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News framing: Theory and typology

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The increasing popularity of the framing concept in media analysis goes hand in hand with significant inconsistency in its application. This paper outlines an *integrated process model of framing* that includes production, content, and media use perspectives. A typology of generic and issue-specific frames is proposed based on previous studies of media frames. An example is given of how generic news frames may be identified and used to understand cross-national differences in news coverage. The paper concludes with an identification of contentious issues in current framing research.

Introduction

Millions of citizens turn to the news media daily and ‘the media’ is a cornerstone institution in our democracies. One influential way that the media may shape public opinion is by framing events and issues in particular ways. Framing involves a communication source presenting and defining an issue. The notion of framing has gained momentum in the communication disciplines, giving guidance to both investigations of media content and to studies of the relationship between media and public opinion. The term framing is referred to with

significant inconsistency in the literature. Moreover, most previous studies of framing have focused on *either* content (e.g., frames in news) *or* framing effects. This article argues that becoming aware of different types of frames is necessary to understand when and why different frames are at work. The paper defines framing as a *process* and it outlines an integrated process model of framing that includes production, content, and media use perspectives. Based on a review of previous studies of media frames a typology of issue-specific and generic frames is proposed. A case study shows how *generic* news frames may be identified and used to understand cross-national differences in news coverage. The study is an illustration of how framing can be used as a tool to study media content.

Framing as a process

The potential of the framing concept lies in the focus on communicative *processes*. Communication is not static, but rather a dynamic process that involves frame-building (how frames emerge) and frame-setting (the interplay between media frames and audience predispositions). [Entman \(1993\)](#) noted that frames have several locations, including the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. These components are integral to a process of framing that consists of distinct

stages: frame-building, frame-setting and individual and societal level consequences of framing (d'Angelo, 2002; Scheufele, 2000; de Vreese, 2002).

Frame-building refers to the factors that influence the structural qualities of news frames. Factors internal to journalism determine how journalists and news organizations frame issues (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Equally important, however, are factors external to journalism. The frame-building process takes place in a continuous interaction between journalists and elites (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978) and social movements (e.g., Cooper, 2002; Snow & Benford, 1992). The outcomes of the frame-building process are the frames manifest in the text.

Frame-setting refers to the interaction between media frames and individuals' prior knowledge and predispositions. Frames in the news may affect learning, interpretation, and evaluation of issues and events. This part of the framing process has been investigated most elaborately, often with the goal to explore the extent to which and under what circumstances audiences reflect and mirror frames made available to them in, for example, the news. The *consequences* of framing can be conceived on the individual and the societal level. An individual level consequence may be altered attitudes about an issue based on exposure to certain frames. On the societal level, frames may contribute to shaping social level processes such as political socialization, decision-making, and collective actions.

In framing processes, frames can be both independent variables (IV) and dependent variables (DV). For example, media frames may be studied as the DV, i.e. the outcome of the production process including organizational pressures, journalistic routines, and elite discourse. Media frames may also be studied as IV, i.e. the antecedents of audience interpretations. Drawing on the integrated process model of framing (see Figure 1), future research would benefit from linking features of the production of news with the content (frame-building) and/or content with studies of uses and effects (frame-setting). A link between either production and/or effects is needed to prevent a proliferation of studies that investigate frames that may have considerable appeal given the 'layman' nature of the frame, but that do not provide any evidence or discussion of the use of the frame in actual news reports. The pitfall of such studies is that we cannot infer whether the frames are in fact, in the words of Cappella and Jamieson (1997, p. 47), 'commonly observed in journalistic practice'.

