

Framing and Intertextuality in the late nineties : Political broadcasting on French TV

Ludovic RENARD

At first sight, the recent evolution of political journalism on French television can be characterized by changes of a contradictory nature. On the one hand, there is in French broadcasting, a general process of crystalization of political coverage, which confirms the hypothesis of a « crisis » of political journalism on French television. On the other hand, the French national networks are the source of numerous attempts at the renewal of political coverage framing¹. The ambiguity of these changes allows one to analyse the news practices and the news challenges to French political journalism on television in the late nineties. The main purpose of this paper is to look at some of the new dimensions of this political journalism. We will focus on the analysis of the evolution of new ways of framing political coverage after the 1995 presidential campaign.

Indeed, at this time, there has been on French television, a multiplication of TV programs illustrating the desire of the national networks to change the forms of political journalism. Most often, this desire finds expression in the introduction of new formats of political coverage on television, using journalistic techniques and patterns imported from non political TV programs. These new practices are deeply involved in the renewal of political coverage framing.

In order to better understand these new forms of political journalism on television, we must focus our analysis on the phenomenon of intertextuality on television. **Therefore, we will demonstrate that taking the phenomenon of television intertextuality into consideration permits a better understanding of the political framing present in the political coverage in France.** There are three parts to this study : 1) the exposition of the methodological and theoretical questions, 2) an analysis of some ways of framing political coverage during the 1996-1997 television season and 3) a more general reflexion about current challenges to political journalism on French television.

New ways of framing political coverage and new forms of political journalism on television

In the general context of the evolution of French broadcasting in the last two decades, French television today has a double centrality in the national political space : French television is significant in the distribution and circulation of political discourse and it is an actor in the process of the diffusion and redefinition of social representations that the political discourse transmits.

Concerning the transmission of political discourse, the topic of many works on political communication is the manner of transmission and circulation of this discourse on television and also the effect of « playing by the rules » by the politicians (the strategy of political marketing). Generally speaking, most of these studies condemn the role played by television. The main argument is that this manner of transmission and circulation creates rules that are present in space and time and that do not allow the political discourse to put forward its own

¹ Erik NEVEU, « Des questions jamais entendues : crise et renouvellement du journalisme politique à la télévision », *Politix*, 37, 1997.

rules of coherence and persuasion. This argument is well-known but not always proven : the « mediaization » of the political discourse caused a crisis for political argumentation, in the more general context where the production of political ideas was declining and where the force of conviction of the political discourse was becoming weaker. But in fact, it is not easy to link these different phenomena.

Concerning the central role played by television in the process of the diffusion and redefinition of social representations actually transmitted by politics on television, the problem is different. This problem is generally raised (by press journalists in particular) in terms of a question about the influence of political coverage on public opinion. Without elements of analysis concerning the reception of political broadcasts, this question is reduced to a discussion about the power of the persuasion attributed in principle to television. The question of the influence of political coverage on the social representations devoted to the political sphere can be approached differently. This time, it can be characterized by a question of the capacity of the different political broadcasts to « *build expressions of representations which exist independently of television* »². Then, the question of the influence of political coverage turns out to be an analysis of the strategy of the networks to find in their different broadcasts the condition of success of this political coverage.

Each of these strategies must be analysed within the context of the change of the power relationship, characterized as a configuration of three components : the first one is the position of the networks (dominant position, competition, audience), the second one is the evolution of the TV profession (the category and the role of political journalist in particular) and lastly the national political context (electoral campaign, political event, etc...). These strategies can be analysed through different subjects : a network, a TV program (« classical » political broadcast, the political part of news, or talk shows) or several broadcasts of which certain are not classified as political broadcasts. We will focus our attention on this last subject. **We will stress the fact that, inside a « televisual » space, the relationships of intertextuality and sense (constructed in a « relational and political »³ manner by these different broadcasts) explain the evolution of political framing (and new ways of framing political coverage).**

First, we will postulate a hypothesis concerning the activities of two of the principal actors of political broadcasting, that is to say, the TV professionals and professional politicians (the third actor is public opinion). Progressively, during the last two decades, the change of the status of television has been integrated into the activities of these professionals. Today, television does not only broadcast political coverage but also constrains politicians in their strategy of communication. French television is becoming central in the national political space. For this reason, politicians have to go through an intense process of socialisation of new political rules induced by the « mediaization » of politics on television. At the same time, the different actors of the political broadcast have been strongly constrained by the networks' commercial logic. Integrating audience objectives and competitive criteria, this logic has caused changes in traditional roles and competencies attached to political journalism in particular, and television coverage in general⁴.

² Erik NEVEU, Annie COLLOVALD, « Les guignols ou la caricature en abîme », *Mots*, 48, 1996.

³ Jacques GERSTLE, « La persuasion de l'actualité télévisée », *Politix*, 37, 1997.

⁴ Erik NEVEU, Brigitte LE GRIGNOU, « Emettre la réception, préméditations et réceptions de la politique télévisée », *Réseaux*, 1988 / *Sociologie de la communication*, CNET, 1997.

