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Do Media News Frames Reflect a Nation's Political Culture?

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FIRST DRAFT

Abstract

This paper deals with the question of macro-determinants of news frames and builds on the current discussion of institutional news media. The role of political culture is in the focus of the paper and it investigates the extent to which a distinct political culture is reflected in the framing of political news in consensus (Switzerland) and competitive (Germany) democracies. The empirical results support the assumption that news frames reflect a nation's political values. Consequently, the paper proposes distinct additional measures that go beyond personalization and conflict orientation. The suggested consensus frame and collective orientation frame are shown to capture the framing of media presentations that relate to core aspects of consensus-oriented decision-making.

Keywords

Media frames, news coverage, political culture, new institutionalism

Problems and Objectives

Based on a comparative media content analysis, the paper investigates the extent to which a distinct political culture is reflected in the political news of national newspapers. The theoretical framework of this analysis is New Institutionalism and the paper builds on existing work that conceptualizes news media as institution. It is argued that this approach provides very promising perspectives for framing research interested in national comparisons.

New institutionalism approaches gained importance in social science research just recently. The idea of institutional mass media, which is discussed prominently at present, seems a very promising approach to connect micro and macro theories of journalism. The paper refers to this current discussion (cf. Cook, 2006; Marcinkowski, 2007; Ryfe, 2006; Sparrow, 2006). Existing research so far has focused on the influence of macro factors such as economic pressures, convergence of media systems and globalization tendencies on media coverage (e.g. Hamilton, 2004; Patterson, 2000). However, other empirical findings challenge the assumption of economization as the crucial influencing factor and lend support to the assumption that political structures or values of different democratic systems (e.g. competitive vs. consensus models) could contribute to an explanation of national differences in media framing (cf. De Vreese, 2005; Strömbäck, 2007). Nevertheless, the empirical basis for this assumption is still rather weak. In line, Esser & D'Angelo (2006) call for more cross-national studies on the connections between political communication culture and framing. Thus, this paper aims at exploring the role of political culture in a national comparative perspective that also includes different points in time and media types, e.g. tabloids and broadsheets.

From the perspective of New Institutionalism, patterns of media interpretations are among the most interesting fields of investigation (cf. Entman, 2006; Lawrence, 2006). Media interpretations are also referred to as media frames research. Here we find affinities of the New Institutionalism approach of news media and studies of generic frames that are related to a so called media logic in particular (cf. Marcinkowski, 2007). Existing research on media frames focuses mainly on media coverage of election campaigns (De Vreese & Semetko, 2002; Rhee, 1997) or certain policy issues such as the European Union (Claes De Vreese, Hajo G. Boomgarden, & Holli A. Semetko, 2005; Claes De Vreese, Hajo G. Boomgarden, & Holli A. Semetko, 2005; Entmann, 1991; Iyengar, 1991). News framing of political decision-making processes, however, is a rather neglected field in media framing research. Hence, we know comparatively little about mass media's presentation of the way political decisions are made, that is the framing of various processes and different modes operandi. For instance, to our knowledge, no study exists that systematically analyzes how media information on negotiations differs from media coverage on hierarchical decisions as regards their news frames. This void in media content research faces recent studies that indicate that

the polity dimension matters. Studies show, for instance, that citizens' perceptions of political processes and the way political decisions are made influences their political attitudes such as confidence in political actors or institutions (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2001, 2002). Moreover, negotiations constitute an increasingly relevant type of political decision-making in western democracies (Grande, 1993). Thus, this paper aims at contributing to media framing research by expanding the empirical research that focuses on frames in campaigning coverage and media information on policy issues by analyzing media frames of political processes.

