

Changing Media Framings of School Shootings: A Case Study of the Parkland School Shooting

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ABSTRACT

The Parkland school shooting that occurred on February 14, 2018, ranks among the deadliest high school shootings in recorded history with seventeen injuries and seventeen casualties. Like other mass school shootings, this event garnered extensive media coverage, but little research has been conducted to examine how media framing for this event compares with previous school shootings. This study examines the framing of the Parkland school shooting by location over time using the Social Coping Model, which describes how collectives cope with and heal from traumatic events. Specifically, this study compares frames of front-page news articles from three local news outlets and three national outlets across three time periods in the immediate aftermath of the shooting. The results indicate the coverage of the Parkland shooting was similar to previous shootings, but the results also suggest a shift in media coverage. The implications for this shift are explored in the context of a changing media landscape while also noting the importance of the Social Coping Model towards understanding the dynamic process of framing school shootings.

KEYWORDS

media, mass shootings, school shootings, news outlets, framing

The United States has experienced several high-profile mass school shootings over the past 50 years, but such events were not discussed as a social problem until the incident at Columbine High School in 1999 (Altheide, 2009; Elsass et al., 2014; Muschert, 2007; Muschert & Carr, 2006). Columbine was different from previous school shootings because it was covered by cable news media (Murray, 2017; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014) and extensively by traditional print media (Chyi & McCombs, 2004). These types of events are often sensationalized within the media and produce a copious amount of media coverage (Muschert, 2007; Schildkraut et al., 2018). Accordingly, the media have become a significant avenue for school shootings research because consumers primarily experience these events through the coverage (Schildkraut et al., 2018). Within this line of work, scholars have examined the media coverage of prominent mass school shootings such as Columbine (Altheide, 2009; Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Larkin, 2009), Virginia Tech (Fox & Savage, 2009; Hawdon et al., 2014), and Sandy Hook (Murray, 2017; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014). The findings from these studies suggest local media outlets closer to a mass school shooting tend to focus on the victims, shooter, and local community, while national media outlets tend to focus on macro issues related to shootings such as gun control.

The shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, 2018, was widely covered by media outlets for an extended amount of time.¹ The Parkland shooting resulted in seventeen deaths and seventeen injuries. To date, only a few studies have examined media coverage and framing of this event, despite it being one of the deadliest high school shootings. Understanding how this shooting was covered is important considering most of the information the average person knows about mass shootings

comes from the media (Schildkraut et al., 2018). In addition, media consumption of mass shooting news stories has been found to be positively associated with increased fear about experiencing this type of event (Burns & Crawford, 1999; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994; Kupchik & Bracy, 2009; Levin & Wiest, 2018; Morrow et al., 2016), increases in gun legislation (Luca et al., 2020), and increases in gun ownership (Porfiri et al., 2019).

There is significant variation in the methods and focus of the few media studies that have focused on the Parkland shooting. For example, Aslett et al. (2020) conducted an analysis of tweets derived from both gun rights and gun control groups following the Parkland shooting to identify how each group respectively framed the problem. Rees et al. (2020) analyzed print media coverage to identify contributing factors to the Parkland shooting. Finally, Holody and Shaugnessy (2020) analyzed print media coverage of the Parkland shooting with a focus on comparing the salience and valence of fifteen frames across local and national outlets. While each contributes to the literature on the Parkland shooting, mass shootings, and media behavior, they do not account for how the media did or did not change their framing of the Parkland shooting in the weeks after it. That is, these studies of the Parkland shooting do not account for the dynamic process of framing (see Chyi & McCombs, 2004). Framing as a dynamic process suggests that the frames relied upon by the media in the immediate aftermath of the shooting may be different from those relied upon months after it has happened.

The current study extends previous research about media framing of school shootings to the Parkland incident by analyzing front-page coverage of the shooting published between February 15, 2018, and April 20, 2018, in *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *Orlando Sentinel*, *Sun Sentinel* and *Tampa Bay Times*. It utilizes methods established by Hawdon et al. (2014), who analyzed print media coverage of the Virginia Tech shooting through Pennebaker and Harber's (1993) Social Stage Model of Coping.² We extend this and prior work by examining how the distance between a print media organization and the Parkland community influenced the framing of the event across three time periods. Finally, by applying the Social Coping Model to a shooting beyond the Virginia Tech shooting, we attempt to provide a reliable coding schema that fosters cross-event generalizability and comparison.

Literature Review

Media and Mass Shootings

While definitions vary, many scholars define mass shootings as incidents that result in the deaths of four or more people by gunfire, excluding the offender (Duwe, 2004; Fox et al., 2020; Krouse & Richardson, 2015; Lankford & Tomek, 2018; Meloy et al., 2001; Peterson & Densley, 2019). Despite variation in how mass shootings are defined, most individuals indirectly experience mass or school shooting events through the media. For example, in the year after the Columbine High School shooting, the three major news networks (ABC, CBS, NBC) crafted over 300 stories about the shooting (Robinson, 2011). Thus, analyses of media coverage about mass shootings are instrumental for the development of knowledge about incidents themselves, media behavior, and the impacts of such events.

Researchers have concluded mass shootings are portrayed in the media for an extensive amount of time and not all covered in the same manner. For example, in an analysis of New York Times articles from 2000 to 2012, Schildkraut et al. (2018) found that race/ethnicity, specifically the shooter being of Asian and other descent, and the number of victims were the most important factors in portraying these events in the media. Similarly, an analysis of television coverage of mass shootings from the three major television networks (ABC, NBC, and CBS) over a twenty-five year span (1989-2014) found that mass shootings with ten or more fatalities receive more coverage than shootings with six to nine fatalities, which in turn receive more coverage than when there are less than six fatalities (Luca et al., 2020). Another important factor is the location of the shooting. Here, research has found that shootings taking place at government buildings (Fox et al., 2020; Silva & Capellan, 2019) or in schools (Fox et al., 2020; Schildkraut et al., 2018; Silva & Capellan, 2019) often take precedence in coverage over shootings that occur in other locations.

