

THE ROLE OF JOURNALISTS IN FRAMING NEWSPAPER ARTICLES AND
EDITORIALS ON SCHOOL VOUCHERS IN DETROIT

by

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Dedication

To Ernestine Mack Clark, my mother,
a woman who set the standard for me to follow.
She instilled in me that education is the key that
unlocks the door to unlimited possibilities.

Thank you mom.

Today I take hold of that key.

I am ready to carry out my mission statement for my life's work.

To Awaken, Teach, Research and Uplift Through Spirit.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe how journalists and members of editorial boards of *The Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* framed the Michigan Tuition Voucher (Proposal 00-1) issue during the 2000 presidential election. The current study builds on the work of Thomas E. Patterson (2000b) by investigating interpretive and descriptive styles of reporting. Journalists' use of interpretive and descriptive styles of reporting is explored, probing further and dissecting interpretive framing by verifying each of the three components that Patterson uses to define interpretive framing (e.g. to *analyze, explain and evaluate*).

The focus of this study is on journalists and editorial board members because they are opinion leaders who help citizens think about policy questions. While journalists have increasingly become more political in reporting, editorial boards have a history of partisanship in terms of taking stances on policy questions in communities and political leadership in national and state elections.

The two major newspapers in the Detroit metropolitan community have historically taken different stands on domestic public policy issues. For example, *The Detroit News* typically endorses Republican candidates for major higher level offices (e.g., gubernatorial, U. S. Senate, and President) and often back conservative issues. The *Detroit Free Press*, conversely, is more likely to endorse Democratic candidates and offers a more liberal view of political issues. For example, *The Detroit News* endorsed Spence Abraham for U.S. Senate in 1994 who had previously been Chairman of the Michigan Republican Party from 1983-1989 (Traugott, 2002). The *Detroit Free Press*

endorsed Debbie Stabenow in 1994, an incumbent in the U.S. House of Representatives. In addition, in the 2000 election, *The Detroit News* endorsed Republican candidates, President George Bush for President, Spencer Abraham for U. S. Senate, and Dick Pothumus for Governor in 2002. Conversely, the *Detroit Free Press* endorsed Democratic candidates, Al Gore for President and Debbie Stabenow for U.S. Senate in the 2000 election, as well as Jennifer Granholm for Governor in the 2002 state-wide election.

Editorial boards can establish the stance their newspaper takes in presenting a political issue. While their stances generally follow a historical perspective (i.e., *The Detroit News* is conservative and the *Detroit Free Press* supports liberal issues), it is uncertain if they use their positions to either attract new subscribers or retain current readers. Pekny (2003), in presenting an alternative view about the importance of editorial boards, asserted that people rarely buy newspapers to read editorials and generally do not delay decision making until an editorial about the topic is presented in the newspaper. While editorials can expand the scope of a political or newsworthy topic, they are merely opinions that he indicated are no better or worse than the opinions of others. Pekny continued that by ruling out the public's demand for editorials, the reason for the existence of editorial boards in a newspaper is a remnant of the "good ol' days of journalism . . . when newspapers did not try to be objective or fair" (p. 1). Pekny, an editorial board member, indicates that newspapers have changed since "the good ol' days when newspapers were party rags, tools of politics first, tools of anything else second" (p. 1). He asserts that while objectivity and fairness became the goals of most newspapers, editorial boards persevered.

Pekny (2003) also describes differences between editors and editorial boards. An

editor makes decisions about news story coverage – who will report the story, which photos to include, and the layout of the story (page on which it will appear, etc.). The editorial board, conversely, deliberates on the story and then takes a stance. He discusses candidate endorsement, giving the example of the struggle a newspaper staff has in keeping the playing field level for an entire election season. “This candidate said this, and the other candidate said that. You [reader] decide” (p. 2). Then at a time just prior to the election, the editorial board indicates which candidate should be elected. For the months prior to the election, the paper appears unbiased, but then prints a completely biased editorial to support their choices. However, Pekny asserts that by understanding the newspaper stance on political deliberations, the editorial board acts as a disclaimer that allows the reader to understand the newspaper’s alleged bias.

Studying school tuition vouchers from a journalist’s framing perspective is important, because it was on the Michigan ballot during a national election year when more attention was paid to political issues. As shown in previous statewide surveys and as ballot questions in the past, education is of particular concern to Michigan parents. An article entitled, “Vouchers fail to find many allies poll shows voters rejecting school aid plan in droves. Local control proposal also losing” supports the importance of education in Michigan (*The Detroit News*, October 29, 2000). Steve Mitchell, a pollster for *The Detroit News*, found more than 1 in 10 respondents chose Proposal 00-1 as the most important issue on the ballot, even more critical than the presidential race, with this finding denoting the saliency of the issue in Detroit and Michigan. Education in Detroit continues to be both a policy issue and a source of political conflict because of teacher strikes, state takeover of school operations, low standardized test scores, and the removal of principals from the Detroit Public Schools administrators union, Organization of

School Administrators and Supervisors (OSAS). The school voucher issue is also salient because of parent concerns about education, although the Black community in Detroit was split on the voucher issue.

Proposal 00-1

The actual wording of Proposal 00-1 is

A Proposal to Amend the Constitution to Permit the State to Provide Indirect Support to Students Attending Nonpublic Pre-elementary, Elementary and Secondary Schools; Allow the Use of Tuition Vouchers in Certain School Districts; and Require Enactment of Teacher Testing Laws

The proposed constitutional amendment would:

1. Eliminate ban on indirect support of students attending nonpublic schools through tuition vouchers, credits, tax benefits, exemptions or deductions, subsidies, grants or loans of public monies or property.
2. Allow students to use tuition vouchers to attend nonpublic schools in districts with a graduation rate under 2/3 in 1998-99 and districts approving tuition vouchers through school board action or a public vote. Each voucher would be limited to _ of state average per-pupil public school revenue.
3. Require teacher testing on academic subjects in public schools and in nonpublic schools redeeming tuition vouchers.
4. Adjust minimum per pupil funding from 1994 -1995 to 2000 -2001 level.

The issue of school vouchers was, and is very controversial, as shown in an article written by Mark Hornbeck entitled, "Voucher vote stirs hot debate backers, critics of ballot proposal hurl accusations of scare tactics, fabrications" (*The Detroit News*, May 29, 2000). Its major provisions (i.e., funding for religious schools, teacher testing on academic subjects, or nonunion provisions) address issues that divide the public along party lines or within union/nonunion supporters.

Members of clergy were divided on the voucher proposal. Adam Cardinal Maida, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Detroit, supported vouchers. An article published by Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki ("Trip tries to spur minister's support for school vouchers backers

fly group to see system in Milwaukee,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 7, 2000) illustrates the divide among clergy members. The Rev. E. L. Branch, president of the Council of Baptist Pastors of Detroit, and four other Baptist ministers flew aboard a “luxurious private jet with sofas and leather armchairs” owned by the Amway company president, Dick DeVos and his wife, Betsy DeVos both of whom are strong supporters of the Proposal 00-1. This team of a half dozen Detroit Baptist ministers went to Milwaukee, Wisconsin to explore how citizens felt about school vouchers. Rev. E. L. Branch stated in this article that his group was still undecided.

In contrast, a story written by Mark Hornbeck (“Blanchard joins voucher fray,” *The Detroit News*, June 23, 2000) cites Rev. Charles Adams, pastor of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church as being opposed to Proposal 00-1. In an October, 29, 2000 article, *The Detroit News* reporters, Hornbeck and Cain, discuss the racial divide in Detroit entitled, “Vouchers fail to find many allies poll shows voters rejecting school aid plan in droves: Local control proposal also losing.” They write that some Black ministers support it, while the NAACP and other ministerial leadership oppose school tuition vouchers. Black ministers in Detroit were among the first to support the proposal, which directly affects students and parents in the Detroit Public Schools. Around the middle of October, support for the proposal dropped sharply among men and women; suburbanites; as well as union and nonunion households. According to *The Detroit News* polls, Blacks and Detroiters now oppose the plan by more than a 30-point margin. *The Detroit News* pollster Steve Mitchell said, “Among Black voters, who were targeted by the advocates, polling has always shown that they didn’t trust Proposal 1.” Catholics is the other group that bailed out on its church leadership during the last week of September 2000. A News Mitchell Poll showed Catholics supporting vouchers by 13 points. Three weeks later they

opposed the proposal by 50 to 38%.

In sum, this topic needs to be investigated because in spite of public opinion data, little is known about how journalists and editors framed the school voucher issue. To understand the importance of the framing of an issue, Patterson (1994) argues that journalists do the talking for candidates. That is, people read what journalists say about candidates' campaign strategies, and not what is said by candidates.

This investigation is important because political parties are declining as political organizations that are primary sources of political information. According to Rosenstone and Hansen (2003), political party membership has declined from 5.9% of the electorate in the 1970s to approximately 3.1% in the late 1980s. In addition, Congress received correspondence from 1.4 million (0.9% of the population) fewer people, and 4.7 million (3.0% of the population) fewer people were likely to sign petitions. Some studies reveal that television news reports are replacing political party newsletters as the primary source of information for political issues. According to Janda, Berry, and Goldman (1995), "Study after study has demonstrated the people who rely on television for their news score lower in test of knowledge of public affairs than those who rely on print media" (p.181). As more and more people get their news from television reports, journalists and editors in print media are providing an attentive audience with a conduit for political debate through dissemination of information.

Reliance on print media may explain change from descriptive to more interpretive reporting of news and world events by reporters and editorial boards. An example of this trend is that average lines containing quotes in *New York Times* stories decreased from 14 to 6 during the period from 1960 to 1992. This decrease indicates a substantial change from descriptive reporting to a more journalist-centered communication process allowing

more freedom for journalistic interpretation. The present study focuses on articles and editorials on Proposal 00 -1 that appeared in *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* from May 1, 2000 through November 30, 2000 to determine whether an interpretative or descriptive frame is more evident. The researcher determines this by defining interpretive framing to mean *analyzing*, *explaining* and *evaluating* and selecting key words used by journalists to separate text in categories that are interpretive, descriptive and a combination of both.

Patterson (2000b) defines an interpretive style of reporting as analyzing, evaluating, and explaining developments, rather than limiting reports only to facts. The interpretive style of journalism affords journalists opportunities to speculate on what the facts mean. Watkins (2001) cites several researchers (e.g., Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Reese, 1997) who provide additional definitions of framing. These definitions focus on cultural knowledge about the truth of published statements, whereas Patterson (2000b) distinguishes between interpretive and descriptive styles of reporting. Patterson argues that this new style is increasingly being used by newspapers. The older form of objective journalism, defined by Patterson as descriptive reporting, uses a straightforward description of events, requiring reporters to stick to facts and leave the speculation and interpretation to the reader.

Interpretative framing, as defined by Peterson (2000), is a practice that journalists use to supplement or, in some cases, bridge other perspectives as a social institution. Accordingly, social dynamics that structure the methods used in journalism contribute to reproducing social patterns. Simultaneously, journalists make claims that are read and accepted as truth using widely-accepted beliefs that mirror American cultural knowledge about the truth of published statements. In contrast, descriptive framing is defined as an

article that is limited to stating facts of who, what, when, and where.

In examining how journalists and editorial boards describe and /or interpret the Michigan Tuition Voucher Proposal 00-1, the researcher examines several issues. For example, when journalists/editorial boards reported on Proposal 00-1, how do they frame the issue? Do they use a descriptive, interpretive or a combination of both types of frames? Framing is stronger when coverage of a theme is continuous (i.e., in the case of the voucher issue) than when it occurs in a single concentrated exposure as is typical of a candidates' pronouncement of a major policy position (Patterson, 2000b). Framing focuses on journalists' use of interpretive or descriptive reporting on the voucher proposal within and between the two newspapers. In the present study, the researcher examines the different ways that the proposal is defined in both papers and then compares the various definitions to the actual proposal language (as written on the ballot, see Appendix A) to determine the approach that the newspapers use in defining Proposal 00-1 to its readership.

Statement of the Problem

The present study is a descriptive analysis. Singleton, Straits, Straits and McAllister (1988) define a descriptive study as research used to describe phenomenon. The type of description is not the same as exploratory research. Descriptive research is a structured, fact-finding endeavor that concentrates on a few aspects of a well-defined topic to evaluate each dimension in an orderly, precise manner.

The study focuses on journalists and editorial boards because they helped structure the discussion about vouchers by providing citizens with information about the issue. They also provided data on opinions of leaders, citizens, and presidential candidates about vouchers.

Little is known about how the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News* covered the Proposal 00-1 from the standpoint of analyzing the newspaper reporters' and editorial boards' reporting styles. The current study seeks to investigate newspaper media to determine the extent to which political elites (editorial boards/reporters) set out to inform their readers about Proposal 00-1, the issue of school vouchers and teacher testing, during a seven-month time period.

The major thesis driving this dissertation research is that print journalists (editorial boards and reporters) from both major papers use an interpretive frame more than a descriptive frame in telling the voucher story in the state of Michigan. Thus, journalists, rather than being viewed as neutral conveyers of information, are actually engaging in political action by interpreting the meaning of the voucher question to potential viewers and voters.

Editorial boards are likely to provide an interpretive frame driven by a particular political preference; *The Detroit News* – conservative and the *Detroit Free Press* – liberal; in terms of the role of government regarding public policy issues. These preferences may be driven by potential readers and audiences.

Specifically, this study seeks to determine whether journalists and newspaper editorial boards acted as objective observers or political activists. Second, newspaper editorial boards and journalists participated in the policy debate by not merely describing the issue, but often using an interpretive mode for citizens to provide citizens with information about how to think about vouchers and their meaning to education. This topic is important to investigate because journalists and editorial boards provide needed information to citizens; with some suggesting that television has replaced political parties as primary sources of political information. The study is not concerned with television

coverage of political issues, but with the print media and its communicative function. Because of competition with television, newspaper journalists are using a more interpretive approach to cover political issues.

Additionally, this study provides ancillary findings that descriptively examine three pertinent themes: *fiscal conservatism, social equality, and racial issues*. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a marketing firm that specializes in Black public opinion studies, has examined questions pertaining school vouchers. In their 1999 National Opinion Poll, they found while White views on education showed no change, Black views on education has shown change in a one-year period. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies reports an increase in the percentage of Blacks supporting school vouchers from 48% in 1998 to 60% in 1999. Overall, both Blacks and Whites identified education as the most important national problem but revealed differences in their views pertaining to age, ideological lines and income. Both groups supported school vouchers and increasing school spending. The national debate on school vouchers focuses especially on minority students and emphasizes the poor performance and quality of many of the schools they attend. Bositis (1999) asserts that "Further, many states with new statewide testing systems have reported large numbers of failing schools, especially schools with large minority enrollments" (p. 4). He argues that education issues possess volatility in the public's opinion because many people do not know what is happening in the schools. "Hence, media coverage of certain issues and events can cause significant shifts in public opinion" (p. 4). A larger percentage of Blacks believe their local public schools are getting worse. These views are possible reasons why Black support for school vouchers increased significantly from 1998 with three in five Blacks supporting school vouchers. Additionally, Blacks support statewide standards and tests,

even though many Blacks believe tests are unfair to minorities. On the other hand, fewer Whites expressed concern about unfairness related to statewide standards and tests.

Although, most urban Black parents favor school vouchers, its leaders do not back this issue (Owens, 2002). In *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, the Supreme Court ruled that the school voucher program in Cleveland is constitutional and may help some families. However, this program is not expected to expand educational opportunities for all Black children. This ruling may increase Black support for vouchers and provide evidence that Black governmental representatives have lost touch with their Black constituency.

Owens (2002) reports results from two different polls that find support for vouchers among the Black community. In 1999, Public Agenda, a nonpartisan research group, noted that 68% of Blacks favor vouchers. In contrast, this research also find that 69% of Black state and local elected officials do not support vouchers, indicating that they do not believe that public schools are failing Black children and 60% rate their public schools as excellent or good. The same percentage of Black parents rate the public schools in their area as fair to poor. According to Owens (2002):

We [Black parents] are desperate for decent education for our children. And people in my generation and those younger doubt the ability of Black government leaders to influence public education policies in ways that would benefit Black children. Our support for vouchers is essentially a critique of politician's ineffectiveness. (p. 1)

Black representation in public education in cities (mayors, council members, school board members, and superintendents) has increased twofold, from 2,724 and 5,815.

Although the number of Black elected officials has increased substantially, Black children continue to have difficulties learning and performing. As a result, Black parents may be looking for alternatives to public school.

Blacks in other urban communities (e.g., Cleveland and Milwaukee) have embraced the concept of school vouchers as a viable choice for educating their children. As a result, this issue is salient in urban communities in Michigan, specifically in Detroit, which has a school population that is 91% Black. Discussions of interest groups and prominent/political leader mobilization are included in the findings about Proposal 00-1 as reported in *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*. These discussions are intended to exemplify the point that newspapers are sites for political deliberation among elite activists. Moreover, literature on educational reform and school vouchers discusses the importance of interest group mobilization and citizen participation in the policy process. An example from a newspaper, *The Indianapolis Star*, in Indianapolis, Indiana illustrates the use of interest groups to influence interpretative framing. The editorial boards of this newspaper held a roundtable with 22 of its readers to discuss and listen to their views regarding the newspaper's coverage. The senior editors decided to tackle education with specific focus on Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS). According to Associate Editor, Ted Daniels, "Based on feedback from sources and letters to the editors, our readers think our coverage is too negative, focusing only on problems and not the good things that happen every day in the public schools. That is not an entirely accurate perception, but it's a perception of many readers." The newspaper was asked by the participants how would the input offered be reflected in their coverage following the roundtable? The newspaper's response is that its reporters and editors will look to include the perspective of positive stories on IPS' parents, students, and teachers in their future coverage. This focus group is an example of a newspaper asking for feedback from its readers to provide interpretations about how what they read affects them especially in regards to education issues. Actions of the *Indianapolis Star* editors speak to the present

study because these editors were willing to respond to comments and concerns of their subscribers (readers, students, educators, etc.) in presenting print coverage about the schools. In contrast, editorial boards at the Detroit newspapers do not appear to use focus groups in determining what the public wants in the daily newspapers. Therefore, it appears that the types of interpretive framing used by the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News* is solely the responsibility of journalists and editorial boards.

Articles and editorials published on school vouchers collected from the two major local daily newspapers in the Detroit Metropolitan Area the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News* are examined in the current study. These newspapers are the primary data sources because of their large circulation and representation of the urban area most affected by school vouchers. Circulation data for both newspapers are discussed further in Chapter Two.

Newspaper coverage on the school voucher issue are examined, compared, and contrasted to determine differences and similarities in how these major newspapers frame the voucher issue and cover the topic. Content analysis is used to describe similarities and differences in the coverage and framing of the voucher issue. If no differences are found in stories framed by newspaper editorial boards, this research contributes to the study of educational policy formulation, providing new insights about the role of journalists and their objectivity when covering political/policy issues. Conversely, if findings reveal differences in the manner in which newspaper editorial boards frame the school voucher issue, this research supports previous research that suggests that journalists act as political activists when framing political issues. This research is based on the premise that news is becoming soft and more like “infotainment” instead of information (Patterson 2000a). According to Daniels, an Associate Editor of *The*

Indianapolis Star, findings from their roundtable focus group revealed that, “People look to newspapers to provide in-depth explanatory reporting on complicated issues. They want all sides of the stories told. They don’t want shallow meeting or press conference coverage or fluffy feel-good features at the expense of more comprehensive reporting.”

The researcher develops biographical profiles of reporters using their experiences in covering educational stories and issues, length of service with the newspaper and level of education. These profiles are useful in examining the interpretive reporting styles of reporters used in framing the Michigan Tuition Voucher Proposal 00-1.

Theoretical Framework

This work is modeled largely by Thomas Patterson (2000b) on media which reveals an increase in the use of interpretive over descriptive frames. While Patterson’s work has focused primarily on national issues, the work of this study is on one local political issue that takes place during a national election. This study uses content analysis to determine the extent to which interpretive and descriptive frames are used in newspaper articles and editorials published over a 7-month period during the national election year.

Agenda setting is used as the theoretical framework in this dissertation. In the 1920s, Lippmann (cited in Sanchez, 2002) suggests that the media creates pictures in the minds of readers. The public reacts to the pictures and not to the actual events. Cohen (1963) indicated that “the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about*” (p. 13). Lang and Lang (1966) focused on agenda-setting by the media. They asserted that:

The information in the mass media becomes the only contact many have with politics. The pledges, promises, and rhetoric encapsulated in news stories, columns, and editorials constitute much of the information upon which a voting decision has to be made. Most of what people know comes

to them “second” or “third” hand from the mass media or from other people. . . . The mass media force attention to certain issues. They build up public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, have feelings about. (p. 466, 468).

McCombs and Shaw (1972) stated that: “While the mass media may have little influence on the direction or intensity of attitudes . . . the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues” (p. 177). According to Sanchez (2002), agenda setting is a process that is used to reconstruct situations and events that occur in the environment into ones that are easier to understand.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) inferred that political reality may be shaped by the way that journalists choose and display an issue. Voters can be influenced about the importance of an issue relative to the extent of information included in the news story and its placement in the media. The media agenda is used to determine, to some degree, the audience (public) agenda. Determining what to select for attention and what to ignore among a number of existing issues means providing a perspective that can be applied to view the political world as a whole. Agenda setting is another method to express the function of the media in terms of defining reality.

Since this time, numerous published articles integrate agenda-setting into a comprehensive theory (Rogers, Dearing, & Bregman, 1993). The published research provides evidence that three issues are included in media agenda setting: a) patterns exist in the exchange of the importance of an issue from the media to the public; b) contingent conditions exist for agenda setting; c) and influences the agenda of the media. The assumption behind these three pertinent areas is that the extent to which an issue included in the article can influence what the public thinks about (Ghanem, 1997). According to

McCombs and Evatt (1995), a secondary level of effects in agenda setting examines the effects of media coverage on what issues the public thinks about and how the public thinks about the issue. They assert that the second level of agenda setting is concerned with specific attributes of an issue, and how this agenda of attributes can influence public opinion. Gilens and Hertzman (2000) argue that the role of the news media is a powerful one because citizens depend on the media to inform them about public policy issues.

A democratic society of any substantial size is unthinkable without the mass media. Without some form of institutionalized news media, citizens could not obtain the information necessary to evaluate political leaders, assess social conditions, and judge the desirability or undesirability of alternative public policies. As John F. Kennedy, in a speech to television broadcasters, stated, "The flow of ideas, the capacity to make informed choices, the ability to criticize, all of the assumptions on which political democracy rests, depend largely on communications. And you are the guardians of the most powerful and effective means of communications ever designed." (Alger, 1996, p. 87).

Significance of the Study

Because the print media contributes to what people read and how they think about issues, this research provides an examination of a critical local issue, school vouchers. This issue generates state-wide interest and has potential national implications for certain districts across the country. School vouchers, as stated on the ballot, gave children in urban school districts additional educational choices through the issuance of vouchers that could provide partial tuition to any private school selected by the parent or guardian. Vouchers are being used in Milwaukee and Cleveland to allow children from low-income families to have opportunities to obtain quality educations.

On June 27, 2002 headlines read, “Court allows school vouchers: Michigan ban unaffected, but activists bracing for long-term education fight” and “Vouchers/Court allows program” (*Detroit Free Press*). The U. S. Supreme Court ruling approved a 6-year-old pilot voucher program in Cleveland, one of the nation’s worst rated school districts. “It’s a good bet that the forces whose 2000 ballot initiative to legalize vouchers was trounced in Michigan will now be re-energized to bring the issue back in new packaging with a label that says; ‘Endorsed by the U.S. Supreme Court.’” According to an editorial in the *Detroit Free Press*, this new ruling places the school voucher issue back to the forefront of the educational agenda in Michigan and granted the issue front-page presence on Friday, June 28, 2002. A supporter of Proposal 00-1, Betsy DeVos, chair of Choices for Children and Kids First Yes! and opponent, Wendy Wagenheim, a spokeswoman for the American Civil Liberties Union and a former executive committee member of All Kids First! were cited in the *Detroit Free Press*, June 28, 2000. Wagenheim said “We knew the day after the victory in November 2000 that this wasn’t necessarily a dead issue.”

Types of Framing Definitions

Several definitions have been used by scholars investigating agenda setting in the media. For the purpose of this study, while framing does not determine what people think, the most important concern about frames is its ability to make specific aspects of a problem appear more salient than others. The potential effects of frames, then, are determined both by what journalists include as well as exclude (Entman as cited in Watkins, 2001).

Kosicki and Pan (as cited in Watkins, 2001) define framing as an active process that uses a unique method of cultural production that is informed by a system of

professional experiences and values regarding what constitute news and access to sources that enable journalists to routinely construct and process news discourse. Watkins cites several researchers (e.g., Entman, 1993; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; and Reese, 1997) while arguing that framing can be perceived as an expression of power, particularly because it affects the public's recognition and understanding of social problems and political issues. Reese (cited in Watkins, 2001) asserts that framing is concerned with the techniques used to combine interests, communications, sources, and culture to provide a cognitive understanding of the world using all possible symbolic and verbal resources. Conversely, McCombs and Shaw (cited in Watkins, 2001) argue that frame analysis goes beyond the latter to consider not just what the journalists of news include or insert into their articles that focus on what becomes the most recognizable aspect of the topic being covered in the press. For example, placement in the newspaper, size and wording of headlines, and inclusion of pictures or graphics are recognizable aspects that can draw attention to an article or editorial.

The present study seeks to determine if differences in the papers' endorsement of candidates and issues may be a basis for examining their coverage of Proposal 00-1. For example, the *Detroit Free Press* endorsed Al Gore for president in 2000, while the *Detroit News* endorsed George Bush. The *Detroit Free Press* justified its position by saying "George W. Bush has not demonstrated he has the understanding of critical issues or the commitment to key values that will keep Michigan's economy moving forward" (*Detroit Free Press*, October 19, 2000). The *Detroit News* praised George W. Bush for his willingness to build consensus on budget, trade, environmental and regulatory issues. "Mr. Bush's presidential campaign stresses conciliation and cooperation. Mr. Gore preaches divisiveness and class warfare, The [*Detroit*] *News* wrote" (*Detroit Free Press*,

October 22, 2000).

Organization of the Study

The dissertation is organized in six chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction and significance of the study. A comprehensive review of related literature pertaining to four areas: Agenda Setting as the theoretical framework, Role of Journalists in Framing, History of Detroit Newspapers, and a discussion on School Vouchers as a political issue that includes an overview of the Detroit Public Schools is provided in Chapter II. Chapter III details the methods used to collect, code and analyze the data needed to address the research questions and hypotheses. Chapter IV and V present the results to five hypotheses and Chapter VI offers conclusions and recommendations based on the findings and a review of related literature.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

There is a paucity of research literature investigating the framing of newspaper articles and editorials on local policy issues during a national election year. This literature review focuses on the following topics: the theoretical framework of agenda setting, role of journalists in framing that includes an historical perspective on the role of journalists, history of Detroit newspapers examining literature concerning school vouchers as a political issue that includes an overview of the Detroit Public Schools. Each of these areas is discussed separately.

Agenda Setting – A Theoretical Framework

Journalists working in print media have recognized the importance of agenda setting in presenting issues to the public that editorial boards and reporters perceive as important. Issues can be complex and multidimensional, and can be manufactured, result from exploitation, or occur through an unanticipated event. Political issues that are either are concerned with public interest that lie within the jurisdiction of a governmental entity or result from consideration by legislators. Issues are transformed into agendas if they are introduced and accepted by people or interest groups with sufficient power to influence public opinion. Agenda setting results from discussions among recognizable groups over procedural matters that are related to the distribution of positions or resources (Cobb & Elder, 1983).

McCombs and Shaw (1972) along with journalism/mass communication scholars

from the University of Texas, Austin, and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, respectively, have pioneered research on the agenda-setting theory of the mass media. McCombs and Shaw (1972), over 30 years ago, generated the original agenda-setting research. Since this time, numerous published articles integrate agenda-setting into a comprehensive theory (Rogers, Dearing, & Bregman, 1993). Agenda setting theory is the ability of the mass media to transfer the salience of items on their agendas to the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw 1972). The published research provides evidence that three issues are included in agenda setting:

1. Patterns exist in the exchange of the importance of an issue from the media to the public;
2. Contingent conditions exist for agenda setting; and
3. Influences affect the agenda of the media.

The assumption behind these three pertinent areas is that “what is covered in the article affects what the public thinks about” (Ghanem, 1997).

According to McCombs and Evatt (1995), a secondary level of effects in agenda setting examines the effects of media coverage on what and how the public thinks about issues. They assert that the second level of agenda setting is concerned with specific attributes of an issue, and how this agenda of attributes can influence public opinion.

McCombs and Evatt (1995) maintain that a set of objects is at the core of an agenda, with each of these objects possessing a set of attributes. For example, McCombs and Evatt examine the agenda for the original McCombs and Shaw (1972) Chapel Hill study along with subsequent studies on agenda setting. They find that the Chapel Hill study’s abstract contains a set of objects (i.e., topics that are covered in the written

report), which form the agenda.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) conducted 100 interviews of people who were not committed to a candidate in the 1968 national election. Each respondent was asked to describe their perception of the key issues. At the same time, four local and one national newspapers, news magazines (Time, Newsweek), and two national evening-news broadcasts were collected and content analyzed. They divided the topics into 15 categories representing key issues as well as additional types of campaign news. They also divided these categories into major and minor items depending on the pace and position in the newspapers or news magazines and time and position for television coverage. The results of the content analysis of the interviews and the media coverage were correlated to determine the congruence of voter emphasis on issues with media coverage of those issues. McCombs and Shaw found that the correlations obtained in the study provide evidence that certain conditions are necessary if agenda-setting is used by the mass media. They concluded that mass media influence on voter emphasis was more credible than other possible reasons. They explained that the correlations were not spurious because they had included most of the means in which voters would obtain information about political issues. McCombs and Shaw asserted that the results of their study support the agenda-setting hypothesis that the mass media may influence the public's perceptions of important issues during a political campaign by setting the "agenda" of the campaign.

The shift in the emphasis does not take away from the basic tenets of the agenda setting hypothesis but adds to what exists. Ghanem (1997) contends ". . . that it is one highway linking up with another major thoroughfare" (p. 4). The first level of agenda

setting is the transfer of object salience from the media to the public agenda, whereas the second level of agenda setting involves two major hypotheses about attribute salience:

1. The way an issue or other object is covered in the media (the attributes emphasized in the news) affects the way the public thinks about that object.
2. The way an issue or other object is covered in the media (the attributes emphasized in the news) affects the salience of that object on the public agenda.

The difference between the two levels of agenda setting is that the first level independent variable are the objects, topics or issues discussed on the media agenda. The second level is also the media agenda and has the same independent variable as the first level but, is considered in terms of attributes or perspectives. However, the dependent variable for both levels of agenda setting remains the public agenda. In the first level's case, the public agenda is operationalized in terms of issue or topic salience, whereas at the second level the salience of the attributes of the issue or topic are measured.

The agenda of objects and the agenda of attributes may be examined as two concentric circles with the agenda of issues being the outer circle and the agenda of attributes imbedded within that circle. Kosicki (as cited in McCombs et al., 1997) refers to agenda setting as the "shell of the topic." The shell of the topic can be compared to the issues or other objects examined, whereas the attributes are an exploration of what is inside the shell. Noelle-Neumann and Mathes (1987) suggested that, "media content can be examined at three levels: agenda setting, focusing and evaluation (p.5)." Noelle-Neumann and Mathes notes that they could easily replace McCombs and others' term agenda setting with the first level of agenda setting.

According to Ghanem,

The link between the two levels of agenda setting takes us back to Lippmann's (1922) idea of pictures in our head. By looking at the attributes of an issue, we get a more detailed examination of that picture. The examination of attributes is similar to the examination of an issue or other object under a magnifying lens, whereas the agenda of issues deals with examination by the naked eye. The attributes of an object are the set of perspectives or frames that impact the public agenda is the emerging second level of agenda setting. (p. 5).

Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981) conducted a nine-wave panel study that investigated the agenda of attributes in the descriptions of the 1976 presidential candidates in over a 1,000 different media outlets including newspapers, television, and wire news media. They found a strong correlation between the media agenda and the public agenda. Another study conducted by Becker and McCombs (1978) examined the 1976 presidential primaries and found significant similarities between the agenda of the New York Democrats' and the stories found in Newsweek Magazine (Ghanem 1997).

Benton and Frazier (1976) identify three levels of information that holds relevant to their study of the economy during the 1976 presidential election. Level 1 includes general issue names, the economy in this case; Level 2 consists of subissues, including problems, solutions and causes; and Level 3 contains specific information about the subissues. Iyengar and Simon's (1993) research on the coverage of the Persian Gulf crisis provides another example that depicts the tri-level approach to media coverage. Ghanem asserts (1997), "Once again significant correspondence between the media and the public agenda was found" (p.6).

The current study examines the second level of agenda setting in which Iyengar and Simon (1993) label the attributes as *frames*. These researchers distinguish between the first and second levels of agenda setting by labeling the attributes frames according to

the content of the first and second levels. The concept of framing is discussed in more detail later on in the chapter.

Many scholars argue that journalists participate in the agenda-setting process by what they write in newspapers. Kingdon (1995) suggested that the media acts as a communicator within a policy community. He refers to people that are inside and outside of the government, who were all working with a number of problems. Sometimes they communicate indirectly, but one thing all of these busy people do is read newspapers. He further indicates that “one major way to bring an idea to the attention of someone else, even someone who is a fellow specialist within the bureaucracy, is for an issue to be covered in the pages of the major papers” (p. 59).

Fallows (as cited in McKenna & Feingold, 1999) argues that:

. . . the media have lost sight of or have been pushed away from their central values . . . [T]he values of journalists have changed, . . . their current practices undermine the credibility of the press, and . . . they affect the future prospects of every American by distorting the processes by which we choose our leaders and resolve our public problems. Many journalists have noted the crisis in their profession, and a number of them have begun reform efforts . . . everyone knows that big-time journalists have become powerful and prominent. We see them shouting at presidents during White House press conferences. We hear them offering *Thumbs Up/Thumb Down* verdicts a few seconds after a politician completes a speech. (p. 65)

This example supports the argument of other scholars that contend that journalists tread a fine line between neutral observer and political activist when publishing their stories.

Agenda setting in terms of newspapers is important because it is dealing with the news and with matters that can influence the lives of citizens. Journalists and editorial boards can decide what is newsworthy and what is not by the placement and emphasis placed on a news story or editorial. Barbour and Wright (2001) argue that citizens are

caught in the middle between politicians and journalists. This position is ironic, as both sides exist, in theory, to serve the public. These conflicting positions make it difficult for citizens to a) get information on which to base their political decisions; b) see good, as well as bad, in government; c) know their leaders as they really are and not just their public relations images; and d) hold journalists and politicians accountable. While these objectives for media coverage do not make it impossible for citizens to formulate decisions when interpreting the news, it can make it more difficult. Thus, journalists place the responsibility and burden on citizens to be critical consumers of the media.

Robert G. Picard, (as cited in Graber, McQuail, & Norris, 1998) a media economist,

. . . warns of the dangers of concentrated control of news institutions, noting that one result is a narrowing of people's perceptions of political issues . . . with alarm, mergers of huge media firms, and self-constrained governmental policies to deal with them. Concentration of channels in a few hands, he argued, limited access, supports the status quo, and leads to "public distrust and resentment of both politics and media. (p. 211)

The two newspapers being compared in this study merged operations in 1989.

Kahn and Kenny (1999) argue that some of the most provocative and compelling research in recent years demonstrates that voters routinely use information provided by the media when assessing the importance of policy matters and evaluating the performance of politicians. Furthermore, beyond influencing candidates' name recognition and viability, press coverage can also influence people's priorities on issues. Studies of national and local news sources indicate that the press can influence the agendas of citizens (Erbring et al, 1980; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar et al, 1982; MacKuen, 1981; Weaver et al, 1981). News organizations are in a position to give a great

deal of attention to certain issues. Crime is one example but they elect not to mention other issues such as education, unemployment, and environmental issues. As a result, Kahn and Kenny (1999) argue the inclusion and exclusion of newspaper stories can affect which issues citizens view as important. Kingdon (1995) suggests the media's tendency to give prominence to the most newsworthy or dramatic story actually diminishes their impact on governmental policy agendas. Such stories tend to come toward the end of the policy making-process instead of at the beginning.

Kingdon (1995) argues that media are often portrayed as powerful agenda setters and that mass media can affect public opinion. As other scholars have discovered, the mass public's attention to governmental issues depends rather closely on media coverage of the issues. The public expectation is that the media report what is going on in government instead of having an independent effect on government agendas. Kingdon offers examples of a committee staffer who demonstrates a contrasting viewpoint to these arguments when he said, "The media has some importance but it's slight. Either media people are reporting what we're already doing, or they're reporting something that we're already aware of" (p. 59). Another prominent reporter agreed, saying: "I think media are largely responsive to the issues that are being aired, and media don't affect what's aired a lot" (p. 59).

Price and Tewsbury (1995) view agenda setting as one variation of priming or framing. However, they did not differ from other scholars in how they define both concepts. Agenda setting using story selection is an influence on public perceptions of issue importance and evaluations of political leaders made indirectly through priming

readers. Framing does not focus on which topics or issues are selected for coverage by the news media, but instead on the particular ways those issues are presented and formulated for the media audience.

An Examination of Framing by Journalists and its Potential Affect on Agenda-Setting

Iyengar (1991) defined the concept of framing as “subtle alterations in the statement or presentation of judgment and choice problems, and the term ‘framing effect’ refers to changes in decision outcomes resulting from these alterations” (p.11). Iyengar finds in his work, *Is Anyone Responsible?* that television news frames issues in two ways, episodic and thematic. Episodic framing is more prevalent, usually taking on the form of an event-based news report. Thematic frames are reports about historical trends and reports on an issue in the context of “collective outcomes and public policy debates” (p.18).

An example of a thematic frame would be a news story that discusses the terrorism issue against the backdrop of the historical bitterness between Northern Ireland’s Protestants and Catholics. While an example of episodic frame would be the depiction of the terrorism issue in the context of an Irish Republican Army bombing in Northern Ireland. The thematic frame offers a broader perspective. Iyengar (1991) finds that episodic framing on television encourages viewers to assign the blame for society’s problems to individuals, rather than to social and political institutions. Congress and political parties are two examples of political institutions. Conversely, thematic framing has the opposite effect. Furthermore, he argues because television news emphasizes episodic framing, it deflects the blame for problems from government, resulting in a

weakening of political accountability.

Researchers define frames in a variety of ways; some in terms of their effects on the audience and others focusing on what a frame is. Framing, according to Entman (1993), “calls attention to some aspect of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead the audience to have different reactions” (p. 55). According to Entman, the way a problem is framed might determine how people understand and evaluate the issue (1993). Framing is the selection of a perceived reality “in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and /or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1989, p. 52). He also argues that “a news slant significantly influences public opinion”(p.75). According to Gitlin (1980), “Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse” (in McCombs, Weaver and Shaw, 1997, p. 6). While, a critique by Gerald Kosicki questions whether framing is relevant to agenda-setting research, McCombs & Shaw (1997) and Bamson (1991) argue that framing is essential agenda-setting research .

Patterson (2000b) contends that traditional agenda setting posits that the media tell us what to think about. Whereas, framing and agenda-setting research focuses on the public policy issues in the news and in voters’ minds. Framing involves the selection of elements within a particular issue and the manipulation of particular elements of an issue on the public’s agenda of attributes. That is, framing expands beyond what people talk or think about by examining how they think and talk (Patterson in McCombs, Weaver, & Shaw, 1997). According to McCombs et al., agenda setting deals with the selection of

issues by the news media and its impact on the public agenda. In selecting the voucher issue in the 2000 election, the manner in which reporters and editorial boards within and between the two newspapers choose to frame the issue can be examined to determine their influence on election outcomes.

The news communicates much more than facts (McCombs; Patterson, cited in McCombs et al., 1997), with the affective dimension relating to the public's emotional response that may result from media coverage. One way that the media exerts this affective response is through the narrative structure of the news. Koch (1990) equates framing with the narrative itself. Schulman (cited in McCombs et al., 1997) argues that:

The way a news story is structured focuses and thus limits the causes and outcomes of the issue. Schudson (1982) argues that the power of the media lies in the forms in which declarations appear. The narrative is the link around which components of who, what, where, why, how, and when (Bennett & Edelman, (1985) that form the content of the message are connected. (p. 12)

In this context, the journalist is viewed as a story teller (Barkin, 1984). The second factor that needs to be considered when examining media frames is the emphasis given to topics in the media, such as placement and size as well as other elements that influence the prominence of a news item. Photographs, pull quotes, subheads, and so on, all serve to give a story in a newspaper more prominence. This aspect of salience needs to be examined when we are looking at the relationship between the salience of items on the media agenda and the salience of those items on the public agenda. Tankard et al. (1991) refers to these focal points of news presentations and labels them "framing mechanisms" (p. 15).

Agenda setting studies focus on how frequently an issue is mentioned in the

media. The frequency with which a topic is mentioned probably has a more powerful influence than any particular framing mechanism, but framing mechanisms could serve as catalysts to frequency in terms of agenda setting. (McCombs et al., 1997).

Role of Journalists in Framing

Most research examining the role of journalists in the media focus on national campaigns and elections as opposed to local issues. Shaw and Roberts (2000) find in their study on campaign events, the media, and prospects of victory in 1992 and 1996 US presidential elections, that the role of the media in framing events has a significant effect on how those events are expected to impact voters' decisions. These results are consistent with the works of Patterson (2000a, b) and Iyengar (1991) and others who hold the media accountable for much of the public response to political campaigns.

The current study highlights how journalists and newspaper editors could influence what people read and play a significant role in how a particular issue is framed. For example, Barbor and Wright (2001) offered two examples that define their views of framing:

1. The same painting can look very different depending on its frame: a heavy gold baroque frame gives a painting weight and tradition, whereas a thin metal frame makes it more stark and modern. The painting doesn't change but how we see it does. (p. 280)
2. People can view a situation related to a disaster differently. One journalist could write about the number of survivors injured another may focus on the number of survivors not injured.

Further, Barbour and Wright (2001) contend that because journalists work in highly competitive environments, they are required to write stories that attract and keep

their audience's attention. This requirement often means presenting news in an entertaining fashion or in ways journalists think their audience would find appealing. Politicians want the ability to communicate with the public and set the agenda. However, the goals of journalists and their rules sometimes conflict with the needs of politicians who want to be presented positively and as effective leaders. Because of the differences, methods and objectives, each side often feels exploited or treated unfairly by the other. For example, Patterson (1994) reports that people read the journalist's interpretation of campaign strategy rather than what the candidate says. Furthermore, Patterson (2000a) argues that there is an issue of soft news versus hard news. "Critics say that the news is based increasingly on what will interest an audience rather than on what the audience needs to know" (p. 3). According to a study about news stories without a public policy component, soft news has dramatically increased as a part of news coverage over the past eighteen years. News stories that have no clear connections to policy issues have risen since 1980. Thirty-five percent of the news was considered soft news in 1980 and by 1998, 50% of the news stories are soft news (Patterson, 2000a). Thus, politicians and public policy issues are losing ground in terms of maintaining a position on the agenda.

Framing of issues in newspapers is important because the readers form an attentive audience whose opinions can be shaped or changed by journalists who have the power to control content and format. The power of journalists is especially important in Detroit because it has two daily newspapers and a combined newspaper on weekends and holidays. Whereas, New York, the largest city in the America, has four daily newspapers: *New York Daily*, *New York Post*, *New York Times*, and *Newsday*. Los Angeles, the second

largest city according to data obtained from The World Gazetteer (2003), has three daily newspapers the *Los Angeles Times*, *Daily News*, and the *La Opinion*. Chicago, the third largest city in the United States, has four major newspapers: *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun Times*, *Daily Herald*, and the *Pioneer Press*. These cities offer their readers a wider span to view information presented in the print media. Cities with one or two daily newspapers may not have a wide selection of choices, especially in discussions of political issues. Lotz (1991) argues in McCombs and Shaw (1997) that framing is not an ideological bias, nevertheless framing is bias, but it is a structural bias that results from a selection process that occurs in the news. For example, whenever reporters must compress information into a few paragraphs, some parts are deliberately left out and some parts are deliberately highlighted. This results in distortion of information and occurs in every news story written. Lotz (1991) argues further that in a sociological sense communication biases are ever present.

According to Patterson (2000b), many reporters believe they have a directive to represent the public. Journalists' desire to play the role of public advocate has increased substantially since the 1960s. Patterson stated that:

As journalists' status rose, they became more assertive, a tendency sharpened by the trend toward interpretive reporting. Vietnam and Watergate also contributed to the change; these events convinced many journalists that their judgments were superior to those of political leaders.
(p. 288)

The literature suggests that journalists are trying to move into the public representative role of a spokesperson for and advocate of the public. This role is close to a journalist acting as a "political activist." However, Patterson (2000b) argues that media are as not

well suited for the role of public representative as political leaders. Journalists are not selected and the public cannot fire journalists. Therefore, the public does not have control over the media. While political leaders can be held accountable through elections, the media is not required to meet public standards. In their roles as reporters, the public expects journalists to provide facts upon which their opinions can be based. As political activists, journalists are attempting to influence public opinion by the way issues are framed for the public in the media. The role of urban daily newspapers in framing the voucher issue is a meaningful topic for research. The media may not tell people what to think, but it tells the public how to think about issues (Barbour & Wright, 2001). As a result, the methods through which journalists use their positions as political activists when writing stories and editorials, and their use or misuse of power when framing issues becomes vital to the study of media politics.

Historical Perspective on the Role of Journalists

In describing the historical role of journalists, Altschull (1995) argues the press must be accountable to the public that it serves. In the 1940s, the press came under intense scrutiny by the trade-union movement and Democratic Party leaders. These groups felt the press represented their issues unfairly. Additionally, political coverage in its news columns was no more than gossip, trash, and trivia rather than information useful to the public. As a result of this criticism, Henry Luce of *Time* magazine developed a commission of scholars in 1946 to improve the quality of the press and prevent governments from placing limits on the media and its First Amendment rights. This commission was known as The Hutchins Commission. It was named for Robert Hutchins, the “*boy wonder*” of academe and a man with impeccable credentials among liberals. It

was established in 1946, a year after the end of World War II. To assure that the commission would not include only people who belonged to his political persuasion, Luce concluded that Robert Hutchins of the University of Chicago was an ideal choice. This commission was comprised of 12 members from different fields. The report written by the commission was entitled a "Free and Responsible Press." In this document, members introduced the term *social responsibility* into the world of U.S. media, and developed a press philosophy and a code of ethics that continues to be followed today.

The commission concluded that the freedom of the press had been placed in danger by the few who ran the press. They were accused of not providing a service to meet the needs of society and had sometimes engaged in society-condemned practices. If these practices continued, the result could lead inevitably to government regulation or control. The Hutchins Commission report advocated a greater assumption of responsibility by the press and enforcement capability (Altschull, 1995). The standards assigned to the press should be no less stringent than other institutions assigned to themselves. For example, the code of the medical profession is called the oath of Hippocrates. Lawyers, engineers, teachers, and representatives of other institutions have used similar codes. Joseph Pulitzer, the founder of the school of journalism at Columbia University, proclaimed its purpose was to assist journalists to become more responsible in gathering and reporting news. The school would "mark the distinction for those who were considered real journalists and men who do a kind of newspaper work that requires neither culture nor conviction but only business training" (Altschull, 1995, p. 140).

Furthermore, the commission clearly delineates the role of the press in contemporary society. According to the commission, the public has a right to expect the

press to provide five basic services:

1. an accurate, comprehensive account of the day's news;
2. a forum for exchange of comment;
3. a means of projecting group opinions and attitudes to one another;
4. a method of presenting and clarifying the goals and values of the society; and
5. a way of reaching every member of society.

The public also has a right to expect that facts are being presented in a meaningful context and “the reality [was] clarified and explained” (Altschull, 1995, p. 139). Media rules developed by the commission were met with opposition and were criticized by Wilber Forrest, president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors regarding its views of the role of the press. He accuses the commission of condemning the entire U.S. Press because of the carelessness of a few of its members. Robert Desmond, in an article written in *Journalism Quarterly*, a publication of journalism educators, challenges the commission for failing to conduct systematic research and its criticism of journalism schools. Finally, the fundamental role of the Hutchins Commission in developing its rules for the media is rooted in the democratic assumption that “. . . democracy is nurtured and furthered when an informed citizenry makes wise judgments in choosing their government representatives” (p.139).

Altshull (1995) contends that the news media are not isolated actors, rather they play a central role in the economic and political lives of cities and nations that extends to the world. The news media is an institution, with all the qualities of other institutions, and has its own structures, bureaucracies, and belief systems. For example, for some media

there is a belief in the code of objectivity and social responsibility that means the people are entitled to facts and not gossip.

Similarly, O’Heffernan (1991) suggests that news media and “other nonstate political players” (e.g., terrorists and non-governmental organizations) have taken on an independent role in the shaping of foreign policy. Although O’Heffernan’s work is limited to global journalism and the foreign policy process, his argument supports the importance of journalists’ roles in satisfying their responsibility to provide citizens with accurate information. When journalists place emphasis on certain issues and sensationalize others, they assume an independent activists’ role in shaping public policy thus, potentially acting with political agendas. Altshull (1995) also infers that the press’s emphasis on “the exceptional rather than the representative; the sensational rather than the significant, [meaning that] the citizen is not supplied with the information and discussion he needs to discharge his responsibilities to the community” (p.138).

History of Detroit Newspapers

The major newspapers in Detroit have long histories that include mergers, buyouts, changing philosophies and political support. The *Detroit News* is considered more conservative, with the *Detroit Free Press* generally following a more liberal slant to reporting and editorializing. The history of each paper and the combined Detroit Newspaper Association is presented in this section.

Detroit Free Press

The *Detroit Free Press* was first published on May 5, 1831 by Sheldon McKnight, a Black printer and apprentice, as a 4-page issue that contained mostly political rhetoric. The paper was initially published as a weekly magazine and endured many hardships.

Through the years, the *Free Press* has had a turbulent history - fires, editorial and philosophical changes, and newspaper strikes (Angelo, 1981). In 1940, John S. Knight bought the *Free Press*, and for the first time the paper came under group ownership. According to Knight, in his first *Free Press* editorial (cited in *Detroit Free Press* history: Knight to Knight Ridder, 2002):

We do not operate in the interests of any class, group, faction or political party . . . we are ourselves free and our paper shall be free . . . free to truth, good manners and good sense . . . we shall be for whatever measure is best adapted to defending the rights and liberties of the people and advancing useful knowledge. (p. 1)

The Detroit News

The Detroit News was founded in 1873 by James E. Scripps. It was the first newspaper to use aerial photography (1912). In 1920, *The Detroit News* owned WWJ radio station, which produced the first commercial broadcasts in 1920. The first commercial TV broadcast in Michigan was produced by WWJ-TV (owned by *The Detroit News*) in 1947. In 1960, *The Detroit News* bought the *Detroit Times*, resulting in two major daily newspapers in the metropolitan Detroit area. Gannett acquired *The Detroit News* in 1985, four years prior to entering into the joint operating agreement (JOA) with the *Detroit Free Press* (*The Detroit News*, 2002).

Detroit Newspapers Agency

The *Detroit Free Press* is owned by Knight Ridder, Inc. of San Jose, California, the second-largest newspaper company in the United States. Gannett Company Inc. of Arlington, Virginia, the largest newspaper publisher, owns *The Detroit News* (Gallaher, 2000). In 1989, the two Detroit newspapers entered into a court-approved joint operating agreement (JOA). This agreement was the largest ever approved under the 1970 Newspaper Preservation Act (Franklin, 1993). Detroit newspapers are responsible for the

business side with reports and columns of each paper published separately. Gannett and Knight Ridder own Detroit newspapers jointly and share in their profits, although Gannett holds three of the five places on the Detroit Newspaper Agency's board. As part of the JOA, the two newspapers publish separately on weekdays. On weekends the newspapers publish combined editions using the masthead, "*The Detroit News and Free Press.*" The *Detroit Free Press* is responsible for news, sports and business on Saturdays, with the *Detroit News* providing features. On Sundays, the two papers switch responsibilities. While Gannett took the front end of the Sunday paper and first billing on the joint masthead, Knight-Ridder took morning circulation for the *Detroit Free Press*. The *Free Press* retained exclusive rights for morning home delivery, allowing it to become the paper with the larger circulation.

Because of the Joint Operating Agreement, the Detroit Newspaper Agency and newspaper unions were on a collision course (Franklin, 1993). The union had agreed to the JOA because they thought their constituencies would be able to share in the profits, which had been overestimated. The Detroit Newspaper Agency contended that because of the JOA, staffing levels at the two newspapers were above those at other newspapers and wanted to reduce staff. A strike ensued in July 1995 which was settled in December 2000. The strike resulted in reduced circulation for both newspapers, although their circulation has been increasing. A comparison of circulation from March 31, 2000 to March 31, 2002 is presented in Table 1.

The *Detroit Free Press* has a larger daily circulation than *The Detroit News*. Both newspapers enjoyed an increase in circulation from 2000 (during the newspaper strike) to 2002 (two years after the newspaper strike).

Table 1
Comparison of Circulation from March 31, 2000 to March 31, 2002

Publication	Circulation Type	Circulation Dates		Percent Change
		March 31, 2000	March 31, 2002	
<i>The Detroit News</i> (Evening – M-F)	Daily	237,991	239,522	0.64
<i>Detroit Free Press</i> (Morning – M-F)	Daily	362,979	364,853	0.51
<i>News & Free Press</i> (Joint)	Saturday/ Holidays	546,342	537,177	-1.71
<i>News & Free Press</i> (Joint)	Sundays	738,248	740,513	0.31

Note: Access ABC (2002) and *Detroit Free Press* among circulation winners (2001)

It is meaningful to the current study to discuss who the reporters are that covered Proposal 00-1. The following paragraphs include biographical profiles of the journalists who responded to a request for background information about themselves in their role as a journalist for *The Detroit News* and or the *Detroit Free Press*.

Journalist Mark Hornbeck, a State Capital Correspondent for the *Detroit News*, was born August 17, 1954. He has worked for *The Detroit News* since 1989. Hornbeck's coverage involves covering state educational issues, the governor's office and state politics. In 1976, he graduated from Michigan State University with honors. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in journalism, with a minor in political science and economics. From 1978 to 1984, Hornbeck worked for the Kalamazoo Gazette. In that position he covered Kalamazoo Public Schools, politics, business, and city hall. He has received numerous awards for reporting on education, feature writing and enterprise journalism, including education writers of American Associated Press, Michigan Press Association and the best of Gannett.

Journalist George Weeks, a political columnist for *The Detroit News*, is a long-time observer of the governor's office. Weeks is a Traverse City native, with a journalism degree from Michigan State University. He worked for 14 years with the United Press

International in Lansing, Michigan as bureau chief. Later he became a foreign editor in Washington. He interrupted his journalistic career to become press secretary and then chief of staff for Governor William G. Milliken. As a consultant for the National Governors' Association, Weeks worked with governors in several states. As a 1981 Kennedy Fellow at Harvard University Institute of Politics, he conducted a study on the American Governorship. He has been a panelist on various radio and TV shows, including NBC's "Meet the Press."

Journalist Ron Dzwonkowski joined the *Detroit Free Press* in 1983. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from Wayne State University. He has been a journalist in Michigan since 1973. His beat has included extensive coverage of educational news. He worked in Lansing from 1979 to 1985 as a reporter assigned to state government and politics, including the politics of education and school-related court cases, charter schools, teacher strikes, etc. In 1985 he became an editor, and in 1998 editor of the editorial page.

Journalist Laura Potts is currently a mental health and communities reporter for the *Detroit Free Press* in the Oakland County newsroom. She graduated from Michigan State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism in May 2000. She also studied international media at the University College, London, England and political journalism at Georgetown University, in Washington, D C. She joined the *Detroit Free Press* in November 2001. Prior to that, she worked at the Associated Press Detroit Bureau. Her previous work experience includes part and full-time work for the *Detroit Free Press* Lansing Bureau, the *East Lansing Towne Courier*, a weekly newspaper, *The State News*, Michigan State University's daily political newsletter, and internships with *The Detroit News* and Capital News Service.

Journalist Patricia Montemurri has been with the *Detroit Free Press* for 22 years. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from the University of Michigan and has received numerous awards for her writing.

She has written broadly on political and educational issues over the past 20 years.

Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki, a primary journalist from the *Detroit Free Press* stated:

Over the years, I have covered government, politics and sports as well as education. I cover education by choice, not because the *Free Press* (sic) makes me do it. I consider it one of the most important issues of our times . . . For example, I have been working for the Free Press since 1996, and have been the *Free Press* reporter covering school vouchers for the entire period. I've been a journalist for a quarter of a century. I have worked for nine different newspapers. Over the years, I have a Bachelor of Arts in English. I've been recognized by state journalists' associations, the Associated Press and newspaper chain contests. One thing you may be interested in: I was invited to be a panelist in a conference on vouchers held in 2001 in Los Angeles, by the Education Commission of the States. The reason for the invitation was my writing on the Michigan voucher election. (personal e-mail from Sarnecki, 9-29-02)

Agenda setting theory, a historical overview of the Detroit newspapers, the media and roles of journalists, as well as profiles on the reporters backgrounds have been discussed in this section of the literature review. Agenda setting has been used by the Detroit newspapers as an indicator of the salience of education, especially in the Detroit Public Schools. In the next section, the implications of school vouchers as a possible reform for public education and the reasons why the issue was salient in the 2000 national election year is discussed.

School Vouchers

For the last decade, issues of equality and quality have become more questionable, particularly in large urban areas. Research by Parker and Margonis (1998) provides evidence that low-income, inner-city parents want schools of choice for their children. Urban parents concerned about their children's schools became increasingly critical of

local public schools. Racial conflict over educational policy may indicate that minority students cannot find places in neighborhood schools of choice, leaving these students in underfunded public schools. The challenge facing inner-city schools, as well as schools of choice, include segregationist strategies by suburban communities. Perceptions of prochoice advocates who hope that school choice can reduce expenditures in urban community schools suggest that these strategies could prevent further redistribution of tax monies from the suburbs to urban schools.

The debate over the “Right” for all children to have access to a quality education has been at the forefront of politics in Detroit over the past decade. As a result, the quality of education has become even more political because it affects the opportunities that children are afforded to achieve academic success. Consequently, the quality or lack thereof can affect public school students’ ability to compete in a global society as effective citizens after completing their education. Brown (1975) stated that “Nothing is more political than education. It is through education that individuals are screened to share in the wealth of this nation” (p. 252). Politics, according to Brown (1975) is the art of distributing resources; with education serving as a function to sort people into two groups, “haves” and “have nots.” This raises the question of equal opportunity for all children to obtain a quality education as a means by which minority children can move from poverty to middle class status in America. Brown (1975) indicates that the 1954 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court for *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* was of critical importance in breaking down physical and psychological isolation between the races and producing hope for new ways of life for minority children in the United States. The ruling however, did not guarantee quality education or equality of education. Good schools have higher standardized achievement scores, are well-financed, and enroll

students representing well- defined socioeconomic groups. Minorities are often grouped with the “have nots,” with limited avenues available to move out of this category. Education, according to Brown, appears to be the “most viable and promising way out” for Black citizens, (1975, p. 252). The Brown decision in 1954 began the modern fight for education as a “right” for Black children.

In an ideal democratic society, public education should be the means to provide everyone with opportunities to receive a quality education that prepares them to be productive, competent adults. A question has arisen about education: Is education a right or is it a privilege? Education, as a “right,” guarantees that every child should have access to a free, public education. Education in a private school is considered a privilege limited to those who can afford to pay tuition or have the ability to earn a scholarship.

The 1954 Brown vs. The Board of Education decision and the Montgomery bus boycott spurred the Civil Rights Movement, with Blacks demanding and gaining more power over their lives. In the 1960s, Blacks in Detroit were successful in placing quality education on the political agenda to demand more from the political system. During this period, Dr. Arthur Jefferson was appointed the first Black superintendent in the Detroit Public Schools. His appointment led the way to increased presence of Black administrators at both the central office and building levels. As the majority of students in the school system were Black, it was perceived that Black administrators and teachers had a better understanding of the social ills and problems unique to an urban school district.

As indicated in the “Standards and Poors Report on the Detroit Public Schools” (2001), from the appointment of Dr. Jefferson through the current Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Kenneth Burnley, the schools have declined. This report discusses that students attrition was partly the result of out-dated equipment and increased violence in

and out of the schools, which in turn led to failing test scores, high drop-out rates, low student morale, apathetic parents, students afraid of gang-related violence, and teachers sometimes afraid of students in their classes. An example of the failing schools is provided in the report, "How Bad are Detroit's Schools?" (Heartland Institute, 1999), which indicates that in 1996, only one third of Detroit high school freshman graduated in four years and less than 10% of these students were able to read at grade level. Ninety-four percent of students in the Detroit Public Schools failed to meet state standards for the Michigan Education Assessment Program tests. High school graduates from the Detroit school district who attended college generally performed below high school levels of other incoming college freshmen. According to the Heartland Institute (1999), of the 1,000 applicants at Bing Corporation who had graduated from Detroit Public Schools, 180 (18%) passed the entry test to obtain a job. Seventy-five percent of applicants at Chrysler Corporation from the Detroit Public Schools were unable to pass a test requiring 10th grade skills.

A majority of Black urban school districts, such as Detroit which has 82% Black students, appear to be failing their students (Heartland Institute, 1999). As a consequence, school issues (e.g., state takeover of the school district, teacher strikes and abolishment of the administrative union for principals/assistant principals only) have become topical issues on the agenda of citizens in the metropolitan area.

Local strikes by Detroit Public Schools teachers are indicative of the fact that teachers in urban school districts do not think that they receive fair compensation with teachers in surrounding suburban school districts. According to the *Michigan Education Directory* (2000) that cites school district pay scales for all 524 K-12 public school districts in Michigan, Detroit Public Schools ranks 88th in teacher compensation, in

contrast to Southfield Public Schools which ranks 5th and Grosse Pointe School District which ranks 12th in the state. These two comparison school districts were selected because they have common boundaries with Detroit Public Schools.

According to a study by Sarbaugh-Thompson (1997), a strike by Detroit teachers in The Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) demanded an 8% increase in salaries to provide equity with teachers in the suburban districts. The Board of Education made a counteroffer of a 3% increase to teachers with the condition that they attend 50 hours of unpaid professional development, with an additional 3% increase contingent on approval of a state-funding reform by voters statewide. Inability to resolve the issues resulted in a strike from August 31 through September 28, 1992. The result of negotiations provided teachers with salary increases of 4% in the first year and 3% in the second year. Three groups of interest (i.e., administration, citizens through the board, and teachers through their union) were involved in this strike. The outcomes of the strike indicated that none of the groups achieved their ideal position because their initial demands were not met. The school year was disrupted, with this strike laying the groundwork to pass Michigan Public Act 112 of 1994 that narrowed the scope of public sector bargaining and provided possible fines for individual public employees who participate in strikes according to Sarbaugh-Thompson (1997).

Over the next few years, teachers continued to raise issues about other conditions of the school district including class size, old buildings in poor condition, inadequate supplies, complicated bureaucracy, apathetic parents and community, etc. These substandard teaching conditions and low pay in relationship to their suburban peers fueled their demands for a new contract that would address issues of pay, working conditions, class size, etc. Judging from their strike rhetoric, the faction that seized

control of the Detroit Federation of Teachers had little interest in the reform effort (Sarbaugh-Thompson, 1997). The teachers voted to go on strike in 1999 and remained out for five days. Options to get teachers back to work, including threats of possible court actions and using the 1994 state law that penalized teachers for striking, were ineffective and failed to resolve contract issues or get students in school.

In March of 1999, the State Legislature passed Public Act 10, which abolished the elected school board. Governor John Engler immediately after passage of the legislation, signed the bill that empowered Mayor Dennis Archer of the City of Detroit to appoint six members of a seven-member reform board of education to replace the elected board of education. The seventh board member was appointed by the Governor and had ultimate veto power over decisions made by the other six members. One of the first duties of the newly selected Reform Board was to replace the superintendent. Dr. David Adamany was appointed interim chief executive officer(CEO), replacing Dr. Eddie Greene. Dr. David Adamany was empowered to oversee operations of the School District, pending the selection of a permanent CEO. The decision to appoint Dr. Adamany represented a departure from the foundation on which public education in Michigan was established. The selection of a CEO to the top leadership position in the Detroit Public Schools, meant that for the first time in its history the top leadership position was filled by someone who did not have credentials in K-12 public education. The board of education was left without its traditional authority in the area of policymaking and of intervention into affairs related to the operation of schools. Public Act 10 empowered the CEO with full authority over the policy and operations of the school district (Jackson, 2001).

As a consequence the issue of education, specifically who should be in charge of the largest public school district in the state, became an important issues on the agenda

for citizens in the Detroit metropolitan area. Community members were concerned about conditions of education, including teacher unrest. These concerns promoted the campaign for a voucher system, which became a ballot proposal in the November 2000 election (Ponders, 2001).

Dr. Adamany engaged in a rigorous campaign to have the Michigan Legislature and Governor John Engler amend the Public Employee Relations Act (PERA) to remove school principals and assistant principals in Detroit from collective bargaining units. His philosophy was that the school district needed a unified school district management team and principals should be chief executives of their buildings (Maxey, Temple Review, Winter 2001). Dr. Adamany asserted that “management of the school district could be substantially strengthened if principals and assistant principals were part of the school district management and were directly accountable to the Chief Executive Officer as at-will employees” (David Adamany, Declaration, March 20, 2000, p. 2). As interim CEO, Dr. Adamany was successful in his pursuit to have Public Act 204 passed. After the passage of this act, he removed principals and assistant principals in Detroit from collective bargaining organizations.

A considerable amount of pressure has been placed on public school systems to make some radical changes in response to what the government, general public, and business leaders see as a failure to provide quality education to America’s children (Hill, 1998). Ponders (2001) argues that educational systems in the large urban areas, such as the City of Detroit must be upgraded to meet evolving educational needs. Others argue that when public schools fail, students should be afforded opportunities to be educated in alternative settings, such as charter schools, nonpublic schools, or at home. Because nonpublic schools are tuition based, vouchers could be a means of allowing students to

have broader choices in educational settings. The concept of vouchers was formally introduced in Michigan in the form of Proposal 00-1. This proposal would allow students in districts that had graduation rates below 66% to use tuition vouchers to attend nonpublic schools in 1998-1999 (See Appendix A). Another method that school districts could use to approve tuition vouchers was through school board actions or a public vote. Each voucher would have been limited to half of the state-average per-pupil public school revenue. The proposal would also require teacher testing on academic subjects in both public and nonpublic schools redeeming tuition vouchers, and adjust minimum per-pupil funding from 1994-1995 to 2000-2001 level. The issue of school vouchers has created controversy and entrenched positions among public school proponents and proponents of tuition vouchers for nonpublic education.

According to Strate (2001), two coalitions regarding the voucher issue arose in Michigan at this time. The first was “Kids First! Yes!” This group was comprised of individuals led by DeVos, president of Alticor (formerly Amway) Corporation. He supported the voucher movement as a means of allowing students in failing school districts to have alternatives when seeking an education outside of public school systems. “All Kids First!” was the second coalition that formed in Michigan. This coalition was aligned with the K-12 public school community in Michigan and also included other organizations, such as League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women (AAUW), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce. This group was opposed to school vouchers because of the concern that tuition vouchers would take money away from the public schools.

While this study is not concerned with specific issues related to school vouchers, the issue of school choice and vouchers was fought out in the media during the presidential campaign in 2000. Ballot issues at the national level involved the controversy between presidential candidates, George Bush and Al Gore. At the state level, a primary issue was the race for the U. S. Senate between Spencer Abraham and Debbie Stabenow.

On October 13, 2000, Mark Hornbeck writes an article entitled, "Candidates tout education, but states make the rules Some voters say Bush, Gore plans have value." Texas Governor George W. Bush made his position on education clear by often repeating his campaign message: "Under a Bush administration, no child will be left behind." Hornbeck also writes about poll respondents stated that students are receiving proper education and students are being passed in order to get the students out of their classes. "Even so the major presidential candidates have spent much of their time on the stump in Michigan and elsewhere talking about school vouchers, charter schools, improving the quality of teachers and other school reform issues" (*The Detroit News*, October 13, 2000).

In a *Detroit Free Press* article written by Patricia Montemurri and other reporters on October 30, 2000, entitled, "Gore goes full bore to sweep Michigan he scours state for support, reaches out to Blacks, Arabs." The article states, "Gore also blasted the issue of the taxpayer-supported vouchers to pay for children to attend private schools. It's an initiative the GOP platform approves, but Bush has shied away from talking about it in his visits to Michigan, where polls show a ballot initiative that will likely be defeated."

At the state level candidate U. S. Senator Spencer Abraham was against vouchers as being the best solution for school choice. This stance was supported in an article entitled, "Voucher Effort Soundly Beaten, Many Feared That Public School Would Lose Funds" written by Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki (*Detroit Free Press*, November 8, 2000).

Journalists and editorial boards have used agenda setting to present their perspective of the voucher issue relative to the Detroit Public Schools. In Detroit, the issue of school vouchers was salient, as well as the presidential and senate elections. All of these issues were heavily reviewed and monitored by both newspapers. An example of an editorial highlights the saliency of Proposal 00-1 during the presidential election year of 2000. The editorial stresses the importance the state of Michigan plays in the outcome of who is elected president. In a *Detroit Free Press* (November 5, 2000) editorial entitled, “Final word after all the appeals and commercials, power to decide rests with individual voters” written two days prior to election day contended:

This is an election of enormous impact for the nation, and for Michigan. State voters could decide to funnel their tax dollars to private schools—which will rock public education to its foundations (Proposal 1, vouchers) . . . And voters can make Governor John Engler’s final two years in office much easier by preserving GOP control of the Legislature in the state House races . . . Michigan, many predict, will be the state that tips the electoral college balance to either Republican George Bush or Democrat Al Gore.

Whose idea of government will prevail—the laissez-faire Bush approach, or the let’s-be-fair promise of Gore? The pundits say this exhaustive race may come down to which candidate that last undecided voter finds more flat-out likeable, the one who’s a more appealing companion for lunch or a beer. If that’s so, we really are a nation in trouble (*Detroit Free Press*, November 5, 2000).

Based on the plethora of advocacy literature published in the last decade, school vouchers appear to be at the forefront of the list of school reforms that are considered controversial (Strate, 2001). A debate has resulted in the academic community regarding vouchers and other reforms involving school choice (e.g., Chubb & Moe, 1990; Good & Braden, 1999; Henig, 1995; Schneider et al., 2000; Witte, 1999). This debate has grown beyond the original question concerning the use of vouchers to allow some at-risk, low-income students to attend private schools. The debate has moved to question whether

student outcomes have improved and has become a political issue, with both sides visualizing critical consequences regarding the resolution of the voucher issue.

Summary

The comprehensive review of literature presented in this chapter studies the framing of the school voucher issue by the print media elite that includes reporters and editorial boards. An examination of research focuses on: agenda setting as the theoretical framework for the study; the role of journalists and how their role has evolved from presenting facts to framing issues and using interpretive frames for salient themes; historical backgrounds of *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*, and school vouchers as a political issue that includes an overview of the Detroit Public Schools. These topics are discussed to facilitate an understanding of the newspapers' role in presenting their positions on a controversial issue, such as school vouchers.

This work is unique because it investigates journalists' functions from two perspectives: a) as objective observers, and b) as political activists with agendas. To fill a gap in agenda setting literature, a relationship is expected between the way reporters frame their stories, and the editorial board's perspective along with their participation as activists in the political process. This study defines and operationalizes concepts using the definition of the interpretive style of reporting defined by Patterson (2000b) and by examining contents of newspaper stories/editorials through their use of *analyzing*, *explaining*, and *evaluating*. The current study extends beyond Patterson's work by dissecting interpretive framing in a more detailed manner. The investigator develops definitions that include journalists' behavioral indicators that provide clarification and decrease ambiguity between the use of: *analyzing*, *explaining* and *evaluating*. The current study also focuses on a state-wide public policy issue during a presidential election rather

than on candidates vying for national offices and their campaigns. The study distinguishes differences within and between two local newspapers and ways in which their journalists' covered this issue using the three concepts of interpretive styles of reporting. Each concept is defined and presented in Chapter III: Methodology.

Chapter III provides the reader with the methodology used to collect, code and analyze the data from the newspaper articles and editorials that appeared in *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* on Proposal 00-1 for the seven months prior to the 2000 presidential election. The results of the data analyses are presented in Chapters IV and V, with conclusions and recommendations for future studies provided in Chapter VI.

Chapter III

Methodology

Research Design

A retrospective, qualitative research design that employs content analysis to analyze the data is used for the current study. This type of design allows for an examination of data that cannot be quantified (e.g., content of newspaper articles and editorials) to develop inferences about the topic being studied. Data for this study include articles and editorials from the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News* from May 1, 2000 through November 30, 2000. This study compares newspaper coverage of the school voucher issue (Proposal 00-1) before and after endorsement by *The Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* during the 2000 presidential campaign . The review of articles written during this period also provides sufficient coverage to draw inferences about the framing of articles and editorials written about school vouchers. Few articles appeared in either newspaper prior to May 1, with the number of articles increasing after that date. A major advantage of the use of a qualitative research design in comparison to quantitative research is the ability to adapt qualitative research to meet the needs of the study. In a quantitative research design, once the plan is approved, sampling design decided, questionnaire developed and distributed to participants, and acceptable response rate determined, the researcher cannot make changes to fit the data collection and analysis (Stemler, 2001).

Content Analysis

Content analysis is defined as a means to congregate text into categories using systematic, replicable techniques using specific rules of coding (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 1980; Stemler, 2001; United States General Accounting Office (GAO),

1996; Weber, 1990). To meet the requirement of reliability, the media being analyzed using this technique must be durable (e.g., in print or on tape). Another definition of content analysis provided by Holsti (1969) indicates that content analysis is “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (p. 14). Janis (cited in Lasswell, 1965) provides a definition for content analysis:

. . . any technique a) for the classification of the sign-vehicles b) which relies solely upon the judgments (which, theoretically, may range from perceptual discrimination to sheer guesses) of an analyst or group of analysts as to which sign-vehicles fall into which categories, c) on the basis of explicitly formulated rules, d) provided that the analyst’s judgments are regarded as judgments are regarded as the reports of a scientific observer. (p. 55)

This method allows researchers to identify relevant experimental manipulations (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991; Wimmer & Dominick, 1999).

The Stemler and Bebell (1999) study is important because it examined educational issues, in a similar way as the current study, which focuses on a policy issue related to education during a presidential election year. Stemler (2001) asserts that content analysis is a useful technique when examining documents for trends and patterns. He indicates that content analysis is useful in attempting to make inferences about what schools include in their mission statements as primary reasons for their existence. Stemler and Bebell (1999) examined a nationwide sample of 267 educational institutions (i.e., elementary, middle, secondary, and post-secondary) drawn from the Internet. The school’s mission statements, obtained from the school’s web sites, were examined using content analysis to address the major research question regarding the criteria being used to measure program effectiveness (e.g., academic test scores) and to determine if the mission statements were aligned to program objectives. Results indicated the presence of

10 major themes, with the purpose of schools shifting from emotional development at the early elementary level to cognitive development at the college level. The mission statements in schools varied both between and across types of schools, although some themes appeared to be present in most mission statements. These themes included cognitive development, emotional development, and fostering effective citizenship/vocational preparation. In addition, when monitoring shifts in public opinion, an empirical base can be developed using content analysis. The current study uses content analysis to search for types of interpretive frames and themes used by newspaper reporters and editorial boards much like Stembler & Bebell (1999) who used content analysis to search for themes in mission statements. Both studies obtained data from the Internet. While Stembler & Bebell (1999) examined mission statements of schools nationally, the current study investigated the use of interpretive framing by reporters/editorial boards within and between newspapers locally.

The study on Black sermons and African American political mobilization (Green, 1997) used content analysis to determine themes that were present in 48 sermons from 12 Black churches. The sermons were analyzed using sentences from the sermons as the unit of analysis. Green's study provided a technique using key words as indicators of the three themes identified for the current study: *race*, *social equity*, and *financial conservatism*. Green used HyperRESEARCH, a software program used to assist with content analysis by categorizing text as specified by the researcher. Green (1997) grouped sermons according to the predetermined categories.

Stemler & Bebell (2001) argue "The assumption that words that are mentioned most often are words that reflect the greatest concerns" (p. 3). The current study uses the software program QSR version 6.0 (formerly NUD*IST) to search for key words related

to themes such as: *race*, *social equality* and *fiscal conservatism* in 170 selected articles and editorials that focus on the school voucher issue. QSR version 6.0 software serves a similar purpose as HyperRESEARCH to assist the investigator technically with obtaining a word-frequency count and the software also facilitated categorizing text more efficiently than conducting these procedures by hand.

A study by Jasperson, Shah, Watts, Faber, and Fan (1998) used content analysis to determine how newspapers used agenda setting and framing together to explain shifts in aggregate opinion. They were able to account for nuances within the issue, in addition to the amount of converge in developing an explanation of how newspapers can effect public opinion on an issue, specifically the federal budget. A computer program was used to analyze the included newspaper stories, with paragraphs within the story used as the unit of analysis. The current study also used paragraphs as the unit of analysis. While the type of framing used in this article differed from that in the current study, the underlying concepts of examining paragraphs for specific words that could classify them into a certain type of frame was consistent. For example, Jasperson et al. used words such as *clash*, *dispute*, and *skirmish* to describe fight as a frame. The current study uses words such as; *apparently*, *should*, *certainly*, *precisely*, and *always* as examples of adjectives that were used to determine the use of evaluating in a paragraph of an article or editorial.

The current study obtains data from the Internet in much the same way as the Stemler and Bebell (1999) study involving school mission statements. The use of the Internet provides a convenient, efficient method for data collection as the period between requests sent to the data source and return of the information is eliminated. The Stemler and Bebell study, as well as the current study, allow researchers to have control over and be actively involved in the data collection process.

When conducting a content analysis, six questions should be considered in the analysis (Krippendorff, 1980). These six questions and the way that they are used to develop the content analysis procedures in the two studies are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Content Analysis Comparison

Krippendorff (1980) Questions	Stemler & Bebell (1999)	Current Study
1. Which data are analyzed?	Mission statements from 267 schools nationwide were examined between and within the schools	Newspaper articles and editorials between and within two local newspapers on a single policy issue, school vouchers.
2. How are they defined?	Any statement that was published on line and entitled "Mission Statement."	A story used in this study was defined as an item published in either newspaper that contained key words: school voucher(s), educational voucher(s). The reporter(s) names were listed. Editorials did not have names listed because these stories were written by the entire editorial board and generally appeared on the editorial page.
3. What is the population from which they are drawn?	All elementary, middle, secondary, and post-secondary schools in the United States	Newspaper articles and editorials written about the school voucher issue in Michigan from May 1, 2000 to November 30, 2000.
4. What is the context relative to which data are analyzed?	The extent to which educational institutions varied in their expressed purposes found in their mission statements.	The extent to which journalists used interpretive frames for agenda setting in examining newspaper coverage of the school voucher issue during a national election.
5. What are the boundaries of the analysis?	The mission statements had to be on web sites that were linked either to two comprehensive sites (one for K-12 schools and one for colleges).	The boundaries existed for the current study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The time limitation from May 1 through November 30 • Two newspapers, <i>The Detroit News</i> and <i>Detroit Free Press</i> • Use of articles and editorials that were included on the NewsBank data base. Commentaries and Letters to the Editorial were excluded from the study.
6. What is the target of the inferences?	Educational institutions who need to investigate how their mission statements reflect the types of students they are attracting and the outcomes they want to obtain for these students.	The use of framing in newspaper articles and by editorials boards to determine the existence of agenda setting by the two local newspapers. In addition, themes that reflect race, social equity, and fiscal conservatism are also a target of the inferences.

Content analysis can be approached from several perspectives. For example, “interpretative content analysis” is employed when researchers use a theoretical basis for collecting data, without expecting to generalize to a larger population (i.e. they are merely attempting to describe or explain data). The current study uses agenda setting as the theoretical basis to collect data that provides evidence of analyzing, explaining, and evaluating to interpret frames used in newspaper articles and editorials. Another supportive role is “deviate-results content analysis.” This method examines stimuli that fail to comply with the balance of the sample. Such an examination may help to explain unexpected variations. For the purpose of this study, hypothesis-generating and interpretive content analyses have been selected (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). Because a strong link between content analysis and theory testing has not been established in previous research, Kolbe and Burnett (1991) build on Lijphart’s (1971) categorizations for case study analysis by providing structure in this area. They list five roles for content analysis in developing theory. Table 3 presents the five roles and their relevance for the current study.

Table 3

Five Roles of Content Analysis

Role of Content Analysis (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991)	Relevance to the Current Study
1. Content analysis is important when collecting data about communications when a theoretical basis has not been strongly established.	This role is not pertinent to the study because theories about agenda setting and framing have been well established in previous literature.
2. Interpretive content analyses uses a theoretical perspective to collect data, without making generalizations to a larger population (i.e., they are describing or explaining data rather than testing data).	The study uses interpretive content analysis to collect data about a local policy issue (school vouchers). The data being collected are newspaper articles and editorials that reflect agenda setting and framing of school vouchers.
3. Hypothesis-generating content analyses is used to make predictions about a phenomenon and offer exploratory value to researchers to provide evidence for specific hypotheses.	The purpose of the study is to generate hypotheses that explore the use of framing to set the agenda regarding the use of vouchers in failing school districts in Michigan. The investigator is able to make predictions about the behaviors of the reporters and editorial boards using hypothesis-generating content analyses.
4. Theory-confirming content analysis examines what is predicted based on established theories. These theories can then be supported or refuted using the results of the content analysis.	Results of the content analysis can be used to confirm agenda setting theory for a public policy issue at a local level that could have national implications. The use of framing in newspapers can provide the evidence needed for theory confirmation.
5. Deviant-results content analysis can be used to examine unpredicted variations can be used to explain deviant results.	This role of content analysis is not pertinent to this study because the study is not expected to find deviant results.

These roles support the use of content analysis in theory generation and testing.

Content analysis can make a major contribution to research through its ability to embellish, augment, accumulate, and describe phenomenon found in data. Kolbe and Burnett (1991) argue, "The need for systematic study and information acquisition, part of the initial steps in theory development, can be readily provided by content-analysis research" (p. 248).

The use of content analysis has been well established in research literature and is looked upon as a valid way to develop and test theory. Moving from the theoretical basis for content analysis to its actual use in research requires an examination of techniques that can be used in conducting a content analysis.

Content analysis relies on coding and categorizing data included in the stories

being studied. According to Weber (1990), “A category is a group of words with similar meaning or connotations” (p. 37). The General Accounting Office (GAO; 1996) asserts that categories developed in the content analysis must be mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Mutually exclusive means that membership in one category excludes the item from being included in any other category. Exhaustive is defined as including all categories of interest without exception. Leaving out categories can provide a source of bias in the content analysis.

Content analysis is used in the current study to determine the extent to which two local newspapers differed in framing their reporting and editorials on issues surrounding Michigan Ballot Proposal 00-1: Tuition Vouchers. Content analysis is being used to describe information in a systematic way by identifying characteristics of messages written by either journalists or the editorial boards. This method allows the investigator to search the text for interpretive frames (i.e., *analyzing*, *explaining* and *evaluating*). The use of content analysis in the current study can help confirm or not confirm the use of agenda setting theory by the two newspapers. The findings may suggest that newspapers help make some issues salient, while minimizing or failing to mention other issues. Thus media can affect agenda setting particularly in framing the school voucher issue by two major local newspapers in Detroit, Michigan.

Independent and Dependent Variables

The independent variables are reporters, editorial boards and newspapers. The independent variables are used to compare and contrast types of framing between and within reporters and editorial boards, as well as between and within the two newspapers (*The Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press*). The type of framing by reporters/editorial boards is the dependent variable in this dissertation. This dependent variable has three

types: interpretive, descriptive, and a combination of both.

