

**Integrative Framing Analysis: Framing Health through Words and Visuals by Viorela Dan.**  
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There is a sharp contrast between the way most messages for mass consumption are presented, which is multimodal, and the methodical design communication scholars often use for analysing the framing of issues or characters embedded in these communications, focusing either on the written words or visuals. A nascent strand of research, however, attempts to rectify this situation through the integrated (or at least parallel) analysis of written and visual media content. Viorela Dan's book *Integrative Framing Analysis: Framing Health through Words and Visuals* is firmly situated within this still burgeoning subfield of framing scholarship. It sets out to remedy, in the author's words in the introductory chapter 1, 'the lack of precise, hands-on, methodological guidance on the integration of words and visuals' (Dan 2018, 2-3) in framing studies. Her book introduces a six-step sequence (from preparing the raw data to data analysis) for an integrative frame analysis, and presents the feasibility of the approach in an empirical study.

In chapter 2, Dan makes a very convincing case for the integrative analysis of verbal and visual frames. Her main arguments are that (a) multimodal messages (i.e., containing words and visuals) are the norm in mass media communication; (b) experimental research provides ample evidence that visuals not only attract more attention than written text but are also processed preferentially and faster; and (c) studies have shown that adding congruent visuals to written messages increases recipients' memory and recall.

In chapter 3, the author provides an overview of methodical approaches to the study of verbal frames and visual frames. She uses the systematization of frame identification techniques by Matthes & Kohring (2008) for the former, and Rodriguez & Dimitrova's (2011) 'levels of visual framing' typology for the latter. Overall, this part of the book – while offering a concise and reader-friendly summary of frame analysis approaches – could have benefitted from a more systematic, and especially more theory-oriented, conceptualization of *frames* (what they are and what they signify) and the process of *framing* (as both an inevitable characteristic of human cognition and communication, and a strategic technique in message production). Linguistic approaches to frame analysis and their equivalents in visual studies are mentioned but get a bit of a short shrift compared to the attention paid to other approaches (such as the hermeneutic approach as developed by Gamson & Lasch 1983).

In her discussion of prior multimodal frame studies, Dan identifies a dearth of variables appropriate to the specific characteristics of visuals as a major shortcoming. In response, she suggests to conduct separate frame analyses for verbal texts and their accompanying visuals (using modality-appropriate variables, respectively) with a subsequent computation of the ratio of congruence between verbal frames and visual frames.

Chapter 4 moves on to provide a brief discussion of the factors that influence framing, and describes the current state of research on the link between (elite) news sources and news frames as well as the connection between advocacy frames (as provided by strategic

communication products) and news frames. This rather short (a mere eight pages) chapter reads more like a small detour. While precise and well-structured it cannot teach the reader a lot about its subject (simply due to brevity). It also does not connect too well with the rest of the study, which analyses the presence of frames in selected media outlets, but – while correlating frame prominence with medium characteristics and extra-medial factor – does not endeavour to systematically measure and assess dynamic frame-building processes.

In chapter 5, Dan describes a step-by-step sequence on how best to conduct her version of an integrative frame analyses. These instructions, however, offer a rather general guide to the framing research process. While certainly helpful when read as a methodology handbook for undergraduate and graduate students, more experienced scholars will likely be left a bit disappointed by the rather generic advice to be found.

Chapter 6 – with 80 pages by far the longest one – is the centrepiece of the book. Structured like a self-contained journal article, it applies the integrative frame analysis approach to the issue of representation of people living with HIV/AIDS in various communication outlets in the U.S. Using a deductive approach, Dan introduces variables on both the verbal and visual level that refer to information expected to point to one of four literature-based character frames – *victim*, *survivor*, *carrier*, and *normal*. The presented research design (from case selection to data collection) is technically very sound and comprehensive. Her codebook is extensive and detailed and as such offers a best practice example for aspiring scholars interested in standardized media frame analyses (and media content analyses more generally).

In the results section, Dan discusses her findings in response to two research questions and 17 hypotheses. In short, her analysis provides evidence for correlations between the relative prevalence of character frames on the one hand and communication context, target audience, news and photo sources, and subject characteristics on the other.

Originally written as the author's doctoral thesis at the Free University of Berlin, the book displays an impressive engagement with the vast framing literature that has accumulated over the past decades. More specifically, the book has two major strengths: one is that it provides an extensive and critical review of existing methodological approaches to frame analysis as well as a systematic comparison of their respective benefits and disadvantages. Another achievement is its attention to detail when it comes to presenting the author's own empirical study. Her comparative analysis of the character framing of people living with HIV/AIDS in news, special interest publications, and public service announcements in the U.S. is elaborate and detailed, and also reported in a well-structured way that is exemplary for this type of research. On the downside, the innovative aspect of the author's methodical approach – calculating a rather straightforward congruence ration between verbal frames and related visual frames – comes across as a bit underwhelming.

As the multitude of techniques for measuring frames in media texts (multimodal vs monomodal, deductive vs inductive, standardized vs qualitative, holistic vs atomistic, etc.) shows, framing remains a somewhat 'fractured paradigm' (Entman, 1993). Dan's extensive review of existing approaches and her critical evaluation of their respective strengths and

weaknesses provide an excellent overview of the current state-of-the-art in (media) frame studies. It can also serve as a very helpful guide for framing scholars that want to choose an analytical approach that befits their respective research interest and object of investigation.

## References

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