10-2021

Framing Strikes: A Case Study of Media Depictions of Two Teacher Strikes

Jamie Gillespie
North Carolina State University, jggilles@ncsu.edu

Framing Strikes: A Case Study of Media Depictions of Two Teacher Strikes

Jamie G. Gillespie

The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, NC State University

Author Note

Jamie G. Gillespie https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6681-933X

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jamie G. Gillespie, The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, 1890 Main Campus Dr., Raleigh, NC 27606. Email: jggilles@ncsu.edu

Introduction

Although I currently live in North Carolina, I was born and raised in Chicago, and I try to keep up on Chicago news. When the Chicago Teachers Union went on strike in September of 2012, I followed the strike closely, and I wasn't the only one. Beyond the coverage in the Chicago newspapers, the strike in 2012 grabbed the attention of national news outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and CNN, because of the issues involved and because it was a national election year. President Obama's ties to Chicago, and the fact that his former Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel, was the mayor at the time, ensured national interest.

In Seattle in 2015, teachers went on strike for some of the same issues as in Chicago – test scores in teacher evaluations, pay, and school resources. The outcomes in Seattle, however, was quite different from that in Chicago. Seattle teachers were more successful than their counterparts on Chicago and I noticed some differences in how the media covered the Seattle strike from how the media covered the strike in Chicago. I wondered if the media had played any role in the strike outcomes.

Study purpose and research questions

To understand the relationship between the media and the outcomes of teacher strikes, I explored the framing issues involved in the media representations of teachers, teachers' unions, and school management in the context of two teacher strikes – Chicago in 2012 and Seattle in 2015. My research questions were:

- How were teachers portrayed by the media?
- How were teachers' unions portrayed by the media?
- How were management officials (e.g., superintendents, board members, mayors) portrayed by the media?

Theoretical Framework

To examine the media portrayals of teachers, their unions, and management officials during the two strikes, I relied on the theories of framing, agenda-setting, second-level agenda-setting, and critical discourse analysis.

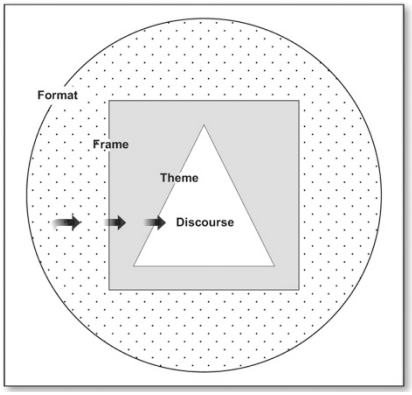
Framing

We are engaged in a constant effort to make sense of the world, and one of the ways we do this is through conceptual frames. By organizing experiences into frames, whether natural or social, we can understand events (Goffman, 1974). These frames are used to interpret new experiences, shaping a person's perspective on any given topic. Media outlets, politicians, advertisers, and others wishing to influence public opinion engage in framing -- the use of conceptual frames to present information in ways that will sway public opinion.

Within media analysis, framing is a concept that overlaps with theme and discourse (Altheide & Schneider, 2017). Figure 1, from *Qualitative Media Analysis*, provides a helpful illustration of the relationships between format, frame, theme, and discourse. Althede (1996) defines frames as "very broad thematic emphases or definitions" (p. 7), and themes as "general meanings or even 'miniframes'" (p. 7). He defines discourse as "the parameters of relevant meanings that one uses to talk about things" (p. 8). The figure demonstrates that discourse lies withing the themes and frames that the writers or speakers are using to shape opinions.

Figure 1

Altheide & Schneider's illustration of relationships between media formats, frames, themes, and discourses.



There is much research on framing in the news media, dating back to the 1970s, when Goffman first put forth framing theory. More recently, in an examination of how framing could be used to sway public opinion on education inequality, Eng framed the issue in four different ways, to appeal to different types of audiences (Eng, 2016). He argued that the media has historically played a significant role in how educational issues have been received by the public, and that framing has led to some changes in public perceptions of the power and role of schools in our society. Unfortunately, as in the case of the media's consistent portrayal of the "hero teacher," whose heroism is based on charisma and entertainment, this can lead to negative consequences for educators and schools (Harris, 2009).

Numerous examples of the effects of framing on educational issues can be found in recent years. The Common Core's reputation suffered because those in opposition to it portrayed it as an attempt on the part of the federal government to dictate curriculum to states and schools (Henderson et al, 2015). The "Wisconsin uprising," the series of protests and resistance that began when Governor Scott Walker introduced the Budget Repair Bill in February of 2011, which took away collective bargaining rights for teachers' unions, was not successful in stopping the passage of the bill by the legislature. Chesters (2016) argued that the uprising suffered from framing the issue as one of fairness because, "the concept of fairness is also hostage to the structural and situational context in which such judgments are made" (p. 464). At the time of the

"uprising," the country was experiencing very high unemployment rates and budget reductions in state and local governments, which colored people's perceptions of fairness.

Agenda-setting

Framing and agenda-setting work together to influence people's perceptions of issues of importance. The two theories were first proposed nearly simultaneously, with McCombs and Shaw's agenda-setting theory published in 1972 and Goffman's framing theory published in 1974. While framing theory argues that the ways in which the media present topics influence how they are perceived and processed, agenda-setting theory posits that news media set the political agenda at any given moment based on what issues they give the most coverage and what issues they do not cover.

Research has shown that people are more likely to identify something as an important political issue if it has received significant coverage by news media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Links have been found between reporting on certain issues and people's opinions on the relative importance of those issues. Walgrave, Soroka, and Nuytemans (2008) found that the media, especially newspapers, had agenda-setting power in Belgium throughout the 1990s. They also demonstrated that the agenda-setting power of the media varies by issues. This was also shown in a study by Lecheler, de Vreese, and Slothuus (2009) which found that news framing of an issue produces large effects when the issue is of low importance to the audience.

McCombs (1997) argued that the agenda-setting ability of the media requires journalists and publications to consider carefully the purpose of each article in building consensus. Although many journalists argue that any agenda-setting effects are inadvertent, McCombs identified the various roles, from less to more overt, that journalism has played in setting political agendas. These agenda-setting effects can impact individuals' opinions and have

political consequences. In 2011, Moon found that the more people use news media, the more susceptible they are to agenda-setting effects, and that the agenda-setting effects influence their political participation.

Second-level agenda-setting

Second-level agenda-setting theory can be seen as a combination of framing and agenda-setting. This theory argues that news media representations shape how people feel about the issues they say are important. In other words, the "slant" used in any report or representation of an issue affects people's attitudes on that issue (Shen et al., 2014). The research, however, is not conclusive. Studies regarding the effect of political advertisements, for example, on people's attitudes toward individual candidates have had mixed results. One study (Roese & Sande, 1993) found that when a candidate ran a negative advertisement that drew attention to his opponent's physical appearance, people often felt more negatively about the candidate running the advertisement. When the negative information focused on other aspects of the candidate's opponent, it was effective. Wu and Coleman (2009) found significant second-level agenda-setting effects in the 2004 presidential campaign for John Kerry. Voters absorbed negative portrayals of Kerry in the media and transferred those negative perceptions to their voting intentions.

Wanta, Golan, and Lee (2004) found that second-level agenda setting was apparent when individuals' opinions regarding a foreign nation were negatively affected by negative news coverage. This link between negative reports and negative public opinions was also found in a study of media framing of New York City's sugar-sweetened beverage portion-size cap. A study by Donaldson, et al (2015) found that news coverage used frames opposed to the regulation 84

percent of the time, helping to solidify public opinion against the regulation and leading to its demise.

Critical discourse theory

In my analysis, I used a framework of critical discourse theory to understand the ways that the language and images used in the media reports of the teacher strikes contributed to, and created, the public's understanding of the strikes. The media's portrayals of the power relationships, their characterizations of the issues and personalities involved, and their depictions of the individuals and their actions were examined using the lens of critical discourse theory.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) goes beyond an analysis of how language is used to persuade. It draws on a range of tools, qualitative and quantitative, to analyze textlinguisitic details (Huckin et al., 2012). Critical discourse analysts pay attention to all parts of the text, including silences, to pull out the inequalities and abuses of power that are in the text and its context. Huckin, Andrus, and Clary-Lemon (2012) argued that it allows the researcher to "coordinate the analysis of larger (macro) political/rhetorical purposes with the (micro) details of language" (p. 111). Critical discourse analysis is particularly useful for educational researchers because it can make visible the connections and discrepancies between discourse and policies. CDA combines grammatical and textual analysis with critical theories of society (Gee, 2004). It is assumed that CDA is based in social theory, such as theories of power and ideology.

Methods

In this study, which seeks to understand two specific events over short periods of time, it is appropriate to use a multiple case study approach. The research questions, which limit the study to the portrayals of the strike actors by the local media, focus the study on the cases as they

played out in public. The goal is to understand how each group and each side of the negotiating table was portrayed in the media.

Stake (1978) argued that, when the goal of a study is to understand, the case study is an appropriate choice. Stake explained that experts develop their understanding of human affairs through personal experience, within specific contexts, which allows them to gather expertise that applies in a broad variety of situations. Flyvbjerg (2006) also argued for the use of case studies in research because they produce context-dependent knowledge that allows people to progress in their learning from beginners to experts, and because, "in the study of human affairs, there appears to exist only context-dependent knowledge" (p. 221).

Sample

I reviewed a total of 361 articles from local newspapers. The articles were published between August 1 and September 30 of the relevant years. These time periods allowed for media coverage of the strikes from beginning to end, with descriptions of the issues and resolutions. Given the differences in populations and numbers of daily and weekly newspapers in each location, the distribution of articles was as is shown in Table 1. Selection of these data sources allowed for consideration of the context, author, publisher, institution, and intended audience of each item, which assisted in identifying the framing taking place, and in determining why any item worked in the way it did.

Table 1
Publications and articles

Publication	**Total Number of Articles**
Chicago Tribune	217
Chicago Sun-Times	49
Chicago Reader	12

Seattle Times	63
Seattle Stranger	20
Total	**361**

The items selected for inclusion in the data were identified through online archive searches of each publication using specific terms that pertained to the cases, as well as through searches of LexisNexis and Proquest. The exception to this was the *Chicago Tribune*, whose archives consist of scanned paper copies of issues which are not searchable. This required me to read the news and city news sections of every issue between August 1 and September 30 of 2012 to find items related to the strike. I had planned to use qualitative research software, specifically Atlas.ti, to organize and analyze the documents. Unfortunately, the format of the archives for the *Chicago Tribune* was not compatible with Atlas.ti. Instead, I created Excel spreadsheets and conducted the analysis "by hand."

Data analysis

All the items included in the analysis were studied with the use of protocols designed to identify the framing that was used. The protocols were used as steps of analysis that assisted with the identification of the frame and its interpretation. I used a document analysis protocol and a photo analysis protocol to review each item pertaining to the strikes. I then used a critical discourse analysis protocol to determine what elements of language within the articles were used to create the frames and to note any language or topics that were missing.

For example, in an article describing the programs available to students during the Chicago strike, the author wrote, "Churches and other not-for-profit organizations also stepped up to ensure that children would not be left on Chicago's streets, already plagued this year by an onslaught of violence" (*Chicago Sun-Times*, September 10, 2012). The author used the passive voice ("be left on Chicago's streets") to portray the students as victims of the strike and of

violence, and to attempt to engage the reader's sympathy. Also, by proposing that students would either be in school or on the streets, the author implied that the students' families would do nothing to occupy their children during the strike without actually including any information from families about what their plans were. In describing the streets as "plagued by an onslaught of violence," the author left out the important information that most shootings in Chicago happened on the weekends and late at night, times when children are not normally in school.

Results

In articles where anti-strike or pro-strike framing was found, I used CDA to determine how the frames were created that encouraged readers toward particular opinions about the strikes. I evaluated the words the authors used, the photographs that were included with the articles, the selections of quotes the authors included, and the placements of the articles within the publications to discern how anti-strike or pro-strike frames were created. Through my review, I found that, in the case of Chicago, 45 percent of all the articles had an anti-strike frame and only 19 percent had a pro-strike frame. In Seattle, there was a higher percentage of pro-strike articles (42) than of anti-strike articles (36). Table 2 shows the findings of my analysis in all publications.

Table 2
Summary of items relating to the strikes in all publications.

Publication	Anti-strike items		Pro-strike items		Readership
	n	percentage	n	percentage	
Chicago Sun-Times	24	49	11	22	400,000 daily
Chicago Tribune	101	47	34	16	400,000 daily
Chicago Reader	1	8	7	58	100,000 weekly
Seattle Times	29	46	22	35	230,000 daily
Seattle Stranger	1	5	13	65	90,000 weekly

Chicago

In anti-strike news articles in the Chicago papers, the union was described as "deliberately dragging out the protest," "angry," "hell-bent on striking," and "extremely frustrated." The strike was called "theatrics," "devastating," "drama," "unnecessary," "a strike of choice," "avoidable," "a tragedy," "a roller coaster," and a "battle." Teachers were described as "angry" and "complaining." The language describing teachers in the news articles referred to them as "walk[ing] off the job," having a "fiery attitude," and "hitting below the belt." One article implied that teachers had to be bribed to implement any reforms in the past: "Since 1987, when the city's teachers last walked out, former Mayor Richard M. Daley got leaders of the Chicago Teachers Union to go along with various reform measures by raising teachers' pay and improving their retirement benefits."

In the editorials and opinion pieces with an anti-strike frame, the union was described as "flame throwing," using "fiery rhetoric," and "shouting." The strike was called "avoidable," "unnecessary," and "polarizing the city." Karen Lewis was described as "fiery," "passionate," and having taken union members "over the edge." The headlines of the editorials – e.g., "If Chicago teachers strike now, it's the union's bad call," "Teacher union's unwise 'strike of choice'," "Teachers risk losing a lot if strike drags on," and "Stand up to teachers, don't demonize them" – make it clear that the papers did not support the strike and believed the teachers were being unreasonable.