These changes constrain strategies developed by actors within the rules of television (and they also constrain the game played by these actors to define new rules) in order to gain the television viewer. For politicians, the object of these strategies is to spread, in the best conditions and with success, their « *programs of perception and transformation of social realities* »⁵ to the public. These programs are formulated by politicians on television through discourses. These programs and discourses are, in different TV broadcasts, schematically covered by the activity of two sorts of TV professionals: directly, in broadcasts (classical political broadcasts or special ones, like the television coverage of political campaigns) organised by actors who are in charge of political coverage on television (political service, political journalists); or by non specialised journalists who present or produce news on TV, talk show, reports. In these broadcasts diffused by networks where politicians often speak, these TV professionals present to the TV viewer their own vision of a social and political world, using television coverage which can be sometimes entertaining and fictional and sometimes informative and cultural.

Therefore, on television, in a manner more or less regular, the political discourses and social representations transmitted by political coverage are diffused in various framings. More or less important depending on the moment, this variety of political coverage on television, is principally the result of framing strategies elaborated by TV professionals. These strategies depend on various factors linked with general modifications which affect relationships between French broadcast and the changes of national public and political space. These factors are, for example, the social inter-dependencies bounded by institutional and structural dimensions of journalistic activities (autonomy of TV professionals), the relationships between political mediaization and public space (agenda effect). **Indeed, there are a numerous reasons which can explain why, in a certain period, contents, patterns and format of political TV coverage, can become a legitimate and effective part of political journalism on television. We are going to focus our attention on one of these factors, which is a source of change in definition of ways of framing political coverage. This factor is the permanent process of interaction between the framing strategies used by politicians in their discourses and the strategies used by TV professionals in their broadcasts (recognised or not as political broadcasts). More exactly, we are going to demonstrate that it is difficult to understand the evolution of the ways framing political coverage, in the late nineties on television in France, without taking into account phenomena of intertextuality transmitted by this permanent process of interaction. Indeed, the political framings which today enclose politics on TV in France, are the result of intertextuality phenomena on two levels: on the first level, the intertextuality phenomena which connect political argumentations with the different TV programs which broadcast them, on the second level, the intertextuality phenomena between the different broadcasts which include the non-political broadcasts.**

This approach can be connected with concurrent frame analyses that we can find in research concerning political communication and, more particularly, political journalism⁶. In order to synthesize these analyses, we can say that they postulate that there is nowadays, a sort of competition, even a fight between journalists and politicians. The stake of this competition

⁵ Philippe BRAUD, *Le suffrage universel contre la démocratie*, 1981.

⁶ For example, in « Communication et politique », *Hermès*, 1995.

would be to determine effective and legitimate political framing in which are included the public's perceptions and representations of the political world and other social worlds. Many theoretical possibilities can be linked to this general frame analysis. One would be to explain the media strategies of framing (framing of political coverage on television, for example) in a strategist paradigm of a fight among professionals, in order to gain positions of power in journalism (political journalism on television). Another one would be to analyse the changes of public space and democratic mediation (how political and media institutions participate in the political construction of political reality).

Our analysis allows us to understand the work of TV professionals concerning the framing political strategies transmitted by political discourse. This work can be analysed through journalistic contents, patterns and formats. Generally speaking, we have to analyse how the journalistic discourses can frame the political discourses and arguments (for example, representing what are the political stakes in a certain political situation).

Activities of politicians and journalists on television are characterized by phenomena of ritualisation which make political practices and discourses on TV routine. Yet, at the same time, the political coverage on television is capable of changing very quickly ; for example, the changes of television broadcasts during political campaigns for elections. These broadcasts can adapt themselves to the changes of the political situation and to competing networks' framing strategies. And it is because these broadcasts are the result of a permanent process of interaction in behaviours and interpretations of political actors on television. What is more, changes in political framing on television have to be analysed in various rhythms, temporalities and cycles, because political framing on television depends upon strategies which are the result of social and institutional inter-dependencies. This necessary periodisation of political coverage on television can be analysed by taking into account context effects, which in a certain period allows one to study practices of TV professionals and politicians.

Before studying a certain period, we are going to focus our attention on the theoretical content of framing political coverage on television. We are going to analyse interaction phenomena, sources of political framing.

Structure of categorisation : interactive construction of political framing on television

Like discourse on television⁷, the study of political framing on television can be analysed from an interactionist point of view. The main objective of an interactionist approach of political discourse on television is to emphasize the interactive aspect which characterises the construction and the practice of political framing on television. According to specialists in communication science, political framing on television characterises the structure « transmitter-receiver » as a sort of interactions. These interactions are distinguished by « *contracts* »⁸ which organise, in different ways, the situational, discursive, conversational and argumentative norms of communication on television. In broadcasts, these norms and contracts are subject to permanent and reciprocal adjustments. That is why we can analyse them from an interactionist point of view.

According to political scientists, it is in the first place, the process of political reality construction which mobilises interaction phenomena. In Jacques Gerstlé's point of view, this political reality, « *that nobody can control* », can be analysed as « *a symbolic composition*

⁷ Philippe VIALON, *L'analyse du discours télévisuel*, PUF, 1996.

