

A Content Analysis of Crimes Posted on Social Media Platforms

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Abstract

With an increasing rate of violent crimes across the country as well as an uptick in crime in the news, perpetrators have turned to social media to gain attention, posting their crimes online. This study analyzed the motives of individuals who post their crimes on social media. By incorporating Sigmund Freud's theories on guilt and utilizing a narrative criticism of testimony, the findings demonstrate a lack of remorse and guilt on the part of criminals who conduct unlawful acts, such as drunk driving, gang rape, and murder. The study concluded that the rationale behind committing the crime and posting evidence of the illegal activities on social media outlets stems from the drive of human beings to be recognized by others in their environment and social media communities.

I. Introduction

Historical Context

With a skyrocketing presence of violent crimes across the country as well as an increase in crime in the news, perpetrators are turning to social media to gain attention by posting their crimes on social media platforms. The FBI's Uniform Crime Report showed an increase in violent crime in 38 out of 50 states in 2016 (FBI, 2016). Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has attempted to raise awareness around this issue, has declared, "The Department of Justice is committed to working with our state, local, and tribal partners across the country to deter violent crime, dismantle criminal organizations and gangs, stop the scourge of drug trafficking, and send a strong message to criminals that we will not surrender our communities to lawlessness and violence" (The United States Department of Justice, 2017). With an increase in crimes across the nation, the media's coverage has risen as well.

Crime news had been an information priority in America's culture for centuries. Court reporting can be traced as far back "as the 1830, and early newspapers sensationalized crime to increase circulation" (Barak, 1994). The New York World, which was first published in 1860 in New York City, played a large role in the shaping of America's news production. In the late 1880s, the newspaper altered its focus from political news to crime and tragedy and enjoyed an increase in its circulation from 15,000 to 250,000 (1994). As the prevalence of crime news increased, exposure to crime through news outlets increased as well.

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Among Americans, 34% reported that they receive their news all throughout the day, not any specific time of day. Each day in 2011, Americans spent an average of 668 minutes with major media, including digital (online on desktop and laptop computers, mobile non-voice, and other connected devices), TV, radio, print media; with a projection of 728 minutes in 2018 (MediaPost, 2017). As news exposure increases, crime exposure has risen as well.

As American citizens continue to be exposed to aggression in the news, imitated behavior has been closely monitored. In a study of aggressive behavior of children in 1963, Bandura examined what children learned after observing adults physically and verbally abuse an inflatable doll. The children later mimicked this behavior by attacking the doll as the adults did (“Bobo doll experiment,” 2015). Experiments such as these demonstrate that as children learn by watching crime on the news, children will, in turn, lack guilt and believe that this behavior is tolerated.

Sigmund Freud demonstrated the study of guilt in his book, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, which was published in 1930 (Gray, n.d., para. 1). World War I became a defining experiment opportunity for him. With the introduction of mass killings and societal pessimism, this event generated an overwhelming sense of negativity about human beings and human nature (para. 2). By reflecting on the events of World War I, Freud studied the Super-Ego and the sense of “Guilt.” His theory will be used in this study to examine why people turn to social media to post crimes.

Modern Text

As Americans turn from newspapers to social media platforms for news, Facebook specifically has seen a large increase in users accessing its site. As of August 2017, 67% of Americans reported that they get at least some of their news on social media. Additionally, 66% of Facebook users use the site for news consumption (Shearer & Gottfried, 2017). Moreover, as of 2017, 202.8 million United States citizens have reported to be Facebook users; with a prediction of 219.8 million users for 2022 (“Number of Facebook users,” 2017). This transition from crime exposure in traditional news media to social media has resulted in a relationship between social media users and criminal activity. With the continuous rise of social media use, people have turned to social media platforms to post crimes they have committed, and in turn create an epidemic of copycat crimes.

