

## **The social psychology of news influence and the development of Media Framing Analysis**

### Abstract

How precisely do media influence their readers, listeners and viewers? In this paper, we argue that any serious study of the psychology of media influence must incorporate a systematic analysis of media material. However, psychology presently lacks a methodology for doing this that is sensitive to context, relying on generalised methods like content or discourse analysis. In this paper we develop an argument to support our development of a technique that we have called Media Framing Analysis (MFA), a formal procedure for conducting analyses of (primarily news) media texts. MFA draws on elements of existing framing research from communication and other social scientific research while at the same time incorporating features of particular relevance to psychology, such as narrative and characterisation.

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(introduction)

Psychology has been slow to acknowledge the influence of the mass media on human behaviour. Although much research has been, and continues to be, conducted on the relationship between violent media and aggressive behaviour, and communication and media scholars have long explored the behaviour of media audiences *per se*, it is only in recent years that the broad impact of media has been emerged as a serious field in the psychology literature. Just to cite a recent example, research on celebrity worship (Maltby, Day, McCutcheon, Houran & Ashe, 2006), online personality (Marcus, Machilek & Schütz, 2006), children's internet use (Greenfield & Yan, 2006) and media influence on eating behaviour (Tiggemann, 2006) all appeared in mainstream psychology journals during 2006.

In order to advance theory and research in the field, Chamberlain and Hodgetts (2008) recently called for a social psychology of media that is sensitive to social context while applying appropriate methodologies. Above all, they argue that media should be understood as social practice. This has not always been the case when psychologists have explored media phenomena. For example, a disproportionate amount of research has dealt with the so-called "effects of violent media" (Fowles, 1999; Freedman, 2002). Indeed, the "effects model" has become pervasive in contemporary culture partly because of psychology's role in pathologising the act of watching violent films (Shaw, 2004). Furthermore, psychologists (and communication scientists) have been rightly criticised for using ecologically invalid research materials, such as artificial laboratory-produced stimuli, rather than actual media (Gauntlett, 2005).

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In recent years, some psychologists have adopted a more sophisticated approach towards the analysis of media, by studying the media texts themselves rather than assuming direct effects on audiences. UK psychology journals have published studies of the constructions of “Britishness” in newspaper coverage of countryside alliance activity (Wallwork & Dixon, 2004), representations of ‘madness’ in the media (Rose, 1998), nutritional health in women’s magazines (Madden & Chamberlain, 2004), NHS treatment decisions (Burgoyne, 1997), coverage of majorities and minorities in the UK press (Gardikiotis, Martin & Hewstone, 2004) and portrayal of menopause in a TV documentary (Lyons, 2000), to name a selection. Outside the UK, there have been several studies of mental health media representations in Australia (e.g., Francis et al., 2004) and sex differences in the US press (Brescoll & LeFrance, 2004). In addition, psychologists have published analyses of media materials in multidisciplinary social science journals like *Social Science and Medicine* and *Health*.

In this work, authors have drawn on a diverse range of quantitative and qualitative methods, such as (quantitative and qualitative) content analysis, discourse analysis, grounded theory, narrative analysis and rhetorical analysis. These are all well-established methods that have allowed researchers to make important contributions to the literature. However none of the above analytic methods has been developed primarily with media material in mind (although some forms of discourse analysis are concerned with anything that can be identified as ‘text’ – see Parker, 1992).

This is not to say that such analyses are incomplete, or unsatisfactory by themselves, but that we believe the literature would benefit from a systematic methodology that could act as a broad framework for all analyses of this type of data, and might serve to

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encourage further, more detailed and thorough research on media materials in psychology and other social sciences. Indeed, in a study of the framing of mental health issues in the US media (Sieff, 2003), the author concluded by saying that future research on the topic required “a systematic analysis of framing functions, structures and elements used in the media to describe mental illnesses” (p. 266).

In this paper we outline a broad methodological toolkit that can be systematically applied to any kind of textual analysis that involves media material, and which is highly sensitive to the mediated context of the data. This ‘toolkit’ is informed by media framing, a widely used in disciplines such as communication, marketing, and political science. In the second half of this paper we describe a flexible set of procedures that can be used to carry out a framing analysis of media material, either at the microanalytic level – such as the analysis of a single piece of text – or at the macroanalytic level, incorporating multiple media sources across a specific time period.

