

Proposal Introduction by Gracie, Kate, and Luke

Introduction and Problem

The problem remains that the differences between left-leaning and right-leaning media outlets and their respective framings of different topics exhibit wildly different angles of a topic. Those right-leaning media sources that disseminate information to their audiences through a conservative lens aim to persuade their audiences to accept a conservative interpretation of information, while those left-leaning media sources aim to persuade their audiences through a liberal lens. This can easily confuse the American public on the truth of an issue. In order to effectively analyze the media landscape on the topic of fracking, this study will examine a specific event; specifically, media coverage in the days prior to the event, during the event, and the days following the event to ensure a comprehensive analysis.

Introduction to the study

This proposal will explore and review the differences between the liberal (left) and the conservative (right) framing of fracking in media literature 90 days prior to and after the Presidential Permit issued by the US State Department under President Trump approving the continuation of the Keystone XL pipeline on March 24, 2017. Analyzing this specific snapshot of the right and left leaning media sources into the issue of fracking will ensure relevance during our analysis of news sources. Only those news articles written and published 90 days prior to and after March 24, 2017 will be used in our literature review.

Background to the study

On March 24th, 2017, President Trump reversed an Obama-era decision in regards to the Keystone XL pipeline, allowing the construction, operation, connection, and maintenance of the pipeline at the border of the United States and Canada for the transport of crude oil through

Montana. President Trump passed this initiative via an executive order following the denial of an original application for the Keystone pipeline in 2008. Following the approval of the pipeline, various groups spoke out against the pipeline, including Native American tribes and advocates, environmental activists, and others. The media coverage following this initiative's approval furthered the divide between political parties as conservative media groups focused primarily on the positive economic impacts that would come from the approval of the Keystone XL pipeline, while liberal media sources focused primarily on the impact of the pipeline on Native American ancestral lands and the negative environmental impacts that the use of crude oil and the expansion of the pipeline would have.

Statement of the problem (What is the problem or area of concern?)

Inconsistent framing of fracking leads to inaccurate understandings of the topic by audiences. Furthermore, when topics/events are framed inconsistently in the media, by policymakers, or within society, it confuses the public. This confusion is a result of mixed messaging, contradictory information, and shifting narratives, making it challenging for people to understand the gravity of topics. Misinformation spreads quickly and individuals will have difficult discerning credible sources from unreliable ones. In extreme circumstances, this leads to a loss of trust in the media. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to determine the differences in the perception of fracking in left and right-leaning media.

Purpose of the study (specific purposes and/or objectives)

The specific objectives of this proposal are:

1. To make clearer the contrast between conservative and liberal framing in relation to fracking;

2. To develop a better understanding of how framing can easily change the perceptions of audiences on the topic of fracking.

Rationale or theoretical basis for the study

Framing- as a theory of mass communication, refers to how the media packages and presents information to the public. According to the theory, the media highlights certain events and then places them within a particular context to encourage or discourage certain interpretations.

Studying the framing of fracking in the media gives insight into the various impacts that the differences in the framing of this issue can impact various aspects of society, such as social and economic implications, influence on public opinion, impact on policy decisions and the polarization of political parties.

Research questions to be answered

The differences in how fracking is presented in the media following the approval of the continuation of the Keystone XL pipeline on March 24th, 2017 impacted the way that consumers of each media source vote on legislation related to fracking or other environmental initiatives, as well having various impacts in other spheres, including social impacts, economic impacts, and the further polarization of political parties.

Research questions to be answered:

RQ1: What are the economic and social frames of fracking being presented in conservative and liberal U.S. media?

RQ2: What are the impacts on policy decisions due to the framing of fracking?

RQ3: How does the framing of fracking further polarize political parties in America?

Importance or significance of the study

Researching the framing differences of fracking in the media is essential for ensuring transparency, accuracy, and balanced reporting. It plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, driving policy decisions and addressing environmental challenges effectively.

Definition of terms (Operational Definitions)

Fracking - the process of injecting liquid into the ground at high pressures to break into and extract oil or gas

Keystone XL - an oil pipeline stretching over Canada and the USA. It pumps oil from West Canada to Illinois and Texas

TransCanada Corporation (TC Energy)- a major North American energy company that works on infrastructure in Canada, the USA, and Mexico

Framing - a technique of focusing the attention of people within a field of meaning, how something is presented to an audience to steer them in one direction or another

Crude Oil - raw, unprocessed oil

U.S. State Department - AKA United States Department of State (DOS) or State Department, is an executive department in the U.S. federal government responsible for foreign policy and relations

Assumptions and limitations of the study

This study is assuming that there is a significant difference in the framing of fracking for it to be noticeable and tangible. The limitations of this study include subjectivity of interpretation, selection bias, time sensitivity, cultural and regional variations, and context dependency. Framing analysis is inherently subjective because researchers must interpret the meaning and intent behind the frames. News framing can change over time and the significance

of the frame evolves as new information is presented. The representation of topics can vary depending on the regional location and cultural significance. Framing is dependent on the specific context and information available at the time.