Scholars have also been able to tie media coverage of mass shootings to specific social consequences. First, increased media attention on these events has been linked to fear of such incidents. In a survey of 212 adults, Kupchik and Bracy (2009) found that those fearful of mass shooting victimization were more interested in reading a story about a mass shooting. Likewise, an analysis of school crime and violence news published by *USA Today* and *The New York Times* found that these sources persistently remind readers about the potential of school violence and frame school crime as getting worse (Levin & Wiest, 2018). Media outlets often reference the last extreme school shooting to emphasize the devastation of the latest attack (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Schildkraut, 2016). This distorts the audience's views of the actual event and can lead to an audience developing more punitive attitudes or a general sense within the public that the number of shootings increased (Schildkraut et al., 2015). Thus, media framing can continue to generate fear of school shootings, despite evidence that the number of events has have declined (Haan & Mays, 2013).

Finally, research has evidenced the impact of mass shooting coverage on future shooters, the dissemination of mass shooting information, and gun related issues. In an ethnographic analysis of the media coverage involving three school shootings (Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Sandy Hook), Murray (2017) suggests stories of shootings can enable future shooters by providing copious amounts of information to the public about the offenders.³ Similarly, Sumiala and Tikka's (2011) examination of YouTube videos about four mass school shootings (Columbine, Virginia Tech, Jokela, and Kauhajoki) found that YouTube facilitated the circulation of videos about school shootings including videos produced by shooters themselves. This circulation promotes violent social imaginaries and can blur what is considered professional news versus non-professional news content (Sumiala & Tikka, 2011). Finally, a recent study of mass shootings over a twenty-five year period finds that a single mass shooting leads to a 15% increase in the number of firearm bills introduced within a state in the year after an incident and is correlated with increased television news coverage (Luca et al. 2020). To complement this finding, an analysis of tweets derived from gun rights groups and gun control groups following the Parkland shooting found each group used Twitter to advance their respective policy narratives (Aslett et al., 2020).

Media Framing and School Shootings

Framing is an important tool used by the media when presenting information (Chermak, 1994; Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Surette, 2015). Media outlets frame information with a specific narrative and reframe stories to recycle them. Entman (1993) argued that framing was the process of selecting specific aspects of a "perceived reality" and making them prominent to define a problem, discuss the causes, make moral judgments, and possibly finding a solution. Scheufele and Tewsbury (2007) wrote that framings are "invaluable tools for presenting relatively complex issues...efficiently and in a way that makes them accessible to lay audiences because they play to existing cognitive schemas" (p. 12). Thus, how the media chooses to frame news is significant as it can affect consumers in a variety of ways, including gaining public support on an issue or the furthering of political arguments (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Scholars have specifically focused on media framing of mass school shootings. This interest increased dramatically after the highly publicized shooting at Columbine High School in 1999 (Murray, 2017; Muschert & Carr, 2006; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014). School shootings represent a unique form of extreme violence because of their location and the greater likelihood that youth are victimized by these types of incidents. Since Columbine, analyses of media framings about school shootings have been instrumental for the development of knowledge about these incidents, media behavior, and the impacts of such events. For example, analyses of newspaper coverage of Columbine and nine other shootings concluded that coverage of these events were focused on individuals immediately after their occurrence, but later, these events were discussed in a larger social context that evoked conversations about issues, such as gun control (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Muschert & Carr, 2006). In addition, a comparative content analysis found that coverage of the Sandy Hook shooting more often focused on the actions of the educators involved rather than focusing on the shooter when compared to the Columbine shooting (Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014). Finally, Frymer's (2009) examination of

print and television news media surrounding the Columbine shootings concluded that the media perpetuated a narrative of “youth violence and alienation” (p. 1390). Recently, Rees et al. (2020) conducted a root cause analysis involving 282 articles from ten online news sources to identify contributing factors to the Parkland shooting. They found that factors fit within four themes: policy (gun legislation), person (mental illness), environmental (culture), and equipment (large ammunition).

Much of the early research on media framing of school shootings only examined coverage from *The New York Times* (see Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Muschert & Carr, 2006; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014). These studies brought forth valuable insights, but they were unable to examine differences in framing across media outlets. Holody and Shaughnessy (2020) addressed this gap by comparing local and national print media coverage of the Parkland shooting and focusing on comparing the salience and valence of fifteen frames. The study found that both local and national print media framed the shooting negatively (valence), while mostly framing their coverage of the shooting around issues of gun control (salience). In another study, Hawdon et al. (2014) provided a content analysis of 854 news stories about the Virginia Tech shooting collected from *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Roanoke Times*. The findings suggested media location and time affected which frame was used. Specifically, the location of the news source impacted which aspects would be accented in the presentation of the story. Importantly, the study found that the focus of the coverage would change in the weeks after the shooting, and how the focus changed depended on the media location. To summarize, media outlets often frame mass shootings utilizing a variety of techniques. Further, evidence suggests that over time, both the framing of a shooting and the amount of coverage of a shooting garners can shift (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Hawdon et al., 2014; Holody, 2020; McQuail, 2010).

Theoretical Framework/Foundations

The current study follows in the logic established by Chyi and McCombs (2004) concerning the study of framing “as a process over time” (p. 26). They offered a pathway for cross-event generalizability for framing research through a schema that took into consideration “space” and “time.” Space here refers to categorizing frames that emerge from event coverage by their socially distant qualities. These frames refer to how the event is presented in the media by focusing on individual victims (individual frame), the community where the event occurred (community level frame), the larger geographic area surrounding the event (regional level frame), society or national significance (societal frame), and international significance (international frame). Time refers to categorizing frames by whether event coverage invokes either the past, present, or future. They then applied this framing schema through a content analysis of 170 *New York Times* articles covering the Columbine shooting. With respects to space, the study found that most of the coverage evoked the societal frame by discussing the shooting through the larger social context and focusing on issues like gun control. Finally, the study found that coverage tended to focus on the present with respect to time.

