TAX-SUPPORTED SCHOOL VOUCHERS:  
A FRAMING ANALYSIS OF OHIO EDUCATION REFORM

DISSERTATION

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By

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

Framing effects have become a popular method to understand how the structure of a message influences public opinion and decision making. A media frame reports an issue, idea, or event of public significance in a manner calculated for a particular effect. Two newer veins of framing research assert first, that a discursive community requires a relationship between the individual making decisions and the broader discussion occurring within the community, and second, the role of values in determining individual responses to frames. This study incorporates these newer applications of framing theory into a public opinion survey of black and white community members in the Columbus, Ohio metropolitan area concerning the controversy of tax-supported school vouchers.

Major issues were located within legal literature. Content analysis of two local newspapers was conducted over five and one-half years, locating the legal issues as frames in the newspapers. Five framing questions were added to a public opinion poll conducted by the Center for Survey Research at Ohio State University. These questions were asked within one of five value contexts, to determine the value's effect on public opinion according to race.

Results indicate that there is a significant effect on public opinion concerning tax-supported school vouchers according to race, but not according to value context. Black respondents support tax-supported school vouchers upon hearing the equal opportunity
frame, but oppose vouchers upon hearing the community action frame. The First Amendment frame and the Competition frame did not produce a significant difference between races.

This study reinforces previous research claiming that news frames affect public opinion. Value contexts did not influence acceptance or rejection of a frame concerning school vouchers. It is suggested that the inherent value within each frame was culturally strong enough to negate the attempt to manipulate the value context with an introductory frame statement.

Future research could isolate value contexts that are inherent already within the news frames and measure whether they influence how individuals respond to a concept overall. Continuing to attempt to isolate the frame's value effect would increase understanding of how frames successfully affect public opinion.
Dedicated to my husband, David
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INTRODUCTION

If the [U. S. Supreme] court upholds the concept [of tax-supported school vouchers], the fight will shift to state legislatures, where public opinion may determine the outcome as much as any opinion from the Supreme Court.

New York Times, February 21, 2002

The relationship between the news media and public opinion has been a focus of researchers for more than half a century. Beginning with Katz and Lazarsfeld’s influential Personal Influence in 1955, scholars have sought to identify the role of the news media on public sentiment. In 1980, third-party presidential candidate John Anderson "had his candidacy assessed as significant primarily by the results of opinion polls generated by or channeled through the mass media and widely accepted as accurate by strategic elements of the political system" (Gollin, 1980, p. 446). Another study almost twenty years later reminds us of the role of the mass media in opinion formation. In speaking of the social problem of structural equality in the United States, Gandy, et al. state, "depending on the ways in which the problem of inequality is framed, then, press coverage may lead citizens toward, or away from, support of particular public policies" (1997, p. 160). Credible theories have been advanced concerning media effects, but the questions of whether and how and to what degree mediated news affects the general public continue to push us into further research.
A media frame can be defined as an explanation of an issue or idea or event of public significance that tells the story in a way calculated for a particular effect. Media make active choices that are potentially important in understanding emerging issues or redefining existing ones. Framing effects have become presently a popular theory to explain media effects. Scholars seek the key to explaining how the structure of a message can influence the opinion and decision making of those exposed to it. This paper is another installment in the study of the effects of framing on public opinion. This research is based upon the proven assumption that individuals use more than media generated frames when forming an opinion about a matter of public interest. An additional element in the opinion making process has been shown in previous research to be the value context that surrounds the frame. Values affect the individual's decision making process when they are attached to media frames. Because this is the case, in order to understand how people choose a frame to explain reality, one must also seek to understand how values associated with the frame are affecting public choice.

This study adds the element of race to the question of media framing and public opinion and argues that values underlying the published media frames will have varying influence upon survey respondents depending upon their racial interest group. Interest group leaders typically serve the interest of their constituency in matters salient to the group. In the case of the national school voucher issue, this has not been the case. While opinion polls show that black Americans support school vouchers, black interest group leaders oppose them. This study seeks to survey this controversy in the Columbus, Ohio area, in order to determine whether Columbus residents mirror the national trend. The goal is to discover whether respondents are accepting or rejecting tax-supported school
vouchers as a viable school reform based solely on the media frame, or whether other factors affect the individual's decision. If respondents are incorporating more than the frame into their understanding of the school voucher, it can be concluded that this controversy is a study of the discursive community operating to come to a public decision on public policy.

This becomes a significant area of interest in light of the primary role that media play in a democracy by distributing viewpoints to the general public. Research by sociologist Serge Moscovici shows that a consistently held minority opinion can influence the majority group to change its opinion. If competing viewpoints are represented by the media to a community, that community will be better able to engage in the public deliberation necessary for a discursive democracy. This study sought to determine whether minority interests are represented along with majority interests concerning the politically controversial state issue of school funding. The mainstream newspaper and an alternative multicultural newspaper in Columbus, Ohio was compared for the effect each has on the public perception of tax-supported school vouchers. Frame analysis, or content analysis, was completed of articles in these newspapers appearing during the period of January 1, 1997 through June 30, 2001, and dealing with the subject of school vouchers in local Ohio schools. Frames discovered in the different newspapers were incorporated into the survey frames, in an attempt to determine whether the local communities adopted the frames of the mainstream or multicultural news articles.

In order to measure agreement with newspaper frames, a survey was employed to determine the relationship between an individual's race, the value condition accompanying the frame, and the frame itself. Each of four news frames was tested in
the survey, manipulating the value condition that accompanied the frame rather than the frame. The goal was to use the framing questions as a way to trace the value conditions that might be affecting public opinion. The survey tied opinion questions couched in one of two value conditions to specific issue frames used in local newspapers. This paper measures the relationship between race and the level of agreement with frames commonly used in The Columbus Dispatch and The Columbus Post, as they varied according to pro-and anti-voucher values.

If it is the case that area newspaper frames represent the minority opinion as well as the majority opinion within the community, then one can argue that this bodes well for the health of a discursive community in the Columbus metropolitan area. Citizens in the area have access to a repertoire of issues for public discussion that represents more than one local interest group.
CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Significance of the Study

A society houses various interest groups that demonstrate an ongoing attempt to affect the social views adopted within its milieu. These different groups compete to establish hegemony and provide the legitimating social dynamic to the larger society. It is here that mass communication becomes relevant, for it is by using the mass media, argues Duveen, that an interest group's ideas are circulated into the larger society, addressing "questions of legitimation." Communication serves "to emphasize a sense of the heterogeneity of modern social life" (2001, p. 9), helping to bind together a pluralistic society that abounds with group distinctions.

This study applies Moscovici's social representations to the field of rhetorical and discursive studies as a practical explanation that combines social construction with the influence of mass media to explain how we understand the world. In essence, Moscovici's social representations give another sociological perspective of what happens in the framing process. This unique application of Moscovici's work adds additional understanding to the relatively abstract theory of framing.

Framing of news reports has become a necessary part of the study of how news affects public understanding of important events in society. News frames shape our
understanding of social reality, thus playing an essential part in how the public views society. The frames presented by the media also encourage people to attempt to attain their goals by letting them know there are others who share their goals who might cooperate in attempting to achieve them (Dahl, 1998, p. 35). Additionally, the media is necessary in order to satisfy Dahl’s criteria for political equality: to be well qualified to participate in democratic decisions, it is necessary for individuals to have opportunities to learn of important matters. This occurs through "inquiry, discussion, and deliberation" (Dahl, 1998, p. 39).

Media are uniquely situated to be able to provide the venue for such inquiry, discussion and deliberation. But if media fails to achieve this, the results can be harmful to a democratic society. Gurevitch and Blumler recognize an inherent danger in this state of affairs. Western journalism is experiencing presently a "crisis of legitimacy" in part because of the increasing inability of many groups with a stake in civic affairs to recognize themselves in the stereotyped portraits of their activities in the major media (1990, p. 285). They also see news personnel as "active constructors of social reality;" thus, it becomes permissible to point the finger at the messenger for the failure to include in the message representations of diverse groups and opinions (1990, 286). Noelle-Newmann agrees that it is essential for a democracy to represent the "emotional convictions" of a larger portion of its people in mass media reports. To fail to do so, she argues, places the democratic society in a vulnerable position, because these are emotional positions. If they have no intellectual foundation, they can become radical ideas in a time of crisis or social conflict (1980).
News frames are powerful constructions. Entman and Bennett (2001) warn of the danger inherent in gaining one's information from news frames—it can harm our understanding of the political system, and a citizen's ability to function within the system. This is because the information received from the news media has been constructed and distributed throughout the political system by those framing the message (pp. 471, 472). Thus, the message we receive has been "constructed" rather than "reported." Moore comments upon this phenomenon when writing of the influence of MADD in changing the way in which Americans view drinking and driving. No one knows why this issue became so prominent when it did (1988, p. 70), but certainly the "idea that drunk driving is bad and avoidable has sustained a broad social movement that has changed the behavior of citizens" (p. 471). MADD is an example of a frame that has had significant influence in affecting the way Americans view this issue.

Gamson and Modigliani (1989) focused our thinking about framing around the question that has remained central to framing studies: how does one explain the development of this particular frame package in contrast to others over time? How do some frames become prominent over others in media discourse? The received view is that frames are typically constructed by media and elites (Kinder, 1998; Price and Tewksbury, 1997). Yet there are other scholars who argue that media frames are neither universal nor immediately accepted by the public (Snow and Benford, 1992; Zald, 1996). Instead media frames compete for dominance in the public (Gamson and Meyer, 1996; Gamson et al., 1992). This condition has led to what Gurevitch and Blumler have called a "crisis of legitimacy" for western journalism because they are seen to ignore the people. As a corrective, journalists need a "principled response" to the accusation that in the
process of socially constructing reality, they distort the portrayal of some groups' aims and activities. They suggest that perhaps audiences would respond to "more serious forms of political discourse and coverage" (1990, p. 285).

Shah, et al (2001), point to the study of values emphasis in framing as an area of study in political behavior that has received little attention. They conclude that when the media places emphasis on specific values, this may influence receivers' individual judgments when making decisions between options. They call for more study of how "individual values and basic motivations" influence the effect of value-frames on voting behavior (230). What role does the underlying value of the frame play in the presentation and acceptance of the frame? Does this vary from one group of the population to another?

Keeping in mind these concerns expressed by media scholars, this study attempts to trace the role played by media frames in a public debate currently being argued in Ohio concerning school reform and funding. Because of the wide exposure that the subjects of school reform and funding reform have received in Ohio, it should be a topic with which citizens are familiar. It is also a subject that has received the attention of both the black and the white communities and has been covered in the newspapers of both communities. This study focuses on the issue of school vouchers, and the manner in which the issue is framed using underlying values in each of two Columbus, Ohio newspapers, in an attempt to locate and identify the frames used to report on the issue of school vouchers. Because frames are affected by the group of elites controlling the frame and by the public that decides how to understand and whether to accept the frame, this paper focuses on the manner in which this occurs.
Maher's research focuses on a result of framing that becomes central to this study: people in an Austin, Texas study used the most frequently mentioned media explanations as their reason to explain a local problem (2001, p. 91). This study is an attempt to work toward the answer to Maher's question: "Why do different publics accept or reject journalists' frames" (2001, p. 92)? Do the frames used by these various newspapers appear in the frames used by those surveyed? Perhaps one of the determining factors to explain public reaction to journalists' frames is whether the public agrees with the value underlying the frame.

**Narrative of the school voucher issue**

The current school funding controversy began in 1991 when, in DeRolph v. State, four school districts in northern Ohio brought suit against the Ohio Board of Education and the Ohio Attorney General because of inadequate educational conditions in these school districts. Complaints included the charges that in winter, the building was too cold to melt snow on the roof; in wet weather the roof leaked; floors were infested with cockroaches; fumes from kerosene and coal dust pervaded the atmosphere; disabled children had to be carried up and down steps to get to the school’s basement library; and closets, even a coal bin, were converted to classrooms. In one instance, the school building was "sliding down a hill at the rate of an inch per month" (McMillan, 1997, p. 3). Lack of funds also caused a shortage of teachers, and lack of necessary supplies such as chalk, paper, and toilet paper.

Plaintiffs won the case at the district court level, and the state was ordered to propose new, constitutional means for school funding that would replace a system funded almost entirely by property taxes. The Attorney General appealed the case to Ohio's Fifth
District Court of Appeals, which overturned the decision, arguing that the Ohio funding system did not violate the Ohio Constitution, and the district court did not have the authority to legislate school funding. Plaintiffs appealed that decision to the Ohio Supreme Court, arguing that the state funding system was "so inadequate that it violated the 'thorough and efficient' clause of the state constitution" (McMillan, 1997, p. 2).

The DeRolph decision judged the school funding system based on whether it was providing a "thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the state" (McMillan, 1997, p. 3). The Court defined "thorough and efficient" as common schools which include "facilities in good repair and the supplies, materials, and funds necessary to maintain these facilities in a safe manner" (McMillan, 1997, p. 4). Others have asserted this definition was too ambiguous to effect real educational reform (Harvard Law Review, 1998). DeRolph required that the Ohio legislature devise a method of school funding that did not rely so completely on property taxes. The majority opinion argued their ruling reinforced the prevailing value in Ohio education since 1802: that any child, regardless of socio-economic status, must be offered full participation in the state's education system. To do otherwise (denying an equal chance of education to any class of child) would "hinder the moral and social development of Ohioans as a whole" (McMillan, 1997, p. 5). Although the Court did not require all school districts to maintain equal funding, the Court did require that a level of adequacy, defined as thorough and efficient, be reached and maintained by the legislature for all school districts in the state.

The 1997 DeRolph decision set off a succession of attempts by the Ohio legislature to achieve the Court's "thorough and efficient" requirement. Each year, the
legislature has been required to submit a funding plan to the Ohio Supreme Court until a plan is accepted. This situation has given rise to more than one experiment to develop alternative funding for schools. One such attempt has been the school voucher experiment, begun in 1995 as a pilot program in Cleveland, Ohio. The Cleveland public school system, an enduring example of educational failure, was labeled as "far and away the most troubled...in the state" in 1996, (The Columbus Dispatch, May 27, 1996), and continues to hold this unhappy distinction. Bolick reports that the problem continues:

Children in the Cleveland Public Schools have a 1 in 14 chance of graduating on time from high school at senior-level proficiency, and an equivalent 1 in 14 chance each year of being a victim of crime in their schools (Spring, 2000, p. 3). Cleveland's education system was performing so dismally that it was placed under court-ordered supervision in 1996 (The Columbus Dispatch, May 27, 1996, p. 1C). The Cleveland system is widely recognized as a "disaster." The May 6, 1997 Columbus Dispatch reports the appalling proficiency results in Cleveland schools. A mere 14 percent of children pass every part of the fourth grade proficiency exam; and merely 2.8 percent pass the sixth grade test; 12 percent pass the ninth grade test. One third of Cleveland public school students were graduating from high school in 1997. State leaders turned to school vouchers in an attempt to improve the Cleveland public school system. A tax-supported school voucher program was begun as a pilot program in Cleveland in the fall of 1995, then launched in September, 1996.

School vouchers are, in essence, coupons that parents can use to pay toward the tuition costs of a private school or another public school in another district. Vouchers are made available to parents in failing school districts. School vouchers have been instituted
in several cities around Ohio, but the school voucher program instituted in Cleveland, Ohio, is unique in an important aspect. While voucher programs in other parts of the state have financed vouchers through private donations, this voucher program is being financed with tax dollars. Additionally, the parents receiving the vouchers are overwhelmingly (99.4%, according to a February 21, 2002 New York Times report) choosing private religious schools. As a result, the issue of Ohio school vouchers continues to be litigated, as parties disagree as to whether it is a violation of the separation of church and state clause of the First Amendment for tax-supported school vouchers to pay for tuition at a private religious school.

In January, 1996, The Columbus Dispatch reported the filing of the first lawsuit to block the Cleveland school voucher program, in which the plaintiffs argued that the program violated the First Amendment by failing to respect the separation of church and state. Each year since 1996, lawsuits have been filed in an attempt to stop the Cleveland voucher program, but special appeals by the state have kept the program open and growing on a year-to-year basis while the issue is being decided. For the past six years, these legal battles have progressed through the state and federal courts, and ultimately to the U.S. Supreme Court, where oral arguments on the case were heard on February 20, 2002. The arguments made to the U.S. Supreme Court were familiar—opponents of the voucher system argued that using tax money for vouchers accepted by private religious schools violate the separation of church and state. Proponents of vouchers argued that the state gives the money in the form of a voucher to parents and guardians of children in failing schools, not directly to private schools. Therefore, it is the parents or guardians of
the child who decide how the voucher will be used; thus the state of Ohio does not support religion.

Of equal interest to the legal battles waged in Ohio over the school voucher issue are the opinions of Ohio citizens about tax-supported school vouchers. The subject has been widely reported in the print media, and citizen opinions are at times represented in the news reports. The issue has fulfilled Cordray's 1996 prediction that "one of the hottest issues in education is school choice" (1996, p. 6A). School vouchers have virtually unqualified support from parents whose children are receiving them. Indicative of parental opinion is the statement of one parent: "I just want to go in there and tell them that I can't believe we have to fight for an education. I'm a flunky, and that's what they're trying to make my kid" (The Columbus Dispatch, June 25, 1996, p. 3C). A 1997 Buckeye State Poll reported in September in The Columbus Dispatch that 56% of the Franklin County residents polled opposed school vouchers. Even conservative respondents, those considered most likely to support school vouchers, were not in favor of the program. By 1998, the trend for the opinion of the general public had begun to shift toward agreement with concerned parents. The 1998 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll reported a majority of Americans supported tax-funded parental school choice, even if the school is parochial. Additionally, there is a racial divide over the issue of supporting tax-supported school vouchers. A 1997 survey by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies reported that support for school vouchers among whites was evenly split, but the ratio among blacks was 56% in favor, to 37.5% opposing, while Hispanics supported vouchers 65 to 29%. Similar opinion results were reported by a Washington Post poll of District of Columbia residents concerning a low-income scholarship program.
that was passed by Congress but vetoed by President Clinton. Residents supported the program "by a margin of 56 to 36 percent...and lower-income black residents supported the legislation by a margin of 65 to 28 percent" (Bolick, 2000, p. 6). Since 1996, public support for school vouchers has not weakened. Owens reports a 1999 survey by Public Agenda, nonpartisan group, which found that 68 percent of blacks favor vouchers. A follow-up survey from an earlier poll by the "Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, showed that the percentage of blacks supporting school vouchers rose to 60 percent in 1999" (New York Times, February 26, 2002). All of this points to the accuracy of a recent prediction by the New York Times in reference to the U. S. Supreme Court's anticipated decision on the Ohio case (Zelman v. Simmons-Harris). This case, more than many other cases before the Supreme Court in the past years, has been the focus of concentrated public relations campaigns from both sides.

Rallies, advertisements, news conferences and press releases that began months ago and continued into this evening reflected the perception that while the court's decision may shape the course of the voucher debate, it is unlikely to be the last word. If the court upholds the concept, the fight will shift to state legislatures, where public opinion may determine the outcome as much as any opinion from the Supreme Court (New York Times, February 21, 2002, p. A21).

This study focuses upon public opinion in the Columbus, Ohio metropolitan area as it relates to school vouchers and the possible values that blacks and non-blacks bring to their understanding of the issue.
Theoretical framework

Framing possesses two advantages that apply to a study such as this. First, it recognizes that media do have an effect on viewers or readers, yet it also recognizes that the viewer/reader plays an integral role in what is accepted. There is a reciprocal relationship between how the message is framed and audience knowledge used during interpretation of the frame (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997, p. 44). According to Pan and Kosicki, because the recipient of the message is actively engaged in the process of comprehending and interpreting a message, one cannot assume that the “intended and comprehended theme of a story” is identical (1993, p. 59). They adopt Goffman’s distinction between tension and balance, or structure and agency. “On the one hand, events and experiences are framed; on the other hand, we frame events and experiences” (Gamson, et al., 1992, p. 384).

The second advantage of a framing study, especially as explained in Gamson’s work, recognizes that individuals learn and make choices based on more than the media frame of an issue. People rely upon their own knowledge, personal direct experience and vicarious experience as they evaluate news and decide whether they think it is consistent with reality (Gamson, et al., 1992, p. 390). Gamson emphasizes that the frame is not enough to affect the recipient’s policy positions. It requires the combination of the frame, personal experience, and common knowledge, or public wisdom (1996; Gamson, et al., 1992). This is of special importance for this study because of the close involvement many citizens have to the issue of school reform. Consumers of news are less likely to be passive receptors of "media effects." A theory that explains the interaction between media and receiver, with the receiver considered an active participant, is necessary for
this study. This is a viewpoint consistent with the concept of a "discursive community" as explained by scholars in the mass communication field (Entman and Bennett, 2001; Pan and Kosicki, 2001).

The frame is unique in the manner by which it affects public opinion. Some scholars are beginning to emphasize that rather than contributing new information to the public store of knowledge, a frame restructures what the public already knows according to a different value.

We suggest that media frames influence opinions by stressing specific values, facts, or other considerations, endowing them with greater apparent relevance to the issue than they might appear to have under an alternative frame. In other words, frames affect opinions simply by making certain considerations seem more important than others; these considerations, in turn, carry greater weight for the final attitude (Nelson, et al., 1999, p. 569).

The need for recognizing this important role of framing meaning in order to create a unified social reality becomes even more essential in a pluralistic democracy. As a consequence of the changes that have occurred in the globalized world, "language and speech are absolutely central to the arguments over the truth of social reality. Language is what societies are left with when their members can no longer agree on the nature of social reality" (Lemert and Brannaman, 1997, p. xxxv).

In summary, framing can be seen as a cognitive activity that news consumers use to select value structures to prioritize what they know in order to make political decisions (Zald, 1996). Frames are socially constructed, in that often the event has not been personally experienced by those to whom the frame is addressed. Also, framing analysis
is more than effects research (Pan and Kosicki, 2001). The theory has expanded its reach to include not only the effect of the frame, but analysis of how the frame is created and study of who competes to exercise control of the frame. It involves strategic actions taken in order to influence public discourse, and thereby public opinion. Scholars have studied framing in experimental settings, in an attempt to discover the process by which control of the frame is achieved, and how it affects belief. All this points to the importance attached to understanding framing in order to understand the vital interactive relationship between the media and the public.

Statement of the problem

This study is an attempt to further understand the relationship between media framing and the construction of meaning supplied by receivers of a media message as it occurs in a discursive community. The reason for the study is to determine whether individuals from different interest groups accept differing frames to explain a controversial issue. The issue of school vouchers is one that has potential in a study of this nature to help the researcher differentiate between how African-Americans and whites understand the issue. An element involved in accepting or rejecting a frame is related to the underlying value that motivates the frame. This study could help us to understand how people choose to accept one frame over another as a valid explanation for their understanding of social reality. The timely nature of the school voucher controversy, the divided alignment of support or opposition for vouchers, and media interest in the Ohio government’s action's concerning vouchers all contribute to this topic as an interesting one for study. The question of interest here is whether individuals of a minority interest group construct an understanding of media reports that is different from
members of a majority group. Specifically, is there a difference in the way blacks and whites respond to issue frames concerning school vouchers, based on the value underlying the frame?

**Hypotheses**

H1: Members of the black community will agree with frames concerning school vouchers presented in *The Columbus Dispatch*.

As will be seen later, previous surveys show that blacks support school vouchers for children in failing public schools. This is contrary to the position taken by elite leaders of the black community as represented in *The Columbus Post*. A content analysis of *The Columbus Dispatch* shows that the Dispatch moved to a pro-school voucher position over the course of the last five and one half years. The prediction is that blacks will support the even more controversial concept of tax-supported school vouchers because of their group interest in improving the education of their children, and thus be in agreement with the position expressed in *The Columbus Dispatch*.

H2: Members of the majority (white) community will disagree with frames concerning school vouchers presented in *The Columbus Dispatch*.

This prediction is based upon the assumption that most white respondents will take into consideration values other than the quality of their children's school when answering these survey questions. Other issues included in the school voucher context, such as whether tax-supported school vouchers violate the separation of church and state, should be given more weight, because white
children generally are not as likely to be threatened by poor quality education as black children.

H3: Members of the black and white communities will agree with different frame constructions concerning school vouchers dependent on race and value.

The third prediction is a logical outgrowth of the first two hypotheses and is grounded in a constructivist view of deliberative democracy. Based upon the claim that citizens are actively involved in forming opinions of personal import, the argument being tested in this hypothesis is that individuals use more than media reports when drawing conclusions. It is then possible for members of an interest group to adopt an understanding of a policy issue different from the position taken by the minority group leaders, because values are factored into the construction.

Definition of terms

Discursive community. The media occupy a central position in contemporary political discourse. Pan and Kosicki define a "discursive community" as "a transitory and discursively bound aggregate, capable of collective action in deliberative politics" (Pan and Kosicki, 2001, p. 41). They argue first that public deliberation, the "essence of democracy," benefits from mass media which make it possible for a growing number of citizens to become involved in the discussion. Second, as political communication is increasingly democratized, "public deliberation inevitably involves the discursive practices of framing an issue, which is not the exclusive province of political elites or media." Rather, individuals both develop an understanding of the media message, and "incorporate" these meanings into their daily experiences (Pan and Kosicki, 2001, p. 37,
emphasis in original). A discursive community shares a common understanding about interpretation and text construction. The frame a group adopts indicates the manner in which it acts upon its discursive and sociological commonalities (Pan and Kosicki, 2001, p. 42).

Herbst explains that the discursive view of public opinion incorporates the law of social norms (1993, p. 44). The emphasis is on the role of communication in the public opinion process. The public opinion process helps to clarify the bounds of social norms, so that people know when they are operating within acceptable social boundaries (1993, p. 46). Herbst explains the discursive role of public opinion polling as a role of establishing social boundaries for the public. Nelson and his colleagues connect the discursive nature of public opinion to media frames. Members of a discursive community interpret and accept media frames based on the underlying values activated on the frame (Nelson, Clawson, Oxley, 1997; Nelson, Oxley, Clawson, 1997). Noelle-Newmann agrees that values are an important aspect of public opinion and public discourse. When this social understanding is realized, she argues, both citizens and governments find they must consider the norms in their decisions and behavior or run the risk of ostracism or loss of respect (1984, p. 179). The discursive community for this study consists of adult residents of Columbus, Ohio metropolitan area.

Framing. This section discusses the burgeoning theory of framing as it is applied to media effects. The subject of framing has taken many directions in the literature, but is here limited to three general areas. Framing literature is based upon the sociological theory that the frame is a central organizing event. Second, framing can be seen as a
process of determining meaning. Third, some researchers see the frame as a causal factor in the forming of public opinion.

Framing has come to be seen as more than an "effect" which is foisted upon media consumers who are powerless to resist its siren influence. A frame is a cognitive mechanism that allows one to organize information into a coherent whole. A framing device can affect a receiver's knowledge activation by the way the "issues are presented, or the way public problems are formulated for the media audience" (Price and Tewksbury, 1997, p. 184). Thus, the frame influences the elements of thought used when forming opinions. These characteristics of framing can be summed into three general categories used when explaining framing: the frame is the central organizing idea or event, framing is a process, and the frame is causal—it affects how people make sense of reality.

Gamson and Modigliani (1987) define the frame as "a central organizing idea or event" that gives structure to the understanding of an occurrence. This has become a frequently used definition of framing. Gamson, et al., refine this statement in a later definition by comparing the frame in media discourse analysis to the schema in cognitive psychology a—"central organizing principle that holds together and gives coherence and meaning to a diverse array of symbols" (1992, p. 384). Norris summarizes new frames as a conventional structure in which the narrative is placed to make sense of the facts. The frame is the overarching explanation or focus which the reader uses to decide if events are newsworthy" (1997, p. 2). By placing new events into "familiar categories" frames enable journalists and readers to sort, present, and evaluate information during the process of decision making (1997, p. 2).
Many scholars are now explaining framing as a process that incorporates the crucial interplay between the framer and receiver, a process which describes the event in a manner that resonates with the receivers. It is the second part of this statement that distinguishes framing from other types of media effects. Framing recognizes the interactive activity between a news story and the consumer of news; it recognizes that the consumer ultimately chooses to accept or reject the explanation of an event that is being offered. Finally, framing engages in strategic use of frames to attempt a desired understanding from the audience. (Pan and Kosicki, 2001). This constructive view of framing requires recognition that the receiver is part of the actual process of constructing meaning.

The manner in which an event, problem, or choice is "framed" becomes a contextual cue that can have a significant effect on decision outcomes (Iyengar, 1991, p. 11). A framing device can affect a reader's cultural perceptions through the process of selection or exclusion, emphasis and tone (Rhode, 1997, p. 8; Moscovici and Duveen, 2001). Maher (2001) defines framing by pointing out the relationship between the frame and the communicator's view of reality. The framing researcher sees the frame as created by the journalist to be what organizes meaning (p. 88). Additionally, framing theory is unique in that it emphasizes a difference between an internal and external environment. The external environment consists of news that could be reported, but is not. Framing also strongly emphasizes causal factors, argues Maher, drawing links between the journalists' frames and the public's views, or between media portrayals of how social problems are caused. (pp. 86-88).
A frame here is an understanding of how to perceive the issue of "school vouchers," identified in four ways: needs of poor children in comparison to wealthier children, the separation of church and state, competition, and the need to protect the viability of public schools.

**Interest group.** Interest groups form in order to attempt to influence a variety of societal issues. An interest group can attempt to achieve economic or political (including social) ends. Interest groups are "associations of individuals or organizations with similar opinions and objectives that attempt to influence public policy. Interest groups' methods include attempting to influence the public by dispensing information that favors their views and by advertising" (Roth, 1997, p. 867). While much research has been done concerning the economic goals of some interest groups (McCormick, and Tollison, 1981; Miller, 1996; Sutter, 1998), this paper looks at political interest groups—narrowed for the purposes of this study to groups involved in the development of policies that are instituted to improve the conditions within a community. Sorensen describes the interest group relationship as an "exchange of resources." The group exchanges support for the politician for the politician's provision of "government services that benefit the interest group" (1998, p. 303).

Beck emphasizes two important aspects of successful political interest groups; they must be well organized and able to persuade both society at large and relevant politicians to support them (1985, p. 4). Beck sees the ideal democratic use of interest groups as a society with "competition among groups with rather equal political strength." This competition benefits the policy-making process because those groups that feel most intensely about an issue will "spend more resources" to achieve their goal, while those
with less at stake will not spend the energy and resources to lobby against the issue. In this manner, a relatively small special interest group can contribute to the "implementation of desirable policies" (p. 8).

Castles also defines the interest group as primarily political, but allows for more loosely organized groups. The pressure group, as he calls it, is a non-political party seeking political change (1967, p. 1). Wilson's definition is general enough to be inclusive of all interest group types.

Interest groups are generally defined as organizations, separate from government though often in close partnership with government, which attempt to influence public policy. As such, interest groups provide the institutionalized linkage between government or the state and major sectors of society (1990, p. 1).

These groups make possible interaction between government and the various interests in society. A fundamental aspect of Wilson's conception of the interest group is its politicization (1990, p. 9). Two major advantages of the interest group are first, that the "intense minority group" has an opportunity to prevail, and second, the group offers the individual "protection" from the state (1990, pp. 3,4). Wilson concedes that scholars have not agreed on the relationship between the interest group and power, but that the relationship exists is apparent (1990, p. 10). Moscovici talks about minority influence, and argues that the minority group does have power to influence majority public opinion when certain conditions are met (Moscovici, et al., 1994). Crano adds the stipulation that minority interest groups can be defined in terms of number or status, and argues that both be considered in future research (1994, p. 24). Moscovici emphasizes that the element of conflict is a necessary ingredient to the recipe for minority success, and emphasizes that
the minority must be "resolute and consistent" (Moscovici, as quoted in Crano, 1994, p. 23). This element of conflict attracts the attention of the news media, which is essential in order to disseminate the interest group's message to the rest of the public. Interest groups often, but do not necessarily, represent the minority group with which it is associated on every salient issue. Elite interest groups that represent the black community in the United States do not present a public argument concerning school vouchers that is consistent with the ethnic minority group.

School vouchers. Vouchers are a type of school choice by which parents may select the school—private or public—that their child will attend. Some voucher programs have been privately financed, while others have been publicly funded (Syler, 2000). The Cleveland, Ohio voucher program, launched in 1995, provided scholarships of $2,250 to "approximately 3,800 economically disadvantaged children so that they may attend private secular and religious schools" (Bolick, 2000). School vouchers have been one method of meeting the Ohio Supreme Court requirement that all schools in the state deliver a "thorough and adequate education" (Patt, 1999).

Values. Values are generally considered a necessary building block for forming public opinion. Social values are values that are held in common by a group or society. They operate as norms that prescribe how people are expected to behave or think in particular situations. Zaller includes values as a part of the political predispositions he measures, because they are "stable, individual-level traits" that regulate how an individual responds to those political communications heard (1992, p. 22). Values are "general and enduring standards" and they take a "more central position than attitudes" in persons' belief systems (Kinder and Sears, 1985, p. 674).
Nelson and Willey define a value as "a positive attitude toward some general state of affairs, even if that state of affairs is an unattainable ideal." A value is unique in that it exercises an evaluation ("claim about goodness or desirability") which is directed toward a "target (an abstract quality or condition)" (2001, p. 249). The authors focus on "value conflict," or the connection between values that citizens hold, and the political positions that they adopt. Using as support previous research that links values to political thinking, they develop a theory of framing to explain how value hierarchies are used by citizens to determine political positions.

Zaller defines values as an organizing principle applied to specific areas, such as the separation of church and state, where the value dimension helps shape public opinion within that specific area (1992, p. 26). It is possible, according to Zaller, to use successfully measures of political values that "capture exactly the value dimensions that regulate the opinion change" (1992, p. 27). Values are, according to Zaller, the means by which individuals are able to resist the influence of elite discourse (1992, p. 287).

Values in this study will be those identified in the frames used in the newspapers chosen for study. These values are first, pro-child, which points to the broader value of individualism; and second, pro-school, which recognizes the importance of universal public education. The four frames mentioned earlier incorporate the values involved.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Framing and social construction of meaning

Social construction is a term used to describe how meaning is constructed to explain events and issues that occur in society (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The social construction theory, when operationalized in frame analysis, is useful for the study of media because it allows the researcher to study more than effects. When used to study news reports, researchers from a constructivist viewpoint argue that framing gives the receiver of the message some control over the message (Newman, Just, and Crigler, 1992). Cappella and Jamieson, for example, explain that frames work to cue a "preexisting set of knowledge, including concepts, procedures, and most important, their interconnection." It is the frame acting as "an explicit context," that activates prior knowledge, allowing for information to be recalled (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997, p. 42).

Framing is a socially constructed negotiation for meaning that occurs between people, who are "active processors of meaning," and social institutions, "which organize meaning" (Gamson, 1995, p. 65). Newman, et al. take a different view from Gamson, and claim that all segments of the media cycle—elites, journalists, and audience are engaged in the same cognitive activity. Each segment of society "select[s] items for attention...redefine[s] terms...make[s] connections" in the process of gaining
understanding of a news story (1992, pp. 119, 120). Nelson and Kinder also emphasize the cognitive nature of framing, stating that a frame is more than a position or argument about an issue. It involves "constructions" of the issue in which elites "spell out the essence of the problem, suggest how it should be thought about," and may make policy recommendations. A frame enables a person to choose from among several considerations the one most useful in forming an opinion about this issue, thus they argue that the frame teaches people how to think about "complex social policy problems" (1996, p.1058).

The social construction nature of framing has begun to exert increased influence in the application of theory. Scheufele provides a conceptual model for what he calls the fourth stage of frame theory development, social constructivism (1999, p. 105). While he is not the first to recognize the social constructive applications in framing, his article contributes by formulating a useful typology to understand the facets of framing.

The frame is also vulnerable to the influence of interested groups (Gamson and Meyer, 1996, p. 76), thus, an active area of research interest has been who influences the frame which is employed (Larson, 1999; Nelson, Clawson, et al., 1997; Zaller and Chiu, 1996). The competition for forming the dominant frame points to the fact that people are active in constructing frames. It is "a locus of potential struggle, not a leaden reality to which we all inevitably must yield" (Gamson, 1992, p. 67). In addition to the recognized influence that elites have over the frame, for the last few years, scholars have advanced the position that the public constructs meaning of the news made available to them by the media. Newman, Just, and Crigler explained the constructionist view in 1992 as an interaction between the consumer of news and the news source, without an evaluation of
whether the consumer "knows enough" to participate in the decision making process (pp. 17-19). They argue that citizens can indeed construct a rich understanding of a public issue, based on personal experience and media information. Their constructionist model triangulates media, the audience member, and the issue content. They found that what the mass media emphasize and what the media audience considers "relevant and important" is not always consonant (p. 110). The constructionist view has been called by some the process view of framing, which argues that the media and/or elites create a structure in which the news story is framed, but the public determines whether they will accept the frame, and what the frame means (Bucy & Angelo, 1999, Gamson, 2000; Scheufele, 1999; Pan & Kosicki, 2001; Price & Tewksbury, 1997). This process view holds that the public plays an important role in constructing the frame. Ryan (1991), and Pertschuk and Schaetzel (1991) suggest ways that interest groups can attempt to control the frame of an event. This leads some to argue that media must accept the responsibility to include the positions and interests of various "discursive communities" that have an interest in the outcome of the public issue (Mervin, 1998).

A competing view of the constructivist nature of framing sees framing as detrimental to the unbiased distribution of news information because of its vulnerability to manipulation. Chan and Lee explain that news produces meanings. It is not an "objective reality, but "a dialectic of social construction mediated by interests, power, and ideology" (1991, p. 19). Journalists must choose from a competing array of media messages that attempt to explain reality. These "multiple realities" compete for dominance over one another, and while no one reality will achieve a monopoly, one will most often dominate over the others. "News is an exercise of power over the
interpretation of reality, and thus favors the power centers that hold a dominant position in the authority relations” (Chan and Lee, 1991, p. 19). Because of this, the media will reflect the power structure in place, and their reactions to changes in the power structure are not always even. “The media,” the authors claim, “construct realities to make sense of the changing power dynamics” (Chan and Lee, 1991, p. 23). Entman and Bennett (2001) warn of the danger inherent in gaining one's information from news frames—it can harm our understanding of the political system and a citizen's ability to function within the system. This is because the information received from the news media has been constructed and distributed throughout the political system by those framing the message (pp. 471, 472). Thus, the message we receive has been "constructed" rather than "reported."

Another aspect of framing that incorporates this power is the struggle that occurs between interested actors over whom is involved in frame construction. This is considered by some as an example of the strategy used in framing contests, the goal being to "achieve their political and communicative objectives." It involves taking "strategic steps" in an attempt to have one's ideology and values accepted by the public as relevant to the issue at hand (Pan and Kosicki, 2001, p. 40; see also Zald, 1996). Moore comments upon this phenomenon when writing of the influence of MADD in changing how Americans view drinking and driving. No one knows why this issue became so prominent when it did (1988, p. 70), but certainly the "idea that drunk driving is bad and avoidable has sustained a broad social movement that has changed the behavior of citizens" (p. 471). The process view would explain MADD's success perhaps by saying when public attention was directed to the problem, average Americans knew what they
thought about deaths at the hands of drunk drivers. Framing is the name given to the process of negotiation for meaning between people and social organizations (Gamson, 1988).

The constructivist view often studies framing as an independent variable, attempting to measure how the frame operates within the public to influence public opinion. However, even though the media sets the frame, and often begins to believe its own frames regardless of whether or not they have been accepted by the discursive community (e.g., the house-race frame), the frame is influenced or changed by the public understanding of the frame. This public understanding does not occur solely because of media influence as Gamson reminded us. Instead, public understanding also depends upon popular wisdom and personal experience with the conditions that surround the frame. By including additional factors in frame making, Gamson's theory does not fit well with conceptualizing framing as an independent variable. Viewing framing as a dependent variable, however, recognizes that other social elements contribute to acceptance or rejection of a frame.

Pan and Kosicki present four distinctives of framing that justify its use as a constructivist tool. First, framing analysis views news as “organized symbolic devices” that trigger the receiver’s memory and help to construct meaning. Second, framing recognizes that news reports occur with rule-governed structures for discourse, but can still “allow for cognitive shortcuts in both news production and consumption.” Third, framing does not rest on the researcher’s intuition. It is possible for another to replicate the study. Finally, framing requires the cooperation of the receiver of the text for its
meaning. It does not exist independent of the understanding of those who hear or read it (1993, p. 59).

This study applies the constructivist view of framing to the U.S. public education system. The quality of education and its importance to the US democratic system is an important aspect of US life held by a majority of Americans (Pew Center for Civic Journalism, 2000; Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, January, 1998). When making choices concerning education, people most often apply a salient value that is used to help in the decision-making process. As individuals apply a value to the decision making, they construct a perspective from which to view the subject of education. For instance, a voter who views education as important to the smooth functioning of a democratic society will vote to increase tax levies on his or her own property or income, in order to better guarantee an effective democratic state (Mutz, 1998).

Also included here is a recognition of the importance of public discussion and debate over important social issues, sometimes referred to as a "discursive community." Pan and Kosicki claim the discursive community can affect the framing of an event (2001). Not just any frame will be accepted by a discursive community. If a community does not legitimate a media frame, then that frame will not be accepted as social reality by that community. While media sources are not required by any normative or ethical standard to consider how various groups interpret their news reports or whether differing group interests are represented in their reports, this seems necessary to the journalistic field if it desires to fulfill the democratic goal of providing necessary political information to all the public.
Social representations and framing. Work by Serge Moscovici is relevant to the study of framing and adds a new dimension to the theory. One of the central elements of Moscovici's theoretical contribution is the development of the concept of social representations, and its role in the development of minority influence. Moscovici defines a social representation as "a system of values" that serves two functions. First, a social representation allows individuals to make sense of and function successfully in both the material world and social society. Second, social representations allow individuals in a community to communicate with one another, by providing the means for understanding their world, individuals in their world, and their history together (Moscovici and Duveen, 2001, p. 12).

Duveen reports that Moscovici's emphasis on communication has been controversial within the discipline of psychology. However, Moscovici's argument is one that is consistent with the explanation many scholars within the field of communication would advance concerning communication's role in the social construction of reality. Duveen explains that representations are a result of "interaction and communication." This "subtle relationship" "between representations and communicative influences" is an essential aspect of the social representation. Representations always exist because of the combined effect of interaction and communication. The balance of these processes of social influence effect the shape of the representation (Moscovici and Duveen, 2001, p. 12).

Representations and communication. "Representations may be the product of communication, but it is also the case that without representation there could be no communication" (Moscovici and Duveen, 2001, p. 13). This interdependence contributes
to representations' changing nature as human interests change (Moscovici and Duveen, 2001, p. 13), and is reminiscent of Gamson's explanation of the struggle in framing. It is because representations can change that minorities have some ability to affect social change. Duveen further explains that influence is always used to sustain or change representations, and it is this influence that allows for specific representations to achieve acceptance (Moscovici and Duveen, 2001, p. 17). Moscovici's representations serve practical functions: they "restore" and give shape to collective awareness, they give explanation to "objects and events," so that all can have access to understanding how the object or events fit with our "immediate interests," and make familiar the unfamiliar (Moscovici and Duveen, 2001, p. 36, 37).

