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Content Analysis of the Portrayal of Muslims in American Media

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Abstract

Since the September 11th terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, Muslims have been a widely discussed topic in American media. The researchers asked the question: *How are Muslims portrayed in American media* and analyzed online news articles from Fox News, CNN, and NPR on the topic of Muslims in America between August 1 and September 30, 2010. Many of the articles found discussed the timely topics of the proposed building of the mosque and Islamic Center, the burning of the Quran, and the anniversary of the September 11th attacks. News articles were run through CATPAC, a content analysis software program. The major contrast between the three sources was the way they portrayed not only the mosque but the American view of Muslims as well. CNN provided mostly negative opinions of the mosque and framed Muslims in a negative way. Although Fox News offered different views on the mosque, negative viewpoints overwhelmingly outnumbered the positive ones. NPR differed from the other sources because it offered a seemingly equal amount of arguments for the views of those for and against the building of the mosque and Islamic Center.

Since the September 11th terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, Muslims have been a widely discussed topic in American media. Media have presented many different issues concerning Muslims throughout the nine years since the attacks. While Muslims have been discussed in the media during this time, this group of people has been much more prevalent in the news at specific times. This is true especially around the anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

Recently the media have extensively covered the topic of Muslims in America. Muslims have been of interest due to the proposal of an Islamic Center and mosque being built near the site of the September 11th attacks. Many discussions arose pertaining to whether building the mosque is ethical due to the argument that the mosque is too close to ground zero while other people believe the mosque is a fundamental right for people who choose to practice their religion. As the 2010 anniversary of the September 11th attacks approached, the discussion of Muslims and the proposed mosque brought a great deal of opposition. Reverend Terry Jones, a pastor in Florida, brought more attention to Muslims in the media when he threatened to burn the Quran on the anniversary of the terrorist attacks. The anniversary itself increased Muslim attention in American media as well.

A recent *TIME Magazine* article by Ghosh (2010) titled “Islam in America...” demonstrates the importance and relevance of discussing Muslims in America. The article discussed intolerance in America; it explained that Muslims are not the only religious group to experience prejudice. “Jews, Mormons, and others still experience hate speech. But the most toxic bile is reserved for Muslims” (Ghosh, 2010, p. 24). Ghosh mentioned the different opinions associated with the proposal to build a mosque and Islamic Center near ground zero. One viewpoint compared building a mosque near ground zero to building a memorial to Hitler at Auschwitz. Another viewpoint was presented by Sami, an Iraqi immigrant; he argued, “If they don’t build it, they will be agreeing with those who say Muslims are not proper Americans” (cited in Ghosh, 2010, p. 25). *TIME Magazine* shows the significance and relevance of the topic of Muslims in today’s society because the publication dedicated its entire August issue to the topic, “Is America Islamophobic?”

Due to the widespread media coverage on the topic of Muslims in America, the researchers chose to conduct a study which examines the media’s coverage on this subject. The researchers asked the question: *How are Muslims portrayed in American media?* In order to answer this question, the researchers analyzed online news articles on the topic of Muslims in America. Many of the articles found discussed the timely and important topics of the proposed building of the mosque and Islamic Center, the burning of the Quran, and the anniversary of the September 11th attacks.

Literature Review

Previous researchers have explored the topic of Muslims and how they are portrayed in both media and society. Previous studies that dealt with the media’s portrayal of Muslims after September 11, 2001 show that the foundation of the current study is connected to similar academic studies.

Brown (2010) investigated the topic of the ways that Muslims are perceived in American society as well as how those perceptions are created in her study, “Islam, the United States and multiple identities.” The author questioned Americans’ thoughts of why Muslims dislike them. After the September 11th attacks, many Americans not only questioned why Muslims dislike them but also questioned how the two parties arrived in such a difficult situation. Sources used by the author described this “hatred” as a clash between civilizations and a conflict between Eastern and Western cultures. The author went on to claim that perhaps religion is at the root of

this disagreement. The researcher conducted her study by examining theories in order to discover what factors framed the perception of Americans. Some initial findings of the study found that Muslims tend to have negative feelings toward Americans. Therefore, the author suggested that religion alone cannot explain feelings toward the United States. She suggested that public diplomacy programming should work to promote media openness that demonstrates the positive values of Americans. These positive values include: fair government, strong education, active business, and democracy.

Ibrahim (2010) studied Muslims in the media after September 11, 2001. Her study titled, “The Framing of Islam on Network News Following the September 11th Attacks,” compared the United States’ network television news coverage of Muslims and Islam following the September 11th attacks. She followed the evening newscasts of ABC, CBS, and NBC during September 11-25, 2001. The researcher examined both visual and verbal frames of Islam and Muslims. Her focus was on which aspects of Islam the news coverage emphasized or ignored. The researcher wanted to see how closely the framing of Islam in the news compared to the beliefs of United States government officials. The results showed that throughout the United States and the rest of the world, the objective coverage of Islam does not exist.

Zaman (2009) wrote “Understanding the experiences of discrimination in Muslim Americans post-9/11: A qualitative study.” The researcher explained how the media has a negative bias toward Arabs and Muslims. Many think this is due to a long-standing negative view. The researcher examined *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* over a six month period to see how Arabs and Muslims are portrayed. Zaman found that these groups of people were mostly portrayed negatively in these newspapers.

Byng (2008) studied Muslims in America after September 11, 2001. Her study titled, “Complex Inequalities: The Case of Muslim Americans After 9/11,” examined how the religious identity of Muslims is similar to racial identity inequalities. Byng analyzed articles in newspapers from the northeastern region of the United States and *The Washington Post* that were published between May 2002 and May 2003. The results of the study showed how complex social inequality is and how it can result from any identity, not just race identity. Therefore, the researcher concluded that Muslim Americans are treated unjustly in social contexts because of their religious minority identity.

Khan (2007) conducted the study, “Potential terrorists, oil suppliers, harems, and worshippers of another god: Media coverage of Muslims, perceived threats from *Muslims*, intercultural contact, and ethnocentrism.” Through this study, the researcher took a further look into reported media and the impact it has on perceived threats from American Muslims. Reports showed a correlation between high degrees of ethnocentrism and a perceived threat from an out-group. This, on the surface implied that Americans think highly of themselves and perceive other cultures as threatening. Other findings showed that this perceived threat is not derived from media exposure. Instead, the study showed that attitudes toward Muslims are strong regardless of media exposure.

Alsultany (2005) wrote a dissertation titled “The changing profile of race in the United States: Media representations and racialization of Arab- and Muslim-Americans post-9/11.” In this study, the researcher examined how “the target of racialization used to consolidate *American* national identity has temporarily shifted to a conflated Arab/*Muslim* category” (Alsultany, 2005, p. iv). The researcher analyzed how the media quickly changed the definition of what an American citizen is after September 11, 2001. The researcher conducted a textual analysis of primetime television programs, news reporting, and non-profit advertising. The results of her

study showed that racism toward Muslim Americans exists even when there is positive portrayal of Muslim Americans in the media.

The six studies provided a relevant basis for this study on the portrayal of Muslims in American media. While these studies offer a foundation for the research study at hand, they are merely used as support to show the importance of this topic. The researchers studying the portrayal of Muslims in American media have used different research methods to create a study which will yield original results.

Method

To examine the portrayal of Muslims in American media, the research team conducted a content analysis of news articles. Content analysis is defined as a “research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). The researchers collected data from three online news sources, Fox News, Cable News Network (CNN), and National Public Radio (NPR). These sources were used because they differ in the way they frame news stories. Fox News is typically viewed as a conservative news source; NPR takes a more liberal stance on issues. CNN is a mainstream news source that many Americans turn to for information. The researchers searched for articles using the phrase, “Muslims in America.” Articles that came up in this search between August 1, 2010 and September 30, 2010 were copied and pasted into a Microsoft Word document. In an attempt to remain objective in their study, the researchers only looked at news stories in their search; opinion articles and blogs were disregarded. The research team gathered 52 articles from Fox News, 64 from CNN, and 20 articles from NPR. When the research process was complete, articles were run through CATPAC. CATPAC organizes the document into “hierarchical ordering of concepts (words) as they occur in natural language” (Doerfel & Marsh, 2003, p. 218).

