

## **Transnational Comparative Framing: A Model for an Emerging Framing Approach**

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In light of continuing trends of globalization, media scholars are increasingly examining and comparing transnational issues. This study argues that although such research is timely and necessary, it requires a more structured approach. By analyzing existing cross-national framing studies, this study exposes gaps in the literature that a new model of approach proposed here could help fill. This transnational comparative framing model provides a framing pool for collecting generic, domestic, and issue-specific frames and proposes a three-dimensional framing matrix as a systematic framing codebook. Discussion of the model centers on its possible application to the analyzed cross-national framing studies to illustrate its ability to provide a more unified approach in this emerging area of research.

Recent critical events across the globe, including the tsunami and earthquakes in Japan and various protests in the Arab world, serve as reminders of how issues and events can connect societies and countries. Immediately following the natural disasters in Japan, global stocks fell and the world economy registered dips in numerous industries (Powell, 2011). Unrest in the Arab world brought spiking fuel prices and similarly affected some areas of the collective global stock market (Cummins & Sudeep, 2011).

Not surprisingly, news media worldwide—from CNN to Al Jazeera—covered these events extensively while various countries' citizens participated in discourse on these transnational topics via digital communication tools such as social network sites. As trends of globalization generate a multiplicity of transnational issues, the globalized news media and innovative communication technologies bring individuals from every corner of the world to the same village of dialogue. In other words, news media coverage of such issues helps form a global discursive community.

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Against the backdrop of globalization and the formation of a global discursive community, media studies on an international scale are timely and important. Scholars of transnational media now emphasize "global" journalism, which covers international events from a global perspective rather than providing only viewpoints aligned with the nation-state where the event has occurred or the reporting news organization is based (Beck, 2005; Berglez, 2008; Gurevitch & Levy, 1991; Reese, 2008). Other scholars, however, argue that globalization is a myth and that some invisible national borders separating human beings remain intact (Hafez, 2007). Citing factors such as culture and politics, these scholars argue that journalists localize or "domesticate" international news by tailoring it to their national audiences (Clausen, 2004; Lee, Chan, Pan, & So, 2002).

This tension between globalization and domestication has given transnational media research salience as a research agenda. Of the various approaches to transnational media research, news media framing is singularly compelling. Frames refer to "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (Reese, 2001, p. 11). A framing approach is particularly useful to transnational comparative media research because it explains the extent to which certain news frames are shared across national borders and the ways different countries' news media adopt such frames. Comparison of news media frames of transnational issues may also reveal which force—globalization or domestication—has more influence on news media's framing of a given issue.

Seeking a cohesive approach to conducting research in the comparative media studies field, this study proposes a transnational comparative framing model (TCFM) to address current concerns facing such research. The model is significant for several reasons. First, the application of framing research in the area of comparative media studies has not been systematically and theoretically examined. Discussions of how researchers have carried out comparative studies and how they should direct future research are mostly geared to the broader scholarship of political communication (e.g., Blumler, McLeod, & Rosengren, 1992; Esser & Pfetsch, 2004; Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990, 2004). Only a handful of studies specifically apply the comparative approach to the context of journalism or its practices at the empirical or theoretical level (e.g., Benson, 2006; Hallin, 2005; Hanitzsch, 2008, 2009). In this regard, this study is a starting point for discussing and developing a framing approach for comparing news media coverage at a transnational level.

Meanwhile, as in other areas of comparative media research where comparisons often rely on the availability of data or the investigators' network "without a great deal of thought about the consequences of such decisions for scientific inference" (Norris, 2009, p. 326), transnational framing studies may have been conducted for the sake of comparison, without elaboration of the reasons or need for such studies. This study thus is also important because it thoroughly explores the theoretical foundation of media framing theories and explains the rationale and applications of framing theories in comparative media studies. Moreover, development of a cohesive model is especially urgent because the lack of a systematic approach in this field makes it difficult to build on transnational comparative framing literature.

In view of the above reasons, as well as recent global events and emerging digital communication tools that make the globalization of news and information easier and more accessible, the model this

study presents is theoretically and methodologically important to the fields of comparative media studies and framing research. This study also calls for a more cohesive approach to transnational framing research and more cross-national studies centered on new media tools such as social network sites.

This study begins with a comprehensive theoretical discussion of media framing theories and their application to transnational media studies before moving on to the current state of transnational framing literature. We then lay out a new model of approach, elaborating systematic and concrete steps for conducting thorough and contributory transnational framing research. The explanation of the model centers on how it would apply to the existing transnational framing studies analyzed in this study. We conclude with further discussion of the model's implications and applications.

