



**Painted in a Corner:  
How the Media Frames Teachers' Unions and Education Reform**

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## INTRODUCTION

“It’s our tendency to approach every problem as if it were a fight between two sides. We see it in headlines that are always using metaphors for war. It’s a general atmosphere of animosity and contention that has taken over our public discourse.”

*Deborah Tannen, Argument Culture*

If Americans are to believe their daily diet of news, there is a monumental battle taking place over the education system. It is a war between those who want the U.S. education system to move forward by correcting ineffective and inefficient practices and those who seek to maintain the status quo. Across this narrative, teachers’ unions are overwhelmingly cast as the enemy, seeking to perpetuate the dysfunctional aspects of the system at the expense of the innocent student casualties of the war. While this media trope is an oversimplified, caricatured and sensationalized account of serious substantive debates about educational reform and the future of U.S. education, argumentative media frames about teachers’ unions have important effects on the ways that Americans conceptualize unions and their roles in education reform. The goal of this report is to unpack these frames, document their content, explain their impact on public thinking and begin to suggest reframing strategies to create a more productive public conversation around teachers’ unions and education reform.

This report comes on the heels of two existing media analyses conducted by the FrameWorks Institute in 2009.<sup>i</sup> These previous analyses were instrumental in revealing patterns in the media coverage around education and education reform more broadly. The current report examines a more specific slice of this coverage by focusing on media presentation of teachers’ unions and education reform. In this way, the report documents and analyzes the explicit and implicit messages — what the FrameWorks Institute calls “media frames” — embedded in the way that teachers’ unions are presented to the public in the context of stories about education reform in the nation’s newspapers, national radio and national news broadcasts. The report also employs FrameWorks’ previous research on cultural models<sup>ii</sup> to analyze the likely effects of a “steady diet” of this media and its embedded frames.<sup>iii</sup> This media analysis is an early but foundational component of the larger FrameWorks investigation aimed at developing communications strategies that advance a more constructive and balanced public conversation about teachers’ unions as a part of the education system and as a locus for educational reform in the United States. The full scope of the larger study includes a wide array of qualitative and quantitative methods associated with Strategic Frame Analysis™ (SFA).<sup>iv</sup>

Media analyses are an important part of the SFA approach. Most importantly, these studies allow us to map a key dimension of what FrameWorks calls the “swamp of public discourse.” In this way, a media analysis aims to understand the common, standardized streams of opinions, arguments and rhetoric that are consistently used to communicate about any given issue. Since media remains the primary source of information about public policy for average Americans, and a key — but not exclusive — source of the cultural models used to understand information,<sup>v</sup> media analyses are an important empirical measurement of the frames that shape public thinking about an issue. By understanding the subtle patterns in the way the media presents issues — or the media frames — media content analyses help explain both why people have stable and

predictable ways of interpreting information and why messages may have patterned effects on thinking. FrameWorks conceptualizes these frames as the link between the public discourses that incessantly swirl around us as members of a society, and the internal, cultural and cognitive patterns of making sense of information that we have developed through shared experiences. Over time, common media frames lead to common interpretations both because of their standardized content and because repeated exposure to these frames activates and engrains a set of interpretations that become highly practiced and easy to use in “thinking” information on an issue.<sup>vi</sup>

Media content analysis is a fairly broad methodological tool that can be used to evaluate the impact of media coverage in a variety of settings and on any number of issues. In this report, we apply this analytical method to: (1) delineate *what* the dominant frames are that are typically used in newspaper, television and radio media coverage about teachers’ unions and their role in education reform; and (2) examine *how* those frames are likely to shape, facilitate, constrain or otherwise affect public thinking about the causes of, and potential solutions to, problems in the education system. Unlike more traditional approaches to media analysis, we add a cognitive layer of analysis, examining the likely cognitive effect of the dominant frames deployed in media on a public that receives a constant “drip drip” of these messages.<sup>vii</sup> To do so, we “drill down” into the media coverage with a sharper analytical lens and use cognitive theory and analytical techniques to explain how the mind makes sense of information to evaluate the patterns of media presentation of this issue in the coverage — this is a comparative analysis of *frames in media* and *cultural models in mind*. As such, this report underscores both the agenda-setting aspects of the media coverage and captures the cultural and perceptual impacts of the frames embedded in this coverage. In this way, we are able not only to describe habits of mind, based on our cultural models interviews, but also to begin to understand how those habits are constantly fed, and with what consequence for public thinking.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *Highlights from the Findings*

- The dominant story being conveyed in media is political — 65 percent of the articles mentioned some kind of legislation related to education reform and the role or response of teachers’ unions to those initiatives.
- More than half of the op-ed coverage (56 percent) was critical in tone.
- Union leaders were fairly well represented in media coverage, accounting for 19 percent of the spokespersons, ranking second only to government officials.
- Thematic analysis revealed a pervasive media frame in which teachers’ unions are portrayed as obstructing and standing in the way of education reform and new legislation. This finding was consistent across media sources, types of media (i.e., newspapers, news broadcasts and radio) and the perceived ideological slant of the media source.
- Moreover, teachers’ unions are further represented as anachronistic and out of date, resisting innovation.
- Of the small percentage of the coverage that examined *why* teachers’ unions resist reform, the focus was squarely on their role in protecting *teachers’ pay and benefits*. There was virtually no discussion of other goals or motivations of teachers’ unions.

- Media materials rarely covered reforms proposed by the teachers' unions themselves and rarely explored the reasons why teachers' unions would oppose specific reforms.
- In general, union members and leadership were used as messengers by journalists to weigh in on policies that impact teacher pay or benefits, but were not consulted as experts on other issues related to educational reform, such as pedagogy or curriculum.
- There was little discussion about the relationship between teachers' working conditions and students' learning environments or, for that matter, between teachers' unions and learning or learning outcomes; only 5 percent of the articles included some mention of the challenges that teachers face in the classroom. Furthermore, there was markedly little coverage of reform proposals that emerged from the teachers' unions themselves.
- When focused on teaching quality, the coverage created the perception that all old teachers are of poor quality and all young teachers are visionary teaching prodigies, thus occluding what empirical research has demonstrated as a strong connection between quality learning outcomes and years of teaching experience.
- There is no narrative in the media about teachers' unions that competes with the dominant obstructionist frame and its related polarity to student outcomes.

It will come as little surprise that media coverage about teachers' unions is predominantly negative and critical. The majority of media included in this analysis constructs unions as obstructionist, anachronistic and wedded to goals that interfere with reform and successful student outcomes. This frame is pervasive regardless of the kinds of reform being proposed, from changing measures of teacher effectiveness to the introduction of web-based learning into classrooms. This analysis finds that teachers' unions are rarely covered as supporting reforms nor is there coverage of any reforms emerging from the expertise of teachers or teachers' unions themselves. As a result, the dominant message about teachers' unions is oriented around some form of obstruction, i.e., that: they block progress and momentum in improving the educational system; they do so to protect their own wages and benefits; and that their interests threaten and come at the expense of student learning.

Teachers' union leaders, as well as rank-and-file members, *were* frequently cited messengers in the media. However, these messengers were typically placed in defensive positions and asked to explain the bases for their recalcitrance. As a result, this analysis suggests that, while the media focuses on key issues around education reform, the mechanisms that underlie these issues are poorly explained in favor of a dominant dualism of "for" and "against." For example, measuring teacher efficacy was an important part of the stories analyzed, but there were few discussions of what quality learning environments entail, how learning occurs and the ways in which teachers' efficacy can be measured. Furthermore, because the media coverage of teachers' unions was fundamentally structured through war and battle metaphors, with unions on one side and champions of improved outcomes on the other, several aspects of union function identified by the experts and advocates FrameWorks interviewed received no attention.<sup>viii</sup> For example, the democratic and local nature of union organization, how unions advance and support teacher professionalization, and unions as critical resources of knowledge concerning pedagogical practice and the teaching profession more generally, were all topics left uncovered by the national news media in favor of their more oppositional characterization.

In this analysis, we found a general consistency between the cultural models the public uses to think and reason about teachers' unions and the media frames that dominate the coverage on this issue. The ideas that good teachers are naturally caring individuals and that financial motivation damages caring and lowers teaching quality were dominant models identified in the cultural models interviews.<sup>ix</sup> These assumptions were also present and reinforced in the media frames around teachers' unions. In this way, media frames of teachers' unions appear to reinforce the public's dominant patterns of understanding the issue. This coverage does not challenge the public to incorporate new or incongruent information into their established and engrained patterns of thinking. Our cognitive analysis, therefore, focuses on the specific ways that the public's existing patterns of thinking will likely deepen as a result of exposure to media frames. We also discuss the implications of this reification for messages that seek to communicate the role of teachers' unions in the education system and in its reform.

We conclude by suggesting that the primary problem with media coverage of teachers' unions is the absence of coverage that connects teachers' unions to ideas of quality teaching, such as what the teaching profession entails, or how public policies and union efforts can support teachers and improve educational quality. This suggests that, in order to build a more productive public conversation about teachers' unions and expand public thinking about this group and its role in the education system and reform, it is not enough to simply characterize the coverage as negative. Documenting and describing the negativity of much of the coverage is important in explaining some of the dominant ways that Americans have of thinking about teachers' unions, but offers little by way of prescriptive value. Instead, communicators need to understand the dominant frames at work, how they shape and affect thinking as well as what is missing from this coverage that could make a difference in how the public understands the role of teachers' unions. It is only with this understanding in hand that communicators can design specific strategies to contest, expand or circumnavigate the dominant frames.

