

Viewing the World through Oprah's Eyes:
A Framing Analysis of the Spiritual Views of Oprah Winfrey

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Abstract

Oprah Winfrey is an American icon. She has a hand in almost every form of media: movies, television, books, Internet, and radio. In her rise to success, another place that she has infiltrated is the church. Because of her wide range of influence, her thoughts and teaching on spirituality have made their way into both the home and church. Over ten years ago, talk shows had a reputation for portraying mainly negative topics. To combat this stereotype, she made a push to encourage more positive topics of discussion on her show. Yet after receiving criticism for “preaching,” she withdrew from spiritually natured shows. However, in the last couple of years, her shows have again seen more focus on spirituality. While Winfrey has been both praised and criticized for these spiritual views, there has not been much written about what these views actually are. There has also been virtually no study to compare her views of ten years ago to the more recent views. Therefore, this thesis uses Erving Goffman’s framing analysis to extract the frames she presents on spirituality on her talk show, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. The frames will be identified in the empirical approach of media packaging. Media packaging attempts to identify within a text the framing devices that compose a frame. These framing devices are: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images. The identification and comparison of her frames on spirituality will provide a better insight into the person, Oprah Winfrey, and what she believes.

Key Words: Oprah Winfrey, Oprah Winfrey Show, Spirituality, Framing Analysis, Day-Time Talk Show, Media Package

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Where are Americans learning their views of spirituality? Perhaps many would say the church or home. However, Shanahan & Morgan point to the television: “Thus, knowing how television discusses an issue is always a good clue to knowing how society at large sees the issue” (105). One of the main figures on television who is most popular for promoting her views on spirituality is Oprah Winfrey. It was said of Oprah Winfrey that “She has a platform to talk about things of the spirit that many religious leaders would die for...” (Nelson, 1). Throughout the history of her talk show, The Oprah Winfrey Show, Winfrey has had the platform to discuss her own form of spirituality. And millions of Americans and people across the world have been listening (“400 Richest Americans”). Although there has been much discussion of the views Winfrey possesses, there needs to be a further analysis of what exactly these views are and how she is presenting them to the world. The purpose of this study is to utilize Erving Goffman’s framing theory to examine Winfrey’s views.

Oprah’s Influence

Oprah Winfrey’s influence can be described in various ways. Her influence can be described in terms of numbers. Her television show, The Oprah Winfrey Show, reaches more than 6 million viewers in America, currently ranking fifth among syndicated shows (“Top TV Ratings”). Across the globe, her show reaches over 46 million people, in 141 countries (“400 Richest Americans”). According to Forbes, as of September of 2008, her net worth has increased to \$2.7 billion. She has also raised over \$80 million in donations for charitable work through her Angel Network (“About Us”).

Her influence can also be described in terms of her accomplishments. Oprah has created what some would call an empire (Harris & Watson vii; Nelson vii). She has been involved in almost every form of media. In 1986, Oprah started her own production company, Harpo Productions (Timberg 138). She has acted in and produced movies. She began her monthly book club in 1996 (Garson 67) and the philanthropic Angel Network in 1997 (Westen 95). Also, her O Magazine has had one of the most successful startups in the industry (Sellers). In addition to all of this, Oprah has launched a restaurant (Westen 80), an XM radio station, and a very successful website (www.oprah.com). In 2009, the Discovery Health Channel will be replaced by the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN) and be distributed in over 70 million homes in the United States (“The Oprah Winfrey Network”).

The number of superlatives used to describe Winfrey are enough to demonstrate the extensive influence that she has had on the country and the world. The Oprah Winfrey Show has been the most watched talk show for over twenty years (“Oprah Winfrey's Biography: Television Pioneer”). She was the first in many areas, such as the first African American billionaire (Garson 37) and the first African American to be listed on Business Week's Annual Ranking of “America’s Top Philanthropists” (“Oprah Winfrey Debuts”).

Finally, what others say about Oprah give insight to her great influence. In her book, Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery, Eva Illouz states:

In the realm of popular culture, Oprah Winfrey is one of the most important American cultural phenomena of the second half of the twentieth century, if we measure ‘importance’ by her visibility, the size of the fortune she has managed to

amass in one decade, the size of her daily audience, the number of imitations she has generated, the innovativeness of her show, and her impact on various aspects of American culture –an effect that some have called, somewhat derogatively, the “Oprahization of culture.” (3)

In her biography about Winfrey, Helen S. Garson states: “Oprah’s appeal crosses racial lines everywhere. It seems as if much of the world and all of America recalls something about her, perhaps more than we do of historic figures, current politicians, scholars, artists, or composers” (1-2). Finally, Harris and Watson state in their book, The Oprah Phenomenon: “Winfrey positioned herself at the head of a vast cultural empire and then convinced everybody to confirm that she’d done so. A discussion of Oprah Winfrey nearly always begins with hyperbole.”

In her empire, she is queen. Her words not only influence people’s thoughts, but change them. She is able to do this through her ability to reach audience members and connect with them. It has been said that Oprah has the gift of talking to millions of viewers as if she speaking to each of them personally (Harris & Watson vii). Deborah Tannen, a professor of linguistics at Georgetown University stated, “Oprah exhorts viewers to improve their lives and the world. She makes people care because she cares. That is Oprah Winfrey’s genius and will be her legacy” (qtd. in Kay 55). Tannen also claims that Americans have an obvious trust in Oprah and her perspective (Palmer-Mehta 67). Marcia Z. Nelson claimed that through her many media, Oprah has the “scope and stature of an influential leader” (vii). She goes on to say that Oprah’s “reach is positively tenacular, touching people about so many things in so many different ways over twenty years” (vii).

Oprah's influence is undeniable. It is apparent that Oprah is "one of the most influential media figures in the world" (Taylor 40). Over the years, her life and words have shaped the thoughts of countless people. Her influence spans a variety of issues, including: family issues, moral issues, spiritual issues, and even lifestyle choices. Because of her popularity and influence, she has received both praise and criticism. One of the most criticized areas of her life are her spiritual and religious views.

Criticism of Oprah has arisen mainly from Christian organizations and authors. The website, entitled "The Gospel According to Oprah," attempts to show the inerrancies and fallacies in her religious views. This website is sponsored by the Christian organization Watchman Fellowship and hosted by the blogging tool Word Press. The book, Don't Drink the Kool-Aid: Oprah, Obama, and the Occult, by Carrington Steele criticizes the New Age philosophy Oprah has instilled in what she presents to viewers. Even her former pastor, Jeremy Wright, has spoken out against Oprah's form of spirituality (qtd. in Taylor 45-6). Oprah's brand of spirituality is unique and it is gaining popularity in America. Because of her wide influence, her words and views deserve a closer look.

Research Questions

There is no doubt the Oprah's ideological influence is far reaching and spans a number of issues. This study will focus on one of the most foundational issues in life: spirituality. Shoemaker and Reese state: "Media content is the basis of media impact" (23). Studying the content of media provides insight into the underlying forces of those who produce the content. There is no doubt that television has the power to influence its audiences. The powerful influence of both Oprah and the medium she uses, television,

indicate that Oprah's audiences are greatly being shaped. The study of the content of several of her shows will provide some indication of the impact of the show on its audience (Shoemaker & Reese 23).

To see how Oprah is impacting American society, it is foundational that the content of her show be studied. Winfrey's own words, mediated through her television show will provide the data to be researched. Using framing analysis, this study will attempt to discover how Oprah frames the issues of spirituality on her talk show.

Although spirituality and religion are often used interchangeably, this study focuses on Winfrey's frames of spirituality. According to Tisdell, spirituality encompasses religion (28). Therefore, the term "spirituality" will be used to encompass Winfrey's views of spirituality and religion.

Throughout the history of her talk show, her audiences have viewed the rise and decline of spiritually focused shows. Because of the poor reputation talk shows received due to their over-sensationalism, Winfrey decided to change the direction of her show (Abt & Seesholtz 176; Westen 90). In 1995, she changed the format of her show to focus on more positive themes, including many that dealt with spiritual issues (Garson 47; Weston 90). In 1998, she introduced the segment, "Remembering Your Spirit" (McGrath 131-3; Taylor 42). However, after much criticism from the public, Winfrey decided to remove spiritual material from her shows. In 2002, "Remembering Your Spirit" was dropped and the New Age guests stopped making appearances (McGrath 141-2). In examining the themes of the shows transcripts over the last ten years, the drop in spiritually themed shows is apparent. However, it was also evident that recently there has been a slight resurgence in shows dealing with spiritual issues. Such a timeline of events

only adds to the interest of studying the topic of spirituality. Therefore, it should be of some interest whether Winfrey's presentation of spiritual issues has changed with the recent reintroduction of spiritual shows.

The primary research question to be answered is: What frames does Oprah Winfrey use to present her views on spirituality? Also, in light of the resurgence of spiritual shows in the last few years, the researcher will attempt to also answer the question: How do the current frames of spirituality presented on the show compare to those presented ten years ago?

The originator of frame analysis, Erving Goffman, defined a frame as the "schemata of interpretation" that enables people "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" (qtd. in Gamson 143). Gamson claimed that frames give meaning to events by providing a central idea or story line (Gamson 143). Goffman's view of framing can be looked at through the metaphor of the frame of a house or building. Like a house's frame gives the building its structure, the frame of a story is the central idea on which the story is built (Tankard, 99). Another view of framing is that the construction of frames can "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" (Entman "Toward" 52). One of the most popular studies of framing theory was done by Robert Entman. He defined how frames were produced:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." (italics in original, "Toward" 52)

Joseph Cappella and Kathleen Jamieson stated the importance of discovering these frames: “Frames not only make the interpretations possible but they also alter the kinds of inferences made” (42). This study will attempt to extract the frames that allow interpretation of Oprah’s views on spirituality. Other areas that will be examined will be how she promotes certain spiritual definitions. This in turn can lead to how certain interpretation, evaluation, and treatment of her spiritual issues are made. Comparing the two time periods will provide the answer to see if her views on spirituality have changed over time. The data should identify whether her current views are consistent or inconsistent with the ones she promoted ten years ago.

Researchers have often applied the “framing analysis” method to news broadcasts in order to determine how newscasters frame issues and how those frames shape the way people view certain issues. Some of the researcher’s same methods will be used to discover the construction of frames that are present in Oprah’s television show. The focus will be on the values and facts that are stressed in regard to the issues of spirituality. Therefore, only shows that focus on spiritual issues will be used. A thorough inductive analysis of ten transcripts, five current and five older, will be done in order to extract the frames. The frames will be represented as a “media package.” Essentially,

Such a package consists of all indicators or framing devices by which the frame can be identified: metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, lexical choices, selection of sources, graphics, stereotypes, dramatic characters, etc. (Van Gorp 486)

A frame can be better understood through the use of these framing devices. The frames will then be clustered and organized to give a better overall understanding of Winfrey's usage of frames. Finally, the extracted frames from both past and present shows will be examined for similarities and differences.

Primarily, it is important to note the limitations of the researcher in the completion of this study. These limitations mainly relate to the issue of objectivity. Objectivity for any researcher is difficult to attain. The first step, however, is realizing one's own limitations in reaching that full objectivity. In noting one's limitation, one can attempt to avoid succumbing to them. Both a limitation and strength for interpreting the results of this study will be the researcher's own religious background.

As a Christian attending a Christian university, there is the probability of this perspective skewing the interpretation of the data towards that Christian bias. However, the intention of this study is to provide a clear view of Winfrey's overall frame of spirituality. The aim is not to compare her views against those of the Christian religion. The research will contain a criticism of her views, in which her views will be analyzed for any discrepancies or internal contradictions. The frames of both time periods will also be compared and conclusions will be drawn. The study will conclude with a criticism of her frames that will be influenced by the researcher's personal background.

Contribution to the Academic Community

"Embodied in Oprah Winfrey, and all she has wrought, are all the major themes of contemporary American life: race, gender, and consumerism; celebrity, power, and self-righteousness; optimism, jingoism, and altruism" (Harris and Watson viii). Oprah is a unique figure in American history and arguably one of the most famous communicators

of our time. The scope of Oprah's influence makes her worthy of study. As someone who makes her living through communication, her methods of employing communication warrant study. Although her life has been a popular topic of study, her words and the influence of those words have been commonly ignored.

Framing theory has gained popularity since its introduction as a tool for understanding the way messages are communicated. An understanding of the theory will lend itself to the understanding of communication. Although the framing theory has been previously applied mainly to the news format, it is the hope of the researcher to apply this theory to genre outside of the news. The application of the theory to a new genre could impact its heuristic value.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to complete an analysis of Winfrey's framing of spiritual issues, there must be an in-depth understanding of the components that make up the study. First, there are many elements that make up the person, Oprah Winfrey, including her background, her career and industry, and her personal life. Winfrey has been a very influential figure in the television industry, therefore her impact on society, day-time talk shows, and academic research warrant further scrutiny. Finally, there must be an overall understanding of the background and uses of Goffman's framing theory. Framing theory has been provided a basis for much of the research applied to the news and journalism. Throughout the years, it has taken on new forms and many approaches and applications to the theory have been developed.

The Person, Oprah Winfrey

Background

Most people know of Oprah's humble beginnings. She was born January, 29, 1954 in Kosciusko, Mississippi. Although her name was intended to be the Biblical "Orpah," two letters were switched and Oprah had a name that would one day be recognized across the world (Garson 12; Taylor 40; Timberg 134-5; Westen 14). A product of a one-night stand, Oprah never lived in a household with both parents (Timberg 134). Until the age seven, Oprah lived with her grandmother on a farm in rural Mississippi. Due much to the Baptist teaching of her grandmother, Oprah knew that she wanted to have a great impact in order to help others (Taylor 40). Because the financial burden of raising Oprah was too much for her grandmother, Oprah went to live with her father in Nashville. It was not but a year before she moved to Milwaukee to be with her

mother. During this time, Oprah started to live the life of a wild teenager. She attributes this rough time in her life as the result of her being raped at age nine and sexually abused by family members (Garson 22; Harris & Watson 4; Taylor 40-1; Timberg 134; Westen 24-9).

At age fourteen, Oprah's mother thought it would be best for Oprah to live with her father in Nashville again (Garson 29; Taylor 41; Timberg 134). Shortly after her arrival there, Oprah gave birth to a baby boy. The child did not survive (Taylor 41; Westen, 30). Under the new strict supervision of her father and stepmother, Oprah started to excel academically (Timberg 135; Westen 33). High school is also where her career in broadcasting began. Oprah worked at a local Black radio station in high school; so the transition to a position at a local CBS affiliate near her college at Tennessee State was smooth (Garson 31-2; Timberg 135-6).

Early Career – Rise to fame

At the beginning of her career in journalism, Winfrey looked to Barbara Walters as a role model (Harris & Watson 4; Timberg 134). She decided not to finish her degree and took an anchor job in Baltimore at 22 (Taylor 41; Weston 45-6). Although she struggled with the formality of this anchor position, she thrived in her new position on the local morning talk show, People Are Talking (Garson 48; Harris & Watson 4; Lawrence viii; Timberg 135). Over the next seven years, Oprah began to build her ratings. In 1984, her former producer, Debra DiMaio, moved to Chicago and showed Oprah's audition tape to her WLS station manager. At that time, Phil Donahue was the leader in the day-time talk show arena. The station manager, Dennis Swanson, took a closer look

and noticed that Oprah's ratings were higher than Donahue's in Baltimore so he offered her a job (Timberg 137).

So in 1984, Oprah moved to Chicago to host a local talk show (Garson 34; Harris & Watson 4; Taylor 41; Timberg 137). Soon, she had overtaken Donahue in the ratings in Chicago. The show, previously a 30-minute show named A.M. Chicago, took on a new time and a new name. The new one-hour show was now entitled The Oprah Winfrey Show. In the fall of 1986, the show was nationally syndicated (Lawrence viii; Timberg 137-8). In a short time, Oprah's show was the top-ranked day-time talk show (Garson 35; Harris & Watson 4; Lawrence iii). Replacing the king of day-time talk was quite an achievement for this young African American woman.

The Oprah Industry

The year 1986 was a big year for Ms. Winfrey. That year, marked her entry into the world of acting, portraying the character of Sophia in Alice Walker's The Color Purple. Although she did not win, Oprah received an Academy Award nomination for the role (Timberg 138; Westen 67). Also in 1986, Oprah started Harpo Productions and her show went national. Harpo Productions "was designed to produce films and television shows devoted to African American themes" (Timberg 138). Winfrey loved the entertainment value of movies, immediately buying the rights to African American books, including Toni Morrison's novel, Beloved (Garson,18; Westen 74). In 1987, Oprah won her first Emmy and completed her degree from Tennessee State (Westen 74-6). From there, her ratings, and the number of her awards only grew (Garson 35).

In 1994, The Oprah Winfrey Show underwent a transformation. Around this time, talk shows had gained a reputation for being over-sensationalized or trashy (Abt &

Seesholtz 176; Westen 90). “I am embarrassed by how far over the line [talk show] topics have gone, but I also recognized my own contribution to this,” Oprah said (Westen 90). So she decided to focus the show on more positive things that would uplift the spirit (Garson 47; Westen 90). With this shift, Oprah also decided to start an on-air reading club, which she called “Oprah’s Book Club.” The book she picked would inevitably fly off the shelves and become a best seller (Garson 67-8; Harris & Watson 23; Westen 90-1). The New York Times Magazine called this the “Oprah effect.” She has been cited as saving the written word (Peck 143-4). In the 90s Winfrey also started the Angel Network and launched her successful website, www.oprah.com (Garson 39; Westen 100). The beginning of the twenty first century was also the beginning for many new Oprah projects. One was the plan for a women’s cable network called Oxygen (Garon 39). She also started O—The Oprah Magazine, which had the most successful start-up in publishing history (Sellers; Westen 102)

Oprah’s Philanthropy

One of the things that Oprah Winfrey is best known for is her philanthropic work. Almost as soon as she started making money, she started giving. Much of her early giving focused on education. Upon graduating from Tennessee State, she donated ten scholarships to the school (Westen 76). In 1989, she also established the Oprah Winfrey Endowment Scholarship Fund for students in need (Westen 80). Since then, her giving has grown greatly. Oprah founded the Angel Network in 1997. She saw this as a practical way for viewers to give their money to worthy causes. Some of these causes included scholarship funds, Habitat for Humanity and the Use Your Life Awards (Nelson xii). By 2004, she had raised nearly \$20 million for more than 100 charities.

Areas of Scrutiny

It is said that Oprah “broke the color line in TV talk” (Timberg 140). From the onset of her career in broadcasting, Oprah has had to face the issue of being defined by her race. In Baltimore, she was told that her hair was too thick and that her nose was too wide (Timberg 136). When she started to gain national attention, race was the focus of countless news stories and interviews. Remarks and comments about Oprah’s race ranged everywhere from the crude and racial to the respectful and professional (Harris & Watson 15; Timberg 138). When questioned on how she was able to succeed in the White dominated press, she replied: “I’ve been able to do it because my race and gender have never been an issue for me. I’ve been blessed in knowing who I am, and I am part of a great legacy” (Timberg 138-9). Winfrey also takes pride in her race, saying, “People see me and they see that I am Black. That’s something I celebrate” (Brummett & Bowers 180).

Another issue that has always been under the scrutiny of the press is Oprah’s weight. Throughout the years, Winfrey’s weight has fluctuated. It has not only been a focus of the press, but of many of her shows. Often times, Oprah would lose a considerable amount of weight only to gain it back. The press have often been unkind in their portrayal of her struggle (Garson 112). Fitness trainer, Bob Greene, helped Oprah realize her emotional dependency on food (Garson 48). She is admired by women for her imperfect image and normal body. Also to many women, Oprah has been an inspiration to achieving personal goals and living a more healthy life (Garson 115).

Although Winfrey has been open about most areas in her life, she has always been more reserved when it comes to disclosing her romantic life (Harris & Watson 6). In

1986, she met and started dating Stedham Graham, founder of the nonprofit organization Athletes Against Drugs (Westen 71). They were engaged for a brief time in 1992, but broke it off before the scheduled wedding date of September 2003 (Garson 96; Westen 88-9). Shortly after, she made clear that she had no intentions or desire to have children. Oprah claims that she would not be a good mother and that not having children has freed her to nurture other children in places like Africa (Garson 97). Despite rumors over the years, Oprah and Graham have never married but still continue to be involved in a committed relationship (Garson 97).

Oprah's Impact

LaTonya Taylor, in an article in *Christianity Today*, said that Oprah “has permeated the way we think about culture and interpersonal communication” (40). The impact of Oprah Winfrey has touched individuals, society and the media. Many have commented on the reasons as to why Oprah is so popular among so many women. Jennifer Harris and Elwood Watson say that Oprah combines her training in journalism with her flair of entertainment (5). She also knows how to use her language to set the tone of most situations. She can range from the serious and formal to the playful and friendly. By doing this, she is able to gain a sort of intimacy with her audience (Haag 119; Harris & Watson 6). Oprah also achieves this intimacy through her transparency. She is comfortable sharing her past experiences, her insecurities, and her struggles. Audience members are able to relate to her on many levels because of her generous amount of self-disclosure (Harris & Watson 6). She also gains intimacy through her nonverbals, like touch and maintained eye contact (Haag 119). Her responses to people and their stories are seemingly genuine and people feel like they get to know the true

Oprah. Phil Rosenthal states: “We accept her not because she has answers. She clearly doesn’t. We embrace her because she has become a multimedia brand name and a multimillionaire icon despite her obvious failings and all-too-apparent insecurities” (“The Church”).

