URŠKA MOLNAR

Racial discrimination in the media: Comparing mass shooting coverage in the American and German media

Rassendiskriminierung in den Medien: Vergleich der amerikanischen und deutschen Berichterstattungen von Amokläufen

Rasna diskriminacija v medijih: Primerjava poročanj ameriških in nemških medijev o množičnih streljanjih

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Magistrsko delo

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ABSTRACT
This master’s thesis examines racial discrimination in the media by analysing American and German coverage of selected mass shootings. The results of the content analysis attest to the racial discrimination of the media, which is in line with the theoretical findings. The results obtained from the American articles revealed racial discrimination in the categories of perpetrator, responsibility insinuating, race and mental health. The German results were compared to the American ones in order to observe similarities and differences between the media. In contrast with the American press, the German press revealed racial discrimination only in the categories of perpetrator and race. A comparative content analysis of the reporting showed that the German media only partially follow the American media and are therefore less discriminatory. In order to confirm the findings of the analysis, the reader’s perception of racial discrimination was examined with a questionnaire. The participants in the survey confirmed racial discrimination in the categories of perpetrator, race and responsibility insinuating. The results gathered confirmed the impact that the discriminatory media content has on the readers. Selective humanisation remains and promotes a distorted view of a crime and of the ones responsible for the crime.
Keywords: mass shooting, discrimination, media bias, gun laws, critical discourse analysis
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1 Introduction

A mass shooting is a violent event that involves multiple victims. It can be committed by individuals or organisations, and it can occur in public or private places. The primary purpose of this thesis is to explore how American and German media report on mass shootings. This thesis will examine cross-cultural differences in the media coverage of the Virginia Tech mass shooting that occurred on April 16, 2007, and was committed by a non-Caucasian perpetrator, and the Las Vegas mass shooting that occurred on October 1, 2017, and was committed by a Caucasian perpetrator. The study will seek to answer the question of the extent which the media contributes to and reflects discrimination.

The hypotheses are based on the media bias that includes reporting that favours a particular race. My first hypothesis is that there is a difference in American media coverage of the mass shooting committed by a non-Caucasian perpetrator and the mass shooting committed by a Caucasian perpetrator. I claim that in contrast to non-Caucasian shooters, Caucasian mass shooters are more humanised in the media. My second hypothesis is that the German media follow the biased reporting approach of the American media.

A literature review will discuss the topics of mass shooting, racial discrimination and biased media coverage. The methodology approach is based on theoretical critical discourse analysis by Teun Van Dijk that emerged in the late 1980s. The analysis will allow me to analyse the role that the media discourse plays in society. Critical discourse analysis is based on the concept of social power, the role of discourse, and the dominance of social power in public discourse. Van Dijk maintains that public discourse is generally dominated by those who have social power.

In the qualitative analysis, I will examine how the media portray the mass shooters and how their races affect the media reporting. I will contrast the American media reporting of the Las Vegas mass shooting committed by a Caucasian perpetrator with the reporting of the Virginia Tech mass shooting committed by a non-Caucasian perpetrator and analyse the differences in the media coverage of these two events. I will also contrast the German media reporting of the Las Vegas mass shooting committed by a Caucasian perpetrator with the reporting of the Virginia Tech mass shooting committed by a non-Caucasian perpetrator and analyse the
differences in the media coverage of these two events. In the end, I will draw a comparison between the American and German media coverage findings to determine whether the German media follow the American biased or unbiased coverage. The content analysis will look into whether there are differences in the descriptions ascribed to perpetrators regarding their race. In the last part, I will conduct a survey of the American media coverage where the respondents will be randomly assigned to exemplars covering both shootings and asked to rate their agreement with the statements regarding race, responsibility insinuating, negative or positive prejudices and prior knowledge of the event. The respondents’ results will help determine the biased media coverage and the respondents’ tendency towards racial discrimination.
2 Literature review

2.1 Mass shootings

In order to provide unambiguous meaning of the term mass shooting, this chapter discusses different definitions. There is no dictionary definition of the term mass shooting. Neither the Macmillan Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Dictionary, The American Heritage Dictionary nor Collins English Dictionary provides a definition of the term mass shooting.

Collins Dictionary provides an example sentence. A rather simple and short example is automatically selected from the corpus and it comes from The Sunday Times:

- Mass shootings by women are rare. (Collins, 2019)

In 1980, the Federal Bureau of Investigation defined mass murder as "one in which four or more victims die, in one event, in one location." (Krouse, Richardson 2015, 4) The thesis follows this official definition. However, there is a big difference in numbers if we base our research on a broad definition of the crime violence research group Gun Violence Archive that defines a mass shooting as a "shooting that usually involves four or more people killed or only injured in a single event, at the same time and location, excluding the perpetrator." (Gun Violence Archive 2019) It is worth noting that the offered definitions of the term prove to be problematic. They do not include incidents where fewer than four people were killed or injured; however, Gun Violence Archive does include a somewhat more exhaustive definition by adding the incidents where people were only wounded.

There is no translation of the term mass shooting to be found in the English-German dictionaries either. Collins English-German Dictionary provides a German alternative for the related term:

- mass killing: der Massenmord (Collins, 2019)

The prominent German dictionary Duden provides the German synonym Amok for Amoklauf corresponding with the English term mass shooting. Under the definition of Amok we can read:

An English translation can be found in the Collins English-German Dictionary of the collocation:

einen Amoklauf aufführen: to run amok (Collins, 2019)

To draw a comparison between the English and German equivalents, I looked up the phrase to run amok:

to run amok: If a person or animal runs amok, they behave in a violent and uncontrolled way.

An example: There is a lack of respect for authority in some schools with kids running amok.

Synonyms: go wild, turn violent, go berserk, lose control (Collins, 2019)

It is evident that the definitions – and thus meanings – of the English phrase to run amok and the German collocation Amok laufen do not correspond.

Figure 1 The usage of the selected terms in Germany
The graph obtained from the German corpus DWDS shows information about the usage of the selected terms in Germany over time. We can recognise a sharp increase in the usage of the term *Amoklauf* after 1995. There is no official German definition of the term *mass shooting* that would define the number of fatalities, so this study follows the American FBI definition of a *mass shooting* and German prevalent equivalent *Amoklauf*.

### 2.2 Race discrimination

According to the Citizens Advice, race discrimination is mistreatment of a person because of his or her race, or because of the race of someone that person is connected with, such as his or her partner. Race incorporates colour, nationality, citizenship and ethnic or national origins.

*Cambridge Dictionary* defines race discrimination:

- **race discrimination**: unfair treatment of someone because of their race (Cambridge Dictionary 2019).

The alternative German dictionary *Duden* defines it as follows:

- **die Rassendiskriminierung**: Diskriminierung einer Bevölkerungsgruppe aufgrund ihrer Zugehörigkeit zu einer bestimmten Rasse (Duden, 2019)

There are no discrepancies in meaning between the English and German definitions of race discrimination. The dictionary definitions correspond.

According to Citro, Dabady and Blank (2002, 224), racial discrimination can arise and continue or develop:

- Across generations

  Discrimination of one generation that is detrimental to health or economic opportunity for a particular group may decrease opportunities for the next generations. For instance, parents’
poor health or employment situation may restrict their ability to support their child’s education, which in turn could decrease the child’s educational performance and, consequently, his or her socioeconomic progress.

- Across processes within a domain

Within a domain of housing, the labour market, health care, criminal justice or education earlier discrimination may affect later outcomes. For example, discrimination in elementary school may be detrimental to the outcomes in secondary school and diminish opportunities to attend college. Even critical single occurrences of discrimination can have long-term cumulative effects. For example, discriminatory behaviour in teacher evaluations of racially disadvantaged students in elementary school may increase the possibility of future discrimination in class assignments in middle school. Similarly, in the labour market, discrimination in hiring or performance evaluations may affect outcomes in promotions.

- Across domains

Discrimination in one domain may decrease opportunities in other domains. For example, families that live in segregated neighbourhoods may have limited access to adequate employment and health care. (Citro, Dabady and Blank 2004, 224)

2.2.1 Types of racial discrimination

When discussing racial discrimination, it is essential for one to differentiate between four types of racial discrimination: direct race discrimination, indirect race discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

According to the Citizens Advice, direct race discrimination is treating someone less favourably than somebody else would be treated in the same circumstances, because of race.

- **Direct race discrimination**: An Asian man tries to enter a nightclub with some friends. They say he cannot enter because it is full. Yet a group of white people just walks in.

Indirect race discrimination are rules, policies or practices that are less likely to concern people of a racial, ethnic or national group than other people, and consequently places them at a disadvantage.
• **Indirect race discrimination**: An employer or school institution has banned wearing headscarves, or is insisting on the wearing of skirts. An employer is insisting that someone has English as his mother language.

Harassment occurs when someone humiliates, offends or degrades the person of another race.

• **Harassment**: An African man is called a racist name by his colleagues. His colleagues say it is only teasing, but the employee is insulted and offended by it.

Victimisation is mistreating a person that has made a complaint of race-related discrimination. It can also occur to a person who is supporting someone who has made a complaint of race-related discrimination.

• **Victimisation**: The African man that is offended at work writes a formal complaint about his treatment. His supervisor threatens to dismiss him unless he withdraws the complaint. (Citizens Advice 2019)

2.3 Gun violence in the U.S

The United States is consistently challenged by many mass shootings every year, especially in schools. The five deadliest mass shootings were the Las Vegas shooting, Orlando nightclub shooting, Virginia Tech shooting, Sandy Hook Elementary shooting and Texas First Baptist Church shooting that all happened after 2007.

The bar chart below portrays the number of mass shootings if we define an event to be a mass shooting event when at least four people were injured. According to this broad definition of a mass shooting, provided by Gun Violence Archive, the U.S. witnessed 417 mass shootings in 2019.
According to the FBI official definition of a mass shooting, there were 117 mass shootings between 1982 and December 2019 in the United States. Male shooters perpetrated 113 shootings, i.e. 96% of all the mass shootings. There were only three female shootings and one male and female shooting. There was one mass shooting in 1982 and as many as 12 mass shootings in 2018. Furthermore, what follows from a careful analysis of the graph is that the number of shootings remained relatively level between 1982 and 2010. There was only one mass shooting event in 2010; however, we can recognise an increase in the number of mass shootings between 2010 and 2018. Overall, we can see an upward trend in the number of mass shootings in the U.S. (Statista 2019)
Figure 2 Number of mass shootings in the U.S. between 1982 and December 2019

The bar chart below illustrates the number of injured and fatally injured during the mass shootings between 1982 and December 2019. 1,012 victims were fatally injured during mass shootings in the United States between 1982 and December 6, 2019 (Statista 2019).