⁸ Patrick CHARAUDEAU, « Les conditions d'une typologie des genres télévisuels », *Réseaux*, 81, 1997.

effect »⁹. On television, interaction phenomena are the result of practices and interpretations of TV professionals and politicians. We are going to focus our attention on the constructive effect on political reality through this interaction process. From this perspective, we are going to maintain that political framing on television functions as interpretative framing. This political framing guides interpretations and strategical ways of framing political coverage. The term of interpretation refers to the symbolic, cognitive, discursive and axiological nature of political discourse and framing on television. Symbolic, insofar as political framing is symbolic references transmitted by political discourse on TV broadcasts. Indeed, this political discourse is not only the simple reproduction of a political reality already totally determinate. It is also a central part of a process which makes this political reality actualised and through which it obtains his characteristics. Cognitive, because it is necessary to take into account what framing political coverage imposes upon political reality¹⁰. Indeed, political framing is the object of appropriations and reappropriations from actors in their strategic behaviours and their interpretations. Discursive, because politicians on television use discourses which exercise their own mediation and eventually reinforce expressive links. These expressive links can transmit signs and symbols which carry social representations. These social representations are diffused and articulated with intersubjectivity. That is why it is not easy to analyse them in TV broadcasts. Therefore, we have to analyse them firstly as texts in discourses on television. Axiological, because social representations transmitted by political discourses are connected with political projects of transformation of social realities and social beliefs. For example, in Alban Bouvier's opinion, when a politician « *talks about nation, it is not only to specify its nature but also to say if we must preserve it or go beyond it* ».

The notion of « categorisation » will help us to specify the theoretical perspective used to study political framing on television (in order to pass beyond a simple description in analysis). This notion is already used in ethnomethodological studies¹¹ and researches concerning political argumentation¹². In general, the notion of « categorisation », like the notion of interaction, is used in order to emphasize the constructive effect of political and journalistic activities on political framing and political reality. From this point of view, the interest of an argumentative analysis is to show how a category (for example, the category « political », which makes politicians and journalists say that a subject or a question is or is not « political »), is collectively constructed through an interactive process of categorisation. Indeed, the work of politicians on television is to anticipate, in their framing strategies, the result of this categorisation process, by producing an argumentative and effective discourse. This discourse influence modes of typification of their different publics. For its part, the ethnomethodological perspective is characterised by the fact that it analyses the « context »¹³ in which these categorisations and modes of typification are used by actors.

Discourses and political framing on television lend themselves to an analysis of the contextual dimensions of categorisation. Indeed, in deciding on their framing strategies, journalistic and political professionals codify in their discourses the political objects, taking into account the

⁹ Jacques GERSTLE, *La communication politique*, PUF, 1992.

¹⁰ Alban BOUVIER, « La catégorisation de l'action dans les argumentations politiques, étude de sociologie cognitive », *L'Année Sociologique*, 44, 1994.

¹¹ Louis QUERE, « L'enquête sur les catégories », *Raisons pratiques*, 5, 1994.

¹² Alban BOUVIER, « Argumentation et cognition en sociologie morale et juridique », *Cognition et sciences sociales*, PUF, 1997. »

¹³ Stephen HESTERS, « Les catégories en contexte », *Raisons pratiques*, 5, 1994.

typification of their publics. Therefore, these professionals are particularly attentive to what Stephen Hesters calls « *local organisations of categorial order* », which are constituted by « *categorisation structure and categories* ». Then, the question is to know how these structures of categorisation are organized in discourses on TV broadcasts, through components of « mediatic » text, in other words, by a type of discursive mode, structure of interlocution, contents and ways of « staging » actors of the political communication process. Politicians and TV professionals make various uses of these components. Therefore, in the discourses of the TV professionals and the politicians, the significations of categories are not independent of the situations in which they are used. For example, a non-political subject of a news report can become political if it is disseminated in a political broadcast.

Political framings are daily constructed by interactive practices of TV professionals and politicians. Nevertheless, this framing is determined by reproductive and ritual principles of categorisation, insofar as the framing strategies of these professionals depend on institutional and social inter-dependencies. But these reproduced and ritualised structures of categorisation have to take into account their insertion in altering contexts, which are subject to a constant process of interaction. That is why framing political coverage strategies must always be in line with changes of political framings. **It means that television framing of political coverage is not only the result of framing political coverage strategies of TV professionals (of political journalists in particular). Indeed, if ways of political coverage on television are enclosed in very limited principles of categorisation, controlled by the framing strategies of TV professionals, these strategies, in order to be legitimated and efficacious, must be based on resources and constraints of TV broadcasts, which depend on changing context of political and social life.**

In TV broadcasts, this notion of « context » reflects two sorts of social relations. Concerning discourses on television, in the transmitter-receiver relation, the social relation is characterised by an interactive context, marked by a high level of anonymity. On the set of a TV program, this intended recipient of discourse is still this anonymous receiver, but he is « staged » in different ways and he can share the descriptive and observable dimensions of reality. Therefore, for the sake of our analysis, it is to be hoped that we distinguish two notions : the context of interaction and the context of action. Both of them form what it is generally called the interaction structure. **TV professionals and politicians integrate into their framing strategies the resources and the constraints organized by these contexts of action and interaction. The interaction structure determinate the structures of categorisation which allow TV actors to define and realize, in interaction, their political framing strategies. But, because of the contextual and interactive character of political coverage on television, these constraints and resources do not exhaust the permanent process of interactive construction of political framing.**

After this brief exposition of theoretical analysis of political framing on television, we are going to focus our attention on the new strategies of framing political coverage after the 1995 presidential campaign. We are going to maintain that most of these strategies have integrated phenomena of television intertextuality. In the nineties, these phenomena have progressively taken part in the redefinition of forms of political TV journalism in France.