### *The framing research tradition*

For many decades, communication scientists, mainly in North America and Northern Europe, have attempted to devise formal techniques for analysing news media content, mostly within the paradigm known as *framing*. A recent paper argued that framing has now become the dominant methodology in communication science (Bryant & Miron, 2006). One author claims to have identified over one thousand applications of the concept of framing to public relations research alone (Hallahan, 1999).

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Despite – or perhaps because of – the enormous prevalence of framing research, the term ‘framing’ has itself managed to escape precise and consistent definition both conceptually and methodologically, and the literature is full of critical reviews that call for some kind of continuity (D’Angelo, 2002; Entman, 1991, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Matthes & Kohring, 2008; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Scheufele, 1999, 2004, to name a selection).

We believe that the study of the persuasive nature of media texts has the potential to contribute to the development of an integrated social psychology of the media.

However, at present, the methodological shortcomings of much of the framing literature are a concern, and – without wishing to add to the current confusion in the field – we are in the process of developing our own methodology, Media Framing Analysis (MFA), which we have already applied to certain topics in health psychology such as older mothers (Shaw & Giles, 2009) and voluntary childlessness (Giles, Shaw & Morgan, submitted).

Below, we outline some of the key concepts behind framing, how they apply to the psychological study of media, and the core components of our model of framing. We then consider some of the limitations of the current literature on framing by reference to several recent studies.

*Framing: brief history of the concept*

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Reviews of the framing literature in communication articles usually begin with Goffman's (1974) concept of the different types of 'frame' that define social situations. In the social sciences more broadly, research on framing has evolved for several decades without ever establishing any clear methodological principles (Entman, 1993; Reese, 2007; Scheufele, 1999), so that large-scale quantitative content analyses of simple units and complex microanalyses of discourse have been grouped together under the same technique. There has been debate as to whether framing actually constitutes so much as a paradigm, let alone a theory (D'Angelo, 2002), so this lack of methodology is hardly surprising.

Much framing research in communication has tended to refer back to the work of Entman (1991, 1993), one of the earliest authors to present a systematic methodology for conducting framing research. Entman analysed the coverage in a range of US media (newspapers, magazines and network TV news bulletins) of two air disasters in the 1980s to demonstrate pro-US bias in the leading news sources' coverage of international affairs. In one incident, a South Korean passenger airliner was shot down by a Soviet fighter plane; in the other, an Iranian passenger plane was shot down by a US navy ship.

Entman's methodology incorporated quantitative content analysis of attributions (e.g., whether interviewees categorised the incident as 'deliberate' or 'a mistake'), along with qualitative analyses that interpreted the texts in a broader discursive context. While the US-provoked incident was framed as part of a technical discourse (with much discussion of the chain of command, 'what went wrong', and so on), the Soviet-

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provoked incident was framed as part of a moral discourse, with the blame pinned ultimately on 'Moscow' rather than the military personnel themselves.

Meanwhile, in psychology, the concepts of 'message frames' and 'framing effects' continue to inform a considerable amount of research. Most of this derives from the work of Tversky and Kahneman (1981) on the design of negative and positive message frames and their impact on experimental participants' decision-making processes. This paradigm has been applied widely in studies of health psychology (e.g., Ferguson & Gallagher, 2007), economic psychology (Gonzalez, Dana, Koshino & Just, 2005), as well as social psychology in general (Ames & Iyengar, 2005).

Most of the psychological research on message framing has been conducted without any reference to the media at all. At best, media are treated as an incidental element in the way, for example, health messages become framed in society in general. This lack of specification, whereby framing is typically operationalised as a set of researcher-designed vignettes for experimental manipulation, means that the research has high internal validity but low ecological validity, since there is no consideration of when and how (and from where) individuals might encounter such 'messages' outside the laboratory.