Frames in the news: Broad and narrow definitions

The variety of definitions of news frames in both theoretical and empirical contributions is considerable. Gitlin (1980, p. 7) defines frames as 'persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation,

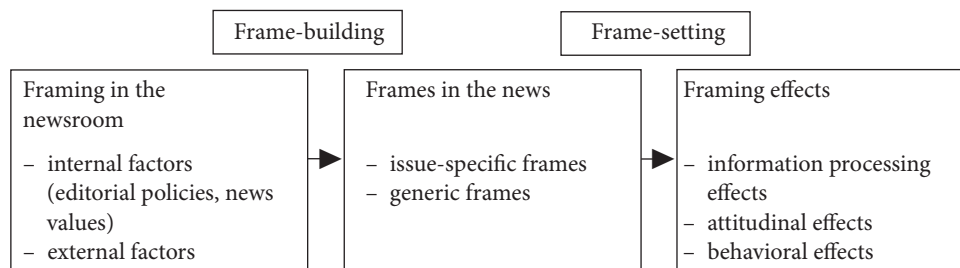


Figure 1. An integrated process model of framing

of selection, emphasis and exclusion by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse.' Gamson and Modigliani (1989) refer to frames as 'interpretative packages' that give meaning to an issue. At the core of this package is 'a central organizing idea, or *frame*, for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue' (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 3, italics in original). By virtue of emphasizing some elements of a topic above others, a frame provides a way to understand an event or issue. In this vein, Cappella and Jamieson (1997, p. 47) suggest that frames activate knowledge, stimulate 'stocks of cultural morals and values, and create contexts'. In doing so, frames 'define problems', 'diagnose causes', 'make moral judgments', and 'suggest remedies' (Entman, 1993).

Communication science framing research is indebted to other disciplines. One obvious predecessor is the series of 'Asian disease'-studies by Kahneman and Tversky (e.g., 1984). Though their framing manipulation – altering the wording of a scenario outlining the consequences of a fatal illness – was appropriate to explore the psychological process, this definition of framing is rather narrow. Indeed simple question wording differences that reverse information are not easily compatible with more complex communicative situations and politics (Sniderman & Theriault, 2004). Some theoretical arguments support the use of the narrow conceptualisation in framing research (e.g., Scheufele, 2000; Shah et al., 2001), but few empirical studies have investigated the 'reversed information' phenomenon. The vast majority of framing studies, more or less explicitly, apply a *broader* definition of frames. *Conceptually*, a broader notion of news frames is indebted to a definition of a frame as 'a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue' (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

In short, *a frame is an emphasis in salience of different aspects of a topic*. While agenda-setting theory deals

with the salience of issues, framing is concerned with the presentation of issues. This brief definition is generally applied to studies of news frames and makes more intuitive sense than applying a narrow definition of frames as 'question wording'. One strong argument for this conceptualization is that most issues – political and social – cannot be meaningfully reduced to two identical scenarios. Political, economic and social events and issues are presented to citizens as alternative characterizations of a course of action (Sniderman & Theriault, 2004). When conceiving of, for example, oil drilling, citizens may be presented with frames such as economic costs of gas prices, unemployment, environment, US dependency on foreign energy sources (Zaller, 1992). Frames are parts of political arguments, journalistic norms, and social movements' discourse. They are alternative ways of defining issues, endogenous to the political and social world.

Identifying frames in the news

Previous research on frames in the news shares little conceptual ground and most studies draw on tentative working definitions or operational definitions of frames designed for the purpose of the specific study. Therefore there is little consensus as how to identify frames in the news. One approach is *inductive* in nature and refrains from analyzing news stories with a priori defined news frames in mind (e.g., Gamson 1992; Neuman et al., 1992). Frames emerge from the material during the course of analysis. Studies taking an inductive approach have been criticized for relying on too small a sample and for being difficult to replicate (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). A second approach is rather *deductive* in nature and investigates frames that are defined and operationalized prior to the investigation.

Scholars have argued in favor of applying concise, a priori defined operationalizations of frames in content analyses. Cappella and Jamieson (1997) state that

considering *any* production feature of verbal or visual texts as a candidate for news frames is a too broad view. They suggest four criteria that a frame must meet. First, a news frame must have identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics. Second, it should be commonly observed in journalistic practice. Third, it must be possible to distinguish the frame reliably from other frames. Fourth, a frame must have representational validity (i.e. be recognized by others) and not be merely a figment of a researcher's imagination (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997, pp. 47; 89).

When working with a deductive approach, the relevant question is: *what* (which components) in a news story constitutes a frame? Entman (1993, p. 52) suggested that frames in the news can be examined and identified by 'the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments.' Along these lines Shah et al. (2002, p. 367) refer to 'choices about language, quotations, and relevant information.' Gamson and Modigliani (1989) identify 'framing devices' that condense information and offer a 'media package' of an issue. They identify (1) metaphors, (2) exemplars, (3) catch-phrases, (4) depictions, and (5) visual images as framing devices. The most comprehensive empirical approach is offered by Tankard (2001, p. 101) who suggests a list of 11 framing mechanism or focal points for identifying and measuring news frames:

1. headlines
2. subheads
3. photos
4. photo captions
5. leads
6. source selection
7. quotes selection
8. pull quotes
9. logos
10. statistics and charts, and
11. concluding statements and paragraphs.

In sum, scholars within the empirical approach to measuring frames agree that frames are *specific textual and visual elements* or 'framing devices'. These elements are essentially different from the remaining news story which may be considered *core news facts*. Price et al. (1997, p. 488) operationalized a frame by varying 'introductory and concluding paragraphs to establish a unique journalistic frame' with information exclusive to the frame while the other paragraphs in the news articles were kept identical. In the same vein, Neuman et al. (1992, p. 126) in their content analysis divided news articles in to sections containing 'frames' and sections containing 'facts'. The distinction between *core elements* and *frame-carrying elements* has effectively been applied in the operationalization of news frames in most studies of framing effects (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Iyengar, 1991, Price et al., 1997; Valentino et al., 2001; de Vreese, 2004).

A typology of news frames

While newsmakers may employ many different frames in their coverage of an issue, scholars agree that this abundance in choice in how to tell and construct stories can be captured in analyses as certain distinctive characteristics. In order to synthesize previous research and the different types of news frames that have been suggested, a more general typology or distinction with reference to the nature and content of the frame is suggested here. Certain frames are pertinent only to specific topics or events. Such frames may be labelled *issue-specific frames*. Other frames transcend thematic limitations and can be identified in relation to different topics, some even over time and in different cultural contexts. These frames can be labelled *generic frames* (de Vreese, 2002). This typology serves to organise past framing research focusing on differences that help explain the use of the catch-all 'framing' phrase.

An issue-specific approach to the study of news frames allows for a profound level of specificity and details relevant to the event or issue under investigation. This advantage, however, is potentially an inherent disadvantage as well. The high degree issue-sensitivity make analyses drawing on issue-specific frames difficult to generalize, compare, and use as empirical evidence for theory building. The absence of comparability has led researchers to ‘too easily finding evidence for what they are looking for’ and to contribute to ‘one of the most frustrating tendencies in the study of frames and framing [being] the tendency for scholars to generate a unique set of frames for every study’ (Hertog & McLeod, 2001, pp. 150–151). In the following, studies of frames in the news are reviewed and classified (Table 1).

Issue-specific news frames

Studies of issue-specific news frames have looked at the framing of the Intifada (Cohen & Wolfsfeld, 1993), the Internet (Roessler, 2001), women’s movement (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997), and labour disputes (Simon & Xenos, 2001). One study of issue-specific news frames focused on public perceptions of US national budget deficits (Jasperson et al., 1998). Drawing on a content analysis of several major US newspapers four frames were identified, and these were labelled ‘talk’, ‘fight’,

‘impasse’, and ‘crisis’. The four frames reflected the chronology of the development of the issue in the news and were issue-sensitive.

In the realm of elections, Shah et al. (2002) identified three frames recurrent in the news during the final stages of the Clinton presidency. They identified ‘Clinton behavior scandal’, ‘Conservative attack scandal’, and ‘Liberal response scandal’. In the same vein, other studies of frames in the news have investigated the presence of frames that pertain to the particular issue in question.

Generic news frames

One group of studies of generic frames concentrates on the coverage of politics, in particular election campaigns. A second group focuses on generic news frames that are structural and inherent to the conventions of journalism. In the first group, Cappella and Jamieson (1996, 1997) investigated the consequences of strategically framed news on political cynicism. Strategic news is defined as news that (1) focuses on winning and losing, (2) includes the language of war, games, and competition, (3) contains ‘performers, critics and audiences’, (4) focuses on candidate style and perceptions, and (5) gives weight to polls and candidate standings (Jamieson, 1992). According to Cappella and Jamieson (1997), strategic news dominates American news coverage of not only election campaigns,

Table 1. Overview content analyses of frames in the news

Medium	Issue-specific news frames	Generic news frames
Press	Durham, 1998	d’Haenes & de Lange, 2001
	Entman, 1991	Lawrence, 2000
	Jasperson et al., 1998	Pan & Kosicki, 1993
	Simon & Xenos, 2000	Patterson, 1993
Television	Norris, 1995	Iyengar, 1991
	Mendelson, 1993	de Vreese et al., 2001
Both/not specified	Gamson & Modigliani, 1989	Cappella & Jamieson, 1997
	Martin & Oshagan, 1997	Neuman et al., 1992
		Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000

but also of policy issues. The focus on winning and losing and polls bears close resemblance to Patterson's (1993) discussion of the use of 'game schema' in election news. Game refers to strategies and (predictions of) electoral success, emphasizing candidates' position in the electoral race. Patterson (1993) provides evidence of the historical increase in the use of the game or horse race frame in the press coverage of US elections from 1960 until 1992.

The second group of studies links news frames to more general features of news coverage such as journalistic conventions, norms, and news values. In an analysis of the US network coverage of social issues such as poverty, crime, and unemployment from 1981 to 1986 Iyengar (1991) found that daily news coverage was strongly biased towards an *episodic* interpretation in which news depicts social issues as limited to events only and not placed in a broader interpretation or context (the *thematic* frame). Iyengar (1991) suggested that norms and standards within news organizations and news production reinforce episodic framing. This practice 'simplifies complex issues to the level of anecdotal evidence' (Iyengar, 1991, pp. 136–137) and induces a topical, disorganized, and isolated, rather than general and contextual, understanding of public affairs and social issues.

Neuman et al. (1992) developed frames used by the audience when discussing current affairs. They found that the frames deduced from their audience interviews were also present in the news media coverage of a series of current issues. In their exploratory study they identified 'human impact', 'powerlessness', 'economics', 'moral values', and 'conflict' as common frames used by the media and the audience. The human impact frame focused on descriptions of individuals and groups affected by an issue. The powerlessness frame referred to 'the dominance of forces over weak individuals or groups' (1992, p. 67). The economics frame reflected 'the preoccupation with "the bottom line", profit and loss' (1992, p. 63). The moral values frame referred to the often indirect refer-

ence to morality and social prescriptions by e.g. including certain quotations or inferences. The conflict frame referred to the journalistic practice of reporting stories of clashing interpretation and it was found to fit well with news media's 'game interpretation of the political world as an ongoing series of contests, each with a new set of winners and losers' (1992, p. 64). These frames were found in relation to different issues which suggest that the frames are more generally applicable than issue-specific news frames.

This line of research was developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), who identified five news frames: 'conflict', 'human interest', 'attribution of responsibility', 'morality' and 'economic consequences'. The conflict frame emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, institutions or countries. The human interest frame brings a human face, an individual's story, or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue or problem. The responsibility frame presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for causing or solving to either the government or to an individual or group. The morality frame interprets an event or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions. The economic consequences frame, finally, presents an event, problem or issue in terms of the economic consequences it will have on an individual, group, institution, region or country. The study found that the attribution of responsibility frame was the most commonly used followed by the conflict and economic consequences frames based on an analysis of national print and television news (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). These generic news frames are related to journalistic conventions and they were found to underlie the coverage of different topics such as an EU summit of European heads of government and crime. However, the generic nature of these frames has not yet been tested in a cross-national comparative setting to establish the generality of the frames beyond national boundaries.

