

News, Public Policy, and Social Justice

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Abstract

In this paper, we look at mediation of public policies in different areas of governance. Editorials appearing in an Indian English language newspaper during the period of an intense public debate on the issue of affirmative action in favor of a section of the population, the Other Backward Classes (OBC) - a popular reference to the socially and educationally backward classes of citizens under India's constitution constitute the sample for the study. Apart from editorials on the public policy of reservation of seats in admission to higher education institutions for the OBC, editorials on three other areas of governance, namely, development, economy, and public administration appearing in the same newspaper, are also consulted to understand media framing of social issues and more specifically, issues of social justice. Inductively identifying the various frames used in its editorials by the newspaper, I detect predominant use of 'personalized' frame in respect of editorials pertaining to the policy area of social justice; and distinguish it from the 'generic' frame of 'characterization' found in theory. The study concludes that the sample editorials in respect of other public policies did not use the personalized frame found in editorials on social justice.

Keywords: social justice, public policy, India, affirmative action, reservation, editorials, framing, *The Indian Express*

The intersection of news with public policy can be understood from a variety of perspectives. That the policy making field has become increasingly “mediatized,” is in itself a concern (Fairclough, 1995). From the policy change perspective, one understanding is that media merely transmits the variety of perspectives on a policy (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993); and is only a “conduit” for policy actors (Kingdon, 2003). From the same perspective, another understanding is that additionally, it could coalesce with other advocacy groups and be a contributor in policy making (Sebatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). From a media effects perspective, the interplay of media agenda-setting, public agenda-setting and policy agenda-setting has also seen distinct research traditions and understandings (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). A public agenda, which could influence public opinion, can be set through the editorial decision of what issues to cover (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

Again, representation of public policies by elevating some policy issues over others is found to prime the public in altering its criteria of evaluating political (policy) actors (Krosnick & Brannon, 1993). Further, media agenda may help those who contribute to policy agenda as a feedback for possible refinements or reassurance. The process, by which the media defines the meanings embedded in a policy issue, that is, “what is at issue” (the frame), is yet another media effects perspective (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). For example, prior research indicates that policy issue framing impacts public opinion (Fine, 1999).

Where media acts as a contributor to public policies – such as in defining policy problems (Cohen & Young, 1973) - media frames can be independent variables of the policy process. On the other hand, where media’s role is merely that of a conduit for transmission, media frames could be seen as dependent variables of the policy agenda itself. This difference helps, to some extent, in distinguishing media’s framing of news from framing of editorials. However, journalists’ influence may exist in both situations (Davis, 2007).

This paper uses the framing of editorials pertaining to a social justice policy issue by a newspaper as a reference, and compares the editorial frames used to present some other public policies by the same newspaper.

Background

In December, 2005, India's Parliament amended the constitution of India, through a historic piece of legislation [Constitution (93rd) Amendment Act, 2005]. Briefly stated, the amendment inserted that notwithstanding the extant constitutional provisions relating to prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth; through law, special provision could be made for the advancement of the socially and educationally backward classes of citizens, specifically in matters of access to educational institutions except those belonging to the religious or linguistic minorities. The amendment [article 15(5)] was carried through with near unanimity in both Houses of Parliament; and the stage was set for follow-through legislations for making some special provisions. There was hardly any significant media coverage of the policy in the following days. Then, in the first week of April, 2006, the then Minister of Human Resource Development was quoted by the media as having "announced" a policy for reservation of seats for the socially and educationally backward classes (commonly referred to as OBC or other backward classes, i.e., other than the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to whom the policy of reservation was already available in admission to higher education institutions albeit through executive orders), and the minister's denial and clarification, that he had merely pointed to the natural corollary to the constitutional amendment, which had to be followed through with an enabling legislation. Even as the all-round political support for the constitutional amendment within Parliament implied that none of the political parties could criticize the policy in public, a few seemingly non-political organizations emerged at the forefront of the anti-reservation protests and occasional pro-reservation public demonstrations; and received wide media attention. Editorials in the mainstream English print media presented a range of reactions – support to the policy, support to the policy with some caveats, neutrality, as well as strong criticism of the policy. In India, the issue of reservations – whether in access to higher education or in employment – is closely identified as a policy impacting social justice, evoking political and social sensitivities.

Methodology

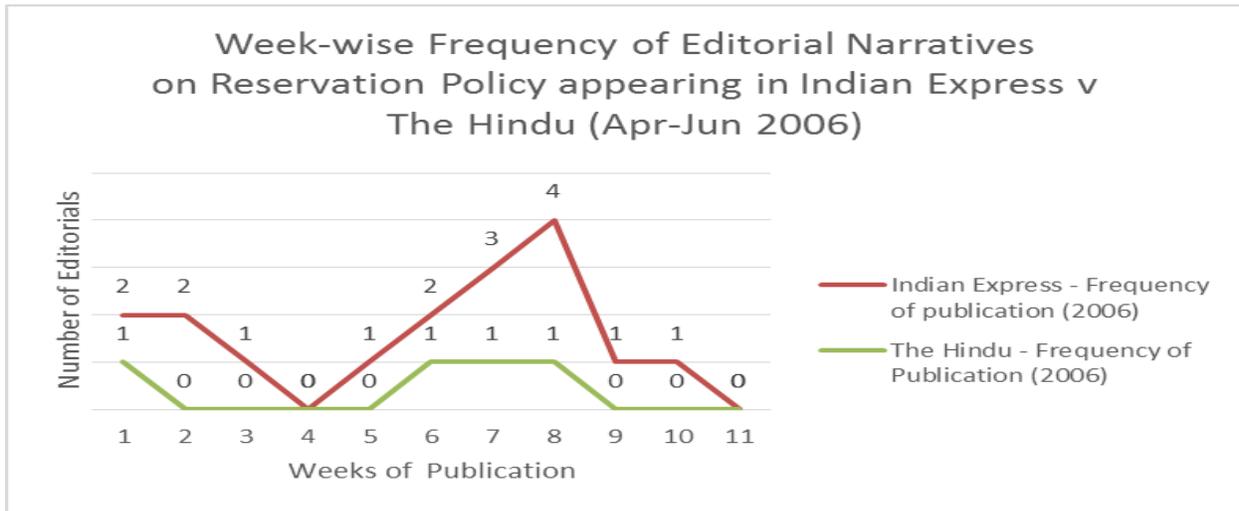
Choice of Newspaper

Editorials appearing in the leading English language newspaper – *The Indian Express* – form the universe for the study. The choice of newspaper was based on two significant considerations. First, the consistent editorial stand taken by the *Express* on the policy issue of reservation, which forms the basis for comparison with other policy issues; and second, the frequency of publication of editorials on the reservation policy. Editorials in the *Express* were found to be consistently and strongly critical of the policy.

In respect of the frequency of publication of editorials on the issue of reservation policy, while *The Indian Express* carried as many as 17 editorials on the issue, *The Hindu*, a newspaper with a diametrically opposite editorial stand on the policy of reservation, carried only 4 editorials during the period of the study. As the other two prominent English language newspapers – *Hindustan Times* and *The Times of India* – were also opposed to the policy, the *Express* could be taken as a representative sample of the anti-reservation section of the English language print media. Therefore, *The Indian Express*, which is perceived to be a newspaper subscribing to center and right of center editorial views (Thakur, 2013), has been taken as the newspaper of choice, notwithstanding the limitation of taking a single newspaper for the study.

Period of Study

The frequency distribution of publication of editorials on the policy of reservation, during the period April-June, 2006, in the two mainstream newspapers – *The Indian Express* and *The Hindu* - with diametrically opposite editorial views on the policy is shown in the graph below:



As may be seen, media induced salience to the policy could be said to have peaked in the period April-May, 2006 as editorializing declined steeply after week 8. For this reason, the period of study has been taken as April-May, 2006.

The Universe for the Study and Choice of Sample Editorials

All editorials appearing during April-May, 2006, in the Indian Express, Delhi (N=104) were considered as the universe for the study, which was comprised of two editorials appearing on each weekday (no editorials were published on Sundays). An editorial, commenting upon an issue with legislative, judicial, executive, regulatory, administrative, political, social, technical, etc. implications going beyond the immediate ‘provocation’ for it, or commenting upon an issue by way of contributing to any theme of policy salience, has been considered as a policy issue (n=60), for the purpose of categorization; otherwise, in the absence of such implications or thematic contribution, editorials have been categorized as pertaining to episodic issues (n=44). Table 1 gives the classification of the universe of editorials. In terms of the broad thematic areas, editorials could be categorized as pertaining to Public Administration (n=25), Politics (n=19), Social Justice (n=14), Development (n=13), Economic Reforms (n=12), External Affairs (n=11), and those not fitting into any of the foregoing were categorized as Miscellaneous (n=10) – editorials on media, judicial reforms and judicial intervention, etc. were included in miscellaneous

category. In terms of editorialized policy issues, the distribution in terms of thematic areas was as follows: Public Administration (n'=15), Social Justice (n'=14), Development (n'=10), Economic Reforms (n'=8), External Affairs (n'=6), Politics (n'=4), and Miscellaneous (n'=3).

A sample size of 16 editorials was divided equally between editorials on social justice policy (8) and the three other prominently editorialized policy areas – namely, Public Administration, Development, and Economic Reforms. The basis of comparative study being the frames used in editorializing social justice policy, the first eight editorials on the issue of reservation (57% of all editorials on social justice) appearing during the period, were taken up for analysis. Policy of reservation for the OBC, has been taken to be representative of the public policy of Social Justice. For the purposes of comparative frame analysis, editorials on the other three thematic areas of public policies were randomized, resulting in the selection of 2 editorials on Public Administration (13% of all public administration editorials), 2 editorials on Development (20% of all development related editorials), and 4 editorials on Economic Reforms (50% of all economic reform related editorials).

Choice of Editorials in Preference to Other Narratives

Several issues such as fair and balanced reporting, absence of bias, adequacy or inadequacy of coverage, and so on, while relevant in analyzing news narratives, are not mandated in analyzing editorial narratives, which are expectedly subjective in nature. The main function of newspaper editorials is to communicate opinions, as distinct from the theoretically unbiased (un-opinionated) information (facts) communicated as news. Editorials have been variously described – as conversations among elites, with the public as more as spectators (Henry & Tator, 2002) than audience, and also as expressions of the “broader ideological position of the newspaper’s owners and managers” (Henry & Tator, 2002, p. 93). Editorials make a challenging field of media studies for the reason that they are also considered the “formulation place for newspaper ideologies” (Van Dijk, 1991, p. 142), and “the relation between ideology and discourse” need complex and indirect

“methods to be studied empirically” (Van Dijk, 2006, p.124). As editorials convey opinions held by the newspaper (management, owners, or editors), the textual narratives in editorials are embedded with the ideological preferences of those who control the medium. The simplest description of a newspaper editorial would be in terms of its three-fold functions of stating problems, suggesting solutions, and exhorting actions. While this generic description would fit any editorial, those relating to public policies could be further elaborated. Typically, editorials written about public policies state an issue engaging the attention of the media at a point in time, or mention a problem confronting society and covered by the media at that point in time, or summarize the trends in news coverage of an event up to that point in time; thereafter, editorials evaluate the issue or problem or event vis-à-vis actions and actors (Van Dijk, 2006), which may be state or non-state actors; finally, editorials draw conclusions which may be a piece of advice or a suggestion, words of caution, or a statement of expectations or prescriptions of dos and don’ts to policy makers and other stake-holders, including readers. Analyzing editorial narratives helps us understand these functions vis-à-vis public policies.

Choice of Frame Analysis as Research Method

This paper seeks to understand the manner in which a representative print newspaper in India presents its views (through editorials) on different policy issues to its audience (Gitlin, 1980). Analysis of editorials lends valuable understanding of the embedded ideologies; and even more importantly lends valuable understanding of not only the manner of presentation of editorial views, but going beyond that as to how the newspapers shape, focus and organize issues – in other words, how newspapers frame issues (Gray, 2003). Framing tells readers how to think about issues and assumes that “how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences” (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). However, newspapers, as distinct from subject specific journals, have audiences constituted largely of lay-readership. In other words, complex issues have to be communicated in a manner intelligible even to lay readers; this is why framing is also referred to as a necessary tool to simplify complexities of issues

(Gans, 1979). And every stage of production of media narratives may well be “part and parcel of the entire framing process” (Van Gorp, as cited in Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 13).

The wide application of framing has also meant that there are specific frames as well as generic frames, and “(D)ebates continue about how we conceptualize frames” (Borah, 2011). Framing research has had its share of contention, with arguments that it suffered from “scattered conceptualization” that prevented its development into a paradigm (Entman, 1993), meaning thereby there was no cohesive accumulation of knowledge on framing research; and equally compelling contrarian argument that while there may indeed be scattered conceptualization due to the diversity of framing devices, there need not be any single “mended” paradigm and that framing research has actually benefited from diversity (D’Angelo, 2002).

While framing studies have interested a number of academic disciplines (D’Angelo, 2002), it is said to have emerged as the most commonly applied research approach in the field of communication science (Bryant & Miron, 2004). Framing, as a concept, has also been adopted in policy research (Schön, & Rein, 1994); and, hence has been selected as the method of analysis for the present study. Editorials engage readers into either reinforcing the meanings about issues, concepts, processes – indeed, the meanings about society itself that may have been constructed by individuals over time in the learning process; or in unlearning or modifying their individual view about society. On behalf of media, editorials contribute to the construction of social reality; and understanding of frames could help in identifying how such reality is constructed. The present analysis, in arriving at the use of frames in editorials is not confined to, or draws only from, the five “common frames” of conflict, human interest, economic, morality, and responsibility found in literature (Matthes, 2009). Frames have been arrived at in this study inductively after multiple readings of the editorials.

Frame identification

In arriving at the frame(s), each editorial narrative was taken as the unit of analysis. Each narrative was analyzed in terms of the diagnostic (problem or issue raised), the prognostic (likely outcome), the solution, if any, and the motivation (direction). This approach, initially used for decomposing ideology (Wilson, 1973), enables deconstruction of the embedded frame in the narrative to diagnostic frames, prognostic frames and motivation frames, in order to arrive at the composite frame itself. Since I use the inductive approach, no *a priori* definition of frames was employed; however, on identifying frame(s) vis-à-vis an editorial, the same was noted down for maintaining consistency of approach when analyzing other editorials. Each of the inductively arrived frames was assigned a definition for the purposes of assessing reliability of coding; and a statistical estimation of inter-coder reliability was carried out with the help of an independent coder. The definition of frames used for the purpose of the study is given in the Appendix.

The sample of 16 editorials comprising the study is given below:

s.no.	Date of publication	Headlines	Specific Policy Issues	Broad Area of Public Policy
1	April 11, 2006	Reservations – over Arjun	OBC reservations	Social Justice
2	April 12, 2006	Arjuns’s aim	OBC reservations	Social Justice
3	April 20, 2006	Time to move on	Environment and large development projects	Development
4	April 20, 2006	Question for Congress	OBC reservations	Social Justice
5	April 21, 2006	Better than quotas	OBC reservations	Social Justice
6	April 26, 2006	Seeing Dabhol	Power sector investments	Economic Reforms
7	April 27, 2006	Rain gain	Utilization of water resources	Development
8	April 29, 2006	Who lit the fire?	Use of Army in aid of civil administration	Public Administration

s.no.	Date of publication	Headlines	Specific Policy Issues	Broad Area of Public Policy
9	April 29, 2006	Without reservations	OBC reservations	Social Justice
10	April 30, 2006	Don't do a bad job	Fixation of wage employment rates under MNREGA	Public Administration
11	April 20, 2006	How creditable a policy?	Announcement of monetary policy by RBI	Economic Reforms
12	April 30, 2006	Behind the scam	Regulating stock-markets	Economic Reforms
13	May 11, 2006	Excellence and access	OBC reservations	Social Justice
14	May 16, 2006	Rs 1 lakh edge	Left-party Governments and economic reforms	Economic Reforms
15	May 17, 2006	Minister as liability	OBC reservations	Social Justice
16	May 26, 2006	Mind after knee-jerk	OBC reservations	Social Justice

Analysis

Analysis of Selected Editorials on Various Public Policies

Analysis of the selected editorials on various public policies “other than reservations,” is given below:

1. Date of publication: April 20, 2006. Broad area of public policy: Development. Editorial headline: “Time to Move On.” Headline’s orientation towards the policy: Neutral.

The editorial appearing on April 20, 2006 titled “Time to Move On” takes the position that “development need not be a zero-sum game,” and contends demands - of greater common good versus entitlements of the displaced from large development projects - can be balanced, without choosing one over the other. It welcomes the Supreme Court’s judgment on the Sardar Sarovar Dam, without mentioning what the judgment was

all about. It blames the union water resources minister for creating “needless confusion,” and praises the prime minister for “gently” “clearing the air.” It advises the protesting Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) as well as the pro-project parties, to leave their differences behind and to “move forward” on the “priority given to rehabilitation” (alluding to the court judgment perhaps). It praises NBA for taking a principled stand on the issue of large dams, and suggests that “NBA should be invited to be formally and substantively a part” of the rehabilitation authority proposed by the central government, to make the body bring credibility due to its “ground-level expertise.” It holds that NBA had to decide between “opposition for opposition’s sake” and a “constructive role.” It concludes that the contradiction between an “activist following his conscience” and “the interests” of the state, was a “false dichotomy.”

This editorial presents the diagnostic of development dilemma due to differences between the state which supports large projects and those who oppose the projects. It diagnoses that the choice is not either development or rehabilitation of oustees. The prognosis, by implication, is that since development is not a zero sum game, if either side takes an entrenched position, development would be the casualty. The editorial advances the solution that agitators should be formally involved in the rehabilitation efforts by the pro-project state. The editorial is balanced in that it gives both points of view and seeks conciliation. There is “othering” of the then minister for water resources and praise for the then prime minister, thereby using the framing device of personalizing (positively as well as negatively); however the substantive effort is directed towards conciliation. It discharges the motivational function of editorials, by sage advice to both sides of the conflict. Orientation of the narrative is neutral and unbiased towards the public policy; and it uses the framing device of conciliation (for the sake of development).

2. Date of publication: April 26, 2006. Broad area of public policy: economic reforms (power sector investments). Editorial headline: “Seeing Dabhol.” Headline’s orientation towards the policy: Neutral.

In terms of the diagnostics, the editorial uses the background news of the decision of a State Electricity Board to place power-purchase order on a power project, which would help the project be revived, while meeting the energy requirements of that power deficit state (Maharashtra); and points to the problems of attracting investments in the power sector. It cites the “badly designed power investment policy” of an earlier government, which had “incentivized cost padding, among other things,” attracting investors looking for “super normal returns,” which made power purchase at “incredible” prices unviable, and leading to defaults by electricity boards and failure of purchase agreements. According to the editorial, political maneuvering made the situation even worse, and India had to bear the cost of breaching the agreement with foreign investors, and one casualty has been the unfinished “basic reforms” of electricity boards.

The editorial poses a problem of attracting genuine power sector investments, thus fulfilling the diagnostic function expected of editorials. It illustrates the problem, citing a situation as background, thereby demystifying the problem and making it easier for readers to understand the same. It blames a policy decision as cause of the problem (othering). It points to the consequences of the failed policy. However, it does not suggest a solution that could be acted upon, failing thereby in prognosis. It also fails in the third, the motivational, function as it has a diffused audience. The orientation of the narrative is negative towards the public policy and it uses the framing device of development (through power sector reforms.)

3. Date of publication: April 27, 2006. Broad area of public policy: development (water resources utilization). Editorial headline: “Rain gain.” Headline’s orientation towards the policy: Positive.

The editorial points to the “significant shifts in the pattern of monsoon,” which results in rain deficit regions as well as others with inundation even in a normal year. It rhetorically asks how the country could insulate against “fear of failed rains,” and points to the need for increasing the comparatively low and inadequate capacity to store water,

which in turn makes India dependent on “good monsoon,” and therefore large projects were unavoidable and need “fair and efficacious rehabilitation” to mitigate social costs. It calls for evolving “a more pan-national approach” for optimal utilization of water resources, to avoid friction among states and division among people.

It points to the problem of dependence on good monsoon and fear of failed rains, thereby fulfilling the diagnostic function of editorials. It identifies the cause to be low storage capacity. It discharges the prognostic function of friction among states and division among people for water. It points to the solution of large projects and the attendant issue of social costs and the solution of fair and efficacious rehabilitation of the project-affected population. All in all a balanced editorial, this does not “other” anyone in particular for the problem. No one, in particular, has been tasked to take action, hence it is diffusedly targeted, and it may be assumed to be directed at society at large – governments, political parties, activists, et al. The orientation of the narrative is neutral towards the public policy; and it uses the framing device of (avoidance of) conflict.

4. Date of publication: April 29, 2006. Broad area of public policy: public administration (use army in aid of civil administration). Editorial headline: “Who lit the fire?” Headline’s orientation towards the policy: Neutral.

The editorial has been written in the background of CBI’s decision to prosecute five army officers accused of fake encounter “killings” of civilians at “Pathribal.” It says that the decision of CBI shows that in society, no one is above scrutiny. It draws attention to the need for a relook at the reward system followed by the army, which incentivizes career prospects. The editorial points out the problem of indiscriminate use of the army in situations that civilian administrators “create and/or can’t tackle.” It claims that human rights violations need to be viewed against the “enormous pressure soldiers work under in situations of domestic conflict.” It argues that while the army cannot be given freedom to kill, equally it needs to be understood that the “army doesn’t recruit its men and officers from a social vacuum,” and even though they could be vulnerable to “institutional corrosion

that affects other parts of the society, army trains it men to behave.” It cautions that indiscriminate use of the army in civil strife situations runs the risk of the army itself becoming like the civil administration.

In terms of the diagnostics, the editorial poses the problem of indiscriminate calling in of the army to assist the civil administration. The prognostics is the risk of the army itself becoming like the civil administration. It does not provide any solution other than to allude that such indiscriminate use of the army ought to be avoided. It is directed at the civil administration to restrain itself from calling in the army to tackle situations for which the latter is not trained. It does not present any argument about why indeed the civil administration is required to call in the army in the first place. It is not critical of the army, but does “othering” of the civil administration. The orientation of the narrative is neutral to the policy of armed forces being called in to the aid civil administration; and it uses the framing device of responsibility – highlighting the failure of the civil administration, as well as unreasonably holding the army responsible for discharging duties its men are not trained or equipped to do.

5. *Date of publication: April 30, 2006. Broad area of public policy: public administration (fixation of rates in wage employment). Editorial headline: “Don’t do a bad job.” Headline’s orientation towards the policy: Negative.*

The editorial questions the decision of the central government “to fix a uniform wage” for NREGA projects, rather than allowing states to set wages. It cautions that the decision would “undermine the popularity” of the program and make states lose interest in it. It advises the central government to focus on coordination, regulation, and outcomes of the program. It argues that “patterns of employment” in rural areas were changing from agriculture to non-agriculture, therefore employment programs like NREGA, which “expand employment opportunities” were needed.

It deals with the issue of centralization of administrative powers. It presents arguments against the decision, but does not present views in favor of the decision. It does

provide a solution, but without dealing with the counterfactuals. The editorial is targeted at the central government to act. Thus the editorial fulfills the diagnostic function of identifying the issue of centralized wage fixation, the prognostic function of pointing to the threat to the popularity of the program. It offers the solution of limiting the central role to regulation and decentralizing wage fixation to states, as well as the motivational function of advising the central government; yet all these functions are discharged partially, because the opposite points of view are not brought up. The orientation of the narrative is negative towards the public policy of fixing of wages by the central government; and it uses the framing device of centralization.

6. Date of publication: April 20, 2006. Broad area of public policy: economic reforms (announcing credit policy). Editorial headline: "How creditable a policy?" Headline's orientation towards the policy: Negative.

The editorial relates to the credit policy announced by the Reserve Bank of India. It criticizes, and calls, the practice of announcing monetary policies on "pre-announced dates" as "quaint" and "old-fashioned," as central banks are expected to "respond to changes in the economy as and when they unfold." It criticizes the RBI, by comparing it with the practice followed in USA of consciously managing expectations by the sharing of views in advance by that country's central bank. It says that by sharing the likely decisions, the economy can be well prepared for changes and cushioned from shocks. It advocates predictability of monetary policy as well as clarifying to the public the reasons thereto; and wants the central bank in India to adopt global norms in these matters.

The diagnostics of the editorial is the problem in the practice of announcing monetary policies (decisions on credit policy) by the Reserve Bank of India. The prognostics is that not sharing the decision in a timely fashion fails the management of expectations and the avoidance of shocks. The prescribed solution is flexibility by central banks. The solution is backed with the example from the United States. However, while making the comparison, the differences in the two economies, and the two societies, is not

dealt with. The motivational role of the editorial is directed towards the RBI, which is the central banker. The orientation of the narrative is negative vis-à-vis the public policy; and it uses the framing device of openness, that is, transparency to frame the policy.

7. Date of publication: April 30, 2006. Broad area of public policy: economic reforms (regulating stock markets). Editorial headline: "Behind the scam." Headline's orientation towards the policy: Negative.

The editorial is set against the background of the Security and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)'s detection of fraud in cornering allotment of shares under some initial public offerings (IPO) by duplicating identities. It laments the absence of any biometric based unique identity to discourage fraud. It identifies the cause of the problem to be the "quota for individual investors," which incentivizes "black markets." It suggests that such black markets can disappear only if there is "open market," which eliminates the price differential between the listing price and allotment price of shares through open auction. It asks the central government to change the "structure of incentives" and to look into "regulations which govern the IPO markets." By way of a parallel, the editorial cites the example of the failure to prevent gold smuggling through policing and the results after custom duties were lowered.

It simplifies the complex issue of the need for stock market regulation. It presents the problem of incentives to cheat, thus fulfilling the diagnostic function. It suggests open auction of shares as the solution. In terms of the prognostic function, the possibility for black-markets and more scams, if the present public policy were to be continued. It does not "other" anyone, that is, it does not blame anyone for the scam; but at the same time it does not specifically name who should take the suggested action – SEBI or the government or parliament through legislation, thus failing in the motivational function, although presumably, the editorial is aimed as much at the government as at the other stakeholders and by way of being informative for the general public. The orientation of the narrative is

negative towards the existing public policy; and it uses the framing device of the neo-liberal argument of open markets.

8. Date of publication: May 16, 2006. Broad area of public policy: economic reforms (left-party governments and economic reforms). Editorial headline: "Rs 1 lakh edge." Headline's orientation towards the policy: Positive.

The editorial relates the Left Front's victory in West Bengal's Assembly elections as the "result of" the Chief Minister's "commitment to economic reform." It uses the example of Tata Motors' proposal for setting up a small car manufacturing plant (the headline alludes to the estimated low market price of the car) in West Bengal to be encouraged by the reforms; and mentions the positive outcomes for the automobile industry and for employment. It praises the chief minister of the state for bridging "the rural-urban divide." It contrasts the reform mindset of the Left Front in West Bengal with the "public tussle" between hardliners opposed to reforms and the reformers in Kerala; and advises the Left Front government in the state to take cue from West Bengal to "address Kerala's social-economic dichotomy."

The diagnosis of the problem by the editorial is the reluctance of the political "left" to come to terms with the need for reforms, which could attract investments in the job-creating manufacturing sector. The problem is highlighted by contrasting with the West Bengal experience of reform, under a leftist chief minister, which gave them political dividends of electoral victory – that is to say, economic reforms need not cost reforming parties politically. The prognostic is that, without reforms, problems of unemployment and socio-economic dichotomy cannot be overcome. It motivates the Kerala government to follow the Bengal model. The editorial does not, however, make any mention of the displacement of people who may be affected due to land acquisition, and how the conflicting interests could be reconciled. In other words the consequences of the singular pursuit of attracting investments are not indicated in the editorial. In hindsight, as it turns out, "Singur," where the Tata plant was finally sought to be established, became the sore

point in the next elections in West Bengal! The orientation of the narrative is positive towards the public policy of economic reforms; and it uses the framing device of the imperatives of development.

Analysis of Editorials on Social Justice

The analysis of the eight editorials in the broad public policy area of social justice [the decision for introducing OBC reservations], which appeared in *The Indian Express*, New Delhi, during the “Reservation” debate of April-May 2006 is as follows:

1. Date of publication: April 11, 2006. Broad area of public policy: social justice (OBC reservations). Editorial headline: “Reservations – over Arjun.” Headline’s orientation towards the policy: Negative.

The editorial argues that “Arjun Singh’s proposal” on OBC reservation has to “contend with” the Election Commission’s query on the timing of the announcement, the “reservations” of a group of ministers in regard to reservation of private sector jobs, and the Knowledge Commission’s “surprise” that it had not been consulted before the minister’s announcement. The story argues against reservation in the private sector, “while they [the private sector] would be happy to explore various measures of affirmative action.” It argues that the constitution’s founding fathers had consciously not provided for private sector reservations. It praises the group of ministers working on private sector reservations for holding wide consultations with constitutional experts, and blames the human resource development (HRD) minister for not doing so, which could have “spared some of the acrimony that this divisive issue has already generated.” It says that “Singh did not even bother to inform the Knowledge Commission,” and calls it “the importunate nature of his stance.” It says that the “minister might have to repent” his action, now that the Election Commission had asked him questions “somewhat difficult to answer.”

The diagnostics in the editorial is the undesirability of making public policies without wider consultations with relevant experts and with a disregard to institutions the

National Knowledge Commission (NKC). The prognostics is the alarm about private sector reservations and the questionable constitutionality of the same. While opposing the policy, it suggests the solution of pursuing alternative affirmative action in place of the policy as proposed. The editorial directs itself towards the then minister, who is held to be personally responsible for the proposal, and holds that he might have to repent; and the prognostics is the alarm about private sector reservations – “moral panics” (Cricher, 2003). While the diagnostics is critical of the public policy, the prognostics is critical of the then Minister Arjun Singh (the “other”), calling his stance importunate, that is, annoying. The editorial is personalized towards the minister; but does not give any arguments that the minister may have put in the public domain in his own defense. It does not present any argument as to why the proposal is of the minister and not a public policy proposal before the government. The orientation of the narrative is negative toward the public policy; and uses a personalized framing device, as well as the framing device of “moral panics” about private sector reservations.

2. Date of publication: April 12, 2006. Broad area of public policy: social justice (OBC reservation). Editorial headline: “Arjuns’s aim.” Headline’s orientation towards the policy: Negative.

The editorial opens with the view that “Arjun Singh’s espousal of reservations” had ruffled both the academe and his government itself. It alleges that the minister’s statements had undermined the prime minister, and that the latter had been silent, out of his sense of disquiet. Thereafter, the editorial goes on to recall the “run-ins” that the minister has had with Narasimha Rao, “when he was prime minister.” It goes on to say that “some even suggest unrealized ambition as a significant motivating factor” for Arjun Singh being “tempted to engage in such brinkmanship.” It concludes that “Arjun Singh has ended up undermining the PM’s image as a reformer committed to the project of modernity.” That intent of modernity is undermined by increasing reservation, according to the editorial.

The diagnostics is the undermining of the prime minister - a reformer for modernity - by his own minister in the cabinet, who espouses reservations. The minister's past challenges to an earlier prime minister is used by way of evidence of his unrealized political ambition. The prognostics is the undermining of modernity itself, due to the public policy of reservation, which is said to have ruffled not just the government but the academe as well. The editorial seeks to drive a wedge between the prime minister and minister and does not present any arguments that the minister may have been advancing in his defense. It also does not explain to the reader as to how reservations undermined "modernity". By invoking "modernity" on one side, is the editorial using "reservation" as a proxy for "caste" on the other? Even as the editorial alludes to the collective responsibility in the cabinet system of governance, by the bounds of which the minister is expected to fall in line with the prime minister, it does not educate the reader on why the policy proposal before the government is that of the minister (the "other"). The orientation of the editorial narrative is negative towards the public policy; and, it uses a personalized framing device (negative, vis-à-vis the minister; and positive one of modernity, vis-à-vis the prime minister).

3. *Date of publication: April 20, 2006. Broad area of public policy: social justice (OBC reservation). Editorial headline: "Reservation Question for Congress." Headline's orientation towards the policy: Negative.*

The editorial calls the government a weak executive, because the cabinet ministers "have repeatedly gone off at a policy tangent," and the ruling party has a weak political authority. Giving instances of ministers giving unilateral statements, it says they get encouragement from "Arjun Singh who sought to present a fait accompli on quota extension." The editorial also accuses the ministers of "sometimes implicitly sometimes publicly, that their biggest loyalties lay outside the government and the party."

The diagnostics presented by the editorial is the perceived violation of the principle of collective responsibility of the cabinet system, rendering the government a weak executive. The prognostics is divided loyalties of ministers vis-à-vis the government (read:

the prime minister). The reservation issue is projected to be a “policy tangent,” in other words, not what the government intended but presented as *fait accompli* by its minister. The editorial is directed at Minister Arjun Singh (the “other”) as responsible for the state of affairs, but does not scrutinize any arguments that the minister may have advanced in the public domain in regard to the policy. The editorial does not educate the reader as to how a minister in a cabinet system of parliamentary democracy could present any *fait accompli* to the government and why the cabinet was not refusing to submit to the public policy proposal at all. The editorial hides more than it reveals when it alludes to the loyalties of some ministers to be lying outside the government and the party. The complexity of the issue is not simplified for the reader. The orientation of the editorial narrative is negative towards the public policy of reservation; and, the framing device used is personalized (negative, *vis-à-vis* the minister).

4. Date of publication: April 21, 2006. Broad area of public policy: social justice (OBC reservation). Editorial headline: “Better than quotas.” Headline’s orientation towards the policy: Negative.

The editorial cites the prime minister’s “suggestion” to the Confederation of Indian Industries, “on broad-basing employment by affirmative action,” and the industries’ encouraging response thereto. It mentions the advantage of flexibility that affirmative action has, according to it, over “pre-fixed quotas,” and how it is a “better marriage between business and welfare,” and would also not face the constitutional hurdles. It cites the example of America, where according to it, the “representation of women and minorities in education, employment and business, has increased because of affirmative action.” It says that university admissions award “additional points to students on the basis of gender, race, national origin, and so on.” JNU admissions are cited as an Indian example on the lines of affirmative action. It mentions that “institutional integrity being more in the US than here, leaving every institution to fix its own points system may create another black market,” and therefore advocates “hugely increasing supply of good education at all levels.”

The diagnostics is the need for models of voluntary affirmative action in the private sector as alternatives to the public policy of reservation. The prognostic is that reservation by law in the private sector can run into problems of constitutional vires, and therefore, increased supply of education alongside voluntary affirmative action are suggested as solutions. The editorial illustrates the issue by giving the example of the United States, where affirmative action is said to have increased representation of women and minorities. Another prognostics is the difficulty of copying the model, because it says there is more “institutional integrity” in the US than in India; however, no evidence is adduced to back this generalization, nor is any reference made to the counterfactual of institutional autonomy being affected. The orientation of the editorial narrative is negative towards the public policy; and it uses the framing device of alternative affirmative action, as well as the framing device of neo-liberal market-based supply side intervention.

5. Date of publication: April 29, 2006. Broad area of public policy: social justice (OBC reservation). Editorial headline: “Without reservations.” Headline’s orientation towards the policy: Negative.

The editorial blames the ongoing controversy on OBC reservation on Arjun Singh “arrogating to himself the power to make policy announcements” that should have been approved by the cabinet. It accuses the minister of precipitating “a series of confrontations,” within the cabinet between the government and industry and between the government and students. These confrontations are claimed to limit “the government’s capacity to forge consensus on a major social issue,” inhibit public-private partnership, and create “an absolutely needless paranoia about curtailed opportunities.” It accuses the minister of pre-empting any opposition by going public without taking the cabinet into confidence. The editorial calls the proposal “flawed implementation” of “making opportunities accessible to largest possible number of India’s citizens.” It holds the minister responsible for creating unease among students, and calls upon striking medical students to show sensitivity towards patients and not to be agitated by “Arjun Singh’s self-promotional follies.”

The diagnostics in the editorial is the violation of the norms of collective responsibility of the cabinet by the minister by going public on the proposal for reservation, which had led to avoidable conflicts at various levels. The prognostic is that the reservation proposal was a flawed implementation of opportunities to access higher education. The editorial is targeted at the minister, who is held responsible for the unease among students. The “othering” of the minister is clear, as he is projected as being driven by self-promotion. The editorial does little to simplify the complex issue for the reader – for instance, it does not make any reference to a constitutional amendment (93rd), which preceded the chain of events in April-May 2006. While the editorial points to three broad consequences of the manner in which the minister is said to have pre-emptively gone public with the proposal on reservation – namely, paranoia about curtailed opportunities, narrowing of the scope for forging consensus, and impact on public-private partnerships – it does not suggest, for the benefit of the reader, any solution for each of these issues or on how to retrieve the situation. The orientation of the editorial narrative is negative towards the public policy, and uses the framing device of conflict, as well as a personalized framing device (negative vis-à-vis the minister).

6. *Date of publication: May 12, 2006. Broad area of public policy: social justice (OBC reservation). Editorial headline: “Excellence and access.” The headline’s orientation towards the policy: Negative.*

The editorial supports the stand taken by a majority of the members of the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) to oppose reservation, and calls one of the minority member’s supports to reservation as only conditional. In calling it the “first measure” of NKC’s “institutional relevance,” it is implied that the government ought to take the commission’s views on reservation seriously. The editorial contrasts the minister’s “narrow” “political agenda” with the NKC fleshing out the fundamental agenda of “making education socially inclusive.” The editorial calls upon the NKC to give its suggestions for excellence in higher education, and making higher education more accessible.

The diagnostics in the editorial are the twin issues of ensuring excellence and access in higher education. The prognostics is that unlike the minister, who had a narrow political agenda, the NKC was addressing the more fundamental issues of socially inclusive education. The majority opinion in the NKC of opposing reservation is presented as an illustration of its institutional relevance. The motivational element of the editorial is directed towards the NKC to give suggestions for excellence and accessibility. The editorial does not, on its own, make any suggestions in regard to the diagnostics. It also does not demystify for the reader as to how the NKC's stand was one of making education socially inclusive, nor how the public policy of reservation would dilute excellence or merit. The orientation of the editorial narrative is negative towards the public policy; and, it uses the personalized framing device (negative towards the minister) and also the framing device of excellence or merit.

7. Date of publication: May 17, 2006. Broad area of public policy: social justice (OBC reservation). Editorial headline: "Minister as liability." Headline's orientation towards the policy: Negative.

The Editorial is virulently critical of Minister Arjun Singh for taking "unilateral control of a very important social policy issue," and attacks him personally for "snubbing the authority of his prime minister" with his "intemperate comments" on the views of NKC; of setting the government "on the path of confrontation with anyone who may have a point of view at variance with his." It calls upon the congressional leadership not to let the minister undermine the prime minister's office "casually." It calls the contrarian views as "well-meaning inputs from intellectuals." It accuses the minister of "breaching all norms of ministerial responsibility and parliamentary responsiveness."

The editorial presents the diagnostics of violation of the principle of collective responsibility of the cabinet in the parliamentary form of government. The prognostics is the perpetuation of confrontation or conflicts. The motivational element in the editorial is the call to the congressional party leadership to rein in the minister. The editorial concedes

that reservation was a very important social issue, but does not illustrate how the minister was controlling the issue, nor does it elucidate to the reader what the government could possibly do to see that the control over the issue remained collective and not with any individual member of the cabinet. It also plays up the issue of the political minister being in opposition to experts, who, by implication, are expected to know more than the minister. The orientation of the editorial narrative is negative towards the public policy; and the framing device used is personalized (negative vis-à-vis the minister).

8. Date of publication: May 26, 2006. Broad area of public policy: social justice (OBC reservation). Editorial headline: "Mind after knee-jerk." Headline's orientation towards the policy: Negative.

The editorial calls the quota decision an "unimaginative response of MPs" to create "constituency" based on the social justice argument. It expresses doubts that the government would have the resources to expand capacity to accommodate reservation or that the money could be "efficiently spent." It implores the prime minister to strengthen educational infrastructure, not only because of the quota, but for India to be a "growing knowledge hub," and India's future depends on upgrading infrastructure, and the nation didn't have to "repent at leisure" for the legislation "in haste."

The diagnostics in the editorial is the politicization of a measure of social justice. The prognostics is the strengthening of educational infrastructure so that the nation did not have to repent at leisure for what it calls hasty policy legislation. The ability to raise resources and efficiency in spending are the challenges to the prognostics. The motivational element of the editorial is directed at the prime minister to make the country a knowledge hub. The editorial does not amplify the grounds, other than political, on which the legislative approval of the policy was thought to be unimaginative. The reader is also not educated for a balanced understanding, the reason as to why the social justice argument was not applicable in deciding on the legislation. It does not also supplement its contention about raising public resources or expenditure thereof. The editorial also does

not demystify how indeed it was a hasty legislation. By suggesting the strengthening of infrastructure, however, the editorial seeks to find a way forward. The orientation of the editorial narrative is negative towards the public policy; and the framing device used in the narrative is that of conciliation.

Based on the above analysis, the framing devices used in the editorials pertaining to the different public policies is presented below for ease of comparison:

S. no.	Date	Public Policy Area	Orientation of Headlines	Orientation of Narratives	Framing Devices Used
1	April 11, 2006	Social Justice	Negative	Negative	a) Personalized b) Moral Panics
2	April 12, 2006	Social Justice	Negative	Negative	Personalized
3	April 20, 2006	Development	Neutral	Neutral	Conciliation
4	April 20, 2006	Social Justice	Negative	Negative	Personalized
5	April 21, 2006	Social Justice	Negative	Negative	a) Alternative Affirmative Action b) Neo-liberal
6	April 26, 2006	Economic Reforms	Neutral	Negative	Development
7	April 27, 2006	Development	Positive	Neutral	Conflict
8	April 29, 2006	Public Administration	Neutral	Neutral	Responsibility
9	April 29, 2006	Social Justice	Negative	Negative	a) Conflict b) Personalized
10	April 30, 2006	Public Administration	Negative	Negative	Centralization
11	April 20, 2006	Economic Reforms	Negative	Negative	Transparency
12	April 30, 2006	Economic Reforms	Negative	Negative	Neo-liberal
13	May 11, 2006	Social Justice	Negative	Negative	a) Personalized b) Merit
14	May 16, 2006	Economic Reforms	Positive	Positive	Development
15	May 17, 2006	Social Justice	Negative	Negative	Personalized
16	May 26, 2006	Social Justice	Negative	Negative	Conciliation

Reliability of identified frames

Frames identified in respect to editorials in the sample drawn from the four selected public policy areas – social justice, development, economic reforms, and public administration – were tested for reliability by approaching a former senior journalist to code each editorial independently. In order to maintain objectivity and an uninfluenced identification of media frame(s) by the coder, even though the definition used in respect to each frame (see Appendix) was shared, along with the freedom to inductively identify any other frame not in the list, the framing device actually identified in the study for each editorial was not disclosed to the coder. The frames identified by the independent coder for editorials in the sample are shown below:

S. no.	Date	Public Policy Area	Frames identified by the independent Coder
1	April 11, 2006	Social Justice	a)Personalized b)Alternative Affirmative Action
2	April 12, 2006	Social Justice	Personalized
3	April 20, 2006	Development	Responsibility
4	April 20, 2006	Social Justice	Personalized
5	April 21, 2006	Social Justice	a)Neo-liberal b)Moral Panics
6	April 26, 2006	Economic Reforms	Responsibility
7	April 27, 2006	Development	a)Conflict b)Responsibility
8	April 29,2006	Public Administration	Responsibility
9	April 29,2006	Social Justice	Personalized
10	April 30,2006	Public Administration	Responsibility
11	April 20,2006	Economic Reforms	Transparency
12	April 30,2006	Economic Reforms	Responsibility
13	May 11, 2006	Social Justice	Personalized
14	May 16,2006	Economic Reforms	Social Justice
15	May 17, 2006	Social Justice	Personalized
16	May 26, 2006	Social Justice	Responsibility

For testing inter-coder reliability of frames identified in the study, vis-à-vis the independent coder's identification of frames, Krippendorff's nominal alpha-reliability (Krippendorff, 2011) was used. Krippendorff's nominal alpha-reliability coefficient, for the purposes of this study, is the estimated difference between perfect reliability between the coders in respect of the identification of frames (i.e., the ideal condition of $\alpha=1$) and the ratio of the observed disagreement between coders to the disagreement expected when the coding is attributable to chance rather than to the properties of the frames. The coefficient ranges from $\alpha=0$, when there is no inter-coder reliability and $\alpha=1$, when there is perfect reliability, which would be a rare ideal condition. Krippendorff's alpha-reliability coefficient, in respect to the inter-coder reliability of frames identified by the independent coder and frames identified in this study, is found to be a significant 0.6, as shown in Table 2. Interestingly, the inter-coder reliability of frames identified in respect of the policy area of social justice alone shows a higher Krippendorff's alpha-reliability coefficient of $\alpha=0.73$, as shown in Table 3, implying stronger agreement in respect to the "personalized" frame building by *The Indian Express* in editorials relating to social justice policies.

Conclusions

Headlines, as well as editorial narratives, pertaining to the public policy on OBC reservation, classified as social justice in this paper, tended to be uniformly negative towards that public policy. Headlines and narratives pertaining to editorials on public policy issues of development were either positively or neutrally oriented towards the relevant policy issue in the sample. Headlines and narratives pertaining to editorials on public policy issues pertaining to public administration were either neutral or negative towards the relevant policy issue in the sample. Headlines and narratives of editorials on public policy issues pertaining to economic reforms were neutral, negative, or positive, depending on the policy issue in the sample. While it is obvious that, where the policy decision or issue is not in congruence with the editorial stand of the newspaper, headlines

or narratives would tend to be negative; there is a predominantly adversarial orientation in the editorial stand of the newspaper, vis-à-vis different public policy areas.

Headlines are pointers to the contents of the narratives that follow. This is even truer for editorial headlines, which we find tend to indicate the orientation of the narratives that follow. All headlines in our sample, barring two, showed the orientation of their respective narrative. Even in the remaining editorials, there is no strong contradiction - in one, the headline is positive while the narrative is neutral, and in the other, the headline is neutral and the narrative is negative.

While dealing with frame devices, it is useful to know that “the same events make different kinds of sense depending upon the frame applied” (Van Gorp, 2007, p.63). It is found that the framing device used in the editorial narratives pertaining to the public policy area of social justice (OBC reservation) was predominantly “personalized” – even though other framing devices of “moral panics,” “alternative affirmative action,” “conflict,” and “neo-liberal” market-based arguments are also found to have been used in editorials on the same policy issue. In the editorials relating to the public policy area of development, framing devices of conciliation as well as conflict are found to have been used, depending on the issue in the sample. “Responsibility” and “centralization” are found to be the framing devices used in editorials relating to the public policy area of public administration, depending on the policy issue in the sample. Of the four sample editorials on the public policy area of economic reforms, two used the framing device of “development,” one used “neo-liberal” approach as the framing device, and the other used “transparency” as the framing device. It may be clarified that there is no inconsistency or contradiction in the narrative being negatively oriented towards a particular public policy and the framing device(s) used. This is so because the editorial narrative reflects the standpoint of the newspaper vis-à-vis the manner in which a specific policy decision was taken or policy issue dealt with by the state or its organs.

It may also be stated that even though the inductive framing (Matthes, 2009) approach has been followed in this paper, in order to identify the specific framing device(s) used in respect of each editorial in the different policy areas, a few framing devices used in our sample editorials are identifiable as “generic” (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), such as the frames of “conflict,” and “responsibility.” Indeed, the “personalized” framing device is also at a broader level, one of “responsibility” – the individual being held responsible under the “characterization” (Gray, 2006) (blame) frame. While characterization is resorted to by the protagonists and antagonists or stakeholders in describing each other, characterization by the media itself deserves to be distinguished from other forms of characterization. Apart from this distinction, the “personalized” frame has been retained separately in this paper, also in order to distinguish it from systemic “responsibility.” A third reason for retaining a distinct personalized framing device is because the framing in the editorial narratives on the public policy of OBC reservation, in our sample, go beyond mere characterization or “othering,” in which the personality of the “other” becomes the proxy for the policy itself, that is, criticism of the personality becomes a substitute for criticizing the public policy.

It is also found that there was no use of the personalized framing device in any of the editorial narratives on the other public policies. For example, there is no personalization of responsibility for the crisis in the power sector, where the government policies are blamed, and no individual is targeted for personal blame. The failure to manage expectations in its credit policy announcements by RBI is also not attributed to the governor of RBI, but to the systemic tradition. The leftist chief minister of West Bengal is praised for his commitment to economic reforms, but his counterpart in Kerala, belonging to the same political party, is not criticized personally for not subscribing to economic reforms – the narrative merely mentions him as a “hard-liner” – it is the State Government of Kerala, which is blamed for not taking the cue from West Bengal.

We also find evidence in the sample that several narratives using the personalized framing device could also be interpreted through the frame of “collective responsibility” (under the cabinet system of government); and similarly, an editorial (Without

reservations, 2006) simultaneously favors “making opportunities accessible to largest possible number of India’s citizens” (social justice frame), and criticizes the minister for creating unease among students (conflict frame). There is no evidence to suggest wide similarity of use of frames by the newspaper in editorializing across public policies. Only two of the frames have been used across editorials – for example, the framing device of conciliation has been used both in respect to editorials on public policy in social justice, as well as the public policy of development. Similarly, the conflict frame has been used in editorials on social justice as well as development. As mentioned earlier, the personalized frame has not been used in any of the other public policies, but then, all editorials in respect to the other public policies are not as strident as the editorials relating to the social justice issue of OBC reservation are found to be. There are, therefore, very weak similarities and stronger differences between the editorials relating to public policy on the social justice issue of OBC reservation, and those relating to the other public policies.

Limitation

The study suffers from the limitation of a small size of the sample of only 16 editorials, even though the statistics used for testing the inter-coder reliability is applicable for small as well as large samples (Krippendorff, 2011). A further limitation is the use of only one newspaper. Use of frames may also be influenced by the fact that in comparison to other public policy issues, the issue of OBC reservation had acquired greater salience in public, in the media, as well as in the policy community during the period of the study.

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Appendix

Definitions of the inductively identified frames are given below:

I. *The Responsibility Frame*: I have confined the scope of the responsibility frame to systemic accountability and expectation from the government and its instrumentalities, administrative action, and attribution of responsibility of a collective nature. Its distinction from the personalized frame has already been mentioned above. Its distinction from the personalized frame would be obvious from II below.

II. *The Personalized Frame*: In framing literature, one of the generic frames used by researchers is that of “responsibility” – who or what is to be blamed or characterized as responsible for an issue dealt with in the narrative. I have digressed from prior research, for the reason that I feel systemic responsibility (holding the government or its agencies responsible for administrative or other action, for example) needs to be distinguished from individual responsibility; and hence, a better representation of discourses pertaining exclusively to the latter ought to be a distinct frame, which for any better term, I have coined in my research as the “personalized frame.” The personalized frame may be used in a variety of ways, in praise or in criticizing key policy actors.

III. *The Moral Panics Frame*: “Moral Panics” is a key sociological concept dealing with collective behavior and social deviance. In media literature, it has been used to refer to the media’s portrayal of the concept of deviance and behavior – for example, warning of new dangers (mainly imagined) in order to alarm the reader. There is a perceived threat to social order in the narrative, dramatic narratives with a strong moral content – for example, a threat to something held sacred – the imminent danger of quality and excellence

crashing due to reservation, or say the imminent danger of reservation being extended to the private sector and thereby bringing down efficiency and growth.

IV. *The Conciliation Frame*: While the alternative affirmative action frame represents discourses which seek to suggest policy alternatives favoring affirmative action other than reservation, which may or may not end acrimony or conflict in society arising out of a policy issue, all such discourses where the effort is to end acrimony or conflicts by reconciling differences would be a distinct category by themselves. Conciliatory moves may not have elements of affirmative action, but both sides to a dispute ought to be persuaded in conciliation efforts to come to some agreement to end the conflict – whether they do so or not is a different matter. I have called frames representing discourses that end or seek to end protest amicably and to move on consensually, reconciling competing interests, as the conciliation frame.

V. *The Alternative Affirmative Action Frame*: In theory, one of the functions of frames is to provide a solution to the problem or issue at hand. In the debate on reservation, several discourse narratives, as well as headlines, suggested alternative policy approaches and formulations to the vexed issue of reservation for the OBC. I have categorized such discourses as being represented by a distinct frame, which, in the absence of any other appropriate term, is being called the alternative affirmative action frame. In looking for this frame, it may be useful to look at arguments on how such alternatives to policy are better than reservations, as one of the choices that needs to be given consideration by policy makers, as suggestions from friends and foes alike of policy makers, and so on. It needs to be kept in mind that the suggested course of action has elements of affirmative action built into it, that is, it is not just any other solution but one which advocates affirmative action, and hence the term “alternative affirmative action.”

VI. *The Neoliberal Frame*: All discourses are essentially ideological, and therefore an exercise in influencing the reader by playing up preferred ideological meanings. Several discourses pertaining to the policy of reservation have used the neoliberal market-driven framework, that is, that markets are more efficient in finding solutions to policy riddles, that competition is a prerequisite for ensuring efficiency, that market outcomes are decided

by forces of demand and supply, that reservation skews and distorts markets for education and is also inefficient, that private sector could play a dominant role in education, that access to education could be solved by interventions on the supply side, and doing away with controls which inhibit investment in education. These arguments in discourses indicated the neoliberal underpinning of ideology and hence the classification.

VII. *The Development Frame*: The term pertains to the meaning being conveyed of development in all societal spheres, including economic development through different strategies, including reforms of the existing institutional or process reforms.

VIII. *The Conflict Frame*: The conflict frame embraces a range of emotions and events – protests, violence, taking to the streets, police action, agitations, strikes, sloganeering, calls for any or all of such actions, and a certain stridency relevant to the disagreements and differences or disputes relating to the policy issue. Even avoidance of conflict could be using a conflict frame if it does not offer a solution for conciliation. Conflict frames radiate acrimony and/or the threat of the same. I have categorized such discourse units and headlines which convey the perceived reality and embedded meanings of conflict as being represented by the conflict frame.

IX. *The Centralization Frame*: Narratives that imply the centralization of power and weakening of decentralized institutional or policy structures could be interpreted as using the frame of centralization.

X. *The Transparency Frame*: Narratives that embed meanings advocating openness of institutions and systems of policymaking and strengthen the argument in favor of transparency in procedures are good candidates for the use of the frame of transparency.

XI. *The Merit Frame*: In order to look for the perceived reality of merit in a discourse, we look at the symbols of merit used in headlines or textual narrative – association with elite institutions, ability to compete and access such institutions, arguments for efficiency, perceived fairness, equality of opportunity, or objectivity in processes of selection, aspirational status, and so on – for both obvious as well as embedded presence. Is merit presented as the norm and caste the deviance in discourses? Sometimes, the argument for

merit is couched as advocating quality of institutions and their excellence, the need to have competitive edge in a knowledge society, and so on.

XII. *The Social Justice Frame*: This frame represents discourses that highlight issues of discrimination, injustice, inequalities, demands for equity, human rights, and so on. The frame is equally applicable where all or any of these issues are lamented or criticized. Indeed, advocacy of reservation is in itself a social justice issue, praised by supporters and criticized by opponents of the policy.

XIII. *The Miscellaneous Frame*: Discourses that could not be represented by any of the foregoing frames have been classified by me as belonging to the genre of the miscellaneous frame. The temptation to classify discourse units amenable to multiple frames needs to be resisted, for as long as it is possible to identify any dominant frame from among the competing frames pertaining to that discourse unit. It is only where no attribution to any of the frames is clearly possible have I counted those as belonging to this genre of miscellaneous frame.

