

New Year, COVID-19, and Political Public Relations: A Mixed Methods Frame Analysis of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Crisis Communication on Twitter

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This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to analyze the crisis communication frames in the COVID-19 tweets (n=459) of Gov. Andrew Cuomo. Findings indicate a prevalence of leadership tweets (29%), action (25%) tweets, severity (17.8%), reassurance (15%), and collaboration (7.6%) tweets. To explain these tweets, we conducted a qualitative frame analysis. We observed that the governor's tweets portrayed him as a leader on top of issues and committed to equality by espousing three frames: Vaccination efforts, pandemic impact, and

relief, as well as hands-on leadership. He displayed authenticity through his dominant use of statistics, bilingual tweets, and rhetorical questions to display authenticity. Findings contribute to the literature on using social media in crisis communication by extending a mixed methods approach to study a popular phenomenon in the field.

Keywords: COVID-19, Twitter, framing, US, governor

Ever since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, over two million deaths have been reported globally (“WHO COVID,” 2021), prompting numerous governmental actions from key political leaders. In the US, a country that has experienced one of the highest infections and mortalities during the pandemic (Baccini & Brodeur, 2021), political leaders at the federal, state, and local levels have been directly involved in managing the pandemic in their respective jurisdictions. Communication has been crucial in the pandemic control initiatives of governors, in which social media has played a vital role as Lee and Basnyat (2013) posit that “effective communication from governments and health agencies to the public is a key component of pandemic response” (p. 119). This communication between political leaders and their public to achieve an intended goal has been described by Strömbäck and Kioussis (2011) as

political public relations, which they define as “the management process which an organization or individual actor for political purposes, through purposeful communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals” (p. 8). Political public relations were rife among political leaders across the globe, particularly in the US, during the pandemic.

Over the past decade, social media have become the backbone of political public relations, featuring prominently in the strategic communication tactics of most politicians (Hendricks & Denton, 2010; Jungherr, 2016). Some scholars have argued that social media is crucial to politicians because members of the community pay attention and give prominence to information politicians post on social media based on their unfiltered qualities and authenticity compared to the traditional media (Enli & Rosenberg, 2018; Enli & Skogerbo, 2013). Though politicians employ different social media platforms to achieve their political goals, such as gaining compliance from citizens in times of crisis, Twitter has been described as the most popular social media platform among politicians (Coe & Griffin, 2020; Eriksson & Olsson, 2016). During the pandemic, political leaders have resorted to Twitter as one of the primary sources for citizen updates (Rufai & Bunce, 2020).

Information communicated by political leaders in times of crisis, such as the pandemic, is crucial to the affected or endangered population as it shapes their attitudes and sets the tone for political discussions among the citizenry (Birkland, 1997; Schneider & Jordan, 2016). This provokes the thought of understanding how crucial political actors, such as governors, who have also been critical during the pandemic, communicate to the public on Twitter. A US governor who made the news for managing the COVID-19 pandemic was New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo. The governor was praised for his leadership in keeping his cool and restoring normalcy when his state recorded one of the highest COVID-19 infection and mortality rates (Scher, 2020; Strauss & Singh, 2020). His effective management of the pandemic made his name central to the COVID-19 conversation in the US, making him an essential candidate for this current study, which explores how the governor employed Twitter to communicate during the pandemic. In addition, he can be described as the image of leadership in conversations around COVID-

19 in the US. Though a lot has happened since this paper about Gov. Andrew Cuomo's sexual harassment scandals and resultant resignation and allegations about him manipulating COVID-19 infection figures, his achievements in managing the pandemic cannot be relegated. Our goal in this current study is to analyze how the governor employed Twitter. Ultimately, this recent study will contribute to knowledge in political public relations and crisis communication by providing insights into Twitter communication on the novel COVID-19 pandemic considering the ever-evolving political climate.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media and Crisis Communication

Crisis communication has been crucial in political public relations and organizational communications subfields for several decades. Fearn-Banks (2016) defines a crisis as "a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting the organization, company, or industry and its publics, products, services, or good name" (p.16). In the political space, a leader's inability to effectively communicate during a crisis can cost them their reelection or lead to their resignation. Heath and Palenchar (2009) argue that crisis communication is "the enactment of the narrative of control (or at least its appearance) in the face of high uncertainty to win external audiences' confidence in ways that are ethical" (p. 295). This suggests that how leaders communicate in times of crisis can yield political capital or dividends, ultimately improving their re-electability. Other scholars have advanced similar arguments that effective crisis communication mitigates the harm crisis can cause an organization's image (Coombs, 2007; Schneider & Jordan, 2016). So, considering their implications, the way crisis communication is framed and the platform used to communicate is crucial. Social media have become indispensable crisis communication tools that enhance speedy content development, dissemination, framing, and storytelling relevant to various stages of crisis management (Liu & Kim, 2011; Ruggiero & Vos, 2014).

Also, social media presents political actors with the luxury of sharing quick information at different stages of the crisis. It also presents them with opportunities to address issues that affect their image at any stage of a crisis (Riddell & Fenner, 2021;

Spence et al., 2015). Despite its popularity as a crisis communication tool, there are still calls for further research into how different political actors use social media during crises to provide deeper insights, particularly on Twitter (Eriksson & Olsson, 2016; Rufai & Bunce, 2020). This position is reinforced by further arguments about how dynamic social media can be to government officials, whose roles are synonymous with managing various crises that have repercussions for the larger society (Branicki & Agyei, 2015; Kaigo, 2012). The novel nature of the COVID-19 pandemic provides a unique opportunity to advance this tradition of scholarship. Crisis communication on social media is crucial for political actors and important to individual citizens affected by the crisis and recipients of crisis information. Social media serves as a critical fact-checking source of information during crises and a way to effectively disseminate actionable information (Day et al., 2019; Sutton et al., 2011). Similarly, other scholars argue that millennials use social media as their primary source of news (Fenner & Piotrowski, 2018). These arguments indicate that crisis communication on social media has become an integral part of culture because it plays a central role for both senders and receivers of crisis information. This study will expand existing knowledge on framing theory and crisis communication in the political arena by employing a mixed-methods approach.

Authenticity in Crisis Communication

Authenticity has been identified as vital to computer-mediated crisis communication (Coleman & Blumler, 2009). Particularly on social media, authentic crisis communication breeds leadership, trust, and confidence in a politician's ability to manage a crisis (Brønn, 2010; Sisson & Bowen, 2017). Authentic rhetoric is characterized by spontaneity and unrehearsed speech or writing (Montgomery, 2001). This present study relies on a classic definition of authenticity, propounded by Margaretten and Gaber (2014), who posit that authenticity is "Perceiving a communication as authentic requires the belief that what is heard is the truth, as a normal person would present it, without the spin and manipulation all too common in modern political communications" (p.330). This implies that we can conceptualize authentic communication as original, truthful, or believable, reminiscent of human-to-human communication, and devoid of spin or manipulation. Using this logic, authentic crisis communication on social media should evoke the thought of coming directly from the account owner. If that is the case, how can

that be achieved since social media masks the identity of the page or account manager? Scholars such as Campus (2010) and Mazzoleni (2014) have settled this confusion with their argument that message content, such as social media communication, is co-created between politicians and their communication strategists. We can argue that social media posts are considered communication coming from politicians from their position.

Despite studies on the display of authenticity (e.g., Montgomery, 2017), only a few have looked at how authenticity is displayed in times of crisis on social media. For instance, Margaretten and Gaber (2014) analyzed the Twitter feeds of Scottish Members of Parliament (MPs) to assess how they displayed authenticity in their crisis communication from 2008 to 2010. They observed that the MPs demonstrated authenticity in their crisis communication tweets by retweeting others that advanced their cause, included relevant hashtags, added URLs to most of their tweets, and tweeted @ other MPs, individuals, and organizations. The authors described this as a display of authenticity because it was reminiscent of what individuals would do naturally on social media any other day. Margaretten and Gaber's arguments equip crisis communication researchers with a framework to unpack authenticity on social media.

Sisson and Bowen (2017) analyzed how Starbucks UK authentically communicated while managing the tax crisis in 2012. The authors claim that Starbucks' use of the hashtag "# SpreadTheCheer" on Twitter to communicate genuinely and honestly was authentic. Juxtaposing their findings with Margaretten and Gaber indicates that using hashtags on social media in times of crisis can be described as authentic despite the difference in both case studies. So, considering the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in the new year, how would the then-governor of New York display authenticity in his tweets? This present study will analyze how Gov. Cuomo shows authenticity in his tweets by also considering other findings from what Sisson and Bowen (2017) and Margaretten and Gaber (2014) found.

Framing Theory

Framing has been described as the unconscious and conscious construction of text to elicit specific interpretations from the intended public (Fountain, 2017; Sikanku et al., 2019). Frames are analyzed using keywords, ideological dispositions, sentence constructions, phrases, and terminologies (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Entman, 1993;

Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Frame analysis can be conducted in both quantitative ways (theory-driven), qualitatively (thematic analysis or salience of keywords), or a combination of both (Fordjour & Sikanku, 2022; Lee & Basnyat, 2013; Sikanku et al., 2019). Hwang (2013) argues that the increasing use of social media in the political space has brought framing to politics and public relations, compared to previously being a traditional media tool.