Figure 3 Number of victims of mass shootings in the U.S. between 1982 and December 2019
Figure 4 Number of mass shootings in the U.S. between 1982 and December 2019, by shooter’s race and ethnicity

Figure 5 Mass shootings in the U.S. between 1982 and December 2019, by the presence of prior signs of shooter’s mental health issues
As is shown by the graph, the white shooters perpetrated 64 mass shootings, followed by black shooters who perpetrated 19 mass shootings. It can be observed that black shooters perpetrated 16 % of the all mass shootings and Latino shooters perpetrated 8.5 % of all mass shootings. Native Americans contributed 2.5 % to the overall number of the mass shooting events.

In more than half of the shooters, prior signs of mental health issues were recognised. For the following 20 % of the shooters, the results were unclear, and for the subsequent 14 %, the results are unknown or yet to be determined. The figure illustrates that less than 15 % of the shooters were identified as having no signs of mental health issues (Statista 2019).

A survey taken in the United States in 2013 pointed out that 80 % of the respondents agreed that the system failed to recognize the perpetrator's health issue, which led to the mass shooting events.

2.3.1 Gun laws

The United States Constitution represents the fundamental law of the United States. The United States Constitution was formulated at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787. People were concerned about the lack of citizens' rights. Therefore, in September 1789, a congress was held in New York, where twelve amendments were adopted. By the end of 1791, only ten of these amendments had an adequate number of ratifications and were incorporated in the U.S. Constitution. (Jaklič and Toplak 2005: 26) They are named the Bill of Rights. Since then, 17 amendments have been added to the first amendments, i.e. Amendments After the Bill of Rights.

The 2nd Amendment of the Constitution ensures the Americans the possession of firearms in the United States and has been a defining aspect of American civil rights since the signing of the Bill of Rights. The Second Amendment states: “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” The concept of this sentence is misleading and has given rise to much criticism but to relatively few Supreme Court rulings. (Jaklič and Toplak 2005: 30)

It was only in the 2008 District of Columbia vs. Heller case that the Supreme Court asserted an individual's right to hold a weapon at home for self-defence. It was for the first time in the
U.S. history that the Supreme court explicitly held its decision that "the 2nd amendment guarantees an individual right to possess firearms independent of service in a state militia and to use firearms for traditionally lawful purposes, including self-defence within the home".

Lower courts have upheld many gun laws since 2008, and the supreme court has refused to rule on any cases regarding the Second Amendment since 2010. Lawyers and activists on both sides argue over the right to carry guns in public, which the Heller ruling did not address. (Guardian News 2020)

While modifying a part of the Bill of Rights would be notably difficult, the argument of gun rights has become a profoundly controversial topic in the political discourse. For example, Republicans share an opinion that if legal gun ownership is controlled, there will not be a difference in the number of mass shootings. In contrast, most Democrats strongly believe the number will decrease.

According to Hepburn/Hemenway, gun availability introduces a risk factor for homicide, both in the United States and across high-income countries. The findings of the studies that explore the relation between gun availability and risk factors indicate that in the United States homes, cities, states and regions, where there are more guns, people are at a higher risk for homicide, particularly firearm homicide.

It is estimated that the United States has the highest rate of civilian-owned firearms in the world. In contrast with other Western countries, there are significantly more shootings in the U.S., which is presumably due to the relatively unconcerned gun control law. According to the OECD, gun homicide rates are 25, 2 times higher in the U.S. than in other high-income countries. Gun control laws in the U.S. are dependent on the state.

According to the GunPolicy.org, the gun regulation in the United States is classified as permissive. In the United States, a firearms owner must be at least 18 years old in order to purchase shotguns, rifles, and ammunition, and at least 21 years old to obtain all other firearms. Tourists and dishonourably dismissed military are restrained from owning a weapon. A weapon must be sold through licensed dealers, and customers must undergo a background check. However, the notorious “gun show loophole” allows obtaining weapons from a flea market, at a gun show, via online sale, or from a personal collector where no background check is needed.
70% of the fatal weapons were obtained legally within the United States borders. There were only 16 mass shootings perpetrated by an illegal weapon.

2.3.2 Las Vegas shooting

The Las Vegas shooting is considered to be the deadliest mass shooting in the U.S. history.

On October 1, 2017, a 64-year-old white gunman, Steven Paddock from Nevada, fired into crowds at the Music Festival in Las Vegas. He killed 58 people and injured 413, but there were also 398 people that injured themselves escaping the panic crowd leaving the event. Paddock was found dead in his hotel room from a self-inflicted gunshot injury. His motive remains officially undetermined.

It brought attention to gun laws, particularly those concerning bump stocks, which Paddock used to fire shots in rapid series, at a rate of fire similar to automatic weapons. It resulted in the U.S. Justice Department banning bump stocks in December 2018. The regulation came into effect in March 2019.

Stephen Paddock was a retired auditor and real estate businessman who was twice separated, had a long-term girlfriend but no children. His father Benjamin Paddock was a bank robber and appeared on the most-wanted FBI list between 1969 and 1977. Paddock's only offence was traffic charges. He was a gambler, familiar with casino hosts in Las Vegas, but was not well known among other high-stakes gamblers because he mostly played video poker. He was reserved and a heavy drinker. Paddock had lost his wealth over the previous two years but had paid off all the debts before the mass shooting event.

Paddock may have considered attacking other venues prior to the Las Vegas mass shooting. He had researched venues in Boston and Chicago but did not attack. Paddock's Internet search phrases from mid-September 2017 included *swat weapons, ballistics chart 308, SWAT Las Vegas, and do police use explosives*.

According to the Guns to Carry “a Shall Issue policy is enforced at the local county level of Nevada. Nevada has traditionally remained an open carry state with more areas accessible to a
person who is open carrying than one who is concealed carrying. A training course is obliged to obtain a concealed carry permit with the minimum age being 21, or 18 if in the army. There is no registration of firearms needed and citizens or non-citizens can acquire long guns in Nevada.” (Guns to Carry 2017)

2.3.3 Virginia Tech shooting

The U. S. experiences the highest number of school shootings in the world. The state in the U.S. that experiences the highest number of school shootings is California.

The Virginia Tech massacre occurred on April 16, 2007, at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, in Blacksburg, Virginia. It was the deadliest school shooting that left 33 fatalities and 17 injured by two semi-automatic pistols. During their escape, six others were injured while jumping out of windows, and the perpetrator was found dead by a self-inflicted gun injury.

The perpetrator was Seung-Hui Cho who was an undergraduate student at the university and a U.S. resident of South Korean origin.

Cho had previously been diagnosed with selective mutism and depression. As a teenager, he received therapy and special education assistance. After graduating from high school, Cho enrolled at Virginia Tech, but privacy laws restricted Virginia Tech to have an insight into Cho's diagnosis. In 2005, Cho was accused of stalking two female students. Virginia special justice declared Cho mentally ill and ordered him to attend therapy; however, he was not institutionalised, so he was still entitled to acquire guns.

According to the Guns to Carry, “in Virginia a Shall Issue policy is enforced and allows for concealed carry permits to be issued to citizens and non-citizens. Applicants for a CCW permit must be 21 or older and finish a firearms training course. For citizens, applications are listed with the circuit court in their county of residence and non-citizens must mail their application to the State Police. Open carry in Virginia is legal without a permit with the minimum age being 18 provided the person meets other qualifying requirements.” (Guns to Carry 2017)
2.4 Gun violence in Germany

Germany is challenged by a significantly smaller number of mass shootings than the United States. According to the FBI official definition of a mass shooting, there were seven mass shootings in Germany between 1982 and December 2019. The deadliest mass shootings were the Erfurt school shooting, Winnenden school shooting, Munich shooting, Euskirchen court shooting and Eppstein school shooting.

Male shooters perpetrated six shootings, i.e. 86 % of the all mass shootings. There was only one female shooting. White shooters perpetrated six out of seven shootings, followed by a Persian perpetrator. The line chart below illustrates the number of fatally injured during the mass shootings between 1982 and December 2019. A total of 62 victims were fatally injured during mass shootings in Germany between 1982 and December 31, 2019.

There was only one or no mass shooting event per year between 1982 and December 2019. We recognise a sharp increase in the number of fatalities in the year 2002 due to the deadliest Erfurt school shooting.

![Figure 6 Number of mass shootings in the U.S. and Germany between 1982 and December 2019](image)
According to the GunPolicy.org, the estimated rate of private gun ownership (both licit and illicit) per 100 people in Germany was 32.0 in the year 2016. The estimated rate for the U.S. was 120.5 in the year 2017. In Germany, the annual rate of homicide by any means per 100,000 population was 1.19 in the year 2016, in contrast with the U.S. rate of 5.91 in the same year.

2.4.1 Gun laws

There is no constitutional right for an individual to bear weapons. Contrary to the U.S., in Germany, the law does not guarantee the right to private gun ownership. Germany has one of the most stringent gun control laws in the world. According to the GunPolicy.org, gun regulation in Germany is classified as restrictive. Gun control laws in Germany are not dependent on the state.

In order to own or be allowed to use a weapon, the Germans must meet certain requirements. This includes completed 18 years of age, reliability and personal suitability, evidence of weapons law expertise and proof of personal need for the weapon and how to use it. (Library of Congress 2015)
Germany decided for legislative changes to prevent new potential mass shootings. The country banned automatic and semi-automatic firearms in 2008 (except for hunting and sport-shooting, which require licenses), in response to the 2002 Erfurt massacre.

According to the Library of Congress, another reform was introduced in 2009 in response to the Winnenden school shooting, in which an eighteen-year-old fatally injured fifteen people. The Weapons Act reform called for the creation of a federal gun register and for intense governmental monitoring of gun owners’ compliance with requirements for the safe storage of firearms. The authorities may at any time access the premises of any registered gun owner to monitor whether the acquired weapon is safely stored. The Weapons Act forbids automatic firearms, regulates the production of and commerce in weapons, and has reporting requirements that allow the tracing of all legally owned firearm, including those received through inheritance. (Library of Congress 2015)

2.5 Media literacy

Media literacy has been described as “the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms”. Media literacy education is associated with the purpose of encouraging critical reflection concerning media content (Aufderheide 1993). People are no longer expected to be passive users. The primary purpose of media literacy education is to teach users how to understand the media by considering economic and social determinants of the media and democratic media production.

