FRAME WORKS INSTITUTE

Overarching Patterns in Media Coverage of Education Issues

A Core Story of Education Report

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November 2012

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:

O'Neil, Moira. (2012). Overarching Patterns in Media Coverage of Education Issues: A Core Story of Education Report. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

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Introduction

In the past decade, education policymakers have made an increasingly self-conscious effort to shape the media conversation about education reform. In 2005, for example, the Bush administration came under investigation for using public funds to create advertisements that endorsed No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB). On the other side of the aisle, President Obama's unveiling of Race to the Top was a highly publicized media event. Education reformers understand that their jobs do not stop with policy design and implementation; they recognize that they must take media conversations about learning and education seriously if their proposals are to gain traction with the public and policymakers. As a site of contested meanings about America's education goals, problems and solutions, the media have tremendous impact on how Americans think about these issues and, in turn, on the design and implementation of education policy. Education advocates and experts must be aware of existing media narratives about learning and education if they are to effectively shift the public conversation about education reform to one in which learning processes, innovation, professional education and other key aspects of true reform are appreciated.

To that end, the research presented here details the dominant media frames about learning and education in American news, and analyzes the likely effects of exposure to these frames on the public's thinking. We first map the common streams of opinions, arguments and narratives that constitute extant "public discourses" about learning and education. We also analyze how well the media coverage reflects the information and concepts that education experts and advocates are trying to disseminate. Finally, we compare the findings from this media analysis to findings from a report detailing American cultural understandings of education issues in order to analyze how patterns in media coverage are likely to interact with existing patterns of public thinking. In this way, we examine *how* dominant media frames compare to, and are likely to influence, the cultural models (shared, patterned but implicit understandings and assumptions) the public uses to think about this issue.[1]

This media analysis is one stage in FrameWorks' Strategic Frame Analysis™ research process — an empirical approach to analyzing public opinion and developing and testing framing strategies. This approach is being employed to develop a "core story" of education, which identifies, organizes and translates a set of expert ideas about education into a "sticky" narrative structure that can be employed across the education reform field, regardless of specific issues of focus. In the media analysis phase of this larger project, we examined 570 media stories randomly sampled from newspapers across the United States and national television broadcasts, as well as blogs from across the political spectrum. This media analysis specifically examines the following facets of education:

Skills and Learning
Learning Space and Time
Assessment
Purposes or Ends of Education
Educational Disparities
Structures of Education

In this report, we analyze the general characteristics of the media coverage about education and learning, and identify the dominant frames that cut across all the above-mentioned areas. In subsequent reports, we provide in-depth analyses of each area to drill down into the frames that attach to these specific parts of the education reform discussion.

The goal of this summary report is to allow experts and advocates to look across these specific issues and understand what they are up against as they communicate about education and learning. This summary report also provides recommendations as to how reform advocates can take advantage of more productive extant narratives in the media's coverage of education issues.

This report was sponsored by the Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, NoVo Foundation, Raikes Foundation and W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Executive Summary

This analysis uncovers three dominant frames related to education and learning.

1. The *Consumerist* frame is alive and well in media coverage. The media frequently employ the *Consumerist* frame, which takes the following forms:

- The benefits of a well-functioning education system are limited to *individual* financial gain. This theme crowds out other education benefits such as supporting the economic well-being of the nation, producing informed and engaged citizens, and offering non-financial benefits that improve quality of life.

- Private industry is the organizing metaphor for explaining how the education system works and what should be done to improve it. Journalists and commentators regularly argue that increasing efficiency and improving cost-effectiveness are the most important goals of education reform, and that pushing education toward a corporate model will improve the system.

- The *Consumerist* frame obscures the collective benefits of education by

cuing individualist thinking, and makes public solutions to the system's current problems "hard to think."

2. The media portray learning as distinct from the policy environments in which it takes place.

- Learning and the structures in which learning occurs are separate in media stories. The media analysis found a negative correlation between media stories that covered issues related to skills and learning and those that covered structural and systemic aspects of education. This suggests that stories dealing with large-scale policy issues, such as funding considerations and systemic accountability measures, do not include descriptions of learning processes within the classroom, and vice versa.

- This bifurcation in media coverage is likely to limit public perceptions of the influential actors in learning outcomes to teachers, parents and students, and will obscure systemic and policy factors that shape skill development.

3. The *Crisis* frame dominates. The media coverage of education issues is structured by an overwhelming sense of impending *crisis*.

- Reporting on *problems* with the education system far outweighs attention to *solutions*. In fact, only 20 percent of the media sampled here contain solution statements.

- Journalists and other commentators amplify the scope of the crisis by voicing their concern about the academic standing of U.S. students in comparison to students from other countries.

- From a cognitive perspective, such crisis frames encourage the public's pessimism about reform ("What can we really do?") and fail to galvanize support for changes to the system.[2] Without clear solutions, problems appear both intractable and inevitable.

Together, these frames challenge education reformers' attempts to communicate about policy solutions to education issues. Based on this analysis, we offer the following communications strategies to begin to address these unproductive frames:

- **Emphasize collective benefits.** Communicators should avoid emphasizing education as a means to individual economic gain. Instead, highlighting the collective benefits of education's role in economic development and other non-financial ends of the education system will encourage more policy-oriented thinking among the public.

- **Feature solutions prominently in reform discussions.** To overcome the crisis frame, critical analyses of the education system should always be accompanied by concrete solutions that address problems. The *Orchestra* explanatory metaphor describes how education works as an integrated system and how problems can be approached through collaboration between the various actors and levels of authority that comprise the system. This metaphor maintains a systemic analysis, but, unlike the *Crisis* frame, avoids characterizing problems as intractable and insurmountable. *Remodeling*, another empirically tested metaphor, can also be used to provide a productive sense of pragmatism in education reform discussions.[3]

FrameWorks is currently developing an explanatory metaphor about skills and learning that will locate these processes within larger learning and policy environments. This metaphor will aid communicators in making the explicit connections between the micro-processes of learning and macro-processes of the education system.

Methods

This research is guided by two primary goals: (1) to examine how topics related to learning and education are regularly treated in the media, and (2) to explore the likely impact of these patterns on public thinking about education issues. In order to address these goals, the analysis is divided into two stages: (1) a content analysis based on a qualitative and quantitative examination of media stories that reference education and learning, and (2) a cognitive analysis of the media frames identified in relation to findings from previous cultural models research.[4]

Media Content Analysis

A recent Pew Center study suggests that, by and large, Americans receive their daily news from a combination of newspapers (both print and online) and broadcast news sources.[5] Sample selection in the current study was based on this finding and included stories taken from national newspaper articles and television broadcasts, as well as three news blogs representing a span of political perspectives. Using the LexisNexis, Factiva and Google News databases, specific news sources were selected based on circulation/viewership statistics as well as geographical and political diversity. The sample was drawn from the following print sources: *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *New York Post*, *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Houston Chronicle*, *The Denver Post*, *Chicago Sun-Times* and *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Sources used to construct the sample also included national television newscasts from ABC, CBS, NBC, CNBC, MSNBC, CNN and FOX News Network, and online content from *Huffington Post*, *Hot Air* and *The Daily Beast*. The study sample was selected from these sources over a one-

year period from October 1, 2010, to October 1, 2011.

Media stories were captured from the databases if they included at least three mentions of the words “education” or “learning.” This threshold ensured that the stories squarely dealt with issues related to education and learning and avoided flooding the sample with stories that mentioned education or learning in passing but were not focused on education issues. The search strategy was also designed to be sufficiently broad so as to capture stories that covered a wide range of education issues in order to allow for analysis of the more specific education issues areas detailed above. The initial capture procedure yielded 1,346 stories. Each of these stories was assigned a number and researchers used a random number generator to select 570 stories that comprised the final study sample.

The media content analysis was conducted in two stages. First, FrameWorks researchers developed a codebook based on standard coding categories utilized in previous FrameWorks content analyses and in the framing literature more generally.[6] Those categories include:

1. Storytelling style (episodic vs. thematic)
2. Tone
3. Section of the newspaper
4. Age-group, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status of the students mentioned
5. Types of messengers/experts cited
6. Values
7. Mentions of specific policies and programs

In addition to the codes above, each story was coded for whether or not it addressed the following specific areas of interest: skills and learning, assessment, educational disparities, structure of the education system, and education policies and programs.

