

Partisan Media Bias in the Framing of the Parkland School Shooting and the March For Our Lives Movement

Media reporting on mass shootings follow well-established frames. Partisan bias is increasingly influencing the frames news media use. In 2018, national media coverage of the Parkland school shooting and the subsequent March For Our Lives protests was largely influenced by the outlets' political leanings.

The most common frames:

Framing the activists

78% activist frames positive in left-leaning media

Youth power

- Framing the activists as capable and their activism as useful
- Power in generational change
- The most common activist frame

Victims

- Framing the activists as victims
- Sympathy and moral authority

59% activist frames negative in right-leaning media

Youth deficit

- Framing the activists as naive and their activism as unhelpful
- Too young to participate in politics

Co-opted movement

- Framing the activists as brainwashed
- Movement co-opted by adults

Framing the shooting

The most common frame: gun control

71% gun control frames positive in left-leaning media

Complementary frames to gun control:

Government failures

- Government inaction or bad policy blamed for mass shootings

Special interest groups

- Lobbying groups blamed for bad policy that leads to mass shootings

70% gun control frames negative in right-leaning media

Counter frames to gun control:

School security

- School security needs to be increased with tools and/or by arming teachers

Mental health

- Mental illness causes mass shootings
- The least common frame among the six

Local officials

- Mistakes by local officials blamed for mass shootings