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Pouring petrol from a keyboard? #Brexitriots as a ritualised response to civil unrest in Northern Ireland

Authors

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Abstract

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Assistant Chief Constable Jonathan Roberts characterised the disorder in Northern Ireland in April 2011 as being ‘at a scale not seen for years’. The demonstrations and related violence were nominally a manifestation of loyalist anger at the Northern Ireland Protocol, which created an Irish Sea border as part of the UK’s departure from the European Union. However, like the union flag protests eight years earlier, these street protests also articulated increasing loyalist dissatisfaction with the Stormont Assembly and the police.

Social media platforms were widely blamed for having amplified tensions surrounding these protests. Sky News Senior Ireland Correspondent, David Blevins, highlighted the role of ‘criminal cartels’ in spreading disinformation online and encouraging youths to riot, stating that “putting out the fire on the street will be difficult while someone, somewhere is pouring petrol from a keyboard”. Indeed, false flag (anonymous) social media accounts were specifically blamed for the rioting at Lanark Way, and messages entitled ‘Calling of Arms’ were shared on Facebook and Whatsapp, urging loyalist youths to “earn their strips” [sic], in the wake of the Sandy Row violence. The Loyalist Communities Council (LCC), an umbrella group for loyalist paramilitaries, sought to distance itself from the violence, warning unionists and loyalists ‘to remain vigilant to the dangers of fake and anonymous social media accounts’, while loyalist commentator James Bryson has labelled the messages as “malicious and false”, accusing republicans for running these false flag accounts.

This paper will explore how affective publics, mobilised on Twitter, responded to the so-called ‘Brexit riots’. It does so by providing an overview of how online platforms are used during contentious episodes in divided societies, examining the background of the April 2011 disorder in Northern Ireland, and presenting the results of a qualitative thematic analysis of tweets tagged #brexitriots tweets (N=10,989) posted between 9 and 13 April 2021. Results indicate that tweeters used this hashtag to blame Brexit supporters for the violence; UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his fellow Vote Leave campaigners were accused of having risked the Northern Irish peace process to secure their Brexit Withdrawal Agreement. A recurring theme was that Remainers had warned Johnson that violence was likely if a new border was created in the Irish Sea and were antagonistic towards the

Democratic Unionist Party for joining the Vote Leave campaign and entering a confidence and supply agreement with the Conservatives in the Westminster Parliament. Meanwhile, those responsible for organising anti-Protocol protests were criticised for bringing youths onto the streets and for misunderstanding how the Protocol operated in practice. Overall, the study found that #Brexitriots tweeters used the hashtag to articulate their dissatisfaction with those they held responsible for the disorder. Loyalist perspectives were noticeably underrepresented in these tweets, providing some evidence to support their assertions that they were being marginalised in these discourses. 'Offline' divisions were reproduced via this hashtag with little evidence of informal learning about why these protests and related violence had occurred in the first place.

Submission ID

96

How is NATO viewed in China? NATO's strategic communication and social media image on Zhihu

Authors

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Abstract

This paper seeks to answer the question of how the Chinese social media users perceive NATO on the platform of Zhihu, the Chinese equivalent of Quora. With China's rising status on the world stage, NATO has turned its gaze toward China. The military and political alliance targets China in order to retain a sense of purpose in 2030. But NATO has a public image problem and faces public perception challenges worldwide.

The study of public image, perceptions, narratives and attitudes is significant in strategic communication (Stracom). Stracom, as a tool related to public diplomacy, is used to target the behavior of various actors via shaping public attitudes and garnering positive media coverage (Wolff, 2014). In the age of social media, we are witnessing a new form of global conflict, 'the weaponization of social media' (Dimitriu, 2012; Singer & Brooking, 2018). NATO has employed Stracom during military interventions such as Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. Since 2008, NATO has used social media and video-sharing platforms such

as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to build its relationship with the public. But the biggest issue in face of NATO is the lack of local resonance, thus NATO should revise and tailor its location-specific communication strategies (Chaban et al.,2018).

Today, NATO's strategic focus has shifted to target both China and Russia. But no research has been conducted to examine NATO's communication strategies as well as the images and perceptions of NATO in China. This study is meant to fill in this gap and examine the main narratives Chinese online users adopt in the discussions of NATO. We selected the question of 'how to view "China-Russia Threat" on the agenda of meeting of NATO Defense Ministers?' posted on Zhihu in February 2021 and collected a total of 75 posts from the threads under this question. We then conducted thematic analysis and find that social media users in China generally hold negative and critical attitudes towards NATO. They perceive NATO as 1) NATO uses China as an imagined/external enemy for its own existence; 2) NATO uses 'China-Russia threat' to comply with the strategy and interests of the US while fighting for their own defense autonomy; 3) NATO uses China to divert public attention from internal to external affairs; 4) NATO is doomed; and 5) China shall prepare for war.

In conclusion, this project contributes to the strategic communication studies from the lens of Chinese perceptions of NATO, and argues that policies rather than communication strategies influence and determine the public opinion in a target country.

Submission ID

627

An Uncivil Diplomacy? Reorienting diplomatic practices on online platforms under the framework of incivility

Authors

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Abstract

Contemporary diplomacy has entered online platform. Diplomats, states representatives, and Ministries of Foreign Affairs use digital tools for self-representation, simulating or

performing dialogue with their counterparts. Although lacking in univocal academic definitions, we can assume that diplomacy is an institution (Berridge 2015) based on formal and codified practices to advance states' goals in the international realm (Bull 1977). Based upon *communication*, diplomacy implies a proper way of doing things (Jönsson, Hall 2003). While politeness and a "diplomatic" attitude are almost a cliché in describing such mediation practices, harsh confrontations in the public display of international relations are frequent, as demonstrated by the communicative performances characterized by *character assassination* or *naming and shaming*.

Nevertheless, the entry of diplomacy on international platforms seems to exacerbate those phenomena: some scholars point out how digital diplomacy is now a militarized tool, as it tends to create new fractures in international societies (Jackson et al. 2019), while others describe how changes in languages and formats of diplomacy are contributing to a trivialization and a polarization of international debate.

In this scenario, we will test how digital diplomacy conducted via online platforms can be understood according to the framework of *political incivility* (Herbst 2010).

Even the concept of incivility is open to numerous interpretations: the range of definitions, and therefore the construction of indicators allowing its operationalization, is still wide and not univocal. Some speak of incivility as rudeness, others focus on the narrative construction of negative emotions, and some scholars reconstruct incivility as the perception of dissonance when certain types of language (insults, nicknames, lousy language, vulgarity, etc.) enter the political vocabulary (Stryker et al. 2016). What is certain is that incivility pertains to the tone and grammar of political practices. Therefore, we will analyze how some online digital diplomatic patterns can be interpreted under the lens of incivility as a strategic communicative performance.

After first reconstructing the literature to set the theoretical background, drawn from contributions from communication sociology, diplomatic studies, and international relations theories, an operational definition of *diplomatic incivility* will be presented.

This definition will be applied to the cataloging of diplomatic practices, exemplifying the strategic use of incivility in diplomatic communication. Case studies will be retrieved from the Twitter accounts run by Ministries of Foreign Affairs of states involved in longstanding international political confrontations (namely: China, Russia, Ukraine, Israel). A qualitative analysis will be carried out to explore narratives, characterization, and adjustments of diplomatic practices in the framework of incivility, mixing content analysis with *netnography* (Kozinets, 2015). Moreover, we will assess a political evaluation, inserting uncivil and "loud" diplomatic performance in the broader international environment.

