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Jensen M. Mills

jmm0009@mix.wvu.edu

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Appalachian Broadcast News Coverage of the Coronavirus: A Content Analysis of Media Framing in the Midst of a Health Crisis

Jensen M. Mills

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Master's in Journalism

Geah Pressgrove, Ph.D., Chair

Gina Dahlia, M.S.

Julia Fraustino, Ph.D.

Daniel Totzkay, Ph.D.

Department of Journalism

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ABSTRACT

Appalachian Broadcast News Coverage of the Coronavirus: A Content Analysis of Media Framing in the Midst of a Health Crisis

Jensen Mills

Media framing of broadcast news is more than identifying an issue, but rather interpreting and explaining the issue for others to better understand. Previous framing scholarship in broadcast news, as well as COVID-19 specifically, has focused mostly on national or international news, so this research explores broadcast coverage from a local perspective in a rural location. During the health crisis of COVID-19, the specific use of media frames can impact how people made sense of the pandemic. Through a content analysis of 165 newscast scripts from five different local news stations in Appalachia, this study contributes to the understanding of media framing from a new perspective. Scripts were coded for five general media frames (*conflict*, *human interest, economic consequences, morality*, and *attribution to responsibility)*, on top of four newly emerging media frames (*ethnicization*, *politicization, fear/scaremongering* and *hope)* in reporters' packages. The presence of frames, a dominant frame, and the story focus were all assessed to explore similarities and differences in broadcast news coverage over the course of one year during COVID-19. Results yielded significant use of the human interest and attribution of responsibility frames, as well as an increased use of politicalization. Use of frames varied from station to station, suggesting that ownership and station location could impact journalists' frame choice during a health crisis. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The first positive case of the novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the United States was reported on January 20, 2020 in Washington and quickly spread across the nation (Meier, 2021). Over 580 thousand Americans have died from the Coronavirus while three million have died globally, with that number rising daily (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2021). In the first year of the pandemic, the Gross Domestic Product of the United States fell to almost a 33 percent annualized rate, which was the deepest decline since 1947 (World Economic Forum, 2020) with the unemployment rate reaching the highest rate since 1948 at nearly 15 percent (Congressional Research Service, 2021). In every sector of society, the pandemic impacted quality of life, the economy and people's daily lives, creating a constant need for accurate and timely information. With the pandemic continuing to have a negative impact on the United States for over a year and a half, and misinformation being a "very big problem" to fifty percent of Americans, (Mitchell et al., 2019) understanding how Americans received news regarding COVID-19 is of significant value to scholars and practitioners alike.

While early scholarship has begun to explore international news coverage of the pandemic (Ogbodo et al., 2020), little research has concentrated on how more rural populations, like those living in Appalachia, received their news. According to the Pew Research Center, in the beginning of the pandemic urban communities were hit hardest in numbers of positive cases and deaths, however, impacted communities quickly shifted to more rural areas (Jones & Kiley, 2020). One in five Americans live in rural America (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017) with 42 percent of Appalachia's population being rural (Appalachian Rural Health Institute, 2021). These rural communities often include populations that are at higher risk for COVID-19 related deaths versus urban communities (Kirzinger, Muñana, Brodie, 2021).

During a health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, news plays an important role in making sure the public gets accurate and reliable information. In particular, research has shown that Americans watch local TV news as a primary source of information, (Pew Research Center, 2019) and during the pandemic, 46 percent of American adults reported that local broadcast news outlets are a major source for COVID-19 news (Shearer, 2020). Highlighting the relevance of local news in rural communities, according to the Pew Research Center (2012), rural communities have the highest level of local news interest at 73 percent compared to large cities, suburbs and small cities. Further, broadcast news has proven to affect the thinking and decision-making of adults regarding health concerns (Wang & Gantz, 2007), and people living in these areas often face unique health, access to care and economic challenges.

Appalachia is made up of 13 states and 423 counties in the eastern part of the United States, including Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia (ARC, 2021). The region is divided up into five subregions, Northern, North Central, Central, South Central, and Southern with over 25 million people living in the region. Most of the region has lost population in the last decade, but the five states that have increased in population were all in the south (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2019). Out of the entire Appalachian region, 19 percent of the counties for the fiscal year of 2022 are defined as economically distressed, and almost 22 percent of the counties are at risk of becoming economically distressed (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2021). It is important to note that while Appalachia makes up 13 percent of the United States, from an economic standpoint, compared to the rest of rural America, Appalachia falls behind on issues like household income and population growth and is

significantly higher in poverty and disability rates (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2020), which created unique hardships for the region during the pandemic.

To illustrate the challenges faced by rural Americans, and particularly those living in Appalachia, these areas are more likely to have an older population, as well as lower ICU beds in hospitals (Davoodi, Healy, Goldberg, 2020). In fact, since 2010, 138 rural hospitals have closed, with a record high of 19 shutting down in 2020 (North Carolina University, 2021), with even more rural hospitals closing since the start of the pandemic (Sisk, 2021). Despite this lack of access to care compared to the rest of the nation, Appalachian residents are at an increased risk of dying from seven out of the top ten leading causes of death (heart disease, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), injury, stroke, diabetes, and suicide), as well as leading the nation in behavioral health issues like suicide rates (Marshall et al., 2017). Appalachia also falls behind the rest of the United States in high-level medical practitioners per 100,000 residents (Marshall et al., 2017) with rural counties having 20 percent fewer primary care providers (Marshall et al., 2017). This confluence of circumstances leads to increased travel times for residents to access critical care. In addition to the lengthy travel time, the ability to travel to medical professionals is a pressing issue for Appalachians. According to one report, 8.5 percent of rural communities in Appalachia did not have access to a vehicle during the pandemic (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2021). In light of these facts, access to reliable news and updates regarding the pandemic were of high-importance to residents of Appalachia.

To add to our understanding of broadcast news coverage during the pandemic, this study employs framing theory to explore the focus of content consumed by Appalachian audiences. As a visual forum, television broadcast news uses images, videos and interviews to tell narrative stories. These stories carry embedded implications based on the focus and content that, as

framing theory suggests, has an impact on how the audience views or understands it (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). For example, depending on the type of framing used (e.g., human interest, fear, conflict) the audience can take away different ideas, responses and perceptions of a particular subject (Entman, 1993; Haenschen & Tedesco, 2020), and in some instances can have negative effects like inciting more fear or anxiety (Harris 2020; Johnston & Davey, 2011). It is important to note, research has also shown that the way a particular story is framed has an impact on the audience's perception of health issues (Diederich, Wyszynski, & Ritov, 2018). During the COVID-19 pandemic, information about the virus was always evolving, which created more information being reported on by broadcast television news stations. During the Influenza pandemic, different phases of the pandemic altered the coverage (Reynolds & Quinn, 2009). Thus, exploring local Appalachian broadcast news stations' use of varying frames throughout the COVID-19 pandemic informs understanding of how coverage evolved, as well as which frames dominated the news in the region.

While recent research has focused on COVID-19 framing in news on a global scale (e.g., Ogbodo et al., 2020), this study fills gaps in our knowledge related specifically to COVID-19 news framing in Appalachia. Specifically, this study employs a content analysis of 165 scripts from five Appalachian broadcast news stations to explore nine types of media frames from three different points in time starting with when COVID-19 first entered the region. The author analyzes what types of media frames were most prevalent in COVID-19 related stories, as well as explores if certain frames changed over the course of a year during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study expands scholarship of framing theory by exploring not only the five most commonly studied media frames (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), (conflict, human-interest, economic consequences, morality and responsibility), but also uses four newly emerging media frames

(ethnicization, politicalization, fear/scaremongering and hope). Ethnicization and politicalization

were chosen specifically to analyze because of the significant events that occurred during 2020,

including the presidential election and over 10,000 protests for the Black Lives Matter movement

(ACLED, 2020). Fear/scaremongering and hope were chosen because of the prominent issues

that COVID-19 caused, including anxiety and stress. By addressing these four media frames, on

top of the five generic media frames, this study expands framing research and offers insights for

professional broadcasters covering health issues.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

An analysis done by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that those who live in rural communities are less likely to view COVID-19 as a serious threat, and less likely to wear masks in public, as compared to those who live in suburban areas (Kirzinger, Sparks, & Brodie, 2021). Forty-four percent of rural residents also think the news has "generally exaggerated" the seriousness of COVID-19 (Kirzinger et al., 2021). Further, differences in coverage that tend to focus more on urban news lead some rural populations to feel ignored (Cramer, 2016) which can impact public health behavior (Kim et al., 2020). Thus, exploring rural news coverage of COVID-19 is critical to understanding how local broadcast stations relate news on important topics critical for public understanding, welfare and safety. By using the framing theory, coverage of the pandemic can be divided into categories of media frames, which can be used to better understand how local broadcast news stations presented COVID-19 to viewers.

