

Language patterns after large-scale upheavals

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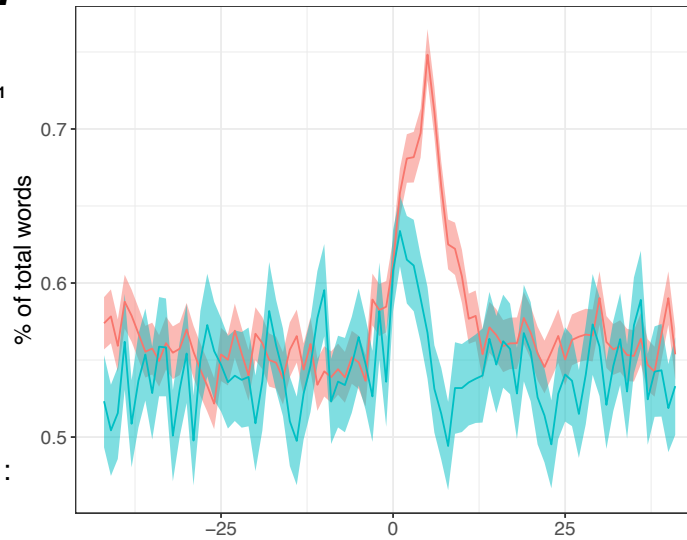
BACKGROUND

- Large-scale upheavals like **natural disasters** and **mass shootings** may bring people together: people work together to surmount the upheavals, forging collective identities
- Upheavals may also drive people apart: people update their beliefs about how nasty and brutish the world is, and how much one must fend for oneself
- Which force prevails? Could language patterns serve as evidence?
- Past research analyzed upheavals one at a time [1]. We pooled numerous upheavals in hope of discerning generalizable patterns

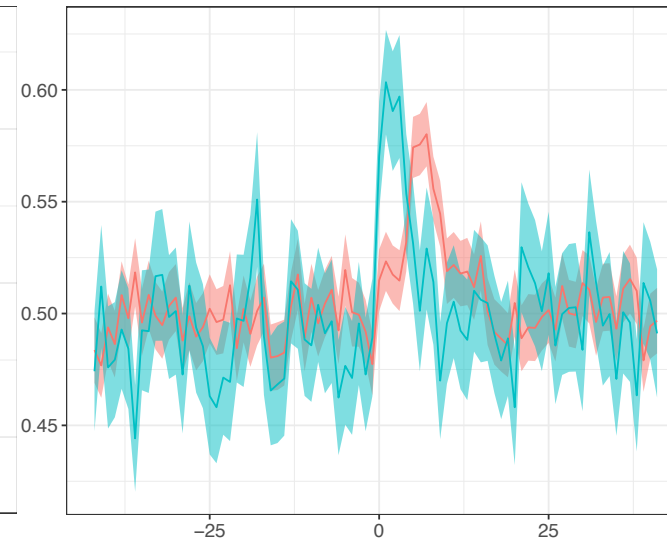
METHODS

- Reddit** data: **6,205,198** comments from **1,144,308** authors in 43 city communities location-matched with
 - 196 natural disasters** [2] and
 - 60 mass shootings** [3] in the US from April 2013 to March 2023
- Dictionary-based text analysis [4]

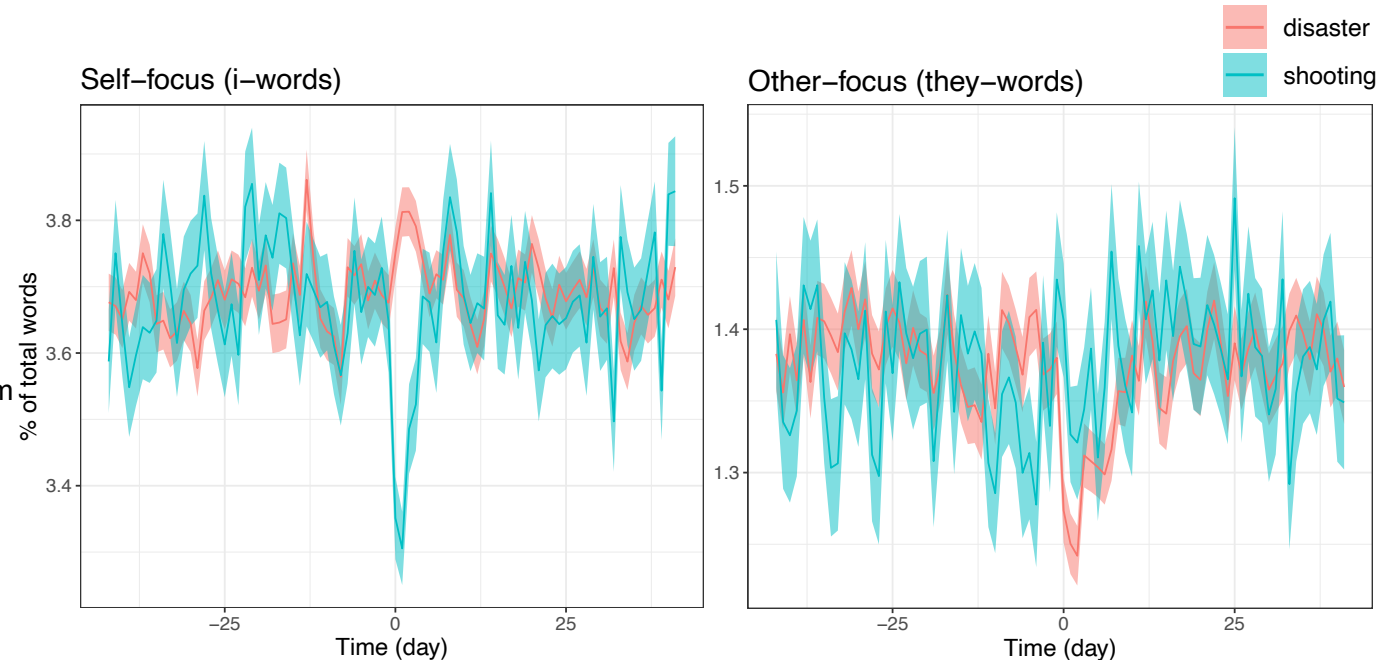
Collective-focus (we-words)



Prosocial words



People use more cohesive language after upheavals, but in different ways for different types of upheavals



FAQs

- Which upheavals did you include?
- Does the severity of the upheavals moderate the patterns?
- Have these patterns changed over time?
- How do the patterns after natural disasters differ from those after mass shootings?
- ...



DISCUSSIONS

- For natural disasters, we see deviations from past findings on the self-focus and other-focus dimensions
- For mass shootings, we see patterns that mirror past findings, albeit on a smaller scale
- Some future analyses we want to run:
 - What do “we” and “they” refer to?
 - Other upheavals?
 - Other behavior?

Let us know what you’re curious about learning next!



- [1] e.g., 9/11 attacks (Cohn et al., 2004), Hurricane Katrina (Goldfine, 2010), 2014 Chile earthquake (Correa et al., 2016), 2015 Paris terrorist attacks (Garcia and Rimé, 2019), COVID-19 pandemic (Ashokkumar and Pennebaker, 2021)
- [2] Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- [3] The Violence Project
- [4] Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC)