Media Framing and Intercultural Communication: a Critical Review of Studies on Framing of Migration

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines how the framing theory and media frames can be used in intercultural communication. If the process of framing is defined as the selection of some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in communicating, then it can be assumed that media frames play an important role in intercultural communication. Drawing from this, it is important to ask whether media frames can provide a plausible tool not only to describe the media coverage of various cultures, but also to set this coverage towards the desirable direction. In other words, knowing how media frames work, can we produce media coverage that instead of fostering conflict and antagonism would support cooperation and solidarity among various groups of society? To answer this question, the article focuses on the studies on migration discourses, as an example of intercultural communication.

KEYWORDS

Intercultural communication – framing – media frames – media – immigration – discourse

1. Introduction

Not only are the mass media the result of a particular culture, they also create it and shape it. There is no doubt that what we learn about the world – taking local or global perspective – we learn it mainly from the media. It is the media that set social representations – "a system of common values, ideas and practices that enable people to understand each other and communicate about similar issues" (Howarth, 2011, p. 153). This applies among other things to our knowledge and understanding of other cultures. As Denis McQuail reminds us, drawing on Harold Lasswell's and Charles Wright's previous findings, among the media's main functions are the transmission of the cultural heritage and the correlation of the parts of the society in responding to its environment (McQuail, 2010, p. 98). Assuming that the role of the media is to foster social integration and cooperation, it is important how the media depict minority cultures. As Europe has observed what one *New York Times* journalist called "the greatest immigration crisis in the continent's recent history" (Nordland, 2015: A6), nation states and their societies must prepare themselves for the mass arrival of foreigners.

The aim of this paper is to provide the theoretical background and research perspectives for future studies of how media frames can enter the complex process of intercultural communication. I am especially interested in answering the question whether media frames can provide a plausible tool not only for describing the media coverage of various cultures, but also for setting this coverage towards the desirable direction. In other words, knowing how media frames work, can we produce media

coverage that, instead of fostering conflict and antagonism, would support coopera-
tion and solidarity among various groups of society? In this sense this study con-
tributes to the research on peace journalism (Lynch, McGoldrick, 2005).

To answer this question, I assess examples of intercultural communication by
conducting an interpretive review of previous studies on immigration discourses.
Here I follow the poststructuralist approach to intercultural communication as a phe-
nomenon involving "those who identify themselves as distinct from one another in
cultural terms" (Collier and Thomas, 1988). Such an approach focuses on migrant
situations where newcomers negotiate their place and identity within host commu-
nity. Intercultural communication involving newcomers and host community may
take the form of dialogue or confrontation, as "the hosts do not necessarily need to
hear the voices of the newcomers, but the newcomers do need to be heard and ac-
cepted to be members of the society" (Noels et al., 2012, p. 56).

In the article's first section, I explain how culture impacts the media and the
communication process. Having defined the role of culture in the mass communica-
tion, I then analyse the ability of mass media to foster intercultural communication.
Section two is devoted to the framing theory and the process of creating media
frames. There I provide basic definitions of both terms, as well as provide the typology
of frames. In the third section, I confront media frames and intercultural communi-
cation, stressing the three main frames used in media coverage of immigration. In the
concluding section, I sum up the findings and try to answer the question how media
frames can be used in the process of intercultural communication.

2. Intercultural communication

The role of culture in the communication process has been widely discussed. In social
sciences, it is possible to distinguish three basic categories in the definition of culture.
The first – the "ideal" – maintains that culture is a state of human perfection which
manifests itself in universal values. The second category perceives culture as "intellec-
tual and imaginative" work that is recorded on various carriers. According to the third
category, culture describes a "particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings
and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour"
(Williams, 1961, p. 57). Without a doubt, the third category is the most common –
both in academic and popular discourses. We can thus assume that culture combines
human behaviour, tradition, law and religion that are characteristic for a given group
of people, let it be an entire nation or an ethnic group. Moreover, such understanding
of culture in its popular/common-sense form can be used to divide members of com-
munities into "us" and "them" (Anderson, 2006, p. 201). Communication studies
scholar Anastacia Kurylo rightly observes that the term culture "is often assumed to
refer to nationality. Additionally, you may think of culture as also referencing ethnicity,
race, age, and gender because they are the most visibly salient categories you notice
in other people when you see them for the first time" (Kurylo, 2013, p. 4).