As part of the process with CATPAC, the researchers grouped certain words together and eliminated a few words from the analysis in order to achieve more precise results. For example, the words *Muslim* and *Muslims* were grouped together because these words are similar in meaning. The words *American* and *Americans* were not grouped together in the analysis because of the different meanings these words can convey. The researchers decided not to have these words grouped together because the word *Americans* in a newspaper article could be referring to a group of people, and the word *American* might be used in the context of anti-American sentiment. CATPAC found the word *CNN* being used frequently; therefore, this word was eliminated because it would not be helpful in obtaining relevant results.

Results

The following results include tables for each news source the researchers examined. The tables illustrate dendograms which are content analysis results from CNN, Fox News, and NPR.

The CNN CATPAC results produced a list of frequently used words from the 64 articles that were analyzed. The following are the results that were retrieved from CATPAC.

CNN RESULTS

TOTAL WORDS 4172 THRESHOLD 0.000
 TOTAL UNIQUE WORDS 40 RESTORING FORCE 0.100
 TOTAL EPISODES 64 CYCLES 1
 TOTAL LINES 2890 FUNCTION Sigmoid (-1 - +1)
 CLAMPING Yes

DESCENDING FREQUENCY LIST					ALPHABETICALLY SORTED LIST				
WORD	FREQ	PCNT	CASE FREQ	CASE PCNT	WORD	FREQ	PCNT	CASE FREQ	CASE PCNT
CENTER	307	7.4	53	82.8	AGAINST	73	1.7	33	51.6
MUSLIMS	278	6.7	62	96.9	AMERICAN	86	2.1	39	60.9
ISLAMIC	207	5.0	51	79.7	ATTACKS	91	2.2	44	68.8
I	184	4.4	44	68.8	BUILD	68	1.6	34	53.1
YORK	160	3.8	46	71.9	BURN	73	1.7	22	34.4
MOSQUE	150	3.6	44	68.8	BURNING	111	2.7	19	29.7
JONES	144	3.5	20	31.2	CENTER	307	7.4	53	82.8
WILL	131	3.1	42	65.6	CITY	64	1.5	31	48.4
WORLD	120	2.9	45	70.3	COMMUNITY	79	1.9	38	59.4
PEOPLE	119	2.9	42	65.6	FLORIDA	71	1.7	26	40.6
BURNING	111	2.7	19	29.7	GROUND	90	2.2	37	57.8
SEPTEMBER	111	2.7	54	84.4	GROUP	72	1.7	34	53.1
OBAMA	108	2.6	21	32.8	I	184	4.4	44	68.8
QURAN	100	2.4	22	34.4	ISLAM	93	2.2	29	45.3
ISLAM	93	2.2	29	45.3	ISLAMIC	207	5.0	51	79.7
TOLD	93	2.2	42	65.6	ISSUE	61	1.5	25	39.1
ATTACKS	91	2.2	44	68.8	JONES	144	3.5	20	31.2
GROUND	90	2.2	37	57.8	M	75	1.8	61	95.3
AMERICAN	86	2.1	39	60.9	MOSQUE	150	3.6	44	68.8
PRESIDENT	83	2.0	21	32.8	MUSLIMS	278	6.7	62	96.9
COMMUNITY	79	1.9	38	59.4	OBAMA	108	2.6	21	32.8
SITE	79	1.9	34	53.1	PEOPLE	119	2.9	42	65.6
ZERO	79	1.9	35	54.7	PLAN	69	1.7	30	46.9
RELIGIOUS	78	1.9	36	56.2	PLANNED	75	1.8	28	43.8
M	75	1.8	61	95.3	PLANS	61	1.5	39	60.9
PLANNED	75	1.8	28	43.8	PRESIDENT	83	2.0	21	32.8
73 1.7 33 51.6			PROJECT		62 1.5 29 45.3				
BURN	73	1.7	22	34.4	QURAN	100	2.4	22	34.4
GROUP	72	1.7	34	53.1	RELIGION	69	1.7	31	48.4
FLORIDA	71	1.7	26	40.6	RELIGIOUS	78	1.9	36	56.2
RIGHT	70	1.7	25	39.1	RIGHT	70	1.7	25	39.1
PLAN	69	1.7	30	46.9	SEPTEMBER	111	2.7	54	84.4
RELIGION	69	1.7	31	48.4	SITE	79	1.9	34	53.1
BUILD	68	1.6	34	53.1	STATEMENT	62	1.5	25	39.1
TWO	66	1.6	39	60.9	TOLD	93	2.2	42	65.6
CITY	64	1.5	31	48.4	TWO	66	1.6	39	60.9
PROJECT	62	1.5	29	45.3	WILL	131	3.1	42	65.6
STATEMENT	62	1.5	25	39.1	WORLD	120	2.9	45	70.3
ISSUE	61	1.5	25	39.1	YORK	160	3.8	46	71.9
PLANS	61	1.5	39	60.9	ZERO	79	1.9	35	54.7