The framing theory has been popular for studying crisis communication across various media platforms (Hallahan, 1999). How political leaders frame their crisis communication can ultimately impact affected citizens' attitudes and behavior (Hannigan, 2012). Scholars argue that how politicians frame their crisis communication can enhance their image, credibility, trust, and social capital among citizens or hurt their reputation (Clark & Nickels, 2020; Schneider & Jordan, 2016). This makes studying how politicians frame crisis communication relevant to political public relations. It gives us a better understanding of approaches employed by different politicians and their potential implications.

Health crises such as pandemics have been examined with the framing theory over the years. A school of thought has argued that health crises can be evaluated using five salient frames, which are: conflict, action, new evidence, reassurance, and uncertainty (Shih et al., 2008), which Liu and Kim (2011) describe as the health crisis frame (see table 1). Other scholars have also advanced five different frames synonymous with a health crisis which are: disease detection, disease prevention, healthcare services, lifestyle risk factors, and scientific discovery (Higgins et al., 2006; Umphrey, 2003), which Liu and Kim (2011) categorize as general crisis frames (see table 1). Lastly, Liu (2009) identified seven organizational frames in crisis communication which are: anniversary/memorial, collaboration, human interest, leadership, seasonal, severity, and special event, which Liu and Kim (2011) describe as disaster frames (see table 1). We believe there are similarities in the frames proposed by the three schools of thought, such as frames such as new evidence and scientific discovery, as they both suggest new findings. Considering the novel nature of the pandemic, we believe blending the suggested crisis communication frames to uncover the dominant ones in the governor's tweets would provide better insights. Hence,

we combined and modified the proposed frames by the three schools of thought. These four research questions anchored our analysis:

Research Questions

RQ1: What were the prevalent crisis communication frames in Gov. Cuomo's tweets in the new year of the pandemic?

RQ2: What were the salient themes in Gov. Cuomo's tweets in the new year of the pandemic?

RQ3: How did Gov. Cuomo display authenticity in his tweets in the new year of the pandemic?

RQ4. What were the dominant ways Gov. Cuomo displayed authenticity?

METHODS

We employed textual analysis for this current study. Textual analysis is a research approach that helps researchers make meaning of the text, identify salient themes, and evoke several meanings considering the polysemic nature of texts (Fiske, 2010; Sikanku et al., 2019). Since the focus of this study was to understand the governor's textual tweets (words-only), the textual analysis was ideal. We purposefully selected the governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo, based on his leadership in managing the pandemic in 2020. He was touted as one of the most influential governors during the pandemic ("The surge," 2020).

Mixed Methods Research

Mixed methods research has become an accepted approach in the social and pure sciences over the past few decades. Creswell et al. (2003) advance the argument that a study can be described as employing mixed methods when both the quantitative and qualitative approaches are involved in the data collection and/or analysis processes in one study or a series of studies. There are different mixed methods research designs; however, this study will highlight two: Concurrent triangulation and sequential explanatory. Concurrent triangulation has been described as a crucial research approach where researchers use different paradigms to corroborate and give more credence to research findings in a study (Creswell et al., 2003). The following steps anchor this approach; the quantitative and qualitative data are analyzed independently and integrated during interpretation (Creswell et al., 2003). Concurrent triangulation substantiates research

findings and allows researchers to collect and analyze data within a short-time-unlike other mixed method approaches.

Creswell et al. (2003) describe sequential explanatory as one of the most basic mixed methods design approaches. It involves collecting and analyzing quantitative or qualitative data before collecting and analyzing qualitative or quantitative data. Eventually, both methods are combined at the interpretation stage of the study. The sequential explanatory is underpinned by five steps: Quantitative/Qualitative collection, Quantitative/Qualitative data analysis, qualitative/quantitative data collection, qualitative/quantitative data analysis, and finally, interpretation of the entire analysis. Morse (1991) described this approach as ideal for using qualitative data to explain and interpret quantitative data and argues that it helps when unexpected quantitative results occur. This means it is efficient in ensuring reliability. Despite the favorable attributes of the sequential explanatory approach, one fundamental weakness hinders researchers from adopting this approach. Its disadvantage is displayed by the length of time involved in this design because it involves two separate phases and a combined interpretation approach that elongates a study. This current study is in two parts. We first employed concurrent triangulation to answer the first two questions and the sequential exploratory approach to answer the third and fourth questions.