What is the relation of culture to the process of communication? If communica-
tion can be understood as "the practice of producing meanings, and the ways in which
systems of meaning are negotiated by participants in a culture", then culture is "the

totality of communication practices and systems of meaning" (Schirato, Yell, 2000, p. 1). In other words, communication is both a process in which messages are transmitted and distributed, and a consequence of a particular culture. Communication derives from culture and strengthens it, as its main function is the control of distance and people (Carey, 1992, p. 15). To sum up, communication and culture are not separate entities but exist with each other through a dynamic relationship. "There is no communication without culture and no culture without communication", observes Douglas Kellner (1995, p. 35).

Since communication is a product of one culture, how does it carry messages belonging to another? There are several types of intercultural communication, of which three are of the cardinal importance. One is cross-cultural communication, which means the communication of various groups inside one national culture. They can use different languages and share different values but still they belong to one national community. Another type is international communication that can be defined as a communication between nation states. Finally, there is intercultural communication – a communication that includes various national and ethnic groups (Ratajczak, 2012, p. 16). For this research it can be assumed that "intercultural communication occurs whenever a person from one culture sends a message to be processed by a person from a different culture" (Samovar et al., 2015, p. 7).

Intercultural communication can be analysed from a person-to-person perspective, but here I would like to focus on the role of the mass media in that process. As various studies have proved, media play one of the crucial roles in our understanding of different cultures. Since most people live in ethnically and/or culturally homogenous communities (Rapport, 2014, p. 233), their only chance to learn something about other cultures is through media outlets. "Various international influences reach, for example, through the mass media, even the most remote village communities and influence their feeling, thinking and acting" – state Helen Spencer-Oatey and Helga Kotthoff (2007, p. 1). In this sense, the media broaden our knowledge about foreign cultures, "opening us to the world". By broadcasting a foreign TV series or movie, the media teach their audiences about foreign customs, traditions, history etc. At the same time, the media can play an important role in explaining the host culture to new incomers, for example immigrants and refugees.

Globalisation is another important factor in the process of intercultural communication. Not only has it made the exchange of various cultures and ideas possible on an unprecedented scale, but also it has made the communication process more mediated. Instead of face-to-face, people communicate with each other via media. Thus, what they think and believe about others often results from what they receive from the media. It means that, on one hand, globalisation reinforces intercultural communication while, on the other, depriving it of important elements. "Over time," write Bruce Barnett and Terence Lee,

"With information exchange among people from different cultural groups, one potential consequence of globalisation is cultural homogenization, the convergence of the indigenous cultures of the world into a universal culture" (Barnett and Lee, 2003, p. 269).

Thus, the media can help various foreign and host groups integrate within their

community. However, the media can also strengthen the existing stereotypes – both negative and positive – which later transpire from the media to intercultural communication on a personal effect (Keshishian, 2004, p. 230).

3. Media frames – what are they?

There are a number of definitions of media frames. It is hardly surprising, considering the fact that in his *Frame Analysis,* Erving Goffman delivers no clear explanation of frames and framing. Instead, the American sociologist introduces the idea of a "primary framework" which – as he points out – "is one that is seen as rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful" (Goffman, 1986, p. 21). In other words, primary frameworks "categorise our experiences into meaningful events" (Haslett, 2012, p. 238). Even though they may vary in the degree of organisation, they still allow their users to "locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms". Primary frameworks exist independently from other frameworks, regardless of social, cultural or political conditions. They are thus "anchored in the real world, at least from the point of view of the individual's organisation of experience" (Turner, 2013, p. 665).

According to Goffman, a primary framework can be divided into two sub-frames: natural and social. The former describes occurrences perceived as undirected, unanimated – in other words – perceived as "purely physical". It means that such a frame carries neither negative nor positive emotions. Its main goal is not to opinionate but to interpret the physical world (body, ecology, natural events etc.). On the other hand, social frameworks "provide background understanding for events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being the human being" (Goffman, 1986, p. 22). Unlike the natural framework, the social framework is flexible; it can evolve, change, or even disappear – depending on various external factors, such as culture, politics, and religion. Closing his remarks on frameworks, Goffman concludes that "we tend to perceive events in terms of primary frameworks, and the type of framework we employ provides a way of describing the event to which it is applied" (Goffman, 1986, p. 24).

