Media in the Policy Process: Using Framing and Narratives to Understand Policy Influences

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Abstract

Policy scholarship has long sought to understand the role of knowledge and information in the policy process. Of the actors, institutions, and resources involved in shaping policy processes and outcomes, media and narratives have been incorporated into empirical policy scholarship and theories with varying success. The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) is a framework through which scholars can bring analysis of narratives into studies of policy making. The NPF moves the field forward in understanding the role of narratives, communication, and stakeholder beliefs in the policy process, while at the same time striving for theoretical rigor. We embed the discussion of frames and narratives in the NPF to provide an empirical and theoretical cohesion to our understanding of media and public policy and then provide a brief empirical example of how such an integration may prove fruitful for policy scholars.

KEY WORDS: policy process, media, framing, narratives

The media and public policy scholarship has long wrestled with the problem of how much influence to accord to media as an actor in the policy process. Media interact with and influence the policy process in two paramount ways: (1) by selecting issues of importance to highlight to the public and policy makers (agenda-setting), and (2) by problematizing policy in a way that attaches meaning to it in a manner that is comprehensible (framing and constructing narratives). Policy scholars from many disciplines struggle with integration of communication-related concepts within our policy theories and empirical traditions. While agenda setting has a robust theoretical core with ample empirical validation, the theories underlying framing and narrative research are often used interchangeably, even though they may be informed by vastly different ontological assumptions.

This paper integrates these seminal concepts from mass communication and political communication to better understand how media use framing and narratives to influence policy making. To do so, we embed the discussion of frames and narratives in the NPF to empirically and theoretically ground our discussion of the role of media and public policy, while simultaneously contributing to the emerging discussion on the value of incorporating narrative aspects into public policy analysis. Through this paper, we attempt to more clearly articulate some of the ways in which the scholarship from mass communication can improve our own discipline's approach to communication concepts that are crucial to policy processes and outcomes, most specifically: the use of framing and narrative and the definition of media actors.

Lasswell's description of the then-emerging field of the policy sciences, wherein he focused on "knowledge *of* the policy process; knowledge *in* the process" (1970,

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p. 3), suggests the early desires for better articulation and examination of the role of information. We argue that this includes the media's role in framing and narrative construction. To understand these two concepts, we draw from their respective core literatures. Entman's canonical definition[1] of framing states that it is the act of "select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (1993, p. 52). A narrative, to borrow the Jones and McBeth integrative definition, is "a story with a temporal sequence of events, unfolding in a plot that is populated by dramatic moments, symbols, and archetypal characters that culminates in a moral to the story" (2010, p. 329). These processes of shaping information and policy-relevant stories are important to the policy process itself as well as the formation and dissemination of knowledge *in* the process.

As policy scholars, we often discuss the importance of media, communication, and framing in policy making, but have typically shied away from building our own theories specifically rooted in policy concepts rather than politics (as the field of political communication does). This had long left a dearth of falsifiable policy scholarship and a muddied understanding of how and when media framing and narratives influence policy processes and outcomes. While good empirical work has been conducted using media analysis or focusing on constructed images in policy making (see B. D. Jones & Baumgartner, 2005, for example), we still do not have a comprehensive framework to help us organize and understand the various ways in which media may directly or indirectly influence the policy process. Contemporary policy theories include media as peripheral or political actors, coalition allies, or coalition resources, and they discuss the important role of media in setting public and policy agendas (Scheufele, 2000, for example) or advancing an agenda of their own (McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 1997), but none clearly articulate the differences between media and other actors or delve deeply into a theoretical discussion of the interaction between media and other policy influences in the policy process (see Baumgartner & Jones, 2009; Kingdon, 2003; Sabatier, 1999). These are areas ripe for exploration and articulation in policy research.

The NPF provides scholars with both the theoretical tools from which they can approach the two-pronged problem we have articulated here: first, how do we understand the role of media actors in the policy process, and second, how can we disentangle two of the ways they are presumed to influence the policy process—framing and narrative construction? The NPF has carved out an empirically falsifiable way to measure and conceptualize socially constructed policy stories such as those observed in both framing and narrative research and therefore provides an excellent foundation upon which we can articulate a clear role for media in the policy process and better apprehend the differences between narrative construction and framing as it can be applied to the policy literature. The NPF does not, however, differentiate between media actors and other policy actors—an important, and correctable omission in accounting for the role of stories in the policy making process. The following sections will explore (1) the role of media in the policy making process, (2) the scholarship in framing and narrative analysis both from a theoretical and empirical standpoint, (3) an explanation of how these two tools can be integrated into the recently developed Narrative Policy Framework,

(4) a case study which contrasts the use of framing and narratives in media coverage of a policy issue, and (5) a discussion of how these findings are relevant to the literature on media and public policy.

Media Heterogeneity: Actors, Messengers, and Organizations

Media Actors in Policy Subsystems

Media can be defined as a means of mass communication[2]—the platform or technology through which messages are disseminated. *Mass* media are one means among several of communicating information to the public. There are other means of disseminating information to the public, or to specific publics, such as: direct communication using media platforms such as the news, opinion blogs, advocacy media, or social media. *Media* as a means of communication also include multiple platforms—the technological means by which messages are disseminated to the public. And while media have certainly changed dramatically in this vein over the past three decades, scholars must not ignore the traditional press such as newspapers, magazines, and broadcast news, where the public still gets the majority of its news and information, although reliance upon legacy media as sources of information varies significantly by age cohort (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2009). *Media* is also a term that embodies multitudes of actors, including editors; journalists; investigative reporters; and, at times, even pollsters. Finally, *media* can also be considered as a nested system of interacting and dependent organizations.

With this understanding of media as heterogeneous and the complexities that are inherent in such a complex group of actors, organizations, and platforms, the task of contextualizing media as actors within the policy process grows increasingly necessary. Most policy theories such as the Advocacy Coalition Framework, which has been used extensively by scholars working at the intersection of narratives and policy processes, include journalists and other media either as actors within coalitions or as resources or constraints for coalitions (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993b). However, it is seldom clear in policy theories whether media actors are considered active, voluntary members of coalitions, or whether they are incidental members of such coalitions through their professional roles. It is also unclear in policy theories how and with what effects media actors filter and frame coalition messages, or whether they simply act as conduits of information from coalitions.

Some depictions of media actors portray them as powerful gatekeepers, determining which items are placed on the media agenda (and thereby the public's issue agenda) and which are omitted (Graber, 2006). As Walter Lippman noted, the media–public relationship results in a pseudo-environment of information, wherein the news media act as a bridge between "the world outside and the pictures in [the public's] heads" (as cited in McCombs, 2004, p. 21). The journalistic decisions made daily about what stories to cover, how to frame the stories, which sources to use, and what facts to include all produce important results for the pseudo-environment that connects empirical realities to our own experiences and preconceptions. Far from solely working to agnostically inform the public, media actively

and passively change opinions and influence agendas by framing policy issues and constructing narratives to relay information in a concise, yet attention-grabbing manner (McLeod, Kosicki, & McLeod, 2002).

Professional norms and economic pressures also play roles in how issues are covered in the media and which issues become part of the dominant media agenda and policy agenda. In American media, journalists are expected to seek truth, serve the public, fight for transparency, and give voice to the voiceless (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). In this sense, media are often cited as one of the most powerful checks on government, particularly where other institutions have failed (Curran, 2000). One of the dominant journalistic norms in America is objectivity, which is not a norm in many other media cultures where politically skewed media are accepted and even embraced (Graber, 2006). While we see an increasing number of media outlets veering toward ideological positions, American journalism is historically distinct in its focus on objectivity, and general American audience discomfort with politically biased media. These journalistic processes and norms associated with news-making indicate that there may be important differences among news outlets, and that the media venue is therefore important when considering opportunities for policy makers to work with media to advance their agenda.

Media Effects: The Influence of Storytelling on Policy Outcomes

Scholars often reference the probable importance of media in policy processes and outcomes (B. D. Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; Kingdon, 2003; Shanahan, McBeth, Arnell, & Hathaway, 2008), as a tool for measuring policy agendas (Baumgartner & Jones, 2009; McCombs, 2005), or as actors in the policy process who interact with advocacy coalitions (Sabatier, 1988; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993a). Further, the narratives used by media, stakeholders, and citizens to describe policies, problems, and opponents can be powerful in the context of shaping public opinion and policy agendas (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993, 2009; McBeth, Shanahan, & Jones, 2005; Stone, 2011; Zaller, 1992). NPF attempts to integrate narratives as a series of empirically identifiable and measurable variables in a more clearly articulated manner than either previous narrative scholarship or policy scholarship has accomplished (M. D. Jones & McBeth, 2010; Shanahan, McBeth, & Hathaway, 2011).

Media characteristics (e.g., ideology, ownership) and outputs (e.g., storylines and framing) are often used as independent variables in policy scholarship, but without a unifying framework to organize the ideas presented in a variety of studies. Bringing these disparate findings together, Arnold (1990) argues that there are two policy spheres where the work of governing takes place. This relationship is often characterized as a visible realm wherein media provide coverage of policy domains; contribute to the formation of public opinion; and, indirectly, constrain the options available to policy makers. In the second (and perhaps more important) invisible realm, media do not pay close attention, the public is largely ignorant of debates and decisions, and policy makers have more freedom to make choices not bound by constituent preferences (and are thereby influenced by other decision constraints such as lobbyists or their personal ideologies). In other words, the limited attention span and resources of the media—and by extension the public—has a

direct impact on the latitude of policy makers (B. D. Jones & Baumgartner, 2005), and this dichotomy helps to explain some of the contradictory findings and theoretical assumptions related to media that we find in policy scholarship. This is a useful heuristic for understanding why media may influence the policy process at times but not others. It does not, however, delve into the content of media messages or coalition narratives that may also influence policy outcomes.

Other policy scholarship focuses more intently on the content of media messages or the strategic use of these messages. Baumgartner and Jones (1993) make the argument that the changing nature of policy images (shaped by elites) in the media leads to punctuations wherein policies change rapidly and dramatically. Elsewhere, Advocacy Coalition Framework studies (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Sabatier & Weible, 2007) treat media as either individual members of competing coalitions of policy advocates (a direct actor), or as resources used by coalitions to influence policy outcomes (an indirect actor or a strategic messaging tool). How can the leading theories of policy change treat media so differently? It may be, in part, due to the visible and invisible spheres that Arnold (1990) describes. It may equally be due to a narrow scholarly focus on certain aspects of the media–policy relationship: media actors, media messages, media attention, or media production influences without explicitly acknowledging the role that media play in conveying messages through storytelling or integrating these concepts into a coherent framework. Two means by which media influence policy processes—framing issues and constructing narratives—are discussed as modes of policy influence in depth below.

Framing as a Theoretical Construct

Framing, or second-level media agenda setting (McCombs, 2004), is primarily a cognitive concept that refers to the influence of transmitted messages on individual knowledge and beliefs (Ansolabehere, Behr, & Iyengar, 1993; Entman, 1993; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). While framing has been suggested as an extension or subset of agenda-setting research (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001), the study of framing has tended to focus on both the salience of an issue (like agenda-setting) and its presentation, with a particular focus on how presentation may impact information processing (Scheufele, 2000). Frames, themselves, are often described as the "central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143). In other words, framing turns a simple list of facts into a story by selecting and emphasizing attributes that draw attention to the situation and persuade readers to understand an issue in a particular light (Gitlin, 1980).

The framing of issues, while often necessary to transmit complex topics in a simplified way, is an equally powerful tool in limiting discussion over policy topics. Emotionally charged human-interest stories often stand in for drier, more institutionally focused policy problems (often referred to as "episodic" framing, where the focus is placed on an individual case at the expense of broader contextual, or "thematic" framing [Iyengar, 1990]). Both coalitions and storytellers are likely to select from a long list of issue attributes to select only the most salient, compelling, and emotive topics for public discussion, thereby framing the issue. Equally, frames are a tool that actors within coalitions, as well as decision makers, can strategically

employ to sway policy images and influence policy outcomes (Baumgartner & Jones, 2009). Journalists, for example, are taught to shape stories to make media consumers care about issues by evoking empathy or similar emotions (Atkisson & Vaughan, 2003; Keller & Hawkins, 2009), even when the inclusion of emotive aspects or human interest contextualization replaces breadth and depth of policy context (Iyengar, 1990). Similarly, policy actors can frame problems in their own communications (e.g., press releases, website content) or through the media. By framing issues in an audience-centric manner, or by simply communicating incomplete parts of complex issues, media can affect *how* the public and policy makers view certain issues on the public and policy agendas.

Framing as an Empirical Tool

The study of framing, as it has evolved in political science and communication studies, has given scholars the ability to look at the changing dimensions of discourse in the population, among government actors, or in the media. In mapping framing construction and proliferation, the field has expanded to account for changes in public opinion, public policy making, and coalition building in areas as diverse as immigration, transportation, and same-sex civil unions (Baumgartner & Jones, 1994; Lawlor, 2015; Price, Nir, & Cappella, 2005). Given the wide variety of subjects under investigation and the numerous aspects of framing measured, the field has sometimes been critiqued as lacking strong internal coherence (De Vreese, 2005). Matthes and Kohring (2008), for example, illustrate five varieties of inductive and deductive approaches to identifying frames in text that incorporate varying levels of human intervention on one end and computer-assisted analysis on the other.

There does, however, appear to be at least some shared understanding that frames can be derived from patterns in text that are identifiable, replicable, and intersubjective (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Matthes & Kohring, 2008). Pan and Kosicki (1993) identify four structural dimensions of frames (syntax, script, theme, and rhetoric) that can be measured in text. Similarly, Chong and Druckman (2007) argue that with a few shared standards, such as identifiable issues and attitudes, replicable coding procedures based in existing literature, and available sources can be developed. These techniques yield a series of lenses through which an issue can be understood by leveraging the lexical choices made by media (or other actors) to either knowingly or unknowingly persuade the audience toward a point of view. Framing is almost always associated with identifying a particular vocabulary in a database of texts that can be detected through automated means such as retrieval of entries in a classification dictionary.

Recently, framing scholars have suggested that the term *framing* may have been applied too widely in describing a variety of different media effects under the same theoretical umbrella (see Cacciatore, Scheufele, & Iyengar, 2016; De Vreese, 2005). As suggested by Scheufele and Iyengar (2012), framing scholars should carefully differentiate between measuring the effects of presenting an individual with two equivalent (and, ostensibly, opposing) presentations of information (referred to by Scheufele and Iyengar as "equivalence framing") and manipulation of the content (and, ostensibly, the theme) of communications ("emphasis framing"). This

categorization of framing suggests that narrative structure can also play a formidable role in influencing audience opinion toward a policy problem.

Narrative Policy Framework as a Theoretical Construct

While framing theory focuses on the broad categories, segments, or angles through which a story can be told, narrative construction involves decisions by storytellers that determine the specific characters, plot, causal implications, and policy solutions presented (Stone, 2011). Journalists are taught to tell stories through the experiences of people because audiences care about other human experiences and stories more so than abstract societal issues. Though this carries shades of Iyengar's aforementioned thematic and episodic framing, narratives carry with them a deep personalization of events. Stone (2011) describes all meaningful communication as packaged in the form of a story, which helps create social meaning from events or actions. Hajer (1993) also argues that narratives are stories constructed to include a beginning, middle, and end, involving some sort of transformation. These stories include heroes, victims, and villains, all of whom fulfill a basic purpose of engendering an emotive response from the reader.

Postpositivist scholars have traditionally guarded the domain of narrative analysis, sometimes arguing against hypothesis testing and falsifiable analyses of narratives (Fischer, 2003), in part due to the risk of losing the depth of content and context when scholars focus on measurement and hypothesis testing. Work by Hajer (1995), Fischer and Forester (1993), and Radaelli (2000, 2012) challenge the ability of empirical work to soundly incorporate narratives in a nonsuperficial and generalizable way. However, the NPF has achieved success at doing just this by placing objectivity at the forefront of study, while still accepting that there is variability in meaning in policy discourse (M. D. Jones, Shanahan, & McBeth, 2014, p. 4).

The NPF was developed from the point of view that narratives are underappreciated and underused in policy research, but that they hold great potential for helping us understand certain dynamics within the policy process such as actor beliefs, coalition formation, and advocacy strategies, among others (M. D. Jones, 2010, 2013; M. D. Jones & Jenkins-Smith, 2009; M. D. Jones & McBeth, 2010; McBeth & Shanahan, 2004; McBeth, Shanahan, Arnell, & Hathaway, 2007; Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2011; Shanahan, Jones, McBeth, & Lane, 2013; Shanahan, McBeth, et al., 2011). Narratives are how we communicate about the world around us, how we organize complex sets of facts, and how we persuade one another. Narratives are one type of the broader set of human communication activities, an important variable in understanding policy processes, and a piece of the policy puzzle that had largely been overlooked in policy research until relatively recently.

