Frames, schemata, and news reporting

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Abstract

This article deals with frames and schemata in news reporting. It distinguishes frames and schemata in newsroom discourse and news reports. On the individual cognitive level, a frame is defined as a set of schemata for different aspects of reality. They emerge in newsroom discourse and in exchange with other (media) discourses, i.e., they are not idiosyncratic but shared among those working in a newsroom. It is supposed that news report structures (media frames) correspond to these newsroom frames and schemata. The article discusses these considerations in regard to related explanations of news production, especially attitudinal approaches such as news bias. While the latter assume that journalists prefer information consistent with their own attitudes or that news reporting is ‘synchronized’ with editorial tendencies, the framing approach proposes that information in routine news reports correspond to newsroom frames. In this study I will use xenophobia as an example to identify newsroom frames in a qualitative frame analysis. In the second part of the study, quantitative analysis of news framing examines whether news report information correlates with newsroom frames. Finally, I will present empirical evidence that shows that newsroom frames play a role in news reporting.

Keywords: frame, framing, schema, discourse, news reporting

Framing is considered to be both a prominent concept of communication science, as well as a “fractured paradigm” (Entman, 1993: 51). Definitions of ‘frame’ and ‘framing’ share some major assumptions since frames are seen as patterns of interpretation and classification. Through (media) framing one emphasizes specific aspects of perceived reality. As a consequence, specific attributions, evaluations, or decisions can be suggested to recipients. Frames can be identified in at least three areas: (1) among journalists, newsrooms or media systems, (2) among recipients
of media messages or society, and (3) among political, economical, cultural etc. actors, groups, or organizations. Many authors conceptualize frames on a cognitive and on a textual level; others see them as patterns of public discourse. Thus, a frame can be looked at in three ways: (1) as a cognitive complex of issue-related schemata for different aspects of reality, (2) established in public, political or inter-media discourse, and (3) becoming manifest as a textual structure of messages such as press releases or newspaper articles.

Most researchers define a frame analogously to a schema. With this one of the two constructs would be obsolete. As outlined in more detail elsewhere (Scheufele, 2000; 2003, 2004) a cognitive schema either refers to a singular object (e.g., victim-schema) or a relation between objects (e.g., causes-schema). Several schemata for different objects or relations form a consistent complex of expectations, i.e., a cognitive frame. Schema theory also distinguishes between a general schema (e.g., for furniture) and sub-schemata (e.g., for chairs and desks). But a frame is not simply a sort of a major schema; sub-schemata are applied to a subset (e.g., chairs) of the same class of objects as the general schema (e.g., furniture). Schemata that set up a frame refer to different classes of objects or relations (e.g., life-style). In other words; the sub-schemata of a general schema focus on the same singular object of reality (e.g., furniture), while schemata forming a frame focus on different objects and relations of the same ‘sector’ of reality (with e.g., furniture, apartment, clothing, music). For example, the frame ‘immigration problem’ is set up by the notion that asylum seekers would be typical victims (victim schema), that riots in front of their hostels would be typical events (event schema) and that all this is due to politicians not solving the asylum problem (causes schema).

Frames and schemata in news reporting

Turning to media and journalists, I will now outline the elements and structures of cognitive frames on the individual level. In addition, I will discuss why they are not idiosyncratic, but rather established in newsroom discourse, and why news reports correspond to these ‘newsroom frames’ (and schemata).

Frames and schemata on the individual level

Which schemata are the elements of a journalist’s frame? One may think of journalists’ schemata (as the elements of a frame) as having references similar to news schema categories (see, e.g., van Dijk, 1988: 55). These
are generalized and serve as a heuristic for empirically identifying frames later on.

(1) Object categories: Journalists’ schemata (as the frame elements) can be seen as referring to five categories of social objects, i.e., events, protagonists, actions or speech acts, interactions, or communication, as well as problems or developments. For example, journalists should have a culprit-schema (level of protagonist) when thinking about xenophobia.

(2) Causes and consequences: Additionally, several news schema categories can be generalized to (schemata of) causes and consequences. This resembles the public discourse approach (see, e.g., Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Graber, 1988; Snow and Benford, 1988). For instance, journalists should also have a ‘causes of xenophobia’ schema.

Schemata for different aspects of reality belonging to one and the same frame use similar standards — regardless of how appropriate these standards actually are. This can be called frame consistency. Pictorially, these schemata are lined up like pearls of the same color on one row, with the pearls representing schemata, the color standing for the standards, and all the colored pearls representing the frame. One person’s schemata could be red, while another one’s are blue. Frame consistency has consequences: If new information, e.g., in a news agency report, coincides with an editor’s attack schema, then this schema is likely to be activated due to schema-fitting. At the same time, the editor’s notion of xenophobic culprits is also touched due to spreading activation from the attack schema to the culprit schema, since both are elements of the same frame.

**News room frames and schemata**

Frames and schemata (as their elements) are not idiosyncratic, but established in newsroom discourse. Newsroom co-orientation and routines (Breed, 1955; Donsbach, 1982) are fertile soil for journalistic frames and schemata, which serve as working routines (Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). Additionally, frames and schemata depend on inter-media discourse since journalists follow media opinion leaders. Moreover, media discourse interacts with other discourses such as political or party discourses (Molotch and Lester, 1974; Berkowitz, 1987). On an individual level, one should speak of journalist’s frames (and schemata), while on the level of newsroom discourse one should speak of newsroom frames (and schemata). These are more or less shared among those journalists working in the same environment. Thus, commentaries written by members of the same staff can be seen as an indicator for the frames that dominate their newsroom.
What distinguishes these considerations from other models of news production? Considering individualistic (e.g., White, 1950), institutional (e.g., Gieber, 1956) and cybernetic studies (e.g., Shoemaker, 1991) of gatekeeper research, framing can be allocated between the first and second tradition — since frames and schemata are established in newsroom discourse. Additionally, the impact of journalistic frames on news production can be conceived as a form of bias known from news bias research (see, e.g., Flegel and Chaffee, 1971; Kerrick et al., 1964). Within this field of research two approaches are relevant. The first focuses on ‘synchronization’ (Schönbach, 1977; Hagen, 1992), which means that print media adapt their news reporting to their editorial lines, for example, by citing statements of (political) actors who support the editorial line. The second approach is the ‘theory of instrumental actualization’ (Kepplinger et al., 1989). It assumes that in a public conflict, journalists stress information favoring their own position. Here, the instrumental quality of information — i.e., attitude-fitting — is substantial. In contrast to both approaches, framing neither deals with editorial lines (i.e., pro-/con-tendencies) nor with journalists’ individual attitudes. Rather, the framing approach proposes that journalists prefer information that is consistent with their schemata or frames. The more attributes of a right-wing attack, for instance, coincide with the ‘slots’ of journalists’ attack schema in newsroom discourse, the more likely they will report on this attack. Here, the degree of schema fitting is substantial.

News value research proposes that an event’s newsworthiness is dependent on so-called news factors characterizing an event (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Rosengren, 1970; Schulz, 1976). An event is likely to be covered if it fits the journalistic conventions of newsworthiness, for example, in the case of serious damage to objects or people. This news factor can be applied to different types of events, such as, arsonist attacks, plane crashes, or thunderstorms. Frames and schemata, however, are content-bound. They can only be applied to objects they refer to, an attack schema, for instance, can only be used for such a crime. Furthermore, news value research sees news factors as working independently of each other. In contrast to this, framing reporting decisions always depend on prior decisions. So a journalist will report causes consistent with his/her ‘cause schema’. Yet, activating this schema is already a consequence of the prior activation of his/her attack schema due to frame consistency. Finally, the news value approach only permits a positive direction, since news factors merely increase the news value. Framing allows for both directions, so a frame or schema consistent with an event’s features increase an event’s news value whereas discrepant attributes reduce it.
In routine reporting, journalists apply frames and schemata (as elements of frames) and focus on frame-/schema-fitting information. Schema theory explains these frames and schemata as generally rather robust (Fiske and Taylor 1991) because they are stabilized in newsroom discourse due to co-orientation. In daily work and with media archives at hand, these frames become even more elaborate. But in times of orientation, already-existing frames and schemata are changed, or totally new ones are established. There can be long-term shifts like with nuclear energy, middle-range changes, e.g., due to activities of politicians launching their own frames and schemata, and short term shifts. Here, frames and schemata can change rapidly due to key events such as the xenophobic attacks in Germany mentioned below. Such crucial events are followed by times of orientation, in which journalists’ frames and schemata alter in terms of the particular key event.

Research questions and hypotheses

The empirical study consists of two parts. First, a qualitative study (frame analysis) identifies newsroom frames and schemata. Second, a framing analysis explores whether they correspond to news report structures, i.e., to media frames. Xenophobia is taken as an example for the model test. Four key events were crucial in Germany during the early 1990s: The xenophobic riots near hostels for asylum seekers in the cities of Hoyerswerda (starting September 17, 1991) and Rostock (starting August 22, 1992), and the arsonist attacks on homes of Turkish foreign workers in the cities of Moelln (November 23, 1992) and Solingen (May 29, 1993) which resulted in the deaths of several foreign workers.

The frame analysis focuses on frame shifts caused by these key events. If key events really shape frames and schemata among journalists in a newsroom environment, different newsroom frames and schemata (their elements) should occur in each phase of orientation immediately after each key event. These frames and schemata should not reflect editorial tendencies or individualistic attitudes of journalists (which distinguishes the framing perspective from news bias research; see above). The riots that took place in Hoyerswerda and Rostock were very similar, as were the arsonist attacks in Moelln and Solingen. Key events such as these, with comparable features, should result in comparable newsroom frames and schemata.

The analysis of framing processes (i.e., the second part of the study) explores whether newsroom frames and schemata that were previously established (by taking commentaries as an indicator), correlate with media frames in times of routine news coverage subsequent to phases of orientation. If, for example, journalists ask for reasons of an attack,
they may select objects causally related to the attack in accordance with
the attack schemata and causes schemata established in the newsroom.
Furthermore, journalists describe the attack and the causes in a certain
way. Here, framing means applying certain attributes or standards
(‘pearl color’).

The dependent variables in the analysis of framing processes (the sec-
ond part of the study) are not the media frames in news reports as such,
but rather their degree of fitting into the newsroom frames established
in a preceding phase of orientation.

H1: Articles in a certain routine phase tend to contain information con-
sistent with the schemata forming a frame (and thus the overall
frame) — as established in the preceding phase of orientation —
rather than information being inconsistent with the schemata (and
frame).

Due to frame consistency — i.e. all schemata forming a frame share the
same standards (‘color’) — the overall frame-fitting is a function of all
singular schema-fitting ratios. For example, overall frame fitting occurs
if an attack in a news report fits into the attack schema of newsroom
discourse, and the same is true for other schemata (of culprits, victims,
and causes). The results presented below focus on fitting into specific
schemata. But when one takes all schema-fitting ratios together, overall
frame-fitting results.

Hypothesis H1 claims to be general for all routine phases and different
media likewise. But some schemata (e.g., schemata of an attack or a
victim) may depend more on factual occurrences than others (e.g., sche-
mata of right-wing extremism and their consequences).

H2: The degree of schema-fitting is higher for schemata detached from
factual occurrences than for those depending on reality.