Procedure of Analysis

We purposively sampled tweets from January to March 2021 because we contextualized this study in the first new year of the pandemic. From our experience in public relations and organizational communication, the new year is when organizations (including governments) set the tone for the year, so it is a time for rich insights into strategic communication. Ultimately, the governor tweeted 595 times from his official Twitter page (@NYGovCuomo); however, 459 of his tweets were related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which formed the basis of our analysis. In answering the first question, we modified and combined the health crisis frames advanced by Shih, Wijaya, and Brossard (2008) (to recap: disease detection, disease prevention, healthcare services, lifestyle risk factors, and scientific discovery); the general crisis frames espoused by Higgins, Naylor, Berry, O'Conner, and McLean (2006) and the disaster frames Umphrey (2003) (to recap: disease detection, disease prevention, healthcare services, lifestyle risk factors, and

scientific discovery); and the disaster frames advance by Liu (2009) (to recap: anniversary/memorial, collaboration, human interest, leadership, seasonal, severity, and special event). We assessed the prevalence of the above-mentioned crisis communication frames.

In doing that, the tweets were first categorized into these frames quantitatively by using the quantitative content analysis approach, which is one of the most efficient approaches to analyzing text in research, and it is frequently used to classify or explain the existence of something (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). Secondly, we did a qualitative frame analysis to analyze the salient themes to better understand the quantitative frames, which answered the second question. This is reminiscent of the approach employed by Sikanku et al. (2019) to study the President of Ghana's State of the Nation speech. We adopt Benoit et al.'s (1999) definition of a theme which is "a theme can comprise a short phrase or as long as several sentences" (p.49). Clark and Creswell (2008) argue that employing quantitative and qualitative approaches gives a study more depth. For the third and fourth questions, we used the same qualitative frame analysis to assess the display of authenticity in the governor's tweets. We adopted Margaretten and Gaber's (2014) definition of authenticity for our analysis (to recap: "Perceiving a communication as authentic requires the belief that what is heard is the truth, as a normal person would present it, without the spin and manipulation all too common in modern political communications"). Finally, we did a quantitative content analysis to assess the dominant frames of authenticity.

Reliability

To ensure reliability in our quantitative analyses, both researchers trained ourselves in understanding the (health crisis frames, the general crisis frames, and the disaster frames) and analyzed all the 459 COVID-related tweets. We employed Krippendorff's (2004) content analysis reliability test and arrived at the following Krippendorff values: 0.85 (health crisis frames), 0.90 (the general crisis frames), and 0.90 (the disaster frames).

Table 1
Crisis Communication Frames

Health crisis frames	
Action	Discusses any past or current organizations' crisis response actions
New evidence	Discusses discovery of new evidence that helps advance understanding of the crisis and/or the ability to quell the crisis
Reassurance	Messages instructing publics to not worry about the crisis by emphasizing readiness and/or successes of the organizations combating the crisis
Uncertainty	Discuss uncertainty in any aspect of the crisis including the cause, the cure, and the possible spread
General health issues frame	
Disease detection	Discusses discovery of a disease's early signs and behaviors to ascertain how the disease is spreading
Disease prevention	Discusses behaviors to prevent the onset of a health problem and to minimize future risk
Disaster frames	
Collaboration	Emphasizes coordination among organizations responding to the crisis
Leadership	Discusses an organization's major achievement/milestone in response to a crisis
Severity	Emphasizes potential or actual damage caused by the crisis

Source: Liu and Kim (2011)

RESULTS

Research question asked: What were the prevalent crisis communication frames in Gov. Cuomo's tweets in the new year of the pandemic?

Table 2

*Crisis frames**Frequency*

Type of Frame	Frequency
Leadership	163 (29%)
Action	141 (25%)
Severity	99 (17.8%)
Reassurance	85 (15%)
Collaboration	42 (7.6%)
Disease prevention	21 (4%)
New evidence	1 (0.2%)
Disease detection	1(0.2%)
Uncertainty	1(0.2%)
Total	554 (100%)

Notes: Some tweets were classified into more than one category.

From the table, after we conducted a quantitative content analysis of Gov. Cuomo's tweets (554), leadership tweets were the highest (29% %), followed by action (25%) tweets, severity (17.8%), reassurance (15%), and collaboration (7.6%). Uncertainty, disease detection, and new evidence tweets were the least, accounting for 0.2% each, followed by disease prevention tweets (4%).