praying at a mosque. The main themes of these articles did not show up in the results because the proposed Islamic Center and the threats to burn the Quran dominated the news. The proposal to build the mosque near ground zero is an important topic in the news because a CNN/Opinion Corporation poll found that about seventy percent of Americans are against building the mosque (CNN articles, 2010).

To depict these results, the CNN articles mostly contained quotes from people that showed opposition to the mosque. One woman who negatively responded to the mosque and Islamic Center being built near ground zero said, “This is hurting people who have already been deeply hurt” (cited in CNN articles, 2010). Another person said, “This is nothing short of a provocation, an insult to the families of people who were murdered, whose bodies were scattered all across that site” (cited in CNN articles, 2010). The articles contained quotes from people who said the mosque is “a breeding ground for terrorists,” and one man was quoted saying he would be okay with the mosque being built as long as it is not built near ground zero (CNN articles, 2010). These quotes show that CNN focused on the negative side of the mosque being built in order to correspond with the results from its poll.

CATPAC results clustered words that often appeared together throughout the articles. The dendrogram results which show the largest and most frequent cluster of words include the words *against*, *Muslims*, *September*, *York*, *people*, *attacks*, *two*, *will*, *planned*, and *American*. The researchers examined the CNN articles to find where the words *against* and *Muslims* appeared together. An excerpt from one of the articles stated, “Army officials interviewed Wednesday said they were unaware of anyone ever protesting against Muslims using the chapel” (CNN articles, 2010). Another example includes the quote, “The FBI is warning local law enforcement agencies that various controversies involving the U.S. Muslim community could lead to hate crimes against Muslims and encourage extremist rhetoric or actions against the United States” (CNN articles, 2010). These examples show that when *against* and *Muslim* appeared together these words were sometimes, but not always, used in a negative context.

The word *attacks* is important to the researchers’ study because it is one of the most frequently appearing words in the CNN articles. In the articles, *attacks* was usually used to refer to the September 11 terrorist attacks. The attacks were typically mentioned in articles that focused on the building of the mosque and Islamic Center near the site of the attacks. Every time the articles mentioned that the mosque is planned to be built near this area, it reminds Americans of the negative events from the past. The use of this word when referring to the proposal of the mosque helped to frame Muslims negatively in the minds of Americans. Reminding people of the September 11 attacks when referring to the mosque also associates Muslims with the attacks instead of associating extremists and terrorists with the attacks. Using this word to relate to the mosque could be a factor that contributed to the CNN poll results that found seventy percent of people oppose the building of the mosque and Islamic Center.

The second largest cluster of words that frequently appeared together in the articles includes the words: *told*, *burn*, *Jones*, *burning*, *Quran*, and *Florida*. This cluster shows that the second most frequent theme of the articles dealt with Jones, the Florida pastor who threatened to burn the Quran on the anniversary of the terrorist attacks. Overall the researchers believe that CNN framed its articles in a way that depicted Muslims negatively.

The results from Fox News produced a list of words that appeared most frequently amongst the 52 articles. The following are results formulated by CATPAC.