By contrast, in communication and other social sciences, framing research has primarily focused on the texts themselves, largely ignoring their reception by individual media users. In this sense, framing research shares some of the characteristics of critical discourse analysis (CDA), which through its history has largely been concerned with textual analysis (Fairclough, 2003). However, recently a Final version of published paper: Giles, D.C. & Shaw, R.L. (2009). The psychology of news influence and development of Media Framing Analysis. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 3(4), 375-393.

key figure in CDA, Teun van Dijk (2006, p.360) has advocated the importance of “the cognitive dimension” in studying the processes of manipulation, an unusual step in a field largely dedicated to avoiding ‘cognitivism’ at all costs. Meanwhile, some communication scholars have begun to explore media framing effects in the laboratory with carefully manipulated yet authentic materials (Hwang et al., 2007).

Nevertheless, with the field in such theoretical disarray, there is still scope for further methodological development at the textual analysis level itself. One of the first tasks is to arrive at an agreed definition of the units of analysis.

*What is a ‘frame’?*

One place to begin searching for the psychological roots of framing might be the early experimental work on text comprehension (Bransford & Johnson, 1972; Anderson & Pichert, 1978), which demonstrated the importance of prior knowledge, shared understandings between writers and readers, and different reader perspectives. Of most relevance here is the work of Bransford and Johnson (1972) who presented participants with a series of apparently unrelated sentences and found that their recall was well below chance level. Recall was considerably improved, however, when the same sets of sentences were presented to different participants along with additional contextual information such as a picture or a title.

These findings echo the definition of framing offered by Gamson & Modigliani (1989, p.3): the frame is part of a general media “package” that provides “a central organising idea...for making sense of relevant events”. If the text is less important

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than the frame placed around it then, it would seem to suggest that the key elements of any framing study would constitute headlines, captions, photographs, and agenda issues such as the juxtaposition of stories, running order of bulletins, and so on.

Nevertheless, media texts are rarely as disjointed as the materials used in the Bransford and Johnson studies, and a full framing analysis must involve a good deal of textual analysis as well. Here there is clear potential for an integration of the framing literature with critical discourse analysis, and van Dijk's (2006, p. 365) description of textual manipulation sounds rather like some communication scholars' description of frames: "by printing part of the text in a salient position...the expression of semantic macrostructures, or topics, which organise local semantic structures".

Entman's seminal (1991, 1993) study of the Korean and Iranian plane disasters was one of the first attempts to integrate all these features into some kind of coherent methodology. He concluded that the frame was defined by three or four important characteristics. First is the process of 'problem definition', whereby the frame selects a particular angle (e.g., a violent incident as "another case of sectarian violence"). Secondly, the frame makes salient a particular causal interpretation (the blame lies with a particular organisation). Thirdly, moral evaluation can usually be identified, and on occasions it is also possible to identify a 'treatment recommendation'. Other key processes involved in the framing process include reader identification (with people in the stories), categorisation (for example, use of adjectives), and generalisation (to other news stories, long-standing debates, and so on).

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While Entman's approach has been enormously influential in framing research, other authors have attempted to broaden the concept of framing to incorporate the cognitive processing of the audience. Indeed, Scheufele (1999) identified a typology of framing research, where he distinguished between those studies that treat framing as a dependent or independent variable (a rather loose classification given that the literature includes many qualitative studies!) and between those – like Entman's – that focus on frames presented by the media and those who focus on frames used by the audience in interpreting media texts. Among the latter approach can be found the work of Price, Tewksbury and Powers (1997), who identified interpretative frames drawn on by readers of news stories, irrespective of the framing processes used by the media.

It is not surprising that the field is characterised by such disunity and confusion when frames can exist as cognitive representations in media users' minds, as well as organisational principles in media. The distinction is further complicated by the suggestion of various media researchers that frames might exist as cognitive structures within the minds of media personnel themselves (editors, reporters, and so on) (see Scheufele, 1999). This confusion mirrors that of the social representations field, which has long straddled a conceptual gulf between the production of representations (cultural objects, such as media), and the reception and circulation of representations. In much social representations research, the latter assumption is usually prevalent, along with a further assumption that representations are fundamentally cognitive in nature: "the epistemological frame of social cognition" (Potter & Edwards, 1999, p. 451).