In its most current articulation, the NPF is conceived according to both its *form* and its *content* (to be discussed below) (M. D. Jones et al., 2014). According to the conceptual ideas that *form* encompasses, narratives contain a setting, characters (heroes, villains, and victims), a plot, and the moral of the story. This does not mean that *every* narrative contains all of these elements, but only that a fully constructed narrative would do so. Importantly for incorporating narratives into policy research, a "policy narrative" identifies the moral of the story as a policy solution to a problem. To specify a policy narrative, recent scholarship indicates that such a

narrative would *at least* contain one character and a reference to a policy issue (M. D. Jones et al., 2014; McBeth, Jones, & Shanahan, 2014; Shanahan et al., 2013).

The NPF is structured and conceived in such a way as to identify ways in which the Framework can be applied to analyses of micro-, meso-, and macro-level policy scales (M. D. Jones et al., 2014). At the micro level, investigators are focused on individual-level influences on and of the policy process such as public opinion formation through trust in narrators, the power of characters, and similar ideas. At the meso level, scholars focus on coalition and group dynamics within the process by analyzing coalition strategies, beliefs, policy learning, and similar foci. Finally, macro-level studies (yet to be as developed or explored as the other two levels) focus on institutions and broader societal or cultural forces that influence the policy process.

The Narrative Policy Framework as an Empirical Tool

As acknowledged in the *Science of Stories* (M. D. Jones et al., 2014), policy narratives may include far more elements that the minimal essentials listed above. The *content* of policy narratives as articulated in the NPF focuses on operationalizing what can be studied and measured by applying the NPF ideas and methods. *The Science of Stories* suggests that two primary areas of analysis are likely to be the focus of NPF studies: policy beliefs of actors (individually or as members of coalitions or formal organizations) and strategies of actors and coalitions in the policy process. These core focal areas are closely linked to the hypotheses that will be presented in Table 2, and are typically measured and analyzed using the following procedures.

Policy narratives are predicated on a culturally subjective understanding of linguistic usage and (often) culturally specific or emotionally laden tropes. While still intersubjective, these "human" elements of storytelling are more interpretive and difficult to associate with specific vocabulary as frames have been. As such, they almost always have to be identified through manual coding by individuals who have a pre-set shared understanding of how these devices will be used in text (pretesting and inter-coder reliability testing are the primary tools for establishing such an understanding), unlike framing analysis, which is typically conducted using auto-coding procedures from an established dictionary. Although the researcher is still required to make decisions about appropriateness and applicability of content to the pre-established lexical dictionary frequently used in framing studies, as well as the mode of text extraction (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013), incorporating the study of framing into the NPF opens up both manual and automated techniques (and both quantitative and qualitative approaches) in identification and analysis.

As with much policy scholarship, the NPF tends to treat media as interchangeable. NPF scholarship uses narratives collected from various media—speeches, news media, newsletters, and press releases to analyze policy dynamics (McBeth et al., 2005; McBeth, Shanahan, Tigert, Hathaway, & Sampson, 2010; Shanahan et al., 2013; Shanahan, McBeth, et al., 2011). Media, of course, are not the same, and as such they have different influences on the audiences they reach. Similarly, coalitions of strategic policy actors are likely to use differing narratives depending on the media through which they are communicating. Not only is a nuanced view

of media important to understanding narratives themselves, but certainly to understanding narrative strategy among coalitions. We can think of media in three important ways, described in more detail above, all of which contribute to a more robust appreciation of how we might incorporate media analysis into policy scholarship: (1) as a means of communication, (2) as actors within a policy subsystem, and (3) as nested set of professional organizations. Table 1 illustrates examples of each of these categorizations.

An NPF Framework for Framing

While the NPF has built up a notable amount of scholarship on the premise that communication activities such as narrative construction should be incorporated into our consideration of policy-relevant variables for analysis, it makes no explicit case for integrating framing into narrative policy analysis. There is, however, cause to think this is an area ripe for discussion and integration as we have argued in this paper. McBeth and Shanahan (2004) found that in policy conflicts, stakeholders frame policy conflicts to market policies in order to influence citizens and policy outcomes, consistent with the NPF focus on policy advocacy strategies. Similar to the framing literature, the authors argue that media are active marketers of public opinion and that they report conflict in a policy story and market policy values by including or excluding certain story elements. The NPF scholarship also describes conflict as hinging on how citizens perceive issues and how those issues affect them personally (McBeth, Lybecker, & Garner, 2010); these findings inherently activate discussion of roles of both narratives and framing in the media.

Some policy scholars have employed the use of framing language, often as a proxy for understanding how narratives operate in policy processes. While these two theoretical concepts are distinct, they both provide insight into the importance of communication in policy processes. Framing has been a primary vehicle for conducting research on these topics for a great many scholars. Framing can be analyzed using the NPF not only to understand the construction of narratives, but also to understand coalition strategy and the role of media actors. If groups of policy actors choose to frame issues in a certain manner in order to gain media coverage or persuade a particular audience, and if media are simply acting as conduits of information (Shanahan et al., 2008), then all media coverage of that coalition's narrative will likely be similar or use similar frames (Nie, 2003). However, if journalists are actively framing stories, acting not as conduits but as contributors, or a "source of a particular policy preference" (Shanahan et al., 2008, p. 116), then media coverage and narratives may differ among outlets. In other words, framing can serve as a tool to identify, understand the motivations of, and ascertain the beliefs of policy participants across an issue (Pralle, 2006). We see a similar sort of analysis in Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, in the treatment of policy images (Baumgartner & Jones, 2009; Wolfe, 2012).

