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Organizational crises can be detrimental if not offset with an appropriate communication strategy. The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2007) has been studied as a framework for understanding how organizations can respond to crises. The current study explores the effectiveness of a nontraditional message source, artificial intelligence (AI), when delivering a rebuilding crisis response strategy. The current study empirically tests and discusses future research in AI trust building and crisis communication response strategies.

While political division has been present in the American press since its start, politicized and polarized content is now stretching beyond straightforward political news – where such content might be expected – and is increasingly seen in other news categories, including science, medical, and health journalism. This development has been especially notable during the COVID-19 pandemic, when medical and health reporting frequently became coopted by a political narrative. This study builds on research into the politicization of pandemic and medical reporting with an investigation of pandemic-era photojournalism. Using a content analysis, this study aims to provide greater insight into the nature of visual news coverage involving the protracted COVID-19 pandemic and fractured political environment, as well as other pandemics from the 20th and earlier 21st centuries.

Is it Just about Guns? ABC News Framing of Mass   pg. 48
Shooting Stories on Digital Platforms
Maurice N. Emelu

Analyzing news frames in the context of mass shootings is a pertinent and timely subject in the current discussions on gun violence in the United States. This study uses the Analysis of Topic Model Networks frame analysis method to examine ABC News coverage of the 2017 Sutherland Springs, Texas, mass shooting. The study analyzed 202 news stories from ABC's X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, and website. The results support previous research on legacy news channels concerning Victims, the Shooter, and Community frames. Additionally, it supports recently discovered frames— Empathy, Interventions, Reactions, and Security. The chi-square test reveals significant differences in the frames' distribution across digital platforms apart from Security Frame. Shooter Frame shows the most statistically significant difference ($\chi^2 = 109.28$, p < 0.001). These differences suggest that news networks' framing of their stories on the three digital platforms (X, YouTube, and website) are not equivalent. There are platform-specific differences concerning the news framing practices. The research critically examines the implications of these findings to the study of mass shooting coverage, policy debates, digital media literacy, and cultural understanding in today's digital world.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Activities and   pg. 74
Communications in Response to the COVID Crisis:
Evidence from the U.S.
Hyun Ju Jeong and Deborah S. Chung

This study investigates how corporations responded to the COVID-19 crisis through their fulfillment of corporate social responsibility (CSR). We quantitatively analyzed a total of 60 CSR news stories published during the year of 2020. We then provided context through the close readings of all 60 news stories. CSR news coverage was selected as the focal content because it is considered to be a more objective communication of CSR compared to corporations' self-disclosed CSR reports. Results show that CSR was provided throughout the year as corporations' timely responses to the unprecedented pandemic. Specifically, corporations emphasized philanthropic CSR activities to support health issues. Their conventional commitments to promotional activities were still present but often criticized with a negative tone. Corporations' evergreen interest in environmental/sustainability issues and human/civic rights also remained but were relatively weakened during the pandemic.

Further, CSR was primarily presented in a positive tone. The findings highlight that a public health crisis may render corporations to transform CSR into emergency and disaster relief.

Book Review   pg. 97

Michael Kearney

Üçok-Sayrak, Ö (Editor), Harden Fritz, J (Editor), and Majocha, K.L.
        (Editor) (2023). *Dialogoc Editing in Academic and
        Professional Writing: Engaging the Trace of the Other*.
        New York, NY: Routledge.
        *This edited volume provides a significant research
contribution that invites readers to ask: How might philosophical
notions of dialogue open new insights for writers and editors in the
field of communication? Conceptualizing editing as dialogue invites
an understanding of researchers as embodied and embedded agents
and ideas as temporal revelatory insights rather than reified
constructs. Dialogic Editing in Academic and Professional Writing:
Engaging the Trace of the Other foregrounds editing as an ongoing
communicative activity conducted within the interpretive community
of the academy.*

Welcome from the Editor

Kristen L. Majocha

Welcome to the 55.2 edition of the Iowa Journal of Communication. We are an award-winning state journal that publishes the highest quality peer-reviewed scholarship on a variety of communication topics. Our journal is a product of the Iowa Communication Association, a professional organization whose purpose is to unite those persons with either an academic or professional interest in all disciplines of Communication and the Performing Arts. Our acceptance rate is 40% with a consistent impact factor of two.

The scholarship in this issue is particularly rigorous regarding the special topic of crisis communication. The lead article, "The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Crisis Communication: A Study of Public Perceptions and Trust of AI" by Travis Loof, Rachel Ehlers, Julia Lobo Paes, Prah Haider, and Rachel Spinks, explores the effectiveness of a nontraditional message source, artificial intelligence (AI), when delivering a rebuilding crisis response strategy, The authors empirically test and discusses future research in AI trust building and crisis communication response strategies. In "Photojournalism, Public Health, and Politicization: Analyzing Photographic News Coverage of Health Crises in the 20th and 21st Centuries", Hans C. Schmidt builds on research into the politicization of pandemic and medical reporting with an investigation of pandemic-era photojournalism, thus providing greater insight into the nature of visual news coverage involving the protracted COVID-19 pandemic and fractured political environment, as well as other pandemics from the 20th and earlier 21st centuries.

Maurice N. Emelu then suggests that news networks' framing of stories on the three digital platforms (X, YouTube, and website) are not equivalent in the article "Is it Just about Guns? ABC News Framing of Mass Shooting Stories on Digital Platforms." He goes on to examine the platform-specific differences concerning the news framing practices and critically examines the implications of these findings to the study of mass shooting coverage, policy debates, digital media literacy, and cultural understanding in today's digital world. In "Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Activities and Communications in Response to the COVID Crisis: Evidence from the U.S.", Hyun Ju Jeong and Deborah S. Chung investigate how corporations responded to the COVID-19 crisis through their fulfillment of corporate social responsibility (CSR). They analyzed a total of 60 CSR news stories published during the year of 2020 and

provided context through the close readings of all 60 news stories. Their findings highlight that a public health crisis may render corporations to transform CSR into emergency and disaster relief. Finally, Michael Kearney provides a scholarly book review of <u>Dialogic Editing in Academic and Professional Writing: Engaging the Trace of the Other, (2023), Eds.</u> Üçok-Sayrak, Ö., Harden Fritz, J., and Majocha, K.L. New York, NY: Routledge. Kearney demonstrates how the edited volume provides a significant research contribution to the field of human communication.

As you read through the journal, consider how you may cite the articles in your own scholarship. Then consider submitting your work to the Iowa Journal of Communication. Manuscripts are now being sought for Volume 56.1, open to any topic in communication, and Volume 56.2 special issue broadly engaging the topic of civility.

Submissions may focus on any type of communication. Approaches may be philosophical, theoretical, critical, applied, pedagogical, and empirical in nature. Submissions from all geographic areas are encouraged, and one need not be a member of the Iowa Communication Association to submit. We are particularly interested in unique, non-standard approaches and voices. Also, book reviews on publications that may be useful to communication researchers and teachers are always welcome.

We are proud that our published articles are indexed through EBSCO. The deadline for both editions is April 30th, 2024. Email me at majochak2@unk.edu for more information. Thank you for your interest in the Iowa Journal of Communication.

Kristen L. Majocha, PhD
Editor

The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Crisis Communication: A Study of Public Perceptions and Trust of AI

Travis Loof, Rachel Ehlers, Julia Lobo Paes,
Prah Haider, and Rachel Spinks

Organizational crises can be detrimental if not offset with an appropriate communication strategy. The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2007) has been studied as a framework for understanding how organizations can respond to crises. The current study explores the effectiveness of a nontraditional message source, artificial intelligence (AI), when delivering a rebuilding crisis response strategy. The current study empirically tests and discusses future research in AI trust building and crisis communication response strategies.

Introduction

During an organizational crisis, a company can crumble into irreparable disarray without a well-crafted communication strategy to counteract the crisis aftermath. The severity of the situation may vary, but the crucial determining factor lies in the organization's response strategy. The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT; Coombs, 2007) categorizes the types of responses and who communicates those messages. However, while traditional response personnel have been extensively researched, little attention has been paid to nontraditional message sources. Enter artificial intelligence (AI), an increasingly widespread tool in all sectors. Despite its ubiquity, AI is still doubted by users in high-stakes situations. In this study, we explore the public's reaction to an AI-based rebuilding crisis response strategy. Our findings can help future work examine how to build trust in AI and develop effective crisis communication response strategies.

Literature Review

Situational Crisis Communication Theory

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is an essential tool for organizations seeking to protect their reputation before, during, and after a crisis (Coombs, 2007). SCCT evaluates how the public perceives and approves of an organization following a crisis, providing an evidence-based framework to guide effective communication strategies (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). Coombs identifies three factors that influence stakeholder attributions

surrounding a crisis: *initial crisis responsibility, crisis history, and prior relational reputations*.

Initial crisis responsibility refers to the attributions of stakeholders regarding the organization's personal control for the crisis or how much the organization's actions caused the crisis. The initial assessment of crisis responsibility is based on how the crisis is being framed (Coombs, 2007). Research has shown that increased attributions of crisis responsibility damage the reputation of the organization (Coombs & Holladay,1996).

According to Coombs (2007), crisis history is determined by whether an organization has faced similar crises in the past. Past crises are a potential indicator for a pattern of undesirable behavior. (Coombs, 2004). Research has shown that there is a weak correlation between crisis history and the perceptions of crisis responsibility, but a strong correlation between crisis history and organizational reputation (Coombs, 2004).

Coombs (2007) notes that unfavorable prior relational reputation, or a history of the organization treating stakeholders poorly, suggests little consideration from the organization for stakeholders across several domains, not just in the crisis itself (Coombs, 2007). Negative relationships with stakeholders are believed to intensify attributions of crisis responsibility. Indeed, prior relational reputation also has been shown to have an indirect effect on the reputational threat (Coombs, 2004).

Moving from attributions by stakeholders to crisis typology, the theory then describes three crisis clusters: *victim, accidental, and intentional*. Within the victim cluster, the organization is a victim of the crisis along with the stakeholder. This cluster often has very weak attributions of crisis responsibility (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Crises that fall into the victim cluster include natural disasters, rumors, workplace violence and product tampering (Coombs, 2007). The accidental cluster represents crises that arise from unintentional actions by the organization (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Crises in this cluster include technical-error accidents, technical-error product harm and challenge. This cluster has minimal attributions of crisis responsibility, as the event is considered unintentional or uncontrollable on the organization's behalf (Coombs, 2007). Finally, and of vital importance to this study, the intentional or preventable cluster refers to a crisis in which the organization purposefully placed stakeholders at risk, knowingly took inappropriate actions, or experienced avoidable human error (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Crises that fall into this cluster include human-error accidents, human-error product harm, and organizational misdeed. The

intentional cluster is highly associated with crisis responsibility (Coombs, 2007). For this study, a preventable crisis cluster is used to elicit participants to place crisis responsibility with the organization.

Finally, SCCT provides three main strategies for handling a crisis: *denial, diminishment, and rebuilding* (Coombs, 2007). Each area is dependent on the crisis at hand, the organization, the stakeholders, and any other constraints surrounding the situation. The main objectives of crisis response strategies are: (1) shape attributions of the crisis, (2) change perceptions of the organization in crisis, and (3) reduce the negative affect generated by the crisis (Coombs, 1995).

Deny strategies seek to establish a crisis frame and try to remove any connection between the organization and the crisis. Deny strategies are often used for victim cluster crises. Diminish responses reflect Attribution Theory's contribution (Coombs, 2004; Weiner, 1985) to SCCT. With this strategy, crisis managers would accept that the crisis occurred, and that the organization is involved but not to the extent stakeholders may originally believe (Coombs, 2006). Diminish strategies are often used after an accidental cluster crisis and typically express lack of intent or excuses to reaffirm a crisis. While diminish strategies can be used with intentional crises, they are likely much harder and more expensive to manage while reinforcing a diminish frame (Coombs, 2007).

If an organization needs to generate new reputational assets, rebuild strategies are often the best option. With a rebuild strategy, the goal is to offset the negatives from the crisis with the presentation of new positive information about the organization or by reminding stakeholders of past good works (Coombs, 2007). Common ways of taking positive action to offset the negatives are offering compensation or a full apology on behalf of the organization. Rebuild strategies are used when the crisis at hand presents a severe reputational threat. Coombs (2002) explains a severe reputational threat as an instance that is viewed as highly offensive or that contradicts a fundamental element used by the organization to establish its reputation. For instance, if a company has built its reputation around environmental concerns, the discovery of illegal disposal of toxic chemicals would be perceived as hypocritical, damaging its reputation. These crises often fall into the intentional cluster or an accident cluster crisis that is paired with a crisis history or an unfavorable prior relationship reputation (Coombs, 2007).

Research shows that rebuild strategies are perceived more positively than using a deny or diminish strategy (Claeys et al., 2010; Sisco, 2012). Verčič, et al. (2018) expanded the literature by

incorporating how communicative responses and various sources of communication (CEO vs Spokesperson) affected stakeholders' perceptions of the organization. While past research (Pauly & Hutchison, 2005; Seeger et al., 2003) placed heavy importance on having someone in power, such as a CEO, respond to the crisis, Verčič, et al. (2018) found no significant difference between CEO or a spokesperson. Crijns et al. (2017) found that using a matched crisis response strategy, such as a preventable crisis with a rebuild strategy, significantly improves stakeholder perceptions of an organization's reputation and empathy toward the spokesperson. Additionally, they found important gender effects in terms of matching spokesperson gender to intended audiences. Manipulation of the source and the strategy have and continue to be empirically tested. However, there may be a gap in the literature from more nontraditional message sources, such as artificial intelligence (AI), which have been less explored in crisis communication research.

Artificial Intelligence

According to Dhankar and Walia (2020), artificial intelligence (AI) is a type of thinking power that has been created by humans. AI has increasingly become a part of decision-making processes that were once done exclusively by humans. For example, Ashoori and Weisz (2019) note that AI models are now used in college admissions, prison sentences, hiring, and mortgage approvals to assist in making fair and accurate judgments. Even more recently, the popularization of language models, such as ChatGPT, has coincided with an explosion in the use of AI for a variety of tasks. Given that AI is now involved in these important decisions, it is crucial to understand how people perceive this information and communication from AI.

Communications and artificial intelligence are more closely related than many give credit for. Gunkel (2017) argues that the discipline of Communications supplies empirical frameworks, including test cases and experimental evidence, to integrate communication and AI. Prior research has shown that users are more susceptible to social influence when they believe they are interacting with a human instead of a machine, regardless of any actual difference in performance (Lim & Reeves, 2010; Okita et al., 2008). Fox et al (2014) found a significant overall effect for humans being more influential than AI-like agents. Extending this reasoning, Mou and Xu (2017) found that users applied different communication strategies when interacting with AI compared to humans.

Ashoori and Weisz (2019) examined seven factors that defined the trust boundaries of AI-infused decision making: stakes, decider, trainer, model interpretability, train and test set description, social transparency, and model confidence. The stakes boundary refers to what consequences would accompany the decision. Research has considered both low-stakes decisions and high-stakes decisions, especially as AI is being increasingly used in high-stakes situations (Murawski, 2019; Rudin, 2018). The stakes boundary is suggested to have a considerable influence on trust. Generally, the higher-stakes scenarios generated a lower trust of AI (Ashoori & Weisz, 2019). This suggests that for significantly consequential information, AI may not be best method of communication.

Jacksch et al. (2019) examined AI-mediated communication (AI-MC) and its influence on trust in online communication. AI-MC refers to interpersonal communication that is augmented by an algorithm to achieve a specific communication goal and can be used in interactions ranging from one-to-one to one-to-many (Jakesch et al., 2019). They did not find a significant difference in the perceived trustworthiness between user profiles that were written by a human or written by AI when *source was known*. However, when participants believed, but were not certain, that the profile content was AI-generated, the content and business entity behind the creation were viewed as less trustworthy than profiles believed to be written by humans (Jakesch et al., 2019). This indicates that AI-MC influences perceived trustworthiness. Jakesch et al. (2019) suggests that in a mixed source communication world, the knowledge, or even suspicion that content is AI-generated may lead to distrust. Lee et al. (2020) explored the perceived credibility of AI-written news media. They found that AI-written news was perceived as credible in all media except newspapers. Online news sites employing AI-written news were perceived as the most credible of the news media studied. Lee et al. (2020) credit this to online news sources already producing more algorithm-based news. These findings suggest that AI produced content is viewed with suspicion and that form of the message (newspaper vs. online news) influences credibility of the AI delivered message.

Edwards et al. (2014), examined whether a known Twitter-bot is perceived differently than a human on variables related to perceptions of communication quality. The authors conceptualized communication quality as source credibility (McCroskey & Teven, 1999), interpersonal attraction (McCroskey & McCain, 1974), computer-mediated communication competence (Spitzberg, 2006), and intent to interact (Edwards et al., 2014). While the Twitterbot

agent generally scored lower than the human agent, the bot's mean score was still above the scale midpoint. This finding demonstrates that users may have perceived the Twitterbot as a credible source (Edwards et al., 2014). Additionally, the study found no significant difference in perceptions of credibility, communication competence, and intent to interact between the human and Twitterbot. This finding suggests that users could still see AI as a source of credible information (Edwards et al., 2014). Given this finding and conclusions drawn by Lee et al. (2020) it appears that AI generated content is acceptable in some communications while not in others.

As the world continues to see more AI in everyday life, organizations will continue to integrate AI. One area where we believe this could occur is in crisis response. This is because during a crisis both timeliness and accuracy of a response are of utmost importance. Furthermore, the amount of trust a person places in an organization and their communications is proportional to the manner the organization responds to crisis. One method of responding to the crisis is by using a rebuilt strategy. Rebuild strategies have been found to be one of the most effective response strategies when dealing with a preventable crisis (Claeys et al., 2010). If the public does not trust the source of the message being delivered, the strategy becomes ineffective. The question then becomes whether the public will view a source as credible and trust the message delivered regardless of if it is human generated and delivered or AI generated and delivered. Given some of these conflicted findings and exploratory nature of this study, we ask the following research questions:

> **RQ1: In a crisis communication response, do individuals trust AI or Human representatives as an information source?**

> **RQ2: In a crisis communication response, are individuals less trusting of an organization when an AI or human acts as a media representative?**

> **RQ3: Will the reputation of an organization decline if an AI representative is used for a crisis response as compared to a human representative?**

> **RQ4: Will individuals perceive the overall credibility of an AI representative lower than a human representative.**

RQ5: What are stakeholder impressions to AI or Human media representatives?