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One solution to this fundamental problem may be the work on “media templates”, developed by Kitzinger (2000). These are shared understandings of key media events (such as “Watergate”, “Vietnam”, or “the James Bulger murder”) that are used – by media and their audiences – to make sense of subsequent events. Media templates emerge over time through repeated coverage, and subsequent commentary, around these events, shaping public memories and generating associations with subsequent events. After a period they begin to act as reference points for both news sources and their audiences. The distinction between news frames and audience frames is thereby avoided.

Although Scheufele (2004) and other authors advocate integrating “media frames” with “audience frames”, it is our belief that these represent radically different concepts that require different theoretical and methodological approaches. A psychological study of media influence must eventually engage with the processes by which readers and viewers make sense of media frames through their own interpretative work, as in Kitzinger’s (2000, 2004) research on media coverage of child abuse, where audiences are treated as co-constructors of the ‘templates’ that are used by audiences and media sources alike.

While the concept of framing itself is still under debate, further attempts to systematically analyse media frames themselves have been proposed in recent years (e.g., Choi & Lee, 2006; Matthes & Kohring, 2008). In the next section we examine some of the limitations behind these approaches.

*Limitations of theoretical and methodological concepts of framing*

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Successive authors have attempted to refine the analytic procedures necessary for the identification and interpretation of frames. Some approaches are linguistic in nature, focusing on the textual elements of news stories, such as Pan and Kosicki's (1993) model that recommended analysing texts along four 'structural dimensions' – syntactical structure (e.g., the traditional 'pyramid' structure of news reports), script structure (predictable sequences of events), thematic structure and rhetorical structure.

While these dimensions are undoubtedly important, other authors have argued that it is possible to break media material down into more basic elements. A recent procedure outlined by Matthes and Kohring (2008) uses cluster analysis to identify frames based on thematic similarity. They analysed 1000 articles drawn from several years' coverage of biotechnology topics in the *New York Times* and coded each article according to Entman's (1993) criteria. The topic ('problem solution') of each article was coded according to an existing set of codes covering biotechnology; an 'actor' was identified for each article; attribution was coded in terms of implied responsibility; and an overall measure of evaluation (whether the story was critical or not) stood for the criterion of 'treatment recommendations'.

Choi and Lee (2006), in their methodology for studying framing in TV news, advocate using the *scene* as the basic unit of analysis, identifiable as "a complete unit of narration" (p. 704). Again, Entman's (1993) criteria were used to code the scenes. The "valence" of each scene was then recorded (as positive, negative or neutral). They found that the valence of the story could then be calculated from the relative

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valence of the overall scenes in the story, although the position of the scenes (beginning, middle, end) was not related to overall story valence.

While these authors are to be credited for trying to develop framing methodology further, there are a number of important aspects of the process that are in danger of being lost through further reduction of media material to basic, usually countable, elements. While Matthes and Kohring (2008, p. 274) may be concerned with “increased precision in measurement”, other authors have urged against further reductionism, arguing that simple attempts to quantify media material are in danger of missing the subtleties of framing (Van Gorp, 2007).

It may not always be possible – or desirable – to evaluate each article or scene as ‘positive’ or ‘negative’: in our own research on older mothers (Shaw & Giles, 2009), several articles that appeared broadly sympathetic towards older mothers contained caveats that hinted at underlying disapproval, such as an older mother reminiscing about her experiences adding “my goodness, though, it was tough”. Thus a positively-framed article can contain negative elements.

Another problem that has been identified with some framing analyses is that the coding and interpretation processes themselves are subject to the same selective bias as the media material they are examining. As Tankard (2001, p.89) puts it, “coming up with the names for frames itself involves a kind of framing”. Matthes and Kohring (2008) rightly criticise the vagueness of numerous studies that fail to specify their criteria for the identification of frames, where a specific frame simply “emerges” through analysis, or “is found”. These arguments echo those found in, for instance, Final version of published paper: Giles, D.C. & Shaw, R.L. (2009). The psychology of news influence and development of Media Framing Analysis. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 3(4), 375-393.

grounded theory research, where the issue of whether categories emerge through analysis (implying an underlying ‘reality’ that needs to be excavated by the analyst), or are the subjective outcome of the hermeneutic process of interpretation, has led to diversification in research traditions (Charmaz, 2000).