The Chyi and McCombs (2004) study offered a framing schema that could be used to understand media framing across different school shootings. Importantly, the study also evidenced that framing was a dynamic process, that frames were subject to change throughout the course of an events lifespan. That is, they found that even while the coverage favored the societal frame, the majority of coverage that evoked the societal frame came later in the month following the event. While this was a significant finding, the study was limited to one media outlet (*The New York Times*) and an analysis of media coverage spanning a month. This left room to expand on framing as a dynamic process. In addition, the study’s use of space and time is limited to how they are evoked within coverage. That is, news coverage of a shooting can discuss societal issues surrounding these incidents (space) while also discussing them with reference to the past, present, or future (time). We suggest an additional approach to understanding the significance of space and time towards the dynamic process of framing is to address how physical space, and time influence the dynamic process of framing. That is, if frames can change in the aftermath of a school shooting, how does a media outlet’s location intersect with time since the shooting to influence how it is framed?

Hawdon et al.'s (2014) analysis of media coverage about the Virginia Tech shooting answered these questions by applying the Social Coping Model, which emphasizes the coping and healing of the collective after a traumatic event and how this process plays out in stages across time. Using survey data following the Loma Prieta Earthquake and the start of the Persian Gulf War, Pennebaker and Harber (1993) found that individuals would talk and think about these events the most in the first few weeks following the event, but discussions and thoughts would return to normal by six to twelve weeks. Based on the results, Pennebaker and Harber (1993) suggested that individuals proceed through three phases while coping with the aftermath of an event. The Emergency Phase occurs two to three weeks after an event when most discussion occurs because the event is fresh in the minds of the public. Next, the Inhibition Phase occurs three to six weeks after an event, when members of the society no longer openly discuss the event but continue to think about it. Finally, the Adaptation Phase occurs when members of the society no longer discuss or think about the event.

We argue that, after a high-profile school shooting, the media may simply be framing the various stages of collective coping as outlined by the Social Coping Model. Despite its relevance, the only study to apply the Social Coping Model to print media coverage of a mass school shooting is Hawdon et al. (2014). That study proposed that the local media should be printing more stories about the Virginia Tech shooting due to proximity, but that as a result of competition and relationship building, they would likely avoid discussion of broader issues (i.e., gun control), and focus on the victims and the community in the immediate aftermath of a mass shooting (i.e., the Emergency Phase). They found that most of the sampled articles were published during the Emergency Phase, with publication declining throughout the following phases as predicted by the Social Coping Model. In addition, while overall coverage of the Virginia Tech shooting declined, local papers were found to be more likely to continue publishing articles during the Inhibition and Adaptation Phases than national newspapers. The cross-event generalizability of the Social Coping Model remains unknown given that the study only focused on one shooting. The current study addresses this gap by applying the Social Coping Model to the Parkland school shooting, which allows for the possibility of comparing the dynamic framing of two high-profile shootings.

Based off previous literature (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Hawdon et al. 2014; Muschert & Carr, 2006; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014), the particular saliency of both location and time in influencing the media's framing is a principal interest of the current study. Specifically, the Social Coping Model, as applied by Hawdon et al. (2014), is primarily used to guide this study. In line with this framework, we seek to answer the following research questions and test the associated hypotheses:

RQ1: What is the media location's impact on the amount of coverage of the Parkland shooting across the three stages of the Social Coping Model?

H1: Local papers will print more stories regarding the shooting than national papers.

H2: Local papers will be more likely to report on the shooting during the Adaptation Phase.

RQ2: What is the media location's impact on the framing of the Parkland shooting across the three stages of the Social Coping Model?

H3: During the Emergency Phase, local papers will be more likely to focus on the shooter.

H4: During the Emergency Phase, local papers will be more likely to focus on victims.

H5: During the Emergency and Inhibition Phases, national papers will be more likely to focus on broader issues.

H6: During the Adaptation phase, the number of articles focusing on new information about the shooting will differ by location of the media.

RQ3: What is the media location's impact on framing of the Parkland community across the three stages of the Social Coping Model?

H7: During the Emergency Phase, local papers will be more likely to depict the afflicted community as experiencing collective trauma and grief.

H8: During the Emergency Phase, local papers will be more likely to depict community solidarity.

H9: During the Emergency Phase, local papers will be less likely to focus on conflict in the local community.

Methodology

Data

The current study used a purposive sampling strategy to collect and analyze a sample of 325 articles from six newspapers about the Parkland shooting published between February 15, 2018 and April 20, 2018. The start date of February 15th was selected because it was the day after the shooting, while April 20th marked the end of the three-week period covered by the Adaptation Phase. The six newspapers included three local newspapers (*Tampa Bay Times*, *Sun Sentinel*, and *Orlando Sentinel*) and three national newspapers (*USA Today*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*). Local newspapers were purposefully chosen based on their location in relation to Broward County and readership. *The Tampa Bay Times* (2019) was considered Florida's most circulated newspaper, followed by the *Orlando Sentinel* (Agility PR Solutions, 2019). *The Sun Sentinel* is in Broward County, where Parkland is located. An equal set of national newspapers were selected for overlap with Hawdon et al. (2014) and readership. At the time of the analysis, *USA Today* ranked number one in terms of readership, followed by *The New York Times* (Misachi, 2017). While *The Washington Post* ranked seventh, it was included for its significance in the Virginia Tech shooting (see Hawdon et al., 2014).

National and local outlets were selected to analyze geographic differences in media framing. Articles that met the inclusion criteria of pertaining to the Parkland shooting, presenting the victims of the shooting, discussing the community, or presenting news concerning broader issues (i.e., gun control policies or mental health) were retained for subsequent analysis. LexisNexis and NewsBank were used to search for articles pertaining to the shooting. The search terms included: Parkland, Parkland school shooting, and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The results were narrowed by timeline (February 15, 2018 – April 20, 2018), publication type (newspapers), location (Parkland, Florida), and news company.