There have been claims that Oprah has an “omnipresence” in American culture (Harris & Watson 7). The name of Oprah is not only a household name but it is used to describe her widespread fame and her ability to influence. New terms in journalism have emerged, like “Oprahization,” the “Oprah effect,” the “Oprah factor,” and “Poprah” (Harris & Watson 10). In 1991, Oprah Winfrey promoted the National Child Protection Act. The bill became known as the “Oprah bill” and was signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1993 (Lawrence ix; Taylor 42; Westen 84). Oprah’s words are considered by some to be influential enough to trigger a \$12 million dollar lawsuit between Oprah and Texas cattlemen. The Texas cattleman accused Oprah of slowing the American beef industry due to remarks on her show stating she would never eat another hamburger (Garson 108; Westen 92). Many in the nation turned to the comforting words of Oprah after the tragedy of September 11 (Garson 41; Nelson vii, Taylor 39). Even President George W. Bush sought the help of Oprah to represent America in a delegation tour in Afghanistan in 2002 (Harris & Watson 1). Oprah’s influence has spread not only in culture, but also research.

Oprah and Spirituality

Religious Background

Because religion and faith are so deeply rooted in Oprah’s personal life, it is often a focus on episodes of her television show. On her grandmother’s farm, Oprah learned

Biblical lessons of God and faith. Without many friends to play with, Oprah spent her time reading Bible stories to animals on the farm (Taylor 40). Oprah's love for the church carried into the time she spent with her father. Her father, Vernon Winfrey, was an active member of Progressive Missionary Baptist Church. As a result, much of the time that Oprah lived with her father was spent at church or at church related events. She even received the nickname "Preacher Woman from the children at school." Despite the troubled teenage years Oprah spent with her mother, she thrived when she returned to the structure of the church. In her teen years, Oprah organized several church presentations, was a member of the choir, and spoke to the teens of local Nashville churches (Taylor 41). In her adult years, she started attending the Trinity United Church of Christ upon moving to Chicago in 1984, but stopped attending the church in the mid-1990s (Samuels 8).

Spiritual Nature of The Oprah Winfrey Show

Martin states that "we are more likely to associate Oprah Winfrey with spirituality than with religion" (150). Even in her show's early stages, many of the episodes have centered on spiritual matters. When The Oprah Winfrey Show changed directions in 1995, spirit-themed episodes became even more prominent. In 1998, Oprah introduced the segment, "Remembering Your Spirit" (McGrath 131-3; Taylor 42). Often times, Oprah has referred to her show as "her ministry" (Taylor 42). In this ministry, her personal and professional choices are now moral ones to which the audience holds her accountable (Illouz 124). According to McGrath, the guiding principles of her show are now spiritual uplift, individual will, personal responsibility, and grand cosmic design (127). Martin also claims, "Winfrey's more subtle legacy will be her creation of and

commitment to a public spirituality that blends the historical, secular, and commercial dimensions” (161).

“Toward that end, she has consistently used a mix of New Age spirituality and popular psychology to promote self-help themes in which all viewers can engage” (Illouz 125). In this blend of religions, she promotes holism and the potentiality to achieve a higher self (McGrath 133-4). With holism, Oprah is able to accommodate all viewers’ religions, without having to align herself with any particular one. Martin claims that Oprah promotes a blend of African, African American, Eastern, and metaphysical philosophical and religious traditions (147). Despite this blend, Oprah still promotes cosmic consequence and is still able to hold her viewers to a high moral standard. Complimentary to this idea of holism, is the goal of the higher self and authentic selfhood. The possibility of self-transformation through a person’s own efforts give hope to many viewers (McGrath 134-7).

The guest appearances of New Age thinkers like Gary Zukav have helped promote this kind of thinking (McGrath 141; Taylor 43). A Harvard graduate and former member of the Green Beret, Gary Zukav’s first book was Dancing Wu Li Masters. This book explored subject like quantum physics and relativity, winning the American Book Award for Science. Perhaps his most famous book, The Seat of the Soul, taught readers how to achieve fulfillment through the “alignment of the personality and the soul” (“About Gary”). Oprah claimed this book to be her number one recommended book and “the most powerful book she has ever read” (McGrath 135). On the show Zukav, gave advice as to how to reach authentic selfhood and spiritual transformation (McGrath 135-

6). Many times, his advice centered on self empowerment and reaching one's full potential.

In 2002, the public saw a drop in spiritually themed shows. The segment "Remembering Your Spirit" disappeared. The New Age guests stopped making appearances. Dr. Phil, her main "psychospiritual" advisor, left to host his own show. Oprah's book club, often her platform for spiritual promotion, was terminated and then reintroduced in 2003. Spiritual promotion has not disappeared, just softened to a more entertainment and relationship focused show. Explicitly spiritual material can now be seen more on both her website and magazine (McGrath, 141-2). In Live Your Best Life: A Treasury of Wisdom, Wit, Advice, Interviews, and Inspiration from O, The Oprah Magazine, there is a section of various articles about spirituality. The focus of the first article is tapping into your spiritual energy (104-5) and another tells the story of how women of varying religions found bliss behind the walls of an abbey (108-14).

Today, much of her spiritual point of view can be found online. On Winfrey's website (www.oprah.com) there is a "Spirit" link on the home page. This link provides access to a wide variety of articles and tools. Some of the titles of links include: "Know Yourself," "Inspiration," "Emotional Health," and "Body Images." Spiritual advisors, like Marianne Williamson, Elizabeth Lesser, and Martha Beck have links on Oprah's site. Through this website, one can also gain access to Oprah's spirituality webcasts. Also available online is the site for the radio programming, Oprah and Friends. The programming can be accessed through XM radio, on the Oprah website, and through iTunes. The line up includes Oprah's Soul Series and interviews with Marianne Williamson and Elizabeth Lesser.

Spirituality in Her Own Words

Although Winfrey does not claim to be a New Age thinker (Watchman), her own statements on spirituality point to the fact that she is. Newport defines “New Age” as a “spiritual movement seeking to transform individuals and society through mystical union with a dynamic cosmos” (1). A common New Age belief is that “God is within you” (5). Winfrey has said, “I have church with myself: I have church walking down the street. I believe in the God force that lives inside all of us, and once you tap into that, you can do anything” (qtd. in Martin 148). Related to this idea was the quote in a 1988 issue of *Time*: “I am guided by a higher calling. It’s not so much a voice as it is a feeling. If it doesn’t feel right to me, I don’t do it” (Lawrence 106).

Another popular feature of New Age thinking is that in order to realize an individual’s Godhood, one must experience a transformation. This transformation is a path to self-realization and enlightenment (Newport 9). In a 2003 article in *Essence*, Winfrey said, “I feel tremendously powerful because I do believe I have reached a point in life where my personality is aligned with what my soul came to do. I believe you have to use your ego for a higher good” (Lawrence 109). In the *New York Times*, on November 8, 1998, she stated: “Spirit is not a religion; it’s just about what is really great about yourself and remembering to live that way” (Lawrence, 113). Finally, on Larry King Live 2003, Winfrey said:

“I think everybody has to figure out a way—I think the real job of your life is figuring out what is the job of your life. What is your calling? And I think everybody is called here to earth to do something special. I think there’s not a person born that doesn’t have a gift to offer in some way. And so, your job is not

just to do what your parents say, what your teachers say, what society says, but to figure out what your heart calling is and to be led by that.” (December 20, 2003; Lawrence, 115)

New Age thinkers also tend to blend religions and view them all as one (Newport 12). A popular exert from The Oprah Winfrey Show depicts her eclectic system of beliefs. In the show Oprah stated, “one of the biggest mistakes humans make is to believe that there is only one way. Actually, there are many diverse paths leading to what you call God.” In response to an audience member’s claim that Jesus is the only way, Oprah said, “There couldn’t possibly be only one way...Does God care about your heart or whether you called His Son Jesus?” (Steele 19). Martin identified five core concepts that form the basis of exploration of themes in Winfrey’s cultural production: faith, African spirituality, African humanism, Eastern spirituality, and metaphysical studies (147).

Despite implications of New Age beliefs, many of her words still reflect remnants of her Christian upbringing. “Faith sustains me, though. Faith that, no matter what, no matter how difficult life becomes, I’ll be okay” (qtd. in Martin 151). She was also quoted in the Baltimore Sun on July, 2001: “I didn’t know what the future held for me [in moving from Baltimore to Chicago]. But I knew who held the future” (Lawrence 108). Finally, the Associated Press quoted Winfrey as saying: “All that I am or will ever become is because of my spiritual foundation and my educational foundation. My life is a living testimony to what God can do with a human being” (Lawrence 110).

Others on Winfrey's Spirituality

Because so much focus has been placed on the matter of spirituality, Oprah is said to have taken on a new role, the role of pastor in the “Church of O” (Taylor 39; Samuels 8). Senior Vice-President and Media Director at the advertising firm of Luckie and Co., Linda Rountree says, “I don’t think she’s evangelical in terms of a particular religious sect...It’s more of a self-help, self confidence type thing without having necessarily religious overtones, per se” (qtd. in Illouz 125). McGrath states, “...yet, by making psychologically framed spirituality (with Christian inflections) the core of each show, at the end of the twentieth century, Winfrey transformed herself into the television queen of New Age awareness” (127).

Some criticize Oprah’s role in promoting a “New Age” philosophy (Harris & Watson 21; Steele 18-20). Her former pastor, Jeremiah Wright, has openly spoken out about Winfrey’s abandonment of the foundational principles of the church.

She now has this sort of ‘God is everywhere, God is in me, I don’t need to go to church, I don’t need to be part of a body of believers, I can meditate, I can do positive thinking’ spirituality. It’s a strange gospel. It has nothing to do with the church Jesus Christ founded. (qtd. in Taylor 45-6)

Carrington Steele, author of Don’t Drink the Kool-Aid: Oprah, Obama, and the Occult, wishes for Oprah to return to her Christian roots (73) rather than her present “mind sciences that are a vehicle for opening one up to spirit guides and various other occult philosophies” (20). Ultimately, in the article, “The Gospel According to Oprah,” Watchman Fellowship claim that Oprah is “deconstructing Christianity and reframing it into a New Age Perspective.”

On the other side, much of the public has embraced the message Oprah sends to viewers (Nelson xv-xix). Brenda McNeal is president and founder of Overflow Ministries in Chicago and former regional director of InterVarsity Christian Ministry. McNeal praises Oprah for her humanitarianism, but has reservations towards her spiritual beliefs, saying, “I think she has one of the most positive programs on television” (as cited in Taylor 42-3). In her book, The Gospel According to Oprah, Marcia Nelson says that Winfrey is both “a compelling and successful spiritual teacher.” She bases this conclusion not on Oprah’s beliefs, but her actions. Many Americans are spiritually hungry, and Oprah’s form of spirituality offers a hopeful, practical, and eclectic blend of beliefs (Taylor 45).

Previous Research

Both Winfrey and the television format in which she inhabits, have provided a rich avenue of research. The day-time talk show format has gone through a variety of stages and through this development, the research has developed as well. Despite, the unique its attributes as a form of mediated communication, the research done has been relatively small. Winfrey has provided researches with a wide variety of platforms of study. She has been the topic of book, magazine articles, and journal studies.

Day-Time Talk

In 1994, Vikci Abt and Mel Seesholtz authored the article, “The Shameless World of Phil, Sally and Oprah: Television Talk Shows and the Deconstructing of Society” in the Journal of Popular Culture. This article was an open criticism of the topics and content of day-time talk shows and the influence they were having on society. This was shortly before the format shift of the show in 1996. Abt and Seesholtz claimed:

“Television talk shows create audiences by breaking cultural values, by managed shocks, by shifting conceptions of what is acceptable, by eroding social barriers and cultural distinctions” (171).

Even though this article gained national attention, there has since not been much research on the topic of day-time talk shows. In the 2007 article “Political Correlates of Daytime Talk Show Viewing,” the authors found only 5 peer-reviewed journal articles in the Communication Abstracts database that used the search terms “television + daytime + talk show” (Glynn et al. 229). One focused on the facets of these shows and reaction shots of the audience. Davis and Owen studied the effects of these shows and found that there was evidence of an agenda-setting effect. They found that if a social problem is shown more frequently, then it is likely be perceived as an important issue. The issue may also be perceived as more serious (Davis & Owen 77-9). To follow up this study, Glynn et al. used the agenda-setting and cultivation perspectives to analyze the influence of daytime talk-shows on opinion formation. They found that the more people watch day-time talk shows and the more real they perceive these talk shows to be, the more they will support government involvement in social issues (240). “Overall, this study demonstrated that daytime talk show viewing can play a significant role in opinion formation” (242).

Although not mentioned by Glynn et al., there have been several other significant studies on the topic of day-time talk shows. In a 1999 study, “Class in Daytime Talk Television,” Beate Gersch evaluated the Oprah Winfrey and Rossie O'Donnell shows in an attempt to discover the political-economic structures of the shows. Gersch found, “Even though talk shows provide a public sphere for women, these women may still be

exploited by the way the shows, and more generally the media, are structured by economic interests” (278). In 1999, Cornelia Illie attempted to uncover the unique discursive and linguistic forms that occur in day-time talk shows. She used texts from both The Oprah Winfrey Show and The Geraldo Rivera Show to confirm that day-time talk shows exhibit the dual features of conversation and institutional discourse (209-10). In the 2005 article, “Talking the Vote: Why Presidential Candidates Hit the Talk Show Circuit,” Matthew Baum found that, “Politically unaware Americans who watched daytime talk shows, considered the opposition party candidate more likeable, and consequently were much more likely to cross party lines, than their counterparts who did not” (230).

Oprah, Previous Research

Because of her wide appeal and influence, a number of books and articles have been written about Oprah Winfrey since her rise to fame. Although Winfrey has not collaborated on or written an autobiography, there have been numerous biographies that have attempted to shine some light on the story of Oprah Winfrey. Other books have turned their focus to more specific topics concerning Oprah, in attempts to delve deeper. One such is Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery: an Essay on Popular Culture by Eva Illouz. She claims “...as a text The Oprah Winfrey Show is inseparable from the set of intentions Oprah Winfrey tries to deliver to her viewers” (7). In her study, Illouz attempts to “clarify the historical and cultural meanings that the persona of Oprah Winfrey and her show incarnate,” “understand the moral enterprise of Oprah Winfrey in the context of a social order,” and “critique of the moral and therapeutic role that Oprah Winfrey has assumed” (8). In The Gospel According to Oprah, Marcia Nelson explores

the reasons that Oprah is a successful and compelling spiritual leader. She sites the following reasons: she is human, acknowledges suffering and wants to relieve it, provides community, promotes self-examination, teaches gratitude, makes things simple, listens, teaches generosity, explores forgiveness, and is a reminder service. Finally, in The Oprah Phenomenon, Harris and Watson compiled a set of essays on Oprah concerning her race, her television presence, and her book club and its effects.

Many of the peer-reviewed articles that focused on day-time talk shows used The Oprah Winfrey Show as one of the shows they analyzed. However, there have not been an abundance of studies done that specifically focus on Oprah or her talk show. Among the studies that do feature her, one focus is what has been called “Oprah effect.” Articles like “Toni Morrison, Oprah Winfrey, and Postmodern Popular Audiences” by John Young and “The Oprah Effect: Texts, Readers, and the Dialectic of Signification” by Janice Peck have explored the significant amount of influence that Oprah has had on the reading community through her book club. John R. Hill and Dolf Zillmann found that Oprah even affects the way the public views criminals. Their study found that because of the fact that the format of the Oprah show lends sympathy, viewers of her show were more sympathetic and therefore more lenient to criminal offenders that were able to give mitigating information (78-80).

Studies that focus on the analysis of the content, style, and construction of Oprah’s show are also found in the research. Laurie Haag showed that Oprah’s success was due to the “evolution of both her personal ‘legend’ and her accessible communication style” (115). She notes that Oprah’s style allows the audience to like her and feel intimate with her. This creates what researchers call a “para-social interaction,”

the feeling that viewers have a relationship with television personalities (115-20). Other studies have turned their focus to the ideologies promoted on The Oprah Winfrey Show. While some have taken a more general approach to the examination of the dialogue within the show (Dixon 171), others have taken a closer look at the spirituality promoted on her show (Parkins 145; Lofton 599). Parkins found “...that through their deployment of liberal, religious and therapeutic discourses, talk shows like Oprah reproduce the dominant ideology of ‘self-contained individualism’, on which American society is based” (146).

Framing Analysis

Background and Definitions

Erving Goffman’s work, Frame Analysis, set the foundation of the framing theory. He claimed the book was an “analysis of social reality” (2). Goffman’s premise in the book is that humans are guided by the intelligent doings of social forces (23). These social forces are the one’s responsible for creating frames. Goffman says that a frame “allows its user to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms” (21). In “Goffman’s Legacy to Political Sociology,” Gamson states: “Frame analysis is a ‘slogan’ for analyzing experience in terms of ‘principles of organization which govern events...and our subjective involvement in them’ (615). By Goffman’s own admission, his definitions of terms in the book are quite abstract (10). Therefore, there must be a dependency on the work of others and their interpretation of Goffman.

Since its introduction by Goffman, the theory has grown in popularity and “framing” has become a term widely used in communication research articles (Weaver

143). Because the term is so often used in everyday language and much of the research has defined it casually, framing began to take on an ambiguous definition. In an attempt to clear up some of the muddle, in 1993, Robert Entman wrote Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. In it, he proposed a more precise understanding of the term. He stated:

To frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described.” (italics in original, “Toward” 52)

He also said that framing served four functions: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies (“Bias” 164; “Toward” 52). Framing also occurs in four locations: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and culture.

Guided by frames, communicators can make conscious or unconscious decisions in constructing frames. The frames of texts are identified by the “presence or absence of certain words, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (“Toward” 52).

Finally, Entman believed that “culture is the stock of commonly invoked frames” (“Toward” 53).

Entman found that frames work by elevating the salience of certain aspects of issues. He defined salience as the ability to make a bit of information more “noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (“Toward” 53). Information becomes more salient through the use of repetition and association with culturally familiar symbols. Salience may also be increased by linking elements with a person’s existing schema.

Schema is defined as the “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information (“Toward” 53). Schema is commonly used interchangeably with terms like categories, scripts, or stereotypes. Entman cited the studies of Kaheman and Tversky (1984) and Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock (1991) as examples of framing research. Kaheman and Tversky’s study had respondents select one of two solutions in a hypothetical disease epidemic. When the wording of the two alternatives was changed, the selection of the solution also shifted dramatically. This was due to the way framing highlighted some features of the solutions while omitting others (“Toward” 53-4). Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock found that when the issue of AIDS was framed to accentuate civil liberties, the public was more in favor of the giving of rights to persons with AIDS (“Toward” 54).

Process: Three Stages

Scheufele claimed that the framing process could be broken down into three stages (306). These stages are: frame building, frame setting, and audience frames. Frame building focuses on factors that influence news makers’ selection and production of news. Insufficient research has been done to show how different factors influence the construction of the news. However, there are at least five factors that potentially influence journalist’s frames: social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, pressures of interest groups, journalistic routines, and ideological or political orientation (Scheufele “Agenda” 307; Scheufele “Framing” 115-6).

Frame setting studies how media stress certain facts and values to make an issue appear more relevant (Scheufele “Framing” 116). This can be studied through the manipulation of the media frame as the independent variable. However, this will further

be discussed later in the research (Scheufele “Agenda” 307). Finally, individual-level outcomes of framing examines how frames of social movements can influence the judgment of individuals and eventually gain their consensus (Scheufele “Agenda” 308). However, it is still unknown to what extent audiences adopt the frames of the media (Scheufele “Framing” 117).

Application to News and Journalism

Goffman’s framing analysis was not originally used to study the news. Yet now, framing theory has been limited mainly to the news and its affects on shaping political thought (Gamson “Goffman’s” 617). Framing is one of the central theories in the study of news and its influence on politics. This is perhaps due to the fact that framing can give power to some viewpoints and extinguish others (Entman 55). Van Gorp claims: “Media makers apply a range of persistent frames, and as such they possibly control the number of alternatives that are available to the receivers when they are constructing social reality” (“The Constructionist” 62). In a sense, news frames determine what is emphasized and what is excluded, presenting to the public a “packaged world” (Gamson “Goffman’s” 618). A frame connects a number of elements so that an audience can understand the situation as a whole. Therefore it is important to realize that media both provide information about an event and how it should be interpreted. So an “essential aspect of the framing process on the receiver side is that the frame provides a context within which the news message can be interpreted” (Van Gorp “The Constructionist” 65). Because the news provides the information people seek, it has the power to “circulate and shape knowledge” (Tuchman, 2).