An example of generic news frames: Framing the euro

To expand the research on generic news frames to a cross-nationally comparative setting, the use of the conflict and economic consequences frames in television news in Britain, Denmark, and the Netherlands was investigated. The extent to which news was framed in terms of conflict and economic consequences was investigated during the first-step introduction of the euro in January 1999 and during a routine period. The study analyzed the evening news of the most widely watched networks in the three countries (*BBC* and *ITV* in Britain, *NOS* and *RTL* in the Netherlands, and *DR1* and *TV2* in Denmark) during 10 days with the sample consisting of an event period around the introduction and a routine period.¹ These cases were chosen given the different journalistic culture and public opinion about European integration.

The study drew on multiple-item scales for each of the two news frames. The *conflict frame* was operationalized with four items such as ‘does the news story reflect disagreement between parties/ individuals/ groups/

countries?’² The economic consequences frames consisted of three items, for example, ‘is there a mention of costs/ degree of expense involved?’³ All items were answered with yes (1) or no (0) for all news stories about the euro introduction and all other political and economic news. Scales were formed by adding the scores of the items and dividing this by the number of relevant items. The scales consequently ranged from 0 to 1. The internal consistency of the scales (Cronbach’s α) measuring the presence of the frames ranged from .57 to .77.⁴

Generic frames and local spins

The investigation of the relative emphasis on the conflict and economic consequences frames in the news showed that conflict was more prominent than economic consequences in political/ economic news stories in all three countries (see Table 2). When looking at stories about the introduction of the euro, the opposite pattern emerges: conflict was less important than economic consequences in these stories.

Table 2. Presence of conflict and economic consequences frame in British, Danish, and Dutch news.

	Conflict		Economic consequences	
	Political/ economic stories (n = 344)	Euro introduction stories (n = 66)	Political/ economic stories (n = 344)	Euro introduction stories (n = 66)
Britain	.42 (.30) (n=85)	.19 (.29) (n=13)	.09 (.22) (n=85)	.15 (.22) (n=13)
Denmark	.43 (.33) (n=63)	.19 (.30) (n=18)	.24 (.38) (n=63)	.37 (.24) (n=18)
The Netherlands	.35 (.33) (n=100)	.10 (.29) (n=17)	.17 (.24) (n=100)	.20 (.30) (n=17)

Note. Data entries are mean scores on the frame scales, figures in parentheses indicate standard deviations and number of cases. Table based on de Vreese et al. (2001).

Journalists in Denmark put a stronger economic consequences spin on the coverage of all news than their British and Dutch counterparts. In Denmark economic consequences were most visible in the stories about the introduction of the euro ($M = .37$, $SD = .24$). In Britain economic consequences was less visible, both for stories about the euro ($M = .09$, $SD = .22$) and for other political and economic stories ($M = .15$, $SD = .22$).

In framing the introduction of the euro in terms of *economic consequences*, Danish news emphasized the implications of the launch for the domestic macro-economy and for individual businesses. The lead story in the Danish *TV-Avisen*, for example, on January 4, 1999 was a story about a company whose competitive position was allegedly threatened by the introduction of the euro which would give international competitors an advantage in terms of currency stability and savings on money transfers. The euro was seen as a major market player and the introduction was watched with some anxiety and trepidation. One Danish journalist put it this way: “The debut of the euro on the world stage marks one of the most important steps towards a United States of Europe.”