- *Interpretive framing* uses speculation, prediction and projecting by the journalists.
- *Descriptive framing* uses a straightforward description of events, requiring reporters to present facts in terms of who, what, when, and where. Speculation and interpretation are left to the reader (Patterson, 2000b). *Both* is a category developed that uses a combination of interpretive and descriptive framing which incorporates speculation and descriptively states the facts involving who, what, when, and where.

The ways in which reporters/editorial boards write about an issue (i.e., school vouchers) in selected articles and editorials can produce possible descriptors that create interpretive frames. These descriptors serve as moderating variables which are indicators of interpretive framing used in reporting styles by the journalists' analyzing, explaining and evaluating when writing stories. These concepts are used by reporters/editors in articles and editorials that exhibit the use of interpretive framing. Patterson (2002, personal communication via e-mail) indicated that, "news stories roughly divide between those that are descriptive in form (telling the "what") and those that tell the "why" through analysis and explanation." Patterson indicated that every newspaper article includes some form of description, most will include some level of analysis and interpretation. In the current study, keywords and actions by journalists determine whether three types of interpretive frames are employed in the articles. The definitions of the three types of interpretive frames are:

- *Analyzing* results from breaking up or separating items in an article/editorial to assist readers to understand the topic being covered. Journalists/editors

present an analysis to provide a close examination of topics included in the article. Journalists/editors offer alternate ways to look at the same picture or use examples to support a particular position or point of view. They often use conjunctions (e.g., and, but, or), cite sources/data, and/or mention universities/quoting professors.

- *Explaining* is the process of providing additional information for readers about the topic to make the subject matter clearer. Journalists/editors use explanation in their articles/editorials in an attempt to make points clearer for readers. The journalist uses transitions that add information to provide clarity for the reader (e.g., with, which, because, that, where) and verbs that depict what type of action is happening in the article. Adjectives can be used to describe nouns (e.g., “*heavy* voter turnout”) that provide additional explanation in an article. When the journalist uses explanation, s/he is attempting to provide clarity regarding the information presented in the article.
- *Evaluating* is the journalists’/editors’ judging, determining, or fixing a value to a person place or thing. Journalists/editors often use value adjectives (e.g., most, always, never, crucial) to present an evaluation of a topic. Another cue to this type of framing is the use of comparative or superlative adverbs (e.g. better, best, badly).

The current study seeks to determine the level of support or nonsupport that the article/editorial appear to have. Therefore, four categories are developed and defined below:

- *Not supportive* the article/editorial indicates that vouchers should not be

approved by voters (Proposal 00-1 should fail).

- *Supportive* the article/editorial indicates that vouchers should be approved by voters (Proposal 00-1 should pass).
- *Neutral* the article/editorial does not take a clear position on whether or not vouchers should be approved by voters.
- *Unclear* the position that the newspaper/editorial board/reporter takes on the school voucher issue in the article/editorial cannot be determined.

Data Collection Procedures

The articles and editorials used in this study were obtained from two major local newspapers: the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*. Articles for *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* were obtained from “Newsbank,” an electronic database of newspaper articles available on the Wayne State University library system. The same keyword searches were used for the *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press*. Keywords used to obtain articles and editorials on the school voucher issue included: school voucher(s), educational voucher(s), and school choice. The search of this electronic data base provided articles and editorials from the *Detroit News* (n=75) and *Detroit Free Press* (n=95).

The Coding Process

The coding schema for the current study is based on the work of Stelmer (2001) and Wimmer and Dominick (1999). Stelmer (2001) indicates the coding process has two different approaches, emergent and a priori. Categories are developed following preliminary examination of the data in emergent coding. Five specific steps for emergent coding are outlined by Haney, Russell, Gulek, and Fierros (1998). Table 4 presents the steps described by Haney et al. and their use in the current study.

Table 4
Steps for Emergent Coding

Steps for Emergent Coding (Haney et al., 1998)	Use in Current Study
1. Two coders review the material independently and develop a set of elements that can be used to form a checklist.	Three coders (the investigator and two bachelor-prepared coders trained by the investigator) independently reviewed the articles and editorials using a coding dictionary and the Coding Form.
2. The coders compare notes and checklists and reconcile any differences that are in the checklists.	After coding 8 articles and editorials (4 from <i>The Detroit News</i> and 4 from the <i>Detroit Free Press</i>), the investigator met with the coders to compare results. They reconciled their differences and made changes to the coding dictionary and the Coding Form.
3. The coders develop a consolidated checklist to apply coding independently to additional data.	As a result of the reconciliation and collaboration by the coders in #2, the Interpretive/ Descriptive Framing Tally Sheet was developed to facilitate coding and determine the extent to which reporters and editorial boards used framing in terms of descriptive, interpretive (analyzing, explaining, and/or evaluating), or a combination of both.
4. The coders determine the reliability of the coding.	The coders' results were analyzed using analysis of variance procedures to determine if the coding they applied to 29 articles differed significantly among them. If there is no significant difference, the coding is considered reliable in terms of consistency.
5. The coders continue coding, completing periodic quality control checks.	The coders continued reading and coding the articles and editorials to provide the data needed in the content analysis. The investigator continued to check on the consensus of the coders to ensure consistency. If differences were occurring, the investigator read the article or editorial and made the decision regarding the appropriate codes.

When using a priori coding, categories are established prior to analyzing the data, with the categories based on some theory. The investigator confers with the two coders to agree on categories and data are coded using these categories. The coding schematic can be revised if necessary, with categories tightened to the extent that mutual exclusiveness and exhaustiveness are maximized (Weber, 1990).

Measurement Tools

The coding process includes the development and use of a Code Dictionary (See Appendix B), along with lists of journalistic actions to assist coders in categorizing the

interpretive frames accurately. Coding forms, Interpretative/Descriptive Framing Tally Sheet, and a Coder's Instruction Guide (See Appendix C) are developed to provide consistency in the coding process.

The coding dictionary is based on a review of the literature on the use of content analysis. Wimmer and Dominick's (1999) coding dictionary explains each element examined in the content analysis. The purpose of the coding dictionary is to provide a consistent resource for coders to use when reading and interpreting information in the newspaper articles/editorials. The coding dictionary is considered to be dynamic, with changes made throughout the coding process categories to tighten the parameter to the extent that mutual exclusiveness and exhaustiveness are maximized (Weber, 1990). A coding form was developed to record information from newspaper articles/editorials consistently. This form provides a structured format for coders that limits the content analysis to those topics specifically included in the study. The areas that are incorporated into the coding form are: article and author information, the degree to which each of the three types of interpretative framing is used in the articles/editorials, inclusion of candidates and other prominent individuals/interest groups who were interviewed or cited in the article/editorial, and emergence of racial, social equality, and fiscal conservatism themes in the articles. This form was amenable to change as the study continued to include all pertinent information from the article that could be used to address the hypotheses developed for this study.

An Interpretative/Descriptive Framing Tally Sheet was developed to allow the coders to record the number of times that each type of interpretative framing or descriptive reporting is used in the article/editorial. Four columns are provided, including analysing, explaining, evaluating, and description. The coder could place a check mark in

the appropriate column(s) to indicate s/he had encountered one of these types of frames in the article in his/her reading. While coders could place multiple check marks for more than one type of interpretative reporting, only one check mark is allowed in the descriptive column, because descriptive information (defined as *who*, *what*, *where*, or *when*) is contained in each paragraph. The percentage of each type of interpretative frames is determined by counting the paragraphs and dividing the sum of each type of interpretative frame by the number of paragraphs. To determine if the article is primarily descriptive or interpretive, or both, the investigator totals the number of interpretative paragraphs included in the article and divided them by the number of paragraphs plus 1 (title). If the resultant answer is equal to or greater than 3, the article is considered interpretative. If the number is greater than 0 or less than 3, the article is considered to have both descriptive and interpretative elements.

Reliability of the coding process.

Lasswell (1965) offers as an example of reliability, the same person using the same ruler in successive measurements of the same object. According to Weber (1990), "To make valid inferences from the test, it is important that the classification process be reliable in the sense of being consistent: Different people should code the same text in the same way" (p. 12). He asserts that reliability problems generally emerge from the ambiguity of word meanings, category definitions, or other coding rules. Researchers who develop the coding scheme may be so closely aligned with the project that they have created shared and hidden meanings within the coding, resulting in artificially-inflated reliability coefficients (Krippendorff, 1980). To avoid this situation, an important step in content analysis is development of a set of explicit instructions for coding (coding dictionary). The use of a coding dictionary allows external coders to be trained and to

develop consistency in coding the articles.

Stemler (2001) reported that reliability is generally determined in two ways:

- Stability (intra-rater reliability) – Obtaining the same results from the same coder on multiple coding trials.
- Reproducibility (inter-rater reliability) – Obtaining the same results from different coders.

Calculating reliability can be determined in more than one way. The simplest method is to measure the percent of agreement among raters by adding the number of cases that are coded the same and dividing by the total number of cases. A problem with this approach is that coders will agree in some cases by chance and this method does not allow for this occurrence.

Because of the variability in the topics (i.e., political discussions, economic realities of vouchers, candidate endorsement, religious input, etc.) that are included in the articles, traditional forms of reliability testing (e.g., Cronbach's alpha coefficients) are not appropriate. Small differences among the coders are not considered problematic, but in using Kendall's coefficient of determination, any variance reduces the reliability coefficient. To control for these issues and determine if the coders are interpreting the articles in a similar fashion, one-way analysis of variance statistical procedures is used to determine if there is an overall difference between the codes assigned for interpretation, *analyzing*, *evaluating*, and *explaining*, while controlling for the two newspapers. The data includes reports from the three coders, (*with one of the coders being the investigator*) for 10 articles presented in *The Detroit News* and 19 articles presented in the *Detroit Free Press*. Results of these analyses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
 One-way Analysis of Variance
 Reliability of Coding for *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*

Type	Number	Mean	SD	DF	F Ratio	Sig of F
<i>The Detroit News</i> (N=10)						
Interpretation						
Coder 1	10	7.00	1.05	2, 27	0.10	0.903
Coder 2	10	7.10	1.10			
Coder 3	10	7.20	.79			
Analyzing						
Coder 1	10	2.70	1.49	2, 27	0.27	0.769
Coder 2	10	2.70	1.16			
Coder 3	10	2.30	1.57			
Explaining						
Coder 1	10	5.00	1.25	2, 27	2.99	0.067
Coder 2	10	4.30	1.42			
Coder 3	10	5.70	1.16			
Evaluating						
Coder 1	10	6.20	1.32	2, 27	0.34	0.714
Coder 2	10	6.50	1.08			
Coder 3	10	6.00	1.63			
<i>Detroit Free Press</i> (N=19)						
Interpretation						
Coder 1	19	6.68	1.06	2, 54	0.42	0.658
Coder 2	19	6.63	1.30			
Coder 3	19	6.32	1.60			
Analyzing						
Coder 1	19	2.42	1.26	2, 54	1.23	0.301
Coder 2	19	2.37	1.26			
Coder 3	19	1.84	1.26			
Explaining						
Coder 1	19	5.26	.87	2, 54	2.17	0.124
Coder 2	19	4.58	.77			
Coder 3	19	5.00	1.33			
Evaluating						
Coder 1	19	5.37	1.46	2, 54	3.01	0.058
Coder 2	19	5.95	1.72			
Coder 3	19	4.74	1.37			

Results of the one-way ANOVA tests provides no evidence of statistically significant differences among the coders on the codes assigned for interpretation, analyzing, explaining, and evaluating. As a result, the assigned codes are considered statistically equivalent. The rationale for selecting 10 stories from *The Detroit News* in

comparison to 19 stories from the *Detroit Free Press* was twofold. First, 22 more articles were printed in the *Detroit Free Press* (109 stories) than in *The Detroit News* (87 stories). Second, in using the systematic selection of every fourth article in the reliability study, five articles were voided in *The Detroit News*, with two voided in the *Detroit Free Press*. The story was voided because of the boolean algebra used in key word searches on Newsbank. The words, school voucher and educational voucher, were used in the keyword search and produced all articles and editorials that included the words voucher(s), school, and/or education. As a result, stories that used these keywords in a different context (e.g., airplane vouchers and vouchers for turkeys) appeared in the results from Newsbank. Table 6 presents a categorization of the articles that were voided in each newspaper.

Table 6

The Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press
Summary and Categorization of Voided Stories

	Newspapers					
	<i>The Detroit News</i>			<i>Detroit Free Press</i>		
	Articles	Editorials	Total	Articles	Editorials	Total
Original Articles from News Bank	73	14	87	78	31	109
Articles and Editorials Voided						
<i>The Detroit News</i>						
Article Number – DA16, DB9, DC1, DC22, DC25	5	0	5			
Editorial Number						
No endorsements for editorials DB1, DB20, DB3, DC21	0	4	4			
Endorsements DC8, DC10, DC13	0	3	3			
<i>The Detroit Free Press</i>						
Article Number – FA14, FA16, FB7, FB24, FC27, FD6				6	0	6
Editorial Number						
No endorsements for editorials FA5, FA30, FB8, FC11, FD2, FD15				0	6	6
Endorsements FC19, FD4				0	2	2
Total Articles and Editorials Voided	5	7	12	6	8	14
Total Articles in Study	68	7	75	72	23	95

Validity

The validity of a measuring device is to measure what it purports to measure. According to Wimmer and Dominick (1999), definitions used in the content analysis are important considerations in determining the validity of the analysis. This technique is closely aligned with face validity which assumes that using rigidly and satisfactorily defined categories contributes to the validity of the coding for content analysis. Wimmer and Dominick indicate that face validity is the most common type of validity reported in qualitative research. Definitions were developed for determining the interpretive status of the articles and the extent to which *analyzing*, *explaining*, and *evaluating* are used in the

articles. The adherence to these definitions when coding the articles provides the assumption of face validity.

Coding Procedures.

A code dictionary and coding form were developed for use in reading and interpreting each of the articles/editorials that were included in the study. The purpose of the code dictionary was to provide concrete explanations and examples of possible items within an article/editorial. Based on the code dictionary, a coding form was developed to provide a structured method to record data from the newspaper articles/editorials. As an adjunct to the coding form, an Interpretative/ Descriptive Framing Tally Sheet was used to determine the extent to which the journalists were *analyzing*, *explaining*, and *evaluating* in each article to address the questions of the use of these types of frames on the coding form.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to test the coding dictionary and coding forms to determine their viability in recording the information from newspaper articles. The two coders had completed bachelor degrees in business and political science/communications. Two coders and the investigator read and coded eight articles from *The Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* to determine interrater reliability between the coders. After completing the coding for the pilot study, the investigator met with the coders who were reading the stories on Monday, September 16, 2002. The purpose of this meeting was to understand problems that had occurred with the pilot study in terms of determining how to code the articles/editorials objectively, while minimizing confusion and ambiguity regarding definitions and themes included in the article/editorial. As a result of this meeting, the Coders' Instruction Guide was developed

to provide specific examples and definitions to help the coding process become more objective and less subject to interpretation. Based on the comments and concerns of the two coders who worked on the pilot study, the Coding Dictionary also was modified to better reflect the items that were being coded and recorded.

Methods use by coders to code information.

All stories were read first to understand the content of the article. The two coders coded the articles independently, first determining the type of framing. They used definitions of interpretive and descriptive framing by Patterson (2000b). The coders then addressed the items on the coding form, using the coding instruction guide as a tool to assist them in completing the coding form. Where differences were occurring, the coders discussed their views until a consensus was achieved and needed changes were implemented to support the agreed upon decisions.

In addition to addressing specific items on the coding form, the coders were asked to review the article to determine if themes emerge from the articles. For example, possible themes that could emerge are *racial, social equality, and fiscal conservatism*. The study was not limited to these specific themes, as other themes (e.g., special events) could have emerged during the coding stage or from the analysis. Data are analyzed to learn whether, and how, these themes are introduced and treated in the editorial pages/news reports. They also are used to examine how journalists/editorial boards used interpretive styles of reporting within and across the two newspapers with respect to the school voucher issue.

The investigator also discovered that parts of speech (e.g., conjunctions, verbs, adjectives and transitional words) serve as cues for coders to categorize the data in one/both and/or all of the categories. According to Berg (1995):

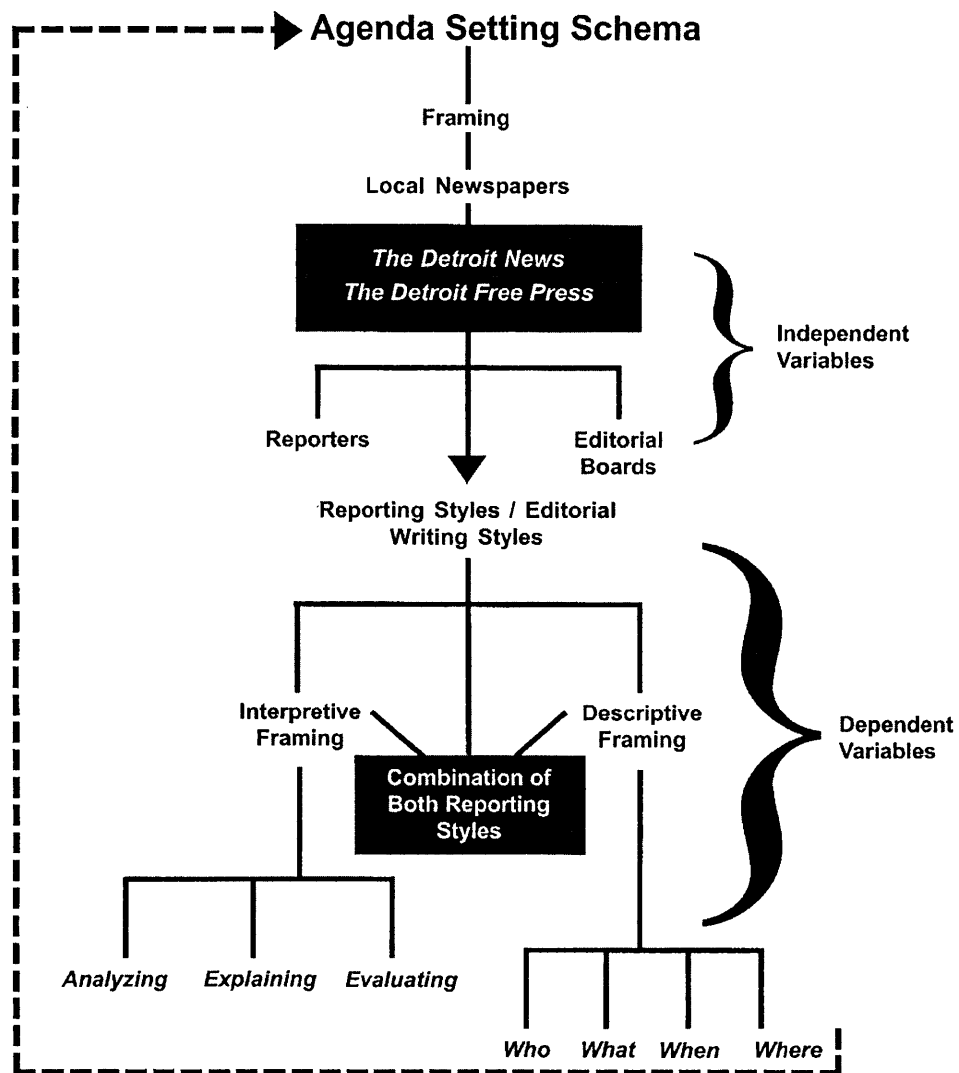
The criteria selection used in any given content analysis must be sufficiently exhaustive to account for each variation of message content and must be rigidly and consistently applied so that other researchers of readers, looking at the same messages, would obtain the same or comparable results. (p.175)

After meeting with coders to discuss areas where differences were revealed in coding, explicit rules were discussed (Berg 1995) and more stringent definitions were developed. This effort assisted in the refinement of the criteria selection for each category to improve reliability and validity once there was an agreement on the changes.

Types of Framing

A schema indicating independent and dependent variables that are included in this study are shown in Figure 1. This schema provides a map that indicates how the independent variables (reporters, editorial boards, and newspapers) use framing as a means of agenda setting. Figure 1 also presents a mapping of agenda setting building on the literature reviewed for this study. The investigator presents a schema depicting how agenda setting is used by *The Detroit News*, the *Detroit Free Press* and their news reporters/editorial boards. It shows a direct relationship from agenda setting to framing and illustrates reporting styles. The schema also shows the newspapers relationship to their reporters and editorial boards and their connection to framing.

Figure 1



Agenda setting theory is the ability of newspapers to transfer the salience of items on their agendas to the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Cohen (1963) described the use of agenda setting by stating that “the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about*” (p. 13). The manner in which local newspapers frame their articles to present a specific perspective can affect agenda setting on a policy issue, such as school vouchers. According to Patterson (2000b), journalist use interpretive and

descriptive styles of reporting to frame articles and editorials by exploring, probing further, and dissecting information. Interpretive framing is assessed by verifying each of the three components that Patterson uses to define interpretive framing (*analyzing, explaining and evaluating*). The agenda setting schema will be tested with the following hypotheses:

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are tested in the study:

Hypothesis 1a. The more stories Reporters write on school voucher issue Proposal 00-1 the more likely they are to use interpretive frames in their reporting.

Hypothesis 1b. The more stories Editors write on the school voucher issue, Proposal 00-1, the more likely they are to use interpretive frames in their reporting.

Rationale for Hypothesis 1:

Journalists who are more familiar with educational issues will interpret rather than describe the voucher issues. For example, reporters who work on educational issues as their regular assignment might compare the relevance of the voucher issue to people within Detroit and those who live in the suburbs. A reporter who does not work specifically on educational issues may only report the details of a meeting without interpretation.

The investigator develops biographical profiles of editors/journalists using their experiences in covering educational stories and issues, length of service with the newspaper and level of education. These profiles are useful in examining the interpretive reporting styles of reporters /editorial boards used in framing the Michigan Tuition Voucher Proposal 00-1.

Operationalization of hypothesis 1:

1. The number of stories that journalists have been reporting on educational issues are used to determine if these journalistic experiences affect the manner in which they describe or interpret their coverage of the voucher issue.
2. Patterson's (2000b) definition of interpretation and description is used to determine if journalists are interpreting or describing the story.

Hypothesis 2. The closer the story is to the election the more likely the reporter is to use an interpretive frame.

Rationale for Hypothesis 2

Reporters, especially after a newspaper has made an endorsement either for or against an issue or candidate, are more likely to attempt to sway their readers to their newspaper's position or stance, as either for or against an issue. As asserted by Barbour and Wright (2001), newspaper, as a media, not only tells people *what issues* to think about, but how to *think about those issues*. As the election day comes closer, reporters structure their articles to influence how their readers should think about an issue, such as vouchers. The position taken by candidates endorsed by the newspaper may also have an effect on the framing and interpretation of the issue.

Operationalization of Hypothesis 2

1. Patterson's (2000b) definition of interpretative and descriptive reporting is used to determine if journalists are interpreting or describing the story or editorial.
2. The story's content is examined and the number of months until the election for each story reported on are used to determine if reporters framed the voucher issue in a more interpretive manner the closer time approached the

November 7, 2000 election date.

Hypothesis 3a. Reporters from *The Detroit News* are more likely to use an interpretive frame that is supportive of Proposal 00-1.

Hypothesis 3b. Editors from *The Detroit News* are more likely to use an interpretive that is supportive of Proposal 00-1.

Hypothesis 3c. Reporters from *The Detroit Free Press* are more likely to use an interpretive frame that is not supportive of Proposal 00-1.

Hypothesis 3d. Editors from *The Detroit Free Press* are more likely to use an interpretive that is not supportive of Proposal 00-1.

Rationale for Hypothesis 3

A review of articles published in the newspapers provides confirmation that overall during the 2000 presidential elections, *The Detroit News* supports Republican candidates campaigning for major political offices, such as, President, Governor and U.S. Senate, while the *Detroit Free Press* generally supports Democratic candidates for these same positions. *The Detroit News* endorsed Republican candidates – George Bush for President, Spencer Abraham for U. S. Senate in 2000 and in 2002, Dick Pothumus for Governor. The *Detroit Free Press* endorsed Democratic candidates in 2000 – Al Gore for President, Debbie Stabenow for U.S. Senate and in 2002, Jennifer Granholm for Governor. According to Fico and Cote (1999), the editorial boards of the newspapers set the tone for the paper, with reporters likely to write their articles to reflect this tone. Responding to editorial cues, reporters use their time and energy to write professionally relevant stories on their assigned topics.

Operationalization Hypothesis 3

The investigator examines the text within each story to determine if the

interpretive frame supports, does not support or is indifferent/neutral toward Proposal 00-1. For example, a question asked in this study is, does the story argue that Proposal 00-1 could help, hurt, or be indifferent to students, public/private schools and teachers, etc. if passed.

Hypothesis 4a. Following the endorsement of the Republican presidential candidate, George Bush, on October 22, 2000 by the editorial board of the *Detroit News*, it is hypothesized that newspaper editorials will show a significant increase in the use of interpretive frames in reference to Proposal 00-1.

Hypothesis 4b. Following the endorsement of the Republican presidential candidate, George Bush, on October 22, 2000 by the editorial board of *The Detroit News*, it is hypothesized that newspaper editorials will show a significant increase in prominent individuals and interest groups interviewed in support of Proposal 00-1.

Hypothesis 4c. Following the endorsement of the Republican presidential candidate, George Bush, on October 22, 2000 by the editorial board of *The Detroit News*, it is hypothesized that newspaper articles will show a significant increase in the use of evaluative framing in a positive direction.

Rationale for Hypothesis 4

When newspapers endorse a major candidate, they may frame their articles in terms that support the candidate's issues. The coverage they give to the issue reflects this endorsement by the number of articles, length of stories, and the use of analysis, evaluation, and explanation as interpretive framing of the stories to support the candidate's position on the issue. According to Graber (2002), the kind of interpretation that is chosen can affect the political consequences of newspaper stories. The editorial board members review events of the day (e.g., endorsement of a candidate and/or issue)

and focus their attention on them by interpreting their meanings, putting them in the context, and speculating about their consequences.

Hypothesis 5a. Following the endorsement of Democratic presidential candidate, Al Gore on October 20, 2000 by the editorial board of the *Detroit Free Press*, it is hypothesized that newspaper articles will show a significant increase in the use of interpretive frames in reference to Proposal 00-1.

Hypothesis 5b. Following the endorsement of the Democratic presidential candidate, Al Gore, on October 20, 2000 by the editorial board of the *Detroit Free Press*, it is hypothesized that newspaper articles will show a significant increase in prominent individuals and interest groups interviewed who were opposed to Proposal 00-1.

Hypothesis 5c. Following the endorsement of the Democratic presidential candidate, Al Gore, on October 22, 2000 by the editorial board of the *Detroit Free Press*, it is hypothesized that newspaper articles will show a significant increase in the use of evaluative framing in a negative direction in reference to Proposal 00-1.

Rationale for Hypothesis 5

The inclusion of sources (e.g., individuals, leaders and interest groups) who support the issue can be an indication of the type of support the newspaper is giving to the issue. For example, if stories only include statements from prominent individuals/leaders and interest groups who either support or oppose (depending on the newspaper in which the article is presented) the issue, then it could be concluded that the paper is presenting only one side of the issue. A balanced view of an issue would include statements from both sides.

Operationalization of Hypothesis 4 and 5:

The endorsement of the major candidates was determined for each of the newspapers. The newspaper articles were examined to determine if the information incorporated within the articles reflected the candidates' position on vouchers. Articles that appeared before the endorsement and those that appeared after the endorsement in the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News* were examined in terms of: number of articles on vouchers, names and positions of individuals/leaders and special interest groups interviewed or cited in the article, placement within the newspaper, number of paragraphs in the story, and tone (e.g., supportive, not supportive, or neutral framing of the story in the newspaper), types of interpretation used in framing the article (e.g., analyzing, evaluating, and explaining). Tankard et al. (1991) refers to these focal points of news presentations and labels them "framing mechanisms" (p. 15). Tankard et al (1991) asserts that media frames are the emphasis given to topics in the media, such as placement and size as well as other elements that influence the prominence of a news item. Photographs, pull quotes, subheads, etc. all serve to give a story in a newspaper more prominence. This aspect of salience needs to be examined when investigating the relationship between the salience of items on the media agenda and the salience of those items on the public agenda.

Themes

In addition to addressing the hypotheses that have been developed for this study, the following themes were also examined descriptively to determine the extent to which they were presented in the newspaper articles.

The racial theme is selected because the Metropolitan Detroit area is racially segregated and has been a major issue of contention in the area for years. According to an

article written by Trowbridge (*The Detroit News*, February 19, 2002), Metro Detroit is deeply divided by race and its people pay every day for that stark division. Those facts are at the heart of “The Cost of Segregation,” a three-week series by the Detroit News and WDIV-TV examined census data and historical documents, gathered opinion in two polls and conducted hundreds of interviews for the examination of segregation in the nation’s most segregated metropolis. Their findings confirm Massey and Denton’s (1993) finding cited by Reynolds Farley who examined data collected in the University of Michigan’s Detroit Area Survey. The analysis of the research found that affluent Blacks who could afford to move outside the ghetto do not want to live in White areas, although they are knowledgeable of housing costs in suburban areas. Massey and Denton (1993) argue that:

Black segregation remains universally high while that of Hispanics and Asians falls progressively as status rises. Only blacks experience a pattern of constant, high segregation that is impervious to socioeconomic influences. The persistence of racial segregation in American cities, therefore, is a matter of race and not class. The residential segregation of African Americans cannot be attributed in any meaningful way to the socioeconomic disadvantages they experience, however serious these may be. (p. 88)

Trowbridge (*The Detroit News* February 19, 2002) reported additional findings that, “. . . segregation extends to our schools, where nearly three out of four area students learn in highly segregated classrooms. Metro Detroiters seem content with segregation: More than half of the respondents in a scientific poll of attitudes said segregation is, at least sometimes, a good idea.” A special television report aired on March 23, 2002 by Emory King and Roger Weber, reporters for WDIV (Channel 4) in Detroit, indicates that segregation in the Detroit metropolitan area continues to be an important issue. As a result, citizens in Detroit and other areas with high concentrations of minority ethnic

groups, view vouchers differently from citizens who lived in suburbs because eligibility for vouchers was going to benefit urban students who were predominately Black.

Wilson (1996) defines race as a social structural variable that indicates people's positions (in terms of social status dependent on skin color) and their networks of relationship in society. Wilson argues further, that Black social and economic problems stem from the unusually disadvantaged class position of Blacks. Poverty is now divorced from race and perpetuated by a profound group of factors. For example, poor schooling, unstable family situations, and joblessness in cities develop because of a move from manufacturing to a service economy (Wilson, 1978). While, Glasgow (1980) places emphasis on racism arguing that because of White prejudice and discrimination have persisted in a many forms, both overt and covert, the color of one's skin continues to be a powerful basis of stratification in America. Loury (1997) holds a similar view that race still matters in society and culture. "Perhaps I could put it this way: It's not the *figment of the pigment* but the *enigma of the stigma* that underlies our drama in Black and White" (p. 17). Loury's point is that work needs to be done to dispel stereotypes that Black people in this country face daily in terms of waking up each morning and being Black in America. He argues that, "race surely has something to do with the survival in that man's mind of a fealty to 'his people'" (p. 17).

For the purpose of the current study, race is defined as a social construct as opposed to a biological construct. Wilson's (1996) definition is used to develop code words for racial themes. Some code words used to define race include, but are not limited to:

Race: Black, White, Hispanic, and other ethnicities i.e. African American, Anglo American, Caucasian, Asian, Diversity, Cultural, Urban, At-Risk.
Geographical locations that were mentioned such as, Detroit and Inkster

were read closely to determine if race was stated or implied.

Social Equality was selected because equality and quality have become synonymous in the national discussion of providing better educational opportunities for all children. Residential segregation remains a fact of American life and has major ramifications in determining the quality of schooling available to Blacks. Property of the Black middle and working classes appreciates more slowly than property of the White middle and working classes, thus increasing the gap in wealth between Black and White Americans; and concentrating poverty in Black neighbourhoods. The negative effects of this segregation results in decreasing the ability for poor Blacks to escape neighbourhoods with substantial levels of poverty (Massey, 1990).

The Declaration of Independence states that all men are created equal with certain inalienable rights. The rights issue continues to play key roles in metropolitan politics. According to Oliver and Shapiro (1995), economic and wealth differences between Blacks and Whites underlie the permanence of social and economic inequities in the United States. When considered in the aggregate, zero or negative financial assets are found among Black families. For every dollar that White middle class families have in wealth, Black middle class families have 15¢. Oliver and Shapiro asserted that barriers to social equality include: heritage of slavery and the reconstruction era, limited educational opportunities, redlining practices that restrict access to capital, and development of the modern suburb. These barriers have been identified as impediments to Black economic success. Oliver and Shapiro indicated that three layers of inequality are responsible for observed racial differences in financial wealth: a) social distinctions in human capital accumulation and market operations, b) institutional and policy factors (i.e., limited access to mortgage and housing markets and artificial barriers associated with other

credit markets; and c) intergenerational transmission of wealth.

This study seeks to examine the concept of social equality as it was framed in the two newspapers. Social equality is defined as “Fair access to livelihood, education, and resources; full participation in the political and cultural life of the community and self-determination in meeting fundamental needs. According to Martin Luther King, injustice for one is injustice for all. Social Equality is the cornerstone of social capital, which cannot be maintained for a few at the expense of many (“The patterns of a conservation,” 2003). According to Kinder and Sanders (1996) in their book, *Divided by Color*:

The history of equal opportunity in education, the object of our second policy question, lies more in the courts than in the legislative or executive branch of government. Through the middle of the twentieth century, segregation of the public schools in the United States was virtually complete. Then, on May 17, 1954, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Chief Justice Earl Warren concluded for a unanimous Supreme Court that “in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.

By 1963 less than 12,000 Black students in the South/about one-half of one percent of the total Black student population, were attending schools with Whites. Hochschild (1984) addresses the issue of social equality in *The New American Dilemma* arguing that incremental and participatory methods to desegregate schools did not work for blacks or whites. Blacks ended up with little freedom and equality and few educational gains were made for anyone. Hochschild argues that rapid extensive change imposed by nonelected officials and without citizen involvement at a centralized level is required. Furthermore, Hochschild supports professionalizing education and removing it from the political fray and protect it from meddling individuals and groups who are novices. The author concludes by indicating that the American dilemma is the choice is between the status quo, which helps a few at the expense of many and change which can benefit many but is

expected to harm a few.

According to Orfield, Wald, and Sanni (2001), segregation has continued to intensify during the 1990s. The investigators found that

. . . most of the progress of Black students since the 1960s was eliminated during a decade which brought three Supreme Court decisions limiting desegregation remedies. The data also shows that Latinos, the nation's largest minority, have become increasingly isolated for the last 30 years, with segregation surpassing that of Blacks, and the rapid growth of suburban minorities has not produced integrated schools.

This resegregation is happening despite the nation's growing diversity, in particular the rapid growth of 245% in the Latino student population over the last 30 years. According Orfield et al. (2001), co-director of The Civil Rights Project and professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, resegregation is contributing to a growing gap in quality between the schools attended by White students and those serving a large proportion of minority schools.

Though our schools will be our first major institutions to experience non-White majorities," says Orfield et al., "our research consistently shows that schools are becoming increasingly segregated and are offering students vastly unequal educational opportunities. (p.1)

Social equality: was identified in the current study by searching for keywords, such as; *fairness, impartiality, justice* in the text of all articles and editorials.

Fiscal conservatism was selected as a theme in this study because providing education to students does not occur without a cost and this study is interested in examining how money and spending used to improve the quality of education for all children was framed in the papers.

Fiscal conservative is defined as the role of government as the enforcer of the principles accepted for the organization of society in general. This definition assumes that a society that takes freedom of the individual, or more realistically the family, as its ultimate objective, seeks to further this objective by relying primarily on voluntary exchange among individuals for the organization of economic activity. According to

Friedman (1987), in a free private enterprise exchange economy, government's primary role is to preserve the rules of the game by enforcing contracts, preventing cohesion and keeping markets free. Government intervention is justified to prevent monopolies, to protect the minority from tyranny by the majority or to provide services that are not achievable through voluntary exchange. Fiscal conservatism clearly takes the side of the individual as opposed to government in procuring the pursuit of necessary goods and services. Keywords to identify fiscal conservatism were: Accountability, responsibility, market, competition, and choice or opportunity.

Each article is coded for information about race, fiscal accountability, and social equality. Dummy variables of yes and no were used to determine if the following themes were addressed in the articles. The investigator employed a qualitative data management software program QSR N6 to conduct keyword searches to examine how frequently some of the keyword were used in the data. The articles are obtained from two major local newspapers, the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* (articles, editorials). Articles for *The Detroit News* were selected by using Newsbank database at Wayne State University Library System. Keyword searches included: School Voucher, School Vouchers, Educational Vouchers and School Choice. The same keyword search is used for *both newspapers*. The coding process included a word count of the frequency of that are deemed clues for the following themes: responsibility/ accountability, taxation were cues for fiscal conservatism; equality/fairness/ justice, at-risk were cues for social equality; black, white, urban, Detroit and Inkster were cues for race, other themes and keywords for the themes and categories are listed in the appendixes (Wimmer & Dominick, 1999). Interest groups and leadership mobilization issues included in the articles and editorials are treated as moderating variables. The number of interest groups

such as Kids First! Yes!, All Kids First, NAACP, Michigan Education Association, etc. that were mentioned as well as, the names of political leaders such as former governor James J. Blanchard, Chairman of All Kids First interest group, Dick and Betsy DeVos leaders of the Kids First! Yes! a group advocating for Proposal 00-1 were counted. The investigator added up the number of times these groups and leaders were mentioned, quoted and/ or interviewed to determine if there were changes before and after the newspaper's endorsement regarding who the journalists elected to mention. The investigator's objective was to determine if the journalists/editors selection of leaders/interest groups mirrored their endorsement. For example *after* the newspaper's endorsement Dick DeVos's name was mentioned in *The Detroit News* 50 times over a 5 days compared to being mentioned 10 times in the months of May through October 20, 2000. These data are placed into a database and the investigator analyzed the results to determine the outcome.

Kingdon (1995) suggests that the media has a short attention span and that the issues are only covered for a short time. While, people on the inside of government are working to set the agenda, usually the media gets the story after a lot of work on the front end has occurred. He argues that interest groups affect the agenda more than the media (p.67). Interest groups are participants outside of government. The interest groups that this study will focus on in the analysis will be the following: "Kids First! Yes!", The Archdiocese of Detroit, "All Kids First!" and MEA. Political leader mobilization will be examined focusing on leaders covered and interviewed in both newspapers who were national and local leaders such as: Presidential Candidates, Vice-President Al Gore, Governor of Texas George W. Bush, Michigan's Governor John Engler and Detroit's Mayor Dennis Archer. The investigator examines people interviewed in *The Detroit*

News and the *Detroit Free Press* who carried the banner in Detroit for the teachers' union, for the Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit, "Kids First! Yes!", and "All Kids First!" when coding the data. Each interest group will be identified according to its type. For example, the Catholic Church Archdiocese is an *ideological interest* group, whereas, the "All Kids First!" and "Kids First! Yes!" are *single-issue* interest groups and the MEA is an *economic* interest group. Finally, conservative is defined as ideas that favor limited government and traditional social order. Liberal is defined as attitudes favoring government action and change as progress (Barbour & Wright, 2001).

Summary

A retrospective, qualitative research design using descriptive analyses and incorporating content analysis methods is used in this study. Newspaper articles and editorials published in *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* from May 1, 2000 to November 30, 2000 on Proposal 00-1, School vouchers, are used as data in this study. The selection of articles included in the study is subject to their inclusion in Newsbank (*Wayne State University database*) and keywords used to search the topics are educational vouchers and school voucher(s). To assure that coding is objective as possible, the investigator develops a code dictionary and coding forms (including a tally sheet). Two external coders who have been trained to code the articles participate in a pilot study that refines the coding process and supports the interrater reliability in the study. The independent variables are the newspapers, reporters, editorial boards with moderating variables of analyzing, explaining and evaluating. The dependent variables are interpretive, descriptive and a combination of both (interpretive/descriptive styles of reporting/framing). Additionally, three themes; *racial*, *social equality* and *fiscal conservatism* are descriptively explored in ancillary findings.

The anticipated findings in this study are that reporters are expected to write more stories on the voucher issue as the election draws near and these stories will use interpretive framing to influence their readers by reflecting the editorial boards' stance on this policy issue. The editorial boards will use their forum to present their conservative or liberal perspectives on the voucher issue, which reflect the national and state political candidates they endorse.

Chapter IV

Findings/Data Analysis on Journalists and Editors

Introduction

According to McCombs and Shaw (1997), the print media contributes to what people read and how citizens think about public policy and political issues. The current study uses McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda setting and Patterson's (2000b) definition of interpretive and descriptive framing to examine how the issue of school vouchers was framed by journalists and editorial boards. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), agenda setting theory is the ability of the mass media to transfer the salience of times on their agendas to the public agenda. This theory was selected for the current study because agenda setting uses framing to transfer the salience of specific attributes about a public policy issue by altering pictures in the minds of readers and creating a coherent image of a public policy issue. McCombs and Shaw (1997) contend that the media may tell readers what to think about, as well as telling them how to think about it, perhaps even what to do about it. Framing shares a focus on public issues in the news and in the voters' minds with agenda-setting research. However, it expands beyond what people talk or think about by examining how they think and talk (Patterson, as cited in McCombs & Shaw, 1997).

Proposal 00-1 (school voucher issue) generated state-wide interest among interest groups, candidates, and policymakers during a presidential election year in Michigan. This controversial issue is selected to determine when and how types of framing; interpretive, descriptive, or a combination of both; are used by journalists (reporters and editorial boards) in their articles and editorials. In newspaper articles and editorials,

interpretive frames can be used as structures to allow citizens who have no direct experience with a topic to understand the context of political discussions and reinforce attitudes. Descriptive frames are used to provide information and facts (e.g., who, what, where, and when) about a topic that a reader may have no prior knowledge. They may be either conscious efforts used to sharpen and focus political elites' interests and ideologies or they may be unconscious, journalistic habits with little or no motivation to persuade (Kinder & Sanders, 1996).