A deductive or a priori coding strategy was used. This procedure relied on the determination of field codes of those used by Hawdon et al. (2014). This allowed for appropriate comparison between two separate mass shootings while also providing the chance to ensure reliability and validity of the coding scheme developed by Hawdon et al. (2014). Each article was coded based upon 1) focus (i.e., the overall frame such as articles focusing on the shooter or victims); 2) reporting signs of community solidarity; 3) reporting of division or conflicts occurring after the shooting; and 4) whether the Parkland community was depicted as damaged or collectively grieving. The current study investigates each of these frames by the geographic coverage of media outlets across time. Specifically, it investigates the frames of the sampled articles according to the three phases defined by the Social Coping Model. Phase 1, the Emergency Phase, covered the first three weeks after the shooting (February 15 through March 7, 2018). Phase 2, the Inhibition Phase, covered the three weeks after Phase 1 (March 8 through March 29, 2018). Finally Phase 3, the Adaptation Phase, covered the three weeks after Phase 2 (March 30 through April 20, 2018).

Variables

Table 1 displays the conceptualization and operationalization of our frames. Frames were housed within two overarching categories: focus and community impact. Our coding schema (focus, community impact, and location) draws from Hawdon et al. (2014) to provide cross-event generalizability of the coding schema and comparison of media framings across two separate shootings (i.e., framing of Virginia Tech vs. Parkland). The

Table 1
Variables

| Frame | Operationalization | Example |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Focus</i> | | |
| Shooter | Provided details about the gunman and his personal history. | “Several teachers who knew [the shooter] in middle school said in interviews that he was an increasing behavioral challenge for the school system and appeared to be on a troublesome path... [the shooter] faced a long string of escalating disciplinary measures throughout his academic career for insubordination, profanity, disruption, fighting and assault.” - <i>Washington Post</i> (Craig et al., 2018) |
| Victim | Provided details regarding the victims and their personal lives (e.g. family, friends or academic involvement). | “Let us all take a few moments to thank the coaches who teach, mentor and, yes, protect our kids. Specifically, let us pay tribute to Aaron Feis, an assistant football coach at [Parkland]... According to witnesses, [he] died amid the carnage after he threw himself in the line of fire and literally took a bullet for the kids.” - <i>Orlando Sentinel</i> (Bianchi, 2018) |
| Broader Issues | Centered on issues related to potential causes of the shooting, political actions before and after the shooting, and safety measures that could be taken to prevent future shootings. Further, these issues incorporated articles pertaining to gun control policies, the possibility of arming teachers, other preventative measures and issues related to mental health, in addition to marches that students participated in or organized. Articles that focused on the types of police response to the shooting (resource officers and FBI officers) were also coded under the “broader issues” category. | “The FBI ignored a warning that [the shooter] might attack a school, failing to act on a call just weeks before [the shooter] allegedly carried out a shooting rampage at a high school in South Florida on Valentine's Day, the bureau said Friday. The disclosure came two days after police say [the shooter] gunned down 17 people, most of them teenagers, at a high school in Parkland, Fla. The FBI... described a Jan. 5 tip from “a person close to [the shooter],” a tip officials acknowledge should have initiated a response.” <i>The Washington Post</i> (Berman & Zapotosky, 2018) |
| News | Reported facts about the case, such as the number of victims or the location of the shooting, how it unfolded, and criminal processing updates. | “When a gunman started shooting at [Parkland], two Miramar SWAT team members...went to help. Now they’ve been suspended for it. The officers did not have permission to respond to the shooting...on Feb. 14, when 17 people were killed.” <i>Sun Sentinel</i> (Trischitta, 2018) |
| <i>Community Impact</i> | | |
| Community Solidarity | Centered on support for and among the Parkland community. | “At [Parkland], students assembled by the hundreds onto the football field, and police officers erected barricades along Holmberg Road to better guide the throng of students leaving campus. “We’re with you,” yelled Michelle Pomerantz, 58, of Parkland, who was among hundreds of supporters applauding and cheering as they lined up along Holmberg Road as the students waited in the football field.” - <i>Sun Sentinel</i> (Valys et al., 2018) |
| Divided and Conflicted | Depicted a community at odds. This also refers to articles that portrayed the protests students formed or were supporting regarding calls for action. In addition, this included debates pertaining to legislation being passed in response to the shooting. | “Filled with fury and impatient for change, thousands of Florida high school students and protesters rallied Wednesday at the state Capitol to demand that lawmakers take action in the final weeks of the legislative session to curb the sale of assault-style rifles. ‘Thoughts and prayers won’t stop my brothers and my sisters from dying - action will,’ declared Sheryl Acquaroli, 16, a student... ‘They are our students, our teachers and our coaches. And they died because you failed.’ - <i>The Washington Post</i> (Scherer, 2018) |
| Grieving and Shattered | Portrayal of the community as distressed and/or damaged. | “They felt safe, no doubt, but the students who returned to [Parkland] on Wednesday could not ignore the reminders of the shooting two weeks ago. They noticed seats left empty after a gunman slaughtered 17 students and staff on Valentine's Day. They watched teachers trying to hold back tears. They avoided looking at the freshman building, now closed, where [the shooter] fired over and over with his AR-15 rifle.” <i>Sun Sentinel</i> (Travis et al., 2018) |

mutually exclusive coding of the news articles' dominant frame was based on their focus on a) the shooter, b) victims, c) broader issues, and d) news. For example, an article that discussed the shooter and his background in addition to information about the victims (those who were killed and those who were involved but not injured) were coded as shooter-focused because the article began and ended with details about him (McMahon et al., 2018). The next category concentrated on the impact of the Parkland shooting on the community. Here articles were coded for a) community solidarity, b) divided and conflicted, and c) grieving and shattered. Articles were coded as reporting signs of community solidarity, division or conflict, grief, or not reporting these signs. As such, these categories are not mutually exclusive, and articles could present signs of community solidarity in addition to signs of grief and/or conflict. Finally, newspapers' media location was coded as local or national for most of the analyses in this study. *The Tampa Bay Times*, *The Sun Sentinel* and *The Orlando Sentinel* were considered "local" papers, while *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today* were coded as "national" papers.

