Critical discourse analysis of a 75,000-word corpus of newspaper articles, editorials, and letters to the editor reveals the presence of a cosmopolitan worldview-frame and its effects on representations of gun owners in the United States. This cosmopolitan worldview, which includes cultural frames of reliance on others, specialization, risk avoidance, and government responsibility for risk reduction, results in the marginalization of gun owners and the silencing of frames and information that would counter it. This study demonstrates that the frames news media adopt in covering contentious social issues can not only silence participants in public debate but hamper efforts to find common ground on those issues. Socially responsible news media should instead explore and report on the variety of frames in play regarding a range of social issues in an effort to educate their audiences and, in so doing, promote public debate.

Representing Gun Owners

Frame Identification as Social Responsibility in News Media Discourse

DOUGLAS DOWNS
University of Utah

***In* Common Knowledge: News and the Construction of Political Meaning**, Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992) argued that media audiences do not passively download information from some mass media pipeline. Instead, audiences' construction of opinion is an active and rich process blending experience and interest, peer interaction, and information from multiple media sources. Audiences themselves act as journalists, directing attention, finding and evaluating sources,

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comparing and connecting data, and inferring meaning. To meet audiences' needs, the authors conclude, a socially responsible media devoted to increasing tolerance and pluralism should offer multiple perspectives on the history and implications of, and solutions to, issues—particularly those involving political, agenda-driven debate. Journalists "have a responsibility to recognize and augment the capacity of an audience to learn politically relevant information and to make thoughtful political judgements" (p. 120). However, although they argued for an ideal, Neuman et al. (1992) began with realism: "Somehow, the system of political communication in the United States appears to be falling far short of its potential" (p. xv).

Analysis of discourse on gun policy, a particularly divisive social issue, in print news, editorials, and reader letters suggests that one reason news media fall short is the adoption of a "cosmopolitan" frame that silences conflicting frames—in this case, those of owners of personal firearms (handguns, shotguns, and rifles). Although some studies have suggested media bias in coverage of such issues, few have investigated the effects of frames adopted by journalists or audiences.[1] Yet, given that frames not only help individuals organize information but also help them determine which information is important and how information should be interpreted, studying the effects of frames on news coverage is vital. This is particularly the case if, as Neuman et al. (1992) suggested, the media have a social responsibility to inform and educate the public to the greatest extent possible on significant social issues. Because frames in part determine how fully informed the audience becomes—by determining what is silenced or omitted from public debate—consciousness of how issues are framed in news coverage is central to the socially responsible news media Neuman et al. envisioned.

I make that case here by reviewing frame theory, theorizing the cosmopolitan frame, and linking frame theory to news coverage. I then focus on the gun policy debate, contextualizing and summarizing positions that those who adopt a cosmopolitan frame might take on that debate. Finally, I analyze discourse on gun owners contained in a 75,000-word corpus of newspaper stories, editorials, and letters to the editor, correlating the marginalization of gun owners and the silencing of noncosmopolitan perspectives on gun ownership, demonstrated by the corpus, with the operation of a cosmopolitan frame that also appears in the corpus.

A COSMOPOLITAN FRAME AND NEWS COVERAGE

Frame Theory

Even after more than 25 years, frame theory remains less than unified and clear-cut. In part because it taps psychology, anthropology, linguistics, artificial intelligence, sociology, reading theory, political theory, critical theory, and even fine arts, few agree on the precise meaning of the term *frame* (and its cousins *script* and *schema*), but fewer still are reticent to invoke it. For our purposes, frames are sets of concepts that help an individual organize and interpret language and experience. They are essential for understanding and producing culturally situated and motivated discourse. Although they operate at all levels of discourse, the type of frame used here is van Dijk's (1980) superstructure or Donati's (1992) deep structural discourse. Such frames were described by Tannen (1993) as "expectations about the world" that shape one's perceptions "to the model of the world provided by them" (p. 21). Thus, these frames are also similar to "conceptual metaphors" as described by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Eubanks (1999). Fisher's (1997) notion of "cultural frames" most closely approaches my use of the term. She suggested four features common to cultural frames:

1. They are part of the discourse which develops in any given culture, and people learn these frames as they learn to competently participate in that culture.
2. They highlight some aspects of an event or issue to which people apply a frame, while hiding others.
3. They organize experiences, values, and beliefs of all members of a culture in a systematic and coherent way.
4. They are accessible and useful to people in the same culture who ascribe to a wide array of ideologies. (para. 4.28)

Examples of such frames would be "Everyone deserves an equal chance" or "Some institutions and tasks are not for everybody," which operate, for instance, in debates over gender policies in the U.S. military (para. 5.15). Cultural frames are smaller than cultures and larger than ideologies—which, Fisher said, do not generate frames (para. 5.1, 5.2). She argued, with Donati (1992), that any part of the frame that appears in a text can "suggest" the whole frame. Thus, cultural frames can be not only metaphoric but also metonymic (para. 5.4).

Frames are constructed and adopted, Fisher (1997) argued, socially and culturally rather than through individual agency. Their use, she stated,

> does not necessarily reflect the desire or unconstrained choice of people within a given culture. . . . At the same time, I do not exonerate individuals or social groups within any social system of responsibility for the array of cultural frames on offer in that society's "tool kit" at any one time. (para. 5.9, 5.11)

Whereas most people and social groups can only use existing frames, Fisher asserted that "exceptional individuals and groups" will be able to modify and even create cultural frames (para. 5.11). Still, this sort of frame differs from the "collective action frame" invoked by Gamson (1995) in his work on activism and the media. Gamson focused on active construction of frames in service of public relations. As opposed to contrived frames, those in question here are unconsciously constructed and culturally reproduced. (Of course, no frame is "natural," and frames cannot be essentialized.)

This concept of cultural frame is not neat or precise. Cultural frame analysis, it seems, must admit two areas of theoretical uncertainty: (a) the question of what level a cultural frame works at and, more broadly, (b) the question of how to identify frames clearly.[2] No amount of linguistic footwork can abrogate the remaining fuzziness regarding the level at which a cultural frame might operate. If, as Tannen (1993) did, we think of a frame as "expectations about the world," it might be extremely general, gathering a number of the cultural frames that Fisher (1997) used as examples (e.g., "everyone deserves an equal chance") to create a sort of *uber*-frame or worldview. As to how we determine what is or is not a frame, frame theory is even less developed. Research on cultural frames, Fisher warned, has ignored "the question of how social scientists might test the reliability and validity of frames" (para. 3.6). Although my analysis will not solve those problems, it may help to note that frame analysis has and should have an ethnographic echo: Researchers bear the burden of supporting personally observed claims, and support is more experiential and contextually contingent than empirical. The worldview frame I sketch next is one that I hope will be accorded general agreement based on readers' experiences. To map a worldview completely would be not only impossible but unusable in its complexity. Instead, frame analyses must balance between rigorous detail

and over-specificity (Fisher, 1997, para. 3.18). And, like ethnographers, we frame analysts must admit the limits of our constructions, especially in the absence of consensus on how to determine what a frame is or how "big" frames are. Careful description may be the only way to convince readers of a frame's existence and validity.