FOX RESULTS

TOTAL WORDS	3717	THRESHOLD	0.000
TOTAL UNIQUE WORDS	40	RESTORING FORCE	0.100
TOTAL EPISODES	52	CYCLES	1
TOTAL LINES	2502	FUNCTION	Sigmoid (-1 - +1)
		CLAMPING	Yes

DESCENDING FREQUENCY LIST

WORD	FREQ	PCNT	CASE FREQ	CASE PCNT
MUSLIMS	626	16.8	50	96.2
MOSQUE	194	5.2	32	61.5
CENTER	189	5.1	39	75.0
ISLAMIC	184	5.0	39	75.0
AMERICAN	145	3.9	40	76.9
PEOPLE	128	3.4	41	78.8
I	125	3.4	38	73.1
WILL	120	3.2	36	69.2
ISLAM	108	2.9	34	65.4
COMMUNITY	84	2.3	26	50.0
RAUF	80	2.2	14	26.9
RELIGIOUS	80	2.2	31	59.6
YORK	80	2.2	34	65.4
LEADERS	75	2.0	30	57.7
GROUND	74	2.0	32	61.5
AMERICA	73	2.0	38	73.1
WORLD	71	1.9	30	57.7
PROJECT	69	1.9	20	38.5
AMERICANS	67	1.8	28	53.8
SEPT	67	1.8	32	61.5
ZERO	67	1.8	30	57.7
OVER	66	1.8	35	67.3
SITE	61	1.6	26	50.0
UNITED	61	1.6	31	59.6
GROUP	59	1.6	30	57.7
NEAR	56	1.5	28	53.8
TWO	56	1.5	31	59.6
BUILD	55	1.5	22	42.3
RIGHT	55	1.5	22	42.3
AGAINST	54	1.5	27	51.9
STATES	54	1.5	31	59.6
RELIGION	53	1.4	20	38.5
YEAR	53	1.4	28	53.8
STATE	52	1.4	21	40.4
PRESIDENT	49	1.3	26	50.0
ATTACKS	48	1.3	28	53.8
TOLD	46	1.2	24	46.2
SCHOOL	45	1.2	14	26.9
IMAM	44	1.2	19	36.5
MOSQUES	44	1.2	15	28.8

ALPHABETICALLY SORTED LIST

WORD	FREQ	PCNT	CASE FREQ	CASE PCNT
AGAINST	54	1.5	27	51.9
AMERICA	73	2.0	38	73.1
AMERICAN	145	3.9	40	76.9
AMERICANS	67	1.8	28	53.8
ATTACKS	48	1.3	28	53.8
BUILD	55	1.5	22	42.3
CENTER	189	5.1	39	75.0
COMMUNITY	84	2.3	26	50.0
GROUND	74	2.0	32	61.5
GROUP	59	1.6	30	57.7
I	125	3.4	38	73.1
IMAM	44	1.2	19	36.5
ISLAM	108	2.9	34	65.4
ISLAMIC	184	5.0	39	75.0
LEADERS	75	2.0	30	57.7
MOSQUE	194	5.2	32	61.5
MOSQUES	44	1.2	15	28.8
MUSLIMS	626	16.8	50	96.2
NEAR	56	1.5	28	53.8
OVER	66	1.8	35	67.3
PEOPLE	128	3.4	41	78.8
PRESIDENT	49	1.3	26	50.0
PROJECT	69	1.9	20	38.5
RAUF	80	2.2	14	26.9
RELIGION	53	1.4	20	38.5
RELIGIOUS	80	2.2	31	59.6
RIGHT	55	1.5	22	42.3
SCHOOL	45	1.2	14	26.9
SEPT	67	1.8	32	61.5
SITE	61	1.6	26	50.0
STATE	52	1.4	21	40.4
STATES	54	1.5	31	59.6
TOLD	46	1.2	24	46.2
TWO	56	1.5	31	59.6
UNITED	61	1.6	31	59.6
WILL	120	3.2	36	69.2
WORLD	71	1.9	30	57.7
YEAR	53	1.4	28	53.8
YORK	80	2.2	34	65.4
ZERO	67	1.8	30	57.7