To establish inter-coder reliability, two coders coded 65 of the 325 articles (20%) and Cohen's kappa scores were generated. Scores were .713 for community damaged/grieving, .742 for community solidarity, and .732 for community division/conflict. Scores reflected substantial agreement above established threshold (see Gottschalk, 2014). An additional round of discussions was conducted between the two coders to increase agreement before one coder then coded all 325 articles.

Analytical Strategy

We began hypothesis testing (H1) by assessing the number of articles about the Parkland shooting published on the front page of each of the newspapers in the sample by phase of the Social Coping Model. Hypotheses two through nine were tested using a series of Fisher's exact tests of independence to compare the relationship between media coverage and location during each phase of the Social Coping Model. This test was assessed rather than a Pearson's chi-square, as was done in the Hawdon et al. (2014), because of the sample size per category and expected values within categories being smaller than five (Connelly, 2016; Kim, 2017). Pearson's chi-squared tests assumes that the sample is large and is an approximation test, whereas the Fisher's exact tests "runs an exact procedure especially for small-sized samples" (Kim 2017, p. 1520).

Results

Overall Coverage by Media Location and Phase

As a reminder, we examine differences in media framing by location of the media outlet across three phases or time periods following the shooting. The Emergency Phase captures the three weeks after the Parkland shooting (February 15 through March 7, 2018), the Inhibition Phase is three weeks after the Emergency Phase (March 8, through March 29, 2018), and the Adaptation Phase is the three weeks after the Emergency Phase (March 30, through April 20, 2018). Table 2 depicts the number of articles included in the sample about the Parkland shooting published on the front page in each of the newspapers. From February 15, 2018, to April 20, 2018, the *Sun Sentinel* published a total of 153 articles, the *Orlando Sentinel* published 36 articles, and the *Tampa Bay Times* published 60 articles. Nationally, *The New York Times* published 24 articles, *USA Today* published 22 articles, and *The Washington Post* published 30 articles.

First, we hypothesized that local papers would publish more stories about the shooting. Table 2 shows that, combined, the three local newspaper companies accounted for 249 articles (76.62%) of the 325 shooting-related articles that were sampled. This supports the first hypothesis that local papers were more likely to print stories about the shooting than national papers. Moreover, while the local papers published 105 (65.21%) of the articles during the Emergency Phase, they accounted for 99 (86.09%) of the published articles during the Inhibition Phase and 45 (91.84%) of the published articles during the Adaptation Phase. The local media's dominance in coverage is corroborated in Table 3, which explores focus frames by location and by phase.

Table 2
Number of Articles by Newspapers by Phase of Social Coping Model

| Newspaper | Phase of Social Coping Model | | | | | | Total | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| | Emergency Phase | | Inhibition Phase | | Adaptive Phase | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| <i>Orlando Sentinel</i> | 18 | 11.18 | 15 | 13.04 | 3 | 6.12 | 36 | 11.08 |
| <i>Sun Sentinel</i> | 51 | 31.68 | 68 | 59.13 | 34 | 69.39 | 153 | 47.08 |
| <i>Tampa Bay Times</i> | 36 | 22.36 | 16 | 13.91 | 8 | 16.33 | 60 | 18.46 |
| <i>The New York Times</i> | 21 | 13.04 | 3 | 2.61 | 0 | 0.00 | 24 | 7.38 |
| <i>USA Today</i> | 12 | 7.45 | 7 | 6.09 | 3 | 6.12 | 22 | 6.77 |
| <i>The Washington Post</i> | 23 | 14.29 | 6 | 5.22 | 1 | 2.04 | 30 | 9.23 |
| Total | 161 | 100.00 | 115 | 100.00 | 49 | 100.00 | 325 | 100.00 |

Results partially supported hypothesis two, which predicted the media company’s location would impact coverage of the Parkland shooting in the Adaptation Phase ($p = 0.053$). Here the number of articles covering Parkland shows that local media coverage dominated this stage, whereas national media coverage began to dissolve completely as local newspapers published forty-five articles and national newspapers published four articles (92% versus 8%). As expected, local papers covered the shooting heavily and dwarfed coverage provided by national outlets, even as overall coverage declined in the two months after the Parkland shooting.

Table 3
Article Focus by Proximity of Paper by Phase of Social Coping Model

| | Location | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| | Local | National | Total |
| <i>Emergency Phase</i> | | | |
| Shooter | 16 (13.8) | 5 (7.2) | 21 |
| Victim | 18 (19.1) | 11 (9.9) | 29 |
| Broader Issues | 65 (65.2) | 34 (33.8) | 99 |
| News | 7 (7.9) | 5 (4.1) | 12 |
| Total | 106 | 55 | 161 |
| Fisher’s Exact = .690 | | | |
| <i>Inhibition Phase</i> | | | |
| Shooter | 5 (4.3) | 0 (0.7) | 5 |
| Victim | 16 (13.8) | 0 (2.2) | 16 |
| Broader Issues | 64 (65.4) | 12 (10.6) | 76 |
| News | 14 (15.5) | 4 (2.5) | 18 |
| Total | 99 | 16 | 115 |
| Fisher’s Exact = .215 | | | |
| <i>Adaptation Phase</i> | | | |
| Shooter | 2 (1.8) | 0 (0.2) | 2 |
| Victim | 10 (9.2) | 0 (0.8) | 10 |
| Broader Issues | 27 (25.7) | 1 (2.3) | 28 |
| News | 6 (8.3) | 3 (0.7) | 9 |
| Total | 45 | 4 | 49 |
| Fisher’s Exact = .053 | | | |

* p -value <.05, ** p -value <.01, *** p -value <.001.
 Note. Expected values are in parentheses.