A Cosmopolitan Worldview Frame: A Proposal

In a study of media coverage of gun policy issues, Gest (1992) referred to a cosmopolitan perspective taken by news media: "Critics charge that a disproportionate number of journalists have an antipathy toward guns because they grew up in big-city households where guns were uncommon" (p. 143). That description contains threads that reveal more than a perceived bias on a single issue. *Big-city* entails a strong rural/urban distinction. *Households* entails a class distinction. The contention that "guns were uncommon" entails locality and lifestyle—inner cities need not apply. Extending these distinctions, it seems possible to treat Gest's cosmopolitan perspective as a frame so broad as to constitute a worldview.[3] Whether news media personnel adopt such a worldview is a separate question; first, what is the case for such a worldview?

An uber-frame or worldview would contain a large number of cultural frames, demonstrating the importance of free play or openness among frames. Individuals can somewhat modify frames, adopt multiple frames at once, and even adopt opposing frames. Furthermore, people of many different worldviews might adopt a given frame, as with Fisher's (1997) example of "everyone deserves an equal chance." As Huckin (1999) explained, "Individuals develop countless frames as they go through life, and these frames are interconnected in intricate ways, with some having greater scope than others" (pp. 10-11).

One frame integral to a cosmopolitan worldview values an interactive problem-solving community over independence or self-reliance: "Other people can solve many of my problems or meet my needs better or more conveniently than I can." Such a frame applies, broadly, from car repair to home improvement to food preparation to protection from crime. The more those with time and expertise can solve the problems of people busy with jobs and families, the better. Doing for oneself, on the basis of a self-reliance principle alone, is valued much less than the extra time and peace of mind that come from calling in experts. One might, then, call a repair company to have one's furnace filter replaced, or have a service station check the air

pressure in one's tires, or take the car to the dealership to have a brake lamp changed, or pay a maid service to handle laundry and house-cleaning chores. A reader in a cosmopolitan frame might be wondering, in regard to some of these examples, "What *else* would a person do?" That question is the best sign that a frame is, in fact, in operation—particularly the function of frames that silences or omits information that might engage an alternative frame. In this case, an opposing frame would be a self-help or self-reliance frame. All the problems listed above are well within the ability of average people to solve on their own, and many value self-reliance on principle, no matter how much time it costs or how questionable the results. Notice, though, that not *only* those who adopt a cosmopolitan worldview might pay a mechanic to check their tire pressure and that some who do adopt that worldview might disdain such assistance. Frames are general ways of approaching life, not drummers tightly dictating individual events or decisions.

A frame closely related to the reliance-on-others frame values specialization and expertise: "Certifications are revealing and essential." This is the frame that makes it worthwhile for professionals to earn certifications even if they have 20 years of experience in the field in which they have just been certified; with the certification comes extra business. It is the frame that insists that preschool teachers need certification, supporting the assumption that only educators (not parents, friends, family, peers, or other experts) can be effective teachers. Those who adopt this frame might not put their children in a noncertified daycare and might support eliminating informal daycares altogether. An opposing frame would be a generalist or learn-through-experience frame, one that would count experience or common sense either as certifications themselves or as negating the need for certifications. Regarding the issue of education, it seems likely that the parents of home-schooled children adopt this latter frame rather than the certification frame. Note, too, the economic constraints of this frame: Poor parents may not be able to afford certified daycare and thus are unlikely to adopt a frame that calls for it.

If readers shrink from uncertified daycare operators, it may be because of a related frame of low tolerance for risk, particularly to children: "Unnecessary risk should be avoided, and the fewer unavoidable risks, the better the world." A cosmopolitan worldview sees risk reduction as cardinal: Happiness is, in part, ensuring greater security. Those who adopt this frame would favor, for instance, individual, corporate, and government efforts toward risk reduction:

health risks, developmental risks for children, the risks of job loss or economic failure, and risks to life and property from crime or even terrorism. This frame, too, may seem so natural a perspective as to leave some readers wondering who *wouldn't* avoid unnecessary risk. The most obvious adoption of a different frame is by those who pursue extreme sports, finding the risk more satisfying than the avoidance of it. But others might not adopt the risk-avoidance frame either. One still cannot be a coal miner, for example, and maintain a low tolerance for risk; risk avoidance, like reliance on specialists, is a privilege dependent on class and social status. Another group might simply not be deterred by risk—for example, people who ride horses as a hobby. And, as frames go, one could predominantly be a risk avoider and still take part in extreme sports; one frame does not necessarily block out opposing frames.

A fourth frame integral to a cosmopolitan worldview has to do with suppositions about the role of government in society. Interlocking with the reliance-on-others, specialization-and-certification, and risk-avoidance frames would demand acceptance of a broad role for government in solving societal problems: "Government has a broad role in and primary responsibility for improving societies and the lives of people who live in them." Government agencies bring expertise, and government is the most dedicated and highly funded institution in pursuit of risk reduction. On the Left-Right, liberal-conservative continuum typically used to describe political positions, those who adopt a cosmopolitan worldview probably fall between moderate and liberal, far from radically Left and much further from radically Right.[4] Both Huckin (1999) and Fisher (1997) have asserted that valid frames must offer a means of interpreting the whole of life, not isolated issues or particular problems. A frame must, in other words, be a "habit of mind," a potent algorithm for addressing a variety of problems. A cosmopolitan worldview suggests positions on a variety of social issues (e.g., welfare reform, standardized testing, drug legalization, immigration)—markedly different positions from those advocated by, say, rural Texans.

These frames begin to show who might adopt a cosmopolitan worldview, although they also suggest who cannot or would not adopt it. Those who live in rural areas and the poor who live in inner cities are unlikely to adopt any of the frames described above consistently. The reliance-on-others frame, for instance, with its emphasis on paying others to solve problems, is out of the financial reach of people in lower classes and out of physical reach of people in rural areas.

Broadly, then, users of a cosmopolitan frame must be middle- or upper-class urban or suburban dwellers. More specifically, they are likely white-collar, professional, educated, and materially comfortable; they may be married, single, or living with a partner, with or without children. They probably have above-average disposable income. And some, without doubt, are journalists.

Frames and News Coverage

Huckin (1999) explained the pivotal role frames play in creating texts: One's frame of reference determines which information seems relevant and which does not. Different frames make different information relevant and tend to silence information irrelevant to a given frame. If writer and reader share the same frame, the reader will find such silences in the text difficult to detect. But a reader who adopts a different frame will often detect those silences. News media make decisions about what information is relevant and what is already shared by their audiences. The frames news media adopt, then, in part determine what America does and does not read.[5]

Without question, news media personnel, as humans, see their stories through frames. A press pass does not bypass frames or bring enlightenment of their existence; flawless, frameless objectivity is impossible. Given that, what frames do news media personnel tend to adopt, and to what extent can they balance frames against each other? I noted Gest's (1992) point that "a disproportionate number of journalists . . . grew up in big-city households" (pp. 143-144). From a position rather to the left of Gest, Parenti (1995) described the background and ideological position of news media bosses. "Virtually all the chief executives of mainstream news organizations are drawn from a narrow, high-income segment of the population," he argued, noting that coverage of working-class, non-White, and non-status-quo positions is muted (p. 8). The demographics and vested interests of news personnel are indicators of frames they adopt, and the interests Parenti noted are cosmopolitan. Still, we might hope that a lack of background or perspective would not hinder people and organizations who specialize in developing background and perspective.

The frames news media tend to adopt and relay to audiences, however, are not simply a matter of personal, corporate, or institutional intention. Even if news personnel came from more diverse backgrounds, a cosmopolitan frame might nevertheless drive news coverage for economic reasons. As news media ultimately derive profit

from perceived (by advertisers) audience gratification and identification (ratings or circulation), audiences must perceive in news something of their own perspectives. News media face the unappealing choice of bowing to audience tastes or losing market share, which may mean targeting, if not adopting, the dominant frame of the audience—and large media markets are cosmopolitan. Thus, frames in news coverage are to some extent constrained by what frames audiences will accept. Media watchers celebrated the courage of Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite because they countered dominant frames and reported on McCarthy and on Vietnam as they saw (framed) them. Murrows and Cronkites are rare, however, among today's news media, which seem more often to adopt dominant frames.

ENTERING THE GUN DEBATE

As office shootings follow school shootings in a seemingly accelerating cycle, debate over solutions has increased similarly, and the rift between those who argue for restricting guns and those who argue for accepting them has widened. "Gun-lovers" paint "anti-gunners" as tyrannical, emotional, illogical, and uninformed, whereas "gun-haters" depict "gun nuts" as clannish, irresponsible, incompetent, and selfish. Each questions the other's commitment to freedom, safety, and life: As in Stanley Fish's (1994) analysis of coded language, each side believes that the arguments of the other are "informed by a massive bad faith" (p. 92). Increasingly, Americans, including journalists (Gest, 1992), have little experience with legal uses of guns (e.g., personal protection, hunting, target shooting, collecting) and extensive direct or media contact with their illegal uses (violent crime and murder).

It seems reasonable to predict that those who adopt a cosmopolitan worldview are among those questioning gun ownership. Guns are high-risk objects most people simply do not need. In urban and suburban areas, they are rarely used for purposes other than to kill people. For decades, more than 30,000 people in the United States have died every year from gun suicides, homicides, and accidents; the only consumer product associated with more deaths per year (around 40,000) is the automobile (Violence Policy Center, 2000). International data show a general correlation between the number of guns in a country and its gun-related injuries and deaths. In 1997, there were

nearly 12 times more gun-related deaths among U.S. children younger than 15 than in the 25 other industrialized countries combined (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 1997).[6] Also in 1997, gunshot was the second leading cause of death among Americans 15 to 24 years old (Violence Policy Center, 2000). Although gun-related deaths in the United States have decreased since 1993—22% total and 35% among children (National Center for Health Statistics, 2000a)—the number of guns has increased, and the relation between these trends has yet to be understood. The hard fact remains that people in the United States are almost as likely to be shot to death as to die in a car accident.

Within a cosmopolitan frame, even the legal use of guns for hunting and self-defense involves the unnecessary taking of life. The possible advantages of gun ownership for self-defense are more than offset by the risk that one's children will accidentally or purposefully use guns against themselves or others. Moreover, the average nonexpert citizen will likely only make a criminal situation worse. Better to spend more money—either on security systems or on funding for police—for expert protection from crime. There is even an element of moral questionableness in gun ownership: Given that gun ownership is risky, that there is little need for the average person to own guns, and that guns should only be used by carefully trained experts, gun ownership is not just dangerous but wrong. Thus, in a cosmopolitan worldview, gun-lovers are a subculture to be regulated and defended against, distanced from "mainstream" America.[7]

Studies of News Media Bias in Coverage of Guns

I discussed above the possibility that, as one of their frames of reference, news media adopt a cosmopolitan frame—a claim the corpus analysis that follows tends to support. The use of such a frame would do much to account for claims of an antigun bias in news media. The few rigorous, and fewer scholarly, studies on news media coverage of guns have supported the perception of an antigun slant. (Anecdotal arguments against the perception exist, but no studies have refuted it.) Gest (1992), senior editor at *U.S. News & World Report*, found the statistics to be meager but telling. He cited studies by criminologist Tamryn Etten in 1989—indicating 70% of stories neutral and 30% biased toward gun control—and by the National Rifle Association (NRA) in 1991, which evaluated 45% of coverage as unfavorable against 35% favorable. Notably, Gest saw "omitting of crucial

information," a type of omission Huckin (1999) characterized as "manipulative textual silencing." According to Huckin, such silencing—successful only when readers do not notice it—is extreme backgrounding that arises from personal intention or the "dispersed" intentionality of the context (frame) in which the silence occurs. A 1992 study of media polls by Mauser and Kopel reported problems linked, in part, to bias. Examination of 16 polls used by proponents of gun control found that "sloppy question construction essentially ruined the utility of the polls conducted by 14 of the 16 [polling] organizations" (p. 75). A Missouri poll, which found that "Voters Back Gun Control," actually showed that a majority of respondents would have opposed existing gun laws had they been made aware of them (p. 76). Mauser and Kopel also found some Gallup polls interchanging *vigilantism* and *self-defense*, which are equivalent neither under law nor by connotation. Still, Mauser and Kopel only tenuously demonstrated bias in media polling.

More recent studies of news coverage claim more certain findings. Dickens (2000) conducted a 2-year study of 653 news stories on ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC for the Media Research Center, a conservative media watchdog group. He reported a substantial number of neutral stories, sound-bites, guests, and position on guns (one third to one half of the category measured). But the remainder slanted most often against guns: an anti:pro ratio of 10:1 in total stories, 8:1 in evening news shows, 13:1 in morning news shows, 2:1 in sound-bites, and more than 2:1 in guests. Of particular interest is Dickens's finding that progun themes—use of guns in self-defense and NRA efforts at crime prevention—were barely covered. Yet Dickens's methodology presumes the very bias he finds. His story-angle content-analysis deems stories "slanted" if statements for or against guns run greater than 1.5:1, which is seemingly reasonable. However, his definitions of *for* and *against* are couched in progun rhetoric: One is *for* guns, for example, if one says "gun control would not reduce crime" but *against* them if one says "violent crime occurs because of guns, not criminals." Whereas the study reliably counted the frequency of such statements, then, its finding of slanted coverage was an ideology-driven interpretation not firmly grounded in the data.

Although academic studies of the issue are virtually nonexistent, Patrick (1999/2000) studied the NRA as an example of a popular interest group subjected to negative news coverage. Patrick supported the premise that the NRA consistently receives negative coverage by comparing coverage of five mass-membership interest groups

(American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU], American Association of Retired Persons [AARP], National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP], NRA, and Handgun Control, Inc. [HCI]) along 16 dimensions, including paragraphs of quotes per article, use of appropriate titles of organizational actors, coverage of pseudo-events, joke headlines, personalization, satire, and the use of photographs of organizational actors. The NRA is least likely to be identified by its proper name and most likely to be labeled a *lobby* or *special interest*. Whereas the other groups are actually called *groups (national civil rights group, public interest group)*, more common terms for the NRA include *powerful gun lobby*, *gun organization*, and *most feared lobby*. Fewer stories on the NRA include photographs of its officials, and they were less likely to be identified by title when quoted (20% of the time vs. 60% to 70% for other groups). Patrick concluded, "These data support a conclusion of systematic marginalization of the NRA" (p. 28).

Although columnist Jacoby (2000) argued that Patrick's (1999/2000) findings can be more broadly applied to guns and gun owners in general, no studies have focused specifically on news coverage of gun *owners*. Nor have any studies of news media bias on guns attempted to relate coverage to frames of reference adopted by news media or audiences. The appearance of a cosmopolitan frame in coverage of gun owners and ownership could account not only for any media "bias" but also for the *perception* of such bias. Such an analysis, then, could help transcend politically motivated blame and lead to a better understanding of how news media and their audiences construct positions on controversial social issues such as gun policy.

CORPUS METHODOLOGY

Critical discourse analysis of a 75,000-word corpus drawn from 31 major newspapers does demonstrate the presence of a cosmopolitan frame in news media discourse. Focused on gun owners and thus limited in size and in relation to the overall gun policy debate, the corpus encompasses explicit newspaper discourse on gun owners from October 5, 1999, to April 5, 2000. I used Lexis-Nexis's *General News* database for five searches of U.S. and Canadian newspapers that grossed nearly 700 documents (see Table 1).

The original search, *(gun* or *firearm)* within five words of *owner*, grossed 342 documents. Substituting *(owned* or *user)* for *owner*

Table 1
Search Terms and Number of Documents Retrieved

Term	*n*
1. *(gun* or *firearm)* and within five words *owner*	342
2. *(gun* or *firearm)* and within five words *(owned* or *user)*	43
3. *(gun* or *firearm)* and *(defen!* and not *defendant)*	214
4. *(gun* or *firearm)* and *protect*	94
5. *(gun* or *firearm)* and *home* and *(protection* or *defense)* and *(use* or *shot* or *shoot)*	4
Gross documents	697
Net documents in corpus	190

returned an additional 43. None of these documents, though, dealt with guns used for self-defense or protection. To locate those kinds of stories, I substituted *(defen!* and not *defendant)* for *owned*; the wild-card term returned hits on all words starting with *defen* except the widely used legal term *defendant*. This search grossed 214 documents. Substituting *protect* for the concept of *defense* produced 94 more. Still, these included only 1 article actually recounting the use of a gun in self-defense. I then added Search 5 in Table 1, which was intended to be both broad in specific word choices and narrow in the overall concept searched for. The search produced 4 more documents.

To be included in the corpus, documents had to reference gun owners or users. Those culled used *gun* metaphorically or idiomatically ("under the gun," "stuck to her guns,"), *owner* not relating to a gun owner ("threatened the car's owner with a gun"), derivatives of *protect* or *defend* not relating to gun owners ("protect children from guns," "defend our rights"), sports discourse ("The Cats' owner is gunning for another win to protect their lead"), or referenced other political issues and situations ("defense industry"). After such documents were eliminated from the corpus, 190 documents totaling just more than 75,000 words remained. These included 75 news articles, 28 editorials or columns, 85 letters (in 46 letters columns), and 2 features. The corpus' small size resulted from the narrowness of the "gun owners" topic, limited coverage on that topic, and limits imposed by design. For instance, discourse that referenced gun owners not by name but in effect, as a *shooter*, *enthusiast*, *collector*, or *hunter*, were not in the corpus. My intent was to see specifically how gun "owners" and "users" were characterized.

I assessed these 190 documents qualitatively, using critical discourse analysis to study topics addressed, characterizations of gun owners, presuppositions of the writers, and trends in the discourse.

MUTUAL MARGINALIZATION

The majority of the documents covered the main topics of recent gun policy debate: child safety, owner responsibility, safe storage, and licensing and registration requirements. In 75% of these documents, gun owners are explicitly or implicitly characterized as selfish, incompetent, and irresponsible, caring more about guns than people. Frequently, guns are portrayed as animate, unerring killers usually targeting children. Keeping guns for self-defense is predominately thought to be dangerous. This corpus suggests that gun owners have grounds, then, for their complaint of bias. But the reality is far more complex than many progun commentators believe. Adding texture to this corpus are letters that demonstrate that reporters, editors, and columnists do not marginalize alone. Most letter writers—that is, the readership—marginalize as well, both those against guns and those for them. Whether through explicit reference, connotation, insinuation, or presupposition, marginalization of gun owners is nearly universal.

Marginalization of Gun Owners

This corpus includes many complaints of marginalization. One NRA member wrote in a letter that some "people in the media . . . demonize gun owners at every chance" (Martino, 2000, p. A30). Responding to a column on antigun media bias, another letter writer said, "it comes as no surprise to this gun owner. Our demonization of the gun culture has been going on for a long time" (Krause, 2000, p. A20). An article on a gun-industry trade show noted "a sense of resentment toward . . . the media for perceived attacks on gun . . . owners" and called gun advocates "beleaguered" (Crowder, 2000, p. A7). In an interview, Olympic shooting champion Shari LeGate also remarked on an antigun media bias (Crowder, 1999, p. A42). In all, 15 documents—10 letters and interviewees in 5 stories—referenced this perceived bias (see Table 2).

Of course, as Fish (1994) observed, the United States is no longer a society that explicitly or openly calls portions of its citizenship crazy

Table 2
Trends in Representations of Gun Owners

Representation	Articles	Editorials	Letters	Total
Complaints of media bias	5		10	15
Selfishness of gun owners		2	1	3
Gun rights versus child safety	4	2	2	8
Incompetence of gun owners	3	2	4	9
Ineffectiveness of self-defense with guns	14	9	4	27
Effectiveness of self-defense with guns	3	2	20	25
Responsibility of gun owners	6	8	9	23
Irresponsibility of gun owners	19	26	28	73

(pp. 90-91). Public censure demands that such opinions hide beneath the surface even if most people hold them; thus, it is exceptional when public discourse *explicitly* marginalizes gun owners. Only three times in the corpus are gun owners charged with selfishness, putting guns ahead of people (two columns, one letter), as in Cohen's (2000) column: "[Gun owners] love the guns they know more than the kid they don't" (p. A19). Yet the underlying principle informs much of the gun policy debate, as it does when the debate is framed as gun rights versus child safety (eight times).

So does the idea that gun owners are incompetent and dangerous. Among documents about dangerous guns, child endangerment, and danger to rights, characterizations of owners as dangerous account for more than one third of uses of the root concept *danger*. The idea is also encoded without the word: "Gun owners are responsible for almost as many deaths annually as motorists" ("Why Gun Licensing Works," 2000, p. A16). Owners can show themselves incompetent, like the gun-owning Dear Abby writer ("Novice," 2000) who expressed surprise that a gun might not be unloaded just because its ammunition clip is removed. Abby might want to warn hunters, the writer confided, in case some of them didn't know either (p. B7). Reinken (2000) wrote of a rifle, which had spent months in a police evidence locker, being displayed during a trial. Having pointed it at a juror, the prosecutor worked the gun's action and, to everyone's surprise, a live cartridge fell out. If professionals err, how unskilled must the "casual gun owner" be (p. 28)?

Additional tension develops when gun owners' use of guns for self-defense meets the popular perception that guns do not work for self-defense. Gilchrist (2000), for instance, quoted a widely cited

study that guns in homes are 43 times more likely to kill in crime, accident, or suicide than in self-defense (p. A13). Writers in this corpus also argue that owners are less prepared than criminals to use guns and should turn to police for protection. In all, there are 12 instances of anti-self-defense arguments; adding incompetence/self-endangerment, which goes to the self-defense debate, brings the total to 21. In addition, 4 articles cover accidental shootings with guns meant for protection; and of 4 articles on successful self-defense with guns, 2 imply disfavor. In opposition, writers in 27 documents argue the merits of owning guns for protection. By genre, about half of the articles mention guns as self-defense neutrally (their overall slant was for gun locks), letters are overwhelmingly for self-defense, and columns largely challenge the self-defense use. So while pro-self-defense writers have a voice, the established media throws its weight to the anti-self-defense position. The polarization of self-defense, and universal awareness of the marginalization of the progun side, is best summarized in one gun owner's letter: "A weapon can be a protective tool for my family, not something to be feared" (Lewis, 2000, p. B15).

"Responsible" Gun Owners and Mutual Marginalization

Selfish, incompetent, dangerous, unreasonable on self-defense—one might as well call gun owners irresponsible. That is, in fact, the most frequent characterization of owners in this corpus, sometimes in precisely those terms but often, again, through insinuation and presupposition. The root concept *responsible* applies to gun owners almost 100 times. (The terms *protect* and *defense* also occur that often but usually do not collocate with *owner*.) Its use is sufficiently important and complex to demand close examination. *Responsible* and its variants have several definitions, including "accountability or agency," "duty," and "dependable or reliable." The first meaning connotes *liability* or *fault*: "The owner was held responsible for the shooting." The second meaning can also sometimes connote liability: "Owners of guns have a responsibility to store them safely." The third meaning assesses *character*, connoting not only dependability and reliability but *common sense*, *honesty*, and *morality*: "We should ensure that only responsible people have guns."

In addition, contextualized use, with presupposition, insinuation, and irony, complicates these definitions. *Responsibility* has different

implications in the following sentences, despite their both belonging to the "accountability/liability" definition:

1. "If you take on the responsibility of a gun you'll need some education."
2. "We need ways to make owners take responsibility for their guns."

The conditional *if* and future tense of Sentence 1 tell nothing about the addressee's willingness to be responsible: The statement is neutral in this regard. The owner may or may not get educated, but she knows she should. Sentence 2 is not neutral; it presupposes that the owner is *not* taking responsibility. This presupposition creates censure or blame, and the insinuation that gun owners do not "take responsibility" is a strike against their character. Notice, though, how such readings depend on a presumed context. If Sentence 2 began "If they're not already doing so . . . ," then the negative insinuation of the sentence is largely erased by conditionality. Thus, the "accountability" meaning of *responsible* has two uses: one directed negatively and one directed neutrally or even positively (toward one who has taken responsibility). In the corpus, this negative use is directed at gun owners 37 times. Positive or neutral usage (which conflates with the "duty" meaning of responsibility) relates to gun owners 8 times.

The "dependable" or "reliable" meaning is likewise context-sensitive. Consider the following sentences:

3. "Responsible gun owners know that education is the key to safety."
4. "Owners should be responsible enough to keep their guns locked."

Responsible might be taken as a slur in Sentence 4 but not in 3, because 3 could portray a gun owner being responsible whereas 4 portrays an owner who (probably) has failed to be responsible—the modal *should be* in 4 seems to entail an owner who did not lock his gun and is, thus, *not* responsible. Reinken (2000) conveyed this idea explicitly as "supposedly responsible adults" (p. 23). But as Eubanks (1999) showed, context is crucial to the reading of such "literal contrastive intercourse." One must know what *is* (context) to know what is *not* (pp. 186-187). In the corpus, character is assessed negatively 11 times and positively 15 times.

One other negative use of *responsible*, invoked only by gun proponents, is the cliché *responsible gun owner* (similar to the more clichéd *law-abiding gun owner*), which occurs 10 times. Although it purports to

assert character, the cliché entails the negative presupposition that the normal gun owner is *irresponsible* (*non*-law-abiding). If society presumed that gun owners *were* responsible, the cliché would be redundant, not a character assertion. *Responsible* in these instances thus serves a defensive, dissociative purpose: "I am not like them." Half the time, the writer explicitly asserts that responsible gun owners are in the majority—a doubly defensive statement that acknowledges and attempts to renegotiate the audience's presupposition that gun owners are irresponsible. Likewise, *law-abiding* is used 9 times simply to report status ("has broken no laws"); but 24 times the term speaks to character and is used defensively against the presupposition that many, if not most, gun owners are not law-abiding. (Of these 24, 9 doubly load the term by additionally collocating it with *citizen*, creating a strong character assertion.) Probably the speakers' conscious intentions in these cases are merely to assert character, not to change a presupposition. Still, it is difficult to escape the poststructural notion that discourse shapes intention: Given the cliché's position in culture, it cannot be strictly a character assertion or alignment, because no one will read it as such. In a debate on gun owners' responsibility, these clichés must count as evidence against owners.

To summarize the uses of the *responsible* concept, counting the 15 explicit uses of *irresponsible*, owners are represented as irresponsible 73 times and responsible 23 times (see Table 3). Presumption of irresponsibility is, as noted, consistent with common characterizations of gun-owners: incompetent, selfish, dangerous, and heedless of evidence to that effect. Notably, with the exception of defensive use of *responsible* and *law-abiding* by primarily progun letter writers, the genres are balanced: Letters and editorials each account for about 35% of uses, with news stories taking an additional 25%. Whereas all the genres reflect the 3:1 ratio of irresponsibility:responsibility, letters disproportionately use the self-defensive terms *responsible* and *law-abiding* (22 of 34 times). With more progun letters, it is surprising that the genre still reflects the overall irresponsible/responsible split. But instead of relating gun use that would contravene stereotypes, progun writers devote discourse to denying their opponents' claims, at some level validating those claims. Accepting their opponents' framing of the debate rather than framing it in their own terms makes progun writers complicit in perpetuating the very discourse that marginalizes them.

The corpus reveals, then, not only that a perception of marginalization exists but that *it is mutually affirmed*. Although letters and

Table 3
Uses of the Concept Responsible

Implication	Number of Occurrences	
Negative accountability	37	
Positive accountability		8
Negative character	11	
Positive character		15
Defensive *responsible*	10	
Irresponsible	15	
Total negative occurrences	73	
Total positive occurrences		23

interviews indicate that gun owners know of the perceptions surrounding them, the same discourse shows their refusal to adopt cosmopolitan conceptions of gun ownership. For their part, gun detractors are content to marginalize the "gun culture," isolating gun owners and calling into question their character, intelligence, and reasonableness, in accordance with a cosmopolitan worldview. Gun owners are, from a cosmopolitan worldview, presumed guilty of "endanger[ing] the majority so a minority of Americans can legally own guns" (Reiber, 2000, p. A26).[8] News media are complicit in this marginalization, as the corpus reveals. But are news media generating public opinion or reflecting it? In what they write, journalists seem simply to reflect the widely held cosmopolitan worldview of much of their audience. What journalists and editors *don't* write, however, is a different matter.