Existing research interested in the factors influencing news frames suggest to extend studies and use both larger media outlet samples and more countries in order to further contribute to the explanation of national differences in media content (De Vreese, 2005; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006). This study, however, proposes to not only expand the empirical program, but also to apply additional news frames. Thus, on methodological grounds, the paper aims at contributing to comparative research of media framing by proposing two additional frames – collective orientation frame and consensus frame. To examine the presence of those two frames might give new insights that to beyond the interpretation of frames such as personalization and conflict orientation being absent. The findings presented in this paper suggest that the proposed frames collective frame and consensus orientation indeed provide additional information regarding national differences of media framing.

Comparing Media Frames from the Perspective of New Institutionalism: Theoretical Framework

The institutional perspective on mass media does not focus on media organizations, but on inter-organizational structures, rules and procedures of news production (Sparrow, 2006). Benson (2006) defines institutions as a „set of standard practices to produce political news“. Such institutional standards are for instance balanced reporting, reliance on authoritative sources, transparency (Sparrow, 2006) and certain definitions of newsworthiness and forms of interpretation (Cook, 2006). The term institutional journalism, then, refers to relatively stable and shared rules and norms that regulate individuals' behavior and structure their expectations. Those rules do not only shape journalistic actions, but as a consequence also media content. An institutional approach of news media, hence, contributes to an explanation of inter-organizational homogeneous and stable media coverage patterns.

In the literature, several macro-level factors influencing institutional rules and structures on the meso-level are discussed. Altogether, there is an overall agreement that institutions are shaped but not determined by exogenous factors (cf. Peters, 2005). Whereas some authors focus on influencing factors such as the pressure of economical power or the convergence of

media systems due to globalization processes, other scholars emphasize the role of cultural values and norms.

For instance, De Vreese (2005, p. 295) attributes the rather low amount of strategic frames he found for news coverage on European affairs in Denmark to the consensus orientation of the nation's political system. In contrast, rather high levels of strategic frames are supposed to be more likely in competitive democracies, such as the U.S. and Great Britain. A comparative study of news frames in Sweden and the U.S. by Strömbäck & Dimitrova (2006) lends empirical support to this assumption. The authors found that the game frame, horserace frame and political strategy frame were more dominant in the U.S. election coverage, whereas the Swedish coverage was more issue-oriented. They attribute those differences, besides other factors, to characteristics of the distinct political systems. In line, Esser & D'Angelo (2006, p. 62) propose that "journalistic framing is contingent upon features of a country's political communication culture" and call for more cross-national studies on the connections between political communication culture and framing. Further support to the assumption of cultural aspects being a relevant explaining factor for media content is given by Strömbäck (2007). His study on the framing of the Swedish election news coverage in 1998 and 2002 challenges the assumption of commercialism as the crucial independent variable and indicates the necessity of additional explaining factors.

A nation's political culture is very much shaped by characteristic political institutions, their practices and rationalities (Linder & Steffen, 2006). Political culture in Switzerland as a consensus democracy, for instance, traces back to the consensus orientation of political institutions and the according expectation that social problems are best solved based on compromises. In contrast, competitive democracies are shaped by the government-opposition code (Kaase & Newton, 1995). The according expectations are clearly defined programs and parties that are capable of forming governments on their own. Coalition bargaining, on the contrary, is not valued (Kaase & Newton, 1995, p. 134).

Key characteristics of political bargaining are described by Jon Elster (1989, pp. 50-95), who defines bargaining as a decision-oriented form of communication that aims to achieve a compromise between divergent interests. Bargaining actors represent specific interests and strategically employ threats, warnings, and promises during the negotiation process, which should be backed up by material capacities and resources. The participants' bargaining position depends on the credibility of their threats and promises, which can be reinforced or undermined by media communication. Successful negotiations result in the partial consideration of all participating interests in the form of an amicable compromise. Political bargains are generally highly specialized, involve a limited number of actors, and are subject to strict time constraints.

Marcinkowski (2005, p. 249ff.) contrasts those core elements of political negotiating with the so called media logic. In general, mass media claim the right to total transparency and publicity of political processes and tend to be provoked when confronted with closed doors. Furthermore, the media's tendency to personalize the political process leads to an emphasis on conflict and failure, and policy-making is framed as a contest with winners and losers. Hence, whereas negotiations require a confidential and closed atmosphere and call for consensus orientation and collective actions with all participants winning, media logic is characterized by public transparency, indiscretions, conflict orientation, personalization and the focus on who is winning and who is losing in a political process. Whereas media logic and the logic of political negotiations are very different, this is not necessarily the case for other types of political decision-making processes. Majoritarian-based or hierarchical processes are rather compatible with media logic, since those processes are also characterized by elements of competition and the attribution of political achievements to certain political actors. Similarly, Marcinkowski (2005, p. 359f.) argues that the logics of political campaigning and elections show more similarities than differences with elements of a media logic.

An analysis of media content based on a New Institutionalism approach has affinities with media frames research, research on generic frames that are related to the so called media logic in particular (cf. Marcinkowski, 2007). Marcinkowski (2007) distinguishes three dimensions of institutional media coverage: patterns of selection, patterns of narration, and patterns of interpretation namely. Patterns of interpretation can be conceptualized as media frames, hence the close relationship between New Institutionalism approaches and framing research (cf. Entman, 2006; Lawrence, 2006).

Existing research on media frames made great contributions in examining the framing of media coverage of election campaigns (De Vreese & Semetko, 2002; Rhee, 1997) or certain policy issues such as the European Union (Claes De Vreese, Hajo G. Boomgarden, & Holli A. Semetko, 2005; Claes De Vreese, Hajo G. Boomgarden, & Holli A. Semetko, 2005; Entmann, 1991; Iyengar, 1991). However, we know comparatively little about mass media's presentation of the way political decisions are made, that is the framing of various processes and different modes operandi. Studies have identified the relevance of media frames such as personalization and conflict orientation (Cappella & Jamieson, 1996; Claes De Vreese, Hajo G. Boomgarden, & Holli A. Semetko, 2005; De Vreese & Semetko, 2002; Rhee, 1997). The absence of personalization frame or conflict frame could be interpreted as consensus oriented media coverage. However, framing research until now did not systematically measure the consensus orientation or collective framing of media coverage.

Research focus & hypotheses

Based on the literature review in the previous chapter, two research voids were identified. First, New Institutionalism approaches of news media mainly focus on the role of economic pressures in shaping media content and there is less empirical research investigating the role of political culture. Second, media framing research has made great efforts in investigating the way media frames policy issues or election campaigns. There is less research dealing with media framing of political processes, however. As a result, no items exist that measure frames that refer to the consensus orientation of decisions or the role of collective actions in political negotiations.

Thus, the aim of this paper is to investigate whether considering different political values contributes to an explanation of national differences in media framing of political processes. We argue that media frames reflect a nation's political culture. More precisely, we expect that news framing is in line with the dominant political logic and its values. For Switzerland as a consensus democracy, we expect the majority of articles to inform about negotiation processes. In contrast, in Germany we assume the majority of articles to refer to majoritarian-based or hierarchical political processes.

H1: Whereas the majority of articles in Swiss newspapers refer to negotiation processes, the majority of articles in German newspapers refer to majoritarian-based or hierarchical political processes

In order to go beyond existing research, we suggest to not only analyze the amount of strategic news frames, but to measure also frames that relate to consensus-oriented aspects of political decision-making. We argue that the absence of strategic or competitive-oriented frames does not necessarily serve as indicator for consensus-oriented framing. Whereas competitive aspects of political processes, such as majoritarian-based decisions or hierarchical orders, are rather in line with core elements of media logic, rules of successful negotiations differ from media logic. Building on the comparison between media logic and core elements of bargaining by Marcinkowski (2007), the following four frames are included in the analysis: collective orientation, consensus frame, personalization, conflict frame (cf. table 1). Whereas the former two are related to aspects of negotiations, the latter two are related to aspects of rather competitive political processes such as majoritarian-based or hierarchical decision-making procedures.