The Framing Theory

Framing theory was introduced in 1974 by Erving Goffman and has been studied considerably over the last couple of decades in areas such as psychology (Kwong et al., 2021), sociology (Jary & Smith, 1976), economics (Hoffman & Ventrresca, 1999), communications (Haenschen & Tedesco, 2020), and most recently, relating to the COVID-19 pandemic (Ogbodo et al., 2020). Framing, in scholarly terms, is selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making those events promote a particular definition for others to better understand (Entman 1993). Studies done on framing in communications, specifically news, have defined framing as a tool that journalists use to shape how audience's interpret issues (Gollust et al., 2019). Frames in the news setting have been studied in broadcast (Harmon & Muenchen, 2009) radio, (Lagerwerf

et al., 2015) and print (D'Angelo et al., 2005) when covering issues like gun violence

(Haenschen & Tedesco, 2020) and events like presidential primaries (Miller, Andsager &

Riechert, 1998).

Framing of events and news in media impacts how audiences come to understand events

(Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1995) which can heuristically affect the audience's opinions and

perceptions of those certain events (Druckman, 2001). For example, research indicates that

framing of issues like politics (Kim, 2017) and health (Bigman, 2014) can result in motivation

and attitude towards an issue being framed to change (Fridkin et al., 2017).

Media Framing

Framing scholarship has primarily employed two approaches: media framing and

individual framing. Individual framing refers to the psychological and sociological background

of framing and how people mentally process and store information (Scheufele, 1999). Rather

than focusing on audience perceptions of coverage, instead this study focuses on media framing

in broadcast news to gain a better understanding of how journalists frame information for their

audience. Since journalists select which news to report on, they are also responsible for piecing

together information to make sense for their viewers (Ryan, 1991). Media frames are seen as an

"essential feature of news" and are necessary to bring understanding to complex or even

mundane news events (Tuchman, 1978, p.193). Stated another way, media frames organize the

world for both journalists who use it and their audience (Gitlin, 1980). While framing

scholarship includes numerous types of frames, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), found the five

most commonly used generic media frames in news are *conflict*, *human interest, economic*

consequences, morality and *responsibility*. Building on this work, more recent scholarship

recognizes *ethnicization* and *politicization* as important news frames (Ogbodo, 2018*).* Important

to this study, research exploring COVID-19 coverage includes *fear/scaremongering* and *hope*

frames (Ogbodo et al, 2020). These nine frames in total will be used in this study to determine

not only the dominant frames in COVID-19 coverage within Appalachia, but also to determine if

there is a change over time in the framing of COVID-19 related news.

Conflict Frame

The conflict frame in media framing, highlights disagreements (Putnam & Shoemaker,

2007) or "emphasizes conflicts between individuals, groups, or institutions" (Semetko &

Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). The conflict frame has been studied in many instances ranging from

gay marriage (Hollingshead, 2012) to political coverage (Bartholomé et al., 2017). The frame

"stresses the problematic side of an issue" (Kozman, 2015, p.116). While it is found

predominantly in political news, like presidential election campaigns (Patterson, 1993) the

conflict frame is often personalized by relating issues in terms of "people like me" versus a

generalized, "powerful others" (Neuman, Just, Crigler, 1992, p. 66). When used in news stories,

this frame conjured "more and opposing points of view" in peoples' thoughts (De Vreese, 2004,

p. 46). Demonstrating the relevance of this frame in a public health setting, one study found that

out of the West Nile virus, mad cow disease and avian flu, the conflict frame was used the most

with mad cow disease, which was also the most political health epidemic of the three (Shih,

Wijaya, & Brossard, 2008).

Human-Interest Frame

The human-interest frame brings a "human face and emotional angle" to a story, issue or

problem (Cho & Gower, 2006, p. 420). It is used to focus on a group or individual and how they

are affected by an issue (Kozman, 2015). Neuman et al. (1992) found it to be the second most

commonly used generic frame of the five after conflict framing. The frame is used to keep the

audience's interest by personalizing the story with relatable information and emotions (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Studies have found that the human-interest frame is viewed more positively by audiences, and people reported that health information with a human-interest frame was more understandable (Hong, 2010). Health journalists believe by employing a human exemplar to complex health stories, it makes the information seem more credible and accurate (Len-Rios et al., 2009). The human-interest frame can also lead to a higher-perceived risk and stronger negative emotions on certain news stories (Oteino, Spada, & Renkl, 2013).

Economic Consequences

The economic frame is used when reporting on events, issues or problems that will have an economic consequence or impact to an individual, group, region, country or institution (Semetko & Valkenburgh, 2000). Due to the pandemic, the total cost for the United States is estimated to be over $16 trillion (Cutler & Summers, 2020) making this media frame important to study. The economic impact an event has is considered high in news value (Graber, 1993). This frame uses more abstract and technical jargon, reflecting, "the preoccupation with "the bottom line" and profit and loss, and wider values of the culture of capitalism" (Neuman et al., 1992, p.63). In a cross-national comparative study on the economic consequences frame during the introduction of the Euro, the consequences frame was found to be used more often than the conflict frame (De Vreese, Peter & Semetko, 2001). Exposure to the economic consequences frame has proven to increase the understanding of specific economic topics, like the Serbian European Union candidacy and policy support (Lecheler & DeVreese, 2019).

Morality Frame

The morality frame presents topics, issues or problems with a religious or moral angle (Neuman et al., 1992). While journalists ethically try to remain objective, they often use quotes

or other sources indirectly implying the morality frame in their reporting (Neuman et al., 1992).

This frame revolves around "right and wrong" or "good and evil" of an issue (Torwel, 2015).

The morality frame has been shared on social media more than the other generic media frames,

as morality frames used in news are, "easier to understand" (p.818) and can, "communicate a

specific identity to others" (Valenzuela, Piña, & Ramírez, p. 820, 2017). Based on the issues

being reported, studies have proven that the morality frame is used more with priests or church

officials and non-profit organizations (Haley, 2010). For COVID-19, restrictions on group

gatherings and other prevention measures have come between people and their religion, causing

the morality frame to focus on the religious problems the pandemic created (Ogbodo et al.,

2020).

Attribution of Responsibility Frame

The responsibility frame reports on an issue or problem by attributing a responsibility for

its cause and/or solution to either the government or to an individual or group (Semetko &

Valkenburgh, 2000). The frame either blames or gives credit to a source by holding the source

responsible for causing or solving a problem (Semetko & Valkenburgh, 2006). Studies have

shown that the media use the responsibility frame to either blame individuals or organizations in

preventable crisis situations (An & Gower, 2009). The responsibility frame has also been studied

in news surrounding political issues, finding that stories relating to one specific instance leads

viewers to blame the individuals or groups in the news, rather than historical or social factors

(Iyengar, 1996). The effects of this frame can have significant impacts on who the audience

perceives to blame in a situation. In terms of COVID-19, the responsibility frame could be used

numerous ways, including blaming a specific place or group of people for the spread of the virus.

Ogbodo et al. found in their study that the responsibility frame occurred when Wuhan China was

blamed for the start of the pandemic, as well as with regard to politicians for not restricting group gatherings earlier (2020).

Ethnicization Frame

The ethnicization frame uses ethnic terms at the foreground of stories (Ogbodo et al., 2020). Ethnic is defined as, "of or relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic or cultural origin or background" (Merriam-Webster, 2021). This frame can include stories that "stimulate or deepen racial divides" (Ogbodo et. al., 2020). This frame has not been studied as in depth or as much as the previous five generic terms. It has been used in two studies on media framing (eg. Ogbodo et al., 2020, Ogbodo, 2018). For this study, the ethnicization frame is important to include due to the origin of COVID-19 from China and surrounding comments from high-ranking United States political leaders. For example, former president Donald Trump and Secretary of State Michael Pompeo referred to it as the "Chinese Virus" and "Wuhan Virus" which made news headlines (CNBC, 2020).

