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**Do Emotions Fit the Frame?  
A Critical Appraisal of Visual Framing  
Research Approaches**

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## Abstract

With the rise of a visibly more emotional public sphere, this article asks if visual framing approaches can be enriched by the integration of emotive elements. Focusing on television news, I ask in what way emotions manifest within audio-visual material, and how these representations of emotions and emotive elements can be analyzed using visual framing analysis. This understanding is grounded in two recent turns: the turn to the visual and to the affective. Both turns provide the background for current framing understandings and visual framing approaches, and for a discussion of three empirical models of analysis and their varying potential to integrate emotive elements. I distinguish here between a holistic 'emotion frame', emotions as narrative structures, and emotion as frame element. I argue that emotions can be best conceptualized as a frame element; I discuss three practical realizations as well as to what extent they are helpful in analyzing emotions empirically in audio-visual news material.

## Contributor Note

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## Introduction

Since more than two decades, visual framing has become a valuable tool in analyzing media content and ideology (Brantner et al. 2013).<sup>1</sup> Its most challenging issue concerns the analysis of the moving image, which due to its methodological complexity remains underdeveloped. This approach is especially relevant, as in the current media-saturated society, visuals have taken over as the dominant mode of communication.

What equally lack conceptual clarity are the emotive potentials of visual frames. Indeed, as visuals have the potential to provoke strong and immediate emotive audience reactions – and this applies more so to the *moving* images – this article will put its emphasis on understanding visual framing as being closely linked to emotionalizing elements and emotional engagement.

The link between visual framing, audio-visual material and emotions has been considered little so far from a methodological angle. Hence, I focus on the emotive aspects of visual framing and how they can be analyzed. For this, I choose the example of television news. To demonstrate the potentially emotive contents of visual framing in news, the article seeks out what emotionalizing elements emerge within television news and on which levels, how they are

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<sup>1</sup> Its popularity manifests in its institutionalization as independent subject with own divisions in professional media studies organizations, such as in the International Communication Association or the national German DGPK with its section for Visual Communication (Barnhurst et al. 2004; Geise and Lobinger 2013; Matthes 2014a).

embedded within media frames<sup>2</sup>, and how these elements can best be approached analytically.

Currently, media-savvy populists, such as US president Donald Trump, challenge mass media coverage considerably by drawing on a repertoire of complacent body language, polarizing statements, and clearly verbalized emotive expressions. This performance finds its way easily into television morning shows as well as evening newscasts, serving news values of conflicts and drama. In order to gain an understanding of how politicians and other actors are framed in journalistic news products, I argue that an analysis cannot stop at the verbal-cognitive level. Rather, most notably rhetoric and visuals have gained in importance and hence need to be integrated into framing analysis. This also needs to include means and devices which can potentially arouse audiences emotionally.

In the following, I first outline why emotions should be included into visual framing research, and in what way this would be a productive endeavor. In a second step, I seek to open up a perspective onto visual framing of audio-visual contents by linking it to emotions in television news.

I start by providing an overview of what constitutes visual framing and emotions ('departure 1' and '2'), with a link to framing effects (audience frames). This is followed by a compilation and consideration of existing approaches towards 'emotional framing' in news journalism. Here, I will ask if emotions could be considered as frame elements

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<sup>2</sup> Media frames are hereby understood as the overarching frames in news coverage.

rather than as complete or invisible-underlying frames. This will help to develop a typology of emotions in media frames which can be useful in further theoretical and empirical frame analyses. This will be supported by the example of identifying emotive visual frames in television news.

But to begin with, I will outline the importance of the two decisive pathways (or turns) which provide the foundation for this argumentation presented in this article.

### **Departure 1: framing and the turn to the visual and emotional**

This section will clarify the gaps in existing framing research approaches. I argue that framing analysis remains incomplete without considering specifics of both moving visuals and emotional engagement. I will first present a brief overview of the general framing concept. Then I will outline what the turn to the visual has contributed to framing. Similarly, I contextualize the affective turn and in what way it shapes framing of ideas. Here, I understand emotions as social means of communication and information. I argue that framing approaches need to widen their understanding of potential framing devices and elements in order to fully grasp the meaning construction of audio-visual products, such as television news.

Originally, the concept of framing was anchored in sociology and social activism (Gitlin 1980; Goffman 1974; Snow and Benford 1988; Snow et al. 1986; Tuchman 1978). Frames were initially understood as principles of organizing everyday experiences, a

'grammar of situations' (Matthes 2014a, 24). The adaptation of framing by media studies is characterized through an apparent lack of conceptual clarity, which reflects in disagreements about, for example, the nature of framing, its definition (Potthoff 2012), or what framing devices constitute or build a frame.<sup>3</sup> This definitional fragmentation or – positively spoken – 'conceptual pluralism' (Marcinkowski 2014, 10) allows flexibility and, at the same time, arbitrariness in its application (Matthes 2014b).