In discussing the main results, we will outline the consequences of diplomatic incivility in the narrativization of international affairs.

Preliminary results suggest that both diplomacy and civility aim to adjust the visibility strategies of political contestants, while diplomatic incivility is a peculiar kind of contemporary political confrontation, showing how the public display of international relations is changing.

Submission ID

665

Crisis memories in public health crises: How we reconstruct past SARS to make sense of and respond to current COVID-19?

Authors

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Abstract

Since December 2019, a novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has spread rapidly around China and then the world, constituting a severe public health crisis with high uncertainty and health risks. During this period, a similar disease, known as the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) that occurred and spread 17 years ago, has been recollected and reconstructed constantly in China, especially through various SARS-related narratives created and shared on social media. This has gradually formed a type of collective memory surrounding past crises. While the negative impacts of crisis history (i.e., the existence of past crises) on current crisis communication has been well documented in the crisis communication literature (Coombs, 2004; Coombs & Holladay, 2001), scant attention has been paid to crisis memory (i.e., the social reconstruction of past crises in the light of the current crisis) and its impacts, especially in public health crisis contexts. To fill this gap, by incorporating the concept of collective memory into the field of crisis communication, this study examined how crisis memories (i.e., SARS memories) were collectively constructed on Chinese social media to help make sense of and respond to an unfolding public health crisis (i.e., COVID-19). Specifically, a quantitative content analysis of 5,677 posts was first conducted to identify major SARS memory narratives co-created by different types of users (i.e., government, media, medical, bloggers, and general people) on Weibo, one of the most popular social media platforms in China. The analysis results revealed seven major types of SARS memory narratives, including nationalism, heroism, identity, trauma, criticism, historical reference, and personal experience, the use of which showed

significant differences among different types of users based on the chi-square test results. Subsequently, an online survey (n = 785) was conducted with participants in mainland China to explore the potential impacts of these different SARS memory narratives on important outcome variables in public health crisis communication, i.e., how people's exposure to different SARS memory narratives on social media influenced their engagement in protective behaviors, their perceptions of threat and efficacy, as well as organizational reputations regarding two major organizations (i.e., the NHC and the local government) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing upon the extended parallel process model (EPPM) and the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), an integrated structural model involving crisis memory exposure and its effects on individual perceptions (in relation to threat, efficacy, and organizational reputations) and behaviors during public health crises was proposed, and structural equation modeling (SEM) analyses were performed to test the model following a two-step approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). The SEM results indicate differential impacts of exposure to the seven different SARS memory narratives on protective behaviors, perceived threat, perceived efficacy, and organizational reputations during COVID-19, upon which theoretical and practical implications for incorporating crisis memory into public health crisis communication are discussed based.

Submission ID

730

The Discursive Construction of Childhood in Children's Books about the Cyprus Problem

Authors

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Abstract

The eastern-Mediterranean island of Cyprus has a long history of bi-communal confrontations. The island has been a site of displacements and loss for many because of the ethno-nationalist bi-communal struggles that influenced all Cypriots, including children. After 1974, when the so-called 'peace' operation of the Turkish armed forces took place, the island was divided with the Greek Cypriots in the south and the Turkish Cypriots in the north.

This study analyses the discursive construction of childhood, in relation to the Cyprus Problem, within children's books. Hence, the study's primary research question is "How is childhood discursively constructed in the children's books about the Cyprus Problem?". We first develop a theoretical model on childhood discourses to better understand this construction. To that end, we use Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory (DT), which principally asserts that social phenomena gain their meanings through discourse, and meanings are discursive constructions that are never entirely fixed or total.

Methodologically, this study employs the Discourse Theoretical Analysis (DTA), elaborated by Nico Carpentier and Benjamin De Cleen (2007). DTA depends on the iterative relationship between the empirical analysis and the theory. DTA uses the sensitising concepts to guide the analysis; discourse serves as the central sensitising concept along with the other discourse-theoretical concepts (i.e. nodal points, floating signifiers), strengthened by sensitising concepts related to (the construction of) childhood and conflict. Since this study focuses on children's books with strong visual components, the multimodal analysis will be employed to support DTA.

For the analysis, three children books featuring Cypriot children have been selected. The selected books are 422 pages in total, they are *Mücahitin Oğlu* (Son of the Mujahid) by İbrahim Örs (1975), *Kıbrıslı Mehmet* (Cypriot Mehmet) by Niyazi Birinci (1980), and *Kıbrıslı Zeynep* (Cypriot Zeynep) by Hadi Besleyici (1991).

This study will make contribution to communication and media studies by providing theoretical development through the analysis of the discursive construction of childhood in the texts appealing to children. Since there has not been much published empirical data about the discursive construction of childhood and the discourse theoretical analysis of children's books, this study will add to the research area.

Submission ID

781

Global South in the Media: Content Analysis of Western Media's Coverage of COP26

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Abstract

With the development of globalization, the international order is becoming more and more open, creating a new window for the further spread of global risks. In this case, both rich and poor countries have to find out ways to survive and flourish in an era of shared risks. The gap between rich countries and the poor ones, however, is still widening, which is worth attention, considering the already uneven development of those powers. In the context of major global crises like climate change, whether the Global South countries that have been in a weak position for a long time can receive objective, accurate, and sufficient media representation will greatly affect their images in the international community and even development prospects in the future. Therefore, this article wants to explore: 1) the image of the Global South in Western mainstream media's coverage of climate change, as represented by the Associated Press and Reuters; 2) how has this image been constructed; and 3) whether or not these news agencies, in possession of discourse power, can responsibly convey the voices of countries who have long been silenced.

From the theoretical perspective of the production of space in media, the researchers have selected 518 pieces of news from the Associated Press and Reuters on climate change issues concerning the Global South in the 14 days before, during, and after the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) for content analysis. The study shows that reports present positive contributions from both the Global South and North countries to addressing the climate change crisis, but this is partly a disguise for "balanced reporting", with the two news agencies still portraying the Global South as countries who cause damage, don't shoulder enough responsibilities, and need help from the outside world, in terms of climate change. The correlation analysis further reveals that the seemingly objective and balanced reports of the two major Western mainstream media agencies conceal the prejudice of "Western-centrism", and the unequal spatial power represented by the media is deeply rooted, which is not conducive to the public's understanding of the interests and factors behind the climate change crisis, hindering the extensive cooperation of the international community to deal with the global crisis. Therefore, the "new cosmopolitanism" style of media space production is worth advocating, as it could help the international community promote the understanding of disagreements and seek effective communication in the context of common crises, then strive to achieve the harmonious co-existence of space between "the local" and "the global".

Submission ID

803

A Cultural Explanation of China's Crisis communication Strategies in the Context of COVID-19 Pandemic

Authors

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Abstract

Crisis communication strategies play an important role in determining whether an organisation is able to survive a crisis affecting the public, and public health crises, such as the COVID-19 outbreak, require different responses and face more challenges. Culture influences the way organisations perceive and respond to a crisis and the call to include culture as an influential factor in crisis communication has been gaining momentum.

