Theoretical Understanding of the Construction Process of the Cultural 'Other' in News Media

Haber Yayınlarında Kültürel 'Öteki'nin İnşa Sürecinin Teorik Kavrayışı

Aynur Sarısakaloğlu, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Türk-Alman Üniversitesi Kültür ve Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi,
E-Posta: ayunur.sarisakaloglu@tau.edu.tr

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to display the processes of cultural identity construction within the context of the media by including approaches of identity and 'Othering', with the aim of developing an understanding of media representations of the cultural boundaries between the 'Self' and the 'Other'. This research adds to existing literature in three different ways. Firstly, the article outlines concepts of identity and 'Othering' as well as constructions of cultural identity within the framework of the notion of 'Othering'. Secondly, it argues that the news media plays an essential role in the construction of the 'Other' by setting agendas and framing issues by the manner in which it presents news, and how it treats them. Generally, news media discourses of cultural otherness rely on stereotypical representations, prejudice, and hate speech, due to the cultural differences that reveal the construction of cultural boundaries for the out-group as the culturally inferior 'Other' by including or excluding cultural peculiarities, as opposed to the in-group. Finally, this article concludes by suggesting that the concept of 'Othering' can be adopted to understand the influence of the media on constructions of cultural identity. Therefore, future research questions regarding media constructions of identity and the cultural 'Other' can be formulated on the basis of the theoretical findings in this article.

Öz

Bu çalışmanın hedefi, medyadaki kültürel kimlik oluşturma sürecini 'Kendi' ve 'Öteki' arasındaki kültürel sınırların medya tarafından nasıl yansıtıldığını kavramak amacıyla kimlik ve 'Ötekileştirme' yaklaşımlarını kullanarak incelemektir. Bu çalışma varolan literatüre üç farklı şekilde katkı yapar. Birincisi, makale 'kimlik' ve 'Ötekileştirme' kavramlarını, ve buna ek olarak 'Ötekileştirme' kavramın içerisindeki kültürel kimlik oluşumlarını ana hatlarıyla tanımlar. İkincisi, haber yayınlarının gündemi belirleyerek ve sundukları haberlerdeki meseleleri buna uygun olarak çerçeveleyerek 'Ötekileştirme' sürecinde büyük bir rol oynadığını öne sürer. Genel olarak, haber yayınlarındaki kültürel 'Öteki'nin anlatımları basmakalıp temsiller, önyargı, ve nefret söylemi üzerine kurulu olur; bunun nedeni ise iç-grubun dış-grubu kültürel açıdan aşağı bir 'Öteki' olarak tanımlamasına yol açan kültürel farklılıkların ikisinin arasındaki sınırların oluşumuna yol açmasıdır. Son olarak da, makalenin bitiminde 'Ötekileştirme' kavramının kültürel kimlik oluşumda medyanın etkisini anlamak için uygulanabileceği önerilir. Bu sayede, medyanın kimlik oluşumuna etkisi ve kültürel 'Öteki' hakkında gelecekte yapılacak çalışmalar bu makalenin kuramsal bulgularını başlangıç noktası olarak kullanabilir.

Introduction

The news media encompasses forms of mass media which focus on communicating news to the public. According to German psychologist Gerhard Maletzke (1963), mass communication is any form of communication in which messages are distributed publicly to a dispersed audience indirectly and uniformly by using technological means. These include not only the printed press or broadcast news such as television and radio, but also news published on the Internet such as in online newspapers, online magazines or blogs. In particular, news media is a source and a tool for identity construction, in which in-group members can differentiate facets of their own identity from constructed narratives by the attributions and stigmatisations of out-group members (Goffman, 1959, 1963). Generally, out-group members such as ethnic minorities, migrants, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers with whom in-group members do not identify, live at least between two cultures and thus experience different cultural patterns. This situation is amplified by the manner in which out-group members are portrayed in the media, especially in news media, since news reporting has a profound presence in the daily lives of people, and thus makes a significant impact on the public's perception of out-group members.

