IMMIGRATION NEWS FRAMES:
CONSTRUCTIONS OF IMMIGRATION AND
THE PASSAGE OF ARIZONA SB 1070

A Dissertation in
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by

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Abstract

This study examined the news frames surrounding coverage of immigration and immigrants, specifically undocumented immigrants, in the time surrounding the passage of a particularly controversial immigration bill, Arizona SB 1070. An inductive framing analysis and longitudinal discourse analysis were conducted to develop a comprehensive understanding of the frames used in news accounts within the state of Arizona and, more broadly, in national news coverage. Generally speaking, immigration and immigrants are socially constructed in news accounts as a detrimental influence on society at large. These frames serve to naturalize and justify the passage of policies that may lead to discriminatory practices. Practical and theoretical implications are also discussed.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There are few topics as heated for Americans as that of immigration. Immigrants, primarily “illegal” immigrants, are often blamed or associated with a host of troubles within society and have been described in the popular press as having effects similar to nuclear holocaust (Trevino, 2010). Immigrants are also closely linked to increased healthcare expenditures (Alvarez & Butterfield, 2000), rising crime rates (Hagan & Palloni, 1999), increased costs of education (Izumi, 2010), and a declining economy (Espenshade & Hempstead, 1996) despite little empirical evidence to support these claims (Friedberg & Hunt, 1995). It is not surprising then that immigrants are often the target of policies or practices that seek to limit their access to work, citizenship, and public services in an effort to reduce the perceived costs associated with their presence in communities.

Despite the restrictive nature of these policies, some of which skirt dangerously close to violating basic human rights (Bosniak, 2007), immigration laws designed to single out groups of individuals often garner widespread public and political support (Bell, 1978). California Proposition 187, a referendum passed by popular vote in 1994, required all public education and healthcare facilities to check the immigration status of students and patients, effectively blocking access to schools and medical treatment for thousands of individuals living within the state. The referendum was passed overwhelmingly by California voters (Jones, 1994). More recently, Arizona SB 1070, passed into law during April 2010, makes it a misdemeanor to be an alien in Arizona without the proper immigration paperwork, requires law enforcement officials to question the immigration status of anyone they suspect of being in the country illegally, and can result in jail time or a fine (see "Arizona Senate Bill 1070," 2010). The majority of Arizonans favoring the law (Rasmussen Reports, 2010a). Nationally, most Americans would favor similar
laws in their own states (Rasmussen Reports, 2010b). The trend to pass restrictive immigration laws, even if they are mostly symbolic, does not seem to be waning. As of April 2011, a similar law to Arizona SB 1070 was approved by the Georgia House of Representatives (Redmon, 2011). Similar laws were still under consideration in 11 other states (Wessler, 2011). A total of ten other states had attempted to pass bills based on SB 1070 but had not succeeded (Wessler, 2011). For this reason, studying how immigration was constructed in the time surrounding the passage of SB 1070 is important, especially as law and policy ventures in one state can quickly spread to other states as politicians capitalize on the popularity of such bills.

News media portrayals of immigration and immigrants likely play a large role in the way audiences perceive immigrants due to a lack of interpersonal contact between groups. Such contact is not likely on a day-to-day basis although it is not necessarily undesirable for members of either group. Both whites and racial minorities have reported that they would like more contact with out-group members but both perceive out-group members as being opposed to such additional contact and they themselves fear being rejected by out-group members when trying to initiate contact (Shelton & Richeson, 2005). Allport (1954) hypothesized that intergroup contact might be integral in reducing prejudices toward out-group members (see also Amir, 1969). When intergroup contact does occur such contact has repeatedly been shown to reduce out-group stereotyping and prejudicial attitudes (Christian & Lapinski, 2003)\(^1\) as have positive media portrayals of out-group members via parasocial interaction (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005). Such reductions in out-group prejudicial attitudes and perceptions are at least a partial result of a

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\(^1\) In a review of relevant literature, Rubin and Hewstone (1998) conclude that experimental data investigating the psychological mechanisms from which the need for derogation of out-group members shows that such impulses are not from a need to increase self-esteem, a potentially limiting factor in using portrayals of out-group members and interpersonal memberships to decrease such derogation. Rather, the majority of experimental data conclusions indicate that while the derogation of out-group members does lead to an increase in self-esteem, it is not the motivating factor.
mutually reciprocal interaction between the differentiation and personalization of out-group members (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002)\(^2\) and contact is most effective when long-term relationships are allowed to develop between in-group and out-group members (Pettigrew, 1998). As most native individuals likely have little day to day interactions with individuals outside their immediate social circle, both news and entertainment media are logical sources of knowledge for what natives know, or think they know, about out-group members, immigrants included. The ability for parasocial interactions to function similarly to interpersonal interactions with out-group members highlights the need for frames that accurately contextualize the role of immigrants and minorities more generally.

In the absence of strong and long-lasting intergroup associations, the ability for parasocial interaction to mitigate prejudicial perceptions of out-group members is likely reduced due to problematic news accounts related to out-group members. Such news accounts are potentially fragmentary and polarizing, not only because the manner in which politicians and advocacy groups describe ideologically charged issues are often in direct opposition to one another (Bennett, 2009) but also because general news practices dictate that journalists focus on conflict and antagonism rather than resolution and cooperation (Holian, 2004). Furthermore, it appears that at least for a portion of the public, the very issue of immigration has become strongly tied to the immediate costs borne by local communities such that the mere presence of immigration in the news agenda makes it more likely for individuals to support anti-immigration policies (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2006; Holian, 2004), especially in times of economic stagnation or recession (Citrin, Green, Muste, & Wong, 1997). That the public may potentially

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\(^2\) Differentiation refers to the ability for intergroup contact to recognize that stereotypes and broad generalizations of out-group members are not as useful as previously thought due to the heterogeneous nature of out-group members. Personalization refers to the recognition of the uniqueness of out-group members in relation to the self (Hewstone et al., 2002).
support restrictive and/or discriminatory immigration policies not because such policies are necessary or prudent does little to dissuade politicians from pushing through restrictive immigration bills themselves or further problematizing immigration in news accounts.

It may be appropriate at this point to discuss whether the current study is a critical frame analysis. I very much intend to show that such constructions are not, by any stretch of the imagination, natural. In this sense, the study was very much critically oriented. By problematizing the shared understandings of immigration, this study sought to show that dominant conceptualizations of immigration and immigrants did not emerge through natural developments. That, as a society, we collectively understand that immigrants pose “problems” that need to be “solved” via aggressive public policy, vigilante border patrols, or racial pogroms is at least partly the result of mass mediated portrayals, i.e. framing, of immigration and related happenings. Therefore, this study examined the role that news media played in the construction of immigration as a social problem within mainstream media outlets in an effort to understand the widespread support of Arizona SB 1070, within the state and elsewhere.

This study explored how immigration was constructed as a social problem within local and regional news outlets in Arizona in year preceding the passage of Arizona SB 1070 and several months afterward. It also examined how national-level discourse approached the issue within a different cultural context and how the subsequent state level discourse responded to the national discourse. The study drew upon Van Gorp’s (2007, 2010) notion of culturally embedded frames to build a holistic and rich description of immigration frames used in both national outlets and those within Arizona. Afterward, differences in constructions of immigration between these two discourse levels were compared. Finally, shifts in discourse patterns were compared to
determine how, or if, national level conceptualizations of immigration interacted with those in Arizona and vice versa.

In light of news accounts from outlets in Arizona and national outlets, immigration coverage utilized a wide variety of frames. Some appeared to encourage audiences to understand immigration, particularly “illegal” immigration, from a dystopian perspective. Unfortunately, these framings were used extensively and did not place current immigration trends within accurate historical and economic contexts. In other words, such framings encouraged views of immigration that were only loosely based on empirical observations. Such framings also seemed to justify the passage of potentially discriminatory legislation. Other frames, used less frequently, promoted understandings of immigration that did place the issue within such contexts.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of this study was the identification and description of frames used in news accounts covering Arizona SB 1070. The following section provides a brief overview of the definition of framing used for this study, the manner in which frames socially construct reality, and the importance of examining frames within broader contexts of culture and power.

Conceptualization of Frames

To frame an issue is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Frames are then defined as the “central organizing idea … for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 3). The conceptualization of frames used for this study is divergent from that used in many recent framing studies due to a few addendums to the conceptualizations provided above. Here, frames are defined in such a way as to answer the call that framing studies connect how journalists construct meaning to larger ideas of media hegemony (Artz & Murphy, 2000). Carragee and Roefs (2004) suggest that frames should be examined within larger social and political contexts more akin to the work of scholars such as Gitlin (1979) and Tuchman (1978). Carragee and Roefs (2004) point out that in past research some investigators have conceptualized frames as the subjects of news stories and provide purely descriptive or effects-based research. Such studies have been described as “the lion’s share” of framing research (Matthes & Kohring, 2008, p. 258).

Although this study uses as a starting point two of the most cited conceptualizations of framing, it also draws heavily on the conceptualization of framing used by Van Gorp (2010,
Van Gorp (2007, 2010) points out that frames are best thought of as packages, drawing on prior work on media packages (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Media packages are defined as a collection of manifest elements in a news account that cue audiences to infer additional meaning beyond what is explicitly stated (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Van Gorp (2007, 2010) adds that it may be more useful to think of these collections not as media packages, as this implies that frames are a result of action taken solely by journalists involved in the newsmaking process and occur independently of wider cultural forces. Instead, Van Gorp terms the collections of manifest textual elements and logical inferences as “frame packages,” implying that in addition to journalists, audiences, sources, and culture play a role in framing news accounts.

The conceptualization of framing used for this study then still recognizes that frames are the central idea to a story, organize thought, and encourage particular interpretations of happenings. This aligns the definition of frames used here with both Gamson and Modigliani’s (1989) thinking as well as Entman’s (1993) work. Where this conceptualization diverges from effects-based approaches is that it explicitly recognizes the fact that journalists draw on preconceived notions regarding current affairs issues that are, at least in part, predefined socially. This includes the manner in which journalism as an institution defines an issue as well as society more broadly. Frames do not develop in a power or cultural vacuum and as such, the frames journalists use can change throughout time, especially when discourse moves from the local to the national level where other journalistic or social institutions have opportunities to challenge the framing of issues at the local or regional level.

Frame Packages

The definition of frames being drawn upon for this study is particularly useful in studying the interaction between culture and the social construction of problems, especially when
journalists, citizen-advocates, and politicians are confronted with broader conceptualizations of a previously and once exclusively local issue. News accounts make up part of an ongoing, evolving public discourse that creates meaning and connects events for the public at large regarding public affairs and current events (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Frames are part of this construction of reality and this study was designed to identify the various frames used to socially construct immigration as a social issue.

As stated previously, frames are probably best thought of as packages containing various elements. These frame packages are an “integrated structure of framing devices and a logical chain of reasoning devices that demonstrates how the frame functions to represent a certain issue” (Van Gorp, 2010, p. 90). Again, Van Gorp stresses that these packages are a result of practices and ideologies inherent in professional newsrooms but are also the product of wider cultural forces and norms.

Frame packages are partly made up of framing devices, the various methods by which journalists can manipulate manifest content in a news account in order to promote a particular interpretation of the information provided therein. The manner in which these frames are inserted into news stories and interpreted by researchers are numerous. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) identify several observable ways by which journalists create meaning in news stories including devices such as metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, moral appeals, and symbols. Van Gorp (2010) also identifies how journalists can use symbols with culturally significant meanings to insert frames into news stories such as narratives, archetypes, and myths. The format in which information is presented and arranged can also play a role in the framing of news accounts. The placement and position of text or visual elements on a page convey the salience, importance, relevance, and other meaning to audiences (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Van Gorp, 2010). The
collection of these various cultural, design, and symbolic devices are referred to as framing devices (Van Gorp, 2007; see also Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). The presence of these devices in a text can be used to indicate the presence of a frame, yet the ability of a frame to define an issue for audiences does not stem from these elements alone despite serving as indicators of a frames presence in a text (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Van Gorp, 2010).

Framing devices alone do not constitute a complete frame package. Framing devices do, however, encourage particular logical extensions of thought. These logical inferences are also part of the frame package and Van Gorp (2007) terms these logical extensions of explicit and implicit statements made in a news text “reasoning devices” (Van Gorp, 2007, 2010) that lead to, as Entman (1993) states, the ability for frames to encourage a particular definition moral evaluation and causal interpretation of the problem at hand. In other words, it is framing devices that signal readers to use a particular mental schema in their own interpretation of a text and thus draw inferences about the information provided therein and to infer additional information as well. When journalists provide framed news accounts to the public, they are then presenting individuals both with information that can be taken literally from the text as well as information that can be derived from these reasoning devices resulting in a frame (Van Gorp, 2007). The framing devices and the reasoning devices, taken together, constitute the frame package. In order to fully understand the role that a particular frame plays in the construction of reality for readers it is necessary to examine both of these elements. The framing devices themselves are important in that in that they serve as textual indicators for a frame’s presence; the reasoning devices are the logical inferences that give the frame explanatory power.
Culture and Power

Despite the proliferation of framing scholarship in recent years, eclipsing even agenda-setting and cultivation research (Bryant & Miron, 2004), there are still several key areas related to the critical study of the framing process that are largely unaddressed in the wider literature. Media-effects centered conceptualizations of frames, while useful in determining short-term effects of frames on audience perceptions, attitudes, assignment of responsibility, or behavior (see Iyengar, 1996; Rhee, 1997; Scheufele, 1999; Shah, Watts, Domke, & Fan, 2002; Valkenburg, Semetko, & De Vreese, 1999), strip framing as a conceptual process of its ability to examine larger issues of power and hierarchy in society that have led to the dominance of some frames over others (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). It is important to recognize that the process of framing news does not occur independently of other social or historical factors and the role that frames play in constructing an issue would be best understood within these settings (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). Rather, the construction and use of news frames by journalists are dependent on the structure of the journalism industry itself (Bagdikian, 2004; McChesney, 2004a, 2008), the professional norms of journalists (McChesney, 2004a) and that of the newsroom (Breed, 1955, 1958), and the degree to which frames resonate with journalists’ professional norms and the public at large (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1989).

The frames employed by various actors in the struggle over meaning are not all equally palatable for journalists and audiences. Social movement activists may try to challenge frames that have been dominant, widely accepted, or simply taken for granted while other actors struggle to maintain the dominance of their preferred framing (Snow & Benford, 1988, 1992; Snow et al., 1986). Benford and Snow (2000) point out that for this reason framing is an active and contentious process as journalists and other actors engage in what Hall (1982) terms the
politics of signification. In other words, the various actors involved in the newsmaking process engage in competing for the ability to socially construct reality for audiences. This process is often rife with conflict as meanings that have been taken for granted or widely accepted into popular/mainstream culture come under fire from groups or organizations that seek to challenge the status quo.

The struggle over framing between activists and those seeking to enforce the status quo is rarely equal as such efforts are not immune to positions of power (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). Social movements are often at a disadvantage compared to cultural, political, or economic elites for a wide variety of reasons (see Breed, 1955, 1958; McChesney, 2004a, 2008). Individuals who are seen as more legitimated sources of power, especially government sources, tend to have first crack at framing an issue or policy while the framing efforts of individuals or organizations that are engaged in challenging the status quo, extant public policy, or current power structures tend to have their framing efforts placed under greater scrutiny. Furthermore, such groups also likely have less expertise and resources on which to draw in order to successfully frame an issue in their favor (Entman, 2003). Benford and Snow (2000) point out that for this reason framing is an active and contentious process that implies the actors involved in the construction of reality have agency to at least a certain degree. Framing implies agency, as widespread success in framing an issue means that groups will have shaped interpretations of happenings for readers in a manner congruent with their own ideology (Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978), possibly resulting in policy or cultural changes. The frames used in news stories are also the result of the active role played by various actors: journalists, sources, and advocates (Benford & Snow, 2000). This process is also contentious as ideologies between individual groups of actors may come into direct conflict (Benford & Snow, 2000).
As a result of journalists’ propensity to rely on official or legitimated sources of power in framing news accounts and despite the “watchdog” function of news, journalism as a social institution tends to support the status quo (McChesney, 2004a, 2008). This is in part due to professional training (McChesney, 2004a, 2008), a respect for the current order and power of business leaders (Breed, 1958), and deferential treatment given government spokespersons (Bennett, 1990). Unsurprisingly then, news media do not always readily accept the framing efforts of social movement advocates as the underlying purpose of many citizen-advocacy groups is to challenge the status quo (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996). News media are typically less open to the framing efforts of citizen-advocacy groups and are inclined to “withdraw from unnecessarily baring structural flaws in the working of the institutions” (Breed, 1958, p. 114). Frame analysis, as long as it is conceptualized in such a manner as to recognize the connection between the construction of reality and larger hegemonic institutions (see Artz & Murphy, 2000; Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Gitlin, 1979; Tuchman, 1978), is capable of illuminating the role of dominant or natural frames in news discourse and can also show how such frames are challenged by citizen-advocacy groups and other sponsors (see Carragee, 1991; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

In addition to the propensity for mainstream news outlets to give preferential treatment to government or business sources, Entman (2003) also shows how frames from official sources such as government spokespersons can trickle down from national news media, become integrated into the framing of an issue by regional or state outlets, and eventually become part of popular understandings of issues. The recursive relationship from one framing effort at a given time to future efforts means that frames are also an evolving phenomenon that change over time due to co-optation by elites (Entman, 2003; Gamson, et al., 1992; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Snow &
Benford, 1988) or can be altered by other journalists, sources, elites, and citizen-advocates to be more in line with the cultural congruence of intended audiences (Snow & Benford, 1992).

The ability for news media and citizen advocacy groups to challenge dominant ideologies and constructions of issues is not always possible and may not easily apply in an instance such as that of Arizona SB 1070. When there is genuine conflict between legitimated sources of power, especially government sources, journalists are more open to using the preferred framing of activists in news stories (Bennett, 1990). Bennett (1990) called this indexing. The success of citizen-advocacy groups then depends, at least in part, on the amount of disagreement among elites. Disagreement between elites is also more likely when a wider range of elites deliberate. A greater degree of disagreement is less likely with elites from one particular state or locality, Arizona for example, than elites from various cultures and backgrounds, for example elites used as potential sources across national news outlets. Arguably, then, the framing efforts of citizen-advocates may be more effective when discourse moves from a local level where there may be less disagreement between elites to a more expansive one, such as when local news stories are picked up and given coverage by national news media. At this point, elites may have more diverse viewpoints and also more disagreement amongst themselves, affording journalists the opportunity to use frames at the national level that would have violated professional or newsrooms standards or seemed out of place at the local level. Furthermore, discourse at the local level may also be forced to address disagreements amongst elites at the national level after national outlets begin to cover a previously local issue.

The frames available for use by journalists are then limited to an extent depending on the context in which they are to be used, and such a view is not incongruent with Goffman’s (1974) original thinking on frames. Summarizing, Goffman defined frames as the unstated rules,
connections, and definitions of various concepts used social interaction that provide meaning and context to everyday activities and interactions with others (Goffman, 1974). Van Gorp (2007, 2010) argues that journalists rely on using culturally shared knowledge to create frames as, after all, a frame is not useful in interpreting a media text if it is only apparent to the journalist what the frame implies. In other words, journalists rely on a cultural stock of potential framing devices over which they have little control at any given point in time (Van Gorp, 2007). That is not to say that journalists are unable to choose which frames within this potential repertoire to employ, only that they are limited in their application of potential frames by the culture in which they and their audiences reside.

Culture shapes beliefs and perceptions (Artz & Murphy, 2000) and does so, in no small part, through frames in news accounts (Gamson et al., 1992). Because frames are dependent on culturally shared knowledge, their use in news accounts and the manner in which they define issues seems quite natural (Gamson et al., 1992). Some scholars acknowledge that the interpretation of frames is largely dependent upon the individual audience member’s schema and cognitive network (see Rhee, 1997; Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele, 2006; Scheufele & Scheufele, 2010; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). In light of the culturally dependent nature of the framing process the interpretation of frames is not wholly separate from the wider culture of the individual (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Relying on Van Gorp’s (2007) description of the framing process and the culturally situated nature of frames means that there are frames that could potentially be used to describe or define an issue or problem that currently are not used, as would be the case of citizen-advocates who would prefer an alternative frame to be used in lieu of more dominant frames. Additionally, it may be possible that there are potential frames that could be applied to news accounts that are
neither used nor present in the current cultural repertoire. This becomes relevant as discourse moves from one culture into another. The culture of newsrooms and society at large is likely very different for any one region in the United States in comparison to the entire country. Undoubtedly, there are some values shared between both cultures but also many values or conceptualizations of issues, problems, and groups that are widely divergent. As a result, discourse and the potential range of frames between regions or between one region and the national level is likely quite different.

Insofar as this study is concerned, the interaction between various cultures in the framing process at both the national and local level warrants examination. It should be expected that the potential repertoire of frames changes when local discourse shifts to larger culture. Furthermore, it is critical to understand how policies and continued discourse are then affected by cultures external from which the issue or problem originated. In instances such as Arizona SB 1070 that may mean that acceptable problem and solution definitions at the regional level are delegitimized or at least challenged when placed in the national spotlight.

In summary, then, placing frames within broader cultural contexts allows for analyses using such a conceptualization to consider how discourses, first being developed locally and then possibly challenged nationally, evolve and change over time. The movement between cultures may lead to wider viewpoints becoming legitimated at the local level for at least the two reasons outlined above: First, there may be more disagreement between official sources and second, the cultural stock of viable frames and understandings of an issue may be more open due to the differences in how an issue is understood at the national level compared to the local level.
Social construction of reality

Frames generally organize reality and help produce meaning in everyday situations (Goffman, 1974). As different frames applied to the same happening can result in divergent viewpoints for the same event, framing helps to perpetuate the multiplicity of perceived realities. Such a view is not at odds with media effects-based conceptualizations of framing as one of the most often cited definitions of frames recognizes that there are multiple ways in which people perceive the world and frames help to perpetuate this multiplicity of subjective realities (Entman, 1993). In this sense, journalists actively take a role in constructing reality for audiences through the frames they apply to news texts. It is the culturally embedded nature of frames that makes it possible for audiences to understand and interpret the frames journalists place in news stories (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Van Gorp, 2007, 2010). The process of framing also includes an element of interpretation by audiences and although this interpretation is not entirely dependent on culture it is also not entirely dependent on the individual either. Rather, it is when individuals and cultures interact that the social construction of reality occurs (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

In writing stories, journalists draw on their own understanding of an issue (Tuchman, 1978) and professional training (McChesney, 2004b). Journalists rely on their professional training and their own understanding of the world in the selection of story topics, sources, and the organization, inclusion, and exclusion of information (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). In other words, journalists use their own “preconceived notions about how to order story elements and about what meanings they could or should impose upon those story elements” (Van Gorp, 2010, p. 84). Professional training can be conceptualized as moderating the types of frames journalists are willing to use when inserting frames into news accounts. Often journalists use frames to draw disconnected or unorganized events into a coherent whole for readers without having to
explicitly contextualize events (Gitlin, 1980). By drawing on their own understanding of the world as professionals, journalists reproduce the values and norms in which journalism as an institution is situated and in the process socially construct reality, at least in part, for readers (Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978).

Immigration Portrayals

The manner in which immigrants are portrayed in mass media likely plays a non-trivial role in the way natives perceive immigrants due to the ability for news media to socially construct reality, and social problems more specifically, for audiences. Unsurprisingly, much extant and past policy has been driven by correspondingly unfavorable attitudes and public opinion surrounding immigrants and immigration. This section briefly reviews the problematic portrayals of immigrants, the disconnect between public opinion and reality, and the role public opinion and debate play in shaping such policies.

Framing and Immigration

Much framing scholarship has focused on a media effects based-approach to the exclusion of broader social, political, and cultural contexts (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). Even within the media effects research, conceptualizations of framing are often rife with discrepancies and are weakly explicated conceptually (Entman, 1993b; Scheufele, 1999). Such approaches do not satisfy the common critique that framing studies have largely ignored issues of power within society (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). Instead, these studies have either sought to determine the frames that are present in immigration news accounts or to determine the effects such frames have on audience perceptions via experimental methods. Although these studies offer valuable insights into the short-term effects of perceptions of immigrants or support for restrictive
policies, these studies do not address the broader question of how immigration is constructed as a social problem.

Without a doubt, part of the reason for the support of restrictive immigration policies lies in the way immigration coverage portrays immigrants and their impact on the well being of certain groups of natives and the role immigrants play in communities. The manner in which immigration is constructed as a problem via news media is even more important as, at best, the public’s knowledge regarding the role immigration plays within society is only loosely grounded in reality (Espenshade & Hempstead, 1996; Schuck, 2007). Information offered to the public regarding immigrants’ criminality via politicians and subsequently news media sources are often widely divergent, misleading, typically inconsistent, and easily taken out of context (Wilson, 2008). In the news within the United States at least, immigrants and minorities more generally are predominately described as criminals (Schuck, 2007) but rarely as victims themselves (Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Heider, 2000; Heider & Fuse, 2004). High-profile crimes, at least in some instances, have been capitalized upon by supporters of restrictive immigration policies as focal points for directing local frustrations at immigrants (Billeaud & Myers, 2010). Specifically, journalists commonly employ metaphors that associate both documented and undocumented immigrants with invading armies that are taking over the host country through overwhelming numbers (van Dijk, 1988) and that their presence could overwhelm natives as a natural disaster would do (Charteris-Black, 2006; Tamul, 2009). Immigrants are also portrayed as burdensome on local resources and undeserving of “special” privileges such as access to public education (Jeffries, 2009) and have been historically and more recently associated with the spread of epidemics (Moore, 2009; Santa Ana, 2002).
Coverage related to immigrants also helps perpetuate existing stereotypes by portraying immigrants as highly passive and helpless (Ono & Sloop, 2002). Additionally, the mere presence of undocumented immigrants, and arguably documented immigrants as well, is framed as being oppositional to many of the norms of American culture such as playing by the rules (Jeffries, 2009), speaking accented English (Pratto & Lemieux, 2001), and assimilating American values (Grimm, 2008). Immigrants have also arguably been used for political ends as well. Ku and Pervez (2010) show that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) cited undocumented immigrants’ fraudulent access to the programs as reason for requiring immigration status checks on Medicaid applicants, despite very little fraud ever being detected in the first place. When immigrants or ethnic communities are the subject of news coverage that is supposedly favorable, news outlets typically focus on ethnic festivals and traditions that set minority communities apart from the rest of the population (Heider, 2000).

As the above examples show, politicians and citizen-advocacy groups in favor of discriminatory policies can potentially select frames that will be both widely circulated by the mass media, if past coverage is any indication, and trigger emotional responses in viewers which can be particularly effective in encouraging ethnic conflict (see Peterson, 2002). The same effect could potentially be reached by framing messages in an appeal to individuals who have a strong need for social dominance or support right-wing authoritarianism (see Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008). As journalists all tend to make similar decisions in similar situations (McChesney, 2004a, 2008), including framing decisions (Entman, 1990, 1992, 1993), politicians can often predict which frames will and will not be picked up by the news media. This affords politicians the opportunity to then tailor their framing of events, issues, and happenings in such a way as to be both beneficial for their own proposed policies and be circulated by the media.
Framing efforts by citizen-advocacy groups are typically less experienced and have fewer resources to frame issues or garner sufficient media attention to counter fragmentary and harmful frames of politicians or other cultural and economic elites.

The unequal opportunities for citizen-advocacy groups to frame public issues are also compounded by journalists’ reliance on public relations professionals. The growth of the public relations industry and an increasing reliance of journalists on press releases has also allowed for well-funded interest groups and political elites to craft media-friendly frames and accompanying source material designed to make journalists’ jobs that much easier (McChesney, 2008). Such PR companies are capable of providing “slick press releases, paid-for ‘experts,’ ostensibly neutral sounding but bogus citizens groups, and canned news events …” for any interest able and willing to pay (McChesney, 2008, p. 33). A recent study conducted by the Project for Excellence in Journalism found that news outlets have begun to rely heavily on information provided by PR firms (Pew, 2010). The study, which looked at news coverage from all local news outlets in Baltimore, MD, found that of six predominant news topics during the one-week study much of what is labeled as news is unoriginal reporting (Pew, 2010). In other words, journalists have begun to draw information more heavily from the reporting of other news organizations and press releases. Even within the same organization, outlets were prone to repackage previously used material in “news” reporting. Some press releases were even published word-for-word with no editing or additional information provided by news organizations highlighting the ability for well-funded interests to “buy” favorable news framing via professionally produced press releases.

The news frames surrounding immigration coverage are likely problematic then for several reasons. Coverage first of all tends to focus almost exclusively on negative or
problematic portrayals of immigrants that are loosely, if at all, based in any observable reality. Such portrayals encourage the public at large to conceptualize immigration as a social issue that has almost exclusively negative impacts on local communities. Citizen advocacy groups that seek to problematize such coverage face an uphill battle as framing efforts are not immune to positions of power or economic capability. These more experienced or well-funded efforts are capable of either producing news media-friendly frames that are more likely to align with journalists’ worldviews and professional scruples or are fielded out to organizations which specialize in producing similarly journalist friendly informational packets.

*Immigration Policy and Society*

Unfortunately, the portrayals politicians and right-wing advocacy groups use to construct immigrants and immigration as issues do not often accurately reflect the true role of each in society. The popular understanding of immigration policy in the U.S. is that the borders have always been open to those that “follow the rules” and that assimilate into U.S. society (Chomsky, 2007; Daniels, 2002). This “open-door policy” has not, however, characterized the U.S. policy on immigration for most of its history. Daniels (2002) cites the time surrounding Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, policies developed during the period of the Know-Nothings in the 1850s, and the intervening time through the Immigration Act of 1924 as long stretches of history in which immigrants were subjected to revitalizations of nativism. Despite popular sentiments to the contrary, the United States has historically relied on external populations for shortfalls in its own domestic labor market (Moore, 1949) and this is no different today (Chomsky, 2007). Up until World War I and World War II, Europe was able to supply the United States with adequate numbers of immigrant workers. During this time period Mexico also supplied the United States with cheap labor where domestic labor markets were inadequate (Moore, 1949). During the
1960s there was an increase in immigration that has since been followed by an increase in news coverage covering the movement of foreigners into the country (DeLaet, 2000). Somewhat unsurprisingly, since then there has been a revitalization of nativism in the United States with little reason to suspect that it has decreased since then (Alvarez & Butterfield, 2000) despite some calls for placing the rhetoric of immigration within broader contexts (Heyman, 2009).

Singling out individuals belonging to a specific ethnic group as the cause for social problems is nothing new. Even before the failure of the Bush administration to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill, states have made efforts to curb what they perceive as burdensome undocumented immigration (Schrag, 2010). In 1994 the citizens of the state of California voted to put Proposition 187 into effect, a bill that would deny undocumented immigrants access to educational and health care institutions (Armbruster, Geron, & Bonacich, 1995). Such efforts are not unique to state legislatures and agencies as both local municipalities and individual agents working for the government have engaged in similar behavior. In 2007, the town of Irving, Texas enacted a policy that requires all individuals booked into the local jail to have their immigration status checked (Kennedy, 2009) and in Pahrump, Nevada residents can receive fines for displaying foreign flags (Welch, 2010). In Pascagoula, Mississippi the newborn child of a non-English-speaking mother was placed in state custody when the Department of Human Services determined that the mother’s inability to speak English would place her child in danger (Padgett & Mascarenas, 2009). These policies are also not a uniquely American phenomenon. In January of 2007 the town of Herouxville, Quebec revised its town charter stipulating, among other things, that the stoning of women was prohibited (O'Regan, 2007).

Finally, as recently as March 19, 2009 the Australian government has continued to detain or deport “boat people” seeking asylum from violence overseas (Shanahan, 2009). Some of these
policies and court decisions are arguably more effective than others at deterring immigrants from taking up residence in particular communities but all send a clear message to would-be immigrants: you are not welcome (Padgett & Mascarenas, 2009).

Nativist policies might have discouraged undocumented immigrants from residing in certain areas, although it is difficult to determine definitively. The rationale municipalities and states often cite for passing such policies is to reduce the costs of housing, education, and healthcare; yet, often soon after passing such politics these municipalities are faced with expensive legal suits, rapidly evaporating locally owned businesses that serviced non-native populations, and declining tax revenues (Belson & Capuzzo, 2007).

These individual examples should not be thought of as isolated communities acting under the guidance of a few radical opinion leaders. Border politics between the U.S. and Mexico have historically been racialized and laws such as Arizona SB 1070 are not a purely contemporary phenomenon (Purcell & Nevins, 2005). The U.S.-Mexico border has been politically and culturally conceptualized as a point of contention for quite some time as a front against which the U.S. must stem the flow of immigrants seeking to move into the Global North and respond to challenges of its economic and cultural dominance (Purcell & Nevins, 2005). This conceptualization has been combined with the more recent use of a counterterrorism lens to understand immigration in the U.S. and has subsequently led to a localization of immigration law enforcement, such that states have taken the mantle of responsibility for the issue from the hands of the federal government (Coleman, 2007).

In addition to the use of border politics as a means for cultural and supposed security concerns, Winders (2007) shows that since 9/11, congressional representatives from throughout the southern United States have begun to more fiercely resist the integration of immigrants,
particularly Latinos, by pushing for both federal and state legislation that plays on fears for both the physical security of citizens and cultural stability of the area. The result is legislation that seeks to control entry past state and local borders on multiple fronts. Winders (2007) argues that state legislation has been used to protect regional cultures from the social intrusion of immigrants as well as the physical entrance of immigrants. The South’s history makes southern culture more open to such legislative efforts as citizens are encouraged to see themselves as protectors of the heritage of the south, not as racists (Winders, 2007).

Regulating immigration via criminal justice proceedings also has broader implications as well. The term “illegal immigrant,” often used without the immigrant modifier, is a fiercely damaging tool wielded against immigrants stemming from neoliberal ideology (Hiemstra, 2007). Hiemstra (2007) concludes that illegality has several implications in its application in contemporary society. First, illegality encourages cheap and exploitive labor by forcing those classified as illegal to seek similarly illegal means to gain employment and compensation. Second, the status of illegality is also arbitrary in the sense that it is a legal construction and that it is a homogeneous blanket classification for an otherwise highly diverse subgroup of the population. Finally, illegality relegates undocumented immigrants to social, political, and economic marginalization as illegality seeps into almost every aspect of life.³

Advocate groups and scholars alike argue almost universally for more open immigration policies in the United States (Schuck, 2007). However, the public primarily gathers information from a news information system that has a propensity to produce a constructed reality that is starkly different from any objective standard due to the distorting influence of previously discussed factors such as professionalism and the reliance on norms of objectivity that privilege

³ For a full description of the conceptual, methodological, and political problems posed by the “illegal” classifier see De Genova’s work on illegality and deportability (De Genova, 2002).
the powerful (Bennett, 1990, 2009; Breed, 1955, 1958; McChesney, 2004a, 2008; McCullagh, 2002).

This is not to say that the United States and the international community do not have a right or a duty to decide who is granted or denied passage through its borders. Maintaining control of a state’s border is reflective of a state’s sovereignty and not necessarily undesirable (Miller, 1999). However, this view, scholars argue, is becoming archaic in rapidly globalizing labor markets (Polson & Kahle, 2010). As financial, information, and commodity markets continue to become more globalized, other markets that states would prefer to remain domestic have a similar tendency to globalize (Massey, 2007). For example, NAFTA fully integrated most of the markets of North America between Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Even though goods and information can move almost effortlessly between each of these countries, human movement between the countries has not. The recent requirement for Mexicans to obtain a Canadian tourist visa where a passport would have sufficed in the past is just one way in which these three separate states continue to treat immigration as a purely domestic issue. It is becoming increasingly important to understand immigration independently of a state-centered approach and for both policymakers and journalists to move away from previously problematic portrayals that divorces immigration from broader global contexts (Polson & Kahle, 2010). As of yet, even efforts that have been geared toward educating the public regarding the complexities of immigration policies have failed to do just that (Polson & Kahle, 2010).

The manner in which journalists frame immigration is critical because, as Macmahon (1930) points out, for much of the nation’s early history, public opinion has driven legislation on many issues, including immigration and this is no different today (Daniels, 2002). Furthermore, the wisdom of relying on public opinion to drive important policy decisions has long been
recognized as worrisome for numerous reasons, the least of which is that the public has, for quite some time, been disinterested in becoming informed about important issues (Lippmann, 1925). If more recent referendum policy votes are any indication, allowing the public to make policy decisions within an emotionally charged atmosphere surrounding opinion formation and decision-making leads to subpar outcomes (Bell, 1978). Allowing public opinion to drive legislation then, is likely not an optimal strategy for developing public policy, especially when there are systematic and recurrent pressures on journalists to use news frames that fit within a narrow ideology (McChesney, 2004). There has also been a consistently wide disconnect between the opinion of the public at large and more informed individuals (Schuck, 2007), indicating that while some small portion of the public may be capable of making an informed decision on a referendum, the majority of people possess far less knowledge. Much of what the public believes about immigration is also possibly erroneous. Espenshade and Hempstead (1996) show that nearly 70 percent of the American public believes that the majority of immigrants arrive in the country through illegal means of some sort, which is simply not the case (see Warner, 2001), underscoring the need for more contextualizing news frames to characterize immigration issue coverage.