This paper covers the Chinese government's strategies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and more importantly addresses the fact that culture is an significant contextual factor in crisis communication. Press conference held by National Health Commission of China from December 8th 2019, when National Health Commission of Wuhan announced first confirmed case, to December 8th 2021, are analysed using content analysis and critical discourse analysis to examine how the crisis communication strategies are shaped by cultural factors. Content analysis can describe overall trends, such as the frequency of use of particular strategies, the appearance of cultural factors, and so on. Following this, in order to provide in-depth qualitative analysis of cultural factors to supplement the content analysis, critical discourse analysis is carried out.

The research adopts strategies from Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory and finds out other two government new crisis communication strategies that emerged during the COVID-19 crisis: notification and Publicity. And five cultural factors are examined: power distance, level of collectivism and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory), and humanism and saving face. Moreover, two cultural phenomena in the press conferences are observed. The first is the emphasis on harmonious relationships and polite forms of communication between journalists and spokespersons at the press conferences. This is affected by power distance in that there is a hierarchy between the spokespersons – the representatives of the Chinese government – and the journalists. The second is the monologue style adopted by spokespersons. Most of the question–response sequences in the press conference data did not involve follow-up questions from the same journalist. The spokespersons' answers were three times longer the journalists' questions. This is to some extent the result of efforts to save face, which is important in the Chinese context.

The relationship between cultural factors and crisis communication strategies is analysed in this research. It can be found that this relationship is a network that strategies and cultural factors cross-influence others. Rebuild strategy is related to Confucian humanism, Confucian Humanism informs rebuild and notification strategies, and notification strategy is related to collectivism cultural factor. Next denial strategy is related to saving face cultural element and saving face cultural element informs denial and bolstering strategies. Last publicity strategy is related to high power distance cultural factor.

Submission ID

821

Balancing proximity, political power and market demand: A comparative computer-assisted discursive news value study of Chinese news coverage of domestic and international terrorist attacks

Authors

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Abstract

While Chinese media are often perceived as ignoring negative social issues, the marketization of Chinese media has made such news no longer negligible. By examining how Chinese newspapers discursively construct terrorist attacks, a typical negative event that threatens the “socialist harmonious society” promoted by the Chinese government, we can further reveal how Chinese media use different news values to balance political power and market demand when reporting on negative social issues. To further highlight these discursive features and media strategies, we compared the coverage of a domestic attack (i.e. the 2014 Kunming attack) and four international events (i.e. the 2015 Paris attacks, the 2013 Boston attacks, the 2010 Moscow attacks, and the 2008 Mumbai attacks) in Chinese mainstream newspapers.

In terms of methodology, by combining a “Discursive News Value Analysis” (DNVA) approach, initiated by Bednarek and Caple (2014; 2017; 2021), with computer-assisted

techniques (i.e. collocation analysis, concordance analysis, sentiment analysis, and Part of Speech tagging), we extracted Chinese lexical indicators representing news values, and applied the list of indicators from the Kunming attack to international attacks, in an attempt to provide linguistic resources for future news value analysis (especially terrorism-related topics) on large-scale datasets. In addition, as we found that the ten commonly used news values (i.e. Eliteness, Personalization, Superlativeness, Negativity, Positivity, Proximity, Timeliness, Impact, Novelty, Consonance) do not allow to profoundly distinguish the nuances of Chinese media coverage of domestic and foreign terrorist attacks, we further divided them into sixteen subcategories of news values.

Based on these (sub)categories and approaches, we found that market factors provide the potential for Chinese media to cover negative terrorist attacks, while, at the same time, specific media strategies are used to meet political needs. When covering *domestic* events, Chinese newspapers (1) used lexical indicators in the subcategories of Negativity to emphasize (government) attitudes and stances, including mourning for victims, condemning terrorist actions and perpetrators; (2) tended to downplay Impact and stress “Government measures” under Positivity; and (3) blamed or criticized “Foreign nations” and “Perpetrators” (subcategories of Negativity). In contrast, regarding media coverage of *international* attacks, Chinese newspapers adopted a fact-oriented discourse, highlighting the “Casualty” information, while downplaying other subcategories related to emotions and attitudes in Negativity and “Intensifiers” under Superlativeness. These different media strategies and discursive characteristics may be due to the proximity factors. When reporting on domestic events that are geographically or emotionally closer to the Chinese government and people, media discourse and strategies were more profoundly influenced by developmentalist ideology and harmonious cultural traditions.

Submission ID

886

The boundary of conflict in Europe: An image of the migrant crisis at the Poland-Belarus border in August and September 2021 in the Polish news service reports.

Authors

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Abstract

Migration problems intensified in the second decade of the XXI century in numerous European countries. The article presents the media image of the migrant crisis that developed unexpectedly in the Polish section of the border between the EU and the Republic of Belarus in August and September of 2021. Migrants from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and other countries started pushing through the EU border there. In many cases the Polish authorities were pushing the migrants back to the Belarus side, preventing them from seeking asylum. The text analyses the images of migrants attempting to illegally cross the EU border and the Polish and Belarus authorities' actions presented in the news of three largest Polish television broadcasters. In August and September Polish media could still report on the situation before the Polish government introduced a ban on media visiting the border. Simultaneously, journalists from Western Europe were allowed to report on the Belarusian side. The fall of Kabul and Taliban's takeover of power in Afghanistan influenced the international publicity of the migrant crisis.

A qualitative, quantitative and comparative analysis of the news, conducted with a categorization key allowed to identify (thanks to framing theory and agenda setting) essential differences in the Polish news materials devoted to this case. While analysing selected set of news, focus was put, inter alia, on: 1) the migrants' image, 2) description of Polish and Belarusian states' activities and 3) the way that other media reported on the events at the border. Each brickwork had a separate subcategory in the categorization key. The test piece covers merely the beginning of the crisis period, when all Polish media had access to the events.

Identified and described differences in narratives mainly stemmed from the diverse viewpoints of individual newsrooms related to their control by various subjects: state and private. "Wiadomości" is the service of the Polish public broadcaster TVP, "Wydarzenia" is a news program of Telewizja Polsat owned by one of the biggest Polish entrepreneurs Zygmunt Solorz-Żak, and "Fakty" is the information service of TVN controlled by the American concern Discovery. The results show indirectly a high level of media polarization in Poland.

Submission ID

954

Research on cross-border risk information dissemination in social media: Taking as an example the overseas information about vaccines in Weibo

Authors

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Abstract

Our society now relies on an interdependent web of cross-border technical, economic and social systems. Information and ideas with great volume and velocity flow without borders through digital media. Notwithstanding the strict regulations governing information in China, the cross-border flow of information is inevitable. Classical theories such as Inter-media Agenda-setting (IAS) and news domestication describe how media are involved in the production and circulation of transnational information. However, previous studies have ignored the unofficial and unorganized cross-border flow of information through social media, perhaps causing unknown social effects.

In China, individuals from various user categories as opinion leaders occupy the intermediate nodes of domestic and foreign information circulation, and they have received widespread attention by producing and posting overseas information on social media. Risk issues and political issues related to the environment, health and safety are their most widely covered contents. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, risk-related topics such as "vaccine" present a diverse and complex transmission landscape. Existing literature shows that the transnational flow of information allows alternative risk information to flow and disseminate in social media-driven channels, challenging the "closed" risk communication model controlled and censored by the government.