According to Ranieri and Fabro, “critical media literacy expands the traditional concept of literacy, including different types of mass communication and popular culture. It educates users to critically analyse relationships between media and audiences, information and power. It promotes skills in analysing media codes and conventions, abilities to criticise stereotypes, dominant values and ideologies, and competencies for interpreting the multiple meanings and messages generated by media texts. It helps people to evaluate media content, to critically dissect media forms, to investigate media effects and uses, to use media intelligently, and to form alternative media.” (Ranieri and Fabro 2016: 462–464)
Racial minorities are presented as criminals or perpetrators more frequently than white people. Studies have also repeatedly confirmed that this media bias promotes public resentment towards those groups (Chiricos and Eschholz 2002)

Repeated underrepresentation of racial minorities as victims and increasing coverage of white people as victims may remodel readers’ perceptions of reality. The reshaped reality disregards racial minorities as victims and normalises white people as the prototypical victims. In contrast, when racial minorities are depicted as victims, they are often dehumanised and criminalised. The media highly affects how the blame is attributed. There are stereotypical media that blame the victims that are racial minorities for their own death.

2.5.1 Media coverage as motivation

In the days following the mass shooting, the media intensively report on the event, circumstances leading to the event and the perpetrator himself. But the intense media coverage may be a sign of perpetrator’s glorification.

A survey taken in the U. S. in August 2019 reported that 45 per cent of respondents approved of mass shooters being identified in media coverage, considering this to be relevant information that should be available to the public. However, 35 per cent believed that naming the perpetrator of such a crime is a form of glorification and would prefer the media to stop publishing on the perpetrators of the act. (Statista 2019)

Studies have suggested that shooters are seeking recognition as one potential motivation. The experts warn that the media may be creating incentives for mass shooters, primarily when they concentrate profoundly on the individual profiles of the shooters themselves. Jay Walker, an economics professor at Old Dominion University and a co-author of the study, says that the study has concluded that “ABC news coverage is suggested to cause approximately three mass shootings in the subsequent week, equivalent to 58 per cent of mass shootings in the United States.” The findings suggest that media coverage systematically causes future mass shootings and advocates for limited media coverage of mass shootings. Potential shooters recognise the perpetrator’s name and picture published all over by the media and are attracted to the reputation they can achieve by an attack.
Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE) has released guidelines for reporting on mass shooting events. SAVE suggests reducing reporting on the shooter as others might identify with or be inspired by them. It suggests publishing photos of the perpetrator and of the victims separately. There should be only few photos of the perpetrator (Guardian News 2020). The press should focus on the victims and not on the perpetrator. It should avoid stigmatising the community where the event occurred or the people targeted by the perpetrator.
3 Methodology and sources

3.1 Methodology

Overall, there were 117 mass shootings in the United States. I have limited my research to the ten deadliest mass shootings perpetrated by a Caucasian or non-Caucasian gunman. I have also restricted the research on the Caucasian and non-Caucasian mass shootings that did not occur more than ten years apart. The study does not include the mass shootings where the perpetrator claimed to be an Islamic soldier or part of a terrorist organisation. In the end, the selection based on these criteria was restricted to the deadliest white Las Vegas Strip massacre and the second deadliest non-white mass shooting Virginia Tech massacre, since the deadliest non-white mass shooting was perpetrated by an Islamic soldier.

The articles regarding the Las Vegas and Virginia Tech mass shootings were chosen because of their significant media coverage by American and German media. I selected twelve texts covering each event because the quality of the reporting varies. The goal is to provide reliable study results of the analysis of the selected representative texts.

After examining qualitative and quantitative methods, a content analysis of the articles was selected for this study. The analysis was conducted based on the following elements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility insinuating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 8 Elements of the qualitative analysis*

In the last part, I will conduct a research on the American media coverage where the respondents were randomly assigned to a) an exemplar covering the Las Vegas shooting b) an
exemplar covering the Virginia Tech shooting. I will measure the respondents’ agreement with the statements on a 5-point Likert scale. They will be asked to rate their agreement with the statements regarding race, responsibility insinuating, negative or positive prejudices and prior knowledge of the event. The respondents’ results will help determine whether readers sense the biased media coverage and whether the respondents show any tendency towards racial discrimination.

3.2 Sources

The aim of the thesis is to provide a thorough analysis of the contrasting media reporting. I have limited my research to seven selected American articles on the Las Vegas shooting and seven selected American articles on the Virginia Tech shooting. I have limited my research to five selected German articles on the Las Vegas shooting and five selected German articles on the Virginia Tech shooting.

First, I selected fourteen most prominent American newspapers that have the biggest circulation and at the same time allow online access to their articles. Using the random number generator, I randomly selected seven of them for the following research. The selected newspapers are The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, New York Post, Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, Star Tribune and The Boston Globe. The articles can be found listed in the Bibliography.

First, I selected seven most prominent German newspapers that have the biggest circulation and at the same time allow online access to their articles. Using the random number generator, I randomly selected five of them for the following research. The selected newspapers are BILD, DIE ZEIT, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, die tageszeitung and Die Welt. The articles can be found listed in the Bibliography.

I selected the longest non-first articles that were released not later than two days after the shooting event. I selected the longest articles since they provide the most objective reporting. The articles were obtained from the official newspaper websites through search terms “Las Vegas shooting” or “Las Vegas Amoklauf” and “Virginia Tech shooting” or “Virginia Tech Amoklauf”. If no German articles were to be found using these search terms, I used the search term “Las Vegas” or “Virginia Tech”. The results will be obtained from the articles that all
include the name of the identified perpetrator of the mass shooting. If there were several articles appropriate for the analysis, I numbered them and used the random number generator to decide on the specific article in each of the newspaper.
4 Analysis of the American media

To make the reading more manageable, the study follows the following list of abbreviations: Boston Globe (BG), Wall Street Journal (WSJ), Los Angeles Times (LAT), New York Post (NYP), Star Tribune (ST), The New York Times (NYT) and The Washington Post (WP).

The content analysis is based on all the nouns and adjectives from the selected articles. The attributes in bold are the attributes provided by the media themselves. The other attributes are quotes that the media included from sources such as family members, neighbours or related reporting. Quotes are elements where sources directly present their viewpoints in their own words. The included viewpoints become part of the media discourse. According to Van Dijk (1993, 151–160), sources may add (im)balance to the coverage and introduce bias reporting through neglected or overrepresented viewpoints. Therefore, it is crucial to examine whether these viewpoints are overrepresented.

4.1 Perpetrator

ATTRIBUTES DESCRIBING THE LAS VEGAS PERPETRATOR

BG: Las Vegas shooting suspect, retired man, licensed pilot, gunman, resident of Nevada, brother, aggressively unfriendly and standoffish, a multimillionaire real-estate investor, letter carrier for the US Postal Service, agent for the Internal Revenue Service, mail carrier, single man, shooting suspect, IRS agent, divorced at least twice, not a normal guy;
LAT: gunman, suspect, resident of Nevada, real estate investor, gambler, licensed pilot, shooter, lone-wolf attacker, gun guy, brother, guy, accountant, shooter;
NYP: shooter, killer, 64-year-old retired accountant, former IRS agent, US Postal Service letter carrier, mail carrier, agent at the IRS, professional gambler, wealthy, bad boy, no good, no angel;
NYT: gunman, a Soldier of the Islamic State, assailant, attacker, man, normal guy, normal fellow, suspect, active shooter, individual, high-flying gambler, wealthy guy, not an avid gun guy, not a normal guy;
ST: Las Vegas suspect, gunman, resident of Nevada, accountant;
WP: gunman, high-stakes gambler, the son of a convicted bank robber, guy, retiree, brother, top player, the small end of the big fish, licensed pilot, professional gambler, prospector, worth more than 2 million dollars, weird, nothing, quiet, unfriendly, standoffish;

WSJ: shooting suspect, gambler, property investor, 64-year-old man, investor, regular video-poker player, shooter, her uncle, gunman, accused shooter, deranged, crazy man, suspect, a regular on the hotels on the Las Vegas Strip, private pilot, lead investor, a guy who was pretty disturbed, cold lone fish, not argumentative, suspected Las Vegas gunman, cold loner, not violent and not nasty, more nondescript, not a talkative guy, very quiet, a little bit weird but not like psychotic, nice, never suspicious.

Concerning the structure of the attributes, there are 70 % more multi-word attributes compared to single-word attributes. The results suggest that there is a difference between single-word attributes and semantically richer multiword attributes. Whereas the single-word concepts show a greater tendency to convey an unmarked meaning, multiword concepts convey a marked meaning. At the same time, multiword attributes are able to provide a richer situational context that single-word attributes cannot. The situational context can be observed in multiword attribute Las Vegas shooting suspect and single-word attribute suspect. Results obtained suggest that the multiword concepts are used as part of derogatory or informal communicative strategies. They label the shooter as a cold lone fish, a guy who was pretty disturbed and deranged, crazy man. In contrast with the multiword attributes, single-word attributes provide a relatively neutral meaning.

In many instances, the Las Vegas shooter, Stephen Paddock, was labelled as gunman or suspect. Six of the articles describe him as gunman and five of the articles describe him as suspect. The articles on the Las Vegas perpetrator include many positive descriptions of him that soften the perception of him and isolate his behaviour as something inexplicable. WSJ: “Paddock recently made living as an investor in residential real estate and was also a regular video-poker player.” NYT includes the statement of the gun owner’s shop where Paddock purchased his weapon: “Mr Paddock is a normal fellow, a normal guy – nothing out of the ordinary”. LAT labels the perpetrator as a real estate investor, gambler and licensed pilot. It describes him as a lone-wolf attacker and “not an avid gun guy but he liked to gamble”. “Paddock’s former brother-in-law remembers the gunman as a smart, fun-loving person. He was a young man thriving in Southern California when he was married to Sharon. Oh, he was a smart guy, like an accountant or something. He had a good job, he was a great guy actually.”
The media characterizes Paddock as an unusual profile of a mass shooter. This allows him to evade the responsibility, giving an impression of him being responsible for some regular crime. The media highlighted the neighbours' and family's statements to portray him as a regular person playing poker and being a successful accountant. None of the attributes reflects on the shooter’s race or country of origin.

**ATTRIBUTES DESCRIBING THE LAS VEGAS MASS SHOOTING**

BG: *shooting at an outdoor concert in Las Vegas, shooting*;
LAT: *shooting, attack, deadliest mass shooting in modern American history, horrible tragedy, solo act, the cowardly acts of a killer, act of pure evil, tragic and heinous act of violence, shootings, gunfire, mass destruction*;
NYP: *the 64-year-old retired accountant’s rampage, slaughter, carnage, massacre, killing spree*;
NYT: *rapid-fire barrage, deadliest mass shootings in American history, attack, gunfire, shooting, act of pure evil, Las Vegas shooting*;
ST: *killings, attack, mass shooting*
WP: *firestorm of bullets, Las Vegas strip, shooting, Sunday’s massacre of innocents*;
WSJ: *deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history, Las Vegas strip*.