After the codebook was developed, three researchers were trained in its application. To test for inter-coder reliability, each researcher coded a set of 25 randomly selected stories from the sample. The researchers achieved an inter-coder reliability score of 0.8 using Holsti’s coefficient — indicating 80 percent agreement across the coded themes.[7] After the reliability test, researchers coded the remaining stories and subjected the resulting quantitative data to statistical analysis examining the frequency of codes within each category. In addition, selected cross-tabulations were computed to examine relationships between codes.

In the second stage of analysis, the sample was divided into the six areas of interest

(skills and learning, assessment, educational disparities, structure of the education system, education policies and programs), and each area was subjected to a qualitative analysis of dominant narratives. The results of these analyses are presented in separate reports. In the current summary report, we characterize the entire data set and document the overarching set of frames that transcended the more specific issue areas.

Cognitive Analysis

The cultural models findings referred to in this document are based on over 60 one-on-one, semi-structured interviews conducted between 2008 and 2012 on issues related to education, including education and education reform, digital media and learning, skills and learning, and assessment. Consistent with interview methods employed in psychological anthropology, cultural models interviews are designed to elicit ways of thinking and talking about issues.[8] Patterns of discourse, or common, standardized ways of talking, were identified across the sample using a basic grounded theory approach to thematic analysis. These discourses were then analyzed to reveal tacit organizational assumptions, relationships, propositions and connections that were commonly made, but taken for granted, throughout an individual's transcript and across the sample. In short, analysis looked at patterns both in what was said (how things were related, explained and understood) as well as what was not said (shared, but taken-for-granted, assumptions).

Finally, to examine expert thinking about education and learning, FrameWorks researchers conducted 20 one-on-one, one-hour phone interviews with experts from the fields of education, psychology and early childhood development. These interviews were conducted in late 2011 to early 2012 and, with participants' permission, were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. To locate experts, FrameWorks surveyed a group of leading foundations working on education issues.

In the cognitive component of this analysis, FrameWorks researchers compared findings from the media analysis with results from the cultural models interviews in order to examine how media frames are likely to intersect with the cultural models that currently inform public thinking. In this type of analysis, multiple patterns of intersection are addressed, including how media frames (1) cue and strengthen existing cultural models, (2) conflict with or challenge existing models, and/or (3) fail to address a topic such that extant patterns of thinking are left to "fill in the blanks." The analysis also provides an etiological understanding of dominant media frames, as the relationship between frames in media and culture in mind is bi-directional.[9] In this way, the media analysis enables FrameWorks to identify the likely cognitive impacts of media framing and to formulate strategic recommendations for experts and advocates who communicate about education and learning.

Findings

In this section, we look across the more specific issues represented in the sample and report on general trends and patterns in media stories dealing with education issues. Despite a range of ideological perspectives that exist in the media around education issues, the analysis shows that there is a consistent narrative about education that cuts across media outlets and specific issues.[10] In the sections that follow, we detail the major components of that narrative and discuss how it compares to the messages education experts are attempting to relay. We also discuss the impact that a steady diet of these frames is likely to have on the American public as it grapples with education issues and policies.

Frame No. 1: Education is a consumer good.

The news media represents education issues as fundamentally economic concerns and consistently employs what previous FrameWorks research defined as the *Consumerist* frame.[11] In the coverage sampled here, the *Consumerist* frame promotes the idea that, to improve education outcomes, the education system should be run like a business in the private sector. This frame appeared in approximately one third of the coverage sampled.

The media constructs this frame in several ways. First, journalists and commentators narrow the goals of an effective education system to individual economic gain. In the sample, the notion of *Workforce Preparation* was the most frequently invoked value (29 percent of the stories that contained an explicit values statement). While these discussions included ideas of both individual career advancement as well as the preparation of the American workforce more generally, individual financial gain was by far the more prominent value. Values such as *Civic Development* and *Common Good*, that were not tied to economic gain but were cited as important purposes of education by experts interviewed in other phases of this research,[12] appeared much less frequently in the sample (3 and 0.2 percent, respectively).

