

The Rhetorical Implications of Metaphorical Entailments and Terministic Screens:
An Analysis of the British Press' Coverage of the COVID-19 Pandemic
Abstract

This paper analyzes the rhetoric of British press reports on the COVID-19 pandemic. I combine terministic screens, metaphors, and metaphorical entailments to explicate a new theory on the impacts of metaphor. I argue that the vehicle of metaphor functions as a terministic screen and the impacts can be understood using metaphorical entailments. Under my theory, these entailments can be plotted onto an XY plane and compared with each other. Using this, I analyze the metaphors used by four British newspapers to assess the role of the press in shaping people's perceptions of the pandemic and its consequences. I identify metaphors that (de)construct borders in order to denote an "other"; economic metaphors mixed with war and natural disaster metaphors to frame the pandemic as an economic, not health, problem; and war metaphors that rhetorically construct plastics and bodyweight as things that should be understood in terms of war.

Introduction

In this paper I bridge the gap between the rhetoric of health and medicine (RHM) and different rhetorical analysis strategies by analyzing a contemporary corpus of articles on the COVID-19 pandemic. I extend the Burkean notion of a terministic screen into RHM following Ceccarelli (2018) and Segal (2008). I follow a line of scholars starting with Sontag (1978) and including (Condit et al., 2002) to deepen our understanding of the role of rhetoric in shaping health and health decisions.

I heed Meloncon and Scott's (2018, p. 13) call to approach RHM theories by "bringing together and relating or merging frameworks or concepts from different theoretical traditions." Specifically, I provide a qualitative analysis and bring Burke and Lakoff and Johnson's contemporary metaphor theory into explicit conversation with each other. Additionally, I follow Meloncon and Scott's (2018, p. 6) declaration that RHM encompasses "discursive-material practices of health and medicine as multilayered, or situated among and along multiple scales of context" such as history, culture, and institutions. Given the global nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, I pursue an analysis of non-American texts, focusing on articles from four British newspapers. Uniquely, I consider how the distinctive dimensions of the British media landscape

influence their writing. My analysis is shaped by the cultural and institutional constraints they face.

This paper proceeds as follows. In the next section I situate my paper in terms of literature on the British press and metaphors of disease. I provide a stylized account of the structure of the British press, informing my hypothesis. Then I elaborate on the existing literature regarding metaphors of disease and how they are discussed in the press. Next, I outline the key elements of metaphorical theory and put it in conversation with the Burkean terministic screen, developing a novel theorization of terministic screens. Specifically, I argue that the vehicle of a metaphor functions as a terministic screen, and I explicate a new method for analyzing the impacts of terministic screens. This includes mapping the dimensions of terministic screens along two dimensions: the degree of their selectivity and their degree of synthesis. This will enable scholars to compare terministic screens across contexts. Then, I outline the methods used to create a novel dataset of news articles. Using this corpus, I analyze the metaphors, terministic screens, and their implications. I identify three main themes: metaphors are used to (de)construct borders to establish an “other”; economic metaphors are mixed with war and natural disaster metaphors, framing the pandemic as an economic and not health problem; and war metaphors are used to medicalize things like plastics and bodyweight. Finally, I conclude.

Context

The British Media

A stylized account of the British press informs my analysis. The British press is highly nationalized, is concentrated in ownership, and London-centric in its coverage, with few local or regional papers (Curran & Seaton, 1991; Negrine, 1994; Seymour-Ure, 1996). The press is highly partisan (Negrine, 1994). Newspapers are divided into the popular press, called tabloids,

and high quality papers, called broadsheets. Only *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mirror* support the Labour Party, while the rest, including *The Daily Mail*, *The Telegraph*, and *Financial Times*, support the Conservative Party. Increasingly, economic constraints have forced the tabloidization of the news, with a focus on human interest stories that sell copies, over investigative or factual reporting (Curran & Seaton, 1991). These constraints also led to an increasing amount of editorial content that has begun to be described as “news” (Rooney, 1998). This leads to blaring and exaggerated headlines, an emphasis on photos, and a focus on popular culture instead of current affairs (Curran & Seaton, 1991). This has made print news a commodity consumed for leisure and entertainment (Rooney, 1998).