Politicization Frame

While there are studies done on politicization in the news, politicalization as a specific media frame is an evolving frame. For example, Schneider and Hannem (2019) explored how sexual misconduct was politicized in the 2016 United States Presidential Election with allegations against Donald Trump; and Urso (2018) studied how the issue of immigration in Italy was framed politically. Ogbodo (2021) defines the politicization frame as a frame which translates attacks by others from a political perspective by taking the major subject matter and focusing on political thoughts and opinions. During the first year of the pandemic, America was also in the midst of a presidential election, thus highlighting the relevance of this frame's inclusion in the current work. Ogbodo et al. (2020) indicate that the politicization frame was

used in America as political parties, "jostle to make political gains out of the crisis ahead of the November Presidential election" (p. 264). A political action frame used in a study on COVID-19 news coverage in Mexico found that coverage using the frame varied depending on the newspaper's political leanings. At the time, the government in office for Mexico was left-leaning, so articles that fell in line with the office's party tended to have frames that did not criticize the government, or used the attribution of responsibility frame that did not blame the government (Rodelo, 2021). Therefore, affecting how people formed opinions regarding the handling of COVID-19.

Fear/Scaremongering

In a study of frames in the global media coverage of COVID-19, the authors found fear/scaremongering and hope frames to be newly emerging (Ogbodo et al., 2018). Research has proven that certain frames can lead to an increase in anxiety or fear, (Harris, 2020) and one study that analyzed coverage of H1N1 found the use of repeating adjectives like, "deadly virus" and "big threat" not only heightened fear and anxiety in the public, but also reinforced negative impressions on how the healthcare system was handling the outbreak (Krishnatray & Gadekar, 2014). However, researchers have yet to make fear/scaremongering and hope a focus of inquiry until 2020. According to an article by the BBC, some people saw an increase in panic attacks and stress when reading or watching COVID-19 news (Harris, 2020), which may be a result of the focus on negative news. In fact, nearly 87 percent of U.S. news articles about COVID-19 were found to have a negative tone versus international news articles where only 51 percent were negative (Sacerdote, Sehgal, & Cook, 2021). To further explore this in Appalachia, the newly emerged fear/scaremongering frame will be included in this study. Stories that include fear/scaremongering are framed in a way to exaggerate fear or panic and research found that this

frame was the second most dominant frame used in COVID-19 coverage in newspaper articles across the globe (Ogbodo, 2020). To illustrate how this frame might manifest in coverage, a CNN article including the fear/scaremongering frame was titled, "Chinese President Xi Jinping has warned against the risk of a second wave of infections in the country as the global pandemic continues to spread" (CNN, 2020).

Hope Frame

The hope frame can be defined as the opposite of the fear/scaremongering frame. It gives stories a sense of hope and reassurance to the public while trying to calm their audience in the midst of COVID-19 (Ogbodo et al., 2020). Ogbodo et al. (2020) found that article titles that used the hope frame focused on encouraging the public. For example, the *Daily Mail* used the hope frame by saying, "Spain's Rate of New Coronavirus Infections Falls to its Lowest Yet for A Second Day in A Row in Latest Sign the Country is Emerging from the Worst of the Pandemic" (Daily Mail, 2020). While this frame is studied less commonly than the five generic frames discussed above, news coverage focusing on positive and reassuring stories on COVID-19 is important to compare to fear/scaremongering frames. "Hope-based emotional news frames, with their focus on the potential for positive future outcomes, encourage audiences to desire other positive outcomes" and motivates them to adhere to protective actions (Nabi & Preston, p.1123, 2016). With this knowledge, the use of the hope frame during COVID-19 could affect how likely people are to follow the guidelines put in place, like social distancing or mask wearing.

Chapter 3: COVID-19 Studies and Framing

In lieu of COVID-19 being an ongoing pandemic, studies on framing and COVID-19 in the news are limited. However, most recent COVID-19 news framing studies focus on news from a national level at different points in time throughout the disease outbreak. Studies use various frames with findings from different countries such as Serbia (Kleut, Jelena & Šinkovic, 2020), Mexico (Rodelo, 2021) and China (Gabore, 2020). Thus far, a majority of studies analyze newspaper coverage of framing within the media, allowing this study to fill in the gaps of knowledge relating to broadcast news framing of COVID-19 (Hubner, 2021).

Common findings from recent framing studies indicate the use of the attribution of responsibility frame focusing on the government for COVID-19 related issues (Sookyung & Wang, 2021), as well as the human interest frame to show those affected, like friends, relatives and neighbors (Kleut, Jelena & Šinkovic, 2020). For example, a content analysis comparing newspaper and television coverage of COVID-19 found both outlets used attribution of responsibility and human interest more than the other five frames measured (Rodelo, 2021). Another study also found that in the first three months of COVID-19 media coverage, the economic consequences frame was used often by focusing on, "individual consequences, such as business closures, rather than the health effects of COVID-19" (Hubner, p. 1, 2021). While each of these studies use various types of frames, most studies that used the generic media frames, like attribution of responsibility or human interests frames, had results that yielded those frames as used most often in news coverage of COVID-19. As noted above and to add to the literature on media framing, this study is also taking into account four newly emerging frames that are relevant to the pandemic and could help better understand coverage.

Chapter 4: Research Questions

As noted above, human interest and fear framing both were the leading types of news frames in global coverage of the Coronavirus (Ogbodo et al., 2020); however, those results compare major global print outlets, which can include different news framing due to differences in cultures and languages. To fill in the gaps of knowledge on the framing theory surrounding COVID-19, this study will concentrate on news from a local scale, as well as from a broadcast perspective. A study done by the Pew Research Center (2012) found that rural communities tend to rely on traditional media, like broadcast news, as their main source of news. Therefore, it is important to see how local, rural broadcast stations framed COVID-19 news to understand how journalists are shaping public opinion during the pandemic. To this end, the following research question is posed:

> *RQ1:* Which type of news framing was most prevalent with broadcast news coverage of
>
> COVID-19 in Appalachia?

Expanding on more than just the most commonly used frame in broadcast news coverage, this study also compares the media frames used over the time period of one year. It has been demonstrated that communication strategies differ depending on the pandemic phase, (Reynolds & Quinn, 2009). Ogbodo et al., (2020) found that during a time of crisis, information that calls for immediate action is crucial for the public to make informed decisions for their safety. During a pandemic with a newly discovered disease like COVID-19, it is important for the public to receive accurate and straight-forward information. To better understand this phenomenon, this study explores the following research question:

> *RQ2*: Is there a change in COVID-19 news framing over time from the first case present,
>
> six months later and one year later?

Chapter 5: Methods

Content analysis is defined as a research method which allows researchers to quantitatively analyze communication messages (Zhou & Sloan, 2015). Through content analysis researchers are able to make inferences by identifying specific characteristics of messages (Holsti, 1969). Using this process allows for a "summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that follows the standards of the scientific method" (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 17). By following this well-established methodological approach, researchers are then able to make, "replicable and valid inferences from texts (and other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18).

For the purpose of this study, a content analysis is used to examine COVID-19 related packages from Appalachian local broadcast news stations' from the five subregions in Appalachia to identify the types of media frames used throughout pandemic coverage. A package is defined as, "a self-contained story on video that includes reporter voice tracks (VT's or narration) and interviews (SOT's or sound on tape), and preferably natural sound (NATS), generally runs one minute, 30 seconds" (Houston Community College, 2016). The presence of nine media frames were measured, as well as the presence of one dominant frame and the focus of the story. Although some research has looked into framing of pandemic coverage internationally (Elena, 2016), framing in print media (Spradlin, 2020) and how coverage has changed over the pandemic (Ogbodo et al., 2020), there is little to no research regarding COVID-19 news from local broadcast stations in rural areas, specifically Appalachia, over the course of the pandemic.

Selection of Sample

      To accomplish the aims of this study and answer its research questions, a purposive judgment sample was used. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), divides Appalachia into five different subregions: Northern, North Central, Central, South Central and Southern (ARC, 2009). The sample frame included a list of 19 news stations whose viewership were made up of either a majority or all located in these five Appalachian subregions (See Appendix A). The stations were chosen from the 2021 Neilson's Designated Market Area (DMA) Rankings by thoroughly researching each of the 210 DMA locations from the list and the counties that each DMA covered. From there, the sample criteria included stations that are geographically located in Appalachia which cover states or counties within each subregion and stations which packages uploaded to YouTube that mention the Coronavirus or pandemic over three time periods (described below). The sample criteria also included stations with ownership from at least one of the four main network affiliate companies, ABC, NBC, FOX and CBS. This was purposefully considered, as Americans tend to watch network affiliate news stations that fall in line with their political beliefs (Jurkowitz et al., 2020), thus including all stations enhances the external validity of study findings. It is important to note that one of the news stations is a duopoly, owned by both FOX and ABC. To represent the entirety of Appalachia, the five subregions were taken into consideration by choosing one station from each of the subregions. Because of the odd number of subregions, one main network company (NBC) was used twice. Due to the limited quantity of packages from other stations, two stations from one state (Tennessee) were used, but were chosen from opposite sides of the state to still best represent the entirety of Appalachia. YouTube was the only location for collecting transcripts, as little to no packages were found on the

stations' website or archive. Stations were also reached out directly through phone calls and emails, but were either unresponsive or refused to give copies of transcripts.