Methodology

Procedure

A two-condition post-test experiment was used with message source (artificial intelligence vs spokesperson) as the independent variable. Participants were randomly assigned one of the two conditions: a press release created by *Chatbot AI Agent* as the media representative, or a press release created by *Pat Kelly* the media representative. The dependent variables were trust (in message source and in the organization), perceived reputation of the organization following the response and source credibility. Participants read a situational brief at the start of the experiment and confirmed their comprehension of the situation. The stimuli were created using a fictitious organization and crisis to ensure that all respondents of this study have not been exposed to the crisis or response prior to the study.

Participants

186 undergraduate students were recruited from a medium-sized Midwestern university. The respondents were offered extra credit for their participation in the study. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 29 years ($M = 19.6$, $SD = 1.87$). Participants consisted of 42% male ($N = 73$), 57% female ($N = 100$) and >1% prefer not to disclose ($N = 2$).

Stimuli

The stimulus for this experiment was a modified version of Verčič et al. (2018) manipulation. The preventable crisis cluster was presented to participants immediately following consent to participate. The fictitious situation consisted of an organization accused of distributing contaminated products to the public. The situational brief explained that following an investigation into the crisis, the organization found that product tampering had occurred and 50 people have reported being hospitalized after ingesting the product.

Consistent with previous literature, the stimuli included the organization's crisis history to ensure that the organization's reputation was at stake. Following the presentation and explanation of the crisis, participants were provided with the company's response. The response was given in a press release with media representative Pat Kelly or Chatbot AI Agent as the creator and/or contact person.

The Pat Kelly name was selected because it was androgynous to avoid the gender-based effect found in previous literature. The press release in both conditions included the same wording, an admission of guilt, and a full apology as described in SSCT rebuild strategy. The identity of the media representative was clearly displayed in the press release. After participants read the situation brief and press release, they were tasked with completing the survey.

Manipulation Check

To ensure that respondents understood the crisis and response, two screener/manipulation check questions were asked. These questions work by instructing subjects to show that they understand the instructions and stimuli (Berinsky et al., 2014). The two manipulation screening check were: "who created the press release in response to the crisis" and "what product was tampered with in the crisis." This was done to gauge the comprehension of the stimuli throughout the study. Participants who did not correctly identify the author of the press release and correctly identify the item at the source of the crisis were removed from analysis.

Measures

Trust in Message Source

To measure the participants' trust in the message source following the stimuli, questions originally used by Song et al. (2018) were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Questions measuring trust included the following: "I trust the source to provide the best available information on the crisis", "I trust the source to provide enough information to allow me to decide my stance on the crisis", "I trust the source to provide truthful information about human safety regarding the crisis" and "I trust the source to provide timely information regarding the crisis."

Trust in Organization

Trust in the organization was measured with six items developed by Hon and Grunig (1999) on a 5-point Likert scale. Questions measured included the following: "This organization treats people like me fairly", "this organization can be relied on to keep its promises", "this organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do" and "I feel confident about this organization's skills" (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Organizational Reputation

To measure the participants' perceived reputation of the organization, questions were measured on a 5-point Likert scale using five items from Coombs and Holladays's (2002) organizational reputation scale. The items present in the study included "the organization is concerned with the well-being of its publics", "the organization is basically dishonest", "I do not trust the organization to tell the truth about the incident", "under most circumstances I would be likely to believe what the organization says" and "the organization is not concerned with the well-being of its publics" (Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

Source Credibility

Perceived credibility of the message source was measured with the five-item credibility scale from Metzger, Flanagin, and Zwarun (2003).

Open Ended Questions

An open-ended question was asked to all participants. The the question was: What was your impression of media representative Pat Kelly/ChatBot AI Agent (condition dependent)? These responses were qualitatively evaluated with thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2012) provide a framework for systematically finding, creating, and using thematic codes within data. Thematic coding was conducted by the first author and a graduate student trained in qualitative research, including thematic analysis. Open coding was conducted individually and then coders compared themes looking for emergent-recurring themes.

Results

Results were analyzed in two ways. For RQ1-RQ4, a series of t-tests were conducted. RQ5 was analyzed with thematic coding. For RQ1-RQ4, a Bonferroni correction was used to prevent any Type 1 errors due to the data being tested multiple times. Each test was designated to a p=.05 and four separate tests were run. The significant level following the correction was pnew=.0125. Each significance level was tested against this new level. Each research question was analyzed with a one-tailed t-Test assuming unequal variance.

Research question one asked if individuals would differ on their levels of trust towards the media representative in a crisis. There was not a significant difference in source trust between participants who read the content created by the AI (M= 3.22, SD=.84) and those

who read the crisis response from a human (M=3.48, SD=.81); t(180) = -2.14, p = .02. The answer to research question one was that we did not find a significant difference between participant's trust in AI as an information source compared to trust in the human message source.

Research question two predicted asked if individuals would be less trusting of an organization if an AI was used as a media representative compared to a human representative. There was not a significant difference in organization trust between participants who read the response from the AI representative (M= 3.36, SD= 1.68) compared to a human media representative (M= 3.39, SD=.76); t(119) = -.38, p = .35. Thus, the answer to research question two was that trust in the organization did not differ regardless of using AI or a human media representative.

Research question three asked if the perceived reputation of an organization would decline when AI is used as a representative. There was not a significant difference in reputation between AI response (M=3.07, SD=.22) and human response (M=3.08, SD=.12); t(176) = -.34, p = .37. The overall perception of the organization's reputation did not differ based on either a human or AI media representative.

Research question four asked if credibility of an AI representative would lower than a human representative. There was not a significant difference in credibility between either AI (M=2.95, SD=.54) nor human media representative (M=3, SD=.49); t(177) = -.6, p = .27. Participants found the AI and human representative a credible source in the crisis.

Research question 5 asked about the qualitative impressions of the media representative. To answer this research question, we conducted a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) of the responses to the question: What was your impression of media representative. As this research was primarily interested in a comparison between an AI representative and a human representative, our final themes represent a comparison of the themes found with the AI and the themes found within responses to the human representative. Thus, these themes are an answer to RQ5.

Human vs. AI

One prominent dissimilarity between human and AI representatives was that AI representatives elicited responses related to skepticism, lack of human emotion, and trustworthiness of AI-generated responses. These themes were obviously not present in the

human condition; however, they do suggest areas where stakeholders might feel uncomfortable with AI.

Personalization and Empathy

Additionally, participant responses to AI highlighted the importance of personalization and empathy in crisis responses. Participants expressed a desire for a more personal touch and empathetic communication, which was not a major theme in human condition. This suggests that even though the content was the exact same in both conditions, an AI delivery was automatically presumed to be void of emotion.

Company Responsibility and Blame

In the human condition, participants gravitated toward the perception of company responsibility and blame. Participants commented on whether the media representative took responsibility or shifted blame onto others, such as employees. This theme was not explicitly mentioned in the AI responses suggesting that participants viewed a human to be more likely to "blame" another.

Discussion

As the field of artificial intelligence advances, the technology will continue to be integrated into various aspects of communication including crisis communication. The efficacy of an organization's crisis strategy is heavily reliant on the level of perceived trust from the public. This makes understanding organizational communication incredibly important for a firm's success. This study aims to bridge the gap between AI and crisis communication. By evaluating this nontraditional message source, we were able to better understand how an AI can be used by organizations and under what conditions. By examining the impact of various strategies on stakeholders, organizations can make informed decisions before implementing a tactic during a time of vulnerability.

We examined trust and perception of AI in two different areas; the trust of AI as an information source in an organization and the trust of the organization who used the AI. The trust for AI was not significantly different than participant's trust in the human representative. Participants also did not differ in their trust levels of the organization despite differing media representatives. Furthermore, the perceived reputation of the organization also did not differ based on which representative was shown. There was also no difference in the perceived credibility of the representative compared to the human representative. Participants were willing to accept that

what the representative had to say about the crisis was accurate. Other studies have also found a similar result in credibility when looking at AI (Edwards et al., 2014). These findings could be caused by the growing comfortability that people have begun to have in AI as an information source.

Theoretical Implications

This study evaluated the use of AI within the context of SCCT to better understand how stakeholders may respond to AI within a crisis. The human-error product harm crisis was used as it is a preventable crisis. In response to a preventable crisis, SCCT recommends using a rebuild strategy. The rebuild strategies are best when an organization needs to regain their reputational assets (Coombs, 2007). In this study our lack of differences amongst conditions could show that the rebuild strategy carried out the goal of regaining reputational assets in both cases. In other words, the reputation of the organization did not differ regardless of who or what was used to deliver the crisis response because the rebuild strategy was effectively used.

Research on SCCT has suggested that someone in a leadership position should deliver the crisis response strategy (Verčič, et al., 2018) as compared to a spokesperson. That argument does, however, have conflicted findings within the literature as noted earlier. In our study, "Pat Kelly, Media Representative for Jacobson Co." did not differ from "ChatBot Artificial Intelligence (AI) Agent, Media Representative for Jacobson Co." One interpretation of these findings could be that the message sources were perceived as having the same level of organizational power within the company i.e., Media Representative. Future research in this area should take care to also manipulate the relative power of message source when comparing against an AI.

Moreover, it is possible that when the experiment was conducted (November-December of 2021) participants did not have a complete mental model of AI. If participants did not know enough about AI, they may not have been able to not centrally elaborate (Ott et al., 2016) on the message or source of the message resulting in shallow comprehension through peripheral processing (ELM; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Peripheral processing leads individuals to rely on heuristic signals, such as the Media Representative title, to inform their attitude (Kang and Namkung, 2019; Xu and Warkentin, 2020). Additionally, this peripheral processing may also explain how responses to RQ5 applied a "machine-like" scheme to the AI when the content was the same in both conditions. Recent research has

started to untangle the various human and non-human actor schemes applied when interacting with AI or a Human (Velez et al., 2019). At the same time, it appears that participants viewed the human representative as more likely to place blame on another. Future research should continue investigating schema activation regarding AI.

Additionally, the increased discussion surrounding AI, popularized by ChatGPT, could change that lack of awareness about the technology. Indeed, Diffusion of Innovation theory (Rogers, 1962) outlines how observability may result in greater adoption of technology. One recent use of AI in crisis may illuminate that point. In 2023, Vanderbilt University received negative publicity for their use of AI in communicating their condolences and support to the victims and their families of the tragic school shooting at Michigan State University (CNN, 2023). Vanderbilt's use of AI in that situation appeared to undermine trust of the organization, directly contradicting the findings of this present study. How do we make sense of this? First, future research should ensure that they are evaluating levels of familiarity with AI to establish how these sources are being mentally processed. Second, our findings are based on attitudes that would pre-date the most recent societal discussion and infatuation with AI. Replicating the current study could then explore how knowledge about AI leads to varying degrees of trust. Finally, these findings that seemingly contradict the actual implementation of an AI in a crisis communication response by Vanderbilt University may also be explained by the "stakes" boundary. In our study, the stakes were exceptionally low as it was a laboratory experiment with a fictitious company selling a fictitious product. When important information is being delivered, it seems that stakeholders want a human touch as supported in our analysis of RQ5. Given all of that, this current study still adds to the body of research by replicating previous findings and beginning to outline the boundary conditions of when AI can be used most effectively.

Practical Implications

Crisis situations are a very real threat in the everyday life of an organization. As organizations prepare for potential crisis, it is important to predict what will help navigate a crisis and what might hinder the process. This study has many practical implications. First, this study shows the success of SCCT's rebuild strategies when paired with a crisis that falls into the preventable cluster. A preventable cluster crisis is one of the most damaging crises an organization can have. Being able to successfully navigate through a

preventable crisis with minor changes in the perceived reputation would be considered a considerable success in any organization, and this study showed that SCCT rebuild strategies can help with that task.

Another implication of this study is the use of AI within crisis communications. Overall, there was little reaction to having an AI representative in the crisis response. Trust in the organization, organizational reputation and source credibility all had no change regardless of the AI component. These results show that the use of AI can be used in an organizational crisis without hindering the overall success of the organization's crisis response. Using AI instead of a human media representative may allow for organizations to protect their employees if the crisis navigation is not successful, may supply a representative that can respond 24-7 about the crisis, and potentially allow for communication personnel to continue to monitor the crisis continuously and adjust as needed.

Future Directions

As a future direction, AI should be investigated with each of the response strategies and a crisis that would invoke that response. Not only would this show whether the other response strategies work as they are designed to, but also whether AI has an impact on their effectiveness. Given the conflicting responses between our study and Vanderbilt's use of AI, it would suggest that AI is not the best method of crisis communication in some crisis clusters. Beyond the obvious difference of ecological validity between these two instances of AI use, they may differ because they are a different type of crisis. Recently, Coombs (2021) outlined a set of "unique crisis forms" which are challenging and especially complex. Among these are industry wide spillover and intrinsic crisis (Coombs et.al, 2021). Intrinsic crises occur when many organizations within an industry are connected to the same crisis. This could be the case with Vanderbilt University's crisis response that used ChatGPT. Such crisis and nontraditional messages sources certainly require more analysis. Further research in this area could also investigate when AI is compatible with all crisis types and responses.

Another future direction for research could be in evaluating the different response delivery methods. In this study, the response was delivered via a press release. In many cases, the response is delivered through many different channels. Some typical crisis responses include press releases, news stories, and press conferences. Future research should evaluate how an AI response is perceived in different media channels.

Limitations

As with any research, this study is not without limitations. The first major limitation was the fictitious crisis. Using a crisis and an organization that participants had no prior experience with may not be able to invoke the same reaction that a real crisis and organization might be able to do. Since the reaction was likely not as strong as it would be with a real-life crisis, the results are likely tamer than they would be otherwise. The method of message delivery (a press release) might not have resonated with a college student population. Future work should seek to expand the participant pool. A press release as a delivery method is already an impersonal method of delivery so using this may have lessened the impact of an AI representative. As a future direction, a different delivery method could be used to see if a more personable delivery method would change the effect of an AI representative.

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Photojournalism, Public Health, and Politicization: Analyzing Photographic News Coverage of Health Crises in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Hans C. Schmidt

While political division has been present in the American press since its start, politicized and polarized content is now stretching beyond straightforward political news – where such content might be expected – and is increasingly seen in other news categories, including science, medical, and health journalism. This development has been especially notable during the COVID-19 pandemic, when medical and health reporting frequently became coopted by a political narrative. This study builds on research into the politicization of pandemic and medical reporting with an investigation of pandemic-era photojournalism. Using a content analysis, this study aims to provide greater insight into the nature of visual news coverage involving the protracted COVID-19 pandemic and fractured political environment, as well as other pandemics from the 20th and earlier 21st centuries.

Introduction

The year was 1721, and Boston was experiencing yet another smallpox outbreak. The disease was brutal, and among the most feared illnesses in Colonial America. When it arrived in a city – which it did frequently – up to 60% of the population was likely to become infected and up to 20% could die. Medical authorities had developed a crude inoculation that could be effective, but the treatment, which involved inserting a small dose of the vaccine into the body in order to spark an immune response, was very risky and could result in death as well. Yet, in response to the 1721 outbreak, Boston authorities – in both the colonial government and church – launched a campaign to inoculate the population. Some objected, leading to the launch of the city's third newspaper, *The New England Courant*, published by none other than James Franklin, older brother to the now-famous Benjamin. A battle of perspectives erupted in the city's fledgling news media, becoming such a heated controversy that it led to Franklin's forced departure from the newspaper and – curiously – the emergence of the younger brother as a public figure.

Ultimately, the inoculation moved forward. But such was not an isolated incident, and demonstrates that medical policy has been a topic of debate in news media since the earliest days of the press in this country. Of course, medical policy was not the only

topic of debate. To the contrary, dissent and argumentation about politics in general have long been components of American news. Such mediated political discussion was an important factor in pushing colonists towards the Revolution, and played a key role in establishing the early republic as well. From that point on – and for the next century – American news organizations were generally unapologetic in their bias, and most people fully expected and understood that news was almost always presented through a political or otherwise partisan filter, or at least in a direction reflective of the publisher's views and perspectives.

But this started to change after the turn of the 20th century, when the news industry began to shift towards a new professional ethic based around balance, objectivity, and fact. For the first time, the concept of the "impersonal reporter" started to replace that of the crusading publisher. By the 1920s, the idea had really started to catch on, and then continued to become increasingly formalized in the decades that were to follow. In time, the public came to expect that journalists should operate objectively, as neutral arbiters of truth. This shift towards the middle – during the era sometimes known as "the great consensus" – affected all types of news content, including political content, certainly, as well as specialties such as health and medical reporting, which was generally expected to appear relatively non-controversial.

But, times are changing, and news has once again shifted towards the type of partisan, commentary-driven content that had been a hallmark of the 17th, 18th, and 19th century press. While this shift may have started with the repeal of the Fairness Doctrine in 1987, the change really became apparent in 1996 with the launch of Fox News and MSNBC. Fox News, launched by Rupert Murdoch and with Roger Ailes at the helm, aimed to present news from a conservative, pro-Republican perspective. The channel was a ratings success, and before long MSNBC shifted its focus to become the liberal anti-Fox with a focus on an audience to the political left. Thus began a new move towards audience segmentation. The business model worked in cable, and soon was shown to work even better on the web.

This shift towards segmented, partisan content has had a dramatic impact on the nation's political landscape. Increasingly, this push towards partisan-driven, ideological news content is stretching beyond directly political news – stories about politicians, political parties, elections, and government – and has started to affect the nature of non-political news topics, resulting in other news categories being framed within a political lens. This increasing politicization

and polarization of news media can be troublesome because it can heighten political discord, emphasize and broaden social divisions, and even encourage individuals to make decisions on the basis of ideology rather than fact. One area of particular concern in this regard involves medical and health reporting, which – while always important – has developed a special relevance in recent years and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Comingling of Politics and Medical Reporting

Because medical and health journalism plays a key role in spreading information about new health concerns, threats, and treatments, this reporting has a social importance (Wang & Gantz, 2010) and directly affects the quality of life of the audience or readership (Barry et al., 2009; Dutta-Bergman, 2004, 2005; Marlenga, Berg, & Gallagher, 2017; Rains, 2007). This reporting takes on an out-sized importance during times of crisis, such as has been seen during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, such coverage becomes especially complicated when medical issues are conflated with political matters. Admittedly, public policy does affect public health (MacPhail, 2009); because of the important role of many governmental programs or institutions, medical reporting often necessarily involves addressing some government-related topics as well. This comingling of health and government has led to what Fidler (2001, p. 81) termed the "microbialpolitik."

Yet, the real problems arise when politicians directly assert themselves and their individual or party platforms into the story, spinning medical topics with a political or partisan angle. When this happens, journalists struggle to avoid becoming "mouthpieces of authorities" (Klemm, Das, & Hartmann, 2019, p. 1224; see also Arceneaux & Johnson, 2015; Schwitzer, 2004), and the line becomes blurred between political reporting – replete with its standards based on the prioritization of fairness and balance – and medical reporting, with its standards based on the prioritization of accuracy and fact.