Analysis of TV programs : intertextuality of political broadcastings on French television

During the decade of the nineties, there has been, on French television, a multiplication of TV programs illustrating the desire of the national networks to change the forms of political journalism. At the beginning of the television season in September 1996, this desire had to take account of a political context which was characterized by a lack of elections in the foreseeable future (before the dissolution of National Assembly). In this context, the principal objective of political TV programs, which is to present contradictory discourses of politicians and to participate in the selection of political programs, is less important and also obliges TV professionals to renew political coverage on TV. Apart from this particular context, from the end of the eighties, political journalism on the networks, which are because of their status, in charge of political broadcastings (leader channel TF1 and the two channels of public service France 2&3), had to take into consideration political coverage from non-political TV programs, partly due to the influence of new national networks (Canal +, M6, La Cinquième). **Now, new ways of framing political coverage have to take into account two types of intertextuality phenomena which change forms of political journalism on television: firstly, journalistic techniques of mobilisation of public opinion, secondly a more general perspective of « disenchantment » with the political coverage by many TV programs not classified as political broadcasts (TV news, talk shows, television journals...) which modify ways of framing political coverage.**

This disenchantment with political coverage can be analysed as a response to the influence of TV professionals who are in competition in television space with political journalists. This supports the hypothesis of a marginalisation of political journalists as principal actors of political coverage on television. In any case, political journalists had to adapt their TV programs, techniques, patterns and contents to non-political TV programs. In order to focus on intertextuality effects which influence framing political coverage in different TV programs, we will study firstly new techniques and patterns of mobilisation of public opinion (the idea of a journalist as a « mediator »). Then, we will study the impact of these new forms of political journalism on traditional political TV programs and on a special TV program, an interview of the French President.

The logic, the techniques and the patterns of « mediation television »

By definition, as the intended recipient of the the discourse, the TV viewer is always present in the structure of interaction (between transmitter and receiver). If the TV viewer is not physically present on the set (in the structure of interlocution depending on the context of action), he is represented in the interaction context by journalists through a « *procedure of delegation* »¹⁴. During the eighties, even in political TV programs, numerous methods of delegation have been elaborated through the sophistication of journalistic techniques of TV viewers' mobilisation. Today, the TV viewers' chance to be heard is abundantly staged in TV programs. This phenomenon is characteristic of the recent framing strategies of political coverage on television. The declarations of two TV professionals in September 1996, illustrated this phenomenon¹⁵. The new Director of the News Department in the public

¹⁴ Erik NEVEU, Brigitte LE GRIGNOU, « Intimités publiques, les dynamiques de la politique à la télévision », *Revue Française de Science Politique*, 6, 1993.

¹⁵ TV program « Lignes de mire », France 3, September 1996.

channel France 2, specified that the task of journalists is to « rediscover our country beyond the words of those who govern ». For his part, an ex-TV news journalist wished that people on the set « would show the world and their own life ». **These declarations mean that interpretative and effective political coverage has to represent and to illustrate perceptions of TV viewers on political and social reality. This political coverage is based on structures of categorisation, which permit the contextual insertion of subjects, topics and discourses into social representations.**

Let us study briefly a talk show called « The World of Lea » (September 1996). The journalist as a leitmotiv : « Family, I listen to you », « The 40 families who will represent the state of France at the end of the TV season ». The role of the journalist is to organise on the set a discussion about 2 or 3 topics between a family and other guests. The strategy of the journalist is to stand aside and let the family speak. « Your questions will be more pertinent than mine », he declares several times. He adds : « What you say is just what the opinion polls show ». That means that opinion polls (classical scientific basis of this genre of TV programs) reinforce the representativity and legitimacy of the family and not that of the journalist (but it did it indirectly). We can identify an original journalistic technique in these TV programs. It is the « micro salon ». It is quite ironic because, in fact, this is an inversion of the « micro trottoir » (« man on the street »), which is very often utilised in TV news. It consists of interviewing people in the street, because their declarations on society's problems are good representations of the different opinion of the public. Generally speaking, the criticism of this journalistic technique is that it gives an imperfect representation of the diversity of opinion and that it makes opinion banal. With the « man in a salon », the declarations of stars, artists, famous people are reduced to soundbites, whereas during one hour and a half, the journalist reverently collects words of the family. This technique confirms declarations of the « mediator journalist » : the legitimate and representative word belongs to the family and not to those who are in a salon, that is to say in another world. In fact, this technique and format is the inversion of TV programs in which people invited (because of their representativity) posed questions to experts who then had the final and « sacred » word. Nevertheless, the family as a central guest during the season will very quickly disappear. First, the family will not witness society's problems, but comments because of its relationship to the subject of the debate (which is a classical format in talk shows). Then the guests invited are from different families. We can propose an explanation for this failure of this technique. TV format implies that, in this genre of TV programs, words and opinions must be exchanged. What is possible in TV news format is in this talk show format not possible. Social representations linked to the opinions of the guests do not correspond to the structure of categorisation which the journalist organizes. Indeed, it is one thing for journalists (in order to legitimate their « mediation activity »), to wish to give an expression to common sense, to public opinion, but it is another thing to find, in patterns, formats and techniques, the ways of the expression of the common sense and the public opinion. We must always consider that the status occupied by TV guests on the set of TV programs is controlled by the TV professionals¹⁶.