This analysis suggests that what is missing from media coverage are stories that describe the process and contexts of effective teaching, the education system, and the relationship to, and role of, teachers' unions in these concepts. These accounts need to include explanations of what teachers' unions do, what *teachers* do, how the two are related and, most importantly, how teachers' unions could be a catalyst for the enactment of reforms that improve educational quality. Currently, such productive stories are precluded by the battle construct in which unions are villainized and painted as obstructionists to, rather than as collaborators in, reform. Teachers' unions would be less served by engaging in "battles" with opponents and reifying the oppositional nature, than by providing the American public with a concrete sense of the work that teachers actually do, how teachers' unions support them in that work and why they are integral to any real efforts to reform the nation's educational system. Moreover, a more constructive public discussion about what teachers actually do in the classroom would help inform a whole host of key educational policy conversations around improving educational quality, educational assessment and teacher tenure/promotion issues. It falls to the subsequent phases of FrameWorks' investigation to recommend descriptive elements that can widen the lens around teachers and further an alternative story about how reform might be achieved. Here, we focus our discussion on deepening the appreciation for the narrative constructs being applied in the media and the consequences of these media frames on public understanding.

## **METHODS**

In this report, our primary goal is to survey the media coverage of teachers' unions and education reform and to juxtapose that coverage with our analysis of cultural models. In this way, we approximate the likely impacts of that coverage on public thinking. This broad focus structures two more-specific goals: (1) to document how topics related to teachers' unions and education reform are treated in the media, and (2) to explore the likely implications of these patterns of coverage for the readers' thinking about this topic.

### **Media Data**

FrameWorks reviewed 518 articles collected from May 1, 2009, to April 30, 2010. During this year, media were collected from newspapers, national radio and national news broadcasts across the country. Articles were drawn from newspapers in the following cities: Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, Washington, D.C., Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Houston, Miami, Denver, San Francisco and Seattle.<sup>x</sup> The sample also included transcripts from national newscasts from ABC, CBS, MSNBC, CNN and Fox News Network, as well as transcripts from National Public Radio news broadcasts. Articles were identified by searching the LexisNexis database for the following terms: "National Education Association," "American Federation of Teachers" and "teachers' unions and education." In this way, we were able to capture stories that dealt with the NEA and AFT as organizations as well as stories that covered issues around teachers' unions more generally.<sup>xi</sup>

### **Cultural Models Data**

This report is further informed by a series of in-depth interviews with civically engaged Americans in Dallas, Texas, and Philadelphia, PA., designed to identify the cultural models Americans use to make sense of information on teachers' unions and education reform. Using analytical techniques drawn from psychological anthropology, two FrameWorks Institute researchers conducted interviews in December 2009 and subsequently analyzed the resulting data. Informants were recruited by a professional marketing firm through a screening process developed and employed in past FrameWorks research. In both locations, informants were selected to represent variation along the domains of ethnicity, gender, age, educational background and political ideology (as self-reported during the screening process). For a summary of findings from these interviews, see Appendix A.

### **Method of Analysis**

In order to address the goals described above, analysis was organized into three stages. First, we coded a sample of 518 articles in order to assess the content of media coverage of teachers' unions as well as assess some of the frame elements that the media employs to tell stories about teachers' unions in the context of education reform. Second, we employed qualitative thematic analysis to analyze a subset of this sample and characterize *how* the media tells stories about teachers' unions and education reform. This second phase of the analysis was less about cataloguing explicit content than it was about identifying the implicit understandings that the coverage conveys. Finally, we compared findings from the media analysis with results from previous cultural models research<sup>xii</sup> to determine how media frames are likely to interact with cultural models in mind. Each stage of the analysis is explained in Appendix B, while Appendix C presents the theoretical background that informs these analyses.

## FINDINGS

In a previous analysis of education reform media coverage,<sup>xiii</sup> FrameWorks found an overwhelming level of negativity in the news directed at the education system, education reform and more specifically at teachers' unions. Similarly, the majority of articles included in this analysis were critical of education, reform and teachers' unions.<sup>xiv</sup>

The majority of newspaper coverage appeared in the “local” or “national” sections. However, more than a third of the newspaper coverage was in the form of op-eds. Table 1 shows that the tone of the coverage within the op-eds was generally critical of teachers' unions. Furthermore, while there were more-supportive pieces, these media were defensive in tone and focused narrowly on refuting criticisms lodged at teachers' unions. In this way, there was a dearth of supportive statements that focused on teachers' unions' role in education reform. This lack of supportive frames occurred despite a robust presence of teachers' union members quoted in the media analyzed. While the media often relied on commentators outside of unions — referred to as “education reformers” — to talk about teachers' unions, members of the teachers' unions themselves were also frequently quoted (see Table 3).

<b>Table 1: Tone of Op-Eds</b>		
<i>Tone</i>	<i>Number of stories</i>	<i>Percent of stories</i>
<i>Critical</i>	74	56%
<i>Neutral</i>	32	24%
<i>Supportive of Unions</i>	27	20%
<b><i>Total</i></b>	133	

In addition to an overwhelmingly critical tone, most of the media coverage presented teachers' unions as largely political organizations, engaged in the mud-slinging that goes along with “politics as usual.” Based on FrameWorks' work on government and budgets and taxes, this association to the polarized political domain is highly problematic and cues associations and assumptions about corruption, waste, inefficiency and inevitability.<sup>xv</sup> Based on this tendency in the coverage of teachers' unions, we would expect similar notions to attach and be used to process and understand information about these organizations.

Sixty-five percent of the articles mentioned legislation related to education reform and the response of teachers' unions to those initiatives (see Table 2).<sup>xvi</sup> Discussions of legislation tended to focus on one of the following more-specific ideas: Pay and Benefits, Race to the Top, Vouchers or Charter Schools.

Furthermore, 21 percent of the themes in the media materials were related to teachers' unions' interactions with politicians. Together these figures indicate that, in general, the stories told about teachers' unions are political in nature and deal with the political aspects of the education system. Given this, it is easier to see how teachers' unions are readily associated as much with politics in the public mind as they are with substantive issues confronting education.

A full 50 percent of the coverage was directly related to the financial disposition of school systems and/or to teachers' pay, benefits and contract negotiations. This is consistent with FrameWorks' previous media content analysis of education reform (which found that an inordinate amount of the public discourse centered on school funding issues)<sup>xvii</sup> as well as with cultural models analysis (which found the public likely to associate unions with teacher pay and benefits but not with other aspects of the educational system, educational quality or educational reform). While a fair amount (about 45 percent) of the coverage of teachers unions and education reform focused on innovation (e.g., Strategies to Improve Teacher Effectiveness, Charter Schools, Vouchers) almost all of this coverage was negatively oriented toward teachers' unions, positioning them as oppositions to these innovations. This oppositional role of teachers' unions is a key part of the media trope and will be discussed in greater detail below.

**Table 2: Themes in Media Coverage**

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Number of mentions</i>	<i>Percentage of articles addressing the topic</i>
Legislation Related to Education Reform	329	64%
Strategies Proposed to Improve Teacher Effectiveness	141	27%
Teachers' Pay and Benefits	124	24%
Teachers' Unions and Politicians	111	21%
Charter Schools	70	14%
Cuts to Education Spending	53	10%
Teacher Layoffs	48	9%
Teacher Contract Negotiations	39	7%
Challenges Teachers Encounter	25	5%
Conflict between Union Members	18	3%
Vouchers	14	3%
Teacher Recruitment	13	2%
Factors that Impact Union Membership	12	2%

In a previous media content analysis of education reform, we found that a good deal of the coverage that functioned as "news about education" was effectively parroted from official press releases and rather uncritically incorporated into media coverage. When we examined the media

specifically about teachers' unions, we found a similar trend (see Table 3). Government officials and school administrators (school superintendents, school board members, etc.) were key spokespersons on issues related to unions (almost 60 percent). It is also interesting to note that parents, students and teachers (the triad identified in our earlier education reform work) collectively represented less than 10 percent of this coverage. So, while these groups may be important in the public's thinking about education, they are rarely cited as messengers in stories about teachers' unions. This contributes to a perceived divide between the concerns and issues of teachers' unions, on the one hand, and the concerns of the public's most important actors on the other.

**Table 3: Messengers for Stories on Teachers' Unions<sup>xviii</sup>**

<i>Messengers</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Government Officials	372	34.8%
Union Leaders	202	18.9%
School Administration	158	14.78%
(Other) Education Reformers	76	7.11%
Teachers	71	6.64%
Students	23	2.15%
Other: <i>Citizens, Business Executives, Former Government Officials, Former Union Members, Government Candidates, Judges, Military Personnel</i>	16	1.50%
Parents	11	1.03%

The majority of the stories included in the analysis were thematic in nature (see Table 4). That is, they generally adopted systemic perspectives and did not define problems related to teachers' unions and education reform as problems of individual behavior.<sup>xix</sup> There was also a strong focus on policy-based solutions to education reform. Therefore, atypically, the problems of media coverage of teachers' unions do not appear to lie in the absence of teachers' union advocates and experts or from the lack of systemic accounts of the education system and its reform.