Such issues have become especially prevalent, and problematic, in recent years, as the nation's increasingly divisive political environment converged with the emergence of the largest public health crisis in a century. The result has been a newly confusing medical news landscape, in which news consumers – and likely news reporters as well – struggle to divorce politics from medicine. Indeed, in a world where protective health measures such as the wearing, or not wearing, of a face mask became political statements, it became all-but-impossible to identify where medical authority or science ends and political agendas begin (Roberts, 2020).

The resulting jumbled and mixed reporting has a real impact on the public. This is especially so because, as is suggested by social representations theory, ideas spontaneously develop as a collective coping mechanism among a population when a new threat emerges (Wagner, Krongerber, & Seifert, 2002). This theory, developed by Moscovici in 1961, emphasizes the way in which individuals learn about, assess, and assign importance to issues and then develop shared, collective ways of thinking about those issues (see Moscovici, 2007). As Höijer (2011) noted, "As a theory of communication it links society and individual, media and public" (p. 3). In the context of medical reporting, therefore, this theory indicates that the way in which topics are covered affects audience understanding and perception of heath policy-related topics, and helps to shape personal healthcare decisions and political behaviors regarding medical policy. These ideas, and the communal understanding that develops, eventually come to be seen as "common sense," and are further perpetuated through interpersonal and mediated communication (Bauer & Geskell, 1999).

A limited amount of scholarship has considered this uniquely problematic scenario, and has shown that pandemic-related text-based medical news has become significantly more politicized and focused on controversy during the COVID-19 pandemic (Author, 2022), and that such politicized news coverage of medical topics does affect audience perceptions (Bolsen et al., 2014; Dunlap et al., 2016; Hart, Chinn, & Soroka, 2020; Hetherington, 2015; Slothuus & De Vreese, 2010). Yet, while research – and even basic observation – demonstrates the politicized and polarized nature of much pandemic-related news coverage, little is known regarding the photographic portrayal of the COVID-19 pandemic in news media. This topic is especially important because of photography's ability to powerfully affect public awareness and opinion.

The Power of Photographs

Photographs, and visual media in general, have an especially powerful impact (Zelizer, 2002) because of their ability to create a sense of immediacy, and allow viewers to feel as though they are witnessing and experiencing events from which they are, otherwise, separated. As such, it is unsurprising that visual media have been so widely adopted as a preferred type of media, often replacing text-based media in the lives of many (Wilmott, 2017). Such a trend is true across entertainment media, social media, and certainly news media as well, where photographs and video are central components of most news products. Research shows that media consumers

increasingly expect, or demand, visual content (Fahmy, Bock, & Wanta, 2014), and Pew Research Center data shows that television and social media – both of which prioritize visual content – remain the most popular ways for the public to obtain news (Mitchell et al., 2016; Shearer & Matsa, 2018). The popularity of visually-driven news media is further supported by research that shows visual media to be especially effective at attracting and maintaining an audience (Leckner, 2012; Lester, 2012; Newton, 2001; Rosen, 2005). Furthermore, the impact of such visual media is lasting; research also shows images to be particularly memorable and impactful on both cognitive and emotional levels (Galikhuzina, Penkovtsev, & Shibanova, 2016; Wilmott, 2017).

Yet, while photographs are often preferred because they are perceived to offer an unfiltered or authentic glimpse into the world (Hall, 1973), all photography necessarily involves a level of production; thus, while images may appear to be a natural or "transparent window" (Schwartz, 2012, p. 223; see also Masterman, 1987), they are in fact a constructed media creation (Hobbs, 2004). As Sontag (1977) noted, photographs are less an objective documentation of a reality than they are an interpretation, based on the perspective of the photographer.

Through the production process, images are framed in a particular way. The frame that is adopted for an image – what and who is included or excluded from an image, what is emphasized or deemphasized. what emotions are depicted, what techniques are used in the production process, and how images are organized when published – reflects and projects a particular viewpoint within "easy-to-understand interpretive packages" (Zhang et al., 2016, p. 121). As Wilmott (2017) noted, "The news media play a major role in telling their audience what and how to think about certain issues. . . . the frames and perspectives that journalists employ often promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or . . . recommendation" (p. 68).

When certain frames are used repeatedly, the viewpoints they present become prioritized, and can become the dominant way in which an audience understands a topic. Once this worldview is adopted by many, such frames come to appear normal, obvious, and part of the cultural mainstream (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980), and when applied to a political context, can legitimize particular policy decisions (Wilmott, 2017).

The Politicization of News Photography

The combination of the modern 24/7 news cycle, heightened competition, and the public preference for visually centered news means that journalists are under ever-increasing pressure to find, report, and publish a constant flow of photogenic news stories. This quest for frequent and plentiful content can lead some news organizations to be more open to using pre-produced or packaged images that are provided directly by politicians and politically-motivated entities. Or, it may cause well-intentioned journalists to, out of necessity, gravitate towards sources that create frequent and accessible opportunities for generating original content. Such opportunities include a wide variety of staged events or pseudo-events (Boorstin, 1992), which may provide "behind-the-scenes" access to well-known political leaders within the context of visual cues – backgrounds, settings, slogans, or supporters – designed to skew the image produced in a direction favorable to the political actor or political agenda. In either case – whether produced by journalists or public relations operatives – such images are generally staged with the goal of portraying the subject positively and advancing a partisan agenda, through the use of "visual framing strategies to promote desired candidate qualities and favored themes and to reinforce policy positions" (Grabe & Bucy, 2009, p. 5). So extensive are such operations that political events – such as conventions and rallies – have been described as little more than a "machine for making images" (Strauss, cited in Schuman, n.d., para. 6) employed by politicians who are well aware of how effective "a limited but powerful trope of images" (Wilmott, 2017, p. 70) can be.

Attending such events or using prepackaged content can be especially desirable to non-elite news media and local news organizations, which often have very limited resources, and may be particularly apt to turn to readily available political content to fill the news hole. Such over-reliance on political images to satisfy the public's demand for a steady stream of visuals makes such content even more commonplace across news sites and social media platforms, and exacerbates the politicization of news photography. Further, because many of these images are crafted to present a partisan angle, they can also contribute to a growing polarization of news content (Marland, 2012). The trend in this direction has been documented not only in the United States, but across the world in countries including Germany, Canada, Japan, Russia, Argentina, Australia, India, Indonesia, South Africa, and South Korea (Marland, 2012).

As a result, such carefully constructed images play an important part in managing the way in which political actors and political issues are understood, and in reinforcing partisan affiliations or shaping the way the public evaluates issues and makes political judgments. As Marland (2012) wrote, "If the news can be framed using a narrative of related visuals, then public opinion can be manipulated and the public policy agenda can be set" (p. 218).

This impact was, likely, especially significant during the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, as research has shown, the impact of mediated messages is especially strong in the case of topics for which individuals otherwise have no knowledge or first-hand experience (Albright, Kenny, & Malloy, 1988; Boninger, Krosnick, & Berent, 1995; Domke, McCoy, & Torres 1999). In a time of social distancing such as occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic – when people were turning to media platforms for knowledge and connection, while also staying home and conspicuously avoiding direct contact with others – the images people saw represented in news media often had an out-sized effect on their perceptions of the pandemic, and the world beyond their own socially-distanced and isolated existence. Indeed, during the COVID-19 pandemic – and especially in its early stages – news images and reports often provided the only stimulus to which a person may have been exposed, creating a "reality tunnel" (Leary, Wilson, & Koopman, 1977) that was "capable of shaping both public opinion and public policy" (Chavez, Whiteford, & Hoewe, 2010, p. 112). Thus, as Hodson (2019) wrote, "Can photographers directly influence politics? The answer is a qualified 'yes'" (para. 15).

Related Scholarship and Focus of Research

Some limited research has previously considered medical and pandemic-related photography and photojournalism. For instance, some scholarship has considered ethical issues associated with medically-related photography, and questioned the propriety of news photographs that depict suffering (Lupașcu, 2020; Mirzoeff, 2011). Specifically, some have raised concerns about whether such depictions constitute legitimate journalistic content, or if they verge on exploitation or voyeurism. Further, some have questioned if visual depictions of pain and suffering are even effective in telling the story of disease. As Lupașcu (2020) wrote:

> Across the field of medical humanities, critical medical humanities and narrative medicine, representations of suffering have always posed questions regarding the patients' agency, the right to look (Mirzoeff, 2011) and the

angle of looking, as well as regarding the responses such
representations — literary or photographic — engender
from their audiences. (p. 43)

Such concerns are especially relevant when photojournalism
involves depictions of disease in developing or non-Western nations.
Notably, research has suggested that health crisis-related reporting
and photojournalism involving the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, in
2014-2015, and the SARS outbreak, in 2003, often included a fear
narrative (Gerlach, 2019), and scholars have questioned if such
pandemic-related photography portrays the developing world with
the same respect and empathy as is embedded within depictions of
medical situations and suffering in Western nations (Capturing the
Pandemic, 2020). Additionally, photographic representations of
medical crises can – intentionally or unintentionally – deceive
viewers into creating artificial limits to or boundaries for a health
crisis or pandemic (Lupașcu, 2020). For instance, pictures of a
disease outbreak in a foreign country can create the impression that
the disease is exclusive to international locations or that contagion is
bounded by borders or geography.

Yet, while depicting disease can be problematic, the
avoidance of such depictions can also be troublesome. Notably, the
argument has been made that avoiding the depiction of disease-
related suffering can lead to what Taylor (1997) called
"percepticide:" the manner in which governments prevent the
documentation of problematic events so that they can later deny that
a problem ever existed. When this happens – and "responsible
witnessing" (Lupașcu, 2020, p. 35) does not occur – the result can be
a collective ignoring or refusal to confront ongoing problems (Taylor,
1997). In contrast, coverage of suffering encourages – if not forces –
the public to move beyond the "comfortable not knowing" and
confront difficult realities (Lupașcu, 2020, p. 35). As Lupașcu (2020)
wrote, such photography "transforms the epistemologically obscure
medical phenomenon into social reality" (p. 42) and helps with
"defining reality and our relationship to the others, to political
regimes and viruses" (p. 25). Further, the depiction of victims or
suffering can also foster empathy among the viewing public, and
even help an audience to see disease as something that might affect
them as well.

Clearly, photography of medical situations and public health
crises is important, but can also be problematic for a variety of
reasons. This is also the case with coverage of the recent COVID-19
pandemic, and scholars are now beginning to explore this topic more
directly as well. However, little scholarship has thus far focused

specifically on the politicization of photojournalism within the context of health reporting and the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, this research focuses on analyzing pandemic-related photojournalism throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, with the goal of identifying how coverage has changed and if pandemic photojournalism has become politicized in a manner consistent with other text-based news coverage during the COVID-19 era. Specifically, the research is framed around the following hypothesis and research questions.

> **H1: Pandemic related photojournalism has become more politically focused over time.**
>
> **RQ1: In what ways have the political focus of pandemic-related news photographs changed over time?**
>
> **RQ2: In what ways have the medical focus of pandemic-related news photographs changed over time?**
>
> **RQ3: In what ways have the framing of pandemic-related news photographs changed over time?**

Method

This study involved a content analysis of news photography. Photographic analysis is challenging due to the inherent ambiguity of visual content (Barthes, 1977), and as Wilmott (2017) acknowledged, the "surplus of meanings" of a photograph can challenge "the academic claim to objective research" (p. 70). Accordingly, following the precedent set by Wilmott and other visual researchers (see Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017; Galikhuzina, Penkovtsev, & Shibanova, 2016), this study also draws on previous research involving photography, and involves the use of previously identified visual frames that were adapted to suit the topic here being considered.

Sample

In order to study a mix of content that has been widely distributed to and published by newspapers across the US (Caple, 2013), photographs were sampled from Proquest's Historical Newspapers database and the AP Images database. For historical photos, the Historical Newspaper database provided the best available archive of images from the 20th century. For more recent photographs, though, the AP images were especially relevant because

they were distributed internationally and used in a wide variety of news media (Mortensen & Gade, 2018).

Photographs tagged as involving pandemics from the 20th and 21st century were identified by searching online databases using the terms associated with each pandemic (Hallin, Briggs, & Brandt, 2010): "influenza" or "flu" or "Spanish flu" or "H3N2" for the 1918-1919 pandemic, "influenza" or "flu" or "Asian flu" or "H2N2" or "influenza A" for the 1957-1958 pandemic, "influenza" or "flu" or "Hong Kong flu" or "H3N2" or "avian influenza" for the 1968 pandemic, "influenza" or "flu" or "H1N1" or "swine flu" for the 2009 pandemic, and "SARS CoV-2" or "coronavirus" or "COVID" for the 2020-2023 pandemic.

All pandemics included in the study were relevant because of their dramatic impact on the global population. The COVID-19 pandemic started in March 2020, and has thus far caused 1.1 million deaths in the United States and 6.8 million deaths worldwide (CDC, 2023; WHO, 2023). The H1N1 pandemic of 2009-2010 resulted in 12,469 deaths in the United States and between 151,700-575,400 deaths worldwide (CDC, 2019a). The H3N2 pandemic of 1968 caused an estimated 100,000 deaths in the United States and 1 million deaths worldwide (CDC, 2019b). The H2N2 pandemic of 1957-1958 was responsible for an estimated 116,000 deaths in the United States and 1.1 million deaths worldwide (CDC, 2019c). The H3N2 pandemic of 1918-1919 caused an estimated 675,000 deaths in the United States and at least 50 million deaths worldwide (CDC, 2019d).

Photographs were selected from among those identified by keywords during relevant time frames: February 1957 - December 1958, September 1968 - December 1970, April 2009 - April 2010, January 2020 - December 2020 (the first 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic). News photographs were rare during the pandemic of 1918-1919 (January 1918 - December 1919), and an insufficient number of photos were available in archives to allow for analysis or comparison; accordingly, the 1918-1919 pandemic was excluded from consideration. Because significantly less archived content was available from earlier time periods, all relevant photographs from the other 20th century pandemics were included in the sample. In contrast, there was an overwhelming amount of available and archived news photographs related to the 21st century pandemics. As such, photographs were randomly sampled from the 2009-2010 and 2020 pandemics. Because AP images are not necessarily published by all member publications on the same day, it was not feasible to create a constructed week or constructed month sample. Rather, a

selection of 15% of all news photographs from each year were randomly selected. Following the precedent set by Wilmott (2017), the photographs were the basic unit of analysis, along with available para-text such as captions and titles.

In all, 755 photographs were analyzed; 0 were included for the 1918-1919 H3N2 pandemic, 85 were included for the 1957-1958 H2N2 pandemic, 70 were included for the 1968 H3N2 pandemic, 290 were included for the 2009-2010 H1N1 pandemic, and 310 were included for the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

Coding

Politicization – a central concept in this study – can be understood as involving the extent to which issues are seen as political in nature. In a photojournalistic context, therefore, politicization can be operationalized as the extent to which people associated with politics, including elected officials and their surrogates or spokespersons, or settings associated with politics are depicted in news photographs (Bolsen, Druckman, & Cook, 2014). Consistent with Krippendorff (2009), this content analysis had an a priori design. Coding involved identifying the following variables: who was pictured (political actors, public health officials, other public officials, health care professionals/researchers/experts, business spokespersons or analysts, ordinary people, patients/sick people, others), the specific political actor pictured (president, vice president, legislator, governor, mayor, candidate, spokesperson, other), the setting pictured (political, medical/scientific, daily life, business/economy, military, sports, other), and the frame used. Frames included the political frame (e.g. an elected official in a press conference), public health frame (e.g. a billboard encouraging masking or vaccination), medical frame (e.g. a patient being treated in a hospital), daily life frame (e.g. average people wearing masks), sports frame (e.g. athletes wearing masks on the sidelines of an athletic event), travel frame (e.g. waiting to board an airplane while socially distancing), vaccine frame (e.g. development or administration of a vaccine), and testing frame (e.g. a COVID-19 testing center) (Adams & Cozma, 2011; Capella & Jamieson, 1997; Lawrence, 2000; McManus, 1992). All coding was done by the lead researcher.

Results

Analysis of photographic news coverage of 20th and 21st century pandemics indicated that, overall, politically-related photojournalism was more prevalent in COVID-19 coverage than in

coverage from earlier pandemics. Further, analysis indicated that the medical and scientific dimensions of the most recent pandemic – indeed, the most important angle to the story – were underplayed in photographic coverage when compared to earlier pandemics.

Political Depictions in Pandemic Photojournalism

Regarding the first research question, data show that news photographs involving COVID-19 addressed politics dramatically more than was seen with earlier pandemics, as measured by several metrics.

Political setting depicted. A political setting was depicted in 51.9% ($n = 161$) of COVID-19 photographs, but in just 18.0% ($n = 80$) of photographs from all other pandemic periods combined (specifically, 30.2% from 2009-2010, and in no photographs from 1968 or 1957-1958). Chi-square goodness of fit tests confirmed that the proportional difference was significant between photographs involving COVID-19 and the earlier pandemics, χ^2 (1, $n = 310$) = 76.161, $p < .001$ (see Table 1).

Political actors depicted. Political actors were depicted in 52.6% ($n = 163$) of COVID-19 photographs. By comparison, political actors were depicted in just 19.1% ($n = 85$) of photographs from earlier pandemics combined (specifically 31.5% from 2009-2010, and in no photographs from 1968 or 1957-1958). Analysis showed that the proportional difference was significant between photographs involving COVID-19 and the earlier pandemics, χ^2 (1, $n = 310$) = 58.115, $p < .001$. Additionally, a Pearson correlation test showed that the average number of political actors depicted in news photographs increased over time to a significant extent, r (755) = .555, $p < .001$.

Medical Depictions in Pandemic Photojournalism

Regarding the second research question, data indicate that photographs involving COVID-19 depicted medical or scientific settings or actors less frequently than was seen in earlier pandemic coverage.

Medical/scientific setting depicted. A medical or scientific setting was depicted in 12.6% ($n = 39$) of COVID-19 reports, but in 33.3% ($n = 148$) of reports from earlier pandemics combined (see Table 1). Chi-square goodness of fit tests confirmed that the proportional difference was significant between photographs involving COVID-19 and earlier pandemics, χ^2 (1, $n = 664$) = 60.008, $p < .001$.

