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# Bringing Them "Out of the Shadows": Analyzing the Movement to Reframe the Immigration Policy Narrative in Utah

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#### **Abstract**

The U.S. has approximately 11.5 million undocumented immigrants residing within its borders. Yet, the federal government has been unable to pass legislation addressing this issue. However, in 2010, an ideologically diverse group of individuals in Utah came together to craft a policy narrative they hoped would inform future immigration reform. These individuals held leadership roles in a variety of economic, political, sociocultural, and religious organizations resulting in *The Utah Compact*. Our research asks: Under what conditions did this group reframe the policy narrative? How did this reframing lead to the passage of Utah's own immigration policy reform? We find that the context and alternative framing of immigration engaged in by proponents shifted the discussion in Utah from an "enforcement only" approach to an economic and humanitarian approach which resulted in the passage of a state-level guest worker program while also influencing the policy narrative at the federal level.

Keywords: Immigration, Policy, Social Movements, Utah, Policy Narratives, Policy Framing

# 1. Introduction

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) estimates that the U.S. has approximately 11.5 million undocumented immigrants residing within its borders (Hoefer, Rytina, and Baker 2012). For several years, the federal government has been unable to pass legislation on this issue, proposing various integration and legalization measures that have all failed to take effect. At the same time, pre-existing policies subjecting undocumented immigrants to deportation have accelerated under the current administration (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera 2013) and, when combined with the most recent economic recession, are considered possible explanations for why the level of undocumented immigration to the U.S. has declined since 2008 (Passell, Cohn, and Gonzalez-Barrera 2013). This decline in unauthorized immigration is particularly concerning to industries reliant on low-skill, foreign-born labor, as productivity levels in fields such as agriculture and hospitality face steep declines amidst a substantial reduction in immigrant labor (Gans 2008; Zahniser, Hertz, Dixon, and Rimmer 2012). Given the uncertainty of the future of undocumented immigration policy and the impact of the most recent economic recession, one of the most divisive issues surrounding immigration is whether to allow those without documentation to stay or to increase efforts designed to remove them from the country (Dimock, Doherty, and Suls 2013). While the president's recent executive action shields up to 5 million undocumented immigrants, this maneuver has been subjected to withering critique and legal challenges. It is also important to note that the president's executive action can be revoked in two years when a new president takes office.

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Further, even if President Obama's executive action survives legal challenges and is not revoked by the next president, there would still exist over 6 million undocumented immigrants who are not covered by the executive order. As a result of federal legislative inaction, states began crafting state-level policies to deal with immigration. Most notably were Arizona's SB-1070 enforcement-only legislation in 2010 and Utah's HB-116 in 2011, as these were the first two major pieces of state-level legislation that addressed the entire population of undocumented immigrants within their state's borders. While Arizona implemented a more draconian approach aimed at reducing the undocumented population by increasing local enforcement of federal immigration statutes and criminalizing any violations, the tactic embraced by the state of Utah was dramatically different. Despite the similarity in political orientation between Arizona and Utah, the latter passed legislation completely opposite to that of the former. Understanding why this occurred necessitates close examination of the "nuts and bolts" of policy-making.

## 1.1 The Utah Compact and Utah Solution

In the spring of 2010, a diverse group of individuals representing an assortment of local and state organizations came together to craft a policy narrative they hoped would inform and shape future immigration reform legislation. These individuals held leadership roles in distinct economic, political, sociocultural, and religious organizations. The result of this collaboration was a simple, one page document that participants entitled "The Utah Compact." 5 What made this group so unique was the ideological diversity of the participants who represented numerous interests typically at odds with one another in the political arena. Throughout the drafting process, the Utah Compact gained the support of prominent leaders from the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce, United Way, current and former mayors and governors, attorney generals and state officials, as well as Episcopalian, Catholic, and Evangelical Lutheran Dioceses (Utah Compact 2013). While The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), a prominent institution in the state of Utah, was not an official signer of the Utah Compact, they did release a statement in support of the Compact on the day of its public release (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2010). On November 11, 2010, supporters came together publically for the first time at a media event and urged public support of the five core principles encoded in the Compact (Utah Compact 2013). They promoted an online, grassroots petition on the Utah Compact's website allowing citizens to both sign-on in support as well as share the petition with friends and family. In January 2011, the Utah Legislature convened with an eye on Arizona's SB-1070. Proponents of the Utah Compact began to meet with legislators and testify in committee hearings regarding a proposed suite of immigration reform bills consistent with the principles of the Utah Compact. Many lawmakers from the Republicandominated statehouse were receptive to the Compact, leading them to craft what became known as the "Utah Solution."

This package of legislation included HB-116, which authorized the state to designate all current undocumented residents as quest workers, HB-469, which authorized Utah citizen residents, including employers, to sponsor undocumented immigrants, and HB-466, which established a partnership between Utah and the Mexican state of Nuevo Leon to allow the flow of foreign-born guest workers into Utah's economy (Romboy 2011). Additionally, HB-497, an enforcement bill, was also passed as part of this suite of bills. While the Utah Solution contained many novel policy provisions, it was never guaranteed success. Republican legislators were outraged at some of the provisions in the bills that they viewed as amnesty-like. Indeed, Senator Stephen Sandstrom, a vocal proponent of an enforcement-only measure (e.g., HB-497), stated he was "disgusted" by the progression of these bills and that they would be a "tragedy" which would "open the floodgates" to more illegal immigration to Utah (Montero 2011a). Tea Party advocates warned Utah's Republican governor, Gary Herbert, not to sign the bills, while Representative Christopher Herrod claimed signing the bills would be "political suicide" for Herbert (Montero 2011b). In the end, the Utah Solution bills all passed successfully with significant bipartisan support and were signed into law by Governor Herbert on March 15, 2011 (Montero 2011c). Understanding how the highly conservative state of Utah passed comprehensive immigration reform, dubbed by the current administration as a "model for the nation," (Canham 2013) presents us with a unique opportunity to examine how carefully crafted narratives can effectuate policy successes in unpredictable ways.

<sup>5</sup>This document espoused five core principles: 1) Immigration is a federal issue that should be handled by the federal government 2) Law enforcement resources should focus on criminal activities rather than civil code violations 3) Families, and keeping families together, are important 4) Acknowledgment of the invaluable role immigrants play in Utah's economy 5) Utah must adopt a humane approach for dealing with the immigrants that are already embedded within our communities (Utah Compact 2013).

#### 2. Literature Review

Previous research on immigration policy formation has analyzed the ways in which immigration interest groups have formed coalitions around particular narratives (Desilver 2013; Lakoff and Ferguson 2006). However, contemporary policy debates as well as media accounts have significantly narrowed the narratives around which immigration reform advocates can mobilize (Cisneros 2008; Fryberg et al. 2012; Gale 2004; Wallace and Figueroa 2012). Within this context, however, reframing efforts have taken place in several states with mixed success. Before turning to our analysis we review these processes in order to provide context for the current study.

#### 2.1 Coalition Formation

Nineteenth century American essayist Charles Dudley Warner once quipped, "politics makes for strange bedfellows" and perhaps none stranger than with immigration policy (Warner and Beecher 2008:32). Within both major parties in the U.S. there exist a number of different factions, each of them an ideological or cultural strain joined together with other factions in the pursuit of desired policies. While federal politics may have grown increasingly partisan in recent years, immigration appears to be an issue that disrupts traditional partisan coalitions (Desilver 2013). Instead of a consistent agenda within a single political party, immigration politics represent a "complex mélange of social, economic, cultural, and security concerns — with conservatives and progressives split in different ways with different positions" (Lakoff and Ferguson 2006:6). As such, scholars must move beyond traditional partisan-based means of understanding policy debates and outcomes and focus instead on the emergence of ideologically diverse groups and their impact on framing outcomes in ways that resonate with the interests of a broad range of stakeholders. Indeed, previous research affirms the importance of interest group dynamics in predicting immigration policy outcomes (Facchini, Mayda, and Mishra 2011; Newman, Johnston, Strickland, and Citrin 2012; Robbins 2010). Laissez-faire think tanks (e.g., Cato) have consistently espoused more pro-immigrant sentiments than their more culturally conservative counterparts (e.g., The Heritage Foundation) (Langerak 2010). Religious conservatives, including adherents from minority religions, (e.g., The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints), also appear to be more inclined to advocate and support pro-immigration frames (Knoll 2009). These nontraditional, ideologically diverse interest groups appear to be splintering the traditional Democratic-Republican coalitions and forging new alignments to craft a counter-narrative to the anti-immigrant narrative espousing fear, threats, and subtle bigotry.

#### 2.2 The Contemporary Immigration Narrative

One of the most important aspects of the contemporary immigration policy narrative has been the obsolescence of the grand metanarrative (de Oliver 2011; Lakoff and Ferguson 2006). Historically, anti-immigrant forces were galvanized by the creation and maintenance of in-group and out-group contrasts that were explicitly based on race and ethnicity through the process of othering: creating "a national standard of 'us' against which a foreign 'them' can be recognized" whereby competition over scarce resources is threatened by the foreign other (de Oliver 2011: 978). Broadly speaking, this strategy of division along the lines of racial or ethnic origins is no longer considered an acceptable form of political dialog. Instead, current anti-immigrant proponents have had to find new ways to confer privilege unto themselves at the expense of immigrants in order to justify exclusionary policies. Contemporary divisions often come in the form of granting legal and social membership through formal citizenship and the othering of undocumented immigrants who lack this designation (de Oliver 2006). This is not to suggest that *implicit* appeal of cultural, racial, or ethnic othering is not an important factor. Indeed, research on color-blind racism reveals how benefactors of white privilege have succeeded in crafting and reproducing negative stereotypes about minorities without explicit appeals to racial inferiority (Bonilla-Silva 2013). Throughout the literature, there are also indications that cultural concerns based on racial or ethnic animus persist, including attitudes about job loss, work ethic, and job security (Brader, Valentino, and Jardina 2009; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Martinez and Ramirez 2009). The growing Latino population in particular has been constructed as a threat by authors and pundits who suggest out-of-control illegal immigration and a lack of cultural assimilation will lead to a "re-conquest" of the American southwest by Mexicans and Mexican-Americans loyal to their ancestral homeland (Chavez 2008). These examples may explain why groups vested in framing an anti-immigration narrative have been successful, namely, because they effectively mobilize existing biases and stereotypes against racial and ethnic others. This issue of othering and legal status often confounds racial and ethnic profiles with criminality in the dominant immigration narrative (de Oliver 2011). Yet existing research finds that immigration is not connected to rising levels of crime but rather changing perceptions and narratives regarding who is a criminal (Sampson 2008; Short and Magana 2002).