The framing of media coverage impacts people’s behavior and opinion of the situation, even if the degree of that impact is uncertain (Valkenburg et al., 2016). Negative media frames remain in people’s mind longer, even if they are also exposed to positive ones (Avdagic & Savage, 2021). Negative framings are common in coverage of British immigration debates, which are genre and medium dependent. Musolff (2015) found that blogs tend to describe immigrants as “parasites” that either destroy or damage the host (country). During the Brexit debate, the press reconstructed EU migrants to fall under the same category as refugees and other types of immigrants through metaphors and other imagery (Share, 2018). Moreover, the coverage described the reduction of immigration as a “win” and solution to a “crisis”, with negotiating tactics including attacking and withdrawal; all of these are war metaphors.

Coverage of the NHS is particularly important for understanding how citizens interact with and relate to their healthcare system. Walker, et. al. (2021) argue that there is a clear and persistent negative bias in coverage of the NHS, and that it varies in strength and intensity over time. They note, “research alerts us to how pre-existing discourses are remobilized and

repositioned during specific political instances to mostly represent the NHS in terms of problems and challenges” (Walker, et. al, 2021, p. 180). This is particularly relevant to the pandemic, since it shows that the history of negative coverage can be remobilized. Moreover, media coverage does not just influence present and future actions because it builds on past rhetoric. This implies case studies cannot be viewed in isolation, and must consider the historical context in order to properly assess the implications of media communication. Thus, the choice of narrative or language mobilizes a particular terministic screen. Like the agenda setting power of the media, this choice has tangible consequences. These accounts inform my analysis, where I expect that media coverage will reflect a desire to get people to read, instead of a focus on being a communication medium between the public and health officials, the government, and other experts. In this way, people’s well-being and health is deprioritized, at the expense of economic benefit for the newspaper.

Pandemic Metaphors

An overview of the literature of metaphors of disease situates this paper. In a corpus analysis of respiratory diseases from 1890 to 2009, Taylor and Kidgell (2022) find similarity in the war metaphors used over time. Brazilian media used war metaphors in its coverage of the Zika virus (Riberio, et. al. 2018). The Dutch media covered the H1N1 epidemic in three stages, each defined by the alarmingness of coverage (Vasterman & Ruigrok, 2013). During the same epidemic, UK media sources varied the metaphors used based on the, “perceived proximity of the disease threat” (Koteyko et al., 2008, p. 242). These suggest that the rhetorical impact of war metaphors should be analyzed thematically, an insight I follow in my analysis.

Taiwanese and state-backed Chinese newspapers used metaphors to relegate SARS to a political, rather than medical, issue (Chiang & Duann, 2007). Specifically, the use of DISEASE

AS WAR was embedded with intentional constructions of “self” and “other” to shift the conversation from the medical to the political realm. This suggests that metaphors and the terministic screens embedded within them can change the “rules of the game” and context that public health communication takes place in. In contrast, the British media did not use the war metaphor in its coverage of SARS (Wallis & Nerlich, 2005). Instead, SARS AS A KILLER was the primary metaphor used; other metaphors attempted to frame SARS as under control.

Studies have begun investigating metaphors of COVID-19. An early analysis of metaphors shared over social media in China identified the use of animal metaphors that highlighted people’s selfishness and that portrayed people as a threat to others (Ho, 2022). Semino (2021) identified frequent use of fire metaphors that convey danger; distinguish between phases of the pandemic; and explain measures for reducing contagion.

Charteris-Black (2021) has carried out the largest study of COVID-19 metaphors to date. I confirm his finding of the presence of war metaphors, but distinguish myself by using a dataset spanning a longer time horizon and by considering the impacts of metaphors in the field of Rhetoric of Health and Medicine. While he analyzes the impacts of metaphors using the binary concept of moral frames, I analyze their impacts in terms of terministic screens. In his analysis, the impacts of metaphors line along two ends of an extreme spectrum, called a moral frame. In contrast, my theorization of terministic screens in the next section creates a spectrum of implications and explicates how different terministic screens can be compared with each other.