Medical/scientific personnel depicted. Medical or scientific personnel were depicted in 26.1% ($n = 81$) of COVID-19 photographs; when depicted, they appeared alongside a politician 24.7% ($n = 20$) of the time. By comparison, medical or scientific personnel were depicted in 30.3% ($n = 135$) of articles from earlier pandemics, and were never depicted with a politician in the same photograph. Analysis confirmed that medical or scientific personnel appeared alongside a political actor significantly more often in COVID-19 photographs than in photographs from earlier pandemics combined, χ^2 (1, $n = 310$) = 16.676, $p < .001$, and individually. Additionally, chi-square analysis showed that political actors were pictured significantly more often than medical or scientific personnel in COVID-19 photos, χ^2 (1, $n = 310$) = 80.530, $p < .001$. Contrastingly, medical or scientific personnel were depicted significantly more than political actors in photographs from earlier pandemics, χ^2 (1, $n = 445$) = 34.859, $p < .001$.

The Framing of Pandemic Photojournalism

Regarding the third research question, data show that in COVID-19 news photographs, the public health frame (22.9%, $n = 71$) was used more frequently than other frames, including the medical frame (12.3%, $n = 38$) and political frame (6.5%, $n = 20$), but not more than daily life (22.9%, $n = 71$). In contrast, photographs from earlier pandemics used the public health frame less (16.9%, $n = 75$) (see Table 2), and the medical frame more (21.1%, $n = 94$).

Analysis confirmed a significant proportional difference in framing, and showed that COVID-19 news photographs addressed public health significantly more than reporting from earlier pandemics, χ^2 (1, $n = 310$) = 7.266, $p = .007$.

Summary

Regarding the first research question, results from this study indicate that politicized COVID-19 news photography was significantly more extensive than in earlier pandemics; notably, COVID-19 news photographs addressed a political dimension 182.5% more frequently than photographs from earlier pandemics. Regarding the second research question, results indicate a decrease in the extent to which medical and scientific settings and personnel were depicted. Regarding the third research question, the public health and political frames were much more common in COVID-19

news photographs, while the medical frame was more common in coverage from earlier pandemics.

Discussion

The politicization of news overall, and health-related reporting specifically, is not an entirely new development. Some level of politically related content was also seen in news coverage of previous health emergencies and pandemics (Hart, Chinn, & Soroka, 2020; Winett & Lawrence, 2005), and this has been reflected in news photography as well. Yet, findings from this study indicate an increase in the extent of political depictions in pandemic and medical news photography during the COVID-19 era, and suggest that such images are increasingly reflective of the general shift from "pathology to politics" (Bennett & DiLorenzo, 2000, p. 35) in medical reporting overall. Further, and notably, findings demonstrate that the photographic coverage of pandemics has become dramatically less likely to directly and straightforwardly depict medical settings and events than was seen in the past.

Admittedly, during a pandemic or other public health crisis, there are understandable reasons why political actors are involved in medical-related news, and as such might be photographed. So, to, there are good reasons why public health-related political events and settings – like speeches or briefings – might be newsworthy during health crises, and worthy of photographic coverage. Yet, this study's finding that political actors appear so much more frequently than medical or scientific personnel (or even public health officials) – the very people most important during times of health crisis – does raise new concerns regarding if the proper balance is being struck, and if attention is being diverted away from necessary measures associated with disease awareness, prevention, and treatment, and towards political controversy. Similarly notable was the finding that research-related settings were never depicted in photographs sampled from the COVID-19 period, even though vaccine and treatment-related research was a major news item throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (COVID Research, 2021).

This demonstrated conflation of politics and medicine can cause confusion, encourage partisan views about medical authority or advice, and contribute to the overall politicization of healthcare in general. Replacing relevant medically-related photographs with political imagery can also lead to a form of "percepticide" (Taylor, 1997), in which the absence of certain images creates the public perception that a medical emergency is of diminished importance. Accordingly, this can cause people to make personal health decisions

less on the basis of sound medical advice, and more on the basis of political ideology, thus leading to negative health consequences.

Additionally, such practices can contribute to the further shift away from traditional standards of health journalistic practice towards a model of political reporting in which controversy is increasingly emphasized (Hallin, Briggs, & Brandt, 2010). With this in mind, further research is needed in order to better demonstrate both the nature, and effect, of such politically-related medical news photographs. In this regard, this study can now be built on with further research investigating photographic coverage of other health crises and medical issues, as well as research that looks into the effect of such images on audience knowledge, beliefs, and actions regarding medical treatment and disease prevention.

Conclusion

All types of reporting – including photojournalism – that is focused on medical emergencies and public health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can certainly be challenging. Yet, such reporting plays an important role in informing the public about topics that are of critical importance. Further, and especially in the case of visual media and photojournalism, such news coverage helps to shape the public's understanding and contextual awareness of the impact of a public health emergency. Nevertheless, photojournalism is not immune to many of the same pressures that exist within journalism in general, and as such room exists for improvement. Continual evaluation and analysis of journalistic content, therefore, can make possible both a better understanding of the current nature of photojournalism, and enable future improvements in the way that topics are depicted by news photography.

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Table 1
Settings Depicted in Photographs

	COVID-19 Pandemic		Other Pandemics	
	%	*n*	%	*n*
Political Event, Speech, or Briefing	51.9	161	18.0	80
Medical or Scientific	12.6	39	33.3	148
Daily Life	31.3	97	32.6	145
Business or Economy	0.0	0	7.2	32
Military	0.0	0	1.1	5
Sports	0.0	0	1.1	5
Other	4.2	13	6.7	30
Total	100.0	310	100.0	445

Table 2
Photographic Frame

	COVID-19 Pandemic		Other Pandemics	
	%	*n*	%	*n*
Political	6.5	20	3.4	15
Medical	12.3	38	21.1	94
Daily Life	22.9	71	27.6	123
Sports	0.0	0	1.1	5
Travel	0.0	0	2.2	10
Vaccine	0.0	0	10.8	48
Testing	4.2	13	0.0	0
Public Health	22.9	71	16.9	75
Other	31.3	97	16.9	75
Total	100.0	310	100.0	445

Is it Just about Guns? ABC News Framing of Mass Shooting Stories on Digital Platforms

Maurice N. Emelu

Analyzing news frames in the context of mass shootings is a pertinent and timely subject in the current discussions on gun violence in the United States. This study uses the Analysis of Topic Model Networks frame analysis method to examine ABC News coverage of the 2017 Sutherland Springs, Texas, mass shooting. The study analyzed 202 news stories from ABC's X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, and website. The results support previous research on legacy news channels concerning Victims, the Shooter, and Community frames. Additionally, it supports recently discovered frames— Empathy, Interventions, Reactions, and Security. The chi-square test reveals significant differences in the frames' distribution across digital platforms apart from Security Frame. Shooter Frame shows the most statistically significant difference ($\chi^2 = 109.28$, p < 0.001). These differences suggest that news networks' framing of their stories on the three digital platforms (X, YouTube, and website) are not equivalent. There are platform-specific differences concerning the news framing practices. The research critically examines the implications of these findings to the study of mass shooting coverage, policy debates, digital media literacy, and cultural understanding in today's digital world.

Introduction

On November 5, 2017, a peaceful Sunday service at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, became a horrific scene. A mass shooting occurred, resulting in the loss of 25 lives and another 20 people wounded. This incident sadly holds the record for the highest mass shooting fatality in U.S. history (Peterson & Densley, 2022). The perpetrator of this heinous act was Devin Patrick Kelley, a former Air Force serviceman with a dishonorable discharge on his record and a known history of domestic violence. Despite being legally not qualified to own firearms, Kelley somehow got his hands on a semi-automatic rifle he used for the shooting (ABC News, 2017; Montgomery et al., 2017; NPR, 2017). This dreadful incident in Sutherland Springs is not an isolated event, but part of a deeply troubling increase in mass shootings across the United States. The way the news networks frame tragedies of this kind is relevant, as it shapes public opinion and sways policy discussions (McGinty et al., 2014; Lankford & Madfis, 2017). Therefore, it is vital to understand

how the news networks frame these incidents and the impact of the framing on the broader societal conversations around mass shootings.

Media framing, also known as news framing, is central to understanding how news media coverage presents and emphasizes certain aspects of a story (D'Angelo, 2010). Moreover, studies show that these news frames shape audience news consumption, interpretation, and conversations on policy and public debates (Silva & Capellan, 2019; Luca et al., 2016). Hence the relevance of frame analysis, a scholarly inquiry that identifies and analyzes how news is presented to the public and where the news media networks place emphasis on their news reports.

In the context of mass shootings, frame analysis has been widely utilized in research to examine emphasis on issues such as gun control, violence, and mental health (Lott & Moody, 2019; Lankford, 2015, 2016a, 2016b; McGinty et al., 2014; 2013; Kleck, 2009). However, focusing on predetermined frames results in other important issues receiving less attention in media coverage or underappreciation of the event's news coverage (Emelu, 2023). Moreover, how news coverage is framed on digital platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, and websites requires thorough examination.

This study analyzes ABC news frames in the coverage of the November 5, 2017, Sutherland Springs, Texas, mass shooting on X, YouTube, and website digital platforms, using the Analysis of Topic Model Networks (ANTMN) grounded inductive method. The findings contribute to frame analysis scholarship by identifying and examining the news frames employed in ABC News' digital platform coverage of a U.S. mass shooting. Additionally, they delve into the implications associated with these frames and what they mean in a broader conversation about the role of news media in furthering discourse about mass shootings, policy issues, and safety.

Literature Review

Frame Analysis

Frame analysis is an approach and a theory used in communication and sociology to examine how media networks present specific topics, occurrences, and events as more significant than others (Walter & Ophir, 2019; Cacciatore et al., 2016). First introduced by Erving Goffman (1974), developed as a theory by Gaye Tuchman (1978), and deepened by Todd Gitlin (1980), frame analysis has garnered significant attention and controversy in the field (Entman, 1993; Entman et al., 2009; Cacciatore et al., 2016; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984). The controversy primarily revolves

around three aspects. The first is the validation of different methodologies used in frame analysis. The second aspect involves precision in defining the fundamental concepts of framing, including frame packages and devices, and arriving at a consensus understanding of how frame analysis works (Entman, 1993). Additionally, ensuring the accuracy and rigor of the media content coding process for frame devices or packages is another piece of the debate (Lule & Neuman, 2018).

Many scholars have offered informed perspectives as a resolution to the controversy. For example, Borah (2011) and Baran et al. (2020) classify frame analysis theoretical framework into two main categories: critical cultural and postpositivist. Postpositivist researchers focus on how stories are emphasized (framed) and their possible or actual impact on audiences. Critical cultural researchers explore the role of power and its dynamics in media framing and how these shape individuals and social structures. The critical cultural theoretical framework assumes that the media shape public conversations. Despite the nuances of each framework, there is a shared understanding among frame analysis scholars that how news stories are presented can influence audience responses (Emelu, 2023).

Similarly, there is a discussion about the various methods used in frame analysis. D'Angelo's edited collections (2018) offer empirical and theoretical models for researchers. Two primary methodologies are prominent: "equivalency framing" (Entman, 1993) and "emphasis framing" (D'Angelo, 2018). Equivalency framing involves presenting equivalent information to create framing effects, while emphasis framing involves highlighting specific arguments, perspectives, and facts while omitting others to shape audience perceptions. Emphasis framing is further divided into generic and context-specific frames, such as Iyengar's episodic and thematic frames (Iyengar, 1996) or the frames of conflict, human interest, economic consequences, and morality (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

A newer approach to frame analysis is the Analysis of Topic Model Networks (ANTMN) proposed by Dor Walter and Totam Ophir (2019). This mixed-method computational approach that this research adopts, seeks to identify media frames through three coding and analysis processes: topic modeling, network structure, and coherent frames. As I observed, in a previous study, ANTMN follows a similar framework to Viorela Dan's (2015; 2018) integrative framing analysis but utilizes computerization to enhance the method. The method allows for the analysis of larger datasets but

does not account for contexts or the specific language used in framing (Emelu, 2023). Despite its limitations, ANTMN offers a promising approach for future frame analysis research. This claim is especially valid during the coding process if there is meticulous line-by-line attention to texts and the context of words and phrases in a story.

Frame Analysis and Mass Shooting

The concept of mass shootings gained widespread attention in the United States public discussion following the 1966 Texas sniper shooting (Capellan, 2015; Lankford, 2015; Kelly, 2012). Since then, there have been debates on the precise definition or classification of this type of violence. However, violent shooting scholars follow the consensus definition from the U.S.A. Congress designation of mass killings in violent crime scenarios. "The term `mass killings' means 3 or more killings in a single incident" (Investigative Assistance for Violent Crimes Act, 2013). As Emelu (2023) notes, leading academia in violent crime scholarships, such as Peterson and Densley, Lott and Moody, and Lankford, follow Congress's lead. They agree that a mass shooting is a single event in which four or more people are killed (excluding the shooter or shooters) in a public location or place(s) close together. Further, the motive for the shooting must not be due to any other underlying criminal activity or ordinary situation, such as robbery, rivalry, insurance fraud, argument, or romance (Peterson & Densley, 2022; Lott & Moody, 2019; Lankford, 2016a).

Most frame analysis research on mass shootings primarily centers around incidents occurring in educational environments and newspaper coverage (Muschert & Carr, 2006; Holody & Daniel, 2017; Holody & Shaughnessy, 2022). In both Holody and Daniel (2017) and Holody and Shaughnessy's (2022) research, gun debates are shown to be a typical frame used in the United States when reporting on mass shootings. However, they acknowledge the complexity of mass shootings news coverage and suggest a detailed focus on specific aspects of the phenomenon. A few notable studies examining framing in U.S. television coverage include those conducted by Mosqueda et al. (2021) and Emelu (2023).

In their analysis of the 1999 Columbine High School mass shooting in Colorado, Mosqueda *et al.* (2021) studied transcriptions from ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC within the first 48 hours following the incident. They aimed to pinpoint youth violence risk factors and understand the media's framing and context of the event. Their study's sample was 265 transcribed news reports. They found that

coverage of juvenile shootings often missed the larger context of youth violence. However, they identified four main risk factors associated with Juvenile mass shootings: individual, family, peer/school, and socio-environmental (pp. 64-66). The researchers also recognized multiple frames about victims, law enforcement, victims' families, Columbine High School, memorials, the death toll, and the broader community and national implications of the incident (p. 64). However, since cable and broadcast news are not synonymous, the researchers did not explore how these frames relate to the overall frame analysis process between and across the networks and the technical differences between framing in cable (CNN) and broadcast news (ABC, CBS, NBC). Despite this observation, Mosqueda et al.'s recommendation for future research to focus on broader frames in news coverage of mass shootings is notable. They suggest treating each case as unique rather than grouping them together. It's also worth considering the consolidation of some of Mosqueda *et al.'s* frames categories, such as incorporating 'Columbine High School' into the 'community' frame and 'death toll' into the 'victims' frame.

Emelu (2023) studied frames in the U.S. cable television coverage of the Sutherland Springs Mass Shootings using the ANTMN frame analysis approach. The author contributes significantly to frame analysis scholarship by identifying and examining nine distinct frames, including four new ones (empathy, interventions, reactions, and security). The findings enrich an understanding of how mass shootings are portrayed in cable news, revealing the complexity of news coverage and challenging the notion of a single-issue frame analysis. The research also sheds light on the influence of political ideology on news framing. In addition, it explores variations in frame emphasis across different digital platforms, offering valuable insights into the role of media in shaping public discourse on this critical issue. The study invites further interdisciplinary exploration of how news media depict individuals within various frames. Moreover, the study agrees with Mosqueda *et al.* (2021) on the need for a comprehensive approach to understanding the multifaceted nature of mass shooting coverage. One of the significant contributions of the study is in defining each identified news frame; this research adopts the definitions.

Tristan *et al.* (2022) studied data from the Gun Violence Archive (GVA). The dataset includes mass shooting entries from 2013-2016 and 2-6 sampled news from news organizations (names of news organizations not included in their paper) on each of the identified mass shootings. The study is a content analysis of the

descriptive language employed in 7,048 news media reports covering the incidents. The researchers specifically focused on descriptors related to race (e.g., "Russian," "Native American," "descent"), relationship status (e.g., "husband," "wife," "boyfriend," "girlfriend"), and citizenship (e.g., "immigrant," "alien," "citizen") (p. 5). They found that white, black, and Hispanic shooters receive significantly "both negative and positive descriptive language" (p. 10). However, they also found that "mass shooters racialized as white simply receive *more* descriptive diversity in media coverage of their crimes." For blacks and Hispanics, the reports tend to be "significantly more likely to have a complete absence of descriptive language in news media reporting." In any case, they conclude that media coverage of perpetrators is "much more nuanced and complex" (p. 10). Although this study is not strictly on frame analysis, it is relevant in the current study's analysis of the framing of the shooter.

Where and How this Research Contributes to the Debate

Further research on the use of news frames in the U.S. broadcast television news coverage of a mass shooting utilizing a grounded approach is relevant. A grounded method enables researchers to uncover the media frames that are subtly present if not deeply embedded, within each media publication (Emelu, 2023, p. 2). Rather than making assumptions about these frames, the approach uses open coding of the news content texts, leading to a thorough and systematic discovery.

Most studies of mass shootings news frames focus on legacy news networks and traditional mediums of publication rather than exploring the mediation role of digital platforms such as X, YouTube, and websites. However, it is crucial to examine the mediation role of these digital platforms, as X is a leading social media platform for journalists in the U.S. (Jurkowitz & Gottfried, 2022) and a top source of global news on social media (Kunst, 2023), while YouTube is the leading video content community and a significant source of global usage as a social media site (DataReportal, 2022; Kunst, 2023). Teens and younger adults use YouTube more than adults (Pew Research Center, 2023). Furthermore, an organization's website is the official digital publishing space for any news organization's online content (Emelu, 2023).

Thus, this study contributes significantly to the existing scholarship on frame analysis. First, by utilizing the ANTMN frame analysis device and following Dan's congruence test to analyze the frames that may emerge on three different digital platforms, this

study provides another example of the use of a new approach that addresses the concern of data analysis validity in frame analysis scholarship and supports a recent study (Emelu, 2023) that arrives at a similar conclusion. Second, studying frames on X, YouTube, and the websites of a U.S.A. broadcast news (ABC) demonstrates the practice of frame analysis on digital platforms and on U.S. broadcast television, an area that needs exploring. Consequently, this research addresses the following questions:

> **RQ1: What are the news frames in the written texts of ABC television coverage of mass shootings in a house of worship?**
>
> **RQ2: Overall, is there a difference in the identified frames and their frequency between X, YouTube, and websites?**
>
> **RQ3: What is the statistical significance of the identified frames on the digital platforms of X, YouTube, and website, and which frame(s) has the most significance?**

Method and Criteria

The sample is a mass shooting in a house of worship from 2017 to 2022 with at least ten victims. The Violence Project database (Peterson & Densley, 2022) compiled data on mass shootings in places of worship within the United States from 2017 to 2022. Two of the documented incidents, occurred in the house of worship with ten or more casualties. They include the Pittsburg Synagogue shooting in Pennsylvania on October 27, 2018, which resulted in 11 fatalities, and the Sutherland Spring Church shooting in Texas on November 5, 2017, which resulted in 25 deaths. The Sutherland Springs case is chosen for this research due to its chronological precedence and higher casualties.

