

# **An Analysis of Everytown Against Gun Violence's Key Influencers**

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Influencer Analysis

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## **Influencer Persona**

Many people have heard of the young David Hogg, a survivor of the February 14 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. He and his fellow survivors have managed to use that status in such a way that they have established themselves as advocates for reasonable gun-safety legislation. Hogg is 17 years old and graduated from high school in June of this year. He has stated that he will be taking a year off from school to work in the 2018 midterm elections before going away to college.<sup>i</sup>

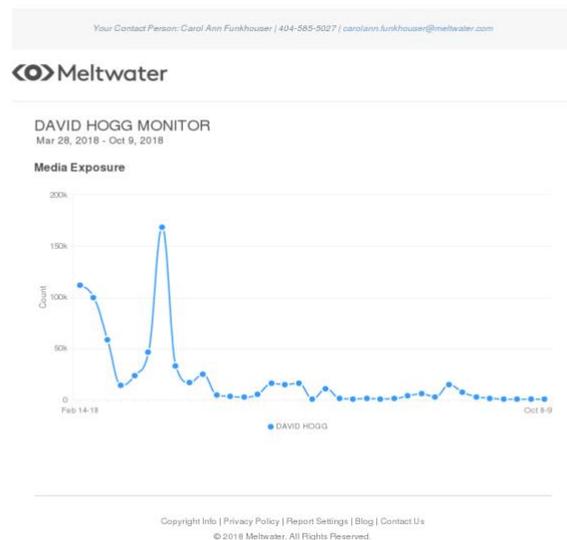
## **Media Reach and Evolution of Influence**

During the shooting, Hogg was aware enough to record the events of the day, using his cell phone and skills that he had developed while studying at school to become a journalist. Because of this work, Hogg was often interviewed by news services. This was the beginning of his status as an influencer. Hogg's influence, however did not immediately build because of its appeal to the public, rather, it grew in response to the intense backlash from what would later become political opposition after he interviewed with various news-stations.<sup>ii</sup> These interviews have often gone viral online. One of the biggest initial boosts to his visibility and his reach occurred when Laura Ingraham, a conservative talk-show host and adult, ridiculed 17-year-old Hogg on Twitter for failing to get in to specific universities in the wake of the shooting.<sup>iii</sup> This decision earned her nearly universal scorn, and many people lauded Hogg for not responding with anger to the host's disappointing statements. Instead, over Twitter, he inspired a boycott

against the companies that sponsored her show, which only yielded an apology from the host after more than a dozen sponsors withdrew their support.<sup>iv</sup>

Hogg maintains an active social media presence, consistently updating his [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#) accounts at least once a week if not more often. A quick look through any of these accounts reveals that his content is consistent across each of his platforms. This content includes numerous posts praising public figures for taking a stand against gun violence, calling for people to register to vote, and recommending that citizens pressure their congressmembers to help address the problem(s) of gun violence. Inserted below is a chart chronicling the extent of the media exposure that Hogg has managed to generate since the shooting happened in mid-February. The massive spike in March was likely caused by the March For Our Lives protest held in Washington DC. This Meltwater search indicates that Hogg shares a characteristic with Everytown, in that their publicity levels increase and then wane again with the public interest in gun legislation; in other words, they only have a substantial reach when shootings occur.

### **Actions as an Influencer:**



Hogg's online presence is defined by two characteristics. The first is that his opponents are extremely vocal and numerous, and that as a whole they seem desperate to invalidate the arguments of Hogg and his sympathizers. These opponents have famously tried to convince the public that Hogg is a "crisis actor," and that the deaths of his 17 classmates were either faked or were otherwise arranged by the government to be a reason to oppress those people who want to exercise their Second Amendment rights. Hog has credited these outlandish accusations as a large part of the reason he has such a large following on social media; his reach was inevitably increased because there were more news sources covering his stories.<sup>v</sup> Though most of his opponents have ceased calling him a crisis actor, Hogg is still viewed by many conservative leaders and news sources as an enemy of Second Amendment, and an enemy of freedom almost by association.

The second of these two characteristics is that Hogg seems to work as a catalyst for those he agrees with politically. From reading his social media posts, it is readily apparent that he is skilled at motivating his followers and people who happen to agree with him through Twitter and other forms of social media, in addition to his exceptional skills as a public speaker, to register themselves and others to vote, protest, boycott, and otherwise be called into action. This ability was displayed with his Twitter-based take-down of Ingraham and her program.<sup>vi</sup>

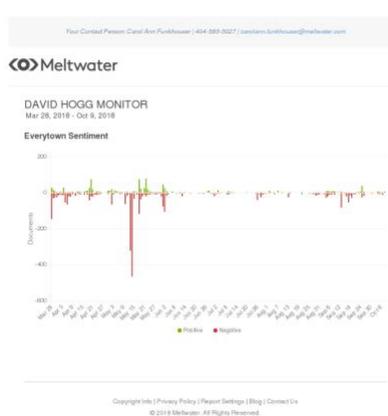
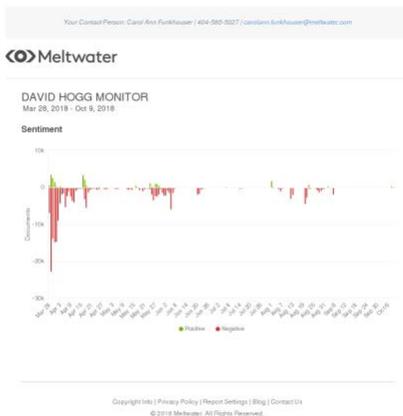
## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

David Hogg and Everytown are both subject to the same weakness; the only periods in which the two entities have a sustained and attentive audience are during the periods in which

shootings occur. This is demonstrated by the chart below. The result of this fluctuating support is that their general effectiveness at advocating for legislation is often hindered by periods of little gun violence. However, it would be beneficial for both parties to support each other as



they are working towards the same goal, albeit at different paces. If you consider the sentiment scores as shown on the chart below, it demonstrates that Hogg and Everytown are very similarly regarded at the same points in time. This has been true since the day of the Parkland shooting, which is when the chart above begins. Additionally, Hogg is much more noticed on Twitter. While Everytown is active online, their responses are generally fewer and far less negative than those expressed against Hogg. Everytown as an agency could benefit from having Hogg be actively involved with their social media campaigns, by publicly endorsing their work, and the content that they put out on various platforms. This would cause a great deal of exposure for both parties, which would in turn cause a great increase in their influence's reach.



## Citations

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- <sup>i</sup> Wash, S., Taguchi, E., Lefferman, J., Allen, K., & Nestel, M. (2018, June 04). Parkland shooting survivor David Hogg heads to Capitol Hill after bittersweet graduation. Retrieved October 9, 2018, from <https://abcnews.go.com/US/parkland-shooting-survivor-david-hogg-heads-capitol-hill/story?id=55624539>
- <sup>ii</sup> Wash, S., Taguchi, E., Lefferman, J., Allen, K., & Nestel, M. (2018, June 04). Parkland shooting survivor David Hogg heads to Capitol Hill after bittersweet graduation. Retrieved October 9, 2018, from <https://abcnews.go.com/US/parkland-shooting-survivor-david-hogg-heads-capitol-hill/story?id=55624539>
- <sup>iii</sup> Fearnow, B. (2018, March 30). Right-wing radio host Laura Ingraham mocked David Hogg for not getting accepted into his top colleges. Retrieved October 9, 2018, from <https://www.newsweek.com/laura-ingraham-david-hogg-colleges-ucla-uc-santa-barbara-twitter-parkland-864992>
- <sup>iv</sup> Wootson, C. R., Jr. (2018, April 01). David Hogg rejects Laura Ingraham's apology: 'A bully is a bully'. Retrieved October 9, 2018, from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2018/03/31/laura-ingraham-takes-an-easter-break-amid-david-hogg-controversy-and-advertiser-revolt/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.41f58ac9339e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2018/03/31/laura-ingraham-takes-an-easter-break-amid-david-hogg-controversy-and-advertiser-revolt/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.41f58ac9339e)
- <sup>v</sup> FactCheck.org. (2018, April 03). David Hogg at School During Parkland Shooting. Retrieved October 9, 2018, from <https://www.factcheck.org/2018/04/david-hogg-at-school-during-parkland-shooting/>
- <sup>vi</sup> Wootson, C. R., Jr. (2018, April 01). David Hogg rejects Laura Ingraham's apology: 'A bully is a bully'. Retrieved October 9, 2018, from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2018/03/31/laura-ingraham-takes-an-easter-break-amid-david-hogg-controversy-and-advertiser-revolt/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.41f58ac9339e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2018/03/31/laura-ingraham-takes-an-easter-break-amid-david-hogg-controversy-and-advertiser-revolt/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.41f58ac9339e)