Theorizing Terministic Screens As Metaphors

This section bridges the gap between two foundational pieces of literature: Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of metaphor and Burke's (1968) concept of a terministic screen. Metaphorical entailments are the way in which we conceptualize and interpret metaphorical concepts. Specifically, they "characterize a coherent system of metaphorical concepts and a corresponding coherent system of metaphorical expressions for those concepts" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 9). I also make use of Richards (1936) vehicle-tenor model of metaphor. The vehicle of a metaphor is the old concept, while the tenor is the new concept being described.

To see the implications of this, consider the metaphor MEDICINE IS WAR, which depicts diseases attacking the body. A natural extension is to explain the body's immune system response as similar to the different tactics a military can use. If many people get sick, then we might say society at large is at war with the virus or bacteria making people sick. Because the point of war is to win, we talk about goals as the "eradication" of a disease, rather than learning to live with or treat it. Not attaining this goal is considered "failure" or a "loss". In this way, metaphors get extended based on the entailments of the vehicle, shaping our view of how the tenor interacts with the world. In this example, because the original vehicle had militaristic entailments, its extensions utilized militaristic language and binary win/loss statements to describe how we should think about, conceptualize, and act with regard to disease.

This step by step extension process feels natural and is difficult to break out of, demonstrating the suggestive power of the vehicle for how we think about the tenor the vehicle suggests how to think about the tenor and it sets boundaries on what actions we can take with respect to the tenor. I argue that when we choose a vehicle, we are choosing a type of terministic screen because the vehicle necessarily tells us what to focus on. The vehicle of a metaphor,

through its entailments, creates a framework that sets up boundaries for how we think about the new concept. Terministic screens filter the world, by necessity, directing (or deflecting) attention to something (Burke, 1968, p. 45). I propose that these are actually the same thing. Because the vehicle tells a listener or reader what to draw a comparison from, it is also telling them how to think about the new concept. In this way, it serves as a filter, reflecting the key elements of the vehicle onto the tenor. That is, the vehicle, “directs the [audience's] attention into some channels rather than others” (Burke, 1968, p. 45). This impacts how we think about the tenor, since we have a set of guideposts directing us toward a certain understanding and set of implications.

To make this more concrete, I suggest building off of two metaphors that Derkatch and Segal (2005) use to explain DNA: DNA IS A BLUEPRINT and DNA IS A RECIPE. They argue that these metaphors impact people’s thinking, but they do not make explicit that these are terministic screens. The vehicle "blueprints" denote a fixed and rigid set of plans that are detailed and precise. Errors can lead to the collapse of buildings or problems later on. They are step 0 in construction because they are quite literally the plan for the foundation of buildings. These qualities of blueprints are the key elements that the metaphor is trying to communicate. As a terministic screen, this is what the vehicle is emphasizing. This results in people being encouraged to think about genetics and therefore their health, as fixed. If a person is genetically predisposed they might believe that they are guaranteed to have something, even if it only means they are more likely too. An individual's sense of health agency is therefore removed.

In contrast, using recipes as a vehicle sets up a terministic screen that reflects agency. Recipes are a list of instructions, but they are malleable and flexible. You can use margarine instead of butter, or change up the spice mixture. You can mistakenly use oregano instead of basil, in the same way your body might accidentally switch an adenine and thymine during DNA

replication. Sometimes this matters, other times it does not. The vehicle reflects these qualities. It opens the door for people to think about mistakes and provides them agency when making decisions about their health. This gives them space to think about change over time just like your DNA changes due to errors during replication. In this way, the vehicle of a metaphor serves as a type of terministic screen by emphasizing certain elements of the tenor, thereby changing the conscious thought processes individuals engage in when thinking about the tenor. In summary, this example has demonstrated that language shapes our relationships with many concepts - including agency and health - and limits the set of actions we have available; this can have profound consequences in our lived experiences.

