



JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY

*School of Education and  
Communication*

# Deadly Gun Violence

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Possible  
Ideological Influences on the Framing of a Mass  
Shooting

**COURSE:** *Master Thesis in Media and Communication Science with Specialization  
in International Communication, LTMT28, 15 credits*

**PROGRAMME:** *International Communication*

**AUTHOR:** *Elena Stückemann*

**Examiner:** *Karin Wennström*

**SEMESTER:** *VT 18*

JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY  
School of Education and Communication  
Box 1026, SE-551 11 Jönköping, Sweden  
+46 (0)36 101000

Master thesis, 15 credits  
Course: Master Thesis in Media and Communication  
Science with Specialization in International  
Communication, LTMT28, 15 credits  
Term: Spring 2018

---

## **ABSTRACT**

---

Writer(s): Elena Stückemann

Title: Deadly Gun Violence

Subtitle: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Possible Ideological Influences on the Framing of a Mass Shooting

Language: English

Pages: 46

---

Statistics show that the number of mass shootings and involved fatalities have drastically increased over the last five years. The framing of these attacks in the mass media has a substantial impact on the public opinion on the causes of shootings, possible prevention methods and gun control in general.

Following study aims to uncover potential ideological influences of political tendencies of liberal and conservative newspapers on the media coverage of the most recent mass shooting in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

A qualitative content analysis with a general structural analysis of 39 articles from the liberal newspaper The New York Times and the conservative newspaper The Washington Times and a more detailed Critical Discourse Analysis of the frames of blame, prevention methods and gun control were conducted.

Findings show that The Washington Times' media coverage on blame attributions and prevention methods mainly included frames of mental health. The focus in The New York Times' coverage is clearly on gun issues and the demand for gun restrictions. The topic gun control is positively framed by The New York Times. The Washington Times, however, framed gun control in connection with conspiracy theories and thus portrayed it in a more negative light.

The findings prove an influence of the newspapers' political tendencies and ideologies on the media coverage of the Florida mass shooting.

---

Keywords: Ideology, mass shooting, framing, media agenda setting, gun control, blame attributions, prevention methods

---

## Table of contents

1 Introduction.....	4
2 Contextual Frame.....	5
2.1 The Political System in the United States .....	5
2.2 Gun Ownership and Policies in the United States.....	6
3 Research Aim and Questions .....	7
4 Research Review.....	8
5 Theoretical Foundation .....	11
5.1 The Prioritization of Topics in the Media.....	11
5.2 The Power of Ideology and Discourse.....	13
6 Method .....	16
6.1 Material and Sample Selection.....	16
6.2 Methods for Analysis .....	17
6.3 Methodological Critique .....	19
7 Analysis.....	20
7.1 Central Findings of the Structural Analysis .....	21
7.2 Central findings of the Critical Discourse Analysis.....	27
8 Conclusion of the Results and Outlook on Further Possible Studies .....	36
9 References .....	39

## 1 Introduction

“It isn’t your imagination: Mass shootings are getting deadlier and more frequent.” (Schulman, 2017). This statement mirrors the sentiments of many U.S. citizens in the wake of most recent shootings in the country. Over the last decade the numbers of attacks even doubled when comparing the beginning of the 2000s with the number of attacks in the last few years (Schulman, 2017). One of the most infamous school shootings in the United States is the Columbine shooting in 1999 which is seen as the beginning point of and inspiration for the several school shootings that followed (Gladu, 2016). Five of the six most fatal shootings in American history happened in the last five years while a remarkable rise in casualties could already be observed from 2007 on. Among these are the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007, the Sandy Hook shooting in 2012, the Orlando nightclub shooting in 2016 and the Texas church shooting and the Las Vegas shooting both in 2017. The most recent school shooting in this list is the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida that took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2018 killing 17 people while injuring 14 others (Chuck, Johnson, & Siemaszko, 2018). Natural consequences after such tragic events is the search for answers – above all – the answer to why. Two main players endeavor to respond to these questions. On the one hand, there is the media which – with the aid of framing – shapes the coverage on the event by highlighting or obscuring certain details that impact the public opinion on the shooting, the shooter and his motivations. On the other hand, there are the politicians who put the tragedy into context and search for prevention methods for future shootings. Politicians use the mass media as a way to reach out to the citizens and to officially comment on the topic. Usually after mass shootings the politicians as well as the media focus on three main subjects – guns, violence in the media and mental health. Other causes may also be considered in the news coverage such as the family’s, the community’s or the religion’s role. However, they do not play a main role in the framing of school massacres (Schildkraut & Muschert, 2013). These potential causes for shootings and the search for appropriate prevention methods do not only divide the country but increase the frictions between the two major political parties in the United States – the Republican and the Democrats. This dissent has reached its peak in the course of new debates on gun control which quickly aroused after the most recent shooting in Florida which attracted a particularly high media attention due to the nationwide student-led protests. Especially now it is crucial for the parties to spin the issue and to persuade the public opinion in favor of their respective viewpoints and ideologies. Since newspapers shape the public opinion it is interesting to question whether newspapers’ inherent political tendencies and ideologies impact the way they cover certain topics. The aim of the following study is to uncover potential ideological influences which affect the framing of the mass shooting in Florida in general and the framing of blame attributions, prevention methods and the topic of gun control in particular. After a short contextual background and the presentation of the

research aim and questions follows a summary of the most important studies that have already been conducted regarding this matter which help to define the media gap. On the theoretical basis of framing, media agenda setting, media representations and the concept of ideology and discourse the study proceeds with a first structural content analysis of 39 articles from the conservative newspaper The Washington Times and the liberal newspaper The New York Times. A more detailed Critical Discourse Analysis of three conservative and three liberal articles which were selected from the sample follows thereafter.

## **2 Contextual Frame**

### **2.1 The Political System in the United States**

The two major political parties in the United States are the left-winged and liberal Democrats and the right-winged and more conservative Republicans. They both have quite different beliefs and stands on various subjects such as the role of the government, military, abortions or gun rights. Because of their more liberal mindset and views on certain topics such as immigration Democrats are more popular among Asians, Hispanics, blacks, well-educated adults and Millennials. In contrary to that, citizens affiliated with the Republican Party tend to be white – particularly white males – less educated, evangelical Protestants and/or members of the Silent Generation. Republicans are more religiously affiliated which explains their mostly rather conservative attitude towards political questions (Pew Research Center, 2015). The partisan gap in political values has been constantly growing over the last decades with a 36 percentage-point difference between the two parties in 2017. The ideological consistency of Americans has clearly increased with fewer left-winged and right-winged members holding a mix of positions across different issue areas. In fact “[...] Republicans and Democrats are now further apart ideologically than at any point in more than two decades [...] (Pew Research Center, 2017, p. 12). According to a survey by the Pew Research Center (2017), the median Democrat in these days is more liberal than 95 percent of the Republicans and Republicans are more conservative than 97 percent of the Democrats.

The parties’ philosophies and ideologies are connotated with both positive and negative images. From an economic standpoint, Democrats have been viewed as more favorable by a majority of Americans because of their close affiliation to the working class, the common people and social responsibility while Republicans are mostly seen as the party for the wealthy and successful businessmen. However, the Republican’s party philosophy and their perceived conservatism have a positive impact on the party’s image while the Democrat’s liberalism and the federal governments high spending and large size often sheds a negative light on their image. The steadily increasing salience of ideologies that are reinforced by the parties’ images

has an extensive influence on the vote choice of the citizens and particularly on the strengthening of party identifications and affiliations (Brewer, 2009).

Nevertheless, a party's likes and dislikes and the voters' connotation with a party should also always be seen in the context of the current domestic and international political situation and in connection with contemporary issues. This underlines the importance of an appropriate framing and agenda setting of certain events or policy proposals a party wants to promote in order to fortify their worldview or ideologies and to improve their image (Baumer & Gold, 1995).

## 2.2 Gun Ownership and Policies in the United States

As constituted in the Second Amendment in the Bill of Rights “[a]rms discourage and keep the invader and plunderer in awe, and preserve order in the world as well as property...Horrid mischief would ensue were the lawabiding deprived of the use of them.” (Paine, 1894, p. 56)

The right to bear arms is for many of the United States' citizens one of the most important amendments and a right they feel entitled to. This great importance can ultimately be ascribed to several relevant events in the American history. Armed conflicts with the Native Americans, slave revolts and the Civil War all led to a general suspicion towards the government and increased the wish to be able to defend themselves in times of crisis (Waugaman, 2016). This historical distrust of the government which can be dated back to the Revolution is a great reason for the high percentage of gun ownership in the US. The United States' national ownership rate of civilian firearms – with 90 firearms for every 100 people – is the highest rate in the world (Karp, 2011). 67 percent of these gun owners claim protection to be the main reason for their gun ownership (Parker, Horowitz, Igielnik, Oliphant, & Brown, 2017).

One of the most famous arguments from advocates for gun ownership in the ongoing debates on gun control in the United States is that not guns but people kill people (Mark R. Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2000). Several polls such as from the Pew Research Center (Parker, Horowitz, Igielnik, Oliphant, & Brown, 2017) tried to investigate whether the right to bear arms or the protection of citizens from gun violence was more important to Americans. The findings show that the public support for gun policies has declined over the past two decades (Mo Jang, 2018). 64 percent of the US citizens state that most people should be allowed to legally own guns while even 70 percent believe citizens should be allowed to legally purchase most or some types of guns. However, discrepancies in the opinions between gun owners and non-gun owners are quite extensive. For example, 77 percent of the non-gun owners support an assault-weapons ban while only the half of gun owners back these policy demands. Since Republicans (with 44 percent) are more likely to own guns than Democrats (with 20 percent) the opinions of these two parties regarding gun policies are very divided as well. Preventions for gun violence in

cases of potential mass shootings such as armed police or teachers in schools are the subject of very heated debates between Republicans and Democrats in these days. While 69 percent of the Republicans support allowing school officials or teachers to carry guns in school only 26 percent of the Democrats approve this possible solution. The main limitation for gun sales that both the gun owners (89 percent) and non-gun owners (89 percent) can agree on is a prevention of firearm sales to people with a mental illness (Parker et al., 2017).

The gun restrictions, in general, are still very limited in the United States due to the Supreme Court rulings that prohibit comprehensive gun restrictions for the general population. This includes, for example, the ban on handguns (Vernick, Rutkow, Webster, & Teret, 2011). Feasible gun control policies usually have to target certain categories of dangerous weapons or a dangerous group of people. (Gostin & Record, 2011) The aftermath of several mass shootings led to two specific types of gun restriction policy proposals: A legislation to prevent people with serious mental illness to possess firearms and a legislation to ban large-capacity magazines. Some restriction laws for people with serious mental illness were passed in 2008 after the Virginia mass shooting. The last one, however, has not been successful yet (Appelbaum & Swanson, 2010). Unsuccessful policy proposals can often be traced back to the great power of lobbyism with the National Rifle Association as the most notable lobby group for the advocacy of gun rights. Most recently the NRA tried to stop the latest gun law that was passed in Florida and which proposed the rise of the age to buy firearms to 21 as a response to the mass shooting at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in February (Stewart, 2018).

### **3 Research Aim and Questions**

After the most recent mass shooting in a high school in Florida on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2018, the news media covered a wide range of topics related to the tragedy, including U.S. gun control policies. Hence, this attack provides a unique opportunity to explore the role of media in shaping the public opinion depending on the media outlets' ideologies.

The aim of this study is to examine how news outlets' ideologies and political tendencies influenced the representation of the mass shooting in Florida in 2018 – in particular the blame attributions, proposed prevention measures against possible future mass shootings and gun control – in the aftermath of the tragedy.

Therefore, following questions will guide the empirical analysis:

- Who or what is being portrayed as the main cause of the shooting? How is it being framed?
- What is being portrayed as the prime solution to prevent future shootings? How is it being framed?
- To what extent do news outlets' ideologies influence the framing of gun control?

## 4 Research Review

Extensive research on cause attributions, the reception and the framing of mass shootings has been conducted over the last decades. Main focal points in the news coverage of these events were mental illness or gun violence as the cause of these tragedies. The most salient events for the body of research were the Virginia Tech Shooting in 2007 and especially the Columbine shooting in 1999. In comparison to any other mass shooting in the United States, Columbine garnered the most media coverage (Maguire, Weatherby, & Mathers, 2002).

A popular cause attribution in the framing of gun violence is the frame of dangerous people with a serious mental illness. A study on the framing of serious mental illness and gun violence examined policy proposals to reduce gun violence after mass shootings in the news coverage, the frequencies of mentions of policy proposals before and after mass shootings and whether the mentioned causes of the mass shootings correlate with the policy proposals promoted in the coverage. A quantitative content analysis of news stories on serious mental illness and gun violence published by 14 regional and national news outlets from 1997 to 2012 revealed that most of the media coverage on policy proposals followed after the mass shootings. The frame of dangerous people with serious mental illness was more often used than the dangerous weapon and gun frame as a cause of gun violence (McGinty, Webster, Jarlenski, & Colleen, 2014). McGinty, Webster, & Barry (2013) examined with a survey-embedded randomized experiment the effects of these frames used in stories about mass shootings on the public attitude towards persons with serious mental illness and support for gun control policies. They uncovered that the media coverage on mass shootings leads to an increase of negative attitudes towards people with serious mental illness and an increase of support for stricter gun policies and restrictions. However, additional information on gun restrictions in the news coverage did not further increase the support for gun control.