In this study, we sort out 47 opinion leaders on Weibo who are engaged in forwarding and spreading overseas information, and divided them into three categories: Official Media, Foreign Media and Self-media. Original data (1,279) with "vaccine" as the keyword and its retweet data (274,395) and comment data (403,655) were collected. Using data mining techniques, the following aspects were analyzed: ① Through time series analysis, it is found that events such as global COVID-19 vaccine development progress and authorization have a significant impact on the discussion of "vaccine" related topics; ② The Linear discriminant analysis (LDA) model is used to perform text clustering analysis on the comment data, and it was found that people's opinions were mainly focused on "global vaccine development and authorization progress", "opinions and sentiments around international vaccine cooperation and confrontation", "evaluation of vaccine administration in different

countries", and "global vaccine knowledge", etc; ③We use Naive Bayes algorithm to analyze the sentiment tendency of different categories of "opinion leaders" comments, and compare sentimental differences between users and viewpoints; ④Combining complex network theories and methods, we use forwarding data to construct a directed weighted forwarding network, and analyzing the dissemination relationship and key nodes of cross-border information through the calculation of network indicators such as centrality.

According to preliminary research results, despite the impact on social public opinion is limited, cross-border information amplifies social media discussions on risk topics, setting, maintaining, and even breaking the agenda of domestic mainstream media to some extent. Chinese netizens consciously form communities that match their own cognitions and attitudes, and allowed to discuss some sensitive issues under the pretext of discussing non-domestic issues. They may also bring issues back to the domestic context, creating domestic resonance and spillover effects of global risks that pose challenges to online social governance.

Submission ID

1278

Analyzing Crisis Communication of Public Health Organizations during COVID-19 Pandemic on Twitter: Strengthening Social Media Crisis Communication for Health Emergencies

Authors

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Abstract

Being declared as an infodemic of social media (WHO, 2020a), COVID-19 pandemic embodies a communication crisis, requiring a fast and timely response from world leaders, health organizations and mass media (Ngai et al., 2020). It has brought forward the significance of crisis communication and communication tools specifically social media platforms in effectively responding and managing the public health crises (Tsao et al., 2021). Gaining insights into how public health organizations as primary communicators in the global health governance (GHG) sector, have communicated about the pandemic by utilizing social media platforms, is critical for augmenting the knowledge on crisis communication

aspects of health emergencies and for further improving the social media communication strategies (Généreux et al., 2021).

With the objective of enriching the field of crisis communication and GHG, this paper intends to carry out in-depth analysis of the communication responses of public health organizations – World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) – on Twitter. The paper aims to gauge the volume, frequency, and engagement indices along with the identification of particular frames and content themes in order to characterize the published tweets. The theoretical underpinning is offered by the Framing Theory and Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Model, for examining how public health-focused organizations use Twitter for communicating and engaging with the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Twitter posts published over the period of one year, starting from the 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020, were retrieved by using Twitter's official API. Content Analysis was conducted for scrutinizing the retrieved tweets and coding was carried out on three dimensions: message frame, message content, and, interactive features. The tweets were manually coded for eleven content frames and twenty-two mutually exclusive content themes based on the CERC framework. Engagement indices were further analyzed for all the content themes for assessing their effectiveness in promoting public engagement.

The preliminary analysis indicated that in total 12,558 Twitter posts were published by the selected organizations within the first year of the pandemic. From the published tweets, 65.03% (n=8,167) of the posts were related to COVID-19 while 34.97% (n=4,391) of the messages were made on other topics. This finding aligns with previous research that the public health organizations have strategically used social media as an information dissemination vehicle to carry out timely communication with the publics. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrated that WHO, followed by CDC and MSF, has been the most active organization in terms of frequency and volume of posts. In terms of framing of the crisis, health crisis frames and general health issues frames were more prevalent in the analyzed tweets. The assessment indicated that the selected organizations followed varying communication strategies, exhibiting a close correspondence with their mandates, and having significant differences in the level of embedded CERC principles in their communications. The findings of the study provide insights into organizational communication responses and contribute towards informing strategic entities to develop robust crisis communication strategies for effectively using digital platforms.

Submission ID

1288

Affect-as-information? Prejudices in Real Life and Emotions on Twitter Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

Authors

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Abstract

A skyrocketing increase in discriminatory incidents and prejudicial attitudes toward Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic has been documented in the United States (Croucher, Nguyen, & Rahmani, 2020). Previous research found discriminations in the offline context is transactional and can be redirected online. The fact that the true identity of a discriminator is often unknown tends to prompt users' emotional responses in the virtual world without the concern of being traced or retaliated (Lozada, Seaton, Williams, & Tynes, 2020; Subrahmanyam & Šmahel, 2011). Despite the rising digital interactions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, few research has been done to investigate whether the increase of prejudices against Asian Americans amid the outbreak of coronavirus is associated with the virtual world, and how emotions and sentiments scale over time (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). Taking China as a case study, this research used cutting edge large-scale data analysis to investigate patterns of emotional dissemination associated with Twitter conversations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the coronavirus disease outbreak in Wuhan, China has been frequently highlighted in former President Trump's tweets and previous US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's public speech (Jaipragas, 2020; Wilkie, 2020). Authorities' stigmatized comments such as "Chinese Virus" and "Wuhan Virus" with unfounded scientific evidence prompted a surge of Asian hate and sparked huge controversy with varying emotionality (Baker, 2020; Chiu, 2020; Lee & Waters, 2021). Negative conversations about Asians and Asian Americans amplify a negative offline emotional climate toward Asians, and in particular the Chinese. Cities with big number of COVID-19 infections (e.g., New York, California) saw notable increases in discrimination (Roberto, Johnson, & Rauhaus, 2020). Parallely, predominantly negative messages about China are being distributed on social media. The prevalent Asian hate leaves the Asian minority group unprotected, isolated, and marginalized (Hahm et al., 2021; Lu, Kaushal, Huang, & Gaddis, 2021; Steinert, 2020).

Literature reviews on Affect-as-information model and emotion arousal, emotions and interactions on social media, emotions and perceptions in the virtual world and real life showed, despite previous research efforts, our understanding of prejudices and emotions, and the relations between stimulations and discrimination offline and discrimination and emotions in the virtual world remains thin.

Utilizing a large-scale dataset – 5.3 million tweets collected from Twitter API with keywords #Wuhan (2,851,391 tweets from January 22 to May 30, 2020), and #Chinesevirus (2,514,974 tweets between March 3, 2020 and January 21, 2021), this study seeks to fill in the knowledge gap. Specifically, this study will execute network analysis, sentiment analysis, and cross correlational analysis to test the following hypotheses:

H1: Prejudicial emotions in real life are highly correlated with emotions on Twitter.

H2: High-arousal negative emotions on social media are more closely correlated with prejudicial stimulus in natural physical environment than low-arousal negative emotions.

H3: Places that are more prejudicial in history arouse higher emotional stimulus on social media than less prejudicial places.

The findings will provide statistical evidence to the associations of offline Asian hate and expressions of prejudices and emotions on Twitter and enhance our understandings of the affect-as-information model in the computer mediated communication context.