For another example, we can consider the metaphor THE BODY IS A MACHINE. The vehicle (“machine”) conveys qualities about the tenor (“body”), like a focus on precise execution or parts that work together to form a whole. Each part has a specific purpose. This ignores the fact that the body is fragile. The metaphor suggests the body is fixed and rigid, just like a machine. If this were the case, we would not be able to learn. Neuroplasticity, or changes to the connections between neurons, means this entailment does not reflect reality. Yet, the metaphor makes us think of the brain as a CPU. This is contradictory because a CPU is just a complex, but rigid and finite, set of logic gates allowing it to do math. Meanwhile, the brain is a complex system of neurons and synapses that send electrical signals and interact with the rest of the body via the central nervous system. Many parts of the brain are involved in several processes. In this way, the vehicle directs our attention to the rigid, mechanical elements of the body where each element has a single role or function, when in reality many parts of the body are flexible and take on several roles. Moreover, the vehicle makes people disregard or ignore specific facts about the body (and brain) which is the tenor. This filtration is exactly what a terministic screen does.

The filtration is achieved by metaphorical entailments, which are introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). They theorize entailments as the implications of the metaphor. I argue that entailments derive from the vehicle. The terministic screen filters reality pointing us in a certain way. The primary implication of the metaphor LIFE AS A STORY is that we tell a narrative about our life, with the secondary implication being that this narrative contains a set of characters and a chronological arc. This suggests linearity and simplicity in the story, with a causal relationship between events along the timeline. In reality, our “stories” or descriptions of ourselves and how we got to where we are are much more complicated. Notwithstanding reality, the metaphor, through its deep roots and acceptance in our culture, permeates and dictates social interaction as the tenor suggests. When you are introduced to someone and they ask you to tell them about yourself, the metaphor is implied. You provide a narrative about your life, key events, and people in a logically ordered fashion. You do not talk about the mundane or daily details of your life. Nor do you present your life as it is. Usually, you provide logic, how you got from one place to another.

This introduces two sub-metaphors with slightly different entailments, and thus terministic screens: LIFE IS A JOURNEY and LIFE IS A STORY. The JOURNEY focuses on evolution from one stage or event to the next. But the end goal is to explain how you went from Point A to Point B. In contrast, LIFE AS A STORY is about an overarching point of high events. The end goal is less clear and is defined by the particular social context of the conversation. In this way, a JOURNEY enables “the ‘texture of dire affliction’” to be communicated and heard in a way that a STORY does not (Farmer, 1996, p. 262-263). That is, JOURNEY enables the communication of details and an interwoven web of connections that lead to the evolution of one’s experience, while STORY focuses on a context dependent narrative arc. Thus, JOURNEY

provides insight into the “mechanisms through which large-scale social forces crystalize into the sharp, hard surfaces of individual suffering. Such suffering is structured by historically given... processes and forces that conspire... to constrain agency.” (Farmer, 1996, p. 263). I argue that metaphorical entailments, in and of themselves, bring these mechanisms to light.

This provides insight into the structural forces that shape disease and how a person’s experience is shaped when they are placed into a context with disease *a priori*. By assuming disease *a priori*, we arrive at a radically different set of implications than if we treat it as an exogenous shock. When disease, illness, or pathogens are *a priori*, they are not an ENEMY. Instead they are a companion on a JOURNEY. For the most part, you go along together, in silence or in tandem. You are mutually reliant upon each other. You adapt to each other as circumstances change, and if one of you stumbles, you help the other. The relationship is usually mutually beneficial. But occasionally you might find yourself at odds if the companion is slowing you down. In this case, you either keep on trudging through and ignore it or you stop and address it. And if this does not work the first time, you try again. Factually, this is just as accurate of a description of humans’ relationship with pathogens as the above explication of DISEASE IS AN ENEMY, yet by starting with disease *a priori*, instead of it being *a posteriori*, the metaphor used and its entailments lead to a radically different conclusion and implications.

Thus, the practical differences between these two terministic screens is subtle but important. In the context of COVID-19, a STORY is a summary of what happened. A JOURNEY is a narrative of progression. One’s story might be about how remote work, online school, or lockdown began. Other narrative elements include when the first person they knew became sick with COVID-19, or when someone was very sick or died. It is a story of firsts and key highlights. That is, high level events that resonate with, and can be understood by, an

outsider. In contrast, a JOURNEY is more self reflective. One might have been hesitant to use masks or vaccinate, and their JOURNEY describes the steps they took to reckon with or (not) change their opinion. A JOURNEY is more personal, especially in the context of healthcare.