TEXTUAL SILENCING AND A COSMOPOLITAN WORLDVIEW

The above analysis demonstrates the presence of the frames that make up a cosmopolitan worldview: risk avoidance, reliance on specialists for protection, and activist government in pursuit of reduction of the risk that gun ownership poses. It seems that the public that adopts this worldview is as responsible for the resulting marginalization of gun owners as are the news media that report on and contribute to that marginalization. One trend revealed by the corpus, however, is clearly the responsibility of journalists and editors:

silencing perspectives on gun ownership that would show it more favorably than do the frames of a cosmopolitan worldview. From outside a cosmopolitan worldview, these silences are dramatic. A gun-culture reader of cosmopolitan-framed discourse may wonder, for instance, at its demand for owner training and its discomfort with guns; gun-culture discourse includes educating children about guns from the time they can walk, so children grow up as comfortable with guns as with clothing.[9] That reader might also note the lack of discussion about recreational uses of firearms: From a cosmopolitan worldview, guns—particularly handguns—target only people.

Diversity Among Gun Owners

I have so far used the monolithic term *gun owners* without describing them. Who are they? How many are they? What do they do with guns? One could think they are a small collection of paranoid people (Crowder [2000, p. A7] calls them "clannish"), fiercely devoted to their guns, who carelessly leave guns lying around so that children can take them to school and shoot people, if the law-abiding owner hasn't already taken the guns to work to blow away the boss, although gun owners are misguided bumblers who couldn't injure anyone but themselves, particularly if their life depended on it. This muddled image arises because news media rarely cover gun owners outside courtrooms, morgues, and protests: 31 major U.S. and Canadian newspapers, over 6 months, out of hundreds of stories on guns, brought to this corpus only two feature articles on gun owners. All news articles relating to owners focus on gun legislation and shootings.[10] That pattern of coverage might make sense if gun owners were really a minority. Yet the news media that insinuate the small minority status of gun owners are the same media that count 192 to 250 million guns, owned by 44 to 90 million Americans, distributed among 33% to 45% of American households. (Most commentators accept the higher figures.) Gun owners cannot be so monolithic a group: There must be diversity among one third of the country's population, or one half its homes, which explains the "I'm not like *those* gun owners" discourse. Few hunters would want to be associated with the Dear Abby writer who didn't understand her rifle. People who keep a handgun for protection share little with hobbyists who load their own ammunition. And none of these people share much with a drive-by shooter who kills five strangers.

The Immorality of Liking Guns

Also silenced but presupposed is a frame regarding the immorality of using or liking guns. Guns to a cosmopolitan worldview are like alcohol and dance to some Protestant sects: at best a guilty pleasure, at worst cause for damnation. A *Mademoiselle* article, "Does Your Boyfriend Own a Gun?" (Baumgardner, 2000) began, "He's everything you want in a guy—until you discover a semiautomatic under the mattress. . . . What does that mean for you?" "Heather," a former nanny and University of Nebraska graduate with a "middle-class upbringing" who "had never been that close to a firearm" (a perfect candidate for a cosmopolitan worldview), worried on discovering her boyfriend's gun: "It made me question whether he was someone I could trust" (p. 81). *Mademoiselle* said gun ownership "hints at all sorts of dark, messy desires in your partner"; it quoted a Florida psychologist who says, "you're right to be uncomfortable with guns" (p. 82). "Mindy" feared getting in verbal fights with her boyfriend, a police officer. "I kept thinking about his gun. I thought, Calm him down" (p. 83). The article's single exculpatory paragraph mentioned that "the mere fact that someone owns a gun isn't cause to doubt his character," but the following paragraph cast that qualifier in doubt, and every woman profiled concluded that gun ownership is a character deficiency (p. 83). The article ended on Heather's breakup: "I didn't trust him much after I saw the gun. . . . It was like he was a different person" (p. 83).[11]

A neutral Associated Press (2000) story (not part of the corpus) dramatically foregrounded the frame disparity. It described gun control advocates as "outraged" that a New York City school showed an NRA video with cartoon character Eddie Eagle to teach gun safety. Although New York's governor barred the NRA "child-safety" program from schools, a police youth officer showed it in a Brooklyn school. Children who find handguns, the video teaches, must "STOP! Don't touch! Leave the area! Tell an adult!" Gun control advocates were outraged because "besides the safety message, . . . it also instills in children the idea that guns are an acceptable and typical aspect of family life." Within a cosmopolitan worldview, guns are not a "typical aspect of family life." But *whose* family life? That worldview explains another feature of the dominant discourse on guns in this article: its White and middle- and upper-class character. Thus, this story silenced the context in which the action took place: the class and

ethnicity of the participants, the history of the school district, the status of guns in Brooklyn, and so on.

Variance in Statistics

Another silence pertains to variance in statistics. Figures on gun ownership vary tremendously, yet in 6 months of coverage, no documents in the corpus compare the figures and their sources or judge their accuracy. And statistics countering the dominant discourse often are not reported at all. Using newspaper figures citing 239 Ohio children killed in gun accidents over 34 years, letter writer Bass (2000) questioned the need for gun locks; the paper hadn't mentioned that 239 deaths in 34 years is a mean of 7 per year (p. A14). Bass asked why the paper didn't use that statistic, questioning how many other consumer products kill 7 Ohio children per year and thus merit a mass media outcry. Similarly, a Canadian columnist notes that the U.S. suicide rate remained constant from 1972 to 1994, whereas the number of guns increased by roughly 113 million (Penfold, 2000, p. A15). News media regularly explain that guns are used more often for suicide than homicide—gun-related suicides outnumbered homicides 17,411 to 12,098 in 1998 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2000b)—but a more thorough discourse would include Penfold's statistic. It could also point out that deaths from firearms have declined 27.6% since 1993 to their lowest rate in more than 30 years and the lowest total number in more than 20 years (National Center for Health Statistics, 2000a). In the corpus, this statistic is reported not by a journalist but by letter writer Coleman (2000). "More guns, fewer deaths" fits neither a cosmopolitan worldview nor the dominant discourse on guns. So Herbert (2000), a columnist, uses different numbers that, against CDC figures, underreport total gun fatalities and overreport accidental shootings that do fit a cosmopolitan frame. By Huckin's (1999) definition, such selectivity is manipulative silencing, as it furthers the dominant discourse in which news media tend to participate.[12]

News media also fail to qualify accurately Kellermann and Reay's (1986) *New England Journal of Medicine* study, which famously found 43 homicides, suicides, and accidental shootings with guns kept in the home for every justifiable homicide.[13] In this corpus, that study is used to discourage gun ownership for self-defense (three times). But those who cite it offer no other numbers from the study or even its date. Nor is the context of the study cited. What locations were

studied? Is a suburban gun as likely to injure its owner as a rural gun, where it might more often be handled by younger, less mature users? What about inner-city guns? Such detail is universally missing in reports of the study. Had any writers in the corpus cited Kellermann, Somes, Rivara, Lee, and Banton's (1998) *Journal of Trauma* study, they might have needed such detail to explain the later study's finding of 22 homicides, suicides, and accidental shootings with a gun kept in the home for every justifiable homicide—roughly half the number in the 1986 study.

Use of Guns in Self-Defense

Even deeper silence surrounds the actual use of guns for self-defense. This corpus includes four accounts of guns being used in self-defense. Two of these four are questionably slanted: One earned a letter of protest from a reader (Roberts, 2000), as it was headlined "Man, Son Gun Down 2 Robbers/One Suspect Killed; Injured Cohort Flees" (Kelly, 1999, p. A1). The words *defense* and *protect* did not appear in the article; the event was instead characterized in the lead as "a running gunbattle" because the victims pursued their assailants (p. A1). Roberts protested that usually only innocent people are "gunned down" (p. B6). Another account was headlined "Pawnshop Owner Had Luck on His Side During Brutal Holdup" (Marx, 2000, p. B6). Only the fact that the owner's weapon misfired after it was wrested from him and fired at his head kept him alive—a self-defense scenario that strongly supports a cosmopolitan worldview.

Claims of media bias are frequently based on lack of coverage of the numerous uses of guns in self-defense (seven letters and two columns in this corpus). Whereas most actual shootings are probably reported to police, fewer instances in which a gun is brandished but not fired would be. Mauser and Kopel (1992) cited a pair of 1978 surveys in which 15% of registered voters or their families reported having used a gun in self-defense: this would be millions of people, but it is not an annual figure (p. 87, note 2). A 1983 National Institute for Justice study returned a figure of approximately 645,000 cases per year based on reconstructions of police records (Bender & Leone, 1989, p. 210). Estimates in the current corpus range from 500,000 to 2 million uses per year, the latter being an NRA figure and probably high. Even a very low figure of 30,000 instances per year (less than 2 instances per day per state) would roughly match the total number of gun-related deaths in a year (although of course such a comparison would be

apples to oranges). Ultimately, the only people who can answer for the underreporting of self-defense uses of guns are the very reporters and editors whose cosmopolitan worldview the responses to such issues might challenge.

Gun Safety Education

Although self-defense is revealed in this corpus to be the chief issue for gun owners, two other silences deserve mention. One is education. Of the 18 uses of *education* that pertain to gun owners as a means of ensuring gun safety, all but 1 come from progun writers (the exception being an article reporting that education on the danger of firing into the air is failing in Florida). The fact that gun owners see children as teachable regarding the dangers of guns, whereas a cosmopolitan worldview does not, has to do with a "guns are animate killing machines" frame. The cliché "guns don't kill people—people kill people" is based on the inanimateness of guns. In the gun culture, guns are not uncontrollable forces but lumps of metal. Users of this frame might see as irresponsible a *lack* of hands-on training and education with guns.[14] In opposition, the discourse of a cosmopolitan worldview reflects the concept that guns by themselves cause death and violence. Such discourse often uses the passive voice (e.g., "killed by guns"), making the gun the agent (seven times in this corpus).[15] It invokes the frame "guns = death." Users of this frame would be unlikely to view gun-safety education as a solution to violence caused by guns. There is no cosmopolitan discourse in this corpus on child-education programs and only passing reference to training programs for purchasers of guns. Personal, private, state, law-enforcement, and organizational education programs in each state seem not to exist in the eyes of news media.

In a story that appeared after this corpus was compiled, Salt Lake City, Utah, media reported on a suburban school district's program, run by police officers, which puts students with real guns in shoot/don't shoot simulations (Hayes & Toomer-Cook, 2000, p. A3). Students fire guns loaded with blanks at television screens in a system resembling simulators officers train on. The program, police said, is meant to teach responsibility for one's actions. Davis (County) education association president Kathleen Leatham represented the general reaction of school, city, and county officials by saying that "having children handle guns in school is wildly inappropriate and makes me sick to my stomach. And if I were a student in that class, I would

refuse to participate." Predicting that the guns would be a distraction rather than a teaching tool, Leatham argued that "It's going to be fun and games for them." City councilwoman Nancy Smith challenged the program on other grounds: "When will a seventh-grader ever have a gun in his possession? . . . It's just not a real situation." Although the article itself is neutral, a cosmopolitan worldview is visible. Most observers would question the program. But how many outside a cosmopolitan worldview would be made "sick" by the thought of a teenager, supervised by a police officer, holding and firing a gun? Furthermore, how many would question the probability of a Utah teen's possessing a gun? Whereas other frames might at least investigate the effect controlled, expert education might have on teen gun use, such education is "wildly inappropriate" to a cosmopolitan worldview. News coverage did little to question that conclusion.

Recreational Uses of Guns

News media also largely silence recreational uses of guns. Only two stories in the corpus, a feature and a news/feature, covered firearms use that did not involve human targets. But what do the millions of gun owners *not* responsible for 1998's 30,708 firearms deaths do with their guns? The single feature (Dolbee, 1999) that covered a variety of gun owners and their pursuits also best framed the overall debate facing Americans:

> All sorts of people own guns.
>
> They own them because they like to hunt or shoot at targets on the practice range.
>
> They own them as collector's items, like a shopper who prowls garage sales for memorable antiques or a fan who scouts sports shows for interesting baseball cards.
>
> And, yes, they own them just in case they might ever need to use one to protect themselves from drive-by shootings to commando attacks, the use of deadly firepower has created an increasingly emotional chasm between those who own guns and those who don't. One side argues that good people shouldn't be blamed for what bad people do. The other side believes that owning a gun is dangerous and immoral.
>
> So why do people around San Diego own guns? Here are some of their stories. (p. E1)

This lead invokes multiple frames and perspectives, introducing two worldviews that frame gun ownership. Unfortunately for the gun policy debate, this multiperspectival approach is rare.

IMPLICATIONS: THE UNION OF FRAMES AND CONSTRUCTIONIST RESPONSIBILITY

Analysis of this corpus of discourse regarding gun owners reveals a rift between sides of the highly polarized gun policy debate and significant marginalization of the gun advocates by mainstream and media discourse. This marginalization, which can be partially explained by the operation of a cosmopolitan worldview frame, is both participated in and caused by media discourse that largely adopts the same frame. Like all frames, a cosmopolitan worldview silences information that would be relevant if other frames were applied. If no other frames are applied, it is possible, as Huckin (1999) described the process, for the silenced information to go unnoticed and unmissed. However, when a nondominant frame is applied to the discourse, information found to be silenced may not achieve the status to contribute to the discourse of the dominant frame. Far from contributing to "a more pluralist and tolerant society" by "drawing attention to . . . multiperspectival views" (Neuman et al., 1992, pp. 118-119), news coverage amplifies the very polarization it should seek to attenuate. Those who adopt a cosmopolitan worldview, lacking personal experience with other perspectives, look to news media for those perspectives. Failing that, participants in the debate are nearly silenced, the rift widens, and the gun policy debate remains deadlocked.

If news media audiences are silencing discourse, whether communicatively or manipulatively, Neuman et al. (1992) provided a possible solution to the problem of communicative silencing and a possible means of exposing manipulative silencing. Applying Huckin's (1999) conceptions of framing and textual silencing to Neuman et al.'s findings on the interaction of media and audience, it becomes clear that one role for a socially responsible media might be introducing new frames to a discourse dominated by a single frame—in other words, to provide frames to an audience that may be missing them. Guns, for example, are a high-saliency issue, which, Neuman et al. suggested, relieves a socially responsible media of having to raise interest in the

issue (p. 119). Instead, introducing new perspectives, histories, and solutions—that is, new frames—to the debate might offer those who adopt a cosmopolitan worldview information they have missed regarding the culture their discourse marginalizes. In addition, journalists who understood that many gun owners share few frames with a dominant cosmopolitan worldview could target information to participants in the marginalized discourse that would clarify the frames in action and their differences. Acting as informative intermediaries, news media might be able to help depolarize and, thus, restart and refocus the gun policy debate. And if, as the corpus suggests, there are advocates on each side whose arguments are informed by "massive bad faith," a socially responsible media could serve as an information clearinghouse, offering to marginalized discourses both the information and the access to challenge whichever bad faith is dominant.

Of course, such a scenario hearkens directly back to the idealistic suggestions of Neuman et al. (1992), and the business and ideological sides of news coverage may not be so ideal. News media do, after all, have vested financial interests in showing audiences what they want to see: the perspective of the dominant worldview. Journalists who take the role of social educators and cover nondominant frames risk being folded up or turned off, a big risk in highly competitive news markets. Still, regarding the gun policy debate, socially responsible coverage will remain out of reach as long as news media remain enveloped in the very frames that are the marginalizing and silencing force in the gun policy debate. Whether blinded to other information by a dominant cosmopolitan worldview or manipulatively silencing such information because of a vested interest in promoting that worldview, there can be little doubt that news media are instrumental in marginalizing and silencing a significant segment of participants in the gun policy debate, and the very institution that should further tolerance and diversity instead actively suppresses them.

The combination of frame analysis and critical discourse analysis of a news media corpus deployed here seems to be an effective method for investigating public discourse on social issues of great import. If, as Neuman et al. (1992) argued, news media are failing in a public educational duty, such analysis gives media researchers a means of describing and explaining how and why the failure takes place as well as an opportunity to propose solutions to the problem. Instead of listening to partisan accusations of favoritism or bias in the

news, we can understand news coverage as well intentioned but constrained by the same frames that place other citizens on various sides of debates on contentious social issues. Before news media and their audiences can work within those constraints to report more fully and understand issues, they must be aware of the frames already in play.

NOTES

1. The most obvious exceptions are Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, and Sasson (1992) on media roles in constructing reality and Gamson and Wolfsfeld's (1993) "Movements and Media as Interacting Systems," which do discuss frames and news coverage. But this work has focused more on construction of frames for persuasion rather than unconsciously adopted frames already in play.

2. Lower level "discursive structural frames" (van Dijk, 1980) are more readily identifiable, as Tannen (1993) demonstrated. With the direct evidence of presuppositions and expectations that texts provide at this level, frames are easier to identify. The difficulty in deciding what is and is not a "complete" frame rises as parts of the frame appear in various texts.

3. This article will also suggest that a fruitful area for further study would be the analysis of a "gun culture" worldview frame. Coverage of it here is not my priority because it is an unlikely frame for news media to adopt. However, given the political muscle the gun culture wields on the issue of gun control, we would do well to study it further.

4. This prediction is bolstered by results from the 2000 presidential election. Maps of Republican and Democrat precincts show that urban and suburban precincts voted Democrat. Although the historically Democratic votes of the poor and minorities partially account for the disparity, these maps may also show the presence of a cosmopolitan, moderate-to-liberal vote. If a Republican vote represents conservative to moderate and a Democrat vote represents moderate to liberal, those precincts voting Democrat would represent, in part, the cosmopolitan vote.

5. Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992) reported that news media do not have as much control of what their audience knows as is popularly assumed. News media, they found, cannot necessarily control their audiences' agendas or positions on particular issues. Still, that news media do not have perfect control is not to say that they do not have a great deal of control.

6. Japan, with the strictest gun control and lowest gun ownership among industrialized countries, was widely reported to have experienced only seven gun-related deaths in 1999.

7. The term *mainstream* is certainly problematic in present-day America, but I invoke it with a mind toward what news media and their audiences tend to conceive of as mainstream—themselves. In this article, then, the term refers to the mostly middle- and upper-class, mostly White, readership of the newspapers included in this study's corpus.

8. In fact, a 1999 Connecticut law is based on this presumption. It lets police search for and temporarily confiscate firearms, without a warrant, if the owner is reported to be a danger to himself or others. The law has been invoked when a mention of suicide or anger at another person was reported to police (Larrabee, 2000, p. A3). The Connecticut legislature's opinion of gun owners' character and self-control let it reduce probable cause to verbal expression.

9. The descriptions here of gun culture ways of thinking are based on my observations through nearly two decades of close proximity. In regard to the argument at hand, for instance, I have relatives, ranchers in a large northwestern state, whose children were using guns by the time they started school. Other relatives of mine teach a state-mandated safety course for minors wishing to hunt big game. (There are no age restrictions in that state on hunting small game or on use of guns.) These instructors tell me that the safety course, which children may enroll in by their 12th birthday, is seen by the boys and girls who take it as a rite of passage.

10. Journalists face news-value constraints that editorialists and letter writers may not. However, the immediacy of the gun debate—due in great part to a media-generated (false) perception that this grave problem is worsening—means that no gun story lacks news value.

11. No news stories in the corpus considered that, in the gun culture, this suspicion of guns is itself suspicious. Again through family connections, I have observed distrust of people who are not competent with guns. In rural areas, ease and ability with guns seem to mark one's worth. And, just as Heather saw something wrong with people who liked and owned guns, so gun culture people who like and own guns appear to see something wrong with people like Heather.

12. Of course, also contributing to this silence is the assumption that good news means low ratings and, thus, does not need to be covered. But on an issue as serious as news media emphasize gun violence is, coverage not influenced by a cosmopolitan frame might do more to publicize success in lowering gun violence despite the presence of more guns.

13. This failing, too, exemplifies a general weakness among U.S. news media, the reliance of which on simplification, sound-bites, and summaries gives short shrift to scholarly work. Valuing costs in time and space over accuracy is also symptomatic of news media that fall short in public service.

14. The discourse of Montana's state hunter safety program is steeped in rhetoric of control and responsibility. Students are constantly instructed to "treat every gun as if it were loaded; always point the muzzle in a safe direction; and beware of your target—and beyond." These rules are the basis for all field tests and the final written exam (State of Montana, 1984, p. 80). The reasoning behind the rules is that if all three are followed, no one can be unintentionally hurt with a gun. Whether or not that logic holds, my point is the *certainty* vested in it by the gun culture.

15. Such usage ("killed by guns") might be synecdochal, where part of the cause (guns) stands for the entire cause (gun and an agent). This explanation would carry more weight, however, if it could account for the palpable distaste of the object itself. A cosmopolitan frame presupposes that possession of a gun affects the character of the possessor; it is the gun itself, not any particular use of the gun, that is distasteful. Thus, it is not clear that when such people say "the boy was killed by a gun" they mean anything other than "the gun killed the boy." The human agent is logically, not simply synecdochally, removed.

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Douglas Downs is a Ph.D. candidate in rhetoric and composition at the University of Utah, where he teaches 1st-year and advanced composition. His dissertation will examine uses of critical discourse analysis to teach critical information literacy, research, and argument in 1st-year composition. Although 1st-year composition is his main research focus, his other interests include critical discourse analysis of media coverage, as in this article, and research pedagogies.