The *Consumerist* frame was further instantiated by rather myopic attention to the products of the education system. Stories in the sample that covered issues related to skills and learning overwhelmingly focused on learning *outcomes*, and rarely on what skills are important or the process by which children develop such skills. For example, the following story discusses the interest private industry has taken in the education "business" to ensure the future workforce leaves school with necessary skills.

Big U.S. employers, worried about replacing retiring baby boomers, are

> *wading deeper into education and growing bolder about telling educators how to run their business. Several initiatives have focused on manufacturing and engineering, fields where technical know-how and math and science skills are needed, and companies worry about recruiting new talent. Their concerns are borne out by the math and science test scores of 15-year-old students in the U.S., which continue to lag behind China, Japan, South Korea and Germany, for example. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce released a report in May that said higher education had failed to "tap the potential of digital technology" in ways that would "transform learning, dramatically lower costs or improve overall institutional productivity."*[13]

The near-exclusive focus on outcomes and comparisons of the education system to a business paints a vivid image of the place of children in the education system; students are likened to factory outputs. In these stories, journalists leave out discussions of the skills that are necessary to successfully enter the workforce. In addition, the lack of discussion of process (i.e., how learning happens and works) leaves room for the public to fill in this empty narrative slot with their dominant, and highly unproductive, understandings about passive in-class learning.[14]

The excerpt above also encapsulates another supporting feature of the *Consumerist* frame — the focus on efficiency and the consistent use of metaphors that compare the education system to a business. Approximately 20 percent of the solutions described in the media stories analyzed were calls for increases or cuts to the education budget, focusing primarily on how to make the system more efficient and how to curtail "bloat."

> *To arrive at this low cost position, I didn't cut corners on anything that was important to the CELS value proposition. CELS doesn't use many adjuncts, faculty salaries are competitive with those at research universities, a laptop is included in tuition, the Division III football stadium has a Jumbotron, etc. As the CELS example illustrates, a college using a value-designed model could deliver a prestige quality product to its target market and yet have vastly lower costs. One would have to use a similar method to determine the size of vouchers. This premium support model (aha!) might then involve restraining the growth rate of premium support to encourage cost control.*[15]

Beyond cost effectiveness and efficiency, reforms were touted as useful when they mirrored reforms in the private sector. School vouchers, calls to end collective bargaining rights for teachers, the implementation of "merit-based pay," and increasing private funding were deemed attractive based solely on their similarity to practices in private industry. These discussions lacked scrutiny of the implications of these practices for education or recognition of the differences between public education and private business:

> *Daniels, who died in 2000, was impatient that education reform wasn't happening fast enough, Childears said. "He wanted us to fund programs that were really trying new and different ways to accomplish things in education," she said. "He specifically mentioned vouchers as a concept that made sense to him based on his belief in the free market and that parents should have the right to determine the best education for their kids."*[16]

Acknowledgements of the problems with applying free market principles to public systems were exceedingly rare in the coverage. What *was* dominant was the notion that emulating the market is the *silver bullet* to education problems.

Cognitive Implications

Preparing students to become productive members of the future workforce is undoubtedly an important function — and goal — of the education system. Furthermore, the efficient and effective use of financial resources *is* a key element in reforming the education system. However, the near-exclusive focus on these arguments and the rampant comparisons between the public education system and private industry are highly problematic for progressive education reformers. Most glaringly, the use of this frame results in the perception that the benefits of a strong public education system are financial, and accrue to individuals. FrameWorks' research has shown that individualism is a highly dominant cultural model in American thinking on education, and that, when locked into this model, it is difficult for members of the public to understand how contributing their tax dollars to an education system will benefit those without children currently in the system.[17] We therefore believe that the dominance of the *Consumerist* frame in the media will strengthen the public's individualist perspective. This, in turn, will challenge those attempting to communicate about how the public education system works, its benefits, and the potential for reform.

Furthermore, the focus on financial efficiency and cost-effectiveness pushes non-economic benefits of an effective education system out of the public's consideration. In contrast to the *Consumerist* frame, the experts we interviewed stressed the importance of education in creating informed citizens who can contribute to a healthy democratic society. Experts also spoke about how an effective education system allows citizens to reach their full potential and explained this "potential" in non-financial terms. The media's presentation of the ideal education system as one in which students are "produced" at as little cost as possible and who, upon exit of that system, seek maximum profit and financial gain, leaves little cognitive space for other ways to understand important benefits of public education.