The unit of analysis for this study was the transcript from packages made by reporters that were uploaded to each station's YouTube account. By only measuring packages, the sample can be used to better understand how employees working in the field chose to frame COVID-19 news. To ensure the sample is consistent, only packages created by news reporters were used, rather than voice overs or digital videos. Packages are the only type of uploaded news videos that we know reporters wrote because their voices are recorded over the video package and edited together. In other words, "packages are a collection of elements from an ongoing news story" (McAdams, p. 10, 2012). Packages run about ninety seconds and are equivalent to about six paragraphs (Rowe, 2005). Other uploaded videos that did not fit the definition of a package that news reporters created were excluded, including digital videos made entirely of graphics or news stories where anchors read over pre-recorded videos. Transcripts that were available from YouTube were read and chosen only if the package mentioned anything regarding COVID-19, including social distancing and the pandemic. Packages that were reused in more than one newscast were only included once. When transcripts from videos were not available, each video was watched to ensure the mention of COVID-19 and then transcribed for inclusion in the study. As a final step to cleaning, the transcripts were read over while listening to the audio to ensure the transcription text matched the video.

Time Frame

In this study, the author chose and transcribed packages at three different time periods expanding over seven days from when the first positive case of COVID-19 was reported in Appalachia for comparison at different times though the pandemic. According to ARC, the first

case in Appalachia was in "early March" (ARC, 2020). Thus, the sample for this inquiry includes

packages uploaded to YouTube on March 1 through 7, 2020. Packages between September 1

through September 7, 2020, exactly six months later, were also included and transcribed. The

third time frame was chosen exactly one year after the first case of COVID-19 in Appalachia, on

March 1 through 7, 2021. By analyzing the presence of media frames over the course of one

year, more comparable data will be available to draw inferences related to possible changes in

dominant frames and story focus. The following figure provides an overview of how many

packages from each station, region and time frame are included in the study.

Table 1

Transcript Totals for Stations with Subregions

Station:	March 1-7, 2020	Sept. 1-7, 2020	March 1-7, 2021	Total	Affiliate	Subregion
WOWK, WV	1	14	5	**20**	CBS	North Central
WBIR, TN	5	22	12	**39**	NBC	Central
WTVC, TN	5	13	0	**18**	ABC	South Central
WJET24, PA	3	14	26	**43**	FOX	Northern
WVTM, AL	3	19	23	**45**	NBC	Southern
Totals	**17**	**82**	**66**	**165**		

Coding Procedure

      To assure the reliability and validity of the study findings, the author followed a systematic process described in detail in the code book. Before reading the transcript, the coder first added the date coded, as well as the station's name, channel and city of location in an Excel spreadsheet. Next, the coder listed the company affiliated with the station, including FOX as 1, NBC as 2, CBS as 3 or ABC as 4. Finally, the coder indicated the date the package was uploaded, found from the provided YouTube link. Then, the coder carefully read each transcript one at a time and mark the presence or absence of each frame, the story foci and the dominant frame, which are operationalized below.

Types of Frames

      As explicated above, media framing refers to the way that journalists define a situation or issue for their audience (Reese et al., 2010). By examining the way that media frames have been defined and used in the news, it allows one to see where framing is taking place and how often (Reese et al., 2010). Broadcast news coverage of COVID-19 is important to U.S. adults, with 23 percent of Americans saying they were paying more attention to COVID-19 news at a local level (Pew Research Center, 2020). Building on previous research, this study includes nine media frames, including the five generic media frames (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) and four more recently studied frames that are important to the aims of this study.

Conflict, "emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups or institutions" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). For this study, the conflict frame will encompass any package that revolves around issues or conflicts between groups of people regarding COVID-19. For example, COVID-19 can be in conflict with nurses or doctors who are fighting the disease on the front lines.

Human-interest gives an emotional or personal angle to an event, issue or problem (Cho & Gower, 2006, p. 420). For this study, the human-interest frame is used when COVID-19 stories include a personal angle that humanizes an issue or problem for the public to better relate to the story. For example, interviewing people who are upset to have family members in the hospital with the chance of dying from COVID-19.

Economic consequences focuses on economic outcomes and consequences on individuals, organizations or countries (Semetko & Valkenburgh, 2000). The frame is used in this study when referring to the implications of COVID-19 related to the economy or how businesses are financially adapting.

Morality/religion pairs a religious or moral point of view with an event, issue or problem (Neuman et al., 1992). For this study, the morality/religion frame is used when religion or moral decisions are paired with COVID-19 issues or problems. For example, when pastors are interviewed regarding people missing church due to social gathering restrictions is an example of the morality/religion frame.

Attribution of responsibility focuses on the party responsible for an issue or event's cause or solution to either the government, individual or group (Semetko & Valkenburgh, 2000). For this study, the frame includes placing blame or responsibility to someone or something based on COVID-19 or a COVID-19 related event. For example, packages that focus on countries blaming Wuhan, China for the pandemic are using the responsibility frame.

Ethnicization brings attention to ethnic terms when interpreting stories or events (Ogbodo et al., 2020). During COVID-19, research proved that some population subgroups, particularly minority populations, were at higher risk of hospitalization from COVID-19 (CDC, 2020). Any

packages highlighting racial or ethnicity terms, or that address the impact on minority population subgroups, were coded as using the ethnicization frame.

Politicization takes a political angle and perspective on stories, events or issues (Ogbodo, 2021). During COVID-19, the United States Presidential Election was taking place, which could influence the amount of times this frame was used to cover COVID-19 stories. In this study, any COVID-19 issues that were portrayed as political issues or with a political relevance are using the politicalization frame.

Fear/scaremongering includes stories that are exaggerated to cause fear or panic among the public (Ogbodo et al., 2020). In this study, the fear/scaremongering frame is used when stories focus on overemphasizing COVID-19 and the effects it can have on the public, rather than using a calm and direct tone in packages.

Hope emphasizes stories that give hope to the public in the midst of the pandemic (Ogbodo et al., 2020). For this study, the hope frame is used to code stories that include positive and uplifting terminology and story foci.

See Appendix 2.

Story focus

While each broadcast news package will be related to COVID-19, the story focus of the package is important to note. The story focus differs from the frame of the package because it is the actual event, problem or issue that the package is centered around; it is what is being framed. Coders will choose from seven different story foci, as well as the option of "other" for a story focus not listed. The seven story foci were chosen after looking on the CDC's homepage (CDC, 2021) for COVID-19 information. After scrolling through the homepage from top to bottom,

there were seven prominent themes: *regulations and mandates, vaccines, infected/death rates, economy or money, schools/universities, hospital/health organizations, and the virus itself.*

Dominant Frame

The dominant frame was determined by selecting one of the nine media frames that best represent the story package as a whole. The dominant frame is the, "most frequently mentioned theme or central organizing idea" (McKeever, 2012, p. 223). Coders were asked to indicate one dominant frame out of the nine media frames that best suits the story. To determine the dominant frame is accurate, the coders were also asked to include one or two sentences that lead them to decide on that particular frame.

Intercoder Reliability

Inter-coder reliability is a "widely used term for the extent to which independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message or artifact and reach the same conclusion" (Lombard et al., 2002). Thus for the purpose of this study, two graduate students were trained from the codebook to code the packages in this content analysis. To establish inter-coder reliability, both students coded 36 transcripts, or over twenty percent of the sample, independently for the presence of the nine media frames and one dominant frame (Lombard et al., 2002). To identify the articles to be coded, stratified random sampling was used to select an equal number of transcripts from the three different time periods and stations. Intercoder reliability was determined using Krippendorff's Alpha (2004). Disagreements were resolved by making clarifications to the codebook and then recoding. Results yielded an average of .870 for Krippendorf's Alpha, with values ranging from .723 to 1.0.

Data Analysis

Data for the study was analyzed using SPSS to answer each of the research questions. Because of the use of nominal data and a desire for descriptive statistics to address RQ1, the mode was used to find the most prominent news frame with coverage of COVID-19. For answering RQ2, a Chi-square test was utilized to compare the relationship of frames used between stations in different regions of Appalachia and across the three time periods. Chi-square is a bivariate analysis based on a cross tabulation, "in which the occurrences of attributes on one variable are tabulated across, or are said to be contingent on, the attributes of a second variable" (Zhou & Sloan, 2015, p. 214). For this test, a significance level of .05 was used to determine if our findings occurred by chance or if we can reject the null hypothesis with confidence (Cashen & Geiger, 2004).