Several studies also focused on the possible impact of party affiliations and predispositions on the recipients' blame attributions. Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2001) tried to examine how alternative representations of issues involving guns may influence the public opinion on related policy proposals and blame attributions associated with tragic events. The two conducted experiments, that were based on two surveys, uncovered that alternative gun frames have an influence on respondents' opinions. A particular influence was discovered on Republicans, Independents and respondents with low political knowledge. Nevertheless, the degree of influence depends on the recipients' predispositions. Respondents are more willing to agree with a certain blame attribution if it coincides with their own beliefs and opinions. This underlines the power of biased media coverage.

Further studies assuming a close link between blame attributions and party affiliations of people showed that personal political tendencies do have a major impact on blame attributions. The results of another study of Mark R. Joslyn & Haider-Markel (2013) uncovered that

Democrats mostly blamed political or social forces and the shooter's environment as cause for the mass shootings while Republicans focused on the individual gunmen as the only one to blame. Furthermore, Mo Jang (2018) showed with a study based on three controlled experiments that extensive news coverage on a mass shooting leads to a further decrease of the Republicans' support for stricter gun policies while the Democrats' opinion on gun restrictions does not change significantly.

When analyzing the people's own and their views on others' attitudes towards gun policies and the role of gun ownership (Seate, Cohen, Fujioka, & Hoffner, 2012) and the influence of gun ownership on blame attributions for mass shootings and the causes of gun violence (M. R. Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2017) researchers came to the conclusion that gunowners perceive the effect on the others' perception of gun control as greater than on themselves (Seate et al., 2012) and that gun ownership triggers self-interested blame attributions about the cause of gun violence and withstands the call to restrict gun policies (M. R. Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2017).

Several studies also focused on the production of the news coverage on mass shootings. A study conducted by Jashinsky, Magnusson, Hanson, & Barnes (2017) on the general blame attributions framed in the news coverage of mass shootings quantitatively analyzed in a content analysis factors such as the individual responsibility for gun violence, the responsibility of lawmakers or background checks as proposed preventions. The results revealed that media outlets tended to blame the government rather than individuals after mass shootings and often misinterpreted the real extent of gun violence.

A great number of studies revolved their researches around the Columbine mass shooting in 1999. With the aid of quantitative content analyses they compared the frame-changing patterns in a period of 30 days of the media coverage of the Columbine shooting either with the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting (Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014), with nine other major mass shootings between the years 1997 and 2001 (Muschert & Carr, 2006) or deepened the insight into the thematic discourse of post-Columbine coverage (Muschert, 2009) that was analyzed in the main study by Chyi and McCombs (2004). In this study, they focused on the quantity of articles and the distribution of these articles on the Columbine shooting in a period of 30 days. They developed a two-dimensional measurement scheme which analyzed the frame-changing patterns over this period of time and which was also used by all above mentioned Columbine-related studies. Findings of the studies revealed that the different adoptions of time and space frames helped to strengthen the salience of the respective events in the news coverage over the whole period of 30 days with their distribution peaks in the days directly after the shooting (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Muschert & Carr, 2006; Muschert, 2009). The sole exception being the coverage on the Sandy Hook mass shooting which reached its

peak of reporting several days after the mass shooting (Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014). The societal frame in which the shooting was discussed in a larger social context and where problems such as gun control were mostly highlighted dominated the coverage (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Muschert & Carr, 2006). The further insight into the thematic discourse additionally discovered a dominating focus on the different reactions on the mass shooting in the media coverage. After that followed the frame of possible causes for the shooting – especially guns were mentioned in this context (Muschert, 2009).

Finally, one last study examined another very different possible impact on the way mass shootings are being framed in the aftermath of the attacks. Callaghan and Schnell (2001) analyzed how media outlets frame public policy issues and to what extent politicians or other interest groups have an impact on the issue framing process. The main focus of this study is on gun control. Multiple content analyses of the rhetoric of interest groups and politicians (inputs) and media discourses (outputs) within a period of nine years uncovered that political players do indeed try to influence the coverage with the aid of interpretative issue frames. Nevertheless, especially after debates mature, news outlets tend to set the tone of the gun control debates and proceed with the distribution of other frames than the political players'. These findings support the assumption that the media plays an important role in the shaping of public policy debates.

A great number of studies in this body of literature put their main focus on the reception of the news coverage on mass shootings in the United States and the influence certain media frames have on the opinion of the recipients. The methods of these studies were mostly surveys and mainly focused on the Columbine mass shooting given that it has been a highly salient topic in the media coverage. The only comparisons between Republicans and Democrats also only concentrated on the reception of media frames and their influence on the people with respective party affiliations. Studies that focused on the production of the media content and the framing of mass shootings mainly conducted quantitative analyses and mostly compared news articles from different points of time (e.g. before and after a mass shooting), over a certain time period or between two or more different mass shootings. Interestingly, most of the samples used for the analyses were left-winged newspapers which often led to assumingly one-sided results. A comparison between the framing of mass shootings of left- and right-winged newspapers has not been conducted yet.

Thus, this following study will contribute to the body of literature by filling the methodological gap. A qualitative content analysis of the most recent mass shooting in Florida will give a more detailed inside on the way the event is being portrayed in the media. The focus on the comparison between a right-winged (Republican) and left-winged (Democratic) newspaper will provide new empirical knowledge and present new perspectives. Instead of analyzing the

influence of alternative media frames on the public opinion and focusing on the reception of certain frames the following study aims to examine the influence of the news outlets' ideologies on their coverage of a highly disputed topic. The Florida mass shooting is particularly valuable for an analysis of the influence of political tendencies and ideologies of the news outlets on the media coverage due to the great media attention and immense focus on stricter gun policies promoted by the various protests by students all over the country.

## **5 Theoretical Foundation**

### **5.1 The Prioritization of Topics in the Media**

The media and journalists are perceived as political watchdogs or as protectors of the public interest (Sparrow, 1999) who guarantee objectivity, pluralism, accuracy, balance and truth (Bennett, 1990). By highlighting grievances journalists have the power to pressure politicians to take measures to introduce or revise policies and regulations. Thus, the way issues are being portrayed has a substantial impact on the policy-making process and future legislations and restrictions and is therefore politically highly salient. Due to the multidimensionality of most public policy issues, the range of potential representations or frames of problems and events is very broad (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001). A media frame is “[...] a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration.” (Tankard, 2001, p. 11). According to Entman (1993) framing is a selection of certain elements of a perceived reality that are made more salient in a communicating text by highlighting a particular problem definition, the interpretation of causes, ethical evaluations and/or treatment proposals. A reporter's view on certain issues or events can influence this selection or the highlighting of special aspects. Even though journalists do strive for objectivity, their personal beliefs, values and ideologies can always have an impact on the framing process (Gans, 1980). Due to the limited cognitive capacity of people to understand and process important and often very complex policy information and legislations issue frames have a strong influence on the public opinion (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Simon, 1957). The framing of highly dramatic events which usually attract a widespread media interest and the included depictions of attributions of blame are especially significant for the media's potentially influential power on legislations as well as the public perception and decision outcomes. Findings in the issue framing research for example showed that increased focus on individual actors instead of a complex representation of abstract issues steers the attention of blame attribution towards the individuals as the sole cause of the issue and isolated incidents (Iyengar, 1990, 1991). Nevertheless, the effects of framing are limited due to critical political predispositions that can also affect the influence of persuasive messages. Even if it is the same information people might react or interpret it differently depending on their inherent

predispositions. These limitations are especially prevalent in the case of gun policies because of the two very opposing parties – the Democrats and Republicans – that have quite contradicting opinions on the matter. Issue frames that coincide with the people’s predispositions are more likely to have a substantial impact on their beliefs and considerations (Zaller, 1992). Thus, the effects of framing can only fully develop when the incoming information’s tone or direction corresponds with the reader’s attitude.

A second model also focusing on the highlighting or obscuring of events and issues is the concept of Media Agenda Setting. It refers to the assumption that strongly correlates the mass media’s emphasis on a particular issue through prominent placement or a high amount of coverage with the relevance the audience ascribes to this issue (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This unique media effect has ultimately the power to influence the public opinion as well as the public policy process (Barnes et al., 2008). Interestingly, debates on policies are more likely to be covered by the media when the parties’ or politicians’ political stakes are high (Regina G. Lawrence, 2000). Since “[...] media coverage usually changes first and therefore largely causes subsequent government decisions” (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000) the agenda setting of news outlets is especially powerful and influential. This highlights the importance of the promotion of certain issues or events while obscuring others. Media outlets influence policy agendas directly by shaping the perception of policymakers as well as indirectly by shaping the recipients’ perception (R. G. Lawrence & Birkland, 2004). Also, political players such as politicians or other interest groups use media visibility to have an impact on politics through their input in the debate and the following issue outputs in the media coverage. Such exertion of influence can, for example, be observed in the debates on gun control (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001). One of the main political players with great influence on legislations and policies related to gun control is the National Rifle Association that is known to maintain their great impact, inter alia, through large donations for various Republican candidates’ election campaigns (Scher, 2018).

An additional influence on the public perception on certain topics can also be achieved with the aid of a socially constructed reality which is formed by an active production of meaning with the aid of texts, symbols and images of media representations (Orgad, 2012). Representations are frames that reflect how particular events, issues or the world in general are being perceived (Hall, 1997). The most popular approach to explain the relationship between representations and the actual reality is the constructional approach. This approach assumes that a journalist’s beliefs and opinions influence his selection and the framing of certain events or issues and accordingly shape a new alternative version of reality. The either promoted or obscured aspects of reality give the representation a particular meaning. These subjective selections and emphases are the reason why media representations should always be seen in the context of the production and reception of information (Orgad, 2012).

An essential part of media representations is a clear distinction between the two contrary groups of “us” versus “the Others”. One group can only be defined by strictly opposing it to the other. This differentiation is based on the concept of *binary oppositions*. Consequently, representations are often structured by contrasting categories such as good versus bad or true versus false. These simple structures are of prime importance for the creation of meaning. Particularly the language use, linguistic choices and semiotics are especially informative and valuable for the analysis of representations. Signs which are used to articulate or communicate ideas are always arbitrary and do not naturally hold a predefined meaning. In the field of linguistics words are often referred to as *signifier* and their corresponding meaning – which is triggered by a specific image in the recipient’s mind through a particular association – is often known as the so-called *signified* (Culler, 1976). However, the meaning of words or *signifiers* can also change over time which once again accentuates the significance of a contextualization of production and reception (Hall, 1997).

In addition to the concept of binary oppositions to further emphasize divergences between two opposing groups, there is also the common use of stereotypes in the media coverage. Stereotyping generalizes groups of people by attributing certain naturally predetermined and simple but essential characteristics to them. These kinds of typifications help to categorize groups of people and individuals within a certain cultural context and contribute immensely to the production of meaning (Hall, 1997). These fixed traits are constantly being passed down from one generation to another within the same culture and are highly resistant to change (Siapera, 2010). Stereotypes can map out differences such as the cultural dualism between Democrats and Republicans in the United States for example. Republicans are typically characterized as firm and conservative, strictly taking care of law and order. Their governance is known to be more in favor of the upper class and more focused on the duties but especially also the constitutional rights of each individual. In contrast, Democrats are seen in a more nurturing way, caring for underprivileged groups, minorities and equal rights, focusing more on a general and overall benefit for citizens and their development (Iyengar, 2005).

## 5.2 The Power of Ideology and Discourse

The media mostly pays attention to topics that are innately dramatic and advertised by powerful economic or political groups (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988). These dominant groups influence the shaping of values and beliefs through their respective ideologies. Ideology can be seen as a system of beliefs and symbols which are to a certain extent pertinent to social or political practices (Thompson, 1984) and which indicates a particular way of how issues, events

or the world in general should be perceived (Althusser, 2004). The concept of ideology has been studied, analyzed and criticized by various researchers over the last decades.

One central theoretical approach presented by Marx (1965) assumes a social function of ideology which conjectures a close link between ideologies and powerful social interests. The process of the creation and spreading of ideas and beliefs should always be seen in relation to a material reality and understood as a result of or highly influenced by current social conditions. Thus, the social function of ideologies includes a stabilization of relations of dominance and certain social conditions (Herzog, 2018) by hiding “[...] the reality of class struggle from our perception and consciousness; and insofar as working-class people unconsciously absorb bourgeois values, they are unwitting carriers of ‘false consciousness’” (Leitch, 2001, p. 762) This shows that next to an active and conscious decision of a reinforcement or acceptance of ideologies there is also a possibility of an ideological false consciousness which results from a lack of knowledge or ignorance towards causal influences, illusionary or false beliefs or self-deception (Pines, 1993). Braybrooke (1967) argued in his Encyclopedia of Philosophy article that for Marx ideology “[...] signified a false consciousness of social and economic realities, a collective illusion shared by members of a given social class and in history distinctively associated with that class.” (p. 125).