**Table 4: Storytelling Style**

	<i>Number of stories</i>	<i>Percent of stories</i>
<i>Episodic</i>	58	11.20%
<i>Episodic with Thematic</i>	43	8.30%
<i>Thematic</i>	332	64.09%
<i>Thematic with Episodic</i>	85	16.41%

In the sections that follow, we present a more in-depth qualitative analysis of the specific narratives used to cover teachers' unions and education reform. More than cataloging *what* is in the media, this analysis addresses *how* the media present information by focusing on and describing specific media frames.

### **Teachers' Unions Obstruct Reform**

The most pervasive media frame identified was the notion that teachers' unions stand in the way of education reform. This finding was consistent across media sources, types of media (i.e., newspapers, news broadcasts and radio) and the perceived ideological slant of the media source. Furthermore, the "teachers' union as obstructionist" frame persisted despite the type of education reforms or policies being discussed.

Union objection to the Obama administration's initial guidelines for the Race to the Top legislation was a pervasive theme through the articles sampled. More specifically, teachers' unions' responses to the proposal to measure teacher effectiveness through student performance on standardized tests was a critical part of the narrative. The following excerpts illustrate how the media discussed teachers' unions' objections to measuring teacher effectiveness and how these discussions consistently assigned teachers' unions the role of obstructionists and anti-reformists.

The nation's largest teachers union, the National Education Association, is displeased with this change, as it has been with Obama's Race to the Top competition. However, the Obama administration appears to be undismayed by the opposition. It is unusual for a Democratic president to be willing to take on one of his party's major interest groups (Getting results, *The Detroit News*, Editorial; Pg. A14, February 3, 2010).

Both national teachers' unions oppose the use of student testing data to evaluate individual teachers, arguing in part that students are often taught by several teachers and that teacher evaluations should be based on several measures of performance, not just test scores. "This is poking teachers' unions straight in the eye," Mike Petrilli, a vice president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a research group that studies education policy, said of the proposed fund eligibility requirement dealing with student data (Administration takes aim at state laws on teachers, *The New York Times*, by Sam Dillon, Section A; National Desk; Pg. 15, July 24, 2009).

STEVE PERRY, CNN EDUCATION CONTRIBUTOR: What teachers unions do is they stand in the way of progress. And one of the places where progress needs to take place is we need to allow there to be a collegial relationship between the teacher and the principal, and they create what is a valued relationship. And we begin to determine their effectiveness based upon the data that appears in the classroom, and the only data that matters is the students' performance (Is merit pay for teachers a viable idea? *CNN Newsroom*, February 17, 2010).

As these quotes attest, teachers' unions are discussed as obstructing progress and innovation. Moreover, an important part of this frame is the way in which they are presented as anachronistic and out of date. This part of the frame was particularly prevalent when journalists and commentators proposed changes to tenure rules. When discussing tenure reform, public schools were often compared to private businesses, needing more competition and innovation to be "efficient." For example, the following article quoted Steve Jobs, the CEO of Apple, on the impact of school districts' ability to hire and fire teachers at will:

Speaking a couple of years ago about technology and education, Apple CEO and founder Steve Jobs said that technology wouldn't matter as long as you can't fire teachers. "I believe that what is wrong with our schools in this nation is that they have become unionized in the worst possible way," he said. Jobs likened schools to running a small business that he said could never succeed if you can't hire and fire. Reasonable? I think so. Would anyone question that there is no single thing more critical to a nation's future than educating its children? Yet, consider that 88 percent of our children get K-12 education in public schools and that 70 percent of the teachers in these schools have union-protected jobs. (Unions protect teachers, but what about kids?: Clout, job security appear to outweigh what's best for students, *Chicago Sun Times*, by Star Parker, EDITORIALS; Pg. 16, March 20, 2010)

The above excerpt argues that public schools should be run like businesses, with efficiency as the most important goal. Framed as such, keeping "unproductive" employees undermines the efficiency and effectiveness of business operations. When the private business model is mapped onto public education, it narrows issues of education reform to ways of getting "bad" and unmotivated teachers out of the school, and more broadly structures a perception that uncaring teachers are the sole explanation for poor educational outcomes. Moreover, it uses a familiar equation that pits business interests against unions to quickly signal to the public the similarly constructed contradiction between education interests and teachers' unions.

These connected themes — that teachers' unions obstruct progress and are out of date — were prevalent in discussions of other kinds of reforms. The following two excerpts describe union objections to charter schools and web-based learning. In both articles, as in the coverage more generally, reforms are described as innovative and successful with only limited data to substantiate those claims. Nevertheless, unions were consistently portrayed as standing against and opposing these "innovative" and "effective" reforms.

Klein and others praised the successes of charter schools, which have drawn the ire of union representatives and school officials. An e-mail to the nation's largest labor union, the National Education Association, was not returned immediately Tuesday. Privately operated schools undertook fresh approaches to schooling, had happier teachers and inspired healthy competition in achievement among New York City schools, said Klein (Gates, MTV link up in "Get Schooled" push: Aim to cut dropouts — Documentary debuts on youth-oriented Viacom channels, *The Seattle Times*, by Shaya Tayefe Mohajer, ROP ZONE; NWWednesday; Pg. B8, September 9, 2009).

Since the Internet hit the big time in the mid-1990s, Amazon and eBay have changed the way we shop, Google has revolutionized the way we find information, Facebook has superseded other ways to keep track of friends and iTunes has altered how we consume music. But kids remain stuck in analog schools. Part of the reason online education hasn't taken off is that powerful forces such as teachers unions — which prefer to keep students in traditional classrooms under the supervision of their members — are aligned against it (We work online. We shop online. Let's learn online, *The Washington Post*, by Katherine Mangu-Ward, OUTLOOK; Pg. B01, March 28, 2010).

Such articles routinely omit any discussion or acknowledgement of *the reasons why* teachers' unions voice concerns about educational reforms. Even the articles that did offer such explanations, did so without an explicit rationale from the unions themselves. In the following excerpt, for example, the journalist offers two possible reasons for teachers' unions' resistance to reform.

In the past, resistance to changing the status quo came from very well-organized teachers unions. Whether the push-back was well-intentioned or based primarily on self-preservation, it had the effect of silencing the dialogue needed to improve our education system. As a result, the condition of education in this country remained sadly unchanged (New Faces & Values; Young teachers' attitudes about work and unions are key to education reform, *Newsday*, by Philip S. Cicero, March 14, 2010).

The writer contrasts "well-intentioned" reasons for pushback from the union, which are not described, with reasons "based primarily on the self-interest" of union members. The former rationale is left mysterious, unexamined and without a clear motivation, while the latter is ascribed a clear and direct motivation. In short, even the articles that did acknowledge reasons for union opposition did so in a one-sided way. In so doing, these media reinforce understandings of unions as self-interested.

Furthermore, of the small subset of the media that did address why teachers' unions resist reform, the majority did so by focusing squarely on teachers' protection of their pay and benefits. For example, in articles that discussed union objections to measuring teacher effectiveness with student test scores, the primary reason cited for union resistance was that teachers did not want test scores to impact their pay.

Take education. President Obama supports merit pay and has called for the elimination of laws that forbid the use of student achievement data to evaluate teachers and principals.

But the National Education Association opposes tying teachers pay, in whole or part, to student achievement or test scores. Sadly, Coakley, Capuano, and Pagliuca all fell squarely in line with the union (The candidates and the unions, *The Boston Globe*, Opinion; Pg. 13, November 25, 2009).

Ms. TONYA KABNER (Special Education Teacher): Quite frankly, merit pay is union-busting, and it's an attempt to divide and conquer that the NEA will not accept.

SANCHEZ: No way, said Tonya Kabner, a special education teacher.

Ms. KABNER: We need to make sure that we do not have our pay tied to a test score.

SANCHEZ: That's the core issue that inevitably draws the ire of teachers: having their pay tied to their students' performance. What about teachers who work with learning-disabled students or kids who don't know English, asks Scott Miller an English teacher from Hawthorne, California.

Mr. SCOTT MILLER (English Teacher): Secretary Duncan, how can anyone possibly suggest that my family's paycheck or my performance evaluation be based on their test scores? (Obama administration pushes merit pay, NPR, *All Things Considered*, July 9, 2009).

In an interview, Ms. Weingarten ... said the changes to the contract were necessary in light of the city's extraordinary financial strains. She noted that many teachers had complained about having to return to school before Labor Day, a provision that was added to the 2005 labor agreement (Principals denounce plan to cut two training days, *The New York Times*, by Javier C. Hernandez, Section A; Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 26, June 24, 2009).

Discussions of teachers' unions' objection to reform overwhelmingly focused on how such opposition comes *at the expense* of student learning. That is, the protection of pay and benefits, and concern with student learning are presented in the media as mutually exclusive and conflicting goals. This sets up the message that, when teachers advocate for more pay, they do so in violation of their commitment and dedication to teaching and learning outcomes. As a result, the idea that teachers' unions are obstructionist and self-interested, and that they frequently act in opposition to the interests of students, is a dominant causal relationship in the media's presentation of teachers' unions. Furthermore, teachers' unions were often cast as being uncaring about underserved populations, since many of the reforms they were covered as resisting were designed to close the achievement gap between white, affluent students and students of color or poor students. The following excerpts show how the media promulgates the incompatibility between protecting teachers' pay and benefits and promoting their attention to students' learning outcomes.