Design and method

For an individual level approach, a survey among journalists or an ob-
servation study would be the best choice. But since in this study frames
and schemata are conceptualized on the level of newsroom discourse,
these methods are not appropriate. Instead, in order to identify the news-
room frames and schemata (the first part of the study), commentaries
written by the newsroom staff seemed to be a better indicator. Commen-
taries about xenophobia in the context of the aforementioned key events
in Germany in the early 1990s were chosen as relevant material. The
newsroom frames were retrieved from commentaries published in each
Frames, schemata, and news reporting

Figure 1. Study design — frame analysis and framing analysis.

of the four phases of orientation succeeding a key event (two weeks). This allowed the study of alternating times of orientation and routine coverage. For the second part of the study, devoted to the analysis of framing processes in news reports, each routine phase subsequent to each phase of orientation was examined (see Figure 1). The total study comprised news and commentaries published between August 1, 1990 and July 31, 1993 in two German national dailies, Suddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ).

Three features of the study design serve to prevent circularity. First, while commentaries are examined in order to identify the newsroom frames, the analysis of framing processes is based on news reports. Secondly, a multi-stage qualitative analysis is conducted for identifying the frames, but the analysis of framing processes employs a conventional quantitative content analysis. Finally, the frames are identified in commentaries published during phases of orientation, whereas the analysis of framing in the news relates to routine phases.

Frame analysis

For the first part of the study, a frame identifying technique was developed, implementing the considerations regarding frames and schemata as outlined above. This was done with a sample of 64 commentaries, which included eight commentaries for each phase of orientation and each paper which were purposively selected3.

Inquiry steps. For analyzing commentaries published after each key event, a coding manual was constructed which was similar to a qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2000). It used objects, causes, and consequences as coding heuristics, comparable to the so-called coding families of Grounded Theory (Strauss 1994). Coders had to answer ‘coding questions’ such as: ‘Which causes for xenophobia are mentioned in the com-
Table 1. *Specific schemata in references to xenophobia.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object reference</th>
<th>Type of schema</th>
<th>Specific object reference</th>
<th>Specific schema</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>Event-schema</td>
<td>Xenophobic attacks</td>
<td>Attack schema</td>
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<td>Demonstrations against</td>
<td>Demonstration schema</td>
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<td>xenophobia</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Script</td>
<td>Xenophobic attacks</td>
<td>Attack script</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protagonists</td>
<td>Protagonist</td>
<td>Culprits of attacks</td>
<td>Culprit schema</td>
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<td></td>
<td>schema</td>
<td>Victims of attacks</td>
<td>Victim schema</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrators</td>
<td>Demonstrator schema</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Right-wing extremists</td>
<td>Right-wing extremism-schema</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relational reference</th>
<th>Schema</th>
<th>Specific relational reference</th>
<th>Specific schema</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Causes</td>
<td>Causes schema</td>
<td>Causes of xenophobia/attacks (selection)</td>
<td>Sub-schemata for different causal spheres (CS)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>within CS&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;: Administration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>within CS&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;: Political system</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>within CS&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;: Society</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>within CS&lt;sub&gt;4&lt;/sub&gt;: Foreigners</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>within CS&lt;sub&gt;7&lt;/sub&gt;: General problems</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Effects, reactions</td>
<td>Effects schema</td>
<td>Effects of xenophobia/attacks (selection)</td>
<td>Sub-schemata for different effect spheres (ES)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>within ES&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;: Action</td>
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<td></td>
<td>within ES&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;: Evaluative reaction</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>within ES&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;: Demanding reaction</td>
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</table>

Analytic steps. First, Mayring’s (2000) summary technique was applied for generalizing all ‘codings’. This resulted in a list of specific schema references (see Table 1) comprising of a schema for culprits, one for victims, one for right-wing-extremists, one for xenophobic attacks, as well as schemata for xenophobia’s causes and consequences in different spheres. With these references at hand, ideal types for each schema reference were constructed by contrasting all ‘codings’ from the first phase of orientation after the Hoyerswerda riots, with those of the second phase after the riots at Rostock, and so on. For an example, ideal types of culprits were identified by contrasting all ‘culprit codings’, i.e., all attributes coded for culprits mentioned in the commentaries. Following
Weber’s (1988) notion of ideal types this procedure served to identify such types (e.g., types of culprits) and interpret them in terms of schemata (e.g., culprit-schemata). This was done for all objects and relations listed in Table 1.

The following results were achieved by these procedures. First, they reveal the references of newsroom schemata. Secondly, they clarify the standards applied to them. Thirdly, one can tell which schema (e.g., culprit schema) emerged in which phase of orientation. For example, one of the results of the frame analysis is that ‘the right-wing gang’ was the culprit-schema established in news rooms after the Hoyerswerda riots, whereas ‘The political Nazi murderer’ was the dominant culprit schema that emerged after the arson attacks in Moelln (see Table 2 below). Finally, the frames were defined as bundles of schemata for different references (culprits, victims, causes etc.) with similar standards (frame consistency). Here, all schemata for all references were contrasted synoptically aiming for frame consistencies.

**News framing analysis**

In the second part of the study news reports published during the four routine phases (see Figure 1 above) by the two newspapers, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, were submitted to a framing analysis. The framing analysis examined whether information (e.g., about culprits) published in routine reports (e.g., several weeks after the incidents in Moelln) corresponded to the news room schema (e.g., culprit schema) which had emerged in the prior stage of orientation (e.g., shortly after Moelln). For calculating the degree of schema-fitting, the framing analysis codebook had to be adjusted to the results of the frame analysis. Thus, the schemata identified before were ‘broken up’ again into their constituents and transferred into categories for the framing analysis codebook.

By decomposing the schemata in this manner one can tell at once whether information (e.g., about culprits) in a given routine article fitted into the corresponding news room schema (e.g. culprit schema) of the preceding phase of orientation. If this was the case, a dummy fitting code was generated for each category and value. The final results were obtained by calculating an index of all dummy codes showing the relative schema-fitting of each article and each object (e.g., culprits) or relational category (e.g., causes). In mathematical terms, the index was a ratio of all schema-consistent information (e.g., schema-consistent culprits’ attributes) to the total of information (e.g., all culprits’ attributes mentioned in the article). In short, the more schema-consistent information a particular article contains, the closer the index approaches the
value 1; the more discrepant information it contains, the closer is the value to 0. An index value of 0.5 indicates an equal amount of schema-consistent and schema-discrepant information. By standardizing the results in this manner it was possible to compare the fitting indices of different schemata. As the overall frame-fitting is a function of all schema-fitting, it was calculated analogously to singular schema-fitting.

Selected findings

Frame analysis

Table 2 shows all culprit schemata derived for the news room discourse of the two daily newspapers, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) and Sueddeutsche Zeitung (SZ), during the phases of orientation directly after the four key events. It should be noted that this table differs from conventional presentations of quantitative research as the columns represent the four phases of orientation (and two daily newspapers), while the rows represent the culprit-schemata. Bold text marks the ideal type’s label (e.g., ‘The right-wing gang’) while normal text paraphrases the schema slots and values. A shaded cell indicates that the news room culprit schema listed in the row (e.g., ‘The right-wing gang’) was present in the phase of orientation after a key event by the papers listed in the columns (e.g. ‘Hoyerswerda’ with FAZ and SZ).