For those who oppose immigration, couching language in terms of law and order makes it "psychologically easier to discriminate against members of that ethnic group because one can do so under the guiding principle of being 'anticrime,' as opposed to 'anti-Mexican' or 'anti-Latino'" (Short and Magana 2002:702-3). This enables a non-prejudicial path for discrimination against immigrants in general and undocumented workers in particular. The media has been particularly complicit in shaping dominant immigrant-as-criminal narratives (Cisneros 2008; Fryberg et al. 2012; Gale 2004; Wallace and Figueroa 2012). It is not uncommon to see images of border agents putting Mexicans in handcuffs and pushing them into large vans, images which frame and contextualize undocumented immigrants as dangerous criminals, terrorists, or pollutants that need to be contained and removed (Cisneros 2008).

### 2.3 Contemporary Attempts at Reframing the Policy Narrative

As the above review indicates, advocates on both side of the immigration policy debate have been successful at creating a variety of narratives for framing their own positions. Yet, the failure to pass any significant reform at the federal level indicates that creating a policy narrative that generates bipartisan support and policy change remains a challenge. However, limited meso level research indicates that several successful policy battles have taken place at the local level (Strunk and Leitner 2013; Walker and Leitner 2011). In most instances, these examples appear to rely on interest group cooperation in the face of an unfavorable status quo thereby achieving policy success (Robbins 2010). For instance, several states have chosen to either opt-out of federal programs responsible for enabling local law enforcement to capture undocumented immigrants for deportation or modify the program to meet their own community needs and resources. This holds especially true when there are increasing political, economic, and social pressures associated with immigration (Boeckelman 1992; Boushey and Luedtke 2011; Newton and Adams 2009). Activists in Washington DC and various communities throughout northern Virginia and Maryland constructed narratives to support their refusal to comply with policy requirements. This narrative pointed to lack of public safety due to unwillingness of immigrants to interact with police, exclusion of immigrants from the broader society, fear within immigrant communities, and the destructive consequences of family separation (Strunk and Leitner 2012).

In another example displayed during the 2008 Republican caucuses in Iowa, voters were subjected to a barrage of anti-immigrant sentiments as Republican candidates, influenced by candidate Tom Tancredo's (R-CO) harsh anti-immigrant views, attempted to "out Tancredo one another" (Knoll, Redlawsk, and Sanborn 2011:2). Yet, no matter how much the candidates rallied against undocumented immigrants, the salience of the issue did not resonate with Republican caucus-goers except for those who already regarded the issue as "very important" (Knoll et al. 2011). Furthermore, ethnic narratives that took aim at undocumented Hispanic immigrants, as opposed to the more general undocumented population, had a significant impact only with those Republicans who already regarded the issue of illegal immigration as "important" (Knoll 2009). This nuance is significant because while most antiimmigration activism is fueled by highly vocal and extremely passionate members of the political right, not all conservatives are anti-immigration activists. Advocates looking to create more inclusive legislation should look beyond party identification or ideological background and may benefit by reframing their policy narrative. When it comes to conservatives in Utah and perceptions toward immigrants, the LDS church may shape larger societal views and policy narratives in unique ways. For instance, when LDS church leaders first relocated to Utah, the state was a part of Mexico's sparsely populated northern territory (Hardy 1969). Only after the Mexican-American War did Utah become a part of the U.S., rejoining a country where many looked to escape religious persecution. More recently, many LDS church members serve missions throughout Latin America. According to official statistics from the LDS Church, close to one-third of missionary work takes place in Mexico and South America (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 2014). Spending long periods of time in Latin America during missions is also associated with reduced intergroup anxiety and lower negative stereotyping toward Mexicans (Ridge and Montoya 2013). This international mission work may also explain why Utah ranks 5th in the nation in mixed-nativity marriages, where one spouse is U.S.-born and the other born in a foreign country (Davidson 2013). Furthermore, Hispanics are one of the fastest growing subsections of the LDS population, who constitute one in ten converts in the U.S. alone (Pew Research 2009). When it comes specifically to undocumented immigrants, LDS missionaries take a "don't ask" approach when talking to potential immigrant Latino converts about the LDS faith. As one missionary put it, "the Lord doesn't look at documentation" (Gonzalez 2009). Therefore, it should not be surprising that Utahans in general may have a more relaxed attitude and less biased perceptions when it comes to immigration.