Frame categorization can be approached in many ways. Common distinctions are generic versus theme-specific frames (Dahinden 2006; Reese et al. 2001; Iyengar 1994 [1991]); episodic versus thematic (Iyengar and Simon 1993), or equivalency versus emphasis (Potthoff 2012; Jecker 2014; Tversky and Kahneman 1981). The most problematic distinction, however, poses the understanding of frames as rather cognitive constructs of audiences (audience frames, see Scheufele 1999) seen against media frames (or similarly textual frames). Reducing the consumption of, for instance, TV news largely on cognitive components leaves out the basics of perception which integrates emotive predispositions, affective and emotional responses, or memory. Though this article focuses on media frames, not audience frames, it is important to understand that media frames become influential in interaction with audience frames as parts of a broader discourse. Media frames orientate themselves on audience perception, as memory structures

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<sup>3</sup> According to different authors, framing is understood as theory, paradigm, approach or tool (Matthes 2014b; D'Angelo and Kuypers 2010; Potthoff 2012; Pan and Kosicki 1993).

resemble ‘mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individual’s processing of information’ (Entman 1993, 53). Hence, if audience frames are primarily understood as cognitive or ‘schema’ then, in consequence, this general cognitive bias might lead to a neglect of emotive or emotionalizing frame elements while conducting a framing analysis.

Here, I want to explore the value of visuals and emotions for the analysis of media frames. Media frames can be understood as textual frames used in news journalism and other communicative products. A text is seen as comprising verbal, written, auditive and visual elements. A media frame is basically an information composition, a structure of meaning, commonly created from the selection of external statements and supplemented with own statements (Potthoff and Kohring 2014, 30; Hertog and McLeod 2001). Some facts or images will be prioritized and emphasized (‘emphasis approach’), ‘thereby unconsciously promoting one particular interpretation of events’ (Norris et al. 2003). This constructivist idea of creating particular versions or contextualization of ‘problems’ or ‘reality’ (Matthes 2007) surfaces also in the framing definition of Entman, up to today the most cited one:

*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 for the item described. (Entman 1993, 52, emphasis in the original)*

These common frame characteristics are shared by many other scholars, such as the principles of selection and salience of information (e.g., Dahinden 2006; Matthes 2007; Scheufele 2003; for a comprehensive overview, see Potthoff 2012, 49–53).

However, little understandable is a long-tolerated ignorance of the visual field and of visually communicated frames (Matthes 2014a), making it an issue of individual researcher interest. A similar criticism applies to emotive aspects. Early definitions (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Snow and Benford 1988) treat frames as cognitive interpretative schemata. Despite setting a focus on social movements which draw highly on emotions as important resource for collective actions, they were little considered (Benford 1997).

The neglect of framing research of what I consider important frame constituents – visuals and emotive elements – got only challenged recently by two profound turns: the ‘visual turn’ and the ‘affective turn’. The following section will outline what implications these two turns exercise onto framing.

Firstly, the ‘visual turn’ (or ‘iconic/pictorial turn’) surfaced in the 1990s with works from Mitchell (1994) and Boehm (1994) who asked ‘What is a picture’. They pointed to increasingly ‘ocularcentric’ character of Western societies (Rose 2012, 4), where everyday life becomes increasingly image-dominated, up to the point of being saturated with visuals (Sturken and Cartwright 2009). Boehm and Mitchell understand the ‘iconic/visual turn’ in the continuation of the linguistic turn, as language itself is richly marked by figurative expressions and metaphors

(Boehm 2007; Bachmann-Medick 2008). Together with the development of Visual Culture Studies, images were not anymore seen as just mirroring things, but achieving a position of 'dynamic structures of being visible, making visible, and visual signals' (Bachmann-Medick 2008, 12). Indeed, images are understood as socially and culturally-dependent practices of perception. They are perceived as a powerful element in shaping a communicative understanding of society.

The turn to the visual is rooted not only in social developments, but also in having gained a deeper understanding of the intrinsic particularity and power of visual logics, and visual perception. Visuals differ from texts, as the sense of sight is preeminent as a source of information (Onians et al. 2011). The psychology of visual perception investigated this 'picture superiority effect' (Kobayashi 1986). In information processing, pictures dominate over textual elements and can considerably influence how people construct meaning. Visual content is perceived earlier – (pre-)consciously – and more concisely, creating an associative predisposition for later cognitive processes (Geise 2014; Marcinkowski 2014). Text communication, on the other hand, is structured by a hierarchical-sequential logic (Geise and Rössler 2012).

The associative logic of the image and immediacy of visual information processing allows for 'a more direct and emotional appeal', and, in consequence, this tends to persuade audiences faster (Paivio 1986; Geise 2011). Images suggest a form of sensual directness which helps in creating an 'eye witness' effect – and through this a higher credibility, although they nevertheless

remain a subject to selection processes (Verschuere 2012). Visuals have a potential of guiding attention and emphasizing salience stronger than verbal information (Scheufele 2001).

The second major turn relevant for framing research is the recent 'affective turn' in Cultural Studies and Social Sciences (Clough and O'Malley Halley 2007; Athanasiou et al. 2009). It describes the shift in the relation between emotion and cognition. The 'rediscovery' of emotions as a serious research subject was supported by neuro-cognitive approaches (among them Damasio 1995; Panksepp 2004, 2012).

The understanding of what an emotion precisely is or how it differs from related meanings, such as 'affect', 'feeling' or 'mood', is highly contested and will be outlined only briefly in the following.

Different interpretations dominated at different times – an 'ongoing clash between competing ways of thinking about the emotions' (Leys 2017, n.p.). In psychology, Tomkins (1962) and Ekman (1978) dominated the discussion of emotions initially with their concept of nearly universal 'basic emotions' with universal face expressions, such as anger, sadness, or joy. However, this popular approach received criticism from scholars, such as Feldman Barrett (2017; Chen 2017), who argues in favor of a rather socio-cultural constructedness of emotions, pointing to the link between learning, emotion vocabulary, and emotion awareness. Feldman Barrett and Parkinson (2005) also argue that emotional expressions remain ambiguous as the same facial expression can describe different subjectively felt emotions.

Later sociological-philosophical conceptualizations emphasize aspects of subjectivity, the body, and agency on cognitive and affective levels. While emotions are considered as conscious, affect is seen as subconscious and body-related (Deleuze and Guattari 1987 [1980]; Massumi 2002; Ahmed 2004). Ahmed's (2004) centeredness on the human body and the value it receives through emotions, her understanding of emotions as cultural practices and materialized political power opened up new perspectives on thinking about the social value of emotions, away from psychological understandings of appraisal theories (e.g., Frijda 1986; Ortony et al. 1988), which consider emotions largely as a reaction of the mind towards cognitive evaluations along a distinct set of dimensions (valence, arousal).

However, these approaches also unwillingly retake the classical Western division between (cognitive) mind and (emotional) body, problematizes Leys (2011). This distinction goes back to the Classical Antiquity and Enlightenment, which assumed a rationalist bias for individuals devoid of passion and human emotions. Western philosophical thinking regarded passions mostly as disruptive to this order, even as 'dangerous' for the functioning of democratic systems (Heidenreich and Schaal 2012; Bon 2006 [1896]). In consequence, they were banned to the 'private' and bodily realm.

But, physiological, sociological and philosophical approaches demonstrated a close relationship between body, cognitions, emotions, perception, and memory (von Scheve 2009). Firstly, the discovery of 'mirror neurons' emancipated emotions on a physio-

logical level. Observing and 'mirroring' someone else's actions builds universal emotional engagement and empathy in apes and humans. This is a precondition for the formation of higher social structures (Mukamel et al. 2010; Shamay-Tsoory et al. 2009; Oberman and Ramachandran 2009; Onians et al. 2011). Secondly, new insights about the different modes of information processing locate the role of emotions clearer. 'System 1' or fast thinking, with quick automatic reactions strongly influenced by natural drives and emotions, is intertwined with 'System 2' or slow thinking which includes logical and conscious considerations and decisions based on rational thinking (Kahneman 2012). The fast thinking mode appears selective in perceptions of reality, and it can entail an 'emotional framing' of issues (367). Thirdly, psychologists and philosophers suggest that emotions form a direct though often subconscious base for decisions and judgments (Slovic et al. 2002) and that without emotions, moral decision-making becomes impossible (Jeffery 2014).<sup>4</sup>

In order to contribute to framing analysis, this paper understands emotions and related facial expressions as means and base of social communication (Averill 1980; Averill 2012; Parkinson 2005). This social orientation reflects in media coverage. Actual and mediated emotions become not only part of the communication repertoire of social actors, but also form a means of both

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<sup>4</sup> Slovic's 'affective heuristics' follows Kahneman's and Tversky's (1981) 'prospect theory', which sees judgments and decision-making not based on 'maximized utility' or a rational 'homo economicus', but instead involving an emotive component, manifest in, for instance, gain and loss frames.

information and performance which journalists deploy in news production – hence, a framing device.

From the above overview, it can be suggested that the double emancipation of the visual and the affects is interlinked. Appearing at roughly the same time, their relevance consists in providing the way to a shift of attention towards non-cognitive concepts.

After having clarified how framing, iconic/visual turn and affective turn relate to each other, I will now go more in-depth with the concepts of visual framing, emotional representation, and emotional arousal.

## Departure 2: visual framing

This section first analyses some of the challenges of visual framing research, before then presenting how interdependent media and audience frames are. Drawing on a variety of experimental results from media effects research, I will give examples how different media frames can indeed lead to differences in motivation, action tendencies, attitudes, and emotions. In short, emotionally charged media messages have the power to influence how audiences think, feel and act.

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The affective capacity of visuals especially gains relevance with television news as means of informing broader audiences with the aim of supporting a deliberate public sphere in societies. Media frames cannot be adequately understood without incorporating their emotive contents and messages, and their effect on audiences. On television, any kind of news item can potentially contain emotionalizing statements,

catchphrases, topics, or symbolic or visual elements which engage and arouse individual viewers. Even hard news with a higher claim for objectivity and neutrality is no exception to this (Uribe and Gunter 2004, 2007), as news events, such as the attack on former US president Kennedy in 1963 or the reporting about the terrorist attack in London 2005 demonstrate.

But researching visual frames and their emotive potentials poses empirical challenges for three main reasons. First, visual framing research needs to integrate the specific logic of visual communication (Geise and Baden 2013). The previous cognitive bias and the focus on theories of schemata and script (Hamill and Lodge 1986; Scheufele 1999) do not allow to grasp the complexity of the framing concept. Visual logic comprises the inherently polysemic character of images, which leaves room for varied interpretations (Herbers and Volpers 2013). Hence, meaning attribution becomes dependent on external concepts – texts which need to be ascribed to an image to achieve a ‘correct’ interpretation. Second, images are embedded in situative, temporal, spatial, individual and social contexts which creates an obstacle for an inter-subjective perception (Geise and Rössler 2012). Third, the emotive potential is bound to subjective perceptions of the individual. Framing devices can, therefore, at maximum, carry a potentially emotionalizing character.