Chapter 6: Results

Transcripts from five news stations from four different states in Appalachia made up the sample ($N = 165$). Out of the total sample, WOWK (West Virginia) accounted for 12% ($n = 20$), WBIR (Tennessee) made up 24% ($n = 39$), WTVC (Tennessee) made up 11% ($n = 18$), JET24 (Pennsylvania) accounted for 26% ($n = 43$) and WVTM's (Alabama) transcripts made up 27% ($n = 45$) of the sample. Story foci were also coded in each transcript. Out of eight story foci, the five news stations centered their packages around schools/universities the most, accounting for 32.9% ($n = 54$) of the story foci used. Infected/death numbers were the least used story focus at 4.2% ($n = 7$). Other story foci included regulations/mandates at 12.2% ($n = 20$), vaccines at 9.8% ($n = 16$), the economy/money for 12.8% ($n = 21$), hospital/health organizations at 4.9% ($n = 8$), the virus itself at 13.4% ($n = 22$) and other (e.g. animal shelter numbers during the pandemic, announcements of events, moving during the pandemic, etc.) at 9.8% ($n = 16$).

RQ1: Which type of news framing was most prevalent with broadcast news coverage of COVID-19 in Appalachia?

The first research question concerned the prevalence of the nine media frames within COVID-19 broadcast transcripts. For this, a frequency analysis was run for the presence of each frame across all three time periods ($N = 165$) by station, as well as the frequency of the dominant frame by station. (See Table 4.) Human interest was the most commonly occurring frame, appearing in 52.7% ($n = 87$) of the entire sample. Conflict appeared in 37% ($n = 61$) of the total transcripts, most notably in 50% ($n = 10$) of WOWK's transcripts and 72% ($n = 13$) of WTVC's transcripts. Attribution of responsibility was found the second most out of the total transcripts, at 40% ($n = 66$). This frame was present in WVTM's transcripts 48.9% ($n = 22$) of the time. Hope appeared the most in WVTM's transcripts, being present in 48.9% ($n = 22$). To add deeper

nuance to our understanding, a crosstab with chi-square significance test was run to compare frames by station. Findings indicate a significant difference in the presence of three frames across the different stations: conflict (x^2 = 14.11, p = .007), attribution of responsibility (x^2 = 10.12, p = .039) and hope (x^2 = 10.92, p = .027).

Table 2

Percentage of the presence of each frame from total transcripts from each station

Frames	WOWK WV, CBS	WBIR TN, NBC	WTVC TN, ABC	WJET24 PA, FOX	WVTM AL, NBC	Total
Conflict*	50% (*n*=10)	28.2% (*n*=11)	72.2% (*n*=13)	27.9% (*n*=12)	33.3% (*n*=15)	37% (*n*=61)
Human Interest	45% (*n*=9)	64.1% (*n*=25)	61.1% (*n*=11)	55.8% (*n*=24)	40% (*n*=18)	52.7% (*n*=87)
Economic Consequences	20% (*n*=4)	20.5% (*n*=8)	11.1% (*n*=2)	25.6% (*n*=11)	13.3% (*n*=6)	18.8% (*n*=31)
Morality/Religion	15% (*n*=3)	23.1% (*n*=9)	38.9% (*n*=7)	9.3% (*n*=4)	13.3% (*n*=6)	17.6% (*n*=29)
Attribution of Responsibility**	35% (*n*=7)	30.8% (*n*=12)	66.7% (*n*=12)	30.2% (*n*=13)	48.9% (*n*=22)	40% (*n*=66)
Ethnicization	0% (*n*=0)	7.7% (*n*=3)	5.6% (*n*=1)	4.7% (*n*=2)	4.4% (*n*=2)	4.8% (*n*=8)
Politicalization	35% (*n*=7)	12.8% (*n*=5)	22.2% (*n*=4)	30.2% (*n*=13)	17.8% (*n*=8)	22.4% (*n*=37)
Fear/Scaremongering	15% (*n*=3)	12.8% (*n*=5)	5.6% (*n*=1)	9.3% (*n*=4)	26.7% (*n*=12)	15.2% (*n*=25)
Hope***	30% (*n*=6)	23.1% (*n*=9)	16.7% (*n*=3)	23.3% (*n*=10)	48.9% (*n*=22)	30.3% (*n*=50)

$*x^2 = 14.11, p = .007, **x^2 = 10.12, p=.039, ***x^2 = 10.92, p = .027$

To further answer which frame was most prevalent in Appalachian local broadcast transcripts, a frequency analysis on the dominant frame was also run and a crosstab with chi-square was run to explore differences by station. Once again, human interest was the most commonly occurring dominant frame, appearing in 35.2% ($n = 58$) of transcripts. The least used dominant frame was morality/religion, only being the dominant frame in 2.4% ($n = 4$) of the total. Findings also indicate a significant difference between the dominant frames ($x^2 = 60.65, p = .002$). Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of frames that were considered the dominant frame from each transcript. To narrow down which specific dominant frame has a significant result between the stations, the adjusted standardized residuals was used. The adjusted standardized residuals inform us, "which cells are associated with statistically significant differences" (Meyers, Gamst & Guarino, 2013, p. 670). Standardized residuals over 1.96 or less than -1.96 are considered significant. For the dominant frame by station, WBIR had two frames significant: conflict ($B = -2.26$) and human interest ($B = 2.80$). Three stations only had one frame with a significant standardized residual: WTVC included conflict ($B = 4.85$), JET included attribution of responsibility ($B = -2.23$) and WVTM included attribution of responsibility ($B = 2.04$).

Table 3

Frequency of dominant frame in all transcripts from each station

Frames*	WOWK WV, CBS	WBIR TN, NBC	WTVC TN, ABC	JET PA, FOX	WVTM AL, NBC	Total
Conflict	20% (n=4)	2.6% (n=1)	50% (n=9)	9.3% (n=4)	8.9% (n=4)	13.3% (n=22)
Human Interest	35% (n=7)	53.8% (n=21)	16.7% (n=3)	37.2% (n=16)	24.4% (n=11)	35.2% (n=58)
Economic Consequences	10% (n=2)	5.1% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	14% (n=6)	4.4% (n=2)	7.3% (n=12)
Morality/Religion	0% (n=0)	2.6% (n=1)	5.6% (n=1)	4.7% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	2.4% (n=4)
Attribution of Responsibility	15% (n=3)	15.4% (n=6)	16.7% (n=3)	4.7% (n=2)	24.4% (n=11)	15.2% (n=25)
Ethnicization	0% (n=0)	5.1% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	4.7% (n=2)	4.4% (n=2)	3.6% (n=6)
Politicalization	15% (n=3)	7.7% (n=3)	5.6% (n=1)	20.9% (n=9)	11.1% (n=5)	12.7% (n=21)
Fear/Scaremongering	5% (n=1)	2.6% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	6.7% (n=3)	3% (n=5)
Hope	0% (n=0)	5.1% (n=2)	5.6% (n=1)	4.7% (n=2)	15.6% (n=7)	7.3% (n=12)

* $x^2 = 60.65$, $p = .002$

RQ2: Is there a change in COVID-19 news framing over time from the first case present, six months later and one year later?

The second research question compares the use of the nine frames to the three time periods: March 1-7, 2020, September 1-7, 2020, March 1-7, 2021 (RQ2). To answer this question, the same frequency analysis and chi-square test were used. (See Table 6) Findings

indicate a significant difference by time frame for five frames: conflict ($x^2 = 9.79$, $p = .007$) attribution of responsibility ($x^2 = 14.12$, $p < .05$), human interest ($x^2 = 13.81$, $p = .001$) ethnicization ($x^2 = 8.52$, $p = .014$) and politicalization ($x^2 = 6.46$, $p = .040$). Across each time period, conflict appeared the most from Sept. 1-7, 2020, appearing in 48.8% ($n = 40$). In March 1-7, 2020 conflict was present 23.5% ($n = 4$) and in March 1-7, 2021, conflict appeared in 25.8% ($n=17$) of the transcripts. Over the time period, attribution of responsibility became less common. Specifically, from March 1-7, 2020 attribution of responsibility appeared in 76% ($n = 13$) of transcripts, in time period two it appeared in 43% ($n = 35$) of the transcripts and in only 27% ($n = 18$) of the transcripts one year later, from March 1-7, 2021. The most prevalent frame, human interest, was present in 12 percent ($n = 2$) of the sample during the first time period, then increased to 54 percent ($n = 44$) of the sample in September 1-7, 2020 and increased again in presence to 62 percent ($n = 41$) of the time in March 1-7, 2021. The least present frame was ethnicization, only present 4.8% ($n = 8$) of the entire sample ($N = 165$). From March 1-7, 2020 it was present 11.8 percent ($n = 2$) of the time and was not present in any of the transcripts in Sept. 1-7, 2020. In the last time frame, ethnicization increased in presence to 9.1% ($n = 6$). Lastly, politicalization was used in 22.4% ($n = 37$) of the sample. It increased in presence across the three time periods also. While it did not appear in any transcripts during March 1-7, 2020, politicalization was present in 18 transcripts in September 1-7, 2020, or 22% of the 88 transcripts. Politicalization was also present in 29 percent ($n = 19$) of the transcripts one year later during March 1-7, 2021.

