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Framing Early Childhood Development in a Global Context: An Analysis of Children's Issues in International News Media

A FrameWorks Research Report

Prepared for the FrameWorks Institute

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

How can we improve the effectiveness of communicating an early childhood development (ECD) agenda to influential decision-makers within an international context? Media constructions of children's issues are critical factors to analyze in attempting to understand the place of early child development in the international advocacy and policy communities. Given the news sources that leaders and members of these communities most often look to for information on children's issues, what is the likely effect of this kind of coverage in shaping the agenda of the field? How can researchers and practitioners frame ECD in a way that expands positive and constructive media coverage of children's development? The following report analyzes how children's issues are framed in the media and the implications of such framing for those working on, and communicating about, early child development in an international context.

The research presented here was conducted by the FrameWorks Institute and sponsored by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. This report examines the explicit and implicit messages, or "media frames," embedded in the news coverage on children's issues. Media analyses are an important part of the FrameWorks Institute's Strategic Frame Analysis™[1] approach. Media analyses identify a key dimension of what FrameWorks calls the "swamp of public discourse." In this way, a media analysis aims to understand the various, but highly standardized, patterns in the presentation of information on any given issue — the common streams of opinions, arguments and rhetoric that constitute "public discourses."[2] Since the media are a primary source of information about social issues and public policies,[3] media analyses are an important empirical measurement of the narrative and presentational patterns that shape public thinking about an issue (see Appendix A for further explanation of media's effects on public thinking).

In this analysis, we detail the dominant media frames used when discussing children in international new sources, and analyze the likely effects of exposure to these frames on the thinking of global decision-makers. To do so, we map the content and frequency of media coverage on this issue and evaluate the implications of these patterns. In this way, we examine *how* dominant media frames compare to, and are likely to influence, the way policymakers and advocates think about both children's issues, and the more specific domain of ECD. As such, this report both underscores the agenda-setting aspects of media coverage and considers the broader social and cultural impacts of the frames embedded in this coverage.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FrameWorks' analysis of the international news coverage of issues related to children reveals the following findings:

1. **The media largely discuss children's issues within the "family bubble" frame.**
   Media discussions of children are framed as parental and familial issues. In this way, the media communicate that children's issues are of concern to immediate families, but not necessarily to society at large. By focusing discussions of children's issues on

families, the media frame children as being clearly and solidly within the realm of parental and familial responsibility. This, in turn, renders discussion of *public policies* aimed at addressing children's issues difficult to consider.

2. **The media also commonly use the "imperiled child"[4] frame in discussions of children's issues.** When they *are* discussed in terms of larger societal concerns, children are presented as vulnerable to external circumstances over which they lack control and agency. The constant exposure to media stories that portray children as victims of crimes, abuse and violence has the tendency to lead decision-makers to support more punitive measures to protect and safeguard children, rather than, for example, consider programs that build children's developmental capacities and resilience.[5]

3. **The media's use of an episodic storytelling style and a crisis tone further reinforces the effects of the "family bubble" and "imperiled child" frame.** The media tend to treat children's issues as singular, isolated events rather than as ongoing trends of larger concern (73 percent). The proliferate use of an episodic tone is compounded by the employment of a crisis tone in over a third (37 percent) of all media stories in the sample. The effect of this is to reinforce the notion that children's issues are of an intractable nature and not likely to improve with support of public policies.

4. **Media coverage of children's issues rarely discusses early child development.** In a small percentage of stories (2 percent), the media discuss children from a developmental perspective, with a focus on research and programs that promote children's cognitive and socio-emotional development. While an in-depth focus on child development was relatively infrequent, brief mentions of ECD programs or research were found in 11 percent of the total media stories in the sample. This means that the media are more likely to address early childhood development in relation to other children's issues, rather than as a focal point in the story.[6]

5. **Parents (15 percent), researchers (14 percent), non-profit organization representatives (13 percent) and government officials (13 percent) are the most frequently cited messengers on children's issues**. In addition to these four, eight other types of messengers regularly provide expert opinion on children's issues in the media. This creates the notion that almost everyone is an expert on children's issues and, consequently, that there are no real experts on children's issues. However, the presence of researchers as messengers indicates that there is a space in the international media for members of the scientific community to weigh in as important spokespeople on children's issues. Despite this promise, the presence of so many different messengers threatens to crowd scientists out and trivialize the expertise they offer as just another voice in the crowd.

6. **American media discuss children in-depth more often than non U.S.-based media. Furthermore, most media stories that discuss children's issues focus on children in the U.S. (54 percent).** This study included four U.S.-based news sources

known for their international focus and importance to global policy and advocacy groups (CNN, *The New York Times*, *Foreign Affairs* and *The Wall Street Journal*). The data indicate that these news sources discuss children more extensively than the non U.S.-based media in this sample. In addition, while it is expected that American-based media refer more often to stories about children that take place in the U.S., the data also reveal that even non-American news sources refer to U.S. children more often than children based in other regions. By focusing on issues related primarily to children in the U.S., the media reinforce an American-centric focus on children that precludes public attention to children in other regions and the specific factors that impact early child development in those regions.

7. **In discussing children's issues, the media predominantly use the generic term "children" (68 percent) and do not generally focus on distinctions based on sex, race or socio-economic standing.** In the presentation of children as one undifferentiated, homogenous group, the media create a concept of "child" that makes it difficult to see the importance that developmental differences may play in relation to children's issues in this coverage. In only 12 percent of the media stories do reporters refer specifically to young children (0-5), which increases the likelihood of "aging up" among the reading audience, i.e., the tendency to think about "children" using a mental model most typically represented by older children and young adolescents.

Given these findings, how do we bring ECD into international media and public conversations? Is there a way to structure these conversations so that the media and the public understand the larger societal benefits of ECD for young children? We begin this report with a brief review of relevant literature, followed by a more detailed discussion of the findings summarized above. We then answer the two questions above and consider their implications for advocates working on ECD in the arena of international children's issues.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE: INTERNATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE ON CHILDREN

To provide background for the current study, in this section we discuss insights from three sources: 1) FrameWorks Institute's prior research on U.S. media content analyses of children and youth; 2) a publication produced by the International Federation of Journalists on how to report on children's issues; and 3) a Pew Center study that documents U.S. media coverage of international issues. We review these studies with a specific focus on their utility in generating hypotheses and propositions to test and explore in the current analysis.

A previous FrameWorks study of the portrayal of children by major U.S. television news outlets[7] reveals that U.S. media tend to use an "imperiled child" frame to discuss children's issues. The "imperiled child" frame is related to what George Gerbner has called the "mean world" syndrome prevalent in the media.[8] In this view, children are defined in a fundamental way by their vulnerability and the risks they face from all sides — from their parents, other adults and their broader environment.[9] In this way, the media portray children as victims, rather than as

agents. The stories reviewed for this study also tended to be highly episodic and sensationalist in nature.[10]

Another related FrameWorks study examines U.S. news media depictions of the specific issue of child maltreatment.[11] This study finds that media coverage of children's issues tends to be episodic, sensationalist and rife with the imperiled child frame. In addition, the authors of this report discuss the ways in which the media's reporting of child maltreatment focuses almost exclusively at the family level, in terms of causal explanations and notions of responsibility. This pattern in the coverage strengthens the "family bubble" default mode of thinking, and conveys the notion that events or issues that take place within the family are divorced from the wider context in which families are embedded.[12] Therefore, when children's issues are narrowly concerned with, and directed towards, parents and families, the public is less likely to consider larger societal causes and implications. This makes broad systemic policy interventions hard to think and see as effective solutions to what are perceptually classified as private family issues. The confluence of these two dominant frames — the imperiled child and the family bubble — is thus a particularly unproductive discursive combination.

A third, related, FrameWorks study looks at U.S. media depictions of child mental health.[13] This study finds that the media tend to cover child mental health primarily in terms of illness and problems. When children are diagnosed with mental illness, the media point primarily to the role of parents and families as caregivers. The likely impact of the media's definition of the problem is to deepen the public's sense that children's mental health problems are fundamentally intractable, and cannot be addressed through programs or policies that support these children and their families.

These FrameWorks studies of children and youth issues have looked at U.S. media, but what is known about how the international media cover children's issues? In a guide published by the International Federation of Journalists, entitled *Child Rights and the Media: Putting Children in the Right: Guidelines for Journalists and Media Professionals*,[14] media professionals offer a reflective perspective on how they might best present international children's issues to the public. Although this document is written as a professional guide and is focused on the specific coverage of *children's rights*, it is instructive for understanding how the international media themselves conceive of their role in influencing public opinion on children's issues.

Authors of this document acknowledge the media's importance in shaping public perception of children's issues. They state, "The way the media portray children has a profound impact on society's attitude to children and childhood, which also affects the way adults behave."[15] That said, the authors recognize that "fierce commercial competition" explains the sensationalist manner in which children's issues are frequently covered. The authors acknowledge that, when "children's rights figure prominently in mainstream media, it is usually in the context of child abuse, exploitation and sensationalist news making."[16] As a solution, the authors propose that:

> *It is possible for journalists to depict children in a way that maintains their dignity, and avoids exploitation and victimization. There are many examples of good journalism that act as a counterweight to media indifference and lack of awareness*

and that challenge myths. There is a need for the media to identify good practice, to applaud high standards, and to encourage improved coverage.[17]

That media professionals themselves acknowledge that reporting on children's issues is exploitative and sensationalized suggests that examining the extent to which such patterns exist in the international media's coverage of children's issues will be important in the current analysis.

Finally, a recent Pew Center study examining the way U.S. news sources cover international stories is instructive background for the current analysis. This Pew study examines international coverage from ABC, CNN, *The New York Times* and major regional newspapers.[18] The authors found that a very high percentage of these stories "focus on the United States' relationship to another country — not on other nations per se."[19] In addition, almost two-thirds (62 percent) of the content from these sources was associated with conflict or violence. According to the report, "Stories about conflict were four times more prevalent than those about cooperation (36 percent vs. 8 percent) in the media overall, with wide variations among outlets."[20] For the current study, the two most important points from this report are: (1) U.S.-based media coverage of international issues tends to be American-centric, and (2) this type of coverage is largely focused on issues related to conflict.[21] Since this study contains four media sources from the U.S., it is worthwhile to note these larger trends.

In order to test these and other propositions, the FrameWorks Institute conducted a comprehensive study, drawing materials from 11 major international and U.S.-based news sources, of how the international media cover children's issues. We present the methods, data and findings from this study in the sections that follow.

METHODS AND DATA

The research described here is guided by two primary goals: (1) to document patterns in the presentation of children's issues that are evident in the international media, and (2) to explore the implications of these patterns for advocates and researchers wishing to communicate about ECD within the broader domain of international media. In order to address these goals, FrameWorks undertook an examination — using both qualitative and quantitative analytical procedures — of a sample of international media materials that discuss children's issues. Below, we present the data and analytical techniques employed in the study.

Media Data

This study is concerned with understanding how children's issues are presented in international media outlets that are commonly read and viewed by global decision-makers. In consultation with the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, and related professionals working on international children's issues, the FrameWorks Institute identified a list of prominent international media outlets. The media sources that comprise this list include: *The Economist, Financial Times, The New York Times, International Herald Tribune, The Wall Street Journal,* BBC, Reuters*, The Lancet,* Al Jazeera and *Foreign Affairs*. The sample also included U.S. national and international television newscasts from CNN. These 11 media sources

were searched from January 28, 2010, to January 27, 2011, using the Factiva/Dow Jones database.

While this sample includes four U.S.-based news sources (*The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Foreign Affairs* and CNN), they are included because (1) they are considered common news sources that are read and viewed by global decision-makers, and (2) they compose a significant share of the media discourse on children's issues. In this report, we reference "international media" to refer to the totality of presentation of issues within all sources in this sample. When relevant, we draw specific distinctions between U.S.-based news sources and non U.S.-based sources as well.

To assemble a sample that captured a breadth of news coverage that shared a primary focus on child-related issues, FrameWorks used the following Boolean search term: "at least child * 7". This operation identified articles from the list of sources that mentioned any variant of the term "child" at least seven times throughout the article or transcript. Setting the threshold at seven mentions avoided "flooding" the sample with articles that mentioned children in passing but did not deal significantly with children's issues.[22] Using this procedure, the final sample included 602 unique media stories (365 newspaper/online articles and 237 broadcast news transcripts).

Media Content Analysis

The media content analysis comprised multiple iterative stages of research. FrameWorks began construction of the codebook by drawing upon standard coding categories identified both in previous FrameWorks content analyses, and in the framing literature more generally.[23] These coding categories include: (1) storytelling style (episodic vs. thematic[24]), (2) tone, (3) news section, and (4) types of messengers/experts cited. This emerging codebook was then supplemented with codes designed to facilitate an analysis of the demographic characteristics of children present in international media coverage. To allow such issues to be examined, we included the following codes: (5) gender, (6) race, (7) socio-economic status, (8) age, and (9) geography.

FrameWorks researchers then formed a sub-sample by randomly choosing 60 media stories from the larger sample of 602. We subjected this sub-sample to a qualitative thematic analysis that identified a series of specific children's issues discussed in the media. Together, these themes comprised a 10th category in the codebook. In order to examine whether the science account of early child development was making its way into the international media discourse on this topic and, more specifically, which parts of this account were present, we also coded for issues identified as integral components of early childhood development.[25] These codes comprised an 11th and final category in the codebook. Codes included in the codebook, and more specific inclusionary criteria, can be found in Appendix B.