Various researchers of the subsequent generation followed suit and expanded the work of Marx around his concept of dominant ideology and “ruling ideas” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 64). Amidst these is Antonio Gramsci (1968) who developed the concept of hegemony which explains an establishment of general consent. The mainly uncritically accepted common sense of society and this collective illusion Braybrooke (1967) wrote about is framed by the opinions that usually mirror the interests of a ruling class. Hegemonic elites with a prevailing power over material resources have also the intellectual power to determine – with their ideology consistent – norms and rules their subjects then follow (Marx & Engels, 1970). These dominant groups’ political, cultural and social relevance and their power are not only simply forced onto the people but are continually reinforced by the promotion of their ideology as commonly acknowledged (Orgad, 2012). Thus, ideological hegemony persists with the aid of a combination of both coercion and consent (Gramsci, 1968).

In opposition to these theoretical conceptions Martin Seliger (1976) aimed for a more inclusive rather than a restrictive conception of ideology. According to the scholar the former mentioned Marxist conception puts ideology in total contrast to a correct and true depiction of reality by associating it negatively with coercion and domination. His concept of ideology takes all political belief systems into account regardless of whether the respective beliefs encourage a preservation, destruction or a rebuilding of social structures. He concludes his action-oriented series of beliefs of an inclusive ideology “[a]s that which guides and defends political action, ideology must therefore be defined so as to refer to political belief systems, whether they are

revolutionary, reformists, or conservative (traditionalists) in outlook.”(Seliger, 1976, pp. 91-92) For Seliger, a crucial element of ideology and its action-oriented beliefs are so-called implements which are rules to help put commitments into practice while constantly modifying them in accordance with the current given conditions. In addition to that, there is also a great importance of a dismissal of disbeliefs or rejections of other opposing principals and beliefs since ideology is constantly defined in opposition to others. The scholar concludes that ideology and politics are deeply intertwined (Seliger, 1976).

Political belief systems and political tendencies are also very important for media outlets and their reporting guidelines. According to Shoemaker (1987), there are different ways how news content is being affected by specific worldviews.

[T]he issue-specific ideology of those who finance the mass media interact to influence mass media content through relationships with social and institutional forces such as advertisers, audiences, and government; through ideological influences on the socialization and selection of journalists; and through the ways in which content is gathered, shaped, and transmitted. (pp. 29-30)

This implies that policymakers and investors have a huge impact on the way events and issues are being portrayed. The party affiliations of media outlets are usually well known and more or less apparent in their media coverage. Their consciously adapted ideology represents their and their respective party’s social interests (Happer & Philo, 2013).

Regardless of the media constantly emphasizing their independent and neutral reporting ideologies still influence the media coverage. An especially influencing factor is the above-mentioned selection of topics journalists have to make on a daily basis. They have the power to highlight or neglect information which shapes the perception of events and issues and the public opinion. Even though journalists pledge to an unbiased reporting, their opinions and beliefs do influence the selection or representations of reality nonetheless (Orgad, 2012).

The journalist’s beliefs and values should naturally be consistent with the ideology and political tendencies of their news outlet. However, there might also be more subtle and unconscious ideological influences. Journalists might generally have a more conservative or liberal worldview but tend towards opposing ideological positions in particular matters which could also be an influencing factor for the media coverage (Jäger & Maier, 2010).

In general, political parallelism and media partisanship can be defined as a systematic preferential treatment of one political position over the other (McQuail, 1992). This distribution of political ideas and beliefs has an impact on the perception and action of individuals and groups. This influence leads to the creation and shaping of (social) reality which is formed by the power of discourse (Jäger & Maier, 2010). A discourse refers to the use of language in writing and speech (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) characterized by “[...] an

institutionalized way of talking that regulates and reinforces action and thereby exerts power” (Link, 1983, p.60, author’s own translation). Strengthened by the repetitiveness of contents, strategies and symbols discourses establish and solidify knowledge and extend their influential effects (Jäger & Maier, 2010). However, knowledge is conditional and can develop over time. Therefore, its validity depends on factors such as time, space and social circumstances, which should always be taken into consideration.

Discourses can be seen as social practices due to their implied dialectic relation between a discursive event and its social order, institutions or certain circumstances framing it. These discursive events are of high relevance in the media and political arena over a long period of time and have an essential impact on the development of discourse (Jäger & Maier, 2010).

A closer analysis of discourse and its dialectic relations and language use can be conducted with the aid of Critical Discourse Analysis. The CDA focuses on socially relevant phenomena and can be seen as “[...] a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.” (van Dijk, 2005, p. 352). CDA pays in particular attention to a text’s ideological references, its linguistic choices and explains and interprets language use within a social, situational and historical framework (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

## **6 Method**

### **6.1 Material and Sample Selection**

The analysis will be conducted on the basis of newspaper articles on the mass shooting in Florida on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2018 published by the left-winged newspaper New York Times (NYT) and the right-winged newspaper The Washington Times (WT) in the time period of seven days after the attack. This limitation of the time period from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February was set due to previous findings that observed a distribution peak of reporting on mass shootings in the days directly after the attacks (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Muschert & Carr, 2006; Muschert, 2009) The selection of the newspapers is based on Slant Quotients that indicate the bias of national and local media outlets in the United States. This scale was developed on the results of a research project by Gentzkow and Shapiro (2010). An SQ of 0 is the maximum a newspaper can reach with a conservative bias, 100 in contrary signals a maximum of liberal bias. On the very left of the scale, The New York Times scored the highest rate of national newspapers with an SQ of 73.7. The newspaper with the lowest score is The Washington Times with an SQ of 35.4 (Groseclose, 2011).

The 18 articles published by The Washington Times and the 21 articles published by The New York Times were retrieved with the aid of the search engine Google and search options on the

newspapers' websites. In order to filter all relevant articles which purely focus on the mass shooting in Florida keywords such as "Florida AND mass shooting" or "Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School AND mass shooting" were used. For the closer Critical Discourse Analysis, the in total 39 articles had to be further narrowed down to be able to gather fitting material for assessment. The purposive approach used as the sampling method for this selection can be often found in qualitative analyses. The investigation of the research questions influences the sampling of the news articles. The first step of the analysis in this study is a structural analysis of all the 39 articles from the left- and right-winged newspapers on the mass shooting in Florida which helps to divide them into three different categories relevant to the research aim and questions – the framing of blame attributions, the framing of prevention methods and finally examples for a general framing of gun control. Due to limitations of time and space, the CDA will only be performed on two opposing articles of each category. The selection of an article depends on its likeliness to contribute knowledge to the issue that is being analyzed and that permits to draw conclusions on the population (Seale, 2018).

## 6.2 Methods for Analysis

As mentioned before discourse can be described as "[...] an institutionalized way of talking that regulates and reinforces action and thereby exerts power" (Link, 1983, p.60, author's own translation). Even though events are always deeply rooted in discourse they can only be counted as discursive events if they comply with certain conditions. The Florida Mass shooting for example can be seen as a discursive event because "[...] it appears on the discourse planes of politics and the media intensively, extensively and for a prolonged time." (Jäger & Maier, 2010). The event had an extraordinary impact on the development of discourse because of its extended media attention. It influenced and still is influencing the politics nationwide due to the fundamental power relations between the media and political arena. Discourse flows which focus on a particular common topic are also known as discourse strands. Discourse strands usually consist of a great number of elements which are also called discourse fragments. These fragments are texts which cover several subjects but concentrate on one particular topic. In order to facilitate a deeper examination of discourse strands and fragments a Critical Discourse Analysis is helpful to structure and interpret texts (Jäger & Maier, 2010). CDA is based on the concept of Critical linguistics which tries to uncover the ways grammar and language is ideologically instrumentalized in texts. Linguistic choices or the highlighting and obscuring of information on events, people, issues or actions highly impacts the meaning of a text. Thus, a closer analysis might be able to reveal a text's latent ideology. The conscious use of language through the promotion of certain views helps to naturalize them to the extent that they are accepted as common sense. In this context a critical analysis of texts also includes the

examination of subtle presuppositions which are assumptions that are taken for granted. Thus, in summary, CDA tries to “[...] draw out and describe the practices and conventions in and behind texts that reveal political and ideological investment.” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 4).

The method of Critical Discourse Analysis has an array of special tools to examine texts. Prior to a detailed analysis of a selection of typical articles a structural analysis of the themes, argumentations and special characteristics is usually conducted. This analysis takes a closer look on the prioritization of themes and their chronological order and examines noticeable similarities or differences. Following this, these discourse strands are usually divided and summarized into several sub-topics. In the case of the mass shooting in Florida typical articles will be chosen from the sub-topics: the framing of blame attributions, the framing of prevention methods and typical examples for a general framing of gun control. The structural analysis also tries to uncover how often certain sub-topics are mentioned and which of them are more in focus while others are being neglected. The analysis aims to detect certain incorporations of other discourse strands and/or special peculiarities in the coverage. The results of this examination will be summarized and interpreted and will already give a hint of the newspapers’ actual discourse position. For a detailed look on the newspapers’ discourse positions certain chosen articles will undergo a more intensive investigation (Jäger & Maier, 2010). The analysis of the articles in each group will first cover the general main topic of the articles and their respective sub-topics. After that, six different analytical tools – if applicable – will be helpful to further analyze the texts in detail.

1. One focus of the analysis will be on the **lexical choices** made in the texts. Choosing certain words over others can carry a lot of meaning. Certain opinions may not be overly exposed in an obvious matter but communicated in a subtler way through the choice of certain vocabulary. It is essential to uncover whether an author tends to use certain kinds of words or even avoids others. In connection with that also **discursive choices** will be in the focus of examination in order to unveil word connotations which can also have an impact on the perception of the topic. The focal point in this part is the detection of indirect, implicit meanings and underlying beliefs in the texts and their argumentation strategies.
2. Possible peculiarities in a text might also be **overlexicalizations** or over-persuasions. Authors tend to overemphasize terms by repeatedly putting quasi-synonym words together or by repeating same words. This can indicate a certain anxiety of the author, signal a potential inconsistency of predetermined social expectations or is a product of an ideological contention.
3. Further interesting observations can be made with the analysis of the **quoting verbs** in a text. The verbs which prelude quotes have an important impact on how the people are represented in a text. In general, these verbs can be divided into neutral structuring

verbs and metapositional verbs. Neutral structuring verbs are unbiased verbs such as say, tell, ask etc. In contrast to that, metapositional verbs are more dramatic and meaningfully charged. They already determine how the reader should perceive the person being quoted.

4. Another very important tool of CDA is **Transitivity** (Machin & Mayr, 2012). “Transitivity is simply the study of what people are depicted as doing and refers, broadly, to who does what to whom, and how” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 104). It aims to detect who the active agent of a text is and analyses the action which shows what is getting done. Important here are also the verbs used to describe the actions of the active agents. It also focuses on the potential loss of active agents with the aid of **passive verb structures** which are usually used to hide responsibility. Important is to disclose which participants of a story are described in a passive and which are described in an active form.
5. **Presuppositions** help to expose possible underlying assumptions that are seen as given and common knowledge. This common knowledge is often used by politicians as basis for their argumentation. Other portrayed statements in texts can be framed as contestable. The analysis of both can be very telling.
6. Texts also communicate and support their statements through visual features. Thus, also an **iconography** is relevant to describe the *signifier* of a picture explaining what can be seen in the image. However, especially the identification of the *signified* – the ideas and values the picture represents and transmits to the recipient – is of high importance (Machin & Mayr, 2012). “Images [...] [a]re managed to present a particular interpretation of the attitude, character and identity of the person [...]” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 70). Little things such as the **gaze** of a person or the **salience** (focus) of the picture create different hierarchies of importance and determine or at least influence the recipient’s evaluation of the depicted person or thing and the communicated message of the article in general (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

### 6.3 Methodological Critique

Objectivity is one of the core quality criteria in the empirical research. The objectivity of a research assumes that findings are obtained independently and free from personal perceptions and opinions of the researcher – an unbiased representation of reality. The objectivity of an analysis can be measured by the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments of studies. A high reliability in a study is given if measures are consistent and replicable under the same circumstances during the data collection. The same methods, instruments and testing conditions should ideally lead to the same results. The validity of measurement- and test-methods indicates the degree of accuracy to which the instruments actually measure what they

claim to measure. This quality criterion proves a content-related conformity of an empirical measurement with a logical measurement concept (Diekmann, 2007).

The objectivity, as well as the reliability and validity of the instruments used in this study, are moderately affected by a few factors which have a slight impact on the research quality of the study.