## **Theoretical Background**

### ***Media Framing Theory***

The primary theoretical underpinning of the TCFM that this study proposes is media framing theory, which is traceable to the seminal work of sociologist Erving Goffman (1974). Goffman first described frames as "schemata(s) of interpretation" that allow individuals "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" (p. 21) issues, events, and topics. Since this intellectual origin, media scholars applying the concept of framing to mass media research have developed and used a wealth of definitions and approaches (Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Reese, Gandy, & Grant, 2001).

Among others, a constructive, cultural approach to framing theory is especially helpful in conceptualizing transnational framing research. Whether a certain frame has a measureable effect on global or domestic audiences greatly depends on its resonance with the target audience's underlying cultural experiences. Journalists and other social actors usually frame issues by drawing upon culturally resonant concepts such as myths, narratives, and metaphors (Hertog & McLeod, 2001; Snow & Benford, 2005).

Nevertheless, the cultural boundaries around frames are neither given nor fixed. From a constructivist perspective, frames are the outcome of negotiating shared meanings (Gamson, 1992). Certain frames might work for audiences in certain times and spaces but not others. Media scholars suggest along these lines that frames serve to build "discursive communities" where "frames define the boundaries of the discourse concerning an issue and categorize the relevant actors based on some established scheme of social taxonomy" (Pan & Kosicki, 2001, p. 41). These discursive communities are historical and regional rather than constant. Social actors such as journalists negotiate with other players and redraw boundaries over time. In addition, frames are used to construct not only boundaries for certain issues but also interrelationships among social actors in discursive communities (Pan & Kosicki, 2001).

### **Globalization of Framing**

With the advent of globalization, an international discursive community has gradually taken shape. Citizens of the same global village share meanings attached to a variety of cross-national issues. For example, the framing of global warming used in *The New York Times* might work well to inform a Chinese citizen almost half a world away. Critical scholars, however, argue that the ideology and practices of neoliberalism—the set of national and international policies that result in commercial domination of all social affairs—drive media discourse or frames around the world for the benefit of corporate interests (McChesney, 2001). Whether the backdrop is globalization or worldwide neoliberalism, certain “generic frames” and “master frames” may be applicable across issues, arenas, and even national barriers (Benford & Snow, 2000; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992). As de Vreese, Peter, and Semetko (2001) indicate, more framing research is needed to elucidate the impact of macro-level principles across nations.

Despite the assertion of the potential cross-boundary applicability of some frames, studies have demonstrated that in many circumstances, distinctive cultural traditions, political positions, ideologies, and media systems lead journalists to prefer to resonate with their own national audience (e.g., Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad, 2000; Dai & Hyun, 2010; Kwon & Moon, 2009; Peng, 2008). Lee et al. (2002) and Clausen (2004) term this phenomenon “news domestication,” that is, the process of adapting international news to suit national audiences. Here, journalists tend to adopt different frames to form their respective discursive communities.

Given this context of the theoretical foundation of cultural framing and the tension between globalization and domestication, cross-national framing analysis is a compelling approach. To achieve substantial impact, this study therefore contends, such comparative research should first focus on truly transnational issues spurring social actors in different countries to share discourses as events unfold. This study defines transnational issues as issues that directly or indirectly affect every country under analysis. These countries should also be connected by, or interacting through, a shared issue or event.

In addition to focusing on transnational issues, transnational comparative framing research should explore certain central questions: What is the rationale for comparing multiple countries experiencing certain issues or events? What frames do the news media of different countries employ? How do the explored frames resonate with global discursive communities and/or respective national audiences? What factors drive differences in the ways distinct countries use certain frames?

The following section examines existing transnational comparative framing literature to explore whether these studies answer or attempt to answer the above questions, and what gaps a new model such as the one presented here should address.

### **The Current State of Literature**

A representative sample of recent literature is essential to provide context for transnational framing research. Noting a recent rise in the incorporation of comparative framing approaches as a means to better understand news media presentations of globalized issues, we used the Communication & Mass

Media Complete database to select all available peer-reviewed journal articles from the last decade (January 1, 2001, through December 31, 2010). The search engine, which produced a robust collection of mass media studies from 26 scholarly journals, is an important tool in the consideration of influential and widely read communication research. Searching for the keyword combinations "comparative" and "framing"/"frame," "transnational" and "framing"/"frame," and "cross-national" and "framing"/"frame," we retrieved a total of 30 articles that explicitly use the concept of framing in cross-national analysis of news coverage<sup>1</sup> (see Appendix).