It should be clear, however that a frame analysis is more than analyzing the message content to find how the media are representing a certain topic. Researchers should work to uncover how the frames of culture get embedded in media content and how the two work together with the schemata of the journalist and audience member (Van Gorp “The Constructionist” 61).

Because journalists must use frames, they in turn create unintentional bias, objectivity nearly impossible (McQuail 343). Even though the frames journalists create are not always intended, they can have great effects on a story’s interpretation. “The frame is a persuasive invitation, a stimulus, to read a news story in a particular way, so that a specific definition of an event, the causal and treatment responsibility for a societal topic, and a moral judgment of a person come more easily across the receiver’s mind” (Van Gorp “The Constructionist” 73).

There are several factors that contribute to why journalists use certain frames. Journalists may create a frame based on their belief systems but they may be unconscious of their selection of a frame. Shoemaker and Reese make the proposition: “Media workers’ personal attitudes affect the content they produce, contingent on their having the power sufficient to influence the production of content and the lack of a strong routine covering the task” (220). Journalists also create frames because of the influence of media routines, the nature of news organizations, and forces outside of the news organizations (Van Gorp “The Constructionist” 67-8). It is also important to consider that elites are concerned with the thoughts of the public because they want to maintain their power by dictating the behaviors of people (Entman “Bias” 165). Ultimately, the power in the media organization comes from the owner (Shoemaker & Reese 218).

Differences in Agenda Setting, Priming, and Framing

There has been a tendency in media research and discussion to blend or overlap the theories of agenda setting, priming, and framing. Yet, each theory does lend its own perspective and function and should therefore be used in the proper context. It will first be useful to define agenda setting and priming. Agenda setting studies examine how the importance media places on certain issues are translated into the importance people place on those issues (Van Gorp “The Constructionist” 70). McCombs, the founder of agenda setting, states: “This ability to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda has come to be called the agenda-setting role of the news media” (1). Further, he states: “The public uses these salience cues from the media to organize their own agendas and decide which issues are most important” (2). Priming’s emphasis is on political issues. It examines the influence of how these prominent issues determine the criteria people use to evaluate political issues (Van Gorp “The Constructionist” 70). Framing is “the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (Entman, “Bias” 164)

There is a common belief that a link exists between agenda setting, priming, and framing theories (Entman “Bias” 164; Scheufele “Agenda” 297; Weaver 142). McCombs argued that “framing is simply a more refined version of agenda setting” (qtd. in Dietram & Scheufele 15). Scheufele says framing is an extension of agenda setting because it has the ability to give greater relevance to an issue by stressing certain elements (“Agenda” 297-8). Yet Scheufele still asserts that agenda-setting and priming are different because they differ in their assumptions and premises (“Agenda” 298). Dietram and Scheufele

found that priming and agenda setting have an accessibility effect and framing has an applicability affect (15). To summarize these differences, Scheufele states:

Framing, in contrast, is based on the concept of prospect theory, that is, on the assumption that subtle changes in the wording of the description of a situation might affect how audience members interpret this situation. In other words, framing influence how audiences think about issues, not by making aspects of the issue more salient, but by invoking interpretive schemas that influence the interpretation of incoming information. Although the process of issue selection or agenda-setting by mass media necessarily needs to be a conscious one, framing is based on subtle nuances in wording and syntax that have most likely unintentional effects or at least effects that were hard to predict and control by journalists.

(“Agenda” 309)

Approaches

According to Pan Kosicki, there are two overall approaches to the study of framing (56). The first, sociological approach is the basis for what is known as the macroscopic approach (Dietram & Scheufele 12; Scheufele “Agenda” 300). This approach is many times linked to the Goffman’s research and attribution theory.

Goffman found that because people cannot fully make sense of the world around them, they use schemes of interpretation to interpret sensory information. These are known as “primary frameworks” (Dietram & Scheufele 11-2; Pan and Kosicki 56; Scheufele “Agenda” 301). Primary frameworks can be classified as natural or societal frames.

Natural frames are used to interpret natural caused events and societal frames to interpret

intentional human actions and events by locating, perceiving, identifying and labeling (Scheufele “Agenda” 301).

The second approach is the psychological or microscopic approach. This approach examines the individual’s way of processing and structuring information through frames (Dietram & Scheufele 11-2; Pan and Kosicki 56; Scheufele “Agenda” 301). Although it does not give a link to the influence of mass media on individual judgments and perceptions, it does give a possible link between stories of the mass media and individual’s frameworks that are used to interpret those stories (Scheufele “Agenda” 301).

Methods and Studies in Framing

“In recent years, framing theory has emerged from agenda-setting and cultivation theory as the most commonly applied research approach in the field of communication science” (Van Gorp “The Constructionist” 60). A search of studies using the term framing in the *Communication Abstract* yielded 2 articles between 1976-80; 76 in 1996-2000; and 165 between 2001 and 2005. This is significantly higher than the 40 articles on agenda setting in the 2001-2005 period (Weaver 143). It is unclear why framing has become so popular but some point to the fact that the term is somewhat ambiguous and yet comprehensive (Weaver 144).

Scheufele stated that the framing theory suffers from “theoretical and empirical vagueness” (“Framing” 103). To help bring clarity to framing research, he classified previous and future framing research along two dimensions:

1. Type of frame examined (media frames vs. audience frames)

2. The way frames are operationalized (independent variable or dependent variable)

Media frames give the essence and meaning of an issue through a providing an organizational idea to individual events (Scheufele “Framing” 106; Scheufele “Agenda” 306). On the other hand, individual or audience frames are used to guide individual’s processing of information. They do this by clustering ideas together that are related to a specific issue (Scheufele “Framing” 107; Scheufele “Agenda” 306).

Using the two dimensions, Scheufele created a four-cell typology to classify all studies of framing theory. His categories were with respect to: media frames as dependent variable, media frames as independent variable, individual frames as dependent variable, and individual frames as independent variable (“Framing” 108). When media frames are the dependent variable, the study focuses on the factors that influence the way journalists or other groups frame certain issues. Much of the research reflects the five factors that potentially influence journalist’s frames, which were previously discussed (Scheufele “Framing 108-9). When media frames are the independent variables, one should ask: “What kinds of media influence the audience’s perception of certain issues, and how does the process work?” (Scheufele “Framing 108) The research completed for this current study fell under this category.

In studies in which the individual frame was the dependent variable, the independent media frame was manipulated and the dependent variable was measured (Scheufele “Framing 112). These studies seek to find the factors that influence individual frames. They also seek to find if the individual frames are replications of media frames and how the audience member can “play an active role in constructing meaning or

resisting media frames” (Scheufele “Framing 108). Finally, individual frames as an independent variable lend results that should lead to relationship between individual frames and the individual perception of an issue (Scheufele “Framing 108).

Due to the vastness of topic of framing, researchers have approached its study from various angles. Some use a discourse analysis and others approach it from a more traditional approach to content analysis or empirical study. Still others employ the use quantitative methods (Van Gorp “The Constructionist” 71). Van Gorp suggested: “The strongly abstract nature of frames implies that quantitative research methods should be combined with the interpretive prospects of qualitative methods (“The Constructionist” 72). Although the quantitative method may be best for measuring media affects, it may not be the best for examining explicitly the stage of frame setting. Therefore, the researcher opted for an empirical analysis, which will be furthered discussed.

Empirical Approach to Framing Analysis

For the purpose of this study, it will be necessary to gather the needed data empirically in a textual analysis. In the book, Framing Public Life, James Tankard admitted that there was danger in this method if it was done arbitrarily or unsystematically (98). Therefore, there is a need to use an approach that is both systematic and empirical. Tankard provides three approaches to studying frames empirically: “multidimensional concept” approach, the “list of frames” approach, and the “media package” approach (99-100).

The first approach considers the various elements or dimensions of news stories that comprise the media frame. Tankard cited Swenson (1990) as looking at various dimensions such as the gender of the writer, placement of the articles, and terminology

used (100). The “list of frames” approach focused on how an issue was portrayed in the news through the identification of the framing mechanisms used throughout the text. First, an “expert” identified the frames and defined the frame in terms of specific keywords, catchphrases, and images. Coders were then responsible for the content analysis of the text through use of those definitions and identification of framing mechanisms. These framing devices were essentially the “focal points for identifying framing” (101). Tankard identified eleven framing mechanisms that include: headlines and kickers, photographs, photo captions, leads, sources, pull quotes, statistics, and concluding statements (101).

Although both previously discussed approaches have their merits, this study will employ the “media package” approach. This approach is often called the “constructionist” approach as well (Van Gorp “The Constructionist” 64). Frame packages are the identity kits for the frame that are made up of the clusters of logically organized devices (Van Gorp “The Constructionist” 64). The media package essentially sums up the key elements that compose a frame. Therefore, it contains both paraphrased material and quotes from the texts. It also contains keywords and the common language that would be used to identify a particular frame (Tankard 99). Gamson and Modigliani stated, “a package offers a number of different condensing symbols that suggest the core frame and positions in shorthand, making it possible to display the package as a whole with a deft metaphor, catchphrase or other symbolic device” (3). The specific framing devices that would be used to identify a frame are: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images (3).

Research Studies

Many researchers have used some form or elements of the media package methodology. Gamson and Lasch used the used this approach to identify the frames on welfare issues (398). Their study, “The Political Culture of Social Welfare Policy,” was published in the book, Evaluating the Welfare State: Social and Political Perspectives, edited by Shimon Spiro and Ephraim Yuchtman-Yaar. They examined materials related to the issue in books, journal articles, commentary, and sponsor material. Through their analysis, they were able to identify four packages and their signature elements that frame the issue related to welfare in the nation and what provisions should be made for welfare of the poor (402). These four frames that Gamson and Lasch identified were: welfare freeloaders, working poor, poverty trap, and regulating the poor (402-407). They were then presented with the question of what to do with their findings. They then hoped to assemble groups in order to discuss the influence of their findings (414-415).

Gamson and Modigliani’s (1989) study, “Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach,” was concerned with the issue of nuclear power (1). They recognized that public discourse in the media cannot be looked at in solitude and isolation. Public discourse must be looked at a set of discourses that interact with each other (2). In their research, Gamson and Modigliani were able to do in an in-depth analysis of the frames present in the nuclear power discourse. Like Gamson and Lasch, they extracted these media packages from a variety of media, like television coverage, newsmagazine articles, and cartoons (1). They believed that packages “have the task of constructing meaning over time” (4). Therefore, they used their study to analyze the frames of three chronological time periods of the nuclear power timeline.

Their conclusion was that opinions about nuclear power must be understood in the context of the current culture that is reflected and shaped by general audience media (35).

Pan and Kosicki (1993) went beyond the use of framing devices to assist in the identification of frames present in the media. Their study was titled “Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse.” In it, they provided a systematic method of interpretive textual analysis to analyze a newspaper article discussing the events of the abortion protest rally in Wichita, Kansas in 1991 (65). The story was coded and analyzed according to four categories: syntactical structure, script structure, thematic structure, and rhetorical structure (55). The rhetorical structure was essentially the identification of framing devices: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images (61). The process required meticulous work, because it required going through the story sentence by sentence to identify each of the four structural elements. The gathered information was charted in an easy identifiable manner (66-7). Pan and Kosicki saw their methodology as only a piece to a larger framework of understanding political discourse. Other elements like the social and cultural contexts were areas that they said warranted further and development and study (69).

In the article, “Where is the Frame? Victims and Intruders in the Belgian Press Coverage of the Asylum Issue,” Baldwin Van Gorp used a deductive approach to answer the question “to what extent the victim-frame and intruder-frame are used to cover the issue of asylum and illegal immigration” (Where 490). Having already identified the frames for analysis, Van Gorp used coders to identify the prevalence of these frames in the Belgian press. The coders were able to identify the frames through the use of identified framing and reasoning devices (Where 493). The framing devices were those

identified by Gamson and Lasch in the construction of a media package (Where 486). Although this study was a deductive analysis, Van Gorp still saw that frames could be identified as whole “packages” with the frame as the core framing idea.

Autumn Liller and Susan Dente Ross also employed the use of framing devices in their research of media frames. Their focus in the article, “They Are Not Us: Framing of American Indians by the Boston Globe,” was on the depiction of Indians in the 20th century media. They conducted a close textual analysis of 55 news, feature, and editorial articles in the Boston Globe. They assigned predefined frames to the stories. From those stories, they were able to identify the distinct traits that comprised the frame. Among these distinct traits were the use of framing devices: “exemplars, descriptions, language use, and organization” (251). In their results, they found that more than 80% of the stories included stereotypical or distorted depictions of American Indians (251).

Researchers may decide to use both a quantitative and qualitative approach to studying frames. This is what Zizi Papacharist and Maria de Fatima Oliveria did in their study, “News Frames Terrorism: A Comparative Analysis of Frames Employed in Terrorism Coverage in U.S. and U.K. Newspapers.” Their goal was to compare the media’s portrayal of terrorism in U.S. and U.K. newspapers after the events of 9/11. As previously stated, they did both a quantitative computerized content analysis and a qualitative discourse analysis. In the discourse analysis, the coder read over the articles over and over, looking for things that would identify the frames, such as: language use, tone, thematic tendencies, focus of the article, epithets, terms, and metaphors (61). Through the identification of these, they were able to analyze and categorize the present frames. Overall, their research discovered that American newspapers differed in their

coverage, episodic vs. thematic. They also discovered that U.S. papers were more concerned with a military solution, whereas U.K. papers focused more on a diplomatic one (52).

Joseph N. Cappella and Kathleen Jamieson saw a frame as “those rhetorical and stylistic choices, reliably identified in news” (39). In their book, Spiral of Cynicism: The Press and the Public Good, they attempted to discover the role that the media played in creating the public’s cynicism towards politics. Their assumption was that the frames the media used were a major contributing factor to this cynicism. Their research covered a broad span of studies to uncover the present frames in the media at that time. From their identification of frames, they were able to test their effects on subjects. They did this through altering components of the news story and recording the difference in responses of the subjects. They found the news frames did not create the cynicism but instead enforced existing beliefs and attitudes of cynicism.

It is apparent that extensive research studies have applied framing analysis. Also, throughout her career, Winfrey has provided rich material for researchers and authors to study. Therefore, a solid foundation of research has been set for a study of this nature. The application of the knowledge of framing analysis to the subject of Oprah Winfrey on The Oprah Winfrey Show provides the essential tools for a method of study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Questions

Scheufele claimed that framing “research should address framing from a more metatheoretical perspective. In other words, how can framing be used to broaden our understanding of media effects?” (“Framing” 104). To fully understand the effects of Winfrey’s frames, one must first be able to identify what those frames entail. Pan and Kosicki stated the basic idea of a framing analysis is “to view news 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” (55-56). Gamson believed that a frame gave meaning to events by proving a central idea or story line (Gamson “Talking” 143). Like a house’s frame gives the building its structure, the frame of a story is the central idea on which the story is built (Tankard 99). This study attempts to find the central frames on which Oprah Winfrey’s views of spirituality are built. Specifically, the research addressed the following questions:

RQ1: What frames does Oprah Winfrey use to present spiritual matters on The Oprah Winfrey Show?

A point of interest that would aid in the understanding of Winfrey’s use of frames was how those frames have evolved over the years. Therefore the other question that was addressed was:

RQ2: How do the spiritual frames of ten years ago compare with the current frames presented on The Oprah Winfrey Show?

Cappella and Jamieson concluded that “news frames are those rhetorical and stylistic choices, reliably identified in news, that alter the interpretations of the topics

treated and are a consistent part of the news environment” (39-40). Finding the frames used on The Oprah Winfrey Show required a methodology that would be able to identify the rhetorical and stylistic choices. This study was an empirical one, using the observation and study of texts to provide the data. Because of the subjective nature of qualitative research, it was also important that the process be systematic and replicable. The study therefore lent itself to an inductive analysis, using the “media package” approach.

The Media Package Approach

In order to accomplish the objectives of this study, the researcher utilized an inductive framing analysis. According to Semetko & Valkenburg, the inductive framing analysis is a way of detecting the possible ways that an issue can be framed (94). On the other hand, the deductive approach employs a content analysis where the certain frames are already predefined (94). Rather than predefining frames, the researcher attempted to extract the frames from the material. “The inductive approach involves analyzing a news story with an open view to attempt to reveal the array of possible frames, beginning with very loosely defined preconceptions of these frames” (Semetko & Valkenburg 94). It should be noted that this method is used only for small sample sizes because it is very labor intensive. It is also very difficult to replicate (Semetko & Valkenburg 94).

Despite its limitations, the inductive approach was best to accomplish the goals of this study. A study of this nature requires close involvement with the text. The researcher must be able to explore in depth the content of the transcripts. The inductive method allows for a fuller, richer, and deeper data; rather than a quantity and breadth of data. Grandy also found that there was a danger in entering a study with preconceived

frames. He said that in doing this “one runs the risk that precisely the subtlety of the messages that framing analysis tries to consider may be lost” (qtd. in Van Gorp).

To identify the possible emerging frames, the researcher used one of Tankard’s three approaches to the empirical study of media framing. This approach was the “media package” approach. Gamson and Modigliani stated that “media discourse can be conceived of as a set of interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue” (3). The internal structure of a package consists of a central organizing idea, or frame, at its core. The package identifies this core central organizing idea as the frame and identifies the material from the texts that support this central idea (Tankard 99).

Media packages are also made up of the framing devices used to portray the central frame. These framing devices are: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions and visual images (Gamson and Modigliani 3; Gamson and Lasch 399-400). Gamson and Modigliani said that the package should be able to be identified through the use of these framing devices. They stated: “a package offers a number of different condensing symbols that suggest the core frame and positions in shorthand, making it possible to display the package as a whole with a deft metaphor, catchphrase or other symbolic device” (3). Therefore, the identification of these framing devices was key to the execution of this study.

Spirituality Defined

It was imperative to this study to first establish a criterion for determining spirituality. This criterion was used in the selection of the transcripts and the analysis of the transcripts. The criterion included: a scholar’s definition of spirituality, Winfrey’s definition, and situational factors of the episodes. A denotative definition could not

simply be used due to the complex nature that is now associated with the term “spirituality.” Sandra Estanek, in her article “Redefining Spirituality: A New Discourse,” claims that “no common definition of spirituality exists.” However, this has not stopped scholars from attempting to establish definitions that would include all current forms of spirituality. In researching this area of spirituality, a myriad of these definitions presented themselves. However, many of these definitions were abstract and without specific criteria. The definition selected was from Elizabeth Tisdell in the book Exploring Spirituality and Culture in Adult and Higher Education (2003). Tisdell’s definition was used for both its thoroughness and clarity. This definition provided a firm foundation for identifying spirituality within the shows. Her definition of spirituality had seven components:

1. Spirituality and religion are not the same, but for many people they are interrelated.
2. Spirituality is about an awareness and honoring of wholeness and the interconnectedness of all things through the mystery of what many I interviewed referred to as the Life-force, God, higher power, higher self, cosmic energy, Buddha nature, or Great Spirit.’
3. Spirituality is fundamentally about meaning-making.
4. Spirituality is always present (though often unacknowledged) in the learning environment.
5. Spiritual development constitutes moving toward greater authenticity or to a more authentic self.

6. Spirituality is about how people construct knowledge through largely unconscious and symbolic processes, often made more concrete in art forms such as music, art, image, symbol, and ritual which are manifested culturally.

7. Spiritual experiences most often happen by surprise. (pp. 28-29)

Tisdell's definition of spirituality was very useful but was not the only criteria for determining the spirituality of the material. It was important to note Winfrey as the source and determinant of the definition of spirituality. Winfrey defined spirit in the *New York Times*, on November 8, 1998. In it she stated: "Spirit is not a religion; it's just about what is really great about yourself and remembering to live that way" (Lawrence 113). In a recent episode, Winfrey said that spirituality is the "greatest discovery of life...when you realize you are more than your body, more than your mind" to discover that "I am connected to the energy of all creation. That I am a part of it, and it is always a part of me" (Borer). Although, in most likelihood, Winfrey would not be willing to give an exact description of her definition of "spirituality," her views on spirituality should be taken into consideration. Therefore, anything that could be construed from her point of view as spiritual was accepted as suitable for the study.

Both Tisdell's and Winfrey's definition of spirituality provided a comprehensive definition of spirituality for the show selection and analysis. A clear, concise definition of the spirituality was needed to easily determine aspects of spirituality throughout the study. This definition is as follows:

Spirituality is a process of meaning making, interrelated with religion, in which a person seeks awareness and authenticity through the connection with a greater life force or energy.

Finally, there were a few final criteria and considerations, based on the situation of the episode, that were used mainly in the analysis of the transcripts. The researchers also looked at:

1. The source of information. Who was speaking and what authority did they possess?
2. The intent of the speaker. What was the intent of the speaker?
3. The context of the material. Was the context of what was said related to spiritual issues?

Using both Tisdell's and Winfrey's definitions and considering the situational factors of the episode, the researcher was able to determine the material that was applicable to the study of spiritual frames.

