

BOOK REVIEWS

Douglas M. McLeod and Dhavan V. Shah. *News Frames and National Security: Covering Big Brother.* New York: Cambridge University Press. 2015. 220 pp. \$80.00 (cloth). \$29.99 (paper).

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When I read this book in the spring of 2015, the Islamic State (ISIS) made headline news day in and day out. As the terrorists claimed responsibility for and threatened more attacks in the West, including in the United States, influential voices in Washington and elsewhere expressed support for the continuation of strict security measures, among them domestic surveillance. Others argued for the restoration of those civil liberties that were curbed by the USA PATRIOT Act adopted just a few weeks after 9/11 and reauthorized twice thereafter under presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. There was no smooth path to the third reauthorization needed before June 1. While a strong majority in the House of Representatives voted before the deadline in favor of a bill prohibiting the bulk collection and storage of Americans' phone records, these limits on the NSA's surveillance authority were not enough assurances for a number of Democrats and Republicans in the upper chamber. Senator Rand Paul filibustered for nearly 11 hours to dramatize his support of civil liberties as he spoke in the name of "the people" for the need to uphold their constitutional rights. Eventually, the most controversial surveillance provisions failed.

How the news media cover these kinds of events and how particular reporting patterns affect news consumers' views about domestic-security-versus-liberty considerations, especially with respect to Arabs and Muslims in the United States and non-Arab/Muslim activist groups (i.e., civil liberty proponents, anti-war protest groups) in the post-9/11 era, were the main research questions that McLeod and Shah address in this remarkable volume.

Of the book's three distinct parts (Conceptual Frame Work, Framing Effects Research, and Implications and Conclusions) the first is the most important one, particularly the strong opening chapter. After a concise review of the message framing and framing effects literature, the authors group four compatible framing effects research approaches into a useful typology. Most importantly, based on the best research they reviewed, McLeod and Shah developed and described their Message Framing Model (MFM) and Message Processing

Model (MPM) that add up to a major contribution to communication/media theory and can serve as an excellent tool for those teaching courses in the field. The MFM paradigm distinguishes between four types of frames as major elements of media messages without ignoring other media content elements that may interact with message framing. The MPM typology links the message receiver's predisposition and memory store to an individual's interpretation and judgment process.

These two models combined served as the theoretical framework for the research presented in the following chapters. Participants in two comprehensive online surveys read stories about the PATRIOT Act and its implications for domestic surveillance in which frames and cues concerning the targets of FBI scrutiny were manipulated to highlight either collective or individual frames and positive or negative cues concerning the targets.

What, then, were the results? To begin with the Arab Study (chapter 4), the convergence of cues, such as immigrant and extremist, strengthened negative group evaluations and other unfavorable positions concerning the civil liberties of Arab Americans. Moreover, participants made these judgments more quickly, a result the authors see as an indication that the combination of Arab and extremist labels "trigger a host of associations linked to racial xenophobia" (161). In this study, individual frames heightened these hostile effects, but there were no negative effects at all when the news story contained divergent cues (immigrant and non-extremist). The Activist Study offered opportunities to examine the effect processes along the lines of the Message Processing Model since its design had, in addition to the individual and collective frame manipulations, an additional feature that manipulated predisposition by having participants identify the activist group they liked most and least. Here, the research found that individual framing of the civil liberty/national security debate resulted in more complex mental processes than collective framing, as these frames interacted with news receivers' attitudes toward group causes (chapter 5). McLeod and Shah found furthermore that individual frames far more than collective frames had polarizing effects in that they made participants less tolerant of activists they opposed and more tolerant of those they supported (chapter 6). Similarly, different framing mattered when the researchers probed the effects of frames and predisposition on study participants' willingness to speak out for or against activist groups: when exposed to individual framing, respondents were more likely to speak out against groups they opposed but less likely to speak in favor of groups they supported.

The research reported in this volume is an impressive testament to the power of news frames and cues on influencing media audiences' assessments and evaluations of public affairs and political actors—and probably not only when it comes to the ongoing debate about the right balance between security and liberty. At a time of tremendous partisan and ideological divisions, the demonstrated polarization effects of individual frames are especially disconcerting.

In their conclusion, McLeod and Shah write that the “evidence of such polarizing effects of individual framing raises larger questions about the implications of this common journalist practice” (163). But even after tweaking the results of their content analysis, they found that individual frames (52.6 percent) were not outscoring collective frames (47.4 percent) by much. Perhaps an examination of TV-network news would have produced a different picture in this respect. Individual and collective frames, on the one hand, and episodic and thematic frames, on the other, are not identical but are quite similar in their respectively narrow and contextual characteristics and their different effects on news consumers’ attitudes and policy choices.

When Shanto Iyengar (1991, 27) found that over a period of six years 81 percent of TV networks’ crime reports and 74 percent of terrorism coverage were episodically framed and had similar problematic effects on news consumers as individual frames, it was not difficult to blame the media for this consequential discrepancy.

All told, again, this is an excellent book that I will certainly use in my Media in American Politics seminar.

Reference

Iyengar, Shanto. 1991. *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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Diana C. Mutz. *In-Your-Face Politics: The Consequences of Uncivil Media*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2015. 288 pp. \$29.95 (cloth).

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Diana Mutz’s latest book, *In-Your-Face Politics: The Consequences of Uncivil Media*, is in many ways an extension of her acclaimed work on the paradoxical relationship between deliberative and participatory democracy. In this book, Mutz argues that highly arousing uncivil television succeeds in drawing viewers’ attention and improving political knowledge, but at the cost of generating low affect toward the “other side” and decreasing political trust. It is easy to bemoan uncivil cable news, and critics can rightfully peg these programs as purveyors of affective polarization and mistrust of government. Yet, as Mutz contends, it is not clear that we would be better off without it, when the alternative is staid political programming that is largely ignored.

Mutz argues that political television can be in-your-face in two senses: spatial norms are violated through close-up camera angles, as are discursive norms by way of insulting language, eye-rolling, raised voices, and other