Only four of the articles label the event as *mass shooting*; five articles label the event as *shooting* and two articles as *massacre*. There are three similar superlatives describing the Las Vegas mass shooting event: *deadliest mass shooting in modern American history, deadliest mass shooting in American history and deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history*. Four articles include the location of the mass shooting in their description.

**ATTRIBUTES DESCRIBING THE VIRGINIA TECH PERPETRATOR**

BG: *loner, gunman, son, legal US resident with no criminal record*;
LAT: *taciturn loner, young man, gunman, 23-year-old English major, scary guy, legal U.S. resident*;
NYP: *stalker, killer, spanky, chubby-cheeked campus creep, mass murderer, twisted, 23-year-old English major from South Korea, question mark, increasingly isolated loner*,
pathetic, a bit kooky, a senior who immigrated to the United States with his family in 1992, homicidal maniac, killer, outcast, weird, antisocial, son;
NYT: troubled student, Virginia Tech killer, 23-year-old student, killer of 32 people, young man few people on campus knew, a South Korean immigrant who Americanized his name, gunman;
ST: 23-year-old senior, gunman, sullen loner who alarmed professors and classmates, violent, erratic, loner;
WP: student, silent brooding student, bespectacled young South Korean citizen, Korean person, son of immigrants, angry, menacing, disturbed, depressed, young man, withdrawn on campus, male, quiet, physically and emotionally down, strange young man, shy, odd, killer;
WSJ: social misfit who snapped, 23-year-old, loner, evil, malevolent soul, man.

In contrast with the attributes describing the Las Vegas perpetrator, the number of multi-word attributes is balanced with the number of the single-word attributes. In contrast with the Las Vegas results, these results suggest that there is no apparent difference between single-word attributes and multiword attributes. Both the single-word concepts and multiword concepts show a greater tendency to convey a marked meaning. However, multiword attributes are able to provide a richer situational context that single-word attributes cannot. The situational context can be observed in multiword attribute sullen loner who alarmed professors and classmates and single-word attribute loner. Results obtained suggest that both the multiword concepts and single-word concepts are used as part of derogatory or informal communicative strategies. They label the shooter as an outcast or chubby-cheeked campus creep.

The article describes Virginia Tech shooter, Cho Seung-Hui, as someone that should be feared. In contrast with the reporting on Las Vegas shooting, Cho is labelled killer five times, whereas Paddock is labelled killer only once. Cho is not once named a suspect, but Paddock is called suspect five times. The next most prevalent Cho's description is that of someone who has mental health issues, but there is nothing that could be done against it. NYP writes: “He was a chubby-cheeked campus creep who stalked at least three pretty co-eds – terrifying one enough that her parents called the cops on him – before he wound up unleashing Virginia Tech’s bloodbath.” WSJ continues: “Cho Seung-Hui seems to fit the profile of a social misfit who snapped. Like many other mass killers, the 23-year-old is being described by acquaintances as a loner, given to bursts of hostility and other antisocial behaviour”. He is declared as dangerous to himself and others due to his mental health problems. Cho is not called a failure of the system
but rather failure himself. In contrast with the results obtained from the articles on Steven Paddock, these results do not humanise the shooter but rather directly condemn him. Four of the articles reflect on Cho’s race or country of origin, whereas none of the articles reflects on Paddock’s race or country of origin. Judging from the results gathered, a conclusion can be drawn that the vocabulary used to describe the Asian shooter is emotionally charged, subjective and incorrect.

ATTRIBUTES DESCRIBING THE VIRGINIA TECH MASS SHOOTING

BG: rampage, shootings;
LAT: massacre, shootings, shots, unrelating staccato, bang bang bang bang bang bang, shooting, shooting incident, tragedy, gunfire, terror, mass shooting, a multiple shooting;
NYP: Virginia Tech’s bloodbath, rampage, worst shooting massacre in U.S. history, killing spree, chilling missive, carnage, impending bloodshed, shooting;
NYT: shooting rampage at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, shooting episodes, shootings, killings, the most horrific incident, fatal shootings, trauma, horrible nightmare;
ST: bloodbath at Virginia Tech, massacre, slaughter;
WP: worst shooting rampage in U.S. history, shootings, Monday’s tragedy;
WSJ: mass murder at Virginia Tech, traumatic event, murder spree, mass murder.

The expressions used by the media to portray the Virginia Tech shooting are as varied as the ones portraying the shooter. Four articles include the location of the mass shooting in their descriptions. They are emotionally charged and subjective. The most theatrical attribute is “bang bang bang bang bang”. The most frightful attributes to be found are “Virginia Tech’s bloodbath”, “impending bloodshed” and “bloodbath at Virginia Tech”.

4.2 Responsibility insinuating

The media is humanising the white shooter Stephen Paddock by including and at the same time not navigating or condemning the statements of expressed surprise. BG included the brother’s statement “Stephen being named as the shooting suspect was like if an asteroid fell out of the sky. [...] We are completely dumbfounded. We can’t understand what happened.” LAT is further portraying the shooter as an average person and one of the people. LAT: “Something just incredibly wrong happened to my brother. He is just a guy who played video poker and
took cruises and ate burritos at Del Taco.” It gives an excuse for his action by stating something wrong must have happened to him as if he had not been responsible for his actions himself. It lays the blame on something else. Very similar results are obtained from WP: “If you told me an asteroid fell into Earth, it would mean the same to me. There is absolutely no sense, no reason he did this. He’s just a guy who played video poker and took cruises and ate burritos at Taco bell. There’s no political affiliation that we know of. There’s no religious affiliation that we know of.” “Something broke in his head is the only thing possible. Did he have a stroke? I’m hoping they cut open his brain and find something. There’s data point missing.” NYT continues in a similar manner by reporting on the weapons as an excuse for his actions: “Erick Paddock said that his brother Stephen was not an avid gun guy at all. The fact that he had those kinds of weapons is just – where the hell did he get automatic weapons?” The results from WSJ reveal similar reporting: “We are shocked, horrified, completely dumbfounded. Where the hell did he get automatic weapons?”

NYT quotes the President: “It was an act of pure evil. Our unity cannot be shattered by evil, our bonds cannot be broken by violence”. With pure evil no human or social element is indicated. The statement implies that neither the society nor the environment was responsible for the mass shooting. The President wanted to assert that there was nothing anyone could have done to prevent the mass shooting. Supposedly there was no contributing factor that led Stephen Paddock to shoot people. Claiming that the mass shooting was an act of pure evil and there were no contributing factors is misleading. It draws a comparison of a mass shooting with the inexplicable works of God since God does not need reasons to act. The questionnaire has not examined the readers' perception of the statement, but I conjecture that this could be understood as a glorification of the mass shooter. In the same vein as NYT, LAT reports: “It was an act of pure evil.” In contrast with the President Donald Trump, George Bush correctly addressed the Virginia Tech mass shooting in 2007: “It is a day of sadness for our entire nation. People all over this country are thinking about you and asking God to provide comfort for all who have been affected.”

NYP writes, “For all his cruelty, Paddock seemed to have wanted to make sure his girlfriend had a nest egg after he was gone.” It includes the statement of his brother: “As he was descending into hell, he wanted to take care of her. He manipulated her to be as completely far away from him and safe while he did this.” The phrase descend into hell refers to Christ's torture and humiliation before his death. This humiliation had a religious dimension as part of
God's judgement upon the sin which he bore for Christians. The brother's statement directly compares his brother's suicide to Christ's passing. It is undoubtedly humanising the shooter and even praising his actions.

ST is the only newspaper that does not include statements of expressed surprise, just as it is not apologizing for the shooter’s actions or humanising him. The results obtained from ST suggest its reporting is correct. ST reports correctly on both the Las Vegas and the Virginia Tech mass shootings.

Virginia Tech perpetrator Cho Seung-Hui had been treated for mental health problems before the mass shooting event. Even though there were no signs of mental illness with the white Las Vegas perpetrator, the media implied that mental health issues could be the cause of his actions. The media reporting on the Las Vegas event shows a gentle tendency towards justification of white perpetrator’s actions due to possible mental health issues.

WSJ reports incorrectly: “However, even those benevolent influences – were it possible to restore them – might not have made a difference in the case of Cho Seung-Hui, whose madness can’t be explained by reason.” WSJ does not quote a source but expresses its own opinion on the mass shooting event. The article first considers gun restriction and examines whether gun control would have been beneficial in preventing the attack. The bias towards an Asian shooter is evident since it indicates that no gun restriction or any societal means would be able to prevent Cho Seung-Hui from being responsible for the Virginia Tech mass shooting. This points to the fact that the media unquestionably clarifies its opinion on the shooter's responsibility. It does not justify or humanise the shooter, even though the same newspaper justified the white shooter Steven Paddock.

4.3 Race

The results do not come as a surprise. Four articles of the selected seven discuss the race of the perpetrator of the Virginia Tech shooting. However, only ST includes the picture of the Asian perpetrator. It does not mention the race in the same article.

BG discusses the country of birth, South Korea: “Mary Karen Read […] was born in South Korea, the same homeland as her killer …” Similarly, NYP names the country of origin, South
Korea, and later further specifies how the perpetrator immigrated to the United States: “a 23-year-old English major from South Korea” and “Cho, a senior who immigrated to the United States with his family ...” NYT and WP include the country of origin and further discuss the immigrant status. NYT: “Cho – a South Korean immigrant who Americanized his name and preferred to be known as Seung Cho.” WP refers to the shooter as a “young South Korean citizen” and “the son of immigrants”. It further elaborates on the immigration status: “Cho held a green card through his parents, and he renewed it Oct. 27, 2003, according to Homeland Security.”

NYT discusses other Asians at Virginia Tech: “Asia-American students at Virginia Tech reacted to news about the gunman’s identity with shock and a measure of anxiety about a possible backlash against them.”

LAT and WSJ are the only newspapers that provide neither the race nor a picture of the perpetrator. They do not specify the country of origin. No newspaper would provide the picture in the article and mention race at the same time.

In contrast with the reporting on the Virginia Tech shooting, no article suggests the race of the Las Vegas perpetrator. Significantly more articles, i.e. four out of seven, provide a picture of the Caucasian shooter Stephen Paddock. Interestingly, the picture of Seung-Hui Cho that ST included in the reporting is only a headshot, whereas all the pictures of Stephen Paddock show his body and some background. No article would even mention the Las Vegas shooter’s country of origin. The noun America and the adjective American are not named even once in direct relation to the shooter Steven Paddock. This leads to the conclusion that the very ability to exclude race from a social discourse is a distinctive feature of the white race.

No media reporting on the Las Vegas shooting or Virginia Tech shooting specifies race or country of origin in the title or subtitle. The language in the article describing Seung-Hui Cho’s race is objective and appropriate in all of the seven articles.