Since a CDA only thoroughly analyzes a limited number of texts and focuses on the content and details in a discourse the structural analysis gives a broader overview over the media coverage on the mass shooting and helps to better detect possible reoccurring behavioral patterns of the left- as well as the right-winged newspaper used to frame a certain topic or issue. However, the articles used for the structural analysis are still only an extract of the great body of publications on the mass shooting in Florida and could, therefore, affect the accuracy of the analysis. Furthermore, qualitative researchers mostly argue that results of qualitative research can be seen as reliable since the studies are usually conducted by a group of researchers (Lamnek, 2005). Since this is not the case in this study results might be influenced by a subjective view or personal bias. The nature of a qualitative analysis and the method of CDA are generally quite random and highly affected by subjective assessments. The selection of typical articles as well as the interpretations of texts are often based on personal opinions and are not an objective reflection of reality (Jäger & Maier, 2010). However, a reflective stance of a researcher in an analysis is a crucial part of CDA and makes it impossible for researchers to be neutral observers. This might affect the objectivity of the study but this thorough, subjective and qualitative analysis is necessary to read between the lines and unravel implied and unnoted facets of human behavior (Mogashoa, 2014). The results of the study cannot be regarded as a representation of the entire population but allow to generalize the theoretical conclusions. This generalization is called typification and is basically the identification of sets of behavior patterns in a certain field – in this case in the covering of mass shootings – that point out possible reoccurring similarities that can be used to generalize findings to a certain extent (Lamnek, 2005).

## **7 Analysis**

The general dispersion of topics proves to be an essential information on the priorities of newspapers and the possible influences of the papers' ideologies and political tendencies. These potentially influential indicators allow a more precise in-depth analysis of selected articles. The purpose of this selection is the filtration of articles that ideally cover the earlier defined research aims and questions such as the framing of blame and future prevention methods for mass shootings. The following section will give a general summary of the distribution and prioritization of topics and their differences and similarities during the

analysis period of the 14<sup>th</sup> until the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February after which a more detailed Critical Discourse analysis of selected articles will follow.

### 7.1 Central Findings of the Structural Analysis

The general structural analysis of the 39 articles in total from both The Washington Times and The New York Times revealed a slight visibility of the papers' political tendencies in their prioritization of topics during the first week after the shooting.

Naturally, on the day of the attack both newspapers first published short overviews on what had happened in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The two newspapers both proceeded to include information on the shooter's state of mind, his troubled past and opinions and statements of his former classmates on his behavioral problems. Also, the more detailed reports on the shooter that followed paint the picture of a disruptive and unhappy childhood influenced by money issues, the death of his adoptive parents and domestic problems. The WT uses this information to put the main focus on the coverage on the problem of mental illness right from the beginning. On the second day of the coverage both papers turn to the portrayal of the victims, drawing an emotional picture of loss and grievances. However, during the development of the coverage the NYT proceeds to frame the victims more as survivors of the attack demanding drastic changes regarding the gun control in the country and increasingly focus on the Never Again Movement and the student-led protests or Democratic leaders calling for legislative changes which proves the NYT's ideologically led intentions to stress the necessity of gun control. Additionally, there is a visible tendency towards a politicization of the event showing the political tendencies of the newspapers while also highlighting clear distinctions between the two parties. The NYT article "Right and Left React to the Gun Control Debate After the Florida Shooting" (Dubenko, 2018) actively points out the very diverging opinions on gun policies and the right to bear guns in the United States. Such an attempt by the WT can only be observed two days later in an article where a conservative radio host clearly states: "'[...] This isn't about the Democrats. This is about the adults, we feel neglected and at this point you're either with us or against us, [...]" (Swoyer, 2018). Opposing Democrats and adults highlights that both the teenagers demonstrating and the Democrats have no saying in this case because they are childishly trying to resolve a problem with measures that will not change the situation. He states that the matter should be resolved by the adults implying that the only responsible people in this are the Republicans. Furthermore, this article also sets clear boundaries between the Democrats and Republicans while his wording literally strengthens the differentiation between "us" versus "the Others". In addition, the plain mentioning of party affiliations of the people included in articles of both papers can be observed throughout the whole coverage. Towards the end of the first week the newspapers

focus again on possible blame attributions and particularly the mentioning of future prevention proposals. With the increase of popularity of the protests for stricter guns laws, heated debates on gun control and the victim's and (Democratic) politician's growing pressure to act, the WT chooses to catch up and goes on to cover the student-led protests and possible gun restrictions as well. However, casual distributions of conspiracy theories which report about questionable reasons for the efforts of the protesting students or hidden political left-winged involvements instrumentalizing the children dim the movement. While the WT is highlighting the difficulties of possible changes in gun policies as shown in headlines such as "Florida survivors, lawmakers on collision course over guns" (Farrington, Replogle, & Lush, 2018) and the explanation for possible difficulties stating that "[...] gun owners make up huge voting blocs in some parts of the state" (Farrington et al., 2018) the NYT draws a more positive focus on possible changes with headlines such as "There is a reason for hope on Guns" (Leonhardt, 2018). A last shift in the analyzed period can be witnessed in the end of the first week of coverage where the articles increasingly focus on possible prevention proposals.

A closer look at the themes in the coverage on the mass shooting reveals one of the bigger similarities both The Washington Times' and The New York Times' reporting have in common. In the first articles published after the shooting, the two newspapers gave similar more detailed background information on the shooting and on the shooter. Both drew a connection between the shootings and the shooter's mental health suggesting that his troubled past and behavior, as well as his violent nature and gun obsession, could be part of the reason for the attack. With the use of direct quotes from fellow students, teachers and old neighbors the newspapers show that the shooter Nicolas Cruz was a "troubled kid" with behavioral problems and there were several warning signs that could have prevented this attack (For example Burch, Robles, & Mazzei, 2018; Farrington, Replogle, & Lush, 2018; Fausset & Kovalski, 2018; Miller, 2018; Rogers, 2018; The Associated Press, 2018). However, The Washington Times clearly points out mental illness as the main cause for the shooting in Florida (Boyer, 2018a; Chasmar, 2018; Swoyer, 2018). The majority of the coverage from the WT portrays him as a weird, unadjusted loner that even stood out in alternative school or mentions the red flags that could have given it away (Balsamo & Gurman, 2018; Blake, 2018; Boyer, 2018a; Dearen, 2018; Farrington et al., 2018; Morton, 2018; B. Richardson, 2018; Spencer & Kennedy, 2018; Spencer, Kennedy, & Lush, 2018; The Associated Press, 2018a, 2018b) In contrary, even though the NYT does report about his concerning behavior the newspaper also claims that "[...] so far there is no evidence Mr. Cruz had psychosis." (Mueller, 2018) Additionally, the paper accuses Republicans of constantly and falsely using mental illness as causes for mass shootings stating that "Mr. Trump and Republican lawmakers have long tried to steer the national conversation after mass shootings to the mental health of people

pulling the triggers, rather than the weapons they used. That effort is belied by the fact that mental illness is not the root of most cases of gun violence [...]." (Mueller, 2018). In total contrast to that, the WT quotes Republicans saying that mental illness and "disturbed individuals" are the only cause for this problem and mass shootings will continue until mentally ill people are being stopped. According to them legislations will not help or change anything and institutions such as the NRA are definitely not at fault, it is only the fault of the people doing this which portrays mass shootings as isolated cases of mentally ill people (Swoyer, 2018).

A common frame in the beginning of the news coverage has also been the shooters admiration for guns. The NYT depicted him as a kid "[...] who enjoyed showing off his firearms[...]" (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018) and who had a large number of firearms and rifles in his possession. While the NYT uses this as an argument for the necessity of stricter gun laws the WT mostly connects his involvement with guns to a pathological obsession again implying a mental disorder. Articles state that he is " [...] 'clearly obsessed with guns; he was attached to and followed all kinds of gun groups.'" (Morton, 2018) or quote fellow students saying that "'[h]e's been a troubled kid and he's always had a certain amount of issues going on. He shot guns because he felt it gave him, I guess, an exhilarating feeling'" (Morton, 2018) which underline the alleged abnormal obsession. Some even suggest a negative influence of violent media causing him to turn more and more destructive reporting that " [...] 'he was involved in a YouTube chat room conversation about bombs or building bombs,'" (Morton, 2018). Also, several institutions – particularly the FBI – are being highly blamed by the WT for the attack because of the several tips about the shooter that had not been followed (Balsamo & Gurman, 2018; Blake, 2018; Boyer, 2018a; Dearen, 2018; Morton, 2018; Spencer & Kennedy, 2018; Spencer et al., 2018; Swoyer, 2018; The Associated Press, 2018b) One article is even going as far as to mention a conspiracy theory which accuses one of the survivors of the shooting and active member of the protests against guns to draw the attention to the restriction of gun laws to distract from the FBI's blame in this event only because his father was once employed by the bureau (Blake, 2018). The NYT on the other hand even defends the FBI stating that the information would not have been enough for prosecutors to arrest the suspect (Goldman & Mazzei, 2018). The Washington Times' rage against the FBI can be seen as a sign for the newspapers' party affiliation and loyalty towards the Republican president Donald Trump given that he was and still is highly scrutinized by the bureau due to unrelated matters such as Russia's involvement in Trumps election 2016. Interestingly, the NYT took up these topics during their coverage on the shooting (K. Rogers, 2018; Turkewitz, Mazzei, & Burch, 2018) proving that also The New York Times' political tendencies influence the reporting.

Another interesting distinctive feature of the NYT is the very emotionally charged articles covering several different viewpoints of the attack. Headlines such as “Emma González Leads a Student Outcry on Guns: ‘This Is the Way I Have to Grieve’” (Turkewitz, Stevens, & Bailey, 2018), “‘Is This the Day I Die?’: Teachers React to the Florida School Shooting” (Takenaga, 2018), “As Shots Ring Out, a Student Texts: ‘If I Don’t Make It, I Love You’” (Burch & Mazzei, 2018) or “A Mother Weeps for Her Angel: ‘I Hope She Didn’t Die for Nothing’” (Turkewitz, Burch, & Stack, 2018) are far more personal and sensational than the headlines from the WT. They dramatically highlight the immense sadness and brutality of the event in order to make the cause of gun control even more salient. The different viewpoints are also used to convince readers that gun control is not only viewed as a necessity by Democrats but also by Republicans. The NYT instrumentalizes quotes from pro-gun owners and/or Republicans which emphasize that the attack “[...] [is] definitely eye-opening to the fact that [the Americans] need more gun control in [the] country.” (Turkewitz, Burch, et al., 2018). One article even reports about a prominent and influential Republican political donor who persists that “[...] the party pass legislation to restrict access to guns, and vowed not to contribute to any candidates or electioneering groups that did not support a ban on the sale of military-style firearms to civilians.” (Burns, 2018). A further strategy to decrease the emotional distance and to make the event more relatable for the reader to increase his personal involvement is the portrayal of the victims. Both the NYT and the WT wrote articles about all the victims with personal quotes from their friends and families (Bidgood, Harmon, Mitch, & Salam, 2018; Reeves, 2018a, 2018b). However, the NYT also included pictures of the victims which literally gives the tragedy a face – or in this case many faces (Bidgood et al., 2018).

Regarding planned measures to prevent future mass shootings both newspapers reported about similar prevention methods. The NYT mentions that the education secretary DeVos repeated Donald Trump’s sentiments about the importance of the addressing of mental health issues (Green, 2018). Additionally, the newspaper quotes Trump’s opinion on shootings stating that it “‘isn’t a guns situation [but] a mental health problem at the highest level.’” (Katie Rogers, 2018). According to the newspaper Trump urges the people to report suspicious behavior. However, the NYT indicates that under the law authorities do not have the power to confiscate guns in a situation like that. The newspaper proceeds to cite the co-president of a gun violence prevention campaign saying these claims are insincere since law enforcement cannot act on suspicion (Mueller, 2018). The WT reported on efforts to restrict the purchase of guns for mentally ill people (Boyer, 2018a) while the NYT revealed that some “[...] officials never mentioned curbing access.” (Mueller, 2018). In fact, Trump even removed a regulation to prevent mentally ill people to buy guns earlier in his presidency (Katie Rogers, 2018). The so-called red-flag bill is mentioned by both newspapers as possible prevention (Farrington et al., 2018; Mueller, 2018; The Associated Press, 2018a). The NYT writes especially positive

about this law proposal to temporarily confiscate guns owned by people posing as a threat to others stating that it has been successful in seven other states (Mueller, 2018). Both newspapers agree on a greater power of law enforcement to hold people considered as dangerous for others even against their own will (Farrington et al., 2018; Mueller, 2018). The WT also covers the proposals to raise the age limit to purchase guns to 21 or repeatedly mentions the authorization for teachers and security guards to carry a gun on school grounds (Farrington et al., 2018; Swoyer, 2018; The Associated Press, 2018a). The NYT refers to it as a part of a broader conversation about future preventions methods (Green, 2018). The newspapers also talk about the declined debate on banning semi-automatic weapons (Persons, 2018; The Associated Press, 2018a; Turkewitz & Hartocollis, 2018). The NYT highlights the deadly danger by calling them assault rifles while also calling to attention that these types of rifles are even easier to purchase than handguns (Turkewitz & Hartocollis, 2018) which again stresses the importance of gun control. Lastly, both papers mention the ban of smaller devices such as the rapid-fire bump stocks which were also used in the shooting in Las Vegas (Farrington et al., 2018; Shear, 2018; Turkewitz & Hartocollis, 2018). The Democrats in general and also the NYT try to put gun control in a positive light. While the WT stresses that pushing new gun restrictions might be complicated or even nearly impossible due to the many voters that are gun owners themselves the paper still tries to draw an optimistic picture that the politicians are doing their best to improve the situation. The Florida Republican Governor Rick Scott for example is pictured as a politician who is actively working on the issue, planning proposals for gun legislations and discussing the topic ever since the shooting took place. The paper even quotes a survivor of the shooting stating that he sincerely believes Mr. Scott will make changes to gun laws (Persons, 2018). The NYT, however, portrays the same person as a “[...] favorite of the gun lobbyists [who has] steadfastly opposed new restrictions” (Oppel Jr., 2018) shedding a negative light on him and Republican politicians in general. The paper paints a picture of frustration with the pro-gun politicians because “[...] [c]ongress shows inability to pass even modest gun measures” (Fandos & Kaplan, 2018). At the same time the paper depicts Democratic Politicians as the ones taking action, fighting for the people and against future mass shootings while the pro-gun owners and/or Republicans stand in the way of improvement and change (Dubenko, 2018; Fandos & Kaplan, 2018; Green, 2018). The paper is also discrediting the president by highlighting his close affiliation with the National Rifle Association and the substantial financial support he received from them. This often repeated piece of information usually follows after Trump’s claims that not gun but mental health issues are the cause for shootings which consequently depicts his statements as disingenuous (Green, 2018; Katie Rogers, 2018; Shear, 2018).

