ideology could influence opinion, but with a small sample size for each frame, and a young somewhat homogenous population for this experiment, more research needs to be done in this area.

In addition, it seems that the data supports the idea that the negative framing of a policy can play a role in lowering the public opinion of said policy. As one can see within my data, the use of the Second Amendment frame depressed support for background checks, especially for men. This data showing that negative framing can somewhat shift opinions is in line with research conducted by Arceneaux (2012) that argues that negative frames can have an especially powerful influence on the opinions of individuals.

However, what has to be made clear is the overwhelming support for the idea of expanded background checks for gun purchases. Even with looking across gender,

ideological, and political knowledge, there was no group in which the average support mean score went below a 4.0 (somewhat support). This may be because my sample consisted exclusively of young adults that are attending an elite-university institution, and they would be more naturally inclined to support this type of policy, because they may not feel threaten by any potential overreach of government and may be more receptive in safety issues. So, my results on the success of framing for this particular political issue, expanded background checks for gun purchases, can only be looked in the lights of a certain demographic as of this time. In addition, political framing may have limited effects on influencing public opinion regarding an issue where there is so much general agreement of support.

### **Conclusion**

Over the course of this paper, I utilized a mixed-methods research design that has been able to both discover and analyze the most recent framing arguments utilized by gun policy interest groups, especially the anti-elite framing used by anti-gun control groups and the victim-family sympathy framing from pro-gun control groups. With those discoveries, I was able to then quantitatively test the effectiveness of frames to shift public opinion regarding expanded background checks for gun purchases.

A major contribution from my research is that I have expanded the current political framing literature by adding two new gun control frames, which are the victim-sympathy frame for the promotion of pro-gun control policies and the anti-elite frame for the use of arguing against gun control policies (see Appendix D). With the addition of these new frames, I have updated the research done by Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2001) for the current U.S. political environment regarding gun policy. The discovery of these two new

frames is an important contribution to the political framing literature, and allows researchers to better understand the political arguments and strategies used by interest groups in the recent debates on gun policy in the United States, especially in the wake of recent events such as the Sandy Hook, Aurora, Tucson, and Virginia Tech mass shootings.

The “anti-elite” frame seems to be an important evolution of framing by anti-gun control interest groups in 2013. It seems that these interest groups thought anti-elite messaging would better resonate with Americans in our current day and age. There has been a lack of literature on the power of the Second Amendment political frame since 2001, and it is possible that the frame has lost some influence since then, therefore interest groups needed to find some new manner for arguing their beliefs, which in turn lead to the anti-elite frames. In addition, with the rise a populist political culture in the United States, with groups such as “the Tea Party” for the right, and “Occupy Wall Street” for the left, it is logical that interest groups would see the anti-elite frame as very effective during this time period in American politics.

The other major framing element that came about from the content analysis is the “victim-family sympathy” frame that was typically employed by the pro-gun control groups. As many Americans have now lived in a world shaped by gun violence tragedies such as the Virginia Tech Shooting, Aurora, Colorado shooting, and the Sandy Hook school shooting, as they have been exposed to these tragedies through the media over recent years. By being exposed to these events, many Americans have extensive memories about these incidents that can be tapped by pro-gun control groups to build sympathy for the victims of these tragedies. Pro-gun control interest groups make sure they utilize emotions, such as sympathy for the victims and protecting our own loved ones, to frame their arguments for

more gun control policies as a way to prevent future events of gun violence and protect others.

In addition, my research findings seem to validate the public's general acceptance of expanded background checks. According to recent political polls by news outlets (Clement, 2013), the overwhelming majority of Americans support expanded background checks. Therefore, it is understandable that I would find a lot of support for the policy in my own research population as well.

By using a mixed-methods approach to my research design, I have been able to not only confirm the Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2001) study, but also build and expand their work. One of the most important features of this approach is that I have been able to research the "life" of a political advocacy frame, from when the message is being transmitted through different media forms by interest groups, to when it is received by individuals; I can then quantitatively test those messages to see if they have influence in shifting public opinion. Without the content analysis, it would not have been possible to find the current frames used by interest groups, use those findings, and then test them towards the general public. Also, without the quantitative experiment, I would not be able to know if certain framing, such as the Second Amendment negative-frame, is still an effective frame for interest groups to utilize. This detailed overview of the framing process from, creation to reception could only be achieved by utilizing a mixed-methods research method as used for this paper. Therefore, it is important future researchers consider using mixed-methods research designs as they study different forms of political framing done by political elites.