The crucial notions of culture and identity are extensively discussed in news media, and components of cultural identity are reconstructed, transformed and represented by the effects of said media. Media representations of minorities implicate discourses of denigration and demeaning stereotypes. In particular, cultural differences are represented in the media alongside the portrayal of hateful and negative emotions, feelings or attitudes; this has become an increasingly important issue as it in turn shapes people's attitudes towards 'Others', regardless of whether their estimation of the 'Other' is positive or negative (Berry et al., 2015; Allen et al., 2017). Thus, news media is capable of producing portrayals that impart identity to text and image, which likewise perform a significant role in the construction of the 'Other'. A theoretical concept that explains this process is the notion of 'Othering' in the context of post-colonial theory (Said, 1979).

According to Stuart Hall (1992), cultural boundaries are constructed by determining characteristics and differences between the 'Us' and the 'Other' through exclusion and/or inclusion of cultural differences. This evokes the question of which self-images and images of the 'Other' are represented, since discourses of 'Othering', as they circulate through the media, are not only exclusionary but also potentially divisive. Studies on identity construction in media have been flourishing for several years. These studies primarily analyse media frames by conducting a qualitative and/or quantitative content analysis to establish how out-group members are portrayed in the media. Research demonstrates a tendency for media coverage to represent 'Otherness' through stereotypes. However, fewer studies deal with theoretical considerations of the cultural 'Other', although existing theoretical perspectives of identity construction are manifold. It has to be noted as a shortcoming that studies on identity construction discuss media portrayals and stereotypes of out-group members, but not the construction process of the 'Other' in news media. The media plays an important role for members of society of all ages and cultures, and it is hugely influential in shaping individuals' attitudes towards life. Regarding this, the aim of this study is to treat constructions of cultural identity on the

basis of certain theoretical assumptions and findings on how news media constructs cultural boundaries performatively and increasingly towards members of the out-group by distinguishing 'Us' from 'Them', as well as marginalising or even denigrating them as cultural outsiders, i.e. 'Others'.

To this end, this article attempts to examine constructions of the cultural 'Other' in news media on the basis of the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the determinants of the construction of the cultural 'Other'?

RQ 2: How are out-group members generally framed as the 'Other' in news media?

The particular contribution of this theoretical discussion is to disentangle components underpinning the construction of cultural 'Others' in news media. Considering the purpose of this study and the existing literature, the article begins by presenting approaches of identity and the concept of 'Othering' as refers to the determination of cultural identity. Furthermore, it focuses on the role of news media in constructing the cultural 'Other' in general. The synthesis section reflects theoretical arguments, and the conclusion sums up theoretical findings and discusses the potential for using said theoretical findings, as well as the limitations of this article.

Theoretical Considerations about Identity Construction

Identity is a complex phenomenon that has been at the centre of various academic fields such as psychology and social sciences; it has inspired many scholars to examine this "powerful construct" (Vignoles et al., 2011: 2). The notion of identity was discussed first as the interpretation of 'Self' and society within the symbolic interactionist tradition, also known as the 'Chicago School', by George Herbert Mead (1934). Mead's (1934) theory on identity development is based on the concepts of 'I', 'Me' and 'Self', which emerged with the growing migration crisis and consequently the increasing number of migrants, who were perceived as a threat to the host society, or rather to the self-concept of the local populace. This situation led to a redetermination of belongingness as well as the shaping of cultural boundaries between one's own identity and the identity regarded as the 'Other'.

In addition to the conceptualisation of identity as a social process, the term was also used in Erikson's (1959) conception of the psychosocial development model, which focuses on the construction of identity as one of the most essential elements of personality development. According to Erikson (1968), identity not only refers to the core of each person, but also to his/her collective culture which is shaped by reflection. Collective identity in turn emerges via belonging to a social group, such as one's family or friends, being part of a minority or an ethnic background, and can be perceived only if a person represents those shared traditions, cultural values, norms, etc. Therefore, belonging to a specific social group means identifying with them or seeking to be like them, and differentiating yourself from other groups (Freud, 1955). This gave way to identity

construction as a process of social comparison of one's self with 'Others' by defining similarities or outlining differences.