Table 4

Percent of frames present in each time frame

Frame	March 1 -7 2020	Sept. 1 – 7 2020	March 1 – 7 2021
Conflict*	23.5% ($n = 4$)	48.8% ($n = 40$)	25.8% ($n = 17$)
Human Interest**	11.8% ($n = 2$)	53.7% ($n = 44$)	62.1% ($n = 41$)
Economic Consequences	5.9% ($n = 1$)	22% ($n = 18$)	18.2% ($n = 12$)
Morality/Religion	29.4% ($n = 5$)	2024.4% ($n = 20$)	6.1% ($n = 4$)
Attribution of Responsibility***	76.5% ($n = 13$)	42.7% ($n = 35$)	27.3% ($n = 18$)
Ethnicization****	11.8% ($n = 2$)	0% ($n = 0$)	9.1% ($n = 6$)
Politicalization*****	0% ($n = 0$)	22% ($n = 18$)	28.8% ($n = 19$)
Fear/Scaremongering	17.6% ($n = 3$)	15.9% ($n = 13$)	13.6% ($n = 9$)
Hope	23.5% ($n = 4$)	29.3% ($n = 24$)	33.3% ($n = 22$)

* $x^2 = 9.79$, $p = .007$, **$x^2 = 13.81$, $p = .001$, ***$x^2 = 14.12$, $p = .001$, ****$x^2 = 8.52$, $p = .014$, *****$x^2 = 6.46$, $p = .040$

A second chi-square test was used to compare the dominant frame and time period to

analyze if there was a change in the dominant frame used starting on March 1 -7 to six months

later to one year later. (See Table 7.) Findings indicate a significant difference in the use of

dominant frames from each time period (x^2= 60.03, p = <.001). During the first time period,

March 1 -7, 2020, the most occurring dominant frame was attribution of responsibility, at 47.1%

(n = 8). The least occurring dominant frame was both politicalization and economic

consequences, as neither were found as the dominant frame. For the second time frame six

months later, September 1-7, 2020, the most used dominant frame was human interest, used 31

percent (n = 26) of the time. The least used dominant frame was ethnicization, appearing in none

of the transcripts as the dominant frame. In the last time frame, March 1-7, 2021, human interest

was the most used dominant frame again, accounting for 47 percent (n = 31) of the transcripts.

The least used dominant frame during March 1-7, 2021 was both fear/scaremongering and

morality/religion, as neither were found as the dominant frame. Out of all three time periods, the

human interest was found the most as the dominant frame, appearing as the dominant frame

35.2% (n = 58) of the time. Morality/religion was found the least, only occurring as the dominant

frame 2.4% (n = 4) of the time.

Table 5

Percentage of dominant frame in each time period

Frame*	March 1 -7 2020	Sept. 1 – 7 2020	March 1 – 7 2021	Totals
Conflict	11.8% ($n = 2$)	22% ($n = 18$)	3% ($n = 2$)	13.3% ($n = 22$)
Human Interest	5.9% ($n = 1$)	31.7% ($n = 26$)	47% ($n = 31$)	35.2% ($n = 58$)
Economic Consequences	0% ($n = 0$)	12.2% ($n = 10$)	3% ($n = 2$)	7.3% ($n = 12$)
Morality/Religion	11.8% ($n = 2$)	2.4% ($n = 2$)	0% ($n = 0$)	2.4% ($n = 4$)
Attribution of Responsibility	47.1% ($n = 8$)	11% ($n = 9$)	12.1% ($n = 8$)	15.2% ($n = 25$)
Ethnicization	5.9% ($n = 1$)	0% ($n = 0$)	7.6% ($n = 5$)	3.6% ($n = 6$)
Politicalization	0% ($n = 0$)	8.5% ($n = 7$)	21.2% ($n = 14$)	12.7% ($n = 21$)
Fear/Scaremongering	5.9% ($n = 1$)	4.9% ($n = 4$)	0% ($n = 0$)	3% ($n = 5$)
Hope	11.8% ($n = 2$)	7.3% ($n = 6$)	6.1% ($n = 4$)	7.3% ($n = 12$)

*$x^2 = 60.03$, $p = <.001$

To answer RQ2, the results show that human interest, politicalization and hope all increased in presence throughout the three time periods. Morality/religion, attribution of responsibility and fear/scaremongering decreased in presence over the course of the year. For the dominant frame, both human interest and politicalization increased in use over the three time

frames and conflict, morality/religion and fear/scaremongering decreased in use over the course of the year. The adjusted standardized residuals for March 1-7, 2020 include: human interest ($B = -2.67$), morality/religion ($B = 2.64$), and attribution of responsibility ($B = 3.87$). The adjusted standardized residuals for September 1-7, 2020 include: conflict ($B = 3.24$), economic consequences ($B = 2.42$), and ethnicization ($B = -2.48$). The adjusted standardized residuals for March 1-7, 2021 include: conflict ($B = -3.18$), human interest ($B = 2.60$), ethnicization ($B = 2.21$) and politicalization ($B = 2.67$).

Chapter 7: Discussion & Implications

The current study was conducted to find changes or patterns in the use of nine media frames that Appalachian local broadcast television stations used in stories relating to COVID-19. The presence of frames, dominant frame and time frame were analyzed to fill in gaps of recent scholarship in numerous ways. First, the author employs framing theory to explore broadcast media in rural newscast coverage in Appalachia, an under researched area despite this population's reliance on broadcast coverage. A majority of research on COVID-19 thus far has centered on global or national news coverage, while the current study explores the use of media frames in Appalachia specifically.

Further, this study expands framing research by examining the use of four newly recognized media frames, politicization, ethnicization, fear/scaremongering and hope (Ogbodo, 2021). By studying these four frames in broadcast news specifically, they provide deeper practical implications for journalists during health crises, as well as a foundation to advance theory. Chosen for specific events that also happened during COVID-19, the four newly emerging media frames were all found to be used by journalists from each of the five stations. Findings relating to their utility in the current study, points to the opportunity to expand understanding by including these four frames in future scholarship. For example, by extending beyond the classically used generic media frames, this more contemporary extension of framing theories would allow scholars to explore intersections of important aspects of news coverage such as valence (e.g., hope, fear), topics impacting diverse populations and political news subjects. For example, in the current study, the four newly emerging media frames not only give insight into how journalists portrayed their stories to viewers throughout COVID-19, but also

draw attention to other events that occurred during COVID-19, like the Presidential Election and Black Lives Matter protests (ACLED, 2020). Further, by demonstrating the utility of the four new frames opens the opportunity for scholars to uncover other possible frames that journalists use for specific issues or topics.

While only being analyzed in a few research studies, previous research on COVID-19 framing found that the fear/scaremongering frame was significantly used as a dominant frame in national and international newspaper coverage (Ogbodo et al., 2021), inconsistent with this study's findings. Examples of fear/scaremongering from the sample include: "Just one week ago, panic and fear were spreading across East Alabama over the possibility of patients with the Coronavirus" and "There are a lot of events planned across East Tennessee because of the long weekend, but health leaders warned our actions could have serious consequences." While there was fear/scaremongering present in Appalachian local broadcast stations, there was not a significant relationship found between the presence or use of fear and the time periods, as previous research discovered. This is a positive example for the news industry to take away from local broadcast news coverage, suggesting that local broadcast journalists can be reliable storytellers by not encouraging fear in the midst of a health crisis, as news regarding COVID-19 can cause an increase in anxiety (Cottage Health, 2020).

Additionally, politicalization and ethnicization both yielded significant results for the presence of each frame. Politicalization increased in presence across the time three periods, while ethnicization was only present in the first and last time period. Examples of politicalization include: "The Trump Administration announced federally a temporary halt on evictions" and "Since last summer, the Governor has extended the mask mandate six times." Politicalization may have increased in presence due to the Presidential Election which occurred in November,

2020, two months after the second time period. One study which also researched the politicalization frame during COVID-19 found that ahead of the election, politics were more prominent, "in the U.S. as Democrats and Republicans jostle[d] to make political gains out of the crisis" (Ogbodo et al., 2021, p. 264). It is possible that the increase in presence of politicalization was used by journalists to engage their viewers' attention, using COVID-19 and political framing as a way to increase viewership.