Representations are "both shaped by the communicative influences at work in society and at the same time serve to make communication possible" (Moscovici and Duveen, 2001, p. 13). Representations depend upon communication to sustain them in a consistent manner and without interruption (Moscovici and Duveen, 2001, p. 13). Social representations are dynamic rather than static, thus, the representation itself becomes the object of study, rather than the explanation of what has transpired.

The similarities between Moscovici's social representations and framing seem evident. Frames are created by institutions and individuals to explain a particular perspective concerning a social issue or problem. These frames compete for dominance within society as they are reported in the media. The frame that people accept to explain an issue or event determines the understanding people have of the issue or event. Both of these explanations (social representations and framing) are explanations of the social construction of meaning. Moscovici's theory is added here, because of its concentration
on minority influence and innovation. It goes beyond framing to explain how a small
group can affect majority opinion. [Framing on the other hand, holds that the power to
frame lies in the hands of elites or journalists, or, in more recent studies, in public
opinion.]

Additionally, the influence of social representations is increased when combined
with the power of the mass media. While not the cause of the phenomenon, the mass
media multiply the tendency of society to fluctuate in order to become an everyday part
of life—a part of accepted reality. The pervasiveness of mass media require a "link"
between the abstractions of our beliefs and "our concrete activities as social individuals,"
which representations provide. Representations help to bring back to us the "common
sense" of collective images and meanings that are necessary for a society to operate.
These representations work to "embody ideas" in society's "collective experiences and
interactions in behavior" (Moscovici and Duveen, 2001, p. 32).

Duveen explains that Moscovici's theory is linked to "points of tension, even of
fracture" in society, which provide areas for new social representations to present
themselves. These new social representations typically emerge around a point of conflict,
where the new or unfamiliar arises. This sets in motion "some kind of representational
work to familiarize the unfamiliar so as to re-establish a sense of stability" (Moscovici
and Duveen, 2001, p. 8). What is happening is an attempt to "legitimate" knowledge and
beliefs in the absence of a universally recognized authority to do so: in a pluralistic
society, too many "centres of power" attempt to achieve the role of final arbiter
concerning knowledge and belief. Thus, society must come to its conclusions in a new
way. "The phenomenon of social representations can, in this sense, be seen as the form
in which collective life has adapted to decentred conditions of legitimation" (Moscovici and Duveen, 2001, p. 9). This is another validation of the need for discursive community. As society fractures, it is needful for groups to find a way to achieve social consensus.

Social representations often emerge around areas of social conflict which have been long-lasting. While Duveen offers as his example the long lasting tension between recognition of the universal rights of man while denying those rights to some, this study locates another conflict (school funding) which exists inside a larger tension (universal public education as the ideal which is denied to some children). Throughout the process of the struggle, new "forms of representations," in this case frames, emerge (Moscovici and Duveen, 2001, p. 8). Social representations become a way to achieve legitimacy within society—they become the manner in which different groups in society “seek to establish a hegemony” (p. 9). Duveen explains that representations are a method of coming to knowledge, functioning as a definition, and leading to practical action in the world and upon others (pp. 11,12).

One again the similarity between the frame and the social representation is evident. As stated earlier, the frame is seen as a strategic process, attempting to achieve status as the accepted way of understanding an idea or event. This is consonant with Duveen's explanation of the representation.

**Framing as a process.** The interactive or process nature of the frame was discussed as early as Goffman: "it has also been argued that these frameworks are not merely a matter of mind but correspond in some sense to the way in which an aspect of the activity itself is organized—especially activity directly involving social agents" (as
quoted in Lemert and Branaman, 1997, p. 158). Goffman defines the frame as the principles of organization which govern the subjective meaning we assign to social events. He sees frames as "essential to understanding the organization of experience" (Frame Analysis, p. 13, as quoted in Lemert, 1997, p. lxxiv).

The combination of storyline and internal mental structure that results in comprehension and acceptance or rejection of a frame leads Pan and Kosicki to label framing as a process (2001). The constructivist view of framing as a process recognizes the changing nature of the frame (Gamson, et al., 1992, Gamson, 1998). The process of accepting a new frame is not a seismic shift, but instead more gradual replacement, as new interpretations are given to "the world out there" (Snow, and Benford, 1992, p. 137; Snow et al., 1986). Gamson claims that framing and frame transformation maintains a useful balance between structure and agency, where "events are framed; we frame events and experiences" (Gamson, et al., 1992, p. 384). The unfolding nature of the narrative emphasizes process, and also makes media the site of struggle, as media reports the competition between frames. An additional element that is also present in the idea of process is the constant possibility of challenge by a competing frame. This challenge can take the form of a negotiation for meaning that occurs between first, people who are actively involved in processing meaning, and second, the social institutions that organize meaning (Gamson, 1988; Gamson, 1995; Gamson and Mayer, 1996).

Viewing framing as a process changes how it is studied. Framing as a process involves the participation of several interested actors. Traditionally, scholars ascribe the power to frame to the media and to power elites (Zaller, 1992; Converse, 1964). This view leads to research that studies the frame as the dependent variable—who had the
most influence in determining how the message would be portrayed to the public, and
how much of that message did the public understand and internalize. A more recent
explanation of framing combines cognitive psychology and sociology to study framing as
a process that occurs between three interacting groups: the media, the public, and

Since the 1980s, William Gamson has written extensively about this subject,
refining his conceptualization and applying it to specific research projects. Gamson
developed the concept of frame further, making it more "public" and recognizing the
important role of mass media in disseminating the frame to the general public. These two
elements move the frame into the realm of contest. Some of the foundational principles
of his view of framing are included here.

- This struggle is an "endless negotiation of meaning," and takes place within the
media, which interacts with public opinion (Gamson, 1998; Gamson, et al., 1992).
It is in the realm of public opinion that the establishment of meaning takes place.
The media presents a structure of ideas, then the public determines what it will
mean (Gamson, 1996).

- The frame is not a static understanding of an issue or event. It is a "contest" for
meaning, a struggle that continues even after an initial frame has been accepted by
the public. This challenging of the dominant by alternative frames means that
frames can adapt over time (Gamson & Meyer, 1996).

- Interested groups (social institutions) act to organize the understanding of the
issue or event (Gamson and Meyer, 1996). This is what Gamson explains as the
process of framing.
• Gamson contributed significantly to the study of framing by developing a concise explanation of the process. It is influenced by three elements: media discourse, the arena for the struggle—the place where the frame is presented; popular wisdom, the collective understanding of how the world works; and experiential knowledge, the individual's application of personal experience to test whether there is a "narrative fit" between the frame and what the individual perceives as reality (Gamson, 1988; 1998). Mutz confirms the power of personal experience as an even more effective influence than mass media. Media exerts a powerful influence on collective-level judgments, and personal experience influences individual-level judgments (1998, p. 68).

• Gamson develops a method of frame analysis using five framing devices: metaphor, visual images, depictions, slogans and catchphrases, and exemplars. While still a relatively subjective method of analysis, this is an important step in framing theory in that it presents a method that others can use to explain attempts at framing that (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). These selected elements from Gamson inform the current study. The relationship between media framing, value positions (experience), and the public's construction of opinion (popular wisdom) are represented in these principles.

Some of Gamson's work is based on an important article by Snow and Benford (1992), where they connect the method of framing to the larger political world of social movements, specifically protest. Snow and Benford talk of "collective action frames," which are frames that are advanced by a social institution, attempting to select the events, situations, experiences, etc. that individuals use to interpret the world, in order to
legitimate and motivate public action. Frame alignment is the name they give to the process of fitting a frame to one's interpretation of the external world. This simplifies a complicated issue or event so that a common explanation becomes possible. This explanation of frame is still processual, in that it depends upon whether the frame makes "real world" sense to the public, whether it fits with their own experience, and whether it has "narrative fidelity." If these three elements are present, the frame has resonance, and it is this resonance that enables frame alignment. Frame alignment can be achieved through several means:

1. frame bridging—the social organization must show a connection between an existing frame and the challenging frame.

2. frame extension—the challenging frame must be expanded to incorporate a meaningful amount of the individual's personal experience.

3. frame amplification—further explanation of the frame must continue to apply the challenging frame so that there is greater narrative fidelity.

4. frame transformation—when this stage is complete, frame alignment has occurred, and the challenging frame is accepted, and collective action can conceivably occur (Snow, et al., 1986).

These stages of framing highlight the process of framing once again. A challenging frame must gain cultural and political influence gradually as it progresses through the stages discussed above. As in Gamson's explanation, this struggle over the power to frame an issue or event occurs within the media.

Pan and Kosicki continue in the vein of Goffman and Gamson by explaining framing as both a psychological and sociological process, involving the public struggle
for control of the frame, yet emphasizing one important element of the process: the receiver also plays a part in applying the frame in his or her own understanding. Understanding of the frame resides in both the text as composed by the journalist, and in the mind of the receiver. They speak more specifically about the nature of media involvement in the process of framing. Pan and Kosicki move framing theory forward in two important respects. In 1993, they develop a method for analysis of text that competes with Gamson’s five rhetorical devices. This method seems less subjective [than Gamson’s method] because the nature of these structures is based in common grammatical principles, making a study more easily replicable by another. The second important respect is the theoretical contribution they make in their 2001 chapter when they connect framing to the vital democratic component of discursive community, which is discussed later.

Other scholars have contributed to the theory of framing in a variety of ways. Scheufele attempts to organize these framing studies into three categories: inputs, processes, and outputs. Within the second category—processes—he identifies four activities that contribute to framing activity. These are frame building, frame setting, journalist as audience, and individual-level effects of framing. Each of these four subdivisions explains an aspect of framing as a process.

The numbers of studies that have approached framing as a process are increasing in media studies, political science, and sociology. Several studies have expanded the discussion of framing influence. Pan and Kosicki (2001) apply their analysis of framing and public deliberation to the area of the 1993 health care debate, concluding that the success of political policy often depends upon the effectiveness of the frame enlisted.
Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) develop the concept of framing's influence on public value construction. Framing a message in a specific way will influence the values that the public brings to bear in their decision making. Price and Tewksbury (1997) develop an explanation of framing that helps to clarify the nature of the process involved. Using a modified Venn diagram, they describe framing as part of the cognitive structure that overlaps knowledge and thought, making certain bits of knowledge applicable to the thought process that goes into decision making.

Chan and Lee develop the journalistic paradigm to describe how the media develop and sometimes shift from one definition of reality to another (1991, p. 23). A journalistic paradigm is "a set of taken-for-granted and unspoken assumptions, cognitive maps, or gestalt world views that inform the media as to what ‘social facts’ to report (and what not to report) and how to interpret them" (1991, p. 23). Labeled by others as a news frame or perspective, a journalistic paradigm gives the reporter a way to prioritize events of "journalistic concern." Because of this, patterns of "selective coverage, interpretation, emphasis, and exclusion" result (1991, p. 23). It is also important to note for this study that "fundamental paradigm shifts rarely occur unless there is a collapse of elite consensus, an internal division, or a reconstitution of the power structure" (Chan & Lee, 1991, p. 24). [This did happen in Ohio, when the Ohio Supreme Court declared the state legislature's process of school funding unconstitutional and required the legislature to devise a form of school funding more equitable than almost exclusive reliance upon local property taxes.]

Terkildsen and colleagues point out that "whoever controls issue formation delineates the public debate by directly or indirectly setting forth an advocacy position
and triggering related value dimensions” (1998, p. 46). This statement focuses upon an important area of study with frame theory. The interrelated nature of frames and values is a phenomenon of growing interest to scholars in the fields of political science and mass communication. While this position has become more and more accepted by scholars in these social science fields, additional empirical evidence increases the precision of theoretical explanations of issue framing.

**Types of frames.** When news events enter the public arena, journalists must determine what is to be covered, and how the story is to be structured, or framed. For example, the media plays a role in the maintenance of social control, in particular by adopting the protest frame, so that order is maintained, and society is not disrupted (McLeod and Detenber, 1999). Some argue that media outlets will frame a story in a way that reinforces the economic and political establishment (Logan and Molotch, 1987), while others see journalists as overly dependent upon city news and events (Kaniss, 1991). Still others argue that the ideal role for journalism is the emerging role of public journalism (Friedland, et al., 1998; Charity, 1995). The theory that the media promotes growth as beneficial to existing institutions in power is frequently used to explain media choices (Demers, 1999; Herman and McChesney, 1997; Chan and Lee, 1991).

Researchers have named frames to explain how people attribute accountability for events (Iyengar, 1992), or how a collective group of people can be mobilized into action (Gamson, 1996). Frames have also been used to explain how politicians run electoral campaigns, and how a political campaign is progressing (Jamieson & Cappella, 1992).

Nelson and Willey contribute to this process of frame identification by establishing four broad frame categories. The *collective action frame*, developed inside
sociology, explains the frame as a means to highlight societal injustice and challenge individuals to unite in a social movement and bring about change. Decision frames, contributed by the field of psychology, emphasize frames that present a choice between "two alternatives with the same expected value" as one that "involves risk" or "a sure thing." Political scientists study news frames as they are created by mass media. This type of frame is more developed and has within it sub-frames that have received much study (strategic vs. game; episodic vs. thematic, conflict vs. personalization). Closely related to the news frame is the issue frame, again most likely conveyed by the mass media. The authors distinguish between the two by attributing the creation of the news frame to the mass media, but the creation of the issue frame to "professional politicians, advertisers, spokespeople, editorialists, think-tankers, and others who care about molding public opinion" (p. 247). Issue frames describe "social policies and problems" that affect how the public understand a problem and begin to form opinions as to possible solutions of the problem (2001, p. 247).

The type of frame I identify is one that places a policy issue in one of several explanatory modes. Similar to the framing history of the abortion issue, newspapers begin by reporting the arguments made by others in the initial phases of the controversy, then choose a preferred frame with time. The list of potential frames was taken from legal literature analyzing the school voucher controversy. Over the five and one half year period of news reporting, the dominant frames used by both newspapers began to solidify.

How framing works. Price and Tewksbury (1997) remind us that the questions concerning how framing works have not yet been answered. They connect their
interpretation of framing effects to Zaller’s "top-of-the-head" theory—that people express an opinion based on whatever knowledge or information is salient to them at the time. If decisions are often made on the spot, then the information that comes to mind when the decision must be made is significant to the public opinion process. This accessibility theory is refuted by Nelson, Clawson, et al. in experiments involving social conflict. They claim the effect goes beyond accessibility, to "weighting" the importance of the information given in the frame (1997, p. 577). In this laboratory experiment, the authors framed two discussions concerning a Ku Klux Klan (KKK) meeting being planned in a nearby town. One frame dealt with civil rights, the other dealt with the threat to social order. They tested to see which frame elicited the most tolerance from respondents. The results showed that respondents who received the civil rights frame were more tolerant of the KKK rally than those who received the social order frame, leading the authors to assert, "the mass media frames the central features" of a public controversy. Nelson, Clawson, et al. conclude that framing does have "an appreciable influence on citizens' perceptions of the issue and, ultimately, the opinions they express" (1997, p. 576).

Zaller himself moves toward a value-oriented explanation in his more recent writing. Concerning the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal and public reaction to it, he argues that a lesson of the scandal is that analysts often overemphasize the power of the mass media to shape the views of a malleable public. "However poorly informed, psychologically driven and 'mass-mediated' public opinion may be, it is capable of recognizing and focusing on its own conception of what matters" (Zaller, 2001, p. 268,
And what mattered here, says Zaller, were political partisanship and the state of the union (peace, prosperity, moderation).

Pride lists several factors that influence whether “contending claims” gain enough attention to become “full-blown social problems.” He includes the way the problem is framed as one of the factors (1995, p. 5). Pride argues that two crucial aspects of framing are the meaning of the frame, and who succeeds in infusing their “views, understandings, and definitions” into the frame (1995, p. 7). If the media and the movement both frame the issue in similar ways, the frame takes on added significance.

Values

There are a variety of social values that are held by society, and they are sometimes in conflict with one another (Zaller, 1992). In the U.S. political system, the political parties adopt and promote particular social values, from which some are then selected by the public as most important to the health of the nation in any given election cycle (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997). For example, the Republican party is usually associated with small government and individualism, the Democratic party is usually associated with larger government and social welfare, yet individualism and social welfare are both important values held by Americans, the opposing sizes of government being the means to achieve each. In a civic society such as ours these social norms are taught to children by the primary institutions in their lives—family, church, school, volunteer organizations such as the Boys’ and Girl’s Clubs of America (Huntington, 1991; Diamond and Plattner, 1993). The traditional view is that the most significant influence on a child has been the family. The family is seen as the place where children learn political and partisan predispositions (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998; Delli Carpini
& Keeter, 1996). A list of social values held in the U. S. would include: egalitarianism, individualism, freedom, the importance of the democratic system, the right to a free education, competition, equal opportunity, and voting rights [an especially salient social value in the 2000 election] (Bellah, R. N., et al., 1985). These are principles that most all Americans would agree are essential to the maintenance of our society.

Different social values become salient in different situations. The values used in a particular political situation will, as Price and Tewksbury (1997) have explained, determine the applicability of particular bits of stored knowledge used in active thought about the matter. They label this the accessibility factor. Instability in public opinion occurs because citizens are ambivalent—they don’t know exactly what to think, because they cannot adjudicate decisively among competing considerations or competing social values. Framing comes into play here—with proper frames, people have more opinions, and opinions are more stable over time, and anchored in the frame construct (Zaller and Feldman, 1992). The value one begins with informs the attitude formed and the opinion expressed (Zaller, 1992). Müller and Reichert (2001) connect framing to opposing stakeholders. In an argument similar to Nelson et al. (1997a, 1997b), they claim an interaction between basic human values and frames. It is this interaction that causes one policy option to appear more attractive than another to the public.

Knowledge of social values can encourage or discourage a person faced with a decision to express an opinion. Noelle-Neumann (1984) addresses this issue in her theory of the spiral of silence. A person keeps a subjective running tally of the dominant opinion in the community, and will not sacrifice the high value of social acceptance in order to express an opinion in opposition to the dominant opinion. Instead, the person
will remain quiet, and the impression will begin to form that the majority opinion is stronger than it really is. Eventually a type of self-fulfilling prophecy occurs, where the originally perceived majority does in fact become so. Another example of social values affecting expression of public opinion is when an individual holds an opinion she thinks might be unacceptable, so she attributes the opinion to others in her reporting of the opinion to the researcher (Glynn, Ostman & McDonald, 1995). A third example of social values affecting public opinion is found in the phenomenon of social desirability—an individual will respond to a question about which he has no opinion in order to fulfill the social role of engaged citizen.

Zaller (1992) explains that the conflict of values leads to ambiguity in the expression of opinions, and an attempt to reconcile the conflict (this is also the underlying idea in cognitive dissonance theory). When values come into conflict, communication becomes necessary in order to resolve the ambiguity or conflict and to bring consensus to the community (Zaller, 1992; Kinder, 1998).¹ The only effective method found for this communication to take place on a national scale is within the media. As Pan and Kosicki point out (2001), this role of the media as an active participant in the public discourse is vital to the health of a nation. Others point to the necessity of a vibrant “public sphere” where the discussion of political matters by an interested and attentive public can take place (R. Neihaus, 1984). This is where a discussion of framing also becomes relevant. As a political issue initially comes to public attention, the media allows interest groups to compose the initial frames used in

¹ This is reminiscent of Moscovici’s “points of tension” which set into motion emergence of new representations. The goal sought in the attempt to resolve ambiguity is a legitimation of knowledge, which provides intellectual unity in a pluralistic society.
reporting the event to the public. Interest groups work to explain the issues to the public in a manner that will increase the likelihood the public will accept the interest group's explanation of the policy or issue. As elite members of society contribute also to the discussion of the issue, the public begins to form a response to what they hear and read. Through public opinion polling, the public's preferences are noted and reported. Throughout this process, the journalists serve dual functions—as reporters of "news" made by the interest groups and elites, and as measurers of "opinion" adopted by the public. Journalists' active role in the initial phase consists of choosing which frames to publicize as they are offered by interest groups and elites. During the "public opinion" phase, journalists often initiate the public polling concerning an issue, and then report the results. Finally, the media will sample the frames, and eventually adopt one, based on journalistic norms (finances, a “good” story, deadlines), social norms or values. This can also include adopting an editorial position that frames the issue in a particular manner.

News media frames can be connected to a value, and can in this manner affect the perspective one brings to a salient issue. Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) based their explanation of framing effects on the foundation established in social construction. They argue that framing is different "both theoretically and conceptually" from persuasion, which attempts to affect belief. Frames, claim the authors, are distinct "message forms not just in their overt structure and substance but also in the way they affect popular thinking about public affairs" (p. 223). Nelson and his colleagues focus on "value conflict," or the connection between values that citizens hold, and the political positions that they adopt. Using as support previous research that links values to political thinking,
they develop a theory of framing to explain how value hierarchies are used by citizens to determine political positions.

Nelson and Willey's theory of framing recognizes values as the motivation for the political attitudes we hold. We hold more than one "treasured value," however, thus at times translating values into political action exposes value conflicts that require a choice be made. The authors use school vouchers as a specific example of the value conflict between "better educational opportunity (a noble egalitarian motive) and taxpayer funding of religious institutions (a threat to civil libertarian values)" (p. 252). Rather than lacking political opinions, citizens are ambivalent concerning some matters, because of

A mix of positive and negative inclinations born of value conflict. Pulled in opposite directions by their conflicting values, many citizens vacillate on specific issues, and their totality of political views lacks the organization that a single dominant value would provide. (Nelson and Willey, 2001, p. 252).