Table 4
Focus by Proximity and by Phase of Social Coping Model

| Shooter | | | | Victim | | | |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <i>Emergency</i> | | | | <i>Emergency</i> | | | |
| <i>Phase</i> | <i>Local</i> | <i>National</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>Phase</i> | <i>Local</i> | <i>National</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| No | 90 (92.2) | 50 (47.8) | 140 | No | 88 (86.9) | 44 (45.1) | 132 |
| Yes | 16 (13.8) | 5 (7.2) | 21 | Yes | 18 (19.1) | 11 (9.9) | 29 |
| Total | 106 | 55 | 161 | Total | 106 | 55 | 161 |
| Fisher's Exact = .333 | | | | Fisher's Exact = .669 | | | |
| <i>Inhibition</i> | | | | <i>Inhibition</i> | | | |
| <i>Phase</i> | <i>Local</i> | <i>National</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>Phase</i> | <i>Local</i> | <i>National</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| No | 94 (94.7) | 16 (15.3) | 110 | No | 83 (85.2) | 16 (13.8) | 99 |
| Yes | 5 (4.3) | 0 (0.7) | 5 | Yes | 16 (13.8) | 0 (2.2) | 16 |
| Total | 99 | 16 | 115 | Total | 99 | 16 | 115 |
| Fisher's Exact = 1.000 | | | | Fisher's Exact = .122 | | | |
| <i>Adaptation</i> | | | | <i>Adaptation</i> | | | |
| <i>Phase</i> | <i>Local</i> | <i>National</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>Phase</i> | <i>Local</i> | <i>National</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| No | 43 (43.2) | 4 (3.8) | 47 | No | 35 (35.8) | 4 (3.2) | 39 |
| Yes | 2 (1.8) | 0 (0.2) | 2 | Yes | 10 (9.2) | 0 (0.8) | 10 |
| Total | 45 | 4 | 49 | Total | 45 | 4 | 49 |
| Fisher's Exact = 1.000 | | | | Fisher's Exact = .569 | | | |
| Broader Issues | | | | News | | | |
| <i>Emergency</i> | | | | <i>Emergency</i> | | | |
| <i>Phase</i> | <i>Local</i> | <i>National</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>Phase</i> | <i>Local</i> | <i>National</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| No | 41 (40.8) | 21 (21.2) | 62 | No | 99 (98.1) | 50 (50.9) | 149 |
| Yes | 65 (65.2) | 34 (33.8) | 99 | Yes | 7 (7.9) | 5 (5.1) | 12 |
| Total | 106 | 55 | 161 | Total | 106 | 55 | 161 |
| Fisher's Exact = 1.000 | | | | Fisher's Exact = .546 | | | |
| <i>Inhibition</i> | | | | <i>Inhibition</i> | | | |
| <i>Phase</i> | <i>Local</i> | <i>National</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>Phase</i> | <i>Local</i> | <i>National</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| No | 35 (33.6) | 4 (5.4) | 39 | No | 85 (83.5) | 12 (13.5) | 97 |
| Yes | 64 (65.4) | 12 (10.6) | 76 | Yes | 14 (15.4) | 4 (2.5) | 18 |
| Total | 99 | 16 | 115 | Total | 99 | 16 | 115 |
| Fisher's Exact = .572 | | | | Fisher's Exact = .275 | | | |
| <i>Adaptation</i> | | | | <i>Adaptation</i> | | | |
| <i>Phase</i> | <i>Local</i> | <i>National</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>Phase</i> | <i>Local</i> | <i>National</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| No | 18 (19.3) | 3 (1.7) | 21 | No | 39 (36.7) | 1 (3.3) | 40 |
| Yes | 27 (25.7) | 1 (2.3) | 28 | Yes | 6 (8.3) | 3 (0.7) | 9 |
| Total | 45 | 4 | 49 | Total | 45 | 4 | 49 |
| Fisher's Exact = .301 | | | | Fisher's Exact = .016* | | | |

* *p*-value <.05, ** *p*-value <.01, *** *p*-value <.001.

Note. Expected values are in parentheses.

Focus by Proximity of Paper by Phase of Social Coping Model

Next, we examined the media's location impact on coverage that was either shooter, victim, or broader issues focused across each phase (Table 3). We expected local media to focus more on the shooter and victims during the Emergency Phase compared to national media (Hypothesis 3 and 4 respectively), while national papers would instead focus on broader issues during the Emergency Phase and through the Inhibition Phase (Hypothesis 5). Our results suggest that local media, when compared to national media, did not differ significantly in their focus on the shooter or victims in the Emergency Phase. While the local media published

more shooter and victim focused articles than national media in the immediate aftermath of the shooting these results reflect that the national media did not shy away from covering the shooter or the victims either. Thus, the third and fourth hypothesis are not supported.

During the immediate aftermath of the shooting (i.e., Emergency Phase), most of the media attention was placed on broader issues. That is, both local and national media focused more on broader issues than other focuses (around 61%). That the local media was heavily focused its immediate coverage on issues related to shootings was not expected. In fact, the local media continued to fixate its attention on broader issues during the second phase, the Inhibition Phase, which was also not expected. During the Inhibition phase, local papers published sixty-four articles framed around broader issues while national papers published twelve articles. This partially supports Hypothesis 5, but Table 4 does not show a significant relationship between location and the broader issues focus in either of the phases. Finally, we expected a difference in reporting new details of the shooting by media location during the last phase, the Adaptation Phase (Hypothesis 6). Here we see that the relationship between location of the media location and framing is significant ($p < .05$). Specifically, national media were reporting new details more than expected nearly two months after the shooting, suggesting that the new details warranted national attention. The implications of these results are explored further in the discussion.

