Legitimation in Discourse and Communication Revisited: A Critical View toward Legitimizing Identities in Communication

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Abstract

The various and multifaceted wars in the Middle East have brought about weird complications in the already challenging multifarious international relations and interactions. The media coverage of terroristic threats in the Middle East and the European countries as well as United States has often targeted Muslim identity. The present study is aimed at analyzing Barack Obama's speech at Baltimore Islamic center which was meant to transform such constructed worldviews about the Muslims by making an attempt to redefine the Muslim identity according to special key identity-bearing terms such as peace and Americanism. Using van Leeuwen's (2007) framework, this study attempts to discuss *identity construction* as a further analytical lens to van Leeuwen's approach. According to Foucault's (2009) notion of *biopower* and Greenblatt's (1980) idea of *improvisation*, it was concluded that Obama struggles to redefine Muslim identity in order to gain control of the society and manage the social subjects in a politically preferred way.

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1. Introduction

Over the last several years, the various and multifaceted wars in the Middle East (ME) have brought about weird complexities in the already challenging multifarious international relations and interactions (Abdi & Basarati, 2016). The rise of different militant groups such as Houthis, ISIS, Ansarollah, etc. in war-hit countries including Yemen, Syria, and Iraq has left Muslims with an array of unresolved problems; specifically, the Jihadi projected identity that accompanies their Muslim-hood and Islamic identity. Moreover, the recent terrorist attacks in San Bernardino have roughly marred the status of US Muslims in both media boards and political campaigns in the US. As a result, American Muslims could have been socially ostracized or degraded at different residential, occupational, and educational contexts.

Recognizing Muslims' mounting challenges in the face of media-illustrated and manipulated identities, however, Barack Obama, the 44th president of the US, gave a speech at the Islamic Center of Baltimore in 2016 and defended the Muslims who have always been living in peace in the US and other parts of the world. American Muslims, Obama proclaimed, like other American criticizes are and have always been whole-heartedly trying for a better future for the USA. Through such identity constructions, Obama de-couples Muslims, especially American ones, from the Jihadists and legitimizes them as true American citizens and peace-loving countrymen. Therefore, analyzing legitimizing discursive practices through identity (re)construction on the part of Obama, which appears to be an attempt to smooth the rough edges of Muslims' media-distorted identity, has significance in uncovering how overarching tensions against Muslims may be settled.

The current study, therefore, aims to investigate the discursive practices with which Barack Obama attempted to settle down the fervent atmosphere against the status of Muslim community in the US, often induced as a result of the recent terrorist actions in San Bernardino and also Paris. On this basis, the study seeks to demystify how Obama endeavors to sooth the tensions between Muslims and non- Muslims

and control the content of socio-political discourses.

Moreover, along with analyzing Obama's legitimizing practices, the study points to an important gap in van Leeuwen's (2007) theoretical framework that has made it less operational in analyzing the sort of legitimizing discursive practices exercised through identity constructions in socio-political contexts. Together with a number of varying socio-political acts, this paper argues that identity constructions may enable the authority to (de)legitimize socio-political orders and practices, social phenomena, ethnic races, and racist practices. Moreover, such constructions can help authority to control the discursive organization of society in line with power-admiring macro interests. Accordingly, the two following research questions will contribute to clarifying the issue.

1. What discursive strategies are loaded in Obama's discourse to produce legitimation among the social subjects?
2. How do identity construction practices help to control the body of society?

2. Theoretical Framework

Considering the notion that power and legitimacy are both successfully exercised within discourse, Idrus and Mohd Nor (2016) critically investigated the essence of legitimizing discursive practices in selected decision-making scenes in a popular syndicated three-judge TV court Show, *Hot Bench*. Applying van Leeuwen's (2007) framework, this study hinges on identifying the types of legitimation processes exploited by judges in making decisions. The authors concluded that the judges mostly employed three types of legitimation processes namely, authorization, moral evaluation, and rationalization.

In a relatively similar work to Idrus and Mohd Nor (2016), Schnurr, Homolar, Mac Donald, and Rethal (2015) studied the legitimizing discursive practices in the context of the nuclear proliferation crisis. These authors focused on how leadership in this issue is carried out as well as discursive processes are relevantly made. Moreover, they observed the processes through which these claims are legitimized. Their findings suggested that the leadership claims

were (inter)discursively legitimized through a variety of discursive strategies. They believe deeper analyses may reveal the context variety and text types of the leadership claims that are surprisingly different due to the use of the variant terms relating to the leadership and crisis.

Examining new methods of producing legitimacy in line with employing theoretical concepts and frameworks from pragmatics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Vandergrief (2012) shows how taking metastancing can be used as a legitimation strategy in political speeches. She proceeded to examine how the speaker's metastances serve two complementary "constructive strategies" (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999, p. 92), a polarized negative other-representation and positive self-representation. Interestingly, this study which was grounded on Hitler's speeches (1935-1941) revealed that the opponents of Nazi ideology are denigrated and contemptuously referred to not through derogatory terms; rather they are interpellated with irony, sarcasm, and mockery. By showing oppositional stances as inferior to the speaker's, the speaker seeks to legitimize Nazi policy and ideology.