Nelson and Willey join other researchers in the field of psychology in explaining the political decision making process in terms of information accessibility (Nelson and Willey, 2001; Price and Tewkesbury, 1997; Zaller, 1992). They state that an issue frame brings to the forefront of an individual's mind a specific viewpoint that incorporates a value within that individual's value hierarchy. The frame can actually lead the individual to select one value over another to use in the process of decision making. The authors distinguish this from other persuasive attempts in that the frame does not supply new information, but instead re-organizes already existing information. A distinguishing element of the value-conflict theory is the ability of issue framing to "establish hierarchies among competing values" (Nelson and Willey, 2001, p. 263). This hierarchy
is susceptible to challenge from other quarters, and the hierarchies can be reestablished by the individual.

Mathematically the process is no different: We figure the costs and benefits and judge accordingly; but the costs and benefits are in the denomination of values, not dollars and cents. So we must judge which of several competing values really counts the most (Nelson and Willey, 2001, p. 256).

This view of framing sees the communicator (most often, the mass media) as a competitor attempting to establish the categories that allow or deny one rival value over another. This value-conflict approach allows the researcher to explain the shifts in public opinion by studying the influence of issue framing.

Value conflict is organized in three specific ways: categorization, goal ranking, and institutional role assignment (Nelson and Willey, 2001, pp. 252-255). First, the manner in which issues are categorized could determine what value is assigned to the issue, eventually determining the "value priorities." Goal ranking is an explicit "declaration" assigning a "superior status" to one value over another. Finally, institutional role assignment isolates a behavior or an action to a narrow institutional dominion, thereby avoiding a value conflict within citizens' broader "global value hierarchy" (p. 254).

Scholars have circled the periphery of value orientation and public opinion, even though the direct link with framing analysis is just now being made. Moscovici underscores the emphasis placed upon values, and goes further to recognize that the social representation [or frame], can be a "system of values" that makes communication, and thereby social interaction, possible. This allows people to make sense of and master
their "material and social world," and second, it makes communication among members of the community possible, by

providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world, and their individual group history (as quoted in Moscovici and Duveen, 2001, p. 12).

This becomes an important matter for a minority interest group that might not always see its interests represented in media coverage.

Ganson talks of frames that incorporate appeals to basic values. These are a fundamental motivation which we all share. A framing package will contain a favorite interpretation for the problem that will have cultural resonance. For example, technology can be referred to as "progress" or as "a monster out of control"—the interpretation accepted will be the one offering "narrative fidelity" (Snow and Benford, 1992) to the community. Framing the political issue within a value dimension reduces the "ambivalence" that an individual might manifest when asked to express an opinion about an issue "that carries roughly evenly balanced communications on both sides of issues" (Zaller, 1992, p. 59). Entman's definition of frames also recognizes a place for value considerations:

Frames, then define problems—determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values;
diagnose causes—identify the forces creating the problem; make moral judgments—evaluate causal agents and their effects; and suggest remedies—offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects (1997, p. 46).
Nelson and his colleagues have tested the strength of framing effects in relationship to the value structure of respondents (Nelson, Clawson, et al., 1997; Nelson, Oxley et al., 1997). They broaden the study of framing effects to hypothesize that in addition to producing message effects, frames affect the manner in which people think about public affairs. Frames differ from persuasion in that frames tell people how to weight the many considerations that enter into their frequent political deliberations. Thus, frames can affect the salience or accessibility of one consideration over another. They conclude “frames appear to activate existing beliefs and cognitions, rather than adding something new to the individual’s beliefs about the issue” (1997, p. 237). This first study focused on public opinion concerning welfare. The second study by Nelson, Oxley, et al., asserts that “frames can be meaningful and important determinants of public opinion”; they serve as “bridges” between the position of the elite concerning a problem or issue, and the public’s understanding of that issue (1997, p. 224). The authors applied framing theory to public opinion concerning the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). They find that the “framing condition affected the perceived importance of free speech and public order, which in turn affected viewer tolerance toward the KKK” (p. 574).

This connection between the frame and communication of the frame as an integral part of a social group's ability to function cohesively is a crucial part of deliberative democracy. Without mass media offering a common understanding of the events surrounding an issue, and the values that apply to the issue, a community would be in danger of splintering (Gurevitch and Levy, 1985, p. 19).
Interest groups

Most scholars now agree that framing is a media effect that explains how people perceive public issues. Agreement exists also on the two most prominent sources of media frames: media personnel themselves, and elites. However, another focus of attention for framing studies has become interest groups that possess a political investment in how the issue is presented to the public. A vein of research relevant to the current focus on interest groups and their ability to affect the media's framing of them has been developing during the last decade. Scholars began to investigate an interest group’s ability to play a part in how a media message concerning its interests is presented to the public (Paletz & Boiney, 1988; Ryan, 1991; Pertschuk & Schaetzel, 1989; Terkildsen, et al., 1998). Suggestions were made as to the political sophistication, level of organization, and relationship with the media that makes this influence possible. Experimental studies soon followed, applying the analysis of Ryan and the applications from the Pertschuck and Schaetzel case study.

The role of interest groups in the framing process is an area consistent with both the constructivist model of framing and the view of deliberative democracy as an essential element for a healthy democracy. While it is difficult for one ordinary citizen to draw the media attention necessary to publicize an opinion to the polis, this becomes possible when citizens join together in a group that promotes this common interest. As interest groups gain sophistication, this could conceivably make the interest groups more integral players in public deliberation. In an effort to study the public and how the public views issues and events important to the democratic process, media and political actors

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(or elites) look to these groups for indications as to how the public is responding. Thus, it is important to understand reference groups in relation to the public opinion process.

**Development of group opinion norms.** Individuals come to identify with others who are similar to them, forming reference groups. Turner named this phenomenon self-categorization, and has argued it is a part of social identity—the part of the self-concept that is related to groups (1999). Norms affect how people express public opinion. Glynn looks at the role of communication, specifically mass media, in forming the norms that regulate the public expression of opinion (1995, 1997). Glynn explains that reference groups establish norms and values, acceptable and unacceptable behaviors for its members (1997, p. 161). Groups play a large role in determining normative expectations toward attitudes and opinions. Thus, as an individual identifies with a particular in-group, the norms of that group are the norms that are taken into account in the opinion making process.

Social identity also becomes relevant in times of social conflict and ambiguity. Kinder and others argue that social conflict leads to uncertainty, which impels people to engage in and continue in communication until consensus is reached (1998; Fiske and Goodwin, 1996). Public opinion seeks to achieve social consensus, addresses affective and cognitive motivations, and works to prioritize public issues according to importance. This is a point of intersection of reference groups and public opinion. Much of the work of public opinion is done in groups, whether social, familial, or issue oriented. It is then that individuals depend upon their social connections to help decide what they should think, and to decide whom to support.
Several authors have asked whether interest groups have been successful in this endeavor (Danielian and Page, 1994), and what practices can be generalized to other groups operating in the public sphere. Moscovici and Doise (1994) address conflict and consensus. When social conflict arises, in this instance, school vouchers, the people or groups involved will seek communication in order to resolve the ambiguity. Again, the role of the minority is important in this time of consensus building. The group does not arrive at consensus that represents the mean position of all the opinions expressed in the group. Rather, it comes to an "extreme" position, which represents all the positions considered, not the middle, or compromise, position. This is called the polarization process by Moscovici and Doise, arrived at by each member of the group moving from an individualistic focus to an intra-group focus. This is reported as a true change in opinion, for members of the group, being questioned later, still hold the extreme position. This new position becomes a part of the social norms (or social representations) of the group. This is an example of how the minority position can bring innovation to social thinking.

**Interest groups and media coverage.** Kinder emphasizes media's role in social conflict. People will engage in and continue in communication until there is some resolution to the social conflict. Public opinion helps to prioritize the public issues, and to move the public to social consensus. Much of the work of public opinion is done in groups, whether social, familial, or issue oriented. Kinder and Sears (1985) explain political opinions as indications of individuals' social memberships. They are declarations, to others and to ourselves, of social identity. The authors identify race and social class as two important social groupings with which people identify. A portion of the communication in which people engage is mediated, another portion is interpersonal
(Price and Oshagan, 1995). This bringstogether public opinion research with the research on reference groups. The significance of reference groups in relation to public opinion lies in how information is distributed through society. The role of the media is crucial in this, because it is through the media that information is distributed to groups and to individuals in the public. Kinder explains information dissemination as a modified two-step flow of communication. The media reports on events and issues of importance to the general public. The Attentive Public receives the message and begins to form an opinion. A subset of the attentive public, the Active Public, works actively to affect the thinking of other members of the public and of the elite, who are also attending to the media. The general public understands all of this based on the explanations and interpretations given to them by the active and attentive publics.

Media coverage of groups will focus on specific groups which follow a cultural norm, whether or not the coverage represents innovative ideas coming from minority, or out-groups. Even if the minority position is not given media coverage, as the minority group continues to express the same positive attitude toward school vouchers in each poll taken, the consistency of the minority opinion is recognized by others. Moscovici argues this will cause the rest of society to be influenced by the minority opinion, and adopt a position that is not a compromise, but a recognition of the validity of the minority position. As media continue to report these polls of public opinion which show a consistent opinion toward school vouchers, the possibility of public opinion across society has a greater chance of also supporting school vouchers. This could be seen as a variation of Noelle-Newmann's Spiral of Silence. If the minority continues to
consistently maintain the minority opinion concerning an issue, change in public opinion overall could be the result as their position gains public strength.

Davis (1995) focused on the competition for controlling the symbols used to explain a public dispute, and concluded that interest groups can contribute to the symbols adopted by the media, but had not at the time of this study achieved complete control of the symbol making process. McLeod and Detenber (1999) report the media coverage concerning a specific social protest in Minneapolis, MN. They conclude that media frames most often will call for social order, and will frame the story in order to reduce the amount of social upheaval that might become likely. Wittebols found that media tend to present protest stories in a favorable light for the institution involved, but the protestors are portrayed as odd, ineffective, and merely a "backdrop" to the elite perspective (1996, p. 358).

Typically, media do not report favorably on marginal groups. Danielian and Page (1994) conducted an extensive content analysis of television coverage that included mention of interest groups, and found that media coverage of these groups was "mostly in connection with protests or demonstrations, which are generally unpopular and ill-suited to presenting specific policy stands or reasoning" (p. 1074). They conclude that when these citizen action groups receive public attention, they have often paid the price of alienating the public and corrupting the group's purposes. McLeod and Hertog (1999) confirm that the media is more likely to invoke a "protest paradigm" in proportion to the radical nature of the group. Depiction of public opinion is the primary way to cover the protest story, reporting polls or characterizing the "public mood." This allows the reporter to label protest behavior as deviant (p. 308). A reported exception is Common
Cause, which succeeded in gaining favorable news coverage and thus favorable public opinion from *The New York Times* by facilitating the research of the journalists, and by sharing journalists' values (Paletz and Boiney, 1988). Davis (1995) applied the model of communicative influences to environmental interest groups. He found issue expansion "through symbolic techniques of arousal and provocation" to be used successfully in the attempt to expand a local issue to receive a larger amount of attention.

Additional studies highlight the role of the interest group in affecting the frame that the media adopts. Terkildsen, et al. (1998) look at the abortion debate in order to analyze how interest groups initially frame a public interest issue. They conclude that in the beginning of the presentation of a new issue, much of the framing comes in fact from interest groups. As the arena of debate becomes crystallized, the media becomes more involved in creating frames. The authors make specific suggestions as to how interest groups are successful in this endeavor. Terkildsen, et al. study how interest groups must operate in order to gain the attention of and coverage by the media. This is a necessary concern, for interest groups must depend upon the media "to have their interpretations of reality inserted into the public debate" (1998, p. 46), and this will occur only as the minority group crafts an argument of high quality (Witte, 1994, p. 89). The final product which is presented to the public is an interplay between media and interest groups, but it is the media that determines finally what is considered news, how much space a story receives, and what will be of potential interest to the reader.

The interest group needs the media in order to determine the direction of discussion of an issue, or to define the issue in terms favorable to the group. The stakes are high for the interest group, because once its information is given to the media, it is
dependent on the editorial decisions of the news source as to what will actually be presented to the public (Terkildsen, et al., 1998). Miller and Riechert combine interest groups and framing to the emerging issue of value's influence on accepting a frame. They argue that rather than trying to change facts or how those facts are interpreted, interest group leaders will attempt an interaction between the frame and "fundamental human values" in a manner that makes the policy alternative attractive to the public and to policymakers (2001, p. 108,109). If successful, they emphasize this frame, if unsuccessful, they attempt another frame.

Mutz (1998) discusses the relationship between three important political arenas: the groups with which people identify, collective opinion and experiences, and media influence on political views. She argues that the power of the media to influence public opinion is at the collective rather than the individual level. She bases her position on the well-founded sociotropic explanation of political opinion: individuals will set aside their personal situations in life ("I have a job") and form their opinion on the sociotropic view ("Many are unemployed, thus the governmental leaders must be held accountable."). It is at the level of collective experience that the media are effective (1998, p. 90). Further, she claims that a differentiation between collective experience and individual experience accounts for much of the reported inconsistencies in media effects research (96). All of this is susceptible to group influence—the groups with which one identifies, even if this is merely a "psychological closeness" (1998, p. 137). Group level effects exist in the form of media "portrayals of how various groups are faring" (p. 143). They use this information to form opinions, rather than generalizing their personal experiences, concerning how policymakers' decisions are affecting their relevant groups. Even though
she argues media are influential in the formation of impersonal perceptions, which are important in "shaping political judgments," Mutz is not willing to label the individual a hapless media consumer whose opinions are molded by the content to which he or she attends (p. 270). Rather, the media consumer weighs the media messages ("sampling political information in one's environment"), and evaluates the views of self and others presented when coming to an opinion. This, claims Mutz, "effectively models democratic decision making" (1998, p. 263). All of this carries the potential of benefiting public deliberation. Collective representations expand our contacts to include the experiences and opinions of others not like us, giving us an opportunity to consider other viewpoints and needs in the process of forming personal political opinion.

If the interest group is not involved in the competition of framing the issue, the public has little opportunity to know the viewpoint of the group. Adding to the claim made by Terkildsen, et al., that interest groups had some effect in how their positions were framed to the public (1998, p. 56), Zaller (1992) notes the importance of competing frames, so that the public has choices when making its decisions. Danielian and Page conclude, based on a content analysis of 13 years of TV news stories, that elite interest groups received a greater amount of coverage and more favorable coverage than other interest groups. "Such imbalances, apparently resulting from differential command of money and other resources, seem to violate norms of equal access, representativeness, balance, and diversity in the marketplace of ideas" (1994, p. 1056). This matter of news coverage of competing interest groups becomes of special importance to minority groups who must rely to a large extent "upon the tactic of public appeals," and hope for favorable media coverage in order to publicize their position (Dannielian and Page, 1994).
Scholars have established that coverage of a diversity of opinions is essential for citizens in a free society to consider themselves an integral part of society. When citizens fail to see their positions, or members of their social or ethnic group represented in news accounts, they are likely to lose faith in the news' positive role in the democratic process. (Dannielian and Page, 1994; Gurevitch and Blumler, 1990; Norris, 1997).

Framing of a public issue is an important component of the attitude the public expresses concerning that issue. Interest groups attempt to compete with the elite and with the media for who will form the dominant frame reported to the public (Pertshuk and Schaetzel, 1991). There is not a causal relationship between cognition and decision or attitude. Often, an individual's position concerning a person or issue is based on how that individual feels about the person or issue. This evaluative process can be affected by media treatment of the subject. Thus, media frames can affect the process of decision making, and thereby are essential considerations for the interest group that has a stake in the decision making process.

**Discursive communities**

Another contribution by Pan and Kosicki briefly mentioned earlier is the specific application of framing theory to political communication, public deliberation in particular (2001). This ties together an important psychological-sociological theory with some of the newer attempts in public journalism to involve ordinary citizens in policy deliberation. Pan and Kosicki introduce a third actor in the framing process in addition to political elites and the media. They argue that the public plays a role in frame

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2 This is an area of research that at the moment is unique to communication studies. Political scientists credit elites (Zaller, 1992) and the media (Iyengar, 1992), but seldom recognize the interrelationship between all three elements—media, elites, and the public.
construction, and they incorporate the opinion activity of the public as a part of their
definition of process. While the seed of this idea resides in Gamson, it seems somewhat
different here in its emphasis on the cognitive processes of the receiver, which helps
determine the meaning of the frame. (Price and Roberts, 1987, model this interactive
process between journalists, elites, and the public, but do not apply it to deliberative
democracy). Pan and Kosicki place all of this in the context of deliberative democracy,
joining the fields of political science, psychology, sociology and mass communication
more completely.

The mass media provide the materials for the construction of public discourse.
The news media provide sources of political information that are necessary for policy
reasoning. The media also provide the concrete and specific means that we use to think
about abstract ideas or principles needed in order to evaluate policy options. The news
media can trigger emotional responses related to an issue. Finally, the media helps to
frame a public policy in a particular way. The list of media's role and actions in a
discursive community is an impressive one, and one that underscores that media are
central to the political process.

Pan and Kosicki make the case that as we have entered the electronic "age of
talk," democracy has developed a distinctive deliberative form. "Each narrative is
sponsored by a group of actors, based on some overarching ideological principles and
cultural resonance. Plurality of public discourse is both the defining feature and
prerequisite of public deliberations" (Pan and Kosicki, 2001, p. 48). The news media
often collaborate with the elite in this effort, thus public deliberation becomes a contest
between "actors in the public arena" over whose ideology will define and shape issues
(2001, p. 36). Framing, argue Pan and Kosicki, is the strategic means to present issues to the public "both for one's own sense making and for contesting the frames of others" (p. 39). Framing analysis gives us a tool to understand how all these elements combine for the successful operation of democracy in the U.S., by connecting "the normative propositions from the idea of 'deliberative democracy' and the empirical questions of collective decision-making (Pan and Kosicki, 2001, p. 36).

Zaller provides in the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal a contemporary example of the media operating in a discursive environment. Zaller documents that a content analysis of the coverage of the scandal in 1998 shows media reports were not pro-Clinton, but were balanced accounts. Although the media were presenting accurate reports concerning Clinton's behavior, people did not accept the media position—approval ratings of the president stayed high. He was still accomplishing the tasks people valued highly: he continued to promise peace, prosperity, and moderation. Rather than blind acceptance of media reports, the people wanted to believe Clinton because of his record in office (their personal experience showed they benefited from his policies. Zaller points out that presidents and their party hold a level in public esteem based on "how effectively they govern" (p. 253), which points to the public exercising popular wisdom.

Education crisis in U.S. society

The quality of public education has become an important issue in discursive communities throughout Ohio (Heise, 2001, pp. 8-9). In March, 1997, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled in DeRolph v. State of Ohio that the standard of a "thorough and

\footnote{While Ohio has been one of the first states to address this problem, its implications are nationwide. "The relationship between the condition of school facilities, student learning, fiscal neutrality and a state's}
efficient education," required by the Ohio constitution was not being met with current school funding provisions. The court defined thorough as one "in which districts are not starved for funds," efficient as "one that does not lack teachers, buildings, or equipment" (O'Neill, 1999, p. 6). The Ohio Supreme Court equated poor proficiency test results with a lack of sufficient funds needed to educate students (O'Neill, 1999, p. 21). While the state, rather than local governments, was given more responsibility for funding the schools, the dissent to DeRolph emphasized the importance of continuing local control over the schools, including discretion as to how the money would be spent. Since the original decision, the DeRolph case has been back to the Supreme Court on two occasions, both times to receive clarification or guidance (O'Neill, 1999, p. 23).

This responsibility given to the Ohio legislature has been a challenging one. The legislature has attempted several times to make the required reforms. During the five and one half years of the school funding controversy, the issue of school funding has been regularly reported by Ohio media. The topic is one that directly affects Ohio families with school age children most directly, but interest in school funding extends beyond involved parents. Because of the tax implications for all state citizens and the broader political implications, school funding in general and school vouchers in particular is a matter of wide general interest, as indicated by the sustained media coverage during this time. This justifies the conclusion that state funding of school vouchers is a topic that can be used when studying deliberative communities.

School vouchers have been one of the reform attempts initiated by the Ohio legislature. In 1995, the legislature enacted a tax-supported school voucher program that

constitutional language may become the most litigated arena of school finance in the 21st century"
has been a subject of controversy. It was struck down by an Ohio court for violation of
the Establishment Clause of the Constitution, and quickly reinstated by the Ohio
legislature, and then challenged in the Federal Court system (Syler, 2000).

Policymakers, politicians, and scholars recognize the crisis of U.S. education
desegregate in the 1970’s, publication of A Nation at Risk in 1984, the establishment of
proficiency tests for schools, the migration of children from public education to private
education and home schooling, school finance litigation, and parental choice—all have
been based on the recognition that America’s public schools are failing its children, and
some type of reform is needed. Sullivan points out that “the acknowledged need for
education reform has proven to be the dominant societal problem of recent years, and it
presents perhaps the greatest challenge to our legal system in the upcoming years” (2001,
p. 2).

