

Morten Hjelholt**Rodney Benson:
Shaping Immigration News
A French – American comparison.
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In recent years, immigration has become a hot-button political issue in virtually every major Western Democracy, raising complex policy questions and promoting strong emotional responses. Globally migration is on the rise, and with this follows positive and negative effects on the fabric of daily life in both sending and receiving nation states. *Immigration is reshaping our lives, yet much of what we know about immigration is limited by the information and analyses we receive from the news media. Are the media up to their task?*

This is the point of departure in Rodney Benson's book "Shaping Immigration News: a French-American comparison". Drawing on interviews with leading journalists and analyses of an extensive sample of newspaper and television coverage since the early 1970's, Rodney Benson shows how the immigration debate has become increasingly focused on the dramatic, emotion-laden frames of humanitarian and public orders. In this wide-ranging study of the news coverage of the issue of immigration in France and the United States, Benson shows the qualities of comparative media research. He brings together insights from media policy, the sociology of journalism, and globalization studies, to examine why coverage is different in both countries. Besides providing a valuable comparison of the distinctive histories, values and economics of journalism in two liberal democracies, Benson elaborates, discusses and suggests new methodological and theoretical approaches to be considered for further research.

The opening chapter of the book positions the journalistic field and immigration news as a lens from which to critically examine an important democratic institution, the

press. Benson argues that a comparison of journalism in the two countries allows for a more direct engagement with debates about the relative merits of public versus market-supported media. As the news format differs in the two countries, this perspective also allows for an assessment of the democratic potentials and constraints in various types of journalistic practice. In chapter two, Benson elaborates his position-logic-structure model as a framework for the historical and structural comparison of the French and American journalistic fields. This model draws upon Bourdieu's field theory and provides a frame for addressing 1) relations of the journalistic field to fields of power; 2) relations between news outlets and civic or market field poles; 3) historical formation of the "rules of the game" by which journalists act professionally. Based on these three foundations (position, logic and structure), the book begins its analysis of the two journalistic fields. In chapters three, four and five, the American and French fields are analysed, and the dominant frames prevailing in four periods between 1973 and 2006 are presented. The American and French framings of immigration exhibit similarities, e.g. the public order frames dominate both in American and French coverage. However, through the close analysis of field position, logic and structure, these chapters also show why globalization does not make journalism homogeneous across borders. Against rushed conclusions about media convergence, Benson offers a convincing and persuasive argument as to why political dynamics and economic issues contained within states remain crucial for understanding how journalism works. In chapter six this argument is utilized to show that French and American media continue to present both individuals and civil society actors in qualitatively different ways. Here and in chapter seven, we get insights into field differences and the ways in which these provide certain challenges to liberal and political theory. In the French case, Benson shows, in contrast to liberal understandings, that the state plays a positive role in informing multi-perspective news. In chapter 8, television news coverage is introduced as reproducing similar forms and coverage across the US and French fields, which is in direct contrast to the newspaper coverage in the two countries.

Throughout the book, several interesting and original ideas are formulated and studied. The book is rich in data and is one of the few examples in media and communication research that offer a solid empirical example of applying Bourdieu's field theory. The field framework offers the advantage of paying closer attention to distinctions in forms of power, variations both within a society and cross-nationally, and ways of mobilizing these for democratic purposes. Especially the "humanitarian frame" is interesting and is shown as frequently used across both countries. In the American context, the frame has been used in a commercialized situation in which new economic orders have encouraged journalists to write their immigration reports as personalized narratives. This has effectively favored a humanitarian frame over more conceptual frames such as racism and globalization. In France, the humanitarian frame has also been a vital frame but for quite different reasons. A close relationship is portrayed to exist between the journalistic frame and the academic field, which ensures attention to be paid to humanitarian concerns. French reporters at the

leading national media outlets tend to have degrees in social science and the humanities from the most prestigious universities. Thus, in the French case, the humanitarian frame has been linked less to the demands of narrative story telling than to practices that attempt to represent diverse civil society voices and viewpoints.

Taking this as his point of departure, Benson provides another valuable insight by focusing on the journalist's habitus as an important factor for new voices and established relationships between journalists and the political field. As mentioned above, a strong natural affinity exists between the habitus of "news-workers" and that of individuals who work politically with (or advocate) for immigrant's rights. This shared habitus and natural feeling/understanding of what constitutes important themes also results in a lack of fellowship with less socially mobile and educated advocates for anti-immigration positions. Thus, historically, the journalistic and political fields have been upheld by positions reframing and reproducing certain societal structures and viewpoints. These insights correspondingly provide a way to analyze and understand both current and historical shifts in dominant discourses of journalistic voices and covering.

With its illustrative empirical collection of "immigration news", Benson's work is valuable for studies of the journalistic field in the Nordic region (see e.g. Schultz 2007, Wilk 2010). Particularly addressing immigration/migration and the role of journalists, this book also provides a vital parallel and comparison to a long Danish tradition of discussing economic, demographic and socio-political consequences of immigration in the press (Benson et al. 2012, Jensen 2000, Jørgensen and Bülow 1999). Benson's analytical framework builds on earlier work (see Benson and Neveu 2005) and provides a novel way to address ways in which historical dynamics and institutional designs continue to shape reporters' work. The framework would serve as an excellent tool to re-vitalize some of these debates, as it enables an analytic view on how battles for positions, logics and structures are constantly being fought, won, lost and reproduced.

In summary, Benson's work represents an impressive and wide-ranging analysis of the connections formed between the political, economic and institutional logics of the journalistic field. Benson's findings and approaches may guide further investigations into the "path dependency" of institutional logics, the habitus of the journalists as well as shifts in dominant frames. As a provider of empirical, methodological and theoretical knowledge this book should be of interest to a broad audience of readers from across different fields of interest.

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Morten Hjelholt
Assistant Professor, Ph.d.
Communication and Culture
IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark
mohje@itu.dk