In the same vein, Peled-Elhanan (2010) examined massacre reports in eight Israeli secondary history books. Looking through the lenses of discourse analytical theories, Peled-Elhanan suggested that Israeli mainstream school books implicitly legitimize the massacres of Palestinians as an influential way in order to secure Jewish state. More pertinent to the social effects of such a discourse, he stated that such legitimizing practices may motivate Israeli youth to become fully-fledged soldiers in different areas to preserve the occupation in the occupied territories of Palestinians.

The cited works in this section all disclose a closer look at the processes of legitimizing certain states of affairs via discourse practices. However, neither of the works cited do attempt to extend the skirts of the research far more than the mere identification of varying discursive strategies of legitimation. The major objective of critical discourse studies is to deconstruct the text so as to unravel dominance, inequality, and unequal (hidden) power relations on one hand (Mayr, 2004; van Dijk, 2009), and to discuss how subjects, social relations, and values are constructed and represented as real on the other

(Fairclough, 2003a; Meyer, 2002; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), the cited works, to some extent, fail to provide extensive analyses concerning how subjects acquire and adopt subjective content of discourse, and how they are being 'interpellated' (Althusser, 1971) in pre-ordained subject positions of discourse.

In the same vein, this research aims at accounting for the existing gap firstly via discussing identity construction as a further analytical lens to recognize legitimizing practices in van Leeuwen's framework, and secondly through pondering carefully upon how power and authority act out to control the discursive organization of the society concerning US Muslims' state of identity. Besides, as noted above, we also delve into the adopted analytical framework so as to signal out the propitious resolution to enrich it and fill the identified gap.

2.1. Legitimation and Identity

It appears that the most prominent act of legitimation is to discursively construct, justify, and institutionalize certain institutional facts, values, and orders (Fairclough, 2003b; van Dijk, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007). Legitimacy, as Deutsch (1963) holds, is the assurance of the compatibility of a value-pursuing course of action with other key values. For Cap (2006) legitimation is mostly seen as the pivotal objective of a political speaker seeking to justify series of actions which are intended to be performed within the scope of the vital interests of the addressee. As deeply rooted in ideology, legitimation presupposes norms and values; therefore, implicitly or explicitly, it states that some course of action, decision or policy is acceptable within a given legal or political system (van Dijk, 1998).

The nature of legitimacy is similar to reality since legitimizing justifications discursively provided for specific series of actions are regarded as *ad infinitum* foundations of praxis (Deutsch, 1963). Also as a fundamental ground for the constitution of society, Ferrarotti (1987) maintains that legitimation constitutes the society in the sense that there is no society which does not rest on the original consent. Thus, insofar as all social control and all organized governments require priorities in the transmission of communications, as well as reassurance about the long-term multi-value

compatibility of the behavior asked for their content and factuality, what all government requires is a minimum of authority and legitimacy (Deutsch, 1963).

Relevant to manufacturing the legitimacy-required consent and unification among subjects, it can be assumed that different discourses aimed to provide the cognitive perception of social structures (Blommaert, 2005; van Leeuwen, 2008) may be cogent enough to provide that minimum amount of authority for manufacturing legitimation through organizing and controlling subjects according to value-laden and specific identity-bearing subject positions inside their constituting articulations. Thus, identity, among other things, may serve to accomplish certain ideological objectives (Retzlaff & Gänzle, 2008) for which acquiring public consent and legitimation in socio-political affairs may serve as germane instances.

Identity, being fundamentally spiked on ideology (van Dijk, 1998), is socially constructed and understood inside the interlocking webs of discourse articulation (De Fina, 2006; Ngo & Hansen, 2013). Individuals construct their identities and are constructed to represent different aspects of their identity (Edu-Buandoh, 2016). This is because identity, on the one hand, is a construct of interacting social practices, and, on the other, the discourse of identity construction is rooted in the socio-historical practices (Alemi, Tajeddin, & Rajabi-Kondlaji, in press). Insofar as it is negotiated in social interactions and contexts and is demonstrated in relation to others within cultural community, through acts and emotions (Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Mckinley, 2015), identity contributes discourses to stratify and organize the society into socially relevant classes and groups such as men, women, Black, White, heterosexual and homosexual (Kiesling, 2006). In other words, a self is the construct of identification with identities created and distributed by various discourses (Burr, 2003). Therefore, these social constructions, stratifications, and organizations enable the authority to manage the legitimizing practices, and finally achieve a long lasting hegemony.

In connection with the correlation between identity and legitimation, Braker (2004) maintains that the concept of identity is a crucial key to perceiving the act of legitimation. He says:

> The identity at one and the same time legitimates the person, and is confirmed by the person's manner of expressing it. Legitimation and identification are in that sense dimensions of inextricably intermeshed activity or pattern of activities. At the same time, identification between rulers and the people to whom the commands are issued serves to legitimate compliance with commands. (p. 35)

According to the inextricable relationship between these two concepts, "legitimation is making sense of power, … to those who exercise power; to those who are subject to the exercise of power; or to both" (as cited in Braker, 2004, p. 37) on one hand, and "the formation of institutional identities justifies the exercise of power and describes the ways and ends of its use" on the other (Braker, 2004, p. 38).