But what exactly do frames and framing stand for when it comes to media analysis? Describing his idea of frameworks, Goffman often reaches for the metaphor of music and theatre that makes his narration more entertaining but falls short of clarity. As Robert Entman rightly points out, "nowhere is there a general statement of framing theory that shows exactly how frames become embedded within and make themselves manifest in a text, or how framing influences thinking" (Entman, 1993, p. 51). Fortunately, in his short essay, Entman provides definitions of frames and framing that have been commonly accepted by media studies researchers (Jörg, 2009, p. 349-367). According to the author, framing means selecting

> "Some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/ or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

Thus, media frames have four key functions: they define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements, and suggest remedies. It is important, however, to underline that within one text there may be several frames. Similarly, one frame may not perform all the four functions.

Following Entman, it can be assumed that each frame has at least four locations in the communication process: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Generally speaking, the communicator – in this case the journalist – selects which aspects of a given topic should be highlighted and which should be marginalised. This decision then transpires into the text, which – in consequence – contains keywords, phrases or images supporting the frame[1]. The receiver may or may not accept the media frame; also, he or she may interpret the media frame differently than the communicator's intention. The culture permeates all the locations. As Entman states – supporting Goffman's thesis – the culture is

> "The stock of commonly invoked frames; in fact, culture might be defined as the empirically demonstrable set of common frames exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping" (Entman, 1993, p. 53).

Media frames can be divided into generic or issue-specific. The former "transcend thematic limitations and can be identified in relation to different topics, some even over time and in different cultural contexts" (de Vreese, 2005, p. 54). According to Judith S. Trent and her research team, generic frames include episodic framing – used as event-based news reports – and thematic framing, providing a broader perspective by placing a problem in a wider context (Trent et al., 2011, p. 138). According to Holli A. Semetko and Patti M. Valkenburg (2000), there are five generic news frames that media organisations use the most frequently. The two scholars name them as the conflict frame, human-interest frame, economic consequence frame, morality frame, and responsibility frame. Other scholars have expanded that list. For example, Lene Aarøe (2017, p. 640) writes about societal trends frame and issue-oriented frame. All of them can be employed in the process of intercultural communication. Certainly, among generic frames, there can be included distrust towards "others".

Issue-specific frames, on the other hand, are pertinent only to certain topics or events. In other words, they may (but may not) lack deeper historical or social contexts as they focus on one specific issue only. For example, issue-specific frames shape the media coverage of healthcare or labour unrests. Issue-specific frames are also employed in the process of intercultural communication since it involves a number of detailed subjects, such as the perception of the "other" as a potential enemy or a friend, depending on the situation.

If generic frames are used to describe intercultural communication at its macro-level, issue-specific frames can be found at its micro level, i.e. at numerous debates that altogether comprise intercultural communication.

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[1] The process of news selection and its framing is much more sophisticated and influenced by various factors (Entman, Matthes and Pellicano, 2009, p. 175-190).

4. How do media frames work and influence our opinion?

Although it remains still unclear how media influence the receivers' thinking, media frames do play an important role in our understanding of the world (McQuail, 1994, p. 327). Depending on which frames dominate the media discourse, they may strengthen the receiver's position, weaken it or alter completely. According to Aarøe (2011, p. 207), "frames can affect citizens' opinions on a diverse range of issues, but also (…) some frames have a stronger effect on public opinion than others. This thesis finds support in political psychology, as Murray Edelman observes:

> "The character, causes, and consequences of any phenomenon become radically different as changes are made in what is prominently displayed, what is repressed and especially in how observations are classified" (Edelman, 1993, p. 232).

Most sociologists agree that the way people perceive the reality depends on various factors. One of them is the mass media. Audiences rely on "a version of reality built from personal experience, interaction with peers, and interpreted selections from the mass media" (Neuman et al., 1992, p. 120). Drawing from this thesis, William A. Gamson argues that frames are built on three levels: cultural, personal, and integrated. The last includes media discourses (Gamson, 1992, p. 129). Due to this complicated process of frame building, how final frames impact their receivers depends on all three levels. In other words, if the structure of media discourses corresponds with personal believes and expectations, then the influence of media frames is the greatest. Consequently, if at any level there are differences between the media outlet and the receiver, media frames may be discarded or misunderstood. Repeating after Baldwin Van Gorp (2007, p. 65), it can be stated that

> "The frame package recalls a schema on the basis of which the receiver fills in the other reasoning devices that are not explicitly incorporated in the message. Frames are tied in with shared cultural phenomena, and because of cultural resonances and narrative fidelity, it can be expected that media content evokes a schema that is in line with the frame."