It is essential to clarify that framing and narratives are not the same thing, nor are they interchangeable terms. They are, however, closely linked. While framing is the act of making aspects of a story more salient in a way that may imply a problem definition or a prescriptive outcome (per Entman's [1993] earlier-stated

Table 1. Media as a Means of Communication, Actors, and Nested System

Means of Communication	Media Actors	Nested System
Technical Platform	*News Actors*	*Level of Influence and Coverage*
Newspapers	Editors	Prestige
Magazines	Reporters	National
Television	Photojournalists	Regional
Radio	Producers	State
Internet	Bloggers	Local
Mobile	Columnists	Hyperlocal
Genre	*Advocacy Actors*	*Ownership or Funding Structure*[a]
News	Lobbyists	Conglomerates
Entertainment	Corporations	Partnerships
Advocacy	Pundits	Public
Paid advertising	NGOs	Individually owned
Direct communication	Political actors	Foundation funded

[a]Here, the ownership structure examples pertain to a democratic system wherein government does not run media, but clearly this analysis could be expanded to include those instances in which state-controlled media are dominant actors within the media and policy processes.

definition), a narrative is an exercise in storytelling that presents the reader with a far more explicit set of moral evaluations and recommendations for treatment (per Jones and McBeth's [2010] definition).

Understanding the way in which media use framing and narratives either in a purposive or ad hoc manner can move policy scholarship forward to understand a significantly understudied element of the framework: strategy (Shanahan, Jones, et al., 2011). Through reframing issues, coalitions in support of policy change can mobilize and locate friendly venues for their arguments (akin to the venue shopping arguments proposed by Baumgartner and Jones), making policy change more likely. The NPF is situated to include framing as part of the analysis of narratives in policy process research. This not only would help to further refine our understanding of the power and role of narratives in the policy process, but would also help understand policy roles of media and policy coalition strategy.

The argument outlined above suggests that narratives are individualized stories, many of which could produce a longer-standing frame. Even though the relationship between the two is not yet fully defined, there is cause to interpret narratives as the root of framing or the tools with which frames can be built. Jones and Song (2014) present an alternative map of these constructs, suggesting that narratives are a less abstract form of frames, or what Berinsky and Kinder (2006) call "story frames." While the scale question does not move the narrative/framing scholarship forward in a meaningful way, their argument about specificity is important. The NPF successfully articulates both the theoretical postulates as well as the specific analytical tools for employing the Framework in policy scholarship. We have attempted to articulate these same categories in our discussion of framing.

Jones et al. (2014) propose NPF hypotheses that can provide scholars with a roadmap to understanding meso-level concepts such as the stability of coalitions and their beliefs (H3 and H5), policy learning and outcomes (H6), the role of public opinion leading to coalition change (H7 and H8), interactions between public opinion and coalition composition and strategy (H7, H8, and H9), and how coalitions strategically use narratives to describe themselves and their opponents and influence policy outcomes (H1, H2, and H4). Table 2 presents the hypotheses as

Table 2. Current and Proposed Hypotheses in the Narrative Policy Framework

Original NPF Hypotheses (M. D. Jones et al., 2014)	Proposed Additional NPF Hypotheses
H1: Scope of Conflict. Groups or individuals who are portraying themselves as losing on a policy issue will use narrative elements to expand the policy issue to increase the size of their coalition. *H2: Scope of Conflict. Groups or individuals who are portraying themselves as winning on a policy issue will use narrative elements to contain the policy issue to maintain the coalitional status quo.* *H3: Narrative Strategy: Groups will heresthetically employ policy narratives to manipulate the composition of political coalitions for their strategic benefit.* *H4: The Devil Shift. Higher incidence of the devil shift in policy subsystems is associated with policy intractability.* *H5: Coalition Glue. Advocacy coalitions with policy narratives that contain higher levels of coalitional glue (coalition stability, strength, and intra-coalition cohesion) will more likely influence policy outcomes.* *H6: Policy Learning. Variation in policy narrative elements helps explain policy learning, policy change, and policy outcomes.* *H7: Exogenous Public Opinion. When exogenous public opinion is congruent with a coalition's preferred policy outcomes, coalitions will offer policy narratives that seek to contain the subsystem coalition (by maintaining the status quo membership of the coalition).* *H8: Endogenous Public Opinion. When endogenous public opinion shocks are incongruent with a coalition's preferred policy outcome, coalitions will offer policy narratives that seek to expand the subsystem coalition.* *H9: Media. The media can be a contributor to advocacy coalitions.*	*H10: Role of Media Actors Within Subsystems. Media acting as conduits of policy information will show stability of policy narratives across media outlets, while media acting as contributors to policy debates will show a greater degree of variation in narrative structure and framing across media outlets.* *H11: Role of Narrative Elements in Policy Communication. Coalitions using rhetorical narrative strategies (character-driven plots, melodramatic narratives, stories of decline, metaphors, etc.) to a greater degree are more likely to prevail in policy debates than those using technical or scientific communication.* *H12: Role of Framing. Coalitions using thematic framing of policy problems are more likely to sway public opinion in favor of their articulated problem and solution than coalitions that employ episodic frames or other human-interest frames, leading to higher success passing their proposed solutions.* *H13: Role of Story Frames. Coalitions using story frames consistent with specific audience beliefs, but varying across media platforms, will influence policy outcomes towards their policy preference.*

currently articulated in the meso-level[3] NPF in the left column. The NPF may also help policy scholars understand the role of media actors within policy subsystems, the strategies that coalitions employ through media, and the influence of framing on policy outcomes. Table 2 therefore also presents four additional proposed hypotheses, based on the arguments outlined throughout this paper.

The thread that connects these hypotheses is that they all employ measurements of narratives to help analyze aspects of media's influence on policy change through narratives and framing. By broadening the NPF to include hypotheses related to the role of media and framing in the policy process, the framework can become the lens through which scholars are able to analyze these distinct, but complementary variables. When attempting to understand whether media are acting as contributors or conduits (Shanahan et al., 2008) to policy debates, understanding the nuances of media actors and the effects that their narrative and framing strategies may have on policy outcomes is especially important. Additionally, by systematically analyzing the use of framing and narrative construction within policy debates, scholars can begin to understand how the decisions that media actors make in selecting stories, framing those stories, and constructing narratives matter to policy outcomes.

Providing scholars with additional hypotheses through which we can expand our collective understanding of the dynamics within policy subsystems and coalitions of policy actors provides a necessary next step in the conversation that constitutes theory building. Not only will these hypotheses contribute to our examination of concepts within the NPF, but they can also contribute to policy process scholarship more

broadly, wherein scholars have often ignored or insufficiently articulated concepts related to media, narrative strategy, and framing as they relate to policy processes.

The Keystone Pipeline: A Cross-National NPF Media Analysis

To support the theoretical claims made above, this section provides a brief example of the proposed hypotheses applied to the Keystone Pipeline debate. News media coverage from U.S. and Canadian news sources were gathered from January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014. The content analysis contains information from four national print news sources—*The Globe and Mail* and *National Post* in Canada, and the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* in the United States, and four regional/local sources—*The Calgary Herald* and *The Hamilton Spectator* (Canada), as well as *The Bismarck Tribune* and *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (United States). Ideological diversity is represented by right-of-center (*National Post* and *Washington Post*) and left-of-center (*The Globe* and the *NYT*) papers, while geographic diversity is represented both by having national and local papers, but also by having two local papers on or close to the pipeline route (*The Herald* and *The Tribune*) and two local papers at a distance from the route (*The Spectator* and *The Post-Gazette*), representing high and low stakes communities, respectively.

The frames under investigation in this study have been selected as the four most frequently used frames from a manual read of the entire article database ($N = 669$). Here, we operationalize frames as overarching storylines selected by media to explain the core topic (the Keystone Pipeline) to readers in a way that promotes particular evaluations of the pipeline or assessments of its potential utility or harm. These frames are: employment, environment, safety, and trade. Frames are detected in articles through manual coding of keywords and key phrases, the content analysis approach extracts "framed" sentences from articles. A sentence qualifies as framed if it mentions the pipeline/pipeline project and also references it in terms of one of the four frames above. Stories are coded for whether they are episodic, thematic, balanced (e.g., elements of both episodic and thematic frames), or neither. Narrative elements are also captured by manual coding of news stories. Each article is coded for the presence or absence of the primary characters presented in the NPF: heroes, villains, and victims. Two additional narrative elements, blame and science, are also coded in this analysis. Blame is a potentially important strategy for constructing intentional villain characters or characterizing political opponents. The use of science is a simple measure of whether a narrative is more or less focused on the human or technical nature of the problem in question. These elements are coded individually and then aggregated to form a narrativity index from 0 to 5.[4] We also capture whether a "moral of the story" or policy solution was mentioned in the article. Finally, we code for the presence of certain actor types: government, advocacy groups, industry, and the public.

Recall the new hypotheses proposed in Table 2. In this brief empirical examination, we test H10 (Role of Media Actors Within Subsystems), H11 (Role of Narrative Elements in Policy Communication), and H12 and H13 (Role of Framing). Our expectations are that media acting as conduits of policy information will show stability of policy narratives across media outlets, while media acting as contributors to policy debates will show a greater degree of variation in narrative structure and

framing across media outlets (H10) and coalitions using rhetorical narrative strategies (character-driven plots, melodramatic narratives, stories of decline, metaphors, and so forth) will prevail in policy debates to a greater extent than those using technical or scientific communication (H11 and H12).

In this analysis of Keystone Pipeline narratives, we explore the stability of narrative construction across media outlets. While multiple narrative elements may serve as foci for empirical analysis, one narrative component of particular interest to scholars may be the use of blame in narratives. The use of blame indicates that policy actors are attempting to place blame for a policy problem on another actor, often likely to be the opposing coalition (measured in this analysis by coding for accusations of purposeful actions and intended consequences, as per Stone [2011]). Previous NPF studies indicate that blame assignment is used more often by actors who support the winning side of a policy debate and therefore may be connected to policy success (Crow & Berggren, 2014). Table 3 presents data on the use of blame in narratives compared with the ideology of the media outlet and whether the newspaper is proximate or not proximate to the proposed pipeline route.[5]

This analysis does not show significant variation in ideological positions as it relates to the use of blame in Keystone Pipeline coverage. However, we do see newspapers located on the pipeline route using significantly less blame than the nonproximate outlets. This type of analysis of media narratives, when scaled up, can be compared to (1) local public opinion and (2) policy outcomes to understand both H10 (the role of media as conduits or contributors) and H11 (the use of narrative elements to influence policy outcomes and whether narrative elements are strategically and effectively employed by policy actors) in future studies.

In order to compare the data above to understand how media ideology matters to story framing, we examine the relationship between the four dominant frames identified in the database of articles and the (1) ideology of the newspaper and (2) proximity to the proposed pipeline. Table 4 presents these findings.

This analysis allows us to understand variation in media coverage (i.e., the conduit versus contributor role of media outlets proposed in H9 and H10). Table 4 indicates that environmental frames are the most common across all media outlets, regardless of ideology or proximity to the pipeline. However, there are no important differences between the frames used by ideologically left or right newspapers in either national context. Proximate newspapers to the pipeline, however, more often use environmental, trade, and safety frames than nonproximate newspapers. This may be a result of newspapers focusing on issues with local impact. However, again when paired with public opinion data or policy outcomes, an analysis such as this one can become a tool for scholars to understand the role that media play in policy debates as well as the effectiveness and strategic use of frames in policy discourse. This analysis can also help us investigate H12 and H13 and the role of framing—particularly the focus on episodic or other human-interest frames. The focus on local issues by proximate newspapers may serve a similar role as episodic framing, wherein readers are unaware of the broader societal context of the issue under discussion. This approach may be used strategically by policy actors or media to influence policy outcomes toward their favored goals.

Figure 1 further analyzes narrative elements (H11) to determine if there are relevant differences between the use of narrative elements and the use of the four

Table 3. Use of Blame in News Media and Direct Communication Outlets

		No Use of Blame in Narrative	Use of Blame in Narrative	Total
Media ideology	Left	145 (51%)	30 (59%)	175 (52%)
	Right	139 (49%)	21 (41%)	160 (48%)
	Total	284 (100%)	51 (100%)	335 (100%)
Media geography*	Not on pipeline route	43 (15%)	15 (30%)	58 (17%)
	On pipeline route	241 (85%)	35 (70%)	276 (83%)
	Total	284 (100%)	50 (100%)	334 (100%)

*Chi-square: 6.54, $p < .01$

Table 4. Framing by Source

		No Frame	Employment	Environment	Safety	Trade
Ideology of national sources	Left	32 (68%)	7 (41%)	70 (49%)	6 (43%)	60 (53%)
	Right	15 (32%)	10 (59%)	74 (51%)	8 (57%)	53 (47%)
	Total	47 (100%)	17 (100%)	144 (100%)	14 (100%)	113 (100%)
Regional sources*	Not on pipeline route	3 (6%)	9 (41%)	24 (16%)	7 (25%)	15 (18%)
	On pipeline route	47 (94%)	13 (59%)	128 (84%)	21 (75%)	67 (82%)
	Total	50 (100%)	22 (100%)	152 (100%)	28 (100%)	82 (100%)

*Chi-square: 14.45, $p < .01$

dominant frames analyzed in the Keystone Pipeline media coverage. Figure 1 illustrates a potentially important association between the use of the "employment" frame and the inclusion of villains in the articles, the "environment" frame and the inclusion of science-related information, and the "safety" frame with the use of blame narrative elements. Again here, this analysis also allows us to understand the role of frames further (H12) and to connect them with central components of policy narratives. Here we see that the environment frame is used when paired with less human-interest–focused information, thereby potentially focusing to a greater extent on the societal implications of the Keystone Pipeline rather than local or individual-level foci. Future studies could compare such data with policy outcomes to understand whether science-focused frames and lower levels of narrativity are, in fact, connected to lower levels of policy success (H11 and H12).

Table 5 presents correlation results in order to understand significant associations between narrative elements in the articles analyzed. This analysis shows that articles using the blame narrative component also use significantly more victim components than other stories ($r = 0.51$, $p < .001$) and that blame and villain narrative components are also significantly correlated ($r = 0.22$, $p < .001$). Additionally, the use of science in storytelling is negatively or not correlated with the use of character types, consistent with the lower levels of narrativity expected in such stories. The correlation between the government and villain components is noteworthy as this suggests that concepts such as regulation and legality are brought in to counter villain narratives. Finally, we also observe that hero and science narrative elements are negatively correlated ($r = -0.11$, $p < .005$), which points to an interesting disassociation between more passion-driven narrative elements (e.g., the hero) and the more institutionalized or regulated elements (e.g., the scientific community). This finding suggests that narrative elements may play out not only differently, but also separately, depending on the framing of the article. These findings also support our argument that when framing and narrative analyses are combined, scholars can develop a greater understanding of

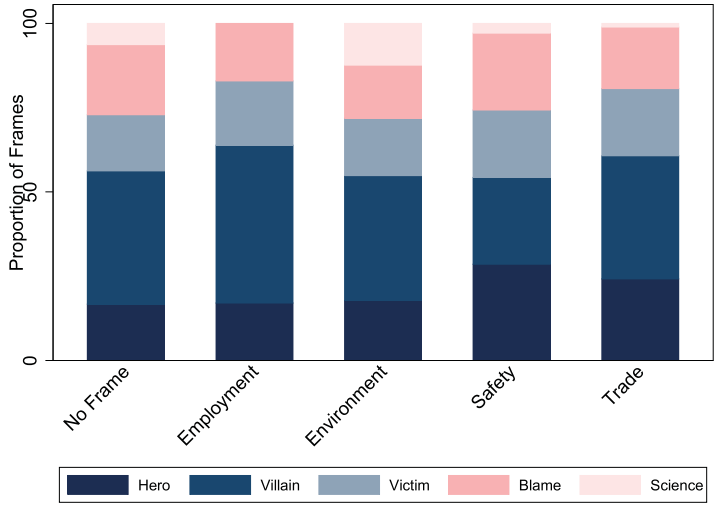

Figure 1. Narrative Element by Frame

the complex, connected, and complementary nature of frames and narratives that situate policy debates to the public. They also demonstrate how media can (and should) be positioned in the study of narratives and framing not only as a source of descriptive information about public policy, but as a notable actor with the means to substantially change the public's understanding of the policy space.