While the contributions from this paper are important in applying framing theory to a recent political debate, there are still major areas to be addressed in future research. While I was able to find an anti-elite frame within my content analysis, because of a lack of time and the make-up of my research population, I was unable to test it with my own sample. Therefore, more research has to be done to test the effectiveness of an anti-elite frame in shifting public opinion. In addition, future research should be conducted with a much larger and diverse sample population. Because of my current sample size, I was unable to find any generational, ethnic, and locational differences in the effects of framing; however, I believe that research regarding demographic differences in the effectiveness of political framing is vital in better understanding how political framing can influence certain social groups.

Finally, although my sample showed that individuals were in overwhelming support of expanded background checks for gun purchases, that proposal still failed to reach sixty votes to break the filibuster within the U.S. Senate with a final vote count of 54 for it to 46 against (Blake, 2013). Therefore, it may be beneficial for future research to see how frames created by political elites, especially political interest groups, can influence the decision-making and rationale of other political elites, such as members of Congress. While my research model and results were able to bring new information into greater political framing literature, much more work needs to be done in this field. Nevertheless, by understanding which frames can influence public opinion on background checks, we now know more about how political debates on gun control are fought in the United States.

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## Appendix A

1. Recently, the United States Senate tried to pass a piece of legislation, which would have required criminal and mental background checks for individuals if they wanted to purchase a gun from an online website or gun show. Many considered this to be an important piece of public policy since it would potentially stop criminals and other harmful people from getting dangerous weapons, while others disagree. What's your personal opinion on this type of legislation?

- I would strongly support it.
- I would support it.
- I would somewhat support it.
- I would somewhat be against it.
- I would be against it.
- I would strongly be against it.

2. Recently, the United States Senate tried to pass a piece of legislation, which would have required criminal and mental background checks for individuals if they wanted to purchase a gun from an online website or gun show. Many considered this to be a policy that would impede upon our Second Amendment rights (*...the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed*), while others disagree. What is your personal opinion on this type of legislation?

- I would strongly support it.
- I would support it.
- I would somewhat support it.
- I would somewhat be against it.
- I would be against it.
- I would strongly be against it.

3. Recently, the United States Senate tried to pass a piece of legislation, which would have required criminal and mental background checks for individuals if they wanted to purchase a gun from an online website or gun show. What is your personal opinion on this type of legislation?

- I would strongly support it.
- I would support it.
- I would somewhat support it.
- I would somewhat be against it.
- I would be against it.
- I would strongly be against it.

4. Recently, the United States Senate tried to pass a piece of legislation, which would have required criminal and mental background checks for individuals if they wanted to purchase a gun from an online website or gun show. Many individuals affected by acts of gun violence, such as the victims and survivors of past gun violence accidents believe this type of policy could help future gun massacres, while others disagree. What is your personal opinion on this type of legislation?

- I would strongly support it.
- I would support it.
- I would somewhat support it.
- I would somewhat be against it.
- I would be against it.
- I would strongly be against it.

## Appendix B – Framing Examples

<b>Name of the Frame</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Theoretical Impact</b>
Gun Safety	Arguing for stronger gun control policies as a way to protect people from dangerous individuals.	This frame would seem to increase support for gun-control policies by taking into account individuals' regard for their own personal safety.
Second Amendment/Gun Rights	“Raised the specter of big government usurping individual rights” (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2001) Fearful of a the government using gun control as a way to strip Second Amendment rights and remove agency from individuals.	This frame would likely decreases support for gun control policies by tapping into the fear of potentially losing constitutional rights and giving government more control and power over the lives of people.
Victim-Sympathy & Loved Ones	Framing support for stronger gun policies as a way to protect loved-ones that could be harmed and as a way to honor the victims of pass episodes of gun violence.	The frame taps into a powerful and emotional connection with individuals, working to make sure that loved-ones are protected and victims of past events don't die in vain, thereby connecting that with stronger gun control.
Anti-Elite Framing	Working by appealing to an individual's fear of “elites” controlling Americans' lives by instituting restrictive gun control policies that would limit our liberties in gun ownership.	The frame uses a populist argument suggesting that elites shouldn't infringe on Americans' gun rights and elites do not understand the importance of gun rights for average/regular Americans.