Throughout the articles obtained, it was prevalent that when the proposal of the mosque was discussed, the topic of ground zero was mentioned along with it. The articles mainly attached *ground zero* to the word *mosque*, as seen in the excerpt “the proposed mosque near ground zero drew hundreds of fever-pitch demonstrators, with opponents carrying signs associating Islam with blood, supporters shouting, "Say no to racist fear!" and American flags waving on both sides” (Fox News articles, 2010). Other areas that mosque and ground zero appear together affirm the opposition; a mother whose son died on September 11th stated, "This (ground zero) is sacred ground and it's where my son was buried." She said the mosque would be "like a knife in our hearts" (cited in Fox News articles, 2010). While offering facts such as 62 percent of people approve the mosque being built while 28 percent say they do not, the articles do not provide nearly as many positive statements on the topic as negative statements. If the articles delivered some type of positive statistic or phrase when referring to Muslims or the building of the mosque, it was more frequently negated by the numerous opposing views derived from quoted citizens.

The word *president* is of interest because it was revealed in the results from the CNN articles as well. The researchers assign this meaning to be that the president’s viewpoint may be of interest to the American people. This can be seen in the discussion of Obama’s stance on the issue. “President Barack Obama inserted himself into the debate when he said Muslims have the same right to practice their religion as everyone else” (Fox News articles, 2010). While the articles display many negative impressions of the building of the mosque, whenever *president* or Barack Obama is mentioned, it is also combined with a positive remark referring to the mosque. Obama stated, “My job as president is to make sure in part that we're upholding our Constitution" (cited in Fox News articles, 2010). This statement by Obama shows he tried to make people favor the building of the mosque because he said it is a constitutional right guaranteed to all Americans. Along with many statements referring to Obama’s stance on the issue came multiple objections to the president’s views. New York Republican Congressman Peter King objected to Obama’s mosque opinions. "President Obama is wrong. It is insensitive and uncaring for the Muslim community to build a mosque in the shadow of ground zero" (cited in Fox News articles, 2010).

Another word that is of interest is *attack*. This negative word shows that the articles referred to the past by discussing the September 11 terrorist attacks. An extract from a Fox News article (2010) claimed that the attacks were an "inside job.” Another reference to the terrorist attacks is that “building a mosque so close to the site of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks -- carried out by extremists in the name of Islam -- is at best insensitive” (Fox News articles, 2010). In most cases, *attacks* was associated with Islam. In many areas where the word *Islam* appeared, it is attached to discussions of the September 11th attacks.

The word *Muslims* is important to the study because it appeared in many different locations and is directly related to the research question. Some articles provided insight into the views of the Muslim people. Pertaining to the proposal to build a mosque and Islamic Center near ground zero, the national executive director of the Council on Islamic-American Relations stated, "We ask Muslims to open mosques nationwide to welcome people, to let them understand the Islamic faith and what American Muslim community is" (cited in Fox News articles, 2010). This viewpoint shows that the proposal to build a mosque in New York City is nothing more than an attempt to increase the number of mosques throughout the country. While many of the articles state positive phrases associated with the word Muslim, many people are more likely to “have an unfavorable than favorable view of Islam” (Fox News articles, 2010). From the Fox

News CATPAC results, the researchers concluded that while Fox News provides both sides of the argument over the proposal of building the mosque and Islamic Center, Fox News offers a one-sided view of Islam. From these results, the researchers decided that for many people it is easier to think of Muslims as a group of religious people when referring to them, but the word Islam is a word that provokes anger and is often associated with extremist ideas and terror. The articles provided factual information about Islam; however, the word itself is one that many Americans fear simply because they do not understand. An excerpt explains that “for most Americans, 9/11 remains as an open wound, and anything associated with Islam, even for Americans who want to understand Islam — to have an Islamic center with so much publicity is like rubbing salt in open wounds” (Fox News Articles, 2010).

The 20 articles collected from NPR produced the following CATPAC results.