She (Michelle Rhee) has won a national following as standard-bearer for a new generation of tough-minded urban school reformers determined to close minority achievement gaps. Her signature proposal is to raise teacher salaries dramatically with private foundation money in exchange for union concessions that would give her more latitude to reassign or dismiss ineffective instructors. That has made the District the

setting for a historic confrontation with the American Federation of Teachers (Two years of hard lessons for D.C. schools' agent of change, *The Washington Post*, by Bill Turque, A-SECTION; Pg. A01, June 14, 2009).

Sometime last year, while negotiating a teacher contract for the KIPP Ujima Village charter middle school in Baltimore, founder Jason Botel pointed out that his students, mostly from low-income families, had earned the city's highest public school test scores three years in a row. If the union insisted on increasing overtime pay, he said, the school could not afford the extra instruction time that was a key to its success, and student achievement would suffer. Botel says a union official replied: "That's not our problem." Such stories heat the blood of union critics. It is, they contend, a sign of how unions dumb down public education by focusing on salaries, not learning (Note to union: Don't mess with success at this high-achieving charter middle school, by Jay Mathews, METRO; Pg. B02).

SCHAEFER RILEY: This week, school started in New York and the kids arrived exactly one day after the teachers arrived. Thanks to brilliant negotiating on the part of Randi Weingarten at the American Federation of Teachers, teachers only had to come one day to prepare at the end of summer vacation. If you go to the AFT's website, they call themselves a union of professionals. I say if you're professionals, then you should take a little bit more time to prepare for the kids to come back (*Journal Editorial Report*, Fox News Network, September 12, 2009).

In sum, the idea that teachers' unions stand in the way of progress and educational quality proved a pervasive media frame. Our analysis suggests that media materials rarely cover reforms proposed by the teachers' unions themselves and rarely explore the reasons why (other than issues of salary and benefits) teachers' unions would oppose reforms. In light of this dominant narrative, issues of great importance to teachers' unions are ignored. For example, the relationship between teacher supports and resources and teaching quality received very little coverage in our sample. Furthermore, in the rare cases when rationales for opposing reform were provided, they were explained in terms of self-interest and financial motivation — reinforcing a perspective that teachers' unions involvement in education is restricted to pay and benefits and is motivated by self-interest, rather than student-interest.

### **Teachers' Unions Lack Accountability**

Accountability is a major theme in education reform circles today and, unsurprisingly, is heavily reflected in the media coverage of teachers' unions. Typically, the reforms that teachers' unions were presented as standing against were precisely those represented as increasing teacher accountability.

Or, as Duncan put it in a New York Times interview: "Believe it or not, several states, including New York, Wisconsin and California, have laws that create a firewall between students and teacher data. I think that's simply ridiculous. We need to know what is and is not working and why." His notion, generally opposed by, among others, teachers unions, is that teachers and their bosses should be held accountable for student success (or lack thereof). The idea applies not only to teacher evaluations but the controversial

subject of merit pay for teachers (Can state go from “ridiculous” to “impressive” in education? *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, by Alan Borsuk, B News; Pg. 1, July 26, 2009).

BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States: If a school continues to fail its students year after year after year, if it doesn’t show any sign of improvement, then there’s got to be a sense of accountability. And that’s what happened in Rhode Island last week at a chronically troubled school, when just 7 percent of 11th-graders passed state math tests — 7 percent” ... In a statement, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, Randi Weingarten, said: “We know it is tempting for people in Washington to score political points by scapegoating teachers. But it does nothing to give our students and teachers the tools they need to succeed.” Superintendents around the country are grappling with the issue of teacher and staff accountability. (*PBS NewsHour*, March 4, 2010).

As the above excerpt demonstrates, the need for greater accountability was frequently explained as a response to unions’ practice of protecting “bad teachers.” Underlying this assertion was the notion that the majority of problems plaguing the education system are caused by ineffective teachers who are paid and retain their jobs regardless of performance. Again, the image of a system full of “bad teachers” was, in all but a very few cases, put forward without supporting data. For example, in the following excerpt, Wolf Blitzer argues that the problems in the education system are, in part, the result of “crummy teachers.” The unanimity of such assertions creates a perception that poor quality teaching is the norm rather than exception.

BENNETT (former Secretary of Education): The teachers unions, and often they react negatively. There is insufficient accountability ... Secretary Duncan, if I understand correctly, has said if you’re going to evaluate teachers, and you should, because we have to reward excellence if we want excellence, then you’ve got to make student evaluations, student success, student learning part of that. This has been mightily resisted. A *New York Times* story this past Sunday showed some of the political resistance to it. You can’t do your job — this job unless sometimes those union people get angry, and he’s made them angry.

BLITZER: Because sometimes you have crummy teachers who aren’t educating the kids but they can’t be fired because of the unions (*The Situation Room*, CNN, March 13, 2010).

The issue of accountability was often discussed in conjunction with debates about teachers’ unions’ seniority policies. In these articles, innovative young teachers were contrasted with older, “bad” teachers who were simply working for a paycheck. With the budget cuts of the past year and resulting teacher layoffs, education reformers argued that young, talented teachers were being let go to protect older teachers. This pattern of coverage creates the perception that all old teachers are of poor quality and all young teachers are visionary teaching prodigies, thus occluding what empirical research has demonstrated as a strong connection between quality learning outcomes and years of teaching experience.

With New York City schools planning for up to 8,500 layoffs, new teachers like Mr. Borock, and half a dozen others at his school, could be some of the ones most likely to be let go. That has led the schools chancellor, Joel I. Klein, into a high-stakes battle with the

teachers' union to overturn seniority rules that have been in place for decades. Facing the likelihood of the largest number of layoffs in more than a generation, Mr. Klein and his counterparts around the country say that the rules, which require that the most recently hired teachers be the first to lose their jobs, are anachronistic. In an era of accountability, they say, the rules will upend their efforts of the last few years to recruit new teachers, improve teacher performance and reward those who do best (With teacher layoffs coming, battle turns to seniority rules, *The New York Times*, by Jennifer Medina, Section A; Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 1, April 25, 2010).

In the rare occasions when unions were represented as “taking accountability” and working with reformers, there was an accompanying tone of skepticism. In this context, teachers' unions' concessions were framed as face-saving tactics and exercises in opportunism, or even as exchanges of favors in a political game where such concessions would be repaid in kind down the line. In these cases, teachers' unions were not described as genuinely accountable or flexible, but as enacting superficial measures in order to protect members and the status quo. For example, the following two excerpts question the motives of union leadership. This aspect of the coverage attests to the power of the “politics as usual” frame which is applied here to explain away legitimate consensus by exposing it as posturing and gaming the system.

In a speech at the National Press Club, Ms. Weingarten sought to present a more flexible, cooperative face for her union as she announced Mr. Feinberg's new role and called for sweeping changes in how school districts evaluate teachers and work with teachers' unions (Union chief seeks to overhaul teacher evaluation process, *The New York Times*, by Steven Greenhouse, Section A; National Desk; Pg. 21, January 13, 2010).

But in the long term, the news conference at the hotel might prove a milestone in public education. It isn't often you see a leading teachers union announce it is taking money from what many of its members consider the enemy: corporate billionaires who have been bankrolling the largely nonunion charter school movement. Of course, it might turn out to be just another publicity stunt (Rare alliance may signal ebb in union's charter opposition, *The Washington Post*, by Jay Mathews, Metro; Pg. B02, May 4, 2009).

In this “era of accountability,” the refusal to accept responsibility for student performance positions unions as standing against educational quality. As the excerpts above demonstrate, teachers' unions were depicted as standing against the public's interest in improved learning outcomes in favor of the self- and financial-interest of their membership. The perceived lack of accountability further contributed to the sense that teachers' unions are fundamentally self-interested and behave this way at the expense of student achievement.

### **Teachers' Unions Talk Back**

Not surprisingly, when members of teachers' unions were given a voice as experts on educational issues or questions of reform, the media coverage was more constructive. However, even in these stories, there were often important omissions in the way unions were described.

Despite the pervasiveness of the idea that teachers' unions only serve to protect teachers' interests, there were surprisingly few stories about *how* unions protect teachers. For example, only 5 percent of the articles included some mention of the challenges that teachers face in the classroom (see Table 1) and, even in these cases, teachers' unions were not attributed a role in addressing these challenges. In fact, the conditions in which teachers work received little attention. The following were the only two stories that dealt directly with the stance the unions took to try and protect vulnerable teachers from unfair treatment:

Cruz is one of more than 300 teachers imported to Louisiana from the Philippines since 2007, a group of educators who say collectively they paid millions of dollars in cash to a Filipino recruiting firm, PARS International Placement Agency, and its sister company, Los Angeles-based Universal Placement International. Cases like those of Cruz and others prompted the American Federation of Teachers and its state affiliate, the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, to file a complaint on Sept. 30 with the state Workforce Commission and attorney general (Teachers trapped in a maze: Filipino educators held in "servitude" to agency that got them U.S. jobs, federal complaint says, *USA TODAY*, by Greg Toppo and Icess Fernandez, *MONEY*; Pg. 9B, October 28, 2009).

"I was frustrated with all the turnover among staff, with the lack of teacher input, with working longer and harder than teachers at other schools and earning less," said Jennifer Gilley, a social studies teacher at the Ralph Ellison Campus of the Chicago International Charter School, who said she made \$38,000 as a base salary as a starting teacher, compared with about \$43,500 paid by the Chicago Public Schools. The potential for further unionization of charter schools is a matter of debate (As more charter schools unionize, educators debate the effect, *The New York Times*, by Sam Dillon, Section A; National Desk; Pg. 1 July 27, 2009).