Research question 2 asked: What were the salient themes in Gov. Cuomo's tweets in the new year of the pandemic? To better understand the dominant crisis communication frames observed in the previous question, we conducted a qualitative frame analysis (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Entman, 1993; Sikanku et al., 2020). We observed three salient themes after our analysis, which are: Vaccination efforts, pandemic impact, and relief, as well as hands-on leadership. Our analysis of the three themes is as follows:

Vaccination efforts

Gov. Cuomo informed the public about vaccination milestones, sites, and vaccination safety processes in tweets under this frame. Below are excerpts of such tweets:

1. The vaccine is safe and effective, and I encourage all healthcare heroes to get vaccinated. We are counting on you. #VaccinateNY (tweeted on January 29).
2. Ten new mass vaccination sites opened today across the state and got right to work getting shots in arms. Thank you to all the health care staff and NY National Guard for a smooth first day at these new sites. #VaccinateNY (tweeted on March 19).
3. Vaccination Update: 29.9% of New Yorkers have received at least one vaccine dose, and 17.3% have completed their vaccine series. 172,128 total doses were administered over the past 24 hours 9,229,098 total doses administered to date (tweeted on March 30).

As Gamson and Modigliani (1989) argue that framing in political discourse creates a reality based on laying emphasis “central organizing framework”; the salience of tweets such as the first excerpt frames the governor as an advocate who cares about the well-being of his people which highlights his effective leadership in managing the pandemic. This explains the dominance of the leadership crisis communication frame in his tweets (Liu, 2009). On the other hand, the second excerpt indicates the steps he is taking in collaboration with other state agencies to fight the pandemic. This portrays him as a proactive and well-informed leader with a good working relationship with other state agencies, who ultimately took action to control the pandemic. The salience of such tweets can be attributed to the action to the action communication frames, which are the second most dominant frame, and the collaborative frame is the third least dominant frame. Tweets of this nature highlight Gov. Cuomo's use of social media to effectively disseminate actionable information, as argued by scholars such as Day et al. (2019). Lastly, the third excerpt shows the results of efforts taken by Gov. Cuomo and his administration in managing the pandemic, which gives the citizens assurances that ‘everything is under control as well as “there is light at the end of the tunnel.” This also explains the prevalence of the leadership and action crisis communication frames, the two most dominant frames. Ultimately, this frame creates an impression that Gov. Cuomo is in control of New York's war against the pandemic, which can enhance his image and political capital.

Pandemic impact and relief

Gov. Cuomo also espoused the frame of “pandemic impact and relief” in his tweets by highlighting the effects or repercussions of the pandemic on the lives and livelihood of New Yorkers, the disparities in how the pandemic affected different communities as well as the need for the federal government and the legislature to take actions to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. Below are excerpts of tweets that were coded under this theme:

1. Communities of color were hit hardest by COVID. They can't be the last to get the vaccine. That's why NY is bringing the vaccine directly to communities most in need (tweeted on January 31).
2. The next COVID-19 aid package must include state & local funding, rent & mortgage relief, help restaurant workers & end SALT. The federal gov must offer a real solution to the looming eviction crisis. My full letter to NY's Congressional delegation (tweeted on February 4).
3. Today's update on the numbers: Total COVID hospitalizations are at 4,603. Of the 282,449 tests reported yesterday, 8,507 were positive (3.01% of the total). Sadly, there were 49 fatalities (tweeted on March 24).

From the first example, the governor highlights the impact of the pandemic on communities of color and espouses actions he is taking to mitigate it. This again reinforces his proactive leadership in fighting the pandemic and highlights his use of three crisis communication frames which are: severity based on the pandemic's impact on communities of color, leadership based on his concern for when these communities would receive the vaccine, and action based on the direct delivery of the vaccine to them. Since framing elicits interpretations for the intended audience (Sikanku et al., 2019), framing his tweets in this way projects an image of a governor committed to ensuring equality in the battle against the pandemic. In the second example, the governor advocates for various reliefs for the people of New York and alludes to a letter sent to New York's congressional delegation. Again, this tweet underscores the presence of three crisis communication frames the severity of the impact of the pandemic, leadership based on his proactive step in advocating for relief, and action based on evidence of the letter he has sent to New York's congressional delegation.

Salient tweets like the second example create the impression that “our governor cares about us,” which can ultimately pay political dividends to the governor. This is particularly important because midterm elections are just around the corner. In the last example, the governor gives an update on the impact of the pandemic based on the number of people hospitalized, those who have tested positive, and those who have lost their lives. The third tweet provides evidence of the severity crisis communication frame because the governor highlights the devastation caused by the pandemic and leadership, which is keeping the people up to date, which in a way can be described as silent advocacy because knowing these figures expose the people to the realities of the pandemic. Tweets of this nature frame Gov. Cuomo as being on top of issues, which builds his credibility and trust among his public in his ability to manage the pandemic, as argued by scholars such as Schneider and Jordan (2016). Also, since frames are embedded in keywords (Entman, 1993), his use of a word like “sadly” highlights his genuine emotions, which can be interpreted as him being authentic, following Margaretten and Gaber’s (2014).