Hall (1992: 275-277) suggests three different conceptions of identity: (1) the Enlightenment subject; (2) the sociological subject; and (3) the postmodern subject. The notion of the Enlightenment subject (1) is based on the philosophical view which considers identity as an ontological property and understands the human person as a unified and stable individual with conscious action ability, whose centre comprises an inner core. This inner core arises with the birth of an individual and remains inherently the same throughout his/her existence. The idea of the sociological subject (2) is devised by Mead (1934) and Cooley (1902), who elaborated an interactive conception of identity, in which the subject retains its inner core but is shaped by the interaction between 'Self' and society. According to this view, the gap between the personal and the public world is bridged by the subject in reciprocation with other identities. Thus, identity can be considered a dialectical process, since it is formed in a continuous dialogue with 'Others', "who mediated to the subject the values, meanings, and symbols – the culture – of the worlds he/she inhabited" (Hall, 1992: 275). The subject is no longer a unified and stable identity, but fragmented, unstable, incomplete and unresolved, because it is constantly reforming and modifying itself in a dialectical process with other cultural identities (Hall, 1992: 276-277). This leads to the emergence of the postmodern subject (3), who, in contrary to the Enlightenment subject, is not biologically but historically defined and is a moveable construction with no fixed and permanent identity. It is conceptualised as a process of identification, as the subject changes and assumes contradictory identities over time through social or cultural influences that "are not unified around a coherent 'self'" (Hall, 1992: 277). In other words, self-identity can be defined so long as it differs from other identities.

As a result, there exists a plurality of conceptions of identity. However, all such assumptions have following three aspects in common: First, identity is determined as a self-image which is linked to a self-concept — a conception "the individual has of himself as a physical, social and spiritual or moral being" (Gecas, 1982: 3) — i.e. the thoughts and feelings of an individual about himself/herself as an object (Rosenberg, 1979). The second aspect highlighted in definitions of identity is the characterisation of identity as shaped by certain functioning traits and habits reflecting the person's character (Jacobson-Widding, 1983; Berger and Luckmann, 1991). And the third common aspect is the definition of identity as a constructive narrative (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). So, identity can be considered an active dialectical process through which individual persons constantly assess themselves based on common attitudes, similar views, traits etc. shared with other selves, and determine who they are in relation to 'Others' (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987). This makes it possible to define the differences between the 'Self' and the 'Other' by perceiving who they are or who they are not (Goffman, 1963). In this sense, the question of identity is not only who the 'Self' is, but also who the 'Other' is.

Cultural Identity as a Dialectical Process

The creation of culture as a social construct is likewise an ongoing interaction process (Applegate and Sypher, 1988). According to the European Commission (2007: 2), culture can be defined as that which "brings people together by stirring dialogue and arousing passions, in a way that unites rather than divides". Therefore, culture can be considered "as a set of distinctive spiritual and material traits that characterize a society and social group", such as literature, arts, ways of life, traditions, values and beliefs (European Commission, 2007: 2). Culture is a primary factor in our lives, or as Raymond Williams (1966: 312) states, it is "not only a body of intellectual and imaginative work; but also and essentially a whole way of life", with its social and cultural practices; since culture shapes the way we behave, think and feel, all of which largely depend on the person's receptivity to culture. Furthermore, cultural values and attitudes are fundamental to the shaping of one's identity, because they resonate with who we are and how we live our lives. Hence, cultural identity can be determined as the self-concept of individual persons who possess certain identical or similar cultural traits and values — like "physical appearance, racial traits, skin color, language usage, self-appraisal, and other-perception factors" (Ting-Toomey, 2005: 214) — who dissociate themselves from members of other cultural groups. Further, religion is also an important identifier for cultural identity, as it creates an identity for its group members and strengthens the cultural belongingness (Samovar et al., 2007). In other words, cultural identity unifies people through shared symbols, values, norms, beliefs, language, religion, and other cultural components (Samovar et al., 2007). These cultural components allow the emergence of a unique cultural identity. Group members behave and act appropriate to these cultural components in order to maintain membership in the unique cultural group. However, the identity of a group is not only based on these components. According to Collier (2002), cultural identity is influenced by internal and external aspects, i.e. by avowals and ascriptions. Culture is also redefined, particularly in intercultural exchange processes (Kim, 1988). Assumptions about self-identity are inferred in relation to 'Others'. Against this backdrop, cultural identity has an influence on "whom we befriend, what holidays we celebrate, what language or dialect we are comfortable with, and what nonverbal styles we are at ease with in communicating with others" (Ting-Toomey, 2005: 214). As a result, cultural identity is a dynamic and "moveable feast" that changes constantly in different social contexts and undergoes continual transformation (Hall, 1992: 277; Derrida, 1979; Castells, 1997). However, our identities are not solely determined by our biology and cultural values; cultural identity is also constructed through various individual developments, such as the sense of self-preservation when threatened and the fear that results from discriminatory experiences, which force people to guard themselves against 'Others' because of threats to their own identity (Vedder and Van Geel, 2017). Hence, the 'Self' is also shaped by social experiences that are encountered throughout life.

The Concept of 'Othering' as a Discursive Process

The construction of the 'Other' refers to the original meaning of the term 'identity', derived from the Latin word 'idem' meaning 'the same' and describing the state of being

equal, belonging to someone and the existence of similarities (Metzeltin and Wallmann, 2010: 41). It is the result of a discursive process in which a group of people (in-group, 'Us', the 'Self') tend to view other groups that are dissimilar as the out-group ('Them') by stigmatising differences, which in turn evoke the classification of individuals into two hierarchical groups: 'Them' and 'Us'. Accordingly, collective identity is the unification of persons through the definition of boundaries between the 'Self' and the 'Other' which enable the segregation of in-group members from out-group members, friends from enemies, heroes from evildoers or the more powerful from the less powerful (Straub, 1998: 100).

Being similar to someone or belonging to a community and sharing certain qualities with others also implies not belonging to another group, or being able to differentiate another group due to different characteristics (Metzeltin and Wallmann, 2010; Yep, 2001). Therefore, "living with the other, with the foreigner, confronts us with the possibility or not of 'being an other'" (Kristeva, 1991: 13). When two different cultures interact, members of the in-group tend to value themselves in contrast to the 'Others', and distinguish themselves from the out-group members they devalue by setting themselves apart (Lévi-Strauss, 1961); as Fabian (1986: 208) also states: "The other is never simply given, never just found or encountered, but made". So cultural 'Otherness' can be defined as the representation of components of culture which differ from the familiar attitudes of the 'Self'.

A theoretical concept outlining the notion of 'Othering' is explained in post-colonial theory, in which the Orient is depicted as "Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (Said, 1979: 1). The Orient as the imaginary 'Other' of Europe is represented in a distancing and reductionist manner, and draws on a contrasting self-image in which the Orient is defined as "irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'", whilst Europe is "rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (Said, 1979: 40). It follows from this that identity is constructed by defining spatial differences between the 'Self' and the 'Other' (Said, 1979). In order to determine the identity of the 'Self', it is therefore necessary to determine the difference from the 'Other'. 'Othering' is consequently a process in which a dominant and powerful group determine into existence an inferior group, or in other words, the 'Other' is required to identify one's own self-image (Fine, 1994). So, 'Otherness' signifies how people or members of the in-group determine their relationship to other people or to members of the out-group. This relationship is strongly influenced by self-image and how one is perceived by others, as expressed through prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination.

Cultural 'Otherness' through Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination

In general, prejudice is an unfavorable affective attitude or belief towards a member of a certain social group, or a preconceived image of someone or something belonging to a certain ethnicity, race, gender etc. based upon a lack of knowledge (Quasthoff, 1978). Prejudice serves the following functions: the stabilization of self-esteem, the structuring

of social situations, the exclusion of out-group members, the fortification of in-group members towards 'Others', and the discharge of aggression (Schäfers, 2003: 422). The terms prejudice and stereotype are closely related. An important aspect distinguishing prejudice is its content, which is particularly charged with emotion, whereas a stereotype is a generalised mindset and oversimplified image or belief regarding a collective group and their members, which can either be positive or negative. Therefore, stereotyping refers to "the process of ascribing characteristics to people on the basis of their group memberships" (Oakes et al., 1994: 1). For Lippmann (1922: 95), stereotypes are used to comprehend the world around us: "They are an ordered, more or less consistent picture of the world, to which our habits, our tastes, our capacities, our comforts and our hopes have adjusted themselves."