In their own research, Matthes and Kohring attempted to resolve this paradox of “researcher frames” (p. 260) by using a set of established codes for their thematic analysis of newspaper articles on biotechnology – a set derived from existing materials used in biotechnology research. With more idiosyncratic topics, however, it is hard to see how the problem of researcher frames can be avoided. Indeed, taking a social constructionist position, one could extend Tankard’s (2001, p.89) quote further and argue that all research involves some element of framing. Scientists necessarily give selective attention to some phenomena at the expense of others: the difference is that the spotlight is, or should be, guided by theory rather than agenda.

Ultimately, methods for analysing framing are as good as the purpose for which they are fit. For example, Carlyle, Slater and Chakroff (2008)’s study of the framing of intimate partner violence (IPV) sought to demonstrate the framing processes of the media by analogy with ‘epidemiological’ data (i.e., crime survey records of IPV). This allowed them to contrast the media and epidemiological data in such a way as to indicate the reality distortion in media coverage – so that, for instance, while crime survey data indicated that alcohol was a factor in two thirds of all recorded cases of IPV, only six per cent of the newspaper and TV stories mentioned alcohol.

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Such analyses are impossible to conduct without highly specified coding criteria that can match the data produced by other quantitative methods. Nevertheless, we may not always want to reduce media material in this way. Many framing studies are conducted in order to elucidate the subtle processes of selection and bias in media, or to illustrate (often using a small data set) a particular framing phenomenon that has been identified in existing research, or is consistent with a particular theoretical position.

Van Gorp (2007), in an extensive review of various framing models and methods, advocates a mixed methodological approach, in which quantitative techniques are used to examine overall trends in large data sets, and qualitative techniques are applied to smaller data sets to examine more subtle framing effects, paying attention to cultural influences. In his words (pp. 72-73),

...the purpose of a frame analysis is to assess not so much the impact of loose elements in a text but the impact of the implicitly present cultural phenomena conveyed by all these elements as a whole and to relate them to the dynamic processes in which social reality is constructed.

This statement concurs with our own position on framing, which we will go on to elaborate in the next section.

### **A methodological framework for Media Framing Analysis (MFA)**

Our model of framing is intended, like other recent advances in the field, to build on the work of Entman (1991, 1993) and Van Gorp (2007), but to consider further

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limitations of existing framing methods and to import techniques from other fields of research, particularly those using qualitative methods. Our MFA technique has already been applied – in somewhat embryonic form – to UK news coverage of older mothers (Shaw & Giles, 2009) and voluntary childlessness (Giles, Shaw & Morgan, submitted).

Following Van Gorp (2007), we believe that it is essential to incorporate a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods in a framing analysis. We conceive MFA as comprising two broad analyses: a (largely quantitative) *macroanalysis* of a broad data set, sampled carefully and purposefully from a specified range of media sources; and a qualitative *microanalysis* of selected materials, perhaps to illustrate one of the broader framing processes identified in the macroanalysis.

*Initial data collection.* The macroanalysis will clearly be guided by some substantive concern that has prompted the research question in the first place. We might begin, for instance, by exploring the media coverage of knife crime in London during 2008, in which case we would need to devise a search strategy, typically guided by code words such as ‘knife’, ‘stab/bing’, and so on. We might conduct a search of newspapers (through a database such as LexisNexis), online content (e.g., the BBC, ITV, Sky websites), and televised news bulletins throughout the year.

*Screening.* The first macroanalytic step is to screen the selected material for relevance, rather as in a systematic literature review. Here, the problem of “researcher frames” becomes evident for the first time (given that, of course, ‘knife crime’ itself is agreed to be a valid category), but it would be unparsimonious to attempt to

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incorporate all material extracted through the search into a meaningful analysis. For instance, the search might have identified dozens of reviews of a film set in London in which a character is stabbed. While a *discourse analysis* of knife crime might wish to incorporate such extraneous material, it would not be appropriate for MFA, where the focus is specifically on the framing processes of the news media. (Nevertheless, distinguishing between different genres of newspaper content is a problematic area that we will return to shortly.)