In both the anti-strike news and anti-strike opinion pieces, teachers were often portrayed as unaware of the impact the recession had on employment, and as "demanding respect and they will take it by force if necessary." The union, it was said, "may walk out on children next week,"

and was “stiffing their students, the children’s parents, the taxpayers and the town in general.” Karen Lewis was described as “patronizing, blustery,” “grip[ing],” “fueling [the] membership’s anger,” and “talk[ing] tough.” The strike was described as “expensive,” a “terrible inconvenience,” “disrupt[ing] a child’s education,” “stressful…for parents and children,” and a “challenge for parents citywide, but especially for those in poor neighborhoods.” One letter to the Editor asked, “Is it a leap from a strike to a street shooting?”

In Chicago, there were fewer articles with a pro-strike frame, and several of those also expressed doubts about the strike or agreements with the CPS officials. In the news articles, the union is referred to as a “clear winner,” “ready to strike,” “not the bad guys,” and having “no sense of urgency.” The teachers are described as “believ[ing] the public supports them,” “competing in the court of public opinion,” and “sincerely want[ing] to be back in the classroom.” The authors state that the teachers have had many things taken from them and had “stuff rammed down their throats.”

In the pro-strike items, the strike is described as having many causes, including lack of resources, lack of staff, lack of programs, lack of playgrounds, lack of textbooks, lack of respect, and lack of air-conditioning. It was also described as “drag[ging] on all week,” full of “political fallout for Aldermen,” “locally supported,” and “nationally bashed.”

In the pro-strike letters to the editor, the union is described as not wanting to strike, wanting “what’s best for students,” and going on strike to “force quality education.” By contrast, the district officials were said to have “belittle[d]” and “offend[ed]” teachers and not put students first. They were described as not “understand how to effectively educate children,” “funding charter schools ahead of public schools,” and “hav[ing] no idea what they’re doing.” Rahm

Emanuel is described as "wrong" and as making an "immoral demand" when he "demand[s] [that] workers work for free."

Seattle

In the anti-strike Seattle news articles, the teachers were described as having "walked out" and as "receiv[ing] raises at levels many haven't seen in recent years." The union was said to feel "no mutual trust" with the district, to "want to see new ideas from the district before it goes back to the bargaining table," and to "[have] an incentive to get a good deal this year," because of the recent Supreme Court rulings. The Court had ruled that the state needed to develop a plan for fully funding schools using reliable, dedicated funds. The argument here was that teachers were striking to get big raises because that would ensure higher levels of funding for the schools and teachers moving forward. The strike was called "'harmful and damaging to the District, our students, and our community,'" "illegal," "inconvenient," "put[ting] pressure on families," and "forc[ing] parents to get creative."

In the anti-strike editorials, letters, and opinion pieces, teachers were described as having "walked out demanding raises," "demanding too much," "at risk of becoming a symbol of excess," and using "inflammatory rhetoric." The union was described as having "siphoned off [funding] for wages," "continually ask[ing] for more," "plan[ning] to close schools," "fighting," and "want[ing] to get as much as it could before…cutbacks occurred." The strike was described as "causing 53,000 children to remain on summer vacation," "so hurtful to communities, families, and children," "illegal," "hurt[ing] broader efforts to improve education funding," and "stiff-arming more than 50,000 kids and their families."

In the Seattle items with a pro-strike frame, teachers were described as "put(ting) students at the center of everything (they) do," underpaid, and as "want(ing) to work." The union is

described as arguing for state funds to go "to kids," and as having been bargaining since May. The district is described as "unwilling to invest in the priorities that educators need to be successful with students," and as unready for negotiations back in August. The items refer to the strike as being "about properly funding schools (and) giving kids the recess time that research shows they need."

Cross-Case Analysis

I also compared the contexts of the strikes to deepen the cross-case analysis. There were some similarities among the issues in the strikes in Chicago and Seattle. In both situations, the teachers were striking for higher pay. Teachers in both strikes were also trying to get student test scores eliminated from their evaluations. Teachers in Chicago were concerned about class sizes and a lack of resources in their schools. They were also concerned about an insufficient amount of support services available to students. In Seattle, teachers were concerned about caseloads for psychologists and therapists, which affected the availability of those services to students, and about the amount of student testing.

Teachers in Chicago achieved some of their contract goals, but they also conceded to several of the demands of the district leaders. Teachers won pay raises, but at a much lower rate than they had hoped. They were able to retain their salary step and lane increases, but lost the option to cash in remaining sick days at retirement. They succeeded in not adding any additional time to the teachers' workday but accepted the district's demand that principals did not have to set aside any positions for teachers who had been laid off. They were unable to eliminate student test scores from teacher evaluations but succeeded in decreasing the role of student test scores in teacher evaluations from 40 percent to 25 percent in the first two years of the contract and 30 percent in the last year.

In Seattle, the union achieved nearly all of its goals. Teachers won pay raises that were less than what they had hoped, but they also won additional pay for a longer school day. The district agreed to their demands for mandatory recess, limits on caseloads for a variety of student services providers, and the elimination of the use of student test scores in teacher evaluations. The teachers also won the creation of Equity Committees in 30 schools to work on eliminating inequities in student discipline.

