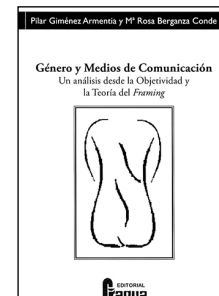


GIMÉNEZ ARMENTIA, P.; BERGANZA CONDE, M. R. *Género y Medios de Comunicación. Un análisis desde la Objetividad y la Teoría del Framing*. Madrid: Fragua, 2009. 255 p. ISBN 978-84-7074-270-5

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Measuring objectivity

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From the very beginning, this book refers, in the title and subtitle, to four great terms or central concepts of current media studies: objectivity, framing, gender and, obviously, the media. There have been many books and articles, with more and more research papers devoted to these topics, and we do not need to expand on these within the confines of a review. That said, the problem is that the authors do not appear to place these studies within their work, nor their work within the overall panorama of these studies.

Giménez and Berganza analyse how the Spanish press treated the news item of the Fourth World Conference on Women, but they do not explain what interest this work may hold fifteen years on. They do not contextualise this UN conference held in Beijing, they do not place the contribution made by their study within the framework of other research into gender and the media, nor do they relate the case they are investigating to any subsequent feminist debate or concern. Nowhere in the text, in the appendices, or practically in the bibliography do we find any references to gender, despite the importance we should be able to deduce from the privileged position reserved for it in the title. In fact, in the introduction to the book the authors state that, in this work, they will be reflecting on “how information can and should adapt to reality” (p. 13) and that they will be doing so on the basis of the case mentioned above. Therefore, their main topic of analysis is *objectivity*.

The first of the theoretical chapters begins with a review of the functions of the media and a number of definitions of the news process. Following this, the authors tackle the question of objectivity, defending the theory of adaptation as their own: “If we view objectivity not only as a quality of what is real but as an attitude of the subject, the cognitive aim of which is the material object and the result of which is the formal object and [sic] we define this process as adaptation between the material object and the subject, we can [sic] then venture that objectivity is possible” (p. 49). However, in a chapter designed as a theoretical review of these questions, it would have been good not to have limited themselves to quoting secondary sources (i.e. works by authors that quote the primary contributions of other authors).

In Chapter Two, the authors attempt to develop a theoretical framework to help with understanding the frames involved in every communication process, as “despite not being able to identify the frame with the visible element of the format, this is a first-hand indication to ascertain how a specific medium or journalist focuses the information” (p. 57) and they then set out some of the debates concerning framing theory. According to Giménez and Berganza, accepting the link between conceptual meaning and the journalist (and/or the medium) does not mean denying that informational truth is connected to the truth of things, but “this relationship must be measured in terms of adaptation and not equation” (p. 64). What they then fail to explain in sufficient detail is what this adaptation consists of; in other words, how a researcher should proceed who wants to conduct an operational study into how far the different media focuses coincide with a given reality.

This work is one in which the desire to apply a descriptive analytical tool has been given priority over theoretical interest. This may explain some of the flaws of this second part. There is no hypothesis, for example. There is only one aim to the analysis: to study the focus of the Spanish press in relation to the conference using framing and adaptation theories. This relative lack of interest in prior theoretical debate is borne out in

the conclusions which the authors finally extract from the analysis: out of a total of ten, six are related to the content and news focus of the Fourth World Conference on Women, yet curiously we have no systemisation or definition of the framing carried out by the media studied. The authors stress that the topic was covered "extensively", that the left-wing media, as opposed to the right-wing media, were favourable to the Conference and that the treatment in general focused on controversy and polemic. However, unlike other framing studies, they do not provide us with the analytical categories, nor do they tell us whether these were created deductively or inductively. Making frames operational and measurable is a complicated task, as we can see from the studies that have been published to date from this perspective (e.g. Berns 2004, or Cheng et al 2009), but as the work of Giménez and Berganza needs to be a little more specific.

At the end of Chapter Three and in the conclusions reference is made (rather unjustified from a research design point of view) to interviews with women journalists who covered the Conference. The authors explain that "the most commonly-shared opinion by the women interviewed was that the sex of the person filing the report was a determining factor regarding the treatment of the Conference" (p. 141, p. 148). In addition, that the preferences of the journalists differed from those of the media for which they worked (which in the end imposed theirs) and that the professionals interviewed stated that they supplied objective information, even though they recognised that their own ideas and experiences may have been conditioning factors. These results, however, do not relate to the content analysis and are disconnected from the rest of the text.

In terms of its structure, this book all too readily betrays its original PhD thesis format. Basically, the book is divided into two chapters of theoretical introduction, a rather extensive chapter on the results and a few brief conclusions (5 pages). The appendices start on page 151 (and end on page 223). We should add that there are some problems with the editing. Despite there being two authors, one of the chapters is written in the first person singular ("I agree with Soria about that", "I feel it would be advisable to", etc.). The masculine is used to refer to the acclaimed female author, Gaye Tuchman (p. 54). Also, for example, on page 104 they even talk about feminist activists fighting "for the discrimination of women" or about "developing women". These expressions do not make it easy to understand the text in general but are hugely indicative of a certain lack of care or attention to the final structure of the work.

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