We analyzed these articles, searching for basic components and rationales of transnational comparison. In each article we examined (1) whether the issue under analysis was a transnational one, (2) whether and how these studies addressed the rationales for studying transnational framing practices, and (3) how the research in these studies approached and applied framing theories.

### ***Issue under Analysis***

As the above theoretical discussion states, we suggest that transnational comparative framing studies should study transnational issues, that the studies should concern an issue that affects every country under analysis, and that the issue should also be the spur or focus of interactions between the countries. However, researchers found that while most of the sampled articles included multiple countries, more than half (16) did not focus on issues with transnational components. For instance, Kenix (2008) compared media framing of same-sex rights in the United States and New Zealand by analyzing two different legal debates in different time periods and contexts. While these issues are entirely worthy of examination, they do not permit analysis of shared meanings over the same issue between two nations. For a full-fledged transnational analysis, we recommend that researchers choose issues that contain a transnational component.

Four articles in the sample did not focus on issues that involved more than one country. For example, one study turned to newspaper coverage in the United States and China to probe the social construction of HIV/AIDS in a single country, China (Wu, 2006). Its findings were interesting and insightful, demonstrating how the two countries reported differently on China by focusing on HIV/AIDS. For a transnational comparison, however, the selected issue ideally affects all countries under analysis—in this case, both China and the United States.

### ***Rationale of Comparison***

Almost half of the articles (14) examined whether any generic frames were employed cross-nationally in media coverage. Some recurrent generic frames included *conflict*, *economic consequences*, and *human impact/interest*, *morality*, *attribution of responsibility*, etc. (de Vreese et al., 2001; Neuman et al., 1992; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Zhou, 2008). By identifying and comparing these generic frames, we were able to explore the globalized media practices.

Six studies asked whether any domestic factors drove the news media in different countries to use different framing strategies. The analysis identified four factors: *culture*, *ideology*, *political positions*,

and *media systems* (e.g., Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad, 2000; Dai & Hyun, 2010; Kwon & Moon, 2009; Lee & Kim, 2010; Peng, 2008). These four factors are discussed in detail in the proposed model.

The analysis demonstrates that most studies explored whether the media frames related to global discursive communities or targeted certain national audiences driven by the four factors. However, adopting a mix of framing approaches made these studies incoherent, as the next section illustrates.

### ***Framing Approach***

The sampled articles employed a variety of framing approaches, including framing functions (e.g., Good, 2008), media packages (e.g., Dai & Hyun, 2010), and critical discourse analysis (e.g., Mahony, 2010). Other studies approached media framing by analyzing mainly themes and subtopics (e.g., Kim, 2004; Kolmer & Semekto, 2009). As Reese (2001, 2007) argues, framing analyses, thematic analyses, and topical analyses are not one and the same. Framing analysis identifies patterns that endure over time, whereas thematic analysis describes themes as stances reported in certain stories. In many cases, researchers "substituted 'frames' for what would have been called 'topic' or 'theme'"; however, these latter do not "organize" and "structure" as frames do (Reese, 2007, p. 151).

### ***Summary of Analysis***

The analysis demonstrates that existing transnational comparative framing studies do not necessarily focus on transnational issues, which are critical to comparative research. Further, the lack of a consistent framing approach impedes deeper analysis of the literature. Little connects the current literature, apart from the use of framing analysis in general. Even then, framing is often loosely defined. Despite its limitations, the current literature does offer guiding examples for exploring application of generic frames to cross-national media coverage. Other studies helpfully elaborate on distinct domestic factors that could influence the framing processes in different regions.

A comparative framing model such as the one introduced in this study can meaningfully guide more structured and cohesive transnational comparative framing studies. Current transnational comparative framing research can benefit from a unified model of approach that can, at the very least, aid researchers in selecting issues or topics of comparison, actors for comparison, and frames to search for during analysis.

### ***New Modeling Approach***

Grounded in the theoretical foundation of media framing and drawing upon the merits and limitations of the existing literature, this study proposes a transnational comparative framing model (TCFM). The model aims to provide a consistent approach to examining transnational news media framing and suggests a combination of inductive and deductive approaches to exploring frames in transnational news media.

We also present a framing pool to help researchers identify any predetermined frames that may apply to various research topics. Notably, the pool and the model can be applied to multiple units of analysis, including newspaper articles, television and radio programs, blogs, micro-blogs (e.g., Twitter), other multimedia (e.g., YouTube), and social network sites (e.g., Facebook), most of which do not feature in current transnational comparative framing analyses.