Within this context, I suggest LIFE IS A JOURNEY is implicitly integrated into the DISEASE IS WAR metaphor. The phrase “person’s journey with disease” implies a series of ups and downs, support systems, and sense of time as someone fights or combats an illness. WAR metaphors filter toward the ups and downs associated with a JOURNEY WITH DISEASE. The phrase “ups and downs” is in itself an orientational metaphor for emotions. In aggregate, these ups and downs can be called BATTLES. Deciding on next steps such as treatment is STRATEGIZING. “Ups and downs” are the impetus, outcome, or changing patterns of faith in the outcome of a BATTLE. This could be more succinctly restated using the mixed war and natural disaster metaphor TIDE OF BATTLE.

The JOURNEY is therefore an *aggregation* of the BATTLES and STRATEGY, whereas the STORY is simply a *summation* of BATTLES. This insight is key because it points at the two dimensions along which metaphors run, providing us with the terministic screen. First is the degree to which the different entailments are synthesized together: summed, aggregated, multiplied, intersectional. Second is the selectivity of the entailments and their content, ranging from high to low. A relatively simple terministic screen, such as the Burkean cropped photograph, is minimal in its synthesis and straightforward in the entailment. It simply crops something out, focusing our attention on another part of the image. These dimensions can be thought of as lying along an XY plane with each dimension on a different axis. The degree of synthesis on the X axis and the degree of selectivity on the Y axis. Note that there is a hole at (0,0) since we can never perfectly describe reality (Burke, 1968).

In contrast, LIFE IS A STORY is summed and has one major entailment. The effect of the terministic screen is the focus on the entailment and its cumulative effect. In contrast, LIFE IS A JOURNEY has several entailments and is therefore more selective. But it also has a higher degree of synthesis between the different entailments. That is, the extent to which the entailments interact with each other and combine to form the “power” of the terministic screen is greater. In this example, power is a function of the increased selectivity, but that does not always hold. There might be a single entailment (low synthesis) that is really restrictive (high selectivity). This illustrates another point. If Metaphor A is contained in Metaphor B, then Metaphor B must either be more selective and/or more synthesized than Metaphor A. This is because Metaphor A builds on the entailments (terministic screen) in some way. However, while all metaphors are terministic screens because they filter our perception, not all terministic screens are metaphors. For example, Burke’s cropped photograph is a terministic screen applied to a visual text.

Methods

To identify sources I searched the Gale OneFile: News database for articles from January 1, 2020 to April 8, 2022. Articles from the start of 2020 were included to allow for early metaphors of coverage in foreign countries. The end date was chosen to coincide with the ending of restrictions and shift toward living with the virus. On April 1, 2022 the UK Government ended free testing and implemented their “Living with COVID-19 Plan”, so an end date of April 8 was chosen to include articles describing the aftermath and reaction.

I selected the national newspapers *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Daily Mail*, and *The Sun* to get a broad cross-section of paper quality and circulation size (Seymour-Ure, 1996). All papers have a conservative bias. Using their ISSNs, and based on the above literature regarding metaphors of war and Charteris-Black (2021), I searched for articles about the pandemic that

appeared on page 1 and included a version of at least one of the following words: war, battle, tactic, strategy, retreat, offense, defense, attack, weapon, combat, enemy, invade, or fight.

I recorded all articles that appeared on the first three pages of the search. *The Daily Mail* had the highest with 23, so I continued searching until I found 23 articles for all sources. No articles from *The Sun* came up in the first three pages, so I conducted a separate search restricted to its ISSN. Articles were recorded into a database along with metadata including the headline, newspaper, date, full text, author, author title (where available), length, and Gale Document ID Number. Additionally, the binary variable ABOUT_COVID was assumed to be TRUE unless the article's substance was clearly not about the pandemic.

After the data was collected, it was cleaned in R. Articles not about COVID-19 were removed. When there were multiple articles with identical headlines, dates of publication, and the same publisher but slightly different word counts, only the longest article was kept. After cleaning, there were 72 articles left for analysis. Headlines and full texts were skimmed for metaphors and terministic screens to identify salient themes.