While the last excerpt raises issues of fairness and disparities in pay in charter schools, there was little information in the sample more generally about resources to support quality teaching or effective teaching contexts. More important, there was even less discussion about the relationship between teachers' access to resources and student learning. When messengers in these media talked about improving teachers' working conditions, there was thin description of what effective conditions for teaching are, and no discussion of the importance of resources and supports for quality teaching. There was also no discussion of why teachers need an organization to advocate for improving access to resources and supports and, perhaps most importantly, no discussion of, or connection between, the contexts in which teachers teach, the resources they have access to and learning outcomes.

Despite the predominance of the obstructionist frame, there were examples of teachers' unions compromising and working with school administrations. This kind of information was typically presented in the context of school district budget crises.

The Cleveland Teachers Union has agreed to a plan that would avoid layoffs but send nearly 200 veteran teachers into retirement within two years. Under a program that district and union leaders approved Tuesday, 200 teachers will be paid with federal stimulus dollars to serve as substitutes or tutors for up to two years, starting in August.

Teachers who volunteer for the program must agree to retire by the time the federal money runs out (Union accepts plan by district: Veteran teachers must retire after 2-year program, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, by Thomas Ott, METRO; Pg. B1, June 10, 2009).

In Tennessee, state Education Commissioner Timothy Webb said the teachers union, the business community and school districts worked together on a united plan. Was there conflict? Of course, but when it came to building a workable solution, everyone expected hurt feelings. But they also expected compromise and sacrifices. That's the stuff of what progress is often made of. And no one here seemingly gives an inch on these. Tennessee stakeholders decided to remove the cap on the number of privately run, publicly funded charter schools; tied teachers' evaluations to student performances and took bold steps to close failing schools. In Milwaukee — due mostly to a lack of accountability — no one even knows where the power lies (Time to come together, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, by James E. Causey, April 4, 2010 Sunday).

As the last excerpt demonstrates, even when journalists focused on union compromise, the issue of accountability remained paramount. Therefore, the articles that represented a union voice provided a rare balance in the debate over accountability and allowed for the expression of a different perspective on this issue of accountability — one that extended beyond student test scores:

Weingarten, also a key player in the District's drawn-out teacher contract talks, outlined a four-step approach to teacher evaluations: States should adopt standards for what teachers should know and be able to do; teachers should be assessed through multiple measures, including student test scores that gauge individual academic progress; administrators should be held accountable for putting the standards into motion; and teachers should receive help through mentoring and professional development (Union chief's plan ties test scores, teacher evaluations, *The Washington Post*, by Nick Anderson, A-SECTION; Pg. A03, January 12, 2010).

Union contracts and tenure rules tend to make it difficult to dismiss ineffective teachers. But in Montgomery, the union is teaming with school officials to weed out — or, better yet, help improve — teachers who fall short. Introduced by teachers in Toledo in 1981, peer review arrived in Montgomery 10 years ago and is considered in many quarters a promising solution to the labor-management impasse over teacher dismissals. The National Education Association has encouraged peer review since the mid-1990s. The American Federation of Teachers, which had supported it even earlier, last year passed a resolution calling on affiliates to consider the program (Throwing a lifeline to struggling teachers: Montgomery program embraces peer review, *The Washington Post*, by Daniel de Vise, A-SECTION; Pg. A01, June 29, 2009).

Despite the balance provided by these explanations, these types of accounts were few and far between. Journalists included limited comments from union officials, and when they did, these comments only vaguely explained alternative ways to measure teaching effectiveness. The vagueness had the general effect of casting teachers' unions as unable to delineate concrete solutions and further entrenched the strong sense of their oppositional stance against reform and antithetical position to improving student learning. The passages below are examples of how

media coverage only vaguely refers to alternate measures and lacks adequate explanations of such ideas.

Randi Weingarten, president of the 1.4 million-member American Federation of Teachers, who had criticized major elements of the proposed rules as “Bush III,” praised the final version. She said the administration made changes to ensure that teachers are included. She also cited the addition of a key qualifier — that teachers should be evaluated on “multiple” measures, including, but not limited to, student achievement (Scoring system for school aid: Obama program assigns points to reform efforts in competition for funds, *The Washington Post*, by Nick Anderson, A-SECTION; Pg. A03, November 12, 2009).

Dennis Van Roekel, president of the 3.2 million-member National Education Association, voiced his displeasure about an evaluation system that focuses on standardized tests. The bill calls for 50 percent of an annual evaluation for teachers and principals to be tied to student academic growth on assessments. “You cannot measure all of the students’ indicators of growth and learning by a paper-and-pencil test,” Van Roekel said. It was a refrain repeated by local union presidents (Varied views of teacher reform: A bill tying evaluations to student growth gets a five-hour hearing, *The Denver Post*, by Jeremy P. Meyer, DENVER & THE WEST; Pg. B-02, April 23, 2010).

In addition, there was very little coverage of reform proposals that emerged from the teachers’ unions themselves. It is interesting to note here that FrameWorks’ more general media analysis on education reform revealed list after list of progressive reforms in the media coverage.<sup>xx</sup> The coverage of teachers’ unions is almost completely void of such proposals, reform ideas and policy lists. This is likely to have significant impact on public thinking in creating or reinforcing the notion that unions are in no way involved in meaningful education reform.

Most coverage of teachers’ unions and reform ascribed the former a clearly reactionary and oppositional role. The following were among the only stories in the sample that explained changes in the education system advocated for by the teachers’ unions.

President Obama has pledged to spend \$10 billion more a year on “zero to five” education, and his 2010 budget makes a \$2 billion “down payment” on that commitment. (Billions more are already in the “stimulus” package.) Any number of congressional leaders want more preschool, as do dozens of governors. Not to mention the National Education Association and the megabucks Pew Charitable Trusts, which is underwriting national and state-level advocacy campaigns on behalf of universal pre-kindergarten (Slow the preschool bandwagon, *The Washington Post*, by Chester E. Finn Jr., Editorial Copy; Pg. A19, May 15, 2009).

Ursetta, then president of a local teachers’ union, blurted out those words 18 months ago during a meeting in the office of Denver, Colorado’s, schools superintendent. The other officials in the room leaned in as Ursetta leaped into a sales pitch that would turn an ordinary day into a highlight of her career. “I want to start a new kind of school,” she said, a union-sponsored public school led by teachers, not a principal. “I started talking

about 21st century skills and wanting to prepare our kids in math and science, especially our low-income and ethnic minority students,” Ursetta said. “We’ve been doing schools the same way in this nation for 150 years, so if we don’t step up, then nothing is going to change.” (Teacher turns “crazy idea” into new school, CNN.com, by Thom Patterson, September 8, 2009).

Again, these union-generated examples of ways to improve educational quality were rare in the media sample. Relatedly, teachers’ unions rarely commented as experts on pedagogical practice. In general, union members and leadership were used by journalists to weigh in on policies that impact teacher pay or benefits. Teachers’ unions were rarely represented as professional organizations or repositories of educational expertise. Despite an extensive membership and knowledge about characteristics of effective teachers and teaching practices, unions are rarely consulted or quoted on such issues. Put another way, there is no narrative in the media about teachers’ unions that competes with the dominant obstructionist frame and its related polarity to student outcomes.

In sum, teachers’ unions are framed in the media as fundamentally opposed to reform and motivated by the collective self-interest of their membership. In the media coverage analyzed here, these self-interests are, in turn, presented as mutually exclusive and oppositional to teacher caring and concern with student learning outcomes. In places, teachers’ union members and leadership are given space in coverage to articulate the role of unions in reform. While a small percentage of stories were successful in explaining a more constructive role for unions in education reform, even these more-positive portrayals failed to explain teachers’ unions’ proposed alternatives or the bases for objections. This pattern of coverage reifies the overwhelming notion that teachers’ unions aren’t involved in productive ways in reform and, rather, that they posture defensively and resist change in order to protect teacher pay. Finally, there was very little coverage of teachers’ working conditions or resource supports, reforms that were proposed from the teachers’ unions themselves, or the pedagogical expertise that unions offer to improve education. In the section that follows, we examine the likely implications of these media frames on how the public thinks and processes information about teachers’ unions.

## **COGNITIVE IMPLICATIONS**

FrameWorks’ previous cultural models research documented the implicit but highly shared ways that Americans use to think and reason about teachers’ unions.<sup>xxi</sup> These models ranged from positive understandings of the role teachers’ unions play in protecting teachers from arbitrary firing and in representing their financial interests, to more negative ideas about how unions *only* focus on pay and benefits and the corrupting influence of such concerns. What emerged most powerfully and clearly from this earlier research was that Americans lack understandings of teachers’ unions’ role in the practice of education and in its reform. While there are many ways of thinking about teachers’ unions, these understandings do not entail, and even block, consideration of the role that teachers’ unions play in education quality and reform beyond pay and benefits. In short, the role that Americans ascribe to teachers’ unions — as protectors of teacher pay and benefits — was important but distinct from, and unrelated to, the practice of teaching, the quality of learning outcomes and the process of improving the education system.