Table 1: Media Frames in Relation to Modus of Political Decision-Making

Political negotiations	Majoritarian-based or hierarchical decision-making procedures
Collective orientation	Personalization
Consensus frame	Conflict frame

Existing research shows, that news coverage in competitive democracies contains a larger amount of articles with strategic news frames than news coverage in consensus-orientated or corporatist democracies (De Vreese, 2005; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006). Hence, for Germany as a rather competitive democracy, news coverage is assumed to be shaped by conflict frame and personalization. In Switzerland, mass media is characterized by strong affinities with political values and structures (Marcinkowski, 2006). In line, existing research indicates that personalization and conflict orientation are no dominant aspects of Swiss media coverage, even in election coverage (Hardmeier, 2003).

H2: News coverage in Germany is characterized by a larger amount of conflict frames and personalization than news coverage in Switzerland.

H3: News coverage in Switzerland is characterized by a larger amount of consensus frames and collective orientation than news coverage in Germany.

Considering the different rules and characteristics of distinct modes of decision-making (negotiations vs. majoritarian-based or hierarchical political processes) and assumed different levels of affinity between media logic and political culture in Switzerland and Germany, we are also interested in a national comparison of the way media frames different modes of political decision-making.

RQ1: What national differences can be observed when comparing frames of media coverage on negotiations with frames of media coverage on majoritarian-based or hierarchical decision-making?

Moreover, we are interested in a national comparison of news frames of negotiations and competitive processes that takes account of different media types (broadsheet vs. tabloid) and points in time. Hence, we formulate the following research question:

RQ2: What national differences can be observed when comparing frames of media coverage on negotiations with frames of media coverage on majoritarian-based or hierarchical decision-making in different media types and at different points in time?

Method & measures

Based on our theoretical argument we conducted a media content analysis in a comparative perspective across countries, taking Germany as example for a rather competitive democracy and Switzerland as example for a consensus democracy. In our analysis we focus on print media. In order to include media with different types of qualities, we took a broadsheet and a tabloid from each nation in our sample. Selection criteria is the circulation, our sampling unit consists of paper with the highest circulation, for Switzerland these are “Neue Zuercher Zeitung” and “Blick“, for Germany “Sueddeutsche Zeitung” and “Bild”.

Furthermore, we considered different points in time and examined press issues from the 1960s, 1980s and the years 2003/2004, 2004/2005 respectively. In order to exclude the time of election campaigns, we choose election periods’ second years as a time of regular political decision-making. We randomly selected ten percent of all newspaper issues in the selected coding periods of one year. After excluding all Sundays and national holidays, a sample of 10 percent of all issues makes 30 or 31 issues per coding period and newspaper, 366 issues in total were examined. Table 2 presents an overview of the content analysis design and data basis.

Table 2: Content analysis design

Switzerland			Germany		
Election of government (Bundesrat)			Election of chancellor		
Election Day: 12/12/1963	Election Day: 12/7/1983	Election Day: 12/10/2003	Election Day: 10/17/1963	Election Day: 3/30/1983	Election Day: 10/22/2002
Coding period			Coding period		
12/12/1964 - 12/11/1965	12/7/1984 - 12/6/1985	12/10/2004 - 12/9/2005	10/17/1964 – 10/16/1965	3/30/1984 - 3/29/1985	10/22/2003 – 10/21/2004
NZZ 41	NZZ 71	NZZ 100	SZ 111	SZ 123	SZ 167
Blick 26	Blick 14	Blick 69	Bild 47	Bild 32	Bild 77
Total articles (31 issues per paper)	Total articles (30 issues per paper)	Total articles (31 issues per paper)	Total articles (30 issues per paper)	Total articles (30 issues per paper)	Total articles (31 issues per paper)
67	85	169	158	155	244

We coded articles that address political decision-making and problem-solving on the national level within the legislative (parliament, commissions etc.) and executive branch (cabinet, minister etc.) or administration. In total 878 articles make the basis for our analysis.

Variables included in the following analysis refer to the modus operandi of political decision-making and media frames. The modus operandi is measured with a dichotomous variable indicating whether an article focuses on negotiations or hierarchical and majoritarian-based

decision-making and problem-solving procedures. Coders had to decide which type of decision-making was dominantly represented in the article. Political decision-making and problem-solving in that sense not only refers to decision-taking, but also the preparation of decisions and their implementation. Negotiations are characterized by aspects of bargaining, the search for compromises, talks and consultations. Given those aspects, processes were coded as negotiations, independently of whether negotiations were successful or not. Hierarchical or majoritarian-based decisions were coded if decisions were presented as taken by actors in charge or high in their hierarchical standing, or based on the vote of the majority of actors.

Four news frames were distinguished: personalization, conflict frame, collective orientation and consensus frame. Those frames were measured with a dichotomous variable in the form of a question:

- Personalization: Does the article attribute activities and achievements to single actors?
- Conflict frame: Does the article present power struggles or disagreements between political institutions or actors?
- Collective orientation: Does the article present political decisions as collective achievements or refer to the role of collective actions?
- Consensus frame: Does the article present political decision-making as talking to each other, listening to each other, and mutual understanding?

Four coders were trained for the content analysis. The coding took place at computer workplaces at the University of Zurich from May to October 2007. To test reliability, each coder observed the same subset of the sample. Intercoder-reliability for the mode of decision-making variable was .63. For the news frames, reliability was .69 in average. These are acceptable values for categories that concern meaning.

Results

We hypothesized that differences in the political culture of the two nations under analysis will be reflected 1) in the amount of media articles on certain modes of decision-making, 2) in the level of personalization and conflict frame, and 3) in the level of consensus and collective framing. In order to answer to hypothesis 1, we examined the amount of articles referring to negotiations and compared it to the amount of articles referring to majoritarian-based and hierarchical decision-making procedures. Contrary to our expectations, there is no significant difference between Swiss and German news. News media in Germany does not present

political processes in the modus of negotiations significantly less often than Swiss news media do (30 percent, and 33 percent respectively). Majoritarian-based or hierarchical decision-making procedures were in the focus of 23 percent (GER) and 27 percent (CH) of all articles. Remaining articles did not refer to decision-making procedures as such, but rather did present political statements linked to political decisions, for instance.

To analyze hypothesis 2 and 3, all stories were examined for their containing news frames. Table 3 shows the presence of news frames in a comparative perspective across nations. Regarding the level of personalization, results show that German media coverage in general is significantly more personalized than Swiss coverage. As for the conflict orientation of news coverage, German coverage in general is significantly more conflict oriented than news coverage in Switzerland. Thus, looking at media coverage in general the results support hypothesis 2 which predicts higher levels of personalization and conflict frame in Germany than in Switzerland. Hypothesis 3 is also supported by our findings: Collective orientation and consensus frame are more often present in Swiss papers (29 percent and 18 percent, respectively) than in German papers (22 percent and 11 percent, respectively).

Besides those general findings, the paper is interested in the question of whether media frames differ when comparing media information on negotiations with media information on majoritarian-based or hierarchical decision-making (Research Question 1). The assumption behind this research question is that media information regarding a specific type of political decision-making might reflect either the logic of this decision-making modus or a general media logic. Data analysis indicates that this is the case indeed and provides several interesting findings that deliver insights that go beyond the analysis of media coverage in general (cf. Table 3).

Whereas Swiss media coverage on majoritarian or hierarchical processes shows higher levels of personalization (26 percent) than news articles on negotiations (19 percent), for the German papers there is no such difference: About one third of both articles on negotiations and majoritarian or hierarchical decision-making is personalized. In contrast, we find that articles on negotiations in the Swiss press are characterized by a surprisingly high level of conflict orientation, whereas in Germany there are no differences regarding media's conflict orientation when presenting different modes of decision-making. Looking at the levels of collective orientation in Swiss papers, the results show substantial differences: Whereas about half of all articles on negotiations contain the collective orientation frame, this is the case for about one out of six articles on hierarchical or majority-based processes only. For Germany, although information on negotiations is more collective oriented (36 percent) than information on hierarchical or majoritarian decision-making (21 percent), those differences are not as substantial as they are in the Swiss case. The consensus orientation frame is almost absent in news articles on competitive decision-making in both nations. As regards

articles on negotiations, Swiss papers more often than German papers contain the consensus frames, although this difference is not significant.

What can be concluded from the results of this national comparison with focus on the media's framing of different modes of decision-making? The most interesting results are that obviously national differences exist mainly for news coverage on negotiating processes. In contrast, there are no significant difference between media coverage in Germany and Switzerland regarding information on hierarchical or majoritarian-based decisions. These results provide evidence for the assumption that the framing of news on negotiations in Switzerland reflects the political culture and tradition of consensus orientation. In contrast, German news articles on negotiations are dominantly characterized by personalization and frames referring to conflicts or power struggles. Put to the point, the presentations of negotiations in Swiss newspapers are more in line with the rules of political negotiating than they are in German papers.

Table 3: Comparison of news frames in Germany and Switzerland

	General news coverage		News coverage on negotiations		News coverage on majoritarian or hierarchical decisions	
	GER	CH	GER	CH	GER	CH
Personalization	35	24**	32	19*	33	26
Collective	22	29*	36	49*	21	17
Conflict	47	23**	26	35**	27	24
Consensus	11	18**	26	37	3	7
	n=557	n=321	n=168	n=105	n=126	n=86

Chi-Square test, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Regarding methodological aspects, our findings suggest that consensus frame and collective orientation frame capture aspects of media interpretations that go beyond the absence of personalization or conflict frames. That is the case because news articles can be both conflict and consensus oriented. Swiss articles on negotiations, for instance, show high levels on both dimensions.

The assumption that consensus frame and collective orientation frame deliver additional information is also supported by correlation analysis. Although there is a significant negative correlation between personalization and collective orientation, this correlation is only very weak ($r = -.162$, $p < 0.01$). Conflict orientation and consensus orientation are not significantly correlated ($r = -.048$, $p = .153$).

Our second research question asks for national differences of media frames in different media types and at different points in time. In the framework of this paper we are not able to

give a comprehensive overview of the results of such a detailed and comprehensive analysis, but rather will present some of the most relevant and interesting findings. In the German tabloid, the collective orientation frame occurs only if an article presents negotiations, whereas articles in the broadsheet contain about the same amount of collective orientation frames when informing about negotiations or majoritarian-based or hierarchical processes. In both nations, the conflict orientation frame is more frequent in both tabloids and broadsheets if they present majoritarian-based or hierarchical decision-making processes. Whereas the consensus orientation frame in German papers occurs as often in the tabloid as in the quality paper when informing about negotiations, the Swiss broadsheet has an even higher level of consensus orientation in articles on negotiations.

The comparison of media frames at different points in time shows that the level of collective oriented articles on negotiations did decrease over time in the two nations, Germany and Switzerland, for both articles presenting negotiations and majoritarian-based or hierarchical decision-making processes. In contrast, the level of conflict orientation did increase in both nations, independent of the presented process type. The level of consensus oriented articles decreased in both nations, in particular for articles on negotiations. The most obvious differences can be found for the personalization of news: In Germany the level of personalization increased for information on both modes of decision-making, in Switzerland it increased for articles on negotiations in particular.