Throughout both strikes, the teachers enjoyed strong support from the parents of the students (Moser, September 17, 2012; Burnett, September 11, 2015). It is possible that this support played a role in gains at the bargaining table. Prior to the strike in Chicago, the union executed a communications plan that distributed their talking points to the public, in general, and to parents, in particular. By the time the strike was declared, parents already knew what the issues were (*Sun-Times* editorial board, September 12, 2012). Given the economic and political context of Chicago in 2012, union leaders were wise to communicate to parents that they were trying to achieve changes, such as smaller class sizes and increased resources for schools, that would benefit their children. The political momentum in the Midwest at the time appeared to be in favor of anti-union policies.

Union members in Seattle stated that they learned from the Chicago strike (Hoop, D., n.d.). As one union member put it: “We’re following the example of Chicago in showing people how you fight back. For years, this union has been much more of a negotiating, concessionary union. Now we’ve managed to turn it a little bit toward power.” It is interesting that the teacher used the word “power” when describing the union’s approach to the contract dispute. Labor strikes are displays of power that challenge the traditional employment power structure, where most of the power lies with the employer. In 2018 and 2019, teachers went on strike in West

Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, Colorado, and Los Angeles and gained significant pay raises and other changes to their benefits and working conditions (Fernandez Campbell, February 14, 2019; Goldstein & Dias, April 12, 2018; California Federation of Teachers, January 23, 2019; Associated Press, May 3, 2018; Bidgood, March 6, 2018). Teachers can change the power dynamics with school districts and state governments when they organize.

The style of "fighting back" in Seattle was significantly different than in Chicago, where the mayor controlled the district and he and the union president were often confrontational in their speech. In Seattle, which was not a mayor-controlled district, the union president, the superintendent, and the board of education did not engage in personal critiques that were documented in local media. This may have contributed to the more positive media coverage in Seattle; or, if personal critiques were in fact lobbed at each other by the negotiators in the Seattle strike, the choice by the media not to include those comments created more positive framing of both sides.

There were other differences between the contexts of the strikes, and the passage of three years between the two strikes is important to note. In 2012, many states still had not recovered from the 2008 recession, and unemployment in the country in December was just barely below eight percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics, December 11, 2012). Although school funding in 2012 in Illinois had increased beyond 2008 levels (Leachman et al, 2016), the Chicago district was facing a budget shortfall. Chicago school leaders throughout that time had increased funding for charter schools while closing neighborhood public schools since 2001.

By 2015 during the Seattle strike, unemployment was down to 5 percent nationally (Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 2016), but school funding in Washington was still below 2008 levels (Leachman et al., 2016). Washington had a history of under-funding schools, as found by

the Washington Supreme Court in the *McCleary* decision. The 2015-2016 school year was the first year that charter schools had been allowed to operate in Washington, but the Supreme Court ruled on September 4, 2015, that the law allowing charter schools and their funding was unconstitutional.

There were also significant differences in the formats of the anti-strike and pro-strike items included in the newspapers. In Chicago, items with a pro-strike frame were more often letters to the editor or opinion pieces. Of the 11 items in the *Sun-Times* that were pro-strike, five (or 45 percent) were letters and one was an opinion piece. Of the 34 items in the *Tribune* that were pro-strike, 13 (or 38 percent) were letters and 10 (or 29 percent) were opinion items. The table below compares the pro-strike and anti-strike items, by type, in the *Tribune* and the *Sun-Times.*

Table 3
Pro- and anti-strike items, by type, during Chicago strike

Item type	***Chicago Sun-Times***		***Chicago Tribune***	
	Pro	**Anti**	**Pro**	**Anti**
Letter	5	0	13	17
Opinion	1	3	10	15
Editorial	0	6	0	15
News	5	15	11	54

During the strike in Seattle, pro-strike items in the *Seattle Times* were less likely (23 percent) to be letters or opinion pieces than news items. Of the pro-strike items in the *Times*, 77 percent were news items. The table below shows the number of each type of item that was pro- or anti-strike in each publication in Seattle.

Table 4
Pro- and anti-strike items, by type, during Seattle strike

Item type	***Seattle Times***		***The Stranger***	
	Pro	**Anti**	**Pro**	**Anti**
Letter	3	1	13	0
Opinion	2	4	6	0
Editorial	0	2	0	0
News	17	22	7	1

It is interesting that the pro-strike items in both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times* were more often letters from readers or opinion pieces. Anti-strike items were much more likely to be news items. The opposite was true of the Seattle publications. By including more pro-strike news items than opinion items, the *Seattle Times* made the pro-strike position in Seattle seem reasonable and valid. In Chicago, where pro-strike items were more likely to be in the opinion section, the anti-strike framing of news items presented the anti-strike view as the fact-based view, and the pro-strike view as the emotional view. These choices by the editors may have influenced readers' opinions regarding the strikes, which in turn may have affected the outcomes of the strikes. It is likely that the negotiators during the strikes read some of the news coverage and/or heard from people who had read the news coverage.