This proposal would allow students in school districts with graduation rates below 66% in 1998-1999 to use tuition vouchers that provide partial tuition to attend nonpublic schools selected by the parent or guardian. Students in seven Michigan school districts, including Detroit Public Schools, would have been eligible to receive school vouchers in the amount of approximately \$3,300 if the Proposal 00-1 had passed.

A total of 170 articles and editorials were obtained from the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News* using the Wayne State University Newsbank Database. The stories published from May 1 through November 30, 2000 on Proposal 00-1 are presented in Chapters IV and V. Of this number, 95 articles/editorials, including 72 articles and 23 editorials, were published in the *Detroit Free Press*. A total of 75 articles and editorials, 68 articles and 7 editorials were obtained from *The Detroit News*.

Content analysis is used in this study to determine the extent to which the two major newspapers share similarities and differences in framing their reporting on issues surrounding the Michigan Tuition Voucher (Proposal 00-1). It is being used as a descriptive tool to identify characteristics of messages written by either journalists or editorial boards. This process allows the investigator to search the text for interpretive

frames (i.e., *analyzing, explaining* and *evaluating*). Content analysis relies on coding and categorizing data included in the articles being studied. According to Weber (1990), “A category is a group of words with similar meaning or connotations” (p. 37). The GAO (1996) asserts that categories developed in the content analysis must be mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Mutually exclusive means that membership in one category excludes the item from being included in any other category. Exhaustive is defined as including all categories of interest without exception. Leaving out categories can provide a source of bias in the content analysis.

Kolbe and Burnett (1991) borrow from Lijphart’s (1971) categorizations for case studies to provide clarity and structure by proposing five roles of content analysis that build on Lijphart’s work. Each role has a specific use, however, the investigator in the current study uses three roles to test hypotheses examining how newspapers in Detroit, Michigan framed the school voucher issue. These roles are relevant to the current study because:

1. Interpretive content analyses allows the investigator to use a theoretical perspective, such as agenda setting, for the basis of collecting data, without intending to make generalizations to a larger population. Thus, the investigator attempts to describe or explain data that reflects an interpretive style of reporting and represents the agenda established by their newspapers in presenting information about the school voucher issue to its readers.
2. The investigator uses hypothesis-generating content analyses to make predictions about an educational public policy ballot issue that would amend the state of Michigan’s Constitution. Unlike most previous research where

there is an established body of literature that concentrates on aspects of framing which examines national policy issues and candidate's campaigns using television as the media source. The current study focuses on a public policy issue that is examined on a local level using newspapers as the medium for communication where the body of literature is in its developing stages. Furthermore, this study investigates how the school voucher issue is framed and focuses in detail on three types of interpretive frames in two major local newspapers.

3. The role of theory-confirming content analyses was used in the current study because it afforded the investigator an opportunity to examine what was predicted by established theories to confirm or invalidate the theoretical position.

These three roles of content analysis are used in this study because they allow the investigator to test hypotheses where an established body of research has not been published that provides a theoretical basis for using interpretive framing and agenda setting in newspapers for local policy issues that could have national implications. Thus, describing and explaining what is happening in Detroit's newspapers as it relates to interpretive framing by journalists on school voucher is explored using Kolbe and Burnett's (1991) method. This type of analysis can help embellish, augment, accumulate, and describe phenomenon in data.

A coding dictionary developed for the study was used by coders. Their responses were entered on an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. According to Wimmer and Dominick (1999), using a computer to tabulate data requires the transfer of data from the coding

forms to a computer file. Using coding forms can minimize data errors and reduce time needed to complete the content analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data for presentation on the tables and graphs used to address the hypotheses developed for this study. In addition to using Excel to summarize the data, QSR N6 (*a text word finding, counting and sorting software designed for content analysis*) was used to perform keyword searches to examine themes that emerged from the data such as race, social equality, and fiscal conservatism.

Three hypotheses are discussed in this chapter. The articles and editorials that are associated with these hypotheses are summarized, coded, and analyzed for presentation using content analysis. A series of tables and graphs that help to describe and explain data are used to confirm (or not confirm) the findings for each hypothesis.

Hypotheses Related to the Journalists

Hypothesis 1a. The more stories *reporters* write about school vouchers, the more likely they are to use interpretive frames.

The number of articles, the size of the headline, length of text, placement of the articles, and the information contained in the articles provide journalists with the ability to set the agenda (McCombs & Shaw cited in Watkins, 2001). The first step in the process of determining the extent to which journalists are using agenda setting is to determine the number of articles that were published on Proposal 00-1, and then investigate the extent to which descriptive and interpretive framing was used in the articles. A total of 140 articles regarding the school voucher issue (Proposal 00-1) were published during the period from May 1, 2000 to November 30, 2000. Patterson's (2000b) definition of interpretation and description is used in determining whether

journalists are interpreting, describing, or using a combination of both when writing a story. Most articles and editorials include some facts with *analyzing*, *explaining*, and *evaluating* are used in a story. Because of the use of both description and interpretation in the articles, a need existed to develop a category that combined both. These articles were reviewed to determine the extent of interpretive framing that was included in each article.

Before testing the first hypothesis, the investigator provides a brief discussion about who the reporters are because these journalists serve as experts and opinion leaders who write articles for the newspapers. These newspapers are circulated to more than 300,000 readers in the Michigan. Therefore, it is important to provide descriptive information about the reporters in this study because this information provides a context in which to examine their backgrounds, and level of expertise in covering educational and governmental issues. The reporters provided their biographical data in terms of area of coverage, years with the newspaper, current positions, and educational levels. While additional reporters have written articles about the voucher issue, the reporters listed in Table 7 responded to the investigator's requests for information. Tables and graphs are used to show whether the reporters used interpretive frames when writing about the school voucher issue to help set the agenda concerning the salience of the Proposal 00-1 in two major Michigan newspapers. Table 7 presents the summarization of the information received from these journalists.

Table 7
Journalists' Biographical Data

Reporter	Area of Coverage	Years with Newspaper	Current Position	Education
<i>Detroit Free Press</i>				
Patricia Montemurri	Various Political and Educational Issues	22	Free Press Reporter	B.A. in Journalism from University of Michigan
Dawson Bell	State Gov't., Politics, Ballot Issues	17	Lansing Bureau (since 1988)	B.S. 1977, Northern Michigan University
Laura Potts	Mental Health and Communities	1	Mental Health & Communities Reporter	B.A. in Journalism 2000, Michigan State University
Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	Government Politics	6	Free Press Reporter on Vouchers	B.A. in English
<i>The Detroit News</i>				
Mark Hornbeck	Governor's Office, State Education, State Politics	13	State Capital Correspondent	B.A. in Journalism 1976, Michigan State University
Gebe Martinez	Government & 2000 Election Campaign	2	Congressional Leadership for Congressional Quarterly	B.A. in Journalism 1976, University of Texas
George Weeks	History and Functions of Governors	N/A	Political Columnist	B.A. in Journalism, Michigan State University

The reporters who covered government, political issues, and election campaigns appeared to have experience in education and local politics, with the exception of Laura Potts. Ms. Potts had the least experience (one year) of the listed reporters who covered Proposal 00-1, and her normal assignments involved mental health and communities. The other reporters' professional experiences with their newspapers ranged from 2 years for Gebe Martinez to 22 years for Patricia Montemurri. Most reporters who provided information to the researcher had completed a bachelor's degree in journalism, with the exception of Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki who had majored in English.

Hypothesis 1a was concerned with the association between the number of articles

written by reporters and their median interpretive scores. This hypothesis was tested by comparing the median interpretive framing scores among reporters who authored or coauthored articles on the school voucher issue. Based on a lack of association between the number of articles published and the median interpretive scores, Hypothesis 1a is not confirmed. Table 8 presents the number of articles authored or co-authored by the journalists, their median scores, and ratio of articles to interpretive framing.

Table 8
Author/Co-author Participation

Author	Number of Articles			Median Interpretive Score	Ratio of Interpretive Articles to Score
	Single Author	Co-Authored with others	Total		
<i>The Detroit News</i>					
Mark Hornbeck	22	4	26	5.5	.21
Thomas J. Bray	10	0	10	8.0	.80
George Weeks	7	0	7	4.0	.57
Gebe Martinez	4	1	5	5.0	1.00
<i>Detroit Free Press</i>					
Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	14	10	24	6.0	.25
Dawson Bell	5	7	12	6.5	.54
Patricia Montemuri	1	5	6	6.0	1.00
Richard Ryan	5	1	6	5.5	1.09
Laura Potts	4	1	5	7.0	1.40

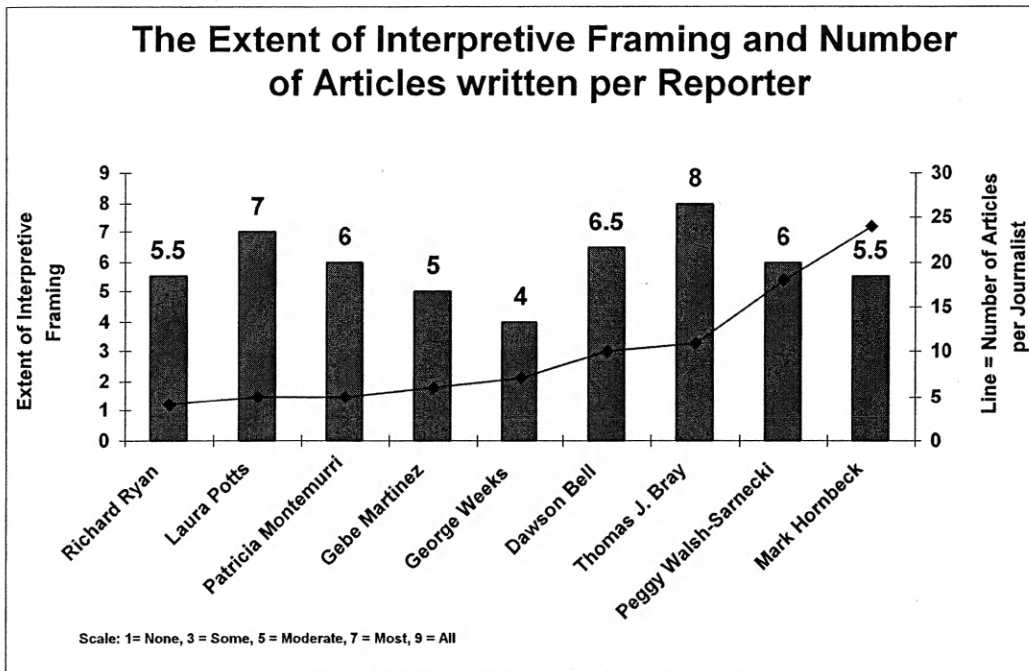
The table also reports these data using ratios. For example, Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki wrote the most stories for the *Detroit Free Press* (n = 24; 14 were single authored and 10 were coauthored with other reporters). A median score of 6 is calculated for the extent of interpretive framing in her articles, which is divided by the number of articles to obtain a ratio score of .25. Mark Hornbeck of the *Detroit News* wrote the most stories on Proposal 00-1 (n=26) which accounted for one-third of the total number of articles written in the

Detroit News on this topic. He had a median score of 5.5 for the extent to which interpretation could be found in his articles. He had a ratio of .21, which is obtained by dividing his median score by the number of articles. Based on lack of association between the number of articles written by journalists and their median interpretive scores, the hypothesis was not confirmed.

The number of articles authored or co-authored by the reporters varied from 1 to 26, with some of these articles co-authored by more than one journalist. Graph 1 includes only those articles where the journalist was either a single author or first author of an article. As shown on the graph, the median scores for each journalist is independent of the number of articles they had written. For example, Laura Potts authored four articles alone and co-authored one article with another journalist. Her median interpretive framing score was 7. In contrast, Mark Hornbeck authored 22 articles and co-authored an additional four articles. His median score for interpretive framing was 5.5. Thomas J. Bray had the highest median interpretive score of 8, and had authored 10 articles. This graph provides additional evidence of the lack of an association between the median score for the interpretive framing of articles and the number of articles written by the reporters.

A score of 1 to 9 was assigned to each article, with higher scores indicating more interpretive framing. The investigator compared the number of articles written by reporters to their median score (1 to 9; as presented on the Coding Form) to determine if the number of articles written on the issue affected the manner in which they described or interpreted Proposal 00-1. Graph 1 presents the median scores for interpretive framing for journalists from both *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*.

Graph 1



Based on the finding of these analyses, the hypothesis of no change in the type of reporting based on the number of articles and the median interpretive scores is not confirmed. It does not appear that an association exists between the number of articles published on Proposal 00-1 and the greater likelihood that interpretive reporting styles are used.

Hypothesis 1b. The more stories that *editorial boards* write on the school voucher issue the more likely they are to use interpretive frames.

Editorial boards establish the stance their newspaper takes in presenting a political or policy issue, such as the school voucher issue that was on the ballot during the presidential year. While their stances generally follow a historical perspective (i.e., *The Detroit News* is conservative and the *Detroit Free Press* supports liberal issues), it is uncertain if they use their positions to either attract new subscribers or retain current

readers. The number of editorials that reflect the newspapers stance on the issue contributes to the agenda setting process.

Reporters are identified by name in the articles that have been written by them, making it possible to attribute a specific number of articles to each individual. Editorials, however, are written by the editorial board, without citing a particular individual as responsible for a specific editorial. In examining 30 editorials about the school voucher issue written by editorial boards, it was not possible to attribute credit to individual editors by name. Therefore the data is presented comparing the two newspapers in terms of similarities and differences in editorial styles in terms of interpretive versus descriptive or combination of both.

The editorials published on the voucher issue are examined to determine the extent to which the editorial boards used interpretive/descriptive types of framing in their editorials. The data in Table 9 does not confirm the hypothesis of an association between the number of editorials published on the school voucher issue and the extent to which interpretive framing is used in the editorials. The median scores for the extent to which they used interpretive framing in *analyzing*, *explaining*, and *evaluating* facts are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Editorial Boards' Median Scores for Interpretative Framing

Newspaper	Number of Editorials	Type of Framing	Median Scores			
			Extent of Interpretive Framing	Analyze Facts	Explain Facts	Evaluate Facts
<i>The Detroit News</i>	7	3	8	4	4	7
<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	23	3	8	2	5	7

The editorials published in both *The Detroit News* (n = 7) and *Detroit Free Press* (n = 23) use interpretive reporting as a general rule. Median scores are calculated to determine the extent to which interpretive framing is used in the editorials. The same formula that is used to determine interpretive scores for the reporters is applied to the editorials, except they are obtained for the newspapers as a whole and not for individual editors. Each newspaper has an interpretive framing median score of 8 which indicates that editorials are between moderate and highly interpretive. This score means that when editorial boards write their stories, they often go beyond describing the topic about which they are writing. They are analyzing, explaining, and evaluating information that is included in their editorials. For example:

The editorial page editor, Ron Dzwonkowski, signed an editorial dated September 28, 2000 that defended Mike Thompson's words and artwork of cartoon drawing that incensed the Catholic Church. Thompson drew a series of panels on a "Vouch-O-Matic" device that shreds the constitutional separation of church and state, "sucks millions out of public education" and throws up a smoke screen to cover, in effect, the shifting of tax dollars to Catholic schools. The Catholic Conference demanded an apology and stated that the cartoon was "inflammatory, shameful and filled with hate." Dzwonkowski stated "For the record, the Free Press editorial board has held some lively discussions of the voucher proposal and has more on the schedule before we make a recommendation. We have questioned some aspects of it in editorials, but we don't question the motives of the Catholic Church in pushing it. We have run a deliberate

balance of pro-con essays on our Other Voices page, in addition to numerous letters from both sides. This is a very important issue for Michigan. We have made our space available for a thorough airing of all points of view on it and will continue to do so. These are opinion pages, where objectivity can take a back seat but fairness and balance matter. The many sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis and Benedictine monks who tried for 11 years to educate me would certainly insist on that” (Detroit Free Press 9/28/2000).

Although editorial boards attempt to provide balance and fairness, this example provides evidence that editors have biases, adding to the expectation that interpretive framing rather than descriptive framing is the norm. From May 1, 2000 to November 30, 2000, *The Detroit News* published 7 editorials concerning school vouchers, while the *Detroit Free Press*, during the same time frame, had 23 editorials. The investigator speculates that this difference may be the result of the *Detroit Free Press*'s opposition to vouchers and the greater number of staff who were covering educational issues than *The Detroit News*. As a result, the editorial board may have been provided with more information on the school voucher issue, and thus, they were better equipped to write more editorials than *The Detroit News* to support their stance. The editorial board of the *Detroit Free Press* may have wanted to be more vigilant in stressing their negative views concerning the effects of vouchers on public education. Table 1 in Chapter 2 compares the circulation of the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News*. The *Detroit Free Press*, because of its wider circulation and morning home delivery, may be more likely to be in the homes of suburban citizens who do not favor the voucher issue, as they perceive no benefit for their children may have been another rationale as to why the *Detroit Free Press* wrote more than 3 times as many editorials in comparison to *The Detroit News*. Blakemore and Campbell (2000), national newsreporters for ABC News, reported,

Debate heats up in suburbs, in suburban schools, voucher are as in the city.

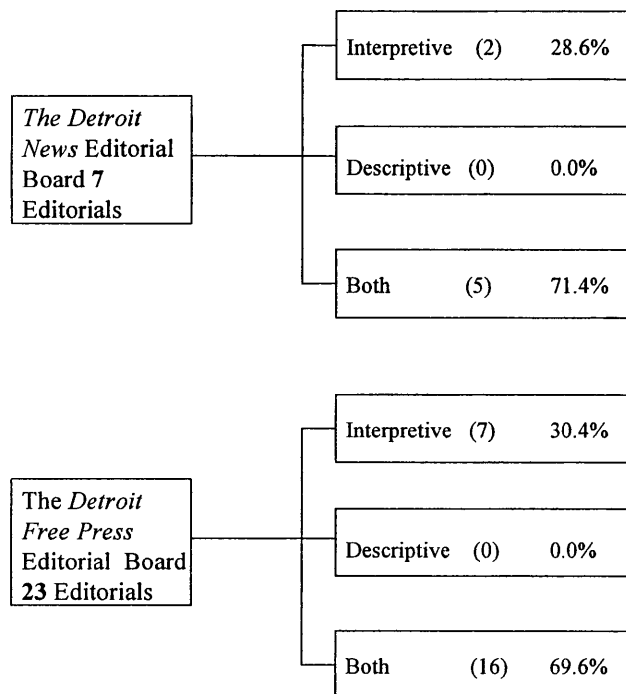
In many rural districts, vouchers would make little immediate difference to where kids actually go to school, because there are few private or religious schools anywhere near enough to make them a practical option. (p. 1)

The investigator in the current study e-mailed two reporters, Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki of the *Detroit Free Press* and Mark Hornbeck of *The Detroit News*. The purpose of this communication was to explore the disparity in the number of editorials published in the *Detroit Free Press* (n=23) and *The Detroit News* (n=7) from May 1 to November 30, 2000. In a telephone conversation on February 24, 2003, Mrs. Walsh-Sarnecki was open to discussing the findings presented in this work. Walsh-Sarnecki suggests that differences in the 23 editorials for the *Detroit Free Press* to 7 editorials for *The Detroit News* may have been because editorial boards meet and decide how they are going to cover a particular issue. According to Walsh-Sarnecki, reporters have a great deal of discretion about what they are going to write about and reporters may or may not read the editorial pages.

Figure 2 presents percentages of editorials in *The Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* on the school voucher issue that used *interpretive*, *descriptive*, or a *combination of both* interpretive and descriptive framing. When the number of editorials that are completely interpretive is examined, 2 (28.6%) editorials in *The Detroit News* meet this criteria, with the remaining 5 (71.4%) editorials using a combination of descriptive and

Figure 2: Hypothesis 1b

The more editorials the editorial board writes on the school voucher issue, the more likely they are to use interpretive frames in their reporting.



interpretive framing. Seven (30.4%) editorials in the *Detroit Free Press* are purely interpretive, with 16 (69.6%) of the editorials using a combination of descriptive and interpretive framing. The percentages of editorials using combined descriptive and interpretive framing is high for editorials that were published in both newspapers.

The editorial boards of both newspapers use a combination of *both descriptive* and *interpretive* framing extensively to present their point of view on the voucher issue. For example, in the *Detroit Free Press* editorial, “Final Word After All the Appeals and Commercials, Power to Decide Rests with Individual Voters,” published on November 5, 2000, the editorial board quoted President Lyndon Baines Johnson, “the vote is the most

powerful instrument ever devised . . . for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men.” Sam Rayburn was also quoted as stating, “A whore’s vote is just as good as a debutante’s.” These quotes are examples of descriptive reporting in an editorial. The interpretive framing exemplifies editorial board’s words: “State voters could decide to funnel their tax dollars to private schools – which will rock public education to its foundations (Proposal 00-1, vouchers).”

On November 8, 2000, *The Detroit News* published the editorial, “Beyond Proposal 1,” which is an example of both descriptive and interpretive framing in an editorial. The editorial begins:

Michigan’s Ballot Proposal 1 has gone down to defeat. It would have amended the state Constitution to provide vouchers in certain school districts. Meaningful help for children in failing public schools will have to await a different approach.

This section discusses the outcomes of the election on Proposal 00-1 in descriptive terms, although the last sentence is interpretive in explaining how Proposal 00-1 can help children to achieve a better education. In the third paragraph, the editorial board includes both descriptive and interpretive framing to provide a suggestion for educational reform. They wrote:

One appropriate action would be to lift all restrictions on starting charter schools. Currently a cap limits to 150 the number of schools that can be chartered by state universities. The cap effectively limits adding to the system because universities have chartered most of such schools in Michigan.

The first sentence of this paragraph is interpretive as it provides a suggestion for change, while the remaining sentences refer to facts regarding the limits on new charter schools in Michigan and the effects of these caps.

When examining the extent of *analyzing*, *explaining*, and *evaluating* facts in the editorials, it appears that editors for *The Detroit News* have a median score of 4, indicating that analyzing is used in some to a moderate number of editorials. This score is double that obtained for the *Detroit Free Press* (median score=2), which indicates they were between none and some. In explaining facts, the *Detroit Free Press* (median score=5) had a higher score than *The Detroit News* (median score=4), with both newspapers having the same median score (7) for evaluating facts. Therefore, the hypothesis of no differences between the two newspapers is not confirmed in regard to an association between the number of editorials on the voucher issue and the extent to which interpretive framing is used in the editorials. Although analyzing is higher for *The Detroit News*, the level of analysis overall for editorials in both newspapers remains at the lower end of the scale of 1-9 in comparison to evaluating which is moving towards the higher end of the scale with a score of 7 by both newspapers. The editorials generally combined both descriptive and interpretive framing, with the editors not providing analysis of the information presented. In the *Detroit Free Press* editorial, “School Vouchers Supreme Court Ruling Sends some Troubling Signals” (July 3, 2000), the editorial board cited statements from the U. S. Supreme Court regarding school vouchers. While it provides some explanation, it did not analyze the situation. An example of the use of *explaining* is:

The case involved a Louisiana program that distributed federally funded computers to schools. Parochial schools got computers as well, based on factors such as student numbers and poverty levels. O’Connor said the computers didn’t play into the schools’ religious teaching and therefore didn’t equate to federal sponsorship of religion.

This paragraph provides an *explanation* of the case before the U. S. Supreme Court and cites Justice Sandra O’Connor’s position on the issue. The editorial board did

not try to *analyze* the facts of the case or relate them to the voucher issue in Michigan.

In a similar way, the editorial, “Proposal 1: Yes” published in *The Detroit News* on October 24, 2000 explains vouchers, but does not analyze them in detail. For example, the section of the editorial reads:

Ballot Proposal 1 is the most far-reaching education plan offered in Michigan in more than 20 years.

It permits limited state aid to nonpublic schools by way of vouchers, to be issued in certain school districts under certain conditions.

These sentences explain what vouchers are, but does not analyze what the purpose of vouchers to improve education programs for students in failing districts in Michigan.

It further describes how vouchers work:

Parents in these districts could send a child to private school and use a voucher to help pay tuition. For school year 2001-02, the maximum value of such a coupon would be about \$3,200.

These examples provide support that editorials do not *analyze* to the same extent that they *explain* and *evaluate*.

Hypothesis 2. The closer the story is to the election the more likely the journalists (*inclusive of both editors and reporters combined from both newspapers*) are to use interpretive frames.

Reporters, especially after a newspaper’s editorial board has made an endorsement either for or against an issue or candidate, are more likely to attempt to sway their readers to their newspaper’s position or stance, as either for or against an issue. As asserted by Barbour and Wright (2001), newspaper, as media, not only tells people *what issues* to think about, but how to *think about those issues*. As election day comes closer, reporters structure their articles to influence how their readers should think about an issue, such as vouchers. The position taken by candidates endorsed by the newspaper may also have an

effect on the framing and interpretation of the issue. Thus, Lippmann's (1922) conception of how the media contributes to the shaping of pictures in our heads about candidates, or a policy issue can contribute to the agenda setting process by emphasizing some issues while de-emphasizing others. McCombs and Shaw (1972) argue that agenda setting is another expression of the reality definition function of the media.

The investigator uses two ways to illustrate the data. First, tables and graphs are used to assess the use of the three types of framing (interpretive, descriptive and combination of both). The tables and graphs compare and contrast findings by month. Based on the data, the conjecture that journalists' stories that are published closer to election day are more likely to use interpretive frames is not confirmed. Examples from stories published about Proposal 00-1 are also used to show how the journalists framed the school voucher issue as election day approaches. The number of stories published is examined by month, with the framing of articles/editorials categorized by *descriptive, interpretive, or a combination of both*. To determine if there is a change in the incidence of interpretive framing of articles/editorials as election day approaches, the percentage of stories that use each type of framing is shown. Table 10 illustrates results of the frequency distribution for the framing types of articles/editorials by months.

Table 10

The Detroit News and *Detroit Free Press*
Frequency Distribution of Articles and Editorials
Type of Framing by Month

Month	Type of Framing						Total	
	Descriptive		Interpretive		Both			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
May	0	0.0	1	2.3	2	1.6	3	1.8
June	0	0.0	1	2.3	10	8.2	11	6.5
July	2	50.0	5	11.4	11	9.0	18	10.6
August	0	0.0	10	22.7	10	8.2	20	11.8
September	1	25.0	8	18.2	17	13.9	26	15.3
October	1	25.0	10	22.7	47	38.5	58	34.1
November	0	0.0	9	20.5	25	20.5	34	20.0
Total	4	100.0	44	100.0	122	100.0	170	100.0

The number of articles and editorials (n=4) that use a purely *descriptive* framing is limited to 2 (50.0%) in July and 1 (25.0%) each in September and October. However, the number of articles that use *both* descriptive and interpretive frames increased over the first six months of the study, and then decreased substantially during November. The number of articles and editorials that were purely *interpretive* increased from May (n=1) and June (n=1) to August (n=10), September (n=8), October (n=10), and November (n=9). The journalists and editorial boards began to *explain* and *evaluate* the voucher issue in terms of facts presented in each article as the election grew closer. On May 29, 2000, Mark Hornbeck of *The Detroit News* writes an article entitled, "Voucher Vote Stirs Hot Debate: Backers, Critics of Ballot Proposal Hurl Accusations of Scare Tactics, Fabrications." Selected key paragraphs from this article support the use of interpretive, descriptive, or a combination of both frames used in reporting.

Five months remain before the first vote is cast on Michigan's controversial school voucher proposal and emotions already are running high.

Welcome to the 2000 version of the voucher battle in Michigan *that will be played out in living rooms, Rotary meetings, churches and over back yard fences and airwaves during the coming summer and fall.*

In the above paragraphs, the reporter is shown using interpretive framing by predicting and speculating about events that he thinks will occur in the future. For example, projecting that people in Michigan *will* be emotional about the proposal and talking about the issue at meetings, churches, in living rooms as well as, across back yard fences. The reporter is also informing the readers that the voucher proposal will be a battle in Michigan.

Early debates, like one hosted at a Lansing hotel last week by Wayne State University and the Citizen Research Council, offer a glimpse at what is *likely* to be an expensive, contentious, and even nasty campaign that promises to make the '98 skirmish over the emotion - charged assisted suicide ballot issue look like a *slumber party pillow fight*. [Evaluating]

Hornbeck uses interpretive frames by prognosticating that the voucher campaign is likely to be costly, bitter and filled with emotions from both sides of the issue. Further, he sarcastically suggests that the assisted suicide issue (which pitted the will of terminally ill patients against moral institutions, medical societies and the state) is minor in comparison to the voucher proposal. An example of evaluative framing is indicated as the reporter refers to the assisted suicide issue as "*a slumber party pillow fight*".

Some veteran political observers say the battle *will* mirror a similar fight 30 years ago when Michiganians voted to ban public tax dollars from private schools.

An *interpretive* style of reporting, as defined by Patterson (2000b), has the journalist *analyzing, explaining, and evaluating* developments, rather than limiting their reports

only to facts. Similarities are observed in *interpretive framing* by the use of the word *will*.

This word (*will*) illustrates the reporter *predicting* what is going to happen in the future.

This same word is also used in the following paragraph. An example of descriptive framing provides evidence to show how journalists state the facts in a story.

“There *will* be lots of debate and TV ads. *Everyone* in Michigan *will* know it’s on the ballot by the time they go to vote.” [*Descriptive*] The voucher proposal, which the Secretary of State recently ruled has enough petition signatures for a spot on the ballot, would let parents use up to \$3,100 in public tax money to pay tuition at a private or religious school. Currently, such indirect public aid to private schools is constitutionally banned.

The latter paragraph provides a definition of the voucher proposal, its context is often presented in articles/editorials throughout the entire data set.

The money impact on public education is less clear. [*Evaluating*] A Senate Fiscal Agency study projected first-year costs to the state of \$52 million to \$80 million. [*Analysis*] That’s based on the notion that more kids already in private schools would redeem vouchers than would those in public schools who transfer to private schools. [*Explaining*] Student migration trends are crucial, because the state would pay about \$3,000 for voucher students while the average state grant for a public school student is more than \$6,000. Even the high-end estimate of \$80 million is a tiny fraction of the \$13 billion spent on public schools (*The Detroit News*, May 29, 2000).

The preceding paragraph exemplifies the use of all three types of interpretive frames [in brackets] being used in the same paragraph. This entire article shows that five months prior to the November 7, 2000 presidential election, *The Detroit News* is focusing on the positive aspects of vouchers. The article is coded as *both* interpretive and descriptive. The most prominent type of interpretive frame used in this article is *evaluating*. An example of *descriptive* and *evaluating* used in the same paragraph is Hornbeck reporting that, “Early debates, *like one hosted at a Lansing hotel last week by Wayne State University and the Citizen Research Council*, [*descriptive*] offer a glimpse at what is *likely* to be [*interpretive framing* the reporter is *predicting/speculating*] an

expensive, contentious, and even nasty campaign that *promises* to make the '98 skirmish over the emotion-charge assisted suicide ballot issue *look like a slumber party pillow fight*" [evaluating]. This paragraph is example of *both* a combination of interpretive and descriptive frames illustrated in this article.

An example of *analyzing* and *explaining* is presented when Hornbeck cites studies and states findings using the term "Reality" to mean the facts, "Reality: Actually the verdict is mixed." *Studies in Milwaukee* [analyzing] say parent satisfaction is high, *but* there are conflicting reports *on whether* [explaining] vouchers have had much impact on student test scores. Cleveland's plan, which is still being challenged in court, is too new to gauge.

Other examples of interpretive framing are in these two paragraphs which state, "*Welcome to the 2000 version of the voucher battle in Michigan that will be played out in living rooms, Rotary meetings, churches and over back yard fences and airwaves during the coming summer and fall.*" The use of interpretive frames is indicated by, "*Some veteran political observers say the battle will mirror a similar fight 30 years ago when Michiganians voted to ban public tax dollars from private schools.*" Hornbeck is *predicting* and *speculating* about the future and what he thinks is going to happen five months down the road. Hornbeck uses interpretive frames moderately, holding a median score of 5.5 in terms of using interpretive frames in the 26 articles that he wrote on the school voucher issue.

The investigator examines the findings and speculates that the interpretive percentage scores are increasing from July through November because two major activities are occurring simultaneously (i.e., increases in television advertising purchased

during prime time programming for campaign ads and “get-out-the-vote” dollars being spent the closer time grew to the November 7, 2000 election). Another article, written by Dawson Bell, Tina Lam and Matt Helms (October 31, 2000), discusses television ads in a *Detroit Free Press* is entitled “TV Ads Bombard Detroit Metro Area is Tops in U.S. in Election Commercials.”

In the most heavily advertised election season in U.S. history, Detroit has become the most heavily advertised market in television. . . . According to statistics compiled for the Brennan Center for justice at the New York University School of Law, Detroit TV viewers sat through (or shielded their eyes from) 3,599 campaign commercials between Oct. 17 and 24, the most ads for a U.S. market during that time. The second-ranked TV market was Seattle-Tacoma, with 3,398 ads . . . Whoever pays for the ads, metro Detroit viewers are feeling inundated (*Detroit Free Press*, October 31, 2000).

For example, the reporters are making a judgment or determination in the title, “TV Ads *Bombard* Detroit Metro Area is *Tops* in U.S. in Election Commercials” and in a paragraph which asserts, “Whoever pays for the ads, metro Detroit viewers are feeling *inundated*.” The italicized words show evidence of *evaluating* which is a type of *interpretive* frame. In this sentence, the reporters *make a judgment or a determination* about how they think the Detroit viewers are *feeling*.

An example that illustrates reporters using *analyzing*, a second type of *interpretive* frame is shown in the Bell et al., article. In this article, Dawson Bell et al. cited Ken Goldstein, a political scientist from the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law and University of Wisconsin, as a source of research and information used to write the article. Bell et al. provide an example of the use of *explaining*, a third type of *interpretive frame*, by offering clarity regarding the use of hard and soft monies to pay for advertising by clarifying regulations about the federal election

laws.

These next two paragraphs provide examples of descriptive and interpretive framing from the Dawson Bell et al. *Detroit Free Press*, October 31, 2000 article. For example, Michael Powell, a retired Detroit police officer living in St. Clair Shores, said Monday that he and his family have found it impossible to escape, “I’m tired of getting bombarded. This isn’t helping.” A paragraph is coded as *descriptive* if it is a direct quote because the words are not the reporters and paragraphs state facts of who, what, when, and where.

Interpretive frames are identified by the investigator’s determination of whether reporters are *projecting, predicting, speculating, guessing*, or using the words, such as *I think*. Dawson and his fellow reporters in writing “*And it could have been worse*” is speculating about the number of political advertisements that are presented on television prior to the election.

In determining the extent to which Dawson Bell et al.’s article is *interpretive*, the following formula is used. If the combined score of the three types of interpretive frames (analyze, explain, and evaluate) exceeds the number of paragraphs in a given story, it is considered interpretive. For example, the scores on the Interpretive/Descriptive Framing Tally Sheet for Dawson Bell et al.’s article are 11 for analyze, 18 for explain, and 9 for evaluate. The sum of these scores is 38 and the number of paragraphs is 22. These scores are written as a ratio, and if the ratio is between interpretation and total number of paragraphs exceeds 3, the article is considered purely interpretive. If the ratio is greater than 1, but less than 3, it is consider both. In this example, the ratio of 38/22 can be reduced to 1.73, the article is coded as “both.” (See Appendix D for the equation for

Calculating Types of Framing.) This article written by Dawson Bell and others (October 31, 2000) in the *Detroit Free Press* is an example of reporters exhibiting *both interpretive* and *descriptive* framing in their reporting.

The articles demonstrate the plans for a great deal of money to be spent on Proposal 00-1 and discuss major dollars set to be spent on advertising. On June 18, 2000, Hornbeck writes an article in *The Detroit News* entitled, “Voucher Fight Gets Catholic Clout, Cash Church Puts \$765,000 into Campaign; Foes say it’s Public Money for Religious Education.” An example of the first paragraph of the article provides an example of the extent of financing supporting Proposal 00-1:

The Michigan Catholic Church is opening its bank book and flexing its political muscle in an all-out effort aimed at swaying parishioners and others to approve in November the use of tax money to pay for private school tuitions.

The Detroit News article from September 8, 2000, “Voucher Ad Blitz May Cost \$10 Million, up: Big Money Backers Support Both Sides of the State Ballot Issue,” provides an example regarding the amount of money that is expected to be spent on television advertising Mark Hornbeck wrote:

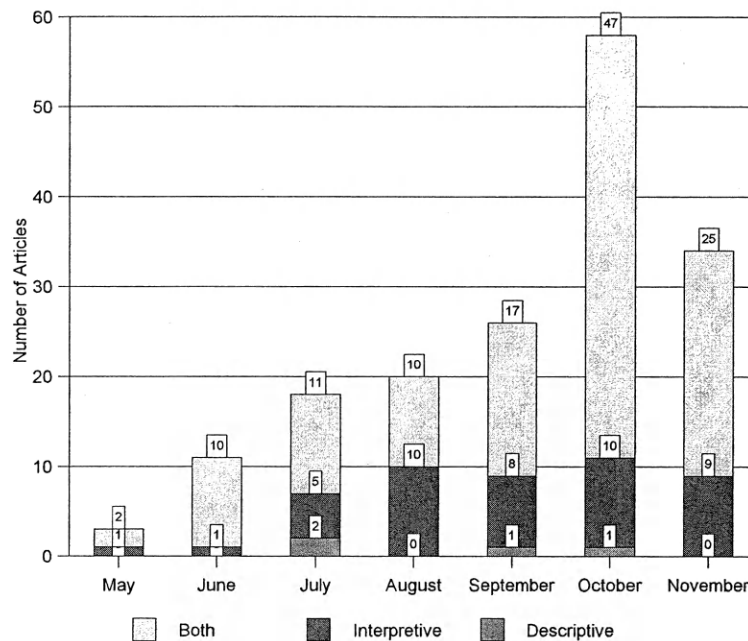
Brace yourselves, Michigan voters. The battle over school vouchers, surprisingly tepid up until now, it about to heat up. Expect backers and opposition forces to spend at least 10 million– and perhaps twice that amount on a high profile ad war in an attempt to sway droves of undecided voters in the final nine weeks of the campaign. In fact, proponents will air their first half - minute spot today.

Therefore, the ads start to gear up in early September to run through election day. This effort may be related to the increase in the number of stories published during October 2000.

Graph 2 presents the comparison between *interpretive*, *descriptive*, and *both* the

graph includes data on 170 articles and editorials presented from May 1 through November 30, 2000 from both newspapers.

Graph 2
Type of Framing By Month



Stories published in the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News* during the month of October are examined to speculate about what may have stimulated the substantial increase in the number of stories published by the newspapers, other than it being the month prior to a national election. Fifty-eight stories are published in October, with 31 stories attributed to the *Detroit Free Press* and 27 stories to *The Detroit News*. The researcher finds that 6 of the 31 stories in the *Detroit Free Press* reference the national campaign. The story is considered national if the story mentions one of the presidential/vice-presidential candidates' names. Seven of the 27 stories from *The Detroit*

campaign. Because the 2000 election is a presidential campaign year, the investigator speculates that increased stories written with a combination of *both, interpretive, and descriptive* frames the month prior to the election may be stimulated by an increase in media advertising.

Media elite help to focus public attention on highly salient issues such as, school vouchers in Detroit. Graber (1989) contends that the media set the public agenda when news stories center attention on a problem and make it seem important to many people. Furthermore, when an issue becomes a matter of controversy among political elites, the media often zones in on the issue. This media activity of building a public agenda is referred to as agenda-building (Graber). Similarly, Pu-tsung (cited in Weaver & Shaw, 1997) provides a discussion on candidate image and Dennis, Chaffee, & Choe, (cited in Weaver & Shaw, 1997) and others found that candidate image is significant, if not the best predictor of voting decisions. The investigator in this study argues that images shown in advertisements related to a public policy issue (e.g. *school voucher issue and children in wheel chairs being shown as having difficulty in getting accepted into private schools*) may be important in how viewers perceive the ramifications of voucher proposal. For example, some ads related to Proposal 00-1 are considered emotional and labeled illegal by supporters of the voucher issue and these kinds of emotional ads were aired on television stations throughout the state of Michigan.

Tedesco (2002) attempted to determine the effects of ads that evoke emotions from viewers, the study involved a Virginia Senate campaign between incumbent Democratic Senator Chuck Robb and Republican challenger George Allen. This study presents a pretest/posttest causal exploration of advertising effects for a series of ads aired

during early October 2000. Political image evaluation and cynicism were linked in effects for the 93 research participants. Findings revealed that emotional responses to ads were strong predictors of posttest candidate image evaluations. Furthermore, participant responses indicate that ads eliciting fearful emotions are significant predictors of overall cynicism. Moment-by-moment responses to the ads show that respondents' evaluations of these ads are strongly associated with the valence of the message strategy and the emotional content occurring at various points in an ad. This race was widely considered to be one of the most important races for the Senate.

Furthermore, academic research demonstrates that advertising is a very significant source of information for voters (Jamieson 1984). A statewide random survey of Virginia voters conducted at the beginning of the 2000 senatorial campaign demonstrated that 39% of the respondents believed that political ads help voters make informed choices. (Heyser as cited in Tedesco, 2002, p. 3)

Therefore, emotional advertising conducted by an anti-voucher interest group, (i.e., "All Kids First") may have contributed to the substantial increase exhibited in the category of a combination of *both* interpretive and descriptive frames used by the newspapers during the month of October 2000. An example of a *Detroit Free Press* reporter, Laura Potts writes an article about a television ad. The article is entitled, "Anti-voucher ad with Disabled Girl Pulled."

At least seven television station in western and northern Michigan pulled an ad Wednesday sponsored by the anti-voucher group All Kids First! after complaints that it makes false claims about the school voucher proposal.

The 30-second ad, featuring a young girl in a wheelchair, went on the air Tuesday. The text states, "Angelica will not benefit from Proposal 1's exclusive private school vouchers because private schools are allowed to reject disabled students like Angelica."

Under Michigan's 1976 Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act, all

public or private schools are prohibited from denying students access based solely on their disabilities.