Studies have also proved that certain frames may influence the receiver more than others (e.g. Iyengar, 1991; Nelson et al. 2005; Zaller, 1992). For example – as Nelson et al., who researched on the media framing of civil liberties, have shown – if a journalist presents the activity of a radical organisation through the free speech frame, there is a greater chance that receivers will show understanding for the organisation. Similarly, if the public order frame is employed, then more receivers will oppose the organisation's radical activity. (Nelson et al., 2005). Still other studies point out that media visual framing exerts greater impact than traditional textual framing. This applies especially to the new media discourses, such as memes, that rely more on the picture than on the text (Callaghan, 2005, p. 180). According to Gamson et al., the contemporary multimodal structure of the media allows the receivers to absorb the message at various levels, including textual, visual and even musical levels. (Gam-

son et al., 1992b, p. 374). The process of media convergence also influences the perception of frames, as

> "Analyses concerning the social, political or cultural implications of public discourse cannot ignore the palette of networked services and modal repertoires that are employed by broadcasting media, public agencies and civic actors in order to gain a voice" (Pentzold, Sommer, Meier and Fraas, 2016, p. 1).

But how exactly does framing work? Most scholars compare framing to another theory explaining how media exert their influence on the receivers, namely the agenda-setting. To put it simply, according to the agenda-setting theory, issues and ideas that the mass media highlight are then reflected in audiences' reactions, such as voting. McCombs and Shaw, who first formulated this thesis in 1972, concluded their research, pointing out that

> "There is a strong relationship between the emphasis placed on issues by the media (that is, the media agenda) and voters' own judgements about the salience and importance of campaign issues (that is, the public agenda)" (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009, p. 31).

There can be distinguished two levels of the agenda-setting. The first explains how object salience moves from the mass media to the public. It is the process

> "Of the mass media presenting certain issues frequently and prominently with the result that large segments of the public come to perceive those issues as more important than others... the more coverage an issues receives, the more important it is to people" (Coleman et al., 2009, p. 147).

The second level agenda concentrates on the attributes and properties of an object. This is why many scholars consider framing as the second level of the agenda-setting. There are, however, some major differences between both theories and processes that suggest treating them separately. Still, the agenda-setting can be regarded as a provider of the structure and language to describe the process of framing.

In order to examine media effects, Dietram Scheufele (1999, p. 103-122) developed a process model of framing. According to this model, the process of media framing can be divided into frame building and frame setting. The former explains how journalists construct a frame. The question why one frame is chosen instead of others remains unanswered since the number of factors influencing a journalist's decision is infinite. Scholars, however, suggest that these factors can be divided into three sources: journalist-centred influences, external sources of influences, and the third source which includes such factors as political orientation of the medium (Shoemaker, Reese, 1996). According to Scheufele, frames derive from such inputs as organisational pressures, ideologies and attitudes. In other words, frames are designed mainly by elites: "Frames suggested by interest groups or political actors as sound bites are

adopted by journalists and incorporated in their coverage of an issue or event" (Scheufele, 1999, p. 116). This thesis is additionally supported by Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model that rests of five filters (ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, and anti-communism and fear). Apart from journalists' own or their employer's political sympathies, class solidarity and the receivers' expectations can play an important role too.

The second level of framing is called the frame setting. Scholars agree that two elements that play a major role in the process of framing are salience of frames and their perceived importance. During this process, attribute salience is transmitted from the media to the receivers. In other words,

> "Frames influence opinions by stressing specific values, facts, and other considerations, endowing them with greater apparent relevance to the issues than they might appear to have under an alternative frame" (Nelson et al., 1997, p. 569).

What should here be remembered is the difference between perceived importance and salience of frames. Repeating after Scheufele (1999, p. 116), it can be stated that the way people regard a certain issue derives from the media frames they are most exposed to. In other words, the more easily accessible are frames, the greater their effect. Although it is difficult to precisely evaluate the role perceived importance in the process of frame building, Scheufele suggests that it accounts for "major proportions of the variance in framing effects" (Scheufele, 1999, p. 117).