The next stage of the analysis involved testing the validity and reliability of the codebook that emerged, through the processes described immediately above. Two FrameWorks researchers applied the codebook to a set of 20 stories that were randomly selected from the total sample. Results of this coding exercise were subjected to a test of inter-coder reliability using Holsti's coefficient.[26] During this first reliability test, the coding researchers achieved an inter-coder reliability score of .66 using Holsti's coefficient.[27] This score indicated that the codes in the

codebook had not been adequately described or were too specific — leading to differences in their application between coders. To address these issues, and improve inter-coder reliability, the lead researchers revised the codebook, addressing specific codes that were problematic by supplying additional clarity on code definitions and parameters. Following this codebook revision and training, another 20 articles were randomly pulled from the total sample and coded by the researchers using the revised codebook. Following this round of coding, the inter-coder reliability test was repeated — this time yielding a respectable .89 coefficient.

Having established the reliability and validity of the codebook, the next stage of the project involved using it to code the entire sample of 602 media. The resulting data were then subjected to a statistical analysis. This statistical analysis examined the frequency of codes in each category.[28]

Finally, we subjected the quantitative results from the analysis of the coding to a frame analysis. This analysis used the quantitative results to identify the general patterns, or frames, that the media use in discussing children's issues.

FINDINGS

The findings presented below are divided into two main sections. In the first section, we analyze the dominant, but implicit, frames embedded in the media that structure an emergent concept of "children." We focus specific attention on *how* the media represent children's issues, and the implications of these frames for advocates and experts communicating about child development in an international context. We find that there are two general frames used in the media to discuss these particular issues: the "family bubble" frame and the "imperiled child" frame. The use of an episodic storytelling style and crisis tone reinforces the effects of the two frames mentioned above. We also discuss how, and where, early childhood development fits within this discourse. In the second part of this section, we map the more explicit characteristics (messengers, demographic variables, etc.) from the content analysis of international media coverage of children, and lay out the implications of these findings for those communicating about ECD in this context.

We begin this discussion by providing an overview of the issues identified in the media that relate to children. As evidenced by the information in Table 1, the media discuss children in relation to a wide variety of topics. Those topics include parents and families, violence and exploitation, the law, education, health, ECD, poverty, and arts and culture. For our purposes here, we are interested in uncovering the presentational patterns of coverage that reveal how the media structure conversations about children and the likely effect on those who are regularly exposed to this discourse. The frame analysis follows the table below.

Table 1. Children's Issues in the Media

Issues		Count	Percent
Parents and Families			
General parenting practices		69	11
Family abuse		25	4
Reproduction and adoption issues		33	5
Family financial issues		17	3
	Subtotal:	**144**	**23**
Violence, Exposure and Exploitation (not family-related)			
Sexual exploitation		26	4
Child labor exploitation		5	1
Children and other forms of violence		86	13
Natural or man-made environmental dangers		16	2
	Subtotal:	**133**	**20**
Children, Law and Criminal Justice System			
Youth crime/criminal		5	1
Child rights and the law		21	3
	Subtotal:	**26**	**4**
Children and Primary/Secondary School Education			
Educational access		33	5
Educational policies and programs: Achievement gap		28	4
Educational policies and programs: Literacy		1	*
Educational policies and programs: Experimental		14	2
Digital media and learning, edutainment		8	1
Bullying/cyberbullying/harassment in school		13	2
	Subtotal:	**97**	**14**
Children and Health			
Diseases and conditions that threaten early survival		17	3
Diseases and conditions associated with fat and sugar		23	4
Child mental health		34	4
Drug use/abuse		3	*
Sexual/reproductive health and development		8	1
Other health conditions/diseases		66	10
	Subtotal:	**151**	**22**
Early Childhood Development			
School readiness/preschool education (0-5 years)		3	*
Brain development (0-5 years)		3	*
Social/emotional development (0-5 years)		1	*
Early childhood development in general		7	1
	Subtotal:	**14**	**2**
Poverty			
Poverty issues		13	2

Economic opportunities		10	2
	Subtotal:	**23**	**4**
Arts and Culture/Civic Engagement			
Arts and culture		63	10
Civic engagement/participation		4	1
	Subtotal:	**67**	**11**

I. Frame Analysis of International Media Coverage of Children

A. Media discussions of children frequently evoke the "family bubble."

While there is a broad range of issues that occupy the media agenda on children, parental and familial issues are the most frequent theme associated discussions of children (23 percent). Most of this discourse centers on parenting trends and general parenting advice, as well as advice on reproduction/adoption and financial matters. Instances of general parenting trends and advice in the media range from stories about public awareness ads reminding fathers to "take time to be a dad,"[29] what to cook for your children to "avoid stress and fighting over food,"[30] and a new digital application that allows parents to watch their children's sporting events online.[31] These articles are aimed directly at parents, and address what parents should and should not do with their children. They also often feature first-hand accounts of parenting. Consider the following quote in an *International Herald Tribune* article about parental patterns in China:

> *Ms. Fu confesses to uncertainty about how to balance her son's true interests with what she thinks he needs, an emotion familiar to many Western parents. ''I'm just not sure what's right. I don't make him do many extra classes. He really likes playing guitar and chess, so often I just let him do that. Actually, I'm pretty confused!''[32]*

There is also a predominance of stories that focus on family abuse, involving parents who suffocate their children,[33] shake their newborns to death[34] or inflict emotional abuse.[35] A few stories reference the role of law enforcement or child protection services, though they do not present a clear picture of how these agencies work or actually help children. Overall, the media present child abuse and neglect as primarily a private family affair. In so doing, the media send the message to the public that this is primarily an issue within (dysfunctional) families, and not of wider concern.

The media's presentation of children's health issues — particularly in regards to childhood obesity — are also characterized by an overwhelming focus on parents and the family. These health stories tend to be alarmist in tone and focus on whether the government should play a role in providing more nutritious food to children, at least in school settings. For example, in the following quote from a CNN broadcast segment entitled "Jamie Oliver's Fight Against Fat," the commentator states:

> *It should be parents that decide what their kids eat, not city officials. Now, as a doctor and as a father of three, I can tell you, I can tell you I appreciate this issue's*

complexity. Yet, childhood obesity is a deadly serious problem. It's actually threatening to cut years off of kids' lives. And that has some people asking another question. Are officials, both in the government and in schools, actually part of the obesity problem?[36]

These discussions about health tend to individualize the issue and place it within the "family bubble" of responsibility. Even when larger societal implications or solutions are invoked to address childhood nutrition, the media consistently bring the conversation back to the responsibility of parents.