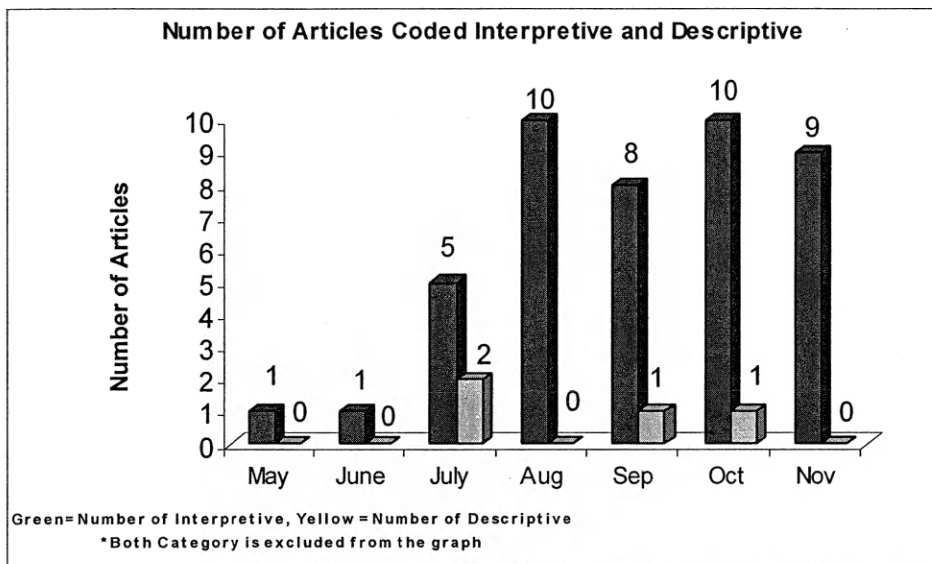
“This ad, factually and legally, is inaccurate, said Greg McNeilly, spokesman for kids First! Yes!, which supports the voucher proposal. “Just as disturbing is the exploitation of a child in a disabled position.”

All Kids First! stands behind the ad, said spokesman Bob Kolt, who insisted that “many private schools by their own admission, refuse to admit disabled students.” He said schools that don’t receive public funding aren’t subject to constitutional due process, so they can deny students without a hearing. (*Detroit Free Press*, October 26, 2000)

The investigator speculates about the increase in the number of articles published in the *both* category, that the emotionally-laden ad featuring a girl with physical disabilities was disturbing to many television viewers according to the article written by Potts. Although it cannot be proven, the investigator posits that the ad may have had a negative effect on voters. Conflict within various communities regarding children with special challenges having equal rights to admittance to private schools may have spurred an interest of the journalists and editorial board on the voucher issue. This interest creates a response by the two newspapers to publish more articles/editorials using a combination of *both* interpretive and descriptive frames on Proposal 00-1 is another speculation that the investigator suggests, but cannot demonstrate.

Data in Graph 3 shows the number of articles and editorials that are purely descriptive. In contrast, the number of articles that are purely interpretive began to increase in August and experience minor decrease in November.

Graph 3



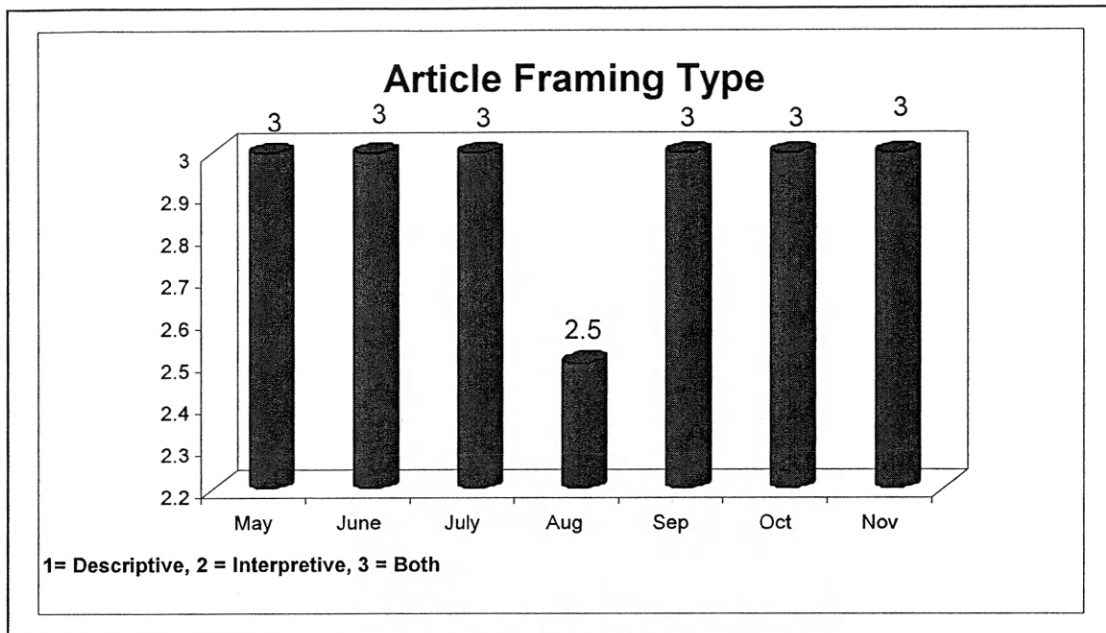
Articles in both *The Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* provide evidence that as the election draws closer, articles and editorials written by reporters and editors are more likely to use interpretive frames in their reporting styles. Although the articles and editorials continue to cite facts and figures and quote prominent individuals and groups in addition to being interpretive, the degree of interpretation appears to increase as election day approaches.

According to Graph 2, 17 articles published in September are included in the “both” category. For example, “Data On Diplomas May Hurt Vouchers: Graduations Up,” the article in the *Detroit Free Press*, dated September 14, 2000, written by Dawson Bell and Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki, is coded as a combination of both interpretive and descriptive frames. The title of this article is coded *evaluative* by examining the words “*May Hurt*” because these words are examples of the journalists placing a judgment and shows Bell and Walsh-Sarnecki *speculating*. According to the article, *only seven* school

districts in Michigan, including the state's largest in Detroit, reported graduation rates in 1998-1999 *low enough* to qualify students for the private school vouchers should voters approve the proposal in November. This paragraph is coded as evaluative because key words (only seven and low enough) in the paragraph are words that denote judgment or place a determination or value on a topic. The authors make a prediction in the title that suggests that journalists are indicating what could happen if graduation rates increase. For the purposes of this study, this style of reporting has been categorized as interpretive framing because reporters suggest a cause and effect. Patterson (personal communication via e-mail, 2002) suggests that when reporters write stories in this manner they are using interpretive frames.

This graph shows the framing type of coded articles based on whether they are descriptive, interpretive, or both. The percentage of interpretive articles decreased from 32.4% during the period from May 1 through September 30 to 20.8% during the period from October 1 through November 7, 2000. In addition, the percentage of articles that used a combined descriptive and interpretive frame increased from 63.5% during the period from May 1 through September 30 to 78.1% from October 1 through November 7, 2000.

Graph 4



Data related to Hypothesis 2 reveal that most articles written from May 1 through November 30 are primarily a mixture of descriptive and interpretive, except in August. In August, the median score for framing type is 2.5 which indicates that articles published in this month are more interpretive than a combination of both interpretive and descriptive.

An example of financial efforts being made by various unions is reported in *The Detroit News* on August 2, 2000:

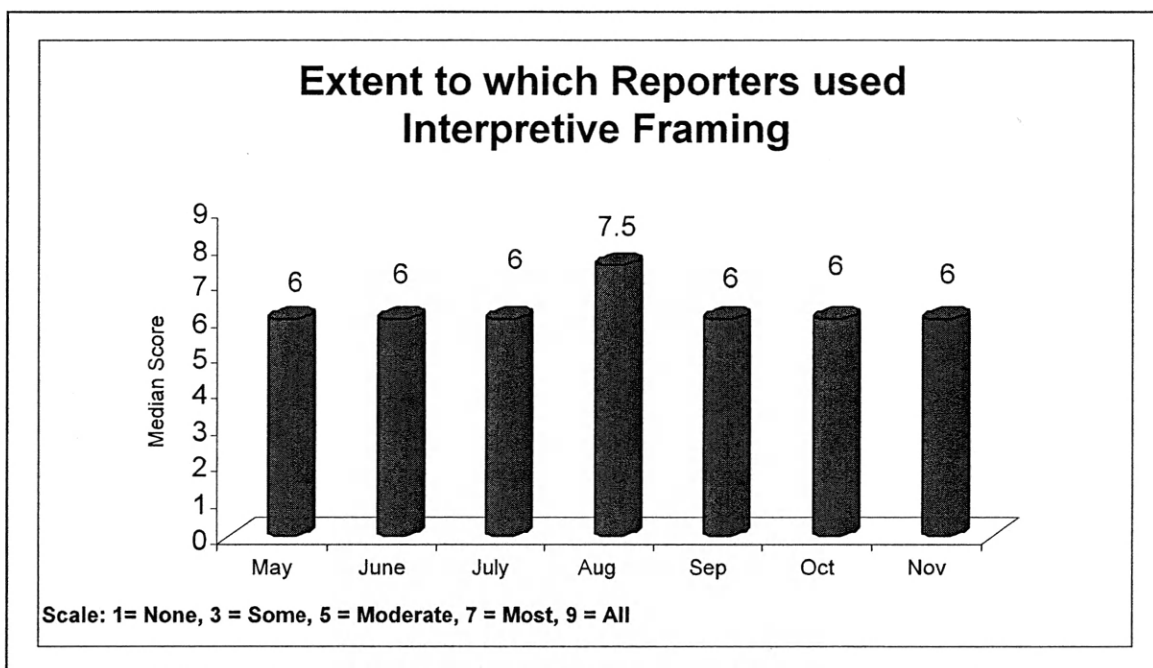
The National Education Association, for example, is assessing a special \$5 fee on its 2.5 million member to fight vouchers. Reportedly, \$3 of the \$5 would fight a voucher initiative in California, while \$2 per member would be sent to Michigan. More millions are expected to be raised through local affiliates, such as the Michigan Education Association, and other unions and liberal interest groups, not to mention in-kind contribution in the form of volunteer phone banks, pamphleteering and get-out-the vote efforts.

The increased dollars spent on campaigning may have motivated journalists' interest to report on the proposal resulting in the slight increase in interpretive framing shown in

August. Barbour and Wright (2001) elaborate on Cohen's theory concerning newspapers as source of communication not only tell people what issues to think about, but how to think about those issues closer a story is to election day.

The extent to which journalists use interpretive framing is determined by the median score for each month. Graph 5 presents the results of this analysis.

Graph 5



An increase in the level of interpretive reporting is shown by a peak 7.5 median score on a scale of 1 to 9 in the month of August. The median scores for the remainder of the months are constant at 6. According to the prescribed scale, 7.5 is equivalent to mostly interpretive.

In *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*, 20 stories were published in the month of August, with increases noted in September (n=26) and October (n=58). The

number of published articles shows a decrease to 34 in November. Although, the interpretive framing scores maintained a median score of 6 (which is between moderate and most), the number of articles published reveals a steady increase of coverage on Proposal 00-1, peaking in October with 58 articles published during the month prior to the election day on November 7, 2000.

Table 10 presents a comparison of the median scores for *analyzing*, *explaining*, and *evaluating* by month for both the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News*. Table 10 further shows that Hypothesis 2 is not confirmed. The highest level of *analyzing* by reporters occurs during May, while July reveals the lowest level of *analyzing*, as evidenced by a median score of 1.5 on a scale of (1- 9). October and November fail to show an increase in *analyzing* as election day approaches. Levels of *explaining* and *evaluating* fluctuate in the moderate area for each of the months, indicating that journalists are more likely to provide *evaluation* and *explanations* to their articles than they are to *analyze* facts.

Table 10

Median Scores for *Analyzing*, *Explaining*, and *Evaluating* by Month

Month	<i>Analyzing</i>	<i>Explaining</i>	<i>Evaluating</i>
May	4	4	5
June	2	5	4
July	1.5	4	5
August	2	5	5.5
September	3	5	4.5
October	2	5	4
November	2	4	5

Scores: 1= None; 3 = Some; 5 = Moderate; 7 = Most; 9 = All

While the interpretive framing median scores did not appear to increase over the months covered in this research, the number of articles that use both interpretive and descriptive reporting show substantial increases.

Hypothesis 3a. Reporters from *The Detroit News* are more likely to use an interpretive frame that is supportive of Proposal 00-1.

Hypothesis 3b. Editorial boards from *The Detroit News* are more likely to use an interpretive frame that is supportive of Proposal 00-1.

Tables, graphs and figures are used to describe and explain the findings for hypotheses 3a through 3d. The findings reveal that hypotheses 3a through 3d are confirmed. The text within each story is examined to determine if the interpretive frames *are nonsupportive, supportive, neutral, or unclear* concerning Proposal 00-1. These concepts are defined in Chapter Three and listed in the Coders Instruction Guide located in Appendix C. For example, the investigator asks the question, does the story argue that Proposal 00-1 would *help, hurt*, or be *indifferent* towards students, public/private schools and teachers, etc. if passed. Figures 3 and 4 show the extent to which reporters and editorial boards use interpretive framing to support the school voucher issue.

Figure 3: Hypothesis 3a

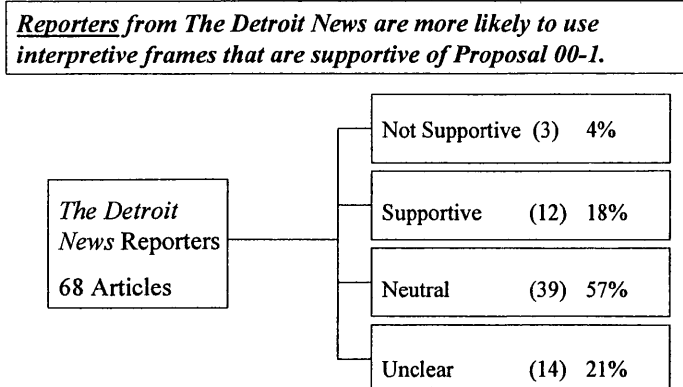
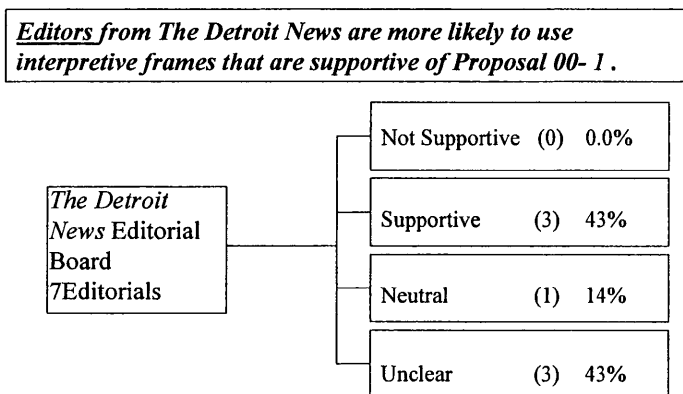


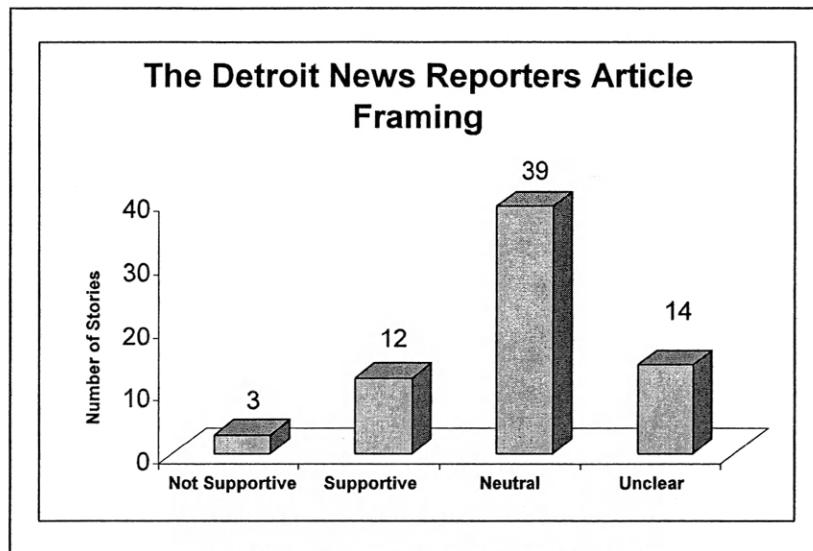
Figure 4: Hypothesis 3b



Graph 6 presents the number of articles published in *The Detroit News* classified by their support of the voucher issue. The investigator in the current study categorized each story after reading it as *not supportive*, *supportive*, *neutral*, or *unclear*. The data reveals that more stories written by *The Detroit News* Reporters are *supportive* (12 stories) on Proposal 00-1 than *not supportive* (3 stories). However, the *neutral* category received the highest number of stories (39) and *unclear* followed with (14) stories. Therefore, the data *supports* Hypothesis 3a that *The Detroit News* Reporters was more likely to use interpretive frames that were *supportive* when reporting on Proposal 00-1.

The graph illustrates the neutrality of the reports in framing their articles.

Graph 6



For example, in an article by Mark Hornbeck published in *The Detroit News* on May 29, 2000, “Voucher Vote Stirs Hot Debate Backers, Critics of Ballot Proposal Hurl Accusations of Scare Tactics, Fabrications” is coded *neutral* because the reporter provided balance in the story by offering information from both sides of the debate. Throughout the article, Hornbeck used the words *proponents*, *opponents* and *reality* to show the reporter’s efforts to be neutral. The graph shows that most articles are coded *neutral*.

An example of an article that is coded as “not supportive of Proposal 1” is written by Thomas Bray. The article, “We Already Have Vouchers: Pell Grants” published by *The Detroit News* on August 20, 2000, is *supportive* of the voucher issue:

What these critics won't tell you, however, is that a voucher system is already in place in this country. Every year it helps nearly 4 million students nationwide attend the school of their choice— including religious-based schools— for nearly \$8 billion. This voucher system has been in effect since 1973 with nary a peep of protest from American Civil Liberties Union. And it doesn't seem to have led to a religious takeover of

the school system. [This is an evaluative statement by Thomas Bray.]

These vouchers are known as Pell Grants, which are awarded mostly on the basis of need to help students attend college. The Pell Grant program is the successor of another voucher system: the old G.I. Bill, which aided millions of returning veterans to finance a college education after World War II. The G.I. Bill was widely considered one of the triumphs of enlightened liberalism.

There is a good reason that neither the G.I. Bill nor Pell Grants, which are awarded largely on the basis of need, [*social equality*] were ever subjected to a court challenge. As Clint Bolick of the Washington-based Institute for Justice notes: “The opponents of vouchers know that a court case on those programs would have exploded in their face.” [*The reporter is being sarcastic and nonsupportive with bias.*]

Anti-choice spokesmen say that vouchers for post-secondary education are somehow different than vouchers for K-12 education. The theory is that kids 18 and older are better equipped to defend themselves from unwanted religious indoctrination than kids in elementary or high school.

[Bray ends the article by arguing]

“There is a broader point. All education, by its nature, must rest on a moral foundation of some sort. Public schools may not inculcate religion, but most of them make a point of trying to teach values. Put aside the question of whether values can exist independent of a set of religious beliefs. *Shouldn't parents have the option of sending their kids to a schools whose values they share – and which might also happen to do a better job of teaching everything else than many of our public schools?*”

The statement that Bray asserts for example, “As for the danger that students might be subjected to religion, that would be their choice. Besides, could a *dose* of religion be worse than what *many* kids are exposed to *in the public schools these days* (*The Detroit News*, August 2, 2000)?” In this article, Bray is a political activist by asking his audience to think about religion being taught in public schools as a viable option. According to Cohen (1963), and supported by Patterson (2000b), the media may not tell its readers what to think about concerning the voucher proposal, but a reporter may contribute to shaping how readers think about the voucher question. Cohen (1963)

espouses this kind of affect that journalists can have on their audiences in his research concerning the press and foreign policy. The investigator in the current study finds this research is applicable in examining the manner in which journalists in Detroit framed the school voucher issue as they used interpretation to try to focus the view that voters have regarding vouchers, failing schools, and the outcomes that can occur if the voucher issue passed or failed.

An example of an article labeled as *unclear* in regard to whether it was supportive or non supportive of the voucher issue is illustrated in an article written in *The Detroit News* on August 17, 2000 by Mark Hornbeck. "School Fight Starts to Build Supporters and Foes skirmish over ballot wording on Proposal."

Foes of the school voucher proposal headed for the November ballot slammed some of the ballot language drafted Wednesday by the state.

But proponents of Proposal 1, the plan to let parents use up to \$3,1000 in public money a year to send their children to private schools, said the wording looks OK to them.

The language fight is the first shot in what promises to be a contentious and expensive battle over school vouchers in the next 10 weeks. Advocates of the voucher plan said they're still reviewing the state wording.

The reporter provides facts that explain what the voucher proposal will do, as well as information concerning the stance from both proponents and opponents of the issue. For example, "The teacher testing part of this was put in for *political spin*," Hodge said. "This proposal is all about eliminating the ban in the State Constitution against using public funds for private schools. *Period.*" The researcher can not consider the article neutral in its framing leading to the conclusion that this article is an illustration of *unclear* framing.

An example of an article that exemplifies a *not supportive* stance by a reporter writing for *The Detroit News* is presented in an article written by Mark Hornbeck on June 23, 2000 entitled, “Blanchard joins voucher fray Ex-Governor named co-chairman of group fighting school plan.” The article states:

Gov. John Engler and former Gov. James Blanchard, longtime political foes, have found common ground. . . . They both oppose the Michigan school voucher proposal. Blanchard officially joins the fray today as an honorary co-chairman All Kids First!, the *voucher opposition group*. . . . Engler was an early and outspoken opponent of the constitutional amendment on the November ballot, though he has said he won’t lead the charge against vouchers in the organized.

“This proposal would hurt neighborhood schools at a time when we ought to be spreading innovation and excellence in public schools, not paying kids to leave them,” said Blanchard, who splits his time between his home in Birmingham and his Washington law office. “Taxpayers can’t afford to finance two school systems.”

“Our campaign has never been about politicians, but about kids,” said Greg McNeilly of Kids First! Yes!, the voucher backers.

Other co-chairs of the anti-voucher effort will be State Board of Education President Dorothy Beardmore, R-Rochester, and the Rev. Charles Adams pastor of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church in Detroit and past president of the Detroit branch of the NAACP.

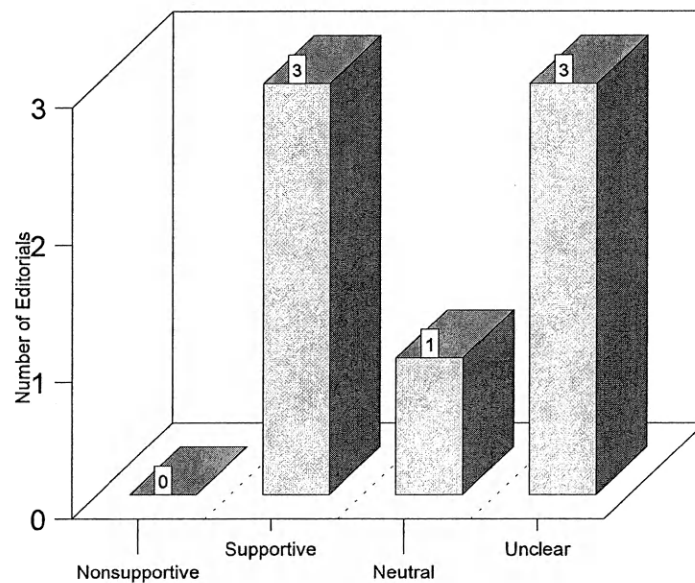
This article is coded as *not supportive* of Proposal 00-1 based on the report regarding Blanchard’s role in the opponents, All Kids First! The reporter does not offer any bias that allows the reader to know which way the newspaper plans to endorse the proposal. This lack of bias may be related to the timing of the article which is published in June instead of October 2000.

In reviewing the editorials for *support/nonsupport* of the voucher issue, three editorials are considered to be supportive, with a similar number unclear in regard to whether the editorial is *supportive* or *nonsupportive* of the Proposal 00-1. One editorial is

neutral about the voucher issue. None of the seven editorials appear to be *nonsupportive* of Proposal 00-1. Graph 7 presents the graphical depiction of this distribution.

Graph 7

The Detroit News Editorial Board Use of Framing



The Detroit News editorial board wrote seven (7) stories. Of those seven stories, 43% or three (3) were supportive of Proposal 00-1, while (0 stories) were not supportive. The neutral category had one (1) or 14%, while the unclear category followed with three (3) stories or 43%. Therefore, data supports Hypothesis 3b that *The Detroit News* editors are more likely to use interpretive frames that are supportive of Proposal 00-1.

An example of *The Detroit News* editorial board taking a *supportive* position is shown in an editorial entitled, "Proposal 1 Yes." In this editorial, the editors write: "The proposal stirs passions and dire predictions from backers and critics alike. But after all the

points are parsed, Proposal 1 deserves a YES vote on Michigan's Nov.7 ballot." (*The Detroit News*, October 24, 2000).

Additionally, examples of the *social equality* and the *fiscal conservative* themes are mentioned in the article by Mark Hornbeck on June 23, 2000 entitled, "Blanchard joins voucher fray Ex-Governor named co-chairman of group fighting school plan." The themes are identified by the researcher in the quote stated by former Governor James J. Blanchard. "This proposal would hurt *neighborhood schools* at a time when we ought to be spreading innovation and excellence in public schools, not paying kids to leave them," said Blanchard, who splits his time between his home in Birmingham and his Washington law office. "*Taxpayers can't afford to finance two school systems.*" The social equality theme is at work in this example, as the researcher defines social equality as the idea of providing better educational opportunities for *all* children. Fiscal conservative is defined as the role of government as the enforcer of principles accepted for the organization of economic activity (Friedman, 1980). Blanchard states that two educational systems is not fiscally responsible.

Hypothesis 3c. Reporters from The Detroit Free Press are more likely to use an interpretive frame that is *not supportive* of Proposal 00-1.

Hypothesis 3d. Editorial boards from the Detroit Free Press are more likely to use an interpretive frame that is *not supportive* of Proposal 00-1.

Merron and Gaddy (1986) use endorsements for the 1984 election as indicators for political leanings when they examined 26 newspapers. Endorsements of Democratic/Republican candidates campaigning for major political offices (i.e., President and U. S. Senate) were used in the current study to assist in determining the newspaper's

stance on the voucher proposal.

Using the same process with the *Detroit Free Press* that is used to classify the articles and editorials for *The Detroit News*, these stories are categorized as *nonsupportive*, *supportive*, *neutral*, or *unclear*. Graphs and figures are used to illustrate the finding for hypotheses 3a through 3d. Figures 5 and 6 present the results of the analyses of both newspaper articles and editorials that were used to test these hypotheses.

Figure 5: Hypothesis 3c

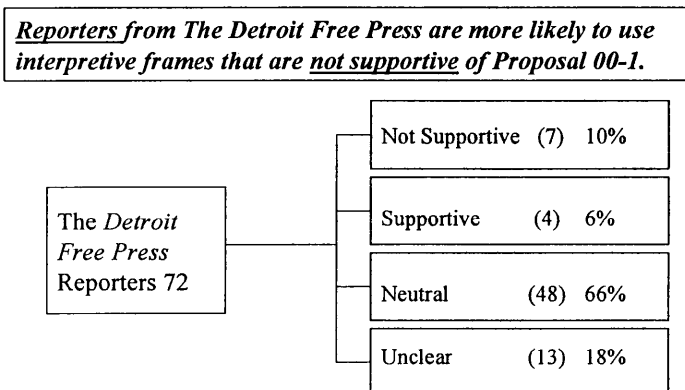
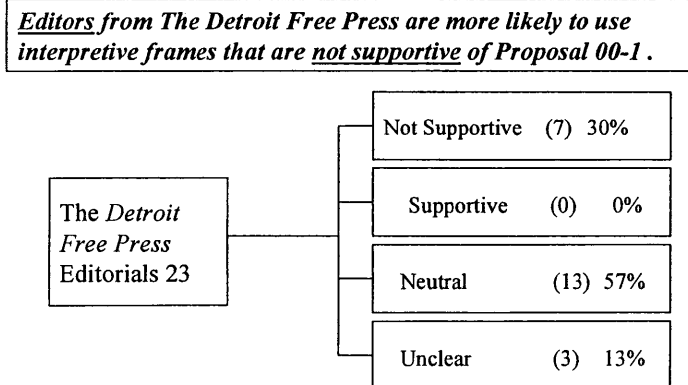


Figure 6: Hypothesis 3d



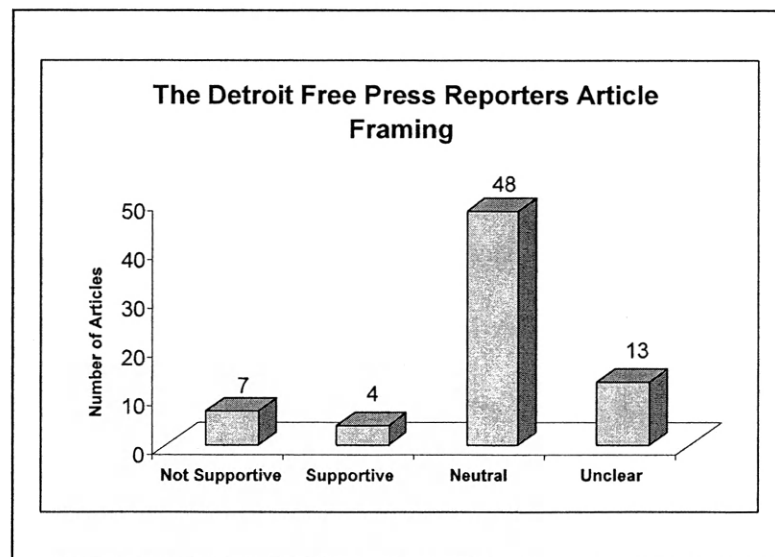
An example of *neutral* article framing by the *Detroit Free Press* is presented in an article entitled. "TV Ads Bombard Detroit Metro Area Is Tops in U.S. In Election

Commercials,” written by Dawson Bell, Tina Lam and Matt Helms (October 31, 2000).

This article is presented earlier in this chapter and offers an excellent example of a *neutral* article. The journalists do not take a position on whether it is good or bad that Detroit spent a lot of money on election commercials.

Similar to *The Detroit News* reporters, the majority of the articles in the *Detroit Free Press* were neutral (n=48, 66%), with the next largest category, unclear (n=13, 18%). The editorials that appear in the newspapers during the time period from May 1, through November 30, 2000 are classified by the researcher into the same four categories. The types of support (*supportive, nonsupportive, neutral, or unclear*) provided in the articles published in the *Detroit Free Press* by reporters are presented in Graph 8.

Graph 8

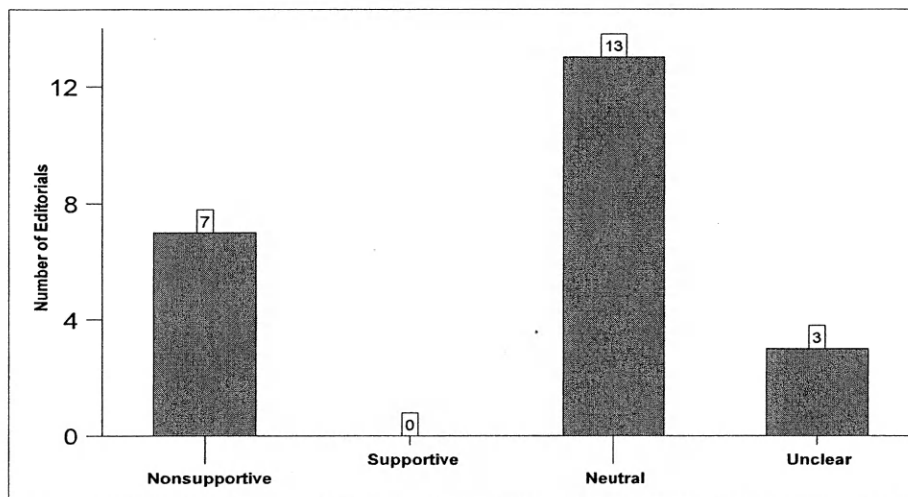


The *editorial board* members of the *Detroit Free Press* are more likely to use a *neutral* stance (n=13, 57%) in their editorials on Proposal 00-1. While none of the editorials were supportive of school vouchers, 7 (30.0%) were not supportive. Their stand

on the voucher issue was unclear in 3 (13%) of the editorials. Graph 9 presents the results of this analysis.

Graph 9

The Detroit Free Press Editorial Board Editorial Framing



To further examine the types of support provided for Proposal 00-1 in *The Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press*, the articles and editorials that appear between May 1 and November 30, 2000 are compared. Table 12 presents results of this analysis. The investigator uses Merron and Gaddy (1986) to support speculations about why neutral scores are high for both newspapers within (as it relates to the reporters) and between newspapers (as it relates to the editorial boards). Merron and Gaddy (1986) cited the Wilhoit and Auh's (1974) study of 46 large metropolitan papers covering gubernatorial and senatorial campaign polls in 1970. The findings of this study showed "a significant relationship . . . between newspaper endorsements of candidates and favorable opinion poll coverage about them." Additionally, Wilhoit and Auh (1974) found when two

newspapers located in the same state endorsed opposing candidates, coverage was basically equal and unbiased. This finding suggests that when editors are cognizant that an event is conclusively partisan, and a measure of comparison exists for their coverage (i.e., a competing daily), they may tend to provide coverage that is more fair and balanced than if the event was clearly partisan or if they lacked competition in terms of reporting on the issue. This literature is relevant to the current study's finding because in Michigan, *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* took opposing sides on the school voucher issue. Although Hypotheses 3a through 3d are confirmed, each newspaper wrote stories that mirrored their position on the issue. The neutral scores were highest for both reporters and editorial boards, suggesting that the existence of competition between the newspapers produces balanced and unbiased coverage on the issue.

Table 12

Comparison of Reactions for Proposal 00-1

The Detroit News and Detroit Free Press

Type of Reaction	Newspaper			
	<i>The Detroit News</i>		<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Reporters	Articles/Stories			
Not Supportive	3	4.0	7	10.0
Supportive	12	18.0	4	6.0
Neutral	39	57.0	48	66.0
Unclear	14	21.0	13	18.0
Editorial Boards	Editorials			
Not Supportive	0	0.0	7	30.0
Supportive	3	43.0	0	0.0
Neutral	1	14.0	13	57.0
Unclear	3	43.0	3	13.0

An example of the *not supportive* is revealed in an article entitled, "Proposal 00-1" written by the *Detroit Free Press* editorial board on October 31, 2000. "The Free Press editorial board has recommended that people vote no on Proposal 1, which would make tuition vouchers available to students in school districts failing to graduate two-thirds of their students and require teacher testing." Overall, the majority of editorials are written from a neutral perspective, although the editorial board is opposed to the proposal.

Another editorial that is *nonsupportive* is entitled, "School Vouchers State Proposal 1 is a Bad Plan For Schools, Students and Taxpayers" (*Detroit Free Press* October 13, 2000). In the first paragraph of the editorial the editors make a statement that is coded as an example of a social equality theme.

Even those who believe school vouchers will *promote social justice* need to take a skeptical look at Proposal 1 on the Nov. 7 ballot. Its scope goes far beyond giving some of the state's most *poorly* served student a chance to get into a better, private school. The vast majority of the public schools in Michigan are working well right now, which only deepens the distress for *families in problem-plagued districts* such as *Detroit*."

In this example, the theme of *social equality* is mentioned in terms of *poor* families in problematic districts, such as Detroit. The *race* theme is also exemplified in this example because Detroit is predominately Black. In the present study, when racial themes were encountered by the researcher, the newspapers did so by mentioning geographical locations (e.g., cities such as *Pontiac, Saginaw, Flint, Inkster*). These cities served as indicators for racial themes, for example in this editorial *problem-plagued districts* such as Detroit. According to Traugott (2001), Michigan has a majority White population (80.8%), with African Americans comprising of 14.1%. Urban areas, especially Detroit, are the home to most African Americans in the state (Serwack as cited in Traugott, 2001).

While *between* differences in the two newspapers in regard to the articles that

appeared to *support* the voucher issue are expected, the *between* similarity in the percentage of articles considered describing a *neutral* or *unclear* position is unexpected. The journalists present a balanced perspective of the issue for their readers. *The Detroit News* is more likely to be supportive (n=3, 43.0%) of Proposal 00-1 than neutral (n=1, 14.0%). In contrast, the *Detroit Free Press* editorials tend to be *neutral* (n=13, 57.0%), with fewer of their editorials *not supporting* the voucher issue (n=7, 30.0%).

Some examples from the text of the articles illustrate the *neutral* position exhibited by reporters not revealing a bias on the proposal either for or against. For example, in an article entitled, “Voucher Battle will be waged in Pulpits” taken by reporters, David Crumm, Patricia Montemurri, Free Press staff writers, and staff writer, Alexa Capeloto, contribute to this report that is located in the *News* section of the *Detroit Free Press* on September 23, 2000. The article, begins by stating that:

Millions of Michigan churchgoers will soon be hearing political messages from the pulpit about the ballot proposal to allow state funded tuition vouchers for private schools. In some churches, voters will be urged to pass the measure; in others, they'll be told to defeat it. Michigan's 2.3 million Catholics will get the most intense spiritual prodding: as many as seven pro-voucher homilies during masses, a campaign tactic sponsored by the state's Catholic bishops . . . On the other side of the issue, the Rev. Charles Adams, one of Detroit's most influential Baptist preachers, is preparing to start condemning the voucher proposal Oct. 1 from the pulpit of his 10,000 member Hartford Memorial Baptist Church. “*Black people are not crazy. They know a scam when they see one, and this is nothing but a scam,*” said Adams, who predicted that many other Detroit Baptist pastors will soon join him in condemning the proposal. “*While it purports to benefit kids who are supposed to be so poor and disadvantaged, it then goes on to open up the voucher possibility all over the state,*” Adams said.

The quote by Reverend Charles Adams suggests the relevance of social equality themes appearing when the reporter quotes Adams stating, “While it purports to benefit kids who are supposed to be so *poor and disadvantaged*, it then goes on to open up the

voucher possibility all over the state.”

Additionally, reporters uses some analysis here by reporting that, “Polls show that about half of Detroit residents are Baptist, but support for vouchers is slightly higher among Detroiters and among Black people than the statewide average for all voters.” This article does not reveal whether journalists are *supportive*, *nonsupportive*, or *unclear* about the journalists’ position. It appears to present *neutral* data and information to its readers. Although, Crumm et al. (2000) write about social conflict related to Rev. Charles Adams’s viewpoint, the reporters still offer information from both sides of the debate, thus substantiating the article to appear *neutral* to the researcher.

The investigator expected that the editorial boards of both major newspapers would write editorials that supported the position that the board had taken on Proposal 00-1 and the findings in the current study supported these hypotheses. In examining bias inherent *within* the newspapers, using articles and editorials categorized as either supportive or not supportive of Proposal 00-1, the investigator concluded that the *Detroit Free Press* tends to be *nonsupportive* of Proposal 00-1, while *The Detroit News* is more likely to *support* Proposal 00-1. In some articles and editorials, the support or lack of support appears to be more notable than in other, where support is less obvious. Based on these findings, Hypotheses 3a through 3d are confirmed.

Chapter V

Did the Newspapers Endorsements Make a Difference in how the Editorial Boards use Interpretive Frames?

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe potential effects that presidential endorsements had on the framing of Proposal 00-1 by editorial boards of *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*. This chapter analyzes results of the pre/post endorsements of presidential candidates by each newspaper, comparing and contrasting the relative frequencies with which the number of editorials written on Proposal 00-1 are placed within editorial pages. Content analysis and descriptive statistics are employed in an examination of interpretive frames to discuss the findings. This chapter also focuses on prominent individuals, including policy experts, candidates, and interest groups. The investigator discusses findings on whether the newspapers interviewed prominent leaders/individuals including policy experts, candidates, and interest groups that mirror their endorsement positions. If editorials only include statements from leaders and organizations who favor the issue, then it is concluded that the newspapers presented information that supported their endorsement positions. A series of graphs, figures, and a table, along with excerpts from newspaper editorials are used to describe and explain the data.

The newspaper editorials are examined to determine if the information integrated within the editorials reflects candidates' positions on Proposal 00-1. Editorials that appear before the endorsement and those that appear after the endorsement in the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News* are examined. This chapter discusses a total of 30 editorials

written on Proposal 00-1. Content analysis is used to examine tone (e.g., *supportive*, *nonsupportive*, *neutral*, or *unclear* framing of the story in the newspaper) and types of interpretation used in framing the editorials (e.g., *analyzing*, *evaluating*, and *explaining*). In addition, names, occupation titles of individuals/leaders and special interest groups interviewed or mentioned in the editorial are examined. All of the editorials are usually placed within the editorial section of the newspaper. The editorials are then analyzed and discussed in this chapter.

Hypothesis 4a.

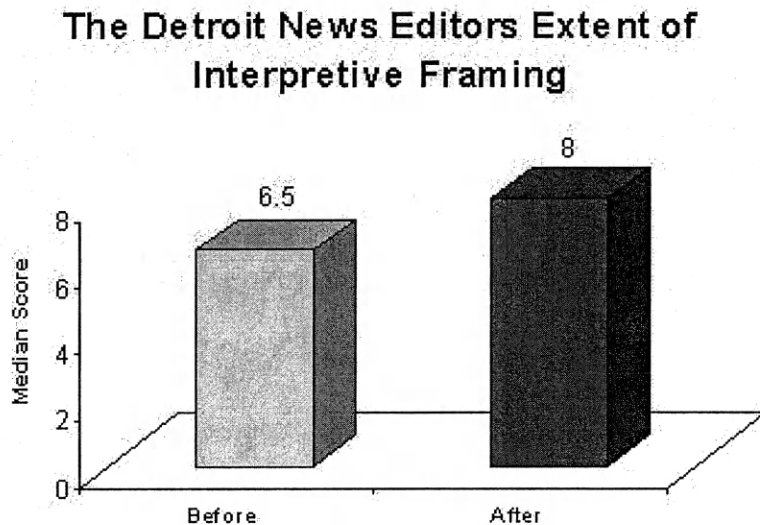
Following the endorsement of the Republican presidential candidate, George W. Bush, on October 22, 2000 by the *editorial board* of *The Detroit News*, it is hypothesized that newspaper editorials will show a significant increase in the use of interpretive frames in reference to Proposal 00-1.