NPR RESULTS

TOTAL WORDS	1518	THRESHOLD	0.000
TOTAL UNIQUE WORDS	40	RESTORING FORCE	0.100
TOTAL EPISODES	20	CYCLES	1
TOTAL LINES	1008	FUNCTION	Sigmoid (-1 - +1)
		CLAMPING	Yes

DESCENDING FREQUENCY LIST				ALPHABETICALLY SORTED LIST			
WORD	FREQ	PCNT	CASE FREQ PCNT	WORD	FREQ	PCNT	CASE FREQ PCNT
MUSLIMS	114	7.5	15 75.0	AGAINST	31	2.0	11 55.0
SAYS	107	7.0	12 60.0	AMERICA	31	2.0	9 45.0
CENTER	84	5.5	18 90.0	AMERICAN	43	2.8	14 70.0
ISLAMIC	83	5.5	18 90.0	AMERICANS	41	2.7	11 55.0
MOSQUE	77	5.1	17 85.0	ANTI	35	2.3	10 50.0
MUSLIMSS	72	4.7	17 85.0	BURN	20	1.3	6 30.0
I	50	3.3	14 70.0	CENTER	84	5.5	18 90.0
AMERICAN	43	2.8	14 70.0	CITY	21	1.4	10 50.0
WORLD	42	2.8	15 75.0	COMMUNITY	36	2.4	10 50.0
AMERICANS	41	2.7	11 55.0	COUNTRY	21	1.4	11 55.0
NEWS	41	2.7	10 50.0	DEBATE	26	1.7	11 55.0
WILL	39	2.6	11 55.0	DON'T	18	1.2	6 30.0
ISLAM	38	2.5	13 65.0	GOING	20	1.3	7 35.0
PEOPLE	38	2.5	16 80.0	GROUND	33	2.2	15 75.0
COMMUNITY	36	2.4	10 50.0	I	50	3.3	14 70.0
ANTI	35	2.3	10 50.0	ISLAM	38	2.5	13 65.0
YORK	35	2.3	13 65.0	ISLAMIC	83	5.5	18 90.0
OVER	34	2.2	15 75.0	MANHATTAN	18	1.2	8 40.0
GROUND	33	2.2	15 75.0	MEDIA	27	1.8	7 35.0
AGAINST	31	2.0	11 55.0	MOSQUE	77	5.1	17 85.0
AMERICA	31	2.0	9 45.0	MUSLIMS	114	7.5	15 75.0
ZERO	29	1.9	14 70.0	MUSLIMSS	72	4.7	17 85.0
MEDIA	27	1.8	7 35.0	NEWS	41	2.7	10 50.0
DEBATE	26	1.7	11 55.0	OBAMA	22	1.4	6 30.0
PROPOSED	24	1.6	12 60.0	OVER	34	2.2	15 75.0
RELIGIOUS	24	1.6	11 55.0	PEOPLE	38	2.5	16 80.0
QURAN	23	1.5	6 30.0	PLAN	19	1.3	6 30.0
OBAMA	22	1.4	6 30.0	PROPOSED	24	1.6	12 60.0
RELIGION	22	1.4	7 35.0	QURAN	23	1.5	6 30.0
CITY	21	1.4	10 50.0	RELIGION	22	1.4	7 35.0
COUNTRY	21	1.4	11 55.0	RELIGIOUS	24	1.6	11 55.0
RIGHT	21	1.4	12 60.0	RIGHT	21	1.4	12 60.0
SEPT	21	1.4	12 60.0	SAYS	107	7.0	12 60.0
BURN	20	1.3	6 30.0	SEPT	21	1.4	12 60.0
GOING	20	1.3	7 35.0	STORY	20	1.3	6 30.0
STORY	20	1.3	6 30.0	TWO	18	1.2	10 50.0
PLAN	19	1.3	6 30.0	WILL	39	2.6	11 55.0
DON'T	18	1.2	6 30.0	WORLD	42	2.8	15 75.0
MANHATTAN	18	1.2	8 40.0	YORK	35	2.3	13 65.0
TWO	18	1.2	10 50.0	ZERO	29	1.9	14 70.0

A smaller group of outcomes produced key words such as *Obama*, *anti*, *American*, *Islam*, *burn*, and *Quran*. Upon looking at the articles again, the meanings of these words vary. Obama is recorded speaking in support of Islam. One article stated, “President Barack Obama is appealing for religious tolerance, reminding Americans that the ‘overwhelming majority’ of Muslims around the world are peace-loving people” (NPR articles, 2010). Among the positive articles were negative ones discussing a rise in anti-Muslim sentiment as well as the belief that Obama is a Muslim.