There are some issues, such as international adoption, in which the media do attempt to bring in larger socio-economic considerations when it comes to parenting. In these cases, the media report on stories that illustrate the limited choices of parents in developing countries and question whether international adoption is beneficial for children. For example, *The Economist* states:

Inter-country adoptions happen in a fuzzy and sometimes murky world. One worry is that demand creates supply. Outsiders' money can distort the decisions of officials and parents in poor countries. That may hamper chances of the most desirable outcome, in which children are fostered by relatives or adopted locally.[37]

The *Wall Street Journal* also remarks on this phenomenon in Haiti:

The case illustrates the complexities of adopting children in a poor country with few working government institutions and a corrupt bureaucracy. Most children in Haitian orphanages aren't orphans, but have been put there by desperately poor families that hope they will be better fed and educated.[38]

However, in both of these instances, the parents are cited as key decision-makers that ultimately decide (based on economic motives) the direction of their children's fate. Moreover, it is not clear why or how the larger public should be concerned with this phenomenon or how it impacts society in general.

FrameWorks has noted in previous research in the U.S. that Americans understand children's issues with the assumption that child outcomes are narrowly the result of the home and immediate family. FrameWorks has found that this assumption is powerful in occluding the influence of other, more systemic, factors that shape families and homes. In this way, the family bubble understanding blocks the realization that children's issues are of importance to society at large — in terms of both cause and effect.[39] The current analysis shows that the family bubble frame is present not only in U.S. media, but also in the way that children's issues are discussed more globally. In this way, the media communicate that children's issues are of concern to immediate families, but not necessarily to society at large.

B. The "imperiled child" frame is also commonly evoked in the media's discussions of children's issues.

When they *are* discussed in terms of larger societal concerns, children are presented as vulnerable to external circumstances over which they lack control and agency. The imperiled child frame is most evident in the media's discussion of issues of state violence, law and poverty.

The types of stories found in the violence category are mostly of an episodic and sensationalist nature, in which reporters employ graphic details to describe the circumstances of individual children brutally beaten, killed or abducted by non-family members. The predominance of these types of stories in the media is to be expected, given what has been mentioned in the literature review regarding the nature of news production and the tendency to exploit children's circumstances and issues for increased ratings or readership.

One such article in the *International Herald Tribune* describes in vivid detail the emotional trauma of children as a result of war:

> *The refugee camps in Uzbekistan are filled with anxious women who desperately want to return home but are so scared of more bloodshed that they will not leave. The children are also showing signs of trauma. The camp here has set up a sparse activities tent for the young, and a stack of their pictures was on display Monday. One child used crayons to draw a tank that was strafing a crowd of fleeing civilians, a corpse on the road squiggled in red. Another sketched her home in flames, a nearby stick figure sobbing.*[40]

Other articles speak to children's imperiled status as instruments of war. *Al-Jazeera* reports on the role of children being used as informants:

> *Why are children being used for intelligence purposes? Because there is a perception that children are not involved in the war, that the children are passive victims of it. Why do children become informants? Often children are forced to become informants, either by drug gangs, the guerrillas or the army.*[41]

An "imperiled child" frame is also used in stories regarding the effects of child labor exploitation and exposure to environmental disasters. In such stories, there is often a sense of helplessness, along with detailed descriptions of the dismal situation that children find themselves in. In the sample, this type of discourse was highly prevalent in stories about children affected by the earthquake in Haiti.[42]

Despite the strength of the imperiled child frame in the media included in this analysis, there were occasional stories in which the media discussed children's *resilience* in the face of factors that imperil them. One such story states:

> *Like most children hit by a disaster or tragedy, 8-year-old Laurel Shepard was upset for months after her brother and grandparents were killed in a plane crash, says her mother Julie Shepard. Haunted by nightmares, she rarely left her mother's side. As the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks draws near, research on children traumatized by disaster is revealing that some children have a surprising capacity not only to bounce back, but to grow stronger than before. Parents can help the process along by encouraging the child to think about any positives, saying, for example,*

"You mentioned you never realized you could be this strong. Tell me more about that." Such encouragement is linked to post-traumatic growth in kids, according to a study of Katrina survivors by Dr. Kilmer and Virginia Gil-Rivas in the latest issue of Child Development.[43]

This example illustrates one way in which child developmental professionals might start taking part in media conversations on children and violence. Instead of perpetuating the "imperiled child" frame, ECD scientists and advocates can help shift this frame, as the piece quoted above does, to acknowledge the role of child development and help the media and the public understand the relationship between development and violence. This is especially important in relation to what is known about how policymakers are likely to react to the constant exposure to media stories that portray children as victims of crimes, abuse and violence. In FrameWorks' research, the predominance of an imperiled child frame has the tendency to lead decision-makers to support more punitive measures to protect and safeguard children, rather than, for example, consider programs that build children's developmental capacities and resilience.[44]

C. The media commonly use an episodic storytelling style to discuss children's issues.
As expounded by Shanto Iyengar, a leading scholar on framing in the media, most media stories are told using an episodic style.[45] This style of presentation highlights accounts of discrete occurrences or persons and, in so doing, places issues in the private or individual realm. Thematic stories, by contrast, focus on issues and trends over time and have been found to examine issues at a community or systems level and direct attention to more ecological, policy-based solutions.

The vast majority of the stories in the international media analyzed here were told in an episodic fashion (73 percent). The international media's use of episodic stories creates the perception that children's issues happen and "work" at the individual level. Such a perspective is not necessarily wrong; individual children are certainly affected by individuals in their immediate environments. However, this pattern in coverage obfuscates the notion that children's issues are also a larger societal concern, are of relevance over the long term, and are shaped by systems factors, such as resources and policies, that have both direct effects on children as well as more indirect effects on their contexts and caregivers. The following excerpt illustrates the kinds of episodic stories present in the media sampled for this project:

A young mom shakes her 3-month old son to death all because he interrupts her while she's playing a game on Facebook. And the young mom tells investigators her baby boy hit his head after a dog knocked him off the couch, then later admits she violently shook her son because his crying interrupted her Facebook game. She even tells investigators after laying her son's body on the couch, she smoked a cigarette and then shook him again.[46]

As discussed above, stories of extreme child abuse and neglect were common, and often focused on individual accounts of "monster" parents and the harm they inflict on their children. These kinds of episodic narratives fail to contextualize the parents' actions. By demonizing parents, punitive policies are endorsed, while policies that address systems and resources to prevent child abuse and neglect appear ineffective. Such stories also create an inaccurate view of the problem,

and function to focus the public's attention on extreme abuse, when, in fact, neglect is by far a more common problem, with more negative implications for society. Overall, the predominance of episodic storytelling hinders the public's ability to view children's issues as being affected by, and having a larger significance for, society.

