**Appendix:**

**Why Do Issues “Whose Time Has Come” Stick Around? Attention Durability and the Case of Gun Control**

**Codebook – Policy, Events, Partisanship Codes of Gun-Related Letters (Current as of 7/16/22)**

**Variable1: Mass/Indiscriminate Shooting.** Defined as 1) public rampage shootings that may be a) arbitrary (shooting up a theater) or b) not totally arbitrary in that shooter is aiming for one person (former boss, romantic partner) but also shoots “bystanders”; c) not totally arbitrary in that shooter has a connection to the place (Adam Lanza and Sandy Hook). We exclude gang shootings, domestic violence within home, and targeted murders/assassinations. We will follow one common definition of a mass shooting: a shooting in a single place that causes 4 or more deaths, excluding the shooter; in cases of uncertainty, we will Google the shooting; if the 4-death rule becomes impossible to utilize as a decision rule, we will reassess. Exception: We code as 1 all letters mentioning “school shootings” as a concern of the writer.

Code 1 if:

* Letter deals with mass/indiscriminate shooting incident, prevention of such incidents, or policy to address such incidents. Includes anniversaries of mass shootings.
* Letter is explicitly about a mass shooting, but also if implicitly so. Arming teachers (which is a policy response to school shootings) is coded 1 by default. We take into account the timing of the letter to infer whether it’s a response to a mass shooting or to the policy discussion that follows a mass shooting. For example, unless there is evidence to the contrary, we assume that letters about gun control that are “clumped” in the immediate weeks/months after a high-profile shooting (e.g., Sandy Hook, Parkland) are “about” mass shootings, even if the writer does not feel the need to explicitly say so because it’s understood in that context. (We are interested in whether mass shootings mobilize or sustain mobilization.)

**Variable 2: Progun Policy.** Defined as actual or proposed 1) deregulation of concealed carry, 2) stand-your-ground laws, or 3) firearm dealer/manufacturer immunity from lawsuits. The letter does not have to name a *specific* policy (e.g., “Bill XYZ123” or even “Permitless Concealed Carry”), but should allude in some way to policy changes that actively make it easier to obtain, carry, and/or use guns. Attribution of policy (actual or proposed) to a negative outcome is necessary. We are interested in backlash to these policies, not merely disagreement with them.

Code 1 if:

* Letter attributes a negative outcome to the enactment or passage of affirmatively pro-gun policies in the contemporary era (or a hypothetical negative outcome in the case of proposals to deregulate guns—“If this law passes, then [x outcome] will occur.”). Examples include arming teachers, loosening CCW laws, etc.
  + We code 1 if a letter complains about the expiration of the 1994 assault weapons ban, on the grounds that the expiration was a policy change in the pro-gun direction. We code 0 if the letter advocates for an AWB.

Code 0 if:

* Letter just deploys general statements about the laxity of gun laws or absence of gun laws.
* Letter fails to associate a progun policy with a tangible harm. It’s not enough to disagree with a policy; the harm does not have to highly specific or detailed, but some negative outcome should be attribute to the policy.

**Variable 3: Personal Threat.** Defined as treating gun availability or gun policy as being related to concerns about the letter writer’s own safety or that of their family or community of interest (geographic, demographic). We are looking for letters that seem “personalized”; look for “I/me/my” and (non-generic) “we/us/our” words in connection with the threat. Also look for some general sense of vulnerability or personalization as a survivor/family member (e.g., letters by family members/friends of victims).

Code 1 if:

* Letter includes descriptions of feeling unsafe in places people like to go (theaters, schools, concerts, etc.).
* Letter uses personalized pronouns (see above).
* Letter conveys vulnerability or personal connection to gun violence.

Code 0 if:

* Letter conveys general moral outrage at the proliferation of guns, the strength of the gun lobby, the prevalence of gun violence etc.

**Variable 4: Children.** Defined as letters that mention these keywords in the context of victimization or gun misuse: child, children, minor(s), kid(s), young people, young adult, school, students. We are interested in whether children are purposely and explicitly invoked as a framing device. Exclude letters that mention mass school shootings in passing but don’t invoke children.

**Variable 5: Negative Partisanship.** Defined as letters that demonize the other party or its representatives. We are not interested in policy disputes (e.g., a letter takes issue with Representative Jones’s pro-gun policy); we are interested in the extent to which letters reflect guns as a proxy for partisan warfare. Look for whether the letter writer sees gun issues through the lens of partisan animus or links activism to partisan animus.

Code 1 if:

* Letter, in a demonizing fashion (which might include using negative descriptors or questioning their honesty, integrity, intelligence, etc), mentions the US President or presidential candidate (in their capacity as head/potential head of a party team), multiple politicians as team members (e.g., the Pelosi-Schumer cabal); party names (Republicans, Democrats), modern party-label synonyms (conservatives, liberals), or pejorative synonyms (socialists, fascists). This code captures whether an individual politician is used as a stand-in for a party; excludes criticism for his/her specific actions (vote on gun bill, articulated stance on gun regulation, etc.).

Code 0 if:

* Letter criticizes individual policymakers for proposed or enacted policy – unless elements above are included.
* Letter talks generically about policymaker inaction on guns.

**Variable 6: Other Countries.** Letters that mention the US as an outlier regarding gun ownership, policy, or politics.

Code 1 if:

* Letter mentions US in an international context. Other countries need not be mentioned specifically.

*List of 21 Major Mass Shootings (1980-2019) from Wikipedia that we considered in coding the mass shooting variable aftermath. Also included below are several that we spot-checked because they were salient shootings, even if \*not on Wiki list (Umpqua/Roseburg, OR; Granada Hills, CA).*

San Ysidro, 7/18/84

Edmund, 8/20/86

Luby’s, 10/16/91

Columbine, 4/20/99

\*Granada Hills JCC, 8/10/99

Virginia Tech, 4/16/07

Binghamton, 4/3/09

Geneva City, 9/10/09

Fort Hood 11/5/09

Aurora, 7/20/12

Sandy Hook, 12/14/12

Navy Yard, 9/16/13

\*Umpqua CC/Roseburg, 10/1/15

San Bernardino, 12/2/15

Pulse/Orlando, 6/12/16

Sutherland Springs, 11/5/17

Parkland, 2/14/18

Santa Fe, TX, 5/18/18

Thousand Oaks, 11/7/18

Virginia Beach, 5/31/19

El Paso Walmart, 8/13/19

Las Vegas, 10/1/19

Pittsburgh Synagogue, 10/27/19

Chart, histogram

Description automatically generated

Histogram

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

**Topic Model Top Words Table**

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**Relative Prominence of Letters Topics Across Stances (Pro- vs. Anti-Gun)**