Based on the substantial increase in median scores on the extent to which interpretive framing is used in the editorials from *The Detroit News*, *the hypothesis is confirmed*. The findings confirm the assumption, stated in Hypothesis 4a, that the endorsement of Proposal 00-1 would cause a positive increase in the extent of interpretive framing on the articles published by *The Detroit News* editorial board following their endorsement for Proposal 00-1. Thus, the investigator can make the inference that the editorial board acted more as political activists than as objective observers in their editorials.

The editorials are scored to determine the extent of their interpretive framing. A coding form was developed utilizing a scale with measurements from 1 to 9 to define intervals that ranged from interpretive framing to complete interpretive framing. The

scores prior to the endorsement of Proposal 00-1 and following the endorsement are presented in Graph 10.

Graph 10



Results of the data analysis show an increase from a median score of 6.5 prior to *The Detroit News* declaring a supportive endorsement for Proposal 00-1 on October 22, 2000 to 8 following the endorsement. The before endorsement median score of 6.5 measures between moderate and high on the interpretive scale, while the after endorsement median score of 8 measures between most and all. This difference represents an increase of 23% in the extent of interpretive framing used by *The Detroit News* editorial board.

An after-endorsement example is presented in an editorial published on November 6, 2000, the day before the national elections. This editorial uses words, such as “*rescue*,” “*chronically failing*,” and “*perhaps some public schools deserve destroying*,” to indicate a negative tone regarding the issue.

Down the ballot, we have asked voters to support Proposal 1, the school voucher measure. We see this as a classic civil rights issue, since it would primarily *rescue* minority students from *chronically failing* urban districts and give them at least a shot at an equal education. Critics say it would *destroy* the public schools. It wouldn't. But *perhaps some public schools deserve destroying*, before they *destroy* the futures of another generation of children. (*The Detroit News*, November 6, 2000)

This quotation is an example of the editorial board using its power to frame public schools negatively by suggesting that *some public schools need destroying* because they have destroyed previous generations and the editorial board predicts that some public schools are about to destroy another generation's future. This example also shows cause and effect patterns that Patterson (personal communication via e-mail 2002) asserts are *interpretive*. In this example, the cause is the "*chronically failing urban districts*" and the effect is to "*rescue minority students . . . and give them at least a shot at an equal education.*" Additionally, this example shows how *The Detroit News* editorial board can paint a picture in the minds' of their readers and speculate about the future if Proposal 00-1 fails. Barbour and Wright (2001) used a similar example to define their view of framing, "The same painting can look very different depending on its frame: a heavy gold baroque frame gives a painting weight and tradition, whereas a thin metal frame makes it more stark and modern. The painting doesn't change but how we see it does." (p. 280) *The Detroit News* appears to be telling their readers how to think about "failing urban districts." Failing schools is a constant theme that both newspapers raise in the editorials and this finding is important because it illustrates that this is what *The Detroit News* editorial board is doing.

The following example of interpretive framing by *The Detroit News* editorial board shows how sentences such as, "*the MEA fears competition among schools*", and

“*Milwaukee competition in public funded education has worked*” are used to frame the topic to reflect their position.

The Michigan Education Association (MEA), the outspoken teachers’ union *fears competition* among schools and campaigned actively against Proposal 1. But *competition in public-funded education has worked in Milwaukee* for 10 years. *It can work in Michigan, too . . .* The MEA and other opponents of Proposal 1 have made their point: They *oppose* vouchers, even if vouchers could give poor parents a much-needed helping hand. . . . *Some parents in those districts are weary of waiting for the state’s public education industry to deliver.* (*The Detroit News*, November 8, 2000).

This example provides evidence on how *The Detroit News* editorial board uses *interpretive* framing by including expressions that offer predictions and speculations such as; “*competition in public-funded education has worked in Milwaukee* for 10 years. It can work in Michigan, too.” Another speculation is that “*some parents are . . . weary of waiting for the state’s public education industry to deliver.*” These phrases indicate ways in which the editorial board exercised their power to judge and suggests expected outcomes concerning the voucher issue. For the purpose of the current study, when this type of reporting is identified within editorials it is considered evaluation and is categorized as interpretive framing by the editorial board. (*The Detroit News*, November 8, 2000)

Another after endorsement example that illustrates the use of interpretative framing by the editorial board is:

Just one more day, and voters will have chosen a new President. Michigan *will* have decided whether to keep the senator it has or try a new one, as well as made vital choices about the philosophy of its Supreme Court and what to do with *its failing schools*. Collectively, voters *will have picked the direction they want government to take at the start of a new century.* (*The Detroit News*, November 6 , 2000)

This portion of the editorial is selected because it shows the saliency of Proposal 00-1 and

frames this state issue as having national implications by referencing how the voucher decision will effect the philosophy of the Michigan Supreme Court. Failing schools are mentioned in the same paragraph as the fact that Michigianians are electing a new president and state senator.

An editorial that appeared in *The Detroit News* on October 24, 2000, shows how *The Detroit News* editorial board encourages voters to vote for Proposal 00-1: “The proposal stirs passions and dire predictions from backers and critics alike. But after all the points are parsed, Proposal 1 deserves a YES vote on Michigan’s Nov. 7 ballot.” The editorial board for *The Detroit News* takes a position on the issue, uses words that are suggestive of evaluation, and encourages readers to vote yes on Proposal 00-1.

The next quotation exemplifies *analyzing* with the Editorial board using data to support their reporting.

The strongest case for the measure is this: It helps parents who want to extract their child from a chronically *failing public school*. In several districts, large portions of several generations have been left behind without a high school education. Last year for example, one Michigan district reported a graduation rate of 20 percent— one in five, according to data filed with the state. . . . Proposal 1 won’t help all parents in all cases. But it’s a start. . . . Vouchers were introduced in Milwaukee in 1990 and a university study showed successful targeting of very low-income minority students. . . . (*The Detroit News*, Oct. 24, 2000).

An example of *The Detroit News* editorial board using an interpretive frame is exhibited in an editorial entitled “Proposal 1: Yes.” This editorial uses *explaining* as a style in presenting the newspaper’s stance on the voucher issue. The editorial board communicates the messages that: “schools are poor” and “performance is bad” and that “school are not doing well.” These ideas are consistently stated in both newspapers editorial pages when examined between newspapers. According to Cohen (1963), these

are ways that newspapers *tell* people *what to think about*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin is referenced frequently in the editorials and the Supreme Court is mentioned often thus, making this a national issue. The newspapers made the coverage of Proposal 00-1 in Detroit a national issue in a presidential election year by framing the issue in a larger scope when discussing Milwaukee and the Supreme Court. This is an example of why the investigator is examining interpretive framing before and after newspaper endorsements.

Proposal 1 also gives school districts two ways to voluntarily adopt vouchers, a generous nod toward local control of local schools. An elected school board could say yes. Or the matter could be put on a local ballot. We do not expect – or recommend– pell-mell rush to permit vouchers in Michigan’s successful public school districts, some of which have national reputations for excellence. (*The Detroit News*, Oct. 24, 2000)

Following the endorsement of the Republican presidential candidate, George W. Bush, on October 22, 2000 by the *editorial board* of *The Detroit News*, it is hypothesized that newspaper editorials will show a significant increase in the use of interpretive frames in reference to Proposal 00-1. The findings on this hypothesis provided support for the confirmation of Hypothesis 4a.

Hypothesis 4b.

Following the endorsement of the Republican presidential candidate, George W. Bush, on October 22, 2000 by the editorial board of *The Detroit News*, it is hypothesized that newspaper editorials will show a significant *increase* in prominent individuals and interest groups interviewed who support Proposal 00-1.

Hypothesis 4b is not confirmed. Unexpectedly, the editorial board of *The Detroit News* mentioned oppositional interest groups in their editorials. However, these groups, such as the MEA, are included in the editorials in a way that reflects a negative point of view. The editorial board, by disparaging anti-voucher interest groups, are used by *The*

Detroit News to promote support for this issue. Therefore, instead of including interest groups that mirror a supportive view of the passage of Proposal 00-1, the opposite occurred. By including groups that were opposed to vouchers as a means of lessening the impact of failing schools and helping students in low-income, low-performing school districts, the editorial board acknowledged their existence in their editorials, but promoted the negativity of their roles in voucher issues. Therefore, the hypothesis is not confirmed.

The editorials in *The Detroit News* are analyzed to determine if they include information regarding prominent individuals and interest groups who support Proposal 00-1. Data are recorded for analysis to determine the extent to which these individuals and groups are included in the editorial and the frequency with which they are mentioned.

Out of seven editorials, two (“Government Money OK’d For Religious Schools,” and “No Campaigning with Tax Dollars”) are published in *The Detroit News* before endorsement. One major pro-voucher group, “Kids First! Yes!”, is mentioned in this editorial, while major interest groups and prominent individuals who supported Proposal 00-1 are not mentioned (e.g., Catholic Church, Dick/Betsy DeVos, etc.) Following endorsement, five editorials (The Vote: What’s at Stake; Beyond Proposal 1; Charter Schools Add Diversity; Proposal 1: Yes; For State Board of Education) are published, with none of the major supportive groups mentioned. Conversely, *The Detroit News* editorial board mentions one group (Michigan Education Association [MEA]) that is not supportive of Proposal 00-1. The MEA is mentioned once before endorsement and four times after endorsement to further emphasize the negative view of this organization regarding Proposal 00-1.

The investigator in the current study speculates that *The Detroit News* editorial

board may lack the expertise that the reporters have who cover educational/ governmental issues daily and work closer to the actual players out in the field. The editorial boards may not be clear on who the key actors really are. Furthermore, editorial boards and reporters both have strict deadlines which may prevent them from mentioning everything in an editorial. *The Detroit News* editorial board *does not* mention *interest groups* and *prominent individuals* who supported Proposal 00-1.

Hypothesis 4c.

Following the endorsement of the Republican presidential candidate, George Bush, on October 22, 2000 by the editorial board of *The Detroit News*, it is hypothesized that newspaper editorials will show a significant *increase in the use of evaluative framing* in a *positive direction to support* Proposal 00 -1. Based on these results, the *hypothesis is confirmed*. While the editorials have some *analyzing and explaining* included in their content, the primary thrust of the editorials is to promote the need to vote *yes* on the school voucher issue because it is the position of the editorial board that vouchers are needed to improve the *problem of failing school districts*.

Three types of interpretive frames, *analyze*, *explain*, and *evaluate* are used to examine each editorial. The investigator applies a scale when reading the editorials to distinguish the three types of frames used by the editorial board. The before-endorsement median score for Analyze is 3, which is equivalent to *Some* on the coding scale that ranges from *None* = 1 to *All* = 9, while the after-endorsement median score increased to 4, indicating an increase of 33% in the editorial board's use of Analysis as an interpretive frame.

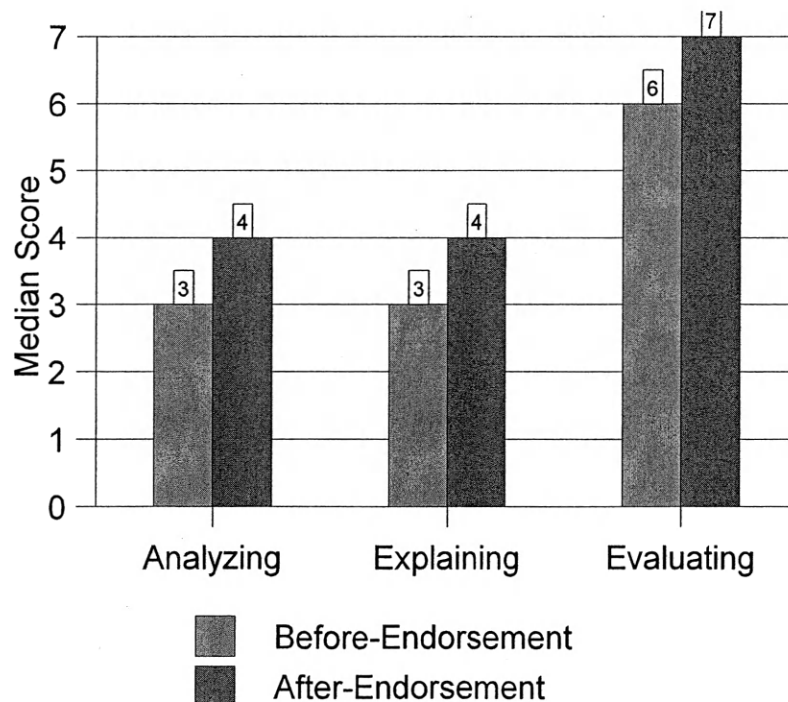
The before-endorsement median score for Explaining is 3, while the after-

endorsement median score increased to 4, revealing an increase in the editorial board's use of *Explaining* by 33%.

Using the same process as *Analyzing* and *Explaining*, the before-endorsement median score for *Evaluate* is 6. The data reveal that *The Detroit News* editorials received a median score of 6 for *evaluating*. Following endorsement, the median score increased to 7. This change is indicative of a 17% increase in evaluating by the editors. Graph 11 presents the graphical representation of this analysis.

Graph 11

The Detroit News Editorials
Change in Median Scores on Analyzing, Explaining, and Evaluating
Before and After Endorsement



The data reveal that *The Detroit News* editorial board received median scores of 6

for *evaluating*, 3 for *analyzing*, and 3 for *explaining*. After-endorsement median scores for *analyzing* (4) and *explaining* (4) both showed 33% increases from the before-endorsement scores, while the after-endorsement median score indicated an increase of 16%.

An editorial published *before endorsement* entitled, “No Campaigning with Tax Dollars,” published on October 5, 2000, is the last editorial written *before The Detroit News* made its endorsement on October 22, 2000. Some examples of evaluation in this editorial are:

Sneaking public tax dollars into political battles is always suspect, if not outright illegal. The issue is driven home in Michigan this week in the matter of school vouchers . . . Other districts distributed information that *purports* to counter “claims” of pro-voucher forces with “fact.” . . . But Huron Valley and the others *should* back off twisted legal interpretations and stop ballot campaigning as a matter of sound public policy. Teachers and administrators are tax-paid servants of the political process, not its *masters*. For his part, Judge Harrison *should* see past specious arguments and uphold Secretary Miller in her *crackdown* on errant school districts. (*The Detroit News*, October 5, 2000).

The title of the editorial “Proposal 1: Yes,” written on October 24, 2000 two days following *The Detroit News* editorial board endorsement of Proposal 00-1, is indicative of the editorial board using its editorial page to suggest to its readers to vote yes for the proposal. The first paragraph is coded evaluative because it meets the criteria of placing a judgement or making a determination.

Ballot Proposal 1 is the *most far-reaching* education plan offered Michigan in more than 20 years . . . The proposal stirs passions and dire predictions from backers and critics alike. But after all the points are parsed, Proposal 1 *deserves* a YES vote on Michigan’s Nov. 7 ballot.

Another example of *The Detroit News* editorial board using evaluation in its interpretive framing is the that the editorial board ends by stating:

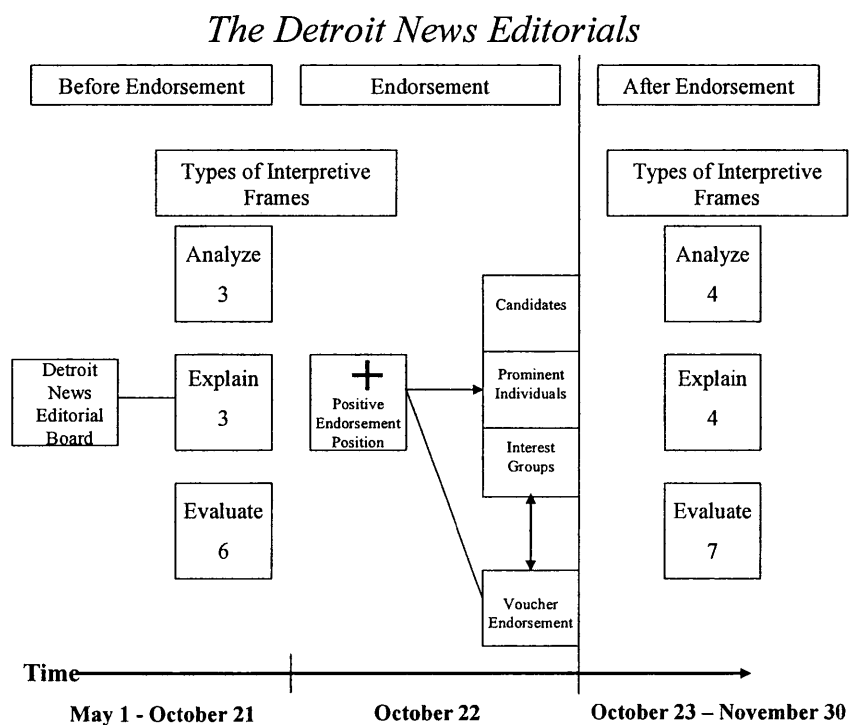
But make no mistake. Proposal 1 represents a *new* direction for education in Michigan. It *broadens* the definition of public education to *public-funded* education. The idea is not new. But after *several* decades of *failure* in some school districts, its time has come.

Figure 7 provides schematic illustration that describes the behavior of the editorial boards over time, with the drawing detailing median scores for the three types of interpretive frames. In comparing the before and after median scores, an increase is noted in the analyzing and explaining frames while a decrease is found for evaluating framing. These decreases and increases of the interpretive framing score are substantial because of the procedures that are used to obtain the before and after scores for this study.

The before-endorsement score is calculated by analyzing scores of each editorial before the October 22, 2000 endorsement date. The after-endorsement median score for the type of interpretive frame score is obtained by using all of the editorials published from May 1, 2000 through November 30, 2000. This method includes two editorials published before October 22, 2000 in the before-endorsement median score, with the after scores using those two editorials and the five editorials written after *The Detroit News* endorsement of Proposal 00-1 to determine the after-endorsement median score.

Figure 7

Schematic Illustration of the Behavior Of Editorial Boards

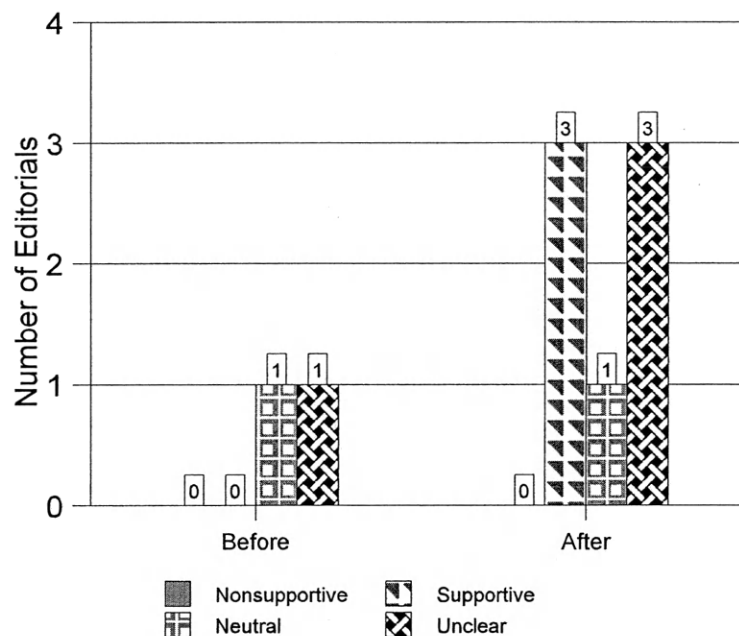


The Detroit News editorials are reviewed to determine the extent to which the three types of interpretive framing, *analyzing*, *explaining*, and *evaluating*, are used to test the hypotheses. Editorials, by their nature, are evaluative and based on the opinions of the editorial board of the newspaper. *The Detroit News* editorial board supported vouchers, with three of the seven editorials published in the paper supportive of vouchers. Five editorials appeared after endorsement, with two (one neutral and one unclear) published

prior to endorsement. Three of the editorials that appeared after endorsement of the voucher issue were supportive, with the other two unclear. Graph 12 presents the types of editorials presented in *The Detroit News*.

Graph 12

Comparison of *The Detroit News* Editorial Framing for Vouchers Before and After Endorsement Oct. 22, 2000



An example of an editorial that appeared in *The Detroit News* before endorsement on October 20, 2000 was “No Campaigning with Tax Dollars” (October 5, 2000). In this editorial, the editorial board stated:

This newspaper has not yet taken a position on vouchers, detailed in Proposal 1, an amendment to the state Constitution on the Nov. 7 ballot. But the use of public funds to sway voters on the issue must stop.

Some districts thinly *disguise* anti-voucher campaigning as distributing news to parents. One *scam* works like this: A school board adopts an anti-voucher resolution, as it is permitted to do by law. But “news” of the effort

is *loaded* with anti-voucher *sloganeering* and distributed to parents and others on school stationary, using publicly paid staff and equipment.

This editorial is sending mixed messages by indicating the newspaper has not taken a position on vouchers, but then indicates that the use of public funds to sway voters on the issue must stop. The use of public funds for any political campaigning is illegal, as well as unethical.

On October 24, 2000, *The Detroit News* published the editorial, "Proposal 1: Yes" that was supportive of the voucher issue. The editorial in part stated:

But make no mistake. Proposal 1 represents a new direction for education in Michigan. It broadens the definition of public education to public-funded education.

The idea is not new. But after several decades of failure in some school districts, its time has come.

This editorial provides evidence of the strong support that *The Detroit News* is supporting vouchers for students in failing school districts.

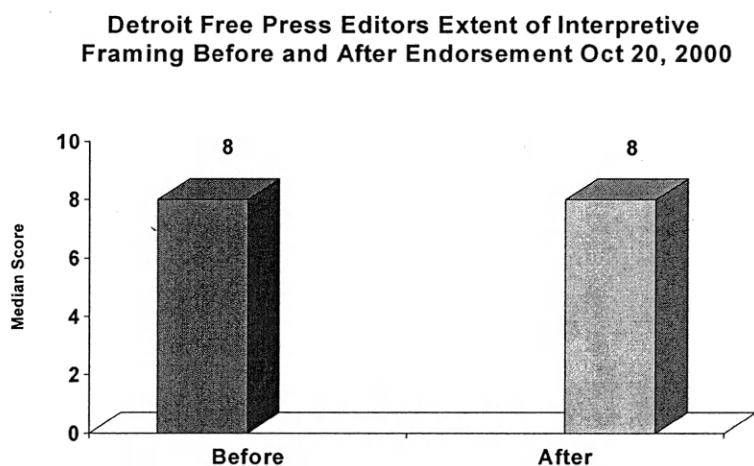
Hypothesis 5a.

Following the endorsement of Democratic presidential candidate, Al Gore, on October 20, 2000 by the *editorial board* of the *Detroit Free Press*, it was hypothesized that newspaper editorials would show a significant increase in the use of interpretive frames in reference to Proposal 00-1. *Hypothesis 5a is not confirmed.* The *Detroit Free Press* editorials do not show a significant increase in the use of interpretive frames.

The interpretive framing score is determined by adding all of the *analyzing, explaining, and evaluating* tally marks made on the coder's grid sheet to compile a total number. This number is called the interpretive framing score and it is then divided by the number of paragraphs plus the title of the editorial if the title is not purely descriptive.

Data reveals that the *Detroit Free Press* editorial board receives a median score of 8 on the scale of 1 to 9 for measuring the extent of interpretive framing before the newspaper endorsed Proposal 00-1 on October 20, 2000. After endorsement, no change was noted in the median score of 8 for interpretive framing after their negative endorsement of Proposal 00-1. Graph 13 presents this analysis.

Graph 13



An editorial written *prior* to endorsement is an example of the use of interpretive framing used toward the beginning of the campaign. “Voucher Vote Ballot Language Needs to be Clear about Proposal,” appearing in the *Detroit Free Press* on August 18, 2000, exemplifies the use of interpretive framing. The investigator has italicized words or phrases that denote examples of *interpretive* framing:

The battle over the school voucher proposal on the Nov. 4 ballot *promises* to be *intense*. That’s why discussion today *ought to be equally intense*

about how to pare down the proposal to 100 words that will fit on the ballot.

Lost in the verbiage is the proposal's blunt impact: It would allow public money and property to flow, indirectly, to nonpublic schools. . . . The title given to this ballot issue needs to be clear about what it would change. Instead, the staff's suggested title starts out: "A proposal to permit state to provide support to students attending nonpublic . . . schools"

The editorial board of the *Detroit Free Press*, using phrases, such as "Lost in the verbiage is the proposal's blunt impact," reflects an interpretation of the issue of the ballot language for vouchers. This statement implies that the language of Proposal 00-1 misrepresents the impact of vouchers on public education. The editorial board also takes umbrage to the title of the ballot issue, "A proposal to permit the state to provide support to students attending nonpublic . . . schools," indicating that the title needs to be clear about what Proposal 00-1 would change. According to the editorial board, this title is vague and indicates that "indirect aid probably could be based on any standard – number of teachers, scope of building repairs – if this proposal passes, as long as it doesn't discriminate."

The level of interpretative framing did not decrease following the *Detroit Free Press's* endorsement against the passage of the proposal as evidenced by the editorial, "Flawed Voucher Plan Loses" published on November 8, 2000:

Michiganders' *gratifyingly big* vote against turning the state Constitution topsy-turvy for a *flawed* voucher plan *certainly* does not let the public schools off the hook in general or state government off the hook in particular. . . . This proposal would have had no traction at all if the *frustration* with underperforming schools wasn't so great, especially since most public schools throughout the state perform quite nicely. Ultimately, the message that *Proposal 1 could lead* to divisive voucher votes even in solid districts seems to have gotten through, along with concern about the impact and amount of tax money headed toward private schools (*Detroit Free Press*, November 8, 2000).

This editorial shows the editorial board making predictions for example, “the message that Proposal 1 could lead to divisive voucher votes even in solid districts seems to have gotten through, along with concern about the impact and amount of tax money headed toward private schools” (*Detroit Free Press*, Nov. 8, 2000). It is not for certain whether a divide will occur or not, but the editorial board has put the idea into the minds of its readers and predicts that the proposal may lead to a divide on the voucher vote even in solid districts. The *Detroit Free Press* editorial board is consistent with their use of interpretive framing before and after their endorsement.

Hypothesis 5b.

Following the endorsement of the Democratic presidential candidate, Al Gore, on October 20, 2000 by the editorial board of the *Detroit Free Press*, it is hypothesized that editorials will show a significant increase in prominent individuals and interest groups interviewed who were not supportive of Proposal 00-1. Therefore, this hypothesis is not confirmed.

Of the 23 editorials written in the *Detroit Free Press*, 15 editorials were written before the endorsement and 8 editorials are written after endorsement. Among the major interest groups and prominent individuals who were in the “nonsupportive” category were mentioned in the editorials published before endorsement of Proposal 00-1. For example, nonsupportive or anti-voucher interest groups and prominent individuals such as; All Kids First; The Michigan Education Association; Former Governor James J. Blanchard, Rev. Charles Adams of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church and Laura Wotuba are *not* included in the editorials as the investigator expected. However, *before and after endorsement*, the Catholic Church is mentioned *three* times. Other major supportive or

pro-voucher interest groups and prominent individuals (e.g., Rev. Eddie Edwards of Joy of Jesus, Kids First, Yes! Greg McNielly, Kids First, Yes spokesperson, Cardinal Maida, and Dick DeVos) are not mentioned either before or after endorsement in the *Detroit Free Press* editorials.

The investigator argues that the *Detroit Free Press* editorial board may not have been aware of the key interest groups and prominent individuals to include in their editorials. Pekny (2003) describes differences between editors and editorial boards by arguing that editors make decisions about news story coverage – who will report the story, which photographs to include. . . . The editorial board deliberates on the story and take a stance, thus the editorial boards are not out in the field learning the who the key players are involving educational policy issue for example.

The editorial, “Don’t Play Politics with Graduation Numbers,” that appears on May 20, 2000 in the *Detroit Free Press* is an example of the use of prominent individuals and groups to emphasize the position of the newspaper on Proposal 00-1. As stated in the editorial:

Someone does need to explain how graduation rates for the *Detroit Public Schools* leapt magically from less than a third to nearly 90 percent. . . . *Interim Schools CEO David Adamany* is having district staff research the rates, to make sure they’re accurate or to correct them if they’re not. . . . All this was going on even before the *Kids First! Yes! pro-voucher organization* tried to *make political hay of the numbers*. Voucher supporters said they feared the faulty figures could encourage other districts to purposely inflate graduation statistics so it would look as if vouchers would not be authorized for their students. . . . The concern of “Kids First! Yes!” is more about votes than accuracy. “*Adamany*” knows performance must get better. So does incoming “CEO *Kenneth Burnley*.” So do most residents and businesspeople in Detroit. That’s the reason to get the number right – and right now – to focus on where student performance needs to go and how to get there, not to play politics.

The editorial board mentions the incoming CEO of Detroit Public Schools, Kenneth Burnley, and interim CEO of Detroit Public Schools, David Adamany, in the editorial, but their positions on Proposal 00-1 was *unclear*. Their presence in the editorial is more to support the need to provide consistent data and the importance of improving student performance. While the *Detroit Free Press* is *not supportive* of vouchers, the one group mentioned in the editorial, “Kids First! Yes!,” is a pro-voucher organization that was presented using a negative tone especially in the expression concerning Kids First! Yes a pro-voucher organization suggesting that Detroit Public Schools were trying to make political hay of their graduation rates. The *Detroit Free Press* is also illustrated in this example citing a pro-voucher single interest group while its editorial board does not favor the passage of Proposal 00-1.

The editorial presented in the *Detroit Free Press* entitled, “School Vouchers Supreme Court ruling Sends Some Troubling Signals” was published on July 3, 2000. This editorial features viewpoints of several prominent individuals including Supreme Court Justices, Clarence Thomas, David Souter, Sandra O’Connor, and Stephen Breyer. These justices are responding to a decision on federal assistance to religious schools. According to the editorial:

The U. S. Supreme Court ended up all over the map in a decision on federal assistance to religious schools that it announced last week. Anyone hoping the case would point to the high court’s view of broader aid, particularly school vouchers, has to be disappointed. . . . The case involved a Louisiana program that distributed federally funded computers to schools. Parochial schools got computers as well, based on factors such as student numbers and poverty levels. . . O’Connor wrote that aid for parochial schools turns on several criteria beyond neutrality, among them that the aid isn’t diverted for religious use and “does not have the permissible effect of advancing religion.” . . . Michigan’s voucher proposal would do precisely that to the tune of millions of dollars.

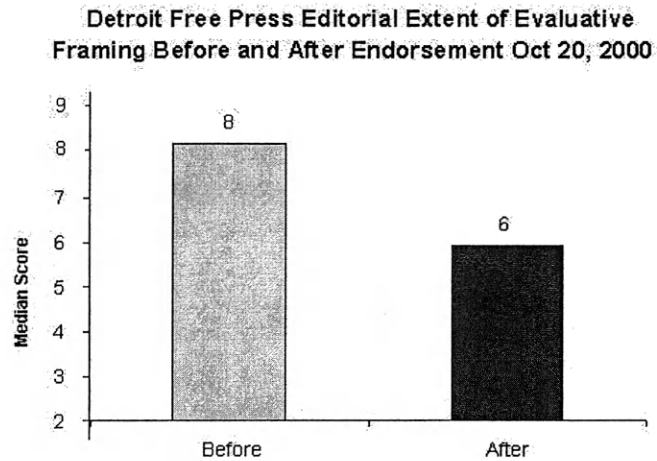
This article is important because it shows the national centrality of this issue. The court had mixed opinions on this issue, with 4 concurring, 2 concurred, but had opinions, and 3 dissenting, leading to the conclusion that the justices are split on the use of government funding for religious education, even to the extent of funding computers for parochial schools. The editorial board uses the Supreme Court Justice citations to further their nonsupport of vouchers for public schools as they explain that this support would be used for religious education and could cost schools millions of dollars in funding.

Hypothesis 5c.

It is hypothesized that following the endorsement of the Democratic presidential candidate, Al Gore, on October 20, 2000 by the *Editorial board* of the *Detroit Free Press*, newspaper editorials will show a significant increase in the use of evaluative framing in a negative direction (*in terms of not supportive of Proposal 00-1*). Hypothesis 5c. is confirmed. The findings show an increase in evaluative framing that resulted in a negative direction was evidence of nonsupport of the voucher issue by the *Detroit Free Press*.

The data reveal that the *Detroit Free Press* editorial boards received a median score of 8 for *evaluative* framing before the newspaper endorsed Proposal 00-1 on October 20, 2000 with an endorsement of nonsupportive of the voucher proposal. After the presidential endorsement, *evaluative* framing revealed a decrease in the median score to 6 for editorials written by the editorial board. Graph 14 shows the decrease of evaluative framing used by the *Detroit Free Press* editorial board. After endorsement the *Detroit Free Press* editorial board's *evaluative* framing after-score decreased by 25%.

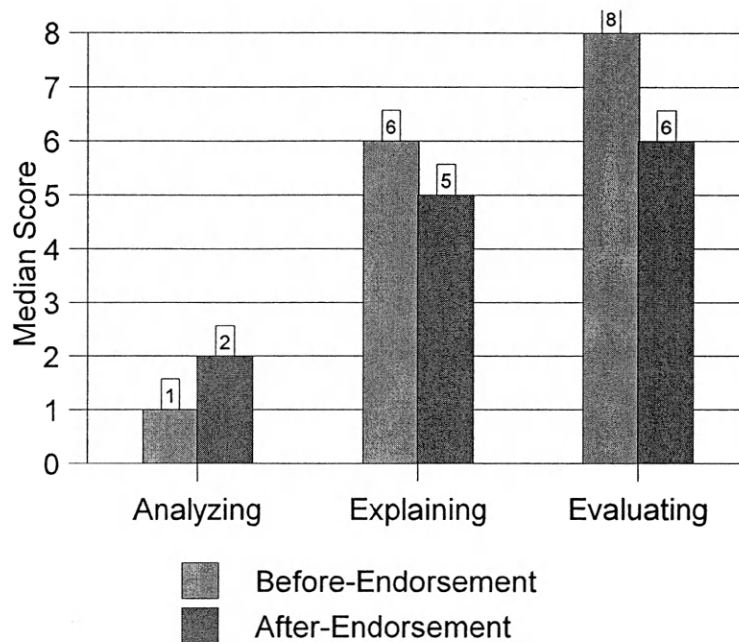
Graph 14



The median scores are calculated by using spread sheet analysis to obtain the median scores of the 23 editorials. Graph 15 shows the changes in median scores. In comparing the before and after median scores, there is an increase in *analyzing* and a decrease in *explaining* and *evaluating* types of interpretive framing from prior to and following endorsement of Al Gore on October 20, 2000.

Graph 15

The Detroit Free Press Editorials
Change in Median Scores on Analyzing, Explaining, and Evaluating
Before and After Endorsement



These decreases and increases in types of interpretive framing scores are considered substantial because of the manner in which the before and after scores for this study are obtained. The before score is calculated by *analyzing* the scores of each editorial published before the October 20, 2000 endorsement date. The investigator obtained the after endorsement date median score by using all of the editorials published from May 1, 2000 through November 30, 2000. This method examines 15 editorials published before October 20, 2000 and the after scores were determined by those 15 editorials plus eight editorials written after the *Detroit Free Press* negative endorsement of Proposal 00-1.

On October 13, 2000, the *Detroit Free Press* published an editorial, "School

Vouchers State Proposal 1 is a Bad Plan for Schools, Students, and Taxpayers.” In this editorial, the voucher issue is assessed, explained, and evaluated in detail. While no prominent individuals or groups are mentioned specifically, the editorial alludes to them.

The first paragraph of the editorial reads:

Even those who believe school vouchers will *promote social justice* need to take a *skeptical look* at Proposal 1 on the Nov. 7 ballot. Its *scope goes far beyond* giving some of the state’s most poorly served students a chance to get into a better, private school.

The use of words (e.g., promote social justice, skeptical look, and scope goes far beyond) are examples of assessing and evaluating that provide readers with a negative view of the editorial board’s position on the voucher issue. In the second paragraph, the editorial board defends the quality of public schools:

The *vast majority* of public schools in Michigan are *working well* right now, which only *deepens the distress* for families in *problem-plagued districts*, such as Detroit. Many of *them* are looking for immediate relief, and who can fault them? Even if handled with the greatest skill and determination, the reform under way in Detroit will be several years taking hold.

In this paragraph, the editors play the good schools in Michigan against the Detroit Public Schools, and provide sympathy for families in problem-plagued districts. They continue to reflect on the need for immediate relief for quality education. The value-laden terms such as, *drubbing at the polls*, *that’s big and not very welcome if..*, and *foolish effort*, and *would be wise* are reflective of evaluation as a component of interpretive framing. These italicized phrases show the *Detroit Free Press* editorial board reporting with fixing a value or making a determination about an issue or a matter.

The editorial board provides examples of problems that may be associated with vouchers should Proposal 00-1 pass:

So it is not easy to ask Detroit parents – and people throughout the state who care about the education of *poor children* – to forgo this escape hatch, especially for the sake of what may seem to be *vague* policy concerns. But the concerns are *serious*, and they *will play out for generations if* Proposal 1 is passed. Even if applied to only the *neediest* students, Proposal 00 -1 would prompt *fundamental concerns* about muddying the line between church and state. But the proposal represents a *huge constitutional* change that could sweep through all school districts. It should not be confused with targeted help for the most poorly served students. (*Detroit Free Press*, October 13, 2000)

In this section of the editorial, the writers have presented information on who would qualify, who would get to use vouchers, who could afford to use them, and state taxpayer's obligation. The information is presented straightforwardly, with some paragraphs moving beyond assessing to explaining. In the final paragraph of each included section, the editors provide an evaluation of the section.

Issues surrounding vouchers are presented in the next two paragraphs of the editorial. The issues are described, with some evaluation presented.

An open door to other changes: Rather than create a narrow exception to the state Constitution for vouchers, this plan removes all constitutional language that bars indirect aid to private schools. Any such changes may help some poor children, but in all probability would help middle-class and well-off families as much or more – and may dilute the resources now available to public schools. Church-state issues: Where religion intersects with public policy, controversy follows. Some taxpayers will object to their money going to religious schools. Some among the religious will object to giving state government a wedge to make demands on their schools. Lawsuits are guaranteed. (*Detroit Free Press*, October 13, 2000).

The side issues: The teacher-testing provision in Proposal 1 is hollow; no one can predict what it would look like and whether there would be any help or penalties attached for teachers who fail (*Detroit Free Press*, October 13, 2000).

These paragraphs provide examples of the use of combining description of the proposal with interpretive framing which uses analyzing, explaining, and evaluating to provide a negative view of the voucher issue, and the probable effects if this proposal is

passed by Michigan voters. Different concepts are presented in the editorial: First Amendment issues of freedom of religion, and issues regarding teacher testing and how teachers would be penalized or helped if they failed the test. All of these issues these have negative repercussions in terms of examining how editorial boards employed *analyzing, explaining and evaluating* in their interpretive framing styles of writing. The use of adjectives (e.g., in all probability, would help middle-class and well-off families, wedge to make demands, per-pupil funding guarantee is irrelevant) indicate the use of evaluating in the interpretive framing used in this editorial.

This editorial draws a conclusion from the earlier paragraphs and provides a definitive statement regarding Proposal 00-1.

Conclusion: Proposal 1 is touted as helping children in failing school districts, but it could affect every school district. It is a *huge constitutional change with more questions than answers* about how it would play out. As the effects of constitutional change rippled across Michigan in the decades to come, *the fate of children in underperforming schools would hardly be the uppermost concern* (*Detroit Free Press*, October 13, 2000).

Vote NO on Proposal 1.

The wording of the conclusion of the editorial provides additional support for the high degree of interpretive framing used to present the voucher issue. Words such as “huge constitutional change,” “more questions than answers,” and “the fate of children” suggest an *evaluative* approach in framing the final paragraph. The editors are not covert in their nonsupport of the issue as they write “Vote NO on Proposal 00 -1” as the last sentence.

This editorial provides an example of how the editorial board of the *Detroit Free Press* uses facts to present the negative side of vouchers. The facts may be only one side of the voucher issue, with no focus on any positive outcomes associated with the use of

vouchers for educating students in poor performing school districts.

Following the election, the editorial board at the *Detroit Free Press* reaffirms their disdain for school vouchers with the publication of “Voucher Advocates Miss Vote’s Message” on November 9, 2000. This editorial combines *explaining* and *evaluating* in developing an interpretive frame regarding the defeat of Proposal 00 -1.

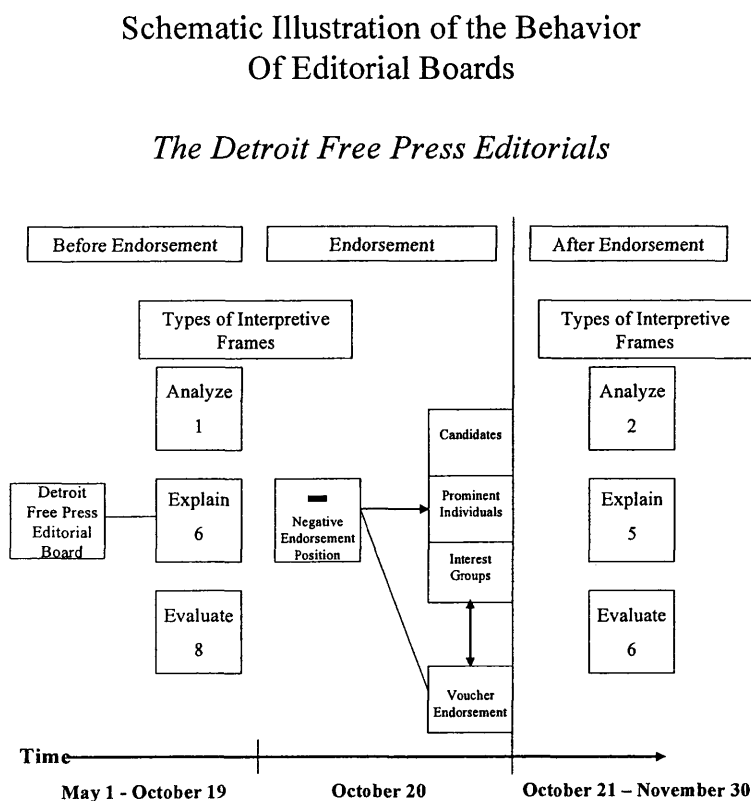
Free-spending voucher advocates have made noises about coming back with other plans despite their nearly 3-1 *drubbing* at the polls Tuesday. They *shouldn’t even begin to think about another statewide proposal* without an explicit U. S. Supreme Court ruling allowing public voucher money to flow to parochial schools. . . . If the U. S. Supreme Court approves religious-school vouchers – *and that’s a big and not very welcome if* – Michigan could look at this kind of school aid again. Without a *federal court blessing*, it is a *foolish effort*, because charter schools, already underway in Michigan, offer virtually the same promise of choice as nonreligious private schools would. (*Detroit Free Press*, November 9, 2000)

The editorial includes subjective words such as, *drubbing* at the polls and *foolish effort* illustrate an *evaluative* position on the part of the reporter when using an interpretive style of reporting (on vouchers in this study). The editorial board explains the need for U. S. Supreme Court action to confront the First Amendment church-state separation issue and then evaluates the effects of that decision on the future of vouchers. In publishing this editorial, the *Detroit Free Press* editorial board further confirms its nonsupport of vouchers for an alternative means of funding education in failing school districts.