## Appendix C

**Table 1**

Videos	<i>Brady</i>	<i>MAIG</i>	<i>NRA</i>	<i>NAGR</i>
Mention Elites	5	3	5	6
<i>Portrayal of Elites</i>				
Positive	2	3	0	0
Neutral	0	0	0	0
Negative	0	0	5	6
Mention families/loved ones	5	4	1	0

**Table 2**

<i>Internet Content (percentage of content analyzed)</i>	<i>Pro-Gun Control Groups</i>	<i>Anti-Gun Control Groups</i>
Mention Gun Ownership as a Right	12%	37%
Connects Gun Policy to Stopping Criminals	89%	18%
Mentions of Terminology About "Background Checks"	84%	72%
Mentions of Past Events of Gun Violence	29%	18%

**Table 3**

<i>Newspaper Articles</i>	<i>MAIG</i>	<i>NRA</i>
Mentioned in Article	24%	51%
Featured Quotes from Spokespersons	19%	23%

**Table 4: Mean differences compared to neutral frame**

<b><i>Frames</i></b>	<b><i>Mean</i></b>	<b><i>n</i></b>
Gun safety frame	5.09	61
Victim-sympathy and loved-ones frame	5.19	57
Second Amendment frame	4.63	57
Neutral	4.83	54

**Table 5: Two-Sample t-test - differences compared to neutral frame**

<b><i>Frames</i></b>	<b><i>p-value</i></b>	<b><i>t-ratio</i></b>
Gun safety frame	0.308	-0.500
Victim-sympathy and loved-ones frame	0.932	-1.506
Second Amendment frame	0.007	-2.4847

\*p-value refers to the value of a difference of means test between the total mean score of the relevant frame and the neutral frame.

**Table 6: Two-Sample t-test – Gender differences compared to neutral frame**

Frame	Men			Women		
	Mean	N	p-value	Mean	N	p-value
Neutral	5.03	26		5.32	31	
Gun Safety	5.00	28	0.54	5.15	32	0.75
Victims	4.35	20	0.93	5.09	33	0.81
2 <sup>nd</sup> Amendment	4.09	21	0.006	5.00	31	0.11

\*p-value refers to the value of a difference of means test between the relevant frame and the neutral frame.

**Table 7: Two-Sample t-test – Ideological differences compared to neutral frame**

Frame	Liberal			Conservative		
	Mean	N	p-value	Mean	N	p-value
Neutral	5.48	27		4.93	30	
Gun Safety	5.28	28	0.81	4.94	33	0.49
Victims	5.05	19	0.88	4.71	33	0.75
2 <sup>nd</sup> Amendment	4.92	26	0.02	4.34	26	0.04

\*p-value refers to the value of a difference of means test between the relevant frame and the neutral frame.

**Table 8: Two-Sample t-test – Political knowledge differences compared to neutral frame**

Frame	High Knowledge			Low Knowledge		
	Mean	N	p-value	Mean	N	p-value
Neutral	5.18	38		5.21	19	
Gun Safety	5.08	28	0.67	5.15	13	0.55
Victims	4.77	31	0.90	4.91	23	0.78
2 <sup>nd</sup> Amendment	4.54	31	0.02	4.76	21	0.11

\*p-value refers to the value of a difference of means test between the relevant frame and the neutral frame.

**Table 9: Demographic Differences Within Frames**

<i>Frame</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>p-value</i>
<b>Neutral</b>	5.03	5.32	0.16
<b>Gun Safety</b>	5.00	5.15	0.26
<b>Victims</b>	4.35	5.09	0.03
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment</b>	4.09	5.00	0.004
	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>p-value</i>
<b>Neutral</b>	4.93	5.48	0.02
<b>Gun Safety</b>	4.94	5.28	0.08
<b>Victims</b>	4.71	5.05	0.20
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment</b>	4.34	4.92	0.04
	<i>Low Knowledge</i>	<i>High Knowledge</i>	<i>p-value</i>
<b>Neutral</b>	5.21	5.18	0.46
<b>Gun Safety</b>	5.15	5.08	0.40
<b>Victims</b>	4.91	4.77	0.36
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment</b>	4.76	4.54	0.72

\*p-value refers to the value of a difference of means test between the two different demographical differences in this table.