Linking it to Entman’s idea of salience, we can understand visual framing as selection and accentuation of certain visual aspects of a perceived reality in a communicative context (Scheufele 2001). A visual media frame can usually be recognized as a group of images with a

similar pattern of certain elements (Herbers and Volpers 2013, 85). This also includes patterns of structuring and interpretation, as well as treatment recommendations through visual means, which via core stimuli become more accessible to the perceptive interpretation frames of the audience (Coleman 2010, 237; Geise 2014; Marcinkowski 2014). In other words, visual framing 'refers to the salient imagery frameworks used to construct meaning' (Rodgers et al. 2007, 121). This salience can be created by visual framing devices, which as communicative information can raise attention and affection (Pan and Kosicki 1993). Examples of framing devices are metaphors, catchphrases, visual images (Gamson and Modigliani 1989), or moral claims. Visual images can also be strongly iconic, which adds affect and emotion to messages (Verschuere 2012).

Despite some theoretical conceptualization, empirical evidence for visual framing of television material remains scarce. Only a few studies were able to develop a sufficiently sophisticated research design. Most visual framing studies of the past 20 years restricted their interests at the press and still images despite some refinements (see Matthes 2009, e.g. Bulla and Borah 2006; Fahmy 2004; Fahmy and Kim 2008), or solely the written script of TV news (Müller and Griffin 2012). However, verbal text, sound and visuals have to be analyzed together (Matthes 2014a). There is also a lack of comparative research between culturally different visual representations (Müller and Griffin 2012). Despite recent calls and practices for emotion research in the news (Cho et al. 2003; Döveling 2005; Pantti and Husslage 2009; Wahl-Jorgensen 2016;

Beckett and Deuze 2016), many studies also remain text-based or photo-based.

As mentioned, emotive elements in the audio-visual realm need to be thought along the media effects perspective. Here, audio-visual emotive information can act as a key stimulus for information processing. But audiences are no passive information (and emotion) receivers. Rather, TV news consumers are 'active, emotionally engaged, and socially networked' (Jenkins 2006, 20). Their 'frames in mind' (or thought) meet 'frames in communication' (or media frames) (Chong and Druckman 2007). Audience frames operate on the assumption that 'perception is reference dependent' (Kahneman 2003, 459), or, 'how we interpret information differs depending on how that information is contextualized or framed' (Scheufele 2011, 4).

There is by now an impressive body of evidence on the theoretical and empirical level proving that affects do influence attention, memory, thinking, associations and judgments (e.g., Forgas 1999), that media frames lead to the arousal of emotions, and that affective framing effects on the audience agenda are stronger than cognitive ones under certain conditions (McCombs et al. 1997). News frames are not only characterized by cognitive complexity, but also through valence and value-based judgments (Keum et al. 2006; De Vreese and Boomgaarden 2003). An emotional response depends on how an issue is presented, and these emotional responses mediate the framing effect on opinions.

For example, Masters and Sullivan (1993) found that the judgment of news commentators influenced the emotional

reaction of audience members towards political leaders. Gross (2008) demonstrated that different framing versions (episodic versus thematic) can stimulate anger or compassion which influences attitude formation in policy opinion, while Kim and Niederdeppe (2014) discovered that anger framing of tobacco advertisements appeared to increase audience empathy, while sadness framing did not. Hence, emotional framing does influence audience effects.

Neuro-cognitive approaches explain this theoretically through information storage and retrieval, accessibility theory, or priming. Forgas and Bower strongly emphasize the affective dimension. They argue that how we see the world and how we select, store and retrieve information is strongly determined by affects linked to cognition as 'the arousal of an affective state spreads activation throughout a network of cognitive associations linked to that emotion' (Forgas 1999, 591). Emotions as frame element can lead to cognitive appraisal patterns which might evoke fear or anger ('cognition-to-emotion'), and this frame adoption will influence the subsequent message processing. In consequence, this results in behavior or attitudes congruent to the experienced emotion ('emotion-to-cognition', Kühne 2013).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For example, anger is a negative emotion which is evoked when an individual is kept from reaching his goals, but is powerful enough to punish the person to blame (Tiedens and Linton, 2001). According to appraisal theories, anger therefore comes up when an issue is negative but controllable, with a high probability to happen, and the responsibility carried by an identifiable actor (Kühne 2013, 12). This can lead to the behaviour motivation of punishing the guilty person.

On the physiological level, Bower (1981) identified that the activation of an emotion node also activates a corresponding memory structure so that people remember specific events in their life connected to this emotional arousal. Subsequently, ideas which correspond to the current mood of a person are easier evoked ('mood congruency', Forgas 2000). Applied to TV news, if news frames pair certain cognitive ideas repeatedly with a distinct set of emotions, these combinations become easier accessible in the brain, and this shapes the way in which one understands, judges – and feels not just politics, but the world (Nabi 2003). Individuals do not consider all in information present when making a decision, but only the most accessible (accessibility theory for information – Kühne et al. 2011, 2012, 2014, 2012). Moreover, it can be assumed that certain issues or attributes are made more salient and therefore more likely to be accessed in order to form opinions (Weaver 2007). Selecting information which corresponds closest to one's own emotional state is named 'affective priming' (Forgas 1995).

To summarize this section, as we have seen, the empirical translation of audio-visual framing research requires further development. Based on the presented theoretical considerations, I will now turn to the existing approaches of visual framing analysis and suggest different ways of how emotive elements can be integrated.

### **3. Towards an integration of emotions into visual framing approaches**

Frames can influence how 'objective' or 'sensationalist' a news piece comes across (Hertog and McLeod 2001). The

question now is how affective-emotional components in audio-visual contents can be most suitably thought of, and where we can empirically place emotions within framing approaches.