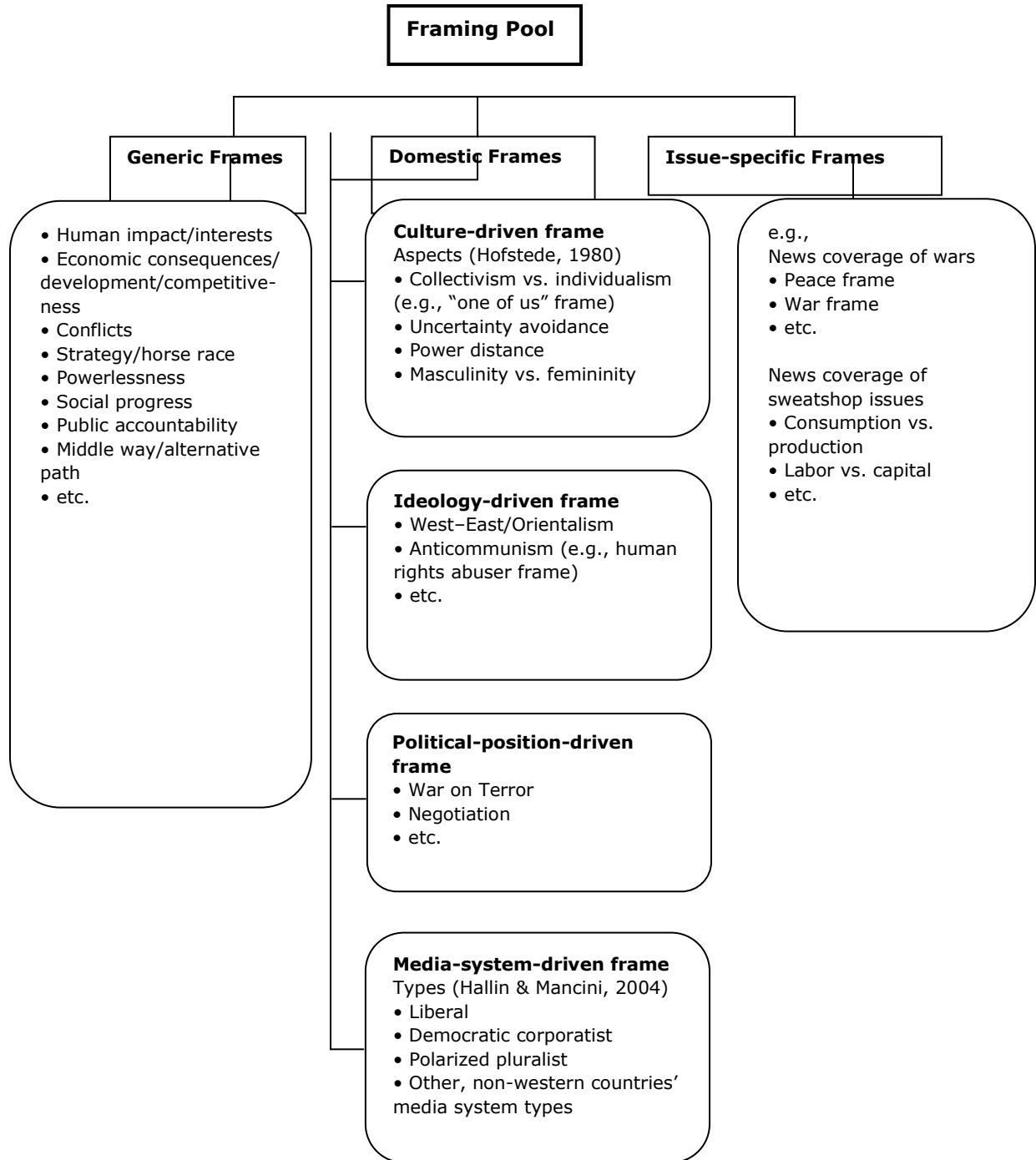
By consulting the framing pool researchers should sort out existing frames and identify other recurrent frames that the given study might analyze. The model proposes a three-dimensional framing matrix to further categorize the frames according to different dimensions. Future researchers employing the model should code the news articles from different countries to investigate whether news media in each country use the frames listed in the framing matrix. The model also suggests that researchers code the social players who participated in framing the issues. The following sections illustrate the proposed approach through discussion of the existing transnational comparative studies under analysis.