This paper will focus on a more recent attempt at reform—parental choice—as a
alternative to public education presently being considered in various states in the U.S. in
addition to Ohio. The issue of school funding is tied to the issue of desegregation of
schools—can it achieve further reforms that desegregation did not achieve? Because of
this connection, the response to school funding reform often is motivated by racial ties
(See Law Review articles by Sullivan, 2001; Syler, 2000; Ryan, 1999a; Ryan, 1999b;
Graves, 1999). This paper recognizes the legal struggles present in the education reform
issue then goes further to ask how public opinion toward education reform varies
according to race. This is a subject immersed in controversy, and it divides groups of

(Honeywell, 1998, p. 1)
people who are otherwise united in the issues they advance to the public. Ryan shows that it is common for funding to follow race in education matters. Yet, "whereas the role of race in welfare reform has been well canvassed, the influence of race in school finance litigation is virtually unexamined" (1999, p. 2). He argues further, that race plays a significant role in school finance reform, with "green [money] following white [people]," which is the classic NAACP method of "tying" minority interests to white interests and of poorer districts to wealthier districts (1999, p. 3). He makes a strong case for considering school finance reform as a method for continuing the attempt to desegregate poor and minority schools, and in so doing, to move beyond race as the primary issue in education reform (1999, p. 2). While not a "perfect substitute for desegregation," he argues the key to improving the quality of minority education is to continue to promote integration, for it is integrated schools that will continue to receive much of school funding (1999, p. 21). Ryan concludes that "school finance reform is a racially divisive issue—even among whites and blacks who both stand to gain from the reform....Whites tend to perceive school finance reform as primarily benefiting minorities, even when inconsistent with reality," Additionally, 'racial hostility' appears to be strongly related to the level of support for the reform of school financing that an individual exhibits. (1999, p. 18).

As noted above, poor and minorities seem to fare the best when tied to "the fates of wealthier neighborhoods and students" (Ryan, 1999, p. 19), and the issue of parental choice is relevant to the discussion of tying poor and minority students and schools to white and wealthy schools. Ryan argues that "vouchers turn the majoritarian system on its head, and affirm the rights of parents to choose, whether they belong to the majority or
not, just exactly what sort of school they want their child to attend" (2000, p. 13). A system of parental choice was proposed by President Bush as a part of his educational plan, that “would provide federal money to parents of children in failing public schools to pay tuition to a public or private school of their choice” (Sullivan, 1999, p. 3). This voucher system is a controversial method of education reform that has received divided responses from the public. Some criticize it because of the potential threat it poses to public education (Your School and the Law, 1999; Ryan, 1999; Syler, 2000), others because of a perceived threat to separation of church and state (Syler, 2000; Graves, 1999). Still others support voucher programs because they increase competition in schools, or because they allow parents greater control over educational choices (Ryan, 1999; Bolick, 2000).

Ryan argues that school finance reform has not proven successful as a substitute for school desegregation (1999, p. 24). Instead, integration has been shown to generate the highest level of success in improving a child’s future chances of success. “Integration, at least when it occurs along both racial and socioeconomic lines, provides more demonstrable benefits for poor minority students than does simply increasing expenditures in urban districts” (Ryan, 1999, p. 17). Ryan advocates the voucher system as superior to school finance litigation for achieving educational equity, because of the unique benefits that accrue to the poor and minority student when educated alongside wealthier and white students (p. 18, 19). However, Ryan agrees with other scholars that this kind of reform is dependent upon American public opinion—“until the battle for public opinion is won, it is unlikely that any structural innovation, like the establishment
of metropolitan government or litigation-based remedies, will achieve by fiat what cannot be accomplished by politics” (Zalinsky, as quoted in Ryan, 1999b, p. 20).
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Background of methodology

The school voucher policy is one that has been consistently resisted by national lawmakers and leading elite interest groups connected to education. Their anti-school voucher position is reported in the news repeatedly, yet previous surveys on school vouchers report that members of the black community support school vouchers as a viable improvement of public education. Perhaps the answer to this lack of connection between interest group members and leaders lies within the process view of framing, embedded in social construction. This view, briefly, holds that framing is a community endeavor, not something "done to" people. Since people are shown to consider more than the frame when forming an opinion, it makes sense to ask whether societal values are playing a role in opinion formation. The connection between framing and values is a connection established by previous researchers and discussed earlier. This research predicts that public opinion will not follow exclusively framing's influence, but will also demonstrate a relationship to the overarching value connected to the frame.
The Pew Research Center has on occasion polled survey respondents concerning their views on education. In 1996, respondents listed education as an important element in their children's future, and listed more money for education as an area where the US could improve. When asked in 2000 how satisfied they were with the quality of education in the US, 54% were satisfied, and 46% were dissatisfied. Additionally, 52% believed that the problem was getting worse (2000).

In 1998, the public placed improving the educational system as the most important element of the public agenda for President Clinton and the congress. As a top priority, it "draws substantially more support from women than from men (82% vs. 74%) and greater support from blacks than whites (90% vs. 76%)" (Pew Research Center, 1998). Age was also a factor in how respondents viewed the issue of education. While education was a top priority for all age groups, those most likely to have school-age children (18-29 and 30-49) placed it as a much higher priority than the second ranked issue. Thus, it would seem reasonable to expect a difference between races in support for tax-supported school vouchers, which are proposed as a method to improve public education.

In a study of public support for the quality of the Nashville, TN school system during a time of public discussion about increased taxes for the schools, Pride traces what happens to cause the public to change its opinion of the public schools from supportive to critical. While the quality of performance in the schools did not diminish during the time of the study, level of public support did. Pride concludes that the shift in opinion followed a shift in the frames of how well the schools were doing. This turning point in the Nashville conflict points to a need for more research on "the framing activities of
movement activists and media operatives before and after a critical event to specify when redefinition is likely to occur" (1995, p. 23).

A survey of individuals in the Columbus metropolitan area could indicate whether coverage of one newspaper (the majority paper) has more influence on particular segments of the population than another (the minority paper) during the occurrence of such a "critical event." Of special interest is whether the Columbus black population is more likely to agree with the frames used more often by the majority or minority newspaper concerning education reform, tax-supported school vouchers in particular. Pan and Kosicki argue that when properly functioning, public deliberation exemplifies the interactions among different actors/speakers/discursive communities. If mainstream media do not facilitate this, then all the relevant positions that should be considered in the decision making process will not be represented in mainstream information flow. To study the relationship of both newspapers' reporting on tax-supported school vouchers and to connect this to community public opinion, places at the analytical center of the study the strategic choices of social actors (Pan and Kosicki, 2001, p. 9).

Location of frames

Tankard (2001) summarizes three empirical approaches to framing. His goal is to elucidate methods for measuring media framing that are "systematic and empirical" (p. 98). He lists three methods that bring objectivity to locating frames: finding the "media package" in the vein of Gamson and Modigliani; seeing the frame as a "multidimensional concept," with various elements involved; and employing a "list of frames" from which coders can identify important framing mechanisms (pp. 100, 101). The significance in these approaches lies in how the frames are found. Tankard reports a study that selected
frames for the research by beginning with the theoretical or research literature in the related field (2001, p. 105). This is the approach used by this study. Tankard's method of frame location was applied, initially drawing the frames from the theoretical or research literature within the school funding controversy. Applying his method to this study, dominant frames were located in the legal literature discussing the school voucher controversy. These four legal issues were coded in two Columbus, Ohio newspapers: The Columbus Dispatch, the mainstream newspaper, and The Columbus Post, representing the African-American community. As the issues were found in newspaper articles, they were moved to the category of frames. Survey questions asked of the respondents represent these frames, in order to ascertain whether the frames, as they appear in the varying papers, were accepted by the consumers of the papers (Table 1.).

Frame categories

Dominant frames are located in the legal literature discussing the school voucher controversy. I conducted a Lexis-Nexis search of the legal literature concerning school vouchers in the state of Ohio, and found four common issues discussed: (1) poorer children should have the same educational opportunities as wealthier children; (2) school vouchers violate (or do not violate) separation of church and state; (3) competition created between the schools will improve the overall quality of education; (4) school vouchers drain the public school system of needed tax funds.

Value conditions

The four legal issues became the frame categories used to code the relevant news stories. The frame categories were divided into two value categories. Pro-school voucher. The equal opportunity and competition frames are consistent with the parental
choice value, which is a pro-school voucher value. *Anti-school voucher.* The First Amendment and community actions frames support the pro-public school value, and can be labeled anti-school voucher values. The pro- and anti-school voucher value conditions also represent widely held values in the U.S. concerning education (parental choice and universal public education).

Table 3.1 diagrams the conceptual progression used for this research, beginning with the theoretical arguments analyzed in the legal literature, then locating those arguments in the selected newspapers, and finally testing residents of the Columbus, Ohio area to determine how individuals of differing ethnic background respond to the frames the newspapers offered.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Literature</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Located issues commonly discussed</td>
<td>• Issues are represented in the frames.</td>
<td>• Do participants respond to frame questions in a manner consistent with the value condition that introduced the issue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Used legal literature in this study b/c conflict is embedded in legal decisions</td>
<td>• Papers differ on which frames/issues they adopt.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Issues encode values</td>
<td>• Two frames consistent with each of the two values</td>
<td>• Survey Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parental choice vs. protecting public school system</td>
<td>• poor children should have the same opportunity as wealthier children (pro)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• separation of church and state (anti)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• competition (pro)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• work together to improve schools—community action (anti)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Theoretical development of research concept
Content analysis of news

Gamson, et al. claimed that the success of a particular frame can be monitored by "how well their preferred meanings and interpretations are doing in various media arenas" (1992, p. 385). For this study, Gamson's criteria would require assessing whether the issues found in the legal literature and adopted as issue frames have been used consistently by the news media.

Hertog and McLeod argue that scholars should eventually "generate a relatively stable, widely agreed-upon set of cultural frames and subframes that is valid over time and across varied topics rather than a new set with every study of every topic" (2001, p. 159). They argue that frame categories must become "widely held and relatively stable" in order for scholars to achieve full effectiveness in studying the role of frames in society. They assume a limited number of "cultural frames" that most in society would recognize, and they call for researchers to begin to identify them (2001, p. 159). The frames found in these news articles are familiar to citizens in U.S. society.

Next, using content analysis, four specific frames, consistent with the values located earlier, were identified in issues of The Columbus Dispatch and The Columbus Post, between the years Jan 1, 1996, and July 1, 2001. The content analyses of these four frames and two value conditions were conducted using Pan and Kosicki's 1993 technique. From this content analysis, one can assess which of the four frames have been most widely adopted by the media organs being studied. Finally, this study attempted to discover how well these four specific frames, some of which have been identified by previous researchers, have been accepted by a representative sample of Columbus area residents, by measuring with which of the frames surveyed individuals agreed.

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Specific procedures. News articles and editorials were selected from The Columbus Dispatch using a keyword search ("school vouchers"). This resulted in a total of 84 news articles and editorials spanning the years January 1, 1996 to July 1, 2001. A hand search was done of The Columbus Post, a weekly minority newspaper with circulation of about 6,000 in the Columbus, Ohio metropolitan area, of news articles and editorials encompassing the same period of time, resulting in 15 news articles and editorials. Both news articles and editorials were used in order to study both the news reported and the editorial endorsements of each newspaper. These dates were selected because they coincide with the education funding controversy in the state of Ohio concerning school funding, and school vouchers in particular.

All news articles and editorials were included that used the term "school vouchers" or "vouchers" in the headline or the lead paragraph of the story. Other news stories that mentioned school vouchers later in the article usually did so only in passing, thus not enough was said to locate a frame. Selection of news articles and editorials was limited to the term "school vouchers" for several reasons. First, it limited the focus of the study, so that questions asked of respondents in a later telephone survey could be specific to a clear, easily understood issue that has received wide news coverage. Second, even though elites oppose school vouchers, several public opinion polls report that a majority of Black respondents support tax-supported school vouchers (Bolick, 2000; Ryan, 1999). Third, tax-supported school vouchers have been an education funding alternative that has been given consideration in Ohio, to the point that trial voucher programs have been instituted around the state. This issue has also been hotly debated in both the legal and political arenas. The U.S. Supreme Court, on February 21, 2002 heard oral arguments in
the final stage of the legal controversy surrounding the state funded school voucher pilot program in Cleveland, Ohio.

Using work on framing analysis by Pan and Kosicki (1993; 2001), this study examined how citizens think and talk about public policy issues. If frames from newspapers are in survey questions, and respondents to the survey questions identify with some frames over others, then we can begin to have increased confidence that there is a relationship between media frames and public opinion. We have also come closer to understanding how individuals think and talk in public. This study also included the additional element of values as they affect the acceptance or rejection of news frames (Nelson, et al., 1997a; 1997b; Shah et al, 2001). With different values clearly proposed by the two newspapers and added to the analysis of the frames, it becomes possible to test a real world example of the role of values in affecting the acceptance or rejection of a frame.

The model adopted from Pan and Kosicki incorporates the framing analyses of two case studies completed by the authors. In their 1993 article, the authors developed a model for framing analysis of new articles. In their 2001 work, they expanded framing analysis to include study of public deliberation. They develop a system of frame analysis that recognizes the constructive nature of public discourse, and the role of meaning interpretation. It claims to provide an empirical method for analyzing political discourse. The news story will have a theme, or frame, which is presented according to one or more of four structural dimensions. These two elements of Pan and Kosicki's model—the frame and the structural dimensions—work together to authenticate the frame a
researcher identifies in a story. Structural dimensions can justify the theme assigned by the researcher to each article, thus giving the analysis more empirical credibility.

A public policy issue can also demonstrate a frame pattern over time (Pan and Kosicki, 1993, p. 64). This repetition of a frame over time is an important factor in learning the frame by the audience. Pan and Kosicki take this next analytic step in their most recent contribution to the field of frame analysis and apply it to the development of public discourse.

The frame analysis for this study consists of four steps:

1. Identify a theme based on the phrase "school vouchers." This is the area where values were located. The values identified were general: either an article demonstrated a position that was pro-parental choice (which might appear as pro-parental choice, or con-public schools) or pro-public schools (which might appear as con-parental choice or reform, or pro-public schools). The value first mentioned in a news story was labeled the thematic, or value emphasis for that item.

2. Four frames were incorporated in survey questions that were added to a recent Buckeye State Poll, conducted by the Center for Survey Research at The Ohio State University. The frames consisted of two that represented the pro-public schools value (community action and separation of church and state), and two that represented the pro-parental choice value (equal opportunity and competition).

3. Make determinations of:

   The script of the framed story—what is the "communal environment outside their experience" (Pan and Kosicki, 1993)? What are they "being told" by the media? The articles carried a familiar script, according to the newspaper in which
the article appeared. Some articles were an historical recounting of the controversy, while other articles built upon the already established controversy. The two newspapers agreed in the factual events that were transpiring; however, each would at times editorialize about the issue, adding additional information or analysis the writer saw as relevant, and presenting that information also as fact. Script was coded when the article developed the history of the controversy, or added to the story.

The thematic dimension for these frames is hypothesis testing, or arguments being made in the articles as to why the public should accept a particular position on school vouchers. Each article contained an argument that maintains one of four possible positions: pro-school; pro-child; con-school; con-reform. This dimension was associated with the values advanced in an article.

The rhetorical dimension involves the proactive, stylistic choices of the framers to achieve an effect. Gamson's five framing devices are applicable here: exemplars, metaphors, depictions, slogans and catchphrases, and visual images.

4. These lexical choices reveal an ideology present in the framer, which can be identified and exposed. This ideology brings the analysis full circle back to the value earlier identified in the article.

Steps one and two are necessary in order to make steps three and four possible. The determination of the script, theme, and rhetorical dimension of the frame will lead to the evaluation in the fourth step, which recognizes the framer's intent (Pan and Kosicki, 2001).
Content Analysis Coding Protocol. A content analysis of the chosen newspapers was conducted based on framing theory. This news article protocol aimed at assessing the news frames used in news stories and editorials covering the school-voucher issue in Ohio from Jan 1, 1996 to July 1, 2001. It examined news coverage given to the school voucher issue in two newspapers distributed in the Columbus, Ohio metropolitan area. The goal was to ascertain the frame used to construct the school voucher issue in each article or editorial. The following definitions were important in selecting and analyzing the content under study.

*News stories* were defined as all non-advertising matter in a news product. In a newspaper this would usually include "all staff-produced news stories found in the first and "local" sections, but excluding editorial pages, op-ed pages, reader opinions, sports, routine business data, society news and similar matter. It may include relevant features produced by local staff reporters and syndicated and wire services stories relevant to the issue or election being analyzed" (Riffe, et al, 1998, p. 112). News stories included refer specifically to "school vouchers" or "vouchers."

*Opinion editorials* are defined as opinion pieces written by a newspaper's editorial staff or an opinion columnist. These are found on the editorial page and op-ed page, and will include the term "school vouchers" or "vouchers."

*A school voucher* is a tuition credit, with the government covering part or all of a child's tuition to a public, parochial or private school of the parents' choice (Bolick, 2000). Articles are included that discuss school vouchers as a viable form of school funding (in Ohio) which has consequences that are open for discussion and evaluation.
Discussion of the implications of school vouchers on either the children or the public schools is part of the paragraph or article included.

*Equal opportunity across classes* (Equality frame) is a familiar argument that employs the struggle between socio-economic classes in the United States. It recognizes the inherent disadvantage of those in the lower socio-economic status, SES, compared to those in the upper SES. Indications of this category included phrases such as: a) this is a trick to disadvantage minority children; b) poor children should have the same opportunity for quality education as wealthier children; c) parents of poor children should have the educational choices for their children as wealthier parents; d) financial arguments made when comparing one group of people to another.

*Separation of church and state* is the First Amendment requirement that the government not establish a state religion. This is frequently understood to forbid government financial support to a religious institution. Separation of church and state is identified by references to the First Amendment, or statements that warn about or accuse the state of "favoring," or "financing," or "privileging" religious institutions.

*Competition* was defined as a state of struggle between two entities (here, public and private schools) in order to win scarce resources. Competition here requires a choice be made between which of two schools a child will attend. Competition was identified when the writer either mentioned "competition" or that school vouchers would benefit public schools.

*Community Action will improve public education* (Mobilizing frame). This argument is made in an attempt to motivate a community to join together in order to reform an aspect of community life that is weak or failing. This category will be
identified by: a) calls for specific segments of the community (parents, teachers, students) to do their part and recognize their responsibility in the matter of public education; b) school vouchers will hurt public schools, thus they will hurt the community in some manner; c) an emphasis on the larger community impact that school vouchers would create.

Public opinion survey

The content analysis brings understanding to the frames used by the media as they discuss school vouchers within the larger state controversy of school funding. This step alone, however, does not indicate whether the role of the media is discursive. In order to better predict whether there was a relationship between how print media present the issue of school vouchers and how the community views school vouchers, an additional step was required in this study. The criteria established to determine if the media has contributed to the discursive community is two fold. First, have the media struck upon values, and have they presented those values in a way that appeals to its reading public? Second, do the black and white communities reference different values when they make decisions concerning school vouchers? To arrive at answers to these questions, it is necessary to turn to survey research. The public opinion survey brings an additional layer of analysis to the question under consideration. This enables the researcher to compare newspaper coverage of school vouchers to the public reaction of readers to the same issue. The two forms of measurement used together in forming a conclusion increase the confidence with which conclusions can be drawn.

Survey research is a careful description of a situation as it is, and does not usually attempt to manipulate variables. Leedy calls descriptive survey research "the
most basic of quantitative methods" (189), and "probably [the] most complex of all the research methodologies" (221). The intent of descriptive research is to uncover possible cause-effect relationships among phenomena. Description of the population is central to the research: hopefully, there can be some extrapolation from the data as to "what is likely to happen again under similar circumstances" (190). The assumption being made with survey research is that what we observe at this time is "normal" and can happen again in the future.

A Random Digit Dialed (RDD) telephone survey of residents in the Columbus metropolitan area would connect public understanding to the value system promulgated in the news reports. The underlying values surrounding this issue that have been identified in the newspapers were included in the question stem, in an effort to suggest a particular value condition to the respondent. This connected the value to the five questions regarding school vouchers, in an attempt to find if the suggestion of a particular value influenced the respondents' expressed opinion toward each of the four frames, and an overall statement of support for school vouchers. Based upon an earlier Lexis-Nexis search of news articles nationwide, two broad values were selected—pro-parental choice or pro-public school. These values are broad enough to include almost any value appeal made, yet are employed in a manner that makes them mutually exclusive. Each value could be expressed positively or negatively. Thus, pro-parental choice could be expressed in exactly that manner, or as an argument that was anti-public school. Likewise, pro-public school could be expressed directly or as an anti-parental choice argument. Each article was coded according to the value that was first invoked in the article.
Each participant in the survey received one of five possible value conditions (Appendix A). The first condition was a neutral statement, not presenting a positive or negative argument associated with the issue of school vouchers. Value two was a positive statement, asserting that people advocate school vouchers because they provide parental choice. Value three became a negative statement, claiming that people oppose school vouchers because of the threat to the public school system. Values four and five offered both the positive and negative conditions, but in value four the negative argument was mentioned first, while in value five, the positive argument was mentioned first, in order to test for question order effects. Each group of respondents was presented with one of the five value options before hearing the questions incorporating the four frames and the question asking for overall support of the idea of school vouchers. This is an attempt to measure whether the value which a person hears before responding to the frames presented in each of the questions has an effect on the respondent's answer.

Because each newspaper embraces one of the values, and because all of the frames are found in examples of articles from both newspapers, it should be possible to draw inferences about the role of each newspaper in contributing to the public discourse and public opinion surrounding school vouchers.

Individuals in the five value conditions were asked the same five questions in systematic random order concerning school vouchers. Their experience differed only in the value scenario that was presented to them before hearing the questions. The first four questions encapsulated the four frames used almost exclusively by The Columbus Dispatch and The Columbus Post. Two frames—competition and equal opportunity—were used in articles that appealed to the pro-parental choice value and were pro-school
voucher. Separation of church and state and community action frames were used in articles that appealed to the pro-public school value and were anti-school voucher. The fifth question asked about general support or opposition to school vouchers, without appealing to a specific frame.

