

Understanding Message Framing and Effects

“Ever since the 1970s, when Army intel agents were caught snooping on antiwar protesters, military intel agencies have operated under tight restrictions inside the United States. But the new provision (Senate Bill S.2386, Sec. 502), approved in closed session last month by the Senate Intelligence Committee, would eliminate one big restriction: that they comply with the Privacy Act, a Watergate-era law that requires government officials seeking information from a resident to disclose who they are and what they want the information for.”

– Michael Isikoff
Newsweek Magazine
June 21, 2004

“Among the Americans who complain about the Patriot Act, Mohammad Junaid Babar probably dislikes it more than most. Absent that often-criticized federal statute, Babar still might stroll the sidewalks of New York, gathering money and equipment for al Qaeda. According to the unsealed transcript of his June 3 appearance before U.S. District Judge Victor Marrero, Babar pleaded guilty to five counts of furnishing ‘material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization.’”

– Deroy Murdock
The National Review
October 25, 2004

Both of these passages from magazine articles – the first from *Newsweek* and the second from the *National Review* – discuss the implications of domestic surveillance activities by U.S. government agencies. But this is where the similarity ends. These two excerpts represent two very different ways of telling a story about government surveillance. One obvious difference is that the first excerpt emphasizes the issue of civil liberties, while the second emphasizes the issue of national security. In addition, the stories illustrate two different

common targets of government scrutiny: activist groups and Arab groups. But a more subtle difference is that the first story addresses the broader policy implications of surveillance in relation to large groups, while the second focuses on a single, potentially dangerous individual.

The differences in these stories raise a number of questions: Would audience members react differently depending on which of these stories they encountered about the debate over domestic security and civil liberties? How would the frame of the news story, whether it organized the issue around individuals or collectives, shape reactions of audience members? Are audience members more likely to favor national security over personal freedoms when seeing individuals or collectives targeted under the PATRIOT Act? This book shares insights from research designed to answer questions about the influence of such stories – news content concerning the surveillance of collectives or individuals, both domestic and international.

The answers to these questions are particularly important in a period when government surveillance of U.S. citizens has reached unprecedented levels. FBI agents have infiltrated groups of antiwar protesters to surveil their activities. The military has held over 500 suspected terrorists at Guantanamo Bay, including some who are U.S. citizens. It was initially revealed that the NSA and other intelligence gathering units within the U.S. government were maintaining databases of over 300,000 individuals and tracking the phone calls of millions of others. Bank transactions and e-mail communications are also being monitored (Priest and Arkin, 2010a,b). More recently, leaks by Edward Snowden have made clear “the vast scope of the National Security Agency’s reach into the lives of hundreds of millions of people in the United States and around the globe, as it collects information about their phone calls, their e-mail messages, their friends and contacts, how they spend their days, and where they spend their nights” (*New York Times*, 2014, January 1).

We contend that whether audience members respond with silence and support for these activities, or with outrage and opposition, is, in part, a function of how the news media frame this issue and the ways they depict implications of particular avenues of action. The research in this book explores these issues. Our research is based on two large experimental studies examining the effects of news stories about government surveillance of “terrorists” under the auspices of the USA PATRIOT Act. Certain features of the news stories, such as the story frame, were systematically altered so that we could examine how audiences would respond to different versions of the story. This research follows a tradition of inquiry that has been rather loosely organized under the label of framing effects research. This tradition of scholarship has long been fragmented, by some accounts “fractured” (Entman, 1993), and continues to require clarification and cohesion. In this chapter, we begin by providing an underlying theoretical structure to organize extant framing research and then use this structure to situate and guide this experimental research.

We begin by providing a typology that organizes and clarifies the different strands of framing research found in communication, psychology, sociology, and political science. We build on some recent efforts to codify frame distinctions, both extending and specifying this prior work (D'Angelo, 2010; de Vreese, 2005; Matthes, 2009; Shah et al., 2009). Beginning with Pan and Kosicki (1993), followed by Kinder and Sanders (1996), Shah et al. (1996), and a range of other scholars (see Druckman, 2001; Chong & Druckman, 2007b; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007) have highlighted the distinction between frames in communication texts and frames in thought. This distinction has often been crossed with other categorization schemes to generate typologies to organize research, including efforts to distinguish between “generic and issue-specific frames” (de Vreese, 2005) to examine “precision versus realism” on the framing continuum (Vraga et al., 2010).

These typologies exist beyond the numerous frame distinctions that have been offered by scholars over the last three decades: gain versus loss (Tversky and Kahneman, 1981), episodic versus thematic (Iyengar, 1991), ethical versus material (Shah et al., 1996), and strategy versus policy (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Lawrence, 2000), along with the dozens of frame categorizations that are particular to a certain issue or class of issues. Along these lines, existing definitions of what constitutes a frame are explored with research that represents common approaches to framing effects categorized into our conceptual framework. Ultimately, our review of this literature leads to the development of two new models that integrate the processes of framing and priming effects: the Message Framing Model (MFM) and the Message Processing Model (MPM). These models present our perspective on frame building (how frames become manifest in texts) and frame setting (how frames come to influence thought), identifying the factors that amplify and attenuate such processes and effects (de Vreese, 2005; Brewer and Gross, 2010). They provide the theoretical basis for our research, integrating a sizable body of currently fractured and unfocused work.

Message Framing and Framing Effects Research

The concept of framing can be found throughout the social sciences as a way of describing how messages, based on certain patterns of emphasis and exclusion, can structure the thinking of the people who encounter them. Sociologists such as Gregory Bateson (1972) used the term as an analogy to a picture frame, implying that any communication organizes the perceptions of audiences by suggesting that they should attend to what is within the frame and ignore what is outside it. Alternatively, psychologists Kathryn Bock and Helga Loebell (1990) apply the metaphor of the structure of a building, asserting that frames provide a skeleton that “shapes the process and products of construction,” thereby providing certain “openings” from which the interior of the building can be viewed. In both analogies, the features of the object remain largely

constant, but the act of framing alters what features observers attend to when they encounter them. As Matthes (2012, pp. 248–249) writes, frames “are a part of culture, they guide how the elite construct information, they affect journalists’ information selection, they are manifest in media texts, and they influence cognitions and attitudes of audience members.”

Few scholars, however, have attempted to merge a formal understanding of how frames become embedded in messages with a comprehension of how they influence the thinking of individuals. This lack of convergence is at least partly because framing has developed along two discrete disciplinary lines – one sociological, the other psychological – with scholars from these differing perspectives generating bounded conceptions of framing and favoring certain methodologies to examine their presence in messages and their effects on audiences. Further, theorizing about framing has often lacked attention to its conceptual moorings, especially the complex interplay of news construction and audience cognition (Pan and Kosicki, 1993), instead relying on the simple division between frames in texts and frames of thought (Scheufele, 1999).

Even within the narrower context of political communication research, the definition of what constitutes a frame varies from scholar to scholar, and from one “master discipline” to another. Researchers in political science and communication differ considerably in their assertions about who does the framing and how frames find their way into news. As Robert Entman (1993) asserted over two decades ago, “despite its omnipresence across the social sciences and the humanities, nowhere is there a general statement of framing theory that shows exactly how frames become embedded within and become manifest in a text, or how framing influences thinking” (p. 51). Although there has been a great deal of research on news framing and framing effects, an integrated view of framing still eludes us.

Within the fields of political science and communication, the concept of framing effects generally focuses on the manner in which the construction of communication texts, usually news content, influences individual thoughts and feelings by structuring press accounts around certain themes or labels (Entman, 1993; Pan and Kosicki, 1993). Some scholars favor treating framing as the sociological process of news construction that results from interactions with and dependency on elite sources (Bennett, 1990; Entman and Rojecki, 1993; Gamson, 1992; Lawrence, 2010; Snow and Benford, 1988), while others understand framing as the psychological dynamics of audience consumption and schema activation that results from the interaction between what is in the text and what is in memory (Fiske and Taylor, 1991; Price and Tewksbury, 1997; Zaller, 1992). In fact, we consider framing to involve both of these processes, one an outcome of press–source relations (Bennett, 1990) and the other an outcome of audience–text interactions (Price and Tewksbury, 1997).

Implicit to many of the sociological studies is the perspective that media frames order or organize audience perceptions by including and excluding certain messages, turning “unrecognizable happenings or amorphous talk into a

discernible event” (Tuchman, 1978, p. 192; also Gitlin, 1980; Goffman, 1974; Graber, 1988; Hall et al., 1978; Rachlin, 1988). As Ball-Rokeach and Rokeach (1987) argue, media do not merely serve an agenda-setting role in public discourse, but are crucial to establishing the range of criteria for constructing, debating, and resolving social issues.