Anti appears primarily in regards to an anti-Muslim attitude among Americans. For example, an article stated, “Throughout the recent anti-Muslim outburst, American Muslim leaders have taken pains to acknowledge that many in their community have prospered in the U.S., and that Muslims have more freedom here than they would in many other countries” (NPR articles, 2010). The words *burn* and *Quran* are the last major theme within the articles from NPR. The researchers presumed that this principally concerns the burning of the Quran in Florida. Another article covered this topic extensively. The story discussed how “a Florida pastor's threat to burn the Quran has sparked an outpouring of concern in the Muslim world” and that it is the media's fault for “blowing this story out of all proportion” (NPR articles, 2010). This issue is a prevalent theme within the articles.

After examining the results of each news organization, the researchers found the most interesting contrast to be the number of people said to oppose or approve the building of the Islamic Center and mosque. The results of CNN's poll show that nearly 70 percent of Americans oppose the mosque (CNN articles, 2010). A Fox News article said that 62 percent of people said Muslims have a right to build the mosque (Fox News articles, 2010). It is interesting in the way the two different news sources frame their poll. CNN focused its poll on if Americans agreed with the mosque being built while Fox News polled New Yorkers to discover if they thought Muslims had the right to build the mosque.

The main theme from all three sources was the discussion of the proposed mosque. The major contrast between the news sources was the way they portrayed not only the mosque but the American view of Muslims as well. CNN provided mostly negative opinions of the mosque and framed Muslims in a negative way. Although Fox News offered different views on the mosque, there was an overwhelming number of negative view points as opposed to positive ones. NPR differed from the other sources because it offered a seemingly equal number of arguments for the views of those for and against the building of the mosque and Islamic Center.

Discussion

Overall, the researchers identified several methods that could have been done differently. The researchers began collecting their articles in early September 2010. At that time, the researchers chose articles from Fox, CNN, and NPR from August 1, 2010 to September 30, 2010 by typing in “Muslims in America.” Because the researchers started collecting data in early September, they were forced to go back in time on the websites in order to collect articles from August. This was a challenging process because the news sites did not allow the researchers to search chronologically, and often the most relevant articles that were produced by the “Muslims in America” search were articles from the current day or week and not from the past. The researchers believe that if they were to perform the collection of the articles over again, they would choose a two month period by going forward in time rather than backward. If the researchers were starting on September 1, they would search the websites daily from September 1 through October 31. The researchers think this would be an easier way to collect the articles.

Another item in the research process that the researchers believe could have been done differently is the researcher's choice of news sources. At the end of the article collection period, the researchers had a total of 64 articles from CNN, 52 articles from Fox and 20 articles from NPR. While CNN and Fox had a similar amount of articles, there is a large discrepancy in articles collected from NPR. The researchers believe that if the sources used had similar amounts of articles collected, this would have generated more of a standard set of results. When looking at the results of CATPAC on each of the sources' articles, the researchers were forced to consider whether the number of articles had any effect on the results.

Additional research to support findings should include surveying human subjects to perhaps provide an interesting contrast to the results. A possible way to conduct the study by using human subjects would be to choose articles from certain sources, allow human subjects to read the articles and ask questions pertaining to how they felt the articles framed Muslims. This would provide a human perspective to the results that CATPAC simply could not produce.

Another dimension to add into the study would be to include blogs and opinion articles in the content for analysis by CATPAC. In this study, the researchers eliminated blogs and opinion articles. A possible way to conduct the study by using blogs and opinions would be to run CATPAC on blogs and opinion articles and compare them with the articles that were objectively written. This would provide interesting results that would depict the difference between the way Muslims are portrayed in an objective way versus a subjective way.

The American media attention of Muslims in America increased to a high degree following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The topic saw a rise in attention earlier this year due to the ninth anniversary of the attacks in combination with the proposed building of a mosque and Islamic Center near the ground zero site. Because of the rise in media attention, the researchers centered their goal of study on the question: *How are Muslims portrayed in American media* and analyzed online news articles from Fox News, CNN, and NPR on the topic of Muslims in America between August 1 and September 30, 2010. The results proved that the three news sources offered differing viewpoints of the topic, differing numbers of articles pertaining to the topic and a variety of arguments on the topics of Muslims in America.

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