## Appendix D

### ***Video Coding Form***

**Name of Video:**

**Date of Video**

**Name of organization that created the video:**

**Length of Video:**

**URL of Video:**

**A Sentence Description of Video:**

Does the video feature any person or group of people speaking to the viewer on behalf of an issue related to guns?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

In one sentence, what is the basic message of the speaker?  
(*Write here*)

Does the media content feature people of an elite status (politicians, actors, trained professionals, people that are assumed to have a lot of social, political, economic capital) or "regular" people (someone that you would not consider famous or well known, someone that you would typically interact with on a daily basis) status?

- 0. No People Featured
- 1. Elite people
- 2. Regular people
- 3. Both

Does the media content mention/use people of an elite status in a positive (positive, as you are suppose to feel supportive about what the elite person said) or negative (negative, as when the elite is used an example someone that you should not agree with and is wrong) light?

- 0. N/A
- 1. Negative
- 2. Positive

Does the media content mention/use people of a regular status in a positive (positive, as you are suppose to feel supportive about what the elite person said) or negative (negative, as when the elite is used an example someone that you should not agree with and is wrong) light?

- 0. N/A
- 1. Negative
- 2. Positive

Does it mention the Second Amendment?

- 0. No

1. Yes

Does it mention the Second Amendment in a positive or negative light?

0. Does not mention the Second Amendment

1. Negative

2. Positive

3. Mentions it but not in a particularly negative or positive way

Does it mention gun ownership as some sort of **right** (e.g. a constitutional right)?

0. No

1. Yes

Does it mention any terminology such as "criminals"/"bad guys" or anything similar?

0. No

1. Yes

Does it mention anything related to terminology such as "Criminal Background Checks", such as "universal background checks", "background checks", "criminal checks", etc.?

0. No

1. Yes

Does the form of media mention the policy idea of a "gun registry" (a universal registry where everyone with a gun would have to register it with the government, similar to how we register our cars with a state DMV office)?

0. No

1. Yes

Does it have any type of "call to action" request to its viewer?

0. No

1. Yes

If it does have a "call to action", who gives the "call"?

0. No call to action given

1. Regular Person

2. Elite Person

3. Both Types of Person

Fill in the "call to action" here: \_\_\_\_\_

Does it mention any type of term that could related with family/loved ones (e.g. parents, son & daughter, husband & wife, relatives) or any other type of familial relationship?

0. No

1. Yes

Does it mention previous recent events of gun violence?

0. No

1. Yes

What previous event of gun violence does it mention?

---

Does the media use any story of slippery slope ideas (slippery slope as in if "X" happens it will lead to big and worst things happening, because "X" will open the door and is the basis for these worst things) towards gun control?

0. No
1. Yes

### ***Web Content Coding Form***

**Date:**

**URL:**

**Organization:**

**Title of Homepage/Press Release:**

Does it mention gun ownership as some sort of **right** (e.g. a constitutional right)?

0. No
1. Yes

Does the home page/press release mention the Second Amendment?

0. No
1. Yes

Does the home page/press release mention the Second Amendment in a positive or negative light?

0. Does not mention the Second Amendment
1. Negative
2. Positive
3. Mentions it but not in a particularly negative or positive way

Does the home page/press release try to connect gun policy to stopping criminality?

0. No
1. Yes

Does it mention anything related to terminology such as "Criminal Background Checks", such as "universal background checks", "background checks", "criminal checks", etc.?

0. No
1. Yes

Does the home page/press release mention the policy idea of a "gun registry" (an universal registry where everyone with a gun would have to register it with the government, similar to how we register our cars with a DMV)?

0. No

1. Yes

Does the home page/press release feature anyone of an "elite status" (politicians, actors, trained professionals, people that are assumed to have a lot of social, political, economic capital)?

0. No

1. Yes

Does the home page/press release portray "elites" in a positive or negative fashion?

0. N/A

1. Negative

2. Positive

Does the home page/press release feature anyone of a "regular status" (someone that you would not consider famous or well known, someone that you would typically interact with on a daily basis)?

0. No

1. Yes

Does the home page/press release portray "regular people" in a positive or negative fashion?

0. N/A

1. Negative

2. Positive

Does it mention previous recent events of gun violence?

0. No

1. Yes

What previous event of gun violence does it mention?

---

Does it mention any type of term that could related with family/loved ones (e.g. parents, son & daughter, husband & wife, relatives) or any other type of familial relationship?

0. No

1. Yes

Does the media use any story of slippery slope ideas (slippery slope as in if "X" happens it will lead to big and worst things happening, because "X" will open the door and is the basis for these worst things) towards gun control?