The consistent comparison of students to commodities "produced" is likely to tap into what FrameWorks researchers have termed the "conduit model of learning." In this model, learning is understood as a passive endeavor where students are "filled up" with information.[18] This will obscure a more dynamic and interactive understanding of learning — a process that experts see as the guiding principle in effectively improving education outcomes.

Finally, the deep metaphor that the public education system is like a private business, on which the *Consumerist* frame is built, presents a cognitive danger already well documented in FrameWorks research.[19] This metaphor offers a simple, cognitively rewarding solution to all the problems of the public education system: *Privatize the public education system and all its current problems will be solved by market forces.*

Frame No. 2: Processes of learning are separated from the education system.

The media regularly focus on systemic education issues, including the politics of funding and the structure of the education system. However, this analysis found that such considerations are distinct from discussions of what happens in classrooms. That is, the media coverage of education as a system is distinct from its coverage of learning.

All the specific education issue areas were well represented in the media sample. Structures of education were mentioned most often (59 percent), followed by skills and learning (45 percent), education programs and policies (41 percent), assessment (35 percent), disparities (32 percent), and learning space and time (19 percent). However, discussion of more micro-processes — such as learning and skill development — did not overlap with more systemic discussions — such as structures of education or education programs and policies.[20] We found a negative correlation between stories covering issues related to skills and learning (processes that occur in the classroom) and those that cover the structure of the education system, meaning, more generally, that it is unlikely for those two topics to be covered in the same story.[21] The following excerpt demonstrates this tendency:

> *Walk down the third floor hallway, and you will be immediately transported to another place and time. Handmade paper lanterns, life-sized models of Terra Cotta Warriors, miniature scholars' gardens and Great Walls and scrolls of delicate calligraphy are evidence of the months the third graders spend immersed in their study of Ancient China — a study that seamlessly integrates literacy, math, science, social studies, music and art. Down the hall, elaborate models of the Brooklyn Bridge and diagrams of the path NYC tap water takes from reservoir to faucet showcase the second grade's New*

> *York City curriculum. Out in the schoolyard, the fourth graders tend to their Three Sisters garden, one of many elements that make up their Lenni Lenape exploration. Guiding them through these wondrous curricula is a faculty comprised of teachers who care about educating these kids as much as we parents care about keeping them clothed and fed.*[22]

The journalist describes a dynamic learning environment, and attributes this environment to the dedication and caring of teachers. However, these types of discussions are disconnected from the more structural factors that contribute to the learning environment, such as teachers' opportunities for continued professionalization or how resources are allocated and used in this particular district. The media analysis consistently found that discussions of skill development are represented as distinct from the policy environments in which they occur. At the same time, journalists tend to report on the more structural features of the education system without reference to how policy developments impact what occurs in classrooms.

Cognitive Implications

The bifurcation of coverage of learning processes and systemic education issues has two likely cognitive impacts for members of the public. First, the separation of the micro-processes of learning from more structural issues in the education system is likely to further ingrain the public's idea that learning outcomes are the effect of individual character and willpower. Previous FrameWorks research has documented a strong tendency for members of the American public to explain education outcomes (both successes and failures) through the presence or absence of individual willpower, discipline and drive (on the part of the student, parent or teacher). This focus on internal states of motivation creates a cognitive blindness to the role that systemic factors play in shaping teaching and learning.[23] The media's separation of student learning from more systemic education issues leaves this cultural model-in-mind uncontested and is likely to result in a continued difficulty to recognize how policies — such as funding decisions or the institutionalization of various kinds of accountability measures — can impact learning processes. In this siloed understanding of learning, audiences will likely attribute outcomes to the personal attributes of the "tangible triad:" parents, students and teachers.[24]

This frame is also likely to have an impact on how the public understands the parts of the education system *outside* of classrooms. Education actors who are not directly tied to the classroom, such as administrators, union representatives and government officials, are likely to be seen as "political" actors who are out of touch with how students actually learn, and whose work is driven by motives other than what is in the best interest of children. The association between these actors and "politics" encourages the evocation of what FrameWorks has documented as

dominant cultural models of "government."[25] In the context of education, this association will result in the perception of these actors as ineffective, corrupt and wasteful. This association is especially problematic because it creates a clear and simple answer to how to improve education: Keep government out. The fact that this conclusion is also supported by the *Consumerist* model, as discussed above, is further cause for concern.

