A RELIGIOUSLY DIVISIVE IMAGE OF H1N1 IN EGYPT AS REPORTED BY THE NEW YORK TIMES

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Abstract

In its reporting from different countries during the timeframe April 17 – June 11, 2009, the New York Times considered various aspects of the H1N1 infection issue, but when the case was related to Egypt, it was about religion. In one article, the daily used three different words: pig, swine, and pork for 30 times to convey the meaning of religious division in Egypt where culling pigs was portrayed as Muslim oppression to the Christian minority.

Key words: *christianity, egypt, framing, h1n1 virus, islam, swine flu, textual analysis*

INTRODUCTION

In spring 2009, the United States of America experienced an outbreak of influenza A virus subtype H1N1, commonly known as the swine flu. The disease apparently spread from an earlier outbreak in Mexico, but the infection started occurring in the U.S. in late March 2009 in California, and by mid-April, scores of people across several states were infected with the disease. The press in the United States extensively covered the global infection because the initial outbreak caused over 100 deaths (Maugh II, 2009).

On June 11, 2009, the United Nations (U.N.) World Health Organization (W.H.O.) raised the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 6 in response to the global spread of the influenza A (H1N1) virus. Phase 6 designation indicated that a global pandemic was underway, because more than 70 countries reported cases of human infection with the H1N1 virus according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – an agency of the United States Department of Health and Human Services (CDC, 2009). On June 12, 2009, the CDC reported that there were 17,855 confirmed and probable cases of humans infected with this disease throughout the U.S., and there had been 45 death cases because of the pandemic (CDC, 2009). Over a period of several weeks, the American press heavily reported the epidemic; however, different newspapers employed different frames to present the 2009 influenza A virus to the public, specifically either H1N1 virus or swine flu.

In his definition of framing, Entman (1993) states that to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text. He explains that the frame in a text is really the imprint of power – it registers the identity of actors or interests that compete to dominate the text. As a major news outlet in the U.S., the *New York Times* used the frames H1N1 virus and/or swine flu to project different meanings to readers. This research paper employs framing theory and uses a qualitative method of textual analysis to examine this daily's coverage of Egypt with respect to the 2009 infection of influenza A (H1N1). It tests the hypothesis that when it covered the swine flu in Egypt, the *New York Times* was more likely to present a religiously divisive image.

FRAMING THEORY

Entman (2007) defines framing as "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular definition" (p. 164), while Gamson (2001) defines a frame as "a central organizing principle that holds together and gives coherence to a diverse array of symbols or idea elements" (p. x). Framing conceptualizes texts as a system of organized signifying elements that both indicate the advocacy of certain ideas and provide devices to encourage certain kinds of audience processing of the texts (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, pp. 55–56). With roots in both psychology and sociology, framing theory relies on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in a news text can have an impact on how it is understood by audiences (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Framing is both a macro and micro construct (Scheufele, 1999), and the model of Gans (1979) relies on this ground, because the paradigm specifies three sources of factors that affect the process of news text production: journalist-centered influence, selection of frames, and external sources of power.

The sociological (macro) foundations of framing were illuminated by Goffman (1974) who argued that individuals cannot fully understand the world around them, and they continuously struggle to employ their life experiences to make sense (meaning) of their surroundings. He said that in order to digest new information efficiently, individuals tend to categorize information and interpret them meaningfully by applying interpretative schemas or primary frameworks. The psychological (micro) origins of framing were examined in experimental studies by Kahneman and Tversky (1979, 1984) who showed how different presentations (framing) of essentially identical decision-making scenarios alter people's choices and evaluations of the frequent options (meanings) offered to them.

When an individual encounters a frame about an issue by going online for example, he is more likely to store it, recall it, and employ it along with other frames to interpret a controversy about the issue (Chong, 1996; Entman, 1993; Kinder & Sanders, 1996). Exposure to certain frames about a controversy makes an audience assigns greater weights (cognitive preferences) to those frames when making subsequent judgments about the debated issue (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997); however, this argument opens the door for individuals to resist exposure to frames (Brewer, 2001, 2002; Druckman, 2001a, 2001b; Druckman & Nelson, 2003). Brashers (2001) argues that variability of framing sources is an important parameter for uncertainty to occur about the mediated meaning, since "individuals may choose some sources of information over others because they believe there are differences in the efficacy of the sources" (p. 483).