The number of collected news reports for each platform is as follows: Twitter (7 reports), YouTube (23 reports), and website (172 reports). News report data about the shooting, which included published articles and digital texts from November 5 to 12, 2017, on the ABC websites, official YouTube, and Twitter accounts, were collected. Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022 ranks ABC News as the first most weekly reach news media offline, the third weekly reach online, and the first in terms of brand trust among the U.S. national broadcast television networks (Newman et al., 2022). Therefore, data from the ABC News network is a credible source for

analyzing broadcast television in the United States. Furthermore, the researcher set the following criteria for data fit for analysis. Namely, the sample includes English texts of news reports, titles and descriptions of digital video footage, image titles, descriptions, the cable news networks' original tweets and retweets, and the original YouTube titles, descriptions, and website posts. However, the researcher excluded videos and their transcripts from the analysis due to cost constraints that exceeded the study's budget. The analysis also did not include retweets of the original tweets by other media outlets, as well as opinion essays and letters to the editor.

The coding was limited to the first week of news reports. Research shows that news coverage of mass shootings tends to peak during this period and gradually decreases over a month, starting from the second week (Dahmen et al., 2018; Holody & Daniel, 2017; McGinty et al., 2014; Muschert & Carr, 2006).

Procedures and Measures

Following Lule and Neuman's (2018) guidelines for coding rigor, the researcher analyzed 202 online news reports from ABC over the specified period using NVIVO software. For the validity of the findings, a codebook was created after a pair of coders' initial coding of 10% of the texts and reconciled after data coding saturation and analysis. The ANTMN grounded inductive method was then utilized. To guarantee that the coding process incorporates the context of each code, the coders attentively coded each news report title-by-title and paragraph-by-paragraph, taking into consideration the report's context and symbolic cues in the texts, and a reconciled accuracy of 91% was achieved.

The coding process consisted of several stages, including identifying the main theme or topic of the piece (topic modeling) and identifying nodes and edges within the network structure. Additionally, individual themes within the paragraphs were coded based on their alignment with emerging recurrent themes in the dataset until category and theme saturation were reached. Emerged themes were analyzed and defined as thematic concepts, a process that grew naturally from the data, leading to the discovery and definition of the nine discovered frames. This methodical approach was implemented to meet the congruence test outlined by Dan (2018) and to mitigate the potential for text quality diminution, as Lule and Neuman (2018) cautioned. The researcher conducted a chi-square test of independence to determine the most statistically significant frame in all studied digital platforms of X, YouTube, and website.

Data Analysis and Results

RQ1 seeks to find out how ABC broadcast television frames mass shootings in a place of worship. Table 1 shows nine frames that emerged from the news stories and how frequently they occurred, listed alphabetically.

Table 1: *Emerged Frames in the ABC News Coverage of the Sutherland Springs Texas Mass Shootings, and their Unit Code Aggregate Mean*

Frames	ABC Coverage, Sutherland Springs
Community Frame [a]	125
Empathy Frame [b]	83
Incident Frame [c]	42
Interventions Frame [d]	109
Issue-Based Frame [e]	41
Reactions Frame [f]	47
Security Frame [g]	1
Shooter Frame [h]	82
Victims Frame [i]	76
Total	606
Mean	67.33
SD	24.5

[a] "Community Frame encodes stories framed around the community and the impact of the shooting on the community and the people's way of life. It is about how the people of the community are portrayed—their population and demographics, culture and experiences, and their responses to the shooting" (Emelu, 2023, p. 7)

[b] "Empathy Frame emphasizes messages, kind words, or concrete actions that show empathy or kindness toward the community, victims, or the shooting incident" (Emelu, p. 8).

[c] "Incident Frame tells the story in a way concerned with the incident, the actual shooting event. It answers the question, what happened?

Every news report on mass shootings may seem to be about the incident. However, how the incident is reported makes a difference in audiences' view of the story and often reveals ideological biases" (Emelu, p. 8).

[d] "Interventions Frame focuses the news story around people's immediate actions as a response to the mass shooting, which often is their effort to improve the situation" (Emelu, p. 5).

[e] "Issue-based Frame encodes the news around policy, economics, beliefs, attitudes, values, and legal concerns in the political and cultural debates, seeking change" (Emelu, p. 6).

[f] "Reactions Frame centers the story around people's responses or statements to the incident rather than on the event itself. Unlike the "Interventions Frame," which focuses on the actions of non-victims or non-eyewitnesses, the "Reactions Frame" focuses on verbal statements made by individuals or groups. By highlighting these reactions, the news media encourages the audience to consider the shooting in light of the comments made by individuals they deem noteworthy" (Emelu, p. 8).

[g] "Security Frame emphasizes security and safety issues as a social problem that requires a response" (Emelu, p. 7).

[h] "Shooter Frame encodes the news story around the shooter as the central focus. It focuses on the shooter as the story's main subject and delves into questions about their motives and actions" (Emelu, p. 7).

[i] "Victims Frame focuses on the victims of the mass shooting, including their families, friends, and relationships. It aims to answer questions such as "Who were the victims of the attack?" and "How are they portrayed?"" (Emelu, p. 7).

Community frame. ABC applied Community Frame 125 times. ABC stories are about a "community," also framed as a "small town" or "small church" (references 4, 41, 44,46-47, 49, 54, 61, 80, 94) where members and neighbors are presented as coming together to mourn their members they know by name (references 15, 30, 44, 46, 80, 84, 110, 122), who lost their lives to the "massacre" (references 9, 12, 17-19, 44-46, 54-55, 57-59, 61, 6-70, 98). The rural community consoles one another and does not run away from harm's

way when news of violent shootings breaks (references 1, 2, 3, 4, 6). The neighborhood is presented as rallying together in "community vigil" or "candlelight vigil" for their losses and the massacre of their members (references 2, 34, 44, 56, 65, 69, 70, 104, 110-111, 114, 120, and 123). The stories emphasize where the incident happened, framing it as happening at a "church" or its variations "small town church," "community church," a "Texas church," or "a Baptist church" (references 1, 3, 4, 5, and 34 other instances). Locals are presented as courageous people who fight back in solidarity. Those who counter the attack with firearms are hailed as heroes (references 4, 24, 61, 63, 69, 82, & 83).

Empathy frame. ABC applied Empathy Frame 83 times. Results showed that ABC news presents messages, kind words, and concrete actions from the community, public and private individuals, and community leaders with a heightened emphasis on their spiritual support, empathetic gestures, and responses. Emphasis is on spiritual support of prayerful thoughts (references 2-3, 18, 41, 51, 57, 66, 81) or gestures, depicted as a large turnout of participants in events such as candlelight vigil (references 1, 5, 6, 25, 37, 38, 51-53, 56, 72-76, 78), or signaling reports such as "White chairs adorned with roses were placed where congregants fell at the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, Texas" (reference 9) or followers and "crosses" placed at the site (references 22, 61, 63, 77). There are also solidarity statements from the government—especially Pence and Governor Abbott—, public figures, politicians, and community leaders (references 4, 6, 10-14, 16-18, 21, 33, 39, 43-44, 46-47, 51-54, 61, 71-76, 79-81) or casket donation promises from an organization as a support to the community to bury their loved ones (reference 36). Memorial parks, memorial services, and promoting Go-Fund Me initiatives to support the bereaved families (references 8,24, 30, 31, 82) are all emphasized.

Incident frame. There are 42 instances of Incident Frame in the studied sample. ABC frames the incident as "gun violence in America" (7-21), the shooter as a "gunman" (1, 2, 8, 11, 13, 15, 20, 23, 26, 30-32), or "mass shooting at church" (references 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 27). Thus, it was much more about the gun violence or gunman killing dozens in a small town or church in Texas.

Interventions frame. ABC applied Interventions Frame 109 times. ABC's coverage of the interventions was framed mainly around swift law enforcement officials, FBI, local police, and

Pentagon toward solving the massacre (references 8, 19, 23-30, 41, 43, 48-49, 70-72, 74-75, 85-86, 88, 94, 97-98, 103, 107-108) or calming the situation through kind acts: "Cop sends flowers instead of Traffic Ticket" (reference 19). There is also an emphasis on the investigative actions sought mainly from law enforcement (references 12, 16-18, 31, 37) and Congress's mounting pressure to find answers (references 38, 40, 55, 54, 62). Also, Mike Pence's availability to support the community (references 9, 23, 45, 77, 96, 103) is highlighted; also emphasized is Texas Governor's interventions, though to a slightly lesser degree (references 78, 81, 106). There is also a portrayal of the "local neighbor's confronting of the gunman" and framing of the bravery of the locals who pursued the gunman (references 5, 69; 1, 6, 14, 46-47, 50, 53, 58, 64, 69). In addition, there was a framing of people's generosity: "Donors raise over $1 million for Texas Church shooting victims in 2 days," plus many other instances of positive fundraising efforts to support (references 21, 22).

Issue-based frame. ABC coverage has 41 instances where Issue-based Frames are applied. The 41 code references identify nine sub-themes making up individual issues in the news stories issue-based frames. They include gun debate (54.67%), policy failure (21.33%), mental health debate (12%), political debate (4%), implicit bias (4%), religious issue (1.33%), race ideology (1.33%), and accountability (1.33%).

ABC's framing of the gun debate is mostly about how there is "Gun Violence in America" (references 6-19) and its variations in frames, such as "But how many more do we bury before we pass a comprehensive gun control law" (reference 1). In addition are similar frames, which are about Trump saying, "This isn't a guns situation," and other republicans arguing along those lines, and the democrats in Congress framed as arguing for responsible gun law (references, 3, 5, 6, 20-22, 27-30, 41). Another main frame is the portrayal of the shooting as a general policy failure around security, privacy, and background check (references 31, 28-29, 33-35, 37-38, 40). Mental health came third and was framed as the Trump republican's alternative to the cause of the problem (references 34, 24, 26, 35-36, 41).

Reactions frame. ABC's coverage has 47 instances of the Reactions Frame. ABC focuses mainly on the political class, giving prominence to Vice President Mike Pence (including his wife), Texas Governor Abbot, and the president, Trump, in that order. There is

only one instance about Pope Francis. Pence is framed as being present, offering kind words, visiting families of the killed and wounded, praying with the community, and standing with them at the site, accompanied by his wife who cares (references 2, 4, 8, 9, 34, 35-39, 45), and shaking hands with the locals who intervened by a counter-attack to the shooter (references 42, 44). The Texas governor, Abbott, is also framed as being present in solidarity (references 6, 10, 19-23, 27, 41). He is also portrayed as tapping into the Texas sense of courage and pride, calling communities to unite in solidarity, families hug each other (references 27, 36), and showing that "when Texas faces a tragedy, Texans come together and respond profoundly and I'm very, very proud of our fellow Texans," (reference 40). Trump is framed as sending mixed messages about the incident, from condolences and prayers, "our hearts are with #Texas…May God be w/ the people of Sutherland Springs, Texas" (references 11; 7, 9, 18, 25, 43), to blaming the shooting on "mental health problems" (references 30-31) and that "that new gun laws would have made "no difference" in preventing the massacre" (references 46; 31-33). Finally, Pope Francis' reaction is framed as "condolences for the deadly shooting" (reference 1).

Security frame. ABC has one instances where Security Frame is applied. ABC frames security concern as the pastor and church community concern, who feel they are not safe and would need to carry a weapon to protect themselves and their church "Pastor Jaime Chapa of El Faro Bible Church in Sullivan City, Texas, said he will be armed when he preaches to his small congregation of 50, and so will a few of his parishioners." The plans of neighborhood churches for security are also highlighted. "Other churches in the southern Texas area said they also planned to increase security in the aftermath of the shooting," plus others implementing concealed handgun licenses policy" (reference 1).

Shooter frame. ABC has 82 instances of using Shooter Frame. ABC frames the shooter as a 26-year-old (references 2, 12, 23, 34, 42, 47, 57, 59, 63, 65, 73-74, 79) gunman (references 1-4, 6, 10, 17, 26, 37, 40, 45, 54, 56, 59, 78), Devin Kelly (references 5, 15, 24, 26, 34-35, 44-45, 47, 52, 56-59, 62-64), his ex-wife describes him as "a demon" (references 4, 17), abusive, and violent (references 18, 41, 57, 64, 68, 78), and his neighbor describes him as living with his parents (references 45). In addition, he is portrayed as a military veteran with a troubled past, having "escaped from a New Mexico mental health hospital in 2012 and was facing military criminal

charges," including "assault of his spouse and their child" (references 14, 15, 23, 25, 38, 47, 52, 57-58, 62, 68, 78). Finally, his race is mentioned twice (references 8, 23), and in both cases, always in the context of his age, gender, and military service "26-year-old white male, and a military veteran."

Victims frame. ABC applied the Victims Frame 76 times in the news coverage. The network's Victims Frame emphasizes the death toll and demographics of the dead victims (references 1-10, 12-14, 17, 32-33, 35, 37-39, 46-48) and the hurting pains of the event described as a "massacre" (references 12, 35-36,39, 44-45, 57, 59, 64, 65). Secondly, there is the prominence of the "Portraits of the victims" (2-30, 39-40, 42, 44, 52, 54) and the survivor's accounts of their pain and losses (references 49, 53, 59), "including an unborn child" (references 19, 21, 47, 51, 58, 64-65). Finally, the victims are framed as friends (references 41, 44), families, and beloved members of the community (references 11, 18, 27-29, 31, 51, 58, 64-65).

The *Discussion* section will consider what these frame stories mean and their implication to news and frame analysis scholarship.

RQ2 asks, overall, if there are frame differences in the use of frames and their frequency between X, YouTube, and website in the sampled network.

Table 2: *ABC Broadcast News Frames Comparison of X (Twitter), YouTube, and Website*

Frames	ABC Tweets Sutherland	ABC YouTube Sutherland	ABC Website Sutherland	Total
Community Frame	3	9	113	125
Empathy Frame	4	1	78	83
Incident Frame	0	7	35	42
Interventions Frame	2	10	97	109
Issue-Based Frame	1	4	36	41
Reactions Frame	3	4	40	47
Security Frame	0	0	1	1
Shooter Frame	0	16	66	82
Victims Frame	0	9	67	76

| Total | 13 | 60 | 533 | 606 |

Overall, ABC website frames make up 87.95% of their digital platforms' publications in the three sampled digital platforms, followed by YouTube (9.90%) and X (2.15%).

RQ3 seeks to find the statistical significance of the identified frames across studied platforms of X, YouTube, and website, and to determine which frame(s) has the most significant deviation. The null hypothesis is that there is no statistically significant difference between frames across platforms and the alternate hypothesis is that there is a significant difference. A *chi-square* test was performed to determine the statistical significance, p-value <0.05. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3: *Statistical Significance of Frames in ABC News Reports Across X, YouTube, and Website.*

News Frame	Chi-Squared Statistic	p-value
Community	45.58	1.35e-10
Empathy	29.31	4.39e-07
Incident	50.95	8.20e-13
Interventions	47.04	3.10e-11
Issue-Based	34.61	2.87e-08
Reactions	38.2	6.46e-09
Security	7.98	0.018
Shooter	109.28	<0.001
Victims	18.13	0.00012

The results show that there is strong evidence of a significant difference in the distribution of news frames across the platforms (χ^2 (16) = 349.38, p < .001), except for Security (χ^2 = 7.98, p = 0.018). The frame with the highest chi-squared statistic and the lowest p-value is Shooter Frame (χ^2 = 109.28, p < 0.001), indicating strongest evidence that the distribution of Shooter Frame across the three platforms is significantly different. This suggests that the framing of news related to the shooter is affected by the digital

platforms and highlights the importance of considering platform differences when analyzing news frames and their distribution.

Discussion

This study analyzes the frames on ABC's X, YouTube, and website reports about a mass shooting, pinpointing the most statistically significant Frame —the Shooter Frame- while highlighting other differences between frames and platforms. It also demonstrates many narratives in the reports beyond the gun debates. Given the ongoing significance of digital platforms for news dissemination, this study emphasizes the need for more academic attention to analyzing news framing across these digital platforms.

ABC's framing of victims emphasizes their tragedy, comprehensive reports on demographics, death toll, survivors' accounts, and losses, remembering them as friends, family, and beloved community members. It raises awareness of more contexts of the news than the controversial gun versus mental health debates, showing that their reports are not just about gun debates. Furthermore, the findings identify how ABC describes the shooter as a "26-year-old gunman, Devin Kelly," only mentioning his race twice in 82 code references. By pinpointing that ABC deemphasizes the shooter's race while emphasizing the gunman, his age, gender, career, and family, this research supports Tristan et al. (2022). Tristan et al. found that news coverage of mass shootings that involve a white person is more descriptive. A study on terrorism reporting— which is not particularly related to mass shooting scholarship but still relevant—shows that regarding reports about shootings in the U.S.A. that involve white males, there seem to be far fewer reports on their race than when the shooter is of a minority race (Dreier et al., 2022). Low mention of the shooter's race (2/82, which is 2.44% of all shooter information, or 2/606, 0.17% of all identified frame references) might be an attempt to avoid stereotyping or stigmatizing a particular racial or ethnic group. Although, one can argue that the omission of the shooter's race is geared toward countering contagion (Lankford & Tomek, 2018; Capellan, 2015). However, in this instance, the shooter's name, sex, family, education, and other demographic information, such as his employment history, are reported numerous times. If the shooter's name and sex are reported lavishly, why not his race? However, further research is needed to determine if sparse information about the shooter's race is consistent across ABC News mass shooting reports. Additionally, conducting a study to determine whether a low report on the shooter's race aligns

with reporting trends across other broadcast television networks could prove worthwhile.