Analysis

Using the thematic categories, articles were analyzed for their rhetorical significance and implications. I identify several themes, including metaphors that construct and deconstruct borders to establish an "other"; economic metaphors that utilize mixed metaphors of natural disasters; and war metaphors with tenors including the pandemic, plastics, and bodyweight.

Borders

Given the nature of a pandemic - the spread of a virus world wide - borders were highly salient. In Europe, Schengen area countries reinstated border checks. In the UK, borders are an

especially important concept, with various overlapping forms of identity: regional (within a country), national (Scottish, English, Welsh, and Irish), British, and at times European.

These forms of identity and a broader discourse of “place” were present in media reports and functions to create an “in group” and “out group”. A *Times* article discussed developments in countries worldwide and provided coverage of Scotland specific issues, such as school closure and contingency plans specific to the country (Smyth & Fisher, 2020). One *Daily Mail* article portrayed a Scottish independence referendum as antithetical to pandemic unity, arguing that they were mutually exclusive (Blackley, 2020). This is despite the fact that the pandemic showed the importance of national sovereignty and self determination for nations and governments. The terministic screen filters attention away from this reality.

An article from *The Sun* demonstrates the power of the press in creating an “other” through borders. It mainly talks about a drug dealer who was extradited from Thailand and who tested positive for COVID-19. Separately, it describes two cruise ships which, “were blocked from docking in the Far East in a bid to block the spread” (Wells, 2020). Here, forcing a ship to stay at sea is posited as a protection mechanism for an unknown country from an unknown threat. By not giving the country but just using the euphemism “the Far East”, the article evokes imagery of the orient for the reader. This exoticizes and further compounds the unknown and much “different” it is from the physical location of the reader. As a terministic screen, it pushes the reader to think about differences instead of similarities and think about the unknown as an exotic “other” confined to one part of the world, instead of an unknown that has the potential to spread everywhere. Moreover, the choice of words is further confusing given British colonial history; it is unclear if the “Far East” is meant to refer to a former colony in which case there

might be some similarities for the reader to think about, or about another country in which case it is even easier for differences to prevail in the reader's mind.

A series of war metaphors amplified borders between Scotland and England. The metaphor EXIT STRATEGY was used to distinguish Scotland from the rest of the UK in the ending of pandemic-era restrictions. For example, the *Daily Mail* article headlined “IT'S TIME TO END OUR COVID CURBS, NICOLA; Businesses urge Sturgeon to act as Boris axes English restrictions” portrays Scotland as distinct from England (Watson, 2022). It creates and then seeks to destroy an “other”. It compares Scotland's existing restrictions with Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s statement that “he could not wait until the ‘total end to this war’ to lift virus measures” (Watson, 2022). This absolutist statement and metaphor apply pressure to First Minister Sturgeon by portraying Scotland as more restrictive “other”, with “Scottish business bosses... demand[ing] 'clear alignment' with the rest of the UK when it comes to removing restrictions.” With Minister Sturgeon being, “urged not to deviate from the UK Government on the lifting of restrictions” there is an attempt to remove the othering and create unity between the nations. The headline focuses on the action sought where this is coming from, whereas the contents of the article focuses on the creations and removal divisions.

As a terministic screen, the metaphors in this article focus on economics at the expense of healthcare. As a tabloid, *The Daily Mail* is focused on generating views. Its headlines, content, and photos are designed to generate interest. Focusing on conflict and disagreement is more interesting to readers than unity. Moreover, readers are pushed to think about the ways in which Scotland and England are different in order to make them the same. This filters away from actual differences that might suggest policy should be different, namely that Scotland is its own country. From a health care perspective, it makes sense for them to have some different policies.

But the article filters away from this healthcare focus by directing attention to the economic impacts of the virus. The headline tells readers that business owners want a more unified economy. The Scottish Chambers of Commerce are quoted in the body of the article. There is a clear desire for more unification of health care policies, and the reason for this is that it will increase economic unity and control. Therefore, the economic framing is filtered toward at the expense of the health care framing. For example, there is no mention of existing case numbers or recent changes to hospitalizations in the article. To summarize, metaphors in this article establish borders before filtering toward economics.