Research Questions

This study had two distinct goals. The first was to examine how immigration was constructed as a social problem in the time surrounding the passage of SB 1070. Although this study was primarily concerned with immigration frames within Arizona, a broad understanding of the frames used in immigration news accounts is necessary before undertaking an examination of how Arizona’s discourse may have encouraged the development and passage of SB 1070. The following research question was thus proposed:
RQ1: *What frames were used in news coverage of immigration?*

Cataloging the frames within Arizona alone may neglect to identify alternative framings that, while seldom used in Arizona, are still part of individuals’ schema for immigration. After all, local discourse does not occur in a political or cultural vacuum. Local understandings of immigration then might be due, at least in part, to constructions of immigration at the national level. Building frame packages solely from Arizonan news accounts may also lead to descriptions of frames that are overly parochial.

The second stage of this study examined how understandings of immigration within Arizona interacted with that at the national level and vice versa. Discourse at the local level may be very different from discourse at the national level, potentially consisting of different conceptualizations of immigration. Furthermore, as Entman’s (2003) cascading activation model illustrates, frames from official sources within the federal government may trickle down to other legitimated sources of power—including those within Arizona—over time and become integrated into other discourses. Entman’s model is directional in nature but this study proposes no such directionality. In fact, it is to be expected that discourses, especially those that are rife with contention, are likely to afford framers (journalists and sources) additional opportunities to engage in using their preferred conceptualizations of immigration (see Bennett, 1990). That said, it is ultimately unclear how understandings of immigration within national outlets will interact with those in Arizona. Thus, the following research questions were proposed:

RQ2: *What were the dominant frames in Arizona and at the national level before SB 1070 became a major news item?*

RQ3: *How did national and Arizona discourses interact in the time after SB 1070 became a major news item?*
Once SB 1070 gained widespread national attention, local leaders and representatives were, in all likelihood, forced to confront a cultural understanding of immigration that was likely quite divergent from that within Arizona. National news outlets were placed in a similar situation as journalists, commentators, and politicians in Washington, D.C. grappled with cultural constructions of immigration from Arizona. At least anecdotally, it was not expected that actors within each discourse level would be deaf to the understandings of immigration elsewhere. Some politicians and civil rights organizations outside Arizona expressed disbelief that such a law was even under consideration. At the very least, the expectation would be that differences would be discussed, if not rectified.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to first identify the frames that were used within two discourses, national and Arizona, to construct immigration as a social problem. The second purpose of the study was to then determine how these two discourses interacted with one another across time. Thus, this study consists of two phases: The first is a frame analysis that will identify the various framings surrounding immigration during the study period; the second is a longitudinal frame analysis that will determine the manner in which national discourse interacted with discourse in Arizona. It might be best to think of the study as a 2 x 2 factorial design with discourse level (national and Arizona) and time period (baseline, SB1070) being the key variables.

The study delineated between coverage in Arizona and that at the national level. Coverage in Arizona is likely shaped by a more local understanding of undocumented immigration driven by the state’s proximity to the border between the United States and Mexico. National news outlets, such as those selected for this study, are geographically more distant from the border and, in some instances, more proximate to Washington, D.C. where understandings of immigration are likely more a result of policymakers’ preferred framings than any firsthand experience with undocumented immigration.

The time period of interest was divided chronologically as well. As understandings of social problems and groups do not arise naturally, it was necessary to establish a baseline set of frames for how immigration was conceptualized by journalists before SB1070 was passed. It was only after SB1070 was passed that the national spotlight centered on Arizona and its potentially problematic law and constructions of immigration. At this point, discourses at the national level may have begun to interact with those in Arizona. Thus, studying the construction of
immigration in Arizona only after the passage of SB1070 poses problems as any frames identified may be a result of journalists and sources being forced to reexamine previously unchallenged constructions of the issue. For this reason, a baseline understanding of immigration at both discourse levels is necessary in order to understand how those discourses were altered and how they may have interacted after SB1070 gained widespread national coverage.

In this section, the generation of a sample for the study is first discussed, followed by a description of the frame analysis and longitudinal frame analysis employed.

Sample

The data for this study was collected through two primary means: Newspaper databases and individual newspaper websites. The sampling frame for the national discourse level was created using the Lexis-Nexis database to search *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Houston Chronicle*, and *San Jose Mercury News*. These outlets were selected because they satisfied three conditions: large circulations, geographical diversity, and ownership diversity. Newspapers with large circulation sizes are likely to be more influential over constructions of immigration at the national level. Using national sources from various regions across the United States will help to mitigate any regional effect on news frames such as proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border, differences in journalistic practice, or political culture within any particular area of the United States. These outlets were also selected because of the parent companies of each in order to reduce the chances of confounding discourse level with outlet ownership.

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5 Baker (2007) argues that ownership plays a strong role in the type of content that media firms are willing to produce. In his analysis, he points out profit-centric owners are more likely to ignore positive externalities of news content in favor of producing cheaper and popular fare. This might entail creating news accounts that do a better job of framing events and happenings within accurate historical and political contexts. Independent, non-corporate owners are more likely to produce this type of high-quality content. The four media companies selected here do not meet those criteria. Thus, the sampling frame generated for this study is not likely to represent the full range of
Within Arizona, the sampling frame was constructed by using both news database searches and by turning to individual newspaper outlets. The news outlets in Arizona selected for constructing a sampling frame were the *Arizona Daily Star, Arizona Daily Sun, Arizona Republic*, and *Phoenix New Times*. The Arizona newspaper sources were collected by going to each individual newspaper’s website and printing each immigration-related news article to a PDF one by one for later analysis. Although this was a far more time consuming process than a simple database search, the resultant sampling frame contained far more sources that were likely far more diverse than those that would have been gathered using only available databases. An initial search using Lexis-Nexis with the keywords listed above resulted in a total of 995 news accounts across the entire study period for newspapers in the state. A similar search within just one other Arizona newspaper’s website, the *Arizona Daily Star*, resulted in 2,670 news accounts. Although it is not apparent what stories are left out of the Lexis-Nexis search, some news accounts from outlets were not included in the Lexis-Nexis database search. At the outset of the study it was not possible to determine whether Lexis-Nexis would have provided a representative sample of news coverage in Arizona or whether the missing stories were systematically left out of the database. In the latter case, it is possible that stories omitted for this reason would have lead to the introduction of widespread systematic error into the study. In order to safeguard against this possibility, an outlet by outlet search was used to create a sampling frame that captured any potentially missing stories.

Like the sources selected for the national sample, these sources were selected because they spanned a wide geographic area in the state. The *Arizona Republic* covers the Phoenix area

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6 The owner of the *Arizona Daily Star* and *Arizona Daily Sun* is Lee Enterprises. The *Phoenix New Times* and *Arizona Republic* are owned by Village Voice Media and Gannett, respectively.
located in the relative center of the state and also home to the state’s capital. Phoenix is also the largest city by population. The *Phoenix New Times* was selected because it represented an alternative to more mainstream content in the state’s capital. The *Arizona Daily Star* covers the Tucson area, the second largest city in the state and in close geographic proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border. The *Arizona Daily Sun* covers the Flagstaff area, a smaller city farther north than Tucson and Phoenix and largely known for its more liberal-minded residents. These three news outlets, excluding the *Phoenix New Times*, vary in their respective city sizes, geographic locations, and proximity to the border. The *Phoenix New Times* also offers an alternative perspective and perhaps unique framing options. Unlike the national sample, two of the news outlets, the *Sun* and *Star*, are both owned by the same parent company, Lee Enterprises. Unlike the national sample, where there were numerous options of news outlets from which to choose and news organizations could be selected because they had varied ownerships, in Arizona this was not possible. The three mainstream news outlets selected are the most highly-circulated outlets in their respective cities (Mondonnewspapers, 2011), thus these outlets are likely amongst the most influential over mainstream discourse within the state.\(^7\) Because these newspapers do not represent the breadth of coverage in the state, two database searches, Newsbank and Lexis-Nexis, were included that included various additional sources from across the state of Arizona.

The keywords “immigration,” “immigrant,” “migrant,” “undocumented,” or “SB 1070” were used to collect news accounts from both types of sources (databases and individual news sites). The time period for the study was broken down into two distinct and consecutive time periods. The first time frame ran from January 1, 2009 through January 31, 2010. This timeframe was used to establish a “baseline” for the news frames of immigration within both discourse

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\(^7\) In the case of Flagstaff, the *Navajo-Hopi Observer* has a circulation of about 15,000 whereas the *Arizona Daily Sun* only has a circulation of about 12,000 (Mondonnewspapers, 2011). The *Observer* primarily serves the Native American population of the area however and was thus not selected for the study.
levels. This was necessary as interactions between discourse levels were far more likely once SB1070 gained widespread news coverage at the national level. The second timeframe for the study captured the time period immediately before and after the passage of SB1070 and the subsequent attention it received. This period ran from February 1, 2010 through July 31, 2010. Searches were not just limited to news stories but also editorials and letters to the editor. As the goal of this study was to broadly identify how immigration was socially constructed by news outlets, letters to the editor and editorials were included in the sampling frame as they are both capable of framing issues for audiences. Furthermore, as Van Gorp (2010, 2007) points out, frame packages are the result of journalists’ framing efforts and those of other actors. For this reason alone it would be appropriate to include letters to the editor and editorials in the sampling frame. A total of 6,085 news accounts were collected in Arizona and 8,910 for the national discourse level. Together, these 14,995 news accounts represented the sampling frame from which the sample for the study was drawn.

Once the sampling frame was constructed, a manageable number of news accounts were selected for analysis for each cell in the 2 (discourse level; national and Arizona) x 2 (time period; baseline, SB1070) design. A total of 226 stories were analyzed (56 per cell). This sample size was used for two reasons. First, the sample was limited to 226 news accounts make the rich description of news accounts feasible within the time available. Second, 56 news accounts per cell was thought to be large enough to identify a breadth of frames used in immigration coverage without sacrificing time and energy that would be better spent providing rich descriptions of accounts. In other words, the sample size used here was not selected based on statistical power but rather on the need to broadly identify and richly describe news frames.
The stories were selected for analysis by creating a constructed news week via a stratified sample segmented by day. This, in effect, statistically reduces the variability of day in the analysis (Babbie, 1995; Neuendorf, 2002). Stories were then randomly selected by week and news outlet. If a particular outlet had multiple news accounts for a single date, random selection was used to choose a story.\(^8\) For a breakdown of the number of news accounts collected by source and time frame at the national level, see Table 3.1. The same information can be found for the Arizona discourse level in Table 3.2. News accounts by type (news story, editorial, letter to the editor) can be found on Table 3.3.

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline (percent)</th>
<th>SB 1070 (percent)</th>
<th>Total (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>26 (46.43%)</td>
<td>23 (41.07%)</td>
<td>49 (43.75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Post</td>
<td>17 (30.36%)</td>
<td>16 (28.57%)</td>
<td>33 (29.46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston Chronicle</td>
<td>6 (10.71%)</td>
<td>8 (14.29%)</td>
<td>14 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Jose Mercury News</td>
<td>7 (12.50%)</td>
<td>9 (16.07%)</td>
<td>16 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56 (100.00%)</td>
<td>56 (100.00%)</td>
<td>112 (100.00%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^8\) It is worth pointing out that Van Gorp suggests that stories be selected, at least in part, based on length—with longer stories included in the sample over shorter ones. The reasoning for this is that longer stories are more likely to contain richer expressions of the frames journalists use in constructing immigration. This study diverges from Van Gorp’s suggestion on this point. It very well may be the case that longer stories may feature more prominent or complex framings, but longer stories may also differ from shorter stories in subject matter, section placement, and also more likely to be feature stories and special topics. Obviously, these types of stories differ from more routine coverage and story length will thus not be considered in selecting stories. News accounts were randomly selected were retained unless they were so short that no frame could be discerned. These short, informational stories are often frameless and serve only to convey manifest information. In other words, they are frameless as they convey only the manifest statements present in the story without any additional logical inferences. For example a short story about the procedural status of SB107 in the state legislature may be frameless. Although Van Gorp stipulates that longer stories potentially afford the opportunity for journalists to insert more framing devices, or indicators clues to the presence of a frame, no such priority for length was used in this study.
Table 3.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arizona Daily Star</th>
<th>SB 1070 (percent)</th>
<th>Total (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 (33.93%)</td>
<td>15 (26.79%)</td>
<td>34 (30.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona Daily Sun</td>
<td>10 (17.86%)</td>
<td>12 (21.43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona Republic</td>
<td>9 (16.07%)</td>
<td>16 (28.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix New Times</td>
<td>4 (7.14%)</td>
<td>4 (7.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexis-Nexis*</td>
<td>1 (1.79%)</td>
<td>1 (1.79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsbank*</td>
<td>13 (23.21%)</td>
<td>8 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2742 (100.00%)</td>
<td>56 (100.00%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources from these databases included news outlets throughout the state of Arizona.

Table 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency Counts of Articles by Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency (percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News accounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to the editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frame Analysis

The constructions of immigration and immigrants in the time around the passage of SB1070 likely played a role in shaping both discourse in Arizona and at the national level. This study employed a content analysis using a portion of Van Gorp’s (2010) approach to framing analysis. The overall goal of such an approach is to:

- identify the framing and reasoning devices and to relate them to a condensing symbol, which is part of a shared culture … The intention of an inductive framing analysis is to reconstruct the frames that are useful to define a certain topic. (Van Gorp, 2010, p. 92)
This study’s reliance on Van Gorp’s (2010) method in approaching inductive framing analysis should help put at ease popular criticisms of a hermeneutic approach to framing analyses. Scholars have, at times wrongly, criticized inductive framing analyses as being prone to the insertion of frames that researchers expect to find and have attacked what others perceive to be the arbitrariness (Tankard, 2001) and subjective nature of inductive framing analysis (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). Although Van Gorp’s (2010) approach claims to remove the subjectivity from inductive framing analysis, it is perhaps better stated to say that his method instead removes some of the arbitrariness from such analyses (Davis, 2010). Criticisms regarding the subjective nature of inductive analyses are likewise not a cause for concern. After all, by its very nature any inductive analysis, or deductive framing analysis for that matter, requires a researcher to make judgments regarding the reading of a text making it difficult to remove subjectivity, assuming that a non-subjective analysis would be possible and desirable.

The manner by which Van Gorp (2007, 2010) seeks to address the role of subjectivity in framing analysis is by following the inductive phases of analysis with a deductive phase where a team of coders uses a codebook derived from the inductive phase to quantitatively analyze content, essentially validating the inductively derived frames against a quantitative analysis. While such an approach is certainly useful and could be applied to a much wider scope of immigration news coverage, the focus of this study was exclusively devoted to the inductive identification and analysis of news texts to examine how mainstream news media had constructed immigration as a social problem in the time preceding and following the passage of Arizona SB1070. Results derived from an inductive analysis, although perhaps not statistically generalizable, are no less valid than their quantitative counterparts. This particular study was designed around the first half of Van Gorp’s (2010) method. A deductive phase in a follow-up
study is most certainly possible but due to the time constraints on this study, an additional phase was not feasible.

It may be helpful to define several key concepts that Van Gorp (2010, 2007) uses in his conceptualization of culturally embedded frames. Recall that frames themselves are probably best described as packages, more specifically, frame packages rather than media packages (cf. Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). A frame package is defined as “an integrated structure of framing devices and a logical chain of reasoning devices that demonstrates how the frame functions to represent a certain issue” (Van Gorp, 2010, p. 91). Framing devices are the manifest elements of a text that serve as markers for frames (Van Gorp, 2010) and reasoning devices are the logical inferences framing devices would encourage readers to make when reading a text (Van Gorp, 2010). It is the reasoning devices that give frames their defining capabilities and ability to change the perception of an issue by defining problems, establishing moral judgments, or suggesting potential solutions (Entman, 1993).

The framing analysis portion of this study was itself was divided into two stages. The first stage of the framing analysis can perhaps best be thought of as an inductive (qualitative) framing analysis of newspaper coverage selected from local and regional news sources in addition to news databases. The focus of the analysis was to provide a rich description of newspaper accounts using a recursive and dialectical approach to studying the texts involved (see Altheide, 1996; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This open coding of the news texts focused on how

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9 As stated previously, this study departs from Van Gorp’s method as it leaves out the deductive validation of the frames identified in the initial inductive phase.
the stories are told rather than on the subject of the stories. Using a constant comparative principle which allows for the simultaneous examination of various media texts in the development of framing and reasoning devices, the researcher was more concerned at this point with developing an extensive list of potential framing and reasoning devices than definitively determining whether such excerpts from the texts actually constitute devices. Some frames were easily identifiable and their corresponding elements described early in the analysis while others took several reexaminations of the texts. This entailed revisiting earlier portions of the analysis as the frames identified in the study began to take more shape in later stages. For this reason, Van Gorp (2007) suggests that during the open coding stage the researcher instead focus on creating a list that contains all the feasible framing and corresponding reasoning devices for subsequent analysis which will be conducted after examining all the texts in the sample. All excerpts that may have represented framing devices were kept at this stage of the analysis as discarding any at this stage may have resulted in missing some frames that were not readily apparent at the outset of the analysis. Retaining all potential framing devices until the analysis of the texts is complete is also important as frames that draw upon an understanding of the issue foreign to the researcher may not be apparent at the beginning of the analysis. Van Gorp’s method allows for a broad interpretation of source material so as to capture the widest diversity of potential frames. Using this strategy, it is not necessary for the researcher conducting the frame analysis to have a congruent schema with the frames that emerge from the texts. Therefore, news accounts might have multiple frames, some of which would be incongruent with one another, as readers with contrastive schema approaching the text would interpret the story differently. In other words, some frames will be said to exist in news accounts even if many people would interpret the stories differently.
Once the collection of framing and reasoning devices was complete, these devices were organized around what Van Gorp (2010) terms “axes of meaning.” In this stage, the framing and reasoning devices were divorced from the stories from which they were taken and organized around logical connections, similarities, and differences so as to form coherent dimensions within the texts. At this point, the rows within the frame matrix consisted of coherent frame packages with the columns representing the framing devices, reasoning devices, and illustrative excerpts from various texts. The various devices were organized by looking for logical combinations of devices that define problems, assign responsibility, suggest solutions, encourage particular moral judgments about actors, etc.