The use of ethnicization in this study refers to the impact COVID-19 had on minority groups. Examples of ethnicization include: "It is common for black folks to have questions and concerns before getting any medical procedure" and "Today, the pastor wants to inform people in hopes that getting the vaccine will promote or encourage good health and wellness in the black community." By only being present at the beginning of news coverage of COVID-19 (March, 2020) and exactly one year later when vaccines were being distributed to communities, it could indicate that news focused on the effects of the pandemic to minorities only when there was a major breakthrough during the health crisis. Research found that minorities, like Hispanic and Black people, were twice as likely to die from COVID-19 than White people (Hill & Artiga, 2022). Taking into consideration this, as well as the results of this study, prove that broadcast news journalists should be held more accountable when it comes to reporting stories and news with the specific focus of reaching minority subgroups.

The human interest frame and attribution of responsibility frame were both found present the most, consistent with previous studies' results (e.g., Sookyung & Wang, 2021; Kleut, Jelena & Šinkovic, 2020). This could suggest that journalists in local news try to relate to their viewers through people in the community like themselves. Research has shown that the human interest frame may persuade more, "favorable interpretations of medical advances" by using emotional

angles, therefore, encouraging positive perceptions towards the issue at hand (Hong, 2013, p. 458). Examples of the human interest frame include: "Because the risk of me getting COVID and that killing me outweighed the risk of the Bladder cancer killing me" and "We're trying to do this to protect everyone and protect the spectators, our teams. All we want to do is be able to play football." The use of the human interest frame increased in presence and dominant frame across all three time periods. This is supportive of previous research, as new knowledge and medical advancements (i.e. vaccines) emerged regarding COVID-19 over the course of the three time frames, the increased use of the human interest frame suggests journalists chose to prioritize relatability in an effort to accurately explain COVID-19.

By prioritizing relatability, this could explain the significant use of the attribution of responsibility frame by indicating journalists inciting blame towards the government or Center for Disease Control regarding policies put in place over the course of the year. Since COVID-19 was a new disease, knowledge and information was constantly changing while learning how to slow the spread of it in a short amount of time. With the constant update of information came mandates, work from home orders and social distancing guidelines, all of which journalists tried to accurately report on. In order to do so, the use of the attribution of responsibility frame allowed journalists to credit their sources, and incite blame on organizations, governments or individuals that set the mandates in place for their viewers to better understand COVID-19, as well as local and national regulations. Examples of the attribution of responsibility frame from the sample include: "Both the Chinese Government and U.S. Government have restricted travel to and from China" and "Even though face masks have been flying off the shelves in Chattanooga and across the nation, government officials agree they won't be your top line of defense against the government."

It is interesting to note the significant differences in the use of frames from each station. Out of the five stations, WTVC in Tennessee, an ABC affiliate, used both conflict and attribution of responsibility the most in their framing of coverage of the pandemic.. Over 72 percent of the transcripts had conflict present and half of the station's transcripts had conflict as the dominant frame. Examples of the conflict frame include: "While state agencies say that child abuse reports are going down, child help calls to their hotlines are going up across the U.S." and "Since the pandemic began, more students have had to be fed and many districts are being forced to ramp up their meal delivery efforts this fall." Looking geographically at the station and its counterpart in Tennessee, WBIR, an NBC affiliate, both stations' use of frames were strikingly different, suggesting that use of frames does not correspond with geographic location. For example, WBIR used the economic consequences frame in 20 percent of its transcripts, while WTVC only used it in 11 percent of its transcripts. Further research is needed to explore station proximity to determine if there might be a relationship between presence of these frames and the station's location.

Furthermore, WVTM in Alabama, an NBC affiliate, used the hope frame the most with almost 49 percent of the stations' transcripts having hope present, while WOWK in West Virginia, a CBS affiliate, used hope the second-most with 30 percent of its transcripts having hope present. Comparatively, both Alabama and West Virginia are within the top three economically distressed states of Appalachia (ARC, 2022). This could suggest journalists in both locations felt the need to report more stories with a positive angle to alleviate their audiences' stress and fear during COVID-19. Examples of the hope frame within the sample include: "But until it can be tested in humans, which will take some time, they are making major steps at the hospital" and "The COVID-19 hospitalization freefall continues."

Lastly, WJET, also known as WFXP, the duopoly that is owned by FOX and ABC in Pennsylvania, used politicalization the most in both presence and dominant frame. Previous research has found the ownership of a media outlet determines how that outlet covers political campaigns (Dunaway & Lawrence, 2015). Research has also shown that when looking for news about government and politics, Americans prefer either CNN or Fox News (Pew Research, 2014). These facts, in lieu of the only FOX affiliate station relying heavily on the politicalization frame, could suggest that station ownership and affiliation have an impact on the use of frames in journalists' stories.

Overall, these results can be applied to better understand how broadcast news can handle future health crises with the use of media frames. Beginning with the use of the fear/scaremongering frame, it is important to be aware that excessive use of this frame can lead to heightened anxiety (Cottage Health, 2020). While this study did not yield significant results with the fear/scaremongering frame specifically, it is useful for journalists to be aware of the impact their packages can have on viewers. This also goes hand-in-hand with the use of the ethnicization frame. Although the ethnicization frame can, "stimulate or deepen racial divides" (Ogbodo et. al., 2020), journalists' should be made cognizant of the frame's positive use within broadcast news by focusing on minority groups who are more likely to get sick or die from COVID-19. The significant use of the human interest frame can also be applied to journalists' knowledge of curating packages for their viewers to better understand specific health crises. By prioritizing telling stories from points of views from members within the community, journalists can better relate to their audiences' understanding of COVID-19.

While results yielded more significant findings in the presence of each frame, the use of the dominant frame is also critical to analyze. The increase and decrease of each frame present

differed slightly from the dominant frame. For example, hope increased in presence, but declined in the dominant frame. For future health crises, keeping in mind the use of each frame is important. While morality/religion and ethnicization were used the least, these frames can be used to benefit the journalists for sharing information with the public in ways for them to better understand. Frames are important for others to make sense of an event, issue, etc. but not when weighing on one frame entirely (Haley, 2010). This is critical for journalists to be mindful of, as the way they frame a story can impact the way others understand the issue, event or policy at hand.

Chapter 8: Limitations & Future Research

While this study provides numerous insights for theory and practice, as with all scholarly inquiry there are limitations. Limitations of this study include a select number of transcripts used from stations in only one geographic location in the United States. Future studies should expand on the sample size, contrasting larger urban and rural cities, or both print and broadcast media, to draw more inferences regarding framing during the COVID-19 pandemic. A larger sample could also prove to be an interesting approach to learning how local broadcast stations framed COVID-19 versus national broadcast outlets. Further quantitative research could also include more scripts beyond the three points in time to include a continuous census of pandemic coverage.

A content analysis also limits the study to only quantitative results, as a qualitative study (i.e., interviews with producers) could be used to answer "why" the types of framing occurred. Limitations also included the difficulty of finding and retrieving the transcripts, as stations were either unresponsive or refused to give access to copies of transcripts directly. Stations also did not have an archive listed online of previously aired newscasts, but only packages uploaded to stations' Youtube accounts, which was still limiting, as it is conceivable that not every station had every package uploaded to YouTube. Another limitation includes only coding for the frames through the transcript of packages. While broadcast news is a visual forum, this study centered only on the diction and word choices chosen by journalists within their packages. A possible future study could incorporate using the video from each package, including surveys or experiments to explore the impact of these frames.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This study attempted to understand the use of media frames within Appalachian broadcast news coverage of COVID-19 over the course of one year. By expanding on the framing theory through the use of four newly emerging frames, as well as the use of the frames in broadcast news, the author was able to fill in the gaps of knowledge pertaining to the framing theory. The results suggest that journalists frame stories with the attribution of responsibility and human interest the most in an effort to better explain and relate health crises to their audiences. The increase and decrease of certain frames across the three time periods suggest national or global events, like the Presidential Election, also have an impact on the journalists' choice of frames. The author provides a framework for future scholarly work, while concurrently providing a deeper understanding of how journalists framed coverage of COVID-19, a health crisis.