Drawing on the media framing literature, the TCFM provides a “framing pool” composed of various frames researchers can use to analyze any cross-national issue. There are three categories in the framing pool: (1) generic frames, (2) domestic frames, and (3) issue-specific frames (see Figure 1).

#### ***Framing Pool for the TCFM***

*Generic frames.* Influenced by globalization, researchers have hypothesized several generic media frames to apply across issues and regions. For example, scholars such as Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992) and Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) introduced a list of generic frames that were common in various news reports: *human impact/interest*, *conflict*, *attribution of responsibility*, *powerlessness*, *morality*, and *economic consequences*. Similarly, Nisbet (2010) offers a set of frames that frequently appear across science policy debates such as *social progress*, *economic development/competitiveness*, *morality/ethics*, and *scientific/technical uncertainty*.

Drawing on the existing literature, the TCFM also sorts out a list of generic frames for cross-national comparative studies, presented in Figure 1. In particular, frames such as *attribution of responsibility* and *morality* are excluded because the model applies Entman’s (1993) approach of framing functions as an analytical dimension to the analysis—an approach that covers the aspects of responsibility and morality. (We discuss the incorporation of framing functions below.) These generic frames are used to answer research questions about which frames resonate within the cross-national discursive community regarding a certain issue. Notably, some of the articles analyzed in the present study, such as Zhou (2008) and Dirikx and Gelders (2010), examined how different countries’ news coverage adopted these generic frames.





*Domestic frames.* As opposed to generic frames, domestic frames are used to examine the domestication of media framing. According to our analysis of current transnational framing studies, four domestic factors influence the framing process: culture, ideology, political positions, and media systems. Driven by these factors, news media in different countries may use distinctive frames to cover similar or identical issues.

Regarding the culture factor, Hofstede's (1980) proposes four cultural dimensions that can respectively be used to generate culture-specific, that is, domestic frames: collectivism vs. individualism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity vs. femininity. For example, one of the studies we analyzed, Kwon and Moon (2009), examined how the U.S. and South Korean news media respectively framed the Virginia Tech shooting case (the gunman was originally from South Korea). In particular, the study investigated how each country's news coverage reflected the cultural dimension of collectivism vs. individualism. The authors concluded that South Korean newspapers, unlike those in the United States, tended to frame the issue by describing the gunman as a member of the South Korean community. According to the TCFM, the author's identified frame—"one of us"—can be categorized as a culture-driven frame. This frame is applicable to South Korea, so the TCFM regards it as a domestic frame.

Ideologies are specific systems of ideas that different classes and social groups deploy to make sense of the world. Ideological differences among different countries could also generate domestic frames. For example, the ideology of "West-East" (e.g., Orientalism) can generate many domestic frames. Mahony (2010) found that in covering issues relating to terrorism and Islamic groups in Indonesia, the Australian media used an Orientalism-driven frame: Muslims as terrorists. In fact, many western countries' media use Orientalism-rendered frames in discussing issues related to Asian countries. Therefore, the ideology "Orientalism" is a factor that generates domestic frames for those western countries.

Whereas ideology refers to abstract and broad ideas and beliefs, political position usually refers to a nation's concrete policies and stances. With respect to political-position-driven frames, "War on Terror" is an example. In Dai and Hyun's (2010) article comparing how news media in the United States, China, and South Korea respectively framed North Korean nuclear tests, the authors found that the Associated Press connected "the nuclear test to the broader 'War on Terror' framework found frequently in US media" (p. 299). In other words, the U.S. political position influenced the media to use the "War on Terror" frame in covering many different issues. So, under the TCFM, "War on Terror" can be regarded as a particular U.S. domestic frame.

Researchers using the TCFM may also discover media-system-driven domestic frames. Hallin and Mancini (2004) distinguished three different models of media systems within the framework of western democracies: the liberal model, the democratic corporatist model, and the polarized pluralist model. Other media system models exist in other, non-western countries. To investigate how these different media systems could result in different domestic frames, Stromback and Luengo (2008) analyzed how news media in Sweden, where the democratic corporatist model prevails, and Spain, under the polarized pluralism model, respectively covered their national elections. Though the TCFM's criteria do not

categorize the topic researched in Stromback and Luengo's (2008) study—elections in respective countries—as a transnational issue, their results are helpful as an example of analysis of media-system-driven frames.

Figure 1 provides some examples of domestic frames rendered by each of these four factors. Here it is important to note that these domestic factors are not mutually exclusive. For example, ideology can be a factor that influences national politics. The purpose of listing these four domestic factors in the framing pool is simply to offer researchers four different perspectives for examining how countries frame issues differently.