Taken together, these clusters of devices should be mutually exclusive but not necessarily exhaustive as the complete list of devices included all feasible possibilities of framing and reasoning devices and not just those that the researcher was able to determine a priori as fitting into a frame package. Once the packages were organized according to shared meaning, the packages were labeled. Naming a frame is also, to a degree, framing in and of itself (Tankard, 2001). The advantage to naming the frame packages is that the label can provide a crystallizing idea around which the frame package is organized (Van Gorp, 2010).

It should be noted that because this study was conducted by gathering news accounts from individual newspaper’s websites and through databases, it was not possible to examine frame prominence within or between stories. In other words, all stories are assumed to have equal weight in constructing immigration as a social issue. Although the page number of some stories was available, it was not possible to incorporate story placement into the analysis because the layout of each page was not discernible from either the databases or newspaper websites and because page numbers were not available for a significant portion of the sample.
Longitudinal Frame Analysis

At this stage, the study had already identified several frameworks for understanding immigration across the study period and discourse levels. These frameworks were established by examining all of the source material holistically. An additional analysis of the data was conducted to understand how constructions of immigration changed between the baseline period and the SB1070 period and also to determine how, or if, national discourse and that within Arizona interacted.

Again, there are several reasons for why such a shift in discourse might have occurred. The first is that by being exposed to alternative conceptualizations of immigration, journalists and sources will alter their mental schema for the issue and respond with a wider diversity of frames in news accounts. Another possible reason to expect a change in discourse is that journalists, by constructing stories “objectively,” will commonly resort to balancing opposing viewpoints against one another (McChesney, 2004), even though such balancing may not indicate that journalists or audiences have adapted their mental schema to the new frames. The passage of SB 1070 in Arizona may have been a critical turning point in the debate on immigration where problematic constructions of immigration in the past may have been brought to light when the bill began to garner widespread coverage. Such a shift is akin to that identified around the time of watershed moments in nuclear power coverage (see Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Arizona SB 1070 may have provided just such a moment.

The longitudinal frame analysis primarily involved reexamining the frame matrix by discourse level and time period in order to build an understanding for what frames were prevalent in each discourse level across time. A simple frequency count of news frames per
story in each time frame and discourse level was also created to serve as an initial guide to indicate which frames may have increased in use once SB1070 began to receive national coverage.

In conjunction with the frequency count, shifts in the SB1070 time period news accounts were examined to see if such changes might have been due to influence from discourse at the opposing level. For example, during the baseline time period a frame that may have never been used in Arizona but that enjoyed widespread use in national level discourse may have increased in use once SB1070 became a national news item. Although this study cannot determine whether the increase in the use of this frame in Arizona was due to exposure to the external conceptualization of the issue, it is possible that the previously unused frame may have trickled down into understandings of immigration within Arizona. Conversely, the same may be true of unused frames in the national level where frames used in Arizona move up into national discourse.
CHAPTER 4: NEWS FRAMES

The first stage of this study entailed analyzing news accounts surrounding coverage of Arizona SB 1070 using a modified version of Van Gorp’s (2010) method of framing analysis. Once a suitable sample was collected from various national and state sources, the news accounts were examined to determine how the issue of immigration was socially constructed (RQ1). The analysis was geared toward ascertaining how news accounts described immigration and immigrants and less on identifying the subjects or topics of such stories. A simple frequency count of the stories which featured each frame by time period across both discourse levels can be found in Table 4.1.10

That said, the frames identified in this analysis are grouped into several key themes. The difference between themes and frames is sometimes blurred in the literature but one of the most coherent definitions of themes is perhaps provided by Kuypers (2010); he explains that “A theme is the subject of discussion, or that which is the subject of the thought expressed” (p. 302). Although all of the frames which arose in this analysis are on the broad subject of immigration, the themes under which frames are organized here are specific aspects of the issue of immigration. The themes then can be thought of as particular aspects of the immigration issue news accounts highlighted. As is the case with frames, there can be multiple themes in any individual story. In other words, the broad themes here are different facets of immigration and

10 The “contentious issue” and “illegality” frames presented a unique challenge as both frames are present in the majority of news accounts. For that reason, both of the tallies for these frames across the study are misleading in that both frames appear to be relatively rare. The framing devices used to convey conflict are often conceptual in nature and are not confined in manageably small segments of news accounts. Instead, these devices sometimes run the entire length of a story. Immigration is very much a contentious issue and it is framed as such through sources that offer conflicting, incompatible, and heated characterizations of immigrants and of immigration. The count of “contentious issue” frames presented here is a tally of stories that explicitly discussed immigration as a contentious issue. The “illegality” frame presents a similar challenge in that the label “illegal” immigrant and the shorthand “illegal” are both likely sufficient to cue the “illegality” frame. Both framing devices are present in the majority of news accounts. Stories that framed undocumented immigrants as “illegal” above and beyond using the “illegal” immigrant framing device were counted toward the “illegality” frame. The “contentious issue” frame was only tallied when immigration was explicitly stated to be a heated topic above and beyond sources or subject matter that communicated the same.
frames are varying interpretations of those facets (Kuypers, 2010). It is worth noting at the outset that for this analysis, the frames within each theme encourage interpretations of immigration that are highly congruent.

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total (percent)</th>
<th>National (percent)</th>
<th>Arizona (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Americans first</td>
<td>7 (3.13%)</td>
<td>1 (0.89%)</td>
<td>6 (5.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>27 (12.05%)</td>
<td>21 (18.75%)</td>
<td>6 (5.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contentious issue</td>
<td>5 (2.23%)</td>
<td>4 (3.57%)</td>
<td>1 (0.89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminality</td>
<td>50 (22.32%)</td>
<td>15 (13.39%)</td>
<td>35 (31.25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human costs</td>
<td>66 (29.46%)</td>
<td>30 (26.79%)</td>
<td>36 (32.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegality</td>
<td>14 (6.25%)</td>
<td>9 (8.04%)</td>
<td>5 (4.46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisible rights</td>
<td>10 (4.46%)</td>
<td>4 (3.57%)</td>
<td>6 (5.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue ignorance</td>
<td>14 (6.25%)</td>
<td>6 (5.36%)</td>
<td>8 (7.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal reverence</td>
<td>29 (12.95%)</td>
<td>5 (4.46%)</td>
<td>24 (21.43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meritocracy</td>
<td>8 (3.57%)</td>
<td>8 (7.14%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural nation</td>
<td>7 (3.13%)</td>
<td>4 (3.57%)</td>
<td>3 (2.68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National security</td>
<td>64 (28.57%)</td>
<td>18 (16.07%)</td>
<td>46 (41.07%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political pawns</td>
<td>16 (7.14%)</td>
<td>11 (9.82%)</td>
<td>5 (4.46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeserved benefits</td>
<td>21 (9.38%)</td>
<td>14 (12.50%)</td>
<td>7 (6.25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington doesn’t get it</td>
<td>21 (9.38%)</td>
<td>1 (0.89%)</td>
<td>20 (17.86%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. News accounts may have multiple frames. Frequencies and percentages refer to the number of news accounts in which the frame was found.

News coverage of immigration during the study period was characterized by 15 separate and distinct frames that can be grouped into four broad themes (RQ1). These four broad themes were “status,” “social change and maintenance,” “invasion and colonization,” and “immigrants as people.” For a complete list of frames by theme see Table 4.2. The labels associated with each frame, especially at first glance, may appear to overlap somewhat. However, each framing of immigrants highlights unique aspects of immigration and the role of immigrants in society. Although the differences between certain frames may appear trivial, the nuances and distinctions between these frames are critical in understanding the multifaceted and, at times, highly problematic portrayals of immigrants.
In this chapter, the section devoted to each frame contains several elements. The first portion of each frame explication is a summary of the frame’s key components. The remainder of each section is devoted to cataloging representative examples of framing devices (manifest textual elements). Material from the source text and, occasionally, richer and more lengthy descriptions of news accounts are provided for illustrative purposes. The reasoning devices (logical inferences) are discussed in conjunction with the devices from which they arise.

**Contentious issue.** News media are capable not only of defining social problems but also of creating them regardless of whether or not such problems actually exist (see Fishman, 1980). Before beginning to discuss the social construction of immigrants themselves as either a group or as individuals, it is perhaps best to start with an examination of how news accounts constructed immigration as a social problem. Immigration as an issue or social problem was commonly set apart from other more routine news coverage and in this way, the “contentious issue” frame can be thought of as a metaframe, or a frame for talking about the issue as a whole, rather than a particular aspect of immigration. Unlike other topics such as the economy, public education, or local crime, immigration was commonly framed as being a particularly antagonistic issue that, when discussed, causes inflamed passions, bitter disagreements, and unproductive deliberation (see Table 4.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Social change and maintenance</th>
<th>Invasion and colonization</th>
<th>Immigrants as people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illegality</td>
<td>Meritocracy</td>
<td>National security</td>
<td>Human costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminality</td>
<td>Undeserved benefits</td>
<td>Washington doesn’t get it</td>
<td>Multicultural nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisible rights</td>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>Political pawns</td>
<td>Issue ignorance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americans first</td>
<td></td>
<td>Legal reverence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames by Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and colonization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2
The volatile nature of immigration debate was expressed to audiences in numerous ways. Immigration as an issue was described as a “potential minefield” (Preston, 2009), an “ongoing crisis” (Billeaud & Myers, 2010), and an issue that has the potential to transform any community from a “serene place with polite politics” into a place of “raw divide” (Davey & McDonald, 2010). Discussions of immigrants sometimes “boil over” (Davey & McDonald, 2010).

Table 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source material</th>
<th>Framing devices</th>
<th>Reasoning devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration is a “potential minefield,” an “ongoing crisis,” an issue that “boils over.”</td>
<td>Comparing immigration to dangerous situations, categorizing it as critical issue, stressing emotional nature of surrounding debate.</td>
<td>Immigration is an important issue that is politically dangerous, has widespread implications for the country, and inflames passions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Noodle War on Jerome Avenue.”4</td>
<td>Emphasizing the friction between “legal” immigrants/restaurant owners.</td>
<td>Any immigrant-related issue is potentially conflict-ridden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Least-bad choice” in reference to policy providing “illegal” immigrants with driver’s licenses.5</td>
<td>Highlighting detriments to immigration policies and downplaying potential benefits.</td>
<td>Undocumented immigrants present society with many problems with no good solutions. A possible remedy is to remove undocumented immigrants entirely.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Preston, 2009  
2Billeaud & Myers, 2010  
3Davey, 2010  
4Dolnick 2010  
5“Maryland’s license dilemma,” 2009

The “contentious issue” frame was even applied to a news account featuring immigrants but that had little to do with immigration itself. In this story, a journalist framed the relationship between two immigrants with a common culture as particularly ridden with conflict even though the subjects themselves were quite amiable toward one another. In a story on two noodle houses in the Bronx that share the same neighborhood, Dolnick (2010) described the competition between two immigrant owners in the text’s headline as the “Noodle War on Jerome Avenue.”
The emphasis on fierce competition between the two restaurant owners makes the conflict between the restaurants and their respective owners the central focal point of the story. Even though the text of the story itself can be interpreted in such a way as to infer that the noodle houses can and will coexist peacefully, the story’s headline is a direct reference to conflict and at the very least can act as a prime for the “contentious issue” frame.

It is important to point out that in the instance of the noodle houses, which may also be the case with other immigration stories, the subjects of the story appeared to harbor no such animosity toward one another judging by each owner’s statements regarding the other. The owner of one shop was quoted in the story as saying “I want them to live like we do … If they closed, I wouldn’t be too happy. There’s enough for both” (Dolnick, 2010). Although this story is the only one in the sample where two subjects directly contradicted the “contentious issue” framing the journalist imposed on the story, it is possible that in other immigration stories the subjects would likewise reject the contention frame had they been given the opportunity to do so. Generally, the framings of immigration or related topics were rarely, if ever, found to stress the possibility of a peaceful solution to problems and in this instance a peaceful resolution was downplayed.11

The framing devices employed under the “contentious issue” frame also implied that immigration is an issue with no easy solutions. For example, in an editorial on state IDs for undocumented immigrants, journalists described such IDs as “the least-bad choice” in providing identification for undocumented immigrants (Maryland’s license dilemma,” 2009). As was the case with other news accounts, stressing the perceived downsides to any potential solution to the exclusion of its benefits poses a dilemma for policymakers and the public at large: Unless a

11 Although the researcher would argue that immigration coverage in this study did not frame any solutions as workable, it is plausible that some audiences might interpret some solutions provided as workable and acceptable to “both” sides of the issue.
suitable cure-all is discovered, policymakers are left with very few actionable options aside from removing undocumented immigrants from society.

Ultimately, framing immigration in terms of its tendency to antagonize individuals and communities may be a self-fulfilling prophecy. If immigration is thought of as an issue that enflames emotions, many people may expect to face harsh criticisms of their views, bombastic counterarguments, and personal attacks when broaching the subject with others. As a result, discussants may enter into deliberation unwilling to seriously consider alternative perspectives or empirical claims that challenge previously held beliefs. It should be no surprise then that debates on the matter devolve into vitriol and froth rather than building policy solutions.

As with all frames, the “contentious issue” frame need have no basis in reality and need only fit into the extant schema of journalists and audiences (Fishman, 1980). Whether deliberation over immigration necessarily and inevitably devolves into unproductive debate may be, therefore, a moot point. This is not to say that the framing of immigration as an issue is either necessary or sufficient to decrease the quality and productivity of deliberations, only that this framing does not likely encourage audiences to be overly optimistic or open minded when approaching the matter.

*Status Theme*

These frames shared one of two conceptual axes: They either drew distinctions between natives and immigrants along various attributes or relied on such distinctions in justifying disparate treatment of the two groups. Numerous news accounts constructed immigrants as distinct from natives. The dichotomizations of various individual qualities along nationality and/or immigration standing likely served to increase social distance, or at least perceived social
distance, between immigrants and natives. Also, frames within this theme were found across a wide variety of news accounts. The focus on status took several forms (e.g. documented/undocumented, innocent/criminal, illegal/legal) and although the discussion of each frame is rendered distinct for the purposes of conceptual clarity here, it is important to note that the various framings within this theme were sometimes intertwined in news accounts. Although the individual frames encourage unique interpretations of immigration and immigrants, the ultimate result was the same: A construction of immigrants that uses status as a justification for various behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs that result in unequal treatment, specifically the enactment of policies akin to Arizona SB 1070.

Illegality. Perhaps one of the most prevalent frames of immigrants themselves within the news coverage examined here was the “illegality” frame. The most obvious use of the label “illegal” when applied to immigrants was to set apart the type of immigrants who are allowed entry to the United States, “legal” immigrants, from those who are not, “illegal” immigrants. This frame is applied almost universally in immigration stories and is usually expressed simply by labeling immigrants without proper documentation as “illegal immigrants” or with the shorthand label, “illegals.” Stories that feature the “illegality” frame placed the problem undocumented immigrants pose solely within the legal realm and stress immigration status as an important and valid characteristic in determining a person’s worth to society. Examples include stressing that “All illegal immigrants break the law” (Cocke, 2009), implying that “illegals” continue to break laws after they enter the country, and contending that “illegals” are not victims and that they bear the sole responsibility for their lot in life (Rodriguez, 2010). Such assertions constructed
immigration as hinging upon the personal choice of immigrants and largely abdicates U.S. society or public policy as a contributor to the problem (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4
Framing and Reasoning Devices for the “Illegality” Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source material</th>
<th>Framing devices</th>
<th>Reasoning devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>References to “illegality,” using the “illegal” modifier to immigrants or immigration.</td>
<td>Places the immigration problem strictly within the legal realm</td>
<td>Solutions to immigration can be found through law enforcement measures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“All illegal immigrants break the law.”¹</td>
<td>Brands all activities by undocumented immigrants as “illegal.”</td>
<td>Even when undocumented immigrants engage in otherwise legal or acceptable activities, the original sin of crossing the border sans paperwork taints all future activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using “illegals” as a substitute for “illegal immigrants” or undocumented immigrants.</td>
<td>Strips referent of other attributes and motivations.</td>
<td>All motivations of an undocumented immigrant’s actions can be attributed to criminality and a willingness to break the law.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Cocke, 2009

Describing an item, person, situation, or happening as illegal brings with it a great deal of cultural baggage. The term itself implies that the very existence of the immigrant poses a problem to the community in which he or she resides, although the danger posed may not be intentional on the part of the immigrant—an important distinction from the “criminality” frame that will be discussed in short order. However, as laws are ostensibly not enacted for arbitrary or misguided reasons (see “legal reverence” frame below), people who are illegal are labeled as such for a (supposedly) good reason, and audiences are encouraged to think of the motivations of immigrants as being less wholesome and pure than natives, their actions and behaviors as toxic to one degree or another, and the overall effect of “illegals” on society as generally negative with little or no benefits derived from their presence.
Although legality is a social construction and normatively defined—lawmakers, and by extension the public, decide what is and is not legal—it is likely that many people, perhaps most, would agree or at least assume that many of the things that are illegal are restricted for good reason, most likely that the object or activity in question is in some way harmful to society. This same logic is applied to illegal immigrants, albeit in the opposite direction where immigrants are first labeled as illegal and then assumed to have overall negative impacts on society.

A common refrain in letters to the editor and comments posted on newspapers’ websites was: “I don’t dislike immigrants, just illegals.” It is this abbreviated version of the “illegal immigrant” label that was perhaps the most telling expression of the “illegal” frame in that it strips the referent of other attributes, including that of immigrant, and ascribes illegality to the totality of the person’s existence. One common expression of this reasoning is apparent when journalists or sources stress the ability of illegal immigrants to remedy the problems they pose to communities by returning home and going through a legalization process before returning to the United States. While this only involves having paperwork processed and perhaps obtaining a visa, the assumption is that this process somehow transforms the immigrant, cleansing them of their original sin of illegality and transforming their role in society. Prima facie, this process does nothing to change the individual’s willingness, for example, to cooperate with law enforcement, refrain from breaking laws, or pay taxes. What does likely change however, is the ability for the individual to engage in this behavior. Instead of recognizing the distinction between an immigrant’s personal motivations and their immigration status, this frame places undue emphasis on the latter to the exclusion of the former.