The work of Nelson et al. (1997) and Nelson and Kinder (1996) did not completely reject the notion of frames accessibility, or salience, and its role in the framing process, but they suggested that perceived importance of specific frames rather than their salience among audiences is the key variable (Scheufele, 1999). Or, "frames influence opinions by stressing specific values, facts, and other considerations, endowing them with greater apparent relevance to the issue than they might appear to have under an alternative frame" (Nelson et al., 1997, p. 569). Through a set of collected data, Nelson et al. (1997) tested whether perceived importance and accessibility are different constructs. Nelson and his associates operationalized accessibility of frames by measuring answers' response latency, and they also measured perceived importance of frames. The results show that it is valid to discriminate between perceived importance of frames and accessibility of frames (Scheufele, 1999).

An individual perceives importance of a frame embedded in a text because the frame carries meaning, and an audience makes a choice that he may or may not employ the frame to interpret the reported issue if the mediated meaning matches her/his individual principles (Brewer, 2002; Brewer & Gross, 2005). In order to define the world, Hochschild (1981) and Feldman and Zaller (1992) argue, audiences form their views relying on multiple frames (meanings) rather than just one. Tversky and Simonson (1993) points out that the process of making cognitive preferences between two frames (meanings) is affected by the presence of a third or more attractive frames, because an individual may pick up two (or more) competing frames

that pull in two opposite directions within a particular issue domain (Tetlock, 1986; Alvarez & Brehm, 1995) to define her/his position on the issue (Brewer, 2001).

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Although the term *textual analysis* has been often generically employed to refer to any study of text, such as qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis, the term should be differentiated as a distinct method by emphasizing an integration of research design, theoretical perspective, research question, and text (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Qualitative textual analysis helps interpret the perceived reality projected by media, according to McKee, who also states that "a text is something that we make meaning from" (2003, p. 4). Fiske (1994) and Steeves (1987) argue that there are four main underlying constructs with respect to textual analysis of news texts: language and meaning, ideology, ideology and myth, and historicity. Semiologists say that meaning is embedded in the semantic content of a text, but textual analysts state that meaning is within the text-audience dialectical process that goes on under certain social and historical context where language is the tool through which the role of media changes from conveying reality to constructing meaning (Hill, 1979).

The media strive not to reflect reality but to construct it in a process that is defined as a signifying practice where media outlets are signifying agents (Hall, 1982), and because language has more than one meaning, resulted media texts should have more than one meaning as well. In each media text there is a range of different readings (meanings) available (Eco, 1978), and a textual analyst must obtain all layers of meaning in a text, not only the desired meanings, but also the alternative readings (Johnson, 1986-1987). By analyzing the meaning(s) of a media text's language, a textual analyst also uncovers the ideological power of the meaning(s) (Kress, 1983), because ideology can be unveiled through textual analysis of the domain of discourse where language is deeply penetrated and inscribed by ideology (Grossberg & Slack, 1985). Banks (1989), Geis (1987), and Kress (1983) argue that ideology is represented by the power of language to shape public perceptions. Ideology uses language in texts to categorize the world from a certain standpoint, because language has both meaning and presupposes and it evokes both beliefs and values.

The dominant meaning (reading) of a text is often driven by myth, where myth, language, and ideology intersect, and language controls the masking and connotative powers of myth and dominates the polysemic interpretations that allow ideological influence to be realized (Hall, 1982). Breen and Corcoran (1982) view the unconscious encoding process as mythologizing in action, and they posit that the function of ideology in modern society is fully understood only through an examination of myth as the dialectic link between culture and communication. Myths are employed in communication as ideological representatives to make sense (meaning) of new events by fitting them into old, familiar cultural molds; myths serve to reify culture. Myths can become organized into ideologies, because myths are read as facts rather than as socially constructed cultural images (Breen & Corcoran, 1982). The blending of ideological and historical origins within myths shapes how a similar succeeding discourse element can revive, so the deep structure of a news segment must be perceived through historicity of the text that carries the news, according to Johnson (1986-1987), who argues that a textual analyst of news must take into account both the immediate and historical contexts of the audience, while Hardt (1989) and Morley (1983) state that a news text cannot be isolated from its historical conditions of both production and consumption. Therefore, the scope of this study considers a textual analysis that relies on the four constructs of language and meaning, ideology, ideology and myth, and historicity.