In contrast, a smaller percentage of articles (27%) discussed children's issues with a thematic storytelling style. These articles bring attention to the societal dimensions of children's issues and show how multiple institutions influence children's well-being. For example, the *BBC* cites the following quote from an interview with Pavel Astakov, the Children Rights Commissioner for the President of the Russian Federation:

> *Without public organizations, without NGOs, without the non-profit organizations, in particular, the socially-oriented ones singled out in recent legislation, we simply cannot succeed. Because there are some places that government authorities cannot reach: we cannot look everywhere or find out to what extent every child feels safe.[47]*

This example helps the public to understand how and why public programs and policies are critical for children. However, examples of this type of reporting were sparse in comparison to the predominance of episodic storytelling.

D. International media largely employ a crisis tone in discussing children's issues.
Tone refers to the style or mood of communication practices.[48] Previous FrameWorks research has found that the media typically present children's and adolescents' issues using a "crisis" or "sensationalist" tone.[49] Communicating issues in a way that express a sense of immediate urgency and imminent threat can have unintended consequences. Such a crisis tone reminds the public of all the other crises on the public agenda, some of which they are likely to find more compelling. Using a crisis tone also risks making proposed solutions seem an inadequate means of addressing intransigent and overwhelming problems.[50]

Table 1. Tone of International News Media Coverage of Children's Issues

Tone	Count	Percent
Crisis/threat	220	37
Neutral	215	36
Positive/constructive	139	23
Consumerist	25	4

In the articles sampled for this analysis, children's issues are mostly presented using a crisis tone (37 percent) or a neutral tone (36 percent). The media's use of a predominant crisis tone likely has the effects described above — instilling and associating a sense of the intractability of children's issues. For example, in a story on children and education, the author states:

> *We will lose children every day unless we pay attention to our education failures and use that information to inform innovation.[51]*

The stress on "losing children" and "education failures" leads to an implicit view of the education system as failing and broken, which in turn is likely to make improving this system through innovation seem difficult or impossible.

A crisis tone is often used to persuade the public to support a given position on children's issues. This is often employed as a way to mask other available information that might persuade the public to think otherwise on the issue. In a quote from a story on vaccinations for children and their perceived potential for causing autism, the author says:

> *When delivered via vaccine, these ingredients and pathogens do not go through the natural immune system — through the nose and mouth and into the GI system (where most of our immune system does its work). Instead, this completely bypasses the natural immune system and is shot directly into the blood stream. How can all children uniformly deal with that? Many do, but according to the CDC, one in 100 in this country cannot. Knowing as we do the destruction that autism wreaks on the afflicted and their families, how many people would take those odds with their own children's lives?*[52]

The author leads this point with a description of the scientific processes for vaccination, thereby initially sparking a "constructive" tone with scientific facts. However, the last sentence depicts vaccinations as dangerous for children and thus ultimately anchors this argument within a crisis tone.

A more promising communication direction is the use of a reasonable/constructive tone used by the media in 23 percent of the stories analyzed. Stories that employ this tone present a reasonable discussion of the problem, as well as its causes and the potential solutions.[53] As a result of the use of this tone, the public is better prepared to listen to, and use, new information. For example, an article that discusses a fatherhood campaign states:

> *Clearinghouse has found that children who live without their biological fathers are, on average, two to three times more likely to have educational and health problems, be victims of child abuse and engage in criminal behavior than peers who live with their married biological or adoptive parents.*
>
> *Conversely, the group also has found that children with involved, loving fathers are far more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem and avoid high-risk behavior.*
>
> *"The fatherhood campaign does that in spades. It makes it easy to take action. You don't need to be a hero to be a great dad, just spend time with your kids," he said.*[54]

In this way, the author presents information in a way that allows the public to constructively consider the implications of this research and recognize a specific solution. Using a reasonable tone such as this has a far more beneficial impact on the public's perception of children's issues because it cues solutions-oriented thinking.

E. Rather than focus exclusively on ECD programs and policies (2 percent), the media are more likely to briefly discuss ECD in relation to other children's issues (11 percent).
In the limited number of stories in which the media *do* discuss child development in depth, they focus on school readiness programs and children's cognitive and socio-emotional capacities. Surprisingly, these discussions treat these issues largely from a scientific perspective and recognize the larger societal benefits of healthy children's development.

For example, a story from *The New York Times* discusses the importance of ECD programs for the overall development of Haitian society:

> *Early childhood development programs that serve children from birth to age 8 would have an immense and lasting positive impact on both individual children and Haiti as a whole.*[55]

The preventative argument for preschool programs of "pay now or pay later" is also present to some degree in this discourse. However, some sources interpret this notion on an individual level, rather than a societal level. For example, an *International Herald Tribune* article states:

> *Students who had learned much more in kindergarten were more likely to go to college than students with otherwise similar backgrounds. Students who had learned more were also less likely to become single parents. Perhaps most striking, they were earning more ... Good early education can impart skills that last a lifetime — patience, discipline, manners, perseverance.*[56]

Some stories from the sample discuss ECD in relation to brain and socio-emotional development. These stories reference the results of new studies that link early experiences to cognitive and emotional developments later in life. There is also a tendency to use more of a scientific tone and cite researchers as primary messengers in these stories. For example, the *New York Times* story includes the following discussion:

> *Scientists have shown that there is, in the words of* The Lancet*, "a golden interval" for childhood nutrition that occurs before the age of 2. "This is the period when brain growth is very extensive and babies are developing their immune systems," said Kathryn Dewey, a professor in the department of nutrition at the University of California, Davis. Stunting that persists after age 2 is generally irreversible, while improved nutrition in early childhood correlates to greater educational success.*[57]

This particular excerpt illustrates that, when the media *do* discuss ECD and brain development, they are quite capable of communicating effectively about why this stage in children's lives is important. The author uses the metaphor of a "golden interval" to help the public conceptualize the value of this time period, and cites a scientist who builds further justification for this point. The author then uses a causal chain that relates nutrition to brain growth and educational success.

Other stories on brain development discuss a new method to scan the brain waves of children to screen for epilepsy[58], and the introduction of a television show for the cognitive development of 2- and 3-year-olds.[59]Another story discusses the emotional development of young children and

presents findings of a new study in China that links difficult birth experiences with a tendency to be aggressive among 4- to 6-year-olds.[60] Despite the observations noted above, the small number of stories focusing primarily on the issue of ECD makes it difficult to draw more general conclusions about the nature of this coverage.