Economic Framing

In contrast, the primary metaphorical entailment of other articles is to portray the pandemic as an economic crisis, in opposition to a health or political event. This is achieved by mixing economic metaphors with natural disaster metaphors. The *Telegraph* article, “Sunak scrambles to block virus meltdown; Wall Street surges 5.1pc on hopes of global fightback but analysts warn of food riots if epidemic takes hold” exemplifies this (Hope, Burden, and Tovey 2020). The headline and first paragraph mixes metaphors, “RISHI SUNAK has re-written part of his Budget to combat the coronavirus crisis amid a wave of worldwide action, as top economists warned that it could halve global growth.” There are metaphors of war (COMBAT), natural disasters (MELTDOWN, WAVE), and economics (GLOBAL GROWTH). MELTDOWN evokes imagery of a nuclear meltdown: a fast, massive, catastrophic breakdown in a complex technological system that creates power. This imagery is the result of the entailments of the vehicle, MELTDOWN. Meanwhile VIRUS is the tenor. Thus, the metaphor describes the pandemic in terms of a nuclear meltdown, evoking imagery of the Fukushima meltdown or Chernobyl. Readers are primed to think about large-scale natural destruction. Depending on the

goals of the speaker or author, this might be the desired interpretation for the audience.

Provoking this imagery is emblematic of practices of British newspapers that seek to generate sales with extreme headlines and outlandish imagery. This suggests that the choice of entailment is intentional, or at the very least, done for business purposes and not informative purposes; it is more akin to infotainment. The filtration is not perfect: a pandemic does not cause physical destruction like a nuclear meltdown. Likewise, the WAVE metaphor achieves its purpose of conveying a large, overwhelming volume of action world wide.

Additionally, in this article a terministic screen is created without the use of metaphor but through the use of specific language and the promotion of a narrative. Words like “army”, “protection”, “food”, and “supply chain” create a narrative of essential industries (a metaphor for industries that are vital to the stability and continued existence of society). The focus on the military and protection filters toward a framework where the military is a vital source of strength or stability in the presence of social disorder or breakdown. The reader starts questioning society's stability when they are made aware of its fragility. While speculative, this still has practical rhetorical consequences. For example, talking about possible runs on food or supply shortages usually exacerbates them, similar to a bank run. Moreover, the narrative of averting a social breakdown can create fear and urgency for people to act. It has the possibility of making the pandemic out to be worse than reality. These layered interpretations and filtrations that create a narrative mean the terministic screens exhibit a high degree of synthesis.

Finally, this article also uses explicitly economic metaphors. It describes the DRUMBEAT of firms making decisions, a metaphor for the loud, consistent, regularity of an action. GLOBAL GROWTH is a metaphorical shorthand for increase in economic growth and increase in the standard of living. ROLLERCOASTER DAY is used to describe how the FTSE

100 performed during the day. All the reader knows is it ended up 1.13%. The reader must therefore apply and identify the entailments of the metaphor: the day was up and down, with various changes or swings. This description of entailments is metaphoric itself, utilizing orientational metaphors. This makes ROLLERCOASTER DAY an orientational metaphor, as it implies degrees and directions of movement in an intangible “thing”.

An article ostensibly focused on health builds on these stock market metaphors. *The Times* article, “Drugs trial gives hope for treatment of virus; Global study sees patient recovery time reduced? Britain's death toll increases to more than 26,000.” It discusses the reaction and impact of this in terms of the stock market,

Shares in Gilead Sciences, which are traded in New York, jumped almost 7 per cent.

Gilead has a stock market value of about \$106 billion. The news also pushed shares in other biotech and pharmaceutical groups higher, leaving Wall Street indices in positive territory. (Whipple, 2020)

Oriental metaphors are used to describe the stock market, including PUSHED, HIGHER, and POSITIVE TERRITORY. The stock market is also being used as a metaphor for sentiment or as a way to gauge reaction to the news. This is indicative of the HEALTH CARE IS BUSINESS metaphor. The audience is led to believe the vaccine is a product through the discussion of market capitalization. This number does not have any impact on the business and increases when the business expands. Thus, it only becomes a relevant indicator for the business if the vaccine leads to an increase in earnings and has a tangible impact on the company’s business model. Therefore, the discussion of the market capitalization is where the vaccine is made into the product.