It is also important to note that the total number of articles about contract negotiations and the strike was much higher in Chicago than in Seattle. There were 278 items in Chicago newspapers dealing with the strike and only 83 items in Seattle newspapers. The Seattle strike lasted two fewer school days than the Chicago strike and there was only one daily newspaper in Seattle, but it is notable that the Chicago strike had more than three times the newspaper coverage of the Seattle strike. Given that most articles in Chicago were anti-strike, this is significant agenda-setting and negative framing.

Conclusions and Implications for Education

Although the different contexts are important to remember, my study also noted very different framing of the strikes in the local media which may have played a role in the eventual contractual outcomes. It is not possible to demonstrate conclusively from this study that framing influenced the outcomes of negotiations, but the differences in the framing of the issues and the outcomes in the two situations is compelling.

Media framing of the teachers' strikes in Chicago (more negative) and Seattle (more positive) likely affected community support for, or opposition to, the strikes and influenced the different outcomes. Educators in both strikes were depicted in anti-strike items as greedy, asking for too much, and aggressive. This aligns with the idea of teachers as public servants who work at the will of the taxpayers, a view that has often conflicted with the idea of teachers as activists (Cooper, 2015). During strikes, all members of the union become activists, which could lead to dissonance in people's perceptions of teachers and their understanding of the role of teachers. In an analysis of the *Chicago Tribune*'s coverage of education between 2006 and 2007, at a time when teachers in Chicago were not striking, Cohen (2010) found that most of the stories used a frame of accountability, which presented teachers as "lacking authority and knowledge, or even as the cause of student failure" (p. 116), depicting a structure in which teachers were without power. Critical discourse analysis indicates that this kind of representation of power relationships serves as reinforcement of pre-existing assumptions about the role of teachers in our society and works to maintain that hegemony. If readers assume that teachers are public servants, they will balk when teachers become activists and attempt to wrest some power for themselves.

This is in line with other studies (Baker, 1994; Goldstein, 2011) that have found anti-union and anti-teacher frames in media coverage of educators. My study adds to these findings through the use of critical discourse analysis, which identified specific items or characteristics of the publications and specific discursive practices that advanced these negative frames. The use of critical discourse analysis enabled me to discern which individuals or groups of people were perceived by the authors to have power, through the words used to describe them and who was quoted. I was able to show how the words used, the individuals quoted, the placement of the stories within the publications, and the photographs that accompanied the stories were used to

show teachers in a negative light most of the time in both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and sometimes in the *Seattle Times*. Since discourse is always social, I theorize that the newspapers were engaging in this type of framing to maintain existing power structures by swaying public sympathy away from the teachers and toward the taxpayers, families, and government officials. Given the number of anti-Rahm Emanuel (then-mayor of Chicago) frames included in both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the articles were not intended to encourage support of the mayor, but to encourage support of the hierarchy.

Because there is so little research on media framing regarding teachers, my findings demonstrate the need for future studies that compare the frames used regarding teachers and their unions during normal conditions to those used during strikes. It would also be interesting to study how this kind of issue framing perpetuates political and social polarization.

Many of these articles depicted the union and the district as either winners or losers, which oversimplifies the disagreements that led to the strikes. This points to the need for teachers, unions, and district leaders to consider how their actions and advocacy have been reported in the past and to make efforts to create their own frames. Union leaders and district leaders also need to be aware of the language used by each other during conversations, and especially during contract negotiations or times of conflict. This awareness could help them understand which issues are most important to the other group and why they are so important, potentially allowing them to avoid events such as strikes.

References

Adkins Covert, T. J., & Washburn, P. C. (2007). Measuring media bias: A content analysis of *Time* and *Newsweek* coverage of domestic social issues, 1975-2000. *Social Science Quarterly*, *88*(3), 690–706.

Altheide, D. L. (1996). *Qualitative document analysis*. Retrieved from https://methods-sagepub-

Altheide, D. L., & Schneider, C. J. (2013). *Qualitative media analysis*. Retrieved from http://methods.sagepub.com.prox.lib.ncsu.edu/book/qualitative-media-analysis-2e.

Associated Press. (May 3, 2018). "Striking Arizona teachers win 19% raise, end walkout." *Los Angeles Times*. https://www.latimes.com/nation/nationnow/la-na-arizona-teachers-20180503-story.html.

Baker, M. (1994). Media coverage of education. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 42*(3), 286-297.

Berliner, D. C., & Biddle, B. J. (1995). *The manufactured crisis: Myths, fraud, and the attack on America's public schools.* Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.

Bidgood, J. (March 6, 2018). "West Virginia raises teachers' pay to end statewide strike." *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/06/us/west-virginia-teachers-strike-deal.html.