Individuals tacitly employ cultural models to interpret and make sense of incoming media.<sup>xxii</sup> The patterns in media coverage identified above are highly consistent with certain implicit cultural patterns of reasoning that our previous research showed individuals to carry around with them and apply to understanding information. Where there is this consonance between patterns of information presentation in media and cultural structures of meaning in mind, there is a *reinforcing effect*. Put another way, the cultural models in mind that are consistent with patterns in the media become more frequently activated, more practiced and familiar, further engrained and, with a steady diet of these media patterns over time, more dominantly associated with the particular topic. In this case, when teachers' unions are presented in the media in ways that are consistent with the cultural understandings that audiences hold in mind, cultural models in mind are reinforced and can be expected to become even more dominantly associated with and persistently applied in understanding information on teachers' unions and education. This is a kind of "I know this story" effect, where information fits easily and comfortably with expectations about the subject.<sup>xxiii</sup> We discuss these patterns of reification below.

The following are patterns of media coverage that are consonant with cultural models in mind and are likely to result in a further entrenchment and reification of specific cultural models that Americans apply in understanding teachers' unions and education:

- **The characterization of teachers' unions as narrowly interested in pay and benefits will make perfect sense given dominant cultural models of teachers' unions.** The fact that the media presentation of teachers' unions focuses overwhelmingly on the function of these groups in securing wages and working conditions, and does little to include other functions, is wholly consistent with the way that Americans understand the function of unions. This overlap between models in mind and patterns in media will further engrain and add to the strength and dominance of the former.
- **The frame "teachers' unions as obstructionists" aligns with American cultural understandings of teaching motivation and quality.** Teachers' unions are primarily seen in the media as standing in the way of innovation and progress, with an especially strong emphasis on job protection and seniority. Given the existing cultural models in which Americans view teacher motivation as exclusionary and competing — that teachers are *either* motivated by pay *or* by caring — together with the assumption that quality teaching is derived from an individual's self-sacrificial caring, this media trope is likely to feed the notion that teachers' unions get in the way of educational quality and improvement. As informants in FrameWorks' previous interviews said, teachers' unions "get in the way of what teachers *should* be focusing on." This already strong cultural assumption about financial motivations coming at the expense of teacher caring is therefore likely to become stronger still with a steady diet of this obstructionist theme.<sup>xxiv</sup>
- **The frame "teachers' unions lack accountability" and the cultural model of "unions adulterating pure capitalism and protecting ineffectiveness" are mutually reinforcing.** In the media, teachers unions are represented as lacking accountability because of what are presented as blindly protectionary policies and motivations. This is consistent with American cultural notions that pure capitalism and open competition maximize quality and efficiency and that these concepts should be employed in the education system. Therefore, the media's presentation of teachers' unions as working against accountability and quality is likely to substantiate the already existing public

notion that teachers unions keep teachers in the system who are in it for the wrong reason as a way of explaining the system's inefficiency.

- **The generally negative tone of the media coverage is likely to activate one half of a dual public understanding of unions.** FrameWorks' earlier research on how Americans think about teachers' unions presented a decidedly mixed perception of these groups. While Americans certainly have negative views about the corruption and politics of unions and about their antiquated function in the system, they also had positive, if limited, perspectives about these organizations as a necessary protection for a vital profession that lacks social clout. Given these dueling models, the overwhelmingly negative tone of the media coverage is likely to tip the balance in favor of the more-negative understandings that Americans have at their disposal for understanding teachers' unions. The activation of these unproductive patterns will crowd out other available understandings and will, over time, favor one of what are currently equally accessible understandings.
- **Media's framing of teachers' unions as out-of-date and antiquated is consistent with public thinking about ideal versus real function of unions.** Earlier interviews revealed a dominant cultural model in which Americans recognized the value of unions in protecting workers who lacked social power, but were quick to point out that these ideal functions of unions were far from their current function in the real world. This notion of antiquated function was mirrored in the media coverage, which is likely to create a starker contrast in the public's mind between the ideal and real functions of teachers' unions. Such a contrast makes it easy for people to dismiss assertions of what teachers' unions are meant to do by asserting their failure to realize these goals.

In addition to the convergence of media frames and cultural models, it is equally important to analyze *missing* patterns in the media presentation — or those scenarios in which there are few if any elements in the media to compete with or challenge existing cultural understandings. When such an absence exists, the individual processing the information is faced with a temporary hole in meaning. In this situation, individuals tend to “fill in” missing information with existing ways of understanding that *are* easily cognized, highly familiar and routinely practiced ways of thinking about the subject. Below, we review several key omissions in media coverage that are likely to be filled in with the more-dominant ways that individuals have for understanding messages. In this way, an absence in media coverage can be just as powerful a cue for dominant understandings as a story that more directly asserts existing understandings.

The following absences in the media coverage are likely to be filled in with dominant cultural models and make subsequent ideas put forward by experts on teachers' unions more difficult to communicate.

- **The overwhelming lack of coverage of the functions of unions will be filled by the role the public currently ascribes to them.** When coverage of the roles that unions play in the education system is limited to them as champions for pay and benefits, people will be unable to imagine any work for unions beyond advocating for teacher pay. The expertise of teachers' unions' in effective pedagogical practices and their knowledge of the educational and professional requirements for effective teachers are completely omitted from the coverage. This absence may explain the limited understanding that

Americans have of how unions are involved in education and reform, but this omission also makes it difficult to widen the public's view of the role of unions more generally.

- **The almost complete omission of coverage of unions as productively involved in improving teaching quality and educational outcomes leaves existing public understandings unchallenged.** The media overwhelmingly ascribes teachers' unions one narrow role in educational reform: standing against reforms. There is no discussion of the ways that unions advance and support reform agendas. More specifically, there is no discussion of how teachers' unions are involved teacher training, access to teaching resources or teacher supports — issues that have major impacts on educational quality and outcomes. The absence of connections between teachers' unions, teaching quality and educational outcomes will allow the dominant public perspective that these organizations are in no way involved in improving education to continue unabated.

Finally, there was an aspect of the media presentation that did not fit with existing cultural models. This pattern is dramatically under-covered in current media and easy to ignore. This pattern, however, is a promising theme to pursue in efforts to reframe the public discourse about teachers' unions and education reform.

- **The few places where media coverage does connect teachers' unions and pedagogy will be hard to think given the public's lack of a cultural model through which to understand this connection.** Although extremely limited, there were some places in which the media *did* cover the pedagogical expertise and research capacity of teachers' unions. This is a promising frame, as it expands the function of teachers unions. However, because the public currently has difficulty linking unions to pedagogical issues and education reform, the infrequency and thinness of this frame will make it easy to disregard by members of the public. Additional work on framing this important function of teachers' unions is therefore required.

## CONCLUSION

The shallow, stereotyped and overwhelmingly negative coverage of teachers' unions places them in a defensive position in the national news media and forces them to fight an uphill battle for deeper public appreciation of their connection to meaningful reform. Teachers' unions will undoubtedly need to defend their organizations from discursive attacks in the media, but what this report shows is the need for teachers' unions to focus communications efforts on explaining what teachers' unions do, and not simply what they oppose. Such coverage would connect the actions of teachers' unions to educational outcomes and would show teachers' unions on the side of parents and other reform leaders, rather than in opposition to them. This will require developing a new story about education reform, how it is likely to happen, and the role that teachers unions can and should play in this process.

Perhaps the most important aspect missing from media coverage of teachers' unions and education reform more generally is a discussion of how students learn, what is necessary for effective learning environments and how that learning can be assessed. While phrases such as "teaching effectiveness" are thrown around repeatedly in the media, FrameWorks' previous research has shown that Americans lack a concrete understanding of how the education system

works and how students learn within that system.<sup>xxv</sup> Media coverage of teachers' unions further contributes to that lack of understanding, and portrays unions as standing in the way of progress to educational quality. In short, teachers' unions are overwhelmingly the villain in the media story of education reform – but their vilification is far from the only problem posed by the coverage. As important, we would argue, is the paucity of stories that connect teachers' unions to the heart of the educational enterprise. FrameWorks' large body of research on education reform and more recent work on teachers' unions suggests that what is missing in public understanding and public discourse about education are understandings and descriptions of mechanisms by, and contexts in which, effective teaching and learning happen. When such processes and contexts can be explained, they will facilitate a more productive conversation about how central teachers' unions are to teaching and learning, both by bringing their expertise of pedagogical practices to bear on educational improvement and by ensuring that learning environments are protected for teachers and students.

## APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM CULTURAL MODELS AND EXPERT INTERVIEWS

By Nathaniel Kendall-Taylor

### Expert Interviews

Experts emphasized that both the history and the profession of teaching are compulsory for understanding the role of teachers' unions in the education system. Experts operated under the assumption that the public holds negative views about teachers' unions, but that these institutions are actually highly democratic and member-driven. The experts we interviewed also viewed the interests of teachers, teachers' unions and students to be largely consonant and complementary. Experts saw a number of specific functions for teachers' unions, including: to protect employees, to give teachers a political voice, and to assure and improve the quality of teaching in the education system. Experts were also in agreement that teachers' unions need to expand the scope of their approach to focus on social issues, such as resource equity, as a means of improving education, but were highly divided in their opinions on *how* teachers' unions should approach their cause, with some experts advocating a more aggressive and intransigent strategy and others supporting more flexible and conciliatory tactics.