This obvious criticism and the apparent frustration of the students resulting into several protests against guns put Republican politicians under pressure to act and also press the WT

to cover pro-gun control movements. This rapprochement to stricter gun laws could be observed in several conservative newspapers. The NYT classifies this transition “[...] as a potentially favorable development.”(Grynbaum, 2018). However, some articles were contradicting to the right-winged political tendency of the WT. The articles stress the involvement of guns and the increasing gun violence in American schools (Reeves, 2018b; Spencer et al., 2018; The Associated Press, 2018b), highlighting the high fatality with quotes referring to the shooting in Florida such as “[...] one of the nation’s deadliest school shootings” (Spencer et al., 2018) or by mentioning that this shooting is the 17th incident of gunfire at an American school only in this year (Spencer et al., 2018). Some even criticize the president by pointing out his efforts to avoid responding to questions regarding the involvement of guns but the instead blame on mental disorders (Spencer et al., 2018). Quotes from distraught parents such as “’ But I can tell you, don’t tell me there’s no such thing as gun violence. It happened in Parkland’ ” (Reeves, 2018b) or desperate demands for Trump to finally take action such as “President Trump, you say what can you do? [...] You can stop the guns from getting into these children’s hands! [...] You can do a lot! This is not fair to our families and our children go to school and have to get killed!’ ” (Reeves, 2018b) are quite straightforward and unusual for a conservative paper.

The articles even cover the several protests (Dearen, 2018; Farrington et al., 2018; The Associated Press, 2018a) where students such as the one in Hollywood “[...] were protesting gun violence, the National Rifle Association and President Donald Trump.” (The Associated Press, 2018b) Especially drastic was an article mentioning teenagers protesting against the Republican Florida Senator Marco Rubio accusing him of “[...] taking \$3 million in NRA blood money.” (The Associated Press, 2018b). This the right-winged ideology contradicting coverage reaches its peak in an article reporting on the shooter involvement with the National Rifle Association. Cruz was a member of an air-rifle marksmanship program financially highly supported by the NRA. This leads evidently to the suggestion that the shooter was able to indulge in his love or even obsession to guns with the help of this youth shooting club. Quotes like “The cadets used air rifles special-made for target shooting.” (The Associated Press, 2018b) could be perceived as an accusation to be at least partly at fault for the teenager’s knowledge on guns and consequently the fatal shooting.

However, it is important to mention that all these articles which were in stark contrast to the actual right-winged ideology and political tendency of the newspaper were actually written by the Associated Press (AP) – a neutral U.S.-based news agency. Thus, the content of the articles cannot be fully considered as a direct reflection of the Washington Times’ usual coverage style and its typical political leaning. Reasons for the WT to resort to news agencies could be the immense time pressure which normally comes with highly relevant and sensational events such as a shooting in a high school.

## 7.2 Central findings of the Critical Discourse Analysis

As already mentioned, the three relevant categories to cover the earlier determined research aim and questions are the framing of blame attributions, the framing of prevention methods and finally examples for a general framing of gun control. The previous structural analysis showed that the mentioning of the shooter's behavioral problems has been a prevailing theme in the coverage on potential blame attributions for the attack. Thus, an opposition of an article of the NYT and one of the WT on the mental health concerns regarding the attack would be especially interesting. In order to find a typical discourse fragment from the WT that reflects their usual style of reporting it was essential to select from the articles that were actually written from the WT and not from the AP. The chosen typical articles to represent the framing of blame attributions are the article "Nikolas Cruz, Florida Shooting Suspect, Described as a 'Troubled Kid'" (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018) from the NYT and the article "Mental health eyed after expelled student killed 17 at Florida high school" (Boyer, 2018a) from the WT.

The article in the NYT gives a very quick overview on the shooting but then proceeds to the main topic of the article – his disruptive and lonely past and the resulting behavioral problems. Sub-topics in the article are the many guns the shooter owned (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018). The WT article on the other hand has quite a mix of topics including a summary of the attack, descriptions of the bloody scene and the mentioning of videos of the attack, Trumps offer of federal assistance and tweets about his condolence, the mentioning of other shootings and the planned efforts to ban mentally ill people from buying guns (Boyer, 2018a). Both articles show in some parts similarities in their choice of words. The same quote "A lot of people were saying that it would be him [...] They would say he would be the one to shoot up the school. Everyone predicted it." (Boyer, 2018a; Haag & Kovaleski, 2018) was used in both texts and depicts the shooter as a troubled kid who obviously negatively attract the attention of his former classmates and teachers. The WT article mentions mental illness in several parts of the text but always puts it strategically next to the mentioning of gun restrictions or involvement of guns in the attack. For example, the article quotes the investigating sheriff saying that "[...] people should get the treatment they need for mental illness, but if so, 'in the opinion of this sheriff, you should not be able to buy a handgun.'" (Boyer, 2018a) or cites a Republican politician also saying that "[...] people with mental illness do not get guns." (Boyer, 2018a). These statements subtly highlight that mental illness is at fault for these attacks involving gun violence. A further stressing of the strong connection between the state of mind of a person and possible mass shootings can be observed in the sentence "[...] the modern era of troubled teens and mass killings" latently implying that all past mass shootings rooted in the problem of a mental disorder of a kid which then again would rather call for a greater focus on proper treatment for mentally ill people instead of gun restrictions. The article does mention that past shootings ignited debates on gun control. Some states even cracked down the purchase of some semi-

automatic rifles and high capacity magazines. Even security protocols have drastically changed after the Sandy Hook shooting. However, the shooting in Florida still happened. This strongly promotes the Republicans ideology and belief that gun restrictions and gun control can and will never stop future mass shootings. The WT does not include a lot of personal information such as things about his past in the coverage. He is only portrayed as a very weird kid who was “‘clearly obsessed with guns.’” which could suggest a pathological and unhealthy obsession that could be a sign for a mental disorder. The term “[...] a troubled loner” (Boyer, 2018a) perfectly summarize his portrayed seclusion that is a result of his mental disorders and a cause for the mass shootings. The NYT article also mentions mental illness once in a quote from a former student stating that “‘[...] he was known to always be mentally ill [...]’” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018). However, the authors do not use words such as “[...] a troubled loner” (Boyer, 2018a) and simply leave it at that but they paint a picture of a very quiet and lonely person with a rough childhood to give the reader another explanation for his weird behavior instead of the unproven claims of a potential mental illness. Teachers, students and neighbors state that “[...] Mr. Cruz was quiet [...]” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018), “[...] he was quiet and not disruptive” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018), “He was always to himself and never tried to associated himself with anyone’” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018), “‘As far as I know, he didn’t have any friends.’” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018), “[...] the boys’ mother [...] had regular problems with their behavior.” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018) or “‘Nikolas has behavioral problems, I think, but I never thought he would be violent.’” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018). These statements help the reader to understand his behavior better and maybe even to subliminally make them feel some kind of pity for the teenager like a former classmate who admitted “‘I felt bad for him.’” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018). The NYT suggests that he did have a free choice and chose to attack the school. He was influenced by his troubled past and his easy access to guns. In total contrast to the WT, the NYT even mentions a colleague at his former workplace who said that “Mr. Cruz [...] was well liked by everyone” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018) and “ ‘He was a great guy’ ” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018). He is generally portrayed as “‘the kid who lived down the street’” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018) implying that anyone – even the quiet kid next door – could do such things once they have access to guns. Interestingly, in connection with the mentioning of the shooter’s several guns that he owned which can be seen in his social media account the word choice suddenly changes. Instead of calling him a teenager or kid the paper proceeds to refer to him as “[...] a man holding firearms and ammunition used semi-automatic AR-15 rifle.” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018) This linguistic choice implies that the newspaper sees his gun ownership as very serious and concerning and that the shooter is indeed mature enough to be held responsible for the attack.

Both articles use the same overlexicalization “‘very, very concerning.’” in relation to his social media appearance (Boyer, 2018a; Haag & Kovaleski, 2018). The WT text shows more of these

word repetitions such as “‘It’s a horrific, horrific day,’” (Boyer, 2018a) and “Just horrible, absolutely horrible.” (Boyer, 2018a). However, these repetitions might only be used to stress the investigators’ great concerns or the atrocity of the event.

In contrast to the often quite emotionally charged reporting style of the NYT – which has already been mentioned above – this article tries to use less dramatic words – especially quoting verbs. The NYT as well as the WT both use neutral structuring verbs. This could be attributed to the fact that the content in the NYT was not on the panic and fear covered in emotionally more charged articles but about information people could recall from the past which is far more settled. The WT is generally less dramatic with the choice of quoting verbs and usually avoids metapositional verbs. A closer look on the transitivity of the texts uncovers several active agents and actions. First and foremost, Cruz is obviously depicted as the agent responsible for the 17 deaths of the high school shooting. The NYT and the WT both use the verb “killing” (Boyer, 2018a; Haag & Kovaleski, 2018) in this context to emphasize his intentions of the shooting. His actions are being called out as irrational which is highlighted by quotes such as “‘The crazy stuff that he did was not right for school, [...]’” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018). His actions highlight all his wrongdoings such as the fact that he “[...] enjoyed showing off his firearms, bragging about killing animals [...]” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018) and underline his active choice to be all to himself and to distance himself from others since he “‘[...] never tried to associate himself with anyone’” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018). Both articles also depict the sheriff and his colleagues as agents who are trying to search for more clues on the shooter’s social media pages. The NYT also emphasizes that a teacher “[...] recalled that school administrators became concerned last year about Mr. Cruz’s behavior and alerted the faculty.” (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018) which shows an active involvement of school officials. However, the WT writes that one of the school officials argues they never got any signs or warnings in relation to the shooter (Boyer, 2018a). Finally, the WT mentions that “President Trump offered federal assistance [...]” (Boyer, 2018a), therefore positively depicting him as an eager politician taking matter right into his own hands while the NYT does not name the President in the coverage (Haag & Kovaleski, 2018). The main presupposition which is the base of this conservative reporting is the general assumption that shootings must inevitably be connected to a mental disorder. Because they do not illustrate his past life it is just a given that he must have a mental illness in order to commit such a crime. Vice versa, the NYT assumes that it is commonly known that tough and disruptive childhoods can have a negative impact on someone’s persona and that a vast array of guns in combination with a troubled past do have an unavoidable and compelling nature that encourages such attacks.

The NYT uses several different images and videos in its text in order to further visualize their intended representation of the attack and the shooter. The main focus of the first picture is on the shooter laying on the grass. He is in a helpless position, looking almost stoic and indifferent

into the camera and is surrounded by two police officers. This image also fits to his mentioned past where he must have also felt helpless and apathetic towards the people and animals he hurt. The hierarchy of importance puts Cruz as the most salient part in the picture as well as in the whole text in general. However, the policemen stand over the shooter cuffing him which could also be seen as a symbol to calm readers down since the shooter has been captured and does not pose a threat to the people anymore. The video in the text shows the shooter in the typical orange prison outfit who is handcuffed. Next to him is his public defender who is often shown to hold her hand protectively on his back. This almost motherly gesture reminds the recipient of the young age of the shooter. Both look to the front while occupying almost the same space in the picture. However, Cruz is again more salient and the clear focus of the picture due to the bright color of his outfit. This also goes well with his past where he also attracted the attention of others because of his strange behavior. The next two pictures are previews of other articles related to the topics which are incorporated between text passages. The first picture shows a sketch of the school where the shooting occurred so that the reader can better imagine what has happened during the fatal minutes of the shooting. The second picture shows a statistic of the frequency of mass shootings in the last two years and depicts how many deaths this gun violence has caused. This visualization of the consequences of mass shootings is very helpful to portray the necessity of stricter gun policies. Lastly, the fourth picture shows the face of the shooter which is half covered by a handgun. The bad quality of the picture leads to the assumption that this is a picture from the shooter's social media accounts. This image contributes perfectly to the discourse fragment of the shooter's many guns, visualizes his passion for them and latently highlights the danger of weak gun laws. The WT only has one picture which shows the gunman's half profile while he is being surrounded by law enforcement who are bringing him into prison. He looks towards the prison. The encirclement of the police officers signals again their superiority and transports the information that he has successfully been captured by the police. The gunman is also here in the focus of the picture. However, the sign "No weapons beyond this point" captures also the attention symbolizing that the thing he loved the most is the thing he has to give up now due to his poor decisions. It is a sign that shows the privilege of guns is only for free men and not for mentally ill killers. The implied privilege works again hand in hand with the conservative beliefs and values to have the right to bear arms.