Bruno, B., & Ashby, S. (2016). *A fight for the soul of public education: The story of the Chicago teachers strike.* ILR Press.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (December 11, 2012). *Unemployment rate edges down in November 2012.* https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2012/ted_20121211.htm?view_full

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (April 2016). *Unemployment rate nears prerecession level by end of 2015*. https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2016/article/unemployment-rate-nears-prerecession-

level-by-end-of-2015.htm#:~:text=National%20unemployment%20declined%20by%201.0,the%20fourth%20quarter%20of%202015.

Burnett, C. (September 11, 2015). "Seattle teacher strike: parents show support despite scheduling upheaval." *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/sep/11/seattle-teacher-strike-parents-community-supportive.

California Federation of Teachers. (January 23, 2019). "UTLA members went on strike and won for public education." https://www.cft.org/article/utla-members-went-strike-and-won-public-education.

Chesters, G. (2016). Social unionism and the framing of "fairness" in the Wisconsin uprising. *The Journal of the Local Economy Policy Unit.* https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0269094216646995?legid=splec%3B0269026909421664v1&patientinform-links=yes&

Chicago Sun-Times Editorial Board. (September 10, 2012). "Teacher union's unwise 'strike of choice.'" *Chicago Sun-Times*. p. 21.

Chicago Sun-Times Editorial Board. (September 12, 2012). "Teachers risk losing a lot if strike drags on." *Chicago Sun-Times*. p. 26.

Cohen, J. (2010). Teachers in the news: a critical analysis of one US newspaper's discourse on education, 2006-2007. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 31*(1), 105-119.

Cooper, B. S. (2015). The collective politics of teacher unionism. In B. S. Cooper, J. G. Cibulka, & L. D. Fusarelli (Eds.), *Handbook of education politics and policy* (2nd ed., pp. 343-364). New York: Routledge.

Cornwell, P., & Orenstein, W. (September 17, 2015). Union suspends strike; school to start Thursday in Seattle. *Seattle Times*. https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/education/seattle-teachers-and-district-reach-tentative-agreement/

DeBray-Pelot, E., & McGuinn, P. (2009). The new politics of education: Analyzing the federal education policy landscape in the post-NCLB era. *Educational Policy, 23*(1), 15-42.

De la Torre, M. (2015). *School Closings in Chicago.* UChicago Consortium on School Research. https://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/school-closings-chicago-understanding-families-choices-and-constraints-new-school

Donaldson, E. A., Cohen, J. E., Truant, P. L., Rutkow, L., Kanarek, N. F., & Barry, C. L. (2015). News media framing of New York City's sugar-sweetened beverage portion-size cap. *American Journal of Public Health*, *105*(11), 2202–2209.

Eng, N. (2016). Education inequality: Broadening public attitudes through framing. *Journal of Social Issues, 72*(4), 676-695.

Fairclough, N. (1992). Discourse and text: Linguistic and intertextual analysis within discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society, 3*(2), 193-217.

Fernandez Campbell, A. (February 14, 2019). "The Denver teachers strike is over. They won." *Vox*. https://www.vox.com/2019/2/14/18224848/denver-teachers-strike-over-deal.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *12*(2), 219–245.

Gee, J. P. (2004). Discourse analysis: What makes it critical? In *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (pp. 23–45). Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience.* New York: Harper & Row.

Goldstein, R. A. (2011). Imaging the frame: Media representations of teachers, their unions, NCLB, and education reform. *Educational Policy*, *25*(4), 543–576.

Goldstein, D., & Dias, E. (April 12, 2018). "Oklahoma teachers end walkout after winning raises and additional funding." *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/12/us/oklahoma-teachers-strike.html?auth=login-email&login=email.

Goodman, P. S. (September 15, 2012). Chicago teachers strike a push-back to education reform. *Huffington Post*. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/15/chicago-teachers-strike_n_1886142.html

Harris, A. (June, 2009). The good teacher: images of teachers in popular culture. *English Drama Media*, (14), 11+. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A215408518/LitRC?u=nclivensu&sid=summon&xid=90ceea16

Henderson, M. B., Peterson, P. E., & West, M. R. (2015). No common opinion on the common core. *Education Next, 15*(1), 9-19. http://educationnext.org/2014-ednext-poll-no-common-opinion-on-the-common-core/.

Hoop, D. (n.d.) Why the Seattle strike matters. Jacobin. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/09/seattle-teachers-strike-standardized-testing-racial-justice/

Huckin, T., Andrus, J., & Clary-Lemon, J. (2012). Critical discourse analysis and rhetoric and composition. *College Composition and Communication, 64*(1), 107-129.

Johnson, S. (February 11, 2021). A Decade After Act 10, It's a Different World for Wisconsin Unions. *Wisconsin Public Radio*. https://www.wpr.org/decade-after-act-10-its-different-world-wisconsin-unions

Leachman, M., Albares, N., Masterson, K., & Wallace, M. (January 25, 2016). *Most states have cut school funding, and some continue cutting*. https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/12-10-15sfp.pdf.