After endorsement, a 25% decrease in *evaluating* is shown by the editorial board. Therefore, the hypothesis is not confirmed. Figure 8 is a schematic illustration that provides an overview of the behavior of the editorial board of the *Detroit Free Press*’s October 20, 2000 negative endorsement, represented with a minus sign in the center of

the figure, on each variable.

Figure 8



The schema illustrates the editorial board's behavior and shows the *Detroit Free Press's* negative endorsement in playing a role in the outcome of the election on Proposal 00-1. Candidates, prominent individuals, and interest groups are mentioned in these editorials. Furthermore the model seeks to compare median scores for types of interpretive frames before and after both newspaper's endorsement.

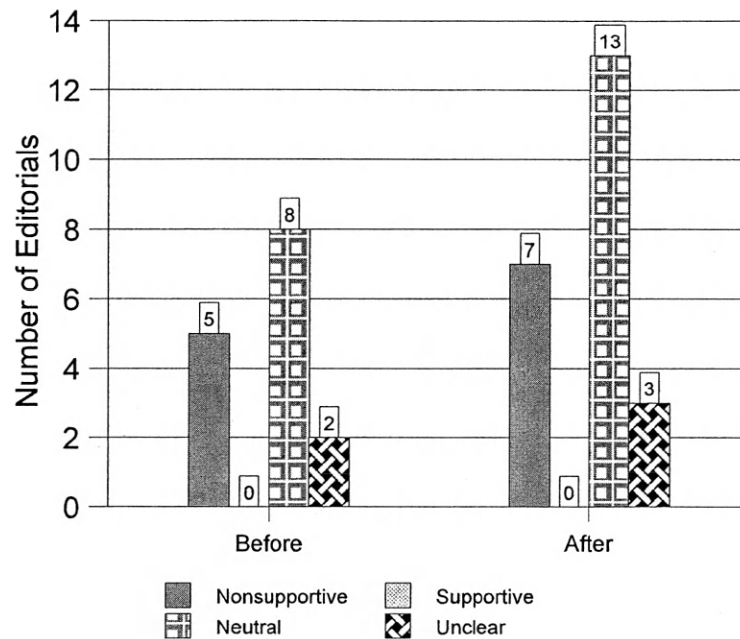
Three types of interpretive frames, *analyze*, *explain*, and *evaluate* are examined

before and after endorsement by the *Detroit Free Press*. The before median score for *Analyze* is 1 on the scale of 1- 9, while the after median score increased to 2. These findings reveal an increase in the editorial board's use of Analysis by 100%. To obtain the percentage change from prior to and following endorsement, the investigator took the before framing score and subtracted it from the after score and divided the difference by the before score to determine the percentage change. The before median score for *Explaining* is 6, while the after median score decreased to 5. These findings reveal a decrease in the editorial board's use of *Explaining* by 16%. The before median score for *Evaluate* is 8, while the after score decreased to 6. These findings reveal a decrease in the editorial board's use of Evaluating by 25%.

The editorials published in the *Detroit Free Press* were examined to determine the change in nonsupport of the voucher issue before and after endorsement on October 22, 2000. An increase of 40% from 5 nonsupportive editorials written before endorsement to 7 nonsupportive editorials written after endorsement was noted after endorsement. Of the 23 editorials that appeared in the *Detroit Free Press*, 15 were published before October 22 and 8 were written after this date. The 15 editorials that appeared prior to October 22 included 5 nonsupportive, 8 neutral, and 2 unclear. After October 22, two editorials were nonsupportive, 5 neutral, and 1 unclear. None of the editorials were supportive of the voucher issue, regardless of when they were published. Graph 16 presents the results of these analyses.

Graph 16

Comparison of the *Detroit Free Press* Editorial Framing for Vouchers
Before and After Endorsement Oct. 20, 2000



Based on the information provided in the graph, a 40.0% increase is noted in the number of editorials that are nonsupportive of the voucher issue from before endorsement (n=5) to after endorsement (n=7). None of the editorials that are published either before or after endorsement is supportive. Neutral editorials increase from 8 before endorsement to 13 following endorsement, indicating a 62.5% increase in neutral editorials. The 50.0% increase in unclear editorials is indicated with two editorials published before endorsement and three editorials after endorsement.

An example of a nonsupportive editorial that appears in the *Detroit Free Press* before endorsement on October 22, 2000 is “School Vouchers Supreme Court Ruling Sends Some Troubling Signals.” The last paragraph in this editorial indicates that:

Souter’s ringing dissent noted that the high court has almost completely

lost track of part of the original intent of the First Amendment. Besides having the absolute right to freedom of belief, a citizen should not be compelled to give a cent to support anyone else's religious beliefs. *Michigan's voucher proposal would do precisely that to the tune of millions of dollars.*

The last sentence is added on to the minority dissent to reinforce the *Detroit Free Press* editorial board's opinion that Michigan's voucher proposal would be against the First Amendment.

The first paragraph of the editorial, "Proposal 00-1," published on October 31 in the *Detroit Free Press* emphasizes the editorial board's lack of support for Proposal 1.

The first paragraph indicates:

The Free Press editorial board has recommended that people vote no on Proposal 1, which would make tuition vouchers available to students in school districts failing to graduate two-thirds of their students and require teacher testing.

The recommendation of a no vote on Proposal 00-1 by the editorial board of the *Detroit Free Press* further supports their nonsupportive stance on this issue.

The findings based on the analyses of increase in evaluative framing that resulted in a negative direction was evidence of nonsupport of the voucher issue by the *Detroit Free Press*. As a result, the hypothesis is confirmed.

Summary

The Detroit News endorses George W. Bush for president on October 22, 2000. George W. Bush is supportive of the use of vouchers for children in failing public schools. Results of the content analysis indicate that *The Detroit News* is more likely to use editorials with evaluative framing after October 22, 2000.

Results are obtained from the content analysis of the editorials published in the *Detroit Free Press* after their endorsement of Al Gore on October 20, 2000. The

outcomes of this analysis support the hypothesis that evaluative framing increase after endorsement. *The Detroit News* is more likely to be more supportive after endorsement, while the *Detroit Free Press* tends to be more nonsupportive after endorsement.

Ancillary Findings

In addition to addressing the hypotheses, an investigation concerning three themes (i.e., *social equality, race and fiscal conservative* issues) is conducted. Newspapers tell its readers how to think and assist in the development of images concerning policy issues. Themes better explain the coverage of school vouchers because they provide a context for examining how newspapers used interpretive frames from a thematic perspective. Themes are analyzed descriptively to determine the extent to which they are present in the newspaper articles and editorials. The articles/editorials are reviewed to determine the percentage of time each theme is present in *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*. These results are shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Themes Used to Discuss School Voucher Articles/Editorials (In Percentages)

Newspaper	Social Equality	Race	Fiscal Conservative Issues
<i>Detroit Free Press</i> – Reporter	25	22	15
<i>Detroit Free Press</i> – Editor	22	4	17
<i>The Detroit News</i> – Reporter	29	19	26
<i>The Detroit News</i> – Editor	57	29	14

The number of articles for reporters for the *Detroit Free Press* is 72 and the editorials is 23. In *The Detroit News*, the number of articles for reporters is 68 and the

number of editorials is 7. The percentage data are compiled by the investigator recording a *yes* or *no* answer for each occurrence of the three themes within the text of the 170 articles in the study.

Open-ended questions are included on the coding form to examine the presence of social equality, race, and/or fiscal conservatism in the articles/editorials. The extent to which these concepts are addressed is described on the coding form.. McCombs et al. (1997) assert that agenda setting studies focus on how frequently an issue is mentioned in the media. The frequency with which a topic or an issue is mentioned probably has a more powerful influence than any particular framing mechanism, but framing mechanisms can serve as catalysts to frequency in terms of agenda setting. In the present study, a key word search is conducted using “QSR N6” a qualitative software program. A frequency distribution is performed to determine how often the selected themes appeared in the articles/editorials. Data are presented in percentages. The key words for *social equality* used in total data set of 170 articles/editorials are: “Poor” (3.6%) and “Fair” (7.3%). The key words used for *race* are: “African American” (2.1%), “Black” (11%), “Diversity” (3.1%), “At-Risk” (1.0%) and Urban(1.6%). One key-word search, “Accountability,” is performed for *Fiscal Conservatism*; and appears in 7.8% of 170 articles/editorials searched simultaneously. The racial theme key word “Black” receives the highest percentage, 11.0% while “At- Risk” is mentioned in the articles the least (1.0%). Some examples of how these themes are used by the reporters and editorial boards are discussed by contrasting differences and similarities in how the newspapers *wrote about* themes (e.g., *social equality*, *race*, and *fiscal conservatism*) in their articles and editorials. The investigator also probes the question concerning whether

reporters/editorial boards/newspapers acted as objective reporters and or political activists in their media roles.

Social Equality

In an article written by Mark Hornbeck entitled “Voucher ad blitz may cost \$10 million, up” (*The Detroit News*, September 8, 2000), Hornbeck provides pro and con arguments in this article. However, the pro position the investigator is focusing on is the pro voucher suggestion, pertaining to the *social equality* theme. Hornbeck asserts, “*Parents in low-income households should have access to private schools while opponents say money will be taken away from the public schools to make that a reality.* Pro voucher supporters argue that competition created by vouchers will improve performance at public schools, *parents need alternatives to failing public schools* and that teacher testing will upgrade teaching staffs and add accountability. On the other hand, in an editorial entitled “Flawed Voucher Plan Loses” offers an example of *social equality* in a *Detroit Free Press*’s editorial board by asserting:

Despite more equitable school finance, state government needs to be doing more for *poor children*: after-school programs, expert teams for schools with bad records, assistance with everything from safe streets to stable family housing. The heat needs to stay high on all *underperforming districts* – a list that’s not entirely consistent with those named to get vouchers automatically in Proposal 00-1 and especially Detroit.

The editorial suggests that,

Teachers *did not deserve* the sneering treatment they got from voucher advocates, but there is still the message that parents want *teachers* to be *well versed* in their subjects. It behooves districts, as Detroit has already done, to amply reward teachers who study the subject they teach, not just more educationese (*Detroit Free Press*, Nov. 8, 2000).

A difference noted by the investigator is that *The Detroit News* appeared less likely to mention positive aspects of Detroit Public Schools such as the district rewarding teachers

who study the subject that they teach as observed in the Nov. 8, 2000, of the *Detroit Free Press*. The newspapers are similar in that they both use the key words, such as: Black, African American, at-risk, and urban. However, they use these words differently to suit their respective frames as shown in the examples cited.

An example of the *social equality* theme revealing itself in an editorial is presented in “The Vote: What’s at Stake,” published on November 6, 2000, one day prior to election day.

Down the ballot, we have asked voters to support Proposal 1, the school voucher measure. We see this as a classic civil rights issue, since it would primarily rescue minority students from the *chronically failing* urban *districts* and give *them at least a shot at an equal education*. Critics say that it would destroy the public schools. It wouldn’t. But perhaps *some public schools deserve destroying, before they destroy the futures of another generation of children*.

The Detroit News editorial board makes compelling arguments in favor of their position on school vouchers and paint a grim image of some of public schools for its readers.

Political scientists (Hellweg, Dionisopoulos, & Kugler, 1989) are interested in candidate image. They describe the concept as an illusive, yet important phenomenon of politics. The investigator in the current study argues that the images of public policies that the editorial boards and newspaper reporters paint for its readers also help shape how the public views the policies reported on by these journalists.

According to the *Detroit Free Press*’s editorial board in an editorial entitled, “School Vouchers State Proposal 1 is a Bad Plan for Schools, Students, and Taxpayers.” The editors provide examples of problems that may be associated with vouchers should Proposal 00-1 pass. In this editorial, *social equality* themes are shown italicized in the editorial’s text below:

So it is not easy to ask *Detroit parents* – and people throughout the state who *care about the education of poor children* – to forgo this escape hatch, especially for the sake of what may seem to be vague policy concerns. *But the concerns are serious, and they will play out for generations if Proposal 1 is passed.* Even if applied to only the *neediest students*, Proposal 1 would prompt fundamental concerns about muddying the line between church and state. But the proposal represents a huge constitutional change that could sweep through all school districts. It should not be confused with targeted help for the most *poorly served students*.

Here's why.

That means students from those districts not attending private schools will immediately qualify for vouchers, even if their *families can easily afford tuition*. Then, as private schools create more classrooms, doors will open to *families for whom the voucher may represent new economic freedom*. Any other public school districts can make its students eligible for vouchers, too, by a district-wide vote or a vote of the school board, regardless of the caliber of their schools, the communities' *average income, or other criteria that might give underserved students an advantage*. This plan may help *poor families, but it is by no means designed to help only poor families* or just families in subpar school districts (*Detroit Free Press*, October 13, 2000).

Both newspapers use similar words (e.g., *failing public schools, Detroit parents, low income or poor families*) to describe the schools where poor children live. However, the *Detroit Free Press* frames problems associated with social equality by offering a variety of solutions. On the other hand, *The Detroit News* focuses on the issues surrounding failing schools, poor children and suggests that the primary school reform solution is creating competition among schools districts using vouchers to resolve educational problems in urban districts. The framing of *social equality* is presented in both papers, although the hopeful perspective shown in the *Detroit Free Press* is in contrast to the hopeless perspective from *The Detroit News*. Another way to describe the apparent difference in interpretive framing is optimism by the *Detroit Free Press* versus pessimism by *The Detroit News*.

Race

Race is another theme that is prevalent in the literature related to the school voucher issues. An example below is presented because it shows covert racial implications identified in the articles/editorials by the investigator. Few overt examples of *racial* issues are discussed throughout the newspaper articles and editorials. However, in an article published in *The Detroit News* on August 6, 2000 in a story entitled: "GOP proves inclusion isn't hypocrisy" written by Thomas Bray, the key word *Black* is mentioned in this article. Bray asserts, "The GOP approach, moreover, is genuinely inclusive. Allowing families to invest more of their own money for retirement helps everybody, but particularly families who have limited capital. Removing the inheritance tax would finally allow *Black* Americans, who suffer the most from the wealth gap, to begin placing stable foundation under their families. Educational vouchers would allow more *urban* kids to escape from dead-end schools. Such programs would benefit society-the ultimate form of inclusion- rather than dividing society into groups that must fight each other for scraps from the contentious table of government." Bray contends, "Republicans obviously have a way to go. They have never deserved their reputation as the party of bigotry, but votes against additions to civil rights laws. This generation of Republicans no longer feels defensive about its philosophical underpinnings. It truly believes it advocates ideas and programs that will help the *downtrodden*."

Other articles/editorials also mention race; for example, a *Detroit Free Press* editorial entitled, "School Vouchers State Proposal 1 is a Bad Plan for Schools, Students, and Taxpayers," mentioned two of the seven cities: *Detroit and Inkster*. School districts in both cities would be eligible to institute school vouchers without stating race. In

another article entitled, “Voucher Effort Soundly Beaten Many Feared That Public School Would Lose Funds,” written by Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki, in the *Detroit Free Press* on November 8, 2000, Walsh-Sarnecki asserts, “Students in seven school districts, including *Detroit and Inkster . . .*” The mentioning of these two predominately Black geographical areas could indirectly allude to implications of *race*. In the *Detroit Free Press*, Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki, the *Free Press* education writer, contends in an article entitled: “Voucher dilemma: Who Gets best students? Proposal 1 critics say school choice is flawed.” “Opponents say the result will be private and parochial schools skimming off the best and brightest students, leaving the public schools to teach the rest—including *at-risk* students, those with learning disabilities, students with emotional problems – with less money” (*Detroit Free Press*, October 9, 2000). This is an example of “at risk” possibly being used in the article/editorial to mean the race of a particular group of students. This example shows how “covertly” or “discretely” race was sometimes addressed by the newspapers, reporters/editorials.

Another example of *race* is presented in an earlier mentioned editorial from *The Detroit News* entitled, “The Vote: What’s at Stake,” published on November 6, 2000.

Down the ballot, we have asked voters to support Proposal 1, the school voucher measure. We see this as a classic civil rights issue, since it would primarily rescue *minority students* from the chronically failing *urban districts* and give them at least a shot at an equal education. Critics say that it would destroy the public schools. It wouldn’t. But perhaps some public schools deserve destroying, before they destroy the futures of another generation of children.

In this editorial, the pronoun *them* is used to reference *minority students*, with the editorial boards arguing that the voucher proposal would rescue minority students from the failing schools and the proposal offers the minority students a shot at an equal

education. In the investigators's reading and examination of all 170 articles/editorials, the investigator did not observe the *Detroit Free Press* reporters/editorial board using the pronoun *them* to refer to minorities as cited in the above mentioned editorial (*The Detroit News*, November 6, 2000). Another difference in the manner in which the *Detroit Free Press* uses racial themes varies from *The Detroit News* use of racial themes in that the articles and editorials in the *Detroit Free Press* did not appear to frame its stories in a way that portrayed Proposal 00-1 rescuing minority students. Instead, the *Detroit Free Press* articles/editorials mentioned race in a descriptive way to inform readers whose groups or nationalities were being discussed. For example, another article in the *Detroit Free Press* mentions race in a political/campaign article written by Patricia Montemurri and others entitled, "Gore Goes Full Bore to Sweep Michigan He Scours State for Support, Reaches out to Blacks, Arabs," published on October 30, 2000. A racial theme is framed by the *Detroit Free Press* reporting on Vice President Gore's visit to a *Black* church. According to Montemurri, "Vice President Al Gore barnstormed through Michigan Sunday, singing with *Black Detroit* churchgoers . . . The Michigan Gore campaign is still wrestling with requests by some Michigan Democrats to bring President Bill Clinton to the state, to further energize *Black* voters." In this example, the reporter uses the key word, Black, to identify the nationality of the group that Gore is targeting for votes. No apparent undertones are found to be covert about race (i.e., using code words to denote race such as mentioning cities, such as Detroit and Inkster).

In *The Detroit News* columnist, Thomas Bray writes an article entitled, "Problems Plague Conyers' Reparations Bill" on September 20, 2000. In this article, Bray seizes the opportunity to make it known to readers of *The Detroit News* that Congressman John

Conyers sends his sons to a private school. Key words are used that denote racial themes such as, *Detroiters* and Black. Bray contends “Conyers is quick to condemn education vouchers which might provide poor *Detroiters* with more choices, but he and his colleagues are strangely quiet when the *Black* middle class sends its own kids to private schools.” The similarities between the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News* is that these three themes emerge however, differences are recognized in how the reporters and editorial boards address the themes. *The Detroit News* appears to be conservative; for example, in the article entitled “GOP Proves Inclusion Isn’t Hypocrisy” published on August 6, 2000. The *Detroit Free Press* appears to take on a more liberal view reporting on events such as, “Convention at Cobo to Offer Spirit, Unity,” written by Darci McConnell on September 7, 2000. This article addresses the Michigan Democratic Party’s state convention and indicates that there will be “high drama.” The reporter asserts, “Saturday’s session will include a rally against the statewide ballot referendum for school vouchers.”

Fiscal Conservatism

Net cost for vouchers would be at least 23 million dollars. Another projected cost stated vouchers would be 150 million dollars.

An example of fiscal conservatism appears in *The Detroit News* editorial section on October 24, 2000. The editorial is entitled, “Proposal 1:Yes.”

Cost to the state also is an issue. No one knows how many students would transfer from public to private schools. But based on current graduation data, seven state school districts (out of some 550) would be required to offer vouchers under Proposal 1. Estimated initial costs would be between \$22.9 million and \$42.7 million, according to an analysis by the state Senate Fiscal Agency. . . . Proposal 1 benefits and the state’s \$25 billion annual budget. By way of comparison, lawmakers recently earmarked \$110 million in public tax dollars for 91,000 computers, mostly laptops, to

be handed out to Michigan teachers. (*The Detroit News*, October 24, 2000).

Proponents of the proposal argue that they are concerned with fiscal conservative implications surrounding the voucher proposal. In contrast, an editorial in the *Detroit Free Press* on July 3, 2000, entitled, "School Vouchers Supreme Court Ruling Sends Some Troubling Signals" reports that the voucher issue, if passed, would take money from the public schools and give to private and religious schools. This transfer of funds could be a violation of the First Amendment, because the money would be supporting the advancement of religion. In contrast, Mark Hornbeck, in *The Detroit News*, offers the pro and con sides of the voucher issue by citing one con to be relevant to the theme of fiscal conservatism, "Private schools will get public money won't be accountable to taxpayers." In this same article, Hornbeck writes "The plan also requires the Legislature to draw up a plan to test teachers in the public schools and private schools that redeem vouchers. Finally, the proposal promises no reduction of public school funding below 2000-2001 levels." The *Detroit Free Press* points out on July 3, 2000 in an article related to fiscal matters concerning Proposal 00-1 that should the proposal pass that it would drain dollars from public schools. For example, the article states, "if passed would be take money from the public schools and give to private and religious schools, which could be a violation of the 1st Amendment, because the money would be supporting the advancement of religion." Whereas, *The Detroit News* suggests in the article reviewed above that the proposal promises no reduction of public school funding below 2000-2001 levels. We see here both newspapers presenting the same issue in two different ways. The readers could be confused about whether the voucher proposal will or will not affect public school dollars if passed. Again, the common thread in both papers is that the theme of fiscal

conservatism emerged from the articles and editorials. However, the manner in which each newspaper and reporter/editorial board dealt with the theme of fiscal conservatism varied as shown in the above example.

Chapter VI

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the political behavior of reporters and members of the editorial boards of *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* to determine how the school voucher issue (Proposal 00-1) was framed during the 2000 presidential election year in Detroit. The current study uses descriptive and exploratory analysis to examine these two newspapers. The study is guided and shaped by a theoretical conceptual framework developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972) agenda setting study. Further, this study builds on the interpretive framing work by Thomas E. Patterson's (2000b). More specifically, this study examines the degree to which journalists and editorial boards used *interpretive, descriptive or a combination of both* styles of reporting in their coverage of Proposal 00-1. In addition, the current study sought to examine themes; *race, social equity and fiscal conservatism*. These themes are addressed because the literature suggests that they are discussed when reporters cover stories related to urban education issues. This study found that the theme of *social equality* was used most by *The Detroit News* editorial board when compared to the *Detroit Free Press* editorial board.

The exploration of this topic is important because little is known about how the school voucher issue was framed for the citizens of Detroit by journalists writing for the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News*. As a result of this work, data are available that examine the following hypotheses.

Summary of Findings

Content analysis was used to examine the *interpretive, descriptive or combination*

of both frames in these two local newspapers. The major findings that were confirmed are: hypotheses 2, 3a-d, 4a, 4c and 5c. Hypothesis 2 found that the closer the story is to election day the more likely journalists are to use interpretive frames. Overall, the number of stories written on the voucher issues increased as election day approached. The data reveals an increase each month from May through August. September through November the interpretive framing scores remained high through election day. The investigator speculates the closer the story was published to election day, the greater the extent of interpretive framing. This increase may have been a result of local reporters covering educational issues using their positions to sway their readers on Proposal 00-1. Journalists may think by publishing a story close to election day the interpretive frames and images used to tell the story may be remembered by potential voters on election day. Lang and Lang (1966) assert that information in the mass media becomes the only contact many have with politics. If this is so, this finding is important to know that interpretive frames may increase as election day nears.

Hypotheses 3a through 3d found that reporters and editorial boards from both newspapers used interpretive frames that are supportive or nonsupportive of their respective position on the school voucher issue. For example, *The Detroit News* reporters and editorial boards used interpretive frames supportive of the school voucher proposal while the *Detroit Free Press* reporters and editorial boards used interpretive frames that are nonsupportive of the school voucher proposal. This may suggest that the editorial board's endorsement of the issue may have influenced how reporters frame their stories in terms of supportive/nonsupportive. Additionally, the political orientation of the newspaper whether the newspaper is considered Republican or Democratic may

contribute to how reporters and editorial framed the school voucher issue. Brown (as cited in Merron & Gaddy, 1986) surveyed 30 Michigan newspapers during the 1966 election, and found that “Michigan papers were overwhelmingly Republican in orientation and exhibited significant bias in news coverage and display” (p. 129).

Hypotheses 4a found that the use of interpretive frames increased 23% after *The Detroit News* editorial board’s endorsement for Proposal 00-1. On the other hand hypothesis 5a, which postulates the *Detroit Free Press* use of interpretive frames remained the same before (median score 8) and after (median score 8) their endorsement. This finding may suggest that the *Detroit Free Press* editorial board generally used more interpretive framing than *The Detroit News* because their interpretive framing scores are consistently higher. The *Detroit Free Press* is characterized to be the more liberal, between the two newspapers.

The investigator expected that Hypotheses 4c and 5c would be confirmed because the editorial board’s evaluative scores are tied to whether the editorial is written supportive or nonsupportive of the school voucher issue. The current study found that evaluating scores increased after the editorial board’s endorsement in a positive direction (in terms of support for the proposal) for *The Detroit News* while showing an increase in the use of *evaluative* framing in a *negative* direction for the *Detroit Free Press*. This finding was expected because editorial boards are able to be opinionated and expressive. After their endorsements the investigator expected the editorial boards to use evaluative frames that mirrored their endorsement. Merron and Gaddy (1986) explore the phenomenon of editorial boards and their influence on favored candidates endorsed on the editorial pages. This literature supports the notion of editorial boards’ favoring policy

issues and writing editorials that are framed around their positions.

The following hypotheses are not confirmed: 1a and 1b, 4b and 5b 5a.

Hypotheses 1a and 1b are not confirmed because the journalists who wrote the most stories failed to have higher interpretive framing scores. This finding was surprising, because the investigator expected journalistic experience (i.e., time on the job and number of stories written on educational issues) to be related to the number of stories written by journalists that used interpretive frames. To the contrary, the findings provided evidence that journalists who wrote one or two stories had interpretive framing scores of 5.5 and 7 that were similar to framing scores for journalists who had written 20 to 24 stories. This outcome supports Patterson's (2000b) assertion that reporter's use of interpretive, instead of descriptive, styles of reporting is increasing.

Results for Hypotheses 4b and 5b were unexpected, with the investigator finding that these postulations were not confirmed. The study found that neither *The Detroit News* nor the *Detroit Free Press* showed an increase in interviews of prominent individuals or interest groups who mirrored their endorsement positions. The opposite occurred, *The Detroit News* mentioned one group that holds a supportive position, Kids First! Yes!, and the Michigan Education Association (MEA) that opposed the school vouchers are mentioned twice before endorsement and four times after endorsement. Conversely, the *Detroit Free Press* mentioned the Catholic Church who supported Proposal 00-1 three times before endorsement and three times after endorsement. This finding may be contributed to the editorial boards wanting to speak out negatively about interest groups that were against their stance on school vouchers. For example, in an editorial *The Detroit News* spoke negatively about the MEA and the union's lack of

support for the passage of Proposal 00-1. Furthermore, the editorial boards may have wanted to warn their readership about the negative position of interest groups (i.e., MEA in *The Detroit News* and Catholic Church in the *Detroit Free Press*) they chose to mention in their editorials. Another conjecture regarding this lack of findings for Hypothesis 4b and 5b is the governor's nonsupportive stance on Proposal 00-1. He may have influenced the editorial board of *The Detroit News* to exclude supportive interest groups and prominent individuals. By suppressing the mention of these groups, they may have been concerned about increasing public awareness of interest groups that reflected their endorsement. By minimizing the role of these interest groups, the editorial board may have been using agenda setting to manage political conflict by keeping key interest groups off the agenda. This role of editorial boards is supported by Entman (as cited in Watkins, 2001) who suggested that journalists are responsible for frames that include, as well as exclude, information from a story.

Discussion

This study examined newspaper coverage on the school voucher issue to determine differences and similarities in which these major newspapers framed the voucher issue and variations in their coverage. Systematic descriptions of differences and similarities are explained in the findings using content analysis as the methodological technique. As differences have been found in stories framed by newspaper editors, this research contributes to the field of public policy in specific areas (i.e., public opinion research, agenda setting theory and media and politics). New insights are provided about the roles of journalists and their objectivity when covering political issues as well as the role of editorial boards and how they make endorsements for and against certain public

policy issues. The current study supports previous research that suggests that journalists act as political activists when framing political issues, as well as the premise that news is becoming soft and more like “infotainment” instead of information (Patterson 2000a). This research supports Kosicki’s and Pan’s (as cited in Watkins, 2001) definition of framing as an active process that uses a unique method of cultural production that is informed by a system of professional experiences and values regarding what constitutes news and access to sources that enable journalists to routinely construct and process news discourse. Watkins’ definition is also critical to the examination of the articles cited in the newspapers (e.g., Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Reese, 1997). These authors argue that framing could be perceived as an expression of power, particularly because it affects the public’s recognition and understanding of social problems and political issues. Conversely, McCombs & Shaw (cited in Watkins, 2001) argue that frame analysis goes beyond the latter definition to consider not just what the reporters/editors of news include or insert into their articles, but focus on what becomes the most recognizable aspect of the topic being covered in the press. While framing does not determine what people think, the most important concern about frames is its ability to make specific aspects of a problem appear more salient than others. The potential effects of frames then, are determined both by what is included as well as by what journalists exclude (Entman as cited in Watkins, 2001). The percent of time that data related to social equity, race, and fiscal conservatism are included in the articles/editorials indicate that it is equally important to observe the percent of times that these issues were not mentioned in the articles and editorials.

The current study uses Patterson’s (2000b) definition of interpretive framing and

builds on that framework. Among the three types of interpretation used by reporters (*analyzing, explaining, and evaluating*) analyzing is used least by reporters. This finding is important because it supports Patterson in regard to his conjecture regarding “*How soft news and critical journalism are shrinking the news audience.*” The dependent variables, evaluating and explaining, are more likely to be used by the journalists than analyzing when discussing the school voucher issue. None of the authors whose photographs appeared online and reported on the proposal appeared to be African American, however, Gebe Martinez may have been of Hispanic origin.

Limitations of the Study

The current study is limited in that it examines one city, Detroit at one point in time, the 2000 presidential election year. To expand the current study the investigator would need to examine the question of framing of a public policy issue (e.g., school vouchers, school funding, etc.) across a number of election years. Another approach might be to investigate interpretive framing on an issue (e.g., charter schools) during a presidential election year across cities (e.g., Detroit, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Phoenix, Minneapolis/St. Paul, etc.) to examine differences and similarities in media coverage using a survey instrument. The second limitation is the study’s inability to address the impact of interpretive framing on the electorate because information about *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* readership is needed. Data concerning the newspapers’ influence on ballot votes by the public would also be useful in expanding the study. The current study focused specifically on how journalists framed the school vouchers issue in *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*. A questionnaire needs to be completed by voters to determine the extent to which their voting decisions were

influenced by newspaper coverage of the voucher issue. Alternatively, focus groups could be held to obtain information on how voters view newspaper's use of interpretive framing to present political information to the electorate.

Importance of the Study

A number of studies focus on agenda setting and issue framing. However, the role of journalists from the two major Detroit newspapers and their framing of the school voucher issue (Proposal 00-1 in the November 2000 Presidential Election) has not been conducted. This study builds on the work of Thomas E. Patterson (2000b) and makes a contribution to understanding how interpretive frames and their subparts (analyzing, explaining, and evaluating) are demonstrated by journalists/editorial boards in their news reports and editorials on a major educational policy issue. This study offers an innovative way of analyzing newspaper articles and editorials, their authors, as well as newspapers that published the reports.

The study provides researchers with an original data set of newspaper articles/editorials that can be used in future studies. The study serves as an example of using content analysis to examine newspaper articles to facilitate analysis pertaining to media/politics and elite actors participating in that process. The significance and its importance are embedded in Bernard Cohen's (1963) assertion, the press ". . . may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think but is stunningly successful in telling them what to think about," which is the "root" of what this work has investigated. According to Patterson (2000b), "The press, in its capacity as signaler, has the power to focus the public's attention" (p. 283). If the media has the power to shape what readers think in regard to national and international issues, then human behavior could be

affected. Therefore, it is important to examine how journalists and newspapers use this power to communicate with their readership through agenda setting by determining which issues become salient and which issues remain unmentioned.

Most Blacks, especially middle income Blacks, are struggling with their stand on school vouchers. Individually, most Blacks want to provide quality education for their children, however culturally, Blacks have a shared collective perspective regarding the education for all Black children. For example, public school teachers, clergy, community and political leaders who live in urban areas are perplexed about where to send their children to school. As a result, they find it difficult to support legislation that would possibly drain dollars from public school systems. The school voucher proposal is a thorny public policy issue for Blacks because of the premise that public education is a public good. To deprive the many for the benefit of a few is contrary to the concept of social equality for the whole.

This concept is similar to Hochschild (1984) who argues that the American dilemma is the choice between the status quo, which helps a few at the expense of many and changes which can benefit many but is expected to harm a few. Bray used evaluative frames to scrutinize this dilemma in a *Detroit News* article published on September 27, 2000 entitled, "Politicians Do Not Walk the Walk on School Choice." Bray asserts:

Why shouldn't other parents have the chance to send their kids, if not to Cranbrook or Detroit Country Day, at least to a decent private school? The argument of the anti-voucher folks, when you get past the thinly veiled anti-Catholic bigotry, is that vouchers would hurt the public schools . . . Parents who are able to do so have moved elsewhere, hoping to provide their children the break in life that the Detroit public school monopoly is trying so desperately to deny the kids who have been left behind. Polls show that Detroit parents in increasing numbers see vouchers as a way out – just as Dennis Archer, Freeman Hendrix and John Conyers found a way out for their kids. It is sad to see so many politicians talking the talk, but

when it come to their situations, they don't walk the walk.

The investigator in the current study poses the question, does Bray exert political activism in his interpretive reporting style? By placing emphasis on the aforementioned politicians and bureaucrats who have their children in private schools, readers of this article may be influenced in their attitudes regarding this political issue. As White (1969-1970) suggests:

The common phrase in New York is that the *New York Times* can't carry an election and *New York Times* editorial page can't swing even 1000,000 votes in a New York City election. But it affects the thinking of all executive, intellectual, and communications leadership. And ten years hence this thinking does shape elections; it creates the sounding board against which politicians offer programs and leadership. (p. 9)

The current study examines how editorial boards and reporters tell their stories to readers in an attempt to influence what they should think about concerning Proposal 00-1. In a special Sunday issue highlighting the 125th anniversary of *The Detroit News*. Mark Silverman, publisher and editor for the newspaper, dedicates its birthday to its readers. George Cantor reports on how *The Detroit News* has adapted to changing reader priorities. Benjamin Burns, director of the journalism program at Wayne State University and a former executive editor of *The Detroit News* is quoted as saying:

Critics point to declining circulation figures as evidence of waning newspaper influence . . . But it is the influence-makers in the community who read the paper. The paper *sets the agenda* [emphasis added] for them. Television doesn't. In that regard, a paper like *The Detroit News* has an influence in this community that broadcast media cannot hope to match. They're not even in the same business. (*The Detroit News*, August 23, 1998)

Findings from the current study provide insight that editorial boards are using interpretation to move beyond telling the public "what to think about" to "how they should think about an issue." For example, in an editorial published in the *Detroit Free Press* on October 31, 2000, the editorial board writes, "The *Free Press* editorial board has

recommend that people vote no on Proposal 1 . . .” The investigator sets the stage for future work to be conducted, specifically on media coverage of public policy issues considered salient in large urban cities.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations have been determined during the course of this study. An extant social issue (e.g., Detroit Public Schools) is being covered in the media (i.e., television and newspapers). Content analysis could be used to code newspaper articles and transcripts of television coverage, along with a survey of parents of children in the school system to determine the extent to which their opinions on the topic have changed due to the influence of interpretive reporting in the newspapers and on television.

A study could examine the perceptions of reporters and editors on their use of interpretive reporting to determine the extent to which they use *analyzing*, *explaining*, and *evaluating* when writing different types of news articles. The reporters/ editors could be surveyed about the extent to which they are allowed to *analyze*, *explain*, and *evaluate* the topics covered in their articles.

A study could be conducted to determine the effects of interpretive framing in newspapers on letters to the editor in response to specific issues presented in the paper. Another recommendation would be to use exit interviews with voters to determine the extent to which newspaper reporting influenced their decisions on voting for an issue that had received extensive coverage in the media.

Future studies could also compare cities in an election year with similar ballot issues. In addition, compare election cycles over time (two/three election cycles) to

investigate the influence of media on important ballot issues.

A thorough examination about why Black students are fairing worse than their White counterparts in schools across the nation could be conducted. *The New York Times* has cited several studies that discuss the issue of , “Why are Black students Lagging?” (*New York Times* November 30, 2002). Felicia R. Lee reports in the article

The persistent academic gap between white and black students has touched off difficult and often ugly debates over the question why. Are racist stereotypes to blame? Substandard schools? Cultural attitudes?

Mr. Ogbu is . . . arguing with renewed fervor that his most recent research shows that African-Americans’ own cultural attitudes are a serious problem that is too often neglected. “No matter how you reform schools, it's not going to solve the problem,” he said in an interview. “There are two parts of the problem, society and schools on one hand and the black community on the other hand.”

Professor Ogbu's latest conclusions are highlighted in a study of blacks in Shaker Heights, Ohio, an affluent Cleveland suburb whose school district is equally divided between blacks and whites. As in many racially integrated school districts, the black students have lagged behind whites in grade-point averages, test scores and placement in high-level classes. Professor Ogbu was invited by black parents in 1997 to examine the district's 5,000 students to figure out why.

Not surprisingly, he said, the parents were disappointed when he turned the spotlight on them as well as the schools. Peggy Caldwell, a spokeswoman for the Shaker Heights City School District, said that minority families cared deeply about their children's academic achievement and the district was working with education experts to reduce the racial achievement gap. She noted that while Professor Ogbu called most of the black families in the district middle class, 10 to 12 percent live in poverty.

All these years later, Professor Fordham said, she fears that the acting-white idea has been distorted into blaming the victim. She said she wanted to advance the debate by looking at how race itself was a social fiction, rooted not just in skin color but also in behaviors and social status. . . . “Black kids don’t get validation and are seen as trespassing when they exceed academic expectations,” Professor Fordham said, echoing her initial research. “The kids turn on it, they sacrifice their spots in gifted and talented classes to belong to a group where they feel good.”

This article is a starting place for researchers interested in the larger question regarding why Black students are failing on a national scale? A study of this magnitude may reveal that education reform will need to encompass an approach that involves more than developing a school voucher proposal to put before the American people for consideration. This type of study may also assist newspaper reporters with understanding why schools are failing. If journalists knew more about the issue of why schools are failing, particularly in highly populated cities with minorities, then they would have access to data that could provide an understanding about the complexity of the issue of “failing schools.”

Another area for future research is to investigate the most recent observation of a high concentration of Blacks and Hispanics who are being educated absent from their White counterparts. Over the past 30 years classrooms have become more homogeneous in respect to race. An article written by DeMasters in the *New York Times* (Jan. 26, 2003) highlights the emergence of minorities in classroom settings.

New Jersey ranks fourth in the nation, after Michigan, New York and Illinois, in segregated schools for Blacks and fourth again, after New York, Texas and California, in segregated schools for Hispanics, according to a new survey by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University. In New Jersey, it said, half the black students and nearly 41 percent of the Hispanic students attended minority-dominated schools in the 2000-01 school year. Segregation is increasing and is often accompanied by “enormous poverty, limited resources and social and health problems of many types,” the survey said.

A study about how to enhance diversity in classrooms that are inclusive of Caucasians could be conducted.

A study could be conducted on newspapers in comparable areas (e.g., Cleveland, Milwaukee, and the state of Florida) to examine how newspapers and television stations

covered the school voucher issue.

Finally, an investigation on the impact of television news reporters sharing desks with local newspaper reporters and implications of this collaboration of print and broadcast media as it relates to agenda setting could be conducted. In an article entitled, "Newspaper of the future: Integrating print, television and the web" by James Gentry (1999), *The Orlando Sentinel* is committed to the convergence of combining newspaper, television and the web. The newspaper began experimenting in Orlando in 1992 when the *Sentinel*, through an arrangement with America Online, became one of the first newspapers on the Internet. Today, Tribune Co. is a significant investor in AOL.

The *Sentinel* launched another step in 1996 with an interactive TV test with Time Warner that "forced us to recognize that eventually everything would have to be in a digital format," Haile says. "We had only about 4,000 subscribers in the test, so we got to practice without a lot of risk." In 1997 the *Sentinel* and Time Warner went on the air with Channel 13, Central Florida News. Gentry (1999) tells the story about how the convergence occurred:

The symbols of the *Sentinel*'s commitment to convergence are obvious across the newsroom. Most visible is the Multimedia Desk, or "bridge," the Star Trek-like command post that dominates the view. Raised about six inches above the newsroom floor, the 25-foot by 15-foot structure serves as command central, where six to eight editors operate at any one time. Typically found there are the deputy managing editor/multimedia, the deputy managing editor/local news, the online editor, the photo assignment editor, the graphics editor and the day or night assignment editor.

Spear says he likes working in both print and video. "I deeply believe in this coming together of newspapers and television," he says. "I really enjoy TV as a powerful story-telling tool. I'm motivated primarily by having fun with TV. But I also believe it won't be too long until you can't tell the difference between print, TV and online. So it's a good idea to keep your eye on each one right now."