0. No

1. Yes

### **Newspaper Article Coding Form**

Date of Article:

Name of Article:

Newspaper:

Is the article a non-op-ed that focuses only on reporting the story and sharing no opinion to the reader?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Does the newspaper article feature any reference of National Rifle Association (NRA), Mayors Against Illegal Guns (MAIG), the Brady Campaign, National Association for Gun Rights (NAGR)?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Does the newspaper article feature any references of the NRA?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Does the newspaper article feature any references of MAIG?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Does the newspaper article feature any references of NAGR?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Does the newspaper article feature any references of the Brady Campaign?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials coming from the NRA?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of the NRA that mentions the Second Amendment in a positive or negative light?

- 0. N/A
- 1. Negative
- 2. Positive
- 3. Mentioned in factual manner only?

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of NRA that mentions the policy idea of Criminal Background Checks in a positive or negative light?

- 0. N/A

1. Negative
2. Positive

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of the NRA that mentions individuals in an elite status (politicians, actors, trained professionals, people that are assumed to have a lot of social, political, economic capital) in a positive or negative light?

0. N/A
1. Negative
2. Positive

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of NRA that mentions previous acts of gun violence?

0. No
1. Yes

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials coming from MAIG?

0. No
1. Yes

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of MAIG that mentions the Second Amendment in a positive or negative light?

0. N/A
1. Negative
2. Positive

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of MAIG that mentions the policy idea of Criminal Background Checks in a positive or negative light?

0. N/A
1. Negative
2. Positive

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of the MAIG that mentions individuals in an elite status (politicians, actors, trained professionals, people that are assumed to have a lot of social, political, economic capital) in a positive or negative light?

- 0. N/A
- 1. Negative
- 2. Positive

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from?

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Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of MAIG that mentions previous acts of gun violence?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from?

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Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials coming from the Brady Campaign?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of the Brady Campaign that mentions the Second Amendment in a positive or negative light?

- 0. N/A
- 1. Negative
- 2. Positive

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of the Brady Campaign that mentions the policy idea of Criminal Background Checks in a positive or negative light?

- 0. N/A
- 1. Negative
- 2. Positive

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of the Brady Campaign that mentions individuals in an elite status (politicians, actors, trained professionals, people that are assumed to have a lot of social, political, economic capital) in a positive or negative light?

- 0. N/A
- 1. Negative
- 2. Positive

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from?

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Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of the Brady Campaign that mentions previous acts of gun violence?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from?

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Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials coming from NAGR?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of NAGR that mentions the Second Amendment in a positive or negative light?

- 0. N/A
- 1. Negative
- 2. Positive

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of NAGR that mentions the policy idea of Criminal Background Checks in a positive or negative light?

- 0. N/A
- 1. Negative
- 2. Positive

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of NAGR that mentions individuals in an elite status (politicians, actors, trained professionals, people that are assumed to have a lot of social, political, economic capital) in a positive or negative light?

- 0. N/A
- 1. Negative
- 2. Positive

What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from?

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Does the newspaper article feature any quotes from officials of NAGR that mentions previous acts of gun violence?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes



What is that quote(s) in brief and what organization did it come from?

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### **Endnotes**

<sup>i</sup> The donation data came from The Center for Responsive Politics' website "OpenSecrets.org".

<sup>ii</sup> I found six videos from Mayors Against Illegal Guns, five videos from the Brady Campaign, six videos from the National Association for Gun Rights, and five videos from the National Rifle Association.

<sup>iii</sup> I define "elites" for this purpose of this paper as individuals such as politicians, actors, trained professionals, and other rare professions, that are assumed to have a lot of social, political, economic capital within our society.

<sup>iv</sup> Of the 11 videos from anti-gun control interest group, each video feature elites in a negative fashion.

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v 4 out of 6

vi It has p-values of 0.31 and 0.93 and t-ratios of -0.50 and -1.50 respectively.

vii For men, the support for background checks when using gun safety frame mean score was 5, while neutral frame was 5.04 (P-value of 0.549 and t-ratio of -0.124). The victim-sympathy frame mean score was 4.35 (P-value of 0.934 and t-ratio of -1.539), however, I was looking for the victim-sympathy mean to be higher than the neutral score, not lower. The p-value is so high because I am using a one-tailed test. I believe the issue may have been statistical error.