Similarly, this study adds to frame analysis scholarship and methodology by using the ANTMN frame analysis device (Walter & Ophir, 2019) in conjunction with Dan's (2018) congruence test and Lule and Neuman's (2018) coding rigor to improve data validity. Although this approach is not infallible, the study's rigorous testing and detailed justification of claims provide verifiable evidence, advancing the possibility of a replicable approach to frame analysis. Grounding the research in news data led to the corroboration of Emelu's (2023) findings that identified additional frames not studied in previous scholarship, enriching scholarship in the field of frame analysis. The new frames include Empathy, Incident, Interventions, Reactions, and Security. The nuanced view of the stories' frames provided by this new approach enhances news consumption attitudes, rejecting oversimplification associated with a one-sided-story attitude. The research findings reveal how news coverage in the U.S. is returning to frames focused on individuals, community, and social relevance (Muschert & Carr, 2006), emphasizing victims (Holody & Daniel, 2017), interventions, and community concerns, in contrast to debates surrounding gun control, supporting previous studies (Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014). The research findings suggest that sometimes, there is inadequate emphasis on mental health issues in the controversial discourse emanating from gun control conversations in the media. The study affirms calls for an inclusive approach to frame analysis, considering unique characteristics peculiar to each case (Holody & Shaughnessy, 2020).

In light of the above contributions, the findings raise questions about the role of news media in shaping public discourse and highlight the complexities of news coverage of mass shootings. In addition, the findings promote a more comprehensive and diversified frame analysis attitude towards news appreciation. This research result implies that while mental health is recognized as a significant issue, its representation in issue-based frames is relatively small, accounting for only about 12%. Furthermore, when considering the overall framing, mental health's representation shrinks to a mere 0.81% of the total (n=606), indicating a potential underemphasis in discussions and reports. Previous research (Emelu, 2023) discovered a similar pattern of less emphasis on mental health issues in the U.S. cable news frames of mass shootings. This discovery highlights the need for a shift in how news reporting approaches mental health issues, especially in the context of mass shootings, where it should be a critical point of discussion.

Furthermore, this research emphasizes the importance of frame analysis scholarship in digital platforms. While social media platforms such as X and YouTube have a more extensive reach to audiences (DataReportal, 2022; Kunst, 2023), the findings confirm that news frame content is predominantly found on news media organizations' websites. Moreover, the results demonstrate significant variations in the distribution of news frames across X, YouTube, and the ABC News website. These variations suggest that although the same news network frames a story, the network's emphasis shifts from one digital platform to another. In other words, there are platform-specific differences in the news framing practices. The differences in the distribution of Community, Empathy, Incident, Interventions, Issue-Based, Security, Shooter, and Victims frames are numerically higher across all platforms, although the Community Frame, Empathy Frame, and Interventions Frame top the list across X, YouTube, and ABC News website. Community Frame, which exhibited the highest frequency, is of particular interest and contextualizes the story emphasis by highlighting the social context of the victims and the community in which the shootings occurred.

These findings highlight the importance of taking a humane and contextualized approach to news coverage of mass shootings. They suggest a counter-narrative to the claim that news coverage of mass shootings focuses mainly on the gun debate. On the contrary, the data provides evidence of extensive reports about the community, the victims, and the interventions during mass shooting incidents. Further research is needed to understand why, despite more prominent frames like the Community Frame, the Issue-Based Frame of gun debates tends to be more popular.

Overall, these findings' implications are pertinent for news journalists, producers, and consumers. News journalists and producers can leverage these differences in the news framing practices across platforms to craft more mindful and nuanced coverage. This study highlights the potential of the news media to promote social change by emphasizing the importance of understanding the social context of victims and communities. By taking a humanizing and contextualized approach, the media can help to promote social change and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of this important issue. News consumers are encouraged to employ a multifaceted approach to accessing news from diverse sources to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the news. The variations in the distribution of news frames across X, YouTube, and the ABC news website suggest that each platform may

offer distinctive opportunities or limitations in terms of news framing.

Further implications of this research could be seen in consideration of Empathy Frame. Empathy is a key component of responsible journalism and can help to make news coverage more effective in reaching and engaging audiences. Empathy framing, in cases of mass shooting, could be what is needed to mobilize change and advance responsible policy regarding gun violence. Without adequate attention to empathy on YouTube platforms, as the study shows—although Empathy Frame is more evenly distributed across the platforms—there is a risk of mass shooting news reports becoming sensationalized and potentially traumatizing for audiences. Under-representation of the Empathy Frame suggests a need for more subtle and empathetic reporting of gun violence, particularly focusing on the experiences of victims and their families. The news media has tremendous power to shape public understanding of gun violence and mental health, and news networks' coverage has social and political implications in relation to policy debates (Silva & Capellan, 2019).

This research's most significant contribution is the frames' variations between the three studied digital platforms. The findings suggest the distribution of news frames varies across different platforms, emphasizing the importance of considering the uniqueness of each medium when studying frame analysis in digital networks. In the ABC News reports, Shooter Frame has the most notable deviation among these platforms ($\chi^2 = 109.28$, p < 0.001). Chi-square analysis revealed this difference was especially prominent in YouTube, which accumulated 16 Shooter frames compared to 0 on X and 66 on Websites. This frame data could result from YouTube being a video-sharing platform offering more opportunities to broadcast detailed coverage, such as interviewing surviving victims or witnesses. It could also be that ABC News network's coverage, in this instance, has a positive bias in favor of Shooter Frame when it comes to YouTube and in general. Also, considering YouTube has a wider audience than X, this may also have been a factor in the framing of Shooter stories. YouTube may be more popular among younger audiences (Pew Research Center, 2023) who may be more interested in issues related to gun violence and mass shootings, and news organizations may be catering to this audience by emphasizing Shooter Frame in their videos on this platform. Additionally, YouTube's video format may allow for more in-depth coverage of a topic like mass shootings, which may lead to more frames related to the shooter.

Moreover, some argue that the YouTube format lends itself to sensational reporting (Soriano & Gaw, 2022; Lewis, 2020; Gupta & Singh, 2017), which might be associated with the Shooter Frame. Nevertheless, these are speculative explanations. To further understand how news frames vary depending on the platform and what that means for public perception of news events, more studies should examine underlying factors contributing to the differences in framing of the Shooter Frame across different platforms.

Conclusion and Limitations

ABC's mass shooting coverage reveals a multifaceted narrative beyond mere gun debates. The most prevalent frame, the Community Frame, underscores the resilience and unity of local communities in the face of such tragedies. The Interventions Frame highlights law enforcement's swift actions to restore order, while the Shooter Frame provides insights into the perpetrator's motivations and background. The Empathy Frame emphasizes the outpouring of support for affected communities, and the Victims Frame offers a comprehensive understanding of those directly impacted. Additionally, the Reactions Frame encourages audiences to consider the incident in light of comments from noteworthy figures, and the Incident Frame details the shooting event itself. The Issue-Based Frame explores related policy debates, while the rarely used Security Frame emphasizes safety concerns.

Analyzing the distribution of these frames across different digital platforms, such as X, YouTube, and the ABC website, reveals significant variations. Notably, the Shooter Frame shows the most substantial disparity, suggesting that the choice of digital platforms (X, YouTube, or website) influences the framing of news related to the shooter. These findings underscore the importance of considering platform-specific contexts when analyzing news coverage of mass shootings. The research also demonstrates that ABC's coverage is not solely about gun debates but encompasses a broader narrative considering various aspects of such incidents.

While this research contributes to frame analysis scholarship and demonstrates its depth across different digital platforms, it has limitations. The findings are limited to ABC's news coverage in three digital platforms, and studying other forms of news networks and comparing them to newspapers will provide a deeper insight into the U.S. culture of news reporting on mass shootings. Moreover, a comparative analysis of this study to other forms of mass shootings using the same device might broaden the findings and further enrich frame analysis scholarship.

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Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Activities and Communications in Response to the COVID Crisis: Evidence from the U.S.

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This study investigates how corporations responded to the COVID-19 crisis through their fulfillment of corporate social responsibility (CSR). We quantitatively analyzed a total of 60 CSR news stories published during the year of 2020. We then provided context through the close readings of all 60 news stories. CSR news coverage was selected as the focal content because it is considered to be a more objective communication of CSR compared to corporations' self-disclosed CSR reports. Results show that CSR was provided throughout the year as corporations' timely responses to the unprecedented pandemic. Specifically, corporations emphasized philanthropic CSR activities to support health issues. Their conventional commitments to promotional activities were still present but often criticized with a negative tone. Corporations' evergreen interest in environmental/sustainability issues and human/civic rights also remained but were relatively weakened during the pandemic. Further, CSR was primarily presented in a positive tone. The findings highlight that a public health crisis may render corporations to transform CSR into emergency and disaster relief.

Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak has brought about an unprecedented global impact. Without exception, the private sector also faced significant consequences from this event, from restaurants and movie theaters to warehouses and meat processing facilities. While corporations are not directly responsible for protecting the health and social welfare of citizens, they have a long history of enacting normative practices in providing corporate social responsibility (hereinafter CSR) in response to a public health crisis (Asante Antwi et al., 2021). Similarly, during the COVID pandemic, numerous corporations have engaged in various CSR activities.

As an essential social entity, businesses are expected to utilize their resources through the fulfillment of CSR to improve the well-being of society (Lee & Carroll, 2011). As a mandatory and voluntary commitment of a corporation, CSR serves as one of the avenues for corporations to testify their legitimacy and leadership in society. Scholarship in this matter notes the contribution of CSR to public welfare and well-being in society, whether or not it leads to

business profits (e.g., Asante Antwi et al., 2021; Carroll, 1991; Kinnick, 2003). However, CSR is often subject to the public eye, given that it may operate not only for social benefit but also for business gains (Peloza & Shang, 2011). When CSR is employed for business outcomes over social gains, it appears as "a PR stunt" that easily attracts public criticism. Thus, the COVID pandemic can provide a natural setting to re-examine CSR from the perspective of corporate ethics and responsibility (He & Harris, 2020). It will be beneficial to examine specific CSR patterns during this pandemic to see how a corporation is prompted in taking a leading role to better serve society's needs.

Several studies have recently investigated the dynamic aspect of CSR during the pandemic conceptually (He & Harris, 2020), empirically (Urban & Tefertiller, 2021), and in the context of a foreign case study (He & Harris, 2020; Ramya & Barel, 2021). However, there is still a lack of research analyzing specific CSR activities, issues, and communications during the pandemic, particularly in the U.S. setting that has recorded the largest COVID cases and deaths (Worldometer, 2021). Further, we point to a call for investigations into CSR content distributed by external stakeholders, particularly the news media (Lee & Riffe, 2019; Pérez et al., 2018), noting that stakeholders tend to view CSR news as credible communication that is distant from corporations' intervention (Einwiller & Carroll, 2020; Lee & Riffe, 2019).

In this research, we examined how corporations have operated with the outbreak of COVID-19 through the provision of CSR as a way to take steps toward public health and social well-being. We specifically examined the activities (extent, type, and issue) and communications (tone) of CSR content distributed during the year 2020 by the top three U.S. daily newspapers with the largest circulations—*The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today.* CSR content presented in news articles serves as public data, providing a relatively fair and objective picture of CSR performance compared to self-reported CSR content (e.g., corporate reports, advertising, and websites) (e.g., Einwiller & Carroll, 2020). This study endeavors to map CSR content comprehensively during the first pandemic year. We first analyzed a total of 60 CSR stories quantitatively using conventional content analysis and then examined them in more detail to offer qualitative context. The findings contribute to enhancing our scholarly understanding of the fluid role of CSR by reviewing its adjustment to a major crisis in modern society and monitoring current practices for improvements.

The COVID-19 Pandemic as a Major Crisis

COVID-19 dominated the world during the first year of the pandemic period in 2020. The virus was first reported in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, and then quickly spread around the world. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed the first outbreak in the U.S. on January 21, 2020, and declared it a public health emergency on February 11, 2020. With the alarming level of spread and severity of the virus, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. Most states reported widespread cases of COVID-19 on April 13, 2020, and the U.S. surpassed China and Italy as the global leader in reported deaths associated with COVID-19 on April 10, 2020 (CDC, 2021). As of January 18, 2021, roughly one year after the first outbreak, over 20 million people were known to be infected, resulting in over 400,000 deaths in the U.S. (CDC, 2021).

The government began to order business shutdowns to prevent the spread of the virus in March 2020. The U.S. economy reported the worst unemployment rate since the Great Depression at 14.7% during the year 2020 in the areas of hospitality, leisure, and healthcare industries, with low-income populations and minority workers taking the hardest hit (CDC, 2021; U.S. Census, 2020). A recent global survey (McKinsey & Company, 2021) finds that business executives cited the pandemic itself as the greatest risk to the growth in economies, while inflation and supply-chain disruptions spiked by the pandemic were also considered as other potential risks. They noted a transition toward normalcy in social and economic life unlikely to occur in the near future. It highlights that COVID-19 is not only a public health crisis leading to a dramatic loss of human life but also an economic and social crisis, putting tens of millions of people around the world at risk of falling into extreme poverty by the end of 2020 (WHO, 2020).

CSR as a Fluid and Practical Commitment During Crises

Since the term was coined in the 1950s, CSR has been viewed using a different angle over time (Lee & Carroll, 2011). The early definitions in the 1950s and 1960s highlight the social contract of corporations in giving back to society. For instance, Bowen (1953) refers to it as the obligation of businesses to pursue those policies, make those decisions, or follow those actions that are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society. This view is later expanded with the addition of self-interest in the 1970s, as seen in the definition of Davis (1975) as corporate obligations to take actions that protect and improve the welfare of society along with their own

interests. From the 1980s to 1990s, CSR is further explained with alternative themes, such as by incorporating stakeholder views and strategic management as a long-term investment (Clarkson, 1995). These changes in the CSR concept highlight the evolving nature of focal content in CSR from a practical lens (Lee & Carroll, 2011). As one of the most comprehensive and integrated perspectives, Kotler and Lee's definition of CSR (2005) suggests a corporate commitment to improving the well-being of society through business practices and contributions of corporate resources. It aligns with the role of CSR as corporate actions taken to benefit the welfare of society, represented by stakeholders, especially in order to find the dynamic role of corporations to better serve society (e.g., He & Harris, 2020). Scholars further note that the exact meaning and weight of each responsibility can be applied with flexibility to different social situations in which CSR is operated (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Accordingly, the focal content of CSR has dynamically been shaped under the global health crisis (Asante Antwi et al., 2021).

When a major crisis strikes an entire community, the private sector frequently steps in to provide its resources to minimize damages and prevent future similar events (Asante Antwi et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2015). In this process, CSR has played an essential role in corporate commitments. Kinnick (2003) found that corporations increased CSR activities, instead of traditional advertising, soon after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the U.S.. Similarly, Patten (2008) found a significant number of corporations donated to disaster relief funds in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami. Corporations also provided CSR in response to a major health crisis, such as HIV-AIDS in Africa, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and Ebola, in hopes to reduce community health concerns and a health divide (Asante Antwi et al., 2021, Droppert & Bennett, 2015).

When the COVID outbreak brought a full scale of uncertainties and risks to society, particularly during the first year of the pandemic, corporations strived to work together to help cope with this new challenge. Corporations developed CSR activities to help employees, consumers, communities, and others vulnerable to the present health and social crisis. For example, brewing and clothing companies (e.g., Anheuser-Busch, Gap) worked with the federal and state governments to urgently produce hand sanitizer, masks, gowns, and goggles to aid the American Red Cross and other essential relief efforts; restaurants and coffee companies (e.g., Chipotle, Starbucks) provided free meals and drinks to healthcare workers on the front

lines of the pandemic; and other corporations (e.g., American Express, Verizon) funded charity programs to help low-income families with food and support at-home children with streaming and technology services. Observing this phenomenon, some recent research examines the role of CSR presented during the pandemic. For instance, the review article by Manuel and Herron (2020) requests a call for business responses to COVID-19 using an ethical lens. A qualitative study (Ramya & Barel, 2021) conducts interviews with the top organizations in India and calls for short-term and localized CSR strategies to solve community-based problems. A quantitative study (Mahmud et al., 2021) analyzing the top 25 corporations' press releases finds corporate leaders' CSR communications included expressions of respect to their vital stakeholders, such as their employees (internal), consumers, and the community (external). Another recent study analyzing the content of corporate websites in Spain suggests corporations' commitments with CSR to alleviate the negative consequences of COVID (García-Sánchez & García-Sánchez, 2020).

　　　　All of these practical observations and scholarly findings stress that corporations' responses to the COVID-19 crisis are distant from conventional formats of CSR, thereby implying the fluid nature of CSR during times of such widespread crises. CSR, under a major crisis, such as COVID, asks corporations to operate businesses in response to the situation, thus taking disaster philanthropy as its focal subset. A pandemic refers to an infectious disease outbreak that warrants further consideration for crisis management, similar to responses and decision-making of other natural disasters or human failures, such as tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes, terrorism, and building or mountain collapses (Glantz, 2014). In this regard, diseases, injuries, fatalities, and other adverse mental and physical health effects have also been classified as natural disasters like tsunamis, earthquakes, and hurricanes (Xu et al., 2016). The overarching impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on public health and society may fit into the characteristics of natural disasters, and therefore, corporations may need to operate their CSR for disaster relief (Mahmud et al., 2021).

The Current Study

　　　　We have observed various practices offered by corporations under the umbrella of CSR during the pandemic, but there has been limited scholarly research investigating this matter. Some research identifies CSR related to the pandemic with review commentaries (e.g., He & Harris, 2020), cases from India, Spain, and the U.K. (He

& Harris, 2020; Ramya & Barel, 2021), hospitality industries and their business lockdowns, and a perspective on employee relations, human resources, and corporate finance (e.g., Urban & Tefertiller, 2021). As noted, specific investigations into the first-year overview of CSR content reported by the news media in the U.S. context are almost absent. The current study aims to fill this gap by examining CSR news published during the early phase of the pandemic in the U.S., wherein a record number of cases and deaths were documented (Worldometer, 2021) and CSR activities are considered as being implicit and voluntary, not explicit and legally mandatory (Lee & Riffe, 2019). Corporations regularly disclose their CSR typically using a platform they own and easily manage (e.g., corporate websites, reports, emails) to present them to the public; however, compared with such self-disclosed content, news reports of CSR are known to present information in a more objective manner (e.g., Einwiller & Carroll, 2020). Based on the privotal role of the news media in CSR communication, corporations strive to harness CSR publicity through news coverage to enhance their reputation. This dynamic can be further discussed with media effects literature: the first-level agenda setting proposing that the news media influence the issues the audience deems important by covering certain topics saliently (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; McCombs, 2005) and the second-level agenda setting, often referred to as media framing, further emphasizing the news media's role in influencing how the audience think about issues by accentuating specific attributes and minimizing others (McCombs, 2005; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). Specifically, consistent CSR news coverage can play a significant role in shaping the public's positive perceptions of corporations (Lee & Riffe, 2019; Pérez et al., 2018). Similarly, a positive tone in CSR news coverage, often prevalently observed, is known to foster the public's favorable view of corporations (Lee & Carroll, 2011; Pérez et al., 2018; Tang 2012).