Inspired by framing research, in its most recent formulation, agenda setting is thought to operate at different levels, with news coverage building salience and prominence of the topic among the public at the first level, and building an image for the issue based on the specific attributes that are made salient in that coverage at the second level (Wanta et al., 2004). As McCombs and Valenzuela (2007) contend, “which aspects of an issue are covered in the news, and the relative emphasis on these various aspects of an issue, makes a considerable difference in how people view that issue.” From this perspective, the media and public agendas do not merely align in term of issue salience, but also around key attributes. Some have argued that the claims of a “second level” are merely an effort to subsume framing under the broader agenda-setting paradigm (see Jasperson et al., 1998). These scholars point to the theoretical efforts of Price and Tewksbury (1997), who understand agenda setting and framing as closely related forms of knowledge activation – accessibility of mental constructs for agenda setting and applicability of those activated constructs for framing.

Nonetheless, the extension of agenda-setting concepts into framing research has taken a number of forms (Scheufele, 2000). One is work on frame setting, which considers how news frames can make both the “story object, as well as the frame used in the story, more salient” (Aday, 2007, p. 768). How these frames become embedded in news texts and make their way to the public is a complex process that is shaped by forces operating at a variety of levels of analysis (see Entman, 2004). Shoemaker and Reese (1996) organize the vast literature on the factors that influence the content of news into those that operate at the levels of the individual journalist, the journalistic profession, the news organization, the news organization’s position within the social system, and the culture/ideology. Entman takes this a step further, offering a model of cascading activation to explain this process. Entman’s model asserts “how interpretive frames activate and spread from the top level of a stratified system (the White House) to the network of nonadministration elites, and on to news organizations, their texts, and the public – and how interpretations feed back from lower to higher levels” (p. 415).

It is not our intent to review the sizable literature on news sociology here, or to provide a detailed dissection of how frames make their way into the news, for other scholars have already done that work (see Bennett, 1990; Entman, 2003; Entman, 2004; Gitlin, 1980). This literature shows that the news, and indeed the frames that are used to construct the news, is the result of a complex interplay between the state and the press, with political elites working to get certain frames and issue labels adopted by journalists as a way to advance their policy agendas, while reporters rely on certain preferred frames as a way to

simplify news production and package the news for audience consumption. This view also recognizes, as Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992) contend, that individuals “do not slavishly follow the framing of issues presented in the mass media”; rather, people “actively filter, sort, and reorganize information in personally meaningful ways in constructing an understanding of public issues” (pp. 76–77; see also Gamson et al., 1992). Our interest lies with the influence of these frames on audiences, and the interplay of message and cognition that produces framing effects.

Organizing Research on Framing Effects

The existing research on framing effects has yielded contrasting approaches to conceptualizing message frames, reflecting Entman’s (1991) conclusion that framing is a “fractured paradigm.” We classify these approaches according to a 2×2 typology (Figure 1.1) that is based on two dimensions: a *purity* dimension that ranges from “idealistic” to “pragmatic” approaches and a *generalizability* dimension that ranges from “context-transcendent” to “context-specific” approaches to news framing. In this figure, we have located some of the more prominent framing effects studies using the two dimensions of this typology.

Frame Purity. The first dimension concerns the strictness of the approach that research takes to conceptualizing frames in order to observe framing effects. This continuum spans from narrow idealistic approaches to broader pragmatic approaches. This distinction is similar to what Iyengar (1991) refers to as a methodological tradeoff between “precision” and “realism.” In a similar vein, Druckman (2001) distinguishes between conceptions of framing as a matter of “equivalency” and as a matter of “emphasis.” The former investigates how different descriptions of a problem or an issue with “the use of different, but logically equivalent, words or phrases” (Druckman, 2001, p. 228) change opinions or preferences.

These idealistic approaches take the rather stringent view that in order to study framing effects, researchers must isolate the frame while all other features of the message are held constant. Typically, this approach lends itself to experimental studies that alternate frames across different conditions in strictly controlled settings. In doing so, this approach emphasizes that all other factual and stylistic elements of the message must be comparable so that researchers can observe the pure influence of the frame. That is, alternative messages must provide equivalent information and be of equal size and structure, varying only in the broad interpretive framework they provide (Vraga et al., 2010). The emphases of this approach are on the internal validity of experimental design and the insights into psychological processes.

The most widely cited example of this approach to conceptualizing message frames is provided by Tversky and Kahneman (1981), who demonstrate that

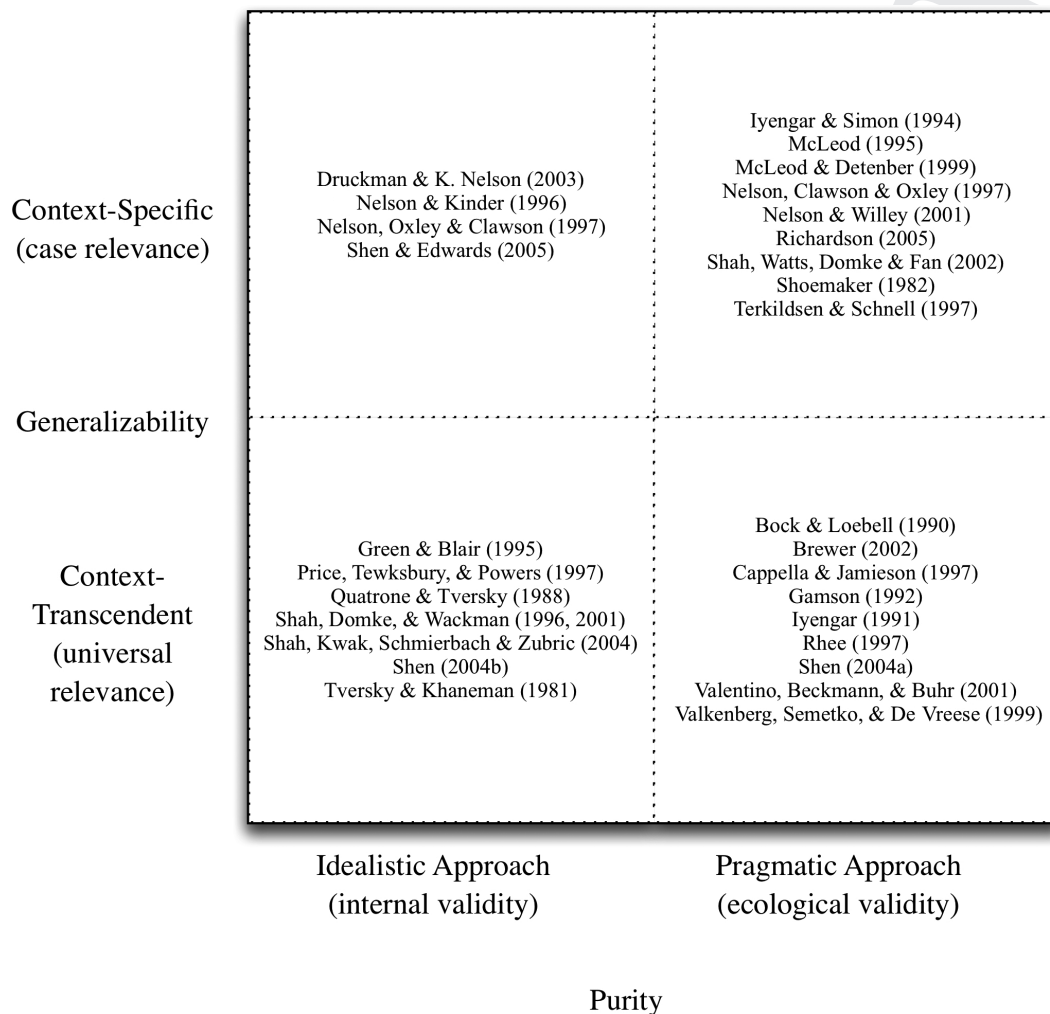


FIGURE 1.1. A typology of existing framing effects research.

presenting solutions to a problem in terms of gains or losses, all the while maintaining the logical and numerical equivalence of the facts, can change individuals' aversion to risk. A particularly notable illustration of these classic prospect theory studies is the Asian disease experiment. In this study, respondents were randomly assigned to one of two differently framed, but probabilistically equal scenarios. Some participants encountered a scenario in which the decision alternatives were framed in terms of gains, while others encountered decision alternatives framed in terms of losses. Both scenarios asked respondents to react to the following problem:

Imagine that the United States is preparing for the outbreak of an unusual Asian disease, which is expected to kill 600 people. Two alternative programs to combat the disease have been proposed. Assume that the exact scientific estimates of the programs are as follows:

[Gain Scenario]

- If program A is adopted, 200 people will be saved.
- If program B is adopted, there is a $1/3$ probability that 600 people will be saved, and a $2/3$ probability that no people will be saved.