That illegality was applied as a defining characteristic of many undocumented immigrants across numerous and varied roles in society is critical in understanding how
immigrants are likely perceived. The frame infers a relationship between immigrants’ varied roles in society with harm in one form or another. For example, many undocumented immigrants have trouble obtaining drivers licenses in the United States and operate vehicles without one. In Maryland, where undocumented immigrants had the opportunity to obtain licenses, there was debate regarding whether the state should “condone” the presence of illegals by offering them licenses. In considering whether these licenses should still be provided, a *Washington Post* article asserted, “Take away [illegal immigrants’] licenses and they’re likely to continue driving, only illegally … Unlicensed drivers are responsible for a disproportionate number of accidents and fatalities” (“Maryland’s license dilemma,” 2009). In this particular instance, the framing of immigrants as illegal did two things. First, it set undocumented immigrants apart from “legal” immigrants and citizens in their willingness to violate the law. The inference here is that undocumented immigrants are more willing to continue driving even when they do not have a valid driver’s license. By extension, citizens and “legal” immigrants would not drive without a license. This downplays the differences in circumstances in which someone without a valid driver’s license may find themselves. A citizen without a driver’s license only has to refrain from driving until he or she reaches the DMV to obtain a new license, a relatively simple matter. Undocumented immigrants have no such option. The choice for “illegal” immigrants is to not drive at all or to drive “illegally,” regardless of the person’s willingness to get a license. The “illegality” frame, as used in this news account, encourages an interpretation of undocumented immigrants’ motives that ignores the possibility that citizens would continue drive if they were never afforded the opportunity to do so legally. The frame also discourages readers to consider that in contemporary society, especially in the U.S. where automobile culture dominates to the exclusion of readily available and practical public transportation, driving a car is a necessity
across most of the country. If licenses were revoked *en masse* from citizens, many would likely keep driving out of sheer need rather than walking several miles every day to work or the grocery store.

Second, this particular framing encourages audiences to think that “illegal” immigrants who operate vehicles without licenses are indistinguishable from all other individuals who operate vehicles without a license. This conflation is problematic as individuals who drive without a license are distinct from individuals that have had licenses revoked for drunken driving, excessive speeding, or other traffic violations. Logically, individuals that have had their licenses revoked for poor driving are more likely to cause harm to others when behind the wheel than those that simply do not possess a license. What the frame of illegality does in this instance is naturalize this conflation of two different types of problematic drivers: those without licenses because they are barred from obtaining them and others who are barred from licenses because they pose a likely threat to others. By stressing the illegal nature of a person’s immigration status and expanding that label, it is much more plausible then that all illegal immigrants should be barred from driving because of the danger posed to society.

The illegal frame was not solely applied to drivers licenses or issues directly related to the state and personal safety. Illegality also set undocumented immigrants apart from the rest of the population on a number of other factors. In news accounts, undocumented immigrants were constructed as individuals who, because of their immigration status, are less trustworthy as witnesses in court (Fernandez, 2010), cannot be victimized because they chose to become illegal (Rodriguez, 2010), are undeserving of life-saving assistance (“Man holds gun,” 2009), incapable of intellectual growth (Kirk, 2010), and have a pathological disrespect for law and order (Cocke, 2009). These applications and extensions of illegality into diverse aspects of modern life
illustrate how the concept of illegality can become strongly associated with much of undocumented immigrants’ lives and intrinsic motivations for their behaviors despite its supposed narrow application to immigration status. Additional implications of being labeled as “illegal” can be seen more clearly within the context of the “legal reverence” frame discussed later.

Also, it is not genetic differences, morals, or past criminal behavior that warrants the label “illegal.” Two people can engage in the same exact behavior side by side and if one of the individuals is illegal, it is assumed under the umbrella of this frame that an “illegal” from outside the U.S. is inherently different than a legal immigrant from the same country and that these two individuals have incredibly disparate effects for the communities in which they reside. Furthermore, there need be no difference between these two individuals as illegality is constructed as a sufficient status to define much, if not all, of an individual’s entire life. Because the immigration status of undocumented immigrants is framed as being paramount in interpreting their roles in society, the “illegality” frame also brings with it the notion of being unofficial or invisible in the eyes of the legal system and society generally. Because undocumented immigrants do not have an official immigration status they can be thought of as not existing. It might be better to say that undocumented immigrants are to be thought of not at all and thus we should not think of them as deserving equal treatment. This final stipulation, that undocumented immigrants do not deserve the same treatment as other human beings, will be explored in more detail under the “invisible rights” frame.

There are some limits as to which undocumented immigrants can be termed “illegal.” The “illegality” frame is incongruent with a number of activities of natives. When charity organizations or good Samaritans seek to lessen the burdens on undocumented immigrants,
journalists seemed to be wary of implying that such organizations are condoning illegal activity, although many opponents of immigration would likely prefer that the frame be applied regardless. In such stories, a balance was struck between terming undocumented immigrants “illegals” and using alternative labels such as “undocumented” (see Portillo, 2009; Shearer, 2009). Instead of describing the lack of proper paperwork within legalistic terms, journalists and sources frame immigrants as undocumented and in some cases as border crossers. The former term merely implies that individuals simply do not possess paperwork and the latter that the problem posed by immigrants is merely one of geography. Denying the “illegality” frame to immigrants in association with otherwise law-abiding actors is likely not due to any difference between undocumented and illegal immigrants. Rather, journalists and sources seem to be loath to associate their fellow citizens with illegality, especially when they are engaged in behavior that many would consider charitable, good-natured, or magnanimous. The association of the citizens’ behavior with illegality would be incongruent and illogical.

Regarding the actual motivations of immigrants, the real reasons for immigrants “choosing” to become “illegal” is not critical to the conceptualization of this frame; arguably, the contextualization of illegality within broader social, political, or economic frameworks would do much to limit this frame’s ability to infer problem definitions, solutions, and moral judgments about immigrants themselves. It is likely that once such context is applied and illegality is understood as merely a social construction rather than as a natural state, such inferences would likely seem hollow. Rather, this frame is likely most useful in understanding the problem posed by immigration when it is applied and understood either alone or in conjunction with other legalistic frames (e.g. legal reverence and criminality) and not those that place contemporary immigration in accurate historical and economic contexts.
The problem posed by illegal immigration then is one of law enforcement. The cause of illegal immigration is not unequal economic prosperity, wealth, globalization, or greedy corporations. Rather, the problem posed by illegal immigration is twofold: Some people are willing to break the law for self-centered reasons and law enforcement is incapable of finding, detaining, and deporting everyone that enters the country without proper documentation. Policy solutions that are congruent with this frame are then most likely to be ones that focus on removing undocumented/illegal immigrants from the country, decreasing the likelihood that immigrants without paperwork will want to live or work in the United States, or preventing people from entering the country unless they do so through an official port of entry.\footnote{There are numerous news accounts that contend that Arizona SB 1070 should be enacted and enforced solely because undocumented immigrants broke a law. This argument assumes that deportation is an appropriate punishment, current immigration laws are worth enforcing, and that even if the law was unjust, it should be followed because it is a law. These assumptions do not necessarily contradict the “illegality” frame but are perhaps better categorized under the umbrella of the “legal reverence” frame.}

Criminality. Related to but distinct from the “illegality” frame is the “criminality” frame. The “criminality” frame not only associated immigrants with illegal behavior but also behavior that would be considered morally reprehensible for one or more reasons. There are many activities that are illegal that would probably not be considered criminal, such as an illegal U-turn or jaywalking. Criminality is usually ascribed to behavior that intentionally and unjustly enriches or benefits one individual at the expense of others. While both jaywalking and illegal U-turns are technically against the law, it is difficult to criminalize someone for either action in comparison to tax evasion, murder, or fraud. The “criminality” frame placed emphasis on the criminal activities inherent in being in a country when one should not and constructed undocumented immigration as hopelessly intertwined with criminality. Perhaps most importantly, the
“criminality frame” stresses the notion that activities of undocumented immigrants are responsible for harm to natives (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5
Framing and Reasoning Devices for the “Criminality” Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source material</th>
<th>Framing devices</th>
<th>Reasoning devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undocumented immigrants enter the country through human smugglers and with the aid of narcotics traffickers.</td>
<td>Contending that undocumented immigrants are complicit in illegal activity.</td>
<td>Undocumented immigrants help perpetuate crimes in communities because they enter the country through the assistance of criminal organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The death of Robert Krentz was attributed to an “illegal, drug-smuggling alien,”1 associating undocumented immigrants with gun smuggling, murder, robbery, and other aspects of the narcotics trade.</td>
<td>Drug traffickers are illegal immigrants.</td>
<td>Conflates undocumented immigrants with drug traffickers and criminal activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug runners and undocumented immigrants use the same routes to enter the country.</td>
<td>It is often difficult to distinguish between narcotics smugglers and undocumented immigrants.</td>
<td>Delineating between the two groups is often difficult, especially at the border where any border crossing could be a drug runner.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Rubin, 2010

As is the case with many frames, the “criminality” frame does have some basis in reality as undocumented immigrants need to break or skirt laws in order to gain entry to the U.S., obtain employment, and perhaps procure fraudulent paperwork. These activities are brought to the forefront of many news accounts while the far broader and non-problematic aspects of undocumented immigrants’ lives are downplayed or, as in most cases, neglected all together. This is important as beyond the relatively narrow aspects of an undocumented immigrant’s life that could be considered “criminal,” much of what undocumented immigrants do on a day-to-day basis is well within legal bounds and no different from documented immigrants’ behavior.
In addition to laws that are broken in order to gain entry to the country and employment, news accounts also drew strong connections between undocumented immigrants and other crimes as well. Most notably, the “criminal” frame associated undocumented immigration with drug trafficking, human smuggling, gun smuggling, robbery, murder, identity theft, and fraud. Within this frame, the activities, behaviors, and motivations of undocumented immigrants are interpreted as directly harmful to law-abiding citizens and constructs undocumented immigrants as a constant source of criminal activity.

This frame manifested itself through various ways in news accounts. Journalists and sources can, for example, stress the complicit nature of undocumented immigrants in human smuggling operations, even when the immigrants are victimized at the hands of coyotes or drug cartels. This can occur when undocumented immigrants commonly brought into the country by coyotes (human smugglers) and then held until their families in their native country can pay a ransom or bribe. At this point, the immigrants are held against their will, but news accounts largely still treated the immigrants as criminals themselves because they entered the country by unlawful means.

Immigrant drop houses are also cited as a major problem and cause of crime in communities. It is not surprising then that when immigrants are held against their will they are rarely accorded victim status. Instead, news accounts typically communicate that undocumented immigrants discovered in the course of drop house raids are arrested and will promptly face deportation proceedings. The denial of victim status to undocumented immigrants, both in terms of being victims of human smuggling or as victims of broader economic and political forces, constructs immigration as a problem of individual behavior rather than systemic inequalities.
Also, the criminality frame was expressed through conflating undocumented immigrants with narcotics smugglers, drug industries, and organized crime. This can range from describing how drug runners and undocumented immigrants often use the same avenues into the U.S. (Archibold, 2009). Undocumented immigration and drug running are also often covered in the same news accounts despite the disparate causes of each: demand for low-skill/low-wage employees and demand for narcotics, respectively. Also, when drug smugglers are apprehended at the border or further within the United States, they are first and foremost defined as “illegal” immigrants.

Much akin to the “illegality” frame, the “criminality” frame logically implies that undocumented immigration is associated with criminal activity and poses a threat to communities. The “criminality” frame often conflates otherwise law-abiding undocumented immigrants with criminals. Law enforcement policies, such as “secure communities,” drew upon the connection between immigration and criminality. To illustrate this point, Neil MacBride, the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, is quoted in a *Washington Post* article as saying,

Secure communities is a great tool in helping us to enforce the law and send a message that there is a cost to coming into the country illegally … In most cases, we are targeting those with a criminal background. We are taking them off the streets and out of our communities, and we are potentially deterring them from returning to the United States and committing further crimes. (White, 2010)

Even though the policy is targeted at deporting undocumented immigrants who commit crimes, MacBride is drawing on or creating a conceptual bridge between immigration status and crime. He also encourages audiences to see the deportation of undocumented immigrants as necessary to prevent further crimes from occurring in communities.
Although undocumented immigrants can come from any country in the world, many news accounts draw clear connections between Hispanics, undocumented immigration, and crime. In a *New York Times* article about a Nebraska city, the authors contend that,

The Hispanic population, while growing, still makes up less than 10 percent of Fremont, yet some say they blame illegal immigrants for what they see as a rise in crime here, the loss of good jobs for local residents and a shift in the culture. (Davey & McDonald, 2010).

Even though the authors distance themselves from the assertion, the inference is that increases in crime are due to immigration and most immigrants are Hispanic. Within coverage of Arizona, especially coverage of Sherriff Joe Arpaio’s “crime and immigration sweeps” this association is even more prevalent (see Billeaud, 2009; Billeaud, 2009b). The label of the “illegal” roundups is important in and of itself as it associates immigrants with criminal activity.

Generally speaking, this frame is not applied universally to undocumented immigrants, at least by journalists. Whether framing efforts by sources are effective at applying this frame to otherwise law-abiding undocumented immigrants is dependent upon individual audience members’ extant schema. Suffice to say that not all undocumented immigrants are framed as being illegal and not all illegal immigrants are framed as being criminal.

The end result of the “criminality” frame is that undocumented immigrants are constructed and understood as criminals who pose various threats to community members. A potent expression of the logic inherent in the “criminality” frame can be found in a letter to the editor from the Arizonan newspaper, *The Sun*: “If a person is in this country illegally, they are a criminal” (Wharton, 2009). The problem posed by criminal immigrants is similar to that of the “illegality” frame in that the problem is one of law enforcement. As is the case with any individual who refuses to abide by society’s rules, the solution to this problem is to remove such individuals from the population at large until the offender repents and agrees to abide by
society’s rules. In the case of criminal illegal immigrants, this likely necessitates imprisonment and deportation.

**Invisible Rights.** Numerous news accounts in this study presented undocumented immigrants as having no civil rights. This is not to say that undocumented immigrants are not human or that they would not enjoy equal civil rights in their home country. Rather, the civil rights of undocumented immigrants were presented as if immigrants forgot to pack their civil rights before leaving home (i.e. “illegals” have rights in Mexico, they do not have rights in the U.S.). Stories that featured the “invisible rights” frame emphasized a lack of official standing as important in defining the rights and protections individuals should enjoy within the boundaries of the United States. The reasoning goes that because undocumented immigrants do not officially exist in the eyes of the government, the government cannot therefore give them their civil rights. The obvious assumption here is that civil rights are granted by a governing agency and are not universal (see Table 4.6).

### Table 4.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source material</th>
<th>Framing devices</th>
<th>Reasoning devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil and human rights are provided by the government. “These people [think] they have civil rights when in fact they have no rights here in the United States.”¹</td>
<td>Lack of official standing in the eyes of the government prevents undocumented immigrants from receiving civil rights and protections.</td>
<td>Naturalizes and justifies disparate treatment of undocumented immigrants. Prioritizes any right (e.g. property rights) of natives over that of basic human rights of undocumented immigrants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Shacat, 2009

The justification for the disparate treatment varied and was supported in several ways. First, news accounts implicitly condoned the segregation of undocumented immigrants by failing to problematize disparate treatment or naturalizing such treatment. This occurred when sources cited in stories disagreed on what to do with undocumented immigrants but framed immigrants
as having no official standing. Second, news accounts drew upon frames discussed elsewhere in this study as justification. That the original sin of crossing a border was considered a defining characteristic for undocumented immigrants, for example, was sufficient to make unequal treatment seem both natural and inevitable. Third, news accounts could justify such treatment by tapping into extant notions of race and immigration in popular culture—or white culture—individually.

The distinguishing element of this frame from others identified and described here is its ability to naturalize and justify almost any conceivable disparate treatment of undocumented immigrants. Such a justification would be based on a lack of a visa, passport, or birth certificate. This aspect of immigration was not necessarily stressed in framing immigrants as criminal or illegal. News accounts that employed the “invisible rights” frame were also not restricted to any particular subject area. Within the confines of this study, this frame was applied to news accounts of a wide range of happenings, three of which will be described here in detail: undocumented immigrants’ access to public utilities, equal civil rights, and reasonable prison housing. The use of the frame within each topic and the justification for each will be discussed in turn.

Shortly after Arizona SB 1070 was passed, a candidate for a state utility regulator position proposed that the state deny utility hookup to households of undocumented immigrants. The regulator, Wong, argued that “illegal immigrants drive up [utility] costs, as utilities have to either build new facilities or buy power from others” (Fischer, 2010). The proposal would have denied service to any household that could not provide documentation that they were in the country legally. Logically, this policy would only save money or resources if undocumented

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13 It is also possible in the news accounts could draw upon framings of immigrants that were either not identified in this study or were not present in news accounts during the time frame of this study.
immigrants, after using basic utilities, did not pay for them and if the utility providers were somehow prevented from turning off water or electric utilities on delinquent accounts.

Regardless, that is what is implied by Wong who goes on to state:

> We have to send a message to the illegal population: If you come to Arizona you may not have utility hookup … Maybe that’ll discourage some of them from coming here. (Fischer, 2010).

Stressing the nature of undocumented immigrants’ status of illegality is, according to Wong at least, sufficient to deny a segment of the actual population electricity and water, even if they will pay for it.

In addition to equal access to basic utilities, undocumented immigrants were also presented as having fewer or secondary civil rights in comparison to citizens. In the sample, a single news account dealt with undocumented immigrants being held against their will by Roger Barnett, a participant in Minuteman-like patrols equipped with night vision-goggles and assault rifles. Barnett was charged with conspiracy to violate the civil rights of a group of undocumented immigrants (Shacat, 2009). He was also accused of holding the group hostage at gunpoint for several hours and assaulting a woman while she was held captive. Barnett was ultimately found guilty, but the trial sparked a great deal of outcry from communities throughout the state. One newspaper, *The Douglas Dispatch*, cited sources as saying that the judge hearing the case should be disbarred for placing greater significance on the civil rights of undocumented immigrants than the property rights of citizens. The paper also noted that the Barnett trial coverage had garnered a total of 43 comments in its online edition, apparently a great deal for the relatively small-town paper as this was four times greater than any other story during that week. The newspaper reprinted several of the comments it had received since the story had originally been published. One commenter expressed his displeasure that “These people [think] they have civil rights when in fact they have no rights here in the United States” and another expressed disbelief that
“something like this could even withstand [sic] in court. How was this not laughed out to start with?!” (Shacat, 2009). Claims such as this justified disparate treatment of undocumented immigrants by claiming that because undocumented immigrants came to the country illegally they have no rights. In other words, because undocumented immigrants do not officially exist they do not have any official rights. Although journalists themselves did not frame undocumented immigrants as deserving fewer civil protections than citizens, sources are given a platform on which to express this view. Undoubtedly, this framing of undocumented immigrants finds resonance with portions of the public.