*Issue-specific frames.* The last category in the framing pool is issue-specific frames. Regarding any particular issue, exploratory analysis of previous literature clues researchers in to the ways news media cover certain issues.

Two of the articles analyzed in the present study focused on the Iraq War, yet they used different analytical frameworks. Lee, Maslog, and Kim (2006) used two frames to analyze articles: peace and war. Kolmer and Semekto (2009) mainly focused on topics such as military actions and political aspects. Each article has its merits in comparative analysis. But in order to build a cohesive framing research literature, the TCFM suggests that researchers studying the same issue—war coverage, in this case—create an issue-specific framing pool that lists all the frames covering the issue. Using the same issue-specific frames to conduct comparative framing analysis, researchers can better contribute to the literature by demonstrating how different countries frame the same issue differently across various studies.

In sum, this framing pool is applicable to a breadth of transnational comparative framing studies and ultimately provides a more unified approach than has previously been employed. Additionally, it is important to note that the framing pool is open and accumulative. Future studies can and should contribute new frames to the framing pool under each of the provided categorizations, thereby building on existing approaches to transnational comparative framing.

### ***Three-Dimensional Framing Matrix***

The TCFM proposes a three-dimensional framing matrix to further categorize frames according to different dimensions. The matrix draws on two of the most-cited methodological approaches to framing, namely, framing functions and media packages (Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

Entman (1993) defines framing according to its four functions: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. Some empirical studies have used these four functions to examine media content (e.g., Good, 2008; Zhou & Moy, 2007). Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) "media package" approach—based on keywords, common language, metaphor, catchphrase, and other framing devices—has also been widely applied (Tankard, 2001). More recently, Van Gorp (2010) combined these two theorizations to construct a more holistic "framing package" approach relying on reasoning devices (functions) as well as framing devices. The TCFM also integrates these two approaches.

According to the "media package" approach, this framing matrix provides three dimensions to construct a package for each frame.

*Framing function.* One of the dimensions is framing functions. As discussed earlier, some scholars regard functional frames such as *morality* and *responsibility* as generic frames (e.g., Good, 2008; Kim, 2004; Liao, 2010). We contend that these framing functions—problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation—can actually serve as dimensions of any frame, be it generic, domestic, or issue-specific. In other words, framing functions included under a specific frame can generate different themes that refer to instances in certain stories, as opposed to frames concerning patterns that endure over time (Reese, 2001).

For example, Good (2008) analyzed how newspapers in the United States and Canada and major "international newspapers" framed the climate issue in 2007. The author's approach was to explore how these newspapers used different framing functions, such as the "nature of the problem," "cause," "consequence," and "solution," to cover the issue. Under each framing function, Good listed several topics. For example, under "nature of the problem," she listed "science," "economy," and "politics"; under "cause," she listed "greenhouse gas," "automobile," and "fossil fuel"; and under "solution," she listed "energy conservation," "alternative energy," and "renewable energy." Good treated each topic as a frame and then calculated the percentage of articles that fit in each frame.

The modeling approach we propose recommends a more systematic use of framing functions to conduct studies similar to Good's (2008). As Table 1 demonstrates, researchers might first list generic frames such as "economic consequences" and "public accountability," and/or issue-specific frames such as "scientific debate," and/or domestic frames, if any are present. They could then organize themes under each frame according to their respective framing functions. In other words, our model regards framing functions as a dimension through which researchers may approach frames. To be sure, depending on the research project, researchers need not necessarily fill in all the cells in the framing matrix; conversely, researchers can identify more than one theme for each cell. For example, under the frame "public accountability," Table 1 lists two suggested remedies.

By following this modeling approach, researchers not only contribute to the framing literature by examining different countries' uses of generic, domestic, and issue-specific frames, but might also investigate news articles' use of framing functions. In addition, the themes can serve as indicators by which researchers and/or coders identify the particular frame. For example, upon finding that a news article discusses how greenhouse gas causes climate change, a coder may determine that the article uses a "scientific debate" frame.

**Table 1. An Example of Analyzing "Framing Functions" in TCFM.**

Frame	Framing Functions			
	Define Problem	Diagnose Cause	Evaluate Morally	Suggest Remedy
Scientific debate	Article discusses climate change as an uncertain scientific problem.	Natural factors such as greenhouse gases cause climate change.		
Economic consequences	Article discusses climate change from the perspective of economic reasoning.			Economic measures should be taken to deal with climate change.
Public accountability		Anthropogenic factors such as humans' use of fossil fuel cause climate change.	Article morally judges the U.S. government's position on the Kyoto Protocol.	a. Humans should conserve energy or consider using alternative energies. b. Nations should work together to effect policies such as the Kyoto Protocol.