Photographers also are involved, carrying still and video cameras. Senior photographer Red Huber says: “My priorities continue to be to shoot stills. But if I also capture something on video, I’ve still done my job, I’ve still touched readers or viewers with that moment. To me, using a video camera has broadened my perspective.”

Excerpts from this article illustrate how some newspapers are integrating with television stations to disseminate the news. The article also exemplifies various ways in which this phenomenon can be explored. Political scientists need to investigate the merger of print and multimedia journalists who deliver news on the quality of information dissemination to citizens in the United States and throughout the world.

Although studies have been conducted on the role of journalists and newspapers contributing to set the political agenda, future research is needed to examine journalists’ self-perceptions of themselves as participants in the political process of setting, shaping, framing issues as they bring these items to the attention of their readers. Would journalists admit to acting as political activists in the agenda setting process?

While the current study examined the role of reporters and editorial boards in the use of interpretive framing as a means of agenda setting, the investigator did not compare and contrast differences between reporters who write primarily in a purely descriptive, objective manner and those who use interpretation in their articles. This type of separation is needed to determine which reporting style, descriptive or interpretive, is more likely to contribute to the agenda setting process. In addition, how reporting styles affect agenda setting needs to be understood to determine which issues become part of the agenda, and which issues either drop off or are excluded.

Further research is needed to examine the organizational culture that exists in newspapers and the effect of this culture on the types of journalists who decide to seek

employment in these organizations. Journalists are aware of the stance of newspapers in larger cities take on local, state, and national political issues. A survey completed by a broad sample of journalists is needed to determine reasons why they seek employment at, and remain working for, a particular newspaper (e.g., reputation, location, political positions and endorsements, etc.).

The research presented indicates that editorial boards of newspapers take position on policy issues and sometimes “act as political activists.” This “acting out” is identified in articles/editorials written by journalists that mirrored editorial boards positions particularly, as it pertained to Proposal 00-1 in election year 2000. This study reveals that both newspapers worked diligently to present balanced news stories, which was confirmed by high *neutral* scores observed when analyzing levels of *support*, *nonsupport*, *neutral* and *unclear* positions taken by journalists on the voucher proposal. More research is needed, especially in the area of interviewing journalists concerning their roles in media and politics.

Appendix A
Voucher Proposal

MICHIGAN BALLOT PROPOSAL 1: TUITION VOUCHERS

A PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION TO PERMIT STATE TO PROVIDE INDIRECT SUPPORT TO STUDENTS ATTENDING NONPUBLIC PRE-ELEMENTARY, ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS; ALLOW THE USE OF TUITION VOUCHERS IN CERTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICTS; AND REQUIRE ENACTMENT OF TEACHER TESTING LAWS

The proposed constitutional amendment would:

- 1.) Eliminate ban on indirect support of students attending nonpublic schools through tuition vouchers, credits, tax benefits, exemptions or deductions, subsidies, grants or loans of public monies or property.
- 2.) Allow students to use tuition vouchers to attend nonpublic schools in districts with a graduation rate under 2/3 in 1998-99 and districts approving tuition vouchers through school board action or a public vote. Each voucher would be limited to of state average per-pupil public school revenue.
- 3.) Require teacher testing on academic subjects in public schools and in nonpublic schools redeeming tuition vouchers.
- 4.) Adjust minimum per pupil funding from 1994 -1995 to 2000 -2001 level.

Should this proposal be adopted ?

Yes (

No (

Appendix B
Coding Dictionary

Coding Dictionary

Time Started	Insert the hour and minute when you first started reading the article
Time Finished	Insert the hour and minute when you completed the coding
Coder Name	Print your name in this space
Date	Insert the month and date you coded the article
Article Number	Insert the article number from the top of your copy of the article
Newspaper	Place a check mark in front of the newspaper in which the article was published
Article Name	Insert the complete name of the article in the provided space
Authors	Insert the author(s) names in the provided space
Reporter 1, 2, 3, 4	Indicate the gender of the reporter(s) (researcher will complete the race)
Article type	Place a check mark in the box that identifies the type of article.
Date of Article	Use the date listed on the newspaper article (Found just above the title)
Day of Week	Refer to calendar to determine the day of week the article was published
Length of article	Number of paragraphs (count the number of paragraphs in the article)
Number of words	Word count will be provided by the researcher.
Placement	The section and page of the article is provided under the author's names
Type of framing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Descriptive (journalist uses a straightforward description of events, Reporter sticks to facts and leaves speculation and interpretation to the reader). 2. Interpretive (journalist speculates on what the facts mean) 3. Both (article uses a combination of descriptive and interpretive framing)

1. Extent of interpretative reporting:	1.	None –	Article contains no interpretive reporting
	3.	Some –	Article contains mostly descriptive, but provides a minimal amount of interpretation of facts.
	5.	Moderate –	Article contains almost equal amount of descriptive and interpretation of facts.
	7.	Most –	Article contains some descriptive facts, but is comprised mostly of interpretation of the facts.
	9.	All –	The entire article is comprised of interpretation, with facts presented only to provide a basis for interpretation.

Does the journalist refer back to previously presented facts and documentation to support facts and then break them down into units that the reader can understand and make a value judgment.

2. Extent of Analysis	1.	None –	Article presented only facts, no attempt was made to break up or separate the facts in units of analysis.
	3.	Some –	Most of the article presents facts, but does break up the facts into units of analysis.
	5.	Moderate –	The article presents facts and analysis in almost equal amounts.
	7.	Most –	The article presents some facts and they are analyzed in depth
	9.	All	Few facts are presented in the article, with the journalist using the entire article to present an analysis
3. Explain facts	1.	None –	Article presents only facts, no attempt was made to make the facts clear to the reader.
	3.	Some –	Most of the article presents facts, but the journalist attempts to make some of the facts clear to the reader.
	5.	Moderate –	The article presents facts, with the journalist providing explanations for most of the facts by breaking them down into units that are more easily understood.
	7.	Most –	The article presents some facts, with the journalist providing explanations for the facts.
	9.	All –	The article presents few facts, with the journalist using most of the article to explain the few facts.
4. Evaluate facts	1.	None –	Article presents only facts, with no attempt made to evaluate the facts for the reader.

- | | | |
|----|------------|---|
| 3. | Some – | Article presents mostly facts, with some attempt made to evaluate these facts for the reader. |
| 5. | Moderate – | Article presents facts, with the journalist presenting an evaluation of a moderate number of facts. |
| 7. | Most – | Article presents fewer facts, and the journalist spends more space evaluating the facts. |
| 9. | All – | Article presents few facts, with the journalist completing evaluating the situation, rarely referring to the facts. |
-
- | | | |
|----|-----------------|---|
| 5. | Nonsupportive – | Article indicates that vouchers should not be of vouchers approved by voters (Proposal 00-1 should fail). |
| | Supportive – | Article indicates that vouchers should be approved by voters (Proposal 00-1 should pass). |
| | Neutral – | Article does not take a clear position on whether or not vouchers should be approved by voters. |
| | Unclear – | Cannot be determined what position the newspaper/editor/reporter takes on the voucher issue. |
-
- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|--|
| 6. | Candidates mentioned in article | Yes – some candidates were mentioned in article
No – article did not mention any candidates |
|----|---------------------------------|--|
-
- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 7. | Which candidates were included in article | List name of candidate(s) and his/her office
Was s/he supportive of vouchers (indicate with a <u>y</u> or <u>n</u> in the column)
What type of mention was made <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal interview – journalist talked directly to the candidate • Direct quote – journalist cited a remark in context from another article or person • Paraphrase – journalist presented his/her version of what the candidate said. • Other – How else was the candidate mentioned. |
|----|---|--|
-
- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 8. | Prominent individuals or groups included in article | List name of each individual or group mentioned in article
Was s/he supportive of vouchers (indicate with a <u>y</u> or <u>n</u> in the column) |
|----|---|--|

		<p>What type of mention was made</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal interview – journalist talked directly to the individual or group • Direct quote – journalist cited a remark in context from another article or person • Paraphrase – journalist presented his/her version of what the prominent individual or group said. • Other – How else was the individual or group mentioned.
10. Definition of Proposal 1	<p>Yes Definition was included</p> <p>No definition was not included</p>	
11. Events mentioned in article that had a direct or indirect effect on voucher issue	<p>Yes events were mentioned</p> <p>No no events were mentioned</p>	<p>If yes, indicate in the space provided the types of events (e.g., rally, party, meeting) in which the voucher issue was mentioned</p>
12. Race mentioned	<p>Yes Race mentioned directly/indirectly</p> <p>No Race not mentioned</p>	
13. If race mentioned		<p>Provide the theme in which race was mentioned and then indicate if the theme was supportive of vouchers</p>
14. Social equity mentioned	<p>Yes Social equity mentioned directly/indirectly</p> <p>No Social equity not mentioned</p>	
15. If social equity mentioned		<p>Provide the theme in which social equity was mentioned and then indicate if the theme was supportive of vouchers</p>
16. Fiscal conservatism mentioned	<p>Yes Fiscal conservatism mentioned directly/indirectly</p> <p>No Fiscal conservatism not mentioned</p>	
17. If fiscal conservatism mentioned		<p>Provide the theme in which fiscal conservatism was mentioned and then indicate if the theme was supportive of vouchers</p>
18. Effect of vouchers on public education	<p>Yes Effects of vouchers on public education mentioned in article directly/indirectly</p> <p>No Effects of vouchers on public education not mentioned in article</p>	

19. If effect of vouchers on public education

Provide the theme in which effects of vouchers on public education was mentioned and if the theme was supportive of vouchers

Appendix C
Coding Forms

3. To what extent did the journalist **explain** facts included in the article?

None		Some		Moderate		Most		All
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

4. To what extent did the journalist **evaluate** facts included in the article?

None		Some		Moderate		Most		All
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

5. Does the article/editorial appear to be supportive of Vouchers (check the most appropriate box)

Not supportive	Supportive	Neutral	Unclear

6. Were candidates mentioned in article/editorial? Yes No

7. If yes, which candidates were included, for which offices were they running, and were the candidates supportive of school vouchers?

Candidate	Office	Supportive (Y/N)	Type of Mention in Article			
			Personal Interview	Direct Quote	Paraphrase	Other (specify)

8. Were other prominent individuals or groups mentioned in article/editorial?

Yes No

9. If yes, which prominent individuals or groups were included, their affiliation, support and how they were mentioned in the article?

Individuals/Groups	Affiliation	Supportive (Y/N)	Type of Mention in Article			
			Personal Interview	Direct Quote	Paraphrase	Other (specify)

10. Was a definition of Proposal 1 included in the article or editorial?

Yes No *If yes, please highlight the definition in the article.*

11. Were any events mentioned in the article that had a direct or indirect effect on the voucher issue?

Yes No

12. Was race mentioned either directly or indirectly in the article? Yes No

13. If yes, please describe the theme and if the theme was supportive of vouchers.

14. Was social equity mentioned in the article? Yes No

15. If yes, please describe the theme and if the theme was supportive of vouchers.

16. Was fiscal conservatism mentioned in the article? Yes No

17. If yes, please describe the theme and if the theme was supportive of vouchers.

18. Was the effect of vouchers on public education mentioned in the article?

Yes No

19. If yes, please describe the theme and if the theme was supportive of vouchers.

20. Did other themes emerge from the article? Yes No

21. If yes, please describe the theme and if the theme was supportive of vouchers.

Coder's Instruction Guide

Explicit Rules:

Restrict analyzing the themes of race, social equity, and fiscal conservatism to only if the themes relate to the school voucher issue.

Do not analyze quotes from interviews for interpretive analysis because these are not the journalists' words.

Highlight **primary** articles in yellow and **secondary** articles in orange.

Primary	focus of the article is Proposal 00-1
Secondary	focus is on other issues as well as Proposal 00-1

Circle the words that appear in the category and give it a check on the code sheet.

Include captions only if they relate to the voucher issue.

Interpretive Framing Defined

The coder should ask him/herself the question: "What are the journalists actions to determine if the journalist is using an interpretative style?"

Did the journalist?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project • Predict • Speculate • Guess • Use a personal perspective (e.g., I think)
---------------------	---

For example: use of "if – then" statements or look for explicit or implied causal statements an example provided by Patterson (2002 e-mail):

in an attempt today to woo union voters, candidate X came out in favor of... Unless candidate X can make a more substantial inroad with these voters, he is likely to lose....

Causal-type statements almost always reveal an interpretive report.
An example derived from newspaper article text is:

"if the court's composition doesn't change", "If vouchers pass then"...

Coding to determine if the journalist used interpretive frames.

The coder will examine the text to see if the journalist predicted, forecast, speculated, guessed. Some key words to look for are:

Interpretive Key Words

If	Expect	Will	May	Likely	Might
I think	Possibly	Maybe	Could	Seems	Appear

Analyze:

To provide close examination by breaking- up and/or separating information to increase the reader's understanding.

Key words:

For example	According to	Such as
And	But	Or
		Nor

Parts of speech to look for are journalists' use of **conjunctions** and citing sources to show the journalist has done some research and is using accurate information.

How to detect if the journalist is using the analyzing style of interpretive reporting?
Journalists' Actions

1. Provides other related examples to support the authors point, using **university cites, professors and other data sources to provide understanding for the reader**. Coder then asks him/herself the question *is the author breaking this information down in such a way to show that s/he has done their homework in terms of reporting on this story?*
2. Refers to the preceding paragraph to offer further understanding. For example, the journalist interviews someone.

Clarifying what it means for a journalist to analyze some key words are:

(Note: these are only key words depending on the content the sentence or word may fall into another category. Please read the sentence and paragraph following the coding guidelines to determine the category of the content).

Explain:

To make clear or plain

Parts of speech to look for: (i.e) Adjectives, (that describe nouns) Verbs, that depict what type of action is happening in the story and transitions that add information to provide clarity for the reader.

Keywords

With **Which**

Because **That**

While

Evaluate: To Judge, Determine, or Fix a Value to a person, place or thing

Parts of speech to look for: (i.e) **adjectives** that describe the journalists' judgement, a determination or a fixed value. The difference in the use of adjectives when the interpretive frame is **explaining** is that the adjectives are more focused on describing the noun as opposed to describing a judgment, determination or fixed value. Cue words are extreme ends one way or the other i.e. all or none.

Keywords

Precious	Certainly	Precisely	Flatly
Weightiest	Should	Intense	Should not
Apparently	Most	All	Top
Should	Fewer	Never	Always

To identify the three themes the coder should use the following definitions and search the key word listed in the themes below.

Race- is defined as a social construct instead of a biological construct. Wilson's (1996) definition indicates people's positions (in terms of social status dependent on skin color) and their networks of relationship in society.

Key words such as; *Black, White, Hispanic*, and other ethnic groups (i.e. *African American, Anglo American, Caucasian, Asian, diversity, cultural, urban and at-risk*) may be used. Geographical locations such as, Detroit, Inkster, Buena Vista Township in Saginaw, Michigan and other areas with high Black populations may be used instead of mentioning race.

Social Equality- is defined fair access to livelihood, education, and resources; full participation in the political and cultural life of the community and self-determination in meeting fundamental needs. Social equality is the cornerstone of social capital, which cannot be maintained for a few at the expense of many ("The patterns of a conservation," 2003).

Key words such as; *Fairness, impartiality, justice* are possible words that may denote the theme of social equality in an article/editorial.

Fiscal conservatism- is defined as the role of government as the enforcer of the principles accepted for the organization of society in general. This definition assumes that a society that takes freedom of the individual, or more realistically the family, as its ultimate objective, seeks to further this objective by relying primarily on voluntary exchange among individuals for the organization of economic activity(Friedman (1987).

Key words such as; *Accountability, responsibility, market, competition, choice or opportunity* are possible words that may indicate the presence of the fiscal conservatism theme.

Example of
Interpretive/Descriptive Framing Tally Sheet

Article Number FA1 Coder's Initials MC

	Interpretive			Descriptive
	Analyze	Explain	Evaluate	Facts
	<i>Break up or separate</i>	<i>Make Clear</i>	<i>Judge, Determine or Fix a Value</i>	<i>Who – What When – Where</i>
Title	✓		✓	
Paragraph 1	✓	✓		✓
Paragraph 2		✓	✓	✓
Paragraph 3		✓	✓	✓
Paragraph 4			✓	✓
Paragraph 5			✓	✓
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Paragraph				
Total	2	3	5	5
Score for type of framing:	$2 + 3 + 5 = 10/5 = 2$ (Indicates that <i>both</i> interpretive and descriptive framing were used in the article).			
Extent of interpretive framing:	$10/6 = 1.667$ (Using scale in Appendix D, article is considered to be <i>mostly interpretive</i>).			
The same method is used to determine the extent to which analyzing, explaining, and evaluating are used in the article/editorial.				

Appendix D

Equation for Calculating Types of Framing

Scoring Method

Scale	Parameters	Definition
1	$0 \leq X < 1/16$	None
2	$1/16 \leq X < 1/8$	
3	$1/8 \leq X < 1/4$	Some
4	$1/4 \leq X < 1/2$	
5	$1/2 \leq X < 1$	Moderate
6	$1 \leq X < 1 1/2$	
7	$1 1/2 \leq X < 2$	Most
8	$2 \leq X < 3$	
9	$X > 3$	All

The frequency with which each category (e.g., *analyze, explain, and/or evaluate*) occurs in an article was divided by the number of paragraphs + 1. This number accounted for description being included in the title. The resultant fraction (X) was then compared to the scale above to determine a score for the extent to which interpretation was used in the article.

The median was selected as the measure of central tendency over the mean to reduce the effect that extreme outliers have on the average, which ultimately can skew the data. The median score was determined by selecting all relevant data and using the software program, Microsoft Excel®.

Appendix E

Listing of Articles Included in Study

Table E-1

Index of Newspaper Articles

Article Number *	Title of Article	Det. News (N)/ Det. Free Press (F)	Journalist Name (s)	Date Day	Story	Editorial
DA1	Voucher vote stirs hot debate	N	Mark Hornbeck	05/29 Mon	X	
DA2	Leaders attend schmoozefest on island to forage for alliances	N	Laura Berman	06/4 Sun	X	
DA3	Voucher fight gets Catholic clout, cash	N	Mark Hornbeck	06/18 Sun	X	
DA4	Bush doesn't impress NAACP	N	Oralandar Brand-Williams and Gebe Martinez	07/11 Tues.	X	
DA5	Government money OK'd for religious schools	N		06/29 Fri	X	
DA6	Let teachers improve schools	N	Barry McGhan	07/6 Thurs	X	
DA7	Director's ability to retain quality staff benefits seniors	N	Maureen McDonald	07/10 Mon	X	
DA8	Blanchard joins voucher fray	N	Mark Hornbeck	06/23 Fri	X	
DA9	Unions are out of touch on the issue of merit pay	N	Thomas J. Bray	07/12 Wed	X	
DA10	Black voters worry about health care, schools, retirement	N	Oralandar Brand-Williams	07/14 Fri	X	
DA11	Bush, Gore zero in on education	N	Mark Hornbeck	07/31 Mon	X	
DA12	Using public money has no place in voucher debate	N	Thomas J. Bray	08/2 Wed	X	
DA13	Variety of candidates scramble for Rep. Martha Scott's seat	N	Christopher Singer	08/2 Wed	X	
DA14	GOP proves inclusion isn't hypocrisy	N	Thomas J. Bray	08/6 Sun	X	
DA15	Gore's veep: Critic of Clinton, centrist	N	Gebe Martinez	08/8 Tues	X	
DA17	Lieberman walks a tight rope	N	Gebe Martinez	08/16 Wed	X	
DA18	School fight starts to build	N	Mark Hornbeck	08/17 Thurs	X	
DA19	Gore tries to cut links to Clinton	N	Gebe Martinez	08/18 Fri	X	
DA20	We already have vouchers: Pell grants	N	Thomas J. Bray	08/30 Wed	X	
DA21	School vouchers hold slim lead	N	Mark Hornbeck	09/1 Fri	X	
DA22	Voucher ad blitz may cost \$10 million, up	N	Mark Hornbeck	09/08 Fri	X	
DA23	Prop 2 gives big cities a veto over state	N	Thomas J. Bray	09/10 Sun	X	

Article Number *	Title of Article	Det. News (N)/ Det. Free Press (F)	Journalist Name (s)	Date Day	Story	Editorial
DA24	State voters rate education top concern	N	Mark Hornbeck Charlie Cain	09/11 Mon	X	
DA25	Parents of students in Detroit qualify for vouchers, study finds	N	Mark Hornbeck	09/14 Thurs	X	
DA26	TV ad promotes vouchers	N	Mark Hornbeck	09/18 Mon	X	
DA27	Engler is batting DH for national ticket	N	George Weeks	09/19 Tues	X	
DA28	Problems plague Conyer's reparations bill	N	Thomas J. Bray	09/20 Wed	X	
DA29	New ads make difference for Abraham	N	George Weeks	09/21 Thurs	X	
DA30	Conference on Pierce ruling will wrestle issue of parental rights, school vouchers	N	George Bullard	09/23 Sat	X	
DA31	Voucher war hits suburbs	N	Mark Hornbeck	09/25 Mon	X	
DB2	Politicians do not walk the walk on school choice	N	Thomas Bray	09/27 Wed	X	
DB3	Candidates lust after Michigan's swingers, but do little real wooing	N	Laura Berman	10/1 Sun	X	
DB4	Voucher backers focus on testing	N	Mark Hornbeck	10/2 Mon	X	
DB5	Voucher foes fire back in ad	N	Mark Hornbeck	10/3 Tues	X	
DB6	No campaigning with tax dollars	N		10/5 Thurs		X
DB7	Judge Clears school districts	N	Mark Hornbeck	10/6 Fri	X	
DB8	Presidential race virtually a dead heat	N	Richard A. Ryan	10/8 Sun	X	
DB10	Drug issue may help Abraham prevail	N	George Weeks	10/12 Thurs	X	
DB11	McCain supports school voucher plan	N	Mark Hornbeck	10/12 Thurs	X	
DB12	McCain campaigns for voucher plan	N	George Weeks	10/13 Fri	X	
DB13	Candidates tout education, but states make the rules	N	Mark Hornbeck	10/13 Fri	X	
DB14	Voucher proposal deserves a fairer hearing	N	George Cantor	10/14 Sat	X	
DB15	Poll shows closest election in 40 years	N	Charlie Cain Mark Hornbeck	10/15 Sun	X	
DB16	McCain shunned by Engler	N	George Weeks	10/15 Sun	X	
DB17	If we could vote...	N	Kathleen Ryan	10/16 Mon	X	
DB18	Myths and facts about Proposal 1	N	Thomas Bray	10/18 Wed	X	
DB19	In-your-face politics arrives	N	Richard A. Ryan	10/18 Wed	X	
DB21	Michigan Pivotal Gore-Bush race	N	George Weeks	10/19 Thurs	X	

Article Number *	Title of Article	Det. News (N)/ Det. Free Press (F)	Journalist Name (s)	Date Day	Story	Editorial
DB22	School district sues state	N	Janet Naylor	10/19 Thurs	X	
DB24	Voucher ads don't ring true	N	Mark Hornbeck	10/24 Tues	X	
DB25	Proposal 1: Yes	N		10/24 Tues		X
DB26	Senate foes stay negative	N	Gebe Martinez	10/24 Tues	X	
DB27	Voucher win in Michigan could have U.S. impact	N	Mark Hornbeck	10/26 Thurs	X	
DB28	For State Board of Education	N		10/26 Thurs		X
DB29	Voucher support tumbles	N	Mark Hornbeck	10/27 Fri	X	
DB30	Vouchers fail to find many allies	N	Mark Hornbeck Charlie Cain	10/29 Sun	X	
DB31	Bush, Gore turn up the heat	N	Gebe Martinez	10/29 Sun	X	
DC2	Gore pushes populist theme	N	Richard Ryan	10/31 Tues	X	
DC3	No fooling—every vote does count	N	Thomas Bray	11/1 Wed	X	
DC4	Voucher campaign is costliest	N	Mark Hornbeck	11/1 Wed	X	
DC5	Backers keep up the fight, despite polls	N	Mark Hornbeck Charlie Cain	11/3 Fri	X	
DC6	Gore turns spotlight on booming economy	N	Richard Ryan	11/3 Fri	X	
DC7	Canada has better comfort zone on religion	N	George Cantor	11/4 Sat	X	
DC9	Poll shows support for vouchers waning	N	Mark Hornbeck	11/5 Sun	X	
DC11	The vote: What's at stake	N		11/6 Mon		X
DC12	Non candidates filled vital election roles	N	George Weeks	11/7 Tues	X	
DC14	Race stays a thriller to end	N	G. Martinez R. Ryan Darci McConnell	11/7 Tues	X	
DC15	Blacks, labor show clout	N	Oralandar Brand- Williams, Tim Kiska	11/8 Wed	X	
DC16	Voucher backers not ready to give up	N	Thomas J. Bray	11/8 Wed	X	
DC17	Huge union, black voter turnout gives state to Democrats	N	Charlie Cain Tim Kiska	11/8 Wed	X	
DC18	Beyond Proposal 1	N		11/8 Wed		X
DC19	Michigan stands to gain in contest	N	Mark Hornbeck	11/9 Thurs	X	
DC20	Educators seek voucher backers' help	N	Darci McConnell	11/15 Wed	X	

Article Number *	Title of Article	Det. News (N)/ Det. Free Press (F)	Journalist Name (s)	Date Day	Story	Editorial
DC23	Charter Schools Add Diversity	N		11/27 Mon		X
DC24	Vouchers need more candid talk	N	Barry McGhan	11/29 Wed	X	
FA1	Detroit graduation rate elusive conflicting reports put voucher status in limbo	F	Dawson Bell Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	05/13 Sat	X	
FA2	Don't play politics with graduation numbers	F		05/20 Sat		X
FA3	Blessed influence Maida's 10 th anniversary	F	David Crumm Patricia Montemurri	06/2 Fri	X	
FA4	Trip tries to spur minister's support for school vouchers	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	06/7 Wed	X	
FA6	Michigan News Briefs	F	David Ashenfelter	06/14 Wed	X	
FA7	Schools' political spending assailed	F	Lori Higgins	06/23 Fri	X	
FA8	Song on Video hits a sour note anti-vouchers	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	06/27 Tues	X	
FA9	Bishops pitch school vouchers letter to urge yes	F	Cecil Angel David Crumm	06/28 Wed	X	
FA10	Court allows tax money to help parochial schools	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	06/29 Thurs	X	
FA11	Which quiz will make trip go faster	F	Ron Dzwonkowski	07/2 Sun	X	
FA12	School Vouchers Supreme Court Ruling Sends Some Troubling Signals	F		07/3 Mon		X
FA13	Man Says Tally Close on Pot Petition Drive Draft	F	Dawson Bell	07/6 Thurs	X	
FA15	Republicans Take lead in poll tide turns toward Abraham	F	Dawson Bell Laura Potts	07/7 Fri	X	
FA17	Local rule initiative gathering steam pot backers far short for the fall ballot	F	Dawson Bell	07/11 Tues	X	
FA18	Support for school vouchers drops slightly home mailing	F	Laura Potts	07/17 Mon	X	
FA19	State house: the best choices in four Macomb county districts	F		07/18 Tues		X
FA20	State house in eastern Wayne county	F		07/19 Wed		X
FA21	State house: Genesee County districts face important choices	F		07/21 Fri		X
FA22	Voucher plan would give great power to the few in many districts	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	07/22 Sat	X	
FA23	State house here are best choices in three Wayne county districts	F		07/24 Mon		X

Article Number *	Title of Article	Det. News (N)/ Det. Free Press (F)	Journalist Name (s)	Date Day	Story	Editorial
FA24	Schools warned on voucher rhetoric state tells 3 districts	F	Dawson Bell Lori Higgins	07/25 Tues	X	
FA25	Voucher: districts must be careful not to try to influence vote	F		08/3 Thurs		X
FA26	Michigan News Briefs	F	Maryanne George	08/3 Thurs	X	
FA27	V-P Choice Follows Conscience, Speaks his mind	F	Chris Mondics	08/8 Tues	X	
FA28	Poll: State supports Bush for president	F	Dawson Bell	08/9 Fri	X	
FA29	Proposals on this fall's state ballot would set up a voucher system	F		08/14 Wed		X
FA31	In Monroe, Gore takes the baton Clinton steps aside as party's heir pledges to build on good times	F	Patricia Montemurri Mary Owen	08/16 Fri	X	
FB1	Party Cast eye toward Granholm for 2002	F	Dawson Bell	08/17 Sat	X	
FB2	Lieberman embraces role, commitment to party ideals	F	Jodi Enda Mark Bowden	08/17 Sat	X	
FB3	Voucher vote Ballot language needs to be clear about proposal	F		08/18 Sun		X
FB4	Top Wayne County Educator to lead state group	F	Laura Potts	08/18 Sun	X	
FB5	Voucher vote phrasing ok'd words mix both sides' ideas for schools proposal	F	Laura Potts	08/19 Mon	X	
FB6	Bush Casts himself as the issue	F	Chris Christoff	08/29 Thurs	X	
FB9	Join the debate	F		09/4 Mon		X
FB10	Bridge walk turns political activists join Engler on Annual trek	F	Chris Christoff	09/5 Tues	X	
FB11	Notes From the campaign trail	F	Darci McConnell Mary Owens	09/5 Tues	X	
FB12	Convention at Cobo to offer spirit, unity	F	Darci McConnell	09/7 Thurs	X	
FB13	Door to Door, vote by vote	F		09/7 Thurs		
FB14	Data on diplomas may hurt vouchers graduations up	F	Dawson Bell Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	09/14 Thurs	X	
FB15	Districts debate state's criteria graduation data can be skewed	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki Dawson Bell	09/14 Thurs	X	
FB16	Vouchers effects would go well beyond seven districts	F		09/15 Fri		X
FB17	Jews stand firm for GOP Lieberman can't sway orthodox	F	Amy Klein	09/20 Sat	X	
FB18	Vouchers voters need to know the likely costs in tax dollars	F		09/23 Tues		X

Article Number *	Title of Article	Det. News (N)/ Det. Free Press (F)	Journalist Name (s)	Date Day	Story	Editorial
FB19	Nonpublic schools ready to admit Detroit students city district could lose about 15,000	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	09/23 Tues	X	
FB20	Voucher Battle will be waged in pulpits	F	Alex Capeloto David Crumm Patricia Montemurri	09/23 Tues	X	
FB21	Lieberman, Farrakhan welcome a meeting both say it can bridge racial, religious divides	F	Jodi Enda	09/27 Sat	X	
FB22	Commentary though, not bigoted	F	Ron Dzwonkowski	09/28 Sun	X	
FB23	Vouchers trail for first time swing in poll comes despite gig ad drive	F	Dawson Bell	09/30 Tues	X	
FB25	School Board Straus, Austin Are Best Choices For State Seats	F		10/2 Mon		X
FB26	League tries to educate all voter group broadens membership, approach	F	Tina Lam	10/2 Mon	X	
FB27	School funding issue complicated plan wouldn't raise per-student amount	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	10/3 Tues	X	
FB28	Voucher Proposal would test teachers but competency exam details not spelled out	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki Dawson Bell	10/3 Tues	X	
FB29	Spinmeister Engler Massages the media	F	Sheryl James	10/5 Thurs	X	
FB30	Beware of polls bearing the mantle of infallibility	F	Dawson Bell	10/5 Thurs	X	
FB31	Cheney, Lieberman to take stage pair look to sharpen distinctions in debate	F	Chris Mondics	10/5 Thurs	X	
FC1	Second fiddles lay a less strident tune Cheney	F	Steven Thomma Ron Hutcheson	10/6 Fri	X	
FC2	Voucher dilemma: who gets best students?	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	10/9 Mon	X	
FC3	Register today calling all potential voters	F		10/10 Tues		X
FC4	Nader says automakers sabotaging safety advances blocked	F	Alexa Capeloto	10/11 Wed	X	
FC5	School vouchers state proposal is a bad plan for schools, students and Taxpayers	F		10/13 Fri		X
FC6	Pastors won't back vouchers influential Baptist leader calls	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	10/14 Sat	X	
FC7	Schools aren't failing in Mackinaw City	F	Ron Dzwonkowski	10/15 Sun	X	
FC8	Lines are drawn in voucher war	F	Peggy Sarnecki	10/17 Tues	X	

Article Number *	Title of Article	Det. News (N)/ Det. Free Press (F)	Journalist Name (s)	Date Day	Story	Editorial
FC9	They Spar in St. Louis, they'll fight in Michigan Bush	F		10/18 Wed		X
FC10	Voucher effort uses phones catholic church says networking beats ads	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	10/18 Wed	X	
FC12	Truth Watch what you should know about campaign rhetoric	F		10/19 Thurs		X
FC13	Oakland County news briefs	F	Kathleen Gray	10/19 Thurs	X	
FC14	Michigan News Briefs	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki Dennis Niemiec Lorene Yue	10/20 Fri	X	
FC15	Michigan News Briefs	F	Dawson Bell, Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	10/25 Wed	X	
FC16	Money separates the rivals bush, gore at odds on how to spend the big budget surplus on the issues	F	Ron Hutcheson	10/25 Wed	X	
FC17	Culture Tax backers going to the hard sell	F	Frank Provenzano Mark Stryker	10/25 Wed	X	
FC18	Anti-voucher ad with disabled girl pulled	F	Laura Potts	10/26 Thurs	X	
FC20	School board election crucial members will choose	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	10/30 Mon	X	
FC21	Gore goes full bore to sweep Michigan	F	Patricia Montemurri	10/30 Mon	X	
FC22	Weakening Church-State line can hurt schools and religion	F	Barbara Arrigo	10/31 Tues	X	
FC23	Engler and the constitution	F	Barbara Arrigo	10/31 Tues	X	
FC24	Proposal 00-1 (The endorsement of Proposal by Detroit Free-Press)	F		10/31 Tues		X
FC25	TV ads Bombard Detroit Metro Area is tops	F	Dawson Bell Tina Lam Matt Helms	10/31 Tues	X	
FC26	Reading the candidates gore would far outspend bush in the classroom	F	David Goldstein	11/1 Wed	X	
FC28	Bombardment of Michigan voters continues	F	Kathleen Gray, Chris Christoff Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	11/2 Thurs	X	
FC29	Voucher ads have voters confused	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	11/2 Thurs	X	
FC30	Sobering politics it took quite a while for Dui arrest to sink in	F		11/4 Sat		X
FC31	Final word after all the appeals and commercials, power to decide rests with individual voters	F		11/5 Sun		X

Article Number *	Title of Article	Det. News (N)/ Det. Free Press (F)	Journalist Name (s)	Date Day	Story	Editorial
FD1	Electorate shrugs at down-to-wire race	F	Maria Recio	11/6 Mon	X	
FD3	Ground zero Michigan voters are at center of a battle	F	Patricia Montemurri Chris Christoff	11/7 Tues	X	
FD5	Ground zero battle for presidency roars across state	F	Patricia Montemurri Chris Christoff Kathleen Gray Hugh McDiarmid	11/7 Tues	X	
FD7	8 th district candidates in tight race many incumbents retain house seats	F		11/8 Wed		X
FD8	Flawed voucher plan loses	F		11/8 Wed		X
FD9	Rogers leads in the 8 th district Bonior,	F	Bill McGraw	11/8 Wed	X	
FD10	School-reform measure well-funded, little-supported	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki	11/8 Wed	X	
FD11	Voucher effort soundly beaten	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki Tina Lam	11/8 Wed	X	
FD12	Networks flounder in calling Florida	F	John Smyntek	11/8 Wed	X	
FD13	Everywhere voters were, Engler was governor was a tough foot soldier for Bush power broker	F	Sheryl James	11/8 Wed	X	
FD14	Voucher advocates miss vote's message	F		11/9 Thurs		X
FD16	Maida seeks new school effort vouchers foes should do more for children, he says	F	Alexa Capeloto	11/21 Tues	X	

SOURCE: Wayne State University Newsbank

* Article numbers are sequential. If an article number is skipped, the article has been voided and is listed in Table E-2, Voided Articles.

Table E-2

Voided Articles

Article Number	Title of Article	Det. News (N)/ Det. Free Press (F)	Journalist Name (s)	Date Day	Story	Editorial
DA16	Regulation hurts economy, workers (Voided-Letters to editor)	N	Ronald Mackall	08/15 Tues	X	
DB1	Charities don't need death tax to inspire gifts (Voided- Letter to Editor)	N		09/26 Tues		X
DB9	Next leader to change court (Voided-not related to issue)	N	Richard A. Ryan	10/8 Sun	X	
DB20	Detroit chamber didn't duck vouchers (Voided-letter from Detroit Chamber of Commerce)	N		10/19 Thurs		X
DB23	Proposal A: Yes (Voided- articles about Proposal 2)	N		10/23 Mon		X
DC1	Proposal 2 race stays low key (Voided- article about Proposal 2)	N	Charlie Cain	10/31 Tues	X	
DC8	Election endorsements (Voided-Listing of candidates)	N		11/4 Sat		X
DC10	Election Endorsements (Voided-Listing of candidates)	N		11/5 Sun		X
DC13	Election Endorsements (Voided-Listing of candidates)	N		11/7 Tues		X
DC21	Michigan Democrats give GOP a rude awakening (Voided-letter to Editor)	N		11/19 Sun		X
DC22	Thousands of turkeys will be given to needy families (Voided-about food voucher)	N	Alesia Cooper	11/21 Tues	X	
DC25	Salvation Army rotates shelter (Voided- pertains to hotel vouchers)	N	Sharon Terlep	11/29 Wed	X	
FA5	FICUS 2000: Put a houseplant in the House (Voided-Letter to editor)	F		06/11 Sun		X

Article Number	Title of Article	Det. News (N)/ Det. Free Press (F)	Journalist Name (s)	Date Day	Story	Editorial
FA14	Oakland County news Briefs (Voided-Vouchers for free medicines)	F	Julie Edgar Lori Higgins Bill Laitner Amy Klien	07/6 Thurs	X	
FA16	Do you civic duty, then vacation (Voided-about Northwest Airline Food Voucher)	F	Ron Dzwonkowski	07/9 Sun	X	
FA30	Parties' Lines (Voided - Comparison of Republican & Democratic platform issues)	F		08/15 Thurs		X
FB7	Packets to help ensure food gets to those in need (Voided-pertains to lunch vouchers)	F	Wendy Wendland-Bowyer	09/1 Fri	X	
FB8	Fighting Words spoken by a Floridian (Voided—Letter to editor)	F		09/3 Sun		X
FB24	Bartlet 2000: The fictional president from the West (Voided - about TV show)	F	Julie Hinds	10/1 Sun	X	
FC11	They spar in St. Louis (Voided-Same as FC9)	F		10/18 Wed		X
FD2	Important issues will be decided (Voided-Letter to Editor)	F		11/7 Tues		X
FC19	Nov. 7 Election endorsements (Voided-Listing of candidates)	F		10/29 Sun		X
FC27	Leaving the projects easier said than done (Voided- pertains to section 8 vouchers)	F	Hugh McDiarmid Jr.	11/1 Thurs	X	
FD4	Election 2000 endorsements (Voided- Listing of candidates)	F		11/7 Tues		X
FD6	Voucher effort soundly beaten many feared that public schools would lose funds (Voided- same as FD11)	F	Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki Tina Lam	11/8 Wed	X	
FD15	Arts tax supporters should refine their act for another try (Voided- about arts tax)	F		11/10 Fri		

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF JOURNALISTS IN FRAMING NEWSPAPER ARTICLES
ON SCHOOL VOUCHERS IN DETROIT

by

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Advisor: Dr. Ronald E. Brown

Major: Political Science

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

This study examined the role journalists play in framing a highly controversial issue during the 2000 national election year. Media as a linkage institution is much like political parties and interest groups because it provides political information. This study investigated the media effect on agenda setting by examining “framing” with an emphasis on interpretive styles of reporting and editorializing. A secondary purpose was to explore whether reporters/editorial boards used their roles to act as “political activists.” This study focused on articles written about the Michigan Tuition School Voucher Proposal 00-1 in the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News* from May 1 to November 30, 2000. While several reporters wrote articles about Proposal 00-1, none of the authors appeared to be African American (as determined by viewing online photographs).

Although the proposal failed on November 7, 2000, a national election year, little is known about how this issue was framed for voters prior to the election. Three aspects of interpretive framing were explored using Thomas E. Patterson’s definition of interpretive style of reporting. These aspects were: *Analyzing*, *Explaining*, and *Evaluating*. Descriptive reporting was also compared to interpretive reporting within and

between both Detroit's largest newspapers *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*. In addition, three themes were examined: *racial*, *fiscal conservatism*, and *social equity*.

Among the three types of interpretation used by reporters (analyzing, explaining, and evaluating) analyzing was used least by reporters. This finding was important because it supported Patterson in regard to his conjecture regarding "*How soft news and critical journalism are shrinking the news audience.*" The dependent variables, *evaluating* and *explaining*, were more likely to be used by the journalists than *analyzing* when discussing the school voucher issue.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Mary Dean Clark

Education

- 2003 Doctor of Philosophy
Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan
Major: Political Science
- 1992 Master of Public Administration
Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan
- 1984 Bachelor of Arts, Liberal Studies (Broadcasting)
Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Teaching Experience

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Wayne State University | Department of Political Science (American Government) |
| Lewis College of Business | English and Math |
| Wayne State University | Department of Education (English and Math) |
| Jackson Community College | Speech Communication (Public Speaking) |

Publication and Professional Papers

The Role of Journalist in Framing School Vouchers in Detroit. APSA, Proceedings 2002

Academic Research Appointments

- 1994-1997 Research Assistant, Wayne State University, Department of OB/GYN,
Detroit, Michigan *Principal Investigator:*

Grant Support

“A Video for Pre-adolescents”
Michigan Women’s Foundation
July 1, 1997-June 30, 1998
Mary D. Clark Polk (PI)
Funding level 1997-1998: \$50,000

“Evaluation of a Substance Abuse Prevention Program”
Children and Youth Initiative of Detroit and Wayne County
June 1, 1997-September 30, 1997
Mary D. Clark Polk (PI); Marilyn Laken (Co-PI)
Funding level 1997 \$40,000
October 1, 1998-September 29, 1999 \$50,000