Here, several options open up: should emotions be best considered as an own discrete frame; do they constitute maybe an entire frame element or framing device? Or are they rather 'invisible', underlying a frame? These three different theorizations of emotions in frames will be discussed in the following, bearing in mind that emotional frames and framing effects can occur in both – the media and the audience. 'Once evoked, emotions dominate people's perspectives and drive subsequent cognitive efforts, including message processing and decision making' (Nabi 2003, 242).

In order to illustrate the more theoretical arguments presented, the empirical evidence and examples for this section are taken from general media coverage as well as a research project of which the author herself was part.<sup>6</sup>

### **'Emotion frames' as unified structure**

The first possibility for analytically establishing frames in news programs consists in coding a distinct emotion frame. The frame does not contain emotive elements besides others but appears as a unified structure containing one single displayed or narrated emotion. This idea follows in some part Nabi's suggestion of 'emotional themes'

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<sup>6</sup> Conducted between 2008 and 2010 at the Free University of Berlin, this project focused on the emotive representation of terrorism in TV news from a sociological and cross-national comparative perspective.

(Nabi 2003, 242), which in some cases become so central that they become an independent frame.

Three suggestions have been made on how to identify it: through its inherent narrative, along with psychological dimensions, and along an ascribed emotion. These possibilities will be discussed in the following.

The term 'emotional framing' was first used by Corcoran (2006). His interest was to integrate emotions directly into the framing concept. This well-meant attempt does not convince on the theoretical side, as Corcoran failed to provide a definition of his 'emotional frame' and how it would relate to 'framing devices'. Empirically led, he distinguished between two types of framing devices – or rather narrative structures: attributed and accredited emotional frames. Attributed frames relate to the public shaming of prominent persons by the media, while accredited emotional frames describe win or loss in sports. The first frame contains little, and the second contains a psychological credibility. However, his conceptualization remains of rather narrow usefulness, as frame contents are too situation-specific and only perpetuate the 'descriptive bias' pointed out before by Benford (1997), without ascending towards a more general level.

Corcoran's understanding of frames as journalistic work practices involves journalistic means, such as identification, intensification, simplification, simple narrative structure and comfortability in news reporting. However, the relation between emotions and frames remains unclear. At best, it is seen pragmatically as a 'hook' for audience attention to easily resonate with an emotional theme.

Contrary to Corcoran, Rodgers et al. (2007) follow a very general approach. They defined distinctive 'emotionality frames' in press photography coverage. The measurement of these frames was oriented on the three-fold PAD scale (pleasure, arousal, dominance) from psychology. Subsequently, they found that in the emotional portrayal of ethnic groups visual stereotyping occurred. For example, African Americans were frequently depicted as happy and excited, while Asian Americans came across as rather sad. Though related to framing approaches, Rodgers et al. rather focused on identifying the presence or absence of an emotion in still photography, and what general type of emotion can be recognized.

Similarly, on a very general level, operate Borah and Bullah (2006) with their 'emotional frame'. Researching newspaper coverage of the Indian Ocean Tsunami, they identified generic frames on different levels of abstraction, like 'lives saved', 'political frame' – and the 'emotional frame'. Here also, their approach rather descriptively describes if or not an emotion is expressed, and what type of – be it a frame of sadness or grief (people in misery) (Borah and Bulla 2005). This idea also recurs in a more hidden form in Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) well-known distinction of five generic frames as 'human interest frame'. Giving a (human) face to a story, with private and personal elements of the actors involved, appears as an emotional angle to an issue's presentation.

This generic appearance of (emotional) frames was understood by scholars as 'structural and inherent to the

conventions of journalism' (De Vreese 2005, 55).

Against these classifications stand more specified single-emotion frames. Those relate to identifying one distinct emotion, such as guilt, suffering, or anger, combined with a specific valence and level of arousal (e.g., Fahmy 2010; Grabe and Bucy 2009; Ibrahim 2010). As with the previous criticism, this approach remains rather descriptive in identifying markers for a single emotion.

All the presented approaches mark the qualitative presence of emotions or emotive elements in news stories, but they mostly do not give a methodology or indicators on how to identify emotions empirically.

### **The indirect/underlying emotions in frames**

The second approach regards emotions neither as a total defining feature of a frame nor as a single frame element only, again retaking Nabi (2003) who sees emotions as frame elements, as for Entman, different emotions can make some parts of a message more salient than others. Certain information is selected which will affect the subsequent emotional experience and perception of the audience. Hence, emotions are underlying features of framing and frames and are mostly embedded in the narratives without necessarily clearly identified as such. We can label this as emotions within a 'holistic frame'.

Stenvall (2014) investigated qualitatively how journalists describe emotional states and behavior of story protagonists. She classified attributed and non-attributed affects where journalists either

write about observed, interpreted or self-experienced affects. Zink et al. (2012) chose a quantitative strategy in sentiment text mining, aiming to capture the emotional spectrum or, 'affective framing' (29) of the financial crisis 2008/9 in a news magazine's emotion discourse, while a more qualitative semantic-associative analysis examined text inherent affective lexica.<sup>7</sup> However, this helps little for *visual* framing, as emotions are identified purely on the written lexical level. Stenvall's and Zink's et al. framing approaches appear maybe at first glance productive; however, they remain of little use to visual framing analysis.