Submission ID

1388

The construction of the African Other and the Covid-19 pandemic

Authors

Ms. Adjua Akinwumi - Simon Fraser University, Communication

Abstract

The spread of Covid-19 comes with a renewed focus on the visibility and surveillance of the Other (Said, 1978). Coverage of its transmission, rapidly occurring across borders and continents, elicits scrutiny of the ‘people living over there.’

Infectious diseases have a long history of contributing to othering; viewed mainly through a Eurocentric lens, its narratives of threats and control are deeply imbricated with Western notions of territory, security, and economy (White, 2020; King, 2002). These narratives underline the dichotomization of ‘bodies to protect’ versus ‘bodies to be protected from.’ The violence against racialized bodies in the wake of the pandemic highlights a rather dire nonetheless resultant implication of visibility in this context.

This paper seeks to interrogate the visibility of the African Other within this perspective. It questions how, why, and when, during the pandemic, African countries and African bodies gained visibility in the Western imagination. It looks to the media and health institutions to unpack this. This paper aims to contribute to the literature that seeks to understand pandemics and their emergent narratives of threat and control, to tease out what underpins this construction, and the resultant effects on bodies that get caught up at its expense.

The first part of this paper interrogates the media's role in this construction. In this section, the paper uses framing analysis as it presents a useful methodological toolbox to understand the relationship between the media and the public. As Entman (1993) notes of frames, they function to make salient and conversely obscure some aspects of reality. The paper considers what frames are used in reference to the pandemic and the African continent and their relationship to concepts of threat and control. The second part of this paper interrogates, via thematic analysis, documents from global health institutions. The paper subsequently compares these respective narratives, unfolding potential instances of relationality.

Submission ID

1444

Social Justice, Modern Racism toward Asians, and Counterargument Intention

Authors

Dr. Xu Song - Stockton University

Dr. Suya Yin - Stockton University

Abstract

Anti-Asian hate crimes and racist incidents have dramatically increased amid the COVID-19 pandemic and caused continuing crisis and unwanted conflict for Asian communities in the United States. This study adopts Social Justice and Modern Racism literature as the theoretical framework, investigates how perceived Social Justice and Modern Racism toward Asians would affect young adults' Counterargument Intention, and explores the potential effects of various demographic factors on Counterargument Intention in both virtual and in-person communication settings.

An online survey was designed and conducted. The survey included variable measures and two simulated scenarios where a racist/racially-biased expression was made towards an Asian individual in a virtual online social media setting and in an in-person public setting as stimuli to measure the survey participants' Counterargument Intention (i.e., intention to

make a counterargument against the racist/racially-biased expression). Demographic information (e.g., gender, race and ethnicity, political orientation, prior experience with racist incidents, and witnessing racist incidents) were also collected.

A convenience sample of 239 young adult student participants were recruited in a US university. Special cautions and procedures were followed to prevent socially desirable responding. A total of 211 participants completed the survey. IBM SPSS was used to analyze data. Variable scales demonstrated good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha=.848\sim.967$).

Research results show that participants' perceived Social Justice was positively correlated with their Counterargument Intention in both the virtual setting ($r=.386, p<.001$) and the in-person setting ($r=.473, p<.001$). Modern Racism toward Asians was negatively correlated with Counterargument Intention in both the virtual setting ($r=-.342, p<.001$) and the in-person setting ($r=-.471, p<.001$). Social Justice was negatively correlated with Modern Racism toward Asians ($r=-.639, p<.001$). Individuals' Counterargument Intentions in virtual and in in-person settings correlated with each other ($r=.733, p<.001$). Compared to males, females demonstrated significantly-higher levels of Social Justice, $t(205)=3.614, p<.001$, and reported significantly-lower levels of Modern Racism toward Asians, $t(205)=-2.178, p=.031$. However, no significant gender difference was found in Counterargument Intention. In the virtual setting, participants who had prior experience with racist incidents reported a greater Counterargument Intention than those without prior experience, $t(207)=3.083, p=.002$; but no significant difference was found in the in-person setting. Participants who had witnessed racist incidents showed greater Counterargument Intention than those who had not in both the virtual setting, $t(207)=3.119, p=.003$, and the in-person setting, $t(207)=2.133, p=.034$. Non-white participants demonstrated greater Counterargument Intention than white participants in the virtual setting, $t(209)=2.930, p=.004$, but not in the in-person setting. Political orientation (more liberal) was positively correlated with Social Justice ($r=.277, p<.001$) and Counterargument Intentions in both virtual and in-person settings ($r=.295, p<.001$; $r=.343, p<.001$ respectively), but was negatively correlated with Modern Racism toward Asians ($r=-.390, p<.001$).

This study extended the research of Social Justice and Modern Racism to the conflict communication contexts where Asian individuals were attacked by racist expressions. The research results indicate that individuals who possess higher level of social justice beliefs, fewer racist attitudes, and more liberal political views and those who have witnessed racist incidents previously would be more likely to make a counterargument against a racist expression that was made towards an Asian individual both virtually and in person. The finding that non-white participants and those who have prior experience with racist incidents demonstrated greater Counterargument Intention only in the virtual setting but not in the in-person setting may suggest that the virtual communication setting would be perceived by those individuals as a more secure environment for them to act on social justice beliefs and speak up for an Asian individual targeted by racist expressions.

Submission ID

1567

Media Catharsis” Function of Chinese Official Media and Social Media during COVID-19 Crisis

Authors

Ms. Yihan Wang - Yunnan University

Ms. Ping Wei - School of Journalism, Yunnan University

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to understand how Chinese official media and social media can alleviate negative public opinion and facilitate problem solving by its ‘media catharsis’ function during the COVID-19 outbreak. This paper takes the anti-epidemic experiences of Ruili, a city on the China-Myanmar border as a case. Ruili, a city located in the west of China’s Yunnan Province, has experienced four-times COVID-19 outbreak and three-times strict quarantine management in the past two years. With a border line of 169.8 kilometers, Ruili, whose GDP is based on industry and China-Myanmar border trade, were under huge pressure on epidemic prevention and control. People lived in Ruili also faced dilemma of no income for a long time. Under this background, Ruili citizens narrated their real experiences and expressed anxiety on Weibo (Chinese social media platform, like Twitter), to seek more government aids. On October 28, 2021, relevant discussions were posted on Weibo hot search. After it, Ruili received extensive attention, people’s demands were answered and resolved.

This paper collects news reports and discusses on ‘epidemic in Ruili’ from January 2020 to January 2022, covering Chinese official media People’s Daily Online and Xinhuanet, local media Yunnan.cn, Ruilijiang Media Center and People’s Government of Ruili, and Chinese social media platform Weibo. Related to four stages of COVID-19 outbreak in Ruili, data collected was divided into four stages. Semantic network analysis method is used to study the reports topics of official media and hot topics of Weibo public opinion. Based on Lisse’s “social safety valve” theory, this paper discusses the ‘media catharsis’ role of different media in public opinion events. The main research problems are, RQ1: What are the differences in media reports at different stages of Ruili epidemic? RQ2: What are the similarities and differences between the ‘media catharsis’ role of Weibo and of Chinese official media?

RQ3: How does the "social safety valve" mechanism of Chinese official media work?
How's the effect?