The results obtained from the articles speak of the media tendency to mention the non-Caucasian race significantly more often than the Caucasian race. Whereas 57% of the articles reporting on the Virginia Tech mass shooting discuss the Asian race, no article reporting on the Las Vegas mass shooting discusses the Caucasian race. This points to the fact that the media
consider the race essential only when it comes to the non-Caucasian race. The consequence of the salient racial content is the fact that it allows readers to consciously or unconsciously think about race.

4.4 Criminal history

Concerning the topic of criminal history, ST explains previous violation of the law for the Las Vegas shooter: “Las Vegas police also had nothing more than a routine traffic violation on Paddock, according to Kevin McMahill, the department’s undersheriff.” WSJ includes the governor’s statement: “Mrs Hutchison said, adding that the suspect didn’t appear in any law enforcement databases and was not on any radar.” Similar results were obtained from NYT: “Officials said he had no significant criminal history and drew little attention to himself.” LAT writes: “[...] who appears to have had no previous run-ins with the law.” and “Mesquite police said they’d had no prior contact with the gunman – no traffic stops, no citations, no arrest, nothing.” BG bears a close resemblance to the reporting: “Quinn Averett, a spokesman for the Mesquite police, said the department has had no previous contact with Paddock.” In contrast with the rest of the articles, NYP does not explain or imply shooter’s previous violation of the law. At the same time, it does refer to his father as a bank robber.

WP elaborates on the father’s criminal history but also points out that the shooter had never been in a violation of the law before the event: “He grew up the son of a convicted bank robber who was constantly running from the law. But in his own life, Stephen Paddock, 64, had stayed out of trouble until Sunday night …” It goes on: “Paddock’s father, Benjamin Hoskins Paddock, was on the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted list […] He escaped from prison that year …” WSJ proceeds in the same way: “His father, Benjamin Hoskins Paddock, was convicted of bank robbery and automobile theft, according to an FBI wanted poster issued in 1969 after he escaped from a Texas prison.” Similar results are obtained from NYT: “Mr. Paddock’s father was convicted in 1961 of committing a series of bank robberies, and was sentenced to 20 years in prison, but escaped from La Tuna federal prison in Texas …” LAT maintains that “Their father, Benjamin Hoskins Paddock, had been wanted on bank robbery charges and was arrested in Las Vegas in 1960, Erick Paddock said in an interview. He tried to run an FBI agent over with his car before he was captured …” BG reporting proceeds very much in the same way: “Paddock’s father, Benjamin Hoskins Paddock, was a convicted bank robber and con man described in a wanted poster as psychopathic with suicidal tendencies. He had escaped from
prison in 1969, earning him a spot on the FBI’s list of most sought-after and dangerous criminals.”

In contrast with the rest of the articles, ST does not mention father’s criminal history. Despite this, there is no article that would not mention either Paddock’s previous violation of the law or his father’s criminal history.

In the light of the criminal history, BG provides the following: “The gun was bought at the store about 35 miles from Virginia tech called Roanoke Firearms, which ran the required instant background check and sold the gun after determining that Cho did not have a criminal record.” LAT reporting proceeds in the same way, including the gun store owner in the reporting: “It really was a very unremarkable sale, owner John Markell said. He was about as clean-cut a kid as you’d ever want to see.”

LAT further reports on Seung-Hui Cho’s previous violation of the university’s law: “Cho was intimidating the other students in the class by snapping pictures of them with his cellphone camera.” NYP writes that “He was [...] –terrifying one enough that her parents called the cops on him – before he wound up unleashing Virginia Tech’s bloodbath.” It further elaborates “John said the girl’s parents called cops after Cho found her at her dorm, introduced himself as Question mark and began leaving messages on a dry-erase board outside her door.” “But when he made crank calls to them, randomly snapped photos of women around campus, stalked their female friends and then threatened suicide when the cops were called, they said they knew he needed help.” WP bears a resemblance with its reporting: “Cho took pictures of fellow students during class and wrote about death …” NYT, ST and WSJ do not include the information on Cho’s criminal history or the previous violation of the university’s law.

Judging from the results gathered from Las Vegas and Virginia Tech coverage, there is no apparent discrimination to be found regarding the reporting on criminal history. The press includes the fact that not only Stephen Paddock but also Cho Seung-Hui had no previous violation of the law. At the same time, it mentions the criminal history of Paddock’s father and Cho’s violation of the university law.
4.5 Mental health

In the light of the mental health topic, BG states: “Paddock’s father was a con man described in a wanted poster as psychopathic.” The article in WP reports similarly that “Paddock’s father was described on a wanted poster as a psychopathic with suicidal tendencies.” Identical results are obtained from WSJ. WP further elaborates, “Eric said he did not know of any mental illness, alcohol or drug problems in his brother’s life.” NYP is the only newspaper that reports on Paddock’s prescribed medication: “Also on Tuesday, the Las Vegas Review-Journal cited state records showing that in June Paddock had been prescribed the anti-anxiety drug Diazepam – better known under its brand name Valium.”

WSJ quotes the Governor of Nevada: “This seems like the act of a deranged, crazy man.”, the neighbour of the shooter adding: “It’s incredible to think that there was a guy who was pretty disturbed among us.” and another neighbour stating: “He was a little weird, but not like psychotic.”

In correlation with the reporting on the mental disease, NYP condemns the Virginia Tech shooter on their own: “He was a chubby-cheeked campus creep who stalked at least three pretty co-eds.” and “But when he made crank call to them, they said they knew he needed help. They took him away to the counselling centre for a night or two.” NYP does not quote when it condemns the Virginia Tech perpetrator. Throughout the text, we can read “creep, twisted, kooky and pathetic”. We can read in the article about the “bizarre warning signs, Cho’s troubled dark side, disturbing real-life encounters and Cho’s eerie calm”. NYT marks the Asian shooter as “troubled” and proceeds: “Prescription medications said to be related to treatment of psychological problems were found among Cho’s effects, but officials did not specify what drugs they were.” BG writes: “There was some concern about him, said Head of the English Department.” There are no similar results to be obtained from the articles reporting on the Las Vegas shooting. The media is not condemning the shooter on its own and does not use derogatory terms to name the white perpetrator.

The very title “Cho’s madness” in WSJ exhibits incorrect reporting. WSJ proceeds: “There are evil and psychotic people in this world willing to do great harm to others if they aren’t stopped. Cho Seung-Hui seems to fit the profile of a social misfit who snapped.” In contrast with the reporting on the Las Vegas mass shooting, evil is discussed in a somewhat different context
regarding the Virginia Tech mass shooting. “The calculation of his murder spree also suggests some deeper evil at work – if we can use that word in liberal company. This was a malevolent soul.” The article later concludes that no gun restriction would be able to prevent the mass shooting. Even though Cho Seung-Hui exhibited apparent signs of mental health issues and clearly the system failed to provide help, this line suggests there was nothing the system could have done to prevent the shooting. Evil in the articles reporting on the Virginia Tech shooting exhibits a somewhat more direct relation to mental health issues. In the text we can read about “bursts of hostility and other antisocial behaviour and warning signs”.

The media reporting on the Asian shooter gives a reader an impression that mentally ill people are potentially shooters. The articles do not examine the contributing factor of the failing mental health system. They do not report on the inadequate mental health service and the impact this has on the lives of Americans. A reader gets an impression that the shooter snaps one day resulting in a mass shooting event. This leads us to conclude that the media are creating a stigma of violence surrounding mentally ill people. The truth is that the Virginia Tech shooting might have been prevented if the authorities had not failed to collaborate between the courts and the services system or establish data systems for monitoring and overseeing the commitment process.
5 Analysis of the German media

To make the reading more manageable, the study uses the abbreviations for Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) and die tageszeitung (TAZ).

5.1 Perpetrator

The content analysis is based on all the nouns and adjectives from the selected articles. The attributes in bold are the attributes provided by the media themselves. The other attributes are quotes that the media included from sources such as family members, neighbours or related reporting.

ATTRIBUTES DESCRIBING THE LAS VEGAS PERPETRATOR

Bild: Las-Vegas Schütze, Jäger, Hobby-Pilot, Schütze, Einzeltäter, Soldat des Islamischen Staates, Buchhalter, lizensierter Jäger, Angreifer, Attentäter, Killer, Rentner;
FAZ: pensionierter Buchhalter, Zocker, Massenmörder, nicht vorbestraft, notorischer Spieler, Schütze, Rentner, lone wolf, Einzeltäter, Bruder, Normalbürger, nicht Fanatiker, Heckenschütze von Las Vegas;
TAZ: normaler Typ, 64-jährige, lone wolf, einsamer Wolf, heimischer Täter, kein Muslim, kein Immigrant, kein ausländischer Terrorist, weder wütend noch gewalttätig, Rentner, völlig normaler Käufer, Massenmörder, normaler Typ, der sich amüsiert und ins Kasino geht, Bürokaufmann, tödlichste Schütze der US-Moderne, Täter;
Welt: Schütze, Einzeltäter, mutmaßlicher Täter, mutmaßlicher Attentäter, Bruder, normaler Mensch, Täter, einsamer Wolf, Soldat des IS, Gast in Hotel und Kasino;
Zeit: 64-jährige Todesschütze, Schütze, sehr sehr krankes Individuum, Täter.

In many instances, the Las Vegas shooter was labelled as Täter” (Eng. perpetrator) or Schütze (Eng. shooter). All of the articles labelled Steven Paddock as Schütze. The articles on the Las Vegas perpetrator follow the American coverage, including positive descriptions of him and his profession that soften the perception of him. The German media further follow the approach of the American media in emphasizing an unusual profile of a mass shooter. Three articles include descriptions such as Normalbürger (Eng. normal citizen), normaler Typ (Eng. normal guy), normaler Käufer (Eng. normal customer) and normaler Mensch (Eng. normal man). In contrast with the German media, only one American article describes Stephen Paddock as a
normal guy and normal fellow. The overall coverage of the German media allows him to evade the responsibility or gives an impression of him not being responsible for the crime. However, only two of the German articles include statements of the family to portray the shooter as a regular person. Corresponding with the results obtained from the American media coverage, the German media coverage does not reflect on Paddock’s race or country of origin. In contrast with the American articles, the German articles do not once describe Paddock as a suspect. The overall results obtained from the German media correlate with the results obtained from the American articles.