However, while there are historic and religious reasons that may help to explain Utah's immigration legalization efforts, in 2005 a new movement in Utah attempted to shift the immigration policy narrative from inclusive to exclusion in keeping with the federal tone and partisan politics. Competing narratives were deployed specifically over the issue of driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants (Stewart 2012; Stewart and Jameson 2013). Advocates of issuing driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants based their arguments on statistics indicating the collective benefits when everyone is insured. Those opposed to issuing licenses to unauthorized immigrants used an "apocalyptic narrative by warning of crisis, utilize[ing] passionate emotions, and employ[ing] strong personification" (Stewart 2012: 602). The appeal to emotions was furthered by a connection to terrorism, as hearings on the driver's license issue made use of testimony where it was pointed out that the 9/11 hijackers had obtained valid licenses. Undocumented Hispanic immigrants were equated with terrorists, and advocates believed this ultimately led to the revoking of issuing driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants in 2005. Because "policy tools respond to dominant narratives" (O'Brien 2012: 27), the challenge for immigration reform advocates involved contesting emotional arguments that have greater power when threat-framing is deployed. Despite this shift in the anti-immigrant narrative among lawmakers, many Utah citizens resisted such extreme positions. Indeed, analysis of responses to stories covering immigration-related issues in Utah media outlets suggests that popular opinion on the issue has moderated over time, with much of the change coming from extreme anti-immigrant sentiments being expressed less frequently (Harris, Morgan, and Gibbs 2013). While we cannot assert with certainty that the rhetoric coming from the statehouse is responsible for the decrease in extreme anti-immigrant viewpoints of its citizens, the shift in popular opinion does signal a context that may have fostered the emergence of the Utah Compact and subsequent Utah Solution.

Given the context and history of the immigration narrative, Utah makes a compelling case for examining the atypical political coalition formation and their unorthodox attempt at reframing the immigration policy narrative at the state level. Utah is, after all, the most Republican state in the U.S. (Wasserman 2013), and conservative Republicans have been primarily responsible for scuttling immigration reform at the national level (Wroe 2008). This is especially important given recent scholarship which has found state ideology and Republican control to be determinant of less inclusive immigration control policies (Boushey and Luedtke 2011; Zingher 2014). This unique context serves as an ideal case to analyze the extent to which a policy shift is possible when diverse actors align and work cooperatively to shape an alternative policy narrative.

### 3. Data and Methods

While quantitative analysis indicates group alliances are important for predicting state-level immigration policy, qualitative interviews allow us to identify the contextual and rhetorical mechanisms that helped shape policy outcomes. In doing so, our findings indicate a successful pathway for immigration reform that may be used by other proponents at the local, state, and federal levels. These interviews informed our understanding of the motivational context for the process, the mechanism that allowed for the successful reframing of the immigration policy narrative, as well as the way in which this reframing led to the passage of a series of immigration reform bills including the first state-level guest worker program in the U.S. Based on a review of media and legislative public documents, we identified 27 economic, political, sociocultural, and religious leaders who were on record with public statements regarding either the Utah Compact or the Utah Solution as possible respondents for our interviews. While interviewees reflected a degree of racial and ethnic diversity similar to that which is found in Utah and included men and women, the primary emphasis in targeting respondents was on capturing the diverse ideological interests involved in reframing the immigration narrative (See Table 1).

Race Sample Utah\* 91.8% White 76.2% Hispanic 19.0% 13.3% Asian 4.8% 2.2% Gender Male 28.6% 50.3% Female 71.4% 49.7%

**Table 1. Sample Demographics** 

<sup>\*</sup>http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/49000.html

Overall, we conducted 21 in-depth, semi-structured phone interviews between January and May 2013, representing a 78% response rate with only one outright refusal. Respondents were also asked to identify other organizations that were involved in either the Utah Compact or Utah Solution, as well as anyone invested in the outcome of passing such legislation, allowing us to confirm that we were including a representative sample of the key players involved in this process. This selection process allowed us to target those people most responsible for reframing the policy narrative and devising policy solutions, thus allowing us the maximum opportunity to answer our key questions. Content analysis was our primary analytic strategy employed for evaluating interview transcripts that were transcribed verbatim. Pseudonyms are used to provide confidentiality and limited personal information is reported in order to protect respondent identities. See Table 2 for respondent profiles.

**Table 2: Respondent Profiles** 

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Race	Classification
Adam	Male	50s	Hispanic	Sociocultural
Bob	Male	40s	White	Economic
Chris	Male	40s	White	Economic
Dave	Male	60s	White	Political
Emily	Female	40s	Hispanic	Political
Fran	Female	40s	White	Political
Grace	Female	50s	White	Sociocultural
Harry	Male	60s	White	Economic
John	Male	50s	White	Economic
Kevin	Male	60s	White	Religious
Lisa	Female	20s	Hispanic	Political
Mary	Female	70s	White	Religious
Ned	Male	30s	White	Political
Olive	Female	30s	White	Political
Peter	Male	30s	White	Economic
Quinn	Male	40s	White	Political
Robert	Male	40s	Hispanic	Sociocultural
Steve	Male	40s	White	Political
Tim	Male	40s	White	Economic
Victor	Male	60s	White	Economic
Wendell	Male	60s	Asian	Religious

We began thematically analyzing interviews by searching each transcript for common themes and recurring patterns that would allow us to answer our research questions regarding context, reframing mechanisms, and policy outcomes. We organize our analysis into three key themes related to strategic reframing of the immigration policy narrative: context, narrative reframing, and policy solutions. Each theme is discussed in depth below.