After analysis, it found that the topics of Chinese state media reports closely followed the hot topics of Weibo public opinion, while the topics reported by local media in Yunnan maintained stability. Weibo platform holds more freedom in expressing opinions, but only when the popularity reaches its peak will it has greater influence. The 'media catharsis' role of Chinese official media plays later than the public opinions on Weibo, but the effect is greater than Weibo discussion. The exposure of public opinion on Weibo by Chinese official media can affect the behavior of local government directly. The reports emotional tendencies by official media can lead the public opinion on Weibo. The timely intervention of Chinese official media can alleviate negative public opinion, facilitate problem solving, and avoid deeper social conflicts as a "social safety valve".

Submission ID

1675

"Traffic Social Responsibility" in Major Public Crisis Events: Connotation, Practice and Strategy

Authors

Ms. Chen Zhang - Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Mr. Xucheng Cao - Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Dr. Fang Wu - Shanghai Jiaotong University

Abstract

In the era of digital platform, Internet celebrities can obtain considerable traffic through operating personal accounts, so as to make profits through advertising, e-commerce sales, etc. Under this logic of platform datafication operation, Internet celebrities are not only Internet opinion leaders, but also business individuals. The previous researches on opinion leaders' social responsibility and corporate social responsibility are not applicable to this important group in the era of digital platform. Therefore, we propose a new concept "traffic social responsibility" to supplement the current theory. Specifically, we hope to examine how Internet celebrities understand their social responsibility and how to strategize it into practice when their personal expression freedom and personal brand strategy are

intertwined. We also attempt to figure out the interaction mechanism of platform, administrator and individual in their process of practice.

This study selects the case of Chinese social media platform Weibo. In July 2021, Henan province in China suffered a rare rainstorm. During this period, Weibo became an important platform for mutual assistance. Many Weibo celebrities forwarded help seeking posts and spread rescue information, which shows their power of information dissemination and sense of responsibility. This is consistent with the “influential” proposed by Social-Mediated Crisis Communication Model (Liu et al., 2012). This study investigates how Weibo celebrities understand their social responsibility in major public crisis events, participate in rescue mobilization, and turn this social participation strategy into a business operation mode.

This study adopts the in-depth interview method. We interviewed eight Weibo bloggers who published relevant content during Henan rainstorm, each has more than 200,000 followers, with a maximum exceeded 1.2 million. The interviews were conducted through online voice, each lasting 60 minutes.

Based on the interviews, this study constructs a traffic social responsibility model. First, the connotation of traffic social responsibility is the product of moral self-discipline at the personal level and moral imagination at the business individual level. When facing the disaster, bloggers as social citizenship are driven by their own will to help the affected people. Meanwhile, bloggers view their traffic as a resource, which brings them greater voice and communication power thus constructing their moral imagination to help the victims. Second, the practice of traffic social responsibility is the integration and transmission of crisis information. After the crisis, information provision and presentation shape the public's views on crisis (Coombs, 2007). During Henan rainstorm, bloggers formed a set of unique information screening, verification and transmission methods. For example, they chose to forward objective facts like disaster-relief information rather than personal opinions. And they consciously verified the identity of the user who initiated the help. They also used presentation methods such as tags or pictures to attract users' attention to this event. Third, the strategy of traffic social responsibility is to form synergy in the interaction among individuals, platform, and regulators. Bloggers considered multi stakeholders, using platform technology to improve communication effect, paying attention to content regulators, actively avoiding risks, and reasonably setting the agenda based on content controlling, so as to realize self-image management.

Submission ID

1703

Hate and Humor in User Generated Content on social media: The Study of Memes on India and Pakistan Conflict

Authors

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Dr. Sehrish Mushtaq - Lahore College for Women University, Lahore City, Pakistan

Dr. Fawad Baig - University of Central Punjab

Abstract

Abstract: Memes are being used as tools of expression during protests (Moussa, Benmessaoud & Douai, 2020) crisis (Aslan, 2021; Murru & Vicari, 2021; Ponton, 2021), and war and conflict (Szwed, 2016; Wiggins, 2016) as well. This research mainly looked into the practice of using diversified social media memes in a conflict situation. For this purpose, we chose the India Pakistan conflict and selected the memes created in India and Pakistan after the incident of 'Pulwama attack' that took place in February 2019. The conflict between India and Pakistan has always been a heated debate since more than 7 decades after their inception. In the recent times the aggression among masses from both sides has found its way of expression through memes on social media.

Several memes were made and circulated from both sides to tease other country in a humorous manner as the conflict rose between India and Pakistan in 2019. These memes could have either intensified hatred or defused the conflict. This study focused to understand the concept, themes and the tone being used in the memes from both sides of the border. Thematic analysis of the selected memes yielded the themes of humiliation, trivialization of conflict, references to history, hatred for the other, nationalism, diversion, mainstream media skepticism, and peacebuilding from the study of selected memes. Though, the hatred by mocking other and showing superiority was the prevalent tone in most of the memes from both India and Pakistan, yet few of the memes were used wisely to normalize the situation and spread the message of peace between the two countries.

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Submission ID

2097

Tripartite Interaction in China's Infodemic Governance: Professional media, government and Internet users

Authors

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Prof. Jing Xu - professor, School of Journalism and Communication, Peking University

Abstract

Abstract:

The Infodemic associated with the COVID-19 pandemic has seriously affected people's physical and mental health, and its governance has become an important issue in the field of communication. Observation found that in China's Infodemic governance framework, the interaction among professional media, the government and Internet users is extremely significant, and greatly affects the operation of China's Infodemic governance. This study is based on mixed research methods. First, through focus group interviews, we learn about the measures taken by the professional health-related media represented by DXY and the government agencies represented by the Cyberspace Administration of China in the management of Infodemic, with special attention to the two-way interaction between professional media and government agencies. This study found that, on the one hand, the government will provide targeted guidance to the professional media on content production

and content distribution based on the information it has learned. And on the other hand, professional media will conduct relevant government related information based on user feedback and the dissemination effect and attention of the content. Suggestions and feedback. Furthermore, this research uses the questionnaire method to investigate the information perception, user behavior, health and psychological status of DXY users during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus we prove the positive role of professional media in the governance of Infodemics. This study believes that the tripartite interaction among professional media, the government and Internet users can significantly promote the governance of Infodemics. The key is that the two-way interaction between professional media and the government improves the judgment and decision-making of the government situation. Government and professional media's grasp of Internet users' characteristics and feedback also contribute to the realization of effective governance. This study not only provides China's experience in Infodemic governance, but also brings a new understanding of China's government and media relations to the global academic community.

Keywords: Internet governance, Infodemic, Professional media, Multiple interactions, User perception

Submission ID

2118

Crowdsourcing Information and Disaster Response : Digital Volunteerism about Cases of Urban Rainstorm Waterlogging in China

Authors

Ms. Ran Gao - Communication University of China

Abstract

New information and communication technologies are influencing disaster response in profound ways. Social networks such as Twitter and Weibo have become among the most popular sources for providing geo-located information to supplement authoritative data sources. Such a key role is reflected in earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, terror attacks, forest fires, and social unrest studies. In many cases, people living far from the impacted area have been better informed through the media than those managing and carrying out the relief effort. The impacted zone often loses power, Internet connections, and

computing capabilities, creating a doughnut pattern of access to relevant information. Thus, rescue organizations particularly encourage volunteers to engage in the construction and maintenance of online volunteer communities and digital platforms, taking advantage of the effects of platformization, datafication and the associated fragmentation of society.