*Note: This table demonstrates how the TCFM analyzes framing functions based on its potential application to Good (2008).*

*Context.* The TCFM suggests another dimension through which to approach media framing: context. By examining the context in which an issue is framed, the model is able to explore whether the news media employ a global or domestic outlook. Chyi & McCombs (2004) propose a two-dimensional measurement scheme for media frames, one of the dimensions being space. They conceptualize five levels under the dimension of space, ranging from micro (individual) to macro (international). Similarly, the TCFM includes three levels under the dimension of context: individual, national, and global. Under the national level in particular, frames can be categorized into each specific nation under analysis. Frames collected earlier should be put into the corresponding level of context.

It is worth noting here that one frame does not necessarily correspond to only one level of context; rather, the arrangement depends on the media content analyzed for each study. For example, de Vreese et al. (2001) examined how newspapers of four nations—Denmark, Netherlands, Germany, and the UK—respectively framed the introduction of the common European currency, the euro. Using the approach suggested here, researchers could design a framing matrix such as Table 2, in which each frame is arranged under certain context(s). For example, the frame "economic consequence" could refer to the

new euro's economic consequences for individual citizens, for a particular nation, or in terms of the global economic situation.

**Table 2. Three-dimensional Framing Matrix.**

<b>Function Context</b>	<b>Frame</b>	<b>Define Problem</b>	<b>Diagnose Cause</b>	<b>Evaluate Morally</b>	<b>Suggest Remedy</b>	<b>Framing Devices</b>
<b>Individual</b>	Economic consequence					
<b>Nation A</b>	Economic consequence					
<b>Nation B</b>	Economic consequence					
<b>Global</b>	Economic consequence					
<b>Nation A</b>	Conflict					
<b>Nation B</b>	Conflict					
<b>Global</b>	Conflict					

To summarize the use of the three-dimensional framing matrix: Having read all the units of coding, researchers sort out the frames (generic, domestic, and issue-specific) and categorize the frames under different levels of context: individual, national (countries under analysis), and global. For each frame under a specific level of context, researchers then list the themes guided by framing functions. Further, researchers can make note of framing devices, such as common languages, catchphrases, and metaphors, that help identify each frame.

*Coding and analysis.* Using the framing matrix, researchers can code units of analysis (e.g., newspaper articles, radio and TV programs, blogs, microblogs, etc.) for frames according to indicators of themes and framing devices. For example, in the aforementioned study by Good (2008), researchers using the TCFM might identify one or two overarching frames for each newspaper article. Suppose the overarching frame "public accountability" is identified in one article. Researchers would then search the article for all themes (as defined by framing functions) that fall under this frame. Conversely, researchers might work backward using the TCFM. Again referring to Good's research, identification of the theme "natural factors such as greenhouse gas that cause climate change" would point to the overarching frame to which the theme belongs, "scientific debate." Researchers would then list other themes, if any, under the "scientific debate" frame.

After coding all units of analysis in a sample, researchers can conduct statistical tests (e.g., chi-square test of independence) to determine whether and how the countries under analysis differ significantly in their use of frames. If the TCFM is employed for a comparative sample, the reliability of the

statistical analysis increases because all units of analysis have been coded using the same model. Meanwhile, by investigating different types and dimensions of frames, researchers can discern whether news media in the compared countries frame specific subjects from a global or domestic perspective.

### ***Social Players***

In the process of building discursive communities, news media are not confined to framing the discursive boundaries of a certain issue but may also frame the social players involved in the issue and their interrelationships (Pan & Kosicki, 2001). The TCFM thus also recommends thorough examination of the social players or sources represented in media coverage.

Researchers must first identify all actors related to the issue. For example, while Davidson (2006) examined how the United States and France framed media mergers differently, he also explored news stories' uses of sources. For each nation, Davidson listed commercial sources (including merging companies and analysts), politicians/regulators, academics, journalists, interest groups, and members of the public. The TCFM recommends that researchers also include international-level sources such as officials of international organizations, if there are any.

Next, researchers should code how often these social players are cited. In particular, the TCFM recommends researchers code both "fact" and "point of view." This classification is important because "point of view" demonstrates more framing power than "fact," according to previous literature (e.g., Greenberg & Knight, 2004; Guo, Hsu, Holton, & Jeong, forthcoming). For example, Guo et al. (forthcoming), analyzing how Chinese and U.S. newspapers framed a sweatshop issue differently, found that the news stories quoted many factory workers, whose words were often presented to address the facts (e.g., background information on individual workers) rather than articulate their personal views. If a source is quoted as providing factual information, the source's information is thus coded as a "fact." By contrast, if the source communicates opinions and arguments, the provided information should be coded as a "point of view." The distinction implies the weight of each source in the news article.

In sum, the transnational comparative framing model we propose here suggests that researchers first consult the framing pool, which lists generic, domestic, and issue-specific frames, and then use the three-dimensional framing matrix as a codebook to guide their research. The model also recommends that researchers analyze the social players and/or sources represented in the news coverage.

### **Discussion**

This study presents the transnational comparative framing model to work toward a more unified approach for conducting comparative media studies concerning multiple nations. The growing trend of globalization has created an opportunity to revisit two important ways of approaching media studies: comparative research and framing. The model developed in this study offers a unified method of exploring media coverage at the intersection of the two. As the review of current research shows, transnational comparative framing studies in their current forms lack a disciplined, cohesive academic approach. This indicates a need for stronger methodologies that can not only advance theoretical and practical

explorations of transnational framing, but also provide a similar backdrop for all studies to be measured against. While the TCFM does not cover the full scope of possibilities for transnational framing approaches, it does lay a foundation for much-needed improvements on current methodological applications.

The presentation of this model is timely, given the continuing trends of globalization and their reflection in communication. Transnational issues such as the tsunami in Japan and the various protests in Arab world spark discussion among journalists, citizen journalists, and people at large around the globe via either globalized media or new technology tools such as blogs and social network sites. Beyond the seemingly global village of dialogue, however, little is known about the extent to which insights on specific issues differ from traditionally national or ethnocentric points of views. Existing transnational media studies, though illuminating, do not provide adequate information on the size and nature of the global discursive community that is taking shape. The model presented in this study focuses particularly on this global phenomenon, aiming to help researchers gather more data on this topic by using the model for further development and replication.

Guided by framing theories, the TCFM lays out systematic steps for researchers exploring transnational news coverage, suggesting a comprehensive research framework applicable to analysis of any globalized issues and media platforms. Further, this model serves as a call for more research to explore transnational framing practice through the digital media that continue to emerge as important platforms of news dissemination.

In addition, the TCFM contributes to theoretical and methodological development in the fields of framing research and comparative studies. Grounded in the comprehensive discussion of media framing theories and drawing upon the limitations and merits of existing transnational comparative framing studies, this model provides theoretical rationales and suggests systematic, concrete steps for conducting cross-national comparative research. By identifying and addressing what the transnational framing literature has so far neglected, the model contributes to the field in two aspects. First, the framing pool works to resolve problematic uses of framing, such as using the approach interchangeably with "labels" or simply categorizing a variety of perspectives into "themes" for the sake of classification even though the labels or themes do not relate to how the media made sense of issues (Reese, 2001, 2008). Second, the three-dimensional framing matrix enables identification of specific levels of each frame, which can be useful in further supporting the rationale behind bringing a comparative perspective to transnational framing studies. In particular, by examining generic versus domestic frames, and frames at a national versus global level, researchers can better understand whether news media of different countries stick to their national points of view or contribute to the global discursive community.

The TCFM represents an important effort to develop a cohesive discursive community for academic comparative media studies, a substantial research area on an international scale. It is particularly important for media scholars in different countries and regions to share research results in ways that make sense and can be easily compared and replicated. In this regard, our exploratory model is the first to call on researchers to use a common framework to research transnational media coverage. The current model is not fixed, but rather serves as a starting point to guide future research as it searches for an element of cohesion.

**Notes**

1. The 30 articles came from 14 journals. More than half ( $n = 18$ ) came from three sources: the *International Communication Gazette*, the *International Journal of Press/Politics*, and the *Asian Journal of Communication*. Almost two thirds ( $n = 19$ ) of the articles analyzed media coverage in the United States. Other prominently featured countries included the United Kingdom ( $n = 9$ ), Germany ( $n = 6$ ), China ( $n = 5$ ), Sweden ( $n = 5$ ), and France ( $n = 5$ ). Twenty-three other countries and regions appeared in the sample. Notably, the majority ( $n = 24$ ) analyzed newspaper articles. The remaining used other traditional media platforms—television programming and newswires—as units of analysis.



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### **Appendix: Comparative Transnational Framing Studies, 2001–2010**

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**2010**

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