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Power to the frame: Bringing sociology back to frame analysis

Rens Vliegenthart
University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Liesbet van Zoonen
Loughborough University, UK

Abstract

This article critically reviews current frame and framing research in media and communication studies. It is first argued that most authors fail to distinguish between 'frame' and 'framing' and therewith produce a conceptual confusion and imprecision that is not conducive to the field. Second, it is argued that current frame and framing research ignore sociological research about news production and news audiences that reached its zenith in the 1980s and is still conceptually and methodologically relevant to much current frame and framing research. As a result, a notion of power is absent from most current frame and framing research. By discussing – on the basis of key literature – what a news 'frame' is, how it comes about and how it is of consequence successively, these claims are substantiated and research directions for improving the field are indicated.

Keywords

audience research, frame, framing, political communication, social construction of news

Introduction

'Framing' is without any doubt one of the buzz-words in current mass communication research. While in sociology, the term was already being used in the mid-1950s (Bateson, 1955), its wide uptake in media and communication studies began only in the early 1990s, when Entman's article about 'framing as a fractured paradigm' was published (Entman, 1993). Ever since, the use of the terms 'frame' and 'framing' has grown steadily

Corresponding author:
Rens Vliegenthart, Department of Communication Science and Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCoR), University of Amsterdam, Kloveniersburgwal 48, 1012 CX Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
Email: r.vliegenthart@uva.nl

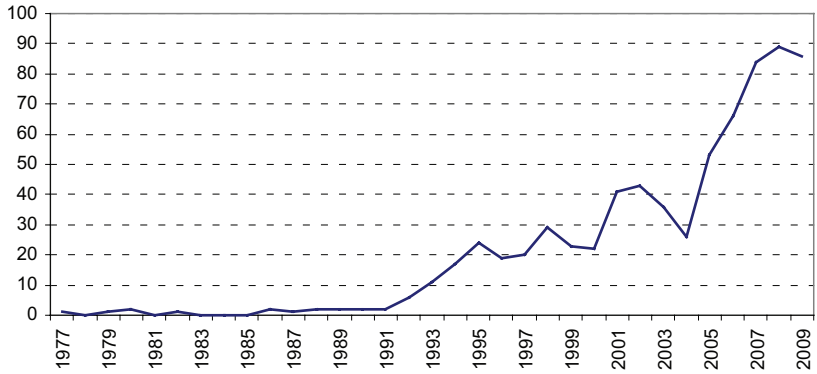

Figure 1. Articles on 'frames' and 'framing' in SSCI communication index
Source: ISI Web of Knowledge, 2010.

in research about news and journalism, with an as yet unprecedented peak in 2008 and 2009. As an illustration of this extensive growth, Figure 1 presents the number of articles that mention the word 'frame' or 'framing' in title or topic in all articles that are ranked in the SSCI index under the category 'communication science'.

Inevitably, with the ubiquity of the term came reflection and criticism on its usage, among other things about a lack of consistency in how different authors define and apply 'frame' and 'framing' (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007), and about its limited understanding as being a straightforward feature of news content that might have certain individual-level effects (Carragee and Roefs, 2004). This article adds to these reflections by considering the different paradigmatic influences on the notions of 'frame' and 'framing', highlighting especially the contrasts between approaches coming out of sociology on the one hand and communication studies on the other. While acknowledging that this distinction is to a certain extent artificial, it does help to recognize fundamental methodological tensions and theoretical gaps in current research, with respect to distinguishing between 'frame' and 'framing', and the understanding of the antecedents and consequences of frames. The article discusses a considerable number of recent publications on frames and framing in a systematic manner, however, it is not meant as a comprehensive literature review or meta- analysis. Rather it uses those publications to illustrate, clarify and substantiate our main claims and arguments.

The article is structured around three central questions that deal with the distinction between 'frames' and 'framing', claiming that many authors fail to differentiate between content features of news ('frames') and process or contextual features of news making and receiving ('framing'). Thus, we successively discuss research about 'frames', frame building (how does a frame come about?) and frame effects (what consequences does the frame have?). But first, it is necessary to point out some of the early work in this area, in which frame and frame building, on the one hand, and frame and frame effects, on the other, were simultaneously examined as distinct features of news that are intrinsically tied to each other.

