

of ideology or pressure from business interests. Leaving the political creation of standards out of the study necessarily limits how much he can say about the judgments and decisions made by OSHA's leaders and those to whom they report. One of the critiques of OSHA is that perhaps because of the intensity of the attacks upon it, the development of new standards has lagged far behind the introduction of new hazards into the workplace. If this is true, contrary to his argument, OSHA has overall failed to develop strategies that would combine political survival and policy effectiveness.

Huber also seems to eschew many opportunities to engage with theoretical arguments about the nature of regulation. These arguments might have led him to say more about the motivation and behavior of street-level bureaucrats, or to engage with Ronald Brickman and colleagues, David Vogel, Lundqvist, Steven Kelman, and Graham Wilson on whether achieving effective but sensible regulation in areas like occupational safety has been more difficult for the United States than for other advanced democracies (respectively, *Controlling Chemicals: the Politics of Regulation in Europe and the United States*, 1985; *National Styles of Regulation: Environmental Policy in Great Britain and the United States*, 1986; *The Hare and the Tortoise: Clean Air Policies in the United States and Sweden*, 1980; *Regulating America, Regulating Sweden*, 1981; and *The Politics of Safety and Health: Occupational Safety and Health in Britain and the United States*, 1985).

Huber himself notes that in the mid-1990s, almost a quarter of a century after its creation, OSHA was still struggling to overcome a legacy of mindless enforcement of unimportant rules. It would have been interesting to hear his explanation for the difficulty that OSHA had in establishing a defensible regulatory strategy. The quality of his empirical analysis of OSHA's implementation strategies is truly impressive. Perhaps in the future, he can be tempted to address some of the wider questions that previous studies of the agency have raised.

Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment. By Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Joseph N. Cappella. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 320p. \$24.95.

We Interrupt This Newscast: How to Improve Local News and Win Ratings, Too. By Tom Rosenstiel, Marion Just, Todd Belt, Atiba Pertilla, Walter Dean, and Dante Chinni. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 244p. \$82.00 cloth, \$22.99 paper. doi:10.1017/S1537592709091166

— Marjorie Randon Hershey, *Indiana University*

A major aim of the burgeoning research on media and politics is to specify the empirical relationships between media content and individuals' political responses. For a variety of reasons, including the difficulty of learning which individuals have been exposed to which specific media

content and the ever-present challenge of demonstrating causality, the answers have been elusive. These two well-written volumes take us several steps in the right direction.

In *Echo Chamber*, Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Joseph N. Cappella provide a rich textual analysis of what they regard as the Republican Party's vital allies in the media: conservative talk radio (Rush Limbaugh in particular); Fox News programs with Sean Hannity, Carl Cameron, and Brit Hume; and the *Wall Street Journal's* editorial page. Using content analysis, they argue that these media share similar lines of argument, which contrast sharply with those of the mainstream media, and that they define the mainstream media as being liberal, biased against conservatives, and therefore untrustworthy as information sources. The intent of these right-wing media, Jamieson and Cappella posit, is to insulate their audiences from contrary viewpoints, inoculate them against any mainstream sources they happen upon, and teach them how to argue with these sources—in short, to marginalize the mainstream media as well as Democrats and liberals for their conservative audience.

Jamieson and Cappella's discussion of cases is among the most interesting parts of their analysis. They suggest, for example, that in the controversy over former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott's praise of Strom Thurmond, these conservative media sources worked actively to present frames that Republicans could use to defuse the crisis—such as the contention that the mainstream media used a double standard in criticizing Lott but not Democrats with a segregationist past—and to guide the crisis to an acceptable solution (in this case, Limbaugh's claim that Lott had gone too far in apologizing for his misjudgment and should therefore step down from his leadership position). Thus, they contend that the conservative media have been an essential part of the Republican Party's promotional structure since the 1990s, disseminating the Republican National Committee's framing of particular stories and “help[ing] vet candidates in Republican primaries for their loyalty to Reagan conservatism” (p. 239).

Jamieson and Cappella's causal argument—that exposure to conservative media produces attitude change consistent with the media content, rather than that people self-select into the conservative media audience because they already hold these attitudes—is perhaps the weakest part of their analysis (not surprisingly, given the difficulty of establishing causation). The results they present from a 1996 experimental study are not as clear-cut as one would hope, a point the authors acknowledge. They are on stronger empirical ground when they refer to these processes as being “mutually reinforcing spirals of effect and exposure” (p. 83). Their claim would be even more persuasive with greater attention to the falsifiability of their hypotheses: what evidence would be needed to show that conservatives and the Republican Party had *not* been guided by Limbaugh, Fox, and the *Wall Street Journal* in the Lott controversy, and is such evidence possible to obtain?