In general, then, the analysis of differences between points in time shows no relevant national differences regarding the development of media frames of negotiations and majoritarian-based or hierarchical decision-making processes. However, there are national differences regarding the way media frames distinct decision-making procedures in broadsheets and tabloids. The most interesting result is that the presentation of negotiations in the Swiss tabloid does reflect elements of media logic more than the according information in the quality paper, whose presentation of negotiations is more likely to be in line with the rules of political negotiations.

To conclude, with respect to the framing of news coverage, results support our general assumptions. Media frames do reflect a nation's political culture. Moreover, our findings indicate that news framing is contingent upon the presented mode of decision-making. Articles on negotiations in Switzerland are characterized by media frames that refer to consensus orientation and collective behavior. In contrast, in Germany news articles on negotiations are dominantly characterized by personalization and frames referring to conflicts and power struggles. Conflict and personalization are also the most dominant frames in German articles on majority or hierarchical decision-making. The results indicate that news media in Germany does reflect the logic of political competition between a government and an opposition, regardless of whether presenting hierarchical or majoritarian-based decision-

making on the one hand or political negotiations on the other hand. News coverage in Switzerland, in contrast, reflects the logic of compromise-seeking behavior when informing on political negotiations.

From a methodological perspective, this study provides empirical evidence for the assumption that the application of the two frames collective orientation and consensus frame offer more differentiated results and new insights. The two frames do not substitute personalization and conflict frames but add to them. Therefore, we suggest that further research, especially studies interested in cultural comparisons, includes other frames in addition to the established frames personalization and conflict orientation.

Discussion

This paper made efforts to address two identified research voids. First, New Institutionalism approaches of news media mainly focus on the role of economic pressures in shaping media content and there is less empirical research investigating the role of political culture. Second, media framing research has made great efforts in investigating the way media frames policy issues or election campaigns. There is less research dealing with media framing of political processes, however. Thus, the aim of this paper is to investigate whether political culture contributes to an explanation of national differences in media framing of political processes.

The findings support the assumption that political culture serves as macro factor explaining the framing of news coverage. However, results did not confirm our hypothesis that the majority of articles in Swiss newspapers focuses on negotiation processes, whereas the majority of articles in German newspapers focuses on hierarchical political processes. In contrast, information on negotiations is equally important in the newspapers of both nations, which could be explained with the increasing importance of negotiations in western democracies, including competitive types, in general. However, the results support the hypotheses regarding national differences in media framing. Moreover, findings suggest that the framing of news is contingent upon the presented mode of political decision-making. Articles on negotiation processes in Swiss papers are characterized by a larger amount of collective orientation and consensus frames and are less personalized than according articles in German papers. For media information on majoritarian-based or hierarchical decision-making procedures, there were no significant differences between media frames in German and Swiss newspapers.

In general, the study's findings suggest that considering characteristic political values of a nation contributes to an explanation of varieties in news frames. Hence, they challenge approaches that focus on economic principles as predictor for news coverage patterns merely. Although this study provides important empirical data for the discussion of factors

influencing news coverage, the results do not allow for broader generalizations due to several limitations. First, the analysis is only based on newspaper coverage. Television news might be characterized different patterns of media frames, for instance. Second, the study is based on a comparison between two countries, one of them being classified as a consensus democracy, the other one as a rather competitive democracy. Hence, it is difficult to distinguish which of the observed differences of media frames can be attributed to dissimilarities in the political cultures, and which dissimilarities are related to other aspects, such as the economical development or political crises. Further research should expand the empirical basis by including a variety of nations that can be classified as either consensus (e.g. the Netherlands, Denmark) or competitive democracy (e.g. Great Britain). Such an empirical basis, then, would allow for more generalizable conclusions about the influence of political culture.

To conclude, this paper contributes to New Institutionalism approaches of news media interested in macro factors influencing media content, as it delivers further empirical relevance for the assumption that not only economic pressures but also cultural values matter. Moreover, the paper provides evidence for the argument that news framing research should develop additional frames in order to be able to capture various aspects of complex political decision-making procedures.

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