Community Impact by Proximity of Paper by Phase of Social Coping Model

Next, we examined the media locations impact on covering the community across each Phase (Table 5). We expected local media to focus more on community grief, solidarity, and conflict during the Emergency Phase when compared to national media (Hypothesis 7, 8, and 9 respectively). Interestingly, despite being one of the deadliest school shootings, we find that, during the Emergency Phase, both local and national media portrayed the Parkland community as grieving the least, with only 8.49% of local and 10.90% of national articles depicting the community in this manner. In fact, during the immediate aftermath of the shooting, the majority of coverage about the community by both local and national media centered around community conflict. Here, 29.25% of articles published locally reported signs of conflict, while 32.73% of articles published nationally reported signs of conflict. These results collectively portray media outlets concerned with capturing conflict over grief, yet also show that both national and local outlets did not significantly vary in their coverage of these attributes. Thus, we find no support for hypothesis seven and nine. Finally, we found no support that coverage of community solidarity by local and national media outlets significantly differed during the Emergency Phase. Here, local papers were slightly more likely to portray signs of solidarity than national newspapers (7.55% and 7.27%, respectively). Surprisingly, we find that during the second phase, the Inhibition Phase, this difference is significant ($p = .004$). During the Inhibition Phase, local papers printed signs of solidarity in 15.15% of articles, while national papers reported signs of solidarity within 50% of their published articles. While this exemplifies the dynamic process of framing, it suggests that there may have been a possible trigger for the change in how the shooting was framed during the Emergency phase as opposed to the Inhibition Phase. Given that this was not expected, the implications for differences found in the Inhibition Phase are explored in the discussion.

Discussion

The current study analyzed temporal variation of print media framing of the Parkland shooting at both the local and national levels to answer questions related to the three stages of Pennebaker and Harber's (1993) Social Coping Model. Specifically, we assessed whether media location influenced how much coverage the Parkland shooting received, as well as how the incident and community response were framed, over time. Hawdon et al. (2014) examined similar questions in their application of the Social Coping Model to the Virginia Tech shooting, but the generalizability of this framework to other shootings was not assessed prior to this study. The Social Coping Model suggests that changes in discussions about traumatic events, like school shootings, occur in three stages: the Emergency Phase (2-3 weeks after an event), the Inhibition Phase (3-6 weeks after

Table 5
Community Impact by Proximity of Paper by Phase of Social Coping Model

| Grieving | | | Solidarity | | | Conflict | | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Emergency Phase | Local | National | Total | Emergency Phase | Local | National | Total | Emergency Phase | Local | National | Total |
| No | 97 (96.1) | 49 (49.9) | 146 | No | 98 (98.1) | 51 (50.9) | 149 | No | 75 (73.7) | 37 (38.3) | 112 |
| Yes | 9 (9.9) | 6 (5.1) | 15 | Yes | 8 (7.9) | 4 (4.1) | 12 | Yes | 31 (32.3) | 18 (16.7) | 49 |
| Total | 106 | 55 | 161 | Total | 106 | 55 | 161 | Total | 106 | 55 | 161 |
| Fisher's Exact = .776 | | | | Fisher's Exact = 1.000 | | | | Fisher's Exact = .719 | | | |
| Inhibition Phase | Local | National | Total | Inhibition Phase | Local | National | Total | Inhibition Phase | Local | National | Total |
| No | 96 (96.4) | 16 (15.6) | 112 | No | 84 (79.2) | 8 (12.8) | 92 | No | 69 (67.1) | 9 (10.9) | 78 |
| Yes | 3 (2.6) | 0 (0.4) | 3 | Yes | 15 (19.8) | 8 (3.2) | 23 | Yes | 30 (31.9) | 7 (5.1) | 37 |
| Total | 99 | 16 | 115 | Total | 99 | 16 | 115 | Total | 99 | 16 | 115 |
| Fisher's Exact = .635 | | | | Fisher's Exact = .004** | | | | Fisher's Exact = .387 | | | |
| Adaptation Phase | Local | National | Total | Adaptation Phase | Local | National | Total | Adaptation Phase | Local | National | Total |
| No | 45 | 4 | 49 | No | 43 (43.2) | 4 (3.8) | 47 | No | 41 (41.3) | 4 (3.7) | 45 |
| Yes | 0 | 0 | 0 | Yes | 2 (1.8) | 0 (0.2) | 2 | Yes | 4 (3.7) | 0 (0.3) | 4 |
| Total | 45 | 4 | 49 | Total | 45 | 4 | 49 | Total | 45 | 4 | 49 |
| Fisher's Exact could not be calculated | | | | Fisher's Exact = 1.000 | | | | Fisher's Exact = 1.000 | | | |

* p-value <.05, ** p-value <.01, *** p-value <.001.
Note. Expected values are in parentheses.

an event), and the Adaptation Phase (6-12 weeks after an event). When applied to a mass shooting, the Social Coping Model suggests that most discussions about the event occur in outlets geographically proximate to events and within the first three weeks before steadily declining. Specifically, the decline in discussion surrounding the event occurs with media outlets further away from an event and later among more media outlets closest to the event. By applying the Social Coping Model to coverage of the Parkland shooting, we were able to assess the generalizability of this model and provide a deeper understanding of dynamic process of framing of school shooting events.

Our findings support previous research that found newspaper companies that were geographically proximate to shootings printed more articles than national newspaper outlets across all phases of the Social Coping Model (Hawdon et al., 2014; Holody, 2020; Holody and Shaughnessy, 2020; McQuail, 2005). Specifically, during the Inhibition (March 8 through March 29, 2018) and Adaptation Phases (March 30 through April 20, 2018), we found local papers continued reporting about the shooting at about the same rate, while national newspapers printed less than half of the articles published within the phase before. This is consistent with media framing studies on mass shootings regardless of the setting (see Holody and Daniel, 2016). Overall, the sustained coverage driven by local media outlets suggests that they maintain considerable buy-in and attachment to school shootings that occur in their area.

Our findings suggest there were only a few ways in which the coverage of the Parkland shooting resembled coverage of shootings from the past. A month after the Parkland shooting, national media outlets published more new details about that shooting than expected when compared to local media. While we have limited research to draw from, Hawdon et al.'s (2014) study on the framing of the Virginia Tech mass shooting displayed the same pattern. That national media continues to cover details of school shooting well after they happen signifies that these outlets continue to acquiesce to public interest in school shootings.

