

# Language trends after large-scale upheavals

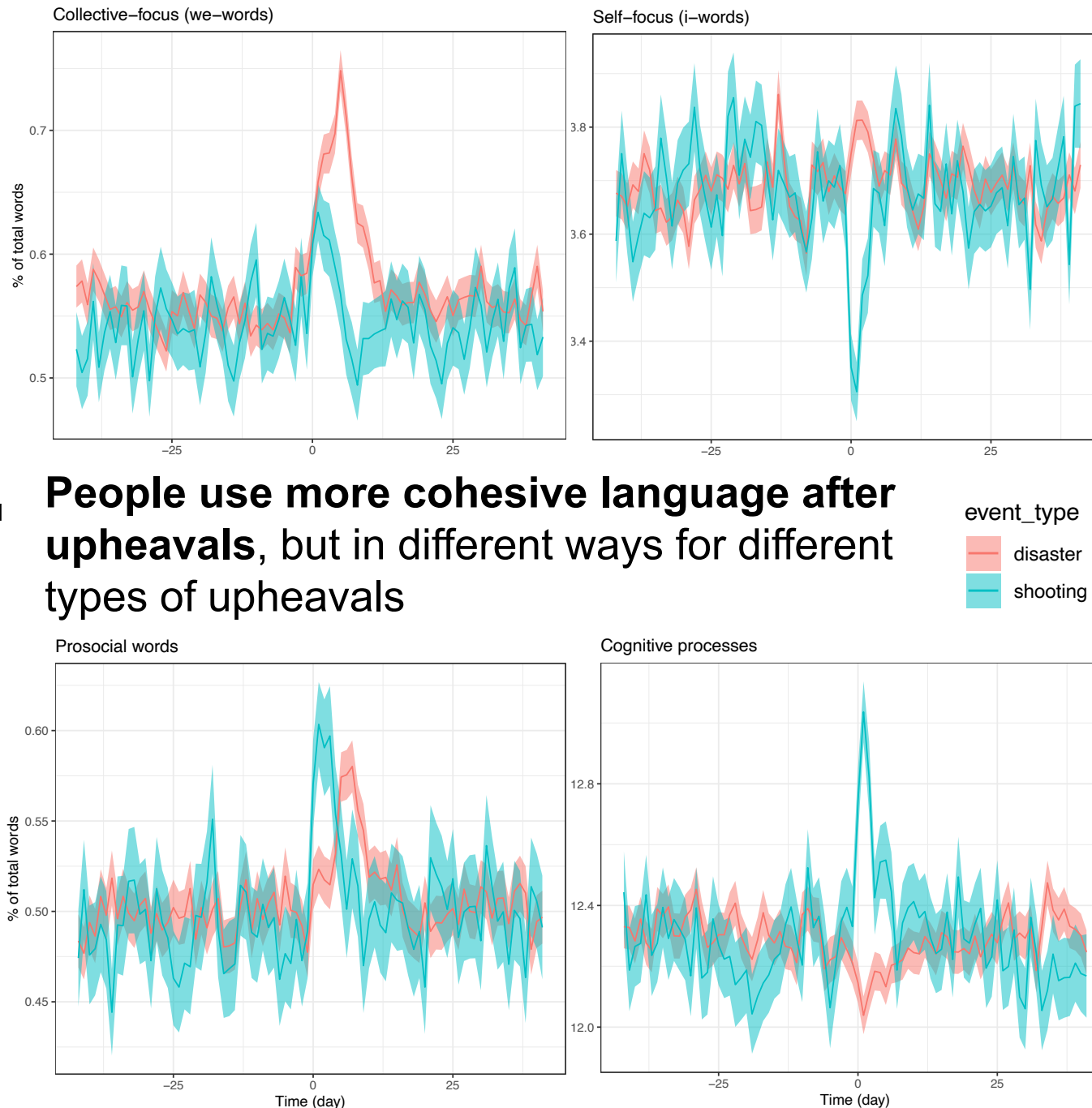
Lin Gan & Ashwini Ashokkumar  
New York University

## BACKGROUND

- Large-scale upheavals like natural disasters and public mass shootings may *bring people together*: they work together to process and surmount the upheavals, forging collective identities
- Upheavals may also *drive people apart*: they update their beliefs about how nasty and brutish the world is, and how much one must fend for oneself
- Which force prevails? We use the effects of upheavals on people's daily language as a first step toward understanding those on other real-world behavior

## METHODS

- Timeframe: April 2013 – March 2023
- **196** federally declared disasters [1]
- **60** mass shootings [2]
- **6,205,198** comments from **1,144,308** authors in 60 city-level subreddits posted 6 weeks before and after each upheaval
- Dictionary-based text analysis [3]



## 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 effects?
- Have these effects changed over time?
- How do the effects of natural disasters differ from those of mass shootings?

We have answers for you here!



## DISCUSSIONS

- For natural disasters, we see deviations from past findings on the self-focus and cognitive processing dimensions
- For mass shootings, we see trends that mirror past findings, albeit on a smaller scale
- Some future analyses we want to run:
  - What does “we” mean?
  - Other upheavals?
  - Other behavior?

Let us know what you think we should do next!



[1] Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)  
[2] The Violence Project  
[3] Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC)