

**DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON HOW TWO NORTH AMERICAN  
NEWS BROADCAST NETWORKS PORTRAY MUSLIMS IN  
RELATION TO U.S. TRAVEL BAN**

**Análisis de cómo el discurso empleado por dos redes Norte Americanas  
de difusión de noticias representan a los musulmanes en relación a la  
prohibición de viajes de los Estados Unidos**

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**Abstract**

Mass media's coverage of events may not be as objective as one would think. The tendency to shape information as per one's necessity is not something uncommon since mass media is controlled by powerful groups, who seek to be portrayed in a favoring manner to the viewers. While they were favoring themselves, they may have damaged others' image, in this case, Muslims'. This research study was carried out to demonstrate which type of discourse CNN and Fox News employed to portray Muslims in relation to the U.S. travel ban through 2017. For this to be possible, an analysis of transcriptions was done, based on Ruth Wodak's discursive strategies for positive self- and negative other-representation. In addition, a comparison was made to discover the type of discourse employed by both networks. It was found that there was a tendency to repetitively use the distinction of 'us vs. them' to favor US's image and diminish Muslims' as well as the constant employment of labels with negative connotations to refer to Muslims. By doing this, the idea that they are the 'enemy', the 'bad guys' may have been reinforced to the audience.

*Key words:* discourse analysis- Muslims- mass media- racism- discursive strategies

**Resumen**

La cobertura de eventos por los medios de comunicación puede no ser tan objetiva como uno pensaría. La tendencia a modificar la información acorde a la necesidad es algo común debido a que los medios de comunicación son controlados por grupos poderosos, los cuales buscan ser representados de manera favorable ante la audiencia. Al favorecer su imagen, posiblemente hayan dañado la imagen de otros, en este caso, la de los musulmanes. Este trabajo de investigación fue hecho para demostrar que tipo de discurso utilizaron CNN y Fox News para

representar a los musulmanes en relación a la prohibición de viajes de EEUU en el año 2017. Para que esto fuera posible, se lleva a cabo un análisis de las transcripciones en base a las estrategias discursivas para la representación positiva de uno mismo y la negativa de otros, las cuales fueron establecidas por Ruth Wodak. Adicionalmente, una comparación fue hecha entre ambas redes de difusión para así descubrir el tipo de discurso empleado por ambos. Se encontró que existe una tendencia de utilizar repetidamente la distinción de ellos vs. Nosotros“ para favorecer la imagen de EEUU y dañar la de los musulmanes. Al hacer esto, puede que haya sido reforzada para la audiencia la idea de que ellos son los enemigos“, los malos“.

*Palabras Clave:* análisis del discurso, musulmanes, medios de comunicación, racismo, estrategias discursivas.

## **Introduction**

Many of the matters that people are aware of regarding the world are based on what mass media chooses to tell us. In the first chapter of the book *Public Opinion* written by Walter Lippmann in 1992, ‘The World Outside and the Pictures in our Heads’, he wrote that the mass media are an essential wellspring of those pictures in our minds about the events surrounding the world, a world that for most people is completely out of reach, out of sight, out of mind‘ (as cited in McCombs, 2005). Thus, a significant role of the media is agenda-setting and representation of the said pictures.

Much of the media coverage, specifically from the West, when reporting events in regards to Islam, frequently does it with a negative approach. Words constantly associated with Islam include violence, terrorism, radicalism, hostility, among others. These all have negative connotations creating a stereotype of Muslims and Islam for viewers (Ishak & Solihin, 2012). After the events of 9/11, western media started associating the terms Muslim and terrorism as synonyms (Mešić, 2011).

After introducing two of the main components of this study, which are media and media’s representation of Islam, the focus of this study will be a discourse analysis of Islam’s portrayal by U.S. English language media. To put it another way, how words are carefully chosen in order to produce a specific impact on the viewers and their opinions on the matter. As mentioned in the article written by Poorebrahim and Zarei (2013), John Fiske argued that language is vastly powerful and it is able to create a new reality and that words are not always objective since they are produced with an intended purpose.

To make this possible, this research project analyzed the discourse employed in seemingly different news media outlets, Fox News and CNN News. The spotlight was on what was said about the Travel Ban in regards to Muslims and the Islamic religion in general. Opinions from the news anchors and special guests and the way they present said opinions will be taken into consideration when analyzing and comparing their discourse. Thus, the issue to be explored is the way in which mass media carefully chooses speech to represent the image of people belonging to the Islamic religion for a world-wide audience when presenting news. As a result, a negative stereotype associated with Muslims may be reinforced.

The purpose of this qualitative research project was to analyze the discourse about Islam in relation to U.S. President Donald Trump's Travel Ban in two North American media networks, CNN and Fox News. One of the objectives was to discover what type of image Fox News and CNN were creating in regards to Islam to the audience. Another objective of this study was to discover if two different broadcasting networks used similar or different types of discourse when discussing Islam. Additionally, this study aimed at determining if the discourse employed by news anchors changed as the travel ban bill developed throughout 2017, as well as discovering which of the discursive strategies, set by Ruth Wodak (2009), were used most frequently to attempt an influence on the audience.

## **Literature Review**

Sharma and Sharma (2010) define discourse as —the study of naturally occurring connected sentences| (n.p.), either written or spoken, is a standout amongst the most encouraging and quickly creating ranges of modern linguistics. The understanding of what a language-user aims to convey when producing utterances is something that one may wonder how it is done. Yule (2010) points out that the key elements of discourse analysis are the attempt to understand and be understood and how this is done. Language-users do rely on the knowledge about linguistic structure and forms, but of course, it goes beyond these factors. He emphasizes on cohesion, coherence and speech events, components that when combined as a whole facilitate the interpretation (or to be interpreted) process. Thus, discourse analysis is the interpretation of language that we reach after the speaker has uttered a sentence. ‘Discourse analysis’, then, is the study of the ways different ‘technologies of entextualisation’ has an impact over how people make meaning in different circumstances, the type of actions they can play out, the type of person they can be, as well as the connections that can be made (Jones as cited in Jones, Chick & Hafner, 2015).

## **Media discourse and critical discourse analysis**

Talbot (2008) has described Media discourse as a multidisciplinary field, which has become the subject of examination in linguistics, especially in critical discourse analysis. Almost all of us find ourselves directly affected by media discourse. Some sections of society have been largely influenced by it, resulting in the replacement of older institutions (for instance, the Church) as the main source of how we perceive and understand the world. The role that discourse plays in creating people's realities is highly important, thus, it can be inferred how powerful and influential media discourse is.

Furthermore, Critical Discourse Analysis, or CDA, is a branch of discourse that essentially contemplates the way social dominance, power abuse, and inequality are achieved, reproduced and opposed in a political and social context as it seeks to comprehend, uncover, and finally oppose social inequality (Van Dijk as cited in Schiffrin, Tannen & Hamilton, 2008). The 'criticality' aspect has been given particularly to the domination, power, and opposition in many areas of language (Ramanathan & Hoon, 2015). Van Dijk (1993), described that power comprises control which may relate to action and cognition, and by which a powerful group can limit another group's freedom and influence their thoughts through manipulation, persuasion, dissimulation, among other techniques.

At the same time, Ruth Wodak (2009) argues that language per se is not powerful, but it gets its power through the way in which powerful individuals employ it. She presents five discursive strategies that are involved in positive self-presentation, which beneficiates the powerful group, and the negative presentation of others. Said strategies are: referential and nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivation, framing or discourse representation, and intensification, and mitigation. The creation of identities and the justification of inclusion/exclusion of a group are supported by these strategies

Referential and nomination happens when social actors are created and represented by in-groups and out-groups and this is possible to be achieved by a variety of categorization devices. Predication happens when social actors are labelled either in a positive or negative way by the attributions given to them. Argumentation occurs when there is an explanation for why an attribution was given to a social actor. Perspectivation, framing or discourse representation occurs when speakers place their opinion and display their involvement in discourse in the narration, quotation, or description of utterances or significant events. Finally, intensification and mitigation happen when the epistemic status of a proposition is altered by either mitigating or intensifying the intention of utterances. She claims that all these strategies are the basis of validation/justification of the construction of

identities and inclusion/exclusion of groups (Wodak, 2009).

### **Mass Media and Islam**

Ishak and Solihin (2012) point out that most of the time, media, to be more specific, Western media, has presented Islam with a negative connotation. This is done by creating an image being constantly associated with antipathy to the West, terrorism, and brutality. The media coverage that Islam and Muslims have received has been quite vast. Most of the information presented has been considered misleading and based on from an objective point of view. Racial and cultural hatred, ethnocentrism and inaccurate data have been present through time (Ahga as cited in Ridouani, 2011). Mešić (2011) also notes that terrorism is no other than an indirect psychological tactic which evades any direct contact with adversaries. Without media exposure, terrorism vanishes. According to him, after the September 11th, 2001 (9/11) attacks, in several western countries the expressions ‘Muslim’ and ‘Terrorism’ started to become synonyms.

Furthermore, many human right activists have cautioned the increase of bigotry and Islamophobia towards Muslims. Western media sought to portray a rather rough image of Islam by broadcasting images of terrorists’ victims, which resulted in public panic and turned into discrimination. Thus, this war on images attempts to demonstrate that Muslims, in general, are a danger to security. As a consequence, every Muslim related TV coverage has a prevailing picture and is ‘Islamic Terrorism’ (Mešić, 2011).

### **Discourse Analysis, Mass Media, and Islam**

Language has a significant role in terms of the knowledge individuals have and it has an impact in the way the world surrounding them is perceived. Words cannot be merely neutral since they all connote meaning. The continuous stereotyping and negative representation of the Islam and Muslims per se in mass media have caused a general reaction from the audience that is being constantly emphasized (Poorebrahim & Zarei, 2013). Even before 9/11 and the subsequent attacks, the repetitive Islamophobic reports by the press encompassing Islam and Muslims were already present. Muslims were regularly being in an unmistakably distraught position and stayed subject to unjustified scrutiny through a progression of negative stereotypes. After the 9/11 attacks, the sense of negativity between them and the west has increased vigorously. Therefore, distinction created by the media, the ‘Us VS Them/Others’, worked as a foundation on the discourse of the war on terror, a discourse that can be easily spotted on any media outlet (Sian, Law & Sayyid, 2012). According to Van Dijk (as cited in Poorebrahim & Zarei, 2013),

news media is mostly controlled by members of more powerful social groups and institutions, and especially their leaders (the elites) have more or less exclusive access' which explains why and how the 'Us Vs. Them' distinction is still being emphasized. Considering all the issues presented, this study presents an analysis of how two major news broadcast, Fox News and CNN discuss the Muslim Travel Ban in the United States of America during the interviews carried out between hosts and guests about the aforementioned event in order to compare and analyze if both news outlets portray Islam and Muslims in the same manner.

## Methods

This study followed a qualitative research approach using existing data from newscast recordings available online as the method of data collection. Critical discourse analysis was used since it can be applied as a tool to interpret social interaction (Van Dijk as cited in Mogashoa, 2014). This research approach was chosen because this study sought to analyze how mass media can easily portray explicitly or subtly their version of reality by using language (Ramanathan & Hoon, 2015). Thus, the study analyzed expressions used, the way in which the sentences uttered were constructed and the word choice. The procedure chosen allowed an in-depth exploration into how Muslims are portrayed in two media outlets.

Purposeful sampling was chosen for this study to select the videos to be analyzed from CNN and Fox News. Due to the different opinions both news outlets have had in the past, their discourse in regards to Muslims was compared in order to find differences and/or similarities. The time frame in which the videos were posted is one of the key aspects of the videos' selection, the ones selected were taken from the beginning of 2017 (January, February, or March), mid-year, and around the last months of that year. This was done with the purpose of analyzing what was said when the Travel Ban was first signed by president Donald Trump and how it kept developing throughout the year 2017. It is important to clarify that all the videos selected were from the same period of time so it was feasible to analyze and compare the discourse employed. The videos that were analyzed were limited to Western media and were posted in the following websites: [www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com), [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com), and their channels on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). Twelve videos from both news outlets were selected.

After download and transcription including non-verbal expressions and increase and/or decrease of the volume of speech, and other discourse variations, the software tool named QDA Miner Lite was used to classify and code data. Ruth Wodak's (as cited in Seale et al., 2007), discourse elements and strategies that

serve to create a positive self-representation and a negative other-representation were used to analyze the data collected. In order to carefully examine these strategies, the table below was used to analyze the data collected:

Table 1

Discursive strategies for positive self- and negative other-representation

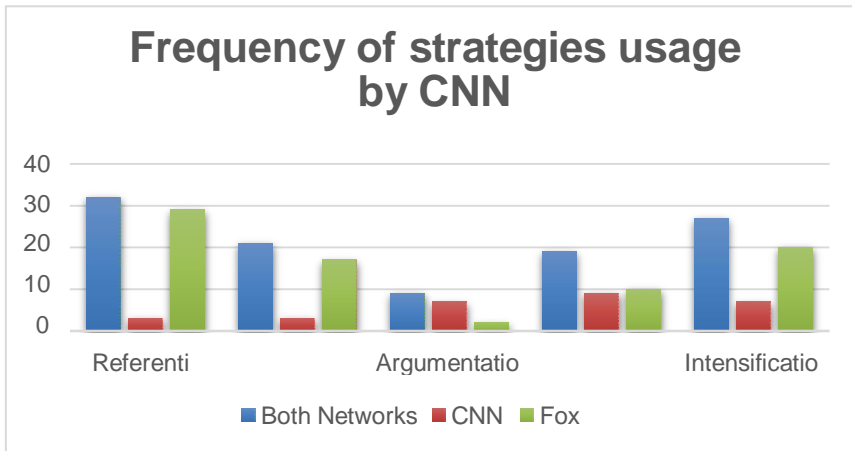
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Devices</b>
<b>Referential/nomination</b>	Construction of in-groups and out-groups	Membership categorization Biological, naturalizing and depersonalizing
<b>Predication</b>	Labelling social actors more or less positively or negatively, deprecatorily or appreciatively	Stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits Implicit and explicit predicates
<b>Argumentation</b>	Justification of positive or negative attributions	Topoi used to justify political inclusion or exclusion, discrimination or preferential treatment
<b>Perspectivation, framing or discourse representation Intensification, mitigation</b>	Expressing involvement, Positioning speaker's point of view Modifying the epistemic status or a proposition	Reporting, description, narration or quotation of events and utterances Intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of utterances

Source: Seale, Clive, et al. *Qualitative research practice*. London, 2007, pp. 195, *Critical Discourse Analysis*

During the second round of coding, all the comments previously categorized as positive, negative, and neutral were once again categorized as per Ruth Wodak's discursive strategies for positive self- and negative other-representation. After this last and final classification, a comparison and analysis between the implementation of each strategy were conducted.

## **Results**

Taking into account to Wodak’s (2007) discursive strategies for positive self-representation and negative other-representation, the first graph shows the frequency of the discursive strategies employment by both networks in the videos selected.



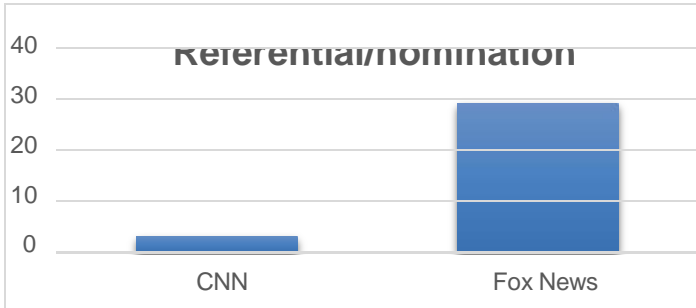
Graph 1. Frequency of usage of each strategy by Fox News and CNN in regards to Muslims and the travel ban.

As can be noticed, Referential/nomination was the most employed strategy, followed by intensification and perspectivation or discourse representation. However, this does not display why or for what purpose it was employed. A detailed description of the results of each strategy previously mentioned and their purposes can be found below.

**Referential/Nomination**

This study found that this strategy was used the most by both networks, though Fox News employed it even more than CNN. In fact, the main purpose of this strategy usage was to portray a negative image of Muslims. The ‘us vs. them’ difference was continuously stated by Fox anchors and guests. They made it clear that the American people (in-groups) were the ones in complete danger by rejecting the travel ban and that their lives were being jeopardized. Whereas the Muslims (out-groups) were depicted as the main cause of danger and that for that reason, the travel ban was needed.





Graph 2. Comparison of the usage of referential/nomination by both networks.

A Fox News anchor stated the following:

...President Trump has promised to do everything within his power to stop radical Islamic terrorists from entering our country and putting you, the American people, in danger. Now he plans on doing that in part by enacting extreme vetting of refugees. However, as we told you last night the all radical obstructionists left here in America is trying to stop the president and by doing so, they are showing that they are perfectly willing to gamble with your lives, the lives of the American people. (Fox News)

In this example, the anchor constructed an in-group by his repetitive and specific word choice. For instance: our country, the American people, your lives, the lives of American people. On the other hand, he created as well an out-group by saying that anyone who opposes to the travel ban is willing to let danger and radical Islamic terrorists enter their country. He implied that letting Muslims (them) live in America, was like supporting all the future attacks in their country. Other Fox News anchors and guests had also made similar comments employing this strategy. Conversely, on the CNN sample, this strategy was employed only once by a speaker who had the same purpose of creating a category by differentiating them (US citizens) from the rest and making it clear that the Americans are once again the ones unsafe.

...but I think it's a powerful argument that we've established religion in this fashion through this ban that is transparently against Muslims, what happens in Syria, Nash, what happens if if an Iranian national goes to the to Switzerland and comes to an American to America. We're not protected

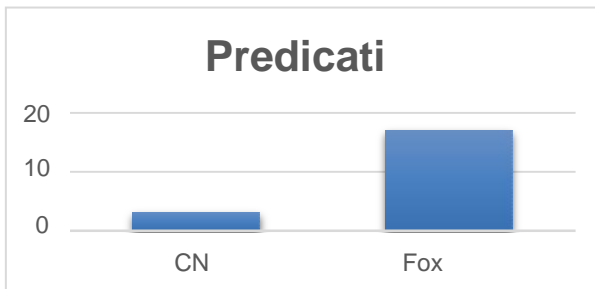
again, we have betting to protect us now and—' (CNN)

On the other hand, this strategy was also used to create in-groups and out-groups but without diminishing Muslims image, although this was done far less frequently. The construction of in-groups and out-groups was still present but with a different intent. For instance, two Fox News' guests and one from CNN stated the following:

—This is part of our compassion, right? As Americans to bringing the most vulnerable from around the world as other countries do as well' (Fox News)

A difference was created between the American people and others, however as it can be seen, it was to show that they are the most powerful group and because of that they have to help Muslims (them), the vulnerable group. As reviewed, this creation of in-groups and out-groups, or 'us vs. them' is a discourse that can be easily spotted and utilized in mass media (Sian, Law & Sayyid, 2012).

### Predication



Graph 3. Comparison of the usage of predication by both networks.

Predication was the third most utilized strategy by both networks. Notably, only Fox News employed this strategy with negative intent, meaning that almost all the labels given to Muslims had a negative connotation. Examples of what anchors and guests from this network stated include:

1. —They could do that but there are a lot of them, and we're paying the policeman salary. How about we get the suspects <emphasizes with her hand point out> out of the country. There's no reason to be bringing them in, what are they doing for us? Going on welfare—' (Fox News)

2. (mentioning what was previously about the people from the six banned countries) \_They said they're dangerous. They're like crazy people there who want to hurt us. That's what they said, were they wrong?\_ (Fox News)

These excerpts show that these anchors and guests referred to Muslims as criminals, crazy people, the bad guys, illegal, and serving no real purpose other than damaging the U.S and its citizens. Labelling them in a negative way was a common trait when reporting their opinions in regards to Muslims and to explain why they were supporting the travel ban. On the other hand, there were cases in which the usage of this strategy had a positive purpose; for instance, CNN used predication to defend their posture in regards of being against of the travel ban.

\_Well, you know, each element of this saga is another piece of a psychological trauma that American Muslims are facing. And as we have new developments, it's another reinforcement that this is somehow some us versus them, uh, fight. There's isolation, psychological isolation amongst the American Muslim community and many immigrant communities from the larger narrative that the administration is painting, whether it's a border wall, whether it's deportations, or this travel ban\_ (CNN)

In the example above, CNN's anchor acknowledged that the idea of an \_us vs. them\_ is being strengthened and that is only making the Muslim community suffer. By his word choice, he labelled them as the real victims. Along these same lines, Fox News' guests expressed their concern and disapproval of this ban, pointing out that by enforcing this, more animosity will be created between Americans and Muslims, resulting in Muslims being the real victim as seen in these examples:

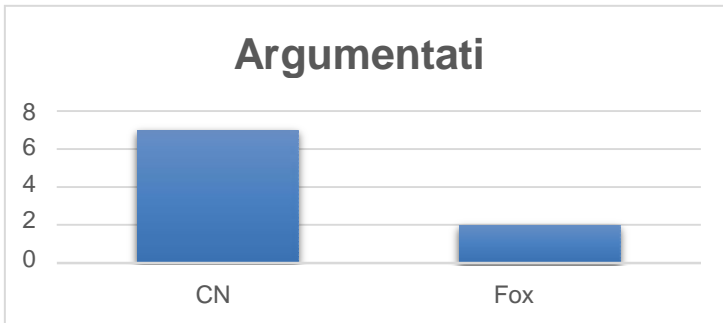
\_Sorry, I disagree completely because the biggest people that are subject to terror by Isis are Muslim and they are victims of terrorism and any-bigger\_ (Fox News)

\_...it means that they have a poor infrastructure, weak central governments and people that are leaving, especially refugees, that are leaving these countries are coming here because they're desperate to live Tucker, they need-\_ (Fox News)

They referred to Muslims as the \_real victims of terrorism\_, \_desperate to live\_, as allies getting their help rejected and ending up being persecuted just for being Muslims. To summarize, this strategy was mostly used with a negative purpose, since as the examples shown, all the labels associated with Muslims were quite explicit and deprecatory. On the other hand, positive use of this strategy showed

that those anchors and guests were actually concerned about Muslims' safety and their future in America. These findings agree with Potter and Wetherell's (1987) that showed the tendency of the United States' media to label Muslims with words that carry a negative connotation which can also be found in other media outlets.

## Argumentation



Graph 4. Comparison of the usage of argumentation by both networks.

It was quite remarkable to find out that this strategy was the least utilized from all five of them. One would think that there would be a reasoning behind any given opinion, especially if it was as controversial as the travel ban is. However, the number of comments using this strategy to justify this measure was significantly fewer than the previous two. The following cases presented are from CNN and Fox News respectively.

1. Uhm, Saudi Arabia is, you know, basically, the o-originator, the inventor of radical Islamic terrorism, it is where Osama Bin Laden came from, it is where Al-Qaeda, in a sense, was born, it is still one of the leading funders of radical Islam around the world, maybe not the country, but people within it, foundations within it' (CNN)
2. I would want it to rain warrants (emphasizes) terrorist warrants, so, I can kick down every door of every possible terrorist, friend of a terrorist, family member of a terrorist. In Israel, if you co hoarded with a terrorist or you had any knowledge of the terrorist attack, we're going to destroy your house. The reason why is because you don't deserve to even live here if you had any knowledge of a potential terror attack. {clip stops playing}' (Fox News)

Both examples employed argumentation with a clear and direct negative purpose, which was to justify their rejection of Muslims and support of the travel ban. On one hand, a CNN's anchor justified his overgeneralization by relying on the actions of just one person, Osama Bin Laden. As a result, he was able to build a direct correlation between Saudi Arabia, its citizens, and radical Islamic terrorism. Whereas on the other hand, a Fox News' guest justified his counter-terror tactics based on what is generally done in Israel. However, the manner in which he initiated his argument was mostly based on using violence against every person who may or may not be related in any way to a possible terrorist. In other words, he hinted the idea of turning every refugee and/or American Muslim citizen into a suspect without a valid reason until proven wrong.