The next two articles that will be further analyzed are typical texts for the category of the framing of prevention proposals. The WT article is called "Trump maps out plan to prevent school shootings after Florida tragedy" (Boyer, 2018b), the NYT article is "Trump Moves to Regulate 'Bump Stock' Devices" (Shear, 2018). Both articles focus on the main topic of possible (gun related) prevention proposals while also writing about the NRA's role in this matter as a

sub-topic. The WT and Trump's main prevention method for future mass shootings is the arming of adults on school grounds. Trump claims "[...] school shootings will continue unless more adults in schools are armed." (Boyer, 2018b). He proceeds to promise that with the aid of this new regulation "All of a sudden, this horrible plague will stop" referring once again to mental illness pointing it out as main cause for the shootings. Other mentioned prevention proposals include a new age limit for rifles to 21 and background checks to keep guns from mentally ill people and the ban of bump stocks. Interestingly – in regards to the linguistic choices in the WT article – Trump uses a very sarcastic language to stultify the idea to ban guns instead of defensively using them for own protection. He mocks pro-gun control groups by saying: "I hear so many of these wonderful plans where you're going to live in this utopian school and there's not going to be any protection, there's not going to be any guns, there's not going to be any bullets flying at the perpetrator [...]" (Boyer, 2018b). He persists that without an offensive strategy such as the idea of armed adults on school grounds America is doomed to see this happen over and over again. This statement is deeply rooted in the conservatives' ideology mirroring the – for the gun owners – sacred second amendment about the right to bear arms to defend oneself. He once again points out how all of this is not a gun issue and the US is not in need of stricter gun laws but highlights that "[...] we're going to be focusing very strongly on mental health, because here's a case of mental health." (Boyer, 2018b). In connection with critique towards the arming of adults the choice of words changes into a more colloquial, aggressive and emotionally charged one. The paper writes "The nation's largest teachers' unions have *slammed* [emphasis added] the proposal to arm teachers as impractical and dangerous." (Boyer, 2018b) portraying them as unpolite people pushing away potential proposals right from the beginning without even taking their time to think about the possible advantages. Contrary to that, The New York Times' argumentation strategy includes the defamation of Donald Trump and his inactivity towards restrictions of gun policies. According to the newspapers Trump constantly failed to address gun issues until the shooting in Florida. The article further deemphasizes his sudden efforts with quotes such as "[...] Mr. Trump's first embrace as president of any gun control measures was dismissed by gun control supporters as minor." (Shear, 2018).

Quite a few wordings and terms used in the article of the NYT are extremely charged words such as "[...] *deep skepticism* [emphasis added] in Washington that anything would change because of *the long history of inaction* [emphasis added] by state and federal politicians after similar mass shootings. Gun control activists said they were braced for another *disappointing* [emphasis added] battle with lawmakers." (Shear, 2018). Also the Democrat Senator Murphy mentioned "[...] he was unimpressed by Mr. Trump's openness" regarding gun violence and called his efforts "wholly insufficient." (Shear, 2018). The NYT thematizes Trump's close affiliation with the National Rifle Association to further portray him and his statements in a

negative way. The great relationship between him and the association and their extremely generous donations towards him and other Republicans which practically make it impossible to push for gun restrictions is highlighted by very positively charged words. This can be observed in the text passage:

The president, they noted, promised *unwavering fealty* [emphasis added] last year to the National Rifle Association, *drawing thunderous applause* [emphasis added] at its annual convention by declaring, 'To the N.R.A., I can proudly say I will never, ever let you down.' The group in turn *enthusiastically endorsed* [emphasis added] Mr. Trump and spent \$30 million on his campaign. (Shear, 2018)

In contrast to that, the WT, however, portrays Trump and especially the NRA in a way more positive light which again shows an ideological impact on the news coverage. The article states that "[...] Mr. Trump, who as a candidate was opposed to a ban on assault rifles, hasn't changed his position." (Boyer, 2018b) which signalizes his consistency and loyalty towards the NRA and his Republican supporters. A further interesting strategy of the WT article trying to positively portray Trump and his actions is his usage of anaphoras: "We're going to do strong background checks. We're going to work on getting the age [for rifle purchases] up to 21 instead of 18. We're getting rid of the bump stocks. And we're going to be focusing very strongly on mental health, because here's a case of mental health." (Boyer, 2018b). The repetitiveness of the same structure of the sentences stresses his ambitions and his and his team's constant efforts to make a change proving that he is always in action. Especially the portrayal of active agents in the reporting is particularly telling. First and foremost, Trump is depicted in both articles as an active agent. However, the framing of his actions is quite divergent. In the WT Trump is framed as a very active politicians who tries his best to improve the situation. Quotes such as "[...] the president expressed more determination than ever [...]" (Boyer, 2018b), "I want to end the problem," (Boyer, 2018b) or "Mister Trump said he has spoken to many lawmakers in the past week." (Boyer, 2018b) mirror is alleged thirst for action. With his quote "There's a tremendous feeling that we want to get something done," (Boyer, 2018b) Trump even includes the NRA as an active member to resolve the problem of mass shootings. The NYT in contrary portrays Trump as only open to legislative changes "[...] that would only modestly improve the national gun background check system." (Shear, 2018). It further states that "The background check bill [...] is a small nod in the direction of gun control." (Shear, 2018) pointing out that the NRA is fine with such a bill since it contains countless loopholes which again points towards the insincerity of Trump and the NRA. The article even claims the support and planned revision of the bill which was also highly praised in the WT article is actually a top priority of the NRA since it would "[...] effectively allow people to carry concealed weapons." (Boyer, 2018b) and which would also further increase the influence of the NRA. While the WT

only mentions Trump's intentions to ban so-called bump stocks the NYT uncovers that the efforts towards a ban of these small devices only result from the constant pressure of students and pro-gun control activists. Emotionally charged words such as " [...] under pressure from angry, grieving students" further emphasize the pressure that moved him to issue a regulation to ban bump stocks. Furthermore, while the WT concentrates on the fact that Trump is actively working on a rise of the age limit for semi-automatic rifles the NYT only mentions that "[...] the *Republican-controlled* [emphasis added] State House *rejected* [emphasis added] an effort to immediately consider a bill to ban large-capacity magazines and the type of assault rifles used in last week's attack, even as students from Stoneman Douglas High School watched from the gallery." (Shear, 2018). The NYT clearly distances itself from the Republicans that voted down the motion right away. Common knowledge which the authors of the texts expect are in case of the WT that conservative supporters are mostly in favor of the NRA and appreciate coverage on it since it simultaneously means that they have a powerful group on their side which fights for their second amendment. Important presuppositions for the NYT article are that the Republican-controlled House implies that pro-gun control restrictions are not likely to be passed. Furthermore, a politicians active involvement with lobbyism groups is commonly known to discredit the sincerity of their statements or it is at least commonly usual that these statements should at least be scrutinized thoroughly.

The NYT does not use a picture to visualize the focus on Donald Trump's role in the promotion – or in this case possible hindrance – of gun legislations but a video of the press conference where Trump announces his decision for a future ban of bump stock devices. The president can be seen in front of an old painting. Due to the angle of the recording his gaze never meets the camera. Instead his head is actually even more lifted making the impression that he is talking down to the people. These could be interpreted as an image of arrogance or stubbornness which grows more and more with the increase of accusations that he is biased because of his affiliation with the NRA. As in the content of the story Trump is also in the video the obvious focal point which visualizes that all his moves and actions are precisely examined and the (liberal) media and pro-gun control groups will keep calling him out on his insincerity or false promises. The WT, however, illustrates its story with a picture of Trump sitting on a table with other people. The shot is taken from a perspective that makes the viewer feel as if he was at the table with them. This underlines that civilians are of course part of the debate and that the president does not have to hide anything. The men both visible in the right of the picture look serious which underlines the seriousness of the topic. The woman in the middle is talking to him, looking into his eyes and her hands are stretched out towards him. Mister Trump sits on the left of the picture. Only his head is tilted towards the woman. His body posture with the folded arms gives him also an impression of stubbornness, however, the

impression of determination and steadfastness prevails. This is the continuance and visualisation of Trump's portrayed reliability and loyalty in the text.

The third and last category which will be analyzed is the general framing of gun control. Especially the development of gun control debates in the wake of the frequent protests for stricter gun laws are an empirically very interesting example to analyze a potential ideological influence on the representation of gun control. A closer look will be given to the WT article "Women's March leader works behind scenes on 'student-led' Parkland gun-control protest" (V. Richardson, 2018) and to the NYT article "Highlights: Students Call for Action Across Nation; Florida Lawmakers Fail to Take Up Assault Rifle Bill March For Our Lives gets help from activists" (Turkewitz & Hartocollis, 2018). Both articles thematize the from the MSD High School survivors' student-led protests for stricter gun laws in either Tallahassee (NYT) or the March for Our Lives (WT). The NYT also describes assault rifles to be the newest target of the gun-control campaign, writes about Trump's proposal to ban bump stocks, highlights the great support for the nationwide protests against gun violence from several big-name Hollywood stars and emphasizes how much easier it is to get an AR-15 rifle instead of a handgun pushing again towards a motion to ban semi-automatic gun rifles (Turkewitz & Hartocollis, 2018). The WT, however, only focuses on their suspicion that the nationwide protests against gun violence and for more gun control were not initiated or at least not totally organized by the students but by left-winged activists who only instrumentalize the kids (V. Richardson, 2018). The WT's quote "The students [...] are receiving help from seasoned left-winged activists." (V. Richardson, 2018) or the highlighting of the involvement of "[...] experienced political hands" (V. Richardson, 2018) suggests that only the influence of liberals has led the kids to protest for gun control because the idea was planted in their head. Additionally, it again emphasizes the clear distinction between Republicans and Democrats.

The WT further distances itself from the liberal media accusing them that "[...] the news coverage repeatedly has depicted the effort as homegrown" (V. Richardson, 2018) highlighting that the WT, however, is quite skeptical. After a protester's short chance to speak and to emphasize how students lead and organize all the protests themselves the newspaper simply writes "Not everyone is buying it." (V. Richardson, 2018). The paper also mentions the conservative Peter Heck who was "blasting the 'sick exploitation' of the teens and describing it politically motivated 'child abuse'." (V. Richardson, 2018). The WT also quotes him saying that "[M]ajor media anchors are [...] exploiting them for one reason: they are saying what media progressives want said'" (V. Richardson, 2018) proving again the alleged liberal agenda to instrumentalize the kids for their own cause. The NYT, in contrast, stresses that it is the children's own will to protest. In total opposition to the theory that they are being instrumentalized by left-winged activists the NYT states that "[...] several Stoneman Douglas

High students who survived the attack have been vocal about wanting change since the shooting.” (Turkewitz & Hartocollis, 2018). As a reason for this motivation the newspaper names “[...] their raw, emotional reactions in the immediate aftermath of the shooting.” (Turkewitz & Hartocollis, 2018). The newspaper focuses on the children as main active agents in this context. They are “[...] calling out their elders for inaction.” Channeling “[...] their grief into legislative change.” (Turkewitz & Hartocollis, 2018). Their aim is to “[...] convinc[e] lawmakers to pass a slate of gun control bills in a state that has been among the friendliest to firearm owners in the nation.” (Turkewitz & Hartocollis, 2018). The portrayal of the students’ aim and efforts in the WT is depicted through citations of left-winged media outlets such as “BuzzFeed’s ‘Here’s What It’s Like at The Headquarters of the Teens Working to Stop Mass Shootings.’” (V. Richardson, 2018) The sincerity of the statements, however, is indirectly questioned due to the WT’s indications that all these liberal media outlets do not seem to mention the alleged outside groups and “[...] experienced political hands” (V. Richardson, 2018) involved in the movement for stricter gun laws. The WT’s quotes such as “Not everyone is buying it” (V. Richardson, 2018) or “As far as critics are concerned [...]” (V. Richardson, 2018) are not directly passive constructions but the choice of words is very vague and might be a way to conceal that only a few share this opinion. Generally, it can be noted that the WT tries to frame the efforts of stricter gun control as a manipulation of left-winged activists while the NYT emphasizes and emotionalizes these efforts by highlighting that the surviving kids are now fighting for gun control to save their and other children’s lives in the future. This coincides with their general political tendencies and ideologies.