Early work

The introduction of the framing concept in the social sciences is often traced to the Gregory Bateson's (1955) essay 'A theory of play and fantasy: A report on theoretical aspects of the project for study of the role of paradoxes of abstraction in communication'. Bateson argues that statements don't have intrinsic meanings, but only acquire those in a frame that is constituted by context and style. In his classic work *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* Erving Goffman (1974) clarifies this premise in much detail and argues that meanings only arise in processes of interaction, interpretation and contextualization. The outcome of those processes are 'social frameworks' (p. 24), that provide meaning, determine what is relevant and irrelevant when considering certain actors, issues or events, and suggest appropriate behaviour. Goffman's first caveat to this explanation is that 'there is the embarrassing fact that during any one moment of activity an individual is likely to apply several frameworks' (p. 25). As we see later in the article, this notion of multiple and intersecting frames is often lost in current frame analyses in communication studies.

Frame building

While Goffman's work turned out to be a standard reference for the frame and framing research in media and communication sciences (but also, for example, in social movement studies and organizational studies), he was initially criticized for his lack of attention to the empirical examination of social frameworks (Benford, 1997; Gamson, 1975). Nevertheless, several media scholars quickly managed to build on Goffman's work to analyse news coverage. Gitlin (1980: 7), for instance, defined frames as 'principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters' and used the concept to analyse the battle between the US student movement of the 1960s and the US news media over 'the prevailing definition of things, the dominant frames'. In that battle, the movement itself became 'framed' as a chaotic, leaderless amalgam of radicals that was in desperate need of a moderate alternative. Gitlin's analysis clearly shows how the way journalism works, as a time and space bound routinized production of news stories, is incompatible with the (lack of) organization of the student movement. The resulting contradictory articulation of news and movement practices resulted in a frame of moderates vs deviants that typified much of the news coverage. In an analysis of the interaction between the Dutch news media and the women's movement in the early 1970s, van Zoonen (1992) concludes similarly that the Dutch women's movement was framed in terms of moderates vs radicals as a result of the conflict between the requirements of news production and the movement's desire for a horizontal, leaderless organization. Her study draws explicitly on Gitlin, but also on Gaye Tuchman's (1978) research on the social construction of news, which contained a study of the coverage of the US women's movement that demonstrated how the particular demands of news making even made feminist journalists complicit in producing the frame of radicals and moderates.

These early studies thus tie particular news frames to the way news is socially constructed, as a routinized production in which newsworthiness is dependent on how a particular event or story fits the time and space requirements of the news organization

(see also Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1980). Neither the qualities of the events themselves, nor the agency of individual journalists can do much against the unrelenting pressure of news as a – anno 2011 – 24/7 enterprise that has to produce immediate and ongoing output. This particular approach was, in addition, clearly operationalized in designs that combined a form of content analysis with additional observations of newsrooms and interviews with journalists and activists.

Frame effects

Early work about news frames and their resonance in public conversation and opinion comes, in different forms, from William Gamson (Gamson, 1992; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989) and Shanto Iyengar (Iyengar, 1991).

Gamson (1992) has an interest in the interaction between social movements, news coverage and audience talk. He examines whether and how collective action frames of social movements, which 'offer ways of understanding that imply the need for and desirability of some form of action' (p. 7), are present in media discourse and people's everyday conversations about the troubles of industry, nuclear power, affirmative action and the Arab–Israeli conflict. On the basis of extensive interviews and focus group discussion, he identifies a wide variety of contending frames in his respondents' conversations, especially between dominant frames evoked by government and economic elites, and critical frames developed by respondents as an articulation of experiential knowledge, popular wisdom and media discourse. His most striking outcome in the context of this article is the relatively marginal role media discourse plays for the respondents' understanding of issues that are close to their everyday experience. In these cases, their own experiential knowledge and popular wisdom take precedence over media discourse, which is merely used to 'spotlight' (p. 134) particular facts and public figures but not to inform respondents' understanding. Gamson's analysis demonstrates how frames in public conversations emerge from an intricate and situated articulation of a particular issue, popular wisdom, experiential knowledge and media discourse.