Findings suggest that coverage of broader issues remains central to the media following a mass school shooting regardless of their location or time since the event. Immediately following the Parkland incident, local newspaper articles focused more on broader issues, which is like the coverage after the Virginia Tech (Hawdon et al., 2014) and Sandy Hook (Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014) shootings. In fact, our findings suggest no difference in coverage of broader issues, victims, or the shooter by media location across any phase. This finding corroborates that of Holody and Shaughnessy (2020), who found that local and national media were similar in their framing of the Parkland shooting, using a different sample of local and national media outlets than the current study. We suggest that this may be a trend because of the increased visibility of mass shootings (Elsass et al., 2016) or the media's interest in agenda setting surrounding mass shootings (Jashinsky et al., 2017; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014). However, we suggest that this will need to be further analyzed.

The media framing of the Virginia Tech and Parkland shootings characterized the ways in which communities responded to tragedies, but there were some important differences in how such responses were framed. Regardless of location, the media concentrated on aspects of community solidarity after Parkland but reporting this mattered more during the Inhibition Phase than the Emergency Phase. This was different from the framing of the community response of the Virginia Tech shooting, where solidarity was not reported as much during the Inhibition Phase than the Emergency Phase (Hawdon et al., 2014). The shift of coverage towards community solidarity by local and national outlets exemplifies the dynamic process of framing that Chyi and McCombs (2004) alluded to in their research about the framing of the Columbine shooting. In their study, they found that the framing of societal issues related to the Columbine shooting were most salient immediately after the shooting but dissipated within a month. Our finding suggests that Parkland evidenced a kind of stalled solidarity where immediate attention went elsewhere. This finding may be explained by the media's portrayal of the Parkland students' and community's unity when protests began on March 24 across the nation. The Parkland survivors organized the March for Our Lives protest within weeks following the shooting (Grinberg &

Muaddi, 2018) and were not fearful of using the media to their advantage. Thus, it appears that regardless of venue (i.e., college or high school campus), community solidarity efforts emerge in ways that become significant stories themselves.

Our findings also support the notion that media response to mass school shootings over time may be shifting with respect to the portrayal of community conflict and grief. Both were topics that the local media discussed immediately after the Virginia Tech shooting, but coverage quickly diminished into the Inhibition Phase. After Parkland, local newspaper companies published more content specific to grief and conflict, but only with respect to the latter did coverage continue into the Inhibition Phase. Overall, the way in which the media portrayed the protests during Parkland signifies that capturing community solidarity and conflict was more significant than portraying a grieving community. This could also mean that the community was able to cope after the Parkland shooting more quickly than communities where other mass shootings occurred. It could also mean affected communities may be quicker to act on mass shootings compared to previous events. Indeed, our results suggest coverage of the Parkland shooting was more likely to discuss conflict than the coverage of Virginia Tech shooting, regardless of media location. This speaks to the form of conflict that sprung forth following Parkland—gun control efforts. This is corroborated by Holody and Shaugnessy (2020), who suggested that the framing of Parkland may have disrupted common framing of mass shootings given the saliency of activism within their study of Parkland coverage.

Conclusion

Continued research into the media framing of school shootings remains critical given the power of the media to influence policy (Robinson, 2005; Sacco, 1995; Shanahan et al., 2008). Luca et al. (2020) found that a single mass shooting leads to a 15% increase in the number of firearm bills introduced within a state in the year after a mass shooting and is correlated with increased television news coverage. Thus, it is likely the media coverage of the Parkland shooting hastened the policy creation time and contributed to the numerous bills passed after the shooting. We found evidence that the print media response to the Parkland emphasized the security of schools and school safety. In the aftermath of the shooting, former Florida governor Rick Scott signed the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, which addressed gun access, education policy, and school safety (Wilson, 2018). This also made Florida the sixth state to pass a red-flag law (Gaudiano, 2018). Similar gun control policies were developed and implemented throughout the nation (Astor & Russell, 2018; Vasilogambros, 2018; Wilson, 2018). Thus, the media's framing of Parkland may have contributed to legislative pressures to act.

There are several limitations to the current study. The Social Coping model outlines a specific timeline; however, future studies should consider extending this. This is especially important in cases where the perpetrator was alive after the shooting event—as was the case for Parkland. Studying a longer period would allow researchers to examine the ways in which the media reminds local communities of a critical event. For events where the shooter survives, we would expect that court proceedings would continue to be locally covered and these proceedings should be analyzed in relation to how they expand on initial framing of the event and how framing of the proceedings may be unique. We suggest this could extend on shooter-focused media studies and the cultural logic of circulation articulated by Sumiala and Tikka (2011).

In addition, this study only analyzed print media coverage. Future research should also investigate media coverage of shootings across multiple forms of media (i.e., social media, digital, other print sources), especially as readership of print newspapers declines. This would allow researchers to compare media coverage of the same event covered on different platforms (i.e., social media). Additionally, future research should further explore how individuals engage with frames. We suggest this could be done through a survey extending on the work by Levin and Wiest (2018), which found those fearful of mass shootings are more likely to engage

with coverage of these events. This could also be accomplished by extending on the work by Aslett et al. (2020), which found individuals can engage frames, such as gun control, on social media.

Nonetheless, our findings lend cross event-validity to the use of the Social Coping Model as a framing schema. The application of this framing schema demonstrates that framing changes across time by location. Importantly, the use of this framing schema allowed for a comparison to a prior high-profile shooting, Virginia Tech, since it was also analyzed via the Social Coping Model (see Hawdon et al., 2014). While this study provides support for Pennebaker and Harber's (1993) Social Coping Model when evaluating media coverage of school shootings, we encourage continued use of this framing schema to assess the continued generalizability of this model.

NOTES

1. Hereafter referred to as the Parkland shooting.
2. Hereafter referred to as the Social Coping Model.
3. The study also included the mass shooting at the Aurora movie theater (Murray, 2017).

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflicts of interest were reported by the authors.

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