In order to identify the extent to which the media reference any mention of ECD within articles that are primarily about other issues, we also coded for "brief mentions of ECD." This data shows that the media at least briefly mention ECD-related issues in 11 percent of the stories in our sample. While we did not code for brief mentions by issue, the fact that ECD is embedded within a slightly larger percentage of media stories indicates that the media are at least somewhat attuned to this topic, even if they do not see it as a "primary" children's issue.

There may be an important discursive opportunity for communicating the relevance of ECD to other issues of concern for children cited in the media, including issues related to parents and families, general children's health, violence, and education. This is one of the key findings that came out of the preceding FrameWorks study, *Where is ECD on the International Child Advocacy Agenda?*[61] FrameWorks found that international child advocacy organizations are more likely to embed ECD programs and policies within other children's issues, such as violence, health and education. By identifying areas of shared values and concerns, and linking ECD programs and policies as solutions, ECD practitioners and researchers can influence wider adoption of ECD within the larger child advocacy field. This process, known as "frame extension," happens when organizations communicate about some target issue (e.g., ECD) in ways that extend the boundaries of the issue "to encompass interests that are incidental to its primary objectives, but are important to potentially adopting organizations."[62] Frame extension of ECD with other children's issues could be a fruitful communications direction to pursue in order to circumvent the predominance of the "family bubble" and "imperiled child" media frames, and interject the utility of ECD programs and policies for the enhancement of children and society.

II. Content Analysis of International Media Coverage on Children

The preceding analysis examined the implicit media frames, tone and storytelling style used to discuss children's issues, as well as the ways in which the media discuss the specific issue of ECD. In this section, we look at the more explicit patterns of communication from our content analysis that bear significance on communicating about children's issues in general and ECD more specifically.

A. American-based media sources discuss children's issues more often than non U.S.-based sources. Furthermore, both US.-based news sources and international sources focus more often on children in the U.S. than in other regions.
Media discussions of children are largely found within American-based media sources (72 percent, includes all stories from CNN, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*). A smaller percentage of media stories are found within European-based media sources (13 percent, includes all stories from the *International Herald Tribune*, *Financial Times*, BBC and *The Economist*). Reuters, an international news service, accounts for another 13 percent of total media stories on children. And *Al-Jazeera*, the only media source in our sample not based in the

U.S. or Europe (and not an international news service), accounted for just 1 percent of all media stories on children.[63]

Table 3. Sources for International News Coverage of Children

News Media Outlet	Count	Percent
CNN	233	39
The New York Times	150	25
Reuters	79	13
The Wall Street Journal	49	8
Financial Times	30	5
International Herald Tribune	26	4
BBC	22	4
The Economist	5	1
Al Jazeera	6	1
The Lancet	1	*
Foreign Affairs	1	*

It should be noted, again, that we narrowed our sample for this study by those stories from all of the above sources that mentioned children (or some derivation of the term) at least seven times. This means that American-based media, such as *CNN* and *The New York Times*, are more likely than other media sources in the study to discuss children's issues in greater depth. It is possible that other media sources *do* discuss children's issues more frequently than presented here — but not as a primary focus of their stories during this time period.

The fact that media stories on children are located predominantly in American-based sources may indicate that other media outlets included in the sample do not view children's issues as a prominent focus for news coverage (at least when compared to other issues on the media agenda). Conversely, this finding suggests that U.S. media do view children's issues as "news worthy." These differences in coverage patterns may evidence deeper cultural beliefs about children (or "news"), which would be of both academic and applied interest as a subject of future research.

When we look at the geographic focus of children in these news stories, we find that both U.S.-based news sources and international news sources focus more often on children based in the U.S. (54 percent), followed by those in the Caribbean (8 percent), Europe (6 percent) and the Middle East (5 percent). In 17 percent of the stories, the media refer to the situation of children in general, with no specific geographic focus.

Table 8. Children's Issues in All Sampled Media by Country/Region

Country/Region	Count	Percent
U.S.	323	54
No city/nationality/region reference made	105	17
Caribbean	51	8

Europe (including Eastern Europe)	34	6
Middle East	28	5
Asia	26	4
Sub-Saharan Africa	18	3
Multiple References	10	2
Canada	3	*
Mexico, Central America and/or South America	2	*
Australia	3	*

It is worthwhile to note that even in a sample that consisted of six media sources that are not based in the U.S. (*The Lancet*, *The Economist*, *Financial Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, BBC, Al Jazeera), and one international wire service (Reuters), the majority of stories focus on issues that relate to American children. In fact, when we removed the four U.S.-based news sources from this sample (CNN, *The New York Times*, *Foreign Affairs* and *The Washington Post*), international media coverage remains largely U.S.-based (as represented by 26 percent of the stories from these sources).

Table 9. Children's Issues in non U.S.-based Media by Country/Region

Country/Region	Count	Percent
U.S.	44	26
Europe	29	17
No city/nationality/region reference made	29	17
Asia	20	12
Sub-Saharan Africa	13	8
Middle East	14	8
Caribbean	10	6
Multiple References	6	4
Australia	3	2
Canada	2	1
Mexico, Central America and/or South America	1	*

While it is not surprising that U.S.-based media focus primarily on children in the U.S., the fact that non-U.S. based media also commonly refer to children in the U.S. *is*. By focusing on issues related primarily to children in the U.S., the media reinforce an American-centric focus on children that precludes public attention to children in other regions and the specific factors that impact early child development in those regions. In addition, the fact that only 2 percent of media stories discuss children's issues in a multinational context suggests that the media may have difficulty conceptualizing (or at least reporting on) issues and trends that affect children in multiple regions. This coincides neatly with the primarily episodic focus of most media stories on this issue. When the media focus on discrete events within a specific context, this creates the perception that issues related to children are isolated phenomena that do not apply in a cross-regional perspective.

B. Most media stories on children are text-based, and occur in the international, national or local section of the news.

Most of the media stories in our sample were from print or online newspaper/magazine sources (61 percent). A smaller percentage (39 percent) derived from broadcast television news segments. The data here are reflective of general patterns of media consumption (at least within an American context). That is, as an aggregate, the American public gets 60 percent of its news from text-based sources (print and online) and 40 percent from video-based (broadcast and online) sources.[64]

When media discussions of children occurred in a specific section of the news (49 percent of total sample), they were found most often in the international/national/local section (43 percent). This was followed by stories found in "other" sections (19 percent), the science and health section (13 percent), and the business/financial section (8 percent).

Table 4. Children's Issues by Media Section (49 percent of total sample)

Section	Count	Percent
International/National/Local News	128	43
Other section	56	19
Science and Health	39	13
Op-ed/Letters to the Editor	26	9
Business/Financial	23	8
Arts and Culture	19	6
Style	7	2
Education	0	0

As mentioned, most stories on children did not appear in a specific section of the news (51 percent). This means that they were part of broadcast or general presentation of news. When these stories are featured in a certain section, the fact that they are found in an international/national/local news section indicates that these stories are of "front page" importance. This is a promising communications direction, since it conveys to the public that children's issues are of sufficient stature to warrant primary attention. It is also promising that 13 percent of stories on children are found in the science and health section, which indicates that, at least to some extent, the media see and present children's issues as scientific in nature.