Two other elements must be considered when it comes to the process of frame building and frame setting. One is called "individual-level effects of framing". It remains unknown whether audiences adopt media frames or media frames only strengthen those individual frames that already exist. Some scholars suggest that media frames first and foremost impact the importance assigned by receivers to the ways of how an issue is framed. The other element Scheufele calls "journalists as audiences". It has already been mentioned that news people are susceptible to various external factors, including their political opinions and the (real or perceived) interests of their media outlet's owner. According to Fishman, another factor that influences journalists is a "news wave", meaning that journalists are prone to employ in their reporting the same frames as they have observed in other media (Fishman, 1980).

5. Frames and intercultural communication

Having defined intercultural communication and media framing, we can now attempt to figure out how these two concepts may work together. The media can serve as a pro-change force but they can also sustain the status quo. For example, in their *Manufacturing consent*, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988, p. 1) claim that in liberal democracies, the media represent the interests of the ruling elite, and as such deliver only propaganda aiming at maintaining existing conditions. Some other scholars have proposed a similar thesis as well. Putting aside this dilemma, we can repeat after Lasswell that one of the main functions of the mass media is cultural transmis-

sion. It means that media perform their teaching function by communicating norms, rules and values of a society (Steinberg, 1995, p. 130). In the normative model, the media should facilitate cooperation and solidarity within a society. Since more and more often contemporary societies consist of various ethnic and national minority groups, the media's function should secure their peaceful coexistence with the majority. In other words, the media should combat racism, xenophobia and chauvinism – a goal that can be found in various documents, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination or the EU law on combating racism and xenophobia (Martinez et al., 2013, 242). Cultural transmission has become especially important since the beginning of the current immigration crisis that has observed hundreds of thousands of people from the Middle East and Africa trying to access Europe. To illustrate the scale of the phenomenon it is enough to provide some statistics: in 2015 the number of people applying for asylum in the European Union reached 1.26 million. Moreover, in the years 2015-2017 over 12.5 thousand people lost their lives while migrating to Europe (EU Migrant Crisis, 2017).

Media frames as defined above, correspond with key concepts used in poststructuralist intercultural communication theory. For example, "positions of experiences", which states that all interpretations depend on individual experiences, refers to what media scholars indicate as a relation between media frames and individual frames. An even more direct reference to framing theory can be found in the concept of "positioning", which – in a general overview – can be regarded as synonymous to framing itself. The process of framing is based on "cultural presuppositions", which – according to Iben Jensen – refers to "knowledge, experience, feelings and opinions we have towards categories of people that we do not regard as members of the cultural communities that we identify ourselves with" (Jensen, 2004, p. 86). In other words, the way that intercultural communication is framed results, among other factors, from the way people, including journalists, perceive foreign cultures and foreigners themselves, what they know (or believe to know) about them, which stereotypes are popular etc. Frames, which the media employ, mirror cultural knowledge. According to Rivenburgh (2011, p. 706), "media frames that reflect cultural common sense, values, or ideology are both instinctually employed by journalists and easily accepted by the public". A similar concept is "cultural self-perception", which defines the identity of the majority and at the same time shapes its perception of minorities. Finally, of crucial meaning is "cultural fix points". According to Jensen, this concept "requires that both actors identify with this topic, and that they position themselves in a discussion" (Jensen, 2004, p. 86). Topics highlighted by the media can be important for both: the majority and minority, as well as they can evoke either positive or negative reactions. Such topics may include religion, morality, social behaviour etc. For grasping media framing, it is thus important to understand which of their aspects are selected during the process of media framing, and which are turned down.

Immigration and immigrants provide a plausible example to test how media framing facilitates or halts intercultural dialogue. According to the studies cited by Rodney Benson (2013), the contemporary Western media use 10 main frames to portray immigrants. The first three frames – global economy, humanitarian crisis, and racism/xenophobia – depict immigrants as victims. Another three portray immi-

grants as heroes who successfully brave various problems. These frames are: cultural diversity, integration, and a good worker. Finally, the last four frames present immigrants as a threat. These frames are: jobs, public order, fiscal, and the national cohesion (Benson, 2013, p. 8). Even though the contemporary mainstream media in the United States and Western Europe seem to have adopted a more pro-immigration stance than in the past (Benson, 2013, p. 2-3), it is wise to repeat that even positive frames may achieve a goal contrary to the expected one. Rodney Benson, who compiled current media frames on immigration, rightly observes that

> "The immigration lawyers who promote 'victim' coverage and the reporters who follow these leads do not perceive themselves as promoting anti-immigration attitudes, although it is possible that some readers predisposed to such attitudes will find evidence in such coverage to reinforce their worldviews" (Benson, 2013, p.7).