Undocumented immigrants in Maricopa County, Arizona, also receive disparate treatment by law enforcement in the county justice system (see Billeaud, 2009). Even though Arpaio’s office has been the subject of a Justice Department civil rights violation investigation, he continues to conduct “illegal immigration crime sweeps” throughout Maricopa County. The goal of such sweeps is to identify undocumented immigrants and arrest them. He has also begun housing undocumented immigrants once they are arrested, not in a prison, but in tents, even though according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) the region of the state in which the prisoners are housed outside has, on average, 110 days per year with temperatures above 100 degrees Fahrenheit (NOAA, 2011). Both the immigration crime sweeps and the housing of prisoners in tents are cases where law enforcement treated undocumented immigrants very differently from the rest of the population. Although not explicitly stated, it appears that the justification for these policies is that it is very difficult to violate the civil rights of individuals that have no such rights.

Taken together, the “invisible rights” frame served to legitimize various political and social apparatuses that treat segments of the population differently and to portray such civil
rights violations as natural and inevitable in a law-abiding society. In essence, because immigrants were shown to be “living in the shadows,” they are outside the purview of government agencies responsible for granting such rights.

*Americans First.* The “Americans first” frame drew upon and promoted two assumptions. The first was that U.S. citizens should have priority access to resources such as employment, tax revenue, government services, healthcare, public education, public safety, political capital, and civil rights. The second assumption was that these resources are only available in finite amounts. If undocumented immigrants have access to any of these resources or resources are spent on them, even civil rights, it means that there are fewer of those resources available for natives or that the resources left for natives are somehow diminished in quality or degree. Lack of suitable employment for natives was the primary topic in which this frame was expressed (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source material</th>
<th>Framing devices</th>
<th>Reasoning devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress should “focus on putting 25 million Americans back to full-time work instead of offering Amnesty to 12 million aliens.”¹</td>
<td>Contends that undocumented immigrants take resources from more deserving Americans.</td>
<td>Americans should priority access to resources, immigrants should be denied access to resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presence of undocumented immigrants reduces wages for Americans.²</td>
<td>Presents access to resources as a zero-sum situation.</td>
<td>Resources are finite, when undocumented immigrants consume resources it precludes Americans from having those resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Turnbull, 2010  
²“Study: US economy,” 2009

The manner in which the frame was expressed in news accounts was typically by sources explicitly stating or implying that when undocumented immigrants draw on society’s resources there are fewer of those resources left for natives. On the subject of the economy, opponents of
comprehensive immigration reform expressed their “incredulity” that the Obama administration “would take on immigration when economic pain for Americans is so widespread” (Preston & Zeleny, 2009). Congress was also urged to “focus on putting 25 million Americans back to full-time work, not offering amnesty to 12 million aliens” (Turnbull, 2010). Immigration reform, as a policy initiative, was criticized as allowing undocumented immigrants to keep their jobs to the detriment of unemployed citizens (e.g. “Study: US economy, 2009). For example, decreases in wages were attributed to the presence of undocumented immigrants in industries such as agriculture and other low-skill/low-wage jobs (“Study: US economy, 2009).

These framing devices promote an “either-or”/zero sum type of reasoning. Either natives get a slice of the pie or undocumented immigrants get a slice. For every slice that goes to undocumented immigrants, that means one less slice for natives. It is not surprising then that this type of framing likely encourages natives to think of immigration in an “us or them” type of mentality. The logic behind “Americans first” frame was only occasionally articulated in news accounts in such a way as to be expressed in a succinct quotation or assertion. Much like the “contentious issue” frame, news accounts of undocumented immigration—and to a certain extent “legal” immigration as well—were commonly grounded in the assumption that Americans should have priority access to finite resources. Even though assertions of the frame are uncommon, as evident by the relatively low frequency of this frame, the logic inherent in this frame is not.

**Social Change and Maintenance**

The three frames that fall under the “social change and maintenance” theme revolve around the topics of social rules and norms, culture, and values. News accounts that fall under
this theme typically discussed changing demographics, rising crime in conjunction with
demographic change, language difficulties, and cultural differences.

Generally, the arguments featured in these frames assume the superiority of U.S. culture
over that of undocumented immigrants and contend that maintaining various aspects of U.S.
society is paramount when considering problems posed by and related to immigration. These
themes encourage roughly similar interpretations of undocumented immigrants and immigration
as a problem. Within these frames, immigration generally creates social discord within and
fragmentation of dominant U.S. culture.

*Meritocracy.* The “meritocracy” frame promotes the notion that “playing by the rules” will
ultimately result in personal success. Although this frame implies certain interpretations about
how society rewards and punishes specific individuals or groups, it is nonetheless important in
understanding how undocumented immigrants’ are framed as fitting into this system. The
“meritocracy” frame, broadly speaking, upheld the basic underlying assumptions of neoliberal
and free market ideology. News accounts that drew upon the “meritocracy” frame stressed how
undocumented immigrants do not follow the rules and enter the country “through the backdoor.”
Such individuals, using this logic, will not be rewarded. Only through hard work, determination,
and “pulling your own weight” (paying taxes) can immigrants improve their lot in life. The
opposite was also held to be true in this line of thinking: That by refusing to “wait in line” and
enter the country like “legal” immigrants, undocumented immigrants are destined for a lifetime
of failure and ostracization (see Table 4.8).\(^{14}\)

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\(^{14}\) Sources also seemed to assume that immigrating “legally” was a fairly straightforward and quick process taking
only weeks or months, not years or decades.
The “meritocracy” frame was rarely invoked in immigration coverage but was typically used to show either the success of immigrants that enter through the “front door” or to illustrate how immigrants that enter the country surreptitiously will not be rewarded. Essentially, this frame contends that there is no limit to one’s accomplishments as long as the rules are obeyed and that in achieving success, issues of race, class, and nationality have no bearing. The frame was also applied to the marginalization of undocumented immigrants in contemporary U.S. society. Undocumented immigrants were shown to be marginalized not because of national origin or race. Instead, audiences were presented with a conceptualization of the workings of society being very good at giving people what they deserve.

Table 4.8
Framing and Reasoning Devices for the “Meritocracy” Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source material</th>
<th>Framing devices</th>
<th>Reasoning devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Showing how playing by the rules is rewarded.</td>
<td>U.S. society is based on the notion that hard work is rewarded. Undocumented immigrants use shortcuts to enter the country.</td>
<td>People get what they deserve, undocumented immigrants do not deserve to be rewarded for their hard work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreigners that are model immigrants, as in the case of Qing Hong Wu, are allowed leeway for minor transgressions.¹</td>
<td>If people immigrate legally then the meritocracy will forgive transgressions as long as one has proven his or her dedication to U.S. society.</td>
<td>Race and national origin are inconsequential in the meritocracy, immigrating illegally is not a minor infraction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Bernstein, 2010

The meritocracy, while firm, was also shown to not be entirely without sympathy for immigrants. A case that illustrates the benefits of “front door” entry using this line of reasoning is that of Qing Hong Wu, an adult immigrant that was convicted of a string of muggings in the U.S. when he was a teenager (Bernstein, 2010). During the trial, Judge Corriero promised Wu that if he behaved, worked, hard, and turned his life around that he would have a prosperous life in the United States. Wu served his prison sentence and in the 15 years since, had been a model
worker, risen to vice president for Internet technology at a national company, and was the sole supporter of his aging mother. When he applied for citizenship, immigration officials noted that he had been convicted of a crime and started deportation proceedings against Wu. Eventually, Wu was pardoned of his original conviction because he had been a “legal” immigrant and, aside from a single series of minor transgressions, had lead a productive life. News stories covering Wu’s case call him a “model immigrant” that has led an “exemplary” life.15

Conversely, undocumented immigrants who begin their lives in the U.S. by breaking a law are not allowed to succeed in U.S. society based on their merits, no matter how admirable those merits may be. Gonzalez (2009b) describes how an undocumented immigrant that entered the country at a young age under the care of her parents is not able to use her college degree to apply for high-paying jobs, the same jobs that her former classmates now hold because they either hold U.S. citizenship or immigrated to the U.S. through the proper channels. Because she broke out of the meritocracy at a young age and never reentered the system by becoming “legal,” her marginalization is to be expected despite living an otherwise law-abiding and productive life.

Within this frame, audiences are encouraged to think of undocumented immigrant as deserving their lot in life because unlike natives or other “legal” immigrants, they refused to play by the rules like everybody else. In essence then, because the meritocracy rewards good behavior and punishes bad behavior, undocumented immigrants get what they deserve.

Undeserved benefits. When undocumented immigrants are shown as benefiting from their presence in the U.S., they are shown as both benefitting unfairly and as disrupting the normal

15 This narrative is a prime example for the expression of the meritocracy frame. Generally, news accounts downplayed the difficulties that Wu experienced throughout this ordeal. Even though he was a model citizen, he was incarcerated for a time and only released after a petition was sent to the governor.
functioning of the meritocracy. Frequently, news accounts show how undocumented immigrants enrich their lives by living in the U.S. illegally or cheating their way around the meritocracy. The “undeserved benefits” frame characterizes the meritocracy as imperfect and emphasizes that undocumented immigrants use services such as public education and emergency rooms much to the chagrin of others who play by the rules. Unlike citizens, who have earned such privileges, this frame also encourages an interpretation of the benefits undocumented immigrants earn as undeserved in that they have not first paid their dues like everybody else. Such benefits then should obviously be revoked when using this lens (see Table 4.9).

The privilege of having access to any one of these benefits can be earned once they “become legal” (Preston & Zeleny, 2009) and “get out of the shadows” (Preston & Zeleny, 2009). Perhaps most importantly, undocumented immigrants should pull their weight by paying taxes to fund the social services they draw upon. Without paying taxes, undocumented immigrants are “fleecing America” (Beard Rau & Kiley, 2010) and getting a free ride by coming to the United States. Being an undocumented immigrant usually makes it difficult to pay taxes, thus within this frame all undocumented immigrants can potentially be framed as receiving benefits that they should be denied. Sources or news accounts featuring this frame also minimize
or ignore any taxes that immigrants have deducted from their pay by employers.

Table 4.9
Framing and Reasoning Devices for the “Undeserved Benefits” Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source material</th>
<th>Framing devices</th>
<th>Reasoning devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portraying the children of undocumented immigrants born in the U.S. as a drain on resources. Politicians should “bring the interpretation of the 14th Amendment into conformity ... with common sense ...”¹</td>
<td>Undocumented immigrants use resources to enrich the lives of their children.</td>
<td>Birthright citizenship should be amended to prevent undocumented immigrants from benefiting unfairly from their anchor babies’ citizenship. Any benefit that undocumented immigrants receive after entering the country should be revoked, if possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undocumented immigrants need to step out of the shadows, play by the rules</td>
<td>Immigrants cheat their way into getting benefits or shirk paying for what they receive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Illegal immigrants tend to work in low-wage jobs and therefore contribute less in taxes than the public services they use.”²</td>
<td>Sets immigrants apart from citizens.</td>
<td>Citizens do not use more resources than they provide to society, they have not done anything illegal to receive those benefits.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Will, 2010  
²Gonzalez, 2009c

In this line of reasoning, it also necessary to set undocumented immigrants that unfairly derive benefits apart from other low-skill workers that deserve access to such benefits.

What is swept under the rug in this thinking is that nearly anybody who works in industries in which undocumented immigrants dominate likely does not earn a high enough wage to completely offset their use of public resources in local, state, and federal income taxes. A decrease in the undocumented immigrant population is shown to be a boon for communities because “illegal immigrants tend to work in low-wage jobs and therefore contribute less in taxes than the public services they use” (Gonzalez, 2009c). Natives and legal immigrants are justified in their use of services because they “deserve” such benefits according to the meritocracy frame.
News accounts also put forward the idea that undocumented immigrants have equal access to public services and opportunities as do “legal” immigrants and citizens. Although rarely expressed explicitly, the logic used is perhaps best exemplified in a *Washington Post* story regarding how “legal” immigrants are unhappy about how “illegal” immigrants bilk the system. One source, Mark Kirkorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, was quoted as saying:

> There are significant numbers of legal immigrants who really resent the idea of rewarding illegal aliens … [Legal aliens] jumped through the hoops, they dealt with the red tape, they paid the fees, and they feel like suckers. (Bahrampour, 2010).

In this statement, “legal” immigrants are shown to be upset that “illegal” immigrants having access to the possibility for a better future without navigating the immigration bureaucracy or paying fees. This sentiment assumes that the “illegal” immigrants in the article have comparable lifestyles and opportunities as the “legal” immigrants. One need only look to the descriptions of the two types of immigrants in the news story (shop owners and day laborers) to recognize that these supposed equal groups are very much unequal. The logic of the frame, however, discourages such an examination.

Arguments against “amnesty” for undocumented immigrants sometimes also draw upon the “undeserved benefits” frame. Opponents of giving undocumented immigrants a chance to fix or legalize their immigration status characterize the procedure as “amnesty.” The label applied to any such process is in and of itself a framing device for the “undeserved benefits” frame. When “amnesty” is used to describe how to fix the problem of missing paperwork for undocumented immigrants, the term implies that “illegals” will receive a get out-of-jail-free-card while everyone else has to follow the rules (see Melcher, 2010; Ratcliffe, 2010; Fischer, 2009; Humphries, 2009).
The “undeserved benefits” frame places great importance at restricting undocumented immigrants’ access to many aspects of society. Children of undocumented immigrants are also characterized as being leeches on society even if they were born in the United States and are full U.S. citizens. An editorial in the *Washington Post* argued that the law should be rewritten to fix this “oversight” and “bring the interpretation of the 14th Amendment into conformity with what the authors of its text intended, and with common sense, thereby removing an incentive for illegal immigration” (Will, 2010). In this reasoning, any benefit that is achieved after “illegally” entering the country should be revoked when possible.

**Assimilation.** Many news accounts portrayed immigrants currently entering the country or those that have recently arrived as different from past immigrants. Within the “assimilation” frame, news accounts compare current Latino immigrants with, for the most part, Western European immigrants but also immigrants from countries in Asia such as Korea, Japan, and China. These differences are discussed within the frame as having less to do with immigration status than culture, language, and nationality. Within this frame, the current wave of immigrants is mainly understood to be Latinos, Spanish-speaking, and Catholic. All are qualities that make current immigrants a disruptive influence on society (see Table 4.10).

In essence, this frame promoted an understanding that all immigrants should leave behind their cultural heritage and become “American.” The central idea to this frame is that unlike Italians, French, Irish, or German immigrants, Latinos do not possess the same work ethic, are unwilling or unable to learn English, refuse to renounce their cultural heritage, continue to celebrate non-U.S. holidays, or otherwise refrain from assimilating into U.S. culture. New immigrants were shown to be determined to keep themselves separate from what it really means
to be an American. A letter to the editor published in the *Apache Junction-Gold Canyon Independent* contended that immigrants that retain cultural ties outside the U.S., when thought of in terms of the “assimilation” frame, are promoting racial hostilities:

> When someone says … “I’m an African American” he is saying “I’m a divided American.” When someone says “I’m a Mexican American” he is saying “I’m a divided American” and so on. Hey, except for illegals, we are all Americans. Period. If the news media would just shut up and stop referring to the race of any American who commits a crime or any other illegal act it would extinguish the fire and the race factor problem would go away. Case closed. (Allan, 2009).

What defining oneself as an American or as solely American means is unclear, but ties to immigrants’ country of origin or home culture were portrayed here as patently unacceptable and described as disrespectful and offensive.
Table 4.10
Framing and Reasoning Devices for the “Assimilation” Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source material</th>
<th>Framing devices</th>
<th>Reasoning devices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“When someone says I’m a Mexican American” he is saying “I’m a divided American ... If the news media would just shut up and stop referring to [race] ... it would extinguish the fire and the race factor problem would go away. Case closed.”¹</td>
<td>Defining oneself as anything other than “American” creates problems for society.</td>
<td>Hispanics are a disruptive influence on society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I found it offensive that some of the people ... were waving the flags of Mexico ... while demanding rights and privileges from this country. The flags ... suggested a sort of arrogance and entitlement when humility [was] in order.”²</td>
<td>Demanding rights while not committing to U.S. society is disrespectful. Immigrants should be humble.</td>
<td>If immigrants want rights they need to leave behind ties to their country of origin, maintaining ties to other cultures is offensive. Immigrants should not be uppity, if they do not make waves then they will get privileges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only English should be spoken by employees of businesses that serve Americans.³</td>
<td>Speaking English is for the convenience of Americans.</td>
<td>Spanish is offensive and divisive, current immigrants are less willing and/or capable of learning English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“… many merchants say the presence of [undocumented] workers is a threat to [the] American dream.”⁴</td>
<td>Contrasts current immigrants with past waves of immigration, namely Western Europeans. Current immigrants are markedly different from older generations of immigrants.</td>
<td>Undocumented immigrants are a threat to the American dream.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Allan, 2009  
²Rodriguez, 2010  
³“Redwood City Man,” 2009  
⁴Bahrampour, 2010

Even in the realm of art, typically a bastion of self expression if ever there was one, Latina/o’s ties to their country of origin through artwork are arguably unwelcome in favor of artwork that does not distinguish its author as being a part of anything other than American culture. Johnson (2010) asks whether “It is time to retire the identity-based group show?” in a
story critiquing the work of Latino artists featured in a Chicano gallery (Johnson, 2010). The author points out that “many artists would balk at being included in an identity-based show. They want to go to the big dance” (Johnson, 2010).

Within this frame, immigrants who continue to demonstrate unacceptable ties to foreign nations by waving foreign flags during political activism or in celebration are described as “disrespectful” and “offensive.” Reproduced in the print version of the *The Washington Post*, a reader states,

> I found it offensive that some of the people who marched on Washington on Sunday for immigration reform were waving the flags of Mexico, Honduras, and El Salvador while demanding rights and privileges from this country. The flags and the demands for action ‘NOW!’ suggested a sort of arrogance and entitlement when humility would have been more in order … next time, show a little respect and leave the foreign flags at home. (Rodriguez, 2010).

Not only is flying or waving a foreign flag arrogant, but the author contends here that immigrants are seeking entitlements that they do not deserve, at least not at the moment. The author also argues that immigrants should demonstrate a little humility and that they should not be overly antagonistic. Perhaps when immigrants are no longer willing to challenge the dominant culture they can be afforded the same liberties as the rest of the population.