Integrating insights from media effects and CSR literature in the context of the pandemic, we first examine the extent to which CSR has been enacted as a response to the COVID crisis. As one of the most highly impacted countries, the U.S. quickly experienced a surge in infection and fatality rates even though it began a nationwide lockdown soon after the WHO had declared COVID as a global pandemic (CDC, 2021). The crisis resulting from the pandemic has raised the consciousness of corporations about the potential benefits of their CSR to vulnerable communities. The government had also activated executive orders on manufacturing personal protective equipment (PPE) and other critical items necessary to combat the

disease. It has elevated the public's interest in the need for CSR in mitigating COVID-related challenges and concerns faced daily (García-Sánchez & García-Sánchez, 2020; Ramya & Barel, 2021). These requests put corporations under the test for their commitments with CSR. Fortunately, there are anecdotal examples showcasing corporate engagement, particularly with the immediate help that was essential to combat the pandemic. To verify this observation empirically, we pose the first research question as an exploratory investigation into the amount of CSR practices throughout the year 2020 in the U.S.:

RQ1. To what extent was CSR provided in response to the COVID crisis?

Second, the current study investigates specific activities of CSR content related to the pandemic. CSR literature incorporates a wide range of corporate commitments under the CSR boundary focusing on two major types – philanthropic CSR and promotional CSR (Chen et al., 2018; Kotler & Lee, 2005). While some degree of overlap exists, this dyad view resonates with corporations' dual commitments to business and society (Peloza & Shang, 2011). It is further discussed with the most comprehensive CSR model, the CSR Pyramid (Carroll, 1991; Carroll & Shebaba, 2010), encompassing CSR activities from corporations' economic responsibilities to philanthropic responsibilities in society. Using these two lenses, CSR is frequently viewed to be operated based on the social *vs.* business motive of corporations (Chen et al., 2018; Graafland, 2013). Philanthropic CSR, typically derived from the social motive of corporations, highlights corporate philanthropy and humanity to help those in need and society at large (Chen et al., 2018; Kotler & Lee, 2005). Without a doubt, philanthropic CSR becomes more important during a crisis. Through a systematic literature review of CSR responses to a list of global health crises, Asante Antwi et al. (2021) suggest that moral obligations and collaborations across industries are essential in making CSR efforts effective during a major health crisis. Recent studies also stress the need of CSR for COVID relief (García-Sánchez & García-Sánchez, 2020; He & Harris, 2020; Mahmud et al., 2021; Ramya & Barel, 2021). On the contrary, corporations are interested in initiating CSR to produce favorable outcomes on business gains. Promotional CSR, based on the business motive of corporations, underlines CSR activities for immediate business outcomes and long-term corporate value, such as an increase in sales, reputation management, and favorable relationships with

stakeholders (e.g., Chen et al., 2018). In pandemic times, some corporate managers admit that the growing expectation for stakeholders to take on leading roles in society leads to corporations' strategic decisions on CSR investment (Ramya & Barel, 2021). Corporations are often viewed as taking advantage of the pandemic when their CSR support is tied to a product purchase. Thus, the pandemic may highlight such competing alternatives of corporate motives with which corporations may develop different types of CSR activities. Thus, we further explore specific issues supported by these CSR activities during the pandemic. Scholars propose that a drastic change in health, relationships, lifestyle, and economy associated with the pandemic has significantly impacted the business environment, particularly by questioning the conventional concepts of CSR (He & Harris, 2020). While COVID-19 is primarily considered as a public health crisis, it has influenced a multitude of social issues covering health to environmental issues. Thus, it will be beneficial to identify the priority issues to which CSR contributions have been dedicated. Accordingly, we propose the following research question:

> **RQ2. How was CSR mainly provided in terms of (a) CSR activities (philanthropic vs. promotional) and (b) social issues in response to the COVID crisis?**

Third, the current study investigates the tone communicated in the description of CSR. The study presents CSR news as the sample based on the understanding that the news media have a significant impact on public opinion in the domains of CSR (Pérez et al., 2018). While CSR is often framed through news coverage, it tends to mirror the growth of stakeholder interest in corporations' leading roles in society; particularly, CSR tone in news coverage determines how stakeholders shape their perceptions toward CSR performance (Furey et al., 2019; Tang, 2012). CSR tone refers to the general evaluative stance of media coverage towards CSR, usually categorized as positive, negative, neutral, or mixed (Lee & Carroll, 2009). Although a positive description is prominent in self-generated CSR content (e.g., corporate reports), a mixed view has been found in public data, such as in news content. Thus, some scholars note the overall positive tone of CSR and the increase of a positive tone toward CSR reports over the last two decades (Lee & Carroll, 2011; Lee & Riffe, 2019); others find that CSR can be negative in tone but moderated by situational factors surrounding CSR and corporations (e.g., Pérez et al., 2018). The current study applies this view to the

COVID crisis and examines which tone is employed in CSR stories to the public. Thus, *RQ3. How was CSR mainly communicated in terms of CSR tone in response to the COVID crisis?*

Methods

Analytic Strategies, Sampling, and Coding

We employed a two-step approach for our analytic strategy to provide a comprehensive view of CSR coverage during the pandemic. Initially, we conducted a traditional content analysis for a quantitative exploration of CSR news coverage. Subsequently, a qualitative approach was adopted to examine individual news content, thereby offering relevant context for the coverage.

For the initial content analysis, the study collected CSR news reported from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, by the top three daily newspapers with the largest circulations in the U.S.— *The New York Times (NYT)*, *The Wall Street Journal (WSJ)*, and *USA Today (USAT)* (Cision, 2011). The sampling procedure was carefully designed based on Riffe et al. (2014). All possible articles were identified using the combination of the keyword variants representing CSR (Lee & Riffe, 2019). These search terms included "corporate/business/company," "cause/issue/nonprofit," "responsibility/social responsibility/ethical responsibility," "philanthropy/sustainability," "charity/donation/volunteer," and "support/help." This search was initially conducted on each media website and then on the *Factiva* database to comprehensively identify all related stories; then, overlapping articles were removed. As a result, a total of 231 CSR stories were collected, and 60 stories (28.4%) were categorized as related to COVID (Krippendorff's α = 1.00).

Two trained independent coders participated in a pilot test to assess intercoder reliability. Following Lee and Riffe (2019), we revised the codebook and code sheet based on the pilot test and discussions that followed and provided further training to ensure agreement between the two coders on the coding procedure and materials. Then, 20 articles were randomly selected from outside of the final sample and coded specifically for intercoder agreement. Using Krippendorff's formula for evaluating inter-rater agreement for nominal level variables, we achieved substantial agreement between the coders for the intercoder reliability scores (Pérez et al., 2018) of the key variables: CSR activity (Krippendorff's α = .89), CSR issue (Krippendorff's α = .97), and CSR tone (Krippendorff's α = 1.00). The variables are listed in Table 1, along with the units of analysis, definitions, and Krippendorff alpha scores.

Table 1: *Variables, Unit of Analysis, Definition, and Krippendorff's Alpha of the Variable*

Variable	Unit of Analysis and Definition	Krippendorff's Alpha
COVID-related vs. not-COVID related	Identify whether the predominant content of the article is about COVID or not.	1.00
CSR activity	Identify the type of CSR support a corporation provides as described in the article (Chen et al., 2018; Kotler & Lee, 2005): • Philanthropic activities: A format of CSR making direct contribution of money, products and/or service to charities or causes that are not tied to any explicit revenue purpose. Donation from a nonprofit affiliated with a corporation Promotional activities: A format of CSR enhancing business gains, typically inclusive of CRM and corporate sponsorship. Cause-related marketing (CRM) is a format of CSR that consumer participation (e.g., buying, app downloading, or social media clicking) is tied to the provision of this CSR. Companies may donate a part of revenues to specific causes based on product sales. Corporate sponsorship is a format of CSR donating money, products, or services paid to a cause in return for access to logo visibility and exposure. It is usually based on a partnership between a corporation and nonprofit or government to promote a specific cause/issue; a corporate logo or name is typically displayed on CSR coverages, instead.	.89
CSR issue	Identify the type of COVID-related cause/issue/charity that receives CSR support as described in the article (Charity Navigator, n.d.): • Environment (e.g., sustainability, green cars) • Human & civil rights (e.g., women's right, minority issues) • Health (e.g., health research support, mask donation) • Human relief (e.g., food, clothing, housing help) • Employee/investor (shareholders)/consumer benefits	.97
CSR tone	Identify the predominant tone of the overall article describing CSR or corporate information (Jahn & Brühl 2019; Lee & Carroll, 2011): • Negative: It is defined as an article reflecting conflicts, disorganization, instability, and weakness; it may also refer to CSR information that is reported to be implausible, lacking legitimacy, not trustworthy/credible in explaining CSR or corporate conduct with a negative impact on the provision of CSR; it includes content that is negative toward the company. • Positive: It is defined as an article reflecting cohesion, co-operation, stability, and strength; it may also refer to CSR information that is reported to be plausible, legitimate, trustworthy/credible in explaining CSR or corporate conduct with a positive impact on the provision of CSR; it includes content that is positive toward the company. • Mixed/Neutral: It reflects neither positive nor negative conditions when there were no explicit evaluative references; it includes the absence/presence of both positive and negative contents toward the company.	1.00

Next, both authors meticulously reviewed 60 news articles, seeking contextual details that could complement the quantitative findings with qualitative approaches. This qualitative reading was further refined through collaborative discussions, thereby achieving mutual consensus on the interpretation of each article.

Results

Concerning RQ1, 28.4% of CSR stories (n = 60) were identified as COVID-related from a total of 211 stories. The initial provision of CSR was made in March 2020 (n = 7, 11.7%) soon after the WHO declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic. The qualitative readings found the first CSR story communicated on March 21 about the reopening of fashion industries to help the shortage of masks and gowns for healthcare workers:

> Last week the American fashion industry went dark as stores and factories closed to help prevent the spread of the new coronavirus. Yet by this weekend, lights had flicked on again on both coasts as designers and manufacturers began to pivot from making dresses, jeans and bathing suits to making surgical face masks and other protective… The swimwear company Karla Colletto had closed its factory in Virginia, but planned to retool and reopen it shortly to help

combat the critical shortage of personal protective
equipment that faces hospitals and healthcare workers.
(March 21, NYT)

Since then, there has been a gradual growth of CSR with the highest
counts in April (n = 10, 17%) and November (n = 9, 15%). The high
frequency of CSR also aligns with the pandemic situation with
COVID-related daily deaths in the U.S. surpassing 2,000 in April and
10,000 in early November (*The New York Times*, 2022). These
findings indicate that more than a quarter of CSR was related to a
specific situation derived from the global pandemic throughout the
year since the first initiatives in March.

Although business lockdowns began in March in the U.S.,
corporations first attempted to help healthcare workers who needed
PPE. Figure 1 illustrates the monthly frequency of CSR.

Figure 1
Frequency of CSR in Response to COVID-19 in the Year of 2020
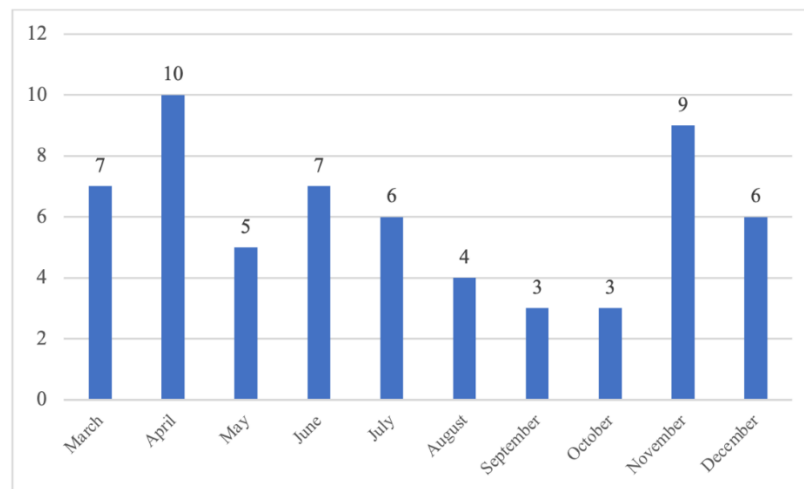
As for RQ2-a, we explored the type of CSR activities during
the pandemic. As seen in Figure 2, results showed that philanthropic
activities (86%) were prominent, while promotional activities still
existed (14%). The qualitative analysis further demonstrated that
philanthropic activities were presented in the form of monetary,
product, or service donations of corporations to help those who were
directly and indirectly impacted by the pandemic. Philanthropic CSR
was mainly initiated by a line of industries (e.g., chemical and
clothing) at the very beginning to help health care workers with food

and PPE, but it quickly expanded into various corporations' engagement in supporting communities (e.g., children, low-income families, minorities, small businesses) vulnerable to the pandemic crisis throughout the year. Corporations participated in this philanthropic march directly through donations and indirectly through partnerships with nonprofit organizations. Below are examples that reveal how philanthropic CSR has been communicated:

> Coronavirus has led to a rush on menstrual products. As with other supplies, those who can afford to hoard have done so, leaving women with lower incomes without basic essentials. ….In partnership with the menstrual product company LOLA, Marlowe sent 100,000 supplies to Los Angeles, where the mayor's office has added 1,600 emergency shelter beds in city recreation centers. (April 5, NYT)

> Larios' restaurants in Huntington Park and Long Beach, California, are among the 200 small businesses across the U.S. receiving up to $10,000 in the form of small business grants from the Verizon fund's first round of applicants. … The fund is offering support to small businesses facing immediate financial threat due to the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing especially on historically underserved communities. (April 30, USAT)

While not popular, traditional promotional activities were still present (14%). It was mainly manifested in the format of cause-related marketing (e.g., corporate donations to a COVID-related cause that is tied to product or service sales) and corporate sponsorship (e.g., corporate sponsor of a special event related to COVID).

In particular, luxury brands (e.g., Girard-Perregaux Laureato watches, Lafayette Clutches) found their own way to fund community-serving nonprofits by offering COVID-supporting charities with limited-item sales and auctions. Airline and hotel companies promoted mileage and loyalty point donations to charitable organizations during the pandemic. For example:

> A limited-edition Porsche Design 911 Speedster Heritage Design Chronograph in titanium was the special accessory that accompanied a 911 Speedster auctioned by RM Sotheby's, with Porsche matching the $500,000 winning bid in April to send more than $1 million to the United Way's

Covid-19 Community Response and Recovery Fund. (June 10, NYT)

Several airlines have partnered with nonprofit organizations to convert donated miles into plane tickets that benefit humanitarian, wellness, educational or environmental initiatives. … Some hotel companies, like Hilton, convert loyalty points into cash for causes including support for health care workers and those fighting California wildfires. (December 4, USAT)

We further examined specific issues supported by CSR activities (RQ2-b).

As seen in Figure 2, health (36%) was the top-ranked issue, followed by stakeholder relations (23%), human relief (19%), human/civic rights (14%), and environment/sustainability (8%).

Figure 2
CSR Activities, Issues, and Tone
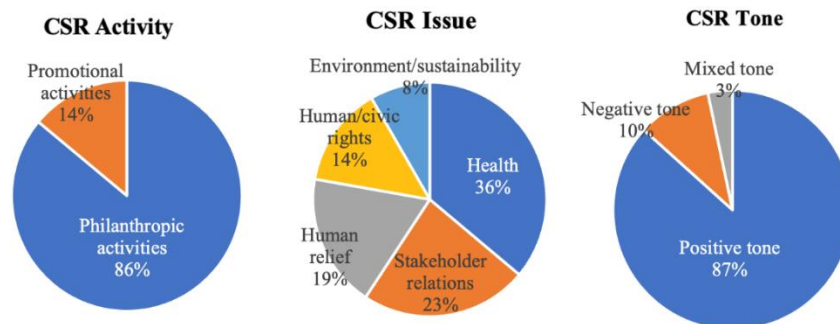
The qualitative analysis showed that health issues usually included business donations of PPE items, female hygiene products, and COVID tests, and their support for vaccine research and small business. Stakeholder relations particularly embraced corporations' proactive and reactive positions about masks and safety policies at work to protect employees and in-store consumers as well as a new phase of investor relations during the pandemic. For example, "Starbucks offered health care to full-time and even part-time employees long before other big chains did. The company has also learned from its experience with the pandemic in China*"* (July 24, NYT). Results further showed that humanitarian relief was primarily demonstrated through small- and large-scale business donations and other help for individuals and communities impacted by the

pandemic, such as technology and device donations for distance learning, grant programs for helping those laid off, food drives, and mental health counseling. Human/civic rights issues were found in CSR mainly for racial minority communities to ease additional financial, educational, and health challenges they might face during the pandemic, along with national attention after the case of George Floyd and Juneteenth, as seen in an example of corporate donations to aid national and regional "art organizations run by people of color at risk of shuttering because of the pandemic" (September 25, NYT). Last, environment/sustainability was the least popular issue in earning corporate support during the pandemic, such as "sustainability was corporate America's buzzword. … From Unilever to Starbucks to G.M., corporations pause some social-responsibility programs or put them on the back burner" (May 1, WSJ) and "plastic bags, forks and containers are everywhere during the pandemic, increasing pollution" (December 11, USAT). However, there were some CSR projects for reducing the use of plastic during the pandemic, such as a consortium of retail stores announcing "a more than $15 million commitment to the Beyond the Bag Initiative" (December 11, USAT).

Last, we analyzed the tone (positive, negative, and both) of CSR communications during the pandemic (RQ3). As seen in Figure 2, COVID-related CSR (n = 60) was mostly communicated to the public with a positive tone (87%) (*vs.* negative: 10% *vs.* mixed: 3%). The qualitative analysis further demonstrated that the positive tone was dominantly found in philanthropic activities and those with a social motive for helping others. An example is seen below and more examples can be found in previous quotes.

> They came like gifts from a Secret Santa, $20 million here, $40 million there, all to higher education, but not to the elite universities that usually hog all the attention. These donations went to colleges and universities that many people have never heard of, and that tended to serve regional, minority and lower-income students…The funds were delivered to Prairie View on Oct. 20, and Dr. Simmons said she had been permitted to start disbursing money immediately to students affected by the pandemic. (December 16, NYT)

On the contrary, a negative tone was found with COVID-related product sales planned by luxury brands.

It was also related to some industries' confusion and failure in handling employee/consumer safety and health concerns (e.g., a social distancing between people, staying-at-home work option and

payment, mask mandates), which was further connected with supply disruptions and lawsuits and protests against a corporation, such as "some employees at Amazon.com's Staten Island, N.Y., distribution facility held a protest and walkout Monday over what they say is inadequate pay and protections during the coronavirus pandemic. (March 3, WSJ).