Hands-on leadership

This frame brings to bear Gov. Cuomo’s leadership by example and demonstration during the pandemic. The frame was evinced in tweets that espoused his daily collaborations with different agencies in combating the pandemic, his tours of facilities, media engagements, and his advocacy by example. Below are excerpts of such tweets:

1. How many times does the fed gov't have to learn the same lesson? They should require ALL internat'l travelers to test negative before entering the US. We reached an agreement w/ carrier to require testing for NY-bound UK travelers. The fed gov't must expand it to all countries (tweeted on January 5).
2. I will be holding a COVID briefing and making an announcement at 11:30 am ET. Watch here: <https://t.co/O3oXmEdnXp> (tweeted on February 8).
3. Today I got the J & J vaccine. As soon as it's your turn, take any of the three safe and effective vaccines available. It's the only way to protect yourself and your family. #VaccinateNY (tweeted on March 17).

In the first tweet, Gov. Cuomo implores the federal government to obligate international governments to enter the US only after testing negative and informs us

about the New York government's measures with New York-bound airlines or UK travelers. This tweet also highlights leadership based on the governor's emphasis on the steps he has taken ahead of the federal government and his admonishment and action crisis communication frames based on his exemplary leadership evinced by his agreement with the airlines. This can enhance Gov. Cuomo's social capital and trust based on his demonstration of how it's done, as scholars such as Clark and Nickels (2020) claim that how politicians frame their crisis communication enhances their social capital and the trust people have in politicians. In the second example, the governor takes a different approach, where he announces his COVID briefing and provides a link for users to watch. This can also be described as an action crisis communication frame because he provides an alternative approach to informing the public.

This again frames the governor as having his people at heart as he wants to provide an alternative channel for informing people about the pandemic, which again enhances his credibility and trust, as argued by scholars such as Schneider and Jordan (2016). Considering arguments about social media being a fact-checking source in times of crisis (Day et al., 2019; Sutton et al., 2011), such tweets enhance Gov. Cuomo's political capital because he would be able to reach many of his public, especially millennials (Fenner & Piotrowski, 2018). In the third excerpt, the governor informs us about taking his COVID vaccine, touts its safety, and highlights its importance. Though this tweet can be classified under the vaccination efforts frames, the governor's demonstration of getting his can be described as his display of hands-on and exemplary leadership. This can be described as espousing leadership frames based on his demonstration of getting the vaccine himself as well as reassurance since he reiterates the vaccine's safety. As Hannigan (2012) argues that the way crisis communication is framed can have an impact on the attitude and behaviors of affected citizens, tweets of this nature can win the trust and compliance of New Yorkers as well as other Americans getting the vaccine.

Research question 3 asked: How did Gov. Cuomo display authenticity in his tweets in the new year of the pandemic? After analyzing Gov. Cuomo's tweets, we observed two salient ways Gov. Cuomo's tweets were framed as authentic: Through statistical authenticity and advocacy, his use of bilingual tweets, and his use of rhetorical questions. Our analysis is as follows:

Statistical Authenticity and Advocacy

Gov. Cuomo used statistics to tweet about the pandemic, which evoked the thought of authenticity. In communicating vaccination milestones and the impact of the pandemic, the governor utilized figures to reinforce his points. His use of figures in his communication on Twitter made it look original and look devoid of spin, creating the perception of authenticity from Margaretten and Gaber's (2014) perspective. Below are excerpts of such tweets:

1. Vaccination Update: 30.4% of New Yorkers have received at least one vaccine dose and 17.9% have completed their vaccine series. -192,853 total doses were administered over the past 24 hours -9,421,951 total doses administered to date. Details: <https://t.co/S1OmTSRTWp> <https://t.co/Jai2jGOHDR> (tweeted on March 31, 2021)
2. Today's update on the numbers: Total COVID hospitalizations are at 7,886. Of the 219,253 tests reported yesterday, 16,497 were positive (7.52% of total). Sadly, there were 166 fatalities. <https://t.co/itJk26uUNj> (tweeted on January 1, 2021).

From the first excerpt, Gov. Cuomo utilizes statistics to provide updates on the state's vaccination status. Since framing is about sentence construction and using keywords (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Entman, 1993), his use of statistics to construct such tweets makes them look truthful, which portrays him as a proactive or hands-on leader, which indicates he has the situation under control. We believe it reinforces the state government's resolve to defeat or mitigate the effects of the pandemic through mass vaccination. On the other hand, his use of statistics in the second extract evokes the thought of authenticity through advocacy and the display of emotions.