[Loss Scenario]

- If program A is adopted, 400 people will die.
- If program B is adopted, there is a $1/3$ probability that nobody will die, and a $2/3$ probability that 600 people will die.

In each condition, respondents were asked which decision alternative they favored, program A or program B. When the experimental subjects encountered the gain scenario, 72% favored program A, the risk-averse option. However, when they encountered the loss scenario, 78% favored program B, the risk-seeking option. Thus, a simple change in perspective, even with absolute numerical and probabilistic equivalence, resulted in a dramatic shift in willingness to opt for the risky alternative.

Other scholars have adopted this narrow conception of framing by shifting the perspective offered to understand a problem or an issue without any changes in factual information or stylistic features of the message. Although most of the studies that we categorize as “idealistic” try to isolate and systematically alter the frame, few have the purity of Tversky and Kahneman’s ideal type. Instead, most fall on the idealistic end of the continuum between precision and realism. They make a strong effort to maintain factual and stylistic consistency, focusing on the essence of the frame shift, though often quotes or other minor features are altered to invoke particular frames. This approach to framing privileges an uncontaminated setting in which to test framing effects over the pragmatism of understanding more realistic frame shifts as they co-occur with changes in factual content of substantive stylistic alterations. Idealistic approaches accept the assumption that the frame can easily be separated from other message differences such as changes in factual information contained in a news story, for example, or structural features such as photographs or headlines that accompany the story. However, limiting the manipulation of frames to numerically equivalent, factually identical, and stylistically consistent alterations imposes limitations on the scope of message frames – and framing effects research – by creating a methodological challenge of how to isolate the frame and an empirical constraint by neutering the power of the frame when it is stripped of the fact packages that accompany it. This has led some researchers to adopt less constrained orientations toward frames, which we call pragmatic approaches.

In pragmatic approaches, which Druckman (2001) refers to as “emphasis” framing, researchers make an implicit argument that it is impossible to fully manipulate a frame without changing some of the basic facts that are presented. That is, different frames necessarily call for different sets of facts. Research in this tradition argues that it is impractical, if not impossible, to hold the facts

constant when you shift across frames. For example, McLeod and Hertog (1999) describe two alternative frames for covering social protest, the debate frame and the riot frame. While the debate frame would focus on the protesters, the protested, and the positions of both sides of the debated issue, the riot frame would be more likely to focus on the police and elaborate on property damage and arrests. Facts covered by the reporter change with the frame.

Studies using the pragmatic approach (e.g., Iyengar, 1991; McLeod and Detenber, 1999) take a more relaxed view of internal validity, preferring instead to stress ecological validity by presenting more realistic variations in story manipulations, often using real stories from the news media as experimental stimuli. Although pragmatic approaches provide a more ecologically valid way of testing framing effects in that real world stories are not limited to differences in equivalencies, this type of research raises a critical problem of clearly distinguishing what is causing the framing effect, whether it is the result of the frame or other content differences. That is, experiments designed to assess the effects of pragmatic or emphasis-framing differences have a hard time creating different story frames while holding all other story characteristics constant.

The most prominent illustration of the pragmatic approach to framing effects is Iyengar's (1991) distinction between episodic and thematic frames. His research explores the tendency of reporters to construct social issues around specific instances and individuals, which he refers to as episodic framing, as opposed to journalists' less frequent emphasis on broader trends and social conditions, which he calls thematic framing. He tested the effects of such frames across a series of experimental studies. In one study, experimental stories focused on the issue of illegal drugs. The episodic story focused on two drug-dependent individuals, while the thematic story focused on systemic rates of drug abuse and the policies used to address the problem. Not only did the time frame and the social level of the story shift across these two instances – as would be required to narrowly shift from episodic to thematic framing – but so did the sources referenced in the report along with the facts used to construct the central assertions. Emphasis on episodic frames was found to shift experimental subjects' "attributions of responsibility both for the creation of problems or situations (causal responsibility) and for the resolution of these problems or situations (treatment responsibility)" to the people featured in press reports (Iyengar, 1991, p. 3).

We should again point out that our distinction between the idealistic and pragmatic approaches should really be seen as a continuum with studies such as Tversky and Kahneman (1981) at the idealistic end, and studies such as Iyengar (1991) at the pragmatic end. Research from along this continuum contributes to our knowledge in different ways. Studies at the idealistic end tell us more about the precise power of the frames themselves to induce effects, while studies at the pragmatic end tell use more about the true power of media messages. As such, we should resist the temptation to discount either approach to framing effects research. While the critics of the pragmatic approach are

correct in asserting that such research should not make claims about the “effect of the story frame,” they should probably stop short of claiming that pragmatic research is not “framing effects” research. Since different frames tend to dictate different sets of facts as journalists construct stories top down starting with the frame, it may be unrealistic to hold everything but the frame constant in most news story contexts. For example, when it comes to news stories about a protest, it is hard to imagine how one story could be framed as a debate and another as a riot using the exact same set of facts. While studies that adopt the pragmatic approach do not isolate the effect of the frame, they do test the differences between stories that are framed differently, and as such might be called framing effects studies.

Frame Generalizability. A second salient dimension of framing research is whether the framing distinction in question applies only to the specific issue featured in the message (*context-specific*), or is generalizable across a variety of situations (*context-transcendent*). Situation-specific frames are more narrowly constructed around a particular issue. For example, Richardson (2005) used situation-specific frames of promoting diversity and redressing inequities to study the effects of newspaper editorials about affirmative action. Nelson and Willey (2001) provide another example. In their study, the authors developed two news stories about the 1996 “pizza redlining” controversy in San Francisco in which pizza delivery services were accused of refusing to provide service to predominantly African-American neighborhoods. One news story used a “crime” frame; this story underscored the pizza delivery company’s claim that the redlining policy was adopted to protect the safety of the delivery drivers. The other story used a “race” frame, which emphasized racial discrimination inherent in the policy.

One particularly notable example of this approach to framing effects research was conducted by Shah et al. (2002), who analyzed media content and then tested the effects of the news framing of sex scandals during the Clinton presidency. They found that three prominent frames existed and had differential effects: The Clinton behavior frame (i.e., accounts of his liaisons and evasions), the conservative attack frame (i.e., denouncements of Clinton’s behavior), and the liberal response frame (i.e., questions of the conservatives’ motives). These frame categories, which were found to work in tandem to explain Clinton’s rising job approval ratings during the height of the Lewinsky scandal, were developed inductively by looking at media coverage, and were not presented as generalizable to other presidencies or political sex scandals. Rather, they were coded and tested in an effort to explain the opinion dynamics at the time. In this work, like the others, the frame categories were constructed narrowly to fit the study topic.

In contrast with these context-specific frames, context-transcendent frames are both more abstract and more generalizable to a wider variety of issues. Examples include episodic versus thematic frames (Iyengar, 1991), strategic

versus issue frames (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Rhee, 1997), ethical versus material frames (Shah et al., 1996), issue versus character frames (Shen, 2004b), and loss versus gain frames (Tversky and Kahneman, 1981). For example, Cappella and Jamieson (1997) examine the effects of framing politics through sports and war metaphors (i.e., strategic framing) as opposed to the presentation of politics as a debate among divergent perspectives (i.e., issue framing). In a series of controlled experiments across two political contexts, the Philadelphia mayoral election and the health care reform debate, they found that framing influenced information recall and respondents' cynicism.

Likewise, Iyengar (1991) attempts to demonstrate the generalizability of his distinction between episodic versus thematic framing, placing him in the bottom-right quadrant of our typology. This quadrant of pragmatic and content-transcendent framing research contains some of the most prominent framing effects studies, including work by Cappella and Jamieson (1997), Gamson (1992), and Price et al. (1997). Iyengar's experimental studies concerning crime, poverty, and unemployment provide some support for the transcendent power of this pragmatic frame shift; however, many tests of the central hypothesis, while directionally consistent, fail to achieve statistical significance. These weak effects may result from the confounding of two distinct frame dimensions in the contrast between episodic and thematic coverage, one of the possible problems of a pragmatic approach. That is, episodic coverage as defined and tested not only favors specific instances over enduring problems (i.e., time span), it also emphasizes individual situations over societal conditions (i.e., social level). The framing distinction explored in this book – individual versus collective frames – isolates the social level dimension and opts for a more idealistic, yet nonetheless transcendent approach.

Applying the Framing Research Typology

Before explicating the individual and collective frame distinction that is at the center of this book, we turn to the conceptual value of our typology for clarifying extant work on framing effects and for advancing the study of message framing, writ large. We believe that this typology helps organize the tremendous diversity of framing research, and in doing so, begins to resolve the conceptual confusion that surrounds the concept. Although some argue that a particular cell of the typology represents the “true definition” of message framing, there is little agreement on which cell that should be. We contend that work on news framing and effects benefits from a conception of framing that encompasses all of the work covered in this typology, yet also recognizes the particular strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

We begin in the lower left quadrant (idealistic/transcendent) of the typology. Here we find research that emphasizes the transcendent quality of message frames – that is, their ability to cross issues and news categories – yet conceives

of framing very narrowly, focusing only on the shift in the perspective provided to the audience by the journalist. For scholars who take this position, facts are supposed to remain identical across various frame categories so that the pure effect of the transcendent frame can be tested and isolated. Apart from the obvious advantages of this approach for purposes of internal validity and for testing the generalizability of frame power across multiple issues, it suffers from a number of serious limitations.

First, treating the definition of framing so narrowly often neuters the frame, removing the factual shifts and stylistic changes that often accompany changes in journalistic orientation. As a result, the full effects of shifts in perspective are not assessed because accompanying changes in the fact packages and reporting norms, such as quoting particular sources, are omitted, with the purity of the frame and the supposed transcendence of the frame category limiting assessment of its impact.

A second related problem stems from what might be called “the challenge of frame isolation.” That is, how can researchers surgically manipulate the frame while holding the rest of the content constant? The frame is, according to many, not any particular element of the text, such as the headline or lead paragraph, but the perspective woven throughout the entire text. It is a Gestalt, derived from the story’s entirety. Many idealistic studies settle for manipulating the headline or lead paragraph as a proxy for isolating the frame, then maintain the rest of the story across conditions as a constant set of facts. As such, not only may it be hard to argue that the frame has been truly isolated, but the resultant news stories may no longer reflect realistic variations of stories as they occur in actual day-to-day reporting.

In the upper left quadrant (idealistic/specific) of the typology, we find one effort to address this limitation by making the frame shift more specific to the issue at hand. Although internal validity is still stressed in this approach, the decision to conceive of the frame as issue-specific allows for greater realism when generating the framed messages, and may have some advantage with regard to external validity as well. As a result, the shift between different ways of narrowly framing a single issue tends to be more flexible to the demands of correctly representing the journalistic norms of preparing news around that topic. Unfortunately, this approach also comes with limitations.

The most important among these is the idiosyncratic nature of many of the frames, which often limits the relevance of the finding to the specific context of the study. In addition, the continued narrowness of the frame manipulation still removes much of what may provide the power of frames to activate thoughts, shape attitudes, and encourage behaviors.

The upper right quadrant (pragmatic/specific) of the typology sacrifices some internal validity in order to examine frames through a more pragmatic approach. Some of these studies examine framing effects outside the laboratory through survey analysis or longitudinal modeling. Even those that employ

experimental designs do not strictly adhere to the logic of only manipulating the frame of the message while holding all other message elements constant. Instead, the research populating this quadrant operationalizes frames in terms of a shift in both perspective and the associated facts. Although not asserted explicitly in many cases, this work operationalizes frames as a package that combines the shift in perspective along with a corresponding shift in the accompanying facts, sources, and subjects. For example, the different frames of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal explored by Shah et al. (2002), not only offered different vantage points from which to view the issue, but also referenced different story elements, quoted different sources, and referred to different historical moments. While this is more ecologically valid, it does come at the expense of narrowly crediting the shift in perspective with the observed effects.

The lower right quadrant (pragmatic/transcendent) is the location of much of the most widely cited framing work, with exemplars from Iyengar (1991) and Cappella and Jamieson (1997), among others. Research in this quadrant has been critiqued for confounding frame shifts with alterations in other substantive features of news content, sacrificing too much internal validity for the sake of ecological validity, especially when testing framing effects within an experimental design. Although those critiques may have some merit, they also miss the larger conceptual issue at stake here. The work in this quadrant attempts to test the effects of context-transcendent frames in their full ecological power. In this conceptualization, the power of the frame lies not only in the shift in perspective or definition of an issue, but also in the other changes that shift in perspective necessitates. From this perspective, to study the effects of frames, especially transcendent ones, the shift in frame perspective cannot be isolated from the associated changes. Of course this limits the ability of the researchers to claim framing effects in the narrow sense typically applied to experimental research, which attempts to isolate the specific feature of interest while holding all else constant. Nonetheless, many insights about framing can be gained from these studies.

Layering Frames and Cues

Organizing framing effects research in this way highlights the fact that work must balance the need for realism with the need for precision. Internal and ecological validity are both required to adequately test framing effects, particularly in experimental settings. We contend that this demands the *layering* of subtle manipulations that are invisible to the experiment participants, with one of these factors shifting the frame in the precise, idealistic sense of research on the left side of this typology, and other factors shifting accompanying elements such as story subjects, journalistic sources, or elite cues that often change along with the frame in research on the right side of the typology. By crossing these

elements in an experimental design, the effects of the frames can be separated from the other story elements that have often been a source of concern. At the same time, it may be that the effects of framing are more dramatic when coupled with fact packages and news cues that reinforce and complement the frame (Shah et al., 2002, Shah et al., 2004).

Existing research draws a distinction between news story frames and cues. While the frame has traditionally been seen as a characteristic that provides structure to the news story as a whole, the term “cue” has often been used to describe specific objects within the news story (Kuklinski and Hurley, 1994; Mondak, 1993). In other words, cues may be thought of as the labels and descriptors that journalists use to represent elements within the story. Just as news frames help to bring meaning to the story as a whole, cues bring meaning to particular concepts within the story. In this sense, there is a parallel between frames and cues. We could think of cues as concepts that are framed in a particular way, an idea to which we will return.

Like frames, cues are the product of a variety of factors operating at different levels to shape the nature of news content (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). However, some of these factors may be more influential in shaping the application of frames and others more important in determining journalists’ choice of cues (Cho et al., 2006). Journalistic norms and conventions, as well as concerns for attracting audiences, may be particularly influential in shaping framing choices, while the selection of cues is more likely to be the product of the relative power of elite sources to assert their preferred labels (e.g., the use of “freedom fighter” as opposed to “insurgent rebel”) into the news discourse (Bennett et al., 2006; Edelman, 1993; Entman, 2004; Gamson, 1992; Gans, 1980).

Frames and cues may operate similarly in terms of the way they affect audiences. They both are likely to interact with an individual’s cognitive network to shape subsequent judgments (Price and Tewksbury, 1997). In terms of isolated effects, we might expect frames to have more influence than cues, as they bring meaning to the entire story rather than just a particular element of the story. However, in reality, frames and cues do not operate in isolation. In creating a coherent story, journalists may select frames and cues that fit together. If a journalist is writing up a story about welfare using an episodic frame, it is likely that the cues used to describe the actors and events will be consistent with that frame. In this case, if the story is framed as an exposé of welfare abuse as opposed to one about the safety net, cues such as “welfare cheat” are more likely to appear. As such, frames and cues can be expected to work together, thereby enhancing their power to influence audience judgments (Cho et al., 2006; Keum et al., 2005; Shah et al., 2004; Shah et al., 2010). Unfortunately, very few studies have attempted to look at the way that frames and cues work together, which should be expected in competitive, elite discourse-driven democracies (Chong and Druckman, 2007a,c). This book is designed to fill this void. Before doing so, we first articulate the research requisites and theoretical models that provide the basis for this research.

Research Requisites

Testing the interplay of frames and cues, as well as other story elements such as source attributions and story subjects, requires large participant pools to provide enough power to be able to cross various message dimensions into realistic media portrayals, while maintaining sufficient power to reveal the typically weak effects of one-shot framing experiments. We adopt this approach in our research in order to investigate the effects of message framing in the context of news stories about government surveillance of Arab and activist groups. Though our messages focus on the tension between civil liberties and national security that are raised by government activities associated with the USA PATRIOT Act, the frames that we chose to manipulate (individual vs. collective presentations of surveillance targets) are transcendent in the sense that these frames are found in news coverage across a variety of different contexts. In our stimulus messages, the individual versus collective framing distinction pertains to whether the news story about FBI surveillance of either an Arab group or an activist group presented a personalized account by focusing on a particular individual as the subject of the story.

In day-to-day news coverage, this distinction can be observed in stories on a variety of topics ranging from natural disasters (e.g., Hurricane Katrina) to government policy (e.g., the impact of welfare reform) to social problems (e.g., crime). For example, stories about illegal drug use will often be framed around an individual exemplar to illustrate problems associated with drug addiction. Alternatively, stories about drug abuse may be framed in epidemiological terms in order to illustrate the scope of the problem. Realistically, many stories on drug abuse (and other relevant topics) may involve a mix of individual and collective frames. It is a common journalistic practice (in television news, in newspapers, and especially in news magazines) to open stories with individual exemplars to add human interest and bring the story to life, and then back out to a more holistic perspective to discuss the impact on larger units of social organization such as groups, communities, and societies. For the purpose of experimentally isolating the impact of this type of framing, and to examine its interaction with other message features, the stimulus stories used in our research were constructed to represent pure forms of the frames.

More significantly, the research reported in this book strikes a balance between the idealistic and the pragmatic approaches to framing effects research. On one hand, our operationalization of the individual and collective frames maintains the vast majority of story content (including the structure, language, and basic facts) across experimental conditions. As such, we can isolate the main effects of the influence of the frame, upholding the idealistic approach's emphasis on experimental control. On the other hand, we cross the story frame condition with other factors that manipulate related yet distinct content elements (i.e., cues and source attributions). We do this in order to: (a) examine the interactive effects of story frames with these other elements; (b) provide a more accurate rendering of the true power of message construction, which may be

underestimated by adherence to the idealistic restriction of holding everything constant but the frame; and (c) observe message effects as outcomes of broader content differences in accordance with the pragmatic approach's emphasis on ecological validity, especially in competitive environments in which elites compete over how issues are labeled (Chong and Druckman, 2007a,c; Shah et al., 2004; Shah et al., 2010).

Limited Effects of Framing

Several years ago, one luminary in the field of communication, Steven Chaffee (personal communication, August 7, 1998), remarked that most studies examining the impact of news frames have failed to find significant effects. To the extent that this was an accurate assessment of past research, we might expect that researchers would have become discouraged and lost interest in framing and framing effects. However, this has not been the case. Instead, framing research remains an active area in the fields of communication and political science. Part of this continued attention may stem from the realization that the theoretical and methodological limitations of many early studies may have led to the underestimation of framing effects.

First, most studies of framing effects have used single-exposure designs, in which researchers sought to examine whether exposure to an isolated message with a particular frame might have an impact on audience members. Effects of a single message may be small or short-lived. However, if the nature and application of frames is largely consistent, framing effects may cumulate to the point where they are more powerful and durable. For example, exposure to a single protest story that frames a particular protest group as being deviant may lead to a short-lived judgment about the group featured in the story but may not have a strong impact on attitudes toward protests and protest groups in general; however, if news stories about protests consistently frame protest groups as deviant, the media may have a powerful, long-term effect on attitudes toward protests as a form of democratic participation (McLeod and Detenber, 1999). Such effects, though potentially powerful, may be hard to observe using traditional experimental methodology. The rare examples of longitudinal modeling of framing effects lend support to this perspective, with such analyses explaining large shifts in public opinion over time (Shah et al., 2002).

Second, the effects of news story frames may interact with other story elements such as cues, sources, quotes, evidence, or other content features. The composition, consistency, and synergy of the content elements may influence the nature of the frame's effects. The idealistic approaches adopted by many experimental studies of framing effects attempt to isolate the effect of the frame by holding most story elements constant and manipulating only a small portion of the text that constitutes the "frame" in alternative experimental conditions. While satisfying concerns about internal validity in isolating the effect, this

procedure may underestimate the effects of news stories as the frames interact with, and are reinforced by, other elements of the story. Likewise, pragmatic approaches sometimes confound two or more textual elements as they attempt to test the effects of alternative frames, possibly resulting in the effects of one dimension countervailing and suppressing the effects of other dimensions, thereby reducing the ability to discern influences.

Third, framing effects may be conditional, resulting from an interaction between the news frame and the predispositions of the individual who encounters it. That is, certain individuals are more susceptible to framing effects than others such that the effects of a frame on some individuals may be strong, while others are not affected at all. If predispositions are not taken into account, one might conclude that framing effects are weak, if they exist at all. Ideology, prior knowledge, political attitudes, and value orientations may each influence frame resonance.

Our examination of framing effects, grounded in an understanding of the breadth of framing research and situated within the typology we offer, attempts to address or account for all of these issues. We understand that framing effects may be quite small in single-exposure studies, and we therefore examine effects using large samples to generate enough statistical power to observe influence of this size. We recognize and embrace the idea that frames may interact with other story elements, and therefore create layered, factorial experimental designs that allow us to examine the interplay of these elements on relevant outcomes. Finally, we appreciate that framing effects are often conditional, and therefore attempt to account for how differences that individuals bring to the processing of media messages might amplify or attenuate these effects.

Message Framing Model

Our review of the literature on news frames and cues led to the development of our integrated Message Framing Model (MFM; see Figure 1.2). This model is based on the observation that news frames and cues have much in common, yet differ in terms of the level of the textual unit to which they are applied. Although cues tend to be directed at individual words and phrases, frames are conceived as covering contentions and accounts. As such, meaning can be embedded in any textual unit from single words (i.e., concept frames) to entire texts (i.e., story frames). When a journalist applies a label to represent a concept, the choice of labels implies a limited range of meanings to the audience. While this label may mean different things to different people, the range of decodable meanings is to some degree prescribed by the label choice. As such, the use of different cues would prescribe a different range of potential meanings. For instance, a journalist could label the leader of an activist group as an advocate or an agitator. This cueing (or concept framing) is likely to fundamentally alter the meaning for audience members.

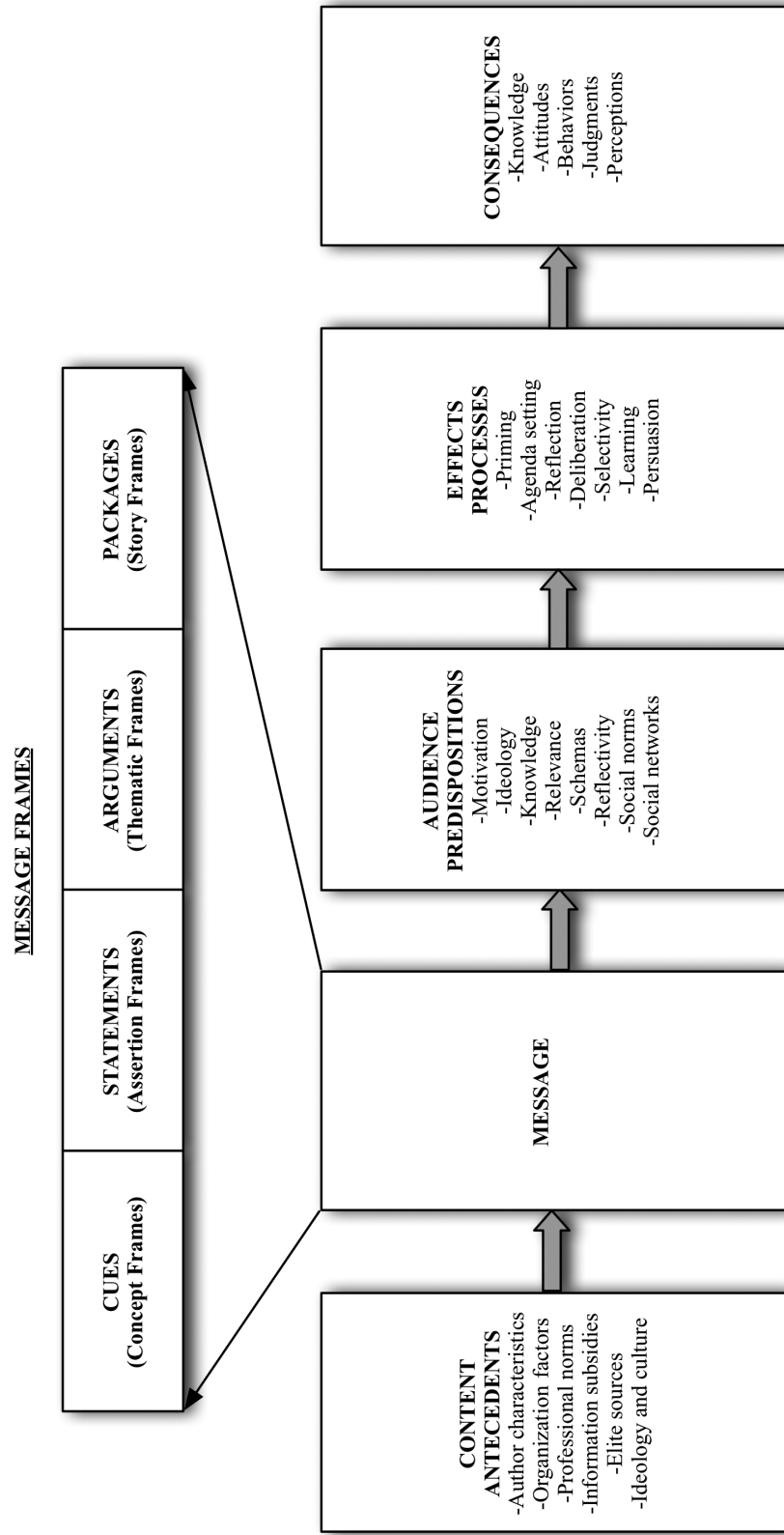


FIGURE I.2. Message Framing Model (MFM).

Similarly, as the journalist compiles concept labels into a sentence, meaning is framed within the resultant statements (i.e., assertion frames). Sentences are then compiled into arguments, either explicit or implicit, about a perceived reality (i.e., thematic frames), which are then packaged into a holistic piece (i.e., story frames). While this bottom-up ordering of composition (from smaller units to larger units) follows the way that a journalist would actually write a story to create meaning, it is likely that the process in the mind of the journalist is both top down and bottom up. That is, before the journalist composes a news story, the construction is guided by the perceived norms for that story type, guided in much the same way as a builder following the blueprint for a house. That abstract blueprint for the news package is likely to convey a certain meaning for the whole (story frames). Of course, political and economic elites can influence the content of news through their rhetoric and information subsidies, particularly how journalists use certain cues to label issues. Thus, the indexing of elite opinions can shape the smaller textual units journalists employ, such as political idioms, shorthand acronyms, and terminology (concepts and assertions). All of these component parts, then, are likely to work to reinforce certain preferred meanings for the audience.

A more concrete illustration may help clarify some of the elements of this model. For example, McLeod and Hertog (1999) describe the characteristics of the “protest paradigm,” a common pattern used in writing stories about social protest that tends to connote certain preferred meanings to the audience. One of the major preferred meanings that stems from the protest paradigm is the notion that protesters are deviant. This is conveyed through a number of textual elements. Derogatory labels (e.g., “extremists” or “militants”) may be used as concept labels. Assertions may also be framed in such a way as to further communicate deviance (e.g., “police are concerned that these extremists may create problems in downtown Minneapolis”). Such assertions may be assembled into thematic structures embedded in a story that frame the protesters as lawbreakers, detailing the nature of their crimes and punishments. Ultimately, these concept labels, assertions, and themes are assembled into the broader story frame. In this case, the overarching frame of the story may be one of “protesters versus police” rather than “protesters versus the intended target of the protest,” a crime story rather than political story.

These textual elements are at least partly a product of the message creator and news organizations that produce them, as well as the political elites who offer them up to journalists and editors. For example, elites and journalists prefer to evoke individual examples to illustrate issues, with news norms encouraging the personification of issues. Ideological and cultural factors can also work to naturalize certain modes of news construction and lead to certain frames being emphasized. Of course, the resonance of these frames on audience members is largely dependent on their personal predispositions and the nature of their cognitive networks.

The meaning embedded within any of these units (from concepts to stories) can interact with an individual's worldviews and cognitive schemas to produce differentiated outcomes. The different predispositions and schemas that individuals bring to the message lead to a range of decoded meanings, a notion referred to as "polysemy" (Hebdige, 1979). In the case of the protest example described earlier, audience members who are politically predisposed to oppose the protesters, or even those who have no prior opinion, are likely to reject the protesters and their message. On the other hand, audience members who are inclined to support the protesters may respond by reading between the lines and coming to a different conclusion about the protest: they may reject the mainstream media account of the protest as biased, or they may even seek alternative sources of information that might lead to a different conclusion regarding the merits of the protest – a set of responses that reflect "media dissociation" (Hwang et al., 2006). As this suggests, in addition to understanding how journalists choose to construct press accounts, we must also understand how audiences process the news.

Message Processing Model

Our approach to framing effects is guided by an integrated Message Processing Model (MPM) that we have derived from prior research (Higgins, 1996; Higgins and Brendl, 1995; Price and Tewksbury, 1997). This model is based on the notion that message frames – in all of their forms – interact with audience members' preexisting orientations and memory store, which are then used in the process of interpreting experiences and making subsequent judgments. Various cognitive processes identified by past research have been integrated to make this model applicable to framing and priming effects. The components of this model include availability, applicability, accessibility, activation, usability, recency, and chronicity (see Figure 1.3).

When an audience member encounters a media message, potential effects are influenced by the "availability" of relevant background information (organized in memory in the form of cognitive schemas) that is retrievable for use in message processing (Higgins, 1996; Tversky and Kahneman, 1973). Cognitions may be available in the memory store because they have been frequently or recently activated for other purposes and remain near the "top of the head." Of course, activation may also be a function of the goodness-of-fit between stored information and the content of the messages that individuals encounter, the "applicability" of existing schemas, from which cognitions may be sampled, to the task at hand (Bruner, 1957; Higgins, 1996). Not all of the cues, assertions, arguments, and packages that comprise message frames will have corresponding cognitions in each individual's memory store that are applicable for activation. These differences in applicability are often referred to as "frame resonance."

As the message is processed, relevant available schemas will be "activated" along with other available schemas (Anderson, 1983; Price and

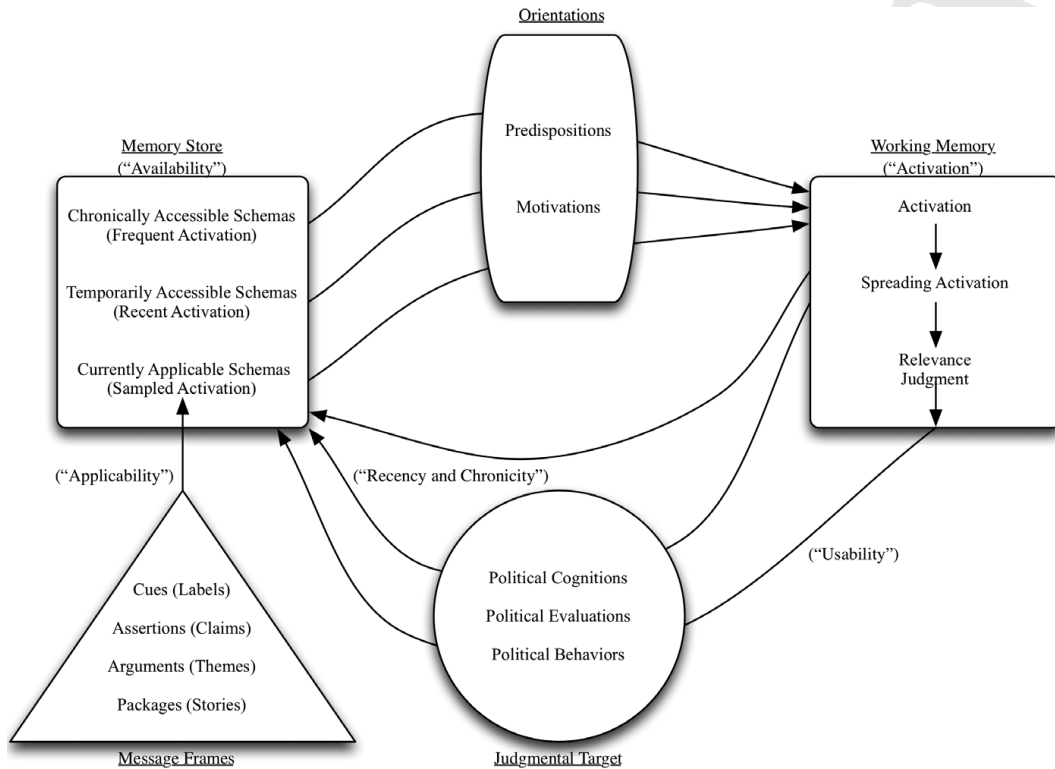


FIGURE 1.3. Message Processing Model (MPM).

Tewksbury, 1997). Once activated, these schemas may become more “accessible” for subsequent judgments and other cognitive tasks (Price and Tewksbury, 1997). Schemas that have been repeatedly activated in the past are more likely to be used in subsequent judgments, a phenomenon that has been called “chronic accessibility” (Roskos-Ewoldsen, 1997; Shah et al., 1996; Shen, 2004a). Likewise, cognitions that have been activated recently also remain available in memory and have a higher probability of accessibility in subsequent judgmental tasks. We refer to this as “temporary accessibility.”

Whether these available and accessible schemas are actually activated and applied is a product of a number of other factors. First among these, as suggested by the MFM, are the orientations that individuals bring with them to any message processing experience. These predispositions and motivations influence whether cognitions available and accessible in long-term memory are activated for use in working memory. Individuals who are highly motivated may process information more deeply and make more of an effort to sample more fully from applicable cognitions. Individuals may be predisposed due to attributional biases or ideological preferences to rely on recently or chronically accessible constructs. Thus, these orientations, writ large, serve to condition which available cognitions are activated.

This model shares some commonality with the theory of affective intelligence, which asserts that people have active use of two systems: the

dispositional (habitual) and surveillance (responsive) systems. These systems have an impact on how people think and act. For recurring events, individuals rely on the habitual processes to accomplish their goals, such as when people rely on partisan cues in voting decisions. However, under “novel and disruptive circumstances” people break free of habit and set out to examine information more fully. These conditions trigger a surveillance system (Armony and LeDoux, 1997; Gray, 1990; LeDoux, 2000). In particular, novel or dangerous circumstances encourage people to reconsider their thoughts and actions. Under familiar conditions of low anxiety, people rely on existing “heuristics” or “predispositions,” since there is a “presumption of predictable continuity.” Under less familiar conditions, people stop relying on existing predispositions and instead start processing contemporary information, regulating levels of political attention. Politicians can prompt processing of contemporary information, leading to the activation of existing thoughts and the integration of new ones (Marcus, 2000; Marcus et al., 2000).

Once thoughts are activated for use in working memory, a number of cognitive responses may occur. Activation may spread to constructs associated with the focal schema as the message was encoded in memory, with the linkages between constructs being strengthened each time they are activated in tandem. As the interconnections to any construct increase, so does the likelihood that it will be activated through this spreading or cascading process (Judd and Krosnick, 1989). This spread of activation process can influence cognitions even if the activated cognitions are not applied to a judgmental target. They can directly influence the recency and chronicity of schema accessibility by building connections between constructs. The stronger or more numerous the mental pathways between constructs, the greater the chance that thoughts activated to process information about one construct will cascade through memory to other constructs in the future, influencing evaluations and the formation of impressions (Lodge and Stroh, 1993).

Of course, the spreading activation process might also influence cognitions, evaluations, and behavior more directly. Before cognitive tasks are performed, the audience member may engage in an implicit judgment (“usability”) about the appropriateness or relevance of applying the activated schemas to the cognitive task (Higgins, 1989; Higgins, 1996); in other words, not all activated thoughts are actually used for making subsequent judgments, nor are all activated thoughts equally relevant or important to a specific cognitive task (Hwang et al., 2007). When political messages inspire negative, aversive reactions of the disposition system, people typically show little further interest in the material, and, to the extent to which they do pay attention, seek messages that reinforce their own beliefs. On the other hand, when political messages induce anxious, uneasy reactions and activate the surveillance system, people become motivated to learn more about the issues involved, willing to seek out viewpoints other than their own, and more open to consider compromise remedies (Marcus, 2000; Marcus et al., 2005).

Other factors may further moderate the effects of a given message. For instance, the influence of an activated schema is dependent on its relationship to other available schemas. If no other schemas are applied to the cognitive task, the activated schema, if deemed usable, is likely to be influential. If the activated schema resonates with other consistent schemas, effects are accentuated; if competing or contradictory schemas accompany it, effects are reduced. The influence of other activated schemas is moderated by identifiable factors linked to prior schema development. For instance, partisanship influences the content of existing schema and the degree of consistency among available considerations. Likewise, political knowledge and issue involvement may be associated with greater cognitive complexity and schema availability. These factors may also be linked to message processing styles such as a greater tendency to reflect on messages, which would enhance spreading activation across schemas.

The MPM and Priming

In addition to the cognitive processes involved in regulating message effects, there are a host of other factors that shape the nature of effects. These factors include the nature of the message (as previously identified by the MFM), the nature of the medium carrying the message, the circumstances under which the message is delivered, and the temporal interval between the delivery of the message and the opportunity for response. Ultimately, the nature of message effects depends on what types of outcomes are being examined. Message effects include a variety of potential outcomes including knowledge gain, perceptual judgments, attitude change, and behavioral outcomes. In general, we can expect that message effects would be greatest on knowledge, diminishing as we move to effects on perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Regardless of the type of effect, our MPM articulates the various cognitive processes that mediate the nature of effects. It implies that the nature of message effects depends on the preexisting characteristics that audience members bring to the message reception, the nature of the message itself, and the receiver's orientations toward the message. In this sense, our model is consistent with Markus and Zajonc's (1985) O-S-O-R Model of message effects.

Many of the component processes of the MPM have been adapted from research on priming effects. Priming has been defined as a cognitive process in which a stimulus increases the accessibility of constructs stored in memory, which then has an impact on subsequent judgments (Higgins, 1996; Higgins and King, 1981; Krosnick and Kinder, 1990). The priming literature's emphasis on accessibility is based on the assumption that individuals are "cognitive misers" or limited-capacity information processors (Fiske and Taylor, 1991). That is, individuals make judgments and evaluations based on a small subset of all potentially relevant considerations, which are easily available and retrievable from stored memory without conscious and careful thought (Krosnick and Kinder, 1990). This accessibility emphasis has been reinforced by the fact

that most past priming research examined constructs with clear applicability to subsequent cognitive tasks. As such, past priming research often overlooked the filtering processes such as the applicability of available and usability of accessible beliefs that regulate the influence of priming messages, even though many researchers have argued on behalf of their importance (Miller and Krosnick, 1996; Price and Tewksbury, 1997). In sum, priming research has emphasized the automatic activation of recently activated or temporarily accessible constructs, but downplayed the more active processes of availability, applicability, and usability.

Our MPM locates priming within a larger set of cognitive processes, which characterizes the interaction between audience predispositions, the message, audience orientations toward the message, and subsequent outcomes. For message effects to occur, the content of the message must resonate with an individual's preexisting schemas (availability and applicability). Further, activated schemas must be deemed usable, or relevant to subsequent judgments. In the context of political communication, priming studies have investigated how news media, as a primary source of political information, influence evaluations of candidates, politicians, and issues (Domke et al., 1998; Iyengar and Kinder, 1987).

To illustrate how the MPM applies to priming effects in the context of political communication, we will use the example of the effects of exposure to a news story about the faltering economy on presidential approval judgments. First, for such a priming effect to occur, the necessary belief structures must be available; in this case, it might be necessary to believe that a presidential administration's policy is among the factors that affect the health of the economy (availability). Second, the information contained in the news story must link to the relevant belief structure (applicability). Assuming this linkage occurs, the belief structure becomes more likely to be activated in working memory (activation), and thus accessible to subsequent evaluations of the president (accessibility). Finally, the relative strength of this primed belief structure in shaping evaluations (usability) may depend on the strength of competing belief structures. In the absence of strong competing structures, the activated structure may simply influence the judgment due to a recency effect (i.e., "top-of-mindedness"). Alternatively, other belief structures may be stronger or deemed more relevant to the evaluation. For example, an individual may see other factors affecting the economy as being more important (e.g., world economic disorder, business cycles, or acts of terrorism), or other factors as being more important to presidential evaluation (e.g., foreign policy issues or personal scandal).

Apart from the influence of the component processes of the MPM, it is important to recognize that the nature of priming effects is in large part a function of the content of the priming message. In the example described earlier, the influence of the priming message on presidential approval judgments, it is clear that effects might be different depending on whether the message portrayed

the economy as faltering, recovering, or thriving. The MPM recognizes that the characteristics of a priming message can potentially differ, and that these differences matter when it comes to the outcomes of exposure to these messages. If we accept that priming messages can be framed in alternative ways, it becomes apparent that these processes overlap.

Applying the Models

By viewing framing effects through the lens of the MPM, we can see that framing and priming share the same basic effects process, reinforcing the contention of the MFM that the essential difference between frames and cues is the textual unit to which they apply. That is, while cues refer to the labels that are used to describe concepts (concept frames), frames are applied to larger textual units ranging from arguments/themes within the text to the entire text itself. The MPM also clarifies that both frames and cues can serve as primes that activate mental constructs. Moreover, when frames and cues are framed in different ways, they can produce different effects by activating different cognitions. However, the nature of these effects will differ depending on the structure of an individual's preexisting schemas. The MPM thus recognizes that audience members play an active role in understanding, interpreting, and applying message-relevant information to subsequent judgments, something that priming studies often overlook.

By putting the MFM and the MPM together, we provide the theoretical framework for the effects examined in our research. Essentially, we examine the effects of different textual units, framed in alternative ways as illustrated by the MFM, on subsequent judgments by the reader, which are outcomes of schema activation structured by the processes identified by the MPM. Across our studies, we examine whether the news story frames the target of government surveillance activities under the USA PATRIOT Act in terms of a specific individual or the collective of which they are a part, a framing distinction that is made at the news story or text level. We also manipulate cues (or concept frames) in different ways across our various studies. For instance, our research focusing on government surveillance of Arabs uses concept labels that frame them as either citizens or immigrants, and as either extremists or moderates.

In the case of our studies that use activists as the subjects of surveillance, we manipulate audience predispositions toward the group by having respondents randomly receive stories about groups whose cause they were inclined to either support or oppose. By systematically invoking predispositions, we experimentally engage different schemas. By using factorial experimental designs that counterbalance the applications of story frames and cues, we can examine not only the main effects of the application of these story elements, but also the effects of their convergence. Effects are likely to be most pronounced when frames and cues work together to activate similar schemas (Cho et al., 2006).

Framing Outcomes

The MFM and MPM leave some important questions unanswered: First, what are the potential outcomes of the effects of frames and cues? Second, what audience predispositions and motivations might affect the power of media frames and cues to influence these outcomes?

There are a variety of potential outcomes to media framing. As noted in our discussion of the MPM, frames and cues begin the effects process by activating certain cognitive schemas. Although the fact that different frames and cues activate particular schemas might be considered a basic cognitive effect, there are several potential consequences of that activation. For example, schema activation may influence the way in which messages are processed and new information is acquired. As such, one potential framing outcome is the acquisition of new information. In turn, this new knowledge may reinforce existing schemas or even add new cognitions to an individual's cognitive network. This may lead to the creation of new beliefs, the reinforcement of existing beliefs, or, in rare instances, the alteration of existing beliefs.

In actuality, effects on knowledge and beliefs are very similar. From a research standpoint, knowledge itself is inherently problematic as it implies that there is an objective standard for what is true. Beliefs, on the other hand, are what someone believes to be true. As such, it is difficult to establish clearly demarcated differences between framing effects on knowledge and on beliefs. Indeed, cognitively, the process is very much the same. That is, exposure to message frames and cues activates schemas, which influence message processing and the acquisition of new information, which may or may not be integrated into the existing cognitive structure. Thus, the effect is the integration of new information in the form of knowledge/beliefs, regardless of whether or not that knowledge is in fact true, or only believed to be true. This may manifest itself in more complex, integrated, or elaborated cognitions.

Other potential cognitive effects of message frames and cues include evaluations, perceptions, and attributions, which are somewhat easier to measure than knowledge and are thus frequently used as outcome variables for framing effects research. For example, McLeod and Detenber (1999) examined the effects of news stories about social protest on evaluations of the effectiveness of the protest and perceptions of the conduct of the protesters and police. Iyengar (1991) looked at framing effects on attributions of responsibility for the creation (causal responsibility) and resolution (treatment responsibility) of social problems.

While framing effects are generally thought of as being cognitive in nature, schema activation may lead to other outcomes such as the formation and change of attitudes, and the promotion and reinforcement of related behaviors. By activating certain schemas that promote a particular way of understanding situations, issues, and problems, media frames may influence such affective orientations as attitudes toward welfare, affirmative action, and homosexuals (Nelson and Kinder, 1996; Shen, 2004b) or such behaviors as political decision

making (Druckman, 2001; Shah et al., 1996). All of these outcomes speak to the multilevel nature of framing effects, from the cognitive to the behavioral.

Framing Moderators

Whether one is examining cognitive, affective, or behavioral framing outcomes, the nature of effects is likely to be subject to the influence of moderating variables. Moderators are factors that either increase or decrease the strength of framing effects, or define the conditions under which framing effects will or will not occur. In Figure 1.3, these moderators are represented by the orientations (including motivations and predispositions) that shape the nature of message effects outcomes. In other words, moderating variables can suppress or enhance the influence of framing, priming, and cueing effects.

There are several potential moderators that can be linked to Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). At the center of the ELM is issue involvement, as it increases both motivation and ability to process media content (Petty et al., 1991). As with knowledge, the nature of involvement's moderating role is complicated. On one hand, motivation may lead to more thorough message processing, thereby increasing message effects. On the other hand, involvement may be associated with stronger predispositions that are likely to be more resistant to message effects. In addition, both the ELM and Eagly and Chaiken's (1993) Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM) suggest that involvement is related to the strategies that people use to process messages. High-involvement individuals are more likely to engage in "central route" processing, the conscious and systematic evaluation of a message's manifest content. Alternatively, low-involvement individuals engage in less effortful "peripheral route" processing by focusing on heuristic cues (e.g., the attractiveness of a message source) that are external to the message's manifest content. As such, the influence of the framing of a content element will affect high and low involvement individuals differently.

Shen's (2004a) study of the effects of political ads stressing either candidate issues or character showed that a message's potential to activate mental constructs was related to the degree of correspondence between characteristics of a message and the availability of preexisting schemas. Using a thought-listing technique to assess activation, this study found that issue ads elicited more thoughts from issue-oriented individuals and character ads activated more thoughts from people with more developed character schemas. In other words, messages that resonated with preexisting schemas were more powerful in eliciting reasons underlying respondents' voting decisions, indicating that mental structure plays an important moderating role in framing effects.

Shen's (2004a) research also provides an example of how predispositions may moderate framing effects. In fact, there are innumerable potentially moderating predispositions. These potential moderators include, but are not limited to, political predispositions (i.e., liberal vs. conservative ideology), issue predispositions (i.e., preexisting positions on issues featured in the message), actor

predispositions (i.e., orientations toward individuals and collectives featured in the message), and media predispositions (i.e., media credibility, trust, and biased perceptions). All of these predispositions might come into play to regulate the impact of message frames.

In addition to the internal cognitive moderators described here, there are social variables that also regulate the nature of message framing effects. For example, Druckman and Nelson (2003) illustrate the influence of social interaction by providing evidence that the tendency to engage in conversations that include a diversity of perspectives reduces framing effects by creating greater potential for the activation of countervailing schemas. Given this finding, we might also expect that framing effects would be greater for individuals who operate within homogeneous social networks than for individuals who are part of heterogeneous social networks in which they are more likely to encounter diverse conversations.

A Framing Analogy Revisited

Near the start of this chapter, we introduced two analogies that past scholars have offered to illustrate the role of news frames: the picture frame (Bateson, 1972) and the building structure (Bock and Loebell, 1990). While we appreciate the usefulness of these analogies, we believe that they are limited in terms of their ability to capture the essence of news frames. In this section, we use the previous discussion of Figures 1.2 and 1.3 to extend previous analogies to a more comprehensive analogy to represent frames and their effects.

Our Message Framing Model (Figure 1.2) expands the notion of framing beyond the news story to other subunits of content contained within it. We note that the words chosen to represent concepts (cues) are framed in ways that connote meaning, as are the assertions into which they may be compiled. In turn, these assertions can be brought together to create themes, which ultimately may be used to construct news stories. Each of these hierarchical units can be framed in different ways to create different types of meaning. Though each hierarchical unit is to some degree independent of the others, certain framings of concepts lend themselves particularly well to certain assertions, which themselves are likely to be part of the development of particular themes, and so forth.

In this sense, the construction of frames is analogous to the construction of a house. The house has a certain structure or meaning that is the product of the meaning choices made at smaller levels of content. In constructing the news story, the journalist may be following an abstract mental blueprint that is the product of professional, organizational, and cultural socialization. This blueprint calls for the use of certain concepts (the building blocks or bricks). The bricks are assembled into walls (assertions) and rooms (themes), which ultimately give structure to the house (news story). Like building houses, there are infinite ways to construct news stories, but there are common patterns of story construction (such as using an individual as an exemplar to personalize

and illustrate a more complex underlying topic or issue), just as there are common and fashionable building styles for houses.

While the house analogy is not entirely new, its utility can be advanced by applying it to framing effects. In this case, the audience member encountering a news story is like a visitor arriving at a house. The visitor has seen many houses before and is able to recognize the features that characterize the new house. The perspective from which the visitor approaches the house, the visitor's sightlines into the various rooms, and the path taken through the house provide different perspectives on the interior. The visitor's estimations of who lives in the house and what they are like is at least partly a function of the interplay between the structure of the house and the ways of seeing into it. The visitor brings predispositions to the experience (e.g., preconceptions, tastes, lifestyles, etc.). Thus, the past experiences and predispositions that are embedded in the visitor's cognitive framework shape the resultant experience and attributions. As a result, different visitors will experience the house differently (e.g., they will attend to different features and notice different things within it depending on their vantage points). In essence, reactions to the new house reflect in part the nature of the house, and in part the nature of the visitor. This is much like reactions to news stories, which are in part a reflection of the nature of the news story (its frame and the frames of its components), and in part the result of characteristics of the audience member (e.g., mental schemas) as they interact with content characteristics.

The research reported in this book adopts this perspective on the nature of framing effects. That is, we see news frames as the culmination of the meaning embedded in the story and its component parts, all of which can be framed in alternative ways. We hypothesize that news story effects will be a function of these content frames, as they interact with the predispositions of the audience. Moreover, framing effects are the result of cognitive processes in which message features activate available schemas, rendering them more accessible for subsequent judgments. We study these framing effects in the context of what has been a central political debate of the new millennium, the tension between national security and civil liberties.