Furthermore, the implementation of this strategy with a more positive intent was mostly done by CNN anchors and guests and in one case by a guest on Fox News stating why he is against this policy

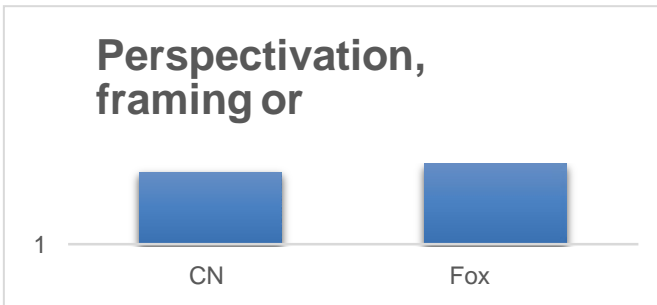
1. Number one, immigrants are not the source of most of the terrorist problems we had, when we did terror threat cases every day, I did four and a half years of these thousands of cases. These are typically native-born Americans or people who have been here a long time. They're not immigrants. Second, let's assume they were, which is incorrect. These aren't the countries you'd pick. I'd look at others. Some of them happen to be American friends, which suggests to me, this list is politicized' (CNN)
2. Well, you know, Tucker, I think the point is that this is this ban was made in the interest of national security. But as we've seen by the way in which it's been revised and continued to be changed that this isn't really about national security. This is about the president trying to make good on a campaign promise to quote "make a complete shutdown of Muslims entering this country". So, this is really about politics and not national security policy making' (Fox News)

In the first example, CNN's anchor utilized this strategy by explaining that this policy is not only damaging Muslims but American citizens as well. The anchor stated that refugees are already risking a lot by fleeing their own countries for the sake of feeling and being safer in America. In the second example, the speaker stated that the travel ban is about politics and not about national security. He explained that this policy may have been presented as a national security matter. However, according to him, this policy is more about Trump's political campaign.

Even though this strategy was not as employed as much the others, it was still

strongly present in the discourse of both networks. The negative purposes for the use of this strategy were mainly based on overgeneralization and prejudice, whereas the positive purposes were based on the fact that there is no evidence to support this policy's approval. Altheide (2007) noted that mass media based most of their arguments against Muslims on the 9/11 attacks; thus, as it was shown in the examples above, mass media may have a tendency to overgeneralize.

### Perspectivation, framing or discourse representation



Graph 5. Comparison of the usage of perspectivation, framing or discourse representation by both networks:

This strategy is usually utilized when a speaker tries to justify their point of view, either on a discriminatory or favorably manner, and an important figure's perspective, narration, or quotation made in relation to that topic can be used to support their claims. Notably, Fox News employed said strategy with a negative purpose more times than CNN did as seen in these examples:

1. What Donald Trump wants to do, what Homeland Security wants to do under him is focus on the criminal illegal aliens and get them out of the United States. Who possibly could object to that? I have no idea what these mayors are thinking about' (Fox News)
2. You know, and Vice Vice President Mike Pence says, "as we are doing everything and anything we can do to continue to make sure that anyone coming into the United States of America does not represent a threat to our communities and our families" when responding to this travel ban and the decision made by the Supreme Court. What else do we need to be doing as right now? This morning I talked to two people who were there

on the day of his Las Vegas attacks, people are worried about what is next in our country, on American soil' (Fox News)

In the first example, the guest used important and well-known figures and entities to support his favorable opinion about the travel ban. By emphasizing on 'who could possibly object to that?', meaning the opposite, he implies that by opposing that idea, you are against powerful politicians and as a consequence, against America. In the second example, the anchor quoted the Vice President, who made a statement supporting the travel ban, and describing an encounter with a regular citizen, whom also gave an opinion about U.S's security and expressed concern about Americans citizens' safety. The final emphasis made by the anchor stressing the word 'our' and specifying he was referring to America.

On the other hand, this same strategy was employed to justify why anchors and guest had a different point of view in comparison to the cases shown above. To be more precise, the comments were made in light of supporting Muslims and rejecting the necessity of implementation of said policy as seen below:.