Gov. Cuomo's use of statistics serves as a tool for advocacy because it highlights the devastating effect of the pandemic in terms of casualties, which can create a sense of urgency for a viewer of such tweets to follow the COVID-19 safety protocols. We believe this makes them authentic through originality, truthfulness, and being devoid of manipulation. The governor's use of the word "sadly," which can be described as his display of empathy and concern about the devastation caused by the pandemic, can be described as authentic. It is reminiscent of human-to-human communication, as such

emotions add a personalized feel to the tweet. Such a display of authenticity portrays the governor as proactive and caring, which enhances his political capital.

Bilingual tweets

Gov. Cuomo employed not only the English language but Spanish in his crisis communication. Since framing looks at the sentence construction (Chong & Druckman, 2007), constructing some of his tweets in Spanish, portrays his awareness of the diversity of his public considering the cosmopolitan nature of New York and Spanish being the second dominant language in the US. As Margaretten and Gaber (2014) have argued that authentic communication should have a sense of originality, his use of the Spanish language portrays Gov. Cuomo as a normal person, which makes his tweets more believable. This can also be interpreted as a strategic way of gaining political capital among the Spanish-speaking communities in New York, gaining compliance from Spanish speakers, and ensuring equal access to information about the pandemic. Below are excerpts of such tweets:

1. Eche un vistazo al interior de uno de los sitios de vacunación del COVID-19 del estado de Nueva York. La vacuna es segura, eficaz y gratuita. Cuando esté disponible para usted, vacúnese. #VaccinateNY (tweeted on February 23).

Take a look inside one of the New York State COVID-19 vaccination sites. The vaccine is safe, effective, and free. When it is available to you, get vaccinated. #VaccinateNY (English translation from Google translate).

2. A partir de mañana (23/3) a las 8 am, todos los neoyorquinos de 50 años en adelante serán elegibles para la vacuna contra el COVID-19. #VaccinateNY #VacúnateNY (tweeted on March 22).

Starting tomorrow (3/23) at 8 am, all New Yorkers age 50 and older will be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. #VaccinateNY #VaccinateNY (English translation from Google translate).

From the above examples, the governor gives directives on vaccine sites which can be described as leadership crisis communication frames and falls under the broad theme of vaccination effort. This again indicates the governor's resolve in defeating the pandemic as well as highlights his authenticity.

Rhetorical Questions

Also, we observed a salience of rhetorical questions in the governor's tweets, which we interpret as a display of authenticity. This is because using rhetorical questions indicates dialogue, as though the sender does not require answers; it is an indirect way of generating conversation on social media without necessary engagement with the users. Again, framing from the perspective of sentence construction comes in here (Sikanku et. al, 2019), which gives the viewer of the tweet the perception of authenticity as if they are interacting with a normal person (Margaretten & Gaber, 2014). Below are examples of such tweets:

1. Today we are expanding the list of people eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine to include all doctors, nurses and staff who come into contact with the public. Not sure if you're eligible? Visit <https://t.co/yVyJY042Pd> (tweeted on January 4).
2. Watching the Big Game today? Celebrate smart and be safe. We are seeing our positivity & hospitalizations decline thanks to the dedication of all NYers. We can't undo that progress (tweeted on February 7).

The first example takes a formal approach to announcing the availability of the vaccine for frontline workers. The rhetorical question can be seen as an advocacy tactic or call for action for frontline workers to click the link. This tweet can also be classified under the vaccination effort's theme and contains the crisis communication themes of leadership based on the milestone in getting vaccines for the frontline workers as well action in advocating for them to click the link. This again highlights the governor's leadership in being on top of issues.

In the second example, the governors take a more casual approach by referring to the live game to update the public on the effects of the pandemic by praising the people of New York and assuring them. This tweet embeds leadership crisis communication frames based on his concern for safety celebrations and updating his public. This again highlights his authenticity, which can ultimately enhance people's trust in his ability to manage the pandemic.

Research question 4 asked: What were the dominant ways Gov. Cuomo displayed authenticity? we analyzed his dominant display of authenticity in his tweets. Our analysis was based on our findings from the previous question.