Show Selection

Although Winfrey uses various forms of media to communicate her frames on spirituality, the goal of this study was to find the frames presented on her television show. The Oprah Winfrey Show was selected as the subject of this study because it reaches the widest audience. Transcripts from The Oprah Winfrey Show provided the material for the inductive analysis. Because the inductive analysis is "labor intensive," the sample size needed to be small enough for one person to complete the analysis. Yet, it needed to be big enough to represent all the frames. To get a full understanding of the frames Winfrey employs, ten transcripts were analyzed. The transcripts were divided into two categories: dated transcripts from 1998 and recent transcripts from 2007-2009. Also, due to the availability of recent transcripts, the sample size had to be limited to five per time period.

First, the transcripts were obtained from two databases. The first was Dow Jones Factiva, accessed through Liberty University's Research Portal. Factiva was used to find the transcripts from ten years ago. Factiva contains transcripts for The Oprah Winfrey Show from 1993 to 2005. This study was proposed in 2008, so the ten year old transcripts were found in the year 1998. Recent transcripts could not be found on Factiva's database. Therefore, it was necessary to purchase recent transcripts on Oprah's website through the Oprah Store (<http://oprahstore.oprah.com/>). The Oprah Store had transcripts dating from September 2005 to the current previous month.

Five episodes from each time period were needed for the study. To find these episodes, it was necessary to manually go through and read the title and description for each episode that aired during the two categories of time periods. Selection of the episodes was based on the established criterion of the definition of spirituality. When selecting the transcripts it was also important to take note of the episode's guest and their connection to the world of spirituality. In researching this topic, many prominent spiritual thinkers were mentioned as being part of Winfrey's assembly of New Age guests. These guests included: Deepak Chopra, Iyanla Vanzant, Marianne Williamson, and Gary Zukav (Taylor 44). This list was not exhaustive so it was important to research the guests' affiliation with spirituality.

The year 1998 was a popular year in the coverage of spiritual issues on The Oprah Winfrey Show. Therefore, it contained several episodes pertaining to spiritual matters. Because there were more than five identifiable episodes, the episodes that were selected were the most recent ones in 1998. Because this study began late in 2008 the episodes

were also drawn from late in 1998. The episodes also provided a variety of topics for the analysis of spiritual frames.

The recent episodes were selected from the years 2007 to 2009. The goal was to find the episodes from 2008 or newer. However, only three episodes fit the criterion for spirituality for this time period. Therefore, it was necessary to go back to 2007 to find the other two episodes. Only five episodes fit the criterion, so it was unnecessary to exclude any episodes.

Method of Analysis

After selecting the episodes, the transcripts needed to be analyzed. The analysis began with the recent transcripts. The first step in this process was to read the transcripts several times. The recent transcripts were first analyzed. Then those from 1998 were read and analyzed. Material that did not pertain to spirituality was identified as irrelevant to the study. Only information that fit the criterion of spirituality was used to extract the frames. This included quotes and statements from guests and viewers of the show. Although, they were not the views of Winfrey directly, they were the people that she had chosen to have on the show to express their views of spirituality.

From that information, the framing devices were identified. The framing devices were: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions and visual images. Gamson and Lasch defined each of these devices (399-400):

1. Metaphors. The metaphor has two parts. The first is the principle subject and the second is the associated subject. The two are compared to enhance understanding of the first object by attaching the characteristics of the second object to the first.

2. Exemplars. Exemplars can be real events of the past or present. Using exemplars essentially compares the attributes of past even with the current issue at hand.
3. Catchphrases. Catchphrases are used in the attempt to capture the essence of an issue in single statement, tagline, or slogan. They basically summarize the principle subject.
4. Depictions. There are certain elements within a package that are typically characterized in a certain way. These depictions can be metaphors, exemplars, or the use of a string of modifiers.
5. Visual Images. These are the elements that depict the frame in visual form. These can be icons or other visual images.

After identifying this information, the frames were then extracted. To do this, the information needed to be clustered and categorized. All quotes, statements, and framing devices were clustered according to their similarities. However, these quotes, statements, and framing devices were not mutually exclusive. Because of the complexity of some the material, often times the material overlapped and was used to describe multiple framing packages. The clusters were then put into even broader categories. The frames were then identified based on these clusters. Cappella and Jamieson's criterion was used for identifying and classifying the frames:

1. Frames should have "identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics"
2. They should be "commonly observed in journalistic practice"
3. They should be "reliably distinguishable from other frames" (47).

The information was also put into chart form to visually see the frames and framing devices that were used. This method was done for each individual show. The charts displayed the media packages by defining the overall frame, any quotes that supported the frame, and the framing devices used for that frame. The charts from each individual show were placed together in their according time periods. Overall frames for each time period were indentified. The overall frames from each time period were used in the comparison of the Winfrey's recent frames and her frames of ten years ago.

Chapter 4: Results

Because this was a comparative study of two different time periods, the results will be categorized according to these two time periods. Each time period will contain background information of each of the five episodes. Background information includes items like show title, air-date, episode summary, and biographical information of each show's guests. The listing of the overall frames for each of the time periods will provide a categorical view of the frames. Based on the commonalities in the frames for each time period, the following categories will be used: belief system frames, world frames, and self frames. The listing of frames will be done as a representation of that time period and not according to individuals shows. Finally, at the end, a comparative analysis of the two time frames will be presented.

Dated Shows – 1998

Episode Background Information

1. October 13, 1998 – “Finding Your Authentic Self; Author Sarah Ban Breathnach discusses her new book, ‘Something More,’ and advises audience members on how to acquire a more healthy self-love.”

Many women of the guest audience of this show's episode were looking for what they felt like was a missing piece in their life. They came looking for fulfillment and they came looking for answers. They came seeking answers from Winfrey's guest, Sarah Ban Breathnach. Breathnach gave advice to these women on how to find their true and authentic self. With this episode, she introduced the concept of keeping a “discovery journal” to aid in the process of discovering one's true self.

Sarah Ban Breathnach's main message is that of fulfillment and finding your authentic self, as evident in the titles of her books, Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort and Joy and Something More: Excavating Your Authentic Self ("Meet Sarah"). She was the first to write a regular column on "everyday spirituality" for a mainstream women's magazine. She founded the Simple Abundance Charitable Fund in 1995 and it has since raised over a \$1 million dollars. She currently lives in the United Kingdom with her husband and continues to write ("Meet Sarah").

2. October 26, 1998 – "Iyanla Vanzant; Vanzant inspires women to gain control of their lives."

During the year 1998, Iyanla Vanzant made many appearances on The Oprah Winfrey Show. On this episode, she promoted a message of inspiration. Vanzant talked to a variety of women, discussing their problems and giving them advice on how to truly take control of their lives. In past appearances, Vanzant gave viewers "homework for the soul." Winfrey and Vanzant took the time to discuss the answers to viewers' homework and discuss the new assignment.

Iyanla Vanzant's early life was not one of ease or privilege. After years of abuse from two husbands, Vanzant decided to move her three children in order to earn a college degree. She then went on to earn a law degree and practiced law for four years. Vanzant feels compelled to share the message of empowerment with women across the country. She does this through motivational speaking, spiritual counseling, and authoring books. She is an ordained minister, a Yoruba priestess, and founder of Inner Visions. Among her eighteen authored books, the most popular have been In the Meantime: Finding

Yourself and the Love That You Want and One Day My Soul Just Opened Up (“Artist Biography”).

3. November 5, 1998 – “Medical Intuitive Caroline Myss, Part 2; power of suggestion and the definition of spirit as a form of inner self.”

On November 5, 1998, Winfrey welcomed guest, Carline Myss for Myss’s second appearance on the show. Winfrey revisited clips and guests from Myss’s last appearance. Myss claims to have the ability to detect medical problems through hearing only person’s name and age. Myss did these readings and was able to talk to a few guests about the importance of the mind-body-spirit connection. The latter of the half of the show, Winfrey and Myss discussed with audience members the concept of the soul and how it relates to religion.

Although Caroline Myss began her professional career as a journalist, her current career centers on the medical field. Myss is not a doctor, but has devoted her life to the promotion of holistic health. For the last 25 years, she has honed her skills as a medical intuitive. Through her research, she has helped develop the field of Energy Anatomy and has written five books. Her most current is Invisible Acts of Power. In 2003, Myss was able to open her own institute, CMED (Caroline Myss Education), which offers programs in Sacred Contracts and Mysticism, Intuition, and Healing (“Caroline Myss”).

4. December 1, 1998 – “Iyanla Vanzant; Author and inspirational speaker Iyanla Vanzant shares how to climb to the top floors of life.”

On the episode that aired December 1, 1998, repeat guest, Iyanla Vanzant, used the metaphor of the levels of a house to describe a human’s levels of self awareness. She started out by describing the basement level and proceeded through three levels, all the

way up to the attic. Along the way, she discussed the different levels with women who were willing to share their stories. Vanzant encouraged these women and gave advice on how to move through these levels of consciousness. The episode's "Remembering Your Spirit" segment featured Dr. Barbara King.

In 1971, Dr. Barbara King founded Hillside Chapel and Truth Center, Inc., in Atlanta, Georgia. Her work centers around speaking engagements, writing books, and hosting a television show. She has received numerous honors and rewards, recognizing her influence in the female African American community ("Rev. Dr. Barbara").

5. December 24, 1998 – "A Conversation with Gary Zukav; author Gary Zukav shares his views on spirit and soul and how the way you treat others directly impacts your own life."

After appearing as a guest on the "Remembering Your Spirit" segment, Gary Zukav received such a response from Winfrey and her viewers that he was invited back to sit down to a more in-depth interview. The interview was previously recorded and shown in the actual taping of the show. Therefore, there was no interaction from the audience. In the interview, Winfrey and Zukav discussed a range of topics from the power of intention, the definition of a soul, and spiritual partnerships.

Before he challenged Americans to realize their self potential, Zukav graduated from Harvard University and was an officer with the Green Berets in the Vietnam War. His most famous work, The Seat of the Soul, made its debut in 1989. In it, he presented his readers with the idea of life fulfillment through the alignment of the personality and the soul. The Seat of the Soul became the #1 New York Times bestseller thirty-one times. In addition to that book, he has also co-authored with Linda Francis three books: Soul

Stories (2000), The Heart of the Soul: Emotional Awareness (2002), and The Mind of the Soul: Responsible Choice (2003). Throughout the years, Zukav has been a popular guest on The Oprah Winfrey Show (“About Gary”).

Frames

Belief system frames

1. “Open Your Mind”

Winfrey framed many of her episodes in a non-judgmental way, stressing the importance of keeping one’s mind open to all existing beliefs. That is the reason this frame was entitled “open your mind.” Winfrey and her guests often used language that was non-judgmental and open to various types of beliefs. Components of this media package included the use of the catchphrases “open yourself” or “open your mind,” the use of catchphrases dealing with “judgment,” the use of the exemplar in which Winfrey is compared to Christopher Columbus, and the depiction of the semantics involved in religion. In a couple of episodes in this time period, Winfrey used the catchphrase of opening up yourself and your heart in order to describe this idea of being receptive to new beliefs.

Winfrey: ...I’m hoping it will open you all up in ways that you haven’t

(“Finding”)

Another catchphrase encouraged one to have an open mind.

Winfrey: If you choose to receive it, if something happened to you and you—you think another way or you think another way or you’re opened—your mind has been expanded in such a way that you can think differently, then so be it.

(“Medical”)

The following catchphrase placed an emphasis on opening one's heart.

Winfrey: ...it is opening up your heart to fill the big who of who you are.

(“Medical”)

This frame of being open to new beliefs was most evident in the exemplar used by Caroline Myss. She used the example of the time in history when people generally believed that the world was flat. Myss said that in many ways Oprah is teaching that the world is round. She claimed that there are still people that are not open to this idea of a round world and still choose to believe it is flat. Essentially, Myss was portraying Oprah as the “Columbus” of our time.

Interestingly enough, Winfrey claimed that she did not care if people believed the world was flat. This sentiment is indicative of one of the basic messages of this frame: whatever you choose to believe is fine. Winfrey openly admitted that there were multiple ways of viewing a situation and that humans are free to choose for themselves which way to believe. In saying this, she was essentially saying that no one belief is right or wrong. One can even choose to follow multiple beliefs. This message was manifested in catchphrases like:

Winfrey: “Created or whether you believe, which I think they—they all mesh together, you can actually believe both... (“Medical”)

Some other catchphrases used by Winfrey included: “whatever you choose to call it” (“Medical”), “people can see that and receive it for themselves” (“Medical”), “you can choose to believe it or not choose to believe it” (“Conversation”), and “I don't expect that anybody should believe what I believe” (“Conversation”).

This view also lent itself to the need to not judge other belief systems. Winfrey's guests also stressed the importance of not casting judgment on others for their beliefs or actions. One example of this was a catchphrase used by Zukav.

Zukav: This is not for me or you to judge... ("Conversation")

Vanzant also used a catchphrase to sum up this nonjudgmental belief.

Vanzant: ...that eliminates me judging right and wrong. ("Iyanla" 1)

This frame was most evident in the show that aired November 5, 1998, featuring medical intuitive, Caroline Myss. Winfrey, Myss, and audience members engaged in conversation about the accusations that Winfrey was trying to push religion. Audience member, Pam, joined the discussion and presented her own views on the subject. In one part of the conversation, it was very evident that Winfrey does not think that there is one right belief system. In this conversation, Myss ended with a summarizing catchphrase.

Pam: ...is, like, a –it's asking God to come in and take over for you rather than saying, 'I am a part of it,' There's a difference. I'm not saying you can't believe that.

Winfrey: Is there a difference?

Myss: No. Th—what you're—you are mixing semantics. That's...

Pam: It's the difference from saying you're God.

Myss: You know, you're just mixing semantics to some extent.

Pam: It's like either being God or being part of his creation and looking to him for help.

Myss: But at the end of the day, it doesn't matter. What matters is how well you live your life. ("Medical")

Winfrey then went on to expand more on the idea that the problem with differing beliefs is many times in the semantics. She again used the catchphrase “whatever you call it.”

Winfrey: Right, because, I think that the force, whatever you call it, whatever religion—if it’s Allah, if it’s Yahweh, if it’s—whatever you call God, divine energy, natur....

Myss: Right.

Winfrey: ...you know, force, whatever, diving intelligence—that if it—the power is omnipotent, it d—it is not hung up on title. We’re the ones all hung up on the semantics in it. Whatever that force is, if it has no name, if the—if the name is a void, it still is what it is. It just is (“Medical”).

2. “Not about religion”

Winfrey desired to frame her talks on spirituality with the distinction of religion from spirituality. This frame was most evidently seen with the use of the catchphrase “not about religion.” She used this catchphrase or some form of it in three of the five shows. Winfrey had often been criticized and accused of mixing religion and spirituality. Rather than implying that her views were not religious in nature, she made it very clear in statements like these.

Winfrey: ...your spirit, which, as we’ve said many times, is not about religion, although we’ve been accused of that this season. (“Conversation”)

In Vanzant’s second appearance, Winfrey not only attempted to separate “spirit” from religion, but to actually define what “spirit” is.

Winfrey: OK. It seems as though there are a lot of people out there who think that there is some great mystery to finding your spirit, but it simply means finding

your goodness. Goodness is another word for spirit. It isn't a religion. I'm not trying to preach religion. Iyanla's not trying to preach reu—religion. It's about going to the core of who you are, what makes you feel true joy. Take it from one of the true masters. (“Iyanla” 2)

In another episode, Winfrey again found the need to distinguish herself from religion.

Winfrey: For example, every day on the show, when we say ‘remembering your spirit,’ I’ve heard the criticism, people saying, ‘How dare you try to tell us about religion,’ when to me it’s just the opposite. It is the opposite. (“Medical”)

Winfrey also tried to separate herself from any correlation to her being a religious figure. The exemplar of a religious figure was God. In the episode that featured Caroline Myss, she made this very clear:

Winfrey: But I—I’ve hear-heard that, a lot of people saying that I’m trying to be—you know, I cant—it’s hard for me to even say it—that I’m trying to be God. Please. (“Medical”)

Again, in this episode, Winfrey showed her desire to not be compared to a religious figure. The exemplar used this time was Jesus, the “savior of the world.”

Winfrey: My feeling was, let’s try to offer that kind of information that the Caroline Mysses of the world and other shows—where other people can see that and receive it for themselves, not to try to, you know, sit up on some pedestal and pretend that I’m the savior of the world, just offer it as information. (“Medical”)

As mentioned, Winfrey had a strong motivation to distinguish the spiritual world from the religious one. Zukav perhaps discussed the reason for this motivation because of the

disappointment people have felt with religion. In Winfrey's interview with him, he stated:

And that's—that's wonderful for so many people who have trouble with religious terms, because they feel religion has failed them for whatever reason.

("Conversation")

3. "Religion"

Despite Oprah's assertions that spirituality is not about religion, her shows often used religious terminology to frame spiritual discussions. The framing devices most commonly used within this frame were depictions and visual images. In her interview with Caroline Myss, she claimed that she has "never...referred to any religion" ("Medical"). However, perhaps the use of this terminology was necessary when describing things of spiritual nature. Religion gives people a frame of reference for understanding these things because it is what most people already understand. It is also likely that religious terminology is inherent in Winfrey's and her guests' speech. One of the most popular terms associated with religion was the depiction of "God" as a supernatural force. In four of the five episodes, Winfrey or her guests made reference to God. Winfrey claimed that there is a creator and each of us is a "child of God" ("Medical"). She said that she did not want to be "separated from God" ("Medical"). Iyanla Vanzant, in the two episodes that appeared on, made numerous references to God:

Vanzant: ...being able to see God manifest in—in everything all the time.

("Iyanla" 2)

Vanzant depicted God as the one in control of individual's lives.

Vanzant: You're in the attic, and you know that God is in control. ("Iyanla" 2)

She expounded more on this depiction later in the episode.

Vanzant: So I want to say this, that God really is in control. And God really does love you. And there may have been no other way for God to show you that you've got to dig a little deeper. And God does it in love. God does it in love because it didn't show up as a tumor.... God will meet you where you are. And that's what happens. Sometimes God has to bring it right up in our face. I love when Oprah says, 'First, God throws a pebble, and then she throws a brick.' Huh? God's been throwing pebbles at you for a while. But you can put some rouge on it and some lipstick and a nice dress and you can talk it up. Come on. Breathe. It's OK. So-- and God had to get your attention. Huh? Can you just trust God for a moment? Just for a moment. ("Iyanla" 1)

Winfrey and her guests also commonly used depictions of other religions or religious figures. Again, the use of these depictions gives viewers a common base for understanding the world of spirituality. When Vanzant used the metaphor of the levels of a house to describe the levels of awareness for a human being, she claimed that the attic was the highest level of awareness. Few people actually live in that attic, she claimed, but the few that did included Jesus, Mother Teresa, and the Dalai Lama ("Vanzant" 2). Each of these was a visual representation of various religions. Gary Zukav made reference to various religions when he made the claim that humans were becoming "multisensory human beings." Multisensory humans had existed up to that point, but there were very few of them. However, he claimed that all the major religions were named after these special humans. Exemplars he gave of this were Christianity's Christ

and Buddhism's Buddha ("Conversation"). Caroline Myss used the beliefs and teachings of multiple religions to compose her own universal system of teachings:

Myss: I knew that if I could capture--capture the essence of the power of Eastern religion and Judaism and Christianity and show the model of how that works within us, that we would understand, one, that we are united with all of this, quote, "divine force" and it doesn't matter the package it comes--comes in; two, that that force, all of them, tell—tell. ("Medical")

In that episode, Oprah also acknowledged the existence of a divine power as "Allah, if it is Yahweh, if it's—whatever you call God, divine energy, natur..." ("Medical"). Finally, Zukav used the term "karma" multiple times in his appearance to describe impact of our intentions ("Conversation").

Another prevalent element in her and her guests' religious talk was their use of religious terms, especially Christian ones. Winfrey's guests have made references to angels and the devil (Iyanla" 1). Both Ban Breathnach and Vanzant made reference to miracles ("Finding" and "Vanzant" 2). Ban Breathnach also made multiple references to prayer ("Finding"). Zukav used the terms "heaven and hell" when describing the potential for making one's life happy or miserable ("Conversation"). Winfrey's speech also reflected Christian terminology. One such statement was: "Was that a hallelujah moment you just had?" ("Vanzant" 1).

Some of Winfrey's guests have even quoted or paraphrased material from the Bible. Dr. Caroline Myss quoted from the "Scriptures" and also claimed that all the all great teachers agree with this point of view.

Myss: But--but that's what God says. If you read the Scriptures, that's exactly what the divine--'I am that which I am.' I--if you really look at the Scripture from that point of view, all the great teachers that we acknowledge as divine, be that Buddha, Jesus, whatever, that is what they teach. (“Medical”)

One of the guests also referred to pride as the “Garden of Eden.” (“Medical”). Ban Breathnach said that the human body was a “beautiful temple,” which is very reminiscent of the similar New Testament teaching.