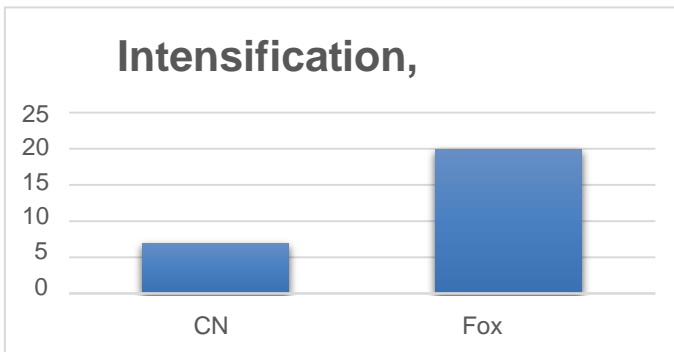
1. Because when you look to intent, there's, uh, no better way to decipher it, than somebody's on words, and we know the president and Rudy Giuliani and others have, you know, said that this is a Muslim ban. And what concerns me is a blanket ban really will just pedal this belief that Muslims, uh, are violent people by nature, it draws no distinguish between, uh, the 99% of Muslims who are peaceful and, uh, 1% just as you have in every religion who would carry out violence and that is actually something that makes us less safe' (CNN)
2. 'It is illegal, 50 years ago a law was passed in this country saying you could not determine immigration status based on national origin, and this is, goes beyond national origin, this is a ban of Muslims]. This is the president telling an entire religion in the, in this world, that they're not welcome in the United United States of Ameri-... [ This this is this is] a ban on Muslims, Rudy Giuliani, who wrote this executive action helped write this policy, said on fox news yesterday that that was a ban on Muslims-' (Fox News)

In these examples, guests from CNN and Fox News respectively, justified their opposition to the travel ban mainly based on what important political figures claimed. They both agreed this was in fact a religious ban trying to pass as a national security matter. Below, the exact fragment from which the examples above based their argument on.

So right when he first announced that he said Muslim ban, he called me up. He said, put a commission together. Show me the right way to do it legally I put a commission together with judge Mukasey, with Congressman McCall, Pete King, whole group of other very expert lawyers on this. And what we did was we focused on instead of religion, [danger], the air areas of the world that create danger for us, which is a factual basis, not a religious basis. Perfectly legal perfectly sensible and that's what the ban is based on it's not based on religion. It's based on places where there are substantial evidence that people...are...sending terrorists into our country' (Fox News)

As it was shown, in order to implement this strategy, whether with negative or positive purposes, all speakers shared their opinion on this matter and utilized what people from recognized entities and important figures with power had claimed in the past to reinforce their point of view. Happer and Philo (2013) note that the most powerful groups, whether political or social, have dominance over what messages are being broadcasted to the audience and that there is a tendency of being favorable to the U.S. and neutral or even hostile to others. The usage of what has been said in the past by these powerful groups might have been done to create a stronger impact on people's opinions.

### Intensification, mitigation



Graph 6. Comparison of the usage of intensification, mitigation by both networks.

This strategy is usually employed when the speaker either intensifies or mitigates the articulation of utterances. This strategy overlapped quite a few times with the ones previously mentioned, and at the same time was one of the most used by both networks. In comparison, Fox News presented more cases in which intensification,



mitigation was employed with a negative purpose than CNN did. Below some of those cases can be found:

1. What Donald Trump wants to do, what Homeland Security wants to do under him is focus on the criminal illegal aliens and get them out of the United States. Who possibly could object to that? I have no idea what these mayors are thinking about' (Fox News)
2. ...put America first, and determine whether these people have a good reason to come here and whether it is in the interest of the American citizens to have them come here-(Fox News)

In these examples the speakers stress words to make them seem like keywords to emphasize their opinion as well as and indirect speech act by turning an assertion into a question. The second speaker created also created an 'us vs. them' stance which is an instance of overlap and an example of how the strategy was use with negative purposes.

This strategy was also found to be used with a positive intent more often on CNN than Fox News, although the way in which all speakers applied this strategy were quite identical as seen below:

1. (when referring to the first version of the travel ban proposed) It was not about national security because the court took into consideration all of the things that went on during the campaign that we're about uh, an anti-Muslim type of regime that Donald Trump was starting'(CNN)
2. That's the biggest effect and that's not gone away because we've got six countries that are almost 100% Muslim and that's the big issue here and we don't have any evidence of the need for this to protect our national security'(CNN)

Both examples presented similarities between each other; for instance, the basis of their argument, which was denying that this policy was a matter of national security. In addition, the negation in their arguments was intensified by a raise of their voices within assertive declarations. The purpose of employment of this strategy was a positive one in regards to the view of Muslims presented. Thus, whether used as a solo strategy or overlapping with other strategies, intensification/mitigation served the purpose of clarifying the intention of whatever was uttered by the speaker as the most subtle variation in the tone of voice may emphasize, conceal, or persuasively display the speaker's intention (Van Dijk,

1998).