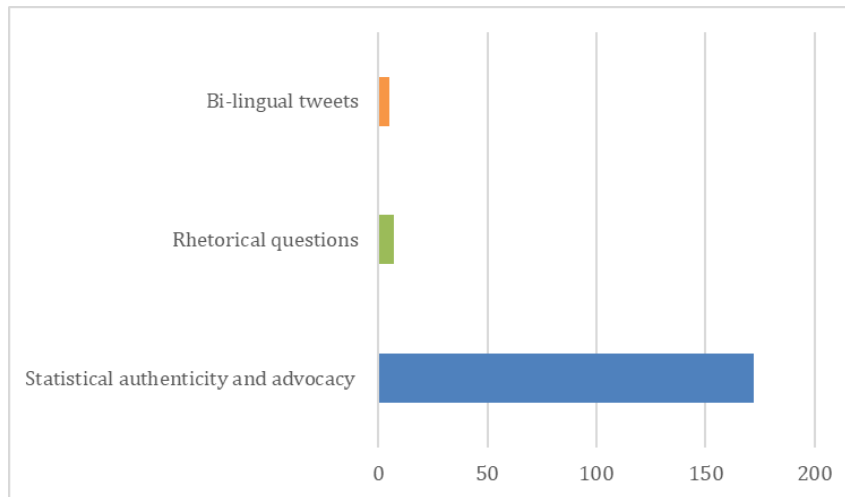


Chart 1: Frequency of Gov. Cuomo's display of authenticity

From the chart, Gov. Cuomo displayed authenticity using statistical authenticity and advocacy 179 times, which is 39% of his tweets on the pandemic in the New Year. His use of rhetorical questions to display authenticity comprised seven tweets, which form 1.5% of the total tweets. Lastly, five of his tweets were coded as the display of authenticity through bilingual tweets, which also formed 1.1% of his total tweets.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Social media platforms like Twitter play a central role in crisis communication in times of crisis. In this current study, we employ a mixed-method and qualitative approach to analyze the crisis communication tweets of New York governor Andrew Cuomo through the lenses of the framing theory of the new year of the pandemic. The governor employed a dominant use of leadership crisis communication frames (29%), followed by action frames (25%) and severity frames (17.8%), which can be better explained by the salience of three themes, namely: vaccination efforts, pandemic impact, and relief, as well as hands-on leadership. Also, reassurance (15%), collaboration (7.6%), and disease prevention (4%) were the subsequent dominant crisis communication frames followed by new evidence (0.2%), disease prevention (0.2%), and uncertainty (0.2%). Again, the governor's use of

reassurance, collaboration, and disease prevention frames reiterates his leadership commitments to the people and dovetails into the hands-on leadership theme. His least use of new evidence, disease prevention, and uncertainty frames can be attributed to the context of his tweets. Since the world, particularly New York (described at one point as the epicenter of the pandemic), was highly impacted by the pandemic in 2020 and Gov. Cuomo was on top of issues, such frames were rare in his tweets. The way Gov. Cuomo framed his tweets creates an impression of a proactive leader, who is well informed and is collaborating well with the state agencies to fight the pandemic, which builds his credibility and trust among his public in his ability to manage the pandemic as argued by scholars such as Schneider and Jordan (2016). In addition, he frames tweets in ways that portray him as a governor committed to equality in supplying resources to communities in the fight against the pandemic, which enhances his image as well as political capital. His crisis communication on Twitter can be impactful in gaining compliance from the public based on Hannigan's (2012) argument that how crisis communication is framed has an impact on the attitudes and behavior of the affected public. Gov. Cuomo's constant updates on the steps he has taken to combat the pandemic based on how he frames his tweets create the impression of 'everything is under control as well as 'there is light at the end of the tunnel' for the citizens, which improves his political capital.

Following arguments from scholars such as Sikanku et al. (2019) as well as Chong and Druckman (2007), about framing embedded in sentence construction; we observed three ways in which Gov. Cuomo displayed authenticity in his tweets based on how his tweets were constructed, going by Margaretten and Gaber (2014) definition of authenticity. Similarly, we observed his dominant use of statistical authenticity and advocacy (39%), followed by his use of rhetorical questions (1.5%) and his use of bilingual tweets (English and Spanish) (1.1%). His dominant use of statistics makes his tweets more believable, serves as a tool of advocacy to gain compliance, and portrays him as a leader on top of issues. His use of rhetorical questions, bilinguals, and tweets can be interpreted as an average person who considers the diversity of languages in New York and wants to reach most people with his messages. This can be construed as his resolve to grant equal access to information to his public and as a strategic way of gaining political capital among Spanish-speaking communities.

The present study extends the literature on crisis communication, social media, authenticity in times of crisis, and the framing theory. Findings are relevant to political public relations, considering the novel nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ever-evolving political climate. In addition, it expands the literature on mixed-method research in political public relations. These findings cannot capture Gov. Cuomo's crisis communication on social media as it considered his tweets for a short period. Similarly, they cannot be generalized to represent how other governors employ crisis communication on Twitter. Future studies could view more tweets and compare the crisis communication of different governors on various social media platforms.

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