McKee (2003) explains that in a qualitative textual analysis, a text is anything that produces "an *interpretation* of something's *meaning* – a book, television programme, film, magazine, T-shirt or kilt, piece of furniture or ornament" (p. 4). He states that texts that surround people have an important effect on the way they think, and it is important to understand how texts are produced and mediated in a

democratic culture because audiences might (might not) choose to consume them. Examining a text as a process and means of research is labeled as *decentering* the text. It implies that a text is the tool to carry out a textual analysis study; however, not the end of it. Interest is not in the text itself, or what it physically holds, but what the text means and signifies in a chain of potentially infinite processes of signification (Barthes, in Cheney & Tompkins 1988).

By employing textual analysis, the analyst should decenter the text to deconstruct it. The aim is to work back through the text's mediations of form, appearance, rhetoric, and style to unveil the embedded political, social, and historical processes, but for press coverage, text decenteralization – the most important process of deconstruction – is the one that embraces the meta-language guiding the text's production (Hall, 1975). The target is to reveal the existing framework within which the production of meaning occurs. The analyst of a text should work on showing the pre-existing stock of meanings employed by media framers to make an event perceivable to readers. Within this phase of deconstruction, the analyst identifies the categories used by the media to define the event (Hall, 1982), specifically those taken-for-granted, seen but unnoticed background features and expectancies, by means of which people share a collective world of cultural meanings (Hall, 1975). The media use visual, verbal, rhetorical, presentational and tone frames to code news meanings, to set the feel of the event and to make it meaningful. In order to grasp the cultural significance of the press accounts with respect to an event, textual analysts have to interpret those frames to determine the underlying coded social meaning (Hall, 1975). Meyers (1994) analyzed the news coverage of the murder of a battered wife by her estranged husband. She examined the language to show how it ascertains inherent cultural assumptions. Lule (1991) analyzed the news coverage of the Sputnik launch, and found that each word and image not strictly neutral in its connotative meaning should be analyzed in terms of its larger possible metaphoric interpretations. In a study of news coverage of Huey Newton's death, Lule (1993) displayed how a textual analyst must isolate the text symbols and metaphors and explore related assumptions and beliefs to extract the underlying ideology.

After deconstructing the text to determine its embedded themes, the textual analyst must then reconstruct the text to specify the dominant or desired reading. The goal is to guarantee that the dominant meaning is set into the language that will win the consent of the audience to the preferred reading (Hall, 1977). Therefore, a textual analysis is incomplete if it stops after the process of text deconstruction. Lester (1992) demonstrates that through the process of text reconstruction, the textual analyst can determine the consequences of the text's preferred reading and explores the range of potential cultural understandings that underlie ideology. After deconstructing then reconstructing a text, the textual analyst should fit the analysis back into production context to point out the polysemic nature of texts. The goal is that the textual analyst acknowledges diverse readings through different production paths (Lester, 1992; Lule, 1991). This stripping of details to find the meaning looks to unfold or unpack the text reading by examining the unseen, unrecognizable ideology behind the text production and consumption, but for Hall (1986), to reduce a text to already present structure is to deny the context's true meaning and the related dialectical process.

FRAMING THEORY AS FOUNDATION OF TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Lazarus and Folkman (1984), and Mishel (1988, 1990) explain that people judge an event's meaning relying on its relevance to their lives, and Lindlof and Taylor (2002) state that meaning (framing effect) is not an accessory to behavior, but it satisfies the performance of social action. In his attempt to explain the sociological (macro) foundations of framing, Goffman (1974) says that individuals cannot fully understand the world around them, and they continuously struggle to employ their life experiences to make sense (meaning) of their surroundings. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) illuminate that "humans infuse their actions – and the worlds that result – with meaning," and they are, "at root, trying to make sense [meaning] and get by" (p. 5). McKee (2003) concurs and argues that "people make meaning of their

experiences" (p. 35), and the sense (meaning) – practices "are not irrelevant to the reality of how the world is … not the opposite of reality: it is the very condition for living in it" (p. 37).