C. The media cite a wide array of messengers on children's issues.

Parents and caregivers are the most frequently cited messengers on children's issues (15 percent), closely followed by researchers/scientific experts (14 percent), advocacy/non-profit organizations (13 percent) and government agencies/officials (13 percent). Children are cited as messengers in 8 percent of media stories.

Table 5. Messengers on Children's Issues in the Media

Messenger	Count	Percent
Parents/caregivers	125	15
Researchers/scientific experts (non-specific)	117	14
Advocacy/nonprofit organizations	106	13
Government agencies, officials	105	13
Children	70	8
Business professionals	50	6
Pediatricians/doctors (not psychiatrists)	54	6
Other	55	6
Law professionals	47	5
School administrators/officials	27	3
Psychologists/psychiatrists	25	3
Teachers	15	2
Religious leaders	20	2
Law enforcement	21	2

Citing parents and caregivers as the primary messengers is likely to further engrain and support the "family bubble" frame described above. In supporting this frame, and its narrow focus on the family, the frequency with which parents and family members are cited in these media is like to inhibit the realization that extra-familial resources and supports are important causal factors.[65]

Those who are most qualified to speak directly on children's developmental well-being — medical doctors (6 percent) and psychologists (3 percent) — constitute only 9 percent of all messengers in the sample. It is promising, however, that researchers (who are not usually referred to by specialty) compose 14 percent of total messengers in the media. This indicates that the media are at least somewhat oriented to drawing upon scholarly expert opinion on children's issues, which is a positive trend for ECD professionals wishing to communicate in this context.

D. The media refer predominantly to a general category of "children," without making any notable distinctions between sex, race, class or age.
Most media stories do not reference children's sex. Of those that did mention the sex of children, 9 percent cited male and female children, 8 percent focused exclusively on female children, and 7 percent focused on male children.

Table 6. Reference of Children's Sex in the Media

Children's Gender	Count	Percent
No reference	460	76
Both	53	9
Female	47	8
Male	43	7

Furthermore, most media stories do not reference the race of children. Of those that do, black children were most often cited (3 percent), followed by Asian children (1 percent) and indigenous children (1 percent).

Table 5. Reference of Children's Race in the Media

Children's Race	Count	Percent
No race/ethnicity specifically mentioned	565	94
Black	16	3
Latino	8	1
Asian (including Southeast Asian)	8	1
Caucasian/white	3	*
Arab	1	*
Indigenous or other ethnic minority	1	*
Mixed race/bi-racial	1	*

In keeping with this pattern, most media stories do not reference the socio-economic status of children. Of those that do, poor/low-income children were mentioned (4 percent), with a much smaller focus on upper class/affluent children (1 percent).

Table 6. Reference of Children's Class in the Media

Children's SES	Count	Percent
No specific reference	566	94
Poor or low-income	26	4
Upper class/affluent	5	1
Working class	3	*
Middle class	1	*
Mixed SES	2	*

Finally, specific reference to children's age or age category is also absent in the media analyzed here. It is interesting, however, that early childhood is the second most frequently cited age category (12 percent), followed by children 6-12 (8 percent) and teenagers (6 percent).

Table 7. Reference of Children's Age in the Media

Children's Age	Count	Percent
Children, general	410	68
Early childhood (0-5, also includes any ECD reference of 0-8)	75	12
Children 6-12	48	8
Teen, teenager, adolescent	38	6
Other specific age reference	16	3
No term	14	2
Juvenile/minor (legal terminology for children)	2	*

Previous FrameWorks research shows that the American public tends to "age up" discussion of child development and child mental health.[66] "Aging up" refers to the tendency to think about

adolescents or teens when discussing early child developmental and early child mental health.[67] The creation of a generic "child" concept that results from the lack of distinction in the media in regards to the variables discussed above creates a space for these aging-up tendencies to be applied.

However, the fact that children in early childhood are specifically mentioned in 12 percent of the total media stories in this sample suggests a discursive opportunity to introduce early childhood development issues into the media. This data shows that children in early childhood are currently a small part of the international discourse on children's issues and suggests a foothold from which ECD issues may be effectively introduced into this media field.

Overall, the clustering of children into one generic category has important ramifications for advocates and researchers wishing to communicate about ECD within the international media. These implications are consistent with the effects of other aspects of the media coverage that have been discussed above. Together, the lack of distinction based on age, sex, race or class suggests that such variables are inconsequential when it comes to children's issues. This powerfully reinforces the more general consequence of the media coverage that has been noted throughout this report — *patterns, both explicit and implicit, in media coverage decontextualize children's issues and divorce these issues from the larger system and systems-level factors that are unquestionably integral parts of child well-being*.

CONCLUSION

The most dramatic finding from this analysis is that, when the international news media discuss children's issues, ECD is *very* rarely part of the discussion — only 2 percent of the stories on children in the media sampled here focused on ECD. ECD remains an underdeveloped - and untold - story in the current media context.

How do we bring ECD into international media and public conversations? Is there a way to structure these conversations so that the media and the public understand the larger societal benefits of ECD for young children? While we found some unproductive trends in the coverage — chief among them, the lack of discussion of child development — there are also important opportunities inherent in the way these media discuss children's issues. There are three promising findings that are worth considering for future communications research on this issue.

The first two promising findings from this research are in regards to media coverage of young children and the use of researchers as messengers. We find that there is a fair amount of media attention given to early childhood as a target age group (12 percent of all media stories specifically refer to children between the ages of 0-8). Therefore, there appears to be discursive space to create robust conversations about early childhood. In addition, while the media cite a wide variety of messengers on children's issues, researchers, doctors and psychologists are also cited as reputable sources of information (23 percent). In prior FrameWorks media analysis of U.S. coverage of child mental health, we found that researchers and scientists were infrequent messengers on this topic.[68] The presence of experts within the international media indicates an opportunity for a greater role for researchers and scientists in shaping international public

conversations about early child development more broadly. In short, this analysis suggests that the frequency of scientists and messengers can, and should, be expanded in these media.

