issues of ensemble alignment, virtual performances lack unity of style and emotion. The lack of a shared acoustic, with which singers' interact to amplify and blend their voices with others, is only poorly redressed by adding 'reverb'. Moreover, time lag in performance, production and audience response highlight the astounding immediacy of live performance. 'Virtual choir' is, effectively, a misnomer. Technologically simulated 'performances' during isolation cannot synthesise place, time, affect and emotion, which are not contexts for music-making, but are revealed as integral textures in the fabric of crafting musical sound.

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GARETH DAVEY

# The China–US blame game: claims-making about the origin of a new virus

On 12 March 2020, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lijian Zhao wrote on Twitter, 'It might be [the] US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan. Be transparent! Make public your data! US owe us an explanation!' In a brazen response, President Donald Trump described the virus responsible for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as the 'Chinese Virus' (also termed 'Chinese coronavirus' and 'Wuhan virus' by his senior officials), implying that it originated in China where the first COVID-19 cases were reported in late 2019. This tug-of-war is currently being played out in political communications, the media and even public discourse, with accusations of slow public health responses, misinformation, media suppression and conspiracy theories – as both countries politicise the origin and impact of the COVID-19 virus, and blame each other for the pandemic.

   Why and how is the virus's origin (which is currently unknown) being constructed as a problem, unlike in other coronavirus outbreaks such as Severe Acute Respiratory

Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)? Here I draw attention to an urgent need to critically unpack the claims-making by US and Chinese officials – its social construction, discourse and rhetorical strategies, motivations, consequences, and cultural, social and political dimensions – to avoid public misunderstanding and foster cooperation to tackle the global threat everyone is facing.

For example, the dispute on the virus's origin rides along with long-standing confrontations between China and the US on numerous issues (e.g. Huawei, military, trade), election promises by Donald Trump to reconfigure their bilateral relationship, and increasingly assertive nationalism in China, appearing to give it some credibility as well as a new arena for their power rivalry to play out. The public faces of this blame game are the world's most powerful and influential claims-makers who command significant attention and control over its future course, including policy and resource changes. China's version of the problem taps into its public's rising anti-US and nationalistic sentiments, while the US's claims fit public perceptions of China as a threat, articulated in ways acceptable or targeted to their audiences; indeed, replies on Twitter to President Trump's and Spokesman Zhao's tweets offer anecdotal evidence of endorsement by their respective online audiences.

Further research is also needed on the role of the media as the gatekeepers of claims-making (e.g. selecting claims as worthy of news-reporting, and presenting some more objectively and favourably than others). As the blame game continues, studies are needed on its trajectory and other social actors (e.g. allies, scientific researchers, the public), and how it is experienced in everyday life in China, the US (e.g. recent incidences of racism against Asian Americans) and other societies which vary socially, culturally and politically. These efforts will hopefully shift the narrative from confrontation and blame to collaboration and trust.

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ANDREW DAWSON AND SIMONE DENNIS

# Disaster nativism: notes from rural Australia

For the farming and tourism town of Anonyton that we research,[1] 2020 has been the year of disasters. The bushfires that led to loss of life and the COVID-19 pandemic that threatens to do so again engender contrasting responses. Community was celebrated

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