World frames

4. “More than Physical World”

In this frame, the world was depicted as having more than just a physical component. Winfrey’s guests also used exemplars to represent this frame. The frame was most evident in the episode that featured Gary Zukav. Towards the beginning of the episode, Oprah said, “. . .it was the study of the physical world that led Gary to the study of the non-physical world” (“Conversation”). This belief was also implied in the way Zukav kept needing to depict the world as “*this* earth,” suggesting that there is another world. Zukav also claimed that there is more to the world “than what you see” (“Conversation”). Although neither Winfrey nor Zukav actually depicted what this non-physical world entails, they did use many framing devices to explain its existence. First, Winfrey related it to the fact that in the study of biology there is more than the naked eye can see. Zukav also used the exemplar of the invisible components of the light spectrum. Finally, Zukav used the exemplar of television waves:

Winfrey: And if it is non-physical , what, the, does that mean? Does it mean, woo, woo, woo—spirits are running around? What does that mean?

Zukav: It means that we have access to compassion and wisdom that is far greater than we—what we can provide to ourselves. For example, you—you mentioned that there are television waves. The television waves are in this room, but we cannot see it. (“Conversation”)

5. “Supernatural Force”

The “supernatural force” frame goes hand in hand with the previous frame. The supernatural force is part of this non-physical world. This supernatural force is not clearly defined though. Depending on the guest, the definition and label of the force changed. However, the force was always referred to in the singular form. Ban Breathnach and Vanzant used the depiction of God to refer to a supernatural force. Both say that people should pray to God. Vanzant says that to fully receive the things you want, you must surrender to God and know that he is in control. This was seen in the following statement:

Vanzant: God uses people, and people come into your life for a reason, a season or a lifetime. Some of them don't come this day. You prayed and you said, 'God, help me.' And God said, 'Poof! Here's my angel, here's my blessing.' (“Iyanla” 1)

When Myss was the guest, this force was depicted as a greater power. On the other hand, Winfrey claimed that this force has no one label. It can be called anything from Allah to Yahweh to God to nature.

Winfrey: Well, yeah, I've been hearing that a lot lately and it—it is disturbing to me because I am s—I am and we are, little earthlings that we are, are so far removed from the greater power that is. (“Medical”)

Self frames

6. Body is “More Than Physical”

Winfrey used the catchphrase that encompasses this frame in the November episode with Caroline Myss. She claimed that she always knew that there was “more to myself than my physical self” (“Medical”). The depiction used to describe this part of a person that is beyond the physical is what Winfrey and her guests called the “spirit” or “soul.” This frame’s media package was composed of metaphors, comparing this non-physical component to a ship and house. It was also composed of a variety of depictions to describe the soul or spirit.

“Soul” and “spirit” were used quite often throughout each of the episodes.

Winfrey believed that a person is composed of a mind, body, and spirit. The segment, “Remembering Your Spirit,” that was featured in many episodes was indicative of this belief. Myss also claimed that this spirit was eternal by saying when “you die and your spirit leaves” (“Medical”). This spirit or soul was depicted in many ways. In the October episode with Iyanla Vanzant, there was not much discussion of the soul or spirit.

Vanzant did say that a soul has both a past and future (“Iyanla”1). In a discussion with Vanzant in December, Winfrey depicted the spirit as your “goodness.” (“Iyanla”2).

The soul or spirit was depicted in depth in the episode featuring Caroline Myss. In that episode, the spirit was depicted as a powerful force. Myss also depicted it as an “alive force,” an “intuitive force,” and as the part that comes from “some force that’s bigger than your body” (“Medical”). Winfrey used the catchphrase “bigger than your body” to define the existence of the soul and its placement in the body.

Winfrey: So are you saying if we don't call spirit 'spirit,' meaning the part of you--the good part of you, the part of you that comes from something, something, some force that's bigger than your body--if we called it your inner self, that would make you feel better? (“Medical”)

Winfrey used a form of this catchphrase again in the same episode.

Winfrey: it is opening up your heart to fill the big who of who you are, that you are something bigger than your job, you're something bigger than what you do in daily life, that your life is bigger than the things that you do and the things that you acquire. (“Medical”)

Winfrey echoed the same concept in her interview with Ban Breathnach. Using the metaphor of a house, she said that body was the housing place for the “who of who you are,” your spirit. This spirit is bigger than your personality and the things you do in life (“Finding”). Zukav agreed with this thought and said that the soul is “enormous” and “existed before you were born.” He also said that the soul is not a “mythical entity” but is a “powerful, purposeful essence” and “the very center of who you are.” He used a metaphor and compared the soul to a mother ship.

Zukav: The mother ship is your soul and you are one of the little boats.

(“Conversation”)

Zukav carried this metaphor further, later in the episode.

Zukav: Meaning is your inner compass that always aligns itself with the direction that your mother ship wants to go. (“Conversation”)

When Myss used the depiction of the spirit as an “intuitive force,” she was also describing how the spirit is connected to the mind and body. The catchphrase used for

this was the “mind-body-spirit” connection. She described the soul as a “companion that filters into your body.” This “companion” serves as a guide that “influences everything you do.”

Vanzant described this non-physical part of the body as levels of awareness. She did this through the metaphor of the levels of a house.

Winfrey: And w—this little house is a metaphor. It’s a metaphor, folks, for our state of consciousness...

Vanzant: Yes. (“Iyanla” 2)

Vanzant said that people start out in the basement with self loathing and hopelessness. As you move up the levels of the house, you move up through the levels of your consciousness and become the highest form of yourself. Vanzant claimed that this is achieved through the training of the “spiritual mind.” In the attic, one has committed total trust and surrender to God.

7. “Journey of Life”

A common metaphor used throughout these episodes was the comparison of life to a journey. The only episode where variations of the metaphor were not present was the episode featuring Caroline Myss. In the “Levels of Self-Awareness” episode, Vanzant depicted it a “sacred journey” (“Iyanla”2). In her other episode, she used the metaphor of traveling on a road:

Vanzant: Just remember where you are is exactly where you need to be.

Sometimes you need a little push to--to move on down the road. (“Iyanla” 1)

Ban Breathnach said that humans should be on a “journey of self-discovery” and a “trip back to yourself.” Winfrey’s audience member, Carrie, expressed this same sentiment:

Carrie: My journey must go on and grow further. And in that journey, I need to be spiritual, educational, physical, the whole gamut of getting back to myself.

(“Finding”)

Zukav also used a form of this metaphor. He spoke of his life’s experiences being an “avenue to spirituality.” He also claimed that our souls are in the state of evolving.

Winfrey ended the episode speaking of this process and journey of evolving.

Winfrey: And I think that we’re all on the same journey, struggling, trying,

evolving, to be the best people that we can be. That is the goal. (“Conversation”)

8. “Longing for Something More”

If humans are on a journey through life, they must be traveling to a final destination. Winfrey claimed that it was a journey “to be the best people we can be” (“Conversation”). Indicative in this statement is the message that you are currently not the best person you can be. Throughout these episodes, the frame that was used was that you are on this journey in life because you are in need of fulfillment, healing, or change. There is a basic message of change in this frame, that you are not where you need to be and that there should be something more. All of these episode contained various catchphrases related to the need for change, healing, and fulfillment.

First, it was made clear that humans are in need of change. In the interview with Zukav, the catchphrase “changing your life” was used twice. Zukav also said, “I had to change who I was” (“Conversation”). Forms of this catchphrase were also used by Winfrey in her discussion with Vanzant (“Iyanla” 2). In both episodes with Vanzant, she assigned “homework for the soul.” Winfrey said that many of her viewers have found the

homework to be a “life-changing process” (“Iyanla” 1). Winfrey also acknowledged this need for change in this catchphrase “you can being to change that.”

Winfrey: And I do know that if you start looking inside yourself and taking responsibility for where you are in your life, you can begin to change that.

(“Medical”)

Another popular catchphrase in this frame was “heal yourself.” Winfrey used it when talking to Vanzant (“Iyanla” 2). In another episode, Vanzant used the metaphor of comparing emotional wounds to physical ones. She stated that if you leave the holes of your life open, they will only continue to bleed. People even attempt to bandage these wounds with things like work, children, or alcohol. She then later went on to state, “But when you fill it with a divine essence like willingness or desire, it will--it will immediately be healed” (“Iyanla” 1). The catchphrase “heal yourself” was also used by Winfrey in the episode with Myss (“Medical”). The depiction of a soul in need of healing was strongly used in the episode with Ban Breathnach. She claimed that there were “secret wounds of the soul” and these wounds led to the “hemorrhaging” and “bleeding” of the soul (“Finding”).

The need for something more was expressed in the catchphrase, “more to life than this.” Using this phrase, Winfrey claimed that people needed to find their “purpose” in life (“Conversation”). She also claimed humans also have a need for “fulfillment” and to find their “authentic self.” Zukav used statements like “living a life of fulfillment” and returning to the “fullness of who we are” (“Conversation”).

Through catchphrases, the need for fulfillment was most seen in the episode, “Finding Your Authentic Self” with Ban Breathnach. Winfrey began the episode with

clips from viewers. Many expressed the need for “something more” in life. One viewer even depicted this need as a void in her life. Later, another viewer used the metaphor of a missing puzzle piece to describe this lack of fulfillment. Winfrey described it as a “longing for something else.” Ban Breathnach said that the key to life was finding your “authentic self.” In order to do this, you need to find yourself. To find yourself, she used the depiction of peeling away the layers and the metaphor of going on an archeological dig.

9. “Empowerment”

The term “empowerment” was often used as a catchphrase throughout these episodes. It was not a strong frame in any one of the episodes, but each episode did contain a catchphrase or some depiction within the frame’s media package. When the word “power” was used in these episodes, it was mainly referring to the power that we possess as humans. “The power within you” was a catchphrase used twice throughout the show with Caroline Myss. Using The Wizard of Oz as an exemplar, Winfrey depicted this power as something that we always had within us.

Winfrey: Glinda, the good witch, told Dorothy she always had it. (“Medical”)

Winfrey, again used this exemplar to depict this powerful force.

Winfrey: It’s the fact that she finally asked, and when Glinda comes, she says, ‘You always had it.’ It’s like that power, that force, that energy, what Carline is saying. It’s there... (“Medical”)

Myss also depicted this power as the “power of our spirit.” Later, she went on to depict this power as a “divine force” and “that power literally is our spirit.” Expounding

on this, later, Myss went on to say that “you are that divinity.” When one viewer, Pam, displayed her discomfort with this concept, Myss and Winfrey were quick to disagree:

Pam: But that’s Garden of Eden. That’ saying you have the power within you.

It’s, like, so basic. It goes back to...

Winfrey: But you do have a power. Don’t you see that you have a power?

Pam: Well, you can ask for that power, but it’s—it’s—it’s—there’s a—there’s a split hair there.

Myss: No, you—you’re born with that power. That is life itself. That is the essence of life with—you die and your spirit leaves. (“Medical”)

Gary Zukav depicted this power as “authentic power,” claiming that we need to become more “authentically empowered” (“Conversation”). Both Vanzant and Ban Breathnach depicted women as powerful beings. Vanzant used the depiction of a queen sitting on her throne. She said that “It’s about stepping into your queenhood” (“Iyanla” 2). Ban Breathnach used a string of modifiers to describe the power of women.

Ban Breathnach: ... you know inside in those quiet moments that you are a magnificent, fabulous, wise, powerful woman, and you're not owning who you are. Something more is reclaiming your glorious power and destiny (“Finding”).

When Vanzant was encouraging women to gain control of their lives, one woman told the story of a friend who went to find her “groove” in the Bahamas. This was a reference to the film, How Stella Got Her Groove Back. Winfrey and Vanzant enjoyed this story and expounded on the thought, framing it with a message of empowerment.

Winfrey: Well, the bottom line is, the groove is with you.

Unidentified Woman #15: I agree.

Vanzant: You are the groove. You are the groove. (“Iyanla” 1)

10. “Entitlement”

The “empowerment” frame goes hand in hand with the “entitlement” frame. This frame was even more prevalent throughout the episodes. The various depictions of composed this frame’s media package. These depictions showed that each individual was either special, unique, or divine. Zukav said that each soul was “great” and each “has a sacred contract” (“Conversation”). Myss depicted each individual as being “divine” (“Medical”). Ban Breathnach taught that each person was “magnificent,” “fabulous,” and “wise.” Quoting from Ban Breathnach’s book, one viewer on the show depicted herself as “pre-magnificent” with gifts to give to the world (“Finding”). Vanzant said that everyone was “a unique and a divine instrument of God” (“Iyanla” 2).

Within this frame, there was a high level of focus on self. Vanzant even said that to grow in life, the only relationship you have is the “one you’re having with yourself” (“Iyanla” 2). This was seen in the catchphrases of “self-loving,” “self-worth,” and “loving yourself.” Each of these catchphrases was used when Ban Breathnach appeared on the show. She described “self worth” as being the key to joy.

Ban Breathnach: Self-worth. When you have self-worth, when you have repose of the soul, everything you have is enough. And you have joy. (“Finding”)

She also described the importance of “self-loving.” The antithesis of this “self-loving” was “self-loathing.” “Self-loathing” was so damaging that Ban Breathnach depicted it as a “rampant infection of the soul.” She encouraged her guests to love themselves by looking in the mirror and telling themselves that they are a “beautiful temple” (“Finding”). Vanzant’s message was similar when she appeared on the show in October.

She gave a message of self-approval and encouraged viewers, using the catchphrase “accept yourself.” Using a metaphor of comparing seeds to self-affirmations, she also encouraged the viewers to “plant better seeds of love inside of ourselves every day” (“Iyanla” 1). In Vanzant’s December appearance, she claimed that this self-focused way of thinking was not selfish, but “selfful.” She used this catchphrase multiple times throughout the episode. There is a need to focus on healing and forgiving yourself so that you can be your best self. However, only you can do this for you (“Iyanla” 2). In the Vanzant’s other appearance, she stated:

Vanzant: It is very, very, very unloving to ask someone to give you what you’re not giving yourself. (“Iyanla”1)

Throughout this frame, a sense of entitlement was seen. Using the catchphrase, “joy is our birthright,” twice, Ban Breathnach claimed that people deserve the right to find what truly makes them happy (“Finding”). Vanzant’s depiction of the queen on her throne, not only framed women as having a controlling power, but also as women being entitled women to not have anyone knock her off of that throne. The position of queen is one of privilege and entitlement. Comparing a woman to this position bestows on her these rights as well (“Iyanla” 2).

11. “Create Your Own Circumstances”

One of the most popular frames throughout these episodes was the “create you circumstances” frame. The frame was present in every episode through various framing devices like catchphrases, metaphors, and depictions. The concept of this frame is that each human is in control of his own lives and has full control of his current situation. Indicative in this frame is also the idea that each human has the responsibility of creating

a better life. If a person desires to improve his circumstances, then this person needs to go out and make that happen. Therefore, a person's choices have consequences and his current situation will reflect those choices.

Gary Zukav's message was full of framing devices that depicted this frame. He claimed that our intentions are the determining factor in our life's outcome. Winfrey expounded on this when she said that "you can never have an intention without an effect."

Winfrey: According to Gary Zukav, our intention, what we intend, towards others is the single most powerful energy in our lives, and it is our intentions, according to him, alone which determine whether we make our lives on this Earth heaven or hell. ("Conversation")

Zukav relates this concept to the principle of karma. He says that here in the West, we call it the Golden Rule. Reading a quote from Zukav's book, Winfrey summed up this principle of karma:

Every action, every thought and every feeling is motivated by an intention, and that intention is a cause that exists as one with an effect. And if we participate in the cause, it is not possible for us not to participate in the effect. ("Conversation")

This principle was restated and paraphrased many times in the episode by both Winfrey and Zukav. Zukav also claimed that people can see this played out in their lives. He said that if you are an angry person, "you are going to draw to yourself angry people" and if you exploit the word you will "experience being exploited." He also said that a person can create "callousness" and "emotional brutality" if that is the way they choose to respond to others.

When medical intuitive, Caroline Myss, came on Winfrey's show, she came bearing the message that humans even have responsibility for the diseases we experience. She said that a female may get cancer of the breasts or ovaries because of the pressure or the expectations they subject themselves to. Later in that episode, Winfrey stated the importance that our thoughts and spirit play in creating our life.

Winfrey: And, you know, to say, 'Look within yourself. Look within your own spirit, your thoughts. You are where you are in life to a great extent because you have created that life. You have created that life,' I--I do not see the harm in that. And I do know that if you start looking inside yourself and taking responsibility for where you are in your life, you can begin to change that. ("Medical")

Winfrey's belief that a person should take responsibility for their life was also evident in the catchphrase of Vanzant's October appearance.

Life is what you make it. Life is what you think it is. ("Iyanla" 1)

Finally, Vanzant also expressed this message when she visited the show in December.

Vanzant: You must tell the truth about how you played a role in being the victim. And in order to get off the first floor, you must take total and complete responsibility for every experience you're having—every single one—every one. ("Iyanla"2)

Zukav believed that choice plays a big role in the creating of our circumstances. He claimed that it was even our choice to come into the world. He said that we did not come here "under duress," but rather came voluntarily. Winfrey paraphrased Zukav's message when she said that the choices that people make are "a part of their own co-creation with—with universal energy." He also said, "If you want to see what—how

you were creating in the past, look around you” (“Conversation”). This choice that we have is a “spiritual gift” according to the depiction given by Ban Breathnach. She also depicted choice as “the centerpiece of creating your life” (“Finding”).

Many guests gave practical advice and action steps to aid in changing one’s circumstances. Ban Breathnach suggested the use of a discovery journal. This served as a visual image of controlling one’s circumstances. She explains that what this is “is a mysterious collage that your soul is creating to give you visual images to help find yourself” (“Finding”). Winfrey also used a quote from Joseph Campbell to give practical advice for getting the life you want:

We must be willing to get rid of the life we’ve planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us. (“Finding”)

In both of her appearances, Vanzant gave the viewers “homework for the soul.” The metaphor of learning in a class was used throughout her October appearance. She claimed that no one needed to get an A in the class, but needed to merely pass it. To pass the class, one must do the homework of releasing things that need to be let go and self-forgiveness. In her other appearance, Vanzant said that our spiritual minds needed to be trained and in turn one can control their circumstances (“Iyanla” 2).

12. “Release Control”

This frame was only present in the episodes with Iyanla Vanzant. It is interesting because it almost seems to contradict the previous frame. The frame was best represented by the catchphrases of “surrender control” or “surrender trust.” In the October episode, Vanzant said that faith was the expression of this total surrender.

Vanzant: Well, scary means that I'm not clear about what's gonna happen. That's what scary means. Fear, I'm afraid, it's scary, means I'm not clear about what's gonna happen. And since, as a human being, I really want to be in control...

Tina (viewer): Right.

Vanzant: ...I'm not clear about what will happen if I surrender control.

Winfrey: But faith is the opposite of that.

Vanzant: Faith is the key. Faith is the key. Just a little bit of faith. You will be taught how to fly. You will be taught how to fly if you just hold that little bit of faith in your heart. (“Iyanla” 1)

In her December visit, Vanzant said that there needed to be a surrender of “total trust” to God. No matter what happens after that, you still have the comfort in knowing that you will “be OK” (“Iyanla”2). This peace of knowing things will work out, was also expressed in the October episode with Vanzant. This essentially is a message of acceptance. She said that it is impossible to “lose your blessing” and that “no matter what happens, you can’t lose...” (“Iyanla” 1).

13. “Feelings”

The “feelings” frame was present in four of the episodes of the time period. It was virtually absent in the interview with Caroline Myss. However, there was a strong emphasis on feelings throughout the other four episodes. Some key words in this frame were “feel,” “feelings,” and “emotions.” The visual image that represented the center of feelings or emotions was the heart.

Winfrey: You feel like there is a hole somewhere, and you think to yourself, 'Is this all there is?' It's because your heart feels a longing for something more.

(“Finding”)

Zukav emphasized the need to follow the feelings that stem from the heart.

Zukav: You reach a place where you follow your heart no matter what your head or the five senses tell you. (“Conversation”)

He placed the feeling of your intuition above the physical component of yourself, saying that “what you intuitively feel is even stronger than what you physically are.” Because feelings are so important, he claimed that you need to be “in touch” with these feelings. In the same episode, Winfrey claimed that it was really about feeling the “ultimate good inside” and being “in touch with your real sense of joy” and “real sense of truth and purpose” (“Conversation”). The importance of feeling joy and happiness was also seen in December’s episode with Vanzant. In that episode, Winfrey claimed that Vanzant’s message was about finding “what makes you feel true joy” (“Iyanla” 2). A guest during Vanzant’s October appearance admitted the need to acknowledge any “suppressed emotions” and let them “come out” (“Iyanla” 1).

Many female viewers expressed that something was missing in their life in the episode with Ban Breathnach. They based this lack of fulfillment on their feelings. For example:

Unidentified Woman #5: And I have a good life, good family and good friends, but I still feel like something is missing. (“Finding”)

Another audience member was unsuccessful in attempting to fill this void.

Unidentified Woman #6: I have tried to find and fill the void with food, money, love, sex, possessions, self-help groups. I still have this feeling that there should be something more. (“Finding”)

Vanzant said that we know something “doesn’t quite fit” when we “don’t really feel good about it (“Iyanla” 2).