Stereotypes as constructions of collective identities are shortcuts that allow us above all to get a quick picture of the 'Other' (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991). Accordingly, this definition of the 'Other' implies also the engagement of oneself, because the 'Other' and the 'Self' interrelate to one another (Landwehr and Stockhorst, 2004: 195). Thus, it can be said that the differentiation of 'Self' from the 'Other' supports the construction of auto-stereotypes, which are images and beliefs members of an in-group hold about themselves (Manz, 1968). On the other hand, self-image is influenced by hetero-stereotypes, images members of a certain group have about another group to which they do not belong (out-group) and which has its basis in a different culture or nation (Manz, 1968). Furthermore, one's behaviour and attitude are also shaped by suspected auto- and hetero-stereotypes, which Vorauer et al. (1998: 917) call meta-stereotypes, "a person's beliefs regarding the stereotype out-group members hold about his or her own group" (Vorauer et al., 1998: 917). Hence, stereotypes support the construction of identity in terms of belongingness and differentiation; those not only pave the way for images of the 'Other' but also promote the emergence of discrimination, which is negative behaviour or differential treatment by members of the in-group, who separate themselves from members of the out-group against the backdrop of social class, race, sex etc. (Allport, 1954). According to Allport (1954: 51) discrimination "occurs when we take steps to exclude members of an out-group from our neighbourhood, school, occupation, or country". A more positive perception and image of the 'Self' is obtained by discriminating against out-groups and devaluing their members. This can lead to the emergence of ethnocentrism, the tendency of the in-group to treat its own members and cultural values as superior to the members and cultural peculiarities of the out-group (Sumner, 1906). Consequently, identity is the 'non-identical' that needs 'Otherness' to distinguish itself from the 'Other', as both concepts only exist in relation to each other; or as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985: 128) point out, "to be something is always not to be something else". Also, James Donald (1988: 32) assumes that one's own culture is determined "by differentiating it from other cultures, by marking its boundaries […] because the 'us' on inside is itself always differentiated". Following this, the cultural 'Self' is consistently defined in relation to the cultural 'Other'.

Impact of News Media on the Construction of Cultural 'Otherness'

In general, cultural values are shaped or constructed through discourses in the public sphere, or as Jürgen Habermas (1962) states, via publicity to the public. According to this point of view, information is transmitted through institutions such as mass media to achieve publicity. To this end, a common set of cultural values, norms or ideas are necessary in order to set up a public sphere as a system to enable public communication (Habermas, 1998). The more a piece of information — such as on cultural values — is shared by the media, the more intersubjective this content becomes, for example when reports on specific issues are delivered in a uniform manner, which in turn creates a basis for public discourse and provides a sense of communality by producing publicity (Habermas, 1962; Wendt, 1992). It is important to realise that culture is constructed consistently not only with regard to solid cultural traditions and values, but also owing to the influence of the media in shaping everyday patterns of behaviour. Therefore, news media functions as a bridge connecting "the world outside and the pictures in our heads" (Lippman, 1922: 3).

Several social scientists have already attempted to analyse and explain the huge impact of the media on its audience (McLuhan, 1964; McQuail, 1994). According to Jäger (2007), the media can significantly influence the creation and articulation of discourses, for example when it constructs the image of the 'Other'. In particular, mass communication such as news media possesses the ability to shape one's opinion, as they are often the primary source of information about subjects which the audience frequently has limited knowledge (De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1975). Hence, media plays an integral part in shaping public discourse, since it can have an impact on the way out-group members are perceived and treated by in-group members. Accordingly, news media matters in relation to identity construction, as it spreads values, norms and symbols and thus influences the way a society thinks and shapes their opinion, since they gather much of their knowledge about issues from news media such as websites (Harrison, 2006). Whether published information is recognised by individuals or the audience, and how it is perceived, depends mostly on whether a public opinion is supported by high-circulation newspapers or individuals with high credibility in social and political institutions, such as 'opinion leaders' (Habermas, 1962); as information "seems to flow from […] print to opinion leaders and from them to less active sections of the population" (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 2009: 32). Opinion leaders have certain personality traits and a specific role in their societal group, either conveying the input from the media by which they have been convinced, or changing the media's information to the effect that corresponds to their opinions (Weimann, 1991; Kepplinger, 2012).