Scheufele (2000) states that framing effects are value-based, while Gamson and Modigliani (1989) argue that the frame building processes conducted by news sources are value-based as well. Kahneman and Tversky (1979, 1984) show how a different presentation (framing) of an issue alters people choices, and that a choice value is attributed to gains and losses rather than to final assets while probabilities are superseded by decision weights. McKee (2003) says that different texts can present (frame) the same event in different ways (i.e., in different choices with different values), and that the interesting part of the textual analysis is "how these texts tell their stories, how they represent the world, and how they make sense [meaning] of it" (p. 17). Therefore, in a world without meaning, which is a framing effect and thus value-based, we would not make choices, because the very concept of choice, which is its value, would not be available to us. Or in other words, we can choose, but we cannot choose our choices (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 6). Social life, according to Lindlof and Taylor, "is enacted in contexts" 2002, p. 38). They say that the practical reasoning in which people engage or make choices depends upon their use of the resources or meanings available in a specific situation. McKee (2003) agrees and explains that it is the meanings and values behind them that interpret things as important.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1. How did the *New York Times* present the 2009 influenza A in Egypt?

RQ2. How did the *New York Times* cover the 2009 influenza A in Egypt?

METHODOLOGY

Health communication has always been a distinguished example of applied qualitative research, because it assists to identify and overcome various perceived communication problems, political, economical, interpersonal, organizational, and media related (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). This study uses qualitative textual analysis and considers a timeframe from April 17, 2009, when the CDC discovered the first two H1N1 (swine) flu cases in the U.S. (California) until June 11, 2009, when the W.H.O raised the worldwide alert level to Phase 6 in response to the ongoing global spread of the pandemic. The research is limited to only written stories issued by the *New York Times* and posted on its website on the Internet within this period when it wasn't yet clear what name (frame: H1N1 virus or swine flu) should be used to identify the infection and its source (*The Washington Post*, 2009). The study is significant because mass communication scholars have long argued that it is important to understand the ways through which framing of issues in the press occurs, because such framing impacts public understanding and, consequently, policy formation (Andsager, 2000, p. 579). Therefore, if framing influences how individuals interpret an issue, "it may ultimately shape how they discuss it with fellow citizens and whether they can arrive at shared frames of reference for deliberating about it," Brewer and Gross (2005, p. 930) argue, explaining that "if framing influences how much citizens think about an issue, then it may also have consequences for the depth and breadth of public deliberation about the issue" (2005, p. 931).

This study examines the press coverage of the H1N1 virus in the *New York Times*. The researcher considered 99 articles issued by this daily newspaper from April 17 until June 11, 2009. The selection considered only those reports that depicted aspects of the 2009 influenza A issue, but the researcher chose only one story out of those 99 articles for the purpose of this research textual analysis, because this one report was the only one that presented the new flu strain within the context of Egypt. In terms of sampling techniques, this one story about the H1N1 in Egypt represents the whole population of articles reported by the *New York Times* about the disease in that country within this study's timeframe (Krippendorff, 2004). The material reality of this one article allows for the recovery and critical interrogation of discursive

politics, because this story is neither a historical document nor scientific data but is literarily evidence in an investigation (McKee, 2003, p. 15).

The *New York Times* was chosen for the purpose of this study because it ranks third in circulation throughout the United States (more than 1,600,000 copies per day according to infoplease.com), in addition it has a diverse coverage of international news compared to other dailies issued in the United States. Another kind of analysis with respect to the literature of framing theory runs throughout the research as evidence to support the argument.

The study uses framing as basis of textual analysis because frames offer insights into nuances and hidden assumptions in texts produced by the media (Hackett, 1984; Tankard, 2003), and because frames reveal meta-themes (Altheide, 1996) used by the media to present events (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Goffman, 1974; Reese, 2001). Frames define problems and propose solutions to them (Entman, 1993), and frames uncover ideologies, symbols, and values (Gitlin, 1980; Hackett, 1984; Tuchman, 1978b). "Ultimately, frames may be viewed as an abstract principle, tool, or 'schemata' of interpretation that works through media texts to structure social meaning" (Reese, 2001, p. 14). A framing textual analysis reveals these embedded meanings in what Reese has called "cultural frames" (2001, p. 13).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The *New York Times* considered different aspects as a response to the global-wide alarm to the H1N1 infection, but when the case was related to Egypt where Muslim majority in this country do not eat pork for religion reasons, the coverage was about religion. On May 1, 2009, the *New York Times* ran a full story titled, "Culling Pigs in Flu Fight, Egypt Anger Herders and Dismays U.N.," which carried controversial meanings about Egypt and religion. Egypt was portrayed as a country that violates international rules set by the United Nations: "Egypt has begun forcibly slaughtering the country's pig herds as a precaution against swine flu, a move that the United Nations described as 'a real mistake.'"