We will underline another journalistic technique of mobilisation of public opinion, in the talk show « L'Hebdo » (« The Weekly ») on Canal+ network. This technique, called « On en parle » (« We are talking about it ») takes into consideration « non-media » public spaces by

¹⁶ Patrick CHARAUDEAU, Rodolphe GHIGLIONE. *Le talk-show, un genre télévisuel*. Dunod, 1997.

polling people on what they talked about the most at work, in cafes, in the subway, in order to obtain a list of 10 topics which are most discussed by French people during the week. The journalist remarks that these topics are not those which are covered by TV news in particular and on television in general. This media coverage and the meaning that is given to it by certain TV professionals is typical of a strategy of distancing from political journalism and from political coverage on television. This strategy is strongly present in political TV programs, even if these programs are a « gender »¹⁷ on the French television.

Political TV programs, disenchantment with political coverage

Analysis has been done of « liquidation » of political TV programs at the end of the eighties and also analysis of cyclic phenomenon of crisis and renewal of journalistic forms of political coverage¹⁸. Generally speaking, political coverage on television has to « convert a complex and opaque activity (politics) into an interaction without putting off the audience ». This analysis is confirmed by a new political TV program broadcasted in September 1996, on the channel France 2 (« Franchement », « Frankly speaking »). Indeed, all the characteristics of classical political coverage on television are in this TV program.

Let us present briefly the 7 parts of this TV program, in which two political journalists interview a politician. The « Portrait » consists of short interviews given by other politicians about the invited politician. « Actuality » covers politics, that is to say partisan politics in this context. « Marks » begins by showing childhood photos and covers political career of the politician. « Political incorrectness » : two « incorrect » questions are recorded by press journalists. « Idea » : the political guest has the time to present one idea, which he particularly likes. Then the journalists introduce an opponent, whom the politician does not know. « Results » : « What is your biggest success » ask the journalists ; and « your biggest failure » ? Example of failure is chosen by the journalists. And last but not least, « Somewhere else », the journalists ask : « When you are not occupied by political activities, what are you doing » ? Alain Madelin (the first politician invited) answer : « I listen to opera and work in my vegetable garden ». At this moment, Jean-Pierre Coffe, a specialist on gastronomical questions on French television conducts the « tomato quiz »¹⁹. He questions the politician to find out if he is only pretending to be a vegetable garden lover. For that, he ask him to identify varieties of tomatoes. This journalistic technique and format is very significant of the functioning of a structure of categorisation. In this case, the structure of categorisation is the following : how politicians who do not know, as we know as everyday French people (this everyday French people is here identified by the category « knowledge of tomatoes » but we can find it on other forms, on other programs) recognise varieties of tomatoes, can propose political solutions to peoples' preoccupations, if they do not have the same perceptions of reality as everyday people (that is to say the TV viewer). In fact, it is quite hard for anybody to identify varieties of tomatoes (at least it is possible not to pretend it by declaring that you like vegetable garden activities !), but the work of journalists consists in making one believe that this is the « A.B.C. » of all collective life. **We can see that structures of categorisation deployed by TV professionals in political broadcasts are ways for a privileged access to social representations which are considered those of the intended recipient of the**

¹⁷ Jérôme BOURDON, « Propositions pour une sémiologie des genres audiovisuels », *Quaderni*, 4, 1988.

¹⁸ Erik NEVEU, « Les émissions politiques à la télévision », *Hermès*, 17-18, 1995.

¹⁹ Alain REMOND, *Télérama*, 2439, October 1996.

discourse. These representations are in TV programs linked with the categories in which people think about the political activity. This journalistic demonstration of the gap between political discourses and public opinion is not new, but it has to use new forms of political coverage. These forms on television have been strongly constrained by the framing of political coverage of non-traditional TV programs.

These non-traditional TV programs cover differently political objects. For example, the TV program « Sunday Evening », on France 3, broadcasts reports on the political profession, that is to say, the activity of a deputy in his district during the week-end, or in a ministry. This TV program, which is late in the Sunday evening broadcasts, is intended for a public with a high cultural level, who wants to have a look at the political events of the week and at the declarations of politicians in other traditional TV (not only on television) programs broadcast during the week-end. In the last part of this TV program, two journalists discuss the rumours of political life. In this part, all is categorised as political ; politics is presented as a space of personal rivalries and partisan politics.

The most significant disenchantment is with forms of political coverage in TV programs (on new national networks, which do not have the status of leader or public channel), which cover political topics not usually covered in TV programs or cover them from a different point of view. The first TV program representative of this phenomenon is the TV program « Arrêt sur Image » (« Freezeframe »), broadcasted on Channel 5 (La Cinquième). Several segments of this TV program, which analyse weekly television broadcasts, examine traditional political coverage, through, for example, the analysis of TV news, mechanism of government communication, in general, the work of media and political journalists. This TV program reveals the intentions of political communication protagonists. This TV program is, most of time, somewhat demystifying for the viewing public of French television. We can also mention another TV program, on the M6 network, which specialises in economic coverage. Two programs have been devoted to the topic of money and political power. The form of coverage is « investigative » journalism. The main objective is to inform about the political profession and its relationship with money. The TV viewer can see reports in which journalists follow a Senator or a Deputy in their different activities. The investigation shows how a city suffered financial collapse, how a mayor obtains subsidies for his city, what is political bargaining, how much money a minister earns. A political scientist comments. What is important to analyse it is not only the patterns and contents, but the force of images which are broadcast. « Zapping », a TV program on Canal+ network, which everyday recapitulates the best moments of TV broadcasts, will, for example, shows a report broadcast by this TV program presenting the deputies practicing golf indoors on the driving range under the National Assembly. These images are rather rare in the French political culture and leads in a certain way to a disenchantment with politics on television. In any case, journalistic coverage shows that political labels are not important (which breaks with the tradition of partisan opposition, highly staged in classical political broadcastings during political campaign, for example) and that this is the political bargaining which explains the political life, which is a realistic vision of politics. In our analysis, we focus on the fact that certain ways of political coverage do not have the objective of presenting the contradictory discourses of political leaders, but of covering, from different point of view, the political objects such as the political structures (political institutions and forces), the political events, the political roles and profession. In

connexion with this, we can mention the numerous portraits of politicians and also documentaries covering political history.