New Shows – 2007-2009

Episode Background Information

1. January 24, 2007 – “What Five Words Describe Your Marriage.”

Gary Zukav joined Oprah as the special guest for this episode. The show was centered on building spiritual partnerships. The material was mainly targeted to married couples in need of repairing their relationship. However, it was not exclusive to just married couples. Three married couples appeared on the show to talk about their own struggles and feelings toward their marriage. Zukav and Winfrey offered advice as to go about fixing their problems and growing a spiritual partnership.

2. February 8, 2007 – “The Secret.”

The Secret was originally a film that was the idea of Australian Rhonda Byrne in 2004. Later, she translated the ideas of the movie into the book, The Secret. According to The Secret’s website, “Rhonda traced The Secret back through thousands of years, incorporating almost every religion and field of human endeavour throughout history” (“Behind”). The Secret was the topic of discussion on the days show. Winfrey invited a panel to discuss the concepts behind the Secret. These guests included The Secret’s originator and guests that appeared on the film, The Secret. These guests were: Rhonda Byrne, Jack Canfield, Lisa Nichols, James Ray, and Michael Beckwith.

Before discovering what Rhonda Byrne calls “the Secret,” she was a successful television and film producer. Since the popularity of the film and book, Byrne is now a recognized celebrity, making "The TIME 100: The People Who Shape Our World" and the Forbes’ “The Celebrity 100” list (“Behind”).

Jack Canfield has reached millions across the nation with his Chicken Soup for the Soul book series. He also specializes in coaching people to live successful lives. His success principles can be found in the book, The Success Principles: How to Get From Where You Are to Where You Want to Be (“Meet Jack”).

Lisa Nichols is a best-selling author, public speaker, and coach. She teaches a message of empowerment, service, excellence & gratitude. She teaches this message through workshops and is the founder Motivating the Masses and CEO of Motivating the Teen Spirit, LLC (“Lisa’s Bio”).

James Ray is a business man and entrepreneur who has devoted his life to teaching the key to creating harmonic wealth in every area of life. His multi-million dollar company, James Ray International, is devoted to spreading Ray’s message of harmonic wealth. Ray also authored the book, Harmonic Wealth: The Secret of Attracting the Life You Want (“About James”).

In 1986, Michael Beckwith founded the Agape International Spiritual Center in hopes of building a trans-denominational spiritual community (“Dr Michael”). Now, the center’s membership totals 10,000 locally. (“Featured”).

3. February 6, 2008 – “The Secret Behind the Secret.”

The intention of the February 6th episode was to further expound on the ideas of The Secret since its debut on The Oprah Winfrey Show the previous year. The goal of

the show was to show how people can improve the quality of their lives through their thoughts and actions. The three guests that were brought on to discuss this idea were Louis Hay, Martha Beck, and Cheryl Richardson. None of the guests that appeared on the show, were actually featured in the film, The Secret. Each of them has contributed to the positive thinking school of thought and shared her own ideas as to how each person can better themselves.

According to her own website, Louis Hay is known as one of the founders of the self-help movement. Hay infuses this principle of positive thinking in her books, Heal Your Body (1976) and You Can Heal Your Life (1984). In addition to authoring books, Hay also leads a very successful support group and is the owner of a successful publishing company, Hay House (“About Louise”).

Martha Beck’s background is in academics, studying career paths as a research associate at Harvard Business School and teaching at the Harvard and the American Graduate School of International Management. Now, a self-proclaimed life coach, Beck has authored several New York Times bestsellers, including Finding Your Own North Star: Claiming the Life You Were Meant to Live. She is also currently a columnist for O, the Oprah Magazine (“About Martha”).

Cheryl Richardson has devoted her life to spiritual inspiration through authoring books and public speaking. Her books include New York Times bestsellers, Take Time for Your Life, Life Makeovers, Stand Up for Your Life and The Unmistakable Touch of Grace. She presents her programs across the nation, gaining public attention from the media (“Cheryl’s Bio”).

4. June 27, 2008 – “The Law of Attraction: Real Life Stories.”

Winfrey described this episode as a follow up to the previous show featuring guests, Martha Beck, Cheryl Richardson, and Louis Hay. As described in the title, the show did feature more guests sharing their stories about how they made the Law of Attraction work in their own lives. Guests who shared their stories ranged from two young girls who are just finding their life goals to a woman who learned to make a new life and forgive her ex-husband. The episode also featured short clips from Dr. Christiane Northrup, Esther Hicks, and Gay Hendricks.

Dr. Christiane Northrup teaches women’s help and wellness through empowerment in her many television specials, television appearances, and authored books (“About Dr. Northrup”). Esther Hicks has co-authored eight books with her husband, Jerry Hicks. They both travel the country teaching workshops on the Law of Attraction (“The Esther Hicks”). Finally, Gay Hendricks, Ph.D. and his wife, Kathryn Hendricks promote their method of body-centered and relationship transformation through seminars and co-authored books (“About Staff”).

5. January 7, 2009 – “Best Life Week Finding Your Spiritual Path.”

The episode that aired January 7, 2009 was part of a week long series to kick off the new year. The theme of the series was living your best life. The goal was to use the guests to discuss spiritual ideas that were key to living your best life in 2009. Winfrey also used past guests’ stories to share forms of practical application. Guests appearing on this show were former guest Dr. Michael Beckwith and new guests, Elizabeth Lesser and Reverend Ed Bacon.

Elizabeth Lesser has appeared not only on Oprah’s television talk show, but also her Sirius XM Radio broadcast, *Oprah & Friends*. She has authored both *The Seeker's Guide and Broken Open: How Difficult Times Can Help Us Grow*. In addition to this, she co-founded the Omega Institute and now serves as a senior advisor on the board (“Elizabeth Lesser”). Reverend Ed Bacon is the rector of the All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, California. The church membership totals 3,500 people. Bacon has been noted for his interfaith work and has been honored by organizations like ACLU and the Islamic Center of Southern California (“The Rev. Ed Bacon”).

Frames

Belief system frames

1. “Open Your Mind”

The basic message of this frame was the same as the frame in the previous time period. This message was displayed through a depiction of being non-judgmental and choosing your own definitions. The frame also used the depiction of being “open” to new thoughts.

Winfrey: And you say Louise helped you to open your heart again (“The Law”).

Winfrey used the metaphor of an open door to describe this openness.

Winfrey: ...for so millions of people the door was at least opened to the idea that we are each responsible for the quality of our lives and the door was open so that people can begin to understand that out (sic.) thoughts, our every thought and words and actions are literally creating our experiences. (“The Secret Behind”)

Martha Beck said that there was a need to drop any “limiting beliefs” that people may have in order to fulfill their desires (“The Law”).

The language of Winfrey and her guests also expressed the meaning of this frame. At the beginning of the Best Life Week episode, Winfrey asked her guests to give their own version of spirituality. Implicit in this catchphrase is the idea that there is no one right definition of spirituality.

Winfrey: Let's define spirituality. Go ahead. Tell us what you think it means.
 ("Best")

In the episode, "The Secret," Dr. Beckwith gave her own definition of a divine force. However, she made it clear that this was not the only correct definition. She said that people may have different definitions of a divine presence.

Beckwith: The presence loved me at my core totally and completely, and it was the most beautiful beyond description. And this presence is everywhere. Most people say that God, or the presence is in everything, but in truth, everything is in the presence, and that totally changed my life. ("The Secret")

Basically, her statement was that one can define spirituality for themselves. Winfrey also expressed the catchphrase, "God doesn't get hung up on the titles."

Winfrey: whatever you want to call it—I call it God. A lot of people call it Source or Universal Energy. I call it God. I think God doesn't get hung up on the titles. It's the people that get hung up on the titles. ("Best")

She also said that "spiritual teachers come in all forms ("Best"). This was exemplified in her saying that a former 11 year old guest had taught her the greatest spiritual lesson.

2. "Not About Religion"

This frame was present in three episodes, but was only prevalent in one episode. Like ten years ago, Winfrey felt the need to make very clear the distinction between

spirituality and religion. She also used the same catchphrase from the previous time period, “not about religion,” throughout these episodes.

Winfrey: First of all, I wanna clear up, what does spiritual mean, because a lot of people think it means religion, and we are not talking about religion. We are talking about, when we say, spirit. (“What Five”)

To get the full benefit of the message of “Finding Your Spiritual Path,” Winfrey let her audience members know, that it did not matter whether they were religious or not.

Winfrey: And whether you’re religious or not, I hope that this show will begin to help you find a deeper connection to begin to live a richer, more fulfilling life, to understand why you’re really here on Earth. (“Best”)

Later in that episode, her guest, Dr. Beckwith, also felt the need to separate her message from religion. She also used a form of the catchphrase, “not about religion.”

Beckwith. First of all, we’re not talking religion here. We’re talking spirituality. (“Best”)

Again this catchphrase was seen when Winfrey went into detail about why she felt compelled to separate herself from religion. She referred to the criticism she received around the filming of the last period’s shows.

Winfrey: Can you explain what spiritual growth is, because a lot of people, as you know, many years ago, I did a segment called Remembering Your Spirit, and I was challenged and talked about and ridiculed because people thought I was trying to tell them how to be religious.

Beckwith: Right

Winfrey: So can you define...

Beckwith: We're not speaking about religiosity.

Winfrey: We're not talking about religion.

Beckwith: We're talking about our real identity. (9)

Winfrey: Mm-hmm

Beckwith: ...which is a spiritual being.

Winfrey: Okay

Ray: It's energy. ("The Secret")

3. "Religion"

Again, despite her efforts of separating herself from religion, Winfrey and her guests still frequently used religious terminology to frame their talks on spirituality. This frame was evident through the use of depictions of religious terminology and exemplars of religious experiences. The most common religious term associated with religion is "God." References to "God" as a powerful being were used multiple times throughout the episodes in this time period. This was most done in the "Best Life Week" episode. Winfrey, her guests, and even the viewers spoke of "God." Winfrey told a viewer, Caroline, that for Caroline, being a stay at home was "God's holiest work." In that episode, Beck partly described the role of God:

Bacon: What's so important to know is that God doesn't give diseases. Diseases are so mysterious. God simply doesn't give them to us. It is very appropriate for you to be angry and underneath the anger is a lot of grief. And I think it's really important to let yourself feel that grief and to let a notion of God who gives diseases die, because that's not the real living, loving God. And then to thank God for your mother at every turn. What a gift God has given you in your mother and

to ask her how she feels about all of this. (“Best”)

“God” was also a popular term in “The Law of Attraction.” Richardson claimed that one could attract certain thing in their life by putting what is important to them in visual representation on a board. Richardson said that God was in the middle of her board because she learned about the Law of Attraction from “the late 1800 and early 1900 writers like Florence Scovel Shinn, Catherine Ponder, Norman Vincent Peale, Napoleon Hill.” (“The Law”). Also in this episode, Winfrey said that “what God loves most is appreciation” (“The Law”).

Other religious terms that were used in these episodes included: faith, prayer, and miracles. In Zukav’s appearance, a viewer used the term “faith.” “Faith” was also used in “The Secret” by Byrne.

Byrne: And your job is not that. Your job is to ask once, only once, because if you're asking twice, then you don't have faith. (“The Secret”)

“Prayer” was used twice to refer to making requests. In “The Law of Attraction,” Richardson’s prayer was to allow things to happen that were in “the highest and best interest” for her (“The Law”). Winfrey used the exemplar of the young Lisa Nichols. In her time of desperation, Nichols prayed for a better life in which she was able to encourage and support others (“The Secret”). Winfrey also expressed her belief in miracles in “The Secret Behind the Secret.” She used the exemplar of how she used her thoughts to receive a “miracle bubble blower.” This event, she claimed, “reinforces my belief in miracles” (“The Secret Behind”). Finally, in that episode, Beck referred to another religion, Buddhism (“The Secret Behind”).

4. “Scientific Fact”

Absent from the previous time period, this frame was new to this time period. Inherent in the frame was the claim that the things of the spiritual world could be scientifically proven. Catchphrases that contained terms like “law” and “principle” were the main indicators of this frame. By using these terms, it was implied that these spiritual happenings were factual and irrefutable. First, this was most evident in referring to the driving force of human circumstances as the “Law of Attraction.” Byrne said that this law is “the most powerful law in the universe and it is the law by which we are creating our lives” (“The Secret”). James Ray resounded the validity of this law by claiming that “it absolutely works” (“The Secret”). In the same episode, the guests were enthusiastic that their assertions were now backed by science. First, Beckwith said “mental energy that can now be measured scientifically (“The Secret”). She also claimed the validity of “The Secret” by saying, “It’s scientific. It’s real” (“The Secret”). Finally, Ray also repeated these scientific assertions.

Ray: Everything happens by, by principles and laws in our universe. ...spiritual traditions and science are now in total agreement (“The Secret”).

Beckwith: ...

In “The Secret Behind the Secret,” Winfrey’s guests again made the assertion that what they were claiming was not only spiritually true, but scientifically true as well.

Beck: We really—we know no scientifically that consciousness brings matter into being where there was energy. (“The Secret Behind”)

Cheryl Richardson said that it was a “fact that our thoughts create our reality” (“The Secret Behind”). Using an exemplar, Martha Beck identified the specific field of science that proves her assertions are fact.

Beck: So part of it is selective attention and part of it I think, frankly, is quantum physics. (“The Secret Behind”)

Again, Beck identified physics as the foundation of the “Law of Attraction.”

Beck: Reading physics, the conclusion is you’re literally creating some of this stuff. The world is much more magical than we think. (“The Secret Behind”)

In “The Law of Attraction,” she used another exemplar in which she identified another field of science, neuroscience. Her claim was that this field was finally catching up to mystic traditions.

Beck: I love neuroscience. They’ve now discovered that we can change the structure of our brains by observing our own thoughts, which mystical traditions have known for a long time. But now it’s physically possible to change the brain and so when you’re making a list that is coming from your core of peace, your brain is literally changing so that you will be happier. (“The Law”)

5. “More than Physical World”

The existence of a supernatural force was a strong theme throughout these episodes. It was seen through the depictions that guests used to portray the world. Hay used a depiction, describing humans as “metaphysical people.” This depiction was an indication of this non-physical world (“The Secret Behind”). A couple times, Winfrey’s guests used the modifier “magical” to depict a presence in the world (“The Secret,” “The Law,” and “The Secret Behind”). Beck said that the “world is much more magical than

we think” (“The Secret Behind”). Associated with magic was the term “manifest.” This term was used in two episodes (“The Secret” and “The Law”). A guest, Wendy, once said that her manifestations were coming so quickly that she thought she was a magician (“The Law”).

6. “Supernatural Force”

Like the previous time period, this force was a single one but not universally defined. The media package contained many depictions of this force, metaphors describing it, and exemplars depicting it. Various guests used a variety of depictions in their discussions of this force. One such depiction was given by James Ray.

Ray: It’s about powerful magnetic force...

Beckwith: Yeah

Ray: ...in the universe. (“The Secret”)

Beckwith depicted this force as “love beauty” (“The Secret”). In “Finding Your Spiritual Path,” Bacon acknowledged the existence of a “divine presence” (“Best”). Winfrey said that this “spiritual entity” can be called “Source,” “Universal Energy,” or “God” (“Best”). Also in this episode, Winfrey, Bacon, and Beckwith, made multiple references to “God.” References to “God” were also very prevalent in “The Law of Attraction.”

The “universe” was most often depicted as a supernatural force, in control of the human circumstances. Many guests in various episodes said that people make requests of the universe and the universe responds. In “The Secret,” the metaphor of ordering from a restaurant served as an exemplar. Lisa Nichols said that a person makes both conscious and unconscious orders to the universe (“The Secret”). A viewer, Heather, claimed that she “ordered” her “husband from the universe” (“The Secret Behind”). Martha Beck

said it was possible to make “requests of the universe” (“The Law”). Hay was a big proponent of this line of thought. She said that the universe listens and responds to our requests (“The Law”). In another episode, she went on to say:

Hay: Well, I think that everything you think and everything you speak goes out from you into the universe and comes back to you multiplied. It’s almost as though the universe is listening to everything you say and everything you think and saying, “Oh, that’s what they want. (“The Secret Behind)

Hay also said that universe loves “gratitude” and “grateful people” (“The Law”). The universe, not only responds to people’s request, but the universe also plays other roles. Winfrey said that the universe can rise up and meet you wherever you are. Dr. Beckwith said that the universe “will match the feeling that you’re holding” (“The Secret”).

7. “Energy Presence”

The “Energy Presence” frame emerged as a prevalent frame in this current time period. Instead of just a supernatural force controlling the happenings in the world, energy also dictates the world’s events. This energy was depicted as “great,” “everything,” “flowing,” and “positive” or “negative.” Richardson depicted this energy as a “greater energy.”

Richardson: It is also about me and this greater energy, this greater creative force. And that’s where an intention is set from. (“The Law”)

Energy was described as a singular force and as a universal entity. In “The Secret,” both Canfield and Beck made the assertion that “everything’s energy.”

Beckwith: We live in—in a, you know, for lack of a better word, a multidimensional universe. Everything is energy. Energy is never destroyed,

never created, and it becomes exactly what you put your attention on, and there's enough for everyone. ("The Secret")

Energy is not only everything, but humans also have the ability to possess this energy. Both Beck and Richardson used depictions of holding or grasping energy ("The Secret Behind"). Richardson claimed that if you hold this energy too tightly, then you can't allow anything to flow in your life ("The Secret Behind"). Energy can also flow outside of humans. The depiction of energy flow was used in both "The Secret" and "The Law of Attraction." Beckwith said that energy flows "where attention goes" ("The Secret"). Beckwith also claimed that this energy flows creates a vibratory feel:

Beckwith: And the energy stated flowing in that direction and expanding that whole vibratory feel in the home. ("The Secret")

When humans control this energy and allow it to positively flow, they should in turn receive back this positive energy. Zukav claimed that "your energy attracts like energy...." ("What Five"). Beckwith speaks of an "energetic match" directing and guiding a human's actions ("The Secret"). Winfrey summed up this principle in the episode of Gary Zukav's appearance.

Winfrey: And so, that's what you're really talking about by intention, 'cause your intention was to upset the person by cutting them or saying something snide to them, and the effect is that the energy of that intention comes back to you in direct proportion that you put it out. ("What Five")

8. Body is "More than Physical"

Like the previous time period, this frame was very evident throughout these episodes. Each episode had framing devices indicated the use of this frame. These

framing devices were depictions, catchphrases, and exemplars. Also, as before, the body was depicted as having a soul or spirit. In “The Secret,” Winfrey and her guests depicted our “real identity” as a “spiritual being” which is composed of “energy” (“The Secret”). Cheryl Richardson also used the catchphrase “spiritual beings (“The Secret Behind”).

The term “soul” was used both to define both a human and a component of the human. Zukav claimed that each human is a “soul on this Earth with gifts to give (“What Five”). Winfrey depicted a viewer as a “highly advanced soul” (“The Secret Behind”). The soul and spirit are also depicted as part of the human. Beck said that you can find things in your spirit (“The Law”) and Richardson said that intentions come from a “soulful place” (“The Law”). Finally, Beckwith said that “our soul can actually give birth to qualities, talents, capacities” (“Best”).

In Zukav’s appearance, he often depicted a human of being composed of different parts. This was evident in his multiple uses of the catchphrases “parts of your personality” and “parts of yourself” (“What Five”).

Zukav: You are a spiritual person if you have set the intention to heal those parts of yourself that are creating destructively in this world and in your life.” (“What Five”)

Zukav went on to later describe what the “parts of your personality” entails.

Zukav: And that’s what we’re calling the parts of your personality that are based in fear, the parts that become judgmental, the parts that have obsessive thoughts and compulsions and addictions, the parts that can’t stop blaming, the parts that can’t stop criticizing. (“What Five”)

One of the catchphrases that depicted one of the parts of the human body was:

“core of peace.” Beck used this phrase multiple times in both “The Law of Attraction” and “The Secret Behind the Secret.” Beck encouraged viewers to get in touch with this and live at your “core of peace.”

Beck: ...you get to a part of yourself I call the core of peace and that’s what you know what is meant to happen in your life. (“The Law”)

Beck used this catchphrase again later in the same episode.

Beck: And when you go to your core of peace you actually feel that the timing—giving into the timing of the universe feels like, whew, where this shallow part is going. (“The Law”)

Beck gave an exemplar of what happens when someone does not live at their core of peace. This exemplar was the story of King Midas. Instead of receiving what he really wanted, he only received what he thought he wanted (“The Law”). In “The Secret Behind the Secret,” Beck added a depiction of part of a human, the “ring of fire.”

Beck: The Ring of Fire is what you have to go through to get from your shallow existence to your Core of Peace. (“The Secret Behind”)

Another depiction of a part of the human was centered around the metaphorical heart. This of course did not mean the physical heart or the heart dealing with romance. Zukav made this distinction clear.

Zukav: ...I am not talking about a romantic heart. I’m talking about the healthiest, most grounded, powerful place in you. What it wants. (“What Five”)

When describing how Rhonda Byrne developed the secret, she claimed that something was “like a flame inside of my heart” compelling her to share this secret with the world

(“The Secret”). James Ray twice depicted a part of the human as a “heart space” in the episode, “The Secret.”

Ray: And so it’s that heart space, not what I can get, but what can I give and how can I serve? And when you’re in the moment, the universe lines up behind you, and it’s at your command. (“The Secret”)

9. “Journey of Life”

As Winfrey and guests did in the 1998 time period, so did this period’s guests use the metaphor of comparing life to a “journey.” Winfrey depicted it as a “journey to yourself” (“The Secret Behind”); Richardson did as a “healing journey” and “spiritual journey” (“The Secret Behind”), and Hicks as an “evolving journey” (“The Law”). Hay said that every person was on a journey, “whether we know it or not” (“The Secret”).

Within this metaphor, the journey was also depicted as a path or road. The title “Finding Your Spiritual Path” is the best example of this. In “What Five Words Describe Your Marriage,” Winfrey also depicted it as a “path of your own spiritual growth.” When introducing Dr. Beckwith on “The Secret,” Winfrey said that “he teaches thousands of faithful followers the path to reaching their highest potential (“The Secret”). Denise, a viewer, said that she herself was on a path (“The Law”). Someone can be led or guided down the path (“The Secret”), but it is everyone’s ultimate responsibility to “find our own path” (“Best”). Bacon said that a crisis means a “crossroad,” indicating the need for choices to be made (“Best”). When actress, Jenny McCarthy, was shown in a short clip, she said, “Everyone has bad things that happen in their life and it really is a matter of taking and choosing the right road” (“Best”). There were also depictions of one traveling down this journey or road in life. Winfrey referred to it as “walking the walk”

(“Best”). Beckwith depicted it as “walking in the direction of what you want” (“The Secret”).

10. “Longing for Something More”

Beck claimed that “most people live in the shallows” (“The Law”). If so, most people are in need of something to get them out of these shallows. The need for something more or a “fulfilling life” was very present throughout these episodes. The most popular framing device used was catchphrases. However, other framing devices like exemplars and metaphors were used. Foundational to this need for something more was a need for change. Catchphrases containing the term “change” were very popular throughout the episodes. In one episode, both Zukav and Winfrey said, “You need to change first” (“What Five”). Change was used frequently in that episode, with the use of the catchphrases: “You need to change” and “Change yourself” (“What Five”). Another popular catchphrase throughout some of the episodes was a form of “changing lives.”

Hay: We might just get one little thing that helps change our life (“The Law”).

Hay: And they have an opportunity to use these ideas and begin to make even small changes in their life. (“The Law”)

Winfrey: Millions of lives have been transformed (“The Secret Behind”).

In “Finding Your Spiritual Path,” Lesser stated the importance of the role that change plays in people’s lives:

Lesser: ...this wasn’t in my plans, this isn’t what I want, whether it was getting sick or losing a business or just even aging, we are born into this world where the rule is change. Everything changes and everything dies and new life only comes when things change and when things end. (“Best”)

Another need seen throughout this frame was the need for growth. Growth was a popular topic for Winfrey and her guests. Zukav said that the growth of individuals in a relationship was essential in building what he called a “spiritual partnership” (“What Five”). Again, catchphrases like “spiritual growth” and “grow spiritually” were used over and over throughout his interview. In Beckwith’s two appearances, he also emphasized the need for growth. Like Zukav, he also used the catchphrase, “spiritual growth.” He found the need to grow certain qualities in one’s life.

Beckwith: ...what quality would I have to grow to have peace of mind? (“The Secret”)

Later, he used the words “develop” and “cultivate” to depict this need for growth.

Beckwith: And I think what’s important is that in circumstances like this we are being called to develop or cultivate qualities within us that we didn’t have before. (“Best”)

Cheryl Richardson used a metaphor to describe this growth process. She said that the reason for things taking longer to occur in her life, was that she needed to grow or “cook a little bit” (“The Law”).

The third need was a need to heal one’s self. This need depicted the soul or life of someone as broken and in need of healing. In “The Secret Behind the Secret,” the soul was depicted as having the possibility of being “broken,” “ruined,” and “tortured.” Upon this occurrence, there must be a need to heal it. “Heal your life” was a very popular catchphrase, with some form of it being used in four of the episodes (“Best,” “The Law,” “The Secret,” and “The Secret Behind”). In “The Secret,” James Ray said that it was our choice to “become healthy and whole.” Cheryl Richardson said that the process was a

“healing journey” (“The Secret Behind”).

Another popular need was to find or know yourself. In order for a person to find themselves, they must have first lose themselves. The catchphrase, “lost yourself,” was used multiple time in “Finding Your Spiritual Path”:

Winfrey: You’ve lost yourself because you think that’s all that you are (“Best”).

Winfrey used this catchphrase again when addressing mothers.

Winfrey: Next, moms listen up. You lost yourself, because you think that’s all that you are... (“Best”)

When talking with Beckwith, Winfrey said that the main goal of their discussion was to help people find their “real identity” (“The Secret”). Winfrey said that everybody has this “true self” (“Best”). The catchphrase of “who you are” or “who you really are” also expressed this need (“The Secret” and “Best”). Zukav said that when talking about the soul, you are practically “getting to know yourself” (“What Five”). This includes “Getting to know what you’re feeling, what you’re thinking, what you’re intending, what your fears are” and “what your loves are” (“What Five”).

Finally, within this frame, there was a need for completion or fulfillment. This need was most seen in “What Five Words Describe Your Marriage” and “Finding Your Spiritual Path.” Zukav said that each person had a reason for being on this earth and that each person needs to “fulfill it” (“What Five”). Winfrey wanted her viewers to understand why they are “really here on Earth,” in order to have a “fulfilling life” (“Best”). This should be the “life of your dreams” and the “life you were born” to live (“Best”). Because Zukav’s main topic of discussion was on marriage, he spoke of how people look for others to “complete” them. Winfrey identified an exemplar from the

movie, Jerry McGuire, when Tom Cruise's character used the phrase "you complete me." However, Zukav said that "only you can complete yourself" ("What Five"). Basically, every person has the right to be fulfilled and therefore should be fulfilled. The need for fulfillment was high stressed by Lesser in her appearance on the show.

Lesser: If you are not fulfilled, if you are not feeling fulfilled all the way down to the bottom of your soul, you ultimately don't have as much to give your kids.

("Best")

11. "Empowerment"

The framing device, depiction, was commonly used in the media package of this frame. The "Empowerment" frame was present in the last time period, and like before, it was depicted as "authentic power" ("What Five"). However, it was not depicted as a divine power as it was before. Zukav depicted the heart as the most "powerful place in you" ("What Five"). Winfrey even depicted our thoughts as being powerful when she used the phrase "powerful thinking" ("The Law"). The power we as humans possess can be used to "change our lives" ("The Secret Behind") and to bring into our lives "that which we are experiencing" ("The Secret Behind"). Yet, Richardson said that this power should be harnessed ("The Secret Behind").

Winfrey and guests framed this message of empowerment through using variations of the catchphrase "everything you need you already have." Winfrey described this belief as "one of the most powerful spiritual beliefs" ("Best"). In that same episode, she also said, "you have everything you need right now" ("Best"). Beckwith claimed that we have the help of something big within us:

Beckwith: We're going to find something within us that's bigger than this circumstance and situation and we're going to let that take over. ("Best")

Like the previous time period, Winfrey used the exemplar of the Glinda, the Good Witch in The Wizard of Oz. Glinda said "you've always had it, my dear" ("The Secret"). Beck resounded that when he said, "You can find it in your spirit" ("The Law"). Finally, Winfrey best summed it up in her statement:

Winfrey: And, in fact, you already hold the power to make that happened. ("The Secret")

12. "Entitlement"

The "Entitlement" frame was promoted through a focus on self, an emphasis on self-love and affirmation, and a sense of entitlement. This was done through the use of self-centered catchphrases, depictions of self, and self metaphors. Over and over, the guests and Winfrey encouraged viewers to put themselves first. Winfrey started out the episode, "The Secret," by telling her audience members to "make 2007 about showing up in the now for you" ("The Secret"). Winfrey summed up the definition of spirituality, saying that "spirituality is about yourself" ("What Five"). Zukav echoed this message of self-focus in his appearance. This self-focus was evident in this statement: "Your commitment is to your own spiritual growth" ("What Five"). In the same episode of his appearance, he and Winfrey used these self-focused catchphrases several times: "fixing yourself," "change yourself," and "heal yourself" ("What Five"). In some ways this focus on self could be perceived as selfish as evident in the conversation Winfrey had with Hay in "The Law of Attraction":

Winfrey: So, Louise, I think that gratitude is one of the easiest ways to begin the whole process...

Hay: Oh it's wonderful.

Winfrey: ...of getting more things for yourself. ("The Law")

This frame did not only send a message of self-focus, but one of self-love. Louise Hay was a big proponent of self-love. She admitted that she liked to teach people to "love themselves" and "adore who you are" ("The Secret Behind"). In "The Secret Behind the Secret," she encouraged a viewer to daily look in the mirror and say that he loved himself. Claiming that the "body needs love" ("The Law"), she used popular catchphrases like "love myself" or "love yourself." A depiction of this self-love was what Hay called "self-compassion" ("The Law"). When Lisa Nichols was recounting her past on the episode, "The Secret," she said that she went through the process of falling in love with herself, coming to a point where she now fully loves herself ("The Secret").

This self-love that Hay so often spoke about was encouraged to be accomplished through affirmation or positive thinking. Again, Hay was a big advocate of self-affirmation. In a conversation with Richardson and Hay on "The Law of Attraction," exemplars of this affirmation were given:

Hay: You know, an affirmation that I use a lot for many things, "All is well.

Everything is working out for my biggest good. And out of this experience only good will come and I am safe." And you can say this over and over and over again. ("The Law")

Richardson spoke of an affirmation she views nearly everyday.

Richardson: There's another great affirmation that I have hanging on my wall I've had for years, "The world is conspiring in my favor." Isn't that great? ("The Law")

Hay used the exemplar of what these self affirmations look like.

Hay: So if you're giving out a feeling of "I'm okay. I'm good enough as I am and I am acceptable and I love life and I love me and you start having gratitude for yourself and for life, then life treats you differently. ("The Law")

Hay used the metaphor of comparing affirmation to planting seeds ("The Secret Behind"). She also used this metaphor in "The Law of Attraction." This metaphor was also seen in the previous time period. Finally, in a clip with Dr. Northrup, he acknowledged the importance of positive thinking.

Dr. Northrup: There's this interesting thing that happens when somebody gets it, really downloads, a more positive way of thinking. ("The Law")

Finally, within this frame there was a sense of entitlement. Zukav expressed this sense of entitlement by through the catchphrase, "you are worth being on this Earth" ("What Five"). Entitlement was also expressed in "The Secret" in the proposition that humans have things that they "deserve in life." Lisa Nichols said that "you deserve right now to feel good." Winfrey rephrased Louise Hay's claim of entitlement:

Winfrey: Louise says if you don't believe you deserve to prosper you will not prosper. ("The Law")

13. "Create Your Own Circumstances"

While this frame was very strong throughout most of the episodes, it was virtually absent in "Finding Your Spiritual Path." This frame entails a message of the ability of

humans to create their circumstances or the things they want in life. Winfrey summed it up with the catchphrase to her viewers that it was possible to “get the job, the love, the life you want” (“The Secret”). One of the principles of the secret is that thoughts create reality. The ability to create as humans places a responsibility on them and also requires action. Through catchphrases, visual images, and metaphors, the frame of creating circumstances was evident.

First, catchphrases that included the term “create” were present throughout the episodes. Cheryl Richardson claimed that she was “co-creating with the universe” in “The Law of Attraction.” One catchphrase was “create the life you want” (“The Law” & “The Secret”). Among the things you can create are “painful experiences” (“What Five”), feelings (“The Secret”), “a space” for things to get better (“The Secret”), and financial freedom (“The Secret”),

One of the main claims of “The Secret” is that our thoughts have the ability to create these things. The frame receives its title from the catchphrase of this basic concept: “We create our own circumstances.” Winfrey summed up this concept in a conversation with Rhonda Byrne, the creator of the secret:

Winfrey: ...human beings here on Earth

Byrne: Yes

Winfrey: ...create our own reality.

Byrne: We do

Winfrey: We create our own circumstances.

Byrne: Yes

Winfrey: We create our own circumstances by the choices we make...

Byrne: Yes

Winfrey: ...and the choices that we make are fueled by our thoughts. So our thoughts are the most powerful thing that we have here on Earth.

Byrne: They are. They are.

Winfrey: And based upon what we think, and we think determines who we are, we attract who we are into our lives. (“The Secret”)

A variation of the catchphrase, “our thoughts create reality,” was used by Winfrey and the following guests: Hay, Richardson, and Beck (“The Law” & “The Secret Behind”). Hay believed that “you can make yourself better with your own thoughts” (“The Secret Behind”). A visual representation of the power of thoughts was the “vision board.” Both Richardson and Hay discussed the advantages of creating a board with visual representations of the things that one desires to have. The concept of the vision board was to think and visualize what one wants and one will receive it. An example of someone who applied this principle was a viewer, Wendy.

Winfrey: Now meet Wendy who says she changed her life by picturing exactly what she wanted... (“The Secret Behind”)

Zukav spoke of a similar concept, but instead of thoughts creating our circumstances, he said that “intention is your act of creation” (“What Five”). He used this catchphrase throughout his appearance. He said that humans can look in their past to see how this principle is true:

Zukav: You can always tell that you have intended in the past by looking at what you’re experiencing in the present. (“What Five”)

While not strongly present, the concept of karma was evident in this frame. Zukav claimed that “Your energy attracts like energy...” (“What Five”), and the “effect is that the energy of that intention comes back to you in direct proportion that you put it out.” (“What Five”). Therefore, as humans, the things we draw or attract are reflections of ourselves. Byrne said that this is principle of the Law of Attraction. She said that “what we do is we attract into our lives the things that we want, and that is based on what we’re thinking and feeling” (“The Secret”). In “The Secret,” Winfrey said that that both the good and bad things in one’s life are there because the “the energy you put out into the world is always gonna be coming back to you” (“The Secret”).

Because of this ability to create circumstances, there is a sense of created responsibility. Zukav claimed that it is each individual’s responsibility to change (“What Five”). Winfrey also indentified the need for individual responsibility.

Winfrey: --for so many millions of people the door was at least opened to the idea that we are each responsible for the quality of our lives and the door was open so that people can begin to understand that our thoughts, our every thought and words and actions are literally creating our experiences. (“The Law”)

Finally, this frame is very action based with conditional terms. When asked to give the definition of “spirit,” Zukav instead gave the definition of what *being* spiritual is. The conditional nature of his definition was seen in this statement:

Zukav: You are a spiritual person if you have set the intention to heal those parts of your self that are creating destructively (responsibility) in this world and in your life. (“What Five”)

He also gave numerous actions needed to build what he called a “spiritual partnership.” Also, in order for new things to enter your life, there were set conditions. These conditions were seen throughout “The Secret” in this catchphrase:

Nichols: It’s—In order to hold on to something new, you have to be ready or willing to let go of something old. (“The Secret”)

Beckwith’s statement later in that episode was very similar to Nichol’s.

Beckwith: Well, basically, nothing new can come into your life unless you open yourself up to being grateful. (“The Secret”)

When explaining how “The Secret” works, Winfrey asked where actions play a role. There was a definite need to “attach action” (“The Secret”). The need for action was made clear in Winfrey’s conversation with James Ray.

Ray: Right? I mean, so you’ve got to, you’ve got to feel it...

Winfrey: You’ve got to think it.

Ray: ...and you’ve got to act upon it.

Winfrey: Act on it, yeah. (“The Secret”)

Richardson was a strong proponent of the need for action. He used a metaphor in which he said that the universe should not be viewed as a Santa Claus where “all you have to do is write your list up and get what you want.” Instead there is a need to commit to consciousness and action (“The Secret Behind”).

14. “Feelings”

The presence of this frame was perhaps stronger within the most recent time period than the previous one. In this frame, feelings were depicted as a powerful force through the use of the metaphor of comparing feelings to a magnet. Feelings were also

present in catchphrases used throughout this time period's episodes. Throughout "Finding Your Spiritual Path," Winfrey and Lesser spoke about feeling more fulfilled. Winfrey used the catchphrase "feel more alive" twice in the show. Through phrases like this, Winfrey and her guests drew attention to the importance of being in touch with one's own feelings and how those feelings help dictate one's circumstances. As before, the heart was a visual image of the center of emotion:

Byrne: ...and we felt that with all of our hearts every single day. ("The Secret")

Zukav and Winfrey used this metaphor with one of their conversations in the episode, "What Five Words Describe Your Marriage?"

Zukav: If you want to have the kind of relationship that your heart yearns for, you have to create it. You can't depend on somebody else creating it for you.

Winfrey: And don't you have to be in tune or in touch with what your heart really is yearning for, because I think a lot of people are yearning for the picture. ("What Five")

Another center of emotion that was identified in these episodes was the "core" or "core of peace." In "The Secret Behind the Secret," Beck said that one must go to this core to draw out their feelings.

As Winfrey said, there was a need to be in touch with one's feelings. Lesser used a depiction of a "spiritual warrior" as "someone who feels life deeply" and "who is sensitive, but still who knows how to go through life" ("Best"). Hicks encouraged audience members to "acknowledge" any uncomfortable feelings and replace them with a "better feeling" ("The Law"). When Oprah was recounting an upsetting past experience

with a job, Beck encouraged her to go “back in that job and tell me what your body, I mean, really remember it and tell me what your body feels” (“The Law”).

The feelings and emotions that humans possess were depicted as powerful. This was best expressed in a conversation with Richardson in “The Secret Behind the Secret.” She claimed that there is “emotional power” behind affirmations, which “begin to manifest themselves in your life” (“The Secret Behind”). Using a metaphor, a viewer compared the feelings to a magnet, pulling your desires in one’s own direction (“The Secret Behind”). She was not the only person to admit the ability of the emotions to attract things into one’s life. Beckwith depicted a person’s feeling as a “feeling tone.” Feelings are sent out to the universe and the universe in turn begins to match that tone (“The Secret”). Canfield echoed this metaphor when he said that one’s feelings are like sending “out a wave into the universe. Anything that’s vibrating in a similar level gets attracted into your life” (“The Secret”). In order to attract one’s desires, other guests said that feeling should be combined with thoughts and actions. Ray gave the process of first feeling, then thinking, and then action (“The Secret”). Byrne said that attracting “into our lives the things that we want” is based on “what we’re thinking and feeling” (“The Secret”).

Comparative Analysis

Because this study was qualitative rather than quantitative, the comparison of the two time frames must be based more on simply the presence of frames and framing devices within the two periods. The presence or absence of frames will show the progression of Winfrey’s spirituality views over the last ten years. The analysis will also indicate if a frame was obviously stronger within one time period over the other.

Although this cannot be proven quantitatively, it will be based on observation of the presence of framing devices throughout the episodes, the variety of framing devices used, and the depth of discussion of each frame. To aid in the identification of the frames in each time period, a chart listing each time period's frame is shown below.

Table 1

Comparison of Two Time Periods

1998 FRAMES	2007-2009 FRAMES
Open Your Mind	Open Your Mind
Not About Religion	Not About Religion
Religion	Religion
More than Physical World	More than Physical World
	Scientific Fact
Supernatural Force	Supernatural Force
	Energy Presence
Body is More than Physical	Body is More than Physical
Journey of Life	Journey of Life
Longing for Something More	Longing for Something More
Empowerment	Empowerment
Entitlement	Entitlement
Create Your Own Circumstances	Create Your Own Circumstances
Release Control	
Feeling	Feelings

The “Open Your Mind” frame was more prevalent in the 1998 time period. The topic was discussed more in depth throughout these episodes, especially when Caroline Myss appeared as the guest. The time period also used more catchphrases like “you judge for yourself” and “you can believe or not believe.” Both time periods did not identify any one belief system as correct or incorrect, implying that there is no one right way to believe.

The “Not Religion” frame was also more identifiable in 1998. Winfrey went to greater lengths to distance herself from religion at this time, taking more time to discuss the topic. The catchphrase, “not about religion” was seen in both time periods. In three of the five episodes of that time period, she discussed this topic in detail while using the catchphrase. She did this in only one episode in the 2007-2009 time period. The catchphrase was used in discussion in other episodes in that time period, but was not the focus of the conversation.

Even though her claims of being non-religious were stronger in 1998, it is interesting that the “Religion” frame was used more in 1998 as well. In the episodes of the 1998 period, Winfrey and her guests made more references to various types of religions and seemed to use more religious depictions and catchphrases. Some of these framing devices included frequent use of “God,” depictions of religions and religious figures, references to the Bible, and depictions of Christian terminology. This Christian terminology included: heaven, hell, Garden of Eden, the devil, angels, faith, prayer, and miracles. The more current time period contained some of these religious framing devices. These framing devices were depictions of “God” and depictions of Christian

terms like faith, miracles, and prayer. However, there were not as wide a range of these depictions, and there were no Biblical references.

A frame not present in 1998 was the “Scientific Fact” frame. The episodes from 2007 to 2009 framed spirituality as being scientifically true. In 1998, the episodes had no references to science and there were no claims of spiritual principles as being factual.

The “More than the Physical World” frame was not a strong frame in either of the time periods. Both used depictions of the world, describing it in non-physical terms. In one episode in the 1998 time period, Zukav did use exemplars to aid in the description of the world. The frame closely associated with “More than the Physical World,” “Supernatural Force,” was more identifiable in the 2007-2009 time period. There was a greater variety of the depictions of this “supernatural force” within this time period. Some of these depictions included “love beauty,” “divine presence,” “spiritual entity,” “Source,” “Universal Energy,” and “God.” In 1998, this “Supernatural Force” was most commonly referred to as “God.” In the more current episodes, both “God” and the “universe” were used often as a depiction of this force.

The current episodes also contained the “Flow of Energy” frame, which was absent in the older episodes. An important aspect of the Law of Attraction was this energy flow. While Zukav did use this frame in his 1998 appearance, it was not “commonly observed” throughout the rest of the episodes of that time period (Cappella and Jamieson, 47).

The 1998 time period also saw a stronger presence of the frame “The Body is More than Physical.” In the episodes of this time period, the guests took more time to explain what these non-physical parts were and how they can be identified. The episodes

also used more catchphrases, depictions, and exemplars. Guests of the episodes in the 2007-2009 period simply used depictions that implied humans were “spiritual beings.” Definitions of these non-physical parts were more implied.

The metaphor of the “journey of life” was pretty evenly seen in both periods. However, the frame was evident in one of the episode’s title in the 2007-2009 time period. Using the metaphor of spirituality being a path, a show titled in this time period was “Finding Your Spiritual Path.” Both episodes used a variety of depictions of this metaphor, like a “journey of evolving,” “crossroads,” and “paths.”

Both time periods contained equal discussions of the frame of “Longing for Something More.” Both frames contained catchphrases like “heal yourself” and “change yourself.” Most all of Winfrey’s guests expressed the need for humans to change through actions like being fulfilled, finding your true self, and growing spiritually.

The “Empowerment” frame was also seen more through the use of framing devices in the 1998 time period. This time period contained catchphrases like the “power within you,” the “power of your spirit,” and your “divine power.” It also contained the metaphor of comparing women to queens and an exemplar from the movie, How Stella Got Her Groove Back. The 2007-2009 time period used catchphrases like the “powerful place within you” and “everything you need you already have.” However, there was not as great of variety of these catchphrases. Interestingly, Winfrey used the same exemplar from The Wizard of Oz over this span of 10 years. Both time periods also contained the catchphrase “authentic power.”

The “Entitlement” frame saw equal discussion in both time periods. Similar catchphrases of “loving yourself” were used. In the 1998 time period, humans were

depicted as “divine” and “pre-magnificent.” Catchphrases like “self-loving,” “self-worth,” and “loving yourself” were also used. Similar catchphrases were also used in 2007-2009. Also, guests from both time periods encouraged self-affirmations. Both Vanzant, in 1998, and Hay, in 2008, used the metaphor of comparing affirmations to planting seeds.

The “Create Your Own Circumstance” frame was a strong frame in both time periods. Both Winfrey and many of her guests framed their thoughts with the idea that humans are in control of creating of their own circumstances in life. Therefore, the guests of both time periods chose to discuss this topic in depth. Both time periods contained catchphrases summarizing a person’s ability to create their own circumstances. The 1998 time period had catchphrases like “life is what you make it” and “If you want to see what—how you were creating in the past, look around you.” In the 2007-2009 time period, a very popular catchphrase was “we create our circumstances.” Also, within this period there was a stronger element of the need for action. The media package of this time period contained depictions of the need for action to attain the desired things in life. A contradiction to this frame was present in the 1998 time period, but was not seen in 2007-2009. This was the “Release Control” frame. Its package contained the catchphrases “surrender control” or “surrender trust.”

Finally, the “Feelings frame” was not a strong frame in either of the time periods. Both periods used the visual image of the “heart” being the center of emotions. Both also saw the importance of being in touch with those feelings. The 2007-2009 episodes may have placed a greater emphasis on the power of these emotions though. The time period

contained the catchphrase “emotional power.” The guests depicted this strength as an emotional tone that the universe matches.

Overall, the frames were discovered to be consistent across both time periods. The current episodes contained two extra frames, and the earlier episodes contained only one extra frame. Also, some of the details of the frames changed over time. Throughout the ten years, there was a shift to a more scientific view of spirituality, with a heavier emphasis on the actions of human beings.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Oprah Winfrey and her show did in fact provide a rich area for research. Framing analysis provided a method for answering the research questions of this study. Answering these questions also resulted in rich areas of discussion and criticism. Perhaps the area of most concern is the apparent contradictions with who she claims to be and the contradictions within her frames. Finally, upon endeavoring on this study, certain limitations have resulted, but areas of further research have also presented themselves.

Discussion

RQ1: What frames does Oprah Winfrey use to present spiritual matters on The Oprah Winfrey Show?

The frames for each time period were put into three categories: belief system frames, world frames, and self frames. The 1998 time period contained thirteen identifiable frames. In 1998, the belief system frames were: “Open Your Mind,” “Not Religion,” and “Religion.” This time period’s world frames were: “More than the Physical World” and “Supernatural Force.” The largest category was the self frames, which included: “Body is More than Physical,” “Journey of Life,” “Longing for Something More,” “Empowerment,” “Entitlement,” “Create Your Own Circumstances,” “Release Control,” and “Feelings.”

The frames for the 2007-2009 time period totaled fourteen. The belief system frames for this time period were: “Open Your Mind,” “Not Religion,” “Religion” and “Scientific Fact.” There were three world frames: “More than the Physical World,” “Supernatural Force,” and “Energy Presence.” Finally, the self frames included the same frames as the 1998 time period with the exception of the absence of the “Release

Control” frame. Therefore, the self frames of this time period were: “Body is More than Physical,” “Journey of Life,” “Longing for Something More,” “Empowerment,” “Entitlement,” “Create Your Own Circumstances,” and “Feelings.”

Identifying Winfrey’s spiritual frames reveals Winfrey’s views of spirituality. Winfrey approaches spirituality with an open mind with no affiliation with religion. Yet, she still uses religious terms to frame these beliefs. According to her views, there is a metaphysical world composed of energy. There is also a supernatural force in control in our world. Winfrey views humans as on journey through life towards “something more.” This “something more” can be finding your lost authentic self. With the possession of souls or spirits, humans are empowered individuals with the entitlement to fulfillment in life. Through taking action and being in touch with one’s feelings, humans possess the power to control the circumstances of their life.

RQ2: How do the spiritual frames of ten years ago compare with the current frames presented on The Oprah Winfrey Show?

Through the analysis, it was discovered that many of the frames of the 1998 time period were in existence during the 2007-2009 period. Exceptions to this are the “Release Control” frame found only in 1998, and the “Scientific Fact” and “Energy Presence” frames that were found only in 2007-2009. Otherwise, each frame in 1998 was also found in 2007-2009. However, the extent of discussion of these frames within the time periods did vary.

The extra frame in the 1998 time period, the “Release Control” frame, might indicate that there has been a shift away from the need of faith in more recent times. “Faith” and “surrendering control” were terms used in the catchphrases of this frame.

The disappearance of this frame may also indicate a shift towards gaining more control in life. There is some merit to the notion of taking responsibility for the consequences of one's actions.

The two additional frames from the 2007-2009 period, the "Scientific Fact" frame and "Energy Presence" frame, might also indicate a shift away from faith. Winfrey's shows during this time period utilized more scientific framing devices. Guests of Winfrey's show used exemplars from the fields of science and catchphrases that indicated a sense of fact and assurance. This frame would seem to appeal to those who claim to be neither religious nor spiritual. Using this frame would also ease the doubts of those that are skeptical of the spiritual world. For those who already possess spiritual beliefs, this frame simply reaffirms this belief. The "Energy Presence" frame was probably introduced because of the discussion of "The Secret." Energy, as a presence in the universe, was used strongly to frame the belief system of the Law of Attraction. "The Secret" provided a new way of looking at the world as composed of energy.

Despite the existence of many of the same frames between the two time periods, the extent to which the frames were used varied. In 1998, Winfrey spent more detailed discussion on the "Open Your Mind," "Not Religion," and "Religion" frames. Also, in 1998, Winfrey and her guests spent more discussion and used more framing devices to present the frames "Body is More than Physical" and "Empowerment." Between 2007 and 2009, Winfrey and her guests used a greater variety of framing devices in the frame of "Supernatural Force." Some of these framing devices they used were depictions like "love beauty," "divine presence," "spiritual entity," "Source," "Universal Energy," and "God."

Some frames saw equal representation between both time periods. One such frame was the “Journey” frame. Both time periods expressed the metaphor of life being a journey through similar framing devices. Another equally represented frame was “Longing for Something More.” Similar catchphrases were used in both time periods. These catchphrases included “heal yourself” and “change yourself.” The “Entitlement” frame was popular in both time periods. Guests during both periods even used the same metaphor of planting seeds of affirmation within yourself. Another popular frame was the “Create Your Circumstance.” Discussion of this topic presented a variety of framing devices in both time periods. However, in 2007-2009 more framing devices included elements of the need for action. Finally, both periods used similar framing devices in the packaging of the “Feelings” frame. The visual image of the center of feelings was presented as the heart. Both periods also placed an emphasis on being in touch with one’s feelings.

With the appearance of the “Scientific Fact” and “Flow of Energy” frame and the disappearance of the “Release Control” frame, it would appear that Winfrey’s frames have become more scientific with less importance on keeping an open mind. This can also be seen with the weaker presence of the “Open Your Mind” frame in 2007-2009. This may be due to the nature of topics in the episodes in 2007-2009. The topic of three shows was “the Secret.” These episodes would most likely share common frames and framing devices.

Criticism

New Age Believer

Since Winfrey's rise to fame, many people have spoken out against Winfrey's views on spirituality. There have been many who have identified her as being New Age. McGrath stated, "Winfrey transformed herself into the television queen of New Age awareness" (127). In the article, "The Gospel According to Oprah," the organization, Watchman Fellowship, claimed that Oprah is "deconstructing Christianity and reframing it into a New Age Perspective." In doing this study, there is valid proof that these assertions by others are true.

Winfrey has claimed that she is not affiliated with the New Age movement and has made no effort to identify herself as New Age. However, her claim provides an area of criticism. It is in fact the researcher's assertion that she is a New Age thinker. Overall, Winfrey's framing of spirituality lines up much most consistently with New Age beliefs. Newport defined "New Age" as a "spiritual movement seeking to transform individuals and society through mystical union with a dynamic cosmos" (1). The first part of this definition was seen in the "Longing for Something More" frame. Within that frame, Winfrey even used the catchphrase "lives have been transformed." Other catchphrases included the terms "change" and "growth." The second part of the definition, "union with a dynamic cosmos," is seen within the "Supernatural Force," "More than Physical World," and "Energy Presence" frames. In the most recent episodes, Winfrey and guests have used depictions of a supernatural force. These depictions include "love beauty," "divine presence," "spiritual entity," "Source," "Universal Energy," and "God." Through the "More than Physical World" and "Energy

Presence” frame, it is evident that Winfrey believes there is a dynamic presence in this world. Through Dr. Martha Beck’s catchphrase, the “world is much more magical than we think,” a belief in a dynamic cosmos is evident. In the 2007-2009, depictions of the presence and flow of energy in this world also support this definition.

With a blending of religions, New Age thinkers tend to view all religions as one (Newport, 12). The framing devices within the “Religion” and “Open Your Mind” frames would indicate that Winfrey supports this New Age belief as well. The “Religion” frame contained many forms of depictions and catchphrases from various religions. Christianity was well represented with references to Scripture, depictions of God, and catchphrases containing words like “faith,” “prayer,” and “miracles.” The religion of Buddha was also used in this frame. Exemplars of various religious figures, like Jesus Christ, Mother Teresa, and the Dalai Lama were also used. The view put forth by the “Open Your Mind” frame was that it was okay to believe whatever you want. This is best exemplified in the catchphrase “I don’t expect that anybody should believe what I believe.” Winfrey used another popular catchphrase in this frame as seen in this statement: “whatever you call it, whatever religion—if it’s Allah, if it’s Yahweh, if it’s—whatever you call God, divine energy” (“Medical”).

Finally, New Age thinkers believe that humans should experience a transformation in order to realize their own Godhood (Newport 9). This belief is in line with the “Entitlement” and “Empowerment” frames. A catchphrase used in the “Empowerment” frame stated that humans possessed “divine power.” Myss even claimed that humans “are that divinity” (“Medical”). While no guest appearing on the show claimed that humans were in fact God, the sense of “Entitlement” was seen through

metaphors of comparing women to queens. In the attempt to get women to love themselves more, many guests used affirming depictions of women which included: “magnificent,” “fabulous,” “wise,” and “worthy of love.”

Contradiction of frames

Within each time period, it was evident that there were some contradictions of frames. The first contradicting set of frames were found in the 1998 time period. The two contradicting frames were “Create Your Own Circumstance” and “Release Control.” Within the “Create Your Own Circumstance” frame, there was a sense that humans can control their own situations. However, in the “Release Control” frame, there was an emphasis on the need for faith and relinquishing control.

Another contradiction was found within the frames dealing with religion: the “Not Religion” and “Religion” frames. These frames were present in both time periods. In the late 1990s, Winfrey used her show as a platform for the discussion of spirituality. However, she received a vast amount of criticism for mixing religious views in her show. It was evident that she felt the need to refute these criticisms and thereby distance herself from religion. However, with such a strong religious background, it was virtually impossible for her to completely let go of all her religious terminology. Her guests also used religion as a frame of reference in their explanation of the issues in the spiritual realm. Religious beliefs are commonly understood throughout America. Using religious terms perhaps helped the viewers understand these spiritual concepts. Winfrey’s guests also probably brought terms of reference from their own past experience with religion.

Finally, the last contradiction was within the current time period of 2007-2009. The “Open Your Mind” frame and the “Scientific Fact” frame possessed inherent

contradictions. While there was the promotion of the need to accept all beliefs, there was also the assertion that one particular belief was factually backed by science. If the claim is that one belief is fact, it would therefore exclude the validity of those that are not scientifically proven. It does not seem that that was the intention of either Winfrey or her guests, but it was the way in which they framed their discussions.

Implications

Oprah Winfrey

Oprah Winfrey has been a figure of interest for the American public and the academic community. The media has scrutinized areas of her life, in topics ranging from weight and her love life. Researchers and authors have chosen her numerous times as a subject for their written material. One subject that both communities have chosen to inspect is Winfrey's spiritual beliefs. Instead of looking at select quotes from Winfrey on spirituality, this study holistically analyzed the views she chooses to present on her television show. This study was able to define these frames, shining a light on her overall spiritual beliefs. It also showed the progression of those beliefs over the last ten years. Any inconsistencies in these frames indicated inconsistencies in her own set of beliefs. Defining the frames that Winfrey chose to use in her show, provides a better understanding of Winfrey herself. In completing this study, it has been found that although Winfrey claims to not be affiliated with any religion or New Age Movement, she in fact is a New Age thinker.

Religion

The identification of the Winfrey's spiritual frames have some bearing on how the public frames spirituality. The implications of what many have called the "Oprah effect"

are significant to religion. The numerous people that watch her show are arguably being influenced by these frames. Viewers may not even realize the unconscious effect that these frames have on their own views. It can be assumed that Winfrey's spiritual frames will be adopted by many of her viewers. Viewers may be incorporating these frames into their own religious beliefs without even realizing it. Although Winfrey denies association with the New Age movement, her frames are filled with New Age thinking. New Age thought has strongly influenced the way people view religion. While Winfrey may not be responsible for converting individuals to New Age beliefs, her frames may encourage an openness to its line of thought.

Exploring Winfrey's spiritual frames has also provided a foundation for the study of other frames. It can be argued that spirituality is the basis of how one frames other areas of life. If this study were to be expanded to other areas of framing, it is most likely that aspects of the identified spiritual frames could be found in other frames. Therefore, it was significant that this study first focused on spirituality. An understanding of Winfrey's spiritual frames lends to an understanding of the other potential frames presented by Oprah Winfrey.

Framing

Erving Goffman's framing theory has experienced an evolution since its introduction to the academic community. Although not originally intended for exclusive application to the world of news reporting, it has primarily been used in this field. Researchers have applied the theory to other areas of study, but it still has not moved far outside of the framing of news stories. There were no studies found that applied this theory to the identification of frames within a talk-show format. This study attempted to

take a framing analysis approach, commonly applied to news stories, and apply it to a talk-show. While those in the news attempt to present information without bias, a talk-show host makes no such claims. They are free to present their own views without the need to be unbiased. Therefore, this media format creates a unique venue for the application of framing theory.

Limitations

As with any study, this study encountered certain limitations. First, there were the limitations of the researcher. As admitted in the introduction, this study was written from the perspective of a Christian. While this could have influenced the interpretation of the data, the same could be said of any religious point of view. A person claiming no religious beliefs would still approach the study from some sort of bias. However, the objective steps of the media package were employed to avoid letting this bias heavily influence the results of this study.

Van Gorp was a proponent of using interpretive means in a qualitative methodology (“The Constructionist,” 72). However, the process of interpretation presents its own limitations. Having a single coder has the potential for affecting the results. Tankard said that without a systematic approach, the researcher may find frames that they are consciously or unconsciously looking for (98). They may also identify frames that fit into a society’s stereotypes (98). To avoid this, the systematic “media package” approach was employed. Usually, a study will employ multiple coders to reduce subjectivity and insure more reliability in the study. However, multiple coders were not employed because of both time and financial constraints.

The limitation of subjectivity also came into play in the process of episode selection. To select the episodes, it was necessary to search through two databases for the needed episodes. This selection was subjective because it was based on the interpretation of the predetermined definition of spirituality. The selection of episodes was also limited by one of the databases used to select the episodes. The database of episodes available through Winfrey's website had very limited descriptions of the episodes. A full understanding of the entire show's theme could not be attained unless the episode was purchased. With both databases, it was also possible to overlook some of the episodes that could have met the criteria because the search entailed looking through hundreds of episodes. Also, because of the lack of recent spiritually themed shows, it was necessary to pick five from a larger time period than just the one previous year. The lack of episodes also created the need to pick three episodes that possessed the same topic, "The Secret." Frames of the message of "The Secret" would then be more evident throughout this time period.

Further Study

This study has lent itself to many other possibilities of further research. Many other framing studies have employed the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of a computer program to quantitatively analyze the transcripts could be used to identify certain key words or phrases. One possible program could be Diction 5.0. This would give the researcher the ability to possibly do an exhaustive study of every spiritually themed episode in the history of The Oprah Winfrey Show. Using a computer program would possibly result in a higher number of identifiable frames. A quantitative study also allows for less subjectivity and increase of reliability. Because

this study utilized one method of framing analysis, combining the two methods could potentially avoid criticism from both ends.

Another method that has been used in the analysis of frames is to treat the media frames as an independent variable in order to test the audiences' reaction. As noted by Cappella and Jamieson, the identification of frames should aid in the identification of the interpretation of those frames. Therefore, it would be interesting to take this study to the next level of audience effects. Through the use of surveys, it would be possible to see if these identified frames are present in the viewers' individual framing schema. There is no debate that Winfrey is a very influential figure in our nation. A study like this would provide a method of understanding just how truly influential she is.

The framing of spiritual issues was chosen as a topic for this study because Winfrey's views of spirituality have been the center of many discussions. However, Winfrey has had many other areas of her life scrutinized and discussed. She also covers a wide variety of topics on her show. It would then be of value to apply this study to the analysis of some of these issues to include: relationships/sex, philanthropy, family, and health. These could even be broken into further sub-categories. Within the family issue, there could be the sub-categories of divorce, abuse, and child rearing. The application of this study to other issues would provide a broader view and understanding of Winfrey as a communicator.

Finally, it would be beneficial to apply another closely related media theory to the study of Oprah Winfrey. Agenda Setting theory has been closely associated with framing theory and often times the two have been used interchangeably. As Van Gorp noted, agenda setting studies examine how the importance media places on certain issues are

translated into the importance people place on those issues (“The Constructionist,” 70). In the search for transcripts for this study, it was discovered that over the last few years, spiritually themed shows were not as prevalent as one might assume. Winfrey may have gained this reputation of being a spiritual leader because of the high amount of shows that featured spiritual issues in the late 1990s. However, since coming under such strong criticism for that, it seems that she has backed off from doing those types of shows. It can be said that spirituality was an agenda that she pushed in the late 1990s. It would be interesting to discover her more recent agendas, which could be done through an analysis of her show themes in the last five years. Presumably Winfrey would give more air time to the subjects she found more important. Therefore, the most popular theme could be seen as her top agenda. A comparative study of two five year time periods over the last ten years could also be done to discover the progression of her agendas.

Regardless of the number of studies done on Oprah Winfrey, there are still many subjects worth researching. Her career has certainly been one of interest. She has been a news anchor, company CEO, actress, public speaker, entrepreneur, philanthropist, magazine publisher, and television show host. Through all of this she has been communicating to millions. Therefore it is her role as a communicator that makes her so fascinating to study.

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