> As the coronavirus pandemic has emerged, [Smithfield Foods] workers say they have encountered another health complication: reluctance to cover their mouths while coughing or to clean their faces after sneezing, because this can cause them to miss a piece of meat as it goes by, creating a risk of disciplinary action. (April 24, NYT)

In addition, a mixed or neutral tone was found in the following two cases: a trade-off between a COVID-19 bond and a sustainability bond among investors as an indicator of CSR reputation and the ritual appreciation of ancestors with Zoom in Nepal, partially causing a generational conflict.

> The Covid-19 bonds have attracted more money this year than bonds linked to sustainability projects, a corner of the debt market that has received a lot of attention due to growing interest in climate-change issues. (June 3, WSJ).

> The ceremonies usually involve a priest and a crowd of relatives, and are considered critical to ease ancestors' journey in the afterlife. With coronavirus cases in the country still growing, tech-savvy priests are offering to help families pay their respects over video calls. Traditional priests aren't pleased, decrying the online versions as crass commercialization. (September 15, WSJ)

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic is not only a public health crisis but also a socioeconomic crisis. The current research quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed the pattern of CSR in the U.S. setting. Our preliminary findings will provide theoretical and practical implications in the domains of corporate communications, emergency and crisis management, media effects, and CSR communications.

The findings advance scholarly discussions of how corporations find their roles during a major crisis. The pandemic may render corporations to respond with emergency relief as primary components of CSR, particularly during the early stage. It highlights the importance of corporate efforts to transform their flexible business model in handling new challenges and difficulties (He &

Harris, 2020). Our findings underline that corporations have taken their mandatory and then voluntary responsibilities to protect the well-being of society from social, economic, and health threats of the virus. Specifically, corporations immediately programmed COVID relief and assistance in response to a nationwide shutdown and a lack of PPE items among frontline workers. While it was partly initiated by the governments' executive orders, this effort has been further expanded to voluntary emergency relief to support vulnerable populations who suffered drastic life changes (e.g., low-income families, minorities) since the pandemic situation has lasted throughout the year.

These findings further draw scholarly attention to the overarching scope of corporate commitments in their responses to a major crisis. How corporations' crisis responses can be synthesized with emergency and disaster relief programs based on transformative partnerships with public and nonprofit sectors is relatively absent in the literature. Emergency and disaster management is considered as providing conceptual roots for corporate crisis literature, but the focal discussion is usually made in the domain of public administration (Coombs & Holladay, 2010; Perlman, 2015). To fill this gap, this study provides preliminary evidence supporting a recent claim that corporations may embrace emergency and disaster assistance under their CSR activities (Mahmud et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2016). This approach will be particularly important given the scale and severity of the COVID impact on society across sectors – private, public, and nonprofit. Indeed, corporate partnerships with other sectors are pivotal in handling social issues. Further, the public described the early stage of the pandemic period with 'war' metaphors on social media, often expressing their overwhelming feelings by referring to the pandemic figuratively as a 'monster,' 'storm,' and 'tsunami' (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020). Thus, although COVID-19 is not a business-generated crisis, stakeholders raised their voices in requesting corporate commitments in ways government spending couldn't cover (García-Sánchez & García-Sánchez, 2020; Ramya & Barel, 2021). We further suggest ongoing efforts to elaborate on the conceptual model that may integrate emergency relief as a subset of constituting corporate ethics in their efforts to benefit society. This fluid concept surrounding CSR continues to be essential in the future because the impact of the pandemic may be long-lasting and continue to present challenges to our daily livelihood.

Further, we found that philanthropic CSR activities were dominant during the pandemic. These findings imply that community-serving philanthropy can be further discussed with

corporations' genuine efforts to contribute to social well-being. Our findings also support that this philanthropic CSR is communicated in a positive tone. Both scholars and practitioners endeavor to find out how to improve CSR communication when it is presented to external stakeholders (Crane & Glozer, 2016). Concerning this matter, we emphasize that corporations' philanthropic activities that align with social needs during a major crisis can contribute to earning positive publicity. It can be further discussed in the context of the role of the news media as major platforms for CSR communications during the pandemic. Although stakeholders consider CSR stories covered by the news as more credible than self-reported CSR stories (e.g., Einwiller & Carroll, 2020), it should be noted that the media presentation of CSR performance can increase public attention and salience toward CSR-related topics (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002; Tang, 2012). This result aligns with previous discussions on media effects (e.g., Carroll & McCombs, 2003; McCombs, 2005; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001), thereby asserting that the media can be effective in shaping the public's perception of corporate responsibility during a crisis. Indeed, specific CSR activities spotlighted by the news media impact how stakeholders think about certain corporations (Cacciatore et al., 2016). Specifically, we suggest the dominance of a positive tone in CSR reports during the pandemic. It can underline the mutual value of journalism and PR in taking a stance as a way to alleviate pandemic-related problems. Although there is traditional tension between journalists and PR practitioners (e.g., Furey et al., 2019), our study highlights that both parties may work together to identify the positive impact of CSR news coverage on the public. That is, the media tend to praise corporations' efforts in finding their contributions during the pandemic.

On the other hand, it should be noted that CSR does not guarantee the public's acceptance during the pandemic. Our findings imply that when it comes to CSR with promotional activities, the media apply a skeptical lens toward reporting CSR. Although this event was not prominent during the pandemic in quantity, CSR was described negatively in news coverage when it appeared to exploit the pandemic situation. This was particularly true for luxury brands that were criticized, based on findings from the current study, for having business motives. This finding signals the presence of a CSR-luxury paradox, referring to a divergence of values between CSR and luxury brands (Wong & Dhanesh, 2017). For example, the nature of luxury brands is based on the inequality inherent in the ownership of rare resources and a symbol of social distinction that is reserved for a small number of groups, whereas CSR focuses on the universal

nature of altruism and taking responsibility in caring for others (e.g., Wong & Dhanesh, 2017). We suggest luxury brands take more cautious steps toward communicating CSR activities possibly by eliminating selling components from their programs. We also found that corporations gained negative publicity when following their business motives when they were incompetent or insensitive in handling employee and consumer health and safety under uncertainties. Therefore, we suggest that while the pandemic has brought uncertainties and risks to businesses, it is critical for corporations to place employee well-being as a priority and develop CSR programs deemed to be more beneficial and ethical to their employees. The current study revealed that corporations were interested in supporting stakeholder relations through their CSR regardless of the pandemic. We recommend corporations enhance their ethical sensitivity to employee safety and well-being related to the pandemic situation, noting that employees are core internal stakeholders.

        In spite of the novelty of the current study, it has several limitations. The research aims to identify the key elements of CSR during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic situation has embraced more dynamic components and has continued to impact our life until now. It appears to be essential for future studies to conduct a longitudinal analysis for capturing CSR comprehensively. Next, it should be noted that our approach to analyzing CSR communicated during the pandemic is limited to news content. Although the news is considered a reliable and credible CSR communication (e.g., Einwiller & Carroll, 2020), we acknowledge that the public is exposed to CSR content communicated by multiple platforms (Crane & Glozer, 2016). For future studies, it is advisable to compare CSR communications engaged by different sources (e.g., consumer-generated posts on social media) to examine how CSR is communicated across platforms. Last, we incorporated a qualitative analysis into the conventional content analysis to offer further details by aligning specific CSR content. However, our sample is limited to all CSR-related COVID stories in 2020. To improve this limitation, we recommend future studies to conduct in-depth interviews with corporate communicators to better understand the process and outcome showing how corporations have identified CSR during this crisis.

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Book Review

Michael Kearney

Üçok-Sayrak, Ö (Editor), Harden Fritz, J (Editor), and Majocha, K.L.
(Editor) (2023). *Dialogic Editing in Academic and
Professional Writing: Engaging the Trace of the Other*.
New York, NY: Routledge.

Introduction

Since the year 1914, when seventeen dissatisfied speech teachers withdrew from the National Council of Teachers of English, the field of communication has defined itself uneasily regarding studies of literature and composition. Of course, the contrast between English and communication departments does not consist entirely in differences of subject area but is a matter of orientations as well—yet even here, the border remains porous. Rhetorical, hermeneutical, semiotic, and media-ecological forms of communication inquiry provide multiple interpretations of the product and process of writing. In this ambiguous disciplinary landscape, Özüm Üçok-Sayrak, Janie Harden Fritz, and Kristen Lynn Majocha's edited volume provides a significant research contribution that invites readers to ask: How might philosophical notions of dialogue open new insights for writers and editors in the field of communication?

Conceptualizing editing as dialogue invites an understanding of researchers as embodied and embedded agents and ideas as temporal revelatory insights rather than reified constructs. *Dialogic Editing in Academic and Professional Writing: Engaging the Trace of the Other* foregrounds editing as an ongoing communicative activity conducted within the interpretive community of the academy. As Bettina Stumm observes in the foreword, commonplace views of editing consider the "mechanical tasks and adjudicatory demands" (xxi) of moving a draft into published form, but a vision for the possibility of "genuine dialogue" (xxi) in academic editing proves to be persistent and inspiring. Stumm introduces the book by presenting a dialogically textured view of an "authorial 'Thou'" (xxii) that demands ethical consideration throughout the editing of a work and the reading of the final product.

In the introduction, Üçok-Sayrak, Fritz, and Majocha announce the central contribution of the volume as "an *ethical turn* for the editing process" (1, emphasis original). Editing constitutes a central practice of the academy with substantial ethical ramifications. Not only must individual scholars engage in writing and editing for

tenure, but the discerning work of academic editors in managing manuscript submissions cumulatively shapes the content, boundaries, and unity-in-diversity of journals, book series, and entire disciplines. Üçok-Sayrak, Fritz, and Majocha rely upon an expanded notion of dialogue that encompasses scholarly conversations in print. In the context of writing, the voice of the Other takes the form of a "trace" that issues an ethical call for preservation rather than being colonized by an editor's voice. Presenting editing as a communicative praxis anchored in professional civility, the editors call attention to the multifaceted ethical implications of one's editing habits—for oneself, the Other, and an interpretive community.

Highlights of the Book

The first four chapters ground and integrate communication ethics perspectives on dialogic editing while Chapters 5–8 focus upon contemplation and application. In Chapter 1, "Dialogic Editing as Understanding and Stumbling into Argument," Ronald C. Arnett identifies three communication ethics implications from the insights of philosophical hermeneutics. First, acts of interpretation, whether oral or written, move textual engagement into the public realm. Arnett identifies the interpreter in this phenomenological event as "witness, participant, and researcher" (13). Second, the public act of interpretation pivots on the unique standpoint and question that one brings to the subject matter, which, in turn, invites a continuing interpretive conversation that incorporates multiple orientations and arguments. Third, the field or horizon of interpretive work matters; the scholarly tasks of reading, thinking, questioning, writing, and editing gain breadth and depth over the course of a project and a career. Arnett celebrates gaps that appear in the writing/editing process, which situate the researcher in an existential position of "listen[ing] to the text . . . which permits one to stumble into a persuasive temporal finding" (13). Dialogic editing oscillates between macro and micro focal points; Arnett warns against "premature concentration on commas, semicolons, colons, or paragraph divisions" and instead commends an orientation of "expectation" during the researcher's editing process (21). Arnett locates the identification of an argument at the end, rather than the beginning, of an interpretive research project: "Dialogic editing begins with a vulnerability of question and concludes with one stumbling into a humble persuasive conviction that dwells in temporality" (23). Arnett frames the philosophical importance of editing as an act of embedded communicative agents seeking to understand a given subject matter, ever attentive to the constructive

role of mistakes in framing that knowledge and opening new possibilities.

In Chapter 2, "Dialogic Editing as Conversation with Tradition," Janie Harden Fritz describes editing as a practice that takes shape within an interpretive community and tradition. Fritz describes editing as a craft housing practices that engage a tradition dialogically; an academic author both shapes and is shaped by a given discipline during the writing process. To provide "a prototype of dialogic editing" (27), Fritz offers an account of the professional relationship between the Southern Catholic novelist Flannery O'Connor and the New York editor Robert Giroux. In O'Connor's life and career Fritz discerns the responsiveness of a communicative agent embedded within the standpoint of a given religious tradition and attentive to rhetorical connections to a larger secular public. The act of editing issues from the ground of a given tradition and simultaneously sparks renewed questioning and conversation about the boundaries of that tradition.

In Chapter 3, "Developing Dialogic Editing Insight: Hermeneutic Humility in Practice," Annette M. Holba examines the editing process from a "constructive hermeneutic approach" (39). Holba shares the insights of Calvin Schrag and Ramsey Eric Ramsey, who invoke the idea of "methodolatry" as an extension of Hans-Georg Gadamer's account of philosophical hermeneutics. Consistent with Gadamer's resistance to the abstraction and reification of hermeneutical methods, Schrag and Ramsey describe methodolatry as a misstep; the dialogic irony that Holba suggests is that missteps, when recognized, may provide openings for revelatory insight. The phenomenon of "transversal comprehension" (41), in which multiple perspectives interpret and seek to understand one another, moves toward a communal celebration of learning that occurs from the recognition of missteps. Holba continually privileges the human and interhuman coordinates of editing, seeking to "unfold empathy in relationships and intersubjectivity in our engagement with, to, and for the other" (42). In Holba's eloquent and passionate description, one sees editing commended as a professional form of friendship with dialogic and even covenantal dimensions.

In Chapter 4, "Between Author, Text, and Reader: Editing and Dialogues of Meaning," Susan Mancino engages the question of editing through the interpretive lens provided by Umberto Eco. Following Eco, Mancino discerns meaning and interpretation as emerging "in the intersection of text, author, and reader" rather than residing in a static source: "Eco theorizes a perspective of interpretation that is implicitly dialogic, which offers a framework

that opens a space for editing within this practice of dialogue" (54). Mancino interleaves Eco's perspective on interpretation with Martin Buber's emphasis on the between. Interestingly, Eco upheld the importance of multiple interpretations of a text without assuming that any interpretation is automatically valid, warning instead that "overinterpretation, which denies the limits of a text, can extinguish a work's meaning and communicative potential" (57). Eco's work illuminates a hermeneutic move that deprivileges a singular intention of the author and focuses attention on the intention of the text. Mancino ties Eco's philosophy of communication to specific academic practices such as anonymous peer review. Such practices afford dialogic opportunities to honor, preserve, and perhaps unfold the manifold layers of meaning latent in a text.

In Chapter 5, "Negative Capability and the Editing Encounter: The Moment of Fissure as an Opening to Communication," Özüm Üçok-Sayrak and Luigi Russi collaborate on a philosophical exploration of French philosopher Georges Bataille's notions of "slippage," "fissure," and "nonknowledge." The authors extend the metaphor of gaps in a text to challenge the act of communication itself, as authorship and editing represent moments of breakage that destroy the illusion of "a complete, unbroken communicator" (70). Temporal "wounds" that occur in the process of submitting a work to an interpretive community offer authors a choice: to lash out in defensive anger or to pause, reflect, and perhaps encounter a new way of seeing the world. Üçok-Sayrak and Russi acknowledge the pain of hostile editorial responses but suggest that hospitality to moments of fissure may yield revelatory insight.

In Chapter 6, "Womanism and Phenomenology as Dialogic Lens," Annette D. Madlock provides a constructively critical response to ongoing issues of voice and representation in academic journals and publishing houses. Madlock understands dialogic editing as ethically obligated to "help ensure that a wide range of perspectives and voices are represented in scholarly work" (81). The chapter reviews quantitative statistics demonstrating lack of diversity in academic publishing, highlighting health, economic, and career impacts of unconscious bias. Madlock commends a set of phenomenological/positional approaches to editing connected to the social, political, spiritual movement of womanism. Madlock concludes by offering insight related to navigating the peer review process in a way that upholds "the research's quality, originality, and significance" (93) while actively promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In Chapter 7, "Dialogic Editing as Pedagogic Relationship: Grading Students' Writing in Person," Joel S. Ward anchors a philosophy of dialogic editing in the embodied event of a teacher–student pair evaluating a written assignment. Basing his analysis on Walter Ong's history of media and Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism, Ward contends that "the act of evaluating writing in the presence of its author restores our understanding of invention and the pedagogical nature of putting thoughts to paper" (98). Ward emphasizes "humble qualities of learning in person" (101), in contrast to the tendencies of technological mediation to frame the written word as a static repository of information. This chapter's repeated emphasis on "the spirited character of inquiry" (102) calls for a shift away from exclusive reliance on numerical grading standards and toward a discursive approach in which a teacher's in-person evaluation of a text can illumine avenues for learning.

In Chapter 8, "Perspective by Incongruity in Creating a Dialogic Relationship among Non-native and Native Editors and Writers," Andri Kosasih and Huixing Liu adjust Gadamer's notion of "fusion of horizons" to suggest a "tension of horizons" in the editing process, particularly across linguistic and cultural barriers. Poignantly, Kosasih and Liu write, "The meeting of the cultural horizons that occurs during the learning process is the soul of dialogic editing" (113). The authors move from Gadamer to Kenneth Burke's notions of trained incapacity and perspective by incongruity. Importantly, the authors state, "Mastering the English language is not the same as mastering writing skills," which includes not just grammar and style but an entire set of "professional assumptions" as well (119). Kosasih and Liu's account of the challenges facing non-native scholarly authors raises important questions about the impact of a spoken language on disciplinary knowledge. The authors call for "respectful, thoughtful, and listening-oriented communication" across cultural boundaries in the dialogic editing process, particularly when that process involves non-native speakers of a language (122). One specific suggestion is for academic publishers to provide "a trusted external party to provide editing at the language level" for non-native speakers while the journal or book editor "work[s] at the content and idea level to provide insights, evaluative comments, and guidance" (125). Kosasih and Liu's effort in bringing an intercultural communication perspective to the philosophical hermeneutic assumptions of dialogic editing opens up rich avenues for further research.

Overall Evaluation

As an edited collection, *Dialogic Editing in Academic and Professional Writing: Engaging the Trace of the Other* makes a compelling, coherent, and original contribution to communication ethics and philosophy of communication scholarship. This volume is inspiring for the personal development of communication scholar–teachers as well as for the holistic health of the field of communication. One notes how many of the contributors are current or former editors of communication journals, with their chapters offering edifying confessions or perhaps time-tested maps that identify coordinates of dialogic editing. For the field as a whole, the book offers a gentle yet insistent reminder that communication researchers themselves are not exempt from the demands of dialogic communication ethics in the everyday. The vision of the whole of this volume is greater than the sum of its parts—a fitting testament to the continuing hope afforded by dialogic editing.