Similar to the focal points of the text the pictures from the NYT article show the young teenagers in action. In the first image the recipient sees kids who sit in a bus. Their facial expressions are hopeful and excited which visualizes their hope to be able to substantially change the gun legislations. It portrays their excitement to finally take measures into their own hands to make a difference. The second picture shows male students holding up signs which read “Gun Control NOW”. Their faces are serious and determined emphasizing their determination to fight the currently weak gun control in America. The third picture shows a big crowd of people and the press next to a bus. The picture is only slightly taken from an above position which gives again an impression to be part of this movement (Turkewitz & Hartocollis, 2018). The only picture of the WT, on the other hand, shows a big crowd of people standing in front of a building protesting against gun violence. A lot of people are holding up signs but the perspective does not allow the viewer to read what is written on them which again could be a way to dim the importance of the movement and protests. The picture is taken from a bird’s-eye view which symbolizes the detachment from the movement highlighting the newspaper’s dissociation from the protests which was also clearly apparent in the text.

## **8 Conclusion of the Results and Outlook on Further Possible Studies**

The recent mass shooting in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida and the resulting debate on gun control forced the two major political parties in the United States – the Republicans and the Democrats – to spin the public opinion in their own favor. An important ally for these efforts proves to be the mass media which shapes the public opinion with the aid of media agenda setting and framing by highlighting or obscuring certain information. The analysis of articles on the shooting from the newspaper The Washington Times – which is known for its right-winged tendencies – and The New York Times – a liberal newspaper – showed the great extent of the influence of their ideology which they share with their respective affiliated parties. The structural analysis showed that the prioritization and distribution of topics did mirror the concept of agenda setting. The prominent placement and high amount of media coverage on certain topics – such as the frequent mental health frames in the WT and the gun control frames in the NYT – put a focus on different aspects of the story to influence the perception of the audience. There was a slight shift of the coverage's focus to gun control related topics and reporting on the protests towards the end of the seven-day period. The NYT focused on these frames to further push the Democrats' agenda to strict gun legislations. The WT, however, was mainly forced to cover the topic due to the high demand and the pressure from the nationwide protests. This proves the great influence discursive events can have on discourse.

In the case of the framing of the cause of the shooting, the analysis confirmed previous findings from earlier studies. Similar to the conclusions drawn by Jashinsky, Magnusson, Hanson & Barnes (2017) the analysis showed that Democrats and the liberal newspaper NYT did indeed tend to blame the government rather than individuals for the mass shooting. Furthermore, the analysis confirmed further results from Joslyn & Haider-Markel's study (2013) that Democrats – and in this case the NYT – mostly blame political forces and the shooter's environment for the mass shooting. The NYT constantly articulates the frustration of the people caused by the inactivity of the (Republican-controlled) State House and focuses on the shooter's disruptive childhood and his environmental influences. Also, in the case of the WT's coverage on the causes of the mass shooting previous results could be affirmed. Comparable to Joslyn & Haider-Markel's (2013) findings the WT also focused on the individual gunman and his mental health as the main cause for the shooting. Some WT articles surprised with a more balanced reporting on the event by occasionally highlighting both perspectives on blame attributions. Those articles, however, cannot be included into the consideration whether the newspapers' political tendency is evident in their reporting because they have been composed by the Associated press – a U.S. based, unbiased news agency. Besides that, the framing of

blame attributions from both newspapers with a stronger focus on mental health issues in the WT and an obvious focal point on gun issues in the NYT proves a strong ideological influence on the news coverage of both papers.

Regarding the framing of prevention methods, it was especially notable that both newspapers try to portray Republican or Democratic politicians and the president in an either positive or negative light depending on the papers' respective political affiliation since different depictions of the efforts or inactivities of politicians do have a great influence on the public perception. Particularly the authors' linguistic choices and the highlighting and obscuring of their efforts or inactivities prove the influence of political tendencies and ideological beliefs of the newspapers. Even though the WT did indeed focus more on mental health-related prevention methods the newspaper also thematized certain (in the words of the NYT rather modest) gun restrictions. The difference to the framing of prevention proposals from the NYT – that mostly concentrated on gun restrictions – is that the right-winged idea of gun policies is predominantly in context with restrictions for mentally ill people.

Lastly, in the context of the framing of gun control – as well as throughout the coverage – it was strikingly evident that the newspapers try to clearly delimit the own favored party from the other. Frequent binary oppositions highlighted the differentiation between “us” versus “the Others”. This again proves the newspapers' strong identification with their respective parties. The praise (NYT) or the maligning (WT) of the protests and simultaneously of the efforts for stricter gun policies and gun control coincides with the newspapers' and their respective affiliated party's beliefs. Especially, the WT attempts to discredit the real origins and motives of the protests by highlighting right-winged conspiracies. These observations also confirm an extended ideological influence on the coverage of gun control.

Similar to previous research the analysis uncovered that the focal points in the discourse on mass shootings are mental illness and gun violence. However, while previous studies mainly concentrated on the reception of the different frames in the representation of mass shootings the results of this study uncovered how opposing news outlets actually frame these kinds of events. Previous research that was mainly focused on quantitative analyses and liberal news outlets was lacking a deeper and qualitative insight into possible differences in the framing of mass shootings – in particular, possible differences between the framing of two ideologically opposing newspapers. The method of Critical Discourse Analysis expanded the empirical knowledge and added a new qualitative perspective. The study examined these extensive differences between newspapers with opposing political tendencies and uncovered exactly how conservative and liberal newspapers use diverging media representations to their advantage and in favor of their ideologies.

The findings, in general, support the before mentioned theoretical background that the media intentionally highlights and obscures certain information in order to promote specific viewpoints. The results show that ideologies and especially the political tendencies of news outlets highly influence the way an issue or event is being portrayed. As stated by the concept of hegemony – which is a core element of ideology – dominant groups – in this case the powerful and widely read newspapers and their respective political parties they support – do determine ruling ideas and establish a general consent. This is done with the aid of framing certain information in favor of their ideology. Additionally, the findings expand the quite limited concept of Media Agenda Setting. Even though news outlets do emphasize particular aspects of a story in their own favor the findings showed that due to public pressure they are also forced to thematize subjects that are in contradiction to their beliefs which would under normal circumstances be neglected.

However, media outlets simply take these unfavorable topics out of context and frame it according to their beliefs with the aid of negative connotations or effectively distance themselves from the covered subject by continuously stressing binary oppositions. The analysis proved that especially the emphasizing of these binary oppositions and stereotypes which are often used in discourses help to stress different stances of two opposing groups. The results of the study support the assumption that political belief systems, political tendencies and the ideological beliefs of financiers have an immense impact on the practices of media outlets and the news coverage.

Nevertheless, it is important to note a few limitations of the study. Inherent to a qualitative analysis also the method CDA is rather random and influenced by subjective assessments. The selection of typical articles or the interpretation of texts is often based on a personal opinion rather than facts. To ensure an intersubjectively reasonable selection and categorization and interpretation of the texts it could have improved the objectivity and reliability of the results to include several researchers to repeat the single steps. It should also be noted that the sample for this study is only an extract from the whole body of publications about the mass shooting in Florida. Even though a bigger sample would have exceeded the scope of this work more articles would have made the analysis more representable and increased the validity. Thus, further studies could investigate the media coverage of the Florida mass shooting published within a wider time frame and with a bigger sample. Furthermore, it could be also interesting to focus on the reception of the media coverage from opposing newspapers on the shooting in the Marjory Douglas Stoneman High School and analyze possible changes in the public opinion that might have been affected by the ideologically influenced framing of the nationwide protests against gun violence.

## 9 References

- Althusser, L. (2004). Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. In J. Rvkin & M. Ryan (Eds.), *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (Second Edi, pp. 693–702). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Appelbaum, P. S., & Swanson, M. D. J. W. (2010). Law & Psychiatry: Gun Laws and Mental Illness: How Sensible Are the Current Restrictions? *Psychiatric Services, 61*(7), 652–654.
- Balsamo, M., & Gurman, S. (2018). Did FBI miss a warning before Florida high school shooting? *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/16/did-fbi-miss-a-warning-before-florida-high-school-/>
- Barnes, M. D., Hanson, C. L., Novilla, L. M. B., Meacham, A. T., McIntyre, E., & Erickson, B. C. (2008). Analysis of Media Agenda Setting During and After Hurricane Katrina: Implications for Emergency Preparedness, Disaster Response, and Disaster Policy. *American Journal of Public Health, 98*(4), 604–610. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2007.112235>
- Baumer, D. C., & Gold, H. J. (1995). Party Images and the American Electorate. *American Politics Quarterly, 23*(1), 33–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X9502300102>
- Bennett, W. L. (1990). Toward a theory of press state relations in the United States. *Journal of Communication, 40*(2), 103–125.
- Bidgood, J., Harmon, A., Mitch, S., & Salam, M. (2018). The Names and Faces of the Florida School Shooting Victims. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/us/florida-school-victims.html>
- Blake, A. (2018). Donald Trump Jr. “likes” tweets smearing Florida school shooting survivor. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/20/donald-trump-jr-likes-tweets-smearing-florida-scho/>
- Boyer, D. (2018a). Mental health eyed after expelled student killed 17 at Florida high school. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/14/shooting-high-school-florida/>
- Boyer, D. (2018b). Trump maps out plan to prevent school shootings after Florida tragedy. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/22/donald-trump-maps-out-plan-to-prevent-school-shoot/>
- Braybrooke, D. (1967). Ideology. In P. Edwards (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, vol. IV* (pp. 124–127). New York: Macmillan & Free Press.
- Brewer, M. D. (2009). *Party Images in the American Electorate*. New York: Routledge.
- Burch, A. D. S., & Mazzei, P. (2018). As Shots Ring Out, a Student Texts: ‘If I Don’t Make It, I Love You’. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/14/us/florida-school-shooting-scene.html>
- Burch, A. D. S., Robles, F., & Mazzei, P. (2018). Florida Agency Investigated Nikolas Cruz After Violent Social Media Posts. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/17/us/nikolas-cruz-florida-shooting.html>

- Burns, A. (2018). Prominent Republican Donor Issues Ultimatum on Assault Weapons. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/17/us/prominent-republican-donor-issues-ultimatum-on-assault-weapons.html>
- Callaghan, K., & Schnell, F. (2001). Assessing the Democratic Debate: How the News Media Frame Elite Policy Discourse. *Political Communication*, 18(2), 183–213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/105846001750322970>
- Chasmar, J. (2018). Parkland shooting survivor Brandon Minoff slams media for “politicizing this tragedy.” *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/21/brandon-minoff-parkland-shooting-survivor-media-po/>
- Chuck, E., Johnson, A., & Siemaszko, C. (2018). 17 killed in mass shooting at high school in Parkland, Florida. *NBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/police-respond-shooting-parkland-florida-high-school-n848101>
- Chyi, H. I., & McCombs, M. (2004). Media Saliency and the Process of Framing: Coverage of the Columbine School Shootings. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81(1), 22–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900408100103>
- Culler, J. (1976). *Saussure*. London: Fontana.
- Dearen, J. (2018). Students shaken by shooting focus on stopping gun violence. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/20/fighting-gun-violence-after-shooting-gives-teens-p/>
- Diekmann, A. (2007). *Empirische Sozialforschung. Grundlagen, Methoden, Anwendungen*. Hamburg: Rowohlt.
- Dubenko, A. (2018). Right and Left React to the Gun Control Debate After the Florida Shooting. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/us/politics/right-and-left-react-to-the-gun-control-debate-after-the-florida-shooting.html>
- Entman, R. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58.
- Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical Discourse Analysis. In *Discourse as Social Interaction (Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction. Vol. 2)* (pp. 258–284). London: Sage.
- Fandos, N., & Kaplan, T. (2018). Frustration Grows as Congress Shows Inability to Pass Even Modest Gun Measures. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/us/politics/congress-inaction-guns.html>
- Farrington, B., Replogle, J., & Lush, T. (2018). Florida survivors, lawmakers on collision course over guns. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/19/students-head-to-florida-capital-to-press-for-gun-/>
- Fausset, R., & Kovalski, S. F. (2018). Nikolas Cruz, Florida Shooting Suspect, Showed ‘Every Red Flag.’ *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/us/nikolas-cruz-florida-shooting.html>
- Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (1991). *Social Cognition* (2nd editio). New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Gans, H. (1980). *Deciding what's news: A study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*. New York: Pantheon.
- Gentzkow, M., & Shapiro, J. M. (2010). What Drives Media Slant? Evidence from U.S. Daily Newspapers. *Econometrica*, 78(1), 35–71.
- Gladu, A. (2016). Was Columbine The First School Shooting In The United States? Sue Klebold Finally Speaks Out On The Tragedy. Retrieved May 20, 2018, from <https://www.bustle.com/articles/141151-was-columbine-the-first-school-shooting-in-the-united-states-sue-klebold-finally-speaks-out-on>
- Goldman, A., & Mazzei, P. (2018). YouTube Comment Seen as Early Warning in Shooting Left Little for F.B.I. to Investigate. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/us/politics/nikolas-cruz-youtube-comment-fbi.html>
- Gostin, L. O., & Record, K. L. (2011). Dangerous people or dangerous weapons: access to firearms for persons with mental illness. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 305(20), 2108–2109.
- Gramsci, A. (1968). *Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Green, E. L. (2018). DeVos and Democrats Urge Congress to Hold Hearings on School Shootings. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/17/us/politics/devos-democrats-school-shootings.html>
- Groseclose, T. (2011). *Left Turn. How Liberal Media Bias Distorts the American Mind*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Grynbaum, M. M. (2018). A Familiar Editorial Split After Parkland Shooting, but Not Everywhere. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/16/business/media/a-familiar-editorial-split-after-parkland-shooting-but-not-everywhere.html>
- Haag, M., & Kovalski, S. F. (2018). Nikolas Cruz, Florida Shooting Suspect, Described as a 'Troubled Kid.' *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/14/us/nikolas-cruz-florida-shooting.html>
- Haider-Markel, D. P., & Joslyn, M. R. (2001). Gun Policy, Opinion, Tragedy, and Blame Attribution: The Conditional Influence of Issue Frames. *The Journal of Politics*, 63(2), 520–543.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.
- Happer, C., & Philo, G. (2013). The Role of the Media in the Construction of Public Belief and Social Change. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 1(1), 321–336. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v1i1.96>
- Herzog, B. (2018). Marx's critique of ideology for discourse analysis: from analysis of ideologies to social critique. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2018.1457549>
- Hilgartner, S., & Bosk, C. L. (1988). The Rise and Fall of Social Problems: A Public Arenas Model. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(1), 53–78. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228951>
- Iyengar, S. (1990). Framing Responsibility for Political Issues: The Case of Poverty. *Political Behavior*, 12(1), 19–40.

- Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Iyengar, S. (2005). Speaking of Values: The Framing of American Politics. *The Forum*, 3(3), Article 7.
- Jacobs, L. R., & Shapiro, R. Y. (2000). *Politicians don't Pander. Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Jäger, S., & Maier, F. (2010). Theoretical and methodological aspects of Foucauldian critical discourse analysis and dispositive analysis. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (Second, pp. 34–61). London: Sage.
- Jashinsky, J. M., Magnusson, B., Hanson, C., & Barnes, M. (2017). Media Agenda Setting Regarding Gun Violence before and after a Mass Shooting. *Front Public Health*, 4(291). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2016.00291>
- Joslyn, M. R., & Haider-Markel, D. P. (2000). Guns in the Ballot Box: Information, Groups, and Opinion in Ballot Initiative Campaigns. *American Politics Quarterly*, 28(3), 355–378.
- Joslyn, M. R., & Haider-Markel, D. P. (2013). The Politics of Causes: Mass Shootings and the Cases of the Virginia Tech and Tucson Tragedies. *Social Science Quarterly*, 94(2), 410–423. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2012.00894.x>
- Joslyn, M. R., & Haider-Markel, D. P. (2017). Gun Ownership and Self-Serving Attributions for Mass Shooting Tragedies. *Social Science Quarterly*, 98(2), 429–442. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12420>
- Karp, A. (2011). Estimating Civilian Owned Firearms. *Small Arms Survey Research Notes*, 9, 1–4. Retrieved from [http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/H-Research\\_Notes/SAS-Research-Note-9.pdf](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/H-Research_Notes/SAS-Research-Note-9.pdf)
- Lamnek, S. (2005). *Qualitative Sozialforschung*. Weinheim: Beltz PVU.
- Lawrence, R. G. (2000). Game-Framing the Issues: Tracking the Strategy Frame in Public Policy News. *Political Communication*, 17(2), 93–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/105846000198422>
- Lawrence, R. G., & Birkland, T. A. (2004). Guns, Hollywood, and school safety: Defining the school-shooting problem across public arenas. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85, 1193–1207.
- Leitch, V. B. (2001). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company.
- Leonhardt, D. (2018). There's Reason for Hope on Guns. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/19/opinion/florida-shooting-gun-control.html>
- Link, J. (1983). Was ist und was bringt Diskurstaktik. *KulturRRvolution*, 2, 60–66.
- Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). *How To Do. Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage.
- Maguire, B., Weatherby, G. A., & Mathers, R. A. (2002). Network News Coverage of School Shootings. *Social Science Journal*, 39(3), 465–470. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0362-3319\(02\)00201-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0362-3319(02)00201-X)
- Marx, K. (1965). *The German Ideology*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1970). *The German Ideology*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176–187.
- McGinty, E. E., Webster, D. W., & Barry, C. L. (2013). Effects of News Media Messages About Mass Shootings on Attitudes Toward Persons With Serious Mental Illness and Public Support for Gun Control Policies. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 170(5), 494–501. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2013.13010014>
- McGinty, E. E., Webster, D. W., Jarlenski, M., & Colleen, L. B. (2014). News Media Framing of Serious Mental Illness and Gun Violence in the United States, 1997-2012. *American Journal of Public Health*, 104(3), 406–413.
- McQuail, D. (1992). *Media Performance. Mass Communication and the Public Interest*. London: Sage.
- Miller, S. A. (2018). Trump to meet with families of Fla. mass shooting victims. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/16/trump-meet-families-fla-mass-shooting-victims/>
- Mo Jang, S. (2018). Mass Shootings Backfire: The Boomerang Effects of Death Concerns on Policy Attitudes. *Media Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2017.1421471>
- Mogashoa, T. (2014). Understanding Critical Discourse Analysis in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education*, 1(7), 104–113.
- Morton, V. (2018). Nikolas Cruz arrested in Parkland, Florida, high school shooting. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/14/nicolas-cruz-arrested-parkland-florida-high-school/>
- Mueller, B. (2018). Limiting Access to Guns for Mentally Ill Is Complicated. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/us/gun-access-mentally-ill.html>
- Muschert, G. W. (2009). Frame-changing in the media coverage of a school shooting: The rise of Columbine as a national concern. *The Social Science Journal*, 46(1), 164–170. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2008.12.014>
- Muschert, G. W., & Carr, D. (2006). Media Salience and Frame Changing across Events: Coverage of Nine School Shootings, 1997-2001. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 83(4), 747–766. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900608300402>
- Oppel Jr., R. A. (2018). In Florida, Extraordinary Obstacles for Changes to Gun Laws. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/17/us/florida-gun-laws.html>
- Orgad, S. (2012). *Media Representation and the Global Imagination*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Paine, T. (1894). *The Writings of Thomas Paine, Vol. 1*. New York: G.P. Putnam's sons.
- Parker, K., Horowitz, J. M., Igielnik, R., Oliphant, B., & Brown, A. (2017). America's Complex Relationship with Guns. An in-depth look at the attitudes and experiences of U.S. adults. Retrieved May 1, 2018, from <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/06/06151541/Guns-Report-FOR-WEBSITE-PDF-6-21.pdf>

- Persons, S. (2018). Marjory Stoneman Douglas student hopeful Florida will act on gun legislation. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/21/marjory-stoneman-douglas-student-hopeful-florida-w/>
- Pew Research Center. (2015). A Deep Dive Into Party Affiliation. Sharp Differences by Race, Gender, Generation, Education. Retrieved May 1, 2018, from <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/4-7-2015-Party-ID-release.pdf>
- Pew Research Center. (2017). The Partisan Divide on Political Values Grows Even Wider. Sharp shifts among Democrats on aid to needy, race, immigration. Retrieved May 1, 2018, from <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/10/05162647/10-05-2017-Political-landscape-release.pdf>
- Pines, C. L. (1993). *Ideology and False Consciousness. Marx and his Historical Progenitors*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Reeves, J. (2018a). Florida school shooting victims torn from community fabric. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/19/school-shooting-massacre-victims-torn-from-communi/>
- Reeves, J. (2018b). School shooting massacre victims torn from community fabric. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/16/high-school-shooting-claimed-students-and-teachers/>
- Richardson, B. (2018). Ex-MTV reporter blames Florida school shooting on lack of abortion. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/19/ex-mtv-reporter-blames-fla-massacre-lack-abortion/>
- Richardson, V. (2018). Women's March leader works behind scenes on "student-led" Parkland gun-control protest. March For Our Lives gets help from activists. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/21/womens-march-leader-works-behind-scenes-on-student/>
- Rogers, K. (2018). After Florida Shooting, Trump Focuses on Mental Health Over Guns. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/us/politics/trump-florida-shooting-guns.html>
- Rogers, K. (2018). Trump Visits Florida Hospital That Treated School Shooting Victims. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/16/us/politics/trump-parkland.html>
- Scher, B. (2018). Why the NRA Always Wins. Retrieved April 20, 2018, from <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/02/19/why-the-nra-always-wins-217028>
- Schildkraut, J., & Muschert, G. W. (2013). Violent Media, Guns, and Mental Illness: The Three Ring Circus of Causal Factors for School Massacres, as Related in Media Discourse. *Fast Capitalism*, 10(1).
- Schildkraut, J., & Muschert, G. W. (2014). Media Salience and the Framing of Mass Murder in Schools: A Comparison of the Columbine and Sandy Hook Massacres. *Homicide*

- Studies*, 18(1), 23–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088767913511458>
- Schulman, A. N. (2017, November 17). How Not to Cover Mass Shootings. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-not-to-cover-mass-shootings-1510939088>
- Seale, C. (2018). Sampling. In C. Seale (Ed.), *Researching Society and Culture* (4th editio, pp. 210–235). London: Sage.
- Seate, A. A., Cohen, E. L., Fujioka, Y., & Hoffner, C. (2012). Exploring Gun Ownership as a Social Identity to Understanding the Perceived Media Influence of the Virginia Tech News Coverage on Attitudes toward Gun Control Policy. *Communication Research Reports*, 29(2), 130–139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2012.667773>
- Seliger, M. (1976). *Ideology and Politics*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Shear, M. D. (2018). Trump Moves to Regulate ‘Bump Stock’ Devices. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/20/us/politics/trump-bump-stocks.html>
- Shoemaker, P. J. (1987). Building a Theory of News Content: A Synthesis of Current Approaches. *Journalism Monographs*, 103, 1–36.
- Siapera, E. (2010). *Cultural Diversity and Global Media. The Mediation of Difference*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Simon, H. (1957). *Models of Man*. New York: Wiley.
- Sparrow, B. H. (1999). *Uncertain Guardians: The News Media as a Political Institution*. Baltimore: JHU Press.
- Spencer, T., & Kennedy, K. (2018). Former student opens fire at Florida high school, killing 17. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/14/shooting-at-florida-high-school-no-of-wounded-uncl/>
- Spencer, T., Kennedy, K., & Lush, T. (2018). Florida gunman had extra ammo at school, fired for 3 minutes. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/15/florida-high-school-shooting-plunges-city-into-mou/>
- Stewart, E. (2018). The NRA sued to block Florida’s new gun law hours after it was passed. Retrieved May 1, 2018, from <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/3/10/17103874/florida-shooting-nra-gun-control-age>
- Swoyer, A. (2018). Rush Limbaugh calls for concealed carry in schools after Florida shooting. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/18/rush-limbaugh-calls-concealed-carry-schools-after-/>
- Takenaga, L. (2018). ‘Is This the Day I Die?’: Teachers React to the Florida School Shooting. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/20/reader-center/teachers-florida-shooting.html>
- Tankard, J. W. (2001). The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing. In D. Reese, O. H. Gandy, & A. E. Grant (Eds.), *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and our Understanding of the Social World* (pp. 95–106). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

- The Associated Press. (2018a). The Latest: Stoneman Douglas students greeted in Tallahassee. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/20/the-latest-florida-students-walk-out-in-show-of-so/>
- The Associated Press. (2018b). The Latest: Trump visits hospital, meets shooting survivors. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/16/the-latest-florida-democrat-inspired-by-outspoken-/>
- Thompson, J. B. (1984). *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Turkewitz, J., Burch, A. D. S., & Stack, L. (2018). A Mother Weeps for Her Angel: 'I Hope She Didn't Die for Nothing'. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/us/a-mother-weeps-for-her-angel-i-hope-she-didnt-die-for-nothing.html>
- Turkewitz, J., & Hartocollis, A. (2018). Highlights: Students Call for Action Across Nation; Florida Lawmakers Fail to Take Up Assault Rifle Bill. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/20/us/gun-control-florida-shooting.html>
- Turkewitz, J., Mazzei, P., & Burch, A. D. S. (2018). 'How Did This Happen?': Grief and Fury After Florida Shooting. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/16/us/florida-shooting.html>
- Turkewitz, J., Stevens, M., & Bailey, J. M. (2018). Emma González Leads a Student Outcry on Guns: 'This Is the Way I Have to Grieve.' *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/18/us/emma-gonzalez-florida-shooting.html>
- van Dijk, T. A. (2005). Critical Discourse Analysis. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp. 352–371). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470753460.ch19>
- Vernick, J. S., Rutkow, L. R., Webster, D. W., & Teret, S. P. (2011). Changing the constitutional landscape for firearms: the US Supreme Court's recent Second Amendment decisions. *American Journal of Public Health, 101*(11), 2012–2026.
- Waugaman, E. (2016). Understanding America's Obsession with Guns: How Did We Get Where We Are? *PSYCHOANALYTIC INQUIRY, 36*(6), 440–453. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07351690.2016.1192381>
- Zaller, J. (1992). *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.