

What is Framing?

“First, our perception of the world is deformed, incomplete. Then our memory is selective. Finally, writing transforms.”

Background

The media influence and shape the way we view the world around us. It is about a how journalist present the news as well as how we, the media consumers, interpret it. Framing is a tool that is utilized to develop that meaning. The frame can either provoke us to think or it could reinforce stereotypes or preconceived notions we already have.

Framing as defined by Entman & Rojecki’s **The Black Image in the White Mind** “highlight and link data selectively to tell more or less coherent stories that define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies.

Why is it important?

The media influence and provide us with “mental shortcuts” to processing information around specific issues. Meaning, “frames” provide us with the context of an issue, but that context may or may not reflect the reality of that issue. Since media play an integral role in shaping our understanding of an issue, how that issue is presented to us is equally as important. How an issue is talked about and explained is based upon how it is “framed”. The way an issue is defined suggests the solution that is needed.

How to Frame an Issue?

Think of your issue as a picture. What do you want people to see? In most cases, there is already a predominate frame on your issue. Presenting an alternative frame entails presenting a different explanation of a problem and proposing a different solution.

A “Frame” answers the following 4 questions:

What is the problem? What is the cause?

What are the solutions? What action steps need to be taken?

How is framing used in media?

Example: Affirmative Action

	Predominate Frame	Alternate Frame
What is the problem?	Affirmative Action is “reverse discrimination”	Affirmative action exists because discrimination still exists
What is the cause?	Preferential treatment of people of color regardless of qualification.	Institutional racism which places people of color and women at a disadvantage
What is the solution?	Get rid of affirmative action	Continue affirmative action
Action Steps	Legislation to stop reverse discrimination.	Legislation to eliminate barriers for people of color and women.

It’s important to note that the predominate frame (PR) used by media highlighted the idea of “reverse discrimination” or “black vs. white”. The alternate frame (AR) presented the reality that affirmative action benefited people beyond race, for example women. In terms of the cause, PR places the blame on individuals where as the AR places blame on the institution.