Islamophobia, Years After 9/11: An Assessment of the American Media

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Abstract : This study seeks to find the extent to which the old Islamophobic prejudice was tilted towards a more negative direction in the United States following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It is hypothesized that, the 9/11 attacks in the United States reshaped the old Islamophobic prejudice through the reinforcement of a strong social identity construction of Muslims as "out-group". The "social identity" and "discourse representation" theories are used as framework for analysis. To test the hypothesis, two categories were created: the prejudice (out-group) and the tolerance (in-group) categories. The Prejudice (out-group) against Muslims category was coded to include six attributes: (Terrorist, Threat, Women's Rights violation, Undemocratic, Backward and Intolerant); while the tolerance (In-group) for Muslims category was also coded to include six attributes: (Peaceful, civilized, educated, partners trustworthy and honest). Data are generated from the archives of three American newspapers: The Los Angeles Times, New York Times and USA Today using specific search terms and specific date range; from 9/11/1996 to 9/11/2006, that is five years before and five years after the 9/11. An aggregate of 20595 articles were generated from the search of the three newspapers throughout the search periods. Conclusively, for both pre and post 9/11 periods, the articles generated under the category of prejudice (out-group) against Muslims revealed a higher frequency, against that of tolerance (in-group) for them, which is lesser. Finally, The comparison between the pre and post 9/11 periods showed that, the increased Prejudice (out-group) against Muslims was most influenced through libeling them as terrorist, which signaled a skyrocketed increase from pre to post 9/11.
Keywords : in-group, Islam, Islamophobia, Muslims, out-group, prejudice, terrorism, the 9/11 and tolerance
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