Ideology, socio-political and/or economic interests of news organisations can also be viewed as important factors influencing the content of the news and distorting public opinion, as they are able to select content based on their own interests and aspirations (Harrison, 2011; Bovitz et al., 2002). Beyond this, agenda-setting can also influence public opinion by setting a public-oriented agenda that provides a rank-ordered set of news stories apprehended to be the most significant (McCombs, 1981; Rössler, 2012). Accordingly, journalists not only propose topics and orient their audience, but also tend to

write stories which can sustain the audience's interest and desire to read further (Rössler, 2012). The published information flow is somehow filtered, but beyond that, the message is absorbed by the audience in the shape of new content through the "pictures in our heads" (Lippman, 1922: 3; Shannon, 1948). The audience can also be considered active media users, who on the one hand consciously select news and read content based on their interests, requirements and aspirations, and on the other hand ascribe meaning to content in various ways that refer to their individual characteristics and the collective identity to which they belong.

Furthermore, news media has an influence on the way we think and act by the manner in which an event is framed by news producers such as journalists, since they can influence public discourse and shape our understanding of issues through news items by adopting statements of opinion from members of the public and consequently reinforce attitudes and believes of in-group members towards out-group members (Gunter and Christen, 1999; Blinder and Allen, 2015). However, the way in which issues are framed depends not only on journalists' personal biases but also organisational structures and media routines, as well as the cultural orientation of news producers (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). Media frames allow audiences to categorise and interpret information in accordance with a predetermined schema or frame, as well as to emphasize certain issues of reality whilst ignoring others (Entman, 1993, 52). Moreover, they have an agenda-setting power to influence public discourse as well as to serve as a kind of metacommunicative structure that makes use of metaphors, images, symbols etc. to evoke latent messages for the audience (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993). News media has the potential to foster the self-identification process by problematising the presence of the 'Others' in a societal group through discourses linked to national representations and negative portrayals of out-group members referring to multiple factors such as ethnicity, religion, class etc. The more the audience reads such news stories, the more they take in such statements, particularly when the audience has less knowledge about the issues mentioned on the news (Gunther and Christen, 1999; Philo, 2008). Here, news media acts as the shaper of collective consciousness and has an impact on the way out-group members are represented in public discourse and perceived by in-group members. Therefore, journalists are required to be neutral transmitters and report facts in an unbiased manner as well as to avoid prioritising their own statements of opinion and beliefs in news stories, preventing the use of language signifying negative outlooks and alluding to negative stereotypes or even hate speech in order to foster inclusion and mitigate conflicts between in-group and out-group members (Happer and Philo, 2013; Galtung, 2006). In this sense, the manner in which news producers present and describe an issue or the type of frame they use for certain issues are highly significant.

Synthesis

Every culture possesses a unique set of characteristics and values, shaped not only by its geography, history or dialectical process with other cultural identities but also through news media. The role of news media in the construction of cultural boundaries and

cultural identities has become a highly researched issue. News media doesn't only offer news on what is happening in the world, but also transmits images of issues discussed in the stories, which in turn leads to a sense of unity amongst those not depicted therein. This is one of the most common ways we frame our identity and define ourselves. Within this framework, cultural identity can be defined as a collective identity constructed through the perception of the cultural 'Self' and/or at least one of the cultural 'Others', as we define ourselves by determining what we are not (see Figure 1). So, construction leads to self-description, which in turn leads to differentiation.
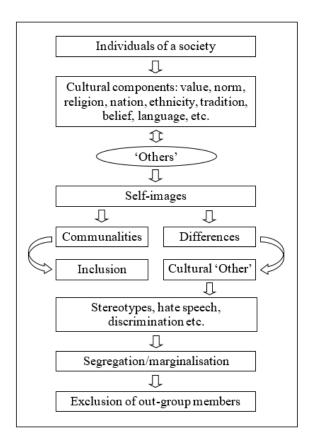

Figure 1: Construction of the cultural 'Other'

The question of how the cultural 'Other' is constructed is strongly influenced by multiple factors. In general, cultural identities are predominantly constructed within an ongoing dynamic process and can be made up of a variety of indicators, such as values, norms, religion, nation, ethnicity, tradition, belief, language, skin colour, profession etc., which in turn can be defined as identifiers of the inclusion or exclusion of out-group members (Quasthoff, 1978; Ting-Toomey, 2005; European Commission, 2007; Samovar et al., 2007). These identifiers lead also to cultural boundaries that are constructed where at least two different cultures or identities encounter each other and hence mark the beginning and ending of a community. Therefore, we can say that boundaries are a significant factor in identity construction, since without the existence of boundaries

determinations of cultural distinctions as well as differences and/or commonalities between in-group members ('Us') and out-group ('Them') members would not be possible. In this regard, news media plays an important role as it is able to (re)construct cultures and identities through the manner in which it reports news, enabling the shaping of individuals' behaviour (De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1975; Harrison, 2006). The way such issues are treated defines whether minority groups are included or excluded from the local community. In this context, culture is a notably effective element of the construction of 'Otherness'. As a result, both similarities and differences of a community can be identified. If the commonalities are in the foreground of the dialogue with the 'Other', the 'Other' is seen as an in-group member (Metzeltin and Wallmann: 2010: 41). However, if the differences are emphasised, the 'Other' is regarded as an out-group member and thus excluded from the local community (Metzeltin and Wallmann: 2010: 41). In particular, a dominance of specific misinformation and uniformly negative media coverage with negative stereotyping of out-group members, as well as hate speech directed at them, can lead to social segregation or even to the marginalisation of out-group members. News media also possesses the ability not only to marginalise out-group members as the cultural 'Other' but also position them as a stigmatised out-group or even an inferior group under such labels as 'social problems' or 'cultural threat'. Constructions of the 'Other' emerge and strengthen when a community sees its collective identity as being under threat, which in turn leads to the exclusion of out-group members from the local community. Rather than simply focusing on cultural differences and difficulties, news media should have a tendency towards a journalism that perceives cultural diversity not as a barrier or burden but as social enrichment, by avoiding divisive terms such as 'Us' and 'Them', negative portrayals, and cultural stereotyping of out-group members — as this could have a negative influence on the public opinion towards those individuals.

Conclusion

This article suggests that news media plays a central role in the perception of out-group members by in-group members of a society and thus should face repercussions for shaping cultural boundaries designed for them. This matter of fact depends exceedingly on how an event is framed by news media. When issues faced by out-group members are subjected to treatment in news media, the tendency is towards identity construction and concurrently the constructions of 'Others' by defining ourselves. Undeniably, news media frequently portrays out-group members as the 'Other' by representing them in stereotypical news visualisations, even though journalistic representations are capable of repositioning out-group members inside the imagined collective community through empathy and a deep understanding of other cultural minorities so as to perceive them not solely as objects of media discourse but as active subjects similar to in-group members.

Despite the contribution of theoretical findings, several limitations and capabilities inherent in the concept of 'Othering' have to be taken into consideration in future research. This study shows that cultural boundaries facing out-group members are not constructed as a result of a straightforward process by in-group members. Social structures shape

relationships between the out-group members and the in-group members of a certain community, which defines the cultural environment. In this context, the author proposes these questions to be taken into consideration by other researchers striving to expand upon possibilities towards strengthening the allegiance of out-group members with in-group members, and imparting confidence upon all group members in a society of multiple cultural identities. Further research in this field is required to outline this circumstance. Taking these theoretical findings as a basis for future research, scholars with an interest in communication studies can also examine whether media discourse on cultural 'Otherness' is also transferred upon new media, particularly social media, since in the current age of digital communication the use of social networking sites to share information and express opinions has soared in recent years. Consequently, social media users are the new gatekeepers conducive to constructing boundaries towards the out-group owing to the possibility of writing their side of the story and sharing contradictory information across social networks.

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