Frequency percentages were computed for all the categorical variables in the study. Descriptive statistics were analyzed, including calculations of means, standard deviations and cross-tabulations for the five framing questions, age and race and gender of respondents, and additional cross-tabs related to demographic characteristics.  

The key dependent variable in this study is the frame chosen by black and white participants. The goal was to determine whether there is a positive relationship between the position taken toward school vouchers by the locally predominant newspapers, and the position taken by the interest group. It was hypothesized (H1) that members of the black community would agree with frames concerning school vouchers presented in the The Columbus Dispatch. It was further postulated that reaction to the frames would be affected by the value underlying the frame. Thus, each news article and editorial was coded for both the dominant frame it presented, and the value that supported that frame. Hypothesis one was one-tailed for survey questions one, four, and five, but two-tailed for questions two and three. In order to test for agreement with The Dispatch position, all three possible positions respondents could choose—pro, con, neutral were included in the analysis. Questions concerning the First Amendment and Competition (questions two and...  

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4 Additional crosstabs included residence, marital status, number of children, education and income, whether respondents read The Post or The Dispatch, and the five frame statements. Because of the focus of the study, not all of these relationships are reported. Cross-tabs indicated additional independent variables that were associated with the dependent variable. See Table 4.3.
three) were handled ambivalently by The Dispatch, thus the t-test for these questions was two-tailed. Current literature is divided on whether the news media possesses the power to influence opinions that would seem to run contrary to an individual's self-interest. Additionally, as already referenced, other surveys report that blacks support the idea of school vouchers. The unique question being asked here is, when confronted with conflicting frames based on conflicting values from competing newspapers in the city, how will individuals decide on a controversial matter such as school choice? Will they set aside their self-interest, and express an opinion consistent with their interest group, or will they respond in light of self-interest, and in conflict with the position taken by the newspaper representing their interest group?

Hypothesis (H2) two predicted that members of the white community will disagree with frames concerning school vouchers presented in The Columbus Dispatch. Because more white children attend schools that meet the state proficiency requirements, respondents will not sense the need to improve the quality of children's education. Thus, one could expect white respondents to disagree with the Dispatch frames, which were primarily pro-voucher. Parents of school age children might prove an exception to this prediction. Black respondents, however, are more likely to have a self-interest in the issue of school vouchers, and are more likely to agree with the pro-school vouchers published in The Columbus Dispatch.

Third, it was further hypothesized (H3) that opinion of the school voucher frame is influenced by race and the value associated with the frame. This prediction is based upon the concept of the discursive community. Individuals and groups of individuals (here, interest groups) do not automatically accept a position presented to them as
"official" or "accepted." Rather, the community discusses and debates the matter, informed by the media, and individuals come to an opinion, which often becomes a consensus. Hypothesis three is based upon the expectation that respondents would express an opinion consistent with the position that benefits their interest group. Whether or not the value underlying the frame construction is consistent with an interest groups' benefit should influence whether or not the frame is accepted.

The ability to conclude with confidence the role of the competing newspapers in this public matter was hampered by the responses given by those surveyed concerning which newspapers they read. Respondents were asked which newspaper they read most often, then a follow-up probe was asked two additional times. The purpose of the survey question was to determine whether individuals were reading one or both of the newspapers of interest. However, results showed only twelve individuals reporting that they read The Columbus Post. This seems unusual for two reasons. First, The Columbus Post reports that it has a subscription rate of around 6,000. Second, the survey included an oversample of more than 300 blacks. It seemed intuitively correct to assume that a greater number of the 300 blacks in the oversample would report reading The Columbus Post. The data, however, does not prove this to be the case. This introduced a difficulty for the analysis of blacks' acceptance of the values presented in the news articles from The Columbus Post. The sample size for those reading the Post is very small, thus the conclusions drawn from the data cannot be considered categorical. Other than this occurrence which hampered the analysis of readers of the Post, this method proved efficacious. Each step of the procedure produced the hoped for data.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Overview of content analysis

A content analysis was conducted of two local Columbus newspapers, The Columbus Dispatch and The Columbus Post from January 1, 1996 to June 30, 2001. Included in the analysis were news articles and editorials that mentioned the term "school vouchers" in the headline or lead of the story. Articles were coded for value emphasis and whether the frame was pro- or anti-school voucher. A second coder was not used in this study because of difficulty of access to issues of The Columbus Post. Instead, the researcher coded all 99 articles twice, and checked for level of agreement. Level of agreement between the two coding exercises was 93% accuracy.

Each newspaper took an easily identified position toward school vouchers within the first 18 months of the controversy and maintained that position throughout the remaining years. The Columbus Dispatch took a pro-voucher position, which has not been a typical message promoted by the media. More predictable was the anti-voucher position taken by The Columbus Post, which was consistent with the views advanced by the elites of the black interest group.
Equal opportunity. The Dispatch concentrated much of its attention on the utilization of the equal opportunity frame in support of school vouchers. More than half of all voucher articles in The Dispatch employed the equal opportunity frame to advocate school vouchers, while only 4% of The Dispatch's anti-school voucher articles employed the equal opportunity frame. The Columbus Post used the equal opportunity frame in an equivocal manner: the frame was used an almost equal number of times for both the pro- and anti-school voucher positions (four and five times respectively).

The equal opportunity statement, as it was worded, limited the area of agreement more narrowly than what was found in previous surveys consulted. A respondent who agreed with the statement was agreeing with more than a general statement regarding school vouchers in the abstract, which has more often been the case in previous research. In this study, one who agreed with this statement was agreeing with a specific policy being debated presently in the state of Ohio: the use of state tax dollars to send children from failing schools to the private school of the parents' choice—religious or non-religious. To agree with the statement, one needed to overcome popular wisdom concerning use of state money, the sacred cow of the separation of church and state, and the equality issue of making state dollars available to some children, but not to other children. In spite of these barriers to agreement with the statement, it was 2.26 times more likely that black respondents would agree with this statement, in comparison to whites' response. One could argue that there was a strong relationship between The Dispatch's equal opportunity frame and the response of members of the black community to the frame. The content analysis of The Dispatch articles would support this. On the
other hand, an intervening factor might be the general mindset of the black community regarding the issue of equal opportunity in American society.

**Competition.** Content analysis of the use of the competition frame shows *The Post* not using this frame at all. *The Dispatch* used the competition frame only once as an anti-voucher frame resulting in the proportion of frames naming competition equaling 1% of the total number of frames employed. In addition to being used infrequently, its use was ambivalent. Even though the legal literature used the argument of competition, this has not been a frame widely adopted by the newspapers included in this study.

**First Amendment.** Both newspapers used the First Amendment frame to oppose school vouchers twice as often as they used it to support school vouchers. The chronology of the First Amendment frame is instructive here. During the five and one-half years that are included in this study, the legal battle concerning school vouchers and the First Amendment has been evolving. Press coverage of this legal issue was covered in both newspapers, and as time has passed, whether school vouchers violate the First Amendment has become more doubtful. The issue is currently before the United States Supreme Court for a final determination. Most legal articles consulted agree that by taking the present case instead of earlier cases dealing with school vouchers, the Supreme Court has signaled it is leaning toward a ruling favorable to the continuation of school vouchers as a constitutional means of school financing. This is a frame which will continue to be used, or will be dropped based on the U.S. Supreme Court's decision.

**Community action.** This value was used often by both newspapers of interest. The community action frame comprised 17% of the total frames contributed by *The Columbus Dispatch*. This number is misleading, however, until we note that *The
Dispatch's use of this frame was equally divided between the two value positions. Thus, even though this frame was used one-fifth of the time, its effect is considered ambivalent. The Post however, used the frame 27%, of the time, primarily in opposition to school vouchers.

Content Analysis of The Columbus Post and The Columbus Dispatch

Analysis of value statements. Content analysis of The Columbus Dispatch revealed a clear position taken by the newspaper concerning school vouchers. Sixty-nine percent of the articles from The Dispatch employed "pro-school voucher" as the underlying value. Dispatch articles utilizing the "anti-school voucher" value were fewer in number (32% of total). The Dispatch used twice as many pro-school voucher value references as anti-school voucher value references.

Content analysis of The Columbus Post demonstrated the opposite value emphasis. One third of the Post articles employed the pro-school voucher value (five of fifteen articles), and two thirds of the articles (ten of fifteen articles) referenced the anti-school voucher value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pro-School Vouchers</th>
<th>Anti-School Vouchers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># articles % of Total</td>
<td># articles % of Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Opportunity</td>
<td>43 51%</td>
<td>Equal Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Amendment</td>
<td>12 14%</td>
<td>First Amendment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Action</td>
<td>3 4%</td>
<td>Community Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58 69%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages do not equal 100% because of rounding

Table 4.1: Summary of content analysis results - The Columbus Dispatch
January 1, 1996 - June 30, 2001
The Columbus Post

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro-School Vouchers</th>
<th>Anti-School Vouchers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Opportunity</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Amendment</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Action</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Percentages do not equal 100% because of rounding

Table 4.2: Summary of content analysis results - The Columbus Post
January 1, 1996 - June 30, 2001

Analysis of frames employed. Each newspaper demonstrated a clear preference in frame choice. The Dispatch favored use of the equal opportunity frame, with nearly a two-to-one ratio in relation to the second most used frame, which was the First Amendment frame. The equal opportunity frame was couched in statements such as: poor children are without the same educational opportunities as wealthier children; vouchers allow parents to send children to better schools; or vouchers give new hope to children in failing schools. The Post also used the equal opportunity frame most often, but use of the frame was divided between pro- and anti-voucher statements. Anti-voucher statements were more likely with this frame than pro-voucher statements. This is in direct contrast to The Dispatch's use of the equal opportunity frame. The second most frequent frame was the community action frame, calling for the community to join together to protect and improve public schools. This study is consistent with literature that says the media will use a variety of frames to explain an event, but eventually focuses on one or two that become identified with the story.
The difference between the two newspapers rests primarily in which values the frames were used to support. Both newspapers were using the same frames in order to support opposite positions on school vouchers. This leads to the conclusion that the frames are combining with the underlying value within the story to create the pro- or anti-school voucher position by the Dispatch and the Post, respectively. The content analysis bears witness to the recent works by Nelson and Willey (2001), and Shah, et al. (2001), that argue that underlying values play an instrumental role in framing, and in influencing public opinion.

Overview of survey

For the survey portion of this research I conducted a secondary analysis of data collected by the Ohio State University Center for Survey Research from the September, 2001 Buckeye State Poll, a random digit dialed telephone survey, including both listed and unlisted numbers, of 900 respondents in the Columbus, Ohio metropolitan area, from between September 7, 2001 to October 15, 2001. Of these 900, 41 respondents did not provide information concerning race or ethnicity, leaving 859 respondents for inclusion in the study. Because the survey focused on several areas of potential racial differences between African-Americans and whites, an oversample from the black community was conducted as a part of this survey, yielding a total of 549 white and 318 black respondents. For each household, one English-speaking adult was randomly selected to be the respondent for the survey. The Ohio State Center for Survey Research completed all the interviewing. A total of 2,864 telephone numbers were randomly generated. A telephone number was called as many as ten times in an attempt to reach an individual eligible to complete the interview. It was presumed that 1,823 calls reached a household
in the central Ohio region with an eligible respondent, with a completion rate of 37%. When a household was reached where there was known to be an eligible member who could respond, interviews were completed in 81% of the cases. For the oversample of African-Americans, 2,901 telephone numbers were randomly-generated for potential interviews. Of these, 652 were presumed to reach a household that housed an eligible adult. From these households, interviews were completed in 36% of the cases. The oversample of African-Americans yielded interviews in a household where it was known there was an eligible adult in 71% of the cases.

An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistics. Analysis of data included computing means, chi-square, t tests (one- and two-tailed), ANOVA, MANOVA, and ordinal regression. Descriptive statistics yield interesting comparisons between white and black respondents. Of the 541 whites responding, 343 lived in Franklin County, and 203 or less than half, lived in the City of Columbus. Black respondents were more likely to live in Franklin County (313 of 318), and more likely to live in the City of Columbus (293 of 318), significant at \( p < .001 \). Second, the race of a respondent is related to whether or not the respondent is married. Black respondents were less likely to be married, significant at the \( p < .001 \) level. Third, there was no significant difference between racial groups and number of children living at home. Fourth, the race of a respondent is related to income level. Finally, there was a difference between race and which of the newspapers of study were read. Blacks were overwhelmingly more likely to read The Columbus Post (\( p < .001 \)), and whites were more likely to read The Columbus Dispatch, significant at the \( p < .05 \) level (see Table 4.3).
Cross tabulations of race and the number of children living at home revealed that more than half of the sample did not have children living at home, with no difference between black and white homes. Of the homes where there were school age children, there were ten times as many children in public school as private school, but differences according to race were not significant. The differences in education and income according to race were significant, \( X^2 = (3, N = 859) = 50.354, p < .001 \), as one would expect (Table 4.3).

Dependent variables consisted of responses to four questions that elicited opinions toward four news frames currently being used in local newspapers and one general statement of support or opposition toward tax-supported school vouchers. Although the general statement does not include a framing device, all five questions are referred to as frame statements for the sake of clarity. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the value conditions that composed the introduction for the five questions. Each group received a different introduction. The first value condition (No Value, or Neutral) contained no pro-voucher or anti-voucher statements; the second only contained a pro-voucher statement; the third value condition only contained an anti-voucher statement; while the fourth and fifth each contained both pro- and anti-voucher statements, but differed in the order of presentation. Additionally, respondents were given the five statements about school funding in a systematic random order.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>$x^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School age children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>154</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both public &amp; private</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>6.702(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>288</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>253</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>7.614(1)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>311</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Married</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>228</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>80.401(1)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Not HS graduate</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS graduate, no college</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>148</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>212</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>50.354(3)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 30,000</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,001 - 50,000</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,001 - 75,000</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 75,000</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>73.33(4)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readers of Dispatch</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>402</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>5.756(1)+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-voucher</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>137</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-voucher</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative / Positive</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive / Negative</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>532</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in city of Columbus</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>105,569(2)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.**  *p<.001 ;  **p<.01 ;  +p<.05

Source: Buckeye State Poll, September 2001, Center for Survey Research, Ohio State University

Table 4.3: Cross-tabulations for demographic characteristics by race
The Center for Survey Research had entered the responses to the five statements on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = "Strongly Agree" to 5 = "Strongly Disagree."

However, for questions containing a pro-voucher frame, strongly agree denoted a pro-voucher opinion, but questions containing an anti-voucher frame, strongly agree denoted an anti-voucher opinion. Responses were recoded so that all five frame statements now indicate level of support or opposition for school vouchers with 1 = "Strongly Oppose" to 5 = "Strongly Support."

Figure 4.1 shows the percentages of white and black respondents that oppose or favor school vouchers according to newspaper frame. Public opinion follows the frames emphasized in the news frames. With the church and state frame where the newspapers are ambivalent, public responses mirror that ambivalence. Even though the competition frame was seldom used by The Columbus Dispatch, and not used at all by The Columbus Post, respondents were more likely to favor school vouchers upon hearing the competition frame. Also instructive is the level of general support in favor of tax-supported school vouchers. If respondents expressed an opinion, they were more likely to support school vouchers, with almost 50% of black respondents in support of vouchers. Once again, a higher standard must be met in order for respondents to favor
Figure 4.1: Mean favorable opinion expressed for each survey question, according to race
school vouchers in this study, because the vouchers are tax-supported rather than funded through private philanthropy, as has previously been the case.

A relationship is evident between public opinion toward tax-supported school vouchers and news frames. Overall general support, as reported in Table 1, shows 44% of whites and 50% of blacks are generally in favor of school vouchers. When looking at levels of support in relation to the four frames, however, support for school vouchers varies from 11% support (Community Action frame) to 66% support (Equal Opportunity Frame) among white respondents. Black respondents' support varied from 6% support (Community Action frame) to 83% support (Equal Opportunity frame). Clearly, something within the nature of the frame affected the opinion toward school vouchers expressed by the individual. This matter will be discussed more fully in relation to hypothesis three.

It was predicted that members of the black community would agree with and white respondents would disagree with frames from The Columbus Dispatch. The Dispatch articulated a pro-school voucher position for the first time in May of 1997. The editorial position of The Columbus Post, however, followed the anti-school voucher position of the black elite interest group throughout the five and one-half years included in the content analysis. Because of the positions taken by the two newspapers, and because of previous opinion surveys showing a majority of black Americans are in support of school vouchers, it was predicted that blacks would agree with The Columbus Dispatch. Second, a large majority of black respondents to this survey live within the city limits of Columbus. Public schools within the city are those most often criticized as being inferior, and have been the focus of a pilot program for tax-supported school vouchers in
Cleveland, Ohio. Third, based upon the values literature included in this study, it was predicted that black respondents would support tax-supported school vouchers in opposition to the position taken by black interest group elites because of the high value they would place in obtaining the best education possible for their children. White respondents are less likely to live within the city limits and to have inferior schools as the only option for their children, thus they were expected to disagree with the pro-voucher position of The Columbus Dispatch. This was proven to be the case. Results show a relationship between race and acceptance of frames reported in The Columbus Dispatch.

Hypothesis 1. Members of the black community will agree with frames concerning school vouchers presented in The Columbus Dispatch. The content analysis of The Dispatch reveals that its issue frames were overall pro-school voucher, but there was however a mix of pro- and anti-voucher frames. Thus, to fully test this first hypothesis, one sub-hypothesis was tested concerning the average response of members of the black community for each of the five frame statements. In order to show agreement with the Equal Opportunity statement and the general support statement, the average response must be >3.0. In order to show agreement with the First Amendment statement the average response must be = 3.0 (no difference). Only one competition frame statement was used, and it was anti-voucher. It was expected that one article presenting this frame over five and one-half years would not influence public opinion, and opinion would agree with The Dispatch, and average 3.0, or no difference. The Dispatch used the community action frame in an anti-voucher position, so it was predicted that black respondents, on average, would score < 3.0. These criteria are summarized in Table 4.4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Newspaper Treatment</th>
<th>Predicted Response to Frame</th>
<th>Actual Response to Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal Opportunity</td>
<td>Pro-Voucher</td>
<td>Positive &gt; 3.0</td>
<td>Positive*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Amendment</td>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>No Difference = 3.0</td>
<td>Anti-Voucher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>No Difference = 3.0</td>
<td>No Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Action</td>
<td>Anti-Voucher</td>
<td>Anti-Voucher &lt; 3.0</td>
<td>Anti-Voucher*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Support</td>
<td>Pro-Voucher</td>
<td>Positive &gt; 3.0</td>
<td>Positive**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .001 ; **p < .05

Source: Buckeye State Poll, September 2001, Center for Survey Research, Ohio State University

The Columbus Dispatch

Table 4.4: Summary of predictions and measured responses toward school vouchers for black respondents according to frame.

In order to test this hypothesis, a one-sample t-test was run on the mean scores of black respondents for each of the five frame statements. Opinion responses were compared to the content analysis results of The Columbus Dispatch (see Table 4.1). The Dispatch took a decidedly pro-school voucher position and emphasized the pro-voucher frame of equal opportunity. Use of the First Amendment frame was evenly divided between pro- and anti-voucher statements, and was ambivalent in its use of the competition frame, using it only once to oppose school vouchers. The community action frame was used relatively often (17% of the total Dispatch articles) again primarily as an anti-voucher frame. The fifth statement, general support, is not connected to a frame, but was included to gauge opinion regarding school vouchers that was somewhat free of framing influence. One should note, however, that The Columbus Dispatch took an overall pro-school voucher position.
Analysis of the results summarized in Table 4.4 shows support for the first hypothesis in every framing condition, except the First Amendment frame. Black respondents' opinions agreed with *The Columbus Dispatch* in four of the five question areas. When presented with the question of tax-supported school vouchers couched within the equal opportunity frame, blacks registered their highest average level of support ($M = 4.2$, $S.D. = 1.19$, $N = 301$), $t(300) = 17.01$, $p < .001$. *The Dispatch* used the First Amendment frame equally to present the pro- and anti-school voucher position. Blacks' response to the First Amendment frame was less than three, on average, but not significant ($M = 2.89$, $S.D. = 1.37$, $N = 298$), $t(297) = -1.34$, $p = 0.180$. *The Dispatch* use of the competition frame was ambivalent, as was the response ($M = 3.08$, $S.D. = 1.41$, $N = 290$) which was not significant, $t(289) = 1.00$, $p = 0.320$. The community action frame was used more often (17% of the total), with anti-voucher frames outpacing pro-voucher frames three to one. Respondents' opinions expressed were decidedly anti-voucher, ($M = 1.39$, $S.D. = 0.95$, $N = 311$), $t(310) = -29.58$, $p < .001$, again agreeing with *The Dispatch* framing position.

The final question measured general support or opposition toward tax-supported school vouchers. There was no news frame to correspond with this question. Black respondents, on average, demonstrate a significant level of support for tax-supported school vouchers, ($M = 3.18$, $S.D. = 1.41$, $N = 304$), $t(303) = 2.30$, $p < .05$.

**Hypothesis 2.** Members of the white community will disagree with frames concerning school vouchers presented in *The Columbus Dispatch*. Analysis of means of white respondents and t-tests for each of the five survey questions shows that this
hypothesis was not supported. White respondents agreed with The Dispatch position in each of the five frame statements.