Iyengar's (1991) study about the effects of television news on the public attribution of responsibility for particular political issues is often taken as an early study of frame effects. While he uses the language of 'frame' and 'framing', his understanding and usage of the term is markedly different from that of the previous authors. Iyengar explicitly takes a 'frame' as being a 'news format' (p. 2), and his distinction between 'episodic' (focusing on a particular case) and 'thematic' frames (evoking a wider social and political context) is a matter of narrative style rather than of theme or political position, as is more typical for the work of Gitlin and Gamson. Iyengar finds that episodic framing in television news stories make 'viewers less likely to hold public officials accountable for the existence of some problem and also less likely to hold them responsible for alleviating it' (p. 2). Yet, this effect was both contingent on individual characteristics of the viewers, as well as the nature of the particular issue involved.

Despite their different understanding of what a 'frame' is, these two early studies both point to the issue specific nature of frame effects and to individual and collective differences in the usage and interpretation of frames. Gamson's research shows in addition that

frames are negotiated and contested in people's discussions, and that their 'frames' also come from other sources than media, i.e. popular wisdom and experiential knowledge.

In sum, these early studies about frames, the way they come about and the way they work out among individuals and collectives, share certain, mostly sociological axioms:

- That frames are multiple and can be contradictory or oppositional;
- That frames are part of a struggle for meaning between different actors that have unequal material and symbolic resources;
- That news frames are the result of situated social and routinized processes in which the agency of the individual journalists is relative;
- That frames used by audiences are the result of socially situated articulations between particular issues, individual and collective differences, experiential knowledge, popular wisdom and media discourse.

While communication scholars are not unfamiliar with those findings (see e.g. D'Angelo, 2002; Reese et al., 2003), we demonstrate in the following sections that they only play a limited role in current framing research.

Frames

Building on these early and other studies, Robert Entman attempted in 1993 to bring the 'scattered' insights about framing from other disciplines together for communication as a 'master discipline' (p. 51), and to 'offer a way to describe the power of a communicating text' (p. 51). Entman introduces a definition that says: 'to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation' (p. 52). His article, 'Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm', has become a standard reference in frame research and has been quoted over 2200 times.[1]

Despite Entman's call for conceptual preciseness, these 2200 and other frame/framing articles contain a cacophony of new definitions, divergent operationalizations and a wide, often incompatible range of empirically established content features. De Vreese (2005: 53), for instance, argues that the definition of a frame as 'an emphasis in salience of different aspects of a topic' captures the way the concept is used by many mass communication scholars. This definition stretches the concept in such a way that it loses much of its potential analytic strength. As Iyengar's conflation of news format and frame already predicted, operationalizations nowadays range from the search for stylistic and narrative features, to thematic and ideological ones. 'Human interest framing', 'economic consequences framing' and 'conflict framing' (Valkenburg et al., 1999), for instance, all refer to the way a story is told, while 'protest framing' (Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2005) or very specifically 'Clinton behaviour frame' or 'conservative attack frame' (Shah et al., 2002) take ideological positions as defining features of the frame. In the context of election campaign coverage, a combination of narrative and thematic

features have identified frames such as 'horse race', 'strategy' and 'issue' framing (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Iyengar et al., 2004).

To further confuse the matter, researchers have used different labels for similar kinds of 'frames' without much reflection.[2] There is considerable overlap, for instance, between Iyengar's (1991) 'episodic' and 'thematic' frames, and De Vreese's (2005) 'issue-specific' and 'generic' frames, respectively. Moreover, the distinction that these interchangeable labels refer to has in itself become problematic. Generic news frames, Van Gorp (2007) argues, have been analysed in such a general way that they are probably better labelled as schemata, script, argument or genre (see also note 2). The examination of issue-specific frames is similarly problematic because of the limited opportunities they offer for generalization and comparison (De Vreese, 2005). In the latter instance, frames are often turned into not much more than content-analytical features that do not help in understanding communicative processes beyond a detailed account of a single case. Two comparative studies about the war on Iraq are illustrative: they identified military conflict, human interest and violence of war frames (Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2005), against a war journalism frame and a peace journalism frame (Lee et al., 2006). Due to their different conceptualization of frames, results about basically the same event are hard, if not impossible, to compare.