Culprit schemata in the newsroom discourse barely differed between the first and second, respectively between third and fourth phases of orientation. However, culprit schemata established after the Hoyerswerda and Rostock incidents differed fundamentally from those emerging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culprit Schemata</th>
<th>FAZ</th>
<th>SZ</th>
<th>FAZ</th>
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<th>FAZ</th>
<th>SZ</th>
<th>FAZ</th>
<th>SZ</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘The right-wing gang’</td>
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<td>Right-wing groups of violent youngsters</td>
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<td>‘The savage mob’</td>
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<td>Right-wing gangs organizing mass hysteria of young fierce skinheads</td>
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<td>‘The political Nazi murderer’</td>
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<td>Single politically motivated young Nazis turn into murderers</td>
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<td>“The fanatic Nazi murderer”</td>
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<td>Single fanatical young Nazis turn into murderers</td>
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Note: A shaded cell indicates, that the culprit schema listed in the row (e.g. “The right-wing gang”) was present in the phase of orientation after key events by the respective papers listed in the columns (e.g. “Hoyerswerda” with FAZ and SZ). Equally shading indicates equally framing (see Table 4).
Table 3. *Newsroom causes schemata in four phases of orientation.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hoyerswerda</th>
<th>Rostock</th>
<th>Moelln</th>
<th>Solingen</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAZ</td>
<td>SZ</td>
<td>FAZ</td>
<td>SZ</td>
<td>FAZ</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Due to an incompetent administration</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Due to slackness of police and justice against right-wing-extremism</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Due to endless debates of the asylum issue</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Due to politicians’ slackness against right-wing extremism</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Due to lack of willingness of politicians to integrate foreigners</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Due to political cynicism</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Due to trivializing right-wing extremism</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Due to social problems (in East Germany)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Due to foreigners being a social problem</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Although foreign “fellow citizens” are “economically beneficial”</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Due to the unsolved problem of asylum-seekers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Due to slackness in prosecuting right-wing extremism</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Due to insufficient integration of foreigners</strong></td>
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</table>

Note: A shaded cell indicates that the causal attribution listed in the row (e.g. SP3, ‘Due to political cynicism’) was presented in the phase of orientation by the respective papers listed in the columns (e.g. ‘Hoyerswerda, Rostock’ with FAZ and SZ). Equal shading indicates equal framing (see Table 2).

After the attacks in Moelln and Solingen, over the course of the events taking place in Hoyerswerda and Rostock, crowds of right-wing youngsters shaped the culprit schemata. But as a result of the Moelln incident, the schemata shifted fundamentally. The schema established after Moelln was further supported by Solingen, yet it tended to emphasize fanaticism. Besides, there were no differences between the two papers.

Activating and shifting one schema alters other schemata as well due to spreading activation. Thus, newsroom schemata for the causes of xenophobia should have changed as a consequence of the culprit schema shifts (Table 3). Indeed almost all causal sub-schemata established in the course of the events that took place at Hoyerswerda and Rostock set up the frame ‘the unsolved problem of asylum seekers’ (see also Table 4 below). The newsroom discourse claimed that the politicians had ignored citizen protests against asylum seekers living next door (CS1) and that endless political debates on asylum seekers had provoked xenophobic attacks as well (CS2). In addition, political cynicism was suspected to be a causal factor (CS3) and asylum seekers themselves were also regarded as a ‘social problem’ (CS4). Finally, the ‘problem of asylum seekers’ was made responsible for xenophobia (CS7). Moreover, the apparent news-
Table 4. Newsroom frames in four phases of orientation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Hoyerswerder</th>
<th>Rostock</th>
<th>Moelln</th>
<th>Solingen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FAZ</td>
<td>SZ</td>
<td>FAZ</td>
<td>SZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xenophobic attack</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsolved problem of asylum-seekers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danger of right-wing-extremism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians' arrogance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrating foreigners as fellow citizens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social problems as a GDR historical deficit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Societal changes</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Xenophobic attitudes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media's contagiousness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkish citizens' vigilantism</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A shaded cell indicates that the frame listed in the row was presented in the phase of orientation by the respective papers listed in the columns. Equal shading indicates equal framing.

room discourse’s conviction that the social situation in Eastern Germany was an accompanying causal factor (CS₃) is a good example of frame bridging (Snow and Benford, 1988; also see Table 4).

With the incidents in Moelln both culprit schemata and causes schemata shifted fundamentally. The ‘asylum’ frame had vanished and been replaced by the frame ‘the danger of right-wing-extremism’. Now, the newsroom discourse complained about authorities, police, and justice not fighting right-wing extremism (CS₁ to CS₃). Additionally, asylum seekers were no longer considered to be a social cause for xenophobia. On the contrary, they were now called ‘fellow citizens’ and ‘economically beneficial’ (CS₄). This coincided with the victim schema coming up due to Moelln: Over the course of Hoyerswerda and Rostock the victims of xenophobia were seen as ‘anti-social and criminal strangers’. After the death of Turkish citizens at Moelln, however, foreigners were regarded as ‘totally innocent’ and ‘fellow citizens’. Subsequently, the events at Solingen evoked as a second frame ‘integrating foreigners as fellow citizens’ (see Table 4). Here, the newsroom discourse considered the insufficient integration of foreigners to be an accompanying factor (CS₂ and CS₇). Table 4 lists all newsroom frames and their presence in the four phases and two papers.

News framing analysis

The analysis of framing processes in the news explored how much information in routine articles fitted into the corresponding newsroom schemata established in prior phases of orientation. Here I will present some sample results are presented for two cases of schema-fitting and frame-fitting. The fitting-indices were calculated as a ratio of all schema-consis-
According to H1, it was expected that routine articles include more schema-consistent than discrepant information. Figure 2 presents, as an example, means of schema-fitting for routinely reported xenophobic attacks. An average of schema-fitting above 0.50 indicates that schema-consistent information prevailed (black columns). An average below 0.50 indicates an overweight of discrepant information in routine articles (gray columns). Except in one case (routine phase after the Moelln incidents in the SZ), schema-consistent information evidently prevailed in routine articles. Similar results were obtained for other types of schemata (e.g., culprit, victim, and demonstration) thus confirming H1.

According to H2, schema-fitting should be higher for schemata detached from factual occurrences than for those depending on reality. Yet, the findings for right-wing extremism, xenophobia’s causes, and consequences are rather ambiguous. As an example, Figure 3 shows the schema-fitting for the consequences of xenophobia. These results do not confirm H2 at first sight. In fact, routine articles published after the Hoyerswerda and Rostock events mentioned more schema-discrepant than consistent consequences and reactions (e.g., demands) on xenopho-
bavia. In total contrast, schema-consistent consequences and reactions prevailed significantly after the incidents at Moelln and Solingen. A closer look at the newsroom schemata themselves proved that all consequences-schemata after Moelln and Solingen make up the predominant frame ‘danger of right-wing extremism’. In contrast, consequences-schemata used during the course of the Hoyerswerda and Rostock events did not form such a unique newsroom frame. Thus, the degree of schema-fitting partly depends on the degree of schema elaboration. Findings for schemata of right-wing extremism support this argument; i.e., the events at Hoyerswerda and Rostock established a vague idea of ‘right-wing gangs’ while the incident in Moelln evoked a sharp idea of right-wing extremism, which was strengthened by the attacks in Solingen

Summary and conclusion

This article defines journalists’ frames on the individual level as cognitive sets of schemata for different aspects of reality. This definition integrates psychological and sociological approaches of framing. Moreover, it dis-
tnguishes between the object (or relational references) and the standards applied to schemata.

Since such frames and schemata are not idiosyncratic but shared among those working together in a newsroom (or even among a larger population of journalists) this article’s focus is on newsroom frames and schemata. This approach assumes, similarly to news bias research, that news reports are written or selected in accordance with the frames and schemata shared among newsroom staff. Yet, the crucial difference with previous research is the focus on cognition rather than on attitudes (theory of instrumental actualization) or on editorial tendencies (‘synchronization’ studies). Nevertheless, these approaches are not questioned, but rather supplemented by the framing approach.

