



A content analysis of newspaper coverage of colony collapse disorder

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Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) is a widely reported phenomenon where commercial colonies of the European honeybee, *Apis mellifera*, experience sudden and significant decline due to the loss of adult worker bees (USDA, 2018). In some cases, beekeepers lost up to 90% of their hives (EPA, 2018). According to the United States Department of Agriculture (2018), honeybee pollination is responsible, either directly or indirectly, for one-third of the nation's food supply.

Media affect people's perceptions and opinions (Bengston et al., 1999). My thesis concerns a specific media effects theory known as framing, which proposes that how media present social reality influence people's attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and evaluation of issues (Aarøe, 2011; Scheufele, 1999).

My content analysis identifies and examines four media frames present in a sample of 113 newspaper articles that discuss CCD. These were *importance explanations* (categorized as *economic*, *food supply*, *moral*, *ecological*, and *general scientific*), *behavior promotion* (categorized as *reactionary* or *preventative*), *cause responsibility*, and *solution responsibility*.

I define an *importance explanation* as the presence of an explanation about why CCD should be important to the reader. For example, a *food supply* category of *importance explanation* would utilize food supply-oriented reasoning such as "bees provide one-third of our food", while a *moral* category could read as "the bees we profit from are dying, so we should protect them."

The variable *behavior promotion* looks for whether the article's writing attempts to prompt the reader to engage in a *reactionary* or *preventative* response to CCD. The *cause responsibility* variable is present when an article attempts to target an entity/event/phenomenon that is responsible for causing CCD, while *solution responsibility* is present when an article targets an entity/event/phenomenon that is responsible for solving CCD.

The content analysis found that *importance explanations* were present in 87.5% of the sample, with *economic* and *food supply* explanations making up 63.7% and 66.4% of the sample respectively. Instances of *moral* (2.7%) and *general scientific* (1.8%) explanations were minimal, while *ecological* explanations comprised 17.7% of the sample.

Exploration of *behavior promotion* found that most of the sample did not promote either type of behavior investigated (63.7%). When behavior was promoted, *reactionary* (21.2%) behaviors were more common than *preventative* ones (15.0%). Meanwhile, *cause responsibility* was present in 69.0% of the articles, while *solution responsibility* trailed at 37.2% presence.

References

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