The third, and most promising, finding is that ECD is briefly mentioned in 11 percent of the sample. This suggests that early child development *is* on the international media agenda, but that it occupies a secondary slot on this agenda. This positioning can be viewed as a strategic tool, rather than a liability, in increasing understanding of ECD issues and their policy relevance. This analysis, as well as the FrameWorks report *Where is Early Childhood Development on the International Child Advocacy Agenda?*,[69] suggest that moving ECD to the front of the international agenda is likely an unrealistic goal. However, this is not to say that framing and communications gains are impossible on this issue. Rather, it suggests a specific communications strategy: It suggests the need to find areas of shared values and concerns to align ECD with the issues that occupy the top spots on the international agenda — issues like violence, health and education. Finding such opportunities is likely to be an effective strategy for increasing understanding of ECD issues and shoring up support for ECD programs and policies. Locating and testing those areas of shared values and concerns will be the primary task of future prescriptive FrameWorks research on this issue. In short, our research suggests the need to identify and communicate the ways that ECD programs and policies relate to other prominent children's issues.

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.

Please follow standard APA rules for citation, with FrameWorks Institute as publisher. Arvizu, S., Lorick-Wilmot, Y., Simon, A., Lo, S., Remington-Bell, T., & Kendall-Taylor, N. (2011). *Framing early childhood development in a global context: An analysis of children's issues in international news media*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

APPENDIX A: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND ON MEDIA EFFECTS

Scholarly work on mass communication generally begins with the premise that the media affect the way 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."[70] 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.[71]

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 create the frames that people use to interpret and engage in public events. That is, frames have an important role in the construction of reality.[72] 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."[73]

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.[74] Studies have documented how certain frames increase the likelihood that audiences will draw out predictable implications from a story,[75] fill in missing information, and make assumptions about what has occurred based on cues in the media frame.[76] In this analysis, we focus on both what is a standard part of the ECD script, as well as what is missing in media narratives regarding early childhood development 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.[77] 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.[78]

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."[79]

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*. Shanto 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. For example, 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.[80] This study confirms the assertion that media frames not only impact how people think about an issue at the moment they read or watch the news, these frames also have measurable impacts on their subsequent evaluations and decision-making processes about the issue.

APPENDIX B: CODEBOOK CATEGORIES

Storytelling Style: Storytelling style refers to whether an issue is discussed in an "episodic" or "thematic" context. As expounded by Shanto Iyengar, a leading scholar on media framing, most stories in the media are told in an episodic style.[81] This type of coverage keeps the issue in the private or individual realm by highlighting stories about discrete occurrences or persons. Thematic stories, by contrast, focus on issues and trends over time. Thematic stories direct attention to contexts beyond the individual and towards the community or systems level to enhance public understanding on an issue. Testing for storytelling style in media materials allows researchers to detect whether the media speak about early childhood development using a systems-level or individual-level approach.

Tone: Tone refers to the style, mood, manners or philosophical outlook of a communication.[82] In previous FrameWorks research, the media tended to present issues using a "crisis" or "threat" tone. When issues are communicated in a way that expresses a sense of immediate urgency and imminent threat, this can have unintended consequences. A crisis tone generally reminds the public of all the other crises on the public agenda, some of which they are likely to find more compelling, and the public is likely to tune out and dismiss the message. Using crisis language also risks making proposed solutions seem inadequate to address such an overwhelming problem. In contrast, when the media present an issue using a "positive" or "constructive" tone, with a reasonable discussion of the problem, its causes and the potential solutions, the public is much better at paying attention to, and integrating, the new information. In addition, the media sometimes adopt a "consumerist" tone that structures information in a way that promotes consumption and stimulates a consumer identity among the public.[83] We also included a "neutral" tone category for those media stories that presented information with no noticeable rhetorical style or manner of presentation.

Source of Materials and Section Placement: We coded for the source of each material as either print or broadcast news. We also noted, in the case of newspaper reports, which section the story appeared in (International/National/Local, Business/Financial, Education, Op-Ed/Letters to the Editor, Science/Health, Arts/Culture, Style or Other). In this way, we were able to detect the types of media that discuss early childhood development, as well as identify how the media categorize such discussions.

Messengers: Our codebook also included a category for "messengers." Messengers refer to the types of people quoted as sources within the materials examined. The FrameWorks Institute has found that the presence or absence of certain types of messengers referenced in materials has implications for what is (and what is not) communicated.[84] Based on our qualitative analysis of the sub-sample, we coded for 14 categories of messengers. They include: Parents/Caregivers, Research/Scientific Experts, Advocacy/Nonprofit Organizations, Government Agencies/Officials, Children, Business Professionals, Pediatricians/Doctors, Law Professionals, School Administrators/Officials, Psychologists/Psychiatrists, Teachers, Religious Leaders, Law Enforcement and Other.

Gender: We coded for gender to detect if and how the media perceive gender as a salient category for the discussion of children. These codes include Male (to refer to any specific references to male children), Female (to refer to any specific references to female children), Both (to refer to both male and female children) and No Reference (to apply to stories that did not specifically mention either male or female children).

Race: We coded for race to detect if and how the media perceive race as a salient category for the discussion of children. Those codes include Caucasian/White, Black, Arab, Latino, Asian (including Southeast Asian), Indigenous/Other Ethnic Minority (write in group: e.g., Roma, Uzbek, other Euro ethnic minorities), Mixed Race/Bi-Racial and No Reference.

Socio-Economic Status: We coded for socio-economic status to detect if, and how, the media perceive the social and economic standing of children. Those codes include Poor/Low-Income, Working Class, Middle Class, Upper Class/Affluent, Mixed References and No Reference.

Age Term for Children: We also inductively coded for the age group focus of the media stories. While these stories were sampled based on the specific mention of the words "child" or "children," we also wanted to see if the media refer to specific age group categories of children. Those codes included Early Childhood (focus on infants, toddlers, preschoolers, usually between the ages of 0-5, though includes references of ECD for those 0-8), Children 6-12 (primary school-age children, not teens, not early childhood), Teens (middle school and high school, 13 and older — not children),

Geography: To detect the geographical focus of international media stories on children, we coded for the specific mentions of geographical regions or countries. Those codes include the U.S., Canada; Caribbean; Europe (including Eastern Europe); Sub-Saharan African; Middle East (including those in North Africa); Mexico, Central America and/or South America; Asia (including Afghanistan, Iran, India, Southeast Asia, and South Pacific Rim countries); Australia; No Reference; and Multiple References (for stories that referred to multiple regions).

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[1] 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.
[2] Strauss, C. (Unpublished manuscript). *Who belongs here and what do we all deserve? Americans' discourses about immigration and social welfare*.
[3] Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

4 http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/ezine22.html

5 http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/ezine22.html

6 In FrameWorks Institute related research, entitled *Where is Early Childhood Development on the International Child Advocacy Agenda?*, we also found that child advocacy organizations mention ECD more often in conjunction with other children's issues. Those issues include education, health and violence.

7 http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/ezine22.html

8 http://www.context.org/ICLIB/IC38/Gerbner.htm

9 http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/ezine22.html

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12 ibid 2

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