**ATTRIBUTES DESCRIBING THE LAS VEGAS MASS SHOOTING**

**Bild:** Hölle, hunderte Schüsse, Gewalttat, Schusssalven, Wahnsinnstat;  
**FAZ:** Anschlag, einer der fürchterlisten Gewalttaten der jüngeren amerikanischen Geschichte, Tat, Blutattat;  
**TAZ:** normaler Wahnsinn, Abschlussfeuerwerk, plop plop plop, Massaker, Betriebsunfall, der letztlich nicht vermeidbar sei, Massaker von Las Vegas, bedauemrliches Ereignis, Schießerei in Las Vegas;  
**Welt:** Tat, Angriff auf ein Musikfestival in Las Vegas, das schlimmste Schusswaffenmassaker in der jüngeren US-Geschichte  
**Zeit:** Angriff von Las Vegas, Unglück in Las Vegas, tödlichste Schusswaffenverbrechen in der Geschichte des Landes, Schüsse, Tragödie von Las Vegas.

In contrast with the American articles, none of the German articles condemns the event as Amoklauf (Eng. mass shooting). Two of the articles describe the event as Massaker (Eng. massacre) and two of the articles describe the event as Angriff (Eng. attack). There are three superlatives used to describe the mass shooting event: “einer der fürchterlisten Gewalttaten der jüngeren amerikanischen Geschichte” (Eng. “one of the most terrible acts of violence in recent American history”), “das schlimmste Schusswaffenmassaker in der jüngeren US-Geschichte” (Eng. “the worst firearms massacre in recent US history”) and “tödlichste Schusswaffenverbrechen in der Geschichte des Landes” (Eng. “deadliest firearm crime in the country's history”). The German articles follow the American articles regarding the use of superlatives. Three articles use the location in their description of the event.
ATTRIBUTES DESCRIBING THE VIRGINIA TECH PERPETRATOR

Bild: Amok-Killer, Amok-Killer von Blacksburg, dieser junger Mann, Außenseiter, Südkoreaner;  
FAZ: Amokläufer, Amokläufer an der Virginia-Tech-Hochschule, 23 Jahre alter Student aus Südkorea, Einzelgänger, sehr ernst, sehr ruhig, Schütze, Täter;  
TAZ: Täter, Amokläufer, Täter, südkoreanischer Student, Schütze, junger Mann, junger Mann asiatischer Abstammung, Pfadfinder;  
Welt: Mörder, keiner unserer Söhne mehr, Amokläufer, Täter, Südkoreaner, Massenmörder, Killer, 1.5 Generation Koreaner, nicht mal ein halber Koreaner;  
Zeit: Täter, Amokläufer von Blacksburg, 23-jähriger Student aus Südkorea, Mann, dieser Typ, Schütze, Amokläufer.

Amokläufer (Eng. mass shooter) is the commonest term used to label Cho Seung-Hui. Bild is the only newspaper that does not use the term but uses the related term Amok-Killer. Steven Paddock was not once named Amokläufer. Unlike Steven Paddock who was labelled Schütze by all of the articles, the Asian perpetrator was named Schütze (Eng. shooter) by only three of the German articles. These results also show that all the newspapers reflect on race or country of origin of Cho Sung-Hui. None of the results reflects on the Stephen Paddock’s race or country of origin. In contrast with the American coverage, German coverage does not portray Cho Seung-Hui as someone that should be feared. Cho is labelled killer three times, whereas Paddock is labelled killer only once. Similar to the American coverage, Cho is not once named a suspect, but Paddock is called suspect five times in the American media. The next most prevalent Cho's description in American coverage is that of someone that has mental health issues, but there is nothing that could be done against it. No German attribute implies to the mental health issues of Cho.

ATTRIBUTES DESCRIBING THE VIRGINIA TECH MASS SHOOTING

Bild: Massaker;  
FAZ: Schießerei, Tat, Blutvergießen, Amoklauf, schlimmster Amoklauf in der amerikanischen Geschichte, Schüsse, Blutbad, Schießerei, Eifersuchstat;
Four of the German articles label the Virginia Tech mass shooting event as *Amoklauf* (Eng. *mass shooting*), whereas none of the articles labels the Las Vegas mass shooting event as *Amoklauf*. Followed by *Amoklauf*, the term *Massaker* (Eng. *massacre*) is used by four of the articles. The term *massacre* is also used by three American articles. Two articles use the location of the event in their description. The Las Vegas mass shooting is labelled as *Bluttat* once, whereas Virginia Tech mass shooting is labelled similarly five times: *Blutvergießen, Blutbad, Bluttat, Blutbad in Blacksburg* and *kaltblutiger Amoklauf*.

**5.2 Responsibility insinuating**

There are only two German articles humanising the white shooter Stephen Paddock by including and at the same time not navigating or condemning the statements of expressed surprise. However, it does not state an excuse for his action by stating something wrong must have happened to him as if he had not been responsible for his actions himself. German coverage does not follow the American approach and does not lay the blame on something else. FAZ writes: “Ein Angehöriger zeigte sich schockt und ratlos. Es ist, als ob ein Asteroid gerade auf unsere Familie gestürzt wäre. Wir haben keine Ahnung, wie das passiert ist.” (Eng. “A member of the family was shocked and at a loss. It is as if an asteroid had just fallen on our family. We have no idea how that happened.”) Welt provides the brother’s statement as well: “Wir haben keine Ahnung, warum er das getan hat. Die Reporterin sagte, der Bruder des Täters habe neben sich gestanden.” (Eng. “We have no idea why he did that. The reporter said the perpetrator's brother was confused.”)

The article in Zeit uses a direct quote from the President: “Der Schütze sei ein sehr, sehr krankes Individuum, sagte Trump.” The quote is not correctly translated since the President actually said “It was an act of pure evil.” The German translation does not allow Paddock to evade responsibility. This points to the fact that the German media clarifies its
opinion on the shooter's responsibility. However, it is not objective reporting since it is a direct quote of the president implying that neither the society nor the environment was responsible for the mass shooting.

The article in Taz does not mention “the act of pure evil”. Nevertheless, it denounces Trump implying there was no contributing factor that led Stephen Paddock to shoot people. Taz: “Am Tag nach dem Massaker zeigt der Präsident, was er meint. Er bietet Bibelzitate und Gebete, die an fundamental-christliche Gemeinden erinnern, die jede Verbesserung auf den Tag der Wiederkehr des Heilands verschieben. Und er lässt erklären, dass eine Debatte über Waffenkontrolle verfrüht sei.” (Eng. “The day after the massacre the president expresses his opinion. He offers Bible quotations and prayers that remind us of fundamental Christian congregations that postpone any improvement until the day of the return of the Saviour. And he says that a debate on weapons control is premature.”)

The bias of the American media coverage towards an Asian shooter is not evident in the German media coverage of the Virginia Tech mass shooting event. No article indicates that gun restriction or any society means would be unable to prevent Cho Seung-Hui from being responsible for the Virginia Tech mass shooting. The media do not discuss the responsibility insinuating. As it is evident from the results, German media do not follow American media coverage regarding the responsibility insinuating.

5.3 Race

All of the selected articles discuss the race of the perpetrator of the Virginia Tech shooting. Two of the articles include the picture in the same article. Bild labels Cho Sung-Hui as Südkoreaner (Eng. South Korean); FAZ labels him as Amokläufer aus Südkorea (Eng. mass shooter from South Korea), Taz labels him as junger Mann asiatischer Abstammung (Eng. young man of Asian origin) and Zeit identifies him as a 23-jähriger Student aus Südkorea (Eng. 23-year-old student from South Korea).

In the light of the topic of race, one article specifies country of origin in the title and another one specifies it in the subtitle. The subtitle of the FAZ article reads: “Der Amokläufer stammte aus Südkorea”.

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Only one article in Welt addresses the reaction of the Asian authorities: “Das blaue Haus vermerkte ausdrücklich, dass Cho seinen festen Wohnsitz seit Jahren in den USA habe.” (Eng. “The Blue House explicitly noted that Cho had been a permanent resident of the United States for years.”) The Blue House tries to distance itself from the mass shooter: “Eine Schlagzeile in Südkorea lautete gestern, der Killer sei in 1.5 Generation Koreaner, was bedeutet, nicht mal ein halber Koreaner. Chos Eltern hätten diesen schon in Alter von acht Jahren in die USA mitgenommen, wo er auch aufgewachsen sei.” (Eng. “A headline in South Korea yesterday reads that the killer is a Korean-American of the 1.5 generation, which means he is not even half Korean. Cho's parents took him to the United States at the age of eight, where he also grew up.”)

In contrast with the reporting on the Virginia Tech shooting, no article suggests the race or country of origin of the Las Vegas perpetrator. Corresponding with the results obtained from the American newspapers, the noun America and the adjective American are not once named in direct relation to the shooter Steven Paddock. Whereas four out of seven American newspapers provide a picture of the Caucasian shooter Stephen Paddock, none of the German newspapers provides a picture of him, but two articles provide the picture of Cho Seung-Hui. The American and the German media all provide the same picture.

The results obtained from the articles speak of the American and German media tendency to discuss the non-Caucasian race significantly more often than the Caucasian race. This shows that the German media follow the American coverage and consider the race important to be mentioned only with the non-Caucasian race.

5.4 Criminal history

Concerning criminal history, only two articles point out that the white perpetrator has never been in a violation of the law before the mass shooting event. FAZ writes: “Er war nicht vorbestraft.” (Eng. “He had no criminal record.”), “Er hatte keinerlei Vorstrafen” (Eng. “He had no criminal record at all.”) and “Einziger Eintrag in seiner Akte sei ein Verkehrsdelikt von vor einigen Jahren, teilte die Polizei mit.” (Eng. “The police said that the only offense on his record is a traffic violation from a few years ago.”) Taz proceeds in the same way: Paddock war ein Rentner, der den Behörden nie in seinem Leben aufgefallen war.” (Eng. “Paddock was a pensioner who had never come to the attention of the authorities.”)
There is only one American article that does not report on father’s criminal history. However, FAZ is the only German article that elaborates on the father’s criminal history: “Der Vater von Stephen und Erick Paddock war ein gesuchter Bankräuber, der in den Sechzigerjahren aus dem Gefängnis ausgebrochen war und in damaligen Steckbriefen als psychopathisch und suizidgefährdet bezeichnet wurde.” (Eng. “The father of Stephen and Erick Paddock was a wanted bank robber who had escaped from prison in the 1960s and was described in the wanted poster as psychopathic and suicidal at the time.”) There are no American newspapers that would not include either Paddock’s previous violation of the law or his father’s criminal history. However, there are three German articles that do not address these topics.

Bild is the only German newspaper reporting on the criminal history of the Asian perpetrator. It is the only article reporting on the plays written by Cho: “Schließlich geht sogar die Mutter mit einer Kettensäge auf ihren Freund los. Der Junge versucht, den Mann mit einem Müsliriegel zu ersticken. Doch der Stiefvater schlägt brutal zu, der Junge stirbt.” (Eng. “In the end even the mother approaches her boyfriend with a chainsaw. The boy tries to smother the man with a cereal bar. But the stepfather hits him brutally so the boy dies.”)