During emergencies, time is the essence, and the benefits of its use often outweigh the risks associated with volunteered information. The role of volunteered information on social media in disaster response has been approached from different angles. Whittaker, McLennan, and Handmer (2015) reviewed how volunteering during emergencies is changing, with specific emphasis on informal volunteerism—ordinary people devoting time and effort in times of crisis, without being affiliated with the emergency services or any formal organization. Examples of "digital volunteerism", as the authors call it, range from setting up Facebook groups, posting pictures of lost items during a tornado in the United States, and mapping and translating distress messages from Haitians after the earthquake 2010. Starbird et al. (2010) distinguished among four kinds of information on Twitter during emergencies: generative, synthetic, derivative, and innovative. They argued that these types of information are typical of different kinds of actors. Working from these distinctions, Reuter, Heger, and Pipek (2013) assigned roles to what they called "virtual volunteers," individuals who talked about events on Twitter during an outbreak of tornadoes in the United States, functioning as contributing assets in emergencies. These roles are the helper, the reporter, the retweeter, the repeater, and the reader. The helper is the person most easily identified as a volunteer, actively engaged in helping with the emergency. The retweeter does not produce original content but distributes essential information to as many people as possible through many retweets. In summary, these studies focus on "unorganized organizational forces" and have not yet profoundly explored the organized online volunteer groups and alternative information crowdsourcing methods (platforms).

In July 2021, Zhengzhou, the capital city of central China, encountered Extreme Rainstorm Weather rarely seen in history. The "digital city" that lost 5G high-speed transmission signals and the Internet in the rainstorm disaster is like a large-scale test field, pouring out a large number of field materials that can be excavated. This "local anomie" caused by the non-human "break experiment" will make the mundane daily actions and the "invisible" connectivity infrastructure "visible again. Observing ordinary people's efforts to rebuild order after the rules are destroyed, so as to expose their efforts and methods to maintain a sense of order, which can "reverse" reveal the internal organizational process of social action. What new types of low latitude information transmission methods have Chinese urban residents explored? The formation of this connectivity action is closely related to the physical infrastructure as an actor. With the reduced dimension to 2G /3G signal, there has been a new rescue platform —— "online rescue document" which is quite similar to the early Internet form. It will constitute an important material carrier of this urban rainstorm disaster.

By focusing on cases of China's urban rainstorm waterlogging disasters, this study is devoted to analyzing new ways of digital voluntary organizations in searches and their relationship with disaster response. To achieve this goal, we employ a relational approach based on actor-network theory (ANT) to reconceptualize "digital volunteerism" as a networked activity beyond the idea of community that enrolls various actors in networks that deliver different forms of actions. Making use primarily of data scraped from Civilian rescue platforms, such as Tencent documents (An online document app that many people can edit at the same time), Weibo Chaohua (an online community that attracted influential Weibo users), and We chat groups, as well as the Official rescue platforms such as People's Daily rescue channel, we hope to obtain a better understanding of the nature of the communication between civil society and voluntary organizations operate, and political concerns related to this new form of information which results of contention and collaboration between civil and institutional actors by highlighting the institutional environment.

Submission ID

2297

Picturing the climate crisis: An analysis of New York Times news visuals, 1986-2019

Authors

Dr. Antal Wozniak - University of Liverpool

Ms. Rachel Carberry - University of Liverpool

Abstract

Most of our findings on news media's visual framing of climate change only cover periods up to 2010 (Schäfer, 2020). This ongoing study addresses this gap by extending the time frame of analysis to the end of 2019. Quite recently, we have also witnessed a discursive shift in climate change reporting with the increasing use of expressions like "climate crisis," so we examine the relationship between more alarming wording and visual representations in news coverage. Did the shift in language also affect the visual reporting about the climate crisis? Or are the journalistic routines of image production and selection too entrenched to allow for substantial changes in how the climate crisis is being made meaningful for audiences via news visuals? We present preliminary findings from a population analysis of climate crisis visuals published in *The New York Times* between 1986 and

2019 ($N = 609$) while data collection and analysis for other news outlets from various countries is ongoing.

First, a media attention analysis with the search string "climate crisis" OR "climate breakdown" OR "climate emergency" OR "climate catastrophe" OR "global heating" for a newspaper sample from Australia (*The Australian* and *Herald Sun*), Canada (*The Globe & Mail* and *Toronto Star*), the UK (*The Times* and *The Sun*), and the US (*The New York Times* and *USA Today*) revealed that more alarming expressions were virtually absent from mainstream media discourse until the late 2010s, decades after the term "climate crisis" had entered the media's vernacular (via the 1983 PBS documentary "The Climate Crisis").

Our analysis of climate crisis visuals in *The New York Times* reveals that over 81% of them ($n = 495$) are photographs, 71% of which had humans as their major subject ($n = 351$), with environmental activists and politicians the most salient actor types. Photos of former US Vice-President and environmental activist Al Gore alone account for 5% of all photos, a clear indication for persona-driven visual frame setting.

Indeed, when analysing visual frames (O'Neill, 2013; Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011) we find very little *solution*-focused imagery (depictions of green technologies make up only 2% of all photos). Less than 5% show natural landscapes (including marine areas), the majority of which depict some kind of damage (e.g., wildfires or coastal erosion). Combining the latter with the very few images of melting glaciers and of people depicted as victims of flooding, we find that a mere 5% of photos show negative *impacts* of the climate crisis. *Cause*-related photos also account for less than 4% of climate crisis news photos. Hence, almost nine out of ten news photos do not represent causes or consequences of nor solutions to the climate crisis. In conclusion, visual coverage of the climate crisis in *The New York Times* has remained largely generic with a particular focus on individuals not directly affected by the worst impacts. Our forthcoming analyses will look at visual framing differences across countries and media outlets as well as changes in visual framing of the climate crisis over time.

Submission ID

2406

Statements of experts on COVID-19 vaccines in the social media users' perception: an experimental study

Authors

Dr. Karolina Brylska - University of Warsaw, Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has painfully reminded us all of the great importance of people's trust in science. In social media, we can see a considerable conflict between disinformation spread by opponents of vaccination and physicians and scientists who try to conduct educational activities on the Internet and explain the value of vaccination and its importance in the fight against the pandemic. It causes that messages created by experts in social media are crucial for the effective fight against the pandemic at the information front-line. To be a valuable tool in this fight, they must be constructed appropriately - be effective in persuasion, i.e. understandable and attractive for recipients (Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Tannenbaum et al., 2015; Ness et al., 2017; Heffner et al., 2020; Jordan et al., 2020; Ojala, 2012; Toma & D'Angelo, 2015; Sundar & Nass, 2001; Borah & Xiao, 2018; Poorisat et al., 2019; Kareklas, Muehling & Weber, 2015; Thon & Jukcs, 2017; Wang et al., 2008).

The presentation will focus on the partial results of a project on the effectiveness of social media posts by medical experts to encourage them to get vaccinated against COVID-19 (project conducted within the "New Ideas" grant, no. 622-62/2021, financed by the University of Warsaw). The presentation will demonstrate how the medics' messages in social media are perceived by supporters and opponents of COVID-19 vaccinations in Poland.