There was less focus on economic consequences by journalists in Britain and the Netherlands compared to their counterparts in Denmark. This was evident in both political/ economic stories as well as stories about the introduction of the euro. Dutch news highlighted the conversion work in the financial sector, but was less concerned with the economic consequences of the euro for the Dutch economy. The only mention of economic consequences was the implications for businesses forced to do extra hours to complete conversion and software. NOS opened with the headline “Spectacular introduction of the euro” but the lead story began “The most spectacular (with a visual of champagne corks popping) was that there was nothing spectacular at all.” The only emphasis on conflict in the Dutch news concerned the ‘political disagreement’ around the Wim Duisenberg ‘is-

sue’. NOS described the problem this way: “The Duisenberg issue is a typical example of the European Union. The economy is fine, but the political disagreement constantly threatens to disrupt.” RTL4 News reported in a similar vein: “The turbulence around Duisenberg does not say a lot about the stability of the new currency, but it does say a great deal about the political weaknesses in this cooperation. The big test will come when a country does not follow the agreements on finance policy, creates disputes, and threatens the euro.”

British news discussed the launch of the euro in terms of the potential economic repercussions for the British pound. Though economic consequences were not at the forefront of the coverage, reporters at both the BBC and ITN mentioned the future prospect of a diminished role for the British pound on the world market and noted that it may stand on the sidelines while future battles would be waged between the US dollar and the euro.

Television journalists in all of the countries were more likely to emphasize conflict in the reporting of political/economic news. The cross-national perspective rendered the generic and universal nature of the conflict frame visible. Possible explanations for the consistent pattern of framing news in terms of conflict may come from factors internal to journalism. The results are in line with research on news values stressing the importance of conflict in the news selection process (e.g., Bennett, 1996; McManus, 1994; Price & Tewksbury, 1997). This explanation is supported by comments by news practitioners. The Editor-in-Chief of ITN said that a key aspect of the EU coverage was “to continue to look at the arguments both between the parties and within the parties” (de Vreese, 2002, p. 71). Similarly, a senior political reporter at BBC said about the conflict impediment: “In political stories, domestic and European, we like to focus on tension between two sides. We have a bipolar, very confrontational Parliament, and that is the structure we use for our political stories [...] Of course that

means simplification, but you sometime have to take decisions that it is easier to tell this as a ‘nasty little stitch-up between Germany and Spain.’”(de Vreese, 2002, p. 71)

While there was much similarity in the news reporting in terms of *conflict*, in the coverage of the event of the euro launch, however, journalists emphasized *economic consequences* more than conflict. Two issue- and context-specific factors may play a role here. First, the introduction of the euro was a success. The launch was carefully staged and none of the scenarios of crashing stock markets or panic scenarios came through. This of course did not provide the basis for a strong journalistic focus on conflict. Second, although the introduction of the euro was a much debated issue in Britain and Denmark, in the Netherlands the ‘euro battles’ had been fought years ago, and the actual introduction of the euro was simply the implementation of long-term planning. Even in Britain and Denmark, both currently outside the euro zone, the debates about the euro lacked the quality of conflict since the euro had already become a reality in much of continental Europe and the countries were not yet discussing a referendum on the euro. The discussion in Britain therefore centered upon the question what it meant not to belong to ‘Euroland’, and how the people and the country were affected by the euro in financial terms.

There appear to be interesting differences between European journalistic traditions, at least concerning the framing of news in terms of economic consequences. Framing news in terms of economic consequences emerged as more important in Denmark and the Netherlands. An emphasis on the domestic economic consequences of an event or issue is a ‘translation’ of the economic implication of a policy. From comparative research on journalistic cultures we know that British journalists perceive themselves as less interpretative and more often as mere transmitters of facts (Köcher, 1986) which may explain the absence of economic consequences frame in British news.

The presence of the economic consequences frame in Danish stories on the euro dovetails with the findings from the 1999 European elections where it was found that Danish television news journalists took on a highly pro-active and interpretative role (de Vreese, 2003). Danish news not only devoted more time to the European elections, they also paid more attention to the consequences of different European issues. This is because Danish TV journalists in the European election campaign saw it as part of their role to explicate the consequences of advanced European integration and focus on the economy and financial fraud of European political institutions. Dutch journalists also focused on economic consequences though in the light of the conversion work in preparation of the launch, indicating their willingness to interpret and add analyses to the news (Deuze, 2002).

In sum, national news organizations provided a significant local or national ‘spin’ to the framing of the news stories. This is important because it links the generic quality of the frames with a specific resonance that in this case was national in focus. The use of similar news frames in different political and journalistic cultures nevertheless emphasizes the *generic* nature of such news frames. Thereby generic frames teach us about journalism and render cross-national differences visible. Moreover, the study was a first exploration of the frame-building process in the integrated process model, namely investigating the relationship between journalistic conventions and news frames. Conflict and consequences are not only cues to journalists for selecting events to become news, they also provide a template for the content structure. Obviously more work is needed to explore the frame-building process in its totality, including for example the perspective of political elites and how they contribute to this process.

Other research has demonstrated that the two news frames, conflict and economic consequences, have the ability to influence the direction of audiences’ thoughts when conceiving of a contemporary political issue (de

Vreese, 2004). Moreover, news frames carrying an inherent valence – emphasizing positive or negative aspects of an issue – have the ability to influence public support for policies (de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003). This emphasizes the necessity for understanding the nature of news frames as they are antecedents of individuals' understanding and interpretation of current affairs.

Discussion

This article synthesised previous research focusing on frames in the news. The diverse operational and methodological features of previous studies make the field heterogeneous. A typology of frames was developed on the basis of extant research and an example of generic frames was discussed. A contentious issue in current framing research addresses the properties and characteristics of a frame. Current research has discussed media framing of different events and issues without addressing the implications for audiences. For some issues media induced information play a more important role than for instance personal resources (Gamson, 1996). This suggests that characteristics of an issue are important for understanding framing.

Moreover, precision is required in the operationalization and measurement of frames. Neuman et al.'s (1992) study refers to the framing concept as part of the journalistic packaging of events in a broader social and historical context as well as individuals' attempt to interpret news in terms of their own lives. The study, however, does not provide a detailed description of the measures that were used to assess and compare the framing of different issues in the news. Along the same line, Iyengar noted (1991, p. 145) that “very few stories were exclusively thematic or episodic,” and though news stories tended to ‘tilt clearly’ in the direction of one or the other frame. Additionally content analyses are often based on the Vanderbilt abstracts. Utilising the Van-

derbilt archive for content analyses aiming at assessing subtleties in media content has been criticised for lack of depth (Althaus, Edy, & Phalen, 2001). Future research needs to specify the *nature* of the frames under investigation. The typology proposed in this review between broad and narrow conceptualizations as well as issue-specific and generic frames may serve as reference points when explicating the nature of the frames.

Framing research as a contribution to theory and a tool for media analysis is work in progress. The empirical contributions are flourishing resulting in heterogeneity in terms of findings and theory advancements. This paper outlined differences in the topics that are framed and the type of frames discussed (issue-specific versus generic). The paper is a first attempt to systematically organise the existing research and identify contentious issues for future research to address. Though the research paradigm is still emerging, framing research has established itself on the media and communication research agenda. Future work should therefore not be designed to demonstrate the mere existence of the concept. To turn the concept in to a viable research avenue, future research should specify the conditions under which frames emerge and how they operate in public opinion formation.

Notes

1. The period was December 31, 1998–January 4, 1999 to investigate the introduction of the euro and January 5–11, 1999 to investigate a routine period. A total of 660 stories were analyzed. Inter-coder reliability tests conducted on a 10% randomly selected sub-sample yielded satisfactory results ranging between 82% and 100% for all measures reported here, for details, see de Vreese (2002).
2. The other items for the conflict scale were: ‘Does one party/ individual/ group/ country reproach another?’; ‘Does the story refer to two or more side or to more than two sides of the problem/ issue?’; ‘Does the story emphasize the achievement s

and or actions of an individual/ party versus the achievements and/ or actions of another individual/ party?’

3. The other items for the economic consequences scale were: ‘Is there reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?’; ‘Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?’

4. The alphas for the conflict frame were: Britain = .67, Denmark = .74; the Netherlands = .81. For the economic consequences frame the alphas were: Britain = .57; Denmark = .70; and the Netherlands = .61. With all item-total correlations consistently positive, the reliability was acceptable.

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