## Discussion

Earlier research suggested that western media in general has strengthened the link between Islam and terrorism and Arabs and brutality (Said, 1997). A discourse analysis of newspapers, by Jonathan and Wetherell (1987), found out that the words used to describe Muslims are often the ones with negative connotation and the usage of negative stereotypes by western media was present even before the 9/11 attacks and that media created the 'us vs. them/others', which has worked as a foundation on the discourse on the war on terror (Sian, Law & Sayyid, 2012). In this study, CNN and Fox News used the 'us vs. them' distinction when reporting about the travel ban and Muslims. The portrayal of Americans as the victims and Muslims as the enemies was the path taken by Fox News anchors and guest throughout 2017. Words like 'crazy people', 'dangerous', 'violent', among others, were used to describe Muslims repetitively. Whereas CNN opted to portray Muslims as the victims, though the words 'victim', 'helpless', 'needing to be protected', among others, had still an overall bad connotation. After comparing both discourses, it was found that the words chosen to describe Americans had always a positive connotation. Even so, one CNN guest stated that supporting the travel ban is 'un-American', this may imply that doing something seemingly bad goes against the positive values Americans have and are known for.

Furthermore, this study has shown that the presence of negative stereotypes to describe Muslims in western media has not apparently changed in comparison to previous studies. For instance, Törnberg and Törnberg (2016) indicated that there are many scholarly reports and sources in western media which have continuously shown the employment of stereotypes diminishing Muslims' image and that they always are placed in a context of conflict. Bazzi (2009) also noted that the discourse employed by media about 9/11 is a clear example of how discourse can produce meaningful knowledge and can strengthen the creation of stereotypes which the results of this study support since the type of discourse used in regards to Muslims has not changed. Additionally, this study also found that the discourse employed by CNN and Fox News in regards to Muslims did not change much through 2017 as both networks kept their original stance.

## Conclusion

This study had as its aim to analyze the discourse employed by two North American media networks in relation to Islam in relation to U.S. President Donald Trump's Travel Ban. In response to the first question which sought to find out what type of discourse is employed by CNN and Fox News in regards to the

aforementioned Travel Ban and whether there were any similarities and/or differences, the analysis showed that the discourse used by CNN anchors and guests presented a different portrayal of Muslims in comparison to how Fox News portrayed them. As it was shown, anchors and guests expressed their opinion by rejecting the implementation of the travel ban. Words like unconstitutional, a joke, un-American, anti-Muslim, among others were part of their discourse when describing the policy. Muslims were depicted as the real victims of terrorism, defenseless and seekers of help from stronger and more capable countries, like America. In addition, it appeared that almost all the CNN speakers had a general common ground towards that policy, which was that there is no evidence to support the travel ban being approved by the president of the United States.

By contrast, the majority of Fox News anchors and guests had a remarkably different opinion in comparison to the ones from CNN. The manner in which they employed their discourse when discussing the travel ban was a negative one. They made assertive comments in which they emphasized the ‘us vs. them’ battle. Almost all speakers repetitively created in-groups (Americans) and out-groups (Muslims), where the in-groups were portrayed as victims of all terrorist attacks carried out by members of the out-groups. Muslims were portrayed in a rather deprecating manner. Words like criminals, the bad guys, illegal, crazy people, among others, were used to describe them. As it was indicated in chapter four, there were many differences and only a few similarities in the way both North American networks employed their discourse to portray Muslims.

Regarding the second question, the analysis conducted intended to identify changes in discourse through time, if any, from both networks. However, there were no significant changes. CNN speakers kept their negative opinion in relation to the travel ban throughout 2017 stating that this policy would only lead to consequences, making America look anti-Muslims, anti-Islam, un-American, rejecting all Muslims that had actually helped Americans in the past. Even though the policy was modified three times within that year, speakers pointed out that there was still no need for its implementation and that the new countries added in September, were a failed attempt of refuting the idea that it was an entirely Muslim ban. Whereas Fox News speakers insisted that Americans and their safety was the number one priority and that whoever was against that policy, was against America and its citizens. When the 3.0 version of the travel ban was signed, all speakers agreed that because of the addition of North Korea and Venezuela, it clearly was not a Muslim ban anymore, since the government took into consideration other factors than religion. Additionally, they repetitively stated the need for said policy.

The third and last question was designed to find out which of Wodak’s (2009)

discursive strategies were mostly used to attempt an influence on the viewers. Referential/nomination and intensification/mitigation were found to be the ones most used by both networks. It was shown that anchors and guests repeatedly created in-groups and out-groups and by doing it so, North America's image was being positively reinforced, whereas Muslims' image was being diminished. In addition, the speakers, when attempting to make an emphasis on their arguments, employed intensification, mitigation by raising their voices and making assertive comments, which may have an impact on people's opinions. CNN portrayed Muslims as defenseless and in needs of help, whereas Fox News, well known for its republican tendency, did the complete opposite and highlighted the already existent negative image Muslims have.

The results of this study may not be fully representative due to the sample's size. They can serve as an indication of a tendency but may not represent the views of all news media outlets or anchors. However, they still were found to be quite relevant as they illustrate how two of the most important news outlets worldwide present such divergent views on the same issue. Further research into the use of this type of discourse applied to other groups or in regards to other events might be useful to better understand how the discursive strategies presented in this study are used to create in-group identity and out-group opposition and how these discourses are used in media to influence viewers' opinions..

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