Similar to maintaining ties to symbols of nationality, new immigrants are encouraged to learn English. Natives should not have to “kowtow” to immigrants that do not speak English by translating documents into other languages, especially Spanish. Such translations were referred to as “unconstitutional” in one news account (“Redwood City Man,” 2009). Immigrants should also refrain from using other languages, at least in public. Speaking Spanish in public especially by employees of businesses and in front of customers was similarly described. A bookstore and cafe in New Haven, Connecticut instituted an “English only” policy for its employees. English was described as the language that would make customers feel the most welcome (“Bookstore’s
Assuming that customers are made uncomfortable by Spanish makes several assumptions about those customers, namely that they do not speak Spanish in the first place. Using this logic, Spanish makes customers feel as if they are not welcome or that their business is not wanted.

The “assimilation” frame also distances current immigrants from older, more established immigrant communities. Older generations of immigrants are shown to be prosperous and law-abiding; current immigrants are typically shown to be day laborers or to work other low-skill jobs. For example, in a story that describes day laborers looking for employment, the old generation is described as:

[A] vibrant mix of immigrants ... have worked for years to get where they are. They own homes, support Little League teams and attend community meetings, where they speak with the accents of India and Guyana, Korea and Bangladesh. (Bahrampour, 2010)

New immigrants are portrayed in stark contrast:

Having gone through the immigration process themselves, the merchants can understand the day laborers’ desire to improve their lives. At the same time, many merchants say the presence of the workers is a threat to their own American dream. (Bahrampour, 2010)

The old immigrants, although they speak with accents, speak English. They are also shown to be active participants in the communities in which they reside. Although no such description is given to the day laborers, the author implies that the new immigrants do not participate in the same manner. In other words, old generations of immigrants readily accepted what it means to be an American while Latinos refuse to commit to the American dream.

Although news accounts did not disparage Hispanics for being Catholic, news accounts also associated Hispanics with Catholicism, or at least drew upon that association. In a *Washington Post* article, Catholicism was shown to be a religion that was largely dependent upon continual Hispanic immigration for survival and that Catholicism acted as “a counterweight
to the United States’ reigning Protestant culture” (Gibson, 2009). This particular news account first associates Hispanics with Catholicism and then sets Catholics apart from mainstream culture. Even though this particular article contends that many Hispanic immigrants shed their Catholicism in favor of assimilation, the association between the Catholic Church and Hispanics was clear two other news accounts. One letter to the editor in the *San Jose Mercury News* claimed that the government should provide no health care or other public benefits for “illegal” immigrants and that the Catholic Church should do so instead (“A health care battle,” 2009). Such a claim is only logical if all “illegal” immigrants are Catholic. Law enforcement was shown to have drawn upon this association in a *Phoenix New Times* article which asserted that the Maricopa County Sherriff’s Office (MCSO), in looking for “illegal” immigrants, “menaced” a Catholic confirmation ceremony (“The bird trumpets,” 2009). Little evidence was found to show that news accounts actively constructed the association between Hispanics and Catholicism but actors clearly drew upon the previously established conflation of illegal immigrants and Catholics.

Unlike older generations of immigrants that learned English, devoted themselves to the communities in which they reside, and shed ties to their homeland’s culture, new immigrants will continue to be a source of discontent and discord. In a letter to the editor published in the *San Jose Mercury News*, California is used as an exemplar for what multiculturalism and immigration can do to the rest of the country. The author contends that diversity is “corrosive” and that communities with greater diversity are culturally poor and filled with people that no longer trust one another. The author argues that diversity has, at least in part, contributed to the downfall of the state. California, he contends, has brought about the exodus of natives by believing in:
Big Government, open borders, diversity, multiculturalism and the politics of compassion … its native-born are fleeing. Still, where California is at, America is headed. Californians who are running away have Arizona, Colorado, Utah and Nevada to head to. But when America arrives at where California is at today, where do the Americans run to? (Buchanan, 2009).

Within this reasoning, a strong society is defined as one that shares a common culture in which differences between groups are minimized or eliminated altogether. This reasoning infers that, ideally, there be no groups in society, at least along the lines of nationality, language, and race. A society that has a large minority population is seen as a society that can become easily fragmented.

The assimilation frame places immigration as a cause of such fragmentation but perhaps credits undocumented immigration with having an even greater contribution to breaking apart the dominant culture because undocumented immigrants are understood to be separate part of society with little hope of integration due to their unique status, or lack thereof.

**Invasion and Colonization**

The frames that fall under the theme of “invasion and colonization” describe issues and problems with the immigration system from a state-centered approach. These frames deal primarily with highlighting various aspects of the government’s capabilities to protect natives from undocumented immigrants, ascribing motivations to political actors, and contrasting the state of Arizona’s priorities with those of the federal government.

**National Security.** One of the most frequently used frames was to discuss immigration as a problem relating to a “porous border” through which undocumented immigrants, narcotics, and terrorists could easily enter the country. The “national security” frame connects two related concepts, the national border and national security, to the problem of undocumented immigration.
Most news accounts using this frame dealt with the border between the U.S. and Mexico and portrayed undocumented immigration’s primary cause as an insecure border. News accounts that placed emphasis on a lack of walls, security, and border patrols across vast expanses of the border also implicitly argue that a militarization of the U.S. border with Mexico would solve the problem of undocumented immigration. In this frame it does not matter why undocumented immigrants enter the U.S., only that they are able to enter at all. Sources cited in
news accounts turn to increases in border patrol agents, increasing the length of fences, and “hardening” other fences as effective and efficient means of combating undocumented immigration. For example, in a story about new border fences in Arizona, Alan White, a Border Patrol agent, describes how even though border crossers are still able to bypass fences, the fences still work. In an *Arizona Daily Star* article he claims:

> When you are crossing a fence 15 feet in the air, it’s a lot easier for me to see … With a barrier that they have to negotiate, it gives us a little more time to react and catch these people. (McCombs, 2009)

Within this frame, even when undocumented immigrants are shown to be capable of bypassing walls or security checkpoints, walls are shown to be working at “stemming the flow” of “illegals.”

The phrase “securing the border” is also a common framing device throughout news accounts covering undocumented immigration and implies that militarizing the border is a viable solution. One source, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement director, John Morton, stated “We’re trying to put our money where our mouth is … You have to have a secure border. You have to have some integrity in the system” and termed deploying troops to the U.S.-Mexico border as “rational” immigration policy (Slevin, 2009). In patrolling the maritime border, boarding teams are “mobilized” and “race” to catch boats that might be carrying contraband into the country. Agents are protected with body armor and armed with rifles. Building fences and funding better border patrols are “the best investment” for the border as a secure border is capable of “cutting back on the drugs entering the United States, criminals entering the United States, and illegal aliens” (Archibold, 2009).

Describing the border as in need of “securing” also implies that the border is insecure at the moment. The border is also, therefore, a place that can be quite dangerous. A porous border
is a border that terrorists, drug smugglers, and criminals can easily navigate. Residents, hikers, and workers who spend time around the border in Arizona are reminded that “every person you are in contact with [in proximity to the border] poses a potential risk, and that a higher occurrence of unexpected encounters is likely” (Hart, 2010). Even if individuals or groups crossing the border are searched, the danger of allowing people to cross borders, by sea or land, is that U.S. Customs agents can never be sure of “what’s in their heart or head” and whether immigrants mean harm to U.S. citizens or interests as immigrants do not disclose that “they think it would be a great idea to plant a bomb in Times Square” (Bernstein, Greenhouse, & Shane, 2010).

Undocumented immigrants are also described as invaders or as part of an invading army. Mexicans specifically are described as trying to “re-colonize” the U.S. southwest. Conceptualizing undocumented immigrants as threatening individuals who are invading the country justifies the existence of armed vigilante groups that organize to protect the lives, livelihood, and property of natives. One such group’s “call to arms” was published in whole in the Arizona Daily Star. In the article, The Minutemen Civil Defense Corps (MCDC) outlined changes to the “SOP” (standard operating procedure) of patrols:

… we return to the border locked, loaded and ready to stop each and every individual we encounter along the frontier that is now more dangerous than the frontier of Afghanistan. This operation will not be for the faint of heart … we will approach our duty as citizens as we should-we have a zero tolerance [sic] for any and all violations of our border and we will forcefully engage, detain, and defend our lives and country from the criminals who trample over our culture and laws. (Steller, 2010)

Members of the MCDC were also encouraged to bring “long arms” as “the violators of our border seem to have been given carte blanche permission to willfully violate our public safety” (Steller, 2010).
Within the rhetoric surrounding the MCDC, both in this “call to arms” and as identified elsewhere in the study, militaristic terms abound. References to the Revolutionary War are also present in this framing of the border. These references include the group’s namesake and the reference to “long arms,” meaning musket rifles used to fight off the British. These period references link the current efforts of the MCDC to those of the minutemen militias that could be ready at a moment’s notice to fight the British, combat oppression, and preserve freedom. The reference also implies that the MCDC is facing an enemy that is better organized and has superior numbers. Furthermore, the association also implies that the MCDC’s goal is to protect personal freedoms.

Conceptualizing undocumented immigration as an issue of security and opposing armies also alludes to the possibility that the deaths of border crossers might be a necessity in securing the border. There are many ways to think about the deaths of undocumented immigrants who die as a result of dehydration, heat stroke, or injury while crossing hazardous terrain to enter the country. As evidenced by the MCDC SOP, the “national security” frame places emphasis on the personal security of natives over that of the “invaders.” On the one hand, the deaths of individuals who are fleeing poverty or seeking a better life for themselves and their children could be thought of as deplorable. Within the national security framework, however, this view of is rejected. The deaths of such individuals are to be expected and perhaps even desired. If the end result is to bar entry to the country and the means of achieving that goal is a “secure border,” the deaths of would-be border crossers are a success—the border worked. If such individuals are also thought of as “invaders,” their deaths may also be necessary much in the same way that killing invaders is a reality of warfare.
Opponents of comprehensive immigration reform also claim that nothing can be done about undocumented immigrants in the country until there are effective measures to prevent unlawful entry. The argument alleges that if “illegals” are “legalized” before the border is “sealed” that the U.S. will be overrun by immigrants, smugglers, and criminals like “spillover from a dam” (Archibold, 2009). The situation can be likened to “the old adage about the importance of turning off the faucet before mopping the floor” (Parker, 2010). A Washington Post article cites a University of Texas law school professor as stating that undocumented immigrants “can hardly do more for a child than to make him or her an American citizen, entitled to all the advantages of the American welfare state” (Fernandez, 2010). If undocumented immigrants are retroactively “documented,” the country will be overrun. In other words, by offering any form of “amnesty” more immigrants will be encouraged to invade the country. One news account also characterized certain areas of the country, California specifically, as having already succumbed to the Hispanic invasion (Buchanan, 2009). As stated in the description of the “assimilation” frame, once immigrants establish a foothold in an area they will force natives out.

One potential solution to undocumented immigrants who have already established themselves in the country is to wear them down through “attrition.” Some news accounts allege that “The only way to stop illegal immigration is to stop the incentives for it. No jobs, no health care, no education or citizenship for the kids” (Pasquarella, 2010). As undocumented immigrants are shown as being analogous to an invading army, fighting back by denying their armies sustenance is logical. By making life miserable enough for undocumented immigrants in the country by denying them access to the means for survival could possibly encourage them to return to their home countries or at least reduce incentives to enter the country.
The problem of failing to close the border while continuing to create incentives for undocumented immigration was also characterized by politicians and sources cited by journalists as having potentially catastrophic effects on the country and Arizona in particular. Arizona governor Jan Brewer characterized the crisis immigration poses as creating a future with “borders over-run, employers over a barrel, and freedom simply over” (Brewer, 2010). The reasoning device implied here is that undocumented immigrants will “over-run” the border and take away natives’ freedom. This statement reinforces the idea that the solution to overwhelming numbers of undocumented immigrants is to militarize the border.

*Washington Doesn’t Get It.* News accounts from outlets in Arizona frequently constructed immigration as an issue that was ineptly handled and understood by bureaucrats and politicians within the federal government. Washington, in a nutshell, was framed as having little understanding for what was happening “on the ground.” Washington is portrayed as incompetent in issues related to undocumented immigration, as deliberately leaving the problem of undocumented immigration unmanaged, and as a direct threat to Arizona. Moves by the federal government to limit the extent to which local law enforcement can enforce federal immigration law was also portrayed as a purposeful move that was taken to punish specific political actors, namely Sherriff Joe Arpaio, and the state generally. Taken together, these associations constitute the “Washington doesn’t get it” frame. It is worth noting that this frame was used almost exclusively in Arizona outlets (see Table 4.12).

Enforcing federal immigration laws falls under federal jurisdiction but news accounts constructed immigration as an issue that the federal government understood poorly because of the geographical distance between Washington D.C. and Arizona. Therefore, it was necessary for
the state and local actors to enforce the law. Common refrains among sources and comments posted to newspapers’ online editions stated that the federal government had “failed” to secure the border, implying incompetence, or “refused” to do so, implying that the border has been purposefully left unsecured (see Harris, Beard Rau, & Creno, 2010). Arizona Janice Brewer is quoted as saying in one news account that Arizona is using SB 1070 “solve a crisis we did not create and the federal government has refused to fix-the crisis caused by illegal immigration and Arizona’s porous border” (Harris, Beard Rau, & Creno, 2010). Either way, claims that Washington’s immigration policy are working based on the finding that there were fewer “illegal” immigrants caught at the border in 2010 were met with skepticism. Politicians were described as using figures for “political advantage” and that “Obama, or his aides, have no sense of what is happening” (Hess, 2010). Anything politicians or officials say about the immigration problem then can logically be discarded as such individuals are likely misinformed.
Efforts then for state or local law enforcement officers to find and arrest undocumented immigrants are predicated on the assumption that the problem will not likely be solved by any action on the part of the federal government. Sheriff Joe Arpaio had conducted immigration crime sweeps based on authority granted by a federal program, often simply referred to as 287(g), which gave local police the ability to enforce federal immigration laws. After several civil rights complaints were levied against the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office (MCSO), the U.S. Justice Department (USJD) began a civil rights investigation. Sheriff Joe responded by stating, “I am not going to be intimidated by the politics and by the Justice Department … I want the

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<th>Source material</th>
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<tr>
<td>“Our federal government has reached new levels or arrogance, foolishness, and disregard for the Constitution.”¹</td>
<td>Portraying politicians in Washington as unwilling or unable to enforce immigration laws. Politicians and officials in Washington are incompetent.</td>
<td>Washington does not understand immigration because of its geographic distance from the border or ineptness. Politicians may be purposefully leaving the immigration problem unsolved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sheriff’s deputy that was fined for contempt of court claimed that the ruling was a “politically motivated attack on the Sheriff’s Office for its illegal immigration enforcement policy ...”²</td>
<td>Federal actors are using political resources to actively punish law enforcement officials and politicians in Arizona attempting to enforce federal laws.</td>
<td>The federal government does not want immigration laws enforced and is willing to expend resources to maintain that lack of enforcement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The biggest threat ... comes from the federal government.”¹</td>
<td>Contending that the federal government’s handling of Arizona is leading to dire budgetary and resource problems.</td>
<td>The federal government is actively trying to harm Arizona.</td>
</tr>
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¹Brewer, 2010 ²“Maricopa deputy chief,” 2009
people of Arizona to know this: I will continue to enforce all immigration laws” (Gonzalez, 2009b). He also characterized the USJD’s investigation as politically motivated: “I get the impression that they don’t like the way we are operating” (Billeaud, 2010). When the federal government revoked the ability for MCSO officers to conduct inquiries into individuals’ immigration status on the street, Sheriff Joe was quoted as saying, “Looks like a little politics, doesn’t it?” (Hensley, 2009). An MCSO deputy was also placed in contempt of court for failing to get undocumented immigrants to their hearings on time. The deputy claimed that the ruling was a “politically motivated attack on the Sheriff’s Office for its illegal immigration enforcement policy, among other things” (“Maricopa deputy chief,” 2009). Efforts by the federal government then to ensure that the civil liberties of undocumented immigrants are protected are likely interpreted either as a sign that the federal government is disconnected from the realities of the “illegal” problem or purposefully antagonistic to the people of Arizona.

The federal government was also portrayed by the Governor, Jan Brewer, as directly threatening Arizona with its incompetence. In her “State of the State” address she claims that the federal government is a direct financial threat to the state:

Our federal government has reached new levels of arrogance, foolishness, and disregard for the Constitution. The biggest threat to our budget comes from the federal government—oppressive health care mandates, job-killing environmental restrictions, and continual refusal to pay for costs associated with illegal immigration. And they’re just getting warmed up. (Brewer, 2010)

When the federal government indicated that it would file suit to prevent Arizona SB 1070 from being put into effect in June of 2010, the lawsuit was met with similar sentiments. The news was broken when the Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, hinted in an interview during a visit to Ecuador that the federal government would likely challenge SB 1070.16 Governor Brewer was

16 Ecuador later joined Mexico in its efforts to prevent SB 1070 from being enforced, citing that Ecuadorian nationals would be adversely and unjustly affected by the law.
“outraged” that the federal government intended to stop Arizona from enforcing the law (Myers, 2010). She stated,

… to learn of this lawsuit through an Ecuadorean interview with the secretary of state is just outrageous … If our own government intends to sue our state to prevent illegal immigration enforcement, the least it can do is inform us before it informs the citizens of another nation. (Myers, 2010)

Unlike in the case of federal criticism of the MCSO, Governor Brewer does not claim that the federal government is merely engaging in political maneuvering. Instead, she implies that Washington does not want Arizona’s help in enforcing immigration laws and that perhaps, the federal government does not want those laws enforced at all.

This framing of the federal government emphasizes the notion that sometimes politicians engage in political wrangling and enact policies for personal ends rather than for the good of the public. Efforts by the federal government then to protect civil liberties or prevent state government’s from encroaching into federal jurisdictions are likely to be seen in accordance with this frame: as further evidence of incompetence or the result of a desire to harm the state and state officials.

Political Pawns. Another frame that was employed to ascribe certain motivations to politicians was the “political pawns” frame. Within this frame, sources within news accounts, usually conservative, alleged that democrats in the federal government were using undocumented immigrants as a bargaining chip (see Table 4.13).
Democrats were supposedly using the 2010 census as a way to increase the Hispanic vote by encouraging undocumented immigrants to fill out the census. A *Washington Post* editorial examined several claims by conservatives that the census is being used by political ends, namely that the census had become politicized because it will count “illegal” immigrants and bloat the political power of groups such as pro-immigration or pro-ethnic lobbyists, Big Labor, and the Democratic Party (Williams, 2010). Although the *Washington Post* editorial goes on to argue that the census is not a political tool, the sentiment that undocumented immigrants are used for political ends is echoed elsewhere in immigration coverage. Comprehensive immigration reform was described as being a way to “instantly create 25 million Democrats” (Ratcliffe, 2010) while efforts to secure the border had been delayed because Democrats are holding the border “hostage” until Republicans help pass comprehensive immigration reform (Nowicki & Gonzalez, 2010). These framings of politicians’ motivations position undocumented immigrants as a tool for maintaining political power.