Frame No. 3: The Education System is in Crisis.

Previous FrameWorks research has shown that *Crisis* thinking pervades public understanding of the education system. The current analysis helps explain these findings by documenting a *Crisis* frame in the media's coverage of education issues; 10 percent of the sample included the *Crisis* frame. By contrast, themes such as education for common good, as a means to provide opportunity for all citizens and to increase civic development together constituted less than 5 percent of media coverage. The *Crisis* frame portrays the education system as facing insurmountable problems beyond repair, in which children stand little chance of ever mastering even the most basic skills or subject content. The excerpt below demonstrates this feature of coverage:

> *We know that the problems start early with two-thirds of American fourth graders who cannot read at their grade level and continues on to high school with 1.2 million students dropping out each year. Disadvantaged children come to school at least two years behind their peers in pre-reading skills. Everyone would agree that our country is in the midst of an education crisis.*[26]

The frame is primarily supported by the dominance of discussions of the poor performance of U.S. students in comparison to their international counterparts, and the inevitability of their fall in international rankings. Media coverage tells a consistent story about students leaving school without the skills required to meet the challenges posed by new global economic pressures. According to these stories, an education system without the ability to produce students who can compete internationally further contributes to the country's already depressed economic state. Schools are described as failing to educate students, and students are depicted as failing to master basic skills. Stories consistently discuss how the United States has "fallen behind" other countries in what one story describes as a "global horse race."[27] The following excerpts demonstrate several elements of this *Crisis* frame:

> *The challenges are enormous. In the most recent benchmark measurement of student success around the world, it found that among 34 developed nations, American students rank 14th in reading, 17th in science, near the bottom,*

> *25th, in math. Another study funded by the U.S. Department of Education found one-quarter of America's eighth-graders cannot read at grade level.*[28]

> *The number of students starting graduate school shrank only among domestic students, according to the council's report. The number of new international graduate students coming to study in the United States rose 4.7 percent from 2009 to 2010, while first-time enrollment of domestic students declined 1.2 percent.*
> *"The decline in domestic students is very bad news for the nation's economic future," Dr. Stewart said. "Higher education and, increasingly, graduate education are what drives prosperity, and if we get to the point where only people with significant bank accounts can afford graduate education, the country is doomed."*[29]

Despite the proclivity to describe the problem, media stories infrequently offer solutions to education problems. Over 20 percent of the stories contained no discussion of solutions. Readers are bombarded with descriptions of education problems, but not provided with pathways to solving them.

Cognitive Implications

Education advocates understandably want to communicate the severity of education problems. However, constant crisis messages without clear and consistent explanations of solutions will have negative effects on the public's willingness to support education reform efforts.

Furthermore, FrameWorks researchers have found that the *Crisis* frame inspires a sense of nostalgia among the public for a previous era in American education. Thinking and talking about solutions, respondents in our research typically reason that the American education system has moved away from its goals and that the only way to get back on track is to return to a time in which the system focused on discipline, limiting distractions and drilling basic content knowledge. This kind of thinking undermines people's willingness to think about the importance of educational *innovations* and higher-order cognitive skills.[30]

Finally, the *Crisis* frame creates inertia in public thinking about education reform, as the severity of the problems described in the media — whole generations of students unable to write complete sentences or "balance checkbooks" — appear insurmountable.

Conclusion

In addition to the problematic frames described above, there are several potentially positive trends in the media coverage of education and learning that emerged from this analysis. The media has the *potential* to expand the public's assumptions about the actors who comprise the education system beyond students, parents and teachers. If other, more problematic frames (*Consumerism*, for example) can be strategically addressed, the strong presence of the voices of education administrators, advocates and researchers (nearly 40 percent of the messengers cited) can begin to widen the public's understanding of who comprises the education system and how that system is organized. Furthermore, the fact that a fair percentage of the media stories analyzed here move outside of the classroom to focus on administrative and political structures that shape the education system is promising. If such discussions can be firmly connected to those dealing with what happens in the classroom (learning, professional development, resources), there is the potential to dislodge dominant individualist understandings of education and learning, and widen the lens on this issue. Future FrameWorks prescriptive research on skills and learning will aid communicators in making this connection.