For example, a news message that intends to promote cultural diversity by presenting immigrants and their foreign culture may cause anxiety among the audiences, as people still tend to perceive diversity as a threat rather than a chance (Moy and Johnson, 2015, p. 1322).

The 10 aforementioned frames can be grouped into three main categories, which correspond with the idea of generic frames: economy frame, social frame, and political (security) frame. The first category includes such frames as global economy, a good worker, fiscal, and jobs. The second category includes racism/xenophobia, cultural diversity, and national cohesion. Finally, the third category comprises humanitarian crisis, integration, and public order. We can thus assume that all the frames can communicate positive and negative messages. For example, the usage of the humanitarian crisis frame can prompt people to have more empathy for refugees, but it can also make people worry about their own well-being and stability as each humanitarian crisis results from political upheaval. Similarly, integration, when analysed from political perspective, presents both: positive results (assimilation) and negative results (failure of integration).

The economic frame has been the most widely used generic frame in any immigration discourse in Western media (Semetko et al., 2000, p. 96). Yet it is still unclear how it affects the receivers. For example, according to the research conducted by Ivy A.M. Cargile and others, news messages that underline immigration's negative impact on the economy of the host country do not have any direct influence on the audience. On the other hand, news messages framing immigration as a positive force in the local work market make the receivers more susceptible to changing their negative opinions (Cargile, 2014, p. 52). However, the researchers themselves admit that various external factors might have influenced their study findings. Among these factors are one's political sympathies, his or her current economic situation, or even religion. Unsurprisingly, there are studies that suggest that the media's extended usage of the economic frame (whether positive or negative) often brings negative consequences. For example, Marisa Abrajano and Zoltan Hajnal, who analysed immigration news stories in the "New York Times" between 1980 and 2011, came to the conclusion that

using the economic frame had raised the paper's readers' concerns about immigration as a whole (Graber and Dunaway, 2015). Their research showed that the increased number of the daily's immigration stories with economic frame and the rise in anti-immigration notions among Americans, including the "New York Times" readers correlated to a high degree. Such a trend occurred even though the readers of the "New York Times" belong to the most socially liberal group in the American society and as such represent a more pro-immigration opinions than the rest.

Research conducted by Chris Hayes and his group proves that the negative economic frame has noticeable influence upon general audience. In conclusions they state that

> "The negative economic frame is quite effective, particularly among independents, Republicans, and those lower in education, while the positive economic frame resonates only with Democrats. Providing more positive information about the economic benefits of legalization does little to move opinions beyond the control group" (Hayes et al., 2016, p. 80-81).

Unlike the economic frame that may have limited impact on certain social-economic groups, the social frame resounds among each and every group of the society. As Cargile et al. maintain, "social/symbolic considerations tend to relate to more gut-level perceptions" (Cargile et al., 2014, p. 45). Even though racism and xenophobia are widely frowned upon – at least officially – by the majority of modern societies, recent opinion polls in the US and EU have proved that such concepts as multiculturalism are more and more questioned, even among people of liberal beliefs (Wilkinson, 2015). As a result, the national cohesion frame, which depicts immigration as a threat to national unity and social harmony, has been widely popular among the mainstream media. Ferruh Yilmaz observes that this frame was first introduced to media discourse in the 1980s and has gained on strength ever since. In his opinion, although the mainstream media oppose far-right parties and ideologies, they still need to take into consideration the opinions prevalent among their audiences: "When the political winds turned against diversity politics in favour of national cohesion," writes the professor of Tulane University, "the media's coverage also shifted" (Yilmaz, 2016, p. 191).