White respondents' agreement with The Columbus Dispatch regarding the pro-voucher equal opportunity frame was significant, \( (M = 3.63, \text{S.D.} = 1.37, N = 508) \) one-tailed \( t (507) = 10.78, p < .001 \). White respondents were predicted to take a position toward school vouchers that was not neutral when having the First Amendment statement \( (M \text{ does not equal } 3) \). On average, the mean score was 3.04 \( (\text{S.D.} = 1.47, N = 497) \), which is a neutral response, but not statistically significant \( t (496) = 0.73, p = 0.233 \). Whites also agree, on average, with the ambivalent position taken concerning competition benefiting public schools, but this was not statistically significant \( (M = 3.05, \text{S.D.} = 1.38, N = 488) \), two-tailed \( t (487) = 0.95, p = 0.341 \). Perhaps it should not surprise us that respondents would mirror an ambivalent position taken by the major print media source. If the media message concerning an issue is unclear, it would be unusual for members of society to form a directional opinion. When responding to the community action frame, white respondents, on average, took an anti-voucher position, \( (M = 1.73, \text{S.D.} = 1.08, N = 522) \), \( t (521) = -26.77, p < .001 \), when it was predicted they would take a pro-voucher position when responding to this statement. Finally, it was predicted that whites would disagree with The Columbus Dispatch's pro-voucher position, taking an anti-voucher position on the final opinion instead. This prediction also was not supported \( (M = 3.01, \text{S.D.} = 1.40, N = 503) \), \( t (502) = 0.13, p = 0.551 \), for the average white respondents' mean was not a significant difference. Thus one cannot assert that a difference would hold true throughout the population.
White respondents agreed with the position taken by The Columbus Dispatch toward each of the frame statements, but the required alpha level was only achieved for two frames—equal opportunity and community action, the two most frequently used Dispatch frames. The average response toward question five (general support), however, did not show agreement with the newspaper. The Dispatch espoused a pro-voucher position, but the white community's response on average showed "no difference," or a neutral response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Newspaper Treatment</th>
<th>Predicted Response to Frame</th>
<th>Actual Response to Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal Opportunity</td>
<td>Pro-Voucher</td>
<td>Anti-Voucher &lt; 3.0</td>
<td>Positive* M = 3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Amendment</td>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>No Difference = 3.0</td>
<td>No Difference M = 3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>No Difference = 3.0</td>
<td>No Difference M = 3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Action</td>
<td>Anti-Voucher</td>
<td>Pro-Voucher &gt; 3.0</td>
<td>Anti-Voucher* M = 1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Support</td>
<td>Pro-Voucher</td>
<td>Anti-Voucher &lt; 3.0</td>
<td>No Difference M = 3.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .001

Source: Buckeye State Poll, September 2001, Center for Survey Research, Ohio State University

The Columbus Dispatch

Table 4.5: Summary of predictions and measured responses toward school vouchers for white respondents according to frame.

Hypothesis 3. Members of the black and white communities will agree with different frame constructions concerning school vouchers dependent on race and value.

The goal with this hypothesis was to compare the effects of both race and value condition upon respondents' opinion toward the school voucher frame constructions presented in the survey questions. Also of interest was whether race and value construction affect the opinion toward general level of support for school vouchers.
Respondents were randomly assigned to one of four value conditions. Each group heard one of four possible introductions: (1) a neutral position—no value statement made toward vouchers; (2) a pro-voucher position; (3) an anti-voucher position; and (4) both pro- and anti-voucher positions. Respondents in the fourth ("both") position were further randomly divided to test for question order effects. Half of the group heard the pro-voucher position first, the other half heard the anti-voucher position first.

Of interest was how the wording of the question introduction simultaneously affected the responses to the five question statements along with race. Because responses were Likert scales that cover the entire range, multiple analysis of variance was used (MANOVA). The independent variables are the value conditions included in the question introduction, race, and the interaction variable, VALUE * RACE. The five question responses are the dependent variables.

The interaction effect of race and value condition is not significant (F(20, 2379) = 1.10, p = 0.336). There is, however, a significant relationship between race and at least one of the five opinion responses (F(5, 717) = 8.49, p < .001). In order to locate which responses are influenced by race, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted next. Results from ANOVA demonstrate that race is significantly related to opinions expressed concerning the equal opportunity frame (F(1, 720) = 24.29, p < .001), and to the community action frame (F(1, 721) = 20.29, p < .001). The positive value condition is significantly related to difference between the races' response to the equal opportunity frame. Black respondents hearing the positive value condition were 1.65 times more likely to agree with the equal opportunity frame. Average responses and standard deviations for these two frame statements are summarized in Table 4.6.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Equal Opportunity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4 Community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5 General Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Buckeye State Poll, September 2001, Center for Survey Research, Ohio State University

Table 4.6: Average response value and standard deviation by race for questions Q4 and Q5

Ordinal regressions were run on the data, because both independent and dependent variables are categorical. These results, summarized in Table 4.7, indicate the likelihood a respondent will agree with a pro-voucher statement according to race and value condition. Race and value condition show a significant effect on the dependent variables of equal opportunity ($X^2 = 41.015$, df = 5, $p = .001$) and community action ($X^2 = 43.230$, df = 5, $p = .001$). In order to isolate whether it is the value condition or race which is causing the effect, Type I analysis (using SAS) was conducted on the two explanatory variables. This showed being white had a significant negative effect on support for school vouchers upon hearing the equal opportunity frame ($p < .001$) and a significant positive effect on support for school vouchers upon hearing the community action frame ($p < .001$). One can conclude by saying that the odds of members of the black community being more favorable of school vouchers in response to the equal
opportunity statement is 2.26 times the odds of the white community being more favorable. Additionally, the odds of the opinions of the white community being more favorable of school vouchers in response to the community action statement is 2.71 times the odds of those of the black community being more favorable. The positive value condition resulted in a negative effect on the white community's opinion toward school vouchers when hearing the equal opportunity frame ($X^2 = 4.79$, df = 1, $p < .05$). Because of the simultaneous effect of race and value condition, an alpha level of .05 is not sufficient for this relationship. Therefore, one must conclude that the effect of the positive value condition upon respondents' opinion of school vouchers was not significant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Statements</th>
<th>Equal Opportunity</th>
<th>First Amendment</th>
<th>Competition</th>
<th>Community Action</th>
<th>General Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>-.814* (.138)</td>
<td>1.96 (.130)</td>
<td>.033 (.132)</td>
<td>.996* (.161)</td>
<td>-.227 (.129)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Value</td>
<td>-.235 (.235)</td>
<td>.087 (.221)</td>
<td>-.219 (.224)</td>
<td>-.272 (.247)</td>
<td>.160 (.220)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Value</td>
<td>-.501 (.232)</td>
<td>.245 (.221)</td>
<td>-.166 (.223)</td>
<td>-.266 (.246)</td>
<td>.141 (.218)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Value</td>
<td>-.420 (.236)</td>
<td>.108 (.223)</td>
<td>-.139 (.226)</td>
<td>-.335 (.251)</td>
<td>-.231 (.222)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative First</td>
<td>-.226 (.226)</td>
<td>.174 (.254)</td>
<td>-.286 (.257)</td>
<td>-.422 (.285)</td>
<td>-.270 (.251)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive First</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2$</td>
<td>41.015* (5)</td>
<td>3.781* (5)</td>
<td>1.541* (5)</td>
<td>43.230* (5)</td>
<td>9.986* (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.617</td>
<td>0.503</td>
<td>0.391</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>0.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** *p < .001
Source: Buckeye State Poll, Center for Survey Research, Ohio State University, September 2001

Table 4.7: Effect of value conditions on frame statements according to race.
Summary. In order to test hypotheses one and two, I compared the means from opinion toward school vouchers by race on each of the five survey questions to the content analysis results of The Columbus Dispatch. Opinion expressed by black respondents on average followed in the wake of newspaper frames (Table 4.4). Their responses ranged from a high of 83.4% of respondents supporting school vouchers when hearing the equal opportunity frame to a low of 6.4% of respondents supporting school vouchers when hearing the community action frame. Fifty percent of black respondents support tax-supported school vouchers overall.

Agreement with The Columbus Dispatch is noteworthy because black respondents are expressing an opinion in contradiction to the public position taken by elite black interest groups, represented in this study by The Columbus Post articles. The Post took a consistent anti-school voucher position. When pro-school voucher statements were made, they were done so using the frames most commonly associated with a minority community (equal opportunity and community action). This does not have the indirect effect of further reinforcing The Columbus Dispatch's pro-voucher position.

The second hypothesis, which compared opinions of white respondents, on average, to the newspaper frame statements was not supported. The range of means between questions was not as extreme as the responses given by members of the black community. Nevertheless, the degree to which whites favored vouchers varied according to the frame presented. It was expected that white respondents would not agree with The Dispatch because they would not be as likely to have children vulnerable to failing public schools. However, this did not prove to be the case (see Table 4.5).
The third hypothesis required a comparison be made between values and race and the content analysis of the frame statements within *The Columbus Dispatch*. Members of the white and black communities did agree with different constructions of the school voucher issue according to race, but only in the positive value condition (see Table 4.8).

Analysis to this point still leaves the question why, even though there is a difference between races for the equal opportunity frame statement and the community action frame statement, there is such a contradiction in opinion toward school vouchers based on these two questions. Equal opportunity is a pro-school voucher statement, and community action is an anti-school voucher statement. The logical response is to look for the variable operating that would cause such a wide swing in opinion about school vouchers. This becomes an even more valid suspicion when consulting the mean for the fifth question, a statement of general support, which is neutral for whites and evenly split for blacks. These questions led to further investigation as to what might be happening.
Hypothesis 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Blacks agree with Dispatch</th>
<th>Hypothesis Supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.a. Equal Opportunity</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.b. First Amendment</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.c. Competition</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.d. Community Action</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.e. General Support</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Whites disagree with Dispatch</th>
<th>Hypothesis Supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.a. Equal Opportunity</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.b. First Amendment</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.c. Competition</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.d. Community Action</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.e. General Support</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.a. Equal Opportunity</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.b. First Amendment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.c. Competition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.d. Community Action</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e. General Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Value conditions are not included because none were found to be significant.

Table 4.8: Summary of results for each hypothesis
Regressing race and the value conditions upon the five frame statements was the final test to determine this.

Do news frames use value hierarchies? Does the value hierarchy within the newspaper frame itself affect public opinion? The answer to these questions can now be addressed. News frames do incorporate a value hierarchy, and it does affect public opinion in the case of school vouchers. Respondents favored or opposed tax-supported school vouchers based on the frames they were responding to. A comparison of these results with the content analysis of The Dispatch shows once again consistency with The Dispatch reporting. The Dispatch was pro-voucher, used equal opportunity as a pro-voucher frame, and used community as an anti-voucher frame. The consistent pattern of agreement with The Dispatch was carried throughout.

Post Hoc Analysis. A post-hoc analysis was done testing the relationship between framing and other important demographic variables generally considered important to the issue of education and race. After initial testing and elimination of irrelevant variables, the variables included: whether respondents read The Dispatch, age, education level completed, income level, race, and a measure of political ideology. A multiple regression was run using these independent variables against the five framing questions. Each of these variables was found to be significant in its effect on at least one of the dependent variables. Results are summarized in Table 4.9.

When asked about the equal opportunity frame, black respondents were more likely to favor school vouchers than white respondents, \((p \leq .001)\), and those respondents with more education were less likely to favor school vouchers \((p \leq .001)\). These results
are in agreement with other research reported concerning racial differences in support of school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Equal Opportunity b</th>
<th>First Amendment b</th>
<th>Competition b</th>
<th>Community Action b</th>
<th>General Support b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>.391 + (.106)</td>
<td>-.053 (.119)</td>
<td>.054 (.115)</td>
<td>-.180 * (.082)</td>
<td>.269 * (.114)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispatch</td>
<td>.175 (.113)</td>
<td>.04 (.126)</td>
<td>.195 (.123)</td>
<td>-.243 ** (.087)</td>
<td>.116 (.121)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.06 (.052)</td>
<td>-.057 (.058)</td>
<td>-.126 * (.056)</td>
<td>.048 (.04)</td>
<td>-.226 + (.055)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.173 + (.054)</td>
<td>-.067 (.08)</td>
<td>-.048 (.058)</td>
<td>.124 ++ (.042)</td>
<td>.044 (.058)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.04 (.038)</td>
<td>.067 (.043)</td>
<td>.03 (.042)</td>
<td>.098 + (.030)</td>
<td>.015 (.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>-.015 (.031)</td>
<td>-.158 + (.035)</td>
<td>-.094 * (.034)</td>
<td>.037 (.024)</td>
<td>-.149 + (.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>743</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p< .01; ** p< .05; + p< .001; ++ p< .005
Coefficients for race represent black respondents.
Seven point political ideology scale ranges from extremely liberal (low) to extremely conservative (high).

Table 4.9: Multiple regressions of race, The Columbus Dispatch, age, education, income, and political ideology upon newspaper frames.

vouchers. Because minority parents and parents with lower levels of educational attainment are more likely to have children in failing schools, they are also more likely to support school vouchers.

The second framing question concerning the separation of church and state only showed a significant negative relationship with political ideology. Liberal respondents
were more likely to oppose tax-supported school vouchers on the basis of separation of church and state than were conservative respondents \( (p \leq .001) \). This response is consistent with generally reported liberal and conservative positions advanced toward the issue of separation of church and state.

Two explanatory variables were related to the third frame statement of competition. Both age and political ideology were negatively related to the competition frame. Older respondents were less likely to support tax-supported school vouchers than were younger respondents \( (p \leq .01) \), who would be more likely to have school-age children. The negative relationship between political ideology and the competition frame \( (p \leq .01) \) indicates that those holding a more liberal ideology were also less likely to support school vouchers upon hearing the competition frame.

The community action frame demonstrated the most relationships with the explanatory variables included in the analysis. Blacks were less likely than whites to support tax-supported school vouchers when hearing the community action frame \( (p \leq .01) \). Readers of *The Dispatch* were also less likely to support school vouchers than non-readers \( (p \leq .05) \), indicating that *The Dispatch*’s framing of the issue was affecting readers. Respondents with higher levels of education, however, were more likely to support school vouchers \( (p \leq .005) \), as were respondents with higher income \( (p \leq .001) \). This response is indicative of sociotropic behavior: more educated and more highly paid respondents would understand that failing schools face an uphill battle in attempting to meet proficiency requirements, and perhaps the answer is to consider the school voucher alternative.
The final question, measuring general support, showed significant relationships in three areas. First, blacks were more likely to support tax-supported school vouchers than whites ($p \leq .01$), which is consistent with surveys nationwide. Second, older respondents were less likely to support school vouchers ($p \leq .001$), which is again reasonable, for they do not have a direct need for school vouchers. And third, those with liberal political ideology were less likely to support tax-supported school vouchers ($p \leq .001$).
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The school funding controversy in Ohio and the resulting debate concerning school vouchers has led to media interest in the subject, and public opinion developing in favor of tax-supported school vouchers. In August 1997, a Buckeye State Poll taken of Franklin County, Ohio residents reported opposition to tax-supported school vouchers at 56 percent, \( \pm 4 \) percentage points. The September 2001 Buckeye State Poll recorded support for tax-supported school vouchers at 50 percent for blacks and 44 percent for whites \( \pm 3 \) percentage points. During this period of time, *The Columbus Dispatch* began to articulate a pro-tax-supported school voucher position and has held that position consistently. It is noteworthy that the level of public opinion increased in the face of two anti-school voucher influences. First, the rise in support has occurred during the time of media reports on the constitutional challenge that continues to be waged in the state concerning the separation of church and state—a situation that would place school vouchers in a questionable light. Second, support in the black community rose in spite of elite black opposition. This study included a review of the role of minority interest groups in developing public opinion, framing theory's contribution to the study of media effects, and the importance of underlying values in frame construction, all focused upon the current school voucher controversy in Ohio.
Theoretical implications

Minority influence. The delineation of two racial categories—black and white—was a useful distinction to make when measuring public opinion. It allowed the researcher to test again whether race influences one's opinion toward school vouchers. The fact that race does influence opinion toward school vouchers was once again confirmed. Because the black respondents live predominately in the City of Columbus, their children are more likely to be enrolled in schools that typically are failing. Their concern about these schools is in itself a value that could affect their responses. As one parent was quoted describing what first grade would be like for his son in a Cleveland, Ohio school: "He had to walk through this war zone and once we get in the school grounds he is still in a war zone and once inside the school he is still in a war zone. No way am I going to send him to that school" (The Columbus Dispatch, 3-4-98, p. 15A). This family lived in an attic for a year in order to afford parochial tuition before becoming eligible for a voucher.

Moscovici's (1994) prediction, however, concerning minority influence is hampered by the situation surrounding this issue. The theory of minority influence says that if a minority group holds and articulates an opinion consistently, it is possible for the minority group to affect societal opinion overall. The key, however, is consistency in holding the position. Minority influence is limited in the school voucher case because of the conflict between the elite minority position and the opinion of the average minority group member. The public can conceivably hear a pro-voucher position from friends and coworkers of the minority interest group, but at the same time hear an anti-voucher position from the elite minority interest group leaders. If Moscovici's theory holds true in
this case, then public opinion would be more likely to change in the direction that would improve the educational prospects of minority children if The Columbus Post advocated rather than opposed tax-supported school vouchers. To agree with the general statement of support for vouchers, respondents needed to overcome popular wisdom concerning use of state money, the sacred cow of separation of church and state, and the equity issue of making state dollars available to some children, but not to other children. In spite of these barriers to agreement with the statement, respondents' agreement increased over the four years between the two Buckeye State Polls, even though level of support for school vouchers is lower in the Columbus area than reported support nationwide.

Discursive community. Lower levels of support for vouchers in the Columbus area could be explained by other factors. First, there has been a protracted legal battle in Ohio over the school voucher issue for almost five years. This legal struggle has been regularly reported in The Dispatch, and in the process has kept arguments for and against school vouchers in the public mind. Although the content analysis of this study did not include a count of the type of sources used by media, my impression is the overwhelming majority of sources were government and school officials, with few interviews of parents who have been embroiled in the decision whether to apply for a public school voucher. This form of reporting that emphasizes the legal strategies being used and the national repercussions arising from the Ohio case keeps the issue sanitized, and maintains the reputation of the newspaper as fair minded. It does not, however, give an accurate picture of the issue. It does not represent the sense of desperation that would permeate the words of parents when they were interviewed. It does not compare the actual educational choices that are involved (although The Dispatch did effectively document
the dismal educational conditions of Cleveland schools). It also does not provide balance to the one-sided, emotional position against school vouchers presented in *The Columbus Post*.

A second possible reason for lower levels of support could be the success achieved by the Columbus public schools during this five-year period and reported in *The Columbus Post*. The newspaper and the school system called for community involvement to improve public schools, and this community effort was regularly reported in *The Post*. Dr. Rosa Smith, Columbus Public Schools Superintendent until the summer of 2001, contributed articles to *The Post*, carrying the banner for community action: "We in the Columbus Public Schools must do our part; families must do their part; and our community must do its part...because the education of our children is a matter of life and death." The Post also was incredulous that the "ultra-right" was promoting vouchers for low-income families, terming it "something sinister." It accuses the right's motives, arguing it "certainly can't be their love of poor kids, because such love has never been displayed anywhere else" (*The Columbus Post*, June 18-24, 1998, p. 3A).

**Media adoption of frames.** As was earlier noted, Gamson argued that a frame's success can be determined by whether its meaning or interpretation is accepted in various media outlets. The standard for inclusion in this study as a possible frame was whether the issues that occurred in the legal literature were adopted and used consistently as issue frames in the media. I followed Tankard's (2001) method of looking in the theoretical literature for the arguments being made that could be developed into issue frames. In this case the newspapers focused on the four most frequently mentioned issues surrounding the voucher issue. These became the frame questions used in the opinion survey. The
newspapers, however, focused on three of the four issues, almost ignoring the fourth, the competition frame. Even though individuals quoted in the stories would refer to competition between public and private schools, and experts quoted would sometimes refer to competition, this was not a frame adopted by the media (according to content analysis coding criteria—the first frame mentioned in the article). Both newspapers focused on one primary frame, which it used most often, then employed the other frames in a secondary manner. The competition frame is not accepted in the Columbus local media. While it may seem a convincing argument to scholars and opinion elites, the media isn't interested. This method of beginning in the theoretical literature, then moving to analyze media reports seemed a useful manner of locating frames, consistent with the newspaper content, and a method I would employ for other studies.

Two particular frames—the equal opportunity frame and the community action frame—resonated especially with respondents of both racial backgrounds. First, black respondents tended to focus on the democratic ideal of equal opportunity rather than the more utilitarian frames that addressed legal issues (First Amendment), or efficacy issues (competition and community action). The level of general support for school vouchers did not match the high percentage of support for school vouchers with the equal opportunity frame. Thus, even if the respondent had not developed a conclusive opinion that was translated into the clear "school voucher" issue, he or she was in agreement with the underlying concept: state taxes should level the playing field between poor and rich even in the area of private school tuition. The Columbus Dispatch clearly preferred the equal opportunity frame in its reporting, while The Columbus Post used this frame ambivalently.
The second frame, the community action frame, was used predominately as an anti-voucher frame by both newspapers, and respondents demonstrated more opposition to school vouchers when presented this frame. William Gamson first introduced this frame primarily as a protest frame and called it the mobilizing frame. Community leaders did certainly call for mobilization of forces in order to improve local public schools. A second important anti-voucher concept was included in the community action frame. Of concern, especially to elites quoted in articles, was the potential damage to the public school system and those children left in the system because they do not receive a voucher in the lottery. Because of the expansion of the frame concept to include more than protest and reform, the frame was renamed. A confounding factor that might have affected respondents' identification with this frame is the maturation effect associated with the September 11 attack on the U.S. This survey was begun September 9, with 23 surveys completed before the attack, and ended October 15. During this time, the American public was challenged to pull together to solve this mammoth national problem. As volunteers across the nation poured into New York and mailed millions of dollars to relief agencies, the community action concept of pulling together to solve a problem could certainly have been operating and affecting individual responses to the community action frame within this study.