Lecheler, S., de Vreese, C., & Slothuus, R. (2009). Issue importance as a moderator of framing effects. *Communication Research 36*(3), 400-425.

Loewus, L. (September 12, 2012). Chicago Strike Puts Spotlight on Teacher-Evaluation Reform. *Education Week.* https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/chicago-strike-puts-spotlight-on-teacher-evaluation-reform/2012/09

Major, M. (2015). Conservative consciousness and the press: The institutional contribution to the idea of the "Liberal Media" in right-wing discourse. *Critical Sociology*, *41*(3), 483–491.

Matthes, J., & Marquart, F. (2013). A new look at campaign advertising and political engagement: Exploring the effects of opinion-congruent and -incongruent political advertisements. *Communication Research*, *42*(1), 134–155.

McCombs, M. (1997). Building consensus: The news media's agenda-setting roles. *Political Communication*, *14*(4), 433–443.

McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *36*, 176–187.

Moser, W. (September 17, 2012). "Poll shows substantial CPS parent, racial divide on Chicago teachers strike." *Chicago*. https://www.chicagomag.com/city-life/september-2012/poll-shows-substantial-cps-parent-racial-divide-on-chicago-teachers-strike/.

Roese, N. J., & Sande, G. N. (1993). Backlash effects in attack politics. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *23*, 632–653.

Rado, D. (September 17, 2012). Chicago teacher strike: Issues at the center of contract negotiations. *Chicago Tribune.* p. 10.

Rogers, R. (Ed.). (2004). *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education.* New Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates.

Shen, F., Ahern, L., & Baker, M. (2014). Stories that count: Influence of news narratives on issue attitudes. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *9*(1), 98–117.

Spielman, F. (August 24, 2012). "Rahm's "gonna need to ratchet it up.'" *Chicago Sun-Times*. p. 2.

Stake, R. E. (1978). The case study method in social inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, *7*(2), 5–8.

Stake, R. (1994). Case study: Composition and performance. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, 122,* p. 31-44.

Supreme Court of Washington. (2012). *Majority Supreme Court opinion in Mathew & Stephanie McCleary et al. v. State of Washington.* https://advance.lexis.com/documentpage/?pdmfid=1000516&crid=b8caa6b6-0b6d-4b29-8783-a808db03fdae&config=00JABhZjY0ZmI3Ny04MzkwLTRlMzAtYjllNC03MzdlOTgyYTY2MDEKAFBvZENhdGFsb2eA00v3ycmKG7ve38pfdpvF&pddocfullpath=%2Fshared%2Fdocument%2Fcases%2Furn%3AcontentItem%3A54N2-VMN1-F04M-C03F-00008-00&pddocid=urn%3AcontentItem%3A54N2-VMN1-F04M-C03F-00008-00&pdcontentcomponentid=506039&pdteaserkey=sr0&pditab=allpods&ecomp=g3J_kkk&earg=sr0&prid=e0fab846-38a0-4838-a8ca-b0a769d9df8a.

Supreme Court of Washington. (2015). *League of Women Voters of Washington v. State of Washington.* https://advance.lexis.com/documentpage/?pdmfid=1000516&crid=ec3876a5-8857-4254-8bc9-2556e4832862&config=00JABhZjY0ZmI3Ny04MzkwLTRlMzAtYjllNC03MzdlOTgyYTY2MDEKAFBvZENhdGFsb2eA00v3ycmKG7ve38pfdpvF&pddocfullpath=%2Fshared%2Fdocument%2Fcases%2Furn%3AcontentItem%3A5GVD-XW41-F04M-C006-00008-00&pddocid=urn%3AcontentItem%3A5GVD-XW41-F04M-C006-00008-00&pdcontentcomponentid=506039&pdteaserkey=sr0&pditab=allpods&ecomp=g3J_kkk&earg=sr0&prid=4dcc3914-d20b-46c1-a7fe-71586cc74aa7.

Tan, Y., & Weaver, D. H. (2010). Media bias, public opinion, and policy liberalism from 1956 to 2004: A second-level agenda-setting study. *Mass Communications and Society*, *13*, 412–434.

Troy, T. (2012). Devaluing the think tank. *National Affairs, 10*, 75-90.

Walgrave, S., Soroka, S., & Nuytemans, M. (2008). The mass media's political agenda-setting power: A longitudinal analysis of media, parliament, and government, W., Golan, G., & Lee, C. (2004). Agenda setting and international news: Media influence on public perceptions of foreign nations. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *81*(2), 364–377.

Wu, H. D., & Coleman, R. (2009). Advancing agenda-setting theory: The comparative strength and new contingent conditions of the two-levels of agenda-setting effects. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *86*(4), 775–789.