Identity construction has proved to play a crucial role in acquiring legitimation in economic and management fields of activity too. Glynn and Abzug (2002), studying the institutionalizing identity and symbolic isomorphism concerning firms and organizations' name, state: "… in their quest for legitimacy, firms changing their names will adopt new names that align with prevalent institutional practices in their organizational field" (p. 270). Therefore, an organizational name and identity and its semblance to culturally appropriate identificational criteria may be helpful in examining their legitimacy. Consequently, identity is in tandem with legitimizing acts of discourse which can serve as an instrument to stratify the structures of society for legitimizing the status quo.

2.2. Legitimation in Discourse and Communication

The framework for pondering upon legitimation in discourse and communication set by van Leeuwen (2007) consists of four categories viz. *Authorization*, *Moral evaluation*, *Rationalization* and *Mythopoesis*. Each of these categories includes some subcategorizations that we discuss below.

As a first category, authorization is referred to as the power of tradition, custom, law, ideology, and of person to whom an institutional power is vested in order to exert certain sorts of authority (Galvon & Guevara Beltran, 2016; Idrus & Mohd Nor, 2016; van Leeuwen, 2007). The authority of legitimation, as van Leeuwen (2007) depicts, consists of 6 subcategorical authorities entitled as *personal authority*, *expert authority*, *role model authority*, *impersonal authority*, *the authority of tradition*, and *the authority of conformity*.

Personal authority legitimation obtains its efficiency from the authority's utterance. While personal authority contains some forms of obligation modality in a person's discourse, the legitimacy of the expert authority is provided with expertise rather than status.

In the case of the role model authority, the legitimacy for an action may be provided by reference to the examples of the role models or eminent group leaders in a group or in the body of society. Significantly, the fact that role models adopt certain behaviors is sufficient to legitimize certain sorts of actions and practices of the followers. Impersonal authority is also provided by reference to laws, rules, and regulations. Likewise, the authority of tradition may be provoked by words such as: *tradition*, *practice*, *custom*, and *habit*.

In the case of conformity, finally, the totality of society's conventionalized procedures for undertaking certain actions provide reason for legitimizing actions. More precisely, most people are doing it, and so should you.

As a second category, moral evaluation is a type of legitimation which is practiced by taking a specific society's value orders into account. It includes three subcategories: *evaluation*, *abstraction*, and *analogy*. Evaluation signifies the qualities of actions. It is typically exerted by attributive and designative adjectives.

Another choice for moral evaluation comes from abstraction. This strategy refers to some practices in abstract ways, and moralizes them by distilling from them a quality that links them to the discourse of moral values. The third choice is taken into account by analogy: comparing an activity which belongs to a certain social practice (often implicitly) with another

activity which is associated with other social practice.

The third categorical element of legitimation is entitled as rationalization defined as giving purpose to institutionalized actions. Rationalization has two sub-branches, namely, *instrumental rationalization* and *theoretical rationalization*. The former legitimizes actions by having their goals, effects, and uses magnified. The latter, on the other hand, does so by explicitly referring to the constructed, conventionalized, and perceived natural order of things.

The last category is devoted to Mythopoesis in which legitimation is practiced through storytelling. This type of legitimizing practice consists of two branches viz. *moral* and *cautionary* tales. In the former, the major character is awarded for participating in discursively legitimized practices; whereas, in the latter, the consequences and results of conforming to the conceived norms and orders of social practices are importantly foregrounded.

2.3. A Critique on Legitimation in Discourse and Communication

In spite of all its merits, the theoretical framework of van Leeuwen (2007) appears to suffer from a relative incapability in specifically considering identity construction as a legitimizing strategy. For, being as a substantial discursive strategy, the framework lacks a specific analytical layer to delve into identity construction strategies. This being the case, the authors argue that the addition of a further subcategory between role model authority and impersonal authority in *authorization* may enrich the framework. This further sublevel can be dubbed as *authority of identity*.

The reason for proposing to locate the authority of identity immediately after the authority of role model lies behind the limited scopes of identification that it surrounds. While the role model authority undergoes legitimation significantly based upon conformity with known and influential figures, the authority of identity argues that the discursive representation of certain master signifiers in broader scopes would serve to legitimate certain types of discursive events. These events cover ideological, political, racial, regional, national, and linguistic fields of action. To put it differently, role model authority is a restricted

analytical lens which, to some extent, is unable to observe legitimation strategies enacted through identifying a subject with identificational criterion in a society. For instance, a discursive practice to identify American Muslims with either Americanism or peace-loving identificational criterion (or both) cannot be recognized by means of narrowly-focused analytical lens of role model authority. Therefore, we may need a widely-scoped one to give the analyst a clear view to observe the legitimizing enactment.

This would be a legitimizing practice in which certain identificational master signifiers discursively foreground an identity with specific characteristics. The master signifiers, in Lacan's term, "are able to exert … force in message because of the role they play in structuring the subject-specifically in giving the subject a sense of identity and direction" (Bracher, 1993, p. 25).

The signifiers of this kind enclose a subject with a sense of significance and identification; therefore, power constructively manages subject's self to be allied and identified with a specific criterion. The identity-bearing function of master signifiers typically presents a sense of security and alliance through discourse.

Relative to the identification of the master signifiers in the body of discourse, one may embark on looking for those signifiers with the higher frequency of repetition as well as contributions that are foregrounded and presupposed as 'sheer facts' within the domain of mutual knowledge between speaker and audience(s). Together with these incidental cases of master signifiers, new sets of identity-bearing facts intended for looking afresh at prior identities or redefining threatened ones are likely liable to occur as discursively embellished new information followed by presupposed, thematized, and naturalized identities to get attention and induce motivation. This strategy goes far beyond the limits of role model authority, and, therefore, may equip the framework with more analytical lenses to critically scrutinize subtle legitimation practices administered through discourse.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data

Barack Obama's speech delivered at February 3, 2016 at Islamic Center of Baltimore serves as the analytical corpus of the present study. After due considerations about the body of the corpus, eight specific and substantial parts of the corpus were selected due to their pertinence to fulfill the various elements of the framework.

3.2. Procedure

In the present study, we utilized the framework put forward by van Leeuwen (2008) in order to analyze the data. The major objective of the framework is to enable the analyst to delve into the discourses of different type (e.g. political, media, clinical, etc.) that seek to legitimize particular sorts of pertinent implementations and (coercive) actions. All these occur within the scope of CDA.

In this framework, we identified an analytical gap and set the ground up to fill it with due justifications. We realized that the framework lacks a full-fledged analytical tool to enable the analyst to scrutinize the sorts of legitimizing acts which the speaker seeks to undertake via constructing, attribution, and/or rethinking some specific identities. In this regard, as we noted in section 2.1.3 and will illustrate in the forthcoming sections, formulating an individual analytical layer dubbed as *authority of identity* may be able to resolve the problem and enhance the analytical strength of the framework. To this end, we analyzed the corpus in terms of the different analytical procedures of the framework. Next, in order to justify our claim and argumentation for formulating authority of identity, as a further analytical tool, we studied and analyzed some instances that, to a greater extent, could be best justified using authority of identity.

4. Results

What discursive practices are loaded in Obama's discourse to produce legitimation in the minds of the social subjects?

TEXT 1:

This mosque, like so many in our country, is an all-American story. You've been part of this city for nearly half a century. You serve thousands of families - some who've lived here for decades as well as immigrants from many countries who've worked to become proud American citizens.

The prominent theme of this extract is to manifest Muslims' social, cultural, economic, as well as political activities as rationally precedent phenomena. Barack Obama began to legitimize Muslim identity by equating the Baltimore mosque with the other mosques in the country. Through the analytical lenses of moral evaluation strategy, it appears that Obama implicitly maintains that the widespread presence of Muslims in the United States as well as their mosques across the country is not an abnormal or a novel phenomenon which has not been identified before.

To do this, first he parallels the Baltimore mosque with other mosques across the US, and then refers to the number of mosques in the US by the phrase '*so many*' so as to represent it as a natural matter. On the other hand, quite implicitly, with reference to rationalization and using historical background such as the length of the period that Muslims have been the citizens of the city, he normalizes and also naturalizes Muslims' participation in social acts and life. This is undertaken by pointing to their 50 year citizenship as '*half a century*' in order to draw more attention upon the history of their American identity.

In order to enact further legitimation, Obama points out Muslims' efficiently purposeful activities in serving different families in need. This can be accounted for by instrumental rationalization which emphasizes the purposefulness "as something that turned out to exist in hindsight" (van Leeuwen, 2007, p. 103).

The purposeful actions of Muslims in the city are regarded as humanitarian actions that allow those families in need to feel like real Americans. The second major theme in this extract which is significantly represented is the construction of collective 'American' identity.

The collective American identity is a master signifier that functions as an index upon which Obama struggles to lead social subjects in a way which would allow them to identify their selves regardless of their background identities: *This mosque…is an all-American story*. This is a well sounded issue when he generally addressed all American people and regarded his present addresses no less than pure Americans. In other words, he refused to separate American Muslims from their non-Muslim countrymen.

By placing Americanism as the master signifier at the nucleus of his speech, he may have been attempting to provide a sense of solidarity between the American people who were once immigrants.

TEXT 2:

Now, a lot of Americans have never visited a mosque. To the folks watching this today who haven't - think of your own church, or synagogue, or temple, and a mosque like this will be very familiar. This is where families come to worship and express their love for God and each other. There's a school where teachers open young minds. Kids play baseball and football and basketball - boys and girls - I hear they're pretty good. Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts meet, recite the Pledge of Allegiance here.

In order to lead non-American minds positively toward the mosque, Obama analogously evaluates mosques with the church, synagogue, and temples. He uses this strategy to imply that there are strongly tied and shared inter-religious practices among the believers of God. He may mean that the functions of these places are the same at heart, but each religion has given specific names to them with respect to particular principles and rituals. Furthermore, Obama clarifies the major function of mosques in that people '*express their love for God and each other*'. According to this statement, he centralizes and thematizes the concept of 'love' in connection with mosques and American Muslims' religious rituals. Then, he attributes a peace-loving identity to Muslims and detaches them from any sort of belligerent identity: *This is where families come to worship and express their love for God and each other.*

In the same vein, he extends the peace-loving identity of American Muslims to some socially significant activities through which they contribute to the well-being of the society. As an instance of instrumental rationalization, he legitimizes their helpful contributions: *There's a school where teachers open young minds.*

In order to connect and subsequently attach all positively attributed identities to an individual collective identity of Americanism, he subtly foregrounds the act of those Muslim girls who recite the Pledge of Allegiance in Islamic

communities and take American-hood as a prioritized identity. Not only does this matter legitimize the idea that American Muslims do not feel separated from their non-Muslim countrymen, but also verifies their peace-loving and, more importantly, their American identity.

TEXT 3:

With interfaith dialogue, you build bridges of understanding with other faith communities - Christians and Jews. There's a health clinic that serves the needy, regardless of their faith. And members of this community are out in the broader community, working for social justice and urban development. As voters, you come here to meet candidates. As one of your members said, 'just look at the way we live...we are true Americans.'

In connection with the previous lines of analyses, Obama continues to both legitimize and attest Muslims' peace-loving and true American identities. In doing so, he discusses American Muslims' socially beneficial activities as a sort of tradition, custom, or practice. Consequently, he (re)defines, affirms, and legitimizes their identities in terms of their socially appreciated identity: *bridging the inter-religion communications*, *serving the people in need*, *working for social justice and urban development*, *meeting candidates as voters*.

Importantly, manifesting such humanitarian and socially preferred practices of American Muslims in terms of culture, tradition, and practice extensively legitimizes and contributes to redefine and rethink their calm and helping identities. Moreover, being represented as the agents of bridging the gap between varying faiths by means of taking part in practices concerned with social welfare as their custom helps to palliate the social tension and the ideology of Islamophobia.

Same as the previous instances, Obama legitimizes the attributed peace-loving identities of American Muslims in unity with the American master signifier which attributes westernized meaning to Muslims' identity, and finally takes them under its own shelter. To do so, he refers to the statement of one of the Muslims who said *'just look at the way we live...we are true Americans'*. This is an instance of personal authority legitimation by

which Obama tries to persuade the non-Muslim Americans that American Muslims declare their American identity by themselves. As Obama reports, Muslims attempt to conform their practices and life-style with true Americans, so that they may be thought of as true Americans.

TEXT 4:

No surprise, then, that threats and harassment of Muslim Americans have surged. Here at this mosque, twice last year, threats were made against your children. Around the country, women wearing the hijab - just like Sabah - have been targeted. We've seen children bullied. We've seen mosques vandalized. Sikh Americans and others who are perceived to be Muslims have been targeted, as well.

For the very objective of defending Muslims' peace-loving identity and delegitimizing anti-Muslim opinions in America as well, Obama significantly emphasizes the result of the anti-Muslim perspectives and behaviors. This is an instance of instrumental rationalization strategy of legitimation through which the results of an action or attitude is particularly highlighted.

The sheer emphasis upon the dispreferred and disappointing outlooks toward the Muslims strategically aimed to legitimize American Muslims' peace-loving identity through delegitimizing anti-Muslim opinions as well as antagonistic actions against Muslims like *targeting women wearing Hijab*, *bullying children*, *vandalizing mosques,* and *targeting Sikh Americans*. This can be regarded as an instance of analogy.

The strategy of legitimation through delegitimizing the counter effects can be put in the same scale with the *discourse of hysteric*, in which the negative and excruciating parts or results of something are specifically emphasized, foregrounded, and maneuvered in order to use a subject's endangered and unseen 'self' to legitimize and prove the otherwise (see Bracher, 1993; Lacan, 1998; Schroeder, 2008).

TEXT 5:

Some of them are parents, and they talked about how their children were asking, are we

going to be forced out of the country, or, are we going to be rounded up? Why do people treat us like that? Conversations that you shouldn't have to have with children- not in this country. Not at this moment.

And that's an anxiety echoed in letters I get from Muslim Americans around the country. I've had people write to me and say, I feel like I'm a second class citizen. I've had mothers write and say, 'my heart cries every night', thinking about how her daughter might be treated at school. A girl from Ohio, 13 years old, told me, 'I'm scared'. A girl from Texas signed her letter 'a confused 14 year-old trying to find her place in the world'.

These are children just like mine. And the notion that they would be filled with doubt and questioning their places in this great country of ours at a time when they've got enough to worry about- it's hard being a teenager already- that's not who we are.

We're one American family. And when any part of our family starts to feel separate or second class or targeted, it tears at the very fabric of our nation.

In this extract, Obama highlights the threatened identity of American Muslims along with the anxieties of the families in the American society. He emphasized that American Muslims are wrongly taken to be analogous to the terrorist Jihadists in the ME and also as second class citizens. Obama exploits the strategy of analogy and puts these statements forward in order to arrive at legitimation through delegitimizing any statement that articulates American Muslims' identity far from the two major overlapping identities: Americanism and peace-loving identity. Muslims' anxiety and the non-Muslims' views toward them as inferiors take root in the society whose viewpoints categorize American Muslims in the same group as Jihadists. Hence, Obama struggles to delegitimize such anti-Muslim identity constructions for the sake of legitimizing the identity of American Muslims.

In his discourse, Obama subtly carried out the delegitimizing act by simply abstracting anti-Muslim identity from collective American identity- *that's not who we are*. Obama tries to

legitimize the concerns and anxieties of the American Muslim children and teenagers who suffer from skewed view points of the society toward them in terms of putting American Muslims' children in the same scale with his own- These *are children just like mine.*

Consequently, by constructing an American collective identity again, and illustrating what may be able to disarticulate the collective identity, Obama, once again, but differently, delegitimizes any particular perspective toward various American communities that may be deemed as second class communities. In his view, any class specific stratification is stringently dispreferred in American unified family- *we are one American Family*.

TEXT 6:

So let's start with this fact: For more than a thousand years, people have been drawn to Islam's message of peace. And the very word itself, Islam, comes from salam- peace. The standard greeting is as-salamualaykum- peace be upon you. And like so many faiths, Islam is rooted in a commitment to compassion and mercy and justice and charity. Whoever wants to enter paradise, the Prophet Muhammad taught, 'Let him treat people the way he would love to be treated' (Applause). For Christians like myself, I'm assuming that sounds familiar.

Here's another fact: Islam has always been part of America. Starting in colonial times, many of the slaves brought here from Africa were Muslim. And even in their bondage, some kept their faith alive. A few even won their freedom and became known to many Americans. And when enshrining the freedom of religion in our Constitution and our Bill of Rights, our Founders meant what they said when they said it applied to all religions.

In the above excerpts, the constructed legitimizing identities are actively and also optimistically at work in an attempt to redefine the threatened Islamic identity. In the same vein, thus, in this instance, Obama tries to allay the existing tensions and legitimize the pure Islamic identity through theoretical rationalization of legitimation strategies.

Giving due considerations to peace-loving identity of Islam and Muslims, he gives

credentials to some historical archives and stories in connection with Islam's incipient days of calling to peace and brotherhood. Obama calls this review of Islamic fabrics as 'facts'. This assumption automatically contributes Islamic identity to be theoretically rationalized, deemed as 'bona fide' reality and actual orders of that faith. This so called fact, consequently, may become legitimized inside the stratified layers of subjective minds.

The peace-oriented identity of Islam is centrally articulated and given singular prominence by assuming it as the dominant and naturalized identity of Muslims- *Islam, comes from salam- peace. The standard greeting is as-salamu alaykum- peace be upon you; Islam is rooted in a commitment to compassion and mercy and justice and charity*. This identity is not entirely and exclusively limited to Islam and Muslims; rather its peacefulness is compared with Christianity, which is an act of legitimation in terms of the authority of conformity: *For Christians like myself, I'm assuming that sounds familiar. .*

Previously mentioned, in addition to legitimation, Obama significantly hopes to unify peace-loving identity with Americanism as two reverberatingly echoed master signifiers for American Muslims to identify their selves: *Islam has always been a part of America*.

Besides this very issue, all these attributions work out to sooth the anxieties of non-Muslim Americans who are dramatically moved by terrorism. He assures them that their Muslim countrymen are historically and ideologically separated from groups of Jihadists in the ME.

As an instance of impersonal and tradition strategies of legitimation, Obama gives reference to the historical records which claim Muslim residency in America for quite long years on one hand, and accounts for their aspiration for peace, fighting for freedom and justice as the authority of tradition on the other. These evidential descriptions allow him to authorize the so called fact in public and, as a result, act out to redefine their threatened identity- *some kept their faith alive*; *a few even won their freedom and became known to many Americans*.

Meanwhile, Obama emphasizes the leading role of democracy and the democratic Constitution of America regarding the freedom of religion. Allegedly, this Constitution provides Muslims with a vantage point to keep their faith alive and practice their religious principles in a peaceful and amicable way: *And when enshrining the freedom of religion in our Constitution and our Bill of Rights, our Founders meant what they said when they said it applied to all religions.*

It seems that the emphasis upon democracy is aimed to acknowledge American Muslims and that the dynamicity and life of their religious community, to a greater extent, is hooked on the foundations of US's democratic Constitution. This claim automatically rules out the legitimation of the fundamentalist states and Jihadists that rarely leave open space for the religious activities of various faiths. It also partly draws the public attention upon the America's inclinations and power-bearing practices in the ME.

It is likely worth to mention that matters of comparison and impersonal authority are obvious in this issue. More to say, although the so called democratic status of America is hardly concordant with the implicit portrayal of arbitrariness in the ME, it is performed in order to draw the public attention upon the existing gap and set a matter of comparison in subjects' mind so as to stimulate them to make assessments.

TEXT 7:

Now, we do have another fact that we have to acknowledge. Even as the overwhelming majority- and I repeat, the overwhelming majority- of the world's Muslims embraces Islam as a source of peace, it is undeniable that a small fraction of Muslims propagate a perverted interpretation of Islam. This is the truth.

Groups like al Qaeda and ISIL, they're not the first extremists in history to misuse God's name. We've seen it before, across faiths. But right now, there is an organized extremist element that draws selectively from Islamic texts, twists them in an attempt to justify their killing and their terror. They combine it with false claims that America and the West are at

war with Islam. And this warped thinking that has found adherents around the world- including, as we saw, tragically, in Boston and Chattanooga and San Bernardino- is real. It's there. And it creates tensions and pressure that disproportionately burden the overwhelming majority of law-abiding Muslim citizens.

Applying personal authority as a strategy of legitimation in this extract, Obama draws on his power of subject position- *…and I repeat.* He reemphasizes the peaceful identity of Muslims for several times in order to exert an alternative way to reecho his former claims about Muslims and gain the utmost consent of the society. He also introduces Islam as a source of peace and constructs this major feature as a presupposed 'fact': we *do have another fact that we….*

This state of affair naturally rationalizes the peaceful identity of Islam and Muslims and also morally evaluates their peaceful identity as a sheer fact. This is so because stigmatizing a phenomenon or a state of affair as a fact or a truth requires a justifiable power position to legitimize the claim. Obama's power-bearing subject position as a president of the US, thus, may provide such a justification and make the society feel less sensitive against American Muslims.

An alternative strategy that Obama adopts to prove Muslim identity is by setting a contrast between the practices of the majority of Muslims and the small fraction who takes on terrorist actions across the world. This case can be nominated for the strategy of conformity in which Obama knowingly makes a comparison between the two sides in order to exhibit lack of conformity between the two and delegitimize the terrorist factions. To do so, he takes the small number of the groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIL into account. Then, due to their small number, he undermines their influence among the vast majority of Muslims who live in peace - *a small fraction of Muslims VS. The overwhelming majority of law-abiding Muslim citizens.* The current statement makes use of impersonal authority in which laws, rules, regulations, and statistics speak for legitimation. In this very instance, Jihadists are degraded and they are represented as *a small fraction.*

On the other end of the extreme, he does otherwise and legitimizes peace-loving Muslims by means of an adjective *overwhelming.* Obama sets a state of contrast between the kinds of practices that both sides undergo for the same end as the former case. In contrast to the practices of the greater majority who '*embrace Islam as a source of peace'* and help the society they inhabit to abound with peace and justice, Jihadists in the ME and North Africa blatantly propagate skewed interpretations of Islam and filled the societies with fear, hatred, and anxiety like the ones in Boston and San Bernardino. The lack of conformity between the practices also delegitimizes the Jihadists and distinguishes them from peace-loving Muslims.

TEXT 8:

As Americans, we have to stay true to our core values, and that includes freedom of religion for all faiths. I already mentioned our Founders, like Jefferson, knew that religious liberty is essential not only to protect religion but because religion helps strengthen our nation- if it is free, if it is not an extension of the state. Part of what's happened in the Middle East and North Africa and other places where we see sectarian violence is religion being a tool for another agenda- for power, for control. Freedom of religion helps prevent that, both ways- protects religious faiths, protects the state from - or those who want to take over the state from using religious animosity as a tool for their own ends.

In connection with religious states of affair, freedom of religion in the US is inextricably unified with freedom of the religious, and it is also introduced as a core value of American identity. Obama defines Americanism and freedom of religion to exist not to be distinct and independent matters. This assertion strengthens the master signifier of Americanism by means of adding a further layer of identification.

The multi layered, value-laden, and identity-bearing master signifier projects a mild and amicable view of America in connection with Islam. Valuing Islamic identity conjoined with peace and justice not only does legitimize Muslim identity within the American non-Muslim society, but also helps the US to

establish an ideological shield to protect its national and international policies. This ideological shield proclaims US support for all faiths and condemns sectarian violence. It may also be able to protect the US against anti-religious accusations which may weaken the USA's influence among Muslims: *Freedom of religion helps prevent that, both ways-protects religious faiths, protects the state from...* As formerly pointed out, this strategy of exerting legitimation is worked out through identity construction. Furthermore, religious liberty is regarded as an inseparable facet of Americanism in the sense that American people are praised for their sense of freedom for religions.

Obama gives credence to these so called facts and legitimizes them by accounting for the importance and effectiveness of role model authority. Particularly, in this extract, the early founders of United States in general and Jefferson in particular, as a specific role model, used to value and respect religious freedom. They believed that religion is extensively a unifying factor and, more than that, keeps the country immune against the danger of schism.

The idea of giving reference to certain individuals like Jefferson legitimizes the constructed collective identity and attracts the other majority to identify themselves with a constructed identificational criterion. It is interesting to note that Obama solicits the available and pertinent strategy to serially legitimize the key themes of his contributions. In this vein, it appears that he foregrounds the issue of 'freedom of religion'. He also aims to delegitimize sectarian violence and religious absolutism in the ME and North Africa where religion is virulently exploited as a tool for acquiring power and control whereas the so called liberal and democratic constitutions of US values religious freedom as a unifying and protective factor of the state.

Due to the liberal and sectarian views of both sides regarding religion, it would be suggestive to posit that there is a utilitarian view shared between the Bill of the freedom of religion and religious sectarian. Given this circumstance, either part seeks to attain some kinds of interests by means of religion, albeit their benefits and advantages are thoroughly matters of different kind. Advantages, however, cannot be restrictively classified as terrestrial affairs, rather they encompass greater scopes of subject's sociopolitical inclinations and behaviors that may include moral and ethical motivations as well (Basarati, 2016).

5. Discussion

How do identity construction practices help to control the body of society?

The discursive act of identity construction can be presumed as a specific act devised *en route* to more extensive and inclusive social stratification. At first sight, constructing firstly a peaceful identity and then, more importantly, including this peace-loving identity within the collective pure American identity may optimistically appear as a more sanguine and democratic act of power that attempts to make the ever seen social borders and demarcations between Muslims and non-Muslims invisible in the American society. More in-depth scrutiny, in contrast, may reveal that such identity constructions are likely intended to alter the existing worn out indications of social stratification. For this reason, power circle replaces these expired borders with more influential and obliging, but much invisible, bonds of subjectivity.

The political actions of this kind persuade the society quite subtly and unconsciously to let the power gain fairly easy access to control every pulse of society. Power attempts to permeate inside the subject's consciousness to inculcate her fictitiously that she is free to think and decide. More particularly, the notion of freedom implicates the free act within certain demarcated and delimited arena. Accordingly enough, Deleuze and Guttari (1987, p. 159) state that "tie me up if you wish; we are continually stratified" and there is no way out of power-intended bonds of subjectivity.

Bourdieu (1991, p. 134) calls such a strategy as "symbolic power" and maintains that it is an instrument whereby "consciousness is given a specialized form and distributed through forms of communication". Identity construction, regarding its capability in constructing stratified layers of society in varying degrees, has the propitious potentiality to be deemed as

an important element of symbolic power or "biopower"; in Foucault's terminology (2009, as cited in Nail, 2016, p. 249), a "political power [that] had assigned itself the task of administrating life". The more characteristic and salient feature of biopower is to control and manage the society in such a way to account for what may happen in the future (Deleuze, 1989; Foucault, 2009; Nail, 2016).

The construction of a peace-loving identity for Muslims can be counted as an instrument to soothe the overriding tensions and uprising disfavor against Muslims among American and European communities. Obama assures non-Muslim communities that not all Muslims are implicated in terrorist actions. Rather, the majority of them participate in social welfare practices, attempting to extend humanitarian affairs throughout the United States. Obama finds this discursive act helpful because it may appease the hysterics and anxieties of Americans regarding the assumption that Muslims' presence in America may jeopardize and disturb the grounds of the United States' wholeness. He assures American people that the discourse of true Islam is deeply rooted in justice and fight for freedom.

Identity construction, here counted as an instance of biopower, can direct the American Muslims' conscious in such a way that may promote the US's national solidarity and power. Biopower of this kind can be hypothesized to function on the basis of improvisation that, in Greenblatt's term, is "the ability to both capitalize on the unforeseen and transform given materials into one's own scenario" (1980, p. 60). Greenblatt (1980, p. 60) asserts that "it is… [an] ability… to insinuate… the preexisting political, religious, even psychic structure of the nations and to turn those structures to their advantage". This complies with the very discursive strategies that Obama exploits whereby he attempts to replace newly illustrated ideas with those oft-manipulated ones that imperil Islamic identity of Muslims among non-Muslim Americans. Probably, he aims to control and manage the attitudes of non-Muslims regarding Muslims in general and American Muslims in particular. In addition, he signals the act of insinuation by emphasizing upon Muslims' socially beneficent activities and draws the local and universal interlocutor's attention to certain so called facts about the identity of Muslims: *Islam comes from salam – peace; Islam is rooted in a commitment to compassion and mercy and justice and charity*.

Obama portrays a favorable picture of American Muslims. Through this, he constructs social expectations concerning their societal behavior and activities. Indirectly, he places them in a constructed behavioral framework that may satisfy the expectations of the society. To put it differently, Obama sets a vacant subject position within the discourse of Americanism. He persuades Muslims to act satisfactorily according to the orders of discourse and, consequently, identify themselves with the subjective content of that discoursal subject position. As Potter and Wetherell (1987, p. 98) state "people who fill these social positions are expected to act in appropriate ways, they learn to play a role". Therefore, he self-actualizes the Muslims by estranging them from the manipulated and media-illustrated identities. Obama attempts to insinuate his constructed ideas into the structures of the subject's opinion, and this discursive act, as a result, may help him to reshape their attitudinal structures and orders according to US's interests in macro levels.

The interests of the US require American Muslims to adopt American identity as their prioritized identity and redefine their Islamic identity based on the criteria of Americanism. Greenblatt (1980) theorizes this phase as *displacement* whereby "a prior symbolic structure is compelled to coexist with other centers of attention that does not necessarily conflict with the original structure" (p. 60). This phase may enable the state to preserve and secure the national solidarity and hamper any voice of otherness that is prudent to disturb the bonds of subjectivity. Redefining the identity of American Muslims with respect to peace and, more importantly, Americanism as a symbolic structure inculcates them to account for peace and Americanism as two inextricable sides of a coin that are always defined together.

In conclusion, identity construction functions as a discursive legitimation act of power intended to legitimate certain states of affairs. Therefore, the significant implication of this study is to suggest a different strategy of studying discursive practices of the authority intended to legitimize multifarious states of

affairs, ideologies, and systems of value for the sake of controlling the discursive organization of society. It also enables subjects to cast a critical view upon varying constructions of identity representations by authority, various discourses of socio-political groups and media-illustrated facts.

Introducing identity construction act of discourse as a legitimizing act has the capability to be exploited in Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), especially concerning racial, gender, and immigration studies. One area of further work may be to develop a systematic analytical framework rooted in the principles of CDS to investigate various illustrations of identity undergone by power in an attempt to achieve biopower in the macro-social management plans.

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