Some scholars indicate that social frames are especially powerful in homogenous (in terms of ethnicity) societies. Regardless of the media intentions, highlighting cultural differences may cause negative reactions among the audiences. It must be remembered that even those who have pro-immigration opinions, reluctantly look at changes of their social reality, expecting that the incomers will integrate or – better – assimilate – as quickly as possible. Very few people in the receiving majority would welcome the potential modification of their lifestyle that, in their view, the mass arrival of foreigners demands. As Joe R. Feagin points out,

> "The idea of assimilation is usually accompanied by an explicit or implicit insistence on one-way adaptation of immigrants, especially immigrants of colour, to the white-dominated culture and racial hierarchy" (Feagin, 2013, p. 117).

The political frame is built on, and takes from, the two previous frames: economic and social. In the time when everything may carry political implications, it is not difficult to link economic and social issues concerning immigration with current politics. Among various frames comprising this category, national security seems to be the leading one. Let us repeat after Zygmunt Bauman that contemporary governments, whose very existence is being questioned,

"Have no choice but to 'carefully select' targets which they can (conceivably) overpower and against which they can aim their rhetorical salvos and flex their muscles while being heard and seen to be doing so by their grateful subjects" (Bauman, 2004, p. 56).

This is why some scholars speak about the global securitization of migration. For example, Tony Payan, who conducted research on the US-Mexico border conflicts, points out that

"Political discourse is being captured by a new rhetoric that necessarily leads to quasi-militarized techniques of responding to border issues. (…) There is a strong tendency to conflate the issues by labelling every one of them a matter of national security" (Payan, 2016, p. 199).

It must be remembered, however, that apart from national security the political frame concerns various other issues. For example, framing immigration as a humanitarian crisis may evoke certain political associations; as such crises involve the question of political responsibility for the current situation. Again, perceiving immigration as a result of political instability results in rising anxiety among the host society. Even though most people sympathise with the victims of humanitarian crises, they would rather keep the problem as far away from them as possible. They fear that the mass arrival of refugees would stretch the resources of the local authorities, which already seem to be lacking in "normal" times – let alone in crises. Besides, the humanitarian crisis frame usually involves depiction of refugees/immigrants as "destructive, lawless, foreign, and unrooted" (Coutin and Chock, 1997, p. 127). Moreover, scholars highlight that the humanitarian crisis frame is widely used by media to present events that take place in poor and distant countries. As Robert Vandervoordt points out, "the humanitarian crisis therefore could only acquire some limited attention in quite particular media, rather than evoking uniform reactions across the political and journalistic spectrum of media organizations" (Vandervoordt, 2016, p. 98). It is therefore possible to assume that the media frame has a limited influence on the receiver.

Further, within the political frame, there is the democracy sub-frame. Not only does it apply to the very system of government but also to state institutions. As mentioned before, highlighting cultural differences between incomers and hosts – regardless of intentions – may build various stereotypes, such as the inability of immigrants to understand democratic institutions. This narration was widely used by the US press in the early 20th century, when people from Eastern and Southern Europe began to dominate among the immigration masses. For example, Elke Murdock points out that

the more "culturally distant" are immigrants, the greater worry of the host society about the preservation of their democratic institutions since "people fear their norms and values are being taken over, and their national identity is at stake" (Murdock, 2016, p. 327). As Ruth Rubio-Marin observes, those who oppose cultural diversity "argue that preserving a certain degree of commonness and homogeneity to enable understanding, cohesion and solidarity is essential for the functioning of social and liberal democracies and recommend more selective inclusion" (Rubio-Marin, 2000, p. 9).

6. Conclusions

Having introduced the basic media frames and their potential to affect audiences, it is possible to draw some conclusions as to their usefulness in fostering social cohesion among members of various cultures. The examples provided above indicate that certain media frames may have a greater impact on audiences than others. Especially those frames that correspond with audiences' opinions on certain migration-related issues or are accepted as "common sense" frames, such as economic consequence frame or national security frame, may affect audiences to a large degree. Even though the process of media framing is influenced by various external factors, it is still possible to single out the most important ones. First of all, it is a medium policy which depends on both: the owner's interests and the expectations of the receivers. Another factor is the political and cultural environment in which a media outlet functions (Herman and Chomsky, 1994, p. 3-14). Although most mainstream media represent the centrist, liberal position on various subjects, including immigration, they still take into consideration the opinions of their receivers. In other words, if the society becomes less enthusiastic about cultural diversity, so do the mainstream mass media. For example, let us think about the U.S. media behaviour after the 9/11 attacks. Responding to the rise of patriotism and nationalism among receivers, the majority of media employed the language and narration that corresponded with those feelings. As a result, U.S. media largely supported the American military invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq (see DiMaggio, 2009, p. 113-132).