One more promising path sees emotions as evoked by a variety of textual devices. They are highly culture-specific, such as myths and metaphors. Myths can activate strong affective reactions. Together with metaphors and narratives, they contain morals, ideals, stories and definitions deeply embedded in a distinctive culture (Hertog and McLeod 2001, 141). Nelson et al. (1997, 568) add to this rhetorical devices like catchphrases, quotes, caricatures, and visuals.

The second and broader path considers emotions closely linked to narrative structures (Kim and Niederdeppe 2014; Kleres 2011; Kühne and Schemer 2014) or as 'narrative elements' (Hertog and McLeod 2001). Narrativity cannot be understood through cognition alone. Indeed, the linguistic narrative structure of texts favors emotional effects, as

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<sup>7</sup> This comprises words with discrete emotions or affective connotations, metaphors, stylistics. It can be identified as normative-moral evaluations or attribution of responsibility. Emotions were classified according to the dichotomies reference to self/other and positive/negative.

'narratives essentially are emotionally structured' (Kleres 2011, 188). This means that the emotions and texts can structurally overlap. For Goldie, an emotion is 'structured in that it constitutes part of a narrative – roughly, an unfolding sequence of actions and events, thoughts and feelings – in which the emotion itself is embedded' (Goldie 2002, 13). This specific structure may subsequently elicit a distinct emotional reaction with audience members. This was confirmed experimentally by Kühne and Schemer (2014) who showed that although emotions are not always clearly visible within a text, the narrative structure of a frame can be established in a way that allows to expect emotional reactions of audiences with a high probability, based on the Appraisal Tendency Framework (ATF; Kühne 2013, 14). According to the ATF, certain frame structures, such as providing a clear agency or not, lead to the activation of certain patterns of cognitive appraisals. For example, if an event is evaluated negatively, such as a terror attack, and there is a clear responsibility attributable to an actor – the clearly identifiable perpetrator of the attack – the resulting emotion will highly likely be anger. If the perpetrator and its motives, however, remain anonymous – if there is no responsible actor identifiable – the emotion resulting from this will rather be sadness.

Related to this idea of frames, which can emotionalize audiences, is the triggering of emotions in cases where the *central organizing idea* (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987) of an article corresponds with the *core relational theme* (Lazarus 1991) of a specific emotion (Kühne 2013, 10).

Although Kühne et al. did not focus on visual components, their idea can be

translated to audio-visual storytelling. And though 'ideal types of frame constellations' (Kühne 2013, 12) can be defined for a variety of emotions, such as anger, sadness, hope or pride, media coverage actually displays a mix.<sup>8</sup> Empirically helpful appears Kleres (2011) identification of dimensions indicating emotions in narratives, among them through structures (different archetypes of stories, such as victim, hero, scapegoat etc., see Lule 2001), agency and further linguistic manifestations of emotions on the lexical and the syntactical level, and in prosody.

To summarize, narratives are closely linked to emotive framing structures. However, they do not directly relate to Entman's frame elements in all aspects. Though the anger and sadness frames described above comprise aspects of his framing definition (problem recommendation, causal attribution (or interpretation), and moral evaluation), other aspects, such as salience or treatment recommendations, remain less prominent, and less emotive aspects may become marginalized, especially issues of ideology and content. Establishing an emotion frame alone does not answer these questions.

### **Emotions as elements of frames**

If it comes to developing a theoretical-empirical conceptualization of *audio-visual* research, the research presented above suggested different ways of linking the visual and emotions to frame

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<sup>8</sup> How deeply narrative structures are linked to emotions was also demonstrated by Kim and Niederdeppe (2014) who examined anti-tobacco advertisements. While a sadness frame tells stories of loss, an anger frame narrates stories of fighting back against the tobacco industry.

analyses. However, as a major gap surfaces the integration of visual components. As scholars mostly chose press and press photography (iconographic approaches) for framing analysis, audio-visual material or moving images and corresponding empirical specifics were not touched upon.

The audio-visual unites a diverse array of verbal and written text, image and sound. These elements are intertwined manifold, they cannot be analyzed separately, to be 'combined' in the end. And neither general 'emotional frames' or emotive narratives allow sufficient empirical differentiation. Therefore, for an analysis another method is required which incorporates multimodal approaches.

Therefore, I would like to suggest three main approaches, focusing explicitly on visual framing, and examining their suitability for incorporating emotive elements. These approaches stem from Geise and Rössler, Rodriguez and Dimitrova, and Jecker. What unites them is an integrative stance towards visual framing analysis, though rationales and empirical realizations differ. Although emotions are not part of them, I will suggest how they may find space by drawing on illustrative general examples supported by a study about terrorism, media, and emotions (Gerhards et al. 2011).

If Entman's framing definition serves as a theoretical orientation for empirically analyzing emotions in frames, then, first of all, we need to look where exactly we can locate emotions. Apart from the link between emotions and narrative structures analyzed in the previous section, two further options seem productive. First, emotions are connected to moral evaluations as one of Entman's

core frame elements. Second, visual salience can inform us from a neuro-cognitive angle that formal message features enhance an easier information access.

To start with, moral evaluations and moral deliberation can be understood as emotionally driven (Jeffery 2014). Evaluative processes contain judgments which are based on cognitive-emotional processes. This idea counters predominant assumptions about seeing moral judgments solely based on rational reasoning. Indeed, emotions can be understood as part of influencing decision-making and driving motivations and actions. Visual key symbols or metaphors can potentially trigger an emotional reaction, leading viewers to expose an emotionally activating (or non-activating!) valence evaluation (Geise and Baden 2013).