*Identifying story.* The second step is to relate each unit in the analysis –newspaper and website articles, or TV news stories – to a specific event that can be regarded as the source or origin of the story. This step is roughly similar to Entman’s (1993) ‘problem definition’ criterion, except that our analysis is based on the idea that it is possible to identify a distinctive “news peg” for each story (Cooper & Yukimara, 2002). This may be a specific incident, like a murder, or a press release from an organisation, a statement by a senior figure, or the publication of a piece of research.

For some articles, such as opinion columns, news pegs may be simply *other news*, which is why it is important to break the data set down according to the nature of the analytic units. In Matthes and Kohring’s (2008) study, the unit of analysis was regarded as the article itself. However, on a topic that has generated much discussion and commentary in the media, the identification of a single generic article may obscure significant differences between media outputs. For instance, Entman’s (1993) criterion of ‘generalisation’ will be highly salient for a commentary article, or large feature, but harder to identify in a short news report.

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In our study of a week's coverage of older mothers in the UK press (Shaw & Giles, 2009), we were able to identify two clear news pegs for the news reports on Monday and Wednesday – in each case, the presentation of specific research paper at a US conference on fertility. However the feature articles in Tuesday and Wednesday's papers referred more generally to 'research published this week'. We were also able to identify a *secondary news peg* for several articles, in this case an announcement by the government's "fertility watchdog" that had been made several weeks earlier. However, following Entman (1993), this is probably better regarded as an instance of 'generalisation' than 'problem definition': a news peg primed by another news peg.

We are unaware of any standard typology for breaking down a newspaper into meaningful categories of article, and in the framing literature this is hardly ever done. But a key step in our analytic procedure is to break the data set down into categories of article in order to examine potential differences in framing between a front page news item, with its apparent neutral observer perspective, and a highly opinionated column where the author may be given free range to fulminate.

Possible categories for newspaper articles include: front page item, short news report, extended news report, short feature, long feature, editorial column, and opinion column (typically with author's name and perhaps picture where the headline would be in a news story or feature). With websites and TV news bulletins, it is likely that fewer categories would be necessary, although they could be coded with reference to their hierarchical position (in running order of a bulletin, or in the number of links away from a website home page).

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*Identifying character.* The analysis of characters in news stories is an important feature of MFA. It is part of Entman's (1991) method that has been somewhat neglected in subsequent framing research, but it occupies a central role in MFA because of our interest in applying framing to topics of interest to psychologists. Research on text comprehension has shown that readers often use the protagonists of stories as an organisational system, so that novel information is often interpreted according to existing character knowledge (Zwaan, 1998).

Further, characters' spatial locations and psychological experiences are also incorporated into readers' understandings of simple, artificially constructed texts (O'Neill & Shultis, 2007; Rapp, Klug & Taylor, 2006). The influence of protagonists and other story characters is likely to be greater still if the character is a well-known figure, such as a leading politician or a celebrity with whom the audience has already established a parasocial relationship and can draw on pre-existing knowledge or belief in order to impute motives and emotional responses to those characters (Giles, 2002).

At the macroanalytic level, this analytic step would consist largely of identifying key individuals who recur frequently in the articles. In our study of older mothers (Shaw & Giles, 2009), there was an identifiable 'dramatis personae' that inhabited the majority of stories – such as the scientists who conducted the research, the government's fertility spokesman, and a woman called Patti Farrant, typically referred to as 'Britain's oldest mother' who was cited on several occasions, mainly in feature articles, and even tracked to her home town of Lewes in one story for a progress update.

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At the microanalytic level, character analysis can be much more elaborate. In one study (Giles & Shaw, 2008) we demonstrated that it was possible to break a short article from British tabloid newspaper *The Sun* into a surprisingly long ‘dramatis personae’ simply by listing each individual or group referred to in the story. The text (figure 1) consists of an apparently simple account of an unfortunate incident: a woman is badly injured when a flying brick smashes into her car windscreen. We identified the following cast list:

- Bricks yobbo/lunatic/thug
- Rosemary Govett
- Six consultants (doctors)
- Cops/police
- Rosemary’s daughter
- Rosemary’s sons
- Medics
- John (Rosemary’s ‘former husband’)

Much of the framing work in this article surrounds the imputed identity of the brick thrower, who is the archetypal villain of the piece (Propp 1928/1968), variously referred to as a yobbo, a lunatic and a thug, and, implicitly, a male (*‘he must be caught’*). Further, the identity of the writer as ‘crime reporter’ immediately frames the story as a crime rather than a medical drama, despite the early focus of the story on the ‘human interest’ details of surgery, and the dramatic presence of consultants and medics.