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Appendix 1: Appalachian News Stations According to Nielsen DMA

City	2020	2021	Change	No. Homes 20	No. Homes 21
Pittsburgh	24	26	-2	1,079,900	1,166,130
Greenvll-Spart-Ashevll-And	38	35	3	787,930	940,000
Birmingham (Ann and Tusc)	44	45	-1	666,170	730,440
Wilkes Barre-Scranton-Hztn	60	58	2	497,830	571,470
Knoxville	61	62	-1	491,810	535,230
Charleston-Huntington	74	75	-1	367,290	426,980
Chattanooga	92	88	4	305,340	373,120
Johnstown-altoona-St.Colge	106	107	-1	248,880	282,430
Huntsville-Decatur(Flor)	78	79	-1	351,610	409,200
Youngstown, OH	115	119	-4	220,670	249,300
Columbus-Tupelo-West Point	133	133	0	161,740	184,570
Erie	152	151	1	125,340	148,830

Binghamton	161	162	-1	106,510	127,800
Wheeling-Steubenville	157	163	-6	114,140	127,010
Bluefield-Beckley-Oak Hill	166	164	2	98,530	123,020
Clarksburg-Weston	173	170	3	84,680	103,610
Elmira (Corning)	178	178	0	72,530	92,150
Parkersburg	193	194	-1	51,240	60,750
Zanesville	204	203	1	27,650	33,580

Appendix 2: Codebook

A. Coder ID: Coders should be identified by the following numbers:
1. Jensen
2. Kristen

B. **Date Coded**: Should include month, date and year (e.g. 092211)

C. News Station Name: What is the name of the station? Write the number with the corresponding name with the right channel.
1= WOWK
2=WBIR
3=WTVC
4=JET24
5=WVTM

D. News Station Location: What state is the station located in? Write the number with the corresponding state.
1= West Virginia
2= Tennessee
3= Pennsylvania
4= Alabama

E. **Affiliate Television Station:** What company is it affiliated with? Write the number with the corresponding company.
1=FOX
2=NBC
3=CBS
4=ABC

F. **Transcript Date:** When was the package uploaded? Should include month, date and year. (e.g. 092211)

Instructions

Please follow the following steps closely. Be sure to double-check each answer, as well as making sure you're entering answers into the right column on the Excel spreadsheet. Be sure to measure and code for each variable by itself.

1. Be sure to code the time frames in oldest to most recent order. So, start with coding the transcripts from March of 2020, then September of 2020 and ending with March of 2021.
2. Code only the things listed below for each package.
3. Code only Coronavirus related stories. For all other packages not relating to Coronavirus coverage, enter the number 99 in all cells.
4. Read entire definitions a few times before marking.
5. Indicate your responses on the Excel spreadsheet.
6. If you're unsure of or have a question regarding the story focus or media frame, indicate your best response then highlight the cell in yellow on the spreadsheet.

Mark the corresponding story focus and media frame by using the numbers listed below for the package.

Packages to code – Coders should analyze only the packages created by reporters or journalists that are COVID-19 related. In other words, everything NOT written by the producer should be coded. This includes introducing the reporter from the anchors. Do not include the tease or filler from the producer or news anchors. Only the words and stories from reporters.

G: Story Focus: This is what the story is about regarding the pandemic. After reading the entire transcript and before coding for the presence of the media frames, from each of the topics below, indicate which number the package clearly focuses on.

1: **Regulations and Mandates** – Stories referring to state, government or CDC policies put into place to stop the spread of COVID-19 (e.g. Traveling or Social distancing)
2: **Vaccines** – Stories referring to anything that has to do with COVID-19 vaccinations (e.g. Vaccine rollout)
3: **Infected/Death Numbers** – Stories that focus on the amount of people who have been diagnosed, infected, tested or died from COVID-19. (e.g. Lives lost)
4: **Economy or Money** – Stories relating to the economic consequences or side effects because of COVID-19. (e.g. Jobs lost)
5: **Schools/Universities** – Stories focusing on education, including all levels of the education system, surrounding COVID-19. Also refers to high school and college sports teams and how stadiums/athletes/fans are adjusting during COVID-19. (e.g. Virtual Learning)
6: **Hospital/Health Organizations** – Stories that focus on health institution news, as well as health medicine. Includes how hospitals are reacting to COVID-19, as well as nonprofits and volunteers. (e.g. WHO updates)

7: **Virus Itself** –Stories that revolve around the COVID-19 virus, including what it encompasses and how to prevent or slow the spread of it. Refers to how others are taking precautions during the pandemic that aren't government mandated. (e.g. signs and symptoms)

8: **Other** (please describe what the content is)

H: Other Description: If you selected 8, or "other" for the story focus, please describe what the focus is in two sentences or less. If you didn't select 8, please leave blank.

Media Frame Type: For each of the nine frames (listed below), please indicate whether or not they are present in the packages. (1=YES/0=NO)

Table 1:

Frame Categories	Literature Definition	Operational Definition	Example
Conflict	Emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups or institutions (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2006, p. 95).	Revolves around any issue or conflict between groups of people regarding COVID-19. Can reflect two sides to the conflict.	"School officials say children learn better face-to-face, but that's also when they're most vulnerable to the virus." "This comes after Visit Erie initially asking for a million dollar grant to help with tourism advertising… But was voted no by council."
Human Interest	Gives an emotional or personal angle to an event, issue or problem (Cho & Gower, 2006).	Humanizes an issue relating to COVID-19 for the public to better relate to the story. Often used with feature stories.	"Knoxville hospitals restrict visitors now to one per room, even if their stay has nothing to do with COVID. So family members wait as close as they can." "We all know moms are superheroes and

			moms-to-be have two people to worry about."
Economic Consequence	Focuses on the economic outcomes and consequences for individuals, organizations or countries (Semetko & Valkenburgh, 2006).	Focuses on the implication of COVID-19 related to the economy or how businesses are financially adapting.	"A lot of people are stressed because of not getting any extra help in August. On Friday, the Senate just received money to help with some of that relief."
Morality/Religion	Pairs a religious or moral point of view with an event, issue or problem (Neuman et al., 351992).	Used when COVID-19 related issues are brought up through a religious or moral lens. Includes what can be seen as "right" and "wrong" and what can constitute as someone "doing their part."	"Bishop Lawrence Persico telling me he decided to suspend several practices as a precaution… adding Catholics should know that missing mass is not a sin." "I spoke to Stanley Robinson with the city of Birmingham and he says they are really counting on fans to do their part."
Attribution of Responsibility	Gives responsibility for an issue or event's cause or solution to either the government, individual or group (Semetko & Valkenburgh, 2006).	Places blame or responsibility from a COVID-19 related event or issue on someone such as a group, country or individual.	"We have 31 students from China, and of course, the US government has restricted travel to and from China." "And if people gather again without masks and in closed spaces, we'll absolutely drive up case rates again."

Ethnicization	Brings attention to ethnic terms at the foreground of stories (Ogbodo et al., 2020)	Stories that pair ethnic/racial terms or addresses the impact on minority population subgroups as it relates to COVID-19. Does not simply refer to other countries.	"Doctor Boyd says black people have been profoundly touched by COVID, getting sick and dying at higher rates than other groups, so the vaccine is a must."
Politicization	Takes a political angle and perspective on stories, events or issues (Ogbodo, 2021).	Stories that portray COVID-19 issues with political relevance. Ties in how governments, either country, state or federal, are making steps to address the issue.	"The Trump administration announced federally a temporary halt on evictions. This is an attempt to reduce the spread of COVID-19." "Since last summer, the Governor has extended the mask mandate six times. The latest order is set to expire in three days."
Fear/Scaremongering	Exaggerates fear or panic among the public (Ogbodo et al., 2020).	Includes negative COVID-19 news stories that may be exaggerated to cause fear or panic among the public. Can also capitalize on the "unknown" and possible increase of case rates.	"Doctors are warning that if we don't wear masks or keep our distance, this could lead to a much bigger crisis: a spike in cases." "At a time when new variants are emerging and much is unknown, one thing that is clear is they're likely easier to transmit and more deadly."

Hope	Emphasizes reassurance to the public (Ogbodo et al., 2020).	Uses uplifting terminology to calm the public with reference to COVID-19.	"It's hard to believe, but one year ago this week is when events were starting to shut down because of the start of the pandemic. A year later, things are starting to look up."

R: Dominant Frame: After coding for the presence of the nine media frames, out of the ones present in each package, indicate which media frame dominates the Coronavirus related story. Specifically, only look at the first and second sentences of the package. Which frame best represents the first two sentences of the package?

1: Conflict
2: Human Interest
3: Economic Consequence
4: Morality/Religion
5: Attribution of Responsibility
6: Ethnicization
7: Politicization
8: Fear/Scaremongering
9: Hope

S: Dominate Description: After coding for a dominant media frame, please include the sentence that most relates to the chosen dominant frame from the package.