The following RQs were asked in the project:

1.How - in terms of form and content - are the physicians' messages on vaccination against COVID-19 in social media structured? 2.What are the types of messages regarding vaccination against COVID-19 published by physicians on social media? 3.What type of expert announcements is persuasive for those sceptical about COVID-19 vaccination?

The study is carried out on three experimental groups and a control group (approx. 30 persons each), composed of students of social studies and humanities, divided according to their attitudes towards COVID-19 vaccination: (1) unvaccinated, (2) sceptical about vaccinations to some extent, but vaccinated, (3) enthusiastic about vaccinations and fully vaccinated.

The project is implemented in three stages.

1. Mapping physicians active in SM and aggregating their posts on vaccinations.

2. Analysis and typology of posts

3. Experiments: research on the reception of types of content using declarative methods (questionnaires) and biometric measurements (face-tracking and eye-tracking) + behavioural element.

In the presentation, the partial results of stage 3 will be presented, namely two types of data obtained with the questionnaires. Firstly, it will be data characterising the respondents, in particular: what are their personal experiences with COVID-19 and/or vaccination against COVID-19, what sources do they learn about vaccinations from, what are the reasons for their decision to take or refuse vaccination, their health literacy level, if and how they contribute to discussions on vaccination in social media and sociodemographic data. The second type of data obtained would be the respondents' opinions on the types of posts (encouraging to vaccinate against COVID) presented. The respondents will evaluate the posts regarding their comprehensibility, attractiveness, persuasive potential and educational value.

Submission ID

2450

The “narrative trap” of the “critic” journalism about violence against journalists in Mexico

Authors

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Abstract

Mexico is the most dangerous place in the world to be a journalist, according to Reporters Without Frontiers: even more than in countries into an official conflict or war as Iraq or Afghanistan. The ONG Artículo 19 has made a counting: between 2000 and 2021 has been committed 148 murders of journalists, most of all only in five states. In this context, the foreign and local journalism has reported about this crimes.

The increase of the violence in Mexico through the “War on Drugs” from 2006, when President Felipe Calderón ordered the initiative has become in a main topic in the academic, so as the communication and journalism studies. But a lot of work has been focused on the

effects of violence in the journalists' work or in the media, but less on the narratives of the violence as object of study.

This work analyzes how an articulated hegemonic narrative of violence are reproduced by the journalism even when its presents itself as a "critic journalism". The main proposition of this work explains that it's formed of a "narrative trap" that helps journalism to construct a critical report when in deep prevails the hegemonic narrative —designed by the State.

This investigation works from the communication because understands the narratives as an communicational process and retakes the proposal of Jesús Martín Barbero (1987) binding the narratives reproduced by the media with the cultural domination. With a critical perspective, this work uses a theoretical frame involves concepts as "hegemony" (Gramsci, 1970; Laclau and Mouffe, 2004), "empty significances" (Laclau, 2005), "factitious diction" (Chillón, 2017), "hegemonic narratives" (Rodríguez y Mastrogiovanni, 2018; Santiago, 2021), "narrative thinking" (Padilla y Bermúdez, 2016) and "fear's territories" (Lindón, 2000).

For the analyse it's been used the Critical Discourse Analysis as methodology in a corpus of five foreign and national journalistic pieces about the violence against the press in Mexico, in January 2022. The transdisciplinary model developed for the analysis involved the proposals of CDA's exponents as Ruth Wodak, Fairclough, Van Dijk y Jäger (Wodak and Meyer, 2003) and narrative theory (Bal, 1990).

The main conclusion of this research is related to the simplification and depoliticization of violence in the narratives found, even in those self-styled as "critical".

This process can be called the "trap of critical narratives": it is the action by which part of a hegemonic narrative ends up being reproduced, such as the "War on Drugs" embedded in other narratives that, on the surface, they seem to contravene it.

This semi-critical narratives or "with critical intention" structurally show an intention to question power, but they do not succeed. The pieces show a kind of narratives about the violence in a different way from that of power, but these narratives, Oswaldo Zavala warned (2015), neutralize any other origin of violence, as if they did not exist.

What can be pointed out, then, is that this relationship between violence and the State appears neutralized and replaced by a unique relationship between violence and "Narco", while even those "brave" or "combatant" journalism create narratives, apparently non-hegemonic, which basically serve to feed an imaginary and a consensus around the "War on Drugs".

Finally, the effect of these narratives are not limited to journalism, because the neutralization of the violence in Mexico through the media is one reproduced too by others cultural products as literature or fiction series.

Submission ID

2484

The impact of journalistic and strategic communicators in Afghanistan before the Taliban takeover: Peacebuilding through communication?

Authors

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Abstract

For 20 years, western countries were in Afghanistan trying to create peacebuilding impact through communication. There are different journalistic concepts on how media can contribute to de-escalation and conflict resolution. But journalists are not the only actors on the scene; there are also strategic communicators. This study examines the impact of communication for sustainable peacebuilding in Afghanistan before the Taliban took power. What has been accomplished?

In times of digitalization, media can be used as a driver of escalation of conflict (Fröhlich, 2018; Tenenboim, 2017; Then-Bergh & Schlippe, 2020), as well as a de-escalator (Aslam, 2016; İnceoğlu, 2019; Katz, 2020). Journalists alone are not capable of establishing nonviolence, strategic communicators also play an important role (Fröhlich & Jungblut, 2021; Jungblut, 2020). The scientific approach of the concept of peace journalism (Galtung, 1998; Lynch et al., 2015; McGoldrick, 2006; Youngblood, 2019) is predominantly western-oriented (Doll, 2022; Neumann & Fahmy, 2016; Prager & Hameleers, 2021; Hanitzsch et al., 2019). So far, Afghanistan remains nearly unexplored of the global north, apart from few exceptions (Hussain & Siraj, 2019).

Despite the political turnover in Afghanistan, the study was able to shed light on what impact has communication made on peacebuilding or escalation (*RQ1*)? In addition, what practices of escalating or de-escalating communication have journalists and strategic communicators employed (*RQ2*)? What threats and experiences of violence have journalists faced (*RQ3*)? What role has new media played in coverage (*RQ4*)? Have strategic communicators evaluated the impact of a media product after media campaigns (*RQ5*)? An online survey (N=309) was conducted using Afghanistan as an example to survey both journalists (N=182) and strategic communicators (N=127) during the period of 15 Aug. to 5

Sep. 2021. The survey reached journalists from all 34 provinces of Afghanistan as well as from all media genres. Succeeding the 18 indicators from former studies (Lee, 2010; Neumann & Fahmy, 2016), practices of war and peace journalism, among others, were queried. The results show that an impact was made on peacebuilding through communication. At the same time, it is evident that political, religious, and military reasons are obstacles to the implementation of peace journalism. More than half of the journalists have already experienced violence. It is noticeable that in 74.79% of the cases no evaluation of the media campaigns was conducted. The study has the limitation that due to the particular threat to women and security situation, a gender analysis could not be conducted. Future studies can examine the impact of Afghan journalists, both inside and outside Afghanistan. This study makes a valuable contribution in terms of deriving the impact of journalism has had in conflict zones. Concepts for peacebuilding communication were known, but the transformation of the digital information environment took place faster than actors were able to adapt communication-related structures and capabilities.

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