Prior to the integration of social media, crimes often were committed away from the public eye unless traditional media broadcasted the information. With the prevalence of agenda setting, traditional media often would choose which stories should be considered important and relevant to the public. Today, as social media continues to grow, the power of the people is expanding. Surette (2016) argued that social media has led to a new genre of performance crime “where people create accounts of their law-breaking through text, images and video, which are then digitally distributed to the public on a large scale” (Surette, 2016, para. 1). Reading the newspaper has in fact been replaced with the exposure to posting, tweeting, and other viral content. In criminal justice systems, information traditionally has been textual, linear, impersonal, and paper-based, and flowed in one direction across loosely coupled criminal justice agencies. Social media content, in contrast, “is multi-medium, digital, holistic, emotional, and image dominated” (Surette). The reshaping of the production and posting of crimes have increased the widespread presence of performance crimes that have resulted in offenders posting pre-crime confessions, videos of themselves committing crimes, footage showing the crime bragging, or evidence in the video that can be used against the perpetrator.

As social media performance crimes take over American’s social media feeds, a line is blurred between the freedom of expression and criminal law. Traditional media, which was founded on the freedom of expression that the United States has subscribed to, acted as public watchdogs. However, social media, as stated previously, had changed the media landscape and is not constrained by the boundaries that traditional media once had. Prior to the interrogation of Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and more, media were confined to boundaries, such as location, time, space or culture. Coe (2015) reckons, “When in place, these boundaries acted as a natural filtration system for news and information” (p. 22). The access to 24-hour platforms has enabled users to escape the constraints that traditional media offered. Without such boundaries, Facebook users have the freedom to post crimes they have committed; therefore, motivate and even encourage other users to follow in their footsteps.

The term “copycat crime” implies that the cause of a crime can be connected to the exposure to media coverage of a prior crime. As media has controlled people’s attention today, the view of copycat

crimes has evolved into media-sourced transmissions (Surette, 2017). Thompson, a forensic psychologist, believes “these crimes have the potential to increase. The terrible crimes being broadcast via social media get extensive media coverage which could contribute to copycat killers” (Levett, 2017). Without the involvement of the social media sites and efforts by others, such as scholars, law enforcement, and credible news outlets, crimes such as these will continue to happen on citizen’s social media feeds and increase the activity of copycat crimes.

With the increasing prevalence of social media and the growing threat of copycat crimes, social media users have seen the platform increasingly used for other inappropriate behavior that encourages these crimes. Among Facebook’s millions of users, some have used the outlet for actions that encourage and promote rape and sexual assault. Change.org, a website used to assist individuals with organizing petitions around advocating change, and Women’s Views on News, a not-for-profit website discussing women’s news, opinions and current events, have continuously commented that Facebook does not take these issues seriously and most importantly does not shut down the pages that promote this violence. Jane Osmond of Women’s Views on News commented, “This is hate speech . . . I find it very disturbing that Facebook don’t [sic] appear to see the connection between pages such as this and the prevailing rape culture we have in our society” (Davies, 2011). This general concern is not just maintained by a small population. People across the globe are joining a Twitter campaign asking Facebook to remove pages that promote this violence. With more than 180,000 supporters, American citizens continue to express a general concern for why this social media platform is not acting (“Petition campaign,” 2011). Unfortunately, this horrific content has resulted from users creating pages, and social media platforms have not stopped violent imagery. Only after Steve Stephens, the murderer of an elderly man in Cleveland, posted the gruesome video on Facebook, combined with the Facebook community’s backlash and disgust with the video, did Facebook finally removed the video. Facebook only issued a statement condemning the video, noting that it was removed after it had garnered global attention (“Why don’t social media,” 2017). With the expanding volume of content put on Facebook today, it is hard to determine when content will reach a massive audience. No army of moderators has the capacity to review and assess posts for violent content on all visual aspects of social media. This challenge brings little hope to the interception of videos even before they are done airing, let alone after the image has received global attention.

This study analyzed the motives behind posting committed crimes to social media outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter. For the purpose of this research social media is defined as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

II. Literature Review

Overview of Civilization and Its Discontents

Although guilt and happiness are two overarching themes, Freud discussed not only their interpretation, but also the reconstruction of narcissism, love, and the origin of civilization (Dufresne, 2015). Dufresne concluded in his commentary that throughout the discussion of the said topics, Freud is, in fact, anti-cultural. Throughout the text, Dufresne translated Freud’s thoughts through the application of psychoanalysis. This theory concludes that the foundation of civility is *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (“dissatisfaction in society” or “discomfort with culture” or “discontentment in civilization.”) This finding may attribute to Freud’s overall belief that people act out in an aggressive manner due to their discomfort or discontentment with the world that surrounds them.

Corbett (2001) questioned whether civilization is a benefit or harm to human beings. Through the questioning of the origins of civilization, individuals are born into a threatening world in which they seek to avoid pain and gain pleasure. Freud viewed “the birth of civilization is rooted in egoism -- each of us striving in an often-hostile world, to create the greatest amount of personal happiness and avoid pain as best as we can” (2001, para. 6). As human beings develop, Freud believed that early people survived in a difficult world where there were three distinct sources of danger: natural disasters, disease, and other living beings. In summary, primitive human development strictly was concerned with dangers that would cause death. Today, with the continuing elimination of danger often caused by natural disaster and disease due to the ever-evolving society human beings inhabit, Freud argued that the societal danger from others has evolved into the worst form of

danger, our own super-ego (2001, para. 19). The super-ego is the part of a person's mind that acts as a self-critical conscience, reflecting social standards learned from elders. "Since the super-ego internalizes most of society's rules it can punish us with one of the strongest punishments possible: Guilt is the super-ego's calling our attention to our own failure to live up to what we have come to know as objective good. We then are evil or sinful," according to Corbett (2001, para. 21). This danger is believed to be the most harmful to humans, and without the feeling of guilt, humans cannot be a proper component of civilization.

Freud and Guilt

Throughout Freud's analysis of guilt and how it is formed within the human brain, one theory that he believed affects human being's guilt is the idea that through helplessness and dissatisfaction, human beings lack guilt when acting savagely and uncivilized.

By essence of identification with one or both parents, Freud argued that "a sense of guilt arises when the conscience blames the ego, there is an unconscious, pathogenic sense of guilt when the superego condemns the ego and is simultaneously powerfully repressed by the ego" (Westerink, 2009, p. 207).

Freud believed that helplessness has shaped the lack of guilt. The helplessness of an adolescent is believed to be the repression of drives and directives for mutual relationships between people. Freud declared himself in favor of a culture with which individuals could be satisfied. He considered it necessary that leaders of people be authoritative examples. Individuals are prepared to conform to a culture only if leaders indeed can set a trustworthy example for individuals (Westerink, 2009, p. 215). With the lack of guidance and direction through leadership or parental figures, it can be argued that citizens within a culture that lack this presence in their lives, were never educated or enlightened on guilt and societal norms.

With the lack of education surrounding societal standards, Freud additionally argued that human beings possess an unconscious desire for punishment. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud stated that the unconscious need for punishment is expressed in patterns of self-torment and self-sabotage with the unconscious sense of guilt. The need for punishment can often substitute for genuine guilt (Carveth, n.d.). With the inability to contain the capacity for the concern of others, one is not able to feel guilt, according to Freud (Carveth). "In the end, we come to see that we are dealing with what may be called a 'moral' fact . . . which is finding its satisfaction in the illness and refuses to give up the punishment of suffering But as far as the patient is concerned this sense of guilt is dumb; it does not tell him he is guilty; he does not feel guilty, he feels ill" (Carveth). Without guilt, Freud believed that human beings often self-torment because of the evasion of guilt.

Comparing Interpretations

In juxtaposition to the phenomenon that guilt is established internally through the subconscious mind, other empirical research finds that guilt is established through interpersonal connections among members of a society or community. Guilt specifically appears most consistent, common and strong in times of communal relationships, which are classified by suppositions of mutual concern (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994). When individuals surround themselves with other members of society that often do not feel a sense of concern about their personal actions or relationships with others, individuals become accustomed to avoiding all sense of responsibility or amenability. Other characteristics of establishing guilt in relationships include motivating people to treat partners well and avoid transgressions, minimizing inequities and enabling less powerful partners to get their way, and redistributing emotional distress to others. This belief, furthermore, does not deny that some experiences of guilt are established within one's own psyche when in isolation. However, many of the said instances may be derived from interpersonal processes and may reflect socialized individuals with internalized reference groups (Baumeister et al., 1994). This belief stems from the idea that individuals might find themselves feeling a sense of guilt alone, but still subconsciously consider the repercussions of their actions toward others in their life and social circle.

Other scholars find guilt to be an extremely necessary component for life's equation in working order. Guilt can be used as a social function that binds human beings together and signals individuals they have gone too far in their actions. However, although guilt can be used to modulate the way we treat each other, there are people who feel too little guilt. "I remember many years ago hearing the behaviorist O. Hobart Mower talk about his time as a patient in a mental hospital. While there, he formed small "honesty" groups, "confession" groups. Patients came together to confess their sins, speak truth to each other" (Eigen, 2007).

These citizens of society were believed to lack the common decency to go crazy and speak of the pain they caused in a matter-of-fact manner. Today, the United States is often believed to be run by insufficiently guiltless people; people who fail to feel the dreadful and horrendous aspects of their action by keeping their focus on self-interest; people who kill but do not feel the effect of killing (2007). Mohamed Atta, one of World Trade Center terrorists, was found with a four-page letter in his luggage. As described in the letter, Atta considered the fact that he was going to be killed for a godly thing of beauty and glory. In this instance, the United States of America possesses evil and plane hijackers as “God’s helpers.” The mentor guides Atta that shortly all his disturbances in life will be consecrated and even his fear is holy. Guilt is not ever mentioned in this letter. All wiped away by righteousness, and the sense of being good erases all sense of guilt (2007). In instances such as this, the lack of guilt can be demonstrated by an outlet of God and those that enforce their believed rulings. The lack of guilt can be explained through subconscious thought, interpersonal relationships, and human beings that enforce and impose the lack of guilt.

This research examined the motives and reasons people post crimes they have committed on social media platforms through examination of Freud’s book *Civilization and Its Discontents*. A content analysis study was conducted to answer the following research question: Why do people post pictures of crimes they committed on social media outlets?

III. Research Methods

Through a subset of rhetorical criticism, this study examined the testimony of three cases, varying in severity, in light of narrative criticism. The study of rhetoric delved into the understanding that humans are the creators of rhetoric, symbols are the mediums for rhetoric, and communication is the purpose of rhetoric (Foss, 2009). Through a critical lens, researchers study rhetoric with the goal of understanding the world. By understanding the world through human beings’ actions, this research examined narratives to comprehend how people describe their actions. Narratives distinguish how human beings think, act, and communicate. By establishing stories for a series of events, we not only establish coherences of ourselves but create meaningful discursive structures that may be communicated, shared and conclusions reached on how individuals participate in the social world (Klapproth, 2004, p. 3).

A narrative can be defined, unique from other rhetorical criticisms, by four characteristics: the narrative must possess two events, the events must be defined in time order, there must be a casual or contributing relationship among the events and possess a unified subject. Narratives are additionally exclusive in the fact that they involve audiences in ways that form a connection through content. This method of storytelling is a joint achievement between the narrator and the audience. “To experience the narrated world, both the narrator and the audience must recognize the discursive form of the story and understand the story’s meaning” (Foss, 2009). Perpetrators, therefore, have an urge to demonstrate to the public and the environment around them, to promote and pride themselves on the crime they have committed.

Using the narrative method of criticism, the author used three narratives to draw conclusions as to why people feel the need to document crimes they commit as well as determine why people post crimes to social media pages. In this study the first step was to select an artifact. Two court-documented videos from two cases (Case #2 and Case #3) were compiled and news outlet’s release of a conversation with a perpetrator (Case #1). Secondly, this study analyzed the artifact by identifying the objective of the narrative, the features of the narrative through its setting, characters, the narrator, events, temporal relations, casual relations, audience, theme, as well as the type of narrative.

IV. Findings

Case #1

In Case #1, a resident of Astoria, Oregon, was found guilty on two counts of “failing to perform the duties of a driver” after posting a Facebook status declaring his act of drunk driving. The author found that the artifact selected was a narrative of a video of testimony by the perpetrator Jacob Cox-Brown. Throughout the testimony, Cox-Brown testified the following statements:

Testimony Statements
“Oh yeah yeah that was a big joke.”
“Yeah sure I probably shouldn’t have posted what I said on there. Yeah, I kind of regret it, you know cause it blew out of proportion. But I don’t know.”
“They know I’m a sarcastic *****. I’ve posted stuff on there before. It’s never blown up like this.”

After assessing the artifact, the author identified the objective of the narrative as the intent to construct identity since Cox-Brown was establishing how he felt about his actions in his testimony. Utilizing this objective, the author identified the following features of the narrative:

Features of the Narrative	Finding
Setting	The narrative took place in Astoria, Oregon, on New Year’s Day in 2013. The perpetrator conducted a hit and run on two vehicles.
Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jacob Cox-Brown was an 18-year-old resident who publicized his act on Facebook and was charged with the offense • Victim whose car is hit by Jacob’s car
Narrative	The narrative is directly told by the perpetrator
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cox-Brown conducted two hit-and-run accidents • Cox-Brown posted a Facebook status stating, “Drivin drunk... classic ;) but to whoever’s vehicle i hit i am sorry. :P” • Cox-Brown was charged with two counts of failing to perform the duties of a driver. Cox-Brown was not charged with drunken driving because the Facebook post is not sufficient evidence that he was intoxicated
Temporal Relations	Events occur over one day
Casual Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause: Human action (The act of posting on Facebook) • Effect: The arrest based on the grounds of the Facebook post as evidence
Audience	Addressed to media and social media friends
Theme	Recognition
Type of Narrative	A Tragedy - Protagonist tries to achieve a goal but falls short because of an inability to overcome flaws or faults

Case #2

In Case #2, residents of Steubenville, Ohio, were found guilty with one perpetrator Ma’lik Richmond, charged with the minimum of one year in a juvenile correction facility, and the second perpetrator, Trent Mays, charged with the minimum of two years because of the additional charge of disseminating photographs of a nude minor after the perpetrators raped and distributed photo and video content of the victim on social media platforms. The author found that the artifact selected was a narrative of testimony by the perpetrators, prosecutor, police, witnesses and the victim’s parents. Throughout the testimony, the following statements were made:

Source	Testimony Statement
Trent Mays	“I would truly like to apologize to her family, my family and the community. No pictures should have been sent around, let alone even taken. That’s all sir.”
Ma’lik Richmond	“I would like to apologize to you, too. I had no intentions to do anything like that. I’m sorry to put you guys through this. I’d just like *sobs* I just want you to realize that I’m sorry. I know I ruined her life, for life.”
Prosecutor	“One of the things the state sees is absolutely no remorse for what happened to the victim and the absolute disregard for another human being cannot go without punishment.”
Police Officer, William McCafferty	“If you could charge people for not being decent human beings, a lot of people could have been charged that night.”
Witness #1	<i>When friend asked Trent Mays if he did anything with the girl</i> “Yeah dude she was like a dead body. I just needed some sexual attention...”
Witness #2	“One member of the “rape crew” used to date her, which is why she was targeted.”
Parent of Victim	“Human compassion is not taught by a teacher, a coach or a parent. It is a God-given gift instilled in all of us. You displayed not only a lack of this compassion, but a lack of any moral code. Your decisions that night affected countless lives, including those most dear to you. You were your own accuser through the social media that you chose to publish criminal conduct on. This does not define who my daughter is. She will persevere, grow and move on.”

After assessing the artifact, the author identified the objective of the narrative as the intent to construct identity since the perpetrators were establishing how they felt about their actions in their testimony. Utilizing this objective, the author identified the following features of the narrative:

Features of the Narrative	Finding
Setting	The narrative took place at a party, a 15-minute car ride, and a basement of the house where the act occurred in Steubenville, Ohio.
Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim • Unidentified friends who possess plea deals • Trent Mays • Ma'lik Richmond
Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attorney • Perpetrators • Mother of victim
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At approximately midnight, the intoxicated victim left a party with four males • The group went to a second party where the victim was vomiting • The same group left the second party and headed to the home of one of the witnesses • During the 15-minute car ride, the victim's shirt was removed, and Mays penetrated the victim and exposed her breasts while his friends filmed and photographed • In the basement of the house, Mays attempted to orally rape the victim by forcing his penis into her mouth • Now unconscious, she was stripped naked and Richmond, also digitally penetrated the victim's vagina • The victim was again photographed • Three witnesses took the photos back to the second party and shared them with friends • When the victim awoke, she was unaware of what had happened to her • By then, the story of her night was already unfolding on the internet, on Twitter and via text messages • The parents then notified the police and took their daughter to a hospital • At 1:38 a.m. on August 14, the girl's parents walked into the Steubenville police station with a flash drive with photographs from online sources, Twitter posts and the video on it • Mays "seemed to try to orchestrate a cover-up, telling a friend, 'Just say she came to your house and passed out,'" and pleading with the victim not to press charges • The evidence presented in court mainly consisted of hundreds of text messages and cellphone pictures that had been taken by more than a dozen people at the parties and afterwards traded with other students and posted to Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube
Temporal Relations	Events occur over one day
Casual Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause: Human action (The act of posting on social media outlets) • Effect: The arrest based on the grounds of the Facebook post as evidence
Audience	Addressed to social media friends
Theme	Recognition
Type of Narrative	A Tragedy - Protagonist tries to achieve a goal but falls short because of an inability to overcome flaws or faults

Case #3

In Case #3, a resident of South Miami, Florida, was found guilty of second-degree murder of his wife after posting a picture of her dead body on Facebook. The author found that the artifact selected was a narrative of testimony by the perpetrators. Throughout the testimony, the following statement was made:

Testimony Statement

“Focus, Barack Obama, president, on this corrupted world that I will be suing,” Medina said. “Focus again, presidents and future presidents, of the world. OK. I will be suing this world. Not only that *Unfriended*¹ the movie by Universal Pictures, came out with a movie before my trial, which was unfair. OK, which is bias. And, um, pretty much the point I’m trying to make is I did not get a fair trial. I will be taking action. I will be suing, and I want Barack Obama, the president of the United States of America, to focus on corruption. Corruption is a big problem that we have in the United States of America and all over the world. Nothing further. Oh, God knows the truth, and nothing further.”

After assessing the artifact, the author identified the objective of the narrative as the intent to construct identity since Medina was establishing how he felt about his actions in his testimony. Utilizing this objective, the author identified the following features of the narrative:

Features of the Narrative	Finding
Setting	South Miami, Florida
Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perpetrator Derek Medina • Victim Jennifer Alfonso
Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The narrative is directly told by the perpetrator

1: *Unfriended* is a thriller horror film regarding a dead high school classmate that contacted their personal bul-
lies via a social media platform when deceased.

Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alfonso and Medina were arguing • Alfonso wanted to spend more time with him • Alfonso threw mascara and a towel at him • Medina went and got the gun • Medina went to the closet and un-holstered his gun • Medina pointed the gun at her • Alfonso told him she was going to leave him • Alfonso stopped went downstairs to the kitchen • Medina came downstairs to re-engage • Alfonso was punching him in the kitchen • Alfonso picked up the knife because she saw him with the gun • Medina disarmed her from the knife • Medina put the knife in the kitchen drawer • Alfonso started punching him in the chest and in the arm. And that's when he shot her • Medina emptied the clip - 8 shots at Jennifer causing 21 empty • Every shot hit • Medina took a picture of her • Medina posted to Facebook "I'm going to prison or death sentence for killing my wife love you guys miss you guys take care Facebook people you will see me in the news. My wife was punching me and I am not going to stand anymore with the abuse so I did what I did I hope you understand me." • Medina went to police the same morning to tell authorities that he had a domestic dispute with his wife and then shot her • Medina drove himself to the South Miami Police Department and turned himself in • Officers then responded to the location where they found the victim deceased from apparent gunshot wounds, as well as the victim's daughter, 10, who was unharmed • Medina later told police that he shot her multiple times after she picked up a kitchen knife, then began punching and kicking him
Temporal Relations	Events occur over one day
Casual Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause: Human action (The act of posting on social media) • Effect: The arrest based on the testimony of the perpetrator, the Facebook post and the camera footage in the apartment
Audience	Addressed to social media friends
Theme	Recognition
Type of Narrative	A Tragedy - Protagonist tries to achieve a goal but falls short because of an inability to overcome flaws or faults

V. Analysis

After analyzing three narratives of testimony in three cases, varying in severity of the crime, many similarities were found among features of the narrative. In all three of the testimonies, the author found that the objective of the narrative was to construct identity, according to the objectives defined by Foss (2009). The perpetrators, therefore, utilized social media outlets to communicate with their viewers by promoting the fact that they were proud of their actions and possessed no guilt when conducting the crime. The use of social media has allowed users to share with their network in an arrogant and complacent fashion. Therefore, the theme of all three of the narratives was recognition that the deed of posting the crime to social media brought them acknowledgement of their achievement.

In addition to similarities in all three narratives, there were differences as well. Throughout the narrative in Case #2, there were more signs of remorse and regret in statements by the perpetrators. In Case #1 and Case #3, the perpetrators showed no sign of repentance nor guilt after conducting their actions. These cases confirm Freud's guilt theory; perpetrators' lack of guilt can cause them to perform the committed crime and post evidence of the crime to social media outlets. The research question can, therefore, be answered by the following statement: People post crimes they have committed to social media outlets because they lack guilt and seek recognition to construct their identity.

Regarding the publics' reaction to the crimes posted on social media, the prior concern of copycat crimes in the study was proven not true. In the aftermath of each case on social media, there was an overwhelming prevalence of calls for justice on social media pages, such as 'OccupySteubenville A Peaceful Protest' as well as from public figures, such as Anderson Cooper, noting social media to tweet messages, such as "As a parent of two boys I would be fundamentally ashamed as a mother if my boys talked like this. - @RosalindWiseman #steubenville." Overall, there was more of a prevalence of positive call to action rather than a presence of copycat crimes.

Additionally, the effects of the acts on social media to the public varied as well. In Case #1 it was viewers of the perpetrator's post that turned Cox-Brown into the police. However, in Case #2, viewers of the perpetrator's social media posts did not turn the perpetrators into the authorities but instead tweeted statements, such as "Song of the night is definitely Rape Me by Nirvana" or "Never seen anything this sloppy lol." Additionally, in Case #3, social media "friends" or Medina only commented on the picture he uploaded with statements, such as "What happened?" or "What happened???? derek" without taking serious action to assess and question the truthfulness of the situation or call authorities. Therefore, Case #2 and Case #3 showed insight into social media users' lack of action taken when individuals see crimes posted on social media.

A narrative criticism is a good source for this study because it assesses the actions taken throughout the narrative and directly applies it to a specific objective.

A limitation of the study is the fact that a narrative criticism does not provide a specific assessment of comparing narratives to one another. A suggestion for future research would be to directly compare each identified feature of the narrative. Other limitations include the lack of detailed information available regarding each case. With many high-profile cases, trial attorneys do not often allow their clients to speak heavily on their own behalf. Because of this limitation, the artifacts analyzed only the events of the crime through the testimony of other varying parties as well as the perpetrators.

VI. Conclusion

Overall, the research showed that the act of posting crimes to social media is caused by human beings' drive to be recognized by others in their environment and their social media communities. This can be demonstrated because the perpetrators craved attention from others in their lives. Due to the lack of guilt perpetrators possess when committing the crimes, individuals proceed to take the action of posting evidence of the crime on a social media platform. Evidence to this argument is, therefore, additionally demonstrated in the lack of the word "apology" in the testimony statements in Case #1 and Case #3. Apology is defined as a regretful acknowledgment of an offense or failure (Apology, 2018). Without the feeling of regret, perpetrators who post crimes they commit to social media, therefore, lack guilt and confirm Freud's guilt theory.

Future studies may compare the direct correlation between the cases and their corresponding social media posts to 'copycat' crimes or other inspirations after viewing other individuals posting crimes on social media outlets. Another study constructed from this data may use rhetorical criticism to examine specific words or phrases stated in each of the testimony statements.

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