Future Directions for Narrative and Framing Analysis in Policy Scholarship

The NPF is an important tool for analyzing policy processes, understanding beliefs of actors, and connecting these to actor or coalition behavior. With any new theoretical development, there is a tension between parsimony and the desire to accommodate new perspectives and contributions. This paper strives to respect the contributions of the NPF and also encourage the adaptation of the framework to include those elements that could be the most useful and complementary to the current structure—those related to the role of media as actors in the policy process and framing of policy issues through storytelling.

The current NPF structure ignores many of the differences among media organizations, platforms, and actors, thereby ignoring the relationship among media, coalitions, and messages. By describing these actors above, we hope to articulate a more systematic analytical approach to media as actors within the policy process. Additionally, by clarifying concepts related to the role of framing in the policy process we have attempted to connect framing and narrative traditions by articulating: (1) framing both as a theoretical construct and an empirical tool, by discussing the tools necessary to conduct framing research in policy scholarship, (2) presenting the ways in which framing and the NPF can be complementary and contribute holistically to a better understanding of the policy process, and (3) present specific hypotheses for further analysis using the key elements outlined herein.

The NPF gives us one approach to begin a systematic, well-articulated, and robust research agenda related to understanding the role of media and communication in

Table 5. Narrative Elements Correlations

	Hero	Villain	Victim	Blame	Science	State	Advocacy	Industry
Villain	−0.088	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	(0.023)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Victim	−0.047	**0.180**	—	—	—	—	—	—
	(0.223)	**(0.000)**	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blame	−0.073	**0.221**	**0.507**	—	—	—	—	—
	(0.058)	**(0.000)**	**(0.000)**	—	—	—	—	—
Science	**−0.113**	0.026	0.072	0.005	—	—	—	—
	(0.003)	(0.510)	(0.064)	(0.903)	—	—	—	—
State	−0.054	**0.259**	0.005	0.029	0.025	—	—	—
	(0.167)	**(0.000)**	(0.892)	(0.459)	(0.522)	—	—	—
Advocacy	−0.073	0.039	0.045	0.073	**0.122**	0.045	—	—
	(0.059)	(0.319)	(0.246)	(0.059)	**(0.002)**	(0.250)	—	—
Industry	0.064	−0.087	0.059	0.002	−0.048	**−0.145**	**0.095**	—
	(0.100)	(0.024)	(0.125)	(0.970)	(0.219)	**(0.000)**	**(0.014)**	—
Public	−0.033	0.003	0.000	−0.013	−0.026	−0.074	−0.018	0.043
	(0.391)	(0.946)	(0.998)	(0.740)	(0.511)	(0.056)	(0.650)	(0.265)

Significance listed in parentheses. Bold indicates significant correlations.

policy making. We can use these tools to also analyze the roles that media play as actors in coalitions and outside of coalitions, the strategies employed by coalitions, and which narratives and frames are more effective in advancing policy change. These theoretical concepts and empirical analyses allow us to move closer to a complete understanding of "knowledge *of* the policy process; knowledge *in* the process," as Lasswell (1970) conceived. The NPF is an important step forward in attempting to deepen our understanding of policy processes and actor behavior through the measurement of narratives, but this paper proposes that NPF scholars have sold their framework short—that the NPF has the potential for even greater contributions to public policy research by integrating concepts presented in the framing tradition.

The purpose of this analysis and theoretical argument was to advance the NPF and the role of framing and media in the framework. Because of our exclusive focus on the role of media and framing, this was not a full investigation of policy change. In future work, we encourage scholars to take the ideas advanced here and combine them with data from coalitions, public opinion, and policy outcomes in order to analyze in a robust manner the influences of media actors and frames on policy outcomes. Additionally, the additional hypotheses presented here are not the only areas where the NPF can help us understand the policy process more systematically. The communication strategies (narratives, frames, media actors as strategic policy resources) used by policy actors can be analyzed using the NPF, along with their strategic use of media to influence policy (by targeting specific audiences through certain strategies, for example). The contributions that the NPF makes to our understanding of policy narratives and policy outcomes is important, but scholars should not hesitate to shape it to be a framework that can help us explore these multiple facets of policy narratives and other policy influences.

Notes

1 We recognize that framing, even according to Entman (1993), is a "scattered conceptualization" that has come under routine investigation for the variety of interpretations that exist in the political communications and public policy literature (see De Vreese [2005], Matthes [2011], and Scheufele [1999], for example).
2 Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines the term as: both the individuals who comprise the media as well as the actual means of communication.
3 We focus on meso-level analyses and ideas here due to the role that media as actors and their outputs play in coalitions, organizations, and policy processes as we have articulated throughout this paper. Certainly one could also advance hypotheses related to framing and narratives according to the micro level, which is an area in need of exploration and development. The use of framing ideas to develop the micro level can be effectively explored in individual opinion formation or individual mobilization through framing strategies by advocacy groups, for example.
4 "Narrativity" is an index variable that sums the total number of narrative elements, including the use of heroes, villains, victims, blame, and science (high narrativity = 3–5; low narrativity = 0–2). Similarly, the use of thematic or episodic framing in narrative construction looked at through the lens of narrativity.
5 We selected two of the closest major cities to the pipeline and to the United States–Canada border that were noted to be potential economic beneficiaries from the building of the Keystone pipeline. These cities and their newspapers are defined as the "proximate" cities or newspapers in this analysis.

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