The problem in ascribing to this framing of politicians and undocumented immigrants is that any effort to “help” immigrants gain citizenship can be interpreted to mean “greater power
for Democrats.” Obviously this will raise objections to immigration reform with conservatives, but also has the potential to have citizens view the politicians as being more concerned with maintaining political power rather than passing laws that are designed to help their constituents.

Legal Reverence. The “legal reverence” frame was used predominately by sources and outlets in Arizona (see Table 21). Constructions of immigration within the “legal reverence” frame stress the need to maintain the “rule of law,” place greater value on laws that are “tough” than those that are not, and encourage that laws be “respected.” This final point should be taken to mean that laws both be followed and be held in high esteem. Undocumented immigration as seen through the “legal reverence” frame is a problem not of border porosity or economic inequality but of lax laws and weak enforcement. Within this rationale, enforcing laws is an end unto itself, the means by which immigration laws are enforced are inconsequential, and that laws succeed in accomplishing their intended purposes is arguably irrelevant (see Table 4.14).

The most prominent example of the “legal reverence” frame within the study is the title of Arizona SB 1070. The law was dubbed the “Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act” and the law itself is largely structured around the assumption that the problem with immigration is that existing laws are not enforced. It is no surprise then that state senator Russell Pearce’s slogan for the bill was that it “takes the political handcuffs off law enforcement” (Rau, 2010). The slogan and the name of the bill itself contend that the only thing keeping undocumented immigrants in the country are politicians, most likely Democrats in Washington, who want to prevent law enforcement officials from fully enforcing the law.
News accounts, at times, also placed greater priority on enforcing laws, regardless of their consequences, with the assumption being that laws need to be enforced. When opponents of SB 1070 claimed the law would result in racial profiling, these criticisms were met with the common refrain “Illegal is illegal, what don’t you get?” The notion that because “illegals” are illegal seems to serve as justification for policies implemented to round up undocumented immigrants, such as Sherriff Joe Arpaio’s immigration crime sweeps. Arpaio was quoted as saying “We takin’ them down. They are here illegally. What’s wrong with that?” (Billeaud, 2009). A similar logic was applied to a bill in Fremont, Nebraska that would have prohibited “illegal” immigrants from renting apartments and working. One proponent of the law is quoted as saying “How can you be against following the law?” (Davey & McDonald, 2010). Respect for the law and its assumed infallibility was also used to argue that racial profiling will not happen if SB 1070 were enforced because there are laws prohibiting racial profiling. This implies that
police officers will not arrest or question people based solely on race because it is simply against
the law to do so.

Sources favoring the bill also referenced a Rasmussen poll (see Rasmussen, 2010) that
found the majority of Americans outside Arizona would also favor a law like SB 1070 in their
own states. This was used as evidence to show that the “rule of law” was what “we the people”
wanted. Proponents of SB 1070 also characterized critics as wanting law enforcement to cease
enforcing laws altogether and that a refusal to enforce immigration laws was equated with threats
to U.S. sovereignty.

Immigrants as People

Unlike the other themes identified in this study, the frames that fall under the umbrella of
“immigrants as people” emphasize aspects of undocumented immigrants’ roles in society in
ways that do not exclusively define them in terms of immigration status, threats to culture, or as
invaders. Within these frames, it is generally understood that undocumented immigrants at least
have the potential to contribute to society in terms of their labor, culture, and values. Some
frames within this theme recognize that, as people, undocumented immigrants can also be
victims.

Human Costs. The most obvious difference between this frame and those within other themes is
that the “human costs” frame makes salient the personhood of undocumented immigrants by
stressing how enforcement policies such as workplace raids, immigration crime sweeps, and
deportations are often traumatic experiences that have long-lasting repercussions for
undocumented immigrants. Some news accounts also link immigration enforcement policies
with negative effects on citizens that get swept up by various law enforcement agencies (see
Lemons, 2009; “Study: Hispanic drivers get more search requests, 2009). As will be discussed in short order, some news accounts also show how undocumented immigrants are particularly vulnerable to overzealous law enforcement policies and exploitative businesses practices. News accounts that feature the “human cost” frame do not necessarily advocate for increasing immigration rates or open borders (see Table 4.15).

Within this frame, audiences are encouraged to think of immigrants as deserving dignity and as undeserving of needless suffering. Perhaps the best example of this frame is news coverage surrounding the Samaritan organization and those like it that attempt to save human lives by placing water in the desert in locations where border crossers may find them (see Portillo, 2009; Shearer, 2009). The water that the organization leaves for undocumented immigrants is sometimes left on national park lands and organizations like the Samaritans have come under fire for littering. Walt Staton, who helped leave water in Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, was convicted in federal court of “knowingly littering.” A letter to the editor characterizes the government’s rationale in the matter:

Staton is now criminalized. He was simply bringing water to an area in the midst of a known crisis. As the bodies of seven migrants have been found on the refuge just since the beginning of this year, I wonder what kind of logic states that piles of water bottles are more seditious than piles of bodies? (Nelson, 2009)

The author contends that government’s priorities should be on saving lives rather than preventing litter, especially since those deaths could be avoided.
Within this frame, enforcement practices such as workplace raids, deportations, and immigration sweeps are portrayed as having distinct effects on individuals and families. Policies that would reduce incentives for undocumented immigrants to enter the country without unduly harming those who are already here are shown to be both more effective at stemming the flow of immigrants than enhanced border security. A New York Times editorial characterizes enforcement policies as:

Table 4.15
Framing and Reasoning Devices for the “Human Costs” Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source material</th>
<th>Framing devices</th>
<th>Reasoning devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I wonder what kind of logic states that piles of water bottles are more seditious than piles of bodies.”¹</td>
<td>Claims that human life is more important than littering in national parks.</td>
<td>Undocumented immigrants deserve to be treated with dignity. Laws should be reworked to take this into consideration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring to workplace raids as a practice that “[piles] hopelessness onto fear—[enforcement alone] will never make 12 million people disappear. It will make them silent partners in a system that forces honest Americans and businesses to suffer with them.”²</td>
<td>Workplace raids are ineffective at solving the immigration problem, enforcement policies only treat the symptoms of a broken immigration system.</td>
<td>Workplace raids do little to punish employers and only serve to traumatize undocumented workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Citizens are being stopped because they are brown.”³</td>
<td>Contends that law enforcement officers will racially profile individuals, intentionally and unintentionally.</td>
<td>Blind faith in law enforcement officer’s ability to ignore race and nationality will lead to discrimination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“[We] are addicted to cheap and dependable labor provided by illegal immigrants who do jobs that Americans won’t do ... this isn’t an invasion but a self-inflicted wound.”⁴</td>
<td>Undocumented immigrants are satisfying a demand for cheap labor.</td>
<td>Americans are partly responsible for problems associated with undocumented immigration. Americans and undocumented immigrants are unwitting victims in this system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Nelson, 2009  
²“Wage watchers,” 2009  
³Henderson & Murguia, 2010  
⁴Navarrette, 2010
… piling hopelessness onto fear—[enforcement alone] will never make 12 million people disappear. It will make them silent partners in a system that forces honest Americans and businesses to suffer with them. (‘Wage watchers,’ 2009).

This editorial also contends that natives as well as undocumented immigrants are hurt by enforcement policies. The “human costs” frame also emphasizes the various tribulations that natives endure in efforts to deport undocumented immigrants. Phoenix mayor Phil Gordon claimed that enforcement policies like Sherriff Joe Arpaio’s immigration crime sweeps and workplace raids foster an environment in which “citizens are being stopped because they are brown” and sweeps lead to “discriminatory harassment, improper stops, searches, and arrests” (Henderson & Murguia, 2010), all of which impact undocumented immigrants about as much as they do citizens.

Perhaps the most potent framing devices used to express this conceptualization of immigration enforcement lies within stories that explicitly detail encounters with law enforcement officers searching for undocumented immigrants. In a Phoenix New Times article, a U.S. citizen, who would only identify herself as Rosa due to fears of retaliation by the sheriff’s office, described her encounter with MCSO deputies during a routine traffic stop. Rosa states that the officer told her that she was pulled over and questioned about her immigration status because “… my people have to make sure your people are not hiding bodies in your trunk” (Lemons, 2009). In another instance, two U.S. citizens testified before a Congressional hearing committee on local immigration enforcement about how they were stopped on their way to work by MCSO officers, given a pat-down, held for three hours without charge, and eventually released (see Congressional hearings on local immigration, 2009). Other news accounts describe how U.S. citizens have also been caught up in deportation proceedings. The Arizona Daily Star reported that court documents and lawsuits show that at least 55 U.S. citizens have been deported
in the last decade (Gamboa, 2009). At least one U.S. citizen was held for five years before being deported. Unlike framings of immigration within other themes that, for the most part, set up clear lines of delineation between undocumented immigrants and natives, these news accounts vividly demonstrate the ease with which citizens can be negatively impacted by immigration enforcement policies.

The “human costs” frame is also perhaps the only frame that constructs much of the incentives for undocumented immigrants to enter into the U.S. as something other than “bennies” like public education and citizenship for anchor babies. Instead, undocumented immigrants are shown to be lured to the U.S. by the promise of higher wages than back home. Once here, immigrants are at the mercy of unscrupulous businesses that use “exploitative labor conditions” (Pasquarella, 2010). The sources of undocumented immigration within this framework are greedy businesses but also consumers:

> because our friends, relatives, [and] associates … are addicted to cheap and dependable labor provided by illegal immigrants who do jobs that Americans won’t do … this isn’t an invasion but a self-inflicted wound. We have illegal immigrants because we hire illegal immigrants. (Navarrette, 2010)

The solution then to undocumented immigration and any problems it poses is very different within this understanding than under, for example, the “national security” frame. The logical solution here is to stop undocumented immigration not by building a wall or “rounding up” people in workplace raids. Instead, the solution that is implied to be best within this understanding is one that holds businesses and consumers accountable by enforcing laws such as minimum wage requirements and punishing businesses that prevent workers from unionizing.

*Multicultural Nation.* The “multicultural nation” frame constructs immigrants’ diverse cultural backgrounds and customs as a source of strength. Where the assimilation constructs differences
between past generations of immigrants and the current one, the “multicultural nation” frame
draws on arguments that contend that no such differences between immigrants groups exist.
Instead, differences lie between past generations of natives and the current generation in that
current natives are no longer doing their part to help immigrants transition into their new lives in
the U.S. (see Table 4.16)

Table 4.16
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source material</th>
<th>Framing devices</th>
<th>Reasoning devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiences with foreigners builds “an appreciation for the differences that make us human. When I hear the French stereotyped as snobby ... I know better.”¹ Rather than diversity being a divisive factor, “irreconcilable contempt” is what “loosens the ties of citizenship and undermines patriotism.”²</td>
<td>Characterizes generalizations about foreigners as stereotypes and as normatively wrong.</td>
<td>Americans need to move beyond stereotypes to truly appreciate the wealth that diversity brings to society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming assimilated into American society has always been “slow and contentious, with progress measured ... in decades ...”³</td>
<td>Draws parallels between the current wave of immigration and the older, more respected waves of immigration.</td>
<td>Hispanics are very much like old waves of immigrants, current mainstream perceptions of immigration are erroneous.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Ferdeline, 2009  
²Gerson, 2010  
³Bush & Putnam, 2010

News accounts featuring the “multicultural nation” frame used framing devices such as characterizing generalized assumptions about immigrants and foreigners as stereotypes.

Ferdeline (2009) argues that experiences with foreigners creates:

… an appreciation for the differences that make us human. When I hear the French stereotyped as snobby, for example, I know better. When I worked in France, the people I met were warm and welcoming, despite my mediocre language skills. (Ferdeline, 2009)

Additionally, experiences with individuals of different backgrounds are seen here as a learning experience rather than one that is frustrating and disrespectful to natives. The differences
between the various cultures that make up American society are a “source of values and vitality” and not a threat to national unity (Gerson, 2010). Instead, it is “irreconcilable contempt” that “loosens the ties of citizenship and undermines the idea of patriotism” (Gerson, 2010). In other words, rather than cultural differences being a source of discord within society, it is the preoccupation with such differences that leads to a breakdown of unity.

Also challenged within this frame is the idea that all immigrants need to immediately learn English and that the responsibility for doing so falls squarely on their shoulders. Bush and Putnam (2010) characterize immigrant assimilation as:

… slow and contentious, with progress measured not in years but in decades … one important difference … that separates immigrants then and now: We native-born Americans are doing less than our great-grandparents did to welcome immigrants.

The same author points out how a century ago employers and community members helped immigrants learn English by providing free language classes.

The logical extensions of this frame place much of the onus for maintaining a healthy society on natives rather than on immigrants. Specifically, native audiences are encouraged to think of themselves as having a small part to play in the assimilation of immigrants into native culture. Such assimilation however, is not likely a one-way street as natives can also benefit from new values and customs and that the dominant native culture will not likely remain unchanged with the arrival of new immigrants. Such change should also not be feared.

**Issue Ignorance.** The “issue ignorance” frame is an aberration in that it does not so much highlight aspects about immigration or immigrants but rather what we, as a public, think we know about immigration and immigrants. The frame promotes an understanding of the knowledge provided by mass media as being misleading, inconsequential, and overly dramatized
(see Table 4.17).

Table 4.17
Framing and Reasoning Devices for the “Issue Ignorance” Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source material</th>
<th>Framing devices</th>
<th>Reasoning devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The “fate of the U.S. economy does not rest of what we do on illegal immigration.”</td>
<td>Highlighting popular misconceptions about immigration, undocumented immigration, and the immigration process.</td>
<td>Much of what the public knows about immigration is erroneous, especially that which originates from mass media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “fate of the U.S. economy does not rest of what we do on illegal immigration.”</td>
<td>Contextualizes immigration accurately.</td>
<td>Undocumented immigration is not as great of a threat to the U.S. as popular accounts say.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1"Study: U.S. economy,” 2009

Authors and sources contended individually that one aspect or assumption of immigration that is widely accepted to be accurate or true is actually not based on empirical observations. Each story then can be taken as an attempt to reframe a single aspect of immigration. For example, a popular understanding of undocumented immigrants seems to be that they draw from public resources without contributing anything in return. Sloan (2009) argues that the opposite is true: undocumented immigrants contribute a great deal to public resources without being able to draw on many such services. The author uses social security as an illustrative example by pointing out that social security is an earned benefit and if undocumented immigrants use phony social security numbers they are essentially subsidizing the program as they will never be able to draw benefits upon their retirement. Other examples include showing how undocumented immigrants can pay taxes through a federal identification number which challenges the assumption that undocumented immigrants cannot and/or will not pay taxes (Gonzalez, 2009), placing the size and impact of the undocumented immigrant population in perspective and showing how the “fate of the U.S. economy does not rest on what we do on illegal immigration” (“Study: U.S. economy,” 2009), and bringing to light the treatment of and attitudes toward
immigrants from past generations as being equally misguided as today’s rhetoric (Sugarmann, 2010).

Taken together across multiple news accounts, letters to the editor, and editorials, these “mythbusting” framing devices encourage audiences to reexamine what they have learned about undocumented immigration. The framing devices might also infer that future information about immigration as an issue and immigrants as a group should be examined with a more critical eye regarding whether assertions made are actually based in reality or whether they are the result of “xenophobic paranoia.” More broadly, if what individuals “know” about immigration, or any other issue for that matter, is reexamined in light of these assertions then the logical conclusion would be to understand information provided by news media at best as misleading and at worse as deceitful.

**Summary.** Examining immigration coverage across the breadth of news accounts, the frames within each theme indicate that when news accounts cover a particular aspect the immigration issue, interpretations encouraged by news accounts are surprisingly uniform. For example, when news accounts place emphasis on the status of an individual immigrant (status theme), each of the frames used to discuss status infer more or less uniformly negative interpretations of that individual’s role in society. Regardless of whether “illegality,” “criminality,” or another frame was employed, within each sub-issue of immigration, encouraged interpretations of the issue are uniform. Within the first three themes, news accounts tended to decontextualize the role immigrants play in society. This was done by largely focusing on one distinct and problematic aspect of undocumented immigrants’ lives to the exclusion of all else. This, of course, is contrasted with the “immigrants as people” theme which tended to be used in stories about the
multifaceted nature of undocumented immigrants’ lives in society. Unsurprisingly, it also seems as though these frames might be amongst the few that provided reliable and actionable information for readers. For the most part then, immigration coverage can be described as being largely misleading.
CHAPTER 5: LONGITUDINAL FRAME ANALYSIS

In addition to identifying the frames used to construct immigration as a social problem, this study was also undertaken to determine how immigration was constructed in the baseline time period preceding the passage of SB 1070 (RQ2) and how, or if, national and local discourses interacted across the study period (RQ3).

As frames are not generated and expressed in cultural or political vacuums (Carragee & Roefs, 2004) and have a tendency to move from discourse among some elites to other sources (see Entman, 2003), the expectation here was that there would be some interchange of frames and understandings of immigration once SB 1070 began to garner national attention. At the very least, journalists were expected to generate “objective” news coverage by counterbalancing one set of interpretations and framings for immigration against others (see McChesney, 2004).

The first step in understanding any interplay between discourse levels first involved identifying frames used across the study period by using a holistic approach to the data. Once this was complete, it was possible to break the data down by time period and discourse level to look for shifts in the use of frames or for variations on frames in the SB 1070 period that were not present in the baseline period. Generally, the logical inferences within any single news frame were found to be consistent across the study period. The framing devices were also more or less uniform across time. For example, emphasizing that many drug smugglers are Hispanic and that many undocumented immigrants are also Hispanic within the “criminality” frame was a consistent feature of immigration discourse throughout the study period.

This section will provide a description for how immigration was constructed as a social problem in each level of discourse (national and Arizona) and time period (pre-SB1070 and post-
SB1070). Shifts in discourse across time in each level are also discussed in light of the baseline frames employed.

As presented previously, a simple frequency count of the frames featured in news accounts by time period can be found in Table 4.1. This information can be used to understand the broad conceptualizations of immigration across the study period, longitudinally. Simple frequency counts may be sufficient to broadly chart trends or changes in immigration coverage, but this information alone is likely a poor substitute for characterizing discourses surrounding immigration during the study period because the frequency of a frame’s usage does not necessarily correspond to its predominance in the mental schema of audiences. