

# The concept of media framing



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In this paper, we analyze the concept of media framing in relation to the construction of a mosque at ground zero. We identify the various frames used by various media houses in America and compare and contrast them. We analyze the related literature and the basic concepts involved in media framing. A general overview of the concept of media framing is also provided.

Entman (1993) describes framing as a scattered concept where previous researchers lack clear conceptual meanings and depend on context-based definitions, rather than general applicability. Brosius and Eps (1995) proceeds that framing may not be clear in explication and generally used but can be seen as a metaphor which does not convert directly into research setting.

While different authors agree that there is lack of commonality in the definition of this term, people have often used the term frame to refer to similar but different approaches. For this particular article, I now use the term framing to refer to the way media houses use mind-controlling technique to gain readership and viewership by providing what appears to be new but intricately woven to control the thought process and opinions.

## **Concept of Media Framing**

Framing can be compared to the setting of agenda or opinion but stretches the research by pin pointing the issues that area at hand instead of a particular topic. Framing theory makes the media take an issue and then places it to connote a new meaning or opinion. It is a very important technique since make the media tailor he thoughts of the masses towards a

particular direction hence they become opinion leaders. When the media selects topics, they direct the people where and what to think.

When journalists choose a frame, they make sure that they even provide a structure in such a way that their audience only interpret what is provided. A frame is a notion which serves to organize or direct social meaning to a given issue at hand. Their intention is to make the targeted audience to think about the news bulletin or article and how to think about it.

## **Media framing at Ground Zero Mosque Construction**

This article looks at the myths, stories, metaphors, and narratives and traditions that the media employed to capture the attention of the American citizens and the world at large and cause the proposal to construct ground zero mosque a big story. While research has shown that the proposed Islamic Cultural Center and Mosque was not to be constructed at the ill-fated World Trade Center site, the frames that were used clearly depicts that the media conditioned the thoughts of the audience to think in a particular direction.

## **CNN's framing of the Mosque at Ground Zero**

### **Numbers as a frame**

The very dominant frame used by CNN in the framing of the mosque at ground zero is numbers. They used extremely large statistics in order to show how grave the situation was being objected by Americans. They purported that a poll they conducted revealed that 68% of Americans opposed the construction of the ground zero mosque (McCormack, 2010). This is as postulated by Stone (2002).

## **Islamophobic phrases as a frame**

CNN televised mind-boggling Islamophobes on several occasions and if not all, Geller – who once advocated for the destruction of Jerusalem's Dome of Rock, which is a Moslem's revered sites, and one who once depicted Muhammad with the face of a pig in her website (FAIR Blog, 2010) had appeared twice on the CNN's network between May and August 2010 to state her position on the proposed construction. Her appearance and her contribution direct people to her perception of what Islam is about.

Consequently, CNN by close extension frame the issue of proposed mosque construction and become opinion carrier and disseminates the same to the audience. This media house, ought to have stated the factual reports without tilting towards anti-Moslem crusaders.

Cooper 360 (2010) gave Fischer television airtime to contribute that Islam is totalitarian and that it is anti-Christian and seeks “ the extermination of Western ideology on civilization. Another segment of Cooper (2010) of Anderson Cooper featured Benham of prolife, anti-Islam crusade Operation Save America, where Islam was termed as a lie from hell. This is in fact use of depiction as a framing device to cause the listeners to imagine, ponder and magnify a Muslim-dominated America.

## **Conceptualization of media framing**

### **Framing theory**

Extant literature has been dedicated to the concept of media framing. This literature can be categorized into four broad stages. The initial stage which gives an account of media framing that occurred between the 1920s and the 1930s was characterized by event that occurred during the World War I such <https://assignbuster.com/the-concept-of-media-framing/>

as propaganda effects as well as its beliefs regarding beliefs on the influence of media on the attitude of people (Scheufele, 1999). The second phase took place between the 1930s and the 1960s and was marked by issues that tended to put forward the gravity and need of personal experience in the process of changing the attitude of people. The researchers who noted this did believe that the main media effect was concentrated on the reinforcement of the attitude that were already in existence as postulated by Klapper (1960). The study of the third stage which took place between 1970s and 1980s gave life to the new media effects that were even stronger. The focus of the media was however rapidly shifted from attitude changes to more cognitive based effects as outlined by Noelle-Neumann (1973). The fourth stage which has been running from 1980s to present has been heavily marred by elements of “ social constructivism,” as shown by the work of scholars such as Berger and Luckmann (1966), Gamson and Modigliani(1989) and Tuchman (1978) who are all social scientists. The other portion of literature on this stage of media effects has also been researched and discussed by political scientists such as Ivengar (1991) and Scheufele (1999). The concept of social constructivism attempts to make an explanation on the possible relationships that exists between media and the audience via a combination of elements of strong as well as limited media effects in the domain of mass media.

The work of Gamson and Modigliani (1989, p. 2) categorically expressed the fact that “ Media discourse is part of the process by which individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists...develop and crystallize meaning in public discourse”. The work

of Gamson and Modigliani (1987) further portrays the real essence of media framing as being the main organizing idea or rather the story line that gives a meaning to certain unfolding string of events. The frames therefore do suggest what a certain controversy is about as well as the real essence of the issue involved (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987, p. 143).

Entman (1993) however points out that the meaning of a frame is tied down to the selection of certain aspects of a reality which is perceived in order to make them salient so as to promote a certain definition of a problem, its moral evaluation, causal meaning as well as the treatment of the recommendations (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

The work of Iyengar (1991) made a differentiation between the thematic and episodic media frames. These episodic media frames are a depiction of public media issues which in essence are concrete instances as well as specific events that come about as a result of individualistic actions. The thematic framing reports on the other side are a systematic reflection of the problems that take place in our society on a level that is considered abstract but with outcomes that are general. The media framing of the Mosque at ground Zero is a perfect example of thematic framing

### **Media framing and elements of public deliberation**

The work of Simon and Xenos (2000) on media framing was concentrated on the analysis of media framing in order to research the influence of public deliberation that is actively involved in the process of social creation as well as the changes that occur in our society over a period of time. They point out that deliberation is a process involving political argumentation that moves on

through a process of discursive giving and taking. The effects are therefore intricately linked to the media framing effects as was indicative in their research (Simon and Xenos, 2000, p. 367).

## **Media framing and the reasoning devices**

The work of Gamson and Lasch (1983) came up with an identification of various framing as well as reasoning devices that can be utilized as a combination in order to create frames. The framing devices include metaphors, exemplars, and visual images, depictions and metaphors. These do suggest a framework to be used in viewing of the issues involved. The reasoning devices on the other side include roots, appeal principles and consequences. They are used in the provision of justification and reasons for the general positions that are adopted (Gamson and Lasch, 1983, p. 399). The work of Stone (2002) makes an addition to the list of devices that include synecdoche as well as numbers. Synecdoche refers to figure of speech which represents an idea in its entirety or in parts. Numbers on the other hand are used as a method of describing a certain phenomena as well as events using measurements. The most favorite technique is the use of either abnormally large or small numbers in order to dramatize an idea as pointed out by Stone (2002, p. 137)

Media framing as depicted by other channels and newspapers

The trouble started with anti-Muslim activists when they suggested that the proposal a ploy by Muslims in American to conquer the memorial site of the

September Eleven attacks (Big Government, 2010). The Big Government uses the word conquer to capture the attention of the already audience who are paranoid about terrorism and the perceived Islamization of America. The point that the proposed site is closer to the ground zero site would not attract serious readership without using the word conquer to tune the minds of the audience to imagine America infested by the perceived enemies.

A good timeline is provided by the Salon (2010) traces the genesis of the controversy to posts done by Pamela Geller on the web Atlas Shrugs blog (2010), a source of anti-Muslim forum. Which insinuated about the impending perceived Islamization of America? Geller (2009) retorted that the construction of the mosque at the world trade center's site was about Islamic expansionism and domination. The term Islamization of America is a catchphrase used to frame the story in order to agitate the American populace. He added that the Islamic center will instill and encourage the Quran's violent texts. This narrative, together with what exists in the Atlas Shrugs blog, is intentionally designed to direct the audience to a specific line of agitation against Muslim rights in America.

In addition, from May, the New York Post picked up a story and Andrea Peyser (2010), the columnist who spread the propaganda that the center was to open on the September 11 in the year 2011, and used repetitively the term Ground Zero mosque in his references to the cultural center. This culminated into anti-Muslim debates as intended by the writer. This numerous use of the terminology of ground zero is use of numbers as a framing device.



## **Contrast between media houses on framing**

**The main contrast between the media houses was the gravity of reporting the extent of media framing. This is depicted in the work of Nisbet and Garrett (2010) whose analysis shown that FOX News was responsible for most of the rumors and misconceptions regarding the construction of the mosque at ground zero.**

## **Conclusion**

**The concept of media framing can be used positively and effectively in various parts of the human society such as in effectively improving businesses instead of using it to trample on basic human rights. It is important that it be used since it can be used in eliciting the true meaning of certain events.**