Values and frames. These two frames also carried a strong inherent value within them. The combination of a value that appeals to an interest group attached to a media frame influences the construction of meaning created by the interest group. It is possible that respondents are interpreting the emotive quality of a frame independent of school vouchers. Equal opportunity and the community joining together to mold its own quality

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of life are important democratic ideals independent of how they are applied to the issue of tax-supported school vouchers. We see here that blacks who had a personal interest in the school voucher issue responded more strongly to specific value frames than whites. One can conclude that understanding the values that inform frames and matching them together can make frames more powerful tools in meaning construction. It is not a new idea to say that individuals are affected by how an issue is framed. Research has shown this to be the case in the abortion controversy, welfare issues, and political campaigns, to name a few examples. The difference here is the recognition that inherent to the frame could be an important national value that drives public response to the frame and to a smaller degree to the issue. Because opinion levels fluctuated according to the frame being used, and differed from the general level of support expressed toward school vouchers, it seems only logical to attach some of this variance to the underlying value embedded in the frame itself. These values were strong enough to override the value conditions (pro-parent and pro-public school) that were randomly presented to respondents in the introduction to the five frame questions.

The presence of inherent value considerations in frames presents the journalist and the policy maker with an ethical decision. Should the journalist be aware of inherent values within the frames that are being used? If the equal opportunity frame is used as a pro-voucher frame by The Columbus Dispatch more than half of the time, has the newspaper given fair coverage to the issue? And if the anti-school voucher community action frame and the equal opportunity frame are used by The Columbus Post to oppose school vouchers, both newspapers can be accused of adding a bias to the public debate. The Dispatch should be defended here somewhat, for it seems that it attempted to present
the issue in an objective manner, often presenting more than one side of the policy debate in the same article. Nevertheless, it still needs to be said that awareness of this added dimension of inherent value positions residing in a frame requires that the media be aware of the implicit value statement being made in a particular frame. Frames cannot be considered value-free statements to be used merely to facilitate public understanding. The media must be aware of normative conventions accepted in society, and aware of their responsibility to handle important ideas and policies with a high ethical standard. Maher holds out the hope that framing theory can help supply journalists with the tools necessary to address the normative dimension that exists within political communication (2001, p. 92). This study shows that the normative considerations are a part of the media framing environment, and concludes that journalists would do a great service to society if they were careful to take this fact into account when writing their reports.

Method

This study used a case study approach, in which a theory in this instance, is analyzed in depth, then the results are added to the findings of other studies, in order to build generalizations concerning the theory, based upon the similar characteristics found in the various studies. The goal is to relate this study to the larger science of public opinion and interest groups. This installment is not in the vein of research by Iyengar (1990) and associates who talk about the negative attribution toward the outgroup. It does not fit with research by Cappella and Jamieson (1997), which studies frames from the perspective of political campaigns which occur over a short period of time.

This study is more in keeping with research that looks at framing and public opinion as it affects national policy toward minorities over the long term. Pan and
Kosicki have studied the subjects of frames surrounding a 1991 abortion protest (1993) and the 1993 national welfare debate (2001), and used these cases to develop their theory of frame analysis, then to tie frame analysis to the larger discursive community. This gives framing a wider role in media effects, for it argues that the frame establishes meaning and the public responds by accepting or rejecting the frame. Nelson and his colleagues (1997a, 1997b, 2001) turned the study of framing toward the ordinary individual who experiences a value conflict then hears a frame that helps to clarify value resolution. Their research focuses on individuals making personal decisions about situations that employ a conflict in values. Their cognitive approach explains how framing works on the larger social level. The present study combines these two approaches and traces the development of the social issue within Ohio, then tests individual responses of citizens in the Columbus, Ohio metropolitan area and compares all this to the frames actually employed in local newspapers. Such an approach achieves the advantage of knowing how a particular issue is explained by experts in the academic arena, comparing the academic explanation to how the issue is developed in the media, and finally, testing how the individual, on average, responds to the information provided.

Additionally, an attempt was made to provide an objective, structural dimension to Pan and Kosicki's 1993 theoretical model for framing. In the incipient days of framing theory, this model was an objectification of the more abstract model proposed by Gamson. During the ensuing decade, few scholars have attempted to systematize framing analysis so that use of the theory could easily be grasped by novitiates. Pan and Kosicki's categories of thematic, script, and rhetorical (where Gamson's list of rhetorical devices is used) is a useful method to organize the content analysis of this study. The values of pro-
public school, anti-public school, pro-parental choice, and anti-reform fit nicely in the thematic category. The script included what was being said by the media and the individuals' personal experiences in the communal environment. The rhetorical category is still somewhat abstract because it allows the coder to make subjective assessments about what might be an exemplar or a depiction, for instance.

If beginning this project today, there are changes that I could make to strengthen the conclusions drawn. First, analysis of survey data could have been greatly simplified with more careful planning of the levels of measurement for both independent and dependent variables. Second, the survey question concerning what newspapers respondents most recently read seemed intuitively correct, and is the established method of asking about readership. Respondents were given opportunity to list three newspapers they read. Yet, only eleven of more than 300 black respondents (and one white respondent) listed The Post as a newspaper they read, when according to The Post, its subscription rate is over 6,000. The survey question asked which newspapers the respondent had read most recently; because The Post is a weekly rather than a daily newspaper, it is conceivable that it was not chosen as an answer. I would suggest directly asking respondents if they read The Post in order to be certain about the number who are reading the paper, and thus be able to include The Post content analysis more directly in the study.

In national surveys of the school voucher issue, Hispanics are another ethnic group that is tested for opinion. This was not done in this study because the only newspaper in the Columbus area that would represent this ethnic group, The Minority Communicator, does not archive its papers for longer than six months and there is no
online archive for the paper. Since the content analysis spanned a period of five and one half years, this made including The Minority Communicator in the content analysis impossible; therefore, the important Hispanic minority was not included in this study.

Finally, the use of value conditions that proved to be non-significant needs to be addressed here. As has been previously stated, the issue frames carried within them specific, and sometimes strong, value orientations. These seemed to overpower the value conditions rotated in the introduction to the survey questions (pro-child and pro-public school). In future research, if the frames themselves carry inherent value implications, it would be wise to avoid trying to add an additional layer to the study that creates values that compete with the frame's value. In retrospect, this could also be a reason that favorable opinion in Columbus is lower than the national average—respondents were sorting through a built in value-conflict that might have changed their response to the question for overall support.

Delimitations and limitations of the study

1. The study is limited to Columbus, Ohio, because it is the seat of the state government, where legislative and judicial decisions are made and most likely to be reported. This has some effect on the generalizability of the study, because the school districts in the Columbus area operate differently than other Ohio cities, especially Cleveland. In Columbus, children who live in the city have the possibility of attending the suburban schools. A second reason generalizing to the state at large could be skewed concerns the success of Columbus city schools' former superintendent Dr. Rosa Smith. Dr. Smith was the charismatic leader of the school system during the five and one-half years represented in this study, and she oversaw
improvements in the city schools' proficiency results. The success of the Columbus City Schools cannot be assumed to be occurring in cities throughout the state.

2. The comparison of newspapers consists of one daily newspaper and one weekly newspaper. The weekly had many articles/opinion pieces that are syndicated, rather than written by journalists who reside in the Columbus area. The daily newspaper had very few articles of this type.

3. This study incorporated a large sample in the Columbus metropolitan area with an oversample of blacks in one community rather than a statewide survey. This requires a trade-off in benefit: the concentrated sample with an oversample included can look at one region in detail, providing for the case-study approach. But it cannot generalize to all of the state.

4. Because this study used secondary analysis of data, there are limitations to what kind of information was available. There is no direct measure of people's knowledge of the school voucher issue. Additionally, respondents were not asked to respond directly to specific articles from The Columbus Dispatch or The Columbus Post.

5. No second coder was used for the content analysis portion of the study because of difficulty of access to The Post. The articles were coded twice by the researcher, however, with 93% agreement between the two coding exercises.
Media responsibility in a discursive community

A diversity of opinion publicly advanced remains an essential element of a free society. In order for minorities to maintain faith in the system, they must be able to see their position and their representatives in the news. This allows minorities to consider themselves an integral part of society as they see their position articulated. Polls play an important role in discursive community when they publicize minority opinion. It builds faith in the system. Also, by keeping the opinion of the black community regarding political issues such as school vouchers in the public eye, it gives the opportunity for consistent minority opinion to influence the larger community. Media play the essential role of publicizing that opinion.

A general discontent with education in the United States has been reported since the publication of A Nation at Risk in 1985. In order to win education reform, successful legal battles will not be enough. They must also, says Patt (1999), fight the battle of public opinion. This is the message also reported by The New York Times in February 21, 2002, and referred to earlier. As public opinion takes on added significance in the school funding issue, media representations become increasingly important in the discursive community. The way in which school vouchers are explained in media frames, and the values underlying media frames, carry a certain synergy. Some values carry so much socio-political significance that if they can be effectively used with a relevant frame, they will affect response. This becomes a tautology—use of the value within the frame in support of the frame makes the frame true. The frame is seen as so true, that participants will agree with it, no matter the subject to which it is attached.
Thus, respondents can agree with both equal opportunity and community action, for example, even though within this study, to do so was to hold contradicting positions.

Anything with this potential power must be open to public scrutiny and evaluation. Journalists carry the responsibility of guaranteeing that alternate (minority) voices are heard on matters of importance to the smooth functioning of democracy. With this in mind, one can say that The Columbus Dispatch's practice of presenting both pro and con positions is good. It allows for more than one position to be considered in the public debate. People have more freedom to make up their own mind, even though the paper takes a particular editorial stand, because both pro and con positions are represented in the papers, giving individuals more than one construction of an issue from which to choose. This is a positive contribution to the discursive community, for it recognizes that citizens are not pawns of the media, thinking what they are told to think. Certainly, the media frame affects public opinion, as this study along with many others demonstrates. Media does not control public opinion, however, because personal experience and the collective wisdom contributed by one's community are also thrown into the mix of public opinion. An example of this is the black response to the frame of competition. One would not expect members of the black community to agree with this statement, for it is easy for a member of the black community to believe that when forced into a competitive posture with the white power structure, the black community will suffer.

What must the media do in order to enhance the democratic advantages that a healthy discursive community brings? In several respects, the media would do well to follow the example of The Columbus Dispatch in its reporting of the state school funding
controversy. First, the newspaper was cautious in taking a position on the matter, waiting for 18 months before taking an editorial position. Second, the paper took a politically unpopular position, based on the potential advantages that could be realized by a beleaguered minority if school vouchers were adopted. Third, The Dispatch was fair—almost to a fault—in the reporting of the controversy. News reporting did not become slanted toward the editorial position once it was announced to the community. Coverage of the controversy continued to represent the factions involved in the legal struggle. Naming and quoting interest groups representing various factions of the legal struggle were well balanced. The criticism that could be made here is that the populace affected by the voucher policy was not adequately covered. The newspaper virtually ignored the human drama of children placed in former coal bins for class, or sitting in a classroom that was not adequately heated during the winter months. The desperation of parents on edge, waiting to know whether the voucher program would be granted another year of funding, or parents devising ways to keep their children out of the Cleveland public schools regardless of the personal cost to them, was not reported. Granted, this was being done to some extent on the editorial page; but that assumes that people who read the front page of a newspaper also read the editorial page. I would have liked to have seen both newspapers articulate what is in the balance regarding this issue: on one hand, a state school system with an effective bureaucracy, and experienced in addressing its interests, aided by a teacher's union who is categorically anti-voucher. On the other hand, a generation of six to eighteen year old children who have only a parent or parents to call for a better system of education for them. If journalists follow their proclivities and quote
established sources who have press releases at the ready, then the hope of introducing Ohioans to a fully balanced view of the issue is thin indeed.

However, there is another way. Much of the content in public opinion is contributed by social groups, which can function as interest groups in the political realm. Some groups do not or are not able to contribute to public opinion. For whatever reason, then, that social group has no opportunity to influence public opinion. If individual "A" is a member of both types of social groups (one with, and one without influence), the potential threat to democracy is reduced, for "A" is represented, even if not in every area of his or her concern. But, if "A" is not represented in any manner—no social group speaks for this person, then "A" is handicapped in a discursive community. There is, then, no message in the polis that represents "A's" thinking. Public deliberation takes place without the benefit of the perspective of "A"—and those like A. McLeod and Hertog document that disadvantaged or discontented groups are treated differently by the media. As long as this continues, it must be said that the media is not doing all it could to guarantee the strong democratic, deliberative society that is the American ideal. As long as we depend upon mediated reality to know what we know, media—journalists, editors, and publishers—must see themselves as more than a corporate interest. They must accept the responsibility to fairly and accurately present information needed to make responsible public decisions.

Future research

This study has traced the school voucher controversy in Ohio for the past five and one half years, which allows one to observe a pattern of frame creation and use that has developed for this subject. This frame analysis has been compared to public opinion
responses in a survey of residents in the Columbus, Ohio, metropolitan area. This allows one to draw conclusions regarding which of the frames respondents accepted when the frame was presented in a specific value context. There are variations that could be applied to this study in future research. First, journalists who contributed to the news reporting could be interviewed in order to learn how each chose the forms they used that contributed to the framing and writing process. This would give the researcher further insight to contribute to the case study approach, indicating whether, in this example, journalists developed frames from extant legal arguments, or found the frames in other places. One could also attempt to determine why the journalist chose particular frames that had a definite positive or negative influence on the reading public. Finally, one could probe the relationship between the use of journalists’ frames and the newspapers’ editorial positions.

A second avenue to pursue with this data would involve removing from the data those who heard the neutral value condition, and compare this group to the others, in an attempt to show the role of the value conditions in the survey. Third, while this study attempted to juxtapose black opinion from the general population with black elite opinion, conclusions are difficult to draw because of two different methods were employed in this study (general opinion was measured with a survey, elite opinion was measured with a content analysis). Future research could measure these in a similar manner, so that the results could be compared.

New research surrounding this general issue could take several directions. First, one frame, such as the equal opportunity frame, could be chosen, rather than choosing several frames. Because this frame is used frequently by The Columbus Dispatch, the
same frame could be represented in different iterations in several issues of The Dispatch, in order to determine reliability and actual response to the news as it is being reported. This study required the researcher to assume the causal relation between newspaper frames and public opinion, but a study employing actual media frames could speak to causality with increased confidence. Additionally, this research should measure whether parents are satisfied or dissatisfied with the quality of their children’s education. Level of satisfaction with children’s education is an important independent variable within the school funding issue. This would connect to an important political science theory—the sociotropic view of politics—that recognizes that people often form opinions concerning an issue that do not directly bear on their own lives, yet would benefit the lives of others.

This study could ask, “who do you talk to about this issue?” Such a question would measure the effect of one’s interpersonal contacts or the strength of one’s ingroup influence. A research study that included all these elements would incorporate the important criteria for framing in a discursive community—the frame, popular wisdom, and personal experience—and would allow for a specific discussion of how public opinion is developed in a discursive community.

Finally, Pride (1995) talks of following a critical issue over time, to understand how arguments change. A next possible step with this study would be to continue to chart the use of frames in local newspapers as the U.S. Supreme Court makes its decision about the constitutionality of the Ohio school voucher program later this year. Frame development in the media could be compared to the development of the issue in the legal literature, to determine whether the newspapers continue to develop frames based upon
legal issues. Additionally, a study could be done of the evolution of frame development in *The Columbus Dispatch*.

Another new project could be begun with the knowledge gained regarding minority interest group influence and its influence on public opinion. Upon choosing and requesting admission to work with a minority group, an issue of importance to the group could be isolated. A public awareness campaign could then be developed, based upon four principles learned in this study:

1. Minority group members will develop opinions different from that advocated by minority elites.

2. Minority and majority group members will develop an opinion using values inherent in the frame used to explain the issue.

3. A consistent minority message is persuasive in the larger society.

4. Media can be responsive to the minority voice.

Other studies similar to this one could be executed in order to continue the contribution to the case study method and the generalizations being developed thereby. There are other areas of political and social interest that could be used in a framing effects study. One example of a future topic of study is the social security issue. The topic represents political ramifications, a strong interest group involved, and an attempt by political elites to control the framing process.
Conclusion

A free society depends upon its members to understand what is at stake in the maintenance of freedom. There must be a means (press, frames, rhetoric) with which to communicate to the polis concepts that are essential to the continuation of the society. This is the primary reason that the press is protected within the First Amendment. The Constitution does not protect the press so that it can develop mega-corporations without the worry of government intrusion. Their inclusion in the First Amendment recognizes that democracy depends upon a free press for its continued existence. When the press does less than it could to promote democratic health, it in a sense commits a "crime against the state." If the press does not do its job, democracy is weakened, for citizens are participating in the democratic process without full knowledge. People can learn of many important political or national matters no other way.

A second reason a responsible press is essential to a democratic society lies within the frequently used metaphor of the marketplace of ideas. This classic democratic principle holds that the competition of ideas within the marketplace of ideas provides a political environment that allows for effective popular decision making. It is the press that makes this happen. A free press can publish opinions from individuals that counter the government position, can criticize government and call for a change. It is this competition that enlivens the marketplace of ideas. The ideal is that as the public confronts and discusses ideas espoused in the marketplace, the public will choose the best option for the community.

Such an ideal requires an educated populace—members who are motivated and competent to understand competing ideas and apply appropriate criteria to choose the
best political option. The public at large has a stake in the quality of education poor children at failing public schools are receiving. Independent studies, such as the Harvard study, show that school vouchers do in fact improve proficiency levels for children receiving a substandard education. It would benefit our democratic society if the standard set in the Columbus, Ohio area were repeated for other issues and in other areas.
APPENDIX A

**Instrumentation.** The following questions were contributed to an ongoing research project conducted by The Ohio State University Center for Survey Research.

**Value 1: general statement, neutral**

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about school funding. The Ohio legislature is allowing urban areas in the state to implement educational alternatives to the public school system. The tax-supported school voucher program has been one of the alternatives.

Keeping that in mind, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements.

**Value: general statement, positive frame**

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about school funding. The Ohio legislature is allowing urban areas in the state to implement educational alternatives to the public school system. The tax-supported school voucher program has been one of the alternatives

Some people advocate school vouchers as the best way to improve public education in Ohio because they allow parents to choose the best education for their children.

Keeping that in mind, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements.

**Value 3: general statement, negative frame**

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about school funding. The Ohio legislature is allowing urban areas in the state to implement educational alternatives to the public school system. The tax-supported school voucher program has been one of the alternatives.
Some people oppose the school vouchers, arguing that they will drain state education dollars from the public school system.

Keeping that in mind, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements

Value 4a: general statement, mixed positive and negative frame

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about school funding. The Ohio legislature is allowing urban areas in the state to implement educational alternatives to the public school system. The tax-supported school voucher program has been one of the alternatives. Some people oppose the school vouchers, arguing that they will drain state education dollars from the public school system. Other people advocate school vouchers as the best way to improve public education in Ohio because they allow parents to choose the best education for their children.

Keeping that in mind, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements.

Value 4b: general statement, mixed positive and negative frame

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about school funding. The Ohio legislature is allowing urban areas in the state to implement educational alternatives to the public school system. The tax-supported school voucher program has been one of the alternatives.

Some people advocate school vouchers as the best way to improve public education in Ohio because they allow parents to choose the best education for their children. Other people oppose the school vouchers, arguing that they will drain state education dollars from the public school system.

Keeping that in mind, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements.

Q.1. Poor children in a failing school district should have the same opportunity to attend a private school as a wealthier child. Do you...
1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree (volunteered)
4. Somewhat disagree
5. Strongly disagree

8. REFUSED
9. DON'T KNOW

Q.2. Tax-supported vouchers going to private religious schools violates the separation of church and state. Do you...

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree (volunteered)
4. Somewhat disagree
5. Strongly disagree

8. REFUSED
9. DON'T KNOW

Q.3. School vouchers will benefit public schools because they create competition between schools. Do you...

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree (volunteered)
4. Somewhat disagree
5. Strongly disagree

8. REFUSED
9. DON'T KNOW

Q.4. All we need to improve the quality of education in the public schools is for teachers, community leaders, parents and students to work together. Do you...

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Somewhat disagree
5. Strongly disagree

8. REFUSED
9. DON'T KNOW

Q.5. How much do you support or oppose the use of tax-supported school vouchers to send children to private schools? Would you say you...

1. Strongly support
2. Somewhat support
3. Neither support nor oppose
4. Somewhat oppose
5. Strongly oppose

8. REFUSED
9. DON'T KNOW
APPENDIX B

Procedure for Content Analysis

The following steps were taken in the content analysis coding. (a) All relevant stories were read to identify whether school vouchers are discussed. (b) All articles that discuss school vouchers in the headline or lead paragraph were be marked. (c) Each story was analyzed for the specific characteristics described below.

V1. Story identification

V2. Story day (month, day, year)

V3. Newspaper name

V4. Thematic emphasis (Values) This is the emphasis mentioned first in the story.
   1. pro-parental choice
   2. con-parental choice/reform
   3. pro-public schools
   4. con-public schools
   5. neither mentioned

V5. Frame
   1. Class struggle
   2. Community responsibility
   3. Competition
4. Separation of church/state

5. Two frames discussed in conflict with one another

VI. Structural dimensions of frame

1. Rhetorical

2. Script
   Thematic
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