Finally, intertextuality phenomena organised by these different TV programs, explain that it is difficult, in certain political contexts (in particular contexts characterized by a lack of elections in the foreseeable future), to define ways of framing political coverage which are reduced to the presentation of competing political programs, through the interview of political leaders. Therefore, political journalists are constrained to import into these TV broadcasts, forms of political coverage taken from non political TV programs. Otherwise, the political TV programs do not give the opportunity to politicians to use efficacious political framings, that is to say, which permit these politicians to realise their strategies of communication. Moreover, if there is not the presence of the leaders of the political scene, these political TV programs are not able to capture a large audience.

We can observe an illustration of these phenomena in the special TV program called « The French ask. The President answers », broadcasting the interview of the President Jacques Chirac on 12, December 1996.

A special political TV program : interview of the President Jacques Chirac

Among the 4 interviewers there are no traditional political journalists, but on the contrary, journalists who, at this time, participate in the renewal of political coverage on different networks. It is also significant that news reportings (from TV News) precede the questions of the journalists and the answers of the President. Indeed, we can interpret this strategy of Jacques Chirac (and of his communication advisers, because this TV program has been negotiated with TV professionals), as an attempt to connect the political programs of transformation of the social realities with the framing of political coverage in which these realities are usually covered and presented to the viewing public. It is true that TV news daily constructs structures of categorisation which organise powerful social representations (national for example)²⁰. It does not mean that the presidential discourse only utilised categories of judgement and knowledge of the journalistic commentary (we should here consider a second level of intertextuality between political argumentation and journalistic commentary). But, the coverage of these categories permits the linkage of these categories with social representations.

We noted in our study, that in general, at the end of the nineties, political coverage tries to illustrate what are the perceptions of the public on the social reality. In this special TV program, we can take note of the repetition by the journalists of expressions such as « we have the feeling », « the feeling of the people ». The rhetoric is not only about the preoccupations of everyday people but about the perceptions of social and political reality. It is why journalists use in news reportings numerous representations of everyday life. An international correspondent from TF1 network, asks the President : « I received during the afternoon telephone calls from people, who tomorrow will take the subway... What can you say to them, Mister President » ?

²⁰ Ludovic RENARD, « Une muséographie télévisuelle : vie, mémoire et traditions des régions françaises dans le journal de Jean-Pierre PERNAUT », *Mémoire de DEA*, IEP/BordeauxIV, 1994.

This special political TV program shows that, because of their more or less repetitive and ritualised uses, political coverage becomes an instrument which determines the meaning of political topics and objects, and which allows the discourses of TV professionals and politicians to connect with categories, according to structures of categorisations, which the interactions between TV professionals and politicians organise. These structures of categorisation are what we can call the political framings on television. The framing strategies of political coverage are constrained by these political framings, at the same time as they determine them. Therefore, political framing organises constraints and resources for the strategies of political journalism.

We will present part 3) *Resources and constraints of the French political journalism* , during the oral presentation of the ECPR workshop in Copenhagen.

Gender in Political Science: Framing the Issues

Pippa Norris
Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass, 02138
USA

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to consider how and why issues of gender politics become salient in the mainstream analysis of political behaviour in the United States, and in particular how the agenda of the women's movement combined with popular accounts in the media to frame the dominant interpretation of the gender gap in political science. To argue this case the paper explores theories of framing, which have become popular in media studies, and considers how this could also be applied to understand the dominant agenda in political science. The conclusion considers the implications for how we study gender politics in political science.

Theories of Framing Gender Politics

One way to understand the politics of gender is through the theory of framing, first introduced by the sociologist Erving Goffman (1974). Frames provide contextual cues giving order and meaning to complex problems, actions, and events. Defined fairly narrowly, the concept of framing refers to subtle issues of presentation (Iyengar, 1991). In surveys, even small changes in the wording of question choices has been found to produce different preferences among respondents (Iyengar, 1991). Such framing effects have been detected in experimental and survey studies across a wide range of subjects. Defined more broadly, frames provide interpretative structures which set particular events within their broader context (Entman, 1991, 1993a; Gitlin, 1980, 1994). In popular culture, frames guide the selection, presentation, and evaluation of information, for journalists and readers, by slotting the novel into familiar categories. In Gitlin's words:

Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organise discourse, whether verbal or visual. (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7)

Some simple examples make the concept clearer. Within election campaigns the familiar 'horse race' frame (who is ahead, who is behind) dominates coverage of the primaries (Hallin, 1990). In discussing Vietnam, Americans who refused to serve in the war were commonly referred to as draft 'evaders', rather than in their own term, as draft 'resisters' (Tuchman, 1978). In covering the student protest movement, activists were widely depicted as scruffy, flag-burning, radical extremists on the streets contrasted with calm, reasonable-sounding authorities in the studio (Gitlin, 1980; Small, 1994). In reporting complex acts of 'terrorist' violence the victim-perpetrator frames amplifies the attribution of responsibility (Cohen and Wolfstfeld, 1993). The black-white race riot frame often shapes coverage of civil disturbances, even where inappropriate (Smith, 1994). The developing world has long criticised the framing of news about their countries only in terms of 'coups, earthquakes and disasters' (Mowlana, 1985). International conflict was often explained by a 'Cold War' frame identifying friends and enemies, until this broke down following the fall of the Berlin Wall (Norris, 1996). Alternative social movements such as anti-nuclear groups (Entman, 1993b) have been framed in ways which they judge inappropriate.