One cause for shifting frames is key events. After such events journalists alter or replace their frames in phases of orientation. Taking xenophobia as an example, newsroom frames (in phases of orientation) were extracted from commentaries through a qualitative analysis. In times of routine coverage, however, the newly established or modified frames are applied to news production. Whether news reports (in routine phases) corresponded to the newsroom frames was examined in a quantitative analysis of news framing. Since the codebook for the frame analysis of news closely referred to the findings of the preceding analysis of newsroom frames, it was possible to calculate standardized coefficients of relative schema-fitting for all routine articles.

The results presented in this article prove that schema-consistent information prevailed in the news published during routine phases. Although the results are not significant in all cases, they indicate that, next to other impact factors, newsroom frames play a role in news reporting. Some findings that seem to be puzzling at first sight may be explained by schema elaboration as a contingent factor.

The study has several limitations. Although xenophobia seems to be an appropriate example for examining key events and shifting newsroom frames, future research should study topics in other sectors of reality as well as different types of topics, especially politics in general. It is quite likely that there are general frames and schemata which can be applied to most aspects of politics (e.g., a ‘scandal/corruption frame’ or a ‘terrorism frame’). In addition, one may find specific frames and schemata characterizing election campaigns communications (e.g., ‘horse-race’ frame; see Patterson, 1993). Future research should explore middle- and long-term transformations of frames and schemata as well. Moreover, it should include other than media discourses (e.g., party discourses) and look for possible interactions with newsroom frames. For this purpose, participant observations and surveys among journalists and politicians will be adequate methodologies. This would provide an
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insight into the actual news production process. Finally, not only should one examine different times of orientation and routine coverage, as was done in this study, but different types of media (e.g., television), countries, and time periods (e.g., ‘the Cold War era’) should be compared for obtaining evidence about media-, epoch-, and culture-specific framing.

Notes

1. For instance, it could be expected that an attack schema directly follows the incidents of Moelln. However, causes- and consequences-schemata change indirectly, so if an attack schema alters as a result of Moelln, then the newsroom discourse of the causes for xenophobia is adjusted as well.
2. Due to the fact that I could not get any agency input, I had to take the decision to publish an article (e.g., on a xenophobic attack) for granted.
3. Considering headlines, I selected those commentaries that were most likely to sufficiently mention the above mentioned object categories and relations.
4. This strategy followed Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). An example could illustrate this: A new type of culprit (i.e., culprit-schema) should occur in each phase of orientation. However, the riots of Hoyerswerda and Rostock were comparable; thus similar culprit schemata should emerge. The arsonist attack of Moelln should have changed this culprit schema significantly, with the comparable attack of Solingen strengthening it.
5. Two arguments supported this analogy. First, schemata and ideal types both abstain from peripheral attributes. Secondly, schemata represent salient characteristics just as ideal types exaggerate core attributes.
6. I assigned value 1 if e.g., a culprit’s attribute (category plus value) mentioned in a routine article was consistent with the culprit schema of the corresponding phase of orientation. Value 0 was assigned if either the category, but not the value was schema-consistent, or if both were schema-discrepant. Practically, more than one attribute of a culprit should occur in an article. Thus, I calculated an average for all culprit attributes mentioned in the routine article.
7. For each article I received an index for the extent to which it fit into the phase-specific attack schema, the attack script, the culprit and the victim schema, in the right-wing extremism schema, in the causes schemata and the consequences schemata, in the demonstration, and the participant schema.
8. T-tests for paired samples proved that the overweight of schema-fitting to non-fitting was not always significant. The t-tests referred to the difference between relative schema-fitting (rF) and relative non-fitting (rNF) per article. The index for non-fitting (rNF) was calculated analogously to the index for fitting (rF). I tested the zero hypothesis that the means of rF and of rNF did not differ.
9. Here, schema-elaboration was measured by adding up the number of schema slots.

References