During the process of media framing it is being decided which frames will become dominant in media-constructed intercultural communication. When it comes to such topics as immigration and refugees, there can be distinguished the three main generic frames: economic, social, and political. Each of them can be positive or negative and is divided into issue-specific frames. Using various studies, it is possible to predict how certain frames are received by audiences. For example, the economic frame – whether used in a negative or positive meaning – affects mostly those people whose economic situation is volatile. They are more susceptible to news messages that depict foreigners as a working force and – regardless of the original intention – consider this frame as negative. On the other hand, the national cohesion and national security frames appeal to all social classes. The "securitisation" of immigration, which has been in progress for some time now, has influenced the media as well. The cultural diversity frame that used to be regarded as a positive frame has recently evolved into a negative one, in which foreign religion, customs, and traditions are presented and received as a threat to national unity.

How then can media frames be used in intercultural communication? If one of the main functions of the media is fostering social cohesion, which is especially important in societies that are becoming more and more heterogeneous, then the process of framing should avoid employing frames that provoke uncertainty and hostility. Such negative frames would include depicting immigrants or refugees as a homogenous mass, since it naturally evokes the feeling of threat among audiences. Instead – as both scholars and journalists admit – the media should choose individual frames. One needs only to think about the famous picture of Alan Kurdi – a three-year-old Syrian refugee boy who drowned attempting to reach the European shore – to realise how powerful the individual frame can be. Another frame useful for intercultural communication is the integration frame. Even though cultural diversity is currently widely perceived as an idea ambiguous at best, highlighting positive aspects of integration can build broader acceptation for incomers. In order to secure framing that would foster intercultural dialogue, various steps should be taken. For example, a United Nations Alliance of Civilizations' study proposes the exchange of opinions between media around the world, more thorough education of journalists, and the establishment of regular "media watches" (Howard and Idriss, 2006, p. 13). In this sense, media should perform peace journalism, encouraging, just like intercultural communication, constructive dialogue, and providing the same space for all parties in the conflict (Roy and Shaw, 2016, pp. 1-14).

Even though the division into "us" and "others" seems to be the prevailing media frame, the news media can still produce positive coverage of foreign cultures. First of all, it is wise to remember that the usage of thematic frames provides the necessary context, whereas episodic frames focus on a selected episode. By choosing the latter, the media inevitably risk that – regardless of their original intentions – the reception among audiences will be negative. For example, reporting extensively on terrorist attacks carried out by foreigners (or natives of foreign origin) in Europe and the US, turns the episodic frame of foreign terrorism into a generic frame that may soon dominate the entire intercultural media discourse. Second, since media frames are the strongest when they correspond with personal frames, intercultural communication should include motives and tropes that receivers are familiar with. For example, conservative host societies may feel more understanding for incomers (immigrants, refugees) if the media highlight their attachment to traditional values. Even though these values may differ, they still share a certain core – common for both groups. On the other hand, liberal societies should be more receptive to the democracy frame and cultural diversity frame since tolerance and the respect for minorities are the fundaments of each liberal democracy. Finally, due to the social media, other frames – marginalized by the mainstream media – have a chance to appear and secure position in the discourse. The social media and other alternative media may play an important role in the process of frame building, including framing of intercultural communication. They provide "people and governments with a powerful tool to construct their own messages, to set the media agenda, or to frame the news messages" (Chen, 2012, p. 6). On the one hand, new media are capable of fostering intercultural dialogue; on the other, however, they "tend to reflect the asymmetry of intercultural communication and inevitably lead to the problem of intercultural confrontation or conflict" (Chen, 2012, p. 6).

To conclude, media frames present a plausible tool not only to describe intercultural communication, but also to turn it into the desired direction. Knowing how the process of frame building works and which frames may have the greatest impact on the audiences, it is possible to significantly eradicate the negative and subjective coverage of foreign cultures, giving space to a more culturally and ethnically inclusive reporting. Only then can intercultural communication facilitate a real dialogue instead of a set of monologues.

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