Since the concept of 'framing' is complex, we need to try to clarify the main components. The theory remains under-developed, nevertheless it provides a general framework to help understand why there have been common criticisms by women of the conventional gender lens provided in popular accounts and political science. When applied to communications, the theory suggests that news 'frames' to simplify, prioritise, and structure the narrative flow of events (Tuchman, 1978; Gitlin, 1980). News frames bundle key concepts, stock phrases, and conventional images to reinforce common ways of presenting developments. Events are open to multiple interpretations, but some frames become the conventional way to treat developments. The essence of framing is selection to prioritise some facts, events or developments over others, thereby promoting a particular interpretation (Entman, 1993a). Reporters can 'tell it like it is' within 60 seconds, rapidly sorting key events from surrounding trivia, by drawing on reservoirs of familiar stories to cue readers. Through the selection, presentation and evaluation of information particular events are understood within broader interpretative categories (Gitlin, 1980).

Where do frames come from? Following Gans (1979), we can suggest that media frames are the product of the interaction between sources, journalists and audiences. The broader political process provides a range of sources, notably the communication strategies of politicians, parties and groups, such as the role of NOW and academic analysts in publicising the gender gap. Once frames are established, Tuchman (1978) suggests they are institutionalised by news organisations, including news 'beats' and 'pack' journalism. Frames can be reinforced by professional training, practices and cultures which strengthen a common interpretation of events. Lastly, frames can be influenced by the dominant norms and values of the audience in the wider political culture.

The effects of framing may be positive, negative, or neutral for women, depending upon the broader political context. Stories about a woman running for the Senate, for example, may be framed as a breakthrough for an 'outsider', someone who can bring a more honest, caring and fresh approach to politics as usual (the 'Mom in tennis shoes'). This may be electorally advantageous for women candidates if voters are unhappy with Congress and want to rid themselves of incumbents. Yet this may be an electoral liability if voters feel that they need experienced leaders to deal with serious problems of the federal deficit or international security. The context influences whether the media acts as an obstacle or resource for women (Kahn, 1991b).

Applying Frames to the Gender Gap

To understand how frames are used to interpret gender politics we can compare the way a gendered lens has been used to interpret recent American elections. After the 1982 elections there were a slew of articles about the 'gender gap' in the electorate. The story originated from the National Organisation of Women, who developed the phrase as a dramatic and simple way to publicise the women's vote (Bank, 1988). The story first broke with Judy Mann "Women are Emerging as Political Force" in *The Washington Post* (October 16 1981), based on a briefing pamphlet developed by NOW. The story was picked up again in a lengthy, front-page article by Adam Clymer in *The New York Times* in June 1982, who throughout focused on the change among women rather than men:

HEADLINE "Women's Political Habits Show Sharp Change"

The political habits of women appear to be undergoing deep changes that worry the Republicans and raise long-range hopes of the Democrats. A variety of newly available statistics show that women, who in the past have voted at a lower rate than men, are now voting at roughly the same level. These statistics also show that women, whose political attitudes used to be barely distinguishable from those of men, are beginning to take positions on issues that sharply differ from those taken by men.

By October, the gender gap had become one of the major stories in the campaign, an issue discussed by campaign managers and pollsters. Throughout the focus remained on how women's voting behaviour had shifted, speculation about the possible reasons for this, and reaction by party strategists. The story took off dramatically in the analysis of the mid-term results (Borquez, Goldenberg and Kahn, 1988), where the gender gap was treated as one of the most significant developments in the election, indeed the basis for a possible realignment. In Adam Clymer's words:

But another kind of realignment, in which more women are tying themselves to the Democratic Party while men vote more heavily for Republicans, could have a more profound impact on American politics than a shift in partisan dominance. This so-called gender gap...may influence American life in the 1980s as much as the civil rights revolution did in the 1960s. (Adam Clymer, *The New York Times* October 31 1982, 4:1.)

The extensive coverage of the gender gap in 1983 and 1984 provided leverage which prioritised women's issues, and strongly influenced the choice of Geraldine Ferraro as Vice Presidential candidate in the Democratic party. Moreover it generated a substantial academic literature seeking to explain this 'new' phenomenon.

Why was the 1982 election framed in terms of the gender gap? Was it because this was the first time there had been a significant difference in the voting preferences of American women and men? No. During the 1950s Gallup surveys indicate there was a consistent gender gap, with women leaning towards the Republicans (Stanley and Niemi, 1994, 105), but this received minimal coverage in the news. Moreover, as an alternative frame, the story about gender differences in voting during the 1980s could have been framed in terms of a strong Republican shift among men, yet this was far less common. Stronger Democratic support among women, although one interpretation among differing meanings, rapidly became the conventional way to understand this development.