### Cultural Models Interviews

- Interviews revealed a set of dominant cultural models applied in thinking about teachers: *teachers are the education system, a good teacher is a caring individual, money is motivation, motivation is exclusionary* (i.e., individuals are motivated by **either** money or caring), *teachers produce effective products* and *school districts restrict the ability of teachers to do their jobs*. These specific assumptions were nested in the more foundational American cultural models of consumerism and mentalism. According to the mentalist model, Americans tend to view outcomes and social problems as a result of individual concerns that reflect motivation and personal discipline. As such, the use of mentalist models by the public has a narrowing effect — it boils complex interactions between individuals, contextual determinants and systems down to either the presence or absence of individual motivation and internal fortitude.
- The vast majority of informants expressed both positive and negative opinions of unions. These positive and negative opinions were structured by *different sets of cultural models*. Informants frequently toggled between these sets of models and oscillated, sometimes in mid-sentence, between the positive and negative views that these models structured.
- In expressing positive opinions of unions, informants made assumptions that: *employees need protection, there is power in numbers* and *the collective threatens the individual*.
- During negative discussions of unions, informants assumed that: *society functions optimally when competition and capitalism are open and pure, individual interests are in conflict with collective benefits, unions are only concerned with pay and benefits* and *money, power and politics are inherently corrupting*.
- When expressing opinions and views on teachers' unions, informants drew on and combined their implicit assumptions of two distinct domains: “teachers” and “unions.”

Furthermore, research revealed that the recruitment of cultural models from these domains was not random or haphazard. Rather, there were three distinct combinations of models that informants employed in talking and thinking about teachers' unions.

- The first combination opinion on teachers' unions, that teachers more than any other group need their rights protected, was structured by the combination of the following four cultural models: *Teachers are Caring Individuals* + *Motivation is Exclusionary* + *Individual Rights Need to be Protected* + *Power in Numbers*.
- The second opinion, that teachers' unions keep teachers in the system who are in it for the wrong reason, was structured by the following cultural models: *Teachers are Caring Individuals* + *Motivation is Exclusionary* + *Teachers are the Education System* + *Capitalism Should be Kept Pure*.
- The third predominant trope that informants expressed about teachers' unions was that teachers' unions improve education by making teachers more motivated. The following cultural models structured this view: *Employee Rights Need Protection* + *Money is Motivation* + *Teachers are the Education System*.

### Mapping the Gaps

The following two quotes, the first from an expert informant and the second from a member of the general public, illustrate several of the specific gaps between expert and public thinking on the role of teachers and teachers' unions in American education. The quotes also clearly demonstrate the need for communications to bridge these gaps in order to create a more productive conversation around these issues.

[Talking about the problems of the education system]

The question is, do you have a system, or do you do things individually? And it's [the way people blame teachers for educational problems] almost like saying the President of the United States of America can individually solve all the problems in America. And nobody would ever say that! If you said that to somebody, they would say that's ridiculous ... There has to be, not only good teachers, but good curriculum and good services.

—

[Responding to a question about the role of resources in shaping outcomes and responsibility for educational problems]

For hundreds of years people have been learning history just fine without all of that [resources]. So, yeah, it's important to have money, and it may be a limitation for you — it may be even more difficult for you if you're teaching history in a grass hut, but you can still do the job properly. If you had one book, or no books, you can still probably teach it. Is it more of a challenge? Yeah. But that means that you have to rise to the occasion. Is it fair? No. But sometimes things aren't fair. That doesn't mean that you can just give up, and it doesn't mean that necessarily those students are that much better off just because they have those things, because you could take a bad teacher with all the technology in the world, and you're not going to have a good product.

The above excerpts demonstrate some of the gaps identified in this research — that experts and the general public have different ways of thinking about responsibility; resources and support; and the issue of teacher training and professionalism. Other gaps identified in the research included: the roles and responsibilities of teachers, what teachers’ unions do and how they are organized, and issues of the public or private nature of education in America. These gaps must be filled to give Americans a more well-rounded appreciation of what teachers’ unions are, what they do, and their role in the American education system and the reform of this system.

### **Communications Implications**

Most generally, the research in this report highlights the fact that advocates must be aware of the understandings that Americans bring to bear on “teachers” and “unions” in how they craft message about “teachers’ unions” within the broader narrative about reform. The connection between these issues speaks to the complexity of strategic communications on the issue of teachers’ unions. There are many implicit understandings that limit public thinking and narrow their perceptions of the role of teachers’ unions. However, many assumptions are promising and should be activated to create a broader appreciation for the role these groups play in improving American education.

## APPENDIX B: METHODS OF ANALYSIS

### Quantitative Analysis

We coded the entire sample of 518 quantitatively in order to assess the content of media coverage around teachers' unions as well as assess some of the frame elements that the media employ to tell stories about teachers' unions in the context of education reform. In this phase of the analysis, we were interested in describing the general content of the media we sampled. Therefore, we coded each piece of media for the frequency of topics and the frequency of solutions mentioned. We coded each story for whether the storytelling style was primarily episodic or thematic or a combination of the two. As expounded by Shanto Iyengar, episodic frames maintain a focus on individuals and single events.<sup>xxvi</sup> This type of coverage keeps the issue in the private realm, highlighting efforts to improve the character or effort of the person experiencing the problem. Thematic frames, by contrast, focus on issues and trends over time. They do this by examining what, at a community or systems level, led to the problem being described, and then identifying solutions and reforms in public policy arenas. In addition to this distinction, researchers enumerated additional frame elements in the stories, including the tone of the coverage as well as the dominant messengers or spokespeople included in the stories. Finally, we coded each piece for the media source (television, newspapers and radio) and for the section of the newspaper in which the article appeared (i.e., op-ed versus national news). In general, the quantitative part of the analysis provides an understanding of *what* is in the media.

### Qualitative or Thematic Analysis

While the quantitative analysis describes the content of the media as it relates to teachers' unions, in the qualitative analysis we analyze *how* the media tells stories about teachers' unions and education reform. That is, in this part of the analysis we analyze the dominant media script or narrative arc about teachers' unions as reform actors. This phase of the analysis is less about cataloguing what is explicitly said than it is about identifying the implicit understandings that the coverage conveys. In order to accomplish this task, we constructed a purposive sample of 75 media materials from the larger sample of 518. Articles were selected for this analysis based primarily on the length and depth of issue coverage. Our coding strategies of the media texts included the types of topics that were covered in the texts, how topics were defined as "problems" deserving of public attention, how the texts attributed responsibility for these problems, the causal stories conveyed, and the potential solutions proposed. Furthermore, in this qualitative analysis we also note significant absences in the coverage (i.e., an issue or theme that is important to experts and advocates we interviewed and received no media attention).

### Cognitive Analysis

Finally, we compared findings from the media analysis with results from the cultural models interviews to determine how media frames are likely to cue up certain cultural models, how media frames may support existing models, how news stories conflict with existing cultural models, and how cultural models are likely to be applied to fill in or provide information for the public when media accounts are incomplete, lack information, or do not provide adequate evidence for causes or solutions. In this way, the media analysis enables FrameWorks to identify the likely cognitive impacts resulting from exposure to these patterns in news media and to use

these implications in formulating strategic communications recommendations for experts and advocates who communicate about teachers' unions and education reform.

## APPENDIX C: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Scholarly work on mass communication generally begins with the premise that modern mass media affect the way that people understand the world they live in. Media framing effects are defined as the ways in which “events and issues are packaged and presented by journalists” that “fundamentally affect how readers and viewers understand those events and issues.”<sup>xxvii</sup> However, the strength of those effects and the exact mechanisms by which the media influence the public’s attitudes, opinions and processes of making meaning have been subject to much scholarly debate since the turn of the last century.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Recent work on the public’s reception of media messages has rejected the determinism that characterized early studies of mass communication. That is, media scholars now recognize that the effect of media frames in determining public thinking about social issues is not unidirectional. Rather, the relationship between the media and the public is now theorized as dialectical, dynamic and socially situated. On the one hand, scholars show that the media actively creates the frames that people use to interpret and engage in public events. That is, frames have an important role in the construction of reality.<sup>xxix</sup> On the other hand, scholars recognize that the public draws on preexisting cultural models and past experiences to actively engage with and make sense of media messages. According to sociologists Gamson and Modigliani, “Media discourse is part of the process by which individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists ... develop and crystallize meaning in public discourse.”<sup>xxx</sup>

Understanding this co-construction, the literature on media framing has empirically documented the links between news frames and patterns in the public’s thinking on specific issues. In addition, scholarship has identified the mechanisms by which media affect public perception of social issues. Media frames have been shown to influence *what* enters the mind of audiences who have been exposed to that frame.<sup>xxxi</sup> Studies have documented how certain frames increase the likelihood that audiences will draw out predictable implications from a story,<sup>xxxii</sup> fill in missing information, and make assumptions about what has occurred based on cues in the media frame.<sup>xxxiii</sup> In this analysis, we focus on both what is a standard part of the teachers’ union script as well as what is missing in media narratives regarding teachers’ unions and how the viewing public implicitly fills in this missing information.

Media frames operate to increase, deepen and enhance or, conversely, suppress and diverge from default thought patterns generated by the story. When media frames are congruent with the public’s cultural models, they generally reinforce default patterns of thinking on the issue, although studies have shown that the public tends to accord different weights or priorities to aspects of an issue than do journalists.<sup>xxxiv</sup> When media frames are inconsistent with or contradict the public’s understanding of that issue, scholars have found that viewers often pay more attention to the frame so that they can either incorporate it into their existing understandings or reject it entirely. For example, studies have shown that when people are exposed to cues in political messages that are inconsistent with their stereotypes about a racial or ethnic group, they engage in *conscious* rather than automatic processing of the racial content of the message.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Price et al. describe the enhancing and suppressing capacities of media frames as a kind of “hydraulic pattern, with thoughts of one kind, stimulated by the frame, driving out other possible responses” (p. 501).