However, the problems that emerge from this analysis are both more numerous and more problematic for education reformers than the opportunities. The primary problem with the media coverage is that it presents a narrow story of education when compared to the stories that education advocates and experts want to tell. For experts, the goals and functions of the education system extend beyond financial considerations; the cognitive processes of learning are embedded within, and shaped by, larger social and political structures; and, while education's problems are severe, research has uncovered effective reforms that have been shown to improve education outcomes and have the power to ensure that all U.S. students have access to quality educational resources. The breadth and nuance of this expert story, as well as its optimism for improving education, are missing from the media narrative. The *Consumerist* frame advocates for the privatization of the system, while the separation of the classroom from policy and systems decisions undermines the role of government in improving that system. The *Crisis* frame emphasizes the dire problems the system faces, while failing to offer concrete and feasible solutions. Unfortunately, as is frequently the case, public understandings of learning and education are closely aligned with the media's narratives, creating a self-perpetuating loop of frames that inhibit productive considerations of how the American education system works and how it can be improved.

The work of the Core Story of Education Project is to break this culture-in-media-culture-in-mind loop by introducing new and more productive ways of talking about education and learning into the public discourse. While the FrameWorks Institute is in the process of laying out the elements of that narrative, there are concrete

recommendations that emerge from this analysis.

1. Communicators should emphasize the collective gain and national prosperity that result from careful preparation of the future workforce.

2. Experts and advocates should emphasize the non-economic benefits of a well-functioning education system whenever possible.

Critical analyses of the education system should be consistently tied to pragmatic discussions of solutions that focus on the systems and policy levelers of change. The *Orchestra* and *Remodeling* explanatory metaphors are helpful to this end, in their ability to concretize systemic aspects of education and move meaningful reform from the ideal to the real.[31]

[1] Quinn, N. (2005). *Finding culture in talk: A collection of methods.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

[2] Davey, L., & Bales, S. (2010). *How to talk about budgets and taxes: A FrameWorks MessageMemo.* Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[3] Kendall-Taylor, N. (2009). *Orchestrating systems and remodeling reform: Reframing education reform with simplifying models.* Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[4] Chart, H., & Kendall-Taylor, N. (2008). *Reform what? Individualist thinking in education: American cultural models on schooling*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute; Lindland, E., Kendall-Taylor, N., Baran, M., O'Neil, M., & Simon, A. (2012). *Mapping the gaps on skills and learning: A core story of education report.* Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

[5] Pew Research Center. (2010). *How news happens: A study of the news ecosystem of one American city.* http://www.journalism.org/sites/journalism.org/files/Baltimore%20Study_Jan2010_0.pdf

[6] Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

[7] Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

[8] Quinn, N. (Ed.). (2005). *Finding culture in talk: A collection of methods*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

[9] For a discussion of the "double birth of meaning," see Shore, B. (1998). *What culture means, how culture means (Heinz Werner Lecture Series).* Worcester, MA: Clark University Press.

[10] There appears to be greater coverage of education issues in sources that have an actual or perceived liberal perspective. For example, *The Huffington Post* accounted for 28 percent of the sample, followed by *The New York Times*, which comprised 15 percent of the stories analyzed. Furthermore, the lion's share of the sample dealt with federal policies, with very little attention paid to local issues (only 4 percent of stories covered local-level policies). This finding is in contrast to FrameWorks' previous media analysis of education, which showed a bias towards coverage of local issues. The highly publicized decision to allow states to opt out of certain aspects of NCLB, as well as the presence several prominent cheating scandals, likely explains the greater focus on federal-level policies during the time period in which media stories were sampled for this analysis.

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[20] Correlations are a standard way to express the strength of a relationship between two categories. They are standardized to run from -1 to 1, where 1 describes a perfect relationship. That is, when one category changes, the other one changes in lockstep. -1 describes a perfect inverse relationship: When one category changes, the other one changes in the opposite direction.

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