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*Reader identification.* Specifically, Entman (1991) asked the question: who is the audience invited to identify with? In the older mothers study, we attempted to code each article in terms of identification. The important materials here may well be peripheral textual items such as headlines, pictures and picture captions; or the selection of quoted individuals in the text. In the feature on Patti Farrant's home town, the subject of the story was not quoted at all: instead the article was constructed around quotation from fellow Lewes residents, some of whom displayed strikingly pejorative views towards older parents. It was clear that the (*Daily Express*) audience was being invited to identify with these residents.

In the *Sun* article in figure 1, the identification work is done through the frequent mentions to Rosemary's family. Both her sons are mentioned in the short piece, even though the elder son was not involved in the incident, and the only quotation in the article comes from her ex-husband John (who was likewise not involved). Although one would expect news sources to invite identification with crime victims rather than perpetrators, here the nature of the identification is of Rosemary as mother and the welfare of the various people she is responsible for. The inclusion of a picture enhances the identification in this particular instance.

*Narrative form.* While treatment of character in MFA is clearly understood in terms of its narrative elements, it is also recommended that part of any framing analysis explores the narrative structure and form of articles, particularly feature articles and longer news items on websites and TV bulletins. Much of the framing work is done through narrative conventions: for instance, in much of the early MMR coverage in Final version of published paper: Giles, D.C. & Shaw, R.L. (2009). The psychology of news influence and development of Media Framing Analysis. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 3(4), 375-393.

the British press, feature articles on the author of the original *Lancet* article, Andrew Wakefield, drew on classic imagery of the struggling scientist desperately trying to convince a cynical world of his new discovery (Shaw, 2005). Elsewhere, Corner (2009) has written about the use of the 'fairytale factor' in news, whereby stories become "dramatic playoffs of...desire, fear and uncertainty" (p.145).

In longer feature articles more generally, especially those containing extensive interview material, we would expect to be able to identify low points or problems, turning points, causal inferences and other elements typical of most narrative forms (Murray, 2008). These features may not occur in short reports, which tend to follow the traditional 'pyramid' of classic journalism (Ytreberg, 2001), although increasingly TV news bulletins are demonstrating more complex narrative structures (Thornborrow & Fitzgerald, 2004; Choi & Lee, 2006).

*Analysis of language categories.* This analytic stage is probably the loosest in our conception of MFA thus far, largely because the way language is analysed will depend largely on the particular research question under investigation, and on the size of the data set. With a large data set, at the macroanalytic stage, it is unlikely that researchers could be expected to do much more than simple analyses of content. At microanalytic level, all manner of textual analytic options are available, including discourse analysis and membership category analysis (see Shaw & Giles, 2009). It is also possible that a microanalysis of language categories could provide the basis for a further macroanalysis; to ascertain, for example, the prevalence of particular linguistic constructions in the wider data set.

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*Generalisation.* Taken directly from Entman (1991), this final step in MFA requires analysis of the way that a specific article, or cluster of articles, may be linked – either explicitly or implicitly – with an ongoing phenomenon. The main task for the analyst here is to separate the news peg, or problem definition, from the broader frame. Is there anything intrinsic in the news peg that links the story to a wider phenomenon, or is the link made *intertextually*? And, what is the function of the link?

This analytic step links to Kitzinger's (2000) idea of 'media templates', which are long-running stories that have been given an almost mythical status by both media sources and their audiences. Media templates are typically key events, such as "Watergate" or "Vietnam" which are then referenced with regard to subsequent events, offering explanatory power to those new events. For instance, news reports have often queried whether the US-led conflict with Iraq might be "another Vietnam", assuming that readers or listeners share the same understanding of what "Vietnam" has come to represent.

By making these generalisations, in single articles, media templates begin gradually to emerge over time. This process may be regarded as the key to how media influence develops.