In analogy to the variety of different definitions, operationalizations and frames that researchers have used, the methods to find frames have also been widely diverse. In fact, the language of 'finding' is illusive, since it already refers to one set of approaches that is deductive in nature, and works with theoretically derived and operationalized frames. In these mostly quantitative studies, the notion of a 'framing device' has been developed to capture defining features of a frame. Yet again, a massive variety of framing devices have been used to identify the decisive features of a frame. Examples include keywords (Entman, 1993), catchphrases (Pan and Kosicki, 1993), metaphors (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989), photographs and charts (Tankard, 2001). The early framing studies operated in an inductive or constructivist manner, not so much 'finding' frames, but reconstructing them from clues in news or interview texts that are partly similar to the framing devices used in deductive approaches, and that partly look for implicit and recurring traces of meaning (see Matthes and Kohring [2008] for an overview).

In sum, it seems that instead of becoming the master discipline that Entman wanted it to be, media and communication frame studies have come to a situation that resembles the one described by Benford (1997: 415) for the use of framing in the context of social movement research, that 'the bulk of empirical work has tended to accomplish more toward yielding *a morphology of frames* rather than producing a sociology of movement *framing processes*' (emphasis added). It is especially with respect to these framing processes that the current wave of frame studies falls short.

'Framing'

Both Entman's aim ('to offer a way to describe the power of a communicating text') and his definition ('to frame is to select . . . in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition') imply a marked divergence from the earlier studies and preludes the very problems that much current frame and framing research suffers from. Entman's

definition proposes that a 'frame' is a tool employed to promote a particular version of reality and therewith assumes an intentionality that is in stark contrast to, on the one hand, the early frame building studies that emphasize that frames do not come about intentionally but are the result of interactions and conflicts between collective and individual social and media actors, and, on the other hand, early frame effects studies that demonstrated that the power of frames was contingent on a range of differently articulated social and individual variables.

Frame building

Gitlin's emphasis on 'tacit theories', and Tuchman's examination of organizational demands of the news organization point to framing processes as outcomes of social interactions between political and media actors and environments that are for the greater part routinized and tapping into common sense. In comparison to this work, current studies tend to greatly simplify how frames come about and use similar instrumental language as in Entman's definition, as the following examples show (all emphasis added): 'serious newspaper and television news programs *use* the responsibility and conflict frames' (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000: 93); 'failed efforts of reporters to *produce* a news frame' (Durham, 1998: 100); 'the game frame is most likely *to be applied*' (Lawrence, 2000: 93); 'the strategy frame is being generalized *by journalists*' (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997: 33). Such phrasing unwittingly puts the main agency in the framing process with the individual journalist, or with editorial teams, at the expense of the level of organizational processes, ideological leanings of the news organization, market constraints, differential power of social and political actors, or national and international cultures and structures (e.g. Dimmick and Coit, 1982; Lowrey et al., 2003; McQuail, 2000; van Zoonen, 1998). While in other areas of media and communication studies pleas for multi-level analysis that assesses the differential impact of these various factors have become ever more common (e.g. Pan and McLeod, 1991), this development seems to have bypassed many studies of news frames. The rare research in which higher level influences on the news than those of the individual journalists have been examined, has been limited to separate analyses of either the macro level of influence (especially by comparing countries) or the micro level of influence (particularly by looking at source influences).

Implicit and often explicit in the country comparisons is the assumption that national media systems and news cultures affect news frames. Strömbäck and Van Aelst (2010), for example, have considered differences in news frames between Belgian and Swedish commercial and public TV news, finding more strategy frames in Swedish commercial TV news compared to public TV news, but not in Belgium. They attribute the differences that they find to differences in the media system and political system, but are not able to determine the relative contribution of each to the variation in frames. Moreover, by focusing on the media and political system, they exclude other possible explanations for the differences that could be located at a meso level (the influence of market and target group features, for instance) or a micro level (source relations). In an exceptional comparison of news frames about the 2005 French riots in newspapers in seven countries, Snow et al. (2007) find that differences in frames could not only be attributed to

cross-national (structural) differences (e.g. economic proximity to France resulted in a frame with less state attribution for the riots), but also to changes over time (a shift from a non-structural frame of rioters as riff-raff, to a more structural frame that highlighted bad housing and economic conditions) and to source differences (e.g. government sources were less involved in diagnostic framing than residents). The Snow et al. study is not only rare because it provides a multi-level explanation of differences in frames, but also because it analyses how source differences contribute to different frames. Most frame studies that look at source differences, focus on the agenda-building power of sources (e.g. Andsager, 2000; McCune, 2003; Poindexter et al., 2003) and have found, for instance, that politicians are to a large extent able to determine the media agenda during election times (see for an overview Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006). While evidence from frame and framing research of the key relevance of the political, social and economic power of news sources for building the news agenda is significant (e.g. Bennett, 1990; Gans, 1980), the inevitable question of whether and how this power translates into a news frame that is favourable to the interests of the powers-that-be, has been less prominently posed. For this question, and others about the way power relations and news production processes influence the emergence and stabilization of particular news frames, other approaches have much to offer. UK authors in particular had pointed to the ideological consequences of the way news is produced, some 35 years ago. By demonstrating how production routines maintained the societal status quo they brought a notion of power into their analyses (e.g. Golding and Elliott, 2006). While not using the vocabulary of frames and framing, such critical studies of the news (e.g. Hall et al., 1978) share the purpose of frame and framing research to analyse how news content 'promotes particular problem definitions' (in the words of Entman). Their additional merit, however, is that they tie such problem definitions to an analysis of power, both as an explicit factor rooted in the commercial requirements of contemporary news production, and capable of imposing (self-)censorship on the newsroom, and as an implicit factor resulting from the time and space contingencies of 24/7 news production, favouring institutional and government sources as 'primary definers' of the news (cf. Hall et al., 1978). The Glasgow Media Group and its series of 'Bad News' studies about news coverage of social and international conflict offers the best examples of such a critical approach, but rarely enter the reflections of contemporary frame and framing researchers.

In sum, much news frame analysis implicitly assumes the determining agency of the individual journalist or editor. By comparing frames across national news media, some studies assume that the macro level of media system and political system also affect news frames, but then fail to identify how and when exactly that influence becomes operational. Moreover, in such comparative studies other possible meso and micro influences on the frame(s) are often ignored. A second level of influence on news frames, apart from that of the individual journalist, is that of news sources. Here, frame studies have been limited to an analysis of the agenda-building power of news sources but have bypassed the question of whether and how that translates into frames that are favourable to their interest. Early social construction and critical studies of news thus have more to offer for understanding how frames come about, than much of current frame research itself.

Frame effects

In the current wave of frame and framing studies, two things have happened in comparison to the earlier work. First, the emphasis has moved to framing as a set of processes that take place among audiences, and, second, these processes have increasingly been approached as effects questions. In recent literature reviews, framing research is almost being equated with media-effects research (Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007), leading other scholars to criticize the 'increasing tendency to explore frames simply as content features that produce media effects' (Carragee and Roefs, 2004: 215).

The interest in framing processes among audiences was already present in early social movement studies such as the one by David Snow et al. (1986) on 'frame alignment'. Drawing from US ethnographic research about religious, peace and neighbourhood movements, they argue that for individuals to participate in a social movement, frame alignment between movement and individuals has to take place, which can take the form of frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension and frame transformation. This type of research is built on Goffman's social interactionist notions in which meaning is the result of individual and collective interactions and negotiations. While such an interactionist understanding underlies much qualitative research about, for example, the audiences and fans of popular culture (Denzin, 2003), it has been considerably less influential in the study of the way audiences make sense of news frames. Most of the latter kind of research consists of experimental studies of the effects of news frames on cognitive, affective and behavioural variables and passes over the preceding issue of how audiences interpret particular frames. The composite body of these studies, however, has not accumulated comparable evidence as to whether and how news frames become part of audience frames for several reasons.

First, widely diverse frames have been examined as 'stimulus' material and – as with the content analyses – the results are difficult to compare. Schuck and De Vreese (2006), for instance, have analysed the effects of 'risk' and 'opportunity' frames in the news about the enlargement of the European Union; Slothuus (2008) examines how a 'job-frame' and 'poor-frame' in coverage of a social welfare bill affected support for cutting social benefits; Gross and Brewer (2007) look at the influence of a conflict frame on people's anger and disgust about campaign financing. Second, the dependent variables in these studies differ considerably, ranging from opinions about certain issues (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2001) to political knowledge (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006), political cynicism (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997), emotions (Gross and Brewer, 2007) or turnout at elections (De Vreese and Semetko, 2002). While these studies are insightful as such, little systematic reflection has taken place on the question: which frames affect which variables, under which conditions?

Third, while in most studies mediating and moderating variables are assumed, which ones these are varies noticeably, covering personal characteristics such as gender, age or political knowledge (Schuck and De Vreese, 2006), the level of interpersonal communication about the issue (Druckman and Nelson, 2003), characteristics of the issue under consideration (Lecheler et al., 2009) or the source of the frame (Druckman, 2001). Again, broader reflections on the question of in what instances which moderator is the most important one, are (as yet) rare.

Inevitably, this kind of work suffers in addition from external validity problems that are inherent to the experimental method. Current everyday mediated life – in which citizens not only constantly encounter a wide variety of media messages, but are also engaged in making their own media environments through mobile and digital technologies – makes the experimental setting with its examination of single and isolated stimulus material, a highly unrealistic one. Only few studies explicitly try to overcome the drawbacks of the experimental setting by, for instance, including a longitudinal measure in their design. Lecheler (2010), for instance, has tested news framing effects over time and demonstrated that especially for individuals with moderate levels of political knowledge, attitude changes resulting from exposure to news material were persistent over a period of at least two weeks.

These frame effect studies share a strong focus on the micro level of the individual, leaving core questions regarding the interpersonal and collective negotiation of meaning unaddressed. Under the heading of 'framing research', only an occasional study examines these collective processes of making meaning (see Baden, 2010, for a positive exception). Price et al. (2005), for example, look at the question of how discussion in three types of groups (with conservative, liberal and mixed ideological leanings) developed after the group members were exposed to different frames on gay and lesbian partnerships. Their study demonstrates that despite widely varying discussions, participants drew from a limited pattern of religious, moral, legal and personal discourses to discuss the issue, regardless of the frame to which they were exposed. The effect of a particular frame appeared to be contingent on the ideological make-up of the group, and even then the authors found ample evidence that individual respondents in the groups referred to alternative frames. In line with Gamson's earlier work (see above), the results of the research by Price and his colleagues suggest only a moderate influence of frames 'filtered as they are through active discussion and group negotiation' (Price et al., 2005: 203). They conclude, therefore, that a constructionist approach like theirs is imperative to complement individual effect studies and produce a 'more robust evaluation of the interconnections between "news talk" and "public talk" ' (p. 205).

Such a combination of individual and meso-level effect studies would imply a (re) orientation of sociological studies of news audiences that have systematically looked at group negotiations following exposure to news items. Apart from Gamson's work mentioned earlier, another obvious candidate would be Morley's *Nationwide Audience* (1980), which is a classic in audience studies and showed, similarly, that ideological predispositions and discussions within and between audience groups produced dominant, negotiating and alternative meanings. One of the reasons that sociocultural research about news audiences has hardly been taken up in studies of frame effects is, probably, that it has not become visible as a coherent body of theory, methods and results. Morley's study is generally seen as one of the sources for a subsequent wave of audience studies, but these have focused on popular culture and entertainment much more than on news and journalism. While other, comparable studies of news audiences have been conducted as well, they have been dispersed through time and place (e.g. Dahlgren, 1988; Livingstone and Lunt, 1994). Nevertheless, these studies have produced a set of outcomes that are relevant, if not key to approaching the question of frame-effects. To begin with these concern the identification of 'referential' and 'critical' interpretative strategies

in responding to news and other media texts. Referential reading or viewing implies connecting the news text to one's own life, whereas critical reading of viewing highlights the constructed nature of the text (cf. Michelle, 2007). Frame-effect studies focus primarily on referential readings and mostly overlook the possibility of audiences reflecting critically on the frames they are offered. Another axiom from audience studies concerns the context of interpretation, pointing at the actual social setting in which reception takes place (where, with whom, at what time), and the social interactions and discursive articulations (with other media texts for instance) that are part of reception. By nature of the design of most frame-effect studies, these social and discursive contexts are not taken into account.

In sum, current research about frame-effects has become heavily dependent on the theories and methods of social psychology and has, through its diversity, not yet produced a coherent and cumulative understanding of whether and how particular frames affect particular responses of individuals in particular circumstances, under particular conditions. The more fundamental problem, however, is that such an individualist approach to political sense-making does not do justice to the interactive and social nature of interpreting politics, or to the active multimedia culture in which citizens nowadays operate and compile their political information.

Discussion

The framing perspective has much to offer studies of news, journalism and political communication, but its present usage in media and communication studies suffers from several shortcomings. It is notably individualist and voluntarist in its orientation and assumes that both individual journalists and individual audience members are relatively autonomous in their news production and consumption. While criticism of the current wave of framing research has been voiced regularly, it remains, basically, within this paradigm (e.g. Van Gorp, 2007).

The state of affairs in frame and framing research reflects Bennett's and Iyengar's (2008: 713) comments on political communication research as focused 'on adding new findings to established categories of study such as the ever popular sub-subfields of framing, priming, agenda setting, and so on. The inevitable result is that the field is adrift theoretically, seldom looking back to see where foundational modern theory needs to be adapted and, in some cases, overthrown, in order to keep pace with the orientations of late modern audiences, and new modes of content production and information delivery.'

We have suggested, in this article, that such 'looking back' should result in considering more sociologically informed research about framing that pertain to micro, meso and macro processes of news production and consumption. Such a sociological perspective posits that the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of individual producers are the product of professional and organizational processes in the newsroom, rather than traits or decisions of autonomous individuals. Similarly, it posits that the relation between news frames and audience frames is based on collective processes of negotiation over meaning, rather than on individual exposure to news frames. Such a perspective does not preclude a social psychological approach to frames and framing, but does necessitate that such studies incorporate a theory of power and use methods that are sensitive to the

contexts of production and reception of news. Production and reception are not only affected by individual differences, but also by social and cultural contexts, structural divisions and power constellations. 'Frames' are part of a collective struggle over meaning that takes place through a multiplicity of media and interpersonal communication; draws from a range of resources, among which are news media and personal experience, and works out differently for particular individuals, groups and institutions. Studying frames thus indeed requires a reorientation on, and usage of the 'foundational theories' of the early framing research we discussed earlier, hopefully resulting in a renewed attention to the articulation of newsroom practices with news output. In addition, the application of multi-level analysis of frame-building and frame-effects will be imperative to a more sophisticated understanding of frames and framing. While this research strategy is often called for (e.g. Pan and McLeod, 1991; Scheufele, 1999) it is hardly ever employed (see for exceptions Dimmick and Coit, 1982). It would be naive to think that such a reorientation of the field would be intellectually and practically straightforward. Nevertheless, even some modest adaptations of the currently dominant approaches in communication research would be feasible and necessary to add to our existing comprehension of frames and framing processes.

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Notes

1. As registered in Scholar Google, 9 October 2010.
2. On a higher level, for that matter, the same holds for the question what distinguishes the concept of 'frame' from similar ones, like 'discourse' or 'interpretative repertoires', or in the context of audience 'frames', the sociopsychological notion of 'schema'.

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