Gender Gap in Voting, 1952-1994

% Voting Democratic:

year	Men	Women
1952	47	42
1956	45	39
1960	52	49
1964	60	62
1968	41	45
1972	37	38
1976	53	48
1980	38	44
1988	44	48
1992	41	46
1994	46	54

In the same way, the 1992 election was widely framed as the 'Year of the Woman'. Why? Four new women won Senate seats. Twenty-four new women were elected to the House, raising the number of women there from twenty-nine to forty-seven. Women continued to increase their numbers in state legislatures. But women remained far from parity. Nearly all women who challenged House or Senate incumbents lost, often by large margins. Moreover, it was not the year for all women: few who won were Republicans. As we have seen earlier, women's representation in Congress remains low compared with legislatures in many established democracies. If we compare the proportion of women in the House with comparable legislatures, there are twice as many women in Canada, Austria and Germany; three times as many in the Netherlands and Denmark; four times as many in Sweden, Norway and Finland. The advancement brought America up to the world average, no better. In this context, the election could have been framed equally accurately as the year where women's gains in the United States were much as might be expected from world-wide secular trends. Or the year where America did much worse than many comparable countries. But no, the frame overwhelmingly emphasised the positive news of 'dramatic' gains. Similar trends in the 1992 British general election, where women MPs increased from 6.2 to 9.6 per cent, were covered by the press in one or two articles at most, and were regarded by women activists as relatively disappointing. Therefore the frame offered

the meaning to the outcome, out of many alternatives. Yet this popular frame shaped the scholarly literature and research agenda in political science.

In the same way the 1994 mid-term Congressional elections were framed as the 'Year of the Angry White Male', on grounds which are strongly open to challenge. In a Nexis search of the major newspapers since 1990, the first reference to this phrase came in an article by Richard Morin and Barbara Vobejda on November 10 1994 in *The Washington Post* :

Two years ago, it was the Year of the Woman. This time around, the election may become known as the Year of the Man, or the Year of the Angry Man....

In the next two weeks the phrase 'angry white male voter' was rapidly picked by all over the country in the post-mortem of the election results, in *The Atlanta Constitution* (November 12th), *The Houston Post* (November 14th), *The Los Angeles Times* (November 15th), *The Boston Herald* (November 15th), *USA Today* (November 18th), and so on. Interviews rapidly located people who had started to describe themselves as 'angry white men'. Some journalists challenged the framing, but most went along. By the end of November, the following example in *The Plain Dealer* was typical coverage:

HEADLINE: "White male voters receptive to GOP message"

Democratic and Republican leaders, meeting separately to rehash the election, agreed on one conclusion: Angry white men fuelled the GOP landslide and could consign Democrats to long-term minority status.

The Democrats, meeting at Walt Disney World in Florida to figure out what went wrong, talked about winning back independents, increasing their margin among union members and finding some way to become competitive in the South. They conceded, with some discomfort, that all of these categories were a manifestation of a problem that has been building for a generation:

White men increasingly don't vote Democratic.
(Peter A. Brown, *The Plain Dealer* November 27 1994, 8)

The 'gender gap' story was turned on its head. The Nexis search revealed no recent references to 'angry white men' voters in the major American papers prior to November 10 1994. By the end of the year thirty-two stories had appeared about this, with the number escalating to 208 stories in spring/summer 1995. Therefore in successive elections first the Democratic edge among women, then the Republican edge among men (angry or not), became the conventional interpretation of gender differences in voting behaviour, the dominant frame which could be adopted in a flexible way to cover stories about different regions, candidates, or party strategies. As shown in Figure 1, the basic gender difference between women and men voters had not substantially altered, but the media frame switched with the suddenness of a roller coaster.

The Theory of Framing and Political Science

The theory of framing has been applied most extensively in communications studies yet it can equally be translated to understand the nature of the dominant agenda in political science. Since frames can be expected to reflect broader social norms, political minorities challenging the dominant culture are most likely to prove critical of the way they are portrayed. Journalists and their readers, or political scientists, are likely to regard frames as 'just common sense'. This is particularly common in mainstream political science where we have a unified discipline, colleagues are addressing a broad audience, and we share a common cultural consensus. The situation is more complex where colleagues are seeking to address a specific subgroup of the profession, such as those studying development politics or women and politics. Major disputes about the dominant frames in political science arise when colleagues aim to reach a wide audience which is deeply divided, where the interpretation and depiction of politics is a matter of cultural dissonance. The battle over the dominant frames in political science is itself a political process when minorities challenge the creation and portrayal of social reality.

Understood in this way, it becomes clearer why the usual gender lens in popular accounts and in political science has often been criticised by women. During the last thirty years the women's movement has sought to challenge the dominant culture and social norms. Periods of major cultural change - like the transformation in women and men's role in politics since the 1960s - highlight awareness of frames. Traditional gender roles, once taken for granted, come to be seen as out of touch with social reality. If political scientists are unaware of these developments, projecting images of women which are no longer appropriate, their portrayal of the sexes may no longer be seen as meeting academic standards of accuracy and balance. The process of social change requires political scientists to be sensitive to slow, subtle, grinding shifts in the tectonic plates of society. Moreover, since political science departments continue to be disproportionately white, male and middle-class, based on their own experience colleagues may not understand why traditional gender frames are no longer appropriate in a more diverse society.

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Return to the 1996 contents page:

[Contents](#)

Go to the main Index:

[Index](#)