### *Conclusion*

Media Framing Analysis has been developed in order to better understand the influence of news media in contemporary culture. We have imported theory and method from communication research in order to try and establish the (social) Final version of published paper: Giles, D.C. & Shaw, R.L. (2009). The psychology of news influence and development of Media Framing Analysis. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 3(4), 375-393.

psychological processes through which mediated ideas and characterisations can take root in everyday discourse. We have tried to accomplish this by drawing on the most successful elements in the existing framing literature, focusing on what is central to social psychology – understanding how mediated news functions within the social world – and also by drawing on ideas from qualitative methodology in general to develop a systematic and epistemologically sound approach to framing research itself.

We have outlined MFA here as a series of steps that might be performed by a researcher wishing to paint a broad picture of the framing processes of a specified phenomenon. We hope that we have created a framework for analysis that is flexible enough for a number of different research questions of interest to social psychologists, but not too broad as to be indistinguishable from any of the other recent methodological recommendations for framing work.

Two important points need to be considered in relation to the future of framing research. The first concerns the future of news itself. Many media scholars have already abandoned the traditional study of newspapers and magazines to explore the fascinating way that news stories evolve online, often in highly unconventional settings. For example, Allan (2006) describes the piecemeal fashion in which online eyewitness accounts of the South East Asian earthquake of 2004 built up in the form of blogs and weblinks until one site received 100,000 hits.

While the online news and blogging phenomena have great interest, they have not come close to replacing traditional newspaper and broadcast bulletin formats for the population at large, so studying these sources remains an important task. In the UK in  
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particular, the tabloid press remains hugely influential, not only on the general public but on other media sources as well.

The second point concerns the reception of news frames by the public. We have talked at times here about the distinction – perhaps artificial – made between ‘media frames’ and ‘audience frames’, whereby some researchers study framing by analysing news texts and others by interviewing audiences. To the former, frames are textual (cultural) phenomena; to the latter, they are cognitive or discursive constructs, existing in either the mind(s) or talk of the public. Other approaches, such as Kitzinger’s (2000, 2004) media templates, or discursive psychology, would prefer to break down this distinction by seeing media and their audiences as joint producers of meaning and understanding. Media templates, or discourses, are shared cultural material that both news sources and audiences draw on to explain events.

We would argue that a media template, or discourse, has to *start* somewhere. While news sources would like to claim that they merely offer a window on to the world, it is perhaps more realistic to regard them as ultimately the origins of frames and templates. Ultimately, media influence may be well be understood as the process by which the frame – and eventually the template – works its way from the media source into the discourse of the audience. What framing analysis offers us is the way in which this process operates.

The next step is to examine reception processes in the light media framing analysis.

We would like to suggest that the narrative form, and particularly the character work,

of articles and bulletins would be a good place to start from. Readers’ and viewers’

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engagement with news material will be closely related to these narrative techniques, particularly the treatment of character, and a psychological explanation of media influence could take these processes as a main focus in future empirical work.

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Figure 1. *The Sun*, 29/11/03

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Target of lunatic . . . Rosemary's Peugeot

# BRICKS YOBBO MAIMS A MUM Hit in her car

By IAN HEPBURN, Crime Reporter

**A MUM of three will have to have her face rebuilt after a maniac hurled a brick through her car windscreen.**

Rosemary Govett, 41, narrowly escaped death when the missile fractured her skull.

She may still lose the sight of an eye, doctors warned last night – as **SIX** consultants planned how to carry out her plastic surgery.

Her Peugeot 406 – in which her two youngest children were passengers – crashed into a garden.

The youngsters escaped injury – and helped save their mum's life, cops said.

Her daughter, 11, ran to a house in Bethersden, Kent, to raise the alarm. And her son, 13, stayed with her until medics arrived.

Rosemary, who also has a son, 18, was stable in intensive care last night.

Her former husband John said: "At least she's still here with us.

"I'm so proud of the kids. God knows how it has affected them –



Victim . . . Rosemary

seeing her with these terrible injuries."

Cops warned last night that this is the **THIRD** time in ten days that the mindless thug has hurled a brick through the windscreen of a vehicle – on the same stretch of road.

Police said: "He must be caught before someone is killed."

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