

THE BLAZE AT GRENFELL: THE TIMES OF LONDON'S FRAMING OF HOW A FIRE  
BECAME A DRIVER FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

by

Madison Burke

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for Departmental Honors in  
the Department of Communication Studies

Texas Christian University

Fort Worth, Texas

May 7, 2018

THE BLAZE AT GRENFELL: THE TIMES OF LONDON'S FRAMING OF HOW A FIRE  
BECAME A DRIVER FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Project Approved:

Supervising Professor: Amorette Hinderaker, Ph.D.

Department of Communication Studies

Paul Witt, Ph.D.

Department of Communication Studies

Joshua Blaylock, Ph.D.

Department of French Studies

## ABSTRACT

A qualitative crisis news framing study which examined the framing employed by *The Times London* following the Grenfell Tower fire. Grenfell Tower, a lower socioeconomic apartment tower block, once stood in Kensington, London. On June 14, 2017, a fire broke out on the fourth floor, which led to the death of 71 residents. The 153 articles published by *The Times London* yielded five frames: informational framing, tragic framing, assumptions of blame, responses, and looking forward. Every article was analyzed using open-axial coding. Each frame contributed to shaping the opinions of policy-makers and the public. In order to understand the power and effectiveness of crisis news framing, this study also observed the process of a crisis metamorphosing into a focusing event. Focusing events lead to transparency and open dialogue for change among the public and policy-makers. This study concluded with two theoretical implications for crisis news framing. First, crisis news framing is similar to an iceberg; the deeper one dives into the water, the larger the iceberg becomes, or the more frames produced to describe the crisis. Second, that there is a relationship between crisis news framing and focusing events.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	5
<i>Rationale for Study</i> .....	8
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	9
<i>News Framing and Crisis</i> .....	9
<i>Distance and Duration</i> .....	11
<i>News Framing and Emotional Response</i> .....	12
<i>Focusing Events</i> .....	13
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS.....	17
<i>Data Collection</i> .....	17
<i>Data Analysis</i> .....	18
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS.....	21
<i>Informational Framing</i> .....	21
<i>Tragic Framing</i> .....	24
<i>Assumptions of Blame</i> .....	31
<i>Responses</i> .....	39
<i>Looking Forward</i> .....	49
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	53
<i>Theoretical Implications</i> .....	53
<i>Practical Implications</i> .....	57
<i>Future Research</i> .....	60
REFERENCES.....	62



## INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday June 14, 2017, a fire erupted at 12:54 a.m. in a 24-story public housing apartment building in Kensington, West London. Grenfell Tower burned for over 60 hours, took more than 250 London Fire Brigade firefighters, and consumed news outlets in London for days. Residents were instructed by the London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, and Grenfell Tower building managers to stay in their homes until the fire was extinguished. As the fire continued, no alarms sounded, and residents only knew to escape because of neighbors' alerts, the sight of smoke, and by ignoring the "stay put" advice. This fire caused 71 deaths, 70 injuries, and an investigation that would lead to the discovery of the city's mishandling and destructive decisions regarding public housing complexes. Occupants in 23 of the apartment building's 129 units lost their lives, while 223 managed to escape. However, all residents of Grenfell Tower lost their homes and most of their belongings.

The first formal hearing started on September 14, 2017 and continued through October. All believed, according to the police and fire services, that this fire started accidentally on the fourth floor by a refrigerator-freezer. Usually, a fire from an appliance does not spread and burn rapidly; however, the Grenfell Tower blaze accelerated rapidly from the new exterior cladding on the building, which is also used in many other complexes throughout London. Grenfell Tower was built from 1972-1974 as council housing in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and managed by the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organization (KCTMO). Although Grenfell Tower housed up to 600 people in the 129 apartments, it used a single staircase because the United Kingdom's building and fire regulations do not require more. Renovations to the tower took place between 2012 and 2016; part of the renovations included new windows and an aluminum composite rain-screen cladding, which improved the appearance

of the building. The contractors chose to install two types of cladding: Arconic's Reynobond PE and Retnolux aluminum sheets. Initially, this cladding would not have been installed, but KCTMO changed their original choice for contractor because a second bid was offered at a reduced cost that would come from switching the cladding to Arconic's Reynobond PE and Reynolux aluminum sheets, which was not as fire resistant as the first choice. The renovations took place during a time when the government was deregulating fire safety and standards. After the Grenfell Tower fire, the other 173 buildings using this cladding were tested, and 165 of them failed combustion and fire testing.

For months, residents voiced their concerns over the safety of Grenfell Tower, specifically toward fire safety, maintenance failures, and the lack of emergency exits available. The Grenfell Tower Action Group, comprised of residents, concerned citizens and council members, complained for years. In 2013, they were threatened legally for defamation and harassment by the Kensington and Chelsea council. Grenfell Tower was a recipe for disaster. During the renovations, the council elected not to install sprinklers because it would increase their budget and delay the renovations even more. The government and the KCTMO were aware of the problems but ignored the warnings and refused to meet with representatives of Grenfell Tower. Ronnie King, a secretary for the all-party Parliamentary group for fire safety expressed that politicians "seem to need a disaster to change regulations, rather than evidence and experience... they always seem to need a significant loss of life before things are changed" (Doward, Helm, & Savage, 2017). Grenfell Tower housed residents who were a part of the working class, usually from a lower socio-economic level, and even undocumented migrants. Even though the residents voiced their concerns, their cries for change were not heard. This study analyzed 153 articles from *The Times London* through the theoretical lens of news framing.

Five frames emerged from the data set that suggested a link between crisis news framing and focusing events.

### **Rationale for Study**

Grenfell Tower fire was not only a fire, but a wake-up call. In this study, I will explore the Grenfell Tower fire through the theoretical lens of News Framing. Any crisis, after analysis, can be outlined, put into timelines, and understood, in reference to the affected organizations. However, for the Grenfell Tower Fire, this crisis is more than its events. News framing is powerful because the influence frames hold over shaping public opinion (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). Every journalistic choice and rhetorical device is delicately employed to fashion a story of both fact and fiction together. Frames of blame or great emotional capacity leave impact upon readers' thoughts (Kim & Cameron, 2011). These apparent themes can become social drivers for change. Grenfell Tower is more than a "fire issue," but one of political and economic failure of foresight. Grenfell Tower has become a focusing event, one that is demanding a discussion among policy makers to amending fire regulations (Fishman, 1999). The various frames explain why Grenfell Tower transformed from a crisis to an issue of social injustice.



## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### News Framing and Crisis

News framing theory concentrates on the authors' rhetorical devices and interjections within texts dealing with crises. Every crisis is explained and framed in a way that influences audiences' thoughts and opinions (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). There is a societal belief present that suggests news agencies and reporters are free of bias and only aim to report the facts; however, this is not always true because preconceived biases subconsciously affect the way a story and message is retold. The news media sources have the choice to manipulate the way they frame data and fact, which directly affects audiences' perceptions (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). The media can choose to report alternative, false, and an illusionist view of a crisis by not presenting accurate and various views of thought (Daniels, Hughart, Fabbriatore, & Martin, 2017). Daniels, Martin, Hughart and Fabbriatore (2017) term the media to be a "cornerstone institution," because of the vast influential ability they hold to mold public opinion when effectively framing a crisis. The opinions presented by the media are paramount to individual thought formation. Even though frames leave impressions, free will is programmed into human nature (de Vreese, 2005). Due to the theoretical nature of news framing, most studies uncover repetitive results that verify the verisimilitude of framing research and the important role frames perform in opinion formation (de Vreese, 2005).

Scheufele (1999) designed a model to better explain the communicative process of framing. Previous research, including Scheufele's, recognizes that frames are influence by ideologies, attitudes, and social norms (1999). Scheufele's model utilizes this concept to break down the process for frame formation and how actors interact in an endless feedback loop. There are four primary variables: frame building, frame setting, individualized level process of

framing, and a feedback loop from audience to journalist (Scheufele, 1999). Even though journalists interject their own opinions, they are not protected from their own biases and lenses. Frames not only influence an audience, but the author themselves. Eventually, a frame can drastically influence ideologies, attitudes, and social norms; Scheufele's (1999) model is essentially cyclical. Frames are unavoidable; they emerge from external stimuli and leave no one immune to their effectiveness (Hook & Pu, 2006).

Depending on the crisis and the data collected, there is an endless selection of frames that might appear. From study to study, the chosen frames vary; however, there are frames that appear throughout crisis news framing research. Crisis usually generates a frame for attributing blame and responsibility; causation can vary due to cultural perspectives (Kim & Yan, 2015). The blame frame is a powerful tool in manipulating an audience's emotional response to a crisis (Kim & Yan, 2015). A local news source has the power to influence local and global thought on a massive scale, especially when distinguishing between attributing blame and responsibility. Blame attributes responsibility on actors in the pursuit of justice (Shahin, 2016). Typically in a crisis, those who are blamed and are non-local actors, are deemed "deviants" and "terrorists;" these terms are saturated with connotative definitions of drama, fear, and destruction (Shahin, 2016). This can escalate the intensity in the effectiveness of the frames, while insinuating a hostile reaction from the public. When an organization experiences crisis, its legitimacy is at stake (Quesinberry, 2005); the media's role as actors in frame formation reinforces or hinders the legitimacy of an organization (Perez, 2017). There are two frames, episodic or thematic, into which all evidence can be sorted; the media judges the organization by analyzing facts and concrete evidence (thematic) or by scripts (episodic). The latter tends to create a greater audience response and interaction because stories create something to talk about (Perez, 2017). Most

articles are published within the first week (70%) of the initial crisis (Kim & Yan, 2015). This is important to note because frames are subject to the primacy effect, meaning that the initial information and frames that individuals read greatly influences their opinions on the situation. After the first week, the articles' subject matter shifts to updates, rather than focusing on telling a framed story (Kim & Yan, 2015). Yan and Kim (2015) uncover in their research that very few articles provide only factual information and cannot be categorized into the coding schema. In any article, from any source, frames exist, subconsciously and consciously in order to bolster an agenda and set of opinions, even when the subject matter is a crisis (Yan & Kim, 2015). The media obtain this goal through repetition and placement (Kim & Yan, 2015). In the end, frames tend to benefit the interests of the journalist and sometimes the organization or country involved (Kim & Yan, 2015).

### **Distance and Duration**

The distance and location of a media source to a crisis actively plays a role in determining public perception and malleability to a frame (Guo, 2011). Guo analyzed the way media's motivations and frames change depending on the distance to the crisis. When a non-local news source reports an event, researchers find an increase of fact manipulation and negative opinions within the text. The media tends to report conflict from the point of view of its country of origin (Guo, 2011). However, framing is a comparative global perspective; proximity, cultural, and economical connections all influence the media's techniques to the framing of a crisis (Stewart & Tian, 2005). The same crisis will be reported on differently dependent on the distance (Stewart & Tian, 2005). This is important to remember because the data for this study are compiled from *The Times London*; this media source is in a proximity to the crisis. The circumstances of this

crisis will impact the way *The Times London* frame the event and how the distance will impact the decisions they make when writing the story.

Lecheler and de Vreese (2011; 2013), have opened the doorway into researching the durational effects frames leave on the audience. First, previous knowledge or expertise of the crisis did not necessarily predict the rate of decay (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2011). A frame's effect can persist beyond the initial exposure; however, no matter how resilient to dilution, after two weeks the effects will start to fade (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2011). After a long enough period passes, the initial frame will have disintegrated enough that the individual is considered a "clean slate" (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2013). Repetitive exposure to the same frame does not strengthen the effects on opinion formation; the only way to increase the effectiveness of a frame is by making sure that there is a short delay between the two exposures (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2013). Lecheler and de Vreese (2013), differentiating from other researchers, argue that frames are impacted by the recency effect; the latest frame exposed leaves the greatest impact.

### **News Framing and Emotional Response**

Framing takes place on a cognitive and psychological level; Emotional responses are inevitable (Lecheler, Schuck, & de Vreese, 2013). Frames warrant an individual to go through the process of experiencing the cognitive appraisal to the frame, feeling an emotional response, then forming and mediating their attitudes and behaviors; a strong emotional response can shift an individual's initial opinions (Lecheler, Schuck, & de Vreese, 2013). In their research, Lecheler, Schuck, & de Vreese (2013) measure the relevant emotions to framing research. Only certain emotions, anger and enthusiasm, mediate a framing effect, while contentment and fear do not. The emotional frames, anger and sadness influenced the information processing (heuristic versus systematic) (Cameron & Kim, 2011). Anger inducing frames provoked individuals to read

the information less closely, harbor negative attitudes, and continue to be skeptical of new frames presented. On the other hand, sadness inducing frames invoked higher credibility ratings and lessened need for attributing blame (Cameron & Kim, 2011). Emotional frames affect the way individuals perceive and understand the crisis (Cameron & Kim, 2011). When the media violently frames crisis situations, audiences' emotional reactions are extreme; It does not matter if the reporting is necessarily factual, just if it elicits a response (Jorndrup, 2016). News media is quick to jump to conclusions without the whole picture. This provides inaccurate framing, while influencing the public to perceive a flawed accounting of events, which produces emotions and actions that may not be fitting to the situation (Jorndrup, 2016). In crisis, especially ones that harbor great tragedy, the news frames tend to humanize disaster. In terms of natural disasters, the media tends to move away from the environmental frame quickly, and focus on the tragedy, loss of life, and the actors involved in the crisis (Houston, Pfefferbaum & Rosenholtz, 2012). Not all frames elicit emotional responses; the ones that do, typically lead to a coalition of change and open access to discussion (Scheufele, 2000). The Grenfell Tower Fire crisis involved loss of life and failures conducted by authoritative actors that could have prevented the significant destruction. The facts and frames in the articles by *The Times London*, would induce emotional responses. The public and the news media are looking to attribute blame, to assign their anger and sadness to a tangible concept. The fire will never cease to burn as long as the media continues to sell emotional frames that elicit negative responses from the public.

### **Focusing Events**

A focusing event is much like a crisis in definition: they occur suddenly, are relatively rare, are large in scale, and the public and policy makers encounter the event simultaneously (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). The theoretical and conceptual structure of a focusing event is

grounded in the tenants of agenda-setting theory. Agenda-setting theory aims to explain why and how news media assigns importance to certain information and how that information is then structured to the public (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). However, Birkland in 1997, introduced a more precise and narrow approach, focusing events, to explain the influential role a crisis event has in terms of creating and promoting public policy dialogues. More specifically, a focusing event brings issues to the public's attention that can only be discussed in the public-policy world, if the general population has knowledge of such issues (Fishman, 1999). The public starts to question the rules and standards in which they live in and demand that governments and policy makers revise into a new age. It is the power that media has and the frames they employ that allow the public to understand the urgency for wanting change and action (Fishman, 1999). However, rarely does a focusing event change the current policies; they just open the floor for discussion from all parties invested (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). A focusing event invites transparency, but not always transformation. It is important to note that a focusing event would not cause vast public uproar without the media framing crises in ways that induce action. A focusing event is just that, an event, but it is the way we tell our stories that leaves an imprint upon thought.

In the beginning research of focusing events, Birkland outlined three communication "features": the assignment of blame, normal versus new event, and learning post-crisis (Birkland, 1997). A feature, or characteristic, helps researchers better prepare and understand the type of impact different crises will have on public policies (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). During the response to a focusing event, assigning blame is important because it defines the public's perceptions of the crisis. The process of attributing blame can vary depending on if the public perceived the event to be random, or by intentional actors (Seegar & Sellnow, 2013). When an

event is considered random, there is a decrease in the need and urgency for solutions because rational individuals cannot control or predict “random” acts of crisis. Contrary, if the event is perceived to be caused from human failure, then solutions are more likely to be written in to the agenda of policy makers (Birkland, 1997). An event is considered “normal” if it is something that is bound to occur at one point given certain circumstances; they are still considered crises, but for the public, it is not difficult to believe that the event will transpire. On the other hand, “new events” are ones that come with little to no prior explanation; these events occur during breakthroughs in technology or society (Birkland, 1997). Last, it is considered learning when changes to policies are made due to a focusing event. Birkland (2007) explains that when an organization refuses to learn from their mistakes, they invite the public’s scrutiny and opinions over their organizational legitimacy. Focusing event research is descriptive and provides a route to explanation. If individuals’ attitudes are reinforced by the frames in the media, they are more willing to join a coalition of thought and action (Scheufele, 2000). These studies give some of the sharpest and strongest insight as to why a crisis induces debate and policy change (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013).

Arguably, Grenfell Tower serves as a crisis and a focusing event, by meeting the denotative requirements of both. Beyond the definition, this crisis is creating discussion amongst the public and policy makers regarding the safety of council housing and fire standard regulations in general. Grenfell Tower is the wakeup call, the catalyst to a bigger movement. A focusing event does not promise change to incur, but opens the door for debate, voicing of various thought, and a hope of righting a wrong. The public believes that the fire was started by a random occurrence, but that there are significant intentional actions carried out by the government, the councils, and building managers that contributed to the fire’s rapid growth and

significant loss of life. However, it is the media's role in this story that has sustained the investigation and discussion amongst all parties. The framing significantly impacted the way this crisis resonated with Londoners, while inspiring some to act and fight for change, a change that can only occur in the public policy world.

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How did *The Times London* frame the Grenfell Tower fire crisis?

RQ2: How did *The Times London* framing of the Grenfell Tower crisis serve as a focusing event?



## METHODS

### Data Collection

This study examines the Grenfell Tower Fire through the theoretical lens of news framing using a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. Through the database NewsBank, I collected news articles from *The Times London* between the dates of June 14, 2017 and June 30, 2017. These dates were used because the incident occurred on June 14, 2017, while June 30, 2017 marks a significant amount of time into the post-crisis stage of the crisis. This is important to note because frames are subject to the primacy effect, meaning that the initial information and frames that individuals read, greatly influences their opinions on the situation (Yan & Kim, 2015). The Grenfell Tower crisis occurred in central London; As stated in the literature review, distance influences the effectiveness of framing on an audience. I made the decision to use *The Times London*, the premier news outlet in London, since it is the most credible news agency in London and will provide an extensive range of journalistic frames, while keeping academic integrity. *The Times London*, between Print and PC, reaches 4,006,000 adult readers monthly, 2,833,000 35+ year olds, and 1,174,000 15-34 year olds monthly (Newsworks, 2017). *The Times London* reaches a broad audience range, which includes policy makers and the public. This is key to the development of a focusing event, since both parties must experience the crisis, during and post, concurrently.

Data were collected on February 1, 2017. The search criterion listed below yielded nearly 450 news articles (N=465).

1. Dates between of June 14, 2017 and June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017
2. Limiting publisher to *The Times London*
3. Search key terms to: “Grenfell Tower Fire”

After each search, I downloaded and exported the articles into my google drive to be saved and stored for future use.

### **Data Analysis**

Before I commenced my data analysis and coding of the text, I conducted a final search to ensure that all the articles published were used in my study. This ensured that I did not start my analysis with bias by leaving out certain journalistic voices. When I began the coding process, frames and theoretical arguments emerged naturally from the text (Lindlof, 1995). Before the data analysis, the news articles were printed, sorted chronologically, numbered, and filed.

This study utilized a qualitative approach to data analysis. In this case, my data are textual evidence in the form of news articles written from various journalists at *The Times London*. This study uses a qualitative system of open-axial coding. This method best allows for the researcher to identify frames and generate ideas discovered during the process. The method is precise, orderly, and eliminates unnecessary information (Lindlof, 1995). Frame analysis allows for emic themes to emerge from the data. Emergent themes were identified to create a coding schema free, to the extent possible, of researcher-imposed judgments or etic frames. (Lindlof, 1995). This study simply aims to explain and discover.

Coding is simply a tool that acts as a retrieval system, rather than one of analytical nature. However, coding is an integral part to interpreting communicative phenomenon because it organizes what the data says, and how certain data interacts and relates as a whole (Lindlof, 1995). Before the coding process began, duplicate articles (such as those published in both a morning and evening edition without change) were eliminated to create the final data set for analysis. After this step, there were 153 articles. In the first, open stage of coding, I read

thoroughly through the data several times to become familiar with the events, the writing, potential frames, and the data in its totality. After this open reading, I identified the relevant frames to create a coding schema. Codes act as signifiers and labels to compile and organize data in a meaningful way; They can be topical and general themes or abstract concepts. Topical themes organize data into persons, behaviors, environments, and events. Even though these codes are surface level, they organize data into simple and concrete events (Lindlof, 1995).

The coding schema organized the data into frames. This data revealed the hidden messages within the journalistic choices, the subconscious decisions that define cultural beliefs and shape opinions; These data were rich with explanation and lead to a deeper analysis and understanding of the Grenfell Tower Fire. The purpose of coding is to flag segments of data that categorize into action, which leads to explanation, understanding, and a thick description of the communicative importance of news framing (Lindlof, 1995). This study aims to uncover these frames, but to also explain the audiences' perceptions and interactions with these frames, and how that influences their opinions and actions.

Notes and textual data were stored in individual physical files, sorted by coding schema, then chronologically, within a bigger expandable file. From the data, 5 frames emerged: Informational Framing, Tragic Framing, Assumptions of Blame, Responses, and Looking Forward. Each were indicated with a different color, which were outlined in my coding schema memo (Lindlof, 1995). Each code represented a different frame. In the second, axial stage of coding, I read through the data again and color coded the text into the respective codes in the schema. It was important that for each frame or code, an outline of properties was explained; this enables parameters to define how and which data qualifies to be placed in said frame (Lindlof,

1995). This simple test, verifies the evidence's place, and in turn, strengthens the frames from categories to constructs of theoretical nature (Lindlof, 1995).

Once this was completed, I revisited each article to further organize the data. I had an individual notepad for each code/frame, in which I wrote down the textual evidence I found in the articles. For each piece of evidence, the word/phrase/sentence was written down into the respective notepad, and noted with which article the evidence was from. This note corresponded to the number marked on the article. These numbers came from my first organization after data collection, in which the articles were sorted into chronological order, void of frame categorization. It is from here, that conclusions and parallels were constructed and analyzed against the theoretical basis behind news framing.

## RESULTS

Coding of the data yielded five distinct framing categories: Informational Framing, Tragic Framing, Assumptions of Blame, Responses, and Looking Forward. Within each of the frames, subcategories emerged, which aided in sorting and narrowing the data further. Two frames, Responses and Assumptions of Blame, yielded the most data; comparatively, Informational and Tragic framing were similar in size. The frame Looking Forward was coded the least out of the data, but developed and categorized the closing or concluding thoughts of most journalists at *The Times London*. In many instances, when multiple frames were present, the true journalistic intent decided which category the data would be coded into, not the information or words in the statements.

### Informational Framing

As with any crisis or event, facts must be established that outline the who, what, when, where and how of what occurred. Informational framing was the first frame that emerged from the data. This frame category solidified the structural reference for journalist and audience to correspond back to. Since the data set was comprised of longitudinal data, meaning the articles spanned a period of time, even as new facts emerged, others were repeated. All articles contained a level of information, but as time progressed after the crisis, this information was not necessarily framed as only informational; journalists tend to manipulate the information to suit a broader agenda, meaning the data was coded under a different frame. Informational framing appeared in 77 articles, which helped discern fact from opinion.

Journalists at *The Times London* started by providing a background on Grenfell Tower, the KCTMO, the cause of the fire, and the transpired events of the night of the blaze. On June 16, *The Times London* reported and established the timeline of the fire. *The Times London* on

June 16 reported that the fire started on the fourth-floor apartment of Behailu Kedebe, a minicab driver from Ethiopia at 12:50 a.m. His fridge caught fire due to faulty wiring. He immediately alerted the other residents on his floor, yelling at them to leave the tower block. *The Times London* reported the accounts of a resident who described the first moments after the fire, as “he knocked on the door and said there was a fire in his flat. It was exactly 12:50am... he told the neighbors. The fire was small in his kitchen, I could see it because the flat door was open” (June 16). Behailu Kedebe managed to escape with his family. In the same article, *The Times London* included “the first <sup>1</sup>999 call was at 12:54 am and by 1:20 am the blaze reached the top floor” (June 16). *The Times London* pointed out on multiple occasions that the fire spread rapidly due to a chimney effect between the vents and the cavities of the cladding.

*The Times London* provided information regarding the responses from local fire and police authorities. Initially, “the fire brigade arrived at the tower inferno within six minutes of the first call,” believing the fire to be a compartmentalized blaze, the typical fire seen at high-rise buildings (June 22). *The Times London* provided further information describing how under normal circumstances the firefighters would build a bridgehead, or the control point, below the fire in case the blaze were to escalate. As well, twenty ambulances and the Metropolitan police arrived on the scene that night. As more information was discovered, *The Times London* had to adjust certain facts pertaining to the increase in death toll; *The Times London* first reported a number of 50 dead from the fire, then increasing the number to 70, 74, and eventually ending on “79 people presumed missing or dead” (June 23). At the time of the fire, there were 600 residents living in Grenfell Tower.

---

<sup>1</sup> 999 is the British Emergency number, equivalent to 911 in the United States

*The Times London* uncovered and included facts surrounding the KCTMO and the <sup>2</sup>cladding used at Grenfell Tower. *The Times London* reported that in 2014, the KCTMO sent a newsletter to residents that educated them in the proper response in case of a fire. The memo outlined a “stay-put” policy; meaning, in the event of a fire, residents were urged to stay in their apartments. It was presumed that a fire could not spread rapidly or far, due to the designs of the building. *The Times London* referred that no other fire safety measures were taken, as Grenfell Tower had one internal staircase and no sprinkler system in place. On June 15, *The Times London* reported on the background of the refurbishments at Grenfell Tower and the associated contractors. The KCTMO employed Rydon to conduct the £8.6 million refurbishment; Harley Facades was subcontracted by Rydon to provide the “materials and design of the external cladding that was a key part of the refurbishment of the block” (June 15). *The Times London* mentioned that planning documents indicated that Harley Facades used an aluminum panel called Reynobond, which were hard to ignite, but combustible. This company is refurbishing seventeen other buildings across the United Kingdom. As well, Harley Facades was caught for a tax avoidance scheme that landed them in financial trouble. *The Times London* provided a background to the KCTMO, who are a not-for-profit council comprised of an unpaid board of directors and tenants who managed and maintained 10,000 properties and 82 being tower blocks; On June 17, *The Times London* discovered that the KCTMO was given fire safety enforcement notices because “regulation states that, in buildings taller than 18meters, and insulation product used in external wall construction should be of limited combustibility” (June 17). Grenfell Tower was 70 meters tall with one internal staircase and structured by concrete panels. Grenfell Tower

---

<sup>2</sup> Cladding is the British term equivalent to “siding” in the United States.

was built in 1974, when safety regulations “were very stringent and focused on the protection of people” (June 16).

Most of the information knotted together to form a solid groundwork of the Grenfell Tower fire; however, *The Times London* did include some miscellaneous information that was provided as external support to back the opinions suggested in other frames. This included the comparisons of the fire at Grenfell Tower to other fires in the past. Those mentioned included the Dubai fire in 2016, the Lakanal House fire in 2009, and others caused by “aluminum composite material... in France, Australia, South Korea, and the United States” (June 15). On June 17, *The Times London* mentioned how a plethora of schools and hospitals were wrapped in the same cladding used at Grenfell Tower; more than “87 tower blocks [were] the subject of fire enforcement notices because of deficiencies in safety precautions” (June 17). This number could be inflated due to the number of safety checks “[decreasing] in the five years from 2011 to 2016, from 84,575 to 63,201” (June 19). *The Times London* included the numerical value of aid sent to survivors of Grenfell Tower. For the residents, the government dispensed “a minimum of 5,000 pounds paid into their bank account and be given 500 pounds in cash” (June 20). *The Times London* provided information and statistics to provide a back story on how many Londoners were potentially affected by cladding. Currently, “8 percent of Londoners [live] in tower blocks, with 500 of the 700 towers, being more than 40 years old” (June 24). Finally, *The Times London* produced only one article containing information without the inclusion of other frames. This article outlined the complexity of the burn victim identification process.

### **Tragic Framing**

As in any crisis, there will always be tragedy. Tragedy evokes a response from the audience, a connection with the crisis on an emotional level. When implementing a level of



pathos, the media elevates the crisis from its informational framing to illuminate upon the severity and great disruption a crisis can cause to a community. Tragic framing is emotional but describes the relationship between crisis, human nature, and storytelling. Tragic framing embellishes the crisis, connects the facts to a story, and communicates the voices of those effected. When journalists write with the intention of evoking an emotional response, they understand that an audience will start to care about the stories they read, develop richer opinions, and in turn, be more receptive to the opinions presented in other frames. Aristotle considered tragedy, with its exposition, rising action, climax and a resolution, to be the highest form of storytelling. It is not just the words that make this frame powerful, but the intent to retell a story, to format the crisis to read like fiction: a tale including heroes and villains, a start and an end. Within this frame, three subcategories emerged: Heroism, Victims/Survivors, and Tragedy. Data coded under this frame met these definitions: any instance that depicted the stories of the victims or survivors, tales of heroism, or general tragedy. There were 95 articles that contained Tragic Framing. Three subcategories emerged: Heroism (9 articles), Victims/ Survivors (45 articles), and Tragedy (86 articles). After the initial reporting of the crisis, some articles within in the data set were coded entirely under this frame. A crisis is defined by its victims and those affected.

### **Heroism**

In any tale, there were villains and there were heroes. Journalists at *The Times London* incorporated stories of heroism. On June 19, *The Times London* included a story of how a nine-year-old boy saved his family from the fire. *The Times London* highlighted the story of Amiel Miller, who lived on the 17<sup>th</sup> floor with his brother and mother who commented that “he’s our hero. If he hadn’t woken us up, it would have been too late... we lost everything: passport, birth certificates, photos, family collages. Everything is gone” (June 19). One article outlined the

heroism observed throughout the community at Grenfell Tower. Many the stories were framed to capture a snapshot of the lives or last moments of the victims. However, a few journalists did report on the heroism that came from tragedy. A five-year-old girl, Thea West, was awakened by her mother's boyfriend, Mickey Paramasivan, as he "swept her under his dressing gown and rushed her to safety" (June 19). Journalists wrote about "a reunion between a woman who had been trapped in the tower and the neighbor who rescued her. Clarita Ghavimi, 66, was unable to get out of her "tenth-floor home because of the thick smoke in the hallway, when Branislav Lukic heard her banging on the door" (June 21). *The Times London* framed the firefighters as the unsung hero at Grenfell Tower. These firefighters were not "just doing [their] job. They were doing an extraordinary job... While everyone else is leaving the scene, [they] are going towards it trying to make people's lives better" (June 24)

### **Victims/ Survivors**

From the data, *The Times London* took paramount importance on retelling the story of Grenfell Tower by uncovering and exposing the stories of those affected by the crisis. To open the tales of the survivors and victims, journalists described the events of that night, June 14. Most victims of The Grenfell Tower fire narrowly escaped with their life. Awakened in the middle of the night to screams, smoke, and flames, most residents were trapped and fought their way to safety. Khadija Saye, a resident, wrote on her Twitter to express that "there [was] a fire in [her] council block, [couldn't] leave the flat... please pray for me and my mum" (June 20). *The Times London* reported that the residents owe their life to ignoring the stay-put advice, the fire safety policy put in place by the KCTMO in the event of a fire. Unfortunately, many residents lost their lives engulfed in the fire of a burning building. *The Times London* recaptured the stories of the survivors and the victims, framing their truths as a tragedy. On June 21, *The Times*

*London* reported that Maryam Adam, a pregnant mother, was awakened by her neighbor who stated that the fire had started in his apartment, and to flee the building as fast as possible. A sense of a strong community emerged in the frame as journalists reported on the altruism when neighbor helped neighbor. On June 21, *The Times London* reported that whole families were taken because the fire. In one instance,

“a young woman who was about to be married [was] believed to have died alongside almost her entire family in Grenfell Tower after she and her brothers refused to abandon their elderly parents... ‘their dad could barely walk anyway’” (June 21).

On June 15, *The Times London* retold the instances of the previous night; As the fire raged,

“by 4am, there was no sign of life... we couldn’t do anything... I’ll never forget those screams: the screams of children and grown men. Or the image of two people, two men I think, waving from the window, then suddenly no being at the window any more” (June 15).

Residents were escaping with children, battling to flee, while “things [were] falling out, people screaming, people jumping out on fire, chucking ropes that they’d made of bed sheets, to try and climb out.” The whole scene was “just a complete nightmare, an absolute nightmare” (June 15).

The trapped residents resorted to throwing children out of the windows, “clambering over charred bodies in corridors and stairways filled with smoke” (June 15). *The Times London* intensified the reach of these events by including a story of one mother, Rania Ibrahim, who used Facebook live to document her experience. Unfortunately, social media could not save her or her two daughters from the fire. They were trapped on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor. *The Times London* expressed how in their last moments, residents made calls to family members to say their last goodbyes, “the look on their face was death” (June 15). That night, as victims fled the building, reporters

saw a girl clutching her Chemistry GCSE notes; she did not want to fail her exams the next morning. These are a few of the stories journalists at *The Times London* chose to illuminate after the crisis; each an example that contributed to the overall development of the story of the Grenfell Tower fire; the events transcended the facts and became an element of fiction.

As the days progressed, journalists embellished the story further by deepening the character development of the victims, *The Times London* included the backstories of multiple residents. On June 16, *The Times London* told the story of one resident:

“Mohamed Alhajali survived the terror of the Syrian civil war and a treacherous crossing of the Mediterranean only to die 14 stories above the streets of Kensington. He was ambitious and was studying engineering in the hope of returning one day to help rebuild Daraa, his home city and the place where the war began”; he was the first confirmed dead, along with his brother Omar.

*The Times London* chose to dedicate a whole article to Khadija Saye, 24, because she was an artist in the community. Khadija Saye was friends with the Labour MP David Lammy, who tweeted out on her behalf after the fire. *The Times London* chose to repeatedly circulate the same victim and survivor accounts. These chosen key stories were often the most heartbreaking and left a powerful footprint in the dust of the fire. *The Times London* reported that there were a number of hidden victims that may never be known, due to the “fears that scores of undocumented and unofficial tenants may [have been] among the dead” (June 24). Journalists at *The Times London* wrote with a quantity approach, producing article after article emphasizing the stories set ablaze by the fire. The stories mostly remained unchanged as the days led on, which only solidified further their existence in the tragedy. Victims were from of every race, culture and religion; Grenfell Tower was diverse, but a bonded community.

*The Times London* enhanced the story line of Grenfell Tower by framing how the victims' and survivors' whole worlds were tilted upside down due to the fire. Homeless and distraught, the anger and the questions the residents had only intensified. Many found themselves seeking help in local community churches, mosques, and community centers. *The Times London* emphasized how the survivors tried to find normal in the abnormal, and that is why

“A little girl who had been stuck on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor was looking for a matching trainer and clutching some new underwear while her mother was still searching for her brother... a young woman wanted a skirt so that she could return to her job on the Sainsbury's checkout. A dazed man was given a Louis Vuitton wheelee suitcase with clothes, and an Uber car to reach his relatives in Hackney. No one asked for much” (June 16).

Contributing to the chaos of the story, *The Times London* depicted the grief that survivors dealt with in the wake of the fire, that “dozens [were] thought to have slept on the grass outside an evacuated building south of Grenfell Tower after being unable to find a bed for the night” (June 19). This further intensified and solidified the victims' sense of tragedy; On June 20, some residents could not reclaim their relief effort funds. *The Times London* mentioned that the residents felt as if the government was “treating [them] like Muppets... there [was] total confusion... [they] saw some horrific things, [they were] now homeless” (June 20). *The Times London* mentioned the difficulties surrounding the healing process for families. Since many victims were immigrants, family members abroad were not in the position to attend the funerals of their loved ones because “visa difficulties meant that their parents might not be able to be at the funeral” (June 17). On June 22, *The Times London* revealed no matter how tough, everyone shed a tear for the victims, including “a heavily tattooed man with tears in his eyes... [tucked] a

card into a magnificent bunch of flowers,” which contained the sentiment, ““To me dearest DAD”” (June 22).

### **Tragedy**

Beyond the stories of heroism and victim accounts, *The Times London* employed a general sense of tragedy. This subcategory invoked sorrow, guilt, anger and an air of devastation. As days passed after the initial crisis, most of the informational framing evolved into tragedy or blame. This is due to the shift in journalist intention. Rather than informing, *The Times London* created opinions based on these facts. Journalists at *The Times London* described Grenfell Tower to be a charred mess, a building engulfed by flames with no escape in sight. In witnesses’ accounts, the Grenfell Tower fire was described by its rapid pace since “the cladding went up like a matchstick” (June 15). The framing used at *The Times London* labelled Grenfell Tower as more than a fire, but a picture of tragedy, a personified flame of destruction:

“As the inferno engulfed room after room, it threw out families’ possessions. Singed maths [sic] homework was found on the ground outside. Parts of the building crumbled away, burning as they fell... One woman dropped her baby from the ninth or tenth floor into the arms of a man waiting below. Trapped families were seen taking turns to breath out of windows, moments before being swallowed by the flames... Already the flames that destroyed Grenfell Tower have proven much more malicious and bloodier” (June 15).

*The Times London* interviewed witnesses who juxtaposed Grenfell Tower to the real-life “The Wicker Man, a blazing pyre” (June 15).

*The Times London* retained a frame of sorrow and anger, which strapped the weight of this travesty to the readers’ consciousness. As the building caught fire, so did the journalists’

intent on writing with a fury; “there [was] a similar theme underlying the anguish and anger following the Grenfell Tower fire” (June 20). *The Times London* included the stories of firefighters. Grenfell Tower was framed as the worst nightmare for firefighters, “no one expected a fire like that... normal techniques would not have worked... but everyone would assess how best they could do their job and go in and save lives. That is all they would want to do” (June 15). On June 16, *The Times London* recounted the toll Grenfell Tower took on all involved, including the mental health of the hospital staffs; Grenfell Tower was unlike anything most medical professionals had ever seen, their “emotional issues were magnified in a major incident because of the number of patients, but you can’t allow these circumstances, which are very emotive, to overwhelm your job” (June 16). Journalists informed their audience on the process that identified burned victims, citing that it would take weeks to recover bodies; Under this frame, this mention of circumstance is not only fact, but a pillar of tragedy. When *The Times London* included these “facts” laced with the frame of tragedy, the scope of devastation was measured; the tragic framing associated to this crisis and the “skeleton of Grenfell Tower... a death trap” (June 23).

### **Assumptions of Blame**

From the data, a third frame emerged, Assumptions of Blame. This frame encompassed the instances in which various parties were accused and blamed for contributing to the events at Grenfell Tower. This frame emerged in 100 articles. Within this frame, five subcategories developed: political downfalls (75 articles), economic factors (46 articles), KCTMO/building managers (18 articles), cladding and associated companies (47 articles), and faulty fridge (8 articles). Before journalists could blame the appropriate parties, the assumptions and “conspiracy theories about how the council, in league with rich developers and the desiring to get rid of

unwanted low-income tenants, might have been responsible” formed (June 15). While the “cuts to housing budgets, the long neglect of social housing, a recent eco-friendly refurbishment, and the alleged failure to act on the anxieties of residents have all been blamed” (June 16). This was an all-encompassing effort from *The Times London* to lead the conversations regarding Grenfell Tower to center around of blame.

### **Political Downfalls**

The most prevalent area of blame was directed toward political downfalls. For the most part, journalists at *The Times London* chose to shift the blame away from the factual evidence that blamed the fire from fridge on the fourth floor and to individuals or agencies. This subcategory outlined how journalists framed the malignant decisions chosen by characters in political power. To begin with, journalists at *The Times London* included how many councilors and MPs were previously warned on the lack of safety at Grenfell Tower and national fire regulations. Mr. Branwell, the preceding housing minister, conveyed to the government that he would be reviewing regulations and fire safety; however, those reviews never took place. The Housing Minister position has been plagued by high turnover rate; the framing insinuated by *The Times London* pin pointed the incompetence harbored by those in power who had the ability to make key decisions. It was urged that Alok Sharma, the latest incumbent, could not keep the delay in revising regulations any longer, “even the comfortably housed are irate over the injustices in the system and the inability to devise effective policy” (June 16). Journalists at *The Times London* habitually referred to the frequency in how often the government was warned, especially by “fire safety and building experts,” who voiced “that there had been concerns that building regulations had failed to keep pace with new construction techniques” (June 15). The blame continued from *The Times London*, who sustained a frame of apathetic sentiment, since



‘The government’s refusal to change dated building regulations for a spate of ‘over-cladding’ ...’ sadly none of us in this room [was] surprised at what’s happened. We [were] surprised at the huge loss of life, which [was] rare. We have lobbied the government for a change in fire safety building regulations. Our concerns have fallen on deaf ears. They have told us that the regulations work as no one has dies. But not anymore. Now is the time to change’ (June 16).

In the past, there had been sparse communication between the regulations and their enforcement. *The Times London* connected and framed the blame to the problems regarding the “building regulations [which] only [went] so far and the problems with this system [were] well known and really [needed] to be mitigated by whoever [was] installing it” (June 16).

The biggest political downfall, in the eyes of *The Times London*, was that the public good did not come first, further suggesting that political and governmental agencies were apathetic and incompetent;

It took 13 years for legislation to be passed to prevent a similar occurrence despite the recommendations being made... to date nothing has been implemented in legislation. It seems... that those responsible for these matters need to act with much greater expedition given the catastrophic events in west London earlier this week (June 17).

This seemed to be caused by the “successive administrations,” who chose to “put short-term the lack of effort, urgency, and priorities” (June 19). Journalists framed the system to be broken and failed. This type of blame was framed as angry and violent: “What do terrorism and capitalism have in common? There [was] no difference between killing innocent people and deliberately ignoring people’s voice” (June 19). The blame was framed beyond incompetence, but to a general lack of care for life. There was no part of the crisis that journalists at *The Times London*

did not attempt to attribute to political blame. *The Times London* sternly believed “nothing [would]” happen from the investigation “because the government [would] set the terms, the government [would] decide when to hold it, the government [would] decide what documents [would] be there, the government [would] decide when the outcome [would] be” (June 17).

On June 22, *The Times London* captured a moment attempted by local authorities who deflected blame upon “third parties,” that were responsible to “meet building regulations and to conform to health and safety legislation” (June 22). *The Times London* reported how the deflection of blame was a common tool in the political arena. The only government system not be caught in the blame game was the fire services, who were “recognized for doing an extraordinary job in terrible circumstances... the firefighters [were] still monitoring the building and going through the flats, so their work [continued] to be harrowing” (June 24). The intensity of the blame directed in this subcategory can be contributed by the increased divisive pressures between political parties, a culture accustomed to choosing profit over safety, and the rejection of change in regards to health, safety, and fire regulations. In the data set, journalists attempted to expose and frame political decisions to plague, rather than save.

### **Economic Factors**

The data set revealed how economic factors influenced the events leading to the blaze at Grenfell Tower. As previously mentioned, within this frame, journalists at *The Times London* crusaded to expose and blame those parties they deemed responsible for the actions that lead to the fire. Economic factors are characterized in this frame by the various spending cuts made by influential actors and the maximization of profits for the business involved. *The Times London* reported that contractors were economically conscious since they were “private companies desperate to cut costs to maximize profits” (June 15). This, in turn, framed these companies to

value cutting costs and corners, while putting tenants at risk. The residents living in tower blocks tended to be immigrants and of lower socioeconomic backgrounds. However, councils like KCTMO were trapped by economic constraints, while construction companies were driven by profit; “The tragedy [had] raised serious questions about the quality of social housing and the gaping divide between the rich and poor” (June 20). The journalists at *The Times London* chose to illuminate upon the economic factors to represent a clearer and justified division between the rich in the poor; the blame was a question of wealth, not safety. On June 17, *The Times London* questioned and expressed opinions regarding the growing divide. The journalists argued

...[What] is more political than this? A tower for the poor, jutting from the streets of millionaires’ houses, refurbished to squeeze in more units, while all around are empty, luxury investments flats. A borough that [had] ‘decanted’ most of its tenants into outer reaches or distant towns, to sell off land to developers. Those it [had] left- who [drove] the taxis, [painted] the toes, [cleaned] the offices of richer residents- it [treated] as a burden, an eyesore: more concerned that their brutalist concrete home is sheathed to look nice from Ladbrooke Grove sundecks that it is safe (June 17).

The state of the housing crisis was framed to be in disarray. The housing crisis plaguing London was simple: they “[were] not building enough houses, with the main victims being the poor and the young... which entrench inequality and mainly benefit older homeowners” (June 24). It was clear that *The Times London* was creating a definitive divide between the rich and the poor, their actions and needs, while contributing to the “glaring imbalance between housing demand and supply” (June 23).

In concurrence with the abundance of economic influencers, *The Times London* mentioned that Boris Johnson, a conservative MP, was accused by other MPs of contributing to

the loss of life; many linked this disaster to cuts in the budget under conservative leadership. This was an example of the journalists at *The Times London* framing spending cuts toward an economic reason, rather than a situation that hailed from political downfalls. Blame was thrown upon the government by the government itself. Journalists included the response by Boris Johnson, who deflected the blame by stating “any attack on emergency service performance is outrageous politicking by Labour” (June 17). *The Times London* expressed how

since the horrific fire cast a literal and metaphorical pall over London, it’s become abundantly clear that the shouldering shell isn’t just the result of a litany of construction decisions, but of a long, grinding war by successive governments against the disadvantaged, who simply didn’t have the weaponry to fight back (June 19).

### **KCTMO/Building Managers**

Separate from political downfalls, journalists framed the blame toward the KCTMO and the building managers at Grenfell Tower differently. The actors who played a part to this subcategory were more intimate with the decision-making processes and warnings surrounding Grenfell Tower; the blame directed toward the KCTMO was narrower and more poignant. Years of neglect and avoidance to the needs, health and safety of residents were uncovered after little to no action was taken, despite the recurrent warnings given to the KCTMO. Journalists at *The Times London* expressed how no matter the complaint, they “fell on deaf ears” (June 15); *The Times London* framed the KCTMO to be apathetic and unresponsive to the needs of the residents they serve. On June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the former chairman of the board, Reg Kerr-Bell, “said that he stood down because of the concerns over how KCTMO was run. ‘This [was] one of the biggest scandals in the country- and it could have been avoided’... Grenfell Tower... ‘[was] a disaster waiting to happen’”. The recurrent theme throughout *The Times London* emphasized neglect,

ignorance, and egotism. Even for those who knew and believed that Grenfell Tower was a disaster in disguise, no actions were taken by the KCTMO to retrofit Grenfell Tower to be safer. During the refurbishment process, the burden of complying with regulations fell on KCTMO, who did not provide a proper understanding to all the regulations associated to tower blocks and fire safety. During the refurbishment process the tower “was inspected 16 times between 2014 and 2016, it has emerged, but control staff from KCTMO did not prevent the use of combustible cladding panels” (June 22).

Last, journalists at *The Times London* framed the blame toward KCTMO based on financial reasons. KCTMO were under scrutiny to release their finances to the public since “it emerged that some Grenfell Tower residents had made allegations before the blaze about shoddy fire precautions and cost cutting.” The council “channeled surplus spending into bolstering a huge reserve pot rather than reinvesting funds in services such as housing” (June 19). Regarding the refurbishment,

it emerged that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea [had] dropped the original contractor for the Grenfell Tower refurbishment, Leadbitter, which priced the work at 11.27 million pounds. The eventual contractor, Rydon, completed the work for 8.6 million pounds (June 17).

This further emphasized how the framing from *The London Times* expressed the influential economic factors that led to a severe neglect in health and safety. The organizations involved were framed to place a greater importance upon cost and profit, rather than the residents’ lives.

### **Cladding and Associated Companies**

*The Times London* uncovered how rapidly the fire spread, which created questions for the cladding companies caught in blame. Journalists at *The Times London* chose to frame blame upon Harley Facades, the subcontractor who installed the cladding, Rydon, the contractors for the refurbishment, and the cladding panels themselves. On June 17, *The Times London* reported that despite Rydon and Harley Facades claiming the cladding met safety requirements, “cladding systems... have been linked to fires in high-rise buildings in Britain and around the world since at least 1991” (June 17). Initially, Harley Facades denied knowing the type of cladding panel they installed. However, as blame continued to be pointed toward their work, journalists exposed how these contractors chose the cheaper version of the cladding. *The Times London* framed the choices made by Harley Facades to be irresponsible and only focused on profit, rather than safety. Reynobond, the cladding company, offers three types of panels, one of them containing and polyethylene core (PE), which is not fire-resistant. Rydon and Harley Facades chose to use wrap Grenfell Tower in this type of panel. “It would have only cost them \$5,000 more to upgrade the building’s external cladding panels” to the fire-resistant type (June 19). In a way, these companies were framed to be only concerned with money, and as a result “so many lives have been lost because the council apparently wanted to save 5,000 pounds on the cost of the cladding” (June 20). However, *The Times London* noted that the weight of the blame is comprised of “a complex chain of contractors, designers and regulators at the center of a criminal investigation into the deaths of 79 people... [including] possible manslaughter offences” (June 24).

### **Faulty Fridge**

The smallest subcategory of blame was directed toward the “faulty fridge,” the source of the fire. The fridge itself evolved from its factual basis in the story to a character of blame.

Journalists at *The Times London* focused on placing blame upon the type of fridge and the regulations concerning certain appliances used in tower blocks. In recent years, awareness circulated by “the London Fire Brigade since 2013,” urged “for fridge manufacturers to make their products safer... ‘Every home has a fridge or freezer... but it [was] no exaggeration to say they [were] potentially the most dangerous household appliances’” (June 15). Appliances were a potential risk factor for fire, a factor to blame; about 300 fires a year were started due to a “faulty fridge.” The blame was framed beyond facts in order to defend the agenda that would instigate manufactures to build appliances with fire-resistant materials. As of current, an appliance is to not be recalled until “fault with the device was proven” (June 24). This is not the primary category of blame that *The Times London* suggested to their audience.

### **Responses**

Various organizations responded to the crisis at Grenfell Tower. This included governmental entities and individuals, the public, activists, and Rydon, the cladding company. This frame categorized the responses that arose and how different organizations dealt with the post-crisis events. Response framing appeared in 106 articles in the data set. In the subcategories, government was mentioned 72 times, public was coded 50 times, activists included 32 times, and Rydon was mentioned 12 times.

### **Government**

The fire at Grenfell Tower, a building that was publicly funded and run, demanded responses from the government. As they were caught in the blame for this tragedy, journalists at *The Times London* gave a platform for a plethora of public officials to defend and voice their responses. This subcategory is comprised of various entities and individuals, who will be organized as follows, rather than chronologically. First, the responses from the KCTMO need to

be addressed. *The Times London* indicated that the KCTMO did issue a statement that expressed their deepest condolences and how aware they were of the residents' complaints over the safety of the building. However, the full statement from the KCTMO was not included in the articles analyzed for this study. On the other hand, *The Times London* chose to include quotes from the leader of the council, Nick Paget-Brown, who expressed his condolences on the radio; Nick Paget-Brown conveyed that "KCTMO would continue to support its tradition of supporting low-income residents" (June 19). Journalists did mention the backlash the council received after this radio interview. Specifically, Nick Paget-Brown tried to resign from his position at the council after the anger and blame directed at his decisions surrounding Grenfell Tower, which ultimately contributed to the devastating fire. Overall, journalists repeatedly articulated how the KCTMO response was ineffective, slow, and how most of the relief came from local volunteers, not the government. The KCTMO was framed to be neglectful, sorrowful, and uninterested in taking the necessary steps to change. Even though the KCTMO stated their position regarding the fire, they took no actions to help the residents beyond utter words of sorrow. *The Times London* made note to include how the KCTMO would continue their "traditions," rather than adjust from the circumstances. To contribute to their disapproval in the public and journalists' eyes, KCTMO banned the public from their council meeting, an attempt to try and not instigate a "repeat disruption by protesters who marched on the town halls days after the blaze" (June 30). The disapproving response toward the government only intensified as political individuals decided to play out a political war over the tragedy.

In the wake of Brexit, the political climate in the United Kingdom was restless and vengeful. For the journalists at *The Times London*, they were more concerned with capturing and quoting the political ping-pong that played out, rather than forming and directing opinions on the



individuals. In a way, the actions of characters like Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May spoke for themselves, which left audience interpretation open. Corbyn was shocked by the blaze and called for an investigation to find at risk properties, so that residents could be rehoused as quickly as possible. Corbyn's responses were framed to be more heroic than villainous. Journalists positively stressed how he met with victims, connected with them emotionally. On the other end, Theresa May faced criticism over her response. Initially, she failed to meet the survivors but ordered a full investigation. On the day of the fire, she was reported to have shed a tear but had shown no emotion to the public. When she visited Grenfell Tower, she met emergency workers rather than residents. May claimed not to meet residents over security concerns. Despite not receiving compliments in her response toward the victims from *The Times London*, she wanted the public to know that "everyone affected by this tragedy [needed] reassurance that the government [was] there for them at this terrible time – and that [was] what I am determined to provide" (June 17). In a way, her response was framed as though she was fighting to pick up the pieces to a puzzle but did not know that none of the pieces she had did not fit together. It was recognized that May, despite eventually meeting with survivors, was still met by opposition. The sentiment at *The Times London* frequently conveyed how Theresa May was all business with no emotion and "has demonstrated that while the voluntary sector's response has been phenomenal, the local authority has failed in its duties of leadership" (June 18). However, journalists chose to include May's response to ordering councils to inspect their own tower blocks, and if found at risk, to rehouse the residents. As well, May urged councils and contractors to draw "contingency plans with landlords... in case a large number of residents [had] to be evacuated" (June 23). Theresa May was recognized, but not commended, for launching a federal investigation because she chose to appoint a "retired judge with a controversial record in housing cases... to lead the

Grenfell fire inquiry” (June 29). May was framed to be taking one step forward, but two steps back at every intersection she faced during this crisis.

Outside the two more prominent and powerful political leaders, *The Times London* did include the responses of a few other influential persons. The response by MP David Lammy who tweeted on behalf of his friend who was lost in the fire, Khadija Saye. He urged for prayer and for answers. Saqiq Khan, the mayor of London, visited the area and victims and expressed his condolences but was heckled by audiences for not taking appropriate action to help the victims. Last, it was briefly mentioned that the Queen and the Duke of Cambridge visited the victims in hospital.

For all the positive responses, the journalists at *The Times London* stressed upon twice the number of negative governmental responses to Grenfell Tower. To start with the instances of positive and heroic, the London Fire Brigade was transparent with their sentiments and plans for how to move forward from the fire: “Our specialist urban search and rescue crews [were] currently working to make the block safe so our firefighters [could] continue to progress throughout the building, making a detailed fingertip search for anyone who may still be inside” (June 16). *The Times London* reported that to encourage residents to come forward and collect their relief funds, amnesty was granted for those residents who were in the country illegally, because those “undocumented migrants who survived the blaze [might] be unaccounted for because of fears over their immigration status” (June 21). However, this did not deter from the negative response framing. Reports criticized the relief efforts, citing that no information had been given to the victims as to where to go for aid. Many journalists included quotes of residents who believed that the government was continuing to fail the community because the “relief efforts at Grenfell Tower descended into chaos... survivors [were] rehoused hundreds of miles

away and others [failed] to receive more than 20 pounds from the government's emergency fund... They were not given information from officials about accommodation options" (June 19). The words and feelings associated with chaos were framed as synonymous with the response efforts by the government. On June 17, within the first few days of the investigation, the Department of Communities and Local Government released information days later that stated how the cladding with an "aluminum panel with a polyethylene core, would be non-compliant with current building regulations guidance. This material should not be used as cladding on buildings over 18 meters in height" (June 17). The frame journalists composed to define the relief efforts arranged by governmental entities was one of chaos, disorganization, and disappointment. Political leaders responded with no emotion, alternative motives, and broken promises, almost as though "seeing the outside of the tower ablaze" was a shock to their system, and they could not reboot. (June 21).

### **Public**

The public, comprised of community centers, charities, churches, mosques and volunteers, responded as aid to provide shelter, clothing and food for residents after the fire. Opposite to the negative framing associated with the governmental response efforts, most of the public taskforces involved in the aftermath of the fire were celebrated by *The Times London* for their efforts. These community centers, St. Clément's Church, Sikh temples, Rugby Portobello Trusts, British Red cross, Harrow Club, and Queens Park Rangers football club acted as drop-off points that collected food, blankets and money donations. Even churches outside the London radius asked how they could contribute. Kristen Edwards of Rugby Portobello Trust, commented that "we all [needed] to stick together now. This community [had] shown it loves each other and [needed] each other, they can't break it apart now" (June 16). *The Times London* emphasized a

sense of community resilience in this subcategory. As the “bags of shoes, toys, T-shirts, underwear, cans and sweets [spilled] out on to west London pavements. The community centers around Grenfell Tower [were] rammed with willing helpers...A superabundance of compassion, a surfeit of love. People-let us never forget-are good” (June 17). As the quantity of aid increased from the public, so did the positive remarks inserted by journalists. Some made comparisons to the type of community altruism in the Manchester Arena Bombing and the attacks around Bourough Market. Londoners were eagerly ready to give “this kindness. It [seemed] people [were] sprung and ready, just waiting for some outlet for their altruism, an event that [called] upon them to connect” (June 17). The community, and the community at *The Times London*, supported the victims of Grenfell Tower, no matter how big or small. Even a six-year-old boy handed over his superhero tin of cash; to him it was just “pocket money” (June 19). Churches held services where those of all walks of life were welcome to weep in the collective thought that they were not alone. The residents were “encouraged to talk to their neighbor and listen to whatever they had to say” (June 19). Public prayer ceremonies near Grenfell Tower were held so the families could grieve for their lost loved ones, especially for those of Islamic faith because “Islamic funeral rites [could not] be performed without a body” (June 21). *The Times London* included the responses from various celebrities, who were framed admirably for their sense of community spirit. Rita Ora, a singer from London, volunteered by sorting out donations; one resident remarked that “it [was] good to see her come back and help out. She was a good kid... it just shows how you can go on to be famous but go back to where you grew up, especially in times of tragedy” (June 16). In another instance, *The Times London* mentioned how Adele, a British vocalist, went to comfort victims. Simon Cowell, a famous British music producer, made plans to release a benefit record to raise money, and Andy Murray, a British tennis player,

pledged to donate “his prize money... to a fund for the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire” (June 20). *The Times London* also reported that there was no sign of people taking advantage of situation. Journalists were pushing the idea that London was one, a synergetic unit connected by shared experience. Despite the diversity of the people affected, they came together. “You couldn’t look at that and say, ‘this doesn’t really work, this mixing of peoples’” (June 17).

Despite the enormous outpouring of support from the public, the response of the residents and the affected community was framed by *The Times London* as one of anger. This differs from blame, as these are reactionary responses and feelings toward the actions taken post-crisis. There is an element of blame within a response of anger; however, it became evidently clear that journalists were using these quotes and expletives as response, not attributing blame. *The Times London* expressed how many of the residents of Grenfell Tower grew angry as the days wore on and confusion toward their chaotic situation worsened; they “[felt] as though they [had] been treated as second class citizens because they [were] poor... The people... [were] angry and they have every right to be. We [needed] answers and we [needed] justice” (June 19). Journalists highlighted the anger that the residents felt; Journalists at *The Times London* framed these responses to justify the actions and anger felt by the community. *The Times London* demand that action be taken and wrongs be righted because the community was “frustrated and angry” at the poor response from the government’s relief efforts and how little was done to prevent the fire from starting (June 19). On June 17, *The Times London* outlined the events at a press conference held at the tower by Sadiq Khan. Someone in the crowd could be heard shouting “‘Murderers! Murderers!’... they were angry at being ignored. Angry at the landlords who would not show their faces and a prime minister who refused to meet them. Angry with the excuses and the

silence... angry at the raging inequality of London's richest borough that had been written out in flames" (June 17).

### **Activists**

Certain individuals and groups became activists, fighters willing to voice their opinions on behalf of the affected persons of the crisis. Parallel to the other subcategories, the responses from activists were framed both positively and negatively by *The Times London*. Framed in an affirmative light, journalists uncovered that Edward Daffarn, of the Grenfell Action Group, warned that only a fire would make KCTMO care about those living in Grenfell Tower; Grenfell Action Group worked to bring attention to the problems at the residence. *The Times London* included a quote from Daffarn, who stated that the "cladding on Grenfell Tower was intended to pimp it up so that it wouldn't spoil the image of creeping gentrification that the council [were] intent on creating" (June 20). On June 29, *The Times London* positively framed a theatre company, Donmar Warehouse, who revised their play which included a satirical impression of the tragedy at Grenfell Tower and how a "musical about parliament, accountability, and poverty seemed rather quixotic" (June 29). There was one mention of the Justice4Grenfell campaign on June 28, a group who "[were] compiling their own list of victims as mistrust [grew] over the official death toll" (June 28). Grenfell Action Group, Donmar Warehouse, and Justice4Grenfell supported the agenda, one that aligned with *The London Times*, denouncing those at fault, but not too far where violence was recommended. *The Times London* articulated these sentiments by condemning more extreme activist groups.

Various protests arose demanding justice and calling for criminal charges to be brought to those parties at fault. On June 17, *The London Times* reported on the first protest started by Mustafa Al Mansur, a friend of Rania Ibrahim, a mother who lost her life in the fire. After this

initial uprising, “impromptu protest [sprung] up, [demanded] help for those left homeless, accurate information on the number of dead and action to hold people and institutions to account for the inferno that swept through the 24-storey tower before 1am on Wednesday” (June 17). *The Times London* noted that some of the public protests escalated to violence and hate. This was when journalists started to denounce and condemn activists who were acting beyond reasonable thought. The Movement for Justice By Any Means Necessary, “left-wing activists behind a ‘Day of Rage’ protest outside parliament” were accused of using the “grief over Grenfell Tower disaster for political ends” (June 20). The activist group, who protest for the “anger of the oppressed,” planned a march against the Conservatives. However, after Grenfell Tower, they decided to “harness the anger that [had] grown since the devastating blaze in west London” (June 20). They believed that the people of the tower were “murdered by this rotten capitalist system, which puts profit before people” (June 20). As well, they claimed the death toll to be too low, causing more suspicion and anger, which “[fueled] suspicion of a cover-up” (June 27). *The Times London* enforced their opinions regarding how many volunteers and residents of Grenfell Tower criticized the groups plans, because no matter how angry they were, the residents were working “to bring about positive change and action through Conservatives with the right people... if any violence [ensued], the issue takes a whole new direction” (June 20). In the article assigned to the Day of Rage protest, the journalists repeatedly expressed how they did not endorse these actions and provided responses on how to properly bring about change. The framing referenced how unhappy the residents and community were over the Day of Rage, so were journalists at *The Times London*. On June 22, one resident Jenni Russel expressed that this protest “hijacked the horror of the Grenfell Tower disaster” (June 22). The framing from *The Times London* kept away from politicizing and “hijacking” the tragedy; the journalists had not

manipulated this crisis to fit their own extremist agendas, once that endorsed violence. The announcement of the Day of Rage caused others to express:

There are all-too plausible concerns that this [might] turn into a riot. Last Friday, relatives and friends of those feared dead in the Grenfell fire tried to storm Kensington town hall... Journalists were attacked. A volunteer [who helped] the fire victims was beaten up after being mistaken for the chief executive of the management company responsible for the tower... The anger over this dreadful tragedy is very understandable (June 20).

The last group of activists mentioned were lawyers. They were coded into this specific subsection because they spoke on behalf of victims, gave legal advice, and were framed with neutrality. Journalists added credibility by introducing the thoughts of lawyers who responded to Grenfell Tower from the perspective of a legal angle, not necessarily one of blame or tragedy. *The Times London* expressed how lawyers urged that a public inquiry might not be the best way to understand the dynamics of what went wrong at Grenfell Tower. However, these lawyers wanted those who were affected to play a bigger and more vital role in the investigation. Lawyers responded by “advising insurers and others on the ramifications of the catastrophe,” which was “going to be a difficult task unpicking legal responsibility for the events at Grenfell Tower” (June 22). Some predicted a class action lawsuit; others argued that “public inquiries lack the clarity and speed of a traditional coroner’s inquest” (June 22).

### **Rydon**

The last subcategory to emerge from the data was the smallest of the four. The contractor company, Rydon, did respond in the wake of the fire, after they found themselves associated with the blame for Grenfell Tower. Journalists at *The Times London* did include that Rydon issued a statement stating the cladding met the building, fire, and safety regulations set forth;



Rydon expressed how they welcomed a public inquiry. *The Times London* did not frame Rydon's response to be deficient or of mal intent; they even included quotes from the cladding company, Reynobond, to boost the credibility of the statement released by Rydon. The evidence stated that the "FR variant," of the cladding on Grenfell Tower, "[was] fire-resistant," but the "PE [was] just plastic" (June 16). Even further, the manufacture confirmed that the "insulation used in the refurbishment of the tower... emitted toxic gasses if burnt... and that the insulation conformed to all British safety standards" (June 20).

### **Looking Forward**

The frame, looking forward, developed as the information and assumptions surrounding Grenfell Tower surmounted. This frame is comprised of two subcategories: fear and change. For many, including journalists, the results from the fire instilled a fear for life for those living and working in buildings similar to Grenfell Tower. It is not the fear before the event or during, but after; the fear that lingers in the mind of those living and adjusting to the circumstances of the crisis. Looking forward is a frame aimed in the future, one that speaks of change and the emotional distress associated to the predicted unknown. Looking forward was found in 47 articles, with fear appearing in 30 articles and change appearing in 36 articles.

### **Fear**

As with any crisis, there is an element of fear associated with the unknown. In any good story, fear keeps the audience on their toes, a possibility of never knowing what will happen next. *The Times London* used this tactic to discuss the potential future, knowing that there would be questions raised from the investigation surrounding the parameters of Grenfell Tower. At *The Times London*, it was obvious to some journalists, that the:

...questions to be asked [were]: [were] there other buildings with that cladding, [were] there other buildings where the cladding [had] been installed in the same way. [Were] there other tower blocks in London and across the country that [had] that cladding? How many [had] been inspected by fire services and local authorities... there [were] residents across London living in tower blocks but also people across the country sick to death and worried over whether their tower block [was] safe (June 19).

On June 21, *The Times London* reported on the lack of health and safety awareness which surrounded the building regulations within the United Kingdom. After Grenfell Tower, journalists included the significant increase in the amount of housing concerns across the United Kingdom, which exposed the potential ramifications involving various parties. *The Times London* mentioned that these problems extended past tower blocks and to the schools without sprinkler systems who were not being held to the highest safety and health standards necessary to keep the students and staff safe from disaster; The “Kensington Aldridge Academy, the school that opened in 2014 beside Grenfell Tower, [was] not fitted with sprinklers” (June 21). Beyond, “thousands of buildings, including hospitals, leisure centers and offices, have been fitted with cladding in the past 30 years” (June 21). The fear that journalists implanted into this story spread beyond the radius of London and the United Kingdom to affect those in other countries as well. After inspection, a building in Dublin was found to have similar cladding to the one at Grenfell Tower; it was deemed a firetrap. As well, a tower block in Germany was found to “be clad in combustible materials,” and that residents would be “housed temporarily until the cladding [was] removed” (June 28). *The Times London* chose to juxtapose Grenfell Tower with the provoked action abroad. Grenfell Tower to foreign investigations and regulatory checks, due to the increased fear that surrounded potentially dangerous materials.

No matter how far the influence spread, the focus at *The Times London* was the fear for the “thousands of residents set to be evacuated from potentially dangerous tower blocks after ‘combustible cladding’ was found encasing at least 11 buildings across the country” (June 23). To even further prove their point, *The Times London* repeatedly expressed these sentiments, just in different words: 600 tower blocks in Britain are at risk, people were terrified to live in their flats. On June 23, *The Times London* included the opinions of one resident, Brian Stevens, in a tower block in Plymouth, who expressed that he was “‘really peeved at the risk we have been put in... we had no idea it was unsafe... I don’t want to stay in my flat’” (June 23). The next day, *The Times London* reported that a tower block in Camden evacuated “162 households” as “panic over fire safety” swept across Britain (June 24). This was another example of how *The Times London* juxtaposed Grenfell Tower with other potential safety problems. Only two days later, “sixty high-rise buildings in 25 local authority areas [had] failed cladding fire tests since the Grenfell Tower disaster, with all samples found to be below the safety level” (June 26). No matter how terrifying this may be to the public, *The Times London* specified that “hundreds of thousands of people, many of them poorer council tenants, [were] living in potential death traps” (June 26). *The Times London*’s sentiment was clear, no one wants “to be living in fear all the time” (June 24).

### **Change**

Alongside fear, *The Times London* wrote of the change they wished to see take place, a glimmer of hope in the dark ash of the fire. It became a common and well addressed opinion from the journalists at *The Times London* that health and safety checks were necessary and regulations needed to be revised. This sentiment was qualified through examples of credible sources exclaiming their own opinions, including “a 2015 survey by the Fire Sector Federation, a

forum for fire and rescue organizations, found that 92 percent of its members believed that the regulations were ‘long overdue an overhaul’” (June 19). In the aftermath “the Grenfell tragedy [had] prompted a nationwide scramble to reassess fire safety at tower blocks across the UK” (June 24). These opinions were included in a plethora of articles from the data set. As more and more information was uncovered by the journalists at *The Times London*, the more journalists reported on change, a calling to action for their audiences.

Certain articles quoted credible sources to describe proposed changes that could be made in the future to prevent another crisis like Grenfell Tower from happening again. On June 23, *The Times London* reported on one proposed plan suggested the government that would “cut delays between planning permission and building, to stop land-hoarding by construction companies and to help small companies to compete with larger ones... to force councils to produce updated plans to meet local housing demand” (June 23). With fact comes opinion; many journalists insisted to include and interject their own commentary on the suggested ideas, framing the plans to fit an agenda. In one instance, as a response to the above proposal, a journalist conveyed: “And what better way to shake up this cozy, quasi cartel than a public body with 55 billion pounds to spend: A National Housing Commission, say, with the powers to cut through local council nimbyism and galvanize smaller builders” (June 24). *The Times London* incorporated various experts’ commentary on the improvements to fire safety, which included preemptive measures like a “risk registrar that [required] social housing landlords to provide a centralized list of residents, highlighting vulnerable, elderly tenants or those with mobility issues, to aid fire and rescue services in an emergency” (June 24). However, most experts called for “tower blocks with sprinklers, tower blocks with fire-resistant cladding... with adequate alarm systems” (June 19). *The Times London* enhanced these ideas further by adding that “these [were]

right, but they [were] not enough... Grenfell Tower should lead to a major rethink not only on the safety of buildings, but how they look and feel; how they affect health, happiness and hopefulness” (June 19). Some journalists were not so hopeful that this disaster would instill change, citing that “no matter what the inquiry finds, the deaths have already illuminated a terrible truth: that the poor cannot count on the same rights to life, courtesy or safety as the middle class or the rich” (June 22).

Despite the difference in opinion, change is reflected and discussed, no matter the outcome, positive or negative. *The Times London* recognized that “from tragedy comes inspiration. Firefighting innovations begin with tragedies... firefighters find themselves at the edge of technology” (June 21). However, journalists repeatedly expressed that “if [these] problems [were] not highlighted... it [was] inevitable that there will be another major loss of life caused by yet another fire safety flaw in our built environment” (June 27). Past their commentary and framing tactics, the journalists at *The Times London* became a part of the community they reported on, becoming a character in the very story they chose to create. In a closing thought in one article, the author encouraged others to “come meet the wonderful people I have met and remember those who have lost their life in a preventable accident that didn’t need to happen” (June 19).

## DISCUSSION

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study analyzed the news framing of the Grenfell Tower fire in articles from *The Times London*. The results from this study suggest two theoretical considerations. First, results suggest that crisis framing that juxtaposes crises may expand coverage to encompass underlying issues into news coverage. Second, results suggest that narrative crisis framing may create

focusing events that draw legislative attention to issues. This discussion will address the nature of news framing by introducing a metaphor, and the relationship between news framing and focusing events. Previous research suggested that news framing is a mode of transportation utilized by media sources in order to express their opinions, consciously or subconsciously, which in turn influenced the opinion formation of the readers, an idea that the results of this study support (Scheufele, 1999). Frames are unavoidable to interact with and be influenced by; they emerge from external stimuli and leave no one immune to their effectiveness (Hook & Pu, 2006).

Grenfell Tower was a crisis; however, crisis news framing acts upon the reader in a different way. Unlike other forms of news coverage, crisis news framing broadens the depth of a story, by extending the crisis to deeper issues by juxtaposing the crisis against other crises, and by exposing the underlying issues contributing to the crisis at hand. In order to fully understand this concept, a metaphor must be employed. This metaphor does not aim to explain the effects of news framing on the audience, but how framing and crisis are related. In this case, crisis news framing will be explained by the simple metaphor of an iceberg. Even though this metaphor is common and overused, it fits perfectly to describe crisis news framing. An iceberg in its form has two separate parts: the tip of the iceberg above the water, and the rest of the iceberg underneath the water. In all cases, the ice residing underwater is greater in size than the ice exposed above water. This is important to understand because in the case of crisis news framing, journalists choose to uncover and expose the ice, or the story that lies beneath. In the beginning stages, a crisis may contain frames that are influenced by the available surface level ice; however, if they so choose, the journalists need to feel compelled enough to dive below the water

line to expose the true size of the iceberg, the crisis. A crisis leads to this exposure, spotlighting upon deeper issues and framing the crisis away from one single issue.

The framing of Grenfell Tower ranged from economics and politics to housing a safety concerns. It is one thing to know that the facts exist, but to expose them is the factor that separates news framing and crisis news framing. As the days progressed, the information held within the frames exposed further truths and opinions surrounding Grenfell Tower, in and outside the community of London. When journalists dive into the water, they expand the known size of the iceberg, which commences the process of metamorphosis, crisis to focusing event.

Crisis news framing has a direct relationship with forming focusing events (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). A focusing event leads to and demands change to occur following a crisis. It is the power that media holds within the frames they employ, which allows the public to understand the urgency for wanting change and action (Fishman, 1999). The public starts to question the rules and standards in which they live in and demand that governments and policy-makers revise into a new age. In this study, Grenfell Tower became a focusing event as a result of the crisis framing from *The Times London*. The results of this study suggest that the creation of a focusing event is not the result of volume of coverage, but the framing. It is a recipe of frames that suggest that journalists play a significant role in creating the public agenda for change (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). In many instances, the closing thoughts of journalists at *The Times London* reflected how a crisis could become a focusing event. As they dove deeper into the water, the iceberg expanded, “the fire exposed deep-seated failures in the building control system” (June 29). As time progressed, the conclusions drawn by journalists could not be categorized under the coding schema, rather they transcended the frames and encompassed the ideology of a focusing event: that a crisis can be bigger than a single event, but a movement into the future.

Theoretically speaking, this is important because it means that not the volume of coverage, but the framing from all previous articles, lead to these conclusions and to the transparent discussion for change between the public and the policy makers. In exposing the truth, the journalists exposed the severity and breadth of a single event and molded it into a tangible reality that not only inspires, but demands to be listened to. Not only did the public listen, but the political leaders and officials who responded to the crisis listened, as well. For the most part, political entities were framed negatively. This indicates that they were reading the media. The public outcry for change demanded that the government listen and respond accordingly, if positive image was to be restored.

Furthermore, Grenfell Tower served as a focusing event because policy makers were reading and reacting to the framing employed in the articles by *The Times London*. It does not matter as much what media sources the residents of Grenfell Tower read or interacted with, because in this situation they were powerless; if the residents possessed any sort of power against the policy makers, they would have not perished in a fire. It is important to note that the discussions for change were held due to the government listening to what was being reported on in *The Times London*. To be a focusing event, the public and policy makers must experience the event at the same time; however, to continue further into the definition, without the framing from media sources, a crisis might not reach both of those parties, which is why *The Times London* was used for this study. The only individuals with power in this situation are the policy-makers, but that is only possible when the voices of the affected community are articulated through the frames at *The Times London*. Crisis news framing, and its different properties derived from news framing, allow it to directly influence the formation of a focusing event.



## Practical Implications

These findings suggest a connection between news framing and focusing events. Beyond the theoretical implications, there are an abundance of practical implications, from public discussion to change. The first noticeable implication influenced the way the public, the media, and the government interacted, discussed, and debated issues of housing, class division, and economic factors. The United Kingdom at the time of Grenfell Tower had voted in favor of Brexit a summer previous, where they would leave the European Union. This political upheaval is an example of change and dissonance among those living within those conditions. Most of the public living in the United Kingdom expressed concerns, fear, and discomfort with the current government. This lack of trust intensified the responses from the community and activists. In a way, Grenfell Tower becoming a focusing event forced a discussion between two separate entities, the government and the public, which spotlighted the growing divide between the two.

Politically speaking, Theresa May and other members within the government were framed as villainous, uncaring, and disengaged from the problems facing the population who live removed from wealth and status. The residents of Grenfell Tower repeatedly expressed their concerns and the discomfort they felt, but no one ever listened. The two frames, assumptions of blame and responses, denoted the unhappiness and distress that had been accumulating. Assigning blame defines the public perception on who is the arbiter of blame and causation to a crisis (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). *The Times London* expressed opinions within these frames that questioned if the government “[would] not enforce laws to save [them] from being burnt in [their] beds, we have the right to ask: what the hell are they for?” (June 17). The framing directly influenced and voiced to a greater audience what was wrong and immoral surrounding not only Grenfell Tower, but the divide of inequality created between the two groups, and how actions

always have consequences. The practical implications of this crisis intensify the negative images surrounding the British government. As a focusing event, Grenfell Tower is an intangible object that has become the voice for those who believed they were silent. Despite the perpetuation of a negative image targeted toward political entities, and as a result of the framing employed by *The Times London*, there are positive implications to this crisis. First, the voices of the residents were finally being shared and listened to. Unfortunately, and expressed in the results, sometimes it takes the loss of life and an upheaval of normalcy, a crisis, to bring about the discussion for change. Under the frame Looking Forward, the subcategory “Change” elicited a sense of hope and a positive outcome to this negative event. In all the ugliness of crisis, the implications of Grenfell Tower exposed a “demand for a wider debate on social housing” (June 19). As a focusing event, the crisis is to instill a passion within the public to advocate for change, and eventually leading to that result. Many of the opinions expressed by *The Times London*, as seen above, were ones that called upon the public and political leaders to enact regulatory changes to fire safety. Thousands of buildings across the United Kingdom and in other countries were checked to see if they had similar cladding or fire safety issues. Grenfell Tower is a focusing event if it is motivating actions toward transformations; as a focusing event, Grenfell Tower is asking of others to learn from their mistakes. Political leaders led the discussions in Parliament regarding the regulations toward health and fire safety; most notably Jeremy Corbyn, demanded the government to take seriously the events at Grenfell Tower and the negligence that this crisis uncovered. The framing at *The Times London* allowed for readers to understand these concerns, as well as join the discussion.

Finally, the two frames, Assumptions of Blame and Responses, led to anger and protests. The results within the frame Responses were recorded with the greatest frequency; however, this

was not the most influential frame. *The Times London* reported heavily on the responses from various entities, though it was the opinions placed upon those responses that left a deeper impact. The blame frame typically leads to anger, which can provoke hostility and violence (Shahin, 2016). Practically, it meant that the public was influenced deeply enough to act as activists, even if they were not a victim of Grenfell Tower. In the case the “Day of Rage” from The Movement for Justice by Any Means Necessary, *The Times London* did not frame these activists positively, rather they denounced their actions. Not all frames elicit emotional responses; however, the ones that do typically lead to a coalition of change and open access to discussion (Scheufele, 2000). When understanding the implications of the framing used by *The Times London*, their previous opinions influenced this group to use Grenfell Tower as an argument. Even though “the fire had claimed the lives of their neighbors, friends and children, it also lit a touch paper of protest” (June 17). Many of the responses and blame directed within the framing were clouded in anger and passion. The type of emotions tied to the Pathos technique fueled activists to speak out and protest on behalf of the events at Grenfell Tower. The journalists justified their anger and the anger of those involved, which meant that those who were indirectly related to the crisis found their anger to be justified. It is within the frame of blame that journalists can fight back with weapons loaded with their own opinions and frustrations. This led to others, specifically activists, feeling as if they could do the same, only in the form of a physical protest. The “Day of Rage” protest did not become a problem for the policy makers or the government until the activists’ motivations were reported on through the framing at *The Times London*. This is another example of those with the power responding to the framing associated with this crisis, which only further justifies the use of *The Times London* as the media source for this study. When people no longer feel alone, when they feel as if they are a part of a community, there is strength

in numbers, a resilience that can carry a single voice to become many. The community bonded; they became a collective voice through a shared experience.

### **Future Research**

Despite the findings of this study, there were certain limitations to the research. Each of these limitations will be identified and discussed. First, this study analyzed the articles and framing from one source of media, *The Times London*, which is very centralized to the crisis. *The Times London* had very specific and intentional framing that other sources of media may have not implemented. This is a concern when analyzing the implications of framing on an audience. It was shown that the framing at *The Times London* contributed to influencing the audience and evolving Grenfell Tower from a crisis to a focusing event. It could be possible that these results were not seen in other forms and sources of media. Even more, future research could compare the results and variations discovered from multiple sources, contrast results, and furthermore enhance or disprove the findings of this study. As well, *The Times London* is a British media source; the preconceived framing techniques, ideals, values, and cultural influences could potentially be witnessed in other British media sources. Future research could incorporate sources from external countries or cultural views in order to understand the relationship between news framing and focusing events. Potential questions of research could include the following: Does a crisis event in one area become a focusing event for an audience in another area? Do certain frames in one area appear more than in others?

Second, there was a limitation of time regarding the timespan of the articles collected. This study analyzed articles from the conception of the crisis stage and through the end of June, which signified a transition to the post-crisis stage. Articles spanning a broader time span, including before and significantly after the crisis, could map out the effects of the framing used

by *The Times London* or other media sources in regard to Grenfell Tower. This study discovered a link between framing and focusing events; however, a broader study would either reinforce these findings or discredit them. It is imperative to track the implications of the framing used by *The Times London*, in order to understand the impact left upon the audience and how successful the frames were in continuing to treat Grenfell Tower as a focusing event.

## References

- Birkland, T. A. (1997). *After disaster: Agenda setting, public policy, and focusing events*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Birkland, T. A. (2007). *Lessons of disaster: Policy change after catastrophic events*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Cameron, G. T., & Kim, H. J. (2011). Emotions matter in crisis: The role of anger and sadness in the public's response to crisis news framing and corporate crisis response. *Communication Research, 38*, 826-855.
- Daniels, R., Fabbriatore, J., Hughart, E. B., & Martin, M. M. (2017). Framing analysis of Syria's 8/21/13 use of chemical weapons. *Ohio Communication Journal, 55*, 179-190.
- Doward, J., Helm, T., & Savage, M. (2017, June 17). Revealed: The tower block fire warnings that ministers ignored. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/uknews/2017/jun/17/tower-block-fire-warnings-grenfell-victims>
- Fishman, D. A. (1999). ValuJet flight 592: Crisis communication theory blended and extended. *Communication Quarterly, 47*, 345-375.
- Guo, S. (2011). Framing distance: Local vs. non-local news in Hong Kong press. *Chinese Journal of Communication, 4*, 21-39.
- Hook, S. W., & Pu, X. (2006). Framing Sino-American relations under stress: A reexamination of news coverage of the 2001 spy plane crisis. *Asian Affairs: An American Review, 33*, 167-183.

- Houston, J. B., Pfefferbaum, B., & Rosenholtz, C. E. (2012). Disaster news framing and frame changing in coverage of major U.S. natural disasters, 2000-2010. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 89, 606-623.
- Jorndrup, H. (2016). News framing in a time of terror. *NORDICOM Review*, 37, 85-99.
- Kim, Y., & Yan, Y. (2015). Framing the crisis by one's seat: A comparative study of newspaper frames of the Asiana crash in the USA, Korea, and China. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 25, 486-506.
- Lecheler, S., & de Vreese, C. H. (2011). Getting real: The duration of framing effects. *Journal of Communication*, 61, 959-983.
- Lecheler, S., & de Vreese, C. H. (2013). What a difference a day makes? The effects of repetitive and competitive news framing over time. *Communication Research*, 40, 147-175.
- Lecheler, S., Schuck, A. R. T., & de Vreese, C. H. (2013). Dealing with the feelings: Positive and negative discrete emotions as mediators of news framing effects. *The European Journal of Communication Research*, 38, 189-209.
- Lindlof, T. R. (1995). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Newsworks (2017). *The Times Readership Statistics*. Retrieved from <http://www.newsworks.org.uk/The-Times>
- Perez, C. R. (2017). News framing and media legitimacy: An exploratory study of the media coverage of the refugee crisis in the European Union. *Communication & Society*, 30, 169-184.
- Quesinberry, A. A. (2005). Legitimacy and legitimacy gap. In R. L. Heath, *Encyclopedia of Public Relations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Scheufele, Dietram A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*, 49, 103.

Seeger, M. W., & Sellnow, T. L. (2013). *Theorizing crisis communication*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Shahin, S. (2016). Framing “bad news”. *Journalism Practice*, 10, 645-662.

Stewart, C. M., & Tian, Y. (2005). Framing the SARS crisis: A computer-assisted text analysis of CNN and BBC online reports of SARS. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 15, 289-301.