The Muslim–Christian social fabric in Egypt was pictured as tense, while the relation between Egyptian government and the country's Coptic Christian population was portrayed in terms of a power punishing a minority for unjustified reasons: "The decision, announced Wednesday, is already adding new strains to the tense relations between Egypt's majority Muslims and its Coptic Christians. Most of Egypt's pig farmers are Christians, and some accuse the government of using swine flu fears to punish them economically."

In its reporting about the new influenza virus on April 24, April 29, and May 1, 2009, the *New York Times* repeatedly said that the infection contains gene segments from North American swine, bird and human flu strains, as well as one from Eurasian swine, quoting Dr. Keiji Fukuda, the World Health Organization's assistant director general, who had declared in April 29 that the new virus "was a swine influenza virus and that the organization had no plans to call it anything other than what it was." But in this specific story on May 1, 2009, about the H1N1 virus in Egypt, Fukuda was quoted differently: "We don't see any evidence that anyone is getting infected from pigs." And it was enough for the newspaper to extend his quotation without referring to his two days ago statement: "This appears to be a virus which is moving from person to person." However, the *New York Times* admits a controversy about the disease name and origin, in addition to fears about mixing with pigs and eating pork: "The outbreak has been dubbed swine flu — now officially called influenza A (H1N1) —because scientists believe it started in pigs, but they do not know if that was recently or years ago. The name change was designed to allay fears about pigs and eating pork."

The *New York Times* also admits that Egypt suffered economically when it was hit by the bird flu: "[The] country has been hard hit by avian flu." Therefore, this matter should justify any precautionary measures taken by a limited resources state like Egypt to protect its national economy; however, religion was the

main meaning in the May 1, 2009, article of the *New York Times* about the influenza A in Egypt: "The great majority of Egyptians are Muslim and do not eat pork because of religious restrictions, but about 10 percent of the population is Coptic Christian. As a result, Egyptian pig farmers are overwhelmingly Christian." In fact, the story classified Egyptian social classes per religion: "[Although] some of the country's Christians are middle class or wealthy, the Christian farmers are generally poor." Yet, the story did not mention that Muslim farmers are poor as well, and went further to draw an image of Muslim oppression against Christians in Egypt: "On Thursday, several urban pig farmers in Cairo said they see the government's decision as just another expression of Egyptian Muslims' resentment against Christians."

To stress the authority – minority oppression meaning, the article then quotes a Christian pig farmer and a governmental official without referring to the fact that the greater majority of Egyptian governments throughout Egypt's modern history have been secular, have encountered and eliminated both homemade and imported Islamic extremism in all its forms, and have been an aide of U.S. military efforts to battle terror in Iraq and Afghanistan after 9/11. "Barsoum Girgis, a 26-year-old pig farmer, lives in a poor neighborhood," the *New York Times* said as a start to tell the story of this Christian pig farmer. It continued saying: "Mr. Girgis makes his living through a combination of raising pigs and collecting garbage — two professions that are often tied together in a city where garbage collection can be an informal affair and where poor farmers rely on food scraps to feed their livestock. He wakes up every morning around 4 a.m. to collect garbage around the city. When he gets back to Manshiet Nasser, at around 9 a.m., he sorts the trash, putting aside what can be sold at the city's booming scrap markets and what he can use as pig feed." The daily mediated resentment in his criticism to the government's decision: "The government here is going after our livelihood." But the *New York Times* colored the condemnation scene with religion when it mentioned Mr. Girgis wears a cross around his neck. It used the cross meaning as a Christian symbolism and to convey a picture of Mr. Girgis as a committed Christian. The daily went to further details about the cross symbol by stressing that it was made of wood to transmit the meaning that Mr. Girgis is poor: "How am I going to feed my children and send them to school without my livestock?"

To enlarge the crisis meaning of this individual case, the *New York Times* said that Mr. Girgis "lives with his extended family, about 30 people, in the first two floors of a building," but did not discuss health restrictions and potential danger of having "60 small pigs live on the ground floor" of Mr. Girgis, and the bad experience the world had due to similar cases when the bird flu hit. The religion-based tone goes on. The *New York Times* reported in the same story that "[many] of Cairo's pig farmers [Christians] live in similar conditions, sharing their small spaces in the teeming city with their animals," but the daily did not refer to many other farmers, both Muslims and Christians, who live in similar conditions or even worse; yet, the newspaper chose to deepen the divisive tone by quoting Mr. Girgis saying: "We are Christian, and we are the underclass, so it's very easy to go after us."