Moral evaluations and moral ethics play a key role through their visual display, for instance, in social movements and frames of injustice. A memorable example is the murder of Khaled Said by the police in pre-Arab Spring Cairo. Here, the once private images reach a public level by turning them into a symbol with a claim of universality and non-uniqueness. The character of a still image 'bypasses the in-built rationality of language to directly impact the viewer's moral senses' (Olesen 2013, 9), creating 'moral shocks' in audiences who again turn producers as social activists. Another example is the presentation of terror victims in television news through everyday life pictures. This 'emotional communication' intertwined with bodily suffering directly create a powerful symbolic potential, with the visual as a reinforcing and amplifying device for an

already existent (injustice) frame (ibid.; Sontag 1979).

Apart from moral evaluation, Entman's framing definition also allows to locate emotions in 'salience'. The basic idea is that if certain visual patterns are presented more prominently and repeated frequently, certain ideas of a frame are made more salient and easier accessible in the brain (Geise et al. 2013). In order to measure visual salience, it has been suggested to form an index of attention (space of a topic in a media outlet), prominence (positioning of a topic) and valence (affective and emotional elements of the message, see Kiousis 2004). The valence dimension relates to 'visuals as stylistic-semiotic systems' (Rodriguez and Dimitrova 2011, 48), such as close-ups and close shots which are usually correlated with more intimacy between protagonist and viewer.<sup>9</sup>

How and on what levels both moral evaluations and salience of emotions in frames can be analyzed will be explained in the following. I will outline three main approaches to visual framing.

The most recent systematic refinement of audio-visual framing analysis stems from Jecker (2014). She also engages with emotive aspects as she includes explicit emotional representation on the visual level as an independent content category (though it remains limited to facial expressions). Besides this, moral evaluations equally indicate strong potential framing effects, hinting to an implicit form of emotionalization.

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<sup>9</sup> Based on E. T. Halls (1966) theory of social distance, the distance of the camera captures varying degrees of intimacy.

Contrary to other visual framing scholars, Jecker addresses the relationship between visual and text as audio-visuals embedded in texts. For her, frames are mainly constituted on the textual level (112–3). Similarly, Rössler (2014) points to the essentially decontextualized character of images, which necessarily need to be complemented by a textual frame.

In the content analytical system, Jecker distinguishes between content categories relating to the verbal level, and to the salience established through audio and visual elements. These levels relate to the four of Entman's framing elements which are used by Jecker although at the same time she criticizes Entman's unclear operationalization<sup>10</sup> of his framing elements. Jecker adds a focus on actors in problem description, causal attribution, problem intervention, and moral evaluation. The audio level comprises a variety of music and sounds (e.g., explosions), and visuals consist of image composition, camera perspective, and operation, editing, color, light, and inserts. Of minor relevance are image topic, text-image-relation, and, finally, the (explicit) display of emotions. Altogether, emotions appear 'in between the lines', on all levels. Though Jecker's suggestion is relevant, framing analysis relies also on visual topics and more latent emotive meanings. This might be better addressed by two other models.

Contrary to Jecker, Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) as well as Geise and Rössler (2012) started with from stills in

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<sup>10</sup> In consequence, Jecker argues, framing studies often mix argumentation and evaluation patterns with mass-mediated interpretation patterns. This also confuses visual representation patterns or news factors (like emotionalization) with actual visual interpretation patterns.

newspapers, but their conceptualizations are applicable to audio-visuals. These scholars also distinguish different analysis levels with increasing degrees of abstraction. I will mostly focus on Rodriguez and Dimitrova, as they developed a model which is not only comprehensive but also empirically good to translate into research practice.

Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) distinguish four layers of visual framing. Emotions act here as a by-element, and they can be identified on all four levels. On the denotative level, an emotion can be the representation of a simple facially expressed emotion or verbalized emotion statement by news subjects. An example for this is people on the street visibly in tears. Though emotional arousal and valence are recognizable, the image alone does not make clear which emotion exactly is displayed. Hence, the contextual framing matters – within terror attacks or disasters it can be identified as grief, setting scenes as generic 'emotional' frames. For viewers, this emotive display can be potentially emotionalizing, which works through processes of mirror neurons and emotional contagion.

The second level regards visuals as stylistic-semiotic system, with gaze, camera position, and other elements adding up to create a certain feeling about a represented object with the viewer, with different degrees and effects of visual proximity and perceived intimacy (Grabe et al. 2001; Graber 1990; Schultheiss and Jenzowsky 2000; Uribe and Gunter 2007).

On the third level, the connotative level, ideas, and concepts which relate to the represented object or characters emerge. As signs, they carry social and

complex meaning and are often rooted in cultures. Emotive representations appear here in the form of emotion rituals. Returning to the example of the London terror attack in July 2005, emotion rituals can manifest in acts of condolence (putting flowers at King's Cross station, flags lowered on half-mast, etc.), in expressions of embarrassed faces of social elites in front of a camera, or in displayed compassion while visiting injured victims at their hospital beds (Gerhards et al. 2011). The display of sympathy, compassion, the collective mourning rituals, and – to a certain extent – unity in the emotive representation across TV news channels signify a negative moral evaluation of the causal agents of terror attacks – the terrorists – on a broad social scale. Also, as these rituals form emotionally charged symbolic representations, they can be considered as formulaic but nevertheless potentially arousing elements of news coverage.