It would be easy to get the impression from *Echo Chamber* that the new conservative media pose a threat to American politics, with their use of ridicule, disparaging labels, the creation of enemies, and an emotionally charged vocabulary, from “death tax” to “partial birth abortion” (pp. 178–79). (The authors do, in fairness, make clear the benefits of the accountability provided by Limbaugh, Fox, and others.) Keep in mind, however, that mainstream political institutions make comparable efforts to maintain public support by creating enemies and defining contested terms in an emotional manner (see Murray Edelman in *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, 1988). These activities, in short, are at the heart of political behavior. Polarized politics, with activists on both sides increasingly divided in their views and mistrustful of one another, is not pleasant to witness, but it can enhance accountability in governance.

The authors do political scientists a major service by taking a systematic look at the modern conservative media. In a JSTOR search of political science journals, I found that articles having to do with Democrats outnumbered those having to do with Republicans by a ratio of 2.6 to 1 (49,226 to 19,204), and search references to “liberal” (57,093) far outnumbered references to “conservative” (38,083). There may be many reasonable explanations for this disparity, but it is vital for researchers to understand political movements of all varieties.

Tom Rosenstiel and colleagues examine another form of media accountability in *We Interrupt This Newscast: How to Improve Local News and Win Ratings, Too*, the report of an extensive five-year study of local news funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts through the Project for Excellence in Journalism. Although local TV news is an important source of political information, with a larger audience than that of national network or cable TV, local newscasts have experienced sharp declines in their ratings; during the past ten years, local TV newscasts have lost almost 20 percent of their viewers.

Using audience data and content analysis of news broadcasts on 154 local stations, the authors demonstrate that the typical “local” newscast does very little to reflect the community it serves. Local newscasts around the United States follow the same tired formula. They open with one or more sensational stories about crime, accidents, fires, and other public safety issues. At the end are one or more human interest stories that have been mentioned during the broadcast as teasers, designed to keep viewers from changing channels. The most important news of the day, featuring government, social issues, business, and international news, is sandwiched in between. These complex issues are chopped into stories of less than a minute in length, with fewer sources and much less detail than the sensational lead stories, and lack the background needed to make the issue comprehensible.

If local stations were sacrificing their democratic responsibilities in order to gain profit, it would be disturbing

enough. But the authors show that the sacrifice seems to be in vain: these choices are bleeding the ratings of local TV newscasts. “Stations with higher-quality newscasts do better commercially than other stations even taking into account network affiliation, time slot, and the size and competitiveness of the market” (p. 29). The “quality” that “sells,” they find, is characterized by a comprehensive local focus, stories of significance (as opposed to unique crime stories, celebrity news, and human interest), active investigations, accuracy and fairness in presentation, the use of more information sources with appropriate expertise, and professional presentation (stories with coherence and explanation, as well as good production values). Sensationalism—gore and graphics beyond what’s necessary to convey information—does not increase ratings.

There is good news and bad news in their findings. The meatier stories that increase viewership do not include long presentations of such vital matters as economic policy (nor do they include long stories at all; a minute and a half appears to be the audience’s limit). Rather, a slight ratings advantage goes to health stories and those about political scandal or malfeasance. On the other hand, the “horse race” stories so common in campaign coverage did significantly less well in the audience ratings than did stories on candidate qualities and debates about issues (p. 145). And although 60 percent of stories about controversial topics presented only one side of the dispute (p. 114), these one-sided stories got somewhat lower ratings than did those presenting a mix of opinions. The authors conclude that in a changing media environment with rapidly multiplying sources of news, stories providing expert sources, context, and information as to how the event or issue affects the audience’s lives are central to the success of local TV news.

The study has the great advantage of using Nielsen ratings from meters that automatically record when the TV is turned on and what channel is being received, supplemented by viewer logs, rather than being based on respondents’ unreliable reports of what they’ve watched. But readers looking for a thorough empirical analysis will be disappointed. Much of the book’s statistical analysis is presented in order to illustrate points, not to analyze findings in detail. The independent variables do not include some potentially important influences, such as the socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic characteristics of the market.

In some ways, the study is an intriguing media analogue to Richard F. Fenno’s *Home Style* (2002)—in this case, a look at local station managers’ perceptions of their audience, just as Congress members hold perceptions of their constituencies. Although station owners expect very large profit margins (40 percent, which the authors say is four times higher than that of most American industries), the information about audience reaction on which they rely is generally of poor quality, often derived from

consultants with little local expertise. Viewers seem to have “a much broader definition of news than the news professionals” (p. 89), resulting in an unmet need for news that goes beyond discussion of fires, police tape, and celebrities. This study shows how the need might be met effectively and profitably as well.

Rules and Restraint: Government Spending and the Design of Institutions. By David M. Primo. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. 216p. \$50.00 cloth, \$20.00 paper. doi:10.1017/S1537592709091178

— Bruce E. Cain, *University of California Berkeley*

David Primo has written an ambitious book analyzing the ways in which rules alter the size and efficiency of budgets at both the state and federal levels. Even readers who do not buy into the central premise that public spending is driven by the uncontrolled bidding of distributive politics (which we might now call the McCain hypothesis in light of the 2008 election) will find many valuable insights in this study. The comparison of state to federal budgetary processes is by itself an important contribution to the political science literature.

The book begins with the observation that public spending has increased at all levels in the postwar period, and that while federal reforms have largely failed, some states have more successfully lowered their total spending and have more responsibly aligned it with per capita revenue changes. The solution to fiscal restraint, Primo maintains, is in the rules that govern the budgeting process. Properly designed and effectively enforced rules can constrain the inevitable political pressures to spend inefficiently. However, all too often, he laments, the design of effective rules is undermined by political considerations.

Using a game-theoretic model with many typical simplifying assumptions, Primo demonstrates that the allocation of distributive goods will often be inefficient because common pool problems (i.e., the temptation to overproduce concentrated benefits when costs are shared) and the powers that agenda setters have in putting together a support coalition are considerable. Unless these processes can be cabined by effective and enforceable externally or internally imposed rules, spending will increase even when everyone wants to cap it. Moreover, in flush times, legislators will commit to recurring expenses that are unaffordable in the long term.

The author also usefully demonstrates how under certain conditions institutional rules, such as spending limits, supermajority rules, and executive vetoes, can limit inefficient and excessive spending, but not always. Supermajority votes, for instance, can sometimes lead to extra, even if somewhat more efficient, spending as the proposer seeks to increase the coalition to match the higher threshold. In the end, Primo concludes that a no-carryover spend-

ing limit enforced by an elected judiciary is the most effective means for restraining budgets.

One of his empirical equations in Chapter 5 shows that public expenditures are indeed lower in states that have no carryover spending limits and elected judiciaries, controlling for other factors. A second, and perhaps more interesting, equation indicates that states with spending limits react to revenue increases more conservatively than do those without, which is consistent with other studies that have shown that states with spending limits have less volatile fiscal patterns and are more likely to put surplus revenue into rainy-day funds.

While there is much of value in this book, there are also a few leaps of faith (and perhaps ideology) and important evidentiary gaps in it as well. Even though Primo acknowledges that distributive goods (especially as he defines them) are only a small fraction of federal and state budgets, he focuses on them as the central objects of restraint. This is indeed analogous to John McCain's attempt to convince us in the last election that earmarks are the core economic problem in America. Quite aside from a point that Primo himself acknowledges—that distributive goods can grease the wheels of budgetary agreement—the main driving forces for budgetary expansion are not distributive goods but, rather, entitlements in the federal budget and non-discretionary spending at the state level. The empirical model that allegedly proves his case only shows that spending is less in states with spending limits, not that spending on distributive goods is less. But as Primo discusses in Chapter 2, there is a tendency to underprovide for public goods due to free-rider incentives, and there is no way to tell from his empirical models whether spending limits are lowering distributive or public goods.

Another puzzling claim is that elected courts are crucial to budgetary restraint. The evidence for this is thin, hinging on the contention that the combined statistical effect of no-carryover rules and an elected judiciary is greater than their separate effects. Even so, this reader at least would like to have had some specific instances in which the courts acted to enforce spending limits, and some data that demonstrated that elected courts were more likely to take up these issues than nonelected ones. It is not obvious that elected judges are anymore likely to take on a legislature that controls their budget or wade into an issue that is so political than are appointed ones. An unstated assumption of Primo's view is that the courts are defending the public interest in restraining spending, but if the public's opinion is more divided than that, elected judges might see danger in fiscal decisions.

While I do not buy all of the premises or conclusions, there are important takeaway points in this book. The design of budget rules can shape fiscal outcomes in significant ways. External constraints will more effectively limit spending than internal mechanisms such, as Gramm-Rudman-Hollings, but they introduce rigidities that make