#### 4. Context

When asked about the rationale for supporting either the Utah Compact or HB-116, (aka the Utah Guest Worker Program), respondents focused on two distinct catalysts: federal inaction and Arizona SB-1070. Most respondents mentioned both of these major catalysts. In each instance, respondents felt Utah's immigration policy was a direct response to these specific events. It appeared to be the context created by these events that allowed for group cooperation in the face of significant ideological differences (Robbins 2010).

#### 4.1 Federal Inaction

The most commonly cited catalyst for change in Utah's policy narrative was that of federal inaction and in some cases, perceived federal ineptitude. John, an economic leader, stated simply that "The American immigration system is broken." Peter, another economic leader, suggested more pessimistically that "The status quo is an abject failure." Such statements were often backed up with evidence citing the failure of the federal government to pass comprehensive immigration reform, specifically in 2006 and 2007 as noted above.

Other respondents were equally frustrated by existing immigration policies that they perceived to be ineffective. Quinn, a political leader, was forthcoming with his opinion on this matter: So if the federal government's policies are, for a lack of a better term, crapping all over Utah and keeping us from our economic potential as a state because of their idiotic immigration policies, we felt we had a right to claim some protection. We could go out and say, well if you're not going to do anything, we will. Additional policies that respondents cited as ineffective or contributing to existing barriers of integration included excessive border security, inefficient use of enforcement agents, and highly bureaucratic and excessively expensive visa and temporary work permit applications.

Economic leaders were typically the most critical of federal government policies. They framed the issue as one surrounding workforce barriers, including inadequate labor pools and ineffective visa policies, with dire economic consequences. Peter, an economic leader, stated, "When we don't have the workforce that is ideal for our economy, we suffer economic consequences." Other respondents relied on statistics. John, another economic leader, focused his concern on agricultural impacts alone: It was between \$5-6 billion of food and agricultural products that rotted in the fields . . . And that was literally product that couldn't be picked or harvested in a timely manner. Food has to be dealt with when it's ready to be harvested and marketed. You can't put it off for two weeks because you can't get workers in the field. Harry, a third economic leader, echoed this sentiment: "So it's a multibillion-dollar industry, agriculture is. And it accounts for more than 14.1% of [Utah's] total economic output." Economic leaders in particular demonstrated the most frustration with the status quo and the inability of the federal government to act. They often relied on these economic factors as their motivation for reframing the immigration policy narrative in a way that moved beyond the enforcement-only paradigm.

#### 4.2 The Arizona Law-SB-1070

While consensus of federal inaction and ineptitude played a strong role in inciting action among leaders in Utah, many also referenced the very specific instance of the passage Arizona's SB-1070 that was signed into law by Governor Jan Brewer in 2010. This legislation sought to criminalize the illegal presence of immigrants and make it a crime for undocumented workers to seek work (Creek and Yoder 2012; Liptak 2012). It was an enforcement-only approach to what opponents of the legislation saw as highly punitive and both socially and economically detrimental to the state. The provision requiring police to check the immigration status of someone they suspect is in the U.S. illegally, also known as the "Show Me Your Papers" provision, was left intact (Creek and Yoder 2012; Sherman 2012). Leaders in Utah reacted strongly to the passage of this legislation only months before the Utah legislature was scheduled to convene. Interviews made it clear that this was a uniting concern that fostered the cooperative mobilization of a politically and socially diverse group of leaders. Respondents noted a sense of urgency, believing that the issue of immigration reform was sure to come to the floor during the upcoming session. Chris, an economic leader, suggested that "people weren't very happy about [AZ SB-1070], but no one knew what to do, how to change that dynamic." Quinn, a political leader, shared his sentiment: "We felt like there had to be some pushback [to AZ SB-1070]." The primary concern seemed to be that if a politically, religiously, economically, and culturally similar neighboring state could pass such legislation, proponents would attempt to do the same in Utah. These fears proved well-founded. During the subsequent legislative session, Senator Stephen Sandstrom proposed an Arizona-style enforcement-only bill, HB-497, that would come to be part of the larger, more comprehensive Utah Solution.6

So while respondents discussed concern over federal inaction, the immediacy of Arizona's potential influence over Utah policy led these leaders to reach the same conclusion about what had to be done. Wendell, a religious leader, summarized this sentiment by saying, "[In Utah] we wanted to find a way forward that was going to be different than Arizona." Doing so was his justification for getting involved with re-writing Utah's immigration narrative. Thus, the reframing of the policy narrative in Utah became a direct response to Arizona's own policy narrative displayed in SB-1070.

#### 5. Reframing the Policy Narrative

Amidst rising public backlash over these developments, leaders began to meet to develop a strategy. In discussing these meetings as well as the general sociopolitical climate in Utah during this period, respondents described the process of deliberating and collectively constructing immigration to mean something different than it had in the past. They began to refocus their narratives in economic and humanitarian (e.g., moral, family) terms.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>He has since changed his perspective and has become an active proponent of "compassionate legislation" while seeking to overturn his own legislation (Montero 2012e).

Respondents then described how the symbolic act of supporting this new policy narrative influenced the bipartisan legislation that would come out of the 2011 legislative session.

. <u> </u>	Family	Economic	Moral	Fed.Issue	Context
Respondents	4/21	19/21	13/21	15/21	16/21
Economic	1	7	3	4	4
Political	1	7	5	5	6
Sociocultural	0	3	2	3	3
Religious	2	2	3	3	3

**Table 3: Salience of Themes to Respondents** 

# 5.1 Economic Reframing

Steve, a political leader, most succinctly described the Utah Compact in this way: "It is just this simple document that is all about bringing people together and saying 'We're all in this together' instead of keeping people out." Other respondents suggested that the people involved in the creation of this statement of principles drew upon a diverse set of motivations (e.g., economic, moral, family) that they used for framing the discussion. Each respondent was also quick to acknowledge that no one person or group was solely responsible for the Utah Compact; rather, it represented the culmination of a collective process. For economic leaders, there was an explicit concern regarding the economic consequences of reform or lack thereof. Peter, an economic leader, was concerned with the embeddedness of immigrants in both the Utah and U.S. economy: People come to the U.S. for economic opportunity . . . We have hourly laborers who fuel our construction, agriculture, and hospitality industries, so it's a virtuous economic marriage . . . Immigration is good for the U.S., and it's good for the economy . . . When we don't have the workforce that is ideal for our economy, we suffer economic consequences . . . And every single day we don't [pass immigration reform], there are economic consequences.

Other respondents were concerned that the lack of legal status prevented undocumented immigrants from receiving fair pay, thereby driving down wages for all workers. Some respondents stated that these wage wars hurt businesses that refused to rely on undocumented immigrant labor, harming their ability to compete. Respondents also referenced severe economic consequences in other states that had implemented similar laws to Arizona's SB-1070 as evidence for supporting an alternative position. But these concerns were not just reiterated by those in the business community. Nineteen respondents mentioned the economic impact of immigration and the importance of comprehensive reform. Mary, a religious leader, also reiterated the embeddedness of both economic and humanitarian narratives inherent in the immigration debate: [The U.S.] has actually sort of advertised the fact that, "Help Wanted Here," for people to do these jobs that presumably citizens didn't want or wouldn't take. So we entice them to come here, and then it just wasn't a just thing to kick them out when they were no longer needed or someone saw that there were problems. For Mary, as well as other respondents, it was clear that an economic reframing did not fully encapsulate the full nature of the concerns present in the immigration debate.

#### 5.2 Humanitarian Reframing

While economic leaders appeared to have more profit-driven motives, they were also quick to acknowledge the importance of creating a more compassionate and humane narrative. Chris, an economic leader, described the non-economic value of immigrant workers: Business leaders who I know, who are really interested in immigration, generally care about it not for dollars and cents reasons . . . It wasn't because they thought they could hire people more cheaply. It was because they knew a family or they'd had an employee in the past. And they knew these were people of value who couldn't just be easily discarded. Respondents repeatedly used words like "compassion," "community," "values," "fair," and "humane" when describing what the ideal immigration policy should look like. Additionally, several respondents referred to their efforts as a means of bring immigrants "out of the shadows." This phrase appeared to reflect the notion that immigrants had been demonized and forced into the outskirts of society for their alleged fraudulent use of welfare services, criminalized, and in a post-9/11 world, equated with terrorists. Respondents indicated that it was this social construction of immigrants as welfare abusers and criminals that had to be changed through a more humanitarian and value-driven narrative if they were ever to achieve a policy solution to immigration reform.

Religious and sociocultural leaders were the least likely to mention an economic rationale for immigration reform. Rather, they focused primarily on concerns regarding the human rights of immigrants and their families. Concern over exploitation, the media perpetuation of the threat narrative, and high regard for family values motivated Kevin, a religious leader, to participate in the immigration policy discussion:

Anytime local or national [news], when the issue of immigration comes forward, what images do you see but people running across fields or scaling a fence or something like this. The reality of what's included with a broken immigration system is the separation of families which is gut-wrenching. I mean it's just life changing . . . and The Utah Compact was trying to keep families together. Wendell, another religious leader, shared his concerns over the use of the term "anchor babies" by proponents of the Arizona legislation. This term was used to describe babies born in the U.S. to undocumented immigrants as a calculated decision for remaining in the country. In another instance, Wendell also described a part-time politician/full-time dentist who equated immigrants to cavity-causing bacteria. In describing his disgust he asked, "What is wrong with these people to look at another person as being equated to bacteria . . . How do you say something like that as if it makes perfect sense?" For Wendell, his disgust over the disregard for immigrants as human beings motivated his involvement with the Utah Compact and reframing of the policy narrative. Political leaders also recognized the need for a change in the dominant discourse, which focused on immigration as a threat to the security and well-being of native born Americans. Whether motivated by economics or human rights, the narrative was changing. Taking this new message to the public to gather support was the final stage in this movement. Quinn, a political leader, indicated, "That's the whole purpose of the Utah Compact frankly. It was a [public relations] document and designed to gain public support." This response indicates that the creators of the Utah Compact were not only motivated to redefine the policy narratives associated with immigration reform but to take an active role in shaping policy. It was a tool designed to reframe a larger political narrative and gain broad public support.

With the Utah Compact, this ideologically diverse group of individuals successfully coalesced to reframe the policy narrative. No longer would the debate center on the current threat narrative but rather encompass the diversity of concerns (e.g., economic, family, moral) in order to upend the status quo and avoid the path of Arizona. Respondents acknowledged a sense of membership in a well-organized group with a clear purpose. The Utah Compact was the outcome of a collective mobilization aimed at creating an alternative immigration narrative that could then be used to garner support for immigration reform legislation. Moreover, by bringing together a diverse array of ideological interests, the authors of the Utah Compact took advantage of an important concept in interpretive policy analyses called "reader-response" theory. Reader-response theory suggests that "the meaning of a text resided not in the text alone, nor in the author's intentions for the text, but in what readers brought with them to their readings" (Yanow 2007:116). That is, it is not just what is written in the document that is of consequence, but also how it is received by the general public. Because of the interplay between the authors' intent, the actual text, and most importantly how it is understood by citizens in Utah, it was only through bipartisan efforts taking into consideration ideologically diverse perspectives that immigration policy could be successfully reframed in Utah. The impact of the Utah Compact can be gleaned quantitatively from longitudinal polling conducted in the state.

Examining sentiments prior to and after the Utah Compact, opinions tilted strongly against Arizona-style enforcement and with the biggest shifts in opinion coming from "strong Republicans" and "very active Mormon" respondents (Monson 2011). With the narrative reframed and the public shifting their opinions on immigration matters in Utah, the context was ripe for a novel legislative approach that differed markedly from that of neighboring Arizona.

### 6. Policy Solutions

# 6.1 Legislative Success

For members of Utah's congressional body, the Utah Compact provided a unique opportunity for bipartisanship. Dave, a Republican political leader, indicated that "[Democrats] jumped all over it, and we never would have got it passed if it wasn't for almost all the Democrats in the House and Senate voting for it." This is a rare instance of bipartisanship as Utah is politically dominated by conservative Republicans who have the capacity to act without Democratic support (Wasserman 2013). Chris, an economic leader, suggested that the Utah Compact allowed highly conservative politicians to work with conservative Democrats because of its humanitarian reframing of the immigration policy narrative. He stated that it "gave them the *courage* to do maybe what their conscience had been encouraging them to do in the first place anyway."

Other respondents also shared this sentiment, often referring to the Utah Compact as a "tool," "cover," "shield," or "umbrella" that would allow Republicans to take a less conservatively popular stance on immigration reform. For Peter, the success of the legislation was measured by what was no longer part of the discussion: enforcement-only, punitive legislation. He felt that this omission also reflected the success of a new and lasting narrative that embraced both economic and humanitarian concerns. The Utah Solution served its purpose as it reflected the reframing the narrative for all future discussions in the state and providing a potential pathway for bipartisan policy development at the federal level. During the 2013 legislative session, this was indeed the case, as the only piece of immigration legislation was a continued declaration of support for the Utah Compact. Indeed, respondents viewed their success as the ability to reframe a policy narrative not only at the state-level, but at the federal level as well.

# 6.2 Strategic Reframing of the National Debate?

For those involved in the Utah Compact and the Utah Solution, the federal government ultimately retains constitutional authority over immigration law and enforcement. While the inaction and ineptitude of the federal government was cited as a primary catalyst for policy change in Utah, respondents also felt that a solution would ultimately have to come at that level. Olive, a political leader, stated that "[The federal government] is the one with the broken system, and they really need to be the ones to fix it." During the course of our interviews, the 2013 legislative session began and ended. As noted above, the only significant immigration legislation that was brought forward was a resolution to uphold the values of the Utah Compact as well as an amendment to the existing legislation, extending the implementation date to July 1, 2015. Respondents noted that this extension was a reflection of hope that the federal government was going to pass bipartisan legislation that would address the 11 million undocumented immigrants already living in the U.S. in a humane and compassionate fashion. These beliefs were primarily based on media reports focusing on "The Gang of 8" as well as President Obama's public support for the path adopted in Utah (Burr 2011; Canham 2013). Thus, when we asked about the future of the Utah Solution, the answer was the same for all respondents: There is nothing left for Utah to do. Quinn, a political leader, summarized their efforts most succinctly:

There's not much more for Utah to do. It did what it did. It set an example for the rest of the nation. It said, "Here's the reddest of the red states and conservative to the nth degree politically speaking, and they did this." They actually crafted comprehensive immigration reform as a state and set an example. And so now, as you look to what Obama wants to do, what Congress wants to do, the Gang of 8 senators, all that they're talking about, at its core, is what Utah suggested we all do. Respondents felt it was the newfound language of economic prosperity and compassion built into the new policy narrative being reflected in political talks in Washington DC that would ultimately lead to an acceptable federal solution. This belief in the influence of the Utah Solution over federal policy provided a sense of pride among our respondents. Dave, a political leader, stated that, "when HB-116 came out, it changed the direction and attitude of much of the country." Eleven other respondents shared his sentiment. They each supported their conviction with evidence of Utah's impact on the rest of the nation. Displays of this influence began with an editorial published in the *New York Times* shortly after the press release of the Utah Compact but prior to the passage of any legislation (New York Times 2010).