On the final and most abstract level, Rodriguez and Dimitrova locate symbols and stylistic features merging. This may outline underlying ideologies such as war or Eurocentrism, where 'news images are employed as instruments of power in the shaping of public consciousness and historical imagination' (Anden-Papadopoulos 2007). This fourth layer includes besides the political and economic also more subtle levels of the cultural and the emotional, although emotions can never be a whole ideology or a connotation, they can easily be part of that, as can be easily seen with populist political contents.

This level also comprises judgments of value and moral, and this again involves the emotional, as outlined above. (Moral) evaluations are frame elements for

Entman (1993) and Matthes (2014b, especially for strategic frames). In news coverage, they can appear as underlying emotion norms. Their implicit character makes their detection not easy, as too overtly expressed norms not only counter objective-impartial norms of news coverage but also might appear as an emotionally patronizing way of news storytelling. Gerhards et al. (2011) identified first emotions and, subsequently, the implicit emotion norms. In news coverage about terror attacks, they tend to comprise generally agreed upon representations of emotions by 'elite agents' like heads of state or journalists themselves, both expressing compassion for victims and disgust for terrorist perpetrators. Alternatively, a collective subject was defined with journalistically attributed emotions, for instance, through verbalized and visualized 'defiance' of a London terror-shaken population. These emotion norms appear of high relevance, as they tend to play a crucial role in the social orientation of larger audiences.

The model of Rodriguez and Dimitrova allows a comprehensive understanding where emotions can be located in visual framing analysis. Though it is hardly applicable to visual framing analysis on a larger scale, it proves to be an ideal entry point into visual-emotive framing analysis.

The model of Geise and Rössler (2012) follows a similar idea of layering. Their visual content analysis model suggests three levels of image analysis: surface structure, inner structure, and deep structure. The surface structure is the manifest level, covering not only formal composition and representation, such as camera perspective or visual strategies, but also objects and persons, and the

configurative arrangement of relations between the objects. It roughly corresponds to the first two levels of Rodriguez and Dimitrova. Next, the inner structure is marked by a quasi-manifest appearance, which is culturally influenced. It seeks to identify visual stereotypes and symbolic imagery, types of images, and evaluating tendencies. Finally, the deep structure aims for the latent meanings which can only be concluded by inference. They shall describe the 'actual meaning' of the visual, which can relate to multiple associations and interpretation patterns. As Geise and Rössler distinguish three levels of analysis, the empirical proposal of Rodriguez and Dimitrova remains more explicit and structured.

To conclude, emotive or potentially emotionalizing representations can be understood as frame elements. They appear in a multitude of layers with a growing level of abstractness – from the coherent specified emotion frame (only for Rodriguez et al.) to effects by symbols and style on audiences. Emotive representations appear in formal visual language, gaze, or spatial relations, in symbolic representations, evaluative tendencies, and finally in the latent meanings. Processes of salience can increase emotive effects. However, the viewer is an active and essential part of this process, as he or she attributes meaning.

## **Conclusion**

Emotions are an essential part of media frames in audio-visual material. They are a powerful tool to influence or create social emotional climates. Also, they perform a strategic function for journalists to structure news material,

using devices of personalization, simplification, or non-authorial affects to establish a link to news audiences or emphasize emotive information (Corcoran 2006; Stenvall 2014).

The discussion showed that the visual is an important carrier and amplifier of meaning and emotions, as it 'bypasses' a rather rational thinking system, aiming more directly at the intuitive 'gut feeling' of a news audience. That visuals and emotions and emotionalizing elements receive more attention by today, challenging dominantly cognitive models and bias is a consequence of both the affective and visual turn.

The approaches presented allow analyzing emotions in visual frames threefold: 1) as distinctive general frames; 2) as embedded in narratives and narrative structures; 3) and as frame elements. The discussion showed that, in fact, only the last approach allows having a differentiated comprehensive access in order to understand where emotions and emotionalizing elements can be empirically located and validated.

Most useful was the multi-layered approach by Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011). Divided into different abstraction levels, emotions are anchored in each, ranging from manifest audio-visual elements to the underlying socio-cultural and ideological structures. As emotive representations or emotionalizing devices can be understood as audio-visual frame element, with Entman's framing definition they are linked to visual salience (via gaze, camera distance, etc.), semantic-symbolic elements (symbols, metaphors), and direct representation of emotions. The empirical example of TV coverage about a terror attack showed that, in addition,

explicit emotion rituals and implicit emotion norms are overarching features of news coverage. These shape moral evaluations and can potentially impact the emotionalization of news audiences.

It needs to be added that the proposals of audio-visual research presented here do not necessarily mention emotions and framing explicitly as an integrative part of an analysis. However, emotions are ever-present, as explicit or implicit manifest elements, deeply embedded in levels of the visual representation, structure and composition, sound, semantic choices, the narrative, and the verbal. The content analytical approach of Geise and Rössler (2012) can be used

for frame analysis in a modified way, while with Jecker (2014), more emotive elements can be incorporated.

Despite emotions are not always clearly visible in audio-visual news coverage, their analysis can be integrated into visual framing analysis by using a refined model comprising the distinct levels and layers where emotionalizing elements manifest. What also emerged as a guiding line for an analysis of emotions in visual framing is the need to contextualize visuals through text. It is the textual level which directs frame and meaning towards rather ambivalent visuals

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