Table 1 All Editorials appearing in *The Indian Express, Delhi, April-May, 2006*

S.No.	Date	Heading	Broad Thematic Area	Issue
1	April 1, 2006	Bofors and after	Public Administration	Policy Issue
2	April 1, 2006	Profit from loss	Politics	Policy Issue
3	April 2, 2006	Why on earth?	Public Administration	Policy Issue
4	April 2, 2006	Convertible stance	Economic Reforms	Policy Issue
5	April 4, 2006	Nuke and cranny	Development	Policy Issue
6	April 4, 2006	Health of ayurveda	Public Administration	Policy Issue
7	April 5, 2006	Can't bank on them	Economic Reforms	Policy Issue
8	April 5, 2006	Merits of a hike	Public Administration	Policy Issue
9	April 6, 2006	Delhi plays games	Public Administration	Episodic Issue
10	April 6, 2006	Procuring credibility	Public Administration	Policy Issue
11	April 7, 2006	Narrow caste-ing	Miscellaneous	Policy Issue
12	April 7, 2006	Mumbai as Meerut	Public Administration	Policy Issue
13	April 8, 2006	Quota quotient	Social Justice	Policy Issue
14	April 8, 2006	Party or NGO?	Politics	Episodic Issue
15	April 9, 2006	Fight, but talk	Politics	Policy Issue

Table 1 All Editorials appearing in *The Indian Express, Delhi*, April-May, 2006 (Contd.)

S.No.	Date	Heading	Broad Thematic Area	Issue
16	April 9, 2006	Know thyself	Social Justice	Policy Issue
17	April 11, 2006	What's left of opposition	Politics	Episodic Issue
18	April 11, 2006	Reservations - over Arjun	Social Justice	Policy Issue
19	April 12, 2006	Pay for it	Economic Reforms	Policy Issue
20	April 12, 2006	Arjun's aim	Social Justice	Policy Issue
21	April 13, 2006	Witness a prosecutor	Miscellaneous	Policy Issue
22	April 13, 2006	Burning desire	Public Administration	Episodic Issue
23	April 14, 2006	Excellence and courage	Miscellaneous	Episodic Issue
24	April 14, 2006	Go-go ban	Public Administration	Policy Issue
25	April 15, 2006	Height of politics	Development	Policy Issue
26	April 15, 2006	George, grounded	Politics	Episodic Issue
27	April 16, 2006	India Bachao Andolan	Development	Policy Issue
28	April 16, 2006	Masjid and message	Public Administration	Episodic Issue
29	April 17, 2006	Best numbers game	Public Administration	Policy Issue
30	April 17, 2006	Modi's best friend:Soz	Development	Episodic Issue
31	April 19, 2006	Sop story	Politics	Policy Issue
32	April 19, 2006	Time to move on	Development	Policy Issue
33	April 20, 2006	How creditable a policy?	Economic Reforms	Policy Issue
34	April 20, 2006	Question for Congress	Social Justice	Policy Issue
35	April 21, 2006	Better than quotas	Social Justice	Policy Issue
36	April 21, 2006	Rare Bareli	Politics	Episodic Issue
37	April 22, 2006	Road to hope	Development	Policy Issue
38	April 22, 2006	Gyanendra's buddies	External Affairs	Episodic Issue
39	April 23, 2006	Gyanendra: the end?	External Affairs	Episodic Issue
40	April 23, 2006	Lights out	Development	Episodic Issue
41	April 25, 2006	Still a royal mess	External Affairs	Episodic Issue
42	April 25, 2006	BJP's Mr Possible	Politics	Episodic Issue
43	April 26, 2006	Seeing Dabhol	Economic Reforms	Policy Issue
44	April 26, 2006	Powerplay, screenplay	External Affairs	Policy Issue
45	April 27, 2006	Rain gain	Development	Policy Issue

Table 1 All Editorials appearing in *The Indian Express*, Delhi, April-May, 2006 (Contd.)

S.No.	Date	Heading	Broad Thematic Area	Issue
46	April 27, 2006	Iron hand	Politics	Episodic Issue
47	April 28, 2006	Big dad, small vision	External Affairs	Policy Issue
48	April 28, 2006	Policy run riot	Public Administration	Episodic Issue
49	April 29, 2006	Without reservations	Social Justice	Policy Issue
50	April 29, 2006	Who lit the fire?	Public Administration	Policy Issue
51	April 30, 2006	Behind the scam	Economic Reforms	Policy Issue
52	April 30, 2006	Don't do a bad job	Public Administration	Policy Issue
53	May 2, 2006	Telling the Taliban	External Affairs	Policy Issue
54	May 2, 2006	Sloppy firsts	Miscellaneous	Episodic Issue
55	May 3, 2006	Be Left & be right	Politics	Episodic Issue
56	May 3, 2006	Rehab, a re-look	Development	Policy Issue
57	May 4, 2006	What Doda derails	Public Administration	Policy Issue
58	May 4, 2006	The Vadodara test	Public Administration	Episodic Issue
59	May 5, 2006	Persian powerplay	External Affairs	Policy Issue
60	May 5, 2006	Subcontinental drift	External Affairs	Policy Issue
61	May 6, 2006	Old query on young	Politics	Episodic Issue
62	May 6, 2006	Threats won't work	Miscellaneous	Episodic Issue
63	May 7, 2006	Sugar and spice	Economic Reforms	Policy Issue
64	May 7, 2006	Back from the brink	Public Administration	Policy Issue
65	May 9, 2006	Cereals in basket case	Public Administration	Policy Issue
66	May 9, 2006	Groping in the dark	Development	Policy Issue
67	May 10, 2006	Another great game?	External Affairs	Policy Issue
68	May 10, 2006	Reason's bench mark	Development	Policy Issue
69	May 11, 2006	Excellence and access	Social Justice	Policy Issue
70	May 11, 2006	Poll vaults	Politics	Episodic Issue
71	May 12, 2006	Everybody profits	Politics	Policy Issue
72	May 12, 2006	Let Sehwag speak	Miscellaneous	Episodic Issue
73	May 13, 2006	It all adds up	Politics	Episodic Issue
74	May 13, 2006	Court as sanctuary	Miscellaneous	Episodic Issue
75	May 14, 2006	Jogic postures	Politics	Episodic Issue
76	May 14, 2006	Map these polls	Politics	Episodic Issue
77	May 16, 2006	A shocking silence	Public Administration	Episodic Issue
78	May 16, 2006	Rs 1 lakh edge	Economic Reforms	Episodic Issue
79	May 17, 2006	Illegal eagles	Politics	Episodic Issue
80	May 17, 2006	Minister as liability	Social Justice	Policy Issue
81	May 18, 2006	Ajmal's maths	Politics	Episodic Issue

Table 1 All Editorials appearing in *The Indian Express, Delhi*, April-May, 2006 (Contd.)

S.No.	Date	Heading	Broad Thematic Area	Issue
82	May 18, 2006	Snarls in safety net	Social Justice	Policy Issue
83	May 19, 2006	Code, Indian	Miscellaneous	Policy Issue
84	May 19, 2006	End of endings	Public Administration	Episodic Issue
85	May 20, 2006	Beyond borders	Development	Episodic Issue
86	May 20, 2006	Stock taking	Economic Reforms	Episodic Issue
87	May 21, 2006	Calm down	Economic Reforms	Episodic Issue
88	May 21, 2006	Nepal rushes ahead	External Affairs	Episodic Issue
89	May 23, 2006	Misrule of law	Politics	Episodic Issue
90	May 23, 2006	To know & to differ	Social Justice	Policy Issue
91	May 24, 2006	Two years, too lost	Public Administration	Policy Issue
92	May 24, 2006	Process in pieces	External Affairs	Episodic Issue
93	May 25, 2006	Grain of graft	Public Administration	Policy Issue
94	May 25, 2006	Politics of sympathy	Public Administration	Episodic Issue
95	May 26, 2006	Mind after knee-jerk	Social Justice	Policy Issue
96	May 26, 2006	Gujarat's asmita?	Miscellaneous	Episodic Issue
97	May 27, 2006	Round table roulette	Public Administration	Episodic Issue
98	May 27, 2006	Terms of reform	Public Administration	Episodic Issue
99	May 28, 2006	Amarinder da Code	Miscellaneous	Episodic Issue
100	May 28, 2006	Crooks and countries	Economic Reforms	Policy Issue
101	May 30, 2006	No longer us vs them	Economic Reforms	Episodic Issue
102	May 30, 2006	Finetune prescription	Social Justice	Policy Issue
103	May 31, 2006	In a brinjal soup	Development	Policy Issue
104	May 31, 2006	Some reservations	Social Justice	Policy Issue

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