Suggesting "[a] clearer expression of good sense and sanity than Utah's would be hard to find," the *New York Times* (2010) heaped praise on the state for its "humane approach to the reality of immigration." Respondents pointed to this op-ed as a critical moment when a variety of organizations, including but not limited to the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, the Partnership for a New American Economy, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National Immigration Forum (NIF), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO, began to take notice of a new policy narrative. Through these national organizations, the value-driven components of the Utah Compact were brought to the various states around the country where it influenced the creation of several other state compacts (Dininny 2013; Lunning 2012; Montero 2011d). On a national level, the 2013 Senate bill on immigration reform bill passed by an overwhelming margin of 68 to 32, though the House of Representatives continues to be resistant to comprehensive legislation extending legal status to unauthorized immigrants. Despite President Obama's recent executive action shielding up to 5 million undocumented immigrants from deportation, up to 25 states are suing the administration to reverse this decision (Freer 2015) and the next president could revoke this exertive action if he or she so choses.

With the states remaining at the forefront of policy innovation, the case of the Utah Solution underscores the importance of crafting narratives that resonate with state political culture in order for comprehensive measures to find popular support.

#### 7. Discussion and Conclusion

With the rhetoric of exclusion and threats dominant in both the U.S. and Utah (Stewart 2012), concerns about the direction of immigration policy reached across partisan thresholds, uniting members often at odds with one another under a common goal. The disgust with federal inaction and fear over the looming threat of Arizona-style legislation provided the necessary context facilitating unity across groups that are unaccustomed to working together. While previous research has shown group activity leading to resistance to restrictive immigration policy at the local level (Strunk and Leitner 2013), such collective action has not taken place in as deeply conservative a context as the state of Utah. By providing a qualitative perspective on the motivation and promotion of the Utah Compact, our research illustrates the inner-workings crucial to altering the dominant narrative on immigration. These interviews highlight the process by which the reframing of the immigration policy narrative played a central role in shaping policy outcomes. Previous research has indicated that these broad ideological constellations are essential to achieving more inclusive immigration policies, though most have not shown how these coalitions are formed or the detailed processes in which consensus is reached. Our interviews with ideologically diverse economic, religious, sociocultural, and political leaders shed light on the behind-the-scenes collaboration typically unseen by outside observers. As a result of this collaboration, the movement was successful in that the Utah Solution garnered bipartisan support and was subsequently passed. Respondents measured their success based on the narrative shift and passage of legislation, while several respondents took credit for the shifting narrative at the federal level.

As indicated by our respondents, the primary intent of the Utah Compact's creators was to change the tone and content of the immigration debate by reframing the way in which immigrants are perceived by policy makers and citizens alike. They knew that in order to achieve what they considered ideal policy outcomes, they would have to overcome media-driven public perceptions of the dominant threat narrative. They also expressed deep satisfaction when their successful reframing of Utah's policy narrative began to influence debates in other states and at the federal level. This debate about policy-making and shaping the narratives that shape policy comes at a crucial time when more states are passing immigration laws as a result of federal legislative inactivity. Our results indicate that while the "strange bedfellows" coalitions resulting in comprehensive immigration reform are hard to predict, the underlying conditions that activate the emergence of these coalitions is a matter of empirical analysis. While we may not be able to predict when coalitions can successfully recast attitudes about immigration or motivate legislative activity, there are a set of necessary conditions that are discernible and that can be examined in other settings. Future research should take into consideration other states that have also enacted more inclusive legislation to determine if there are similar state-level contextual drivers facilitating the passage of such legislation. Such research should consider whether the processes behind reframing of the policy narrative in Utah played were evident in the reframing other state-level narratives thereby influencing their own policy process.

That said, it is also important to note that Utah is a fairly racially and ethnically homogeneous state in which minorities make up a very small percentage of the general and voting populations. Additional research comparing and contrasting Utah with a more heterogeneous state (e.g., California) would be beneficial for understanding the impact of this homogeneity on the success of both the reframing of the policy narrative and subsequent policy solution. With regard to diversity, future researchers may also want to consider the socioeconomic status and religious affiliation of respondents which was outside of the scope of this paper. Utah is, after all, the only state where a majority if residents are of the LDS faith. As such, states can have their own set of idiosyncrasies that are important factors to be taken into consideration. In the U.S., the diverse policy approaches that the individual states engage in are often regarded as "laboratories of democracy;" test cases that provide evidence for effective policy prescriptions (Cohen 2003). As such, the implications for this research stretch beyond the borders of both Utah and immigration policy research. By reaffirming the central role of the policy narrative in the policy process, these findings suggest that other interest groups intent on effecting policy change may have a model for reframing the contemporary policy narrative, gaining popular support, and influencing the development and passage of new legislation.

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