Bild further reports on the Seung-Hui Cho’s previous violation of the university’s law: “Doch seine Texte waren so bedrohlich, dass Lucinda Roy die Polizei und Uni-Leitung informierte. Diese Drohungen schienen unter der Oberfläche zu liegen. Sie waren nicht eindeutig. Ohne klare Drohungen konnte die Polizei aber nichts gegen den Studenten unternehmen.” (Eng. “But his texts were so threatening that Lucinda Roy informed the police and university management. The threats appeared to be concealed. They were ambiguous. The police could do nothing against the student without clear threats.”)

5.5 Mental health

Concerning mental health results, there is no article that would imply Paddock’s mental illness or drugs he was using. Results similar to American BG are found in German FAZ reporting on the father’s mental state: “Der Vater war […] in damaligen Steckbriefen als psychopathisch und suizidgefährdet bezeichnet wurde.” (Eng. “The father was described in the wanted posters as psychopathic and suicidal.”) Even though there were no signs of mental illness with the white Las Vegas perpetrator, the American media implied that mental health issues could be the cause of his actions. The German media does not report on the mental illness and does not
follow the tendency towards justification of white perpetrator’s actions due to his mental illness.

Zeit quotes the president: “Der Schütze sei ein sehr, sehr krankes Individuum.” (Eng. “The shooter was a very, very sick individual.”) There is no similar quote to be found in the American coverage. As in the case of American pure evil no social element is indicated with individual. The statement implies that neither the society nor the environment was responsible for the mass shooting. The President wanted to assert that there was nothing anyone could do to prevent the mass shooting. Supposedly there was no contributing factor that led Stephen Paddock to shoot people.

In correlation with the reporting on the mental disease German media do not condemn the Virginia Tech shooter, whereas American media do condemn the shooter on their own. The German media further does not report that the Virginia Tech shooting might have been prevented if the authorities had not failed to collaborate.


6 Reader’s perception

6.1 Methodology

The proposed research will thoroughly investigate the reader’s perception of racial discrimination. The respondents of the questionnaire are passers-by that were randomly selected and asked whether they wanted to participate in a survey. The following survey is self-selecting since the respondents volunteered to take part after being given the choice to participate or decline. Random selection was used to obtain a sample that is representative of the population. In what concerns the participants’ cohort, the age range of those taking part in the survey was of 18-60+ years old. The research was based on a random selection principle since it is a precise, scientific method whereby all the articles had an equal chance of selection. They were asked to read the randomly selected American article reporting on the Las Vegas shooting or the randomly selected American article reporting on the Virginia Tech shooting. 20 participants took part in the study. 10 of them were surveyed on the Las Vegas shooting and 10 of them were surveyed on the Virginia Tech shooting. Location, all the pictures, the name of the mass shooting event, the name of the perpetrator and race were concealed in all of the articles. To express their opinion on the statements related to the article the participants had to choose between five options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree.

Demographic questions are to be found in the Appendix. Here I present the questionnaire.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear respondent,

I am a student at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana and this questionnaire is a part of my master's thesis. The purpose of this study is to examine how perpetrators are perceived after reading a newspaper coverage. This questionnaire is anonymous and comprises a number of questions on the topic of reader's perception of the perpetrator. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. I would appreciate if you could answer all of the questions. By completing this survey, you agree to participate in this research.

Thank you for your cooperation.
1. I have recognised the event the article is referring to.
   YES  NO  MAYBE
   0    0    0

2. I have already read the article before participating in this survey.
   YES  NO  MAYBE
   0    0    0

3. The perpetrator is a white person.
   strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree
   0    0    0    0    0

4. I believe that the perpetrator has more positive than negative features.
   strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree
   0    0    0    0    0

5. Ignoring the fact that he is responsible for the mass shooting, the perpetrator is an ordinary person.
   strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree
   0    0    0    0    0

6. The perpetrator is the only one responsible for the mass shooting.
   strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree
   0    0    0    0    0

7. The gun legislation is responsible for the mass shooting.
   strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree
   0    0    0    0    0

8. Identified and treated mental health issues could have prevented the mass shooting.
   strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree
   0    0    0    0    0

9. Nothing could have prevented the mass shooting.
   strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree
   0    0    0    0    0

The questionnaire consisted in total of nine close-ended questions. There were no missing responses and no multiple responses with any of the questions, so all of the questionnaires were considered in the analysis.
### Figure 9 Survey Results on the Las Vegas shooting

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<th>R4</th>
<th>R5</th>
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### Figure 10 Survey results on the Virginia Tech shooting

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45
6.2 Previous knowledge of the event

| Q1 | I have recognised the event the article refers to. |
| Q2 | I have already read the article before participating in this survey. |

When inquired about their previous knowledge of the Las Vegas mass shooting event, three respondents claimed having recognised the event the article referred to. Besides, it was claimed by two respondents that they might or might not recognise the event. Overall, five respondents did not identify the event or the article. Among those that identified the event, none reported having read the article prior to the survey.

No respondent claimed having recognised the Virginia Tech event the article referred to. There was only one who claimed he might or might not recognise the incident or might have read the article prior to the survey. The results do not come as a surprise, since the Virginia Tech mass shooting happened in 2007, whereas the Las Vegas mass shooting occurred recently, in 2017.

6.3 Race

| Q3 | The perpetrator is a white person. |

This question item aimed to reveal whether the readers could recognise the race of the perpetrator. Out of the ten people surveyed, 80% agreed with the statement and expressed their belief that the perpetrator was a white person. Among those who decided that the perpetrator was a white person, 60% claimed to agree with the statement strongly. All of the Black and Persian respondents strongly agreed with the statement. This leads us to conclude that the non-Caucasians are more conscious of the colour of the perpetrator while reading the article. There is a possible explanation that non-Caucasians recognised the shooter being humanised and their previous experience with racial discrimination helped them determine that the article was discussing a white perpetrator. Perpetrator’s race affects media interpretation of a mass shooting.

In response to the above question, 70% of the Virginia Tech respondents disagreed with the description and expressed their belief that the perpetrator was not a white person. Six out of seven White respondents disagreed with the statement and one of them indicated “neutral”.
These results are in line with our analysis of the articles that has proven that a White shooter is more humanised in the media than an Asian shooter. The participants responded clearly to the incorrect reporting of the Virginia Tech shooting. It led them to believe that the immoral characteristics should be ascribed to a non-white shooter. Given that one might not expect the Black respondents to agree with the statement, the finding that two out of three Blacks agreed with the statement is somewhat surprising. It can be argued that non-Caucasians are already aware that most of the mass shootings are perpetrated by Caucasians.

6.4 Humanising

**Q4**: I believe that the perpetrator has more positive than negative features.

**Q5**: Ignoring the fact that he is responsible for the mass shooting, the perpetrator is an ordinary person.

Concerning the fourth question item, there was a divide in respondents’ opinions. Specifically, six respondents claimed they disagreed that the Las Vegas perpetrator exhibited more positive than negative features. Only two white respondents believed the perpetrator exhibited more positive features. Two respondents answered with “neutral”. What emerges from the data collected is that none of the respondents thought that Virginia Tech perpetrator exhibited more positive than negative features. The results show that 80% of the participants indicated strong disagreement with the statement.

The fifth question item aimed to reveal whether a reader perceives the perpetrators as regular people. Half of them regarded Steven Paddock as an ordinary person. Here, none of the non-Caucasians believed that Stephen Paddock was an ordinary person. Whilst the respondents described Stephen Paddock as an ordinary person, the respondents undisputedly rejected Cho Seung-Hui as an ordinary person. Amongst the answers obtained, 80% of those who rejected him as an average person marked their disbelief with “strongly disagree”. All of the non-Caucasians undisputedly strongly disagreed with the statement.
When inquired about their stance on the perception of the perpetrator, the participants in the survey clearly supported the research hypothesis that the white perpetrator was more humanised in the media coverage. The analysis of the answers gathered shows that the respondents undisputedly believed that Cho was an immoral person since all of them disagreed with both of the statements.

### 6.5 Responsibility insinuating

| Q6 | The perpetrator is the only one responsible for the mass shooting. |
| Q7 | The gun legislation is responsible for the mass shooting. |
| Q8 | Identified and treated mental health issues could have prevented the mass shooting. |
| Q9 | Nothing could have prevented the mass shooting. |

When asked about the responsibility, 30 % of the respondents claimed that the Las Vegas perpetrator was the only one responsible for the mass shooting, whereas 50 % of the respondents claimed to disagree with the stateament strongly. In contrast, out of the ten people surveyed, 60 % agreed that the Virginia Tech perpetrator was the only one responsible for the mass shooting. Therefore, it can be concluded that the survey confirmed the analytical part since it proves that the media justify the white shooter's action. There is media bias towards an Asian shooter implying that the shooter is the only one responsible for the attack. In contrast, at the same time, the white shooter's actions are justified.
In the light of the research question concerning gun responsibility, 70% of the people surveyed agreed that gun legislation bears responsibility for the Las Vegas mass shooting. In contrast, only 40% believed that gun legislation bears responsibility for the Virginia Tech shooting.

The results obtained from the survey show that 80% of the respondents claimed that identified and treated mental health issues could have prevented the white perpetrator from shooting. Contrary to the Las Vegas respondents, only 30% of the people surveyed believed that the mental health system could have prevented the Virginia Tech mass shooting.

We can ascribe this to the fact that the media reporting on the Asian shooter implies that all mentally ill people are potentially shooters. The articles do not examine the contributing factor of the failing mental health system but portray the Asian perpetrator as an individual responsible for his own actions.

It appears that among the Las Vegas respondents the opinion that something could have prevented the mass shooting is prevalent. Seven out of ten people surveyed expressed their disagreement with the statement that nothing could have prevented the mass shooting. Two respondents were neutral, whereas only one agreed with the description. In response to the above question, six out of ten Virginia Tech respondents decided that nothing could have prevented the mass shooting. All of the Black respondents disagreed.
7 Conclusion

This master's thesis has examined racial discrimination in the media by analysing American and German coverage of the mass shootings. The first hypothesis, stating that there is a difference in American media coverage of the mass shooting committed by a non-Caucasian perpetrator and the mass shooting committed by a Caucasian perpetrator, was confirmed. The second hypothesis, claiming that the German media follow the biased reporting approach of the American media, was only partially supported.

The first part of the thesis presented a theoretical background, which outlined the main terminology of a mass shooting relevant to this study. It examined gun violence and mass shootings in the United States and Germany and drew a comparison of American and German gun legislation. The theoretical part presented the Las Vegas mass shooting and the Virginia Tech mass shooting relevant to the study. It addressed racial discrimination and reshaped media reality that dehumanises perpetrators of racial minorities and criminalises the victims of racial minorities.