War Metaphors

Finally, in tandem with extant literature I find that the British press made extensive use of metaphors of war. Politicians made extensive reference to the “war” and “fight” against the virus. One article identified a “decisive point” in the pandemic which would require an evaluation of the “economic fallout” (Smyth & Fisher, 2020). Another article in *The Times* opened by stating in no uncertain terms, “Britain moved on to a coronavirus war footing last night as a man in Surrey became the first person to contract the disease” (Smyth & Elliott, 2020). A third article, this time in the *Telegraph*, discussed how health officials were creating a BATTLE PLAN that will state “treatment [can be] rationed” (Donnelly & Rayner, 2020).

However, there were also instances of mixed metaphors. In two otherwise identical articles (article ID 615905295 and 615905377) from *The Telegraph* that had slightly different headlines, Boris Johnson is described as setting up a “war room” (Knapton et al., 2020a, 2020b). More interestingly, it uses quotes from unnamed scientists who, “said it may be too late to ‘stem the tide’”. This natural disaster metaphor is used in tandem with a war metaphor. This is because the natural disaster metaphor contains entailments and a terministic screen that focus on the inevitability and lack of control over spread, and its size, scale, and reach. In fact, this is acknowledged later in the article when the UK medical chief is paraphrased as saying, “it was inevitable that the UK would soon move from the ‘containment’ level to the ‘delay’ stage.” These were two of four stages in the Government’s pandemic response. While military metaphors focus on the urgency and collective action associated with responding to the pandemic, natural disaster metaphors are used to convey the scale and the lack of human control, despite wars being neither inevitable nor beyond human control. While war inspires national unity, natural disasters usually do not because they are focused on one particular region. Therefore, by mixing metaphors, the authors also mix terministic screens. This creates a new

terministic screen through addition that focuses on both scale and unity. Had the metaphors been used independently, only one of these goals could have been achieved.

Finally, a theme establishing a relationship between COVID-19, war, and third concepts emerges. After Prime Minister Boris Johnson left the hospital with a COVID-19 infection, *The Times* used the headline, “Johnson to launch war on fat after virus scare; It's all right for you thinnies, PM tells staff as he accepts obesity increases risk from Covid-19” (Swinford, 2020). In terms of metaphors, “fat” is made into the vehicle, because the propensity to get the virus is understood in terms of it. “Fat” is an enemy to be “fought”. “Fat” is turned into a new rhetorical “battlefront”. Rhetorically, this headline reduces the agency of people who are obese, putting the blame on them for getting sick. But Boris Johnson’s actions are an attempt to undo this and give people more agency. Regardless, he still uses this metaphor as a way to understand and contextualize his own illness and then applies this lesson to other people.

The Telegraph article headlined one article “Pandemic opens new front in war on plastic; Throwaway PPE threatens wildlife, say scientists.” (Horton, 2020). Like in the “war on fat”, this article posits plastics as a new enemy that must be combatted. The justification for the war is that it is detrimental to wildlife, in the same way the actions of Russia in invading Ukraine might be detrimental to Britain’s security interests in the region. Moreover, this article medicalizes plastics and wildlife by bringing them into the medical sphere through their association with COVID-19 protections (mask wearing). The FRONT metaphor inspires collective action like we would see with a battle front. In this way, the article attempts to expand our understanding of war and provides a new lens to the wider WAR AGAINST CORONAVIRUS.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that British newspapers utilized metaphors to filter people's perceptions of the pandemic away from a global health crisis and toward a viewpoint that considers its economic, social, and political impacts. To achieve this, I explicated a new theory of terministic screens and metaphors, arguing that the entailments associated with a tenor are the same as the filtration of reality associated with a terministic screen, and that these can be mapped and compounded in various ways. By reconsidering the temporality of disease as a rhetorical object, we can reframe disease's rhetorical impacts. Utilizing this, I provided insights into the ways in which structural media constraints influence media behavior and rhetorical strategies. By considering these institutions, I heed Meloncon and Scott's (2018) call to the ways medicine and health work across contexts and encounters.

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