Finally, media frames also have evaluative implications among the audience, specifically audiences’ perceptions of what *causes* the social issue being covered and what *should be done to address the problem*. Iyengar’s classic study of episodic versus thematic framing demonstrated a powerful link between media frames and an audience’s subsequent evaluation of an issue. He found that when subjects were exposed to episodic frames regarding poverty, or frames that represented poverty as a discrete, isolated and individualistic event, they were more likely to make personal rather than systemic attributions.<sup>xxxvi</sup> In Gilliam and Iyengar’s study described above, participants who were exposed to suspects who were identifiable as African-American were more likely to support punitive approaches to crime reduction. In sum, media frames not only impact how people think about an issue at the moment they read or watch the news, but these frames have measurable impacts on their subsequent evaluations and decision-making processes about an issue.

## APPENDIX D: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

<b>Stories on Teachers' Unions by Publication</b>		
<i>Name of publication</i>	<i>Number of stories</i>	<i>Percent of stories</i>
<b>Newspapers</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>81.08%</b>
<i>The Washington Post</i>	115	22.20%
<i>The New York Times</i>	91	17.57%
<i>The Denver Post</i>	52	10.04%
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	28	5.41%
<i>Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</i>	20	3.86%
<i>The Boston Herald</i>	19	3.67%
<i>Plain Dealer, Cleveland</i>	19	3.67%
<i>Chicago Sun Times</i>	17	3.28%
<i>USA Today</i>	13	2.51%
<i>The Houston Chronicle</i>	12	2.32%
<i>The Boston Globe</i>	8	1.54%
<i>Other: The Atlanta-Journal-Constitution, Chicago Daily Herald, Chicago Tribune, The Detroit News, Grand Rapid Press (Michigan), The Miami Herald, Newsday, The Seattle Times</i>	26	5.02%
<b>Television</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>13.51%</b>
<i>CNN</i>	46	8.88%
<i>Fox News</i>	11	2.12%
<i>Other (ABC, CBS, Federal News Service, MSNBC, PBS NewsHour)</i>	8	11.43%
<b>Radio</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>5.4%</b>
<i>NPR</i>	28	5.60%

<b>Placement of Stories in Newspapers on Teachers' Unions</b>		
<i>Section</i>	<i>Number of stories</i>	<i>Percent of stories</i>
<i>Local/National News</i>	275	67%
<i>Op-Ed</i>	133	32%
<i>Business/Money</i>	8	2%
<i>Other: Arts/Culture and Lifestyle</i>	3	<1%
<b>Total</b>	419	

#### **About FrameWorks Institute:**

The FrameWorks Institute is an independent nonprofit organization founded in 1999 to advance science-based communications research and practice. The Institute conducts original, multi-method research to identify the communications strategies that will advance public understanding of social problems and improve public support for remedial policies. The Institute's work also includes teaching the nonprofit sector how to apply these science-based communications strategies in their work for social change. The Institute publishes its research and recommendations, as well as toolkits and other products for the nonprofit sector, at [www.frameworksinstitute.org](http://www.frameworksinstitute.org).

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<sup>i</sup> Manuel, T. (2009). *Don't give up on education: A cognitive analysis of the media coverage of education reform 2007-2008*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

Center for Media and Public Affairs. (2009). *Put down your pencils please: Media coverage of education reform 2007 to 2008*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

<sup>ii</sup> Kendall-Taylor, N. (2010). *Understanding teachers' collective role in reform: Mapping the gaps between the expert and the public understandings of teachers' unions as part of Strategic Frame Analysis™*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

<sup>iii</sup> This analysis also helps explain the existence of many of the dominant understandings that emerged in these earlier interviews.

<sup>iv</sup> Strategic Frame Analysis™ includes a variety of methods such as: cultural models interviews, focus groups, media content analysis, cognitive media content analysis, Simplifying Models development and empirical testing of frame effects using experimental surveys.

<sup>v</sup> Quinn, N., & Holland, D. (1987). Culture and cognition. In Holland, D., & Quinn, N. (Eds.), *Cultural models in language and thought* (pp. 3-40). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>vi</sup> Gamson, W.A., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95(1), 1-37.

<sup>vii</sup> See: Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication*. 26(2), 172-199.

<sup>viii</sup> Kendall-Taylor, N. (2010). *Understanding teachers' collective role in reform: Mapping the gaps between the expert and the public understandings of teachers' unions as part of Strategic Frame Analysis™*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid

<sup>x</sup> Cities were selected in conjunction with the funders for geographic diversity.

<sup>xi</sup> Articles addressing education reform more generally were analyzed in a separate media content analysis. Manuel, T. (2009). *Don't give up on education: A cognitive analysis of the media coverage of education reform 2007-2008*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

<sup>xii</sup> Kendall-Taylor, N. (2010). *Understanding teachers' collective role in reform: Mapping the gaps between the expert and the public understandings of teachers' unions as part of Strategic Frame Analysis™*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

<sup>xiii</sup> Manuel, T. (2009). *Don't give up on education: A cognitive analysis of the media coverage of education reform 2007-2008*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

<sup>xiv</sup> This was also a feature of the coverage on education more generally as evident in a previous FrameWorks media analysis. Manuel, T. (2009). *Don't give up on education: A cognitive analysis of the media coverage of education reform 2007-2008*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

<sup>xv</sup> Bales, S.N. (2006). *How to talk about government*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

Kendall-Taylor, N., & Bales, S. (2009). *Like Mars to Venus: The separate and sketchy worlds of budgets and taxes*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

<sup>xvi</sup> It is important to note that “education reform” was not a search term in compiling the sample. This deliberate choice was made because the primary goal of the analysis was to determine whether and how articles about *teachers' unions* framed *education reform*. Searching “education reform” only as it occurred in conjunction with “teachers' unions” allowed us to find specific patterns and relationships between the coverage of teachers' unions and reform rather than presupposing associations in our sample. In fact, the majority of articles about teachers unions *did* deal with reform issues.

<sup>xvii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xviii</sup> “Messengers” are here defined as individuals quoted or connected to content within an article or as the authors of op-ed pieces. Authors of pieces other than op-eds were not coded as “Messengers.”

<sup>xix</sup> Iyengar, S. (1994). *Is anyone responsible?: How television frames political issues*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

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- <sup>xx</sup> Manuel, T. (2009). *Don't give up on education: A cognitive analysis of the media coverage of education reform 2007-2008*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Kendall-Taylor, N. (2010). *Understanding teachers' collective role in reform: Mapping the gaps between the expert and the public understandings of teachers' unions as part of Strategic Frame Analysis™*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Gamson, W.A., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95(1), 1-37. Shore, B. (1996). *Culture in mind: Cognition, culture and the problem of meaning*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Gamson, W.A., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95(1), 1-37. Tannen, D. (1993). *Framing in discourse*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> See: Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with Television: The Violence Profile. *Journal of Communication*. 26(2), 172-199.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Kendall-Taylor, N., & Chart, H. (2008). *Reform what? Individualist thinking in education: American cultural models on schooling*. Washington DC: FrameWorks Institute.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Iyengar, S. (1994). *Is anyone responsible?: How television frames political issues*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Price, V., Tewksbury, D., & Powers, E. (1997). Switching trains of thought: The impact of news frames on readers' cognitive responses. *Communication Research*, 24(5), 481-506.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Scheufele, D.A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *The Journal of Communication*, 49(1), 103-122.
- <sup>xxix</sup> McQuail, D. (1994). *Mass communication theory: An introduction* (3rd ed.). London, England: SAGE Publications and Tuchman, G. (1978). *Making news: A study in the construction of reality*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Gamson, W.A., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95(1), 1-37.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Price, V., Tewksbury, D., & Powers, E. (1997). Switching trains of thought: The impact of news frames on readers' cognitive responses. *Communication Research*, 24(5), 481-506. Valkenburg, P.M., Semetko, H.A., & De Vreese, C.H. (1999). The effects of news frames on readers' thoughts and recall. *Communication Research*, 26(5), 550-569.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Price, V., Tewksbury, D., & Powers, E. (1997). Switching trains of thought: The impact of news frames on Readers' cognitive responses. *Communication Research*, 24(5), 481-506.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Gilliam, F.D., Jr., & Iyengar, S. (2000). Prime suspects: The influence of local television news on the viewing public. *American Journal of Political Science*, 44(3), 560-573. Gilliam and Iyengar, for example, demonstrated that local news coverage of crime followed a standard script. Namely, that crime stories are typically about violent crime, feature a particular "type" of suspect, and that crime news often entails racialized imagery. In a series of experiments, they found that even when subjects were exposed to crime stories that did not feature a particular suspect, participants falsely recalled having seen a suspect and a large majority identified the non-existent suspect as African-American. This work and other similar studies have documented that viewing audiences fill information into news stories that follow standard and ubiquitous media scripts.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Neuman, W.R., Just, M.R., & Crigler, A.N. (1992). *Common knowledge: News and the construction of political meaning*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Mendelberg, T. (2001). *The race card: Campaign strategy, implicit messages, and the norm of equality*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Valentino, N.A., Hutchings, V.L., & White, I.K. (2002). Cues that Matter: How political ads prime racial attitudes during campaigns. *American Political Science Review*, 96(01), 75-90.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is Anyone Responsible?: How Television Frames Political Issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