The results of the analytical part of the study attest to the racial discrimination of the media, which is in line with the theoretical findings. As has been already discussed in the previous chapters, the results obtained show skewed coverage of the mass shooting perpetrated by an Asian shooter. In the light of a motive question, the media always seeks a reasonable explanation for a mass shooting. Race as a covert motive plays a crucial role in media interpretation. In the analytical part, the results were divided into five categories: perpetrator, responsibility insinuating, race, criminal history and mental health. The results obtained from the American articles revealed racial discrimination in the categories of perpetrator, responsibility insinuating, race and mental health. Therefore, the study has confirmed the first hypothesis. The media allows the Caucasian perpetrator to evade the responsibility and portrays him as an ordinary person. This can be recognised as the potential limitation of the study, as the study did not follow the coverage of female shooters. They justify or humanise the Caucasian perpetrator even though they do not justify the Asian perpetrator. The media reflect on the race of the Asian perpetrator, whereas they do not reflect on the race of the Caucasian perpetrator. The results obtained showed that the vocabulary used to describe the Asian perpetrator is skewed. Finally, there are no results indicating discrimination regarding the criminal history of the perpetrators.
The German results were compared to the American ones in order to observe similarities and differences between the media. In contrast with the American press, the German press revealed racial discrimination only in the categories of perpetrator and race. On the one hand, the German articles follow the American coverage by softening the perception of a Caucasian perpetrator; on the other hand, they do not follow the American coverage by condemning the Asian perpetrator. The analysis revealed that the German media do not follow the American media coverage regarding responsibility insinuating. The results obtained from the articles speak of the American and German media tendency to address the non-Caucasian race significantly more often than the Caucasian race. A comparative content analysis of the reporting showed that the German media only partially follow the American media and are therefore less discriminatory.

In order to confirm the findings of the analysis, the reader’s perception of racial discrimination was examined with a self-selected survey. The participants in the survey confirmed racial discrimination in the categories of a perpetrator, race and responsibility insinuating. The results gathered confirmed the impact that the discriminatory media content has on the readers. Selective humanisation remains and promotes a distorted view of crime and the ones responsible for the crime. It is also accountable for our false assumptions and preconceived notions.

To change and improve the current situation, I strongly advocate for balanced press and discourse, which is the fairest approach for all individuals involved. Reporters should attempt to cover all relevant points of view to assure that their articles are balanced. The articles should introduce all sides of the story and all the people involved should be represented. I support the idea of the platform AllSides.com that reveals differences in perspectives of the Left, Right and Centre and publishes the reporting of the same event parallel to each other so that the reader can perceive the overall biased coverage tone of the news. It provides media bias ratings for online news coverage. AllSlides.com enables a broader view, allowing the reader to understand the news from different positions. A discourse shift toward encouraging media to assure that their depictions of racial minorities’ victims are balanced could lead to less biased perception from individuals across society. It could lead to the equal treatment not only by the general public but also by individuals in law enforcement and police forces in cases against racial minorities.
8 Research limitations

This master's thesis focused on the topic of mass shootings, as these involve perpetrators of different race and get enough international media attention, so the American and German reports could have been compared. Prior to the analysis, I examined the most massive mass shootings in America. I decided from among the ten most massive shootings caused by a Caucasian shooter and the ten most massive ones caused by a non-Caucasian shooter. After eliminating the Islamic soldier shootings, my decision was based on the size priority of the event. With the Caucasian shooter, this was the biggest mass shooting event. For a non-Caucasian shooter, I could have only chosen one because otherwise the event would be too different, due to either time factor, volume factor, or non-reporting by foreign media. The study has, therefore, some limitations within which the findings need to be interpreted carefully. The analysis found that the media was more lenient toward the white shooter. After analysing the articles, I concluded that the media could be more lenient toward the white shooter partly because the white shooter did not actually show serious problematic behaviour before the mass shooting event. At the same time, the non-white shooter already had mental problems and problems with the law. Therefore, the results of the analysis could be partly distorted, as the results indicate that the media were more lenient towards the white shooter.

I have recognised the potential limitation of the study. The results of this study may not be completely generalizable because the sample size was restricted to only 24 articles and 20 participants. A bigger sample size would increase the power of the study and reduce the margin error. Increased sample size would avoid possible misleading results if an outlier is present in the sample. However, the participants were randomly selected and were of different age and nationalities, which should improve the sample's representation of the population.
9 Zusammenfassung

Ein Amoklauf ist ein gewalttätiges Ereignis, an dem mehrere Opfer beteiligt sind. Sowohl Einzelpersonen als auch Organisationen begehen Amokläufe. Es gibt keine englische Wörterbuchdefinition für den Begriff mass shooting. Das Federal Bureau of Investigation definierte Massenmord als "einen, bei dem vier oder mehr Opfer bei einzigem Ereignis, an einem Ort sterben". (Krouse, Richardson 2015, 4) Die These hat dieser offiziellen Definition gefolgt. Es gibt jedoch einen großen Unterschied zwischen den Definitionen, denn die breite Definition der Forschungsgruppe Gun Violence Archive erklärte den Begriff mass shooting als "Schießerei, bei der normalerweise vier oder mehr Personen beteiligt sind, die bei einem einzigen Ereignis gleichzeitig und am selben Ort getötet oder verletzt wurden, mit Ausnahme des Täters". (Gun Violence Archive 2019)

Die verfügbaren Definitionen des Begriffs hat sich als problematisch erwiesen, weil sie keine Vorfälle umfassen, bei denen weniger als vier Menschen getötet oder verletzt wurden. Es gibt auch keine offizielle deutsche Definition des Begriffs mass shooting, die die Zahl der Todesopfer definiert. Aus diesem Grund hat diese Studie der amerikanischen FBI Definition des Begriffs mass shooting und deutschem Äquivalent Amoklauf gefolgt.

Laut Citizens Advice ist Rassendiskriminierung eine Misshandlung einer Person aufgrund ihrer Rasse oder aufgrund der Rasse einer Person, mit der diese Person verbunden ist, wie z. B. ihres Partners. Die Rasse umfasst Hautfarbe, Nationalität, Staatsbürgerschaft und ethnische oder nationale Herkunft.


Bei mehr als der Hälfte der Schützen wurden frühere Symptome von mentalem Zustand erkannt. Für die folgenden 20 % der Schützen waren die Ergebnisse unklar, und für die folgenden 14 % waren die Ergebnisse unbekannt oder müssen noch ermittelt werden. Weniger als 15 % der Schützen hatten keine Symptome von Geisteskrankheiten aufgewiesen. (Statista 2019)


In Deutschland gibt es kein Recht auf Besitz und Tragen von Waffen. Im Gegensatz zu den USA garantiert das Gesetz in Deutschland kein Recht auf privaten Waffenbesitz. Deutschland
hat eine der strengsten waffenrechtlichen Regelungen der Welt. Laut GunPolicy.org werden die waffenrechtlichen Regelungen in Deutschland als restriktiv eingestuft.


Um die Ergebnisse der Analyse zu bestätigen, wurde die Wahrnehmung der Rassendiskriminierung durch den Leser mit einer Umfrage untersucht. Die Teilnehmer der Umfrage bestätigten Rassendiskriminierung in den Kategorien Täter, Rasse und Verantwortung. Die gesammelten Ergebnisse bestätigten die Auswirkungen des
diskriminierenden Medieninhalts auf die Leser. Die selektive Humanisierung stellt sicher, dass die Leser eine verzerrte Sicht auf das Verbrechen und die für das Verbrechen Verantwortlichen haben. Hieraus ergibt sich, dass die selektive Humanisierung auch verantwortlich für unsere falschen Annahmen und Vorurteile ist.

Um die aktuelle Situation zu ändern und zu verbessern, setze ich mich für eine ausgewogene Presse und einen ausgewogenen Diskurs ein. Ich unterstütze die Idee der Plattform AllSides.com, die Unterschiede in den Perspektiven von Links, Rechts und der Mitte aufdeckt und die Berichterstattungen über dasselbe Ereignis parallel zueinander veröffentlicht. Sie bietet Media Bias Ratings für die online Berichterstattungen. AllSlides.com ermöglicht dem Leser, die Nachrichten aus verschiedenen Positionen verstehen zu können. Dies könnte dazu führen, dass nicht nur die breite Öffentlichkeit, sondern auch Einzelpersonen in Strafverfolgungs- und Polizeikräften rassistische Minderheiten gleichbehandeln.
10 Povzetek

11 Bibliography

11.1 References


11.2 Articles of the analysis

11.2.1 Las Vegas shooting

American media

BostonGlobe Media Partners, LLC. 2020. "What we know about Stephen Paddock, the Las Vegas shooting suspect?“ https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/nation/2017/10/02/what-
know-about-stephen-paddock-las-vegas-shooting-suspect/xJs3POZE3G6BGdT138UhI/story.html.


German media


Zeit Online. N. d. „Trump weiß, wem er Loyalität schuldet“.
https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2017-10/las-vegas-us-waffengesetze-trump-nra.

Taz. N. d. „Normaler Typ, normaler Wahnsinn“.

Welt. N. d. „Wir haben keine Ahnung, warum er das getan hat.“

### 11.2.2 Virginia Tech shooting

**American media**

BostonGlobe Media Partners, LLC. 2020. "As slain students are mourned, the campus asks why“.
https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/image/443812372/.


Los Angeles Times. 2020. "A puzzling start to a deadly day“.


StarTribune. 2020. "Who was he?“
https://www.newspapers.com/image/250627855/.


German media


Taz. N. d. „Der Täter hatte zwei Stunden Zeit für sein Todeswerk“. https://taz.de/Archiv-Suche!/292123&s=virginia%2Btech%2Bamoklauf&SuchRahmen=Print/.

12 Appendix

What gender do you identify as?

- Male
- Female
- Other:

(please specify)

What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18–25
- 26–39
- 40–59
- 60+

Please specify your ethnicity.

- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- Asian
- Persian
- Other:

(please specify)

What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

- No formal education
- High school
- Bachelor’s degree
- Master’s degree
- Doctorate degree
- Other:

(please specify)
Izjava o avtorstvu

Izjavljam, da je magistrsko delo v celoti moje avtorsko delo ter da so uporabljeni viri in literatura navedeni v skladu z mednarodnimi standardi in veljavno zakonodajo.

Izjavljam, da je besedilo magistrskega dela v tiskani in elektronski obliki istovetno, in dovoljujem njegovo objavo na fakultetnih spletnih straneh.

Ljubljana, 6. 2. 2020, Urška Molnar