The myth in this story is that a city like Cairo, with its at least 10 million population, relies on pigs to consume its garbage. The article simply argues that the 300,000 pigs that were culled were the method to consume the daily garbage of 10,000,000 people. The *New York Times* conveyed the meaning that Christian pig farmers do a valuable service to the rest of Cairo that will be recognized only if they stop picking up the trash; yet, even the 'garbage' component was told within a religion-based context and a divisive tone of "our [Christians]" and "their [Muslims]," which was used by Mr. Marcos Shalab, another Christian pig farmer, who was quoted saying: "If they take away our pigs, why would we go collect their garbage every morning?"

Cairo as a city was established by Muslims. There was no Cairo prior to the Muslim Caliphate in Egypt, and centuries of Islamic history have been stored in this city, but the article depicts Cairo through Mr. Girgis's eyes as a city that relies on pigs, despite that Islam considers pigs as cursed animals and prohibits eating their meat: "[This] city relies on us to process its waste. It relies on the pigs." The myth goes on to

include the Muslim side as well when the article quotes an Egyptian average Muslim commenting on the H1N1 virus, swine animal, and eating pork: "Now we know there is a reason God bans pigs: they spread sickness." Egyptian government said that killing pigs was not more than "a general health measure." The Agriculture Ministry's head of infectious diseases, Saber Abdel Aziz Galal, explained that the cull "is good to restructure this kind of breeding in good farms, not on rubbish." The article reports that many of Cairo's pig farmers live in similar conditions of Mr. Girgis, sharing their small houses in the crowded city with their animals. "We will build new farms in special areas, like in Europe," Mr. Galal said. "Within two years the pigs will return, but we need first to build new farms."

Instead of trying to find someone to comment on the Egyptian official, or at least to check the history of other similar cases that could be cited as evidence, the *New York Times* chose to conclude its report from Cairo with an ungrounded statement that Egyptian government does not fulfill promises when it comes to issues related to Christians. The daily said: "It remains unclear if the government will compensate the farmers for their losses. The Health Ministry originally said the farmers would be paid, but after many in Parliament disagreed, the ministry appeared to back down."

CONCLUSION

In its May 1, 2009, article titled, "Culling Pigs in Flu Fight, Egypt Anger Herders and Dismays U.N.," the *New York Times* used frames that correlate the 2009 influenza A with the swine animal. But in the same day, the *New York Times* ran another story in which the daily admitted that the swine-free frame H1N1 is "less loaded" with any subjective meaning and "more scientific" than any other term. The story titled, "W.H.O Gives Virus a Name That's More Scientific and Less Loaded," depicted how the U.N. organization made a move toward using the H1N1 term rather than any swine-related frame: "[The] "S word" had been banned: A sentence in a box at the very top of the home page of the World Health Organization said, 'From today, W.H.O will refer to the new influenza virus as influenza A (H1N1),'" and the CDC followed the W.H.O approach: "Officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have also started to shun the word 'swine.'"

In a world without meaning, which is a framing effect and thus value-based, we would not make choices, because the very concept of choice, which is its value, would not be available to us. In other words, we can choose, but we cannot choose our choices (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 6). Text deconstruction is a method that focuses on a truth or center to provide meaning. Western philosophy is dependent on a center through sets of binary pairs that make meaning rather than being polar opposites, each is dependent on the other for meaning and (we might say) existence. In all binaries, one of the terms is always subordinated to the other, man/woman, good/evil, and in our specific case about the *New York Times* reporting on the 2009 influenza A in Egypt, Christianity/Islam. Meaning is to differ and defer, and the binary speech/writing provides a guarantee of subjectivity that constantly slips from one sign to the next. Signifiers do not produce signs; they merely put them in an endless chain of signification, where in this case study, the *New York Times* used the word pig: 24 times, swine: 4, pork: 2, against only one time for the scientific, pig-free frame of H1N1. Language works like a dictionary where, when you look up a word, you get other words that provide meaning. If you keep looking up those words, you will ultimately come back to the word you started with, just like a closed loop of meaning. In the case considered by this study, the *New York Times* used the three different words: pig, swine, and pork in a chain of signs that refers to the meaning that Muslims do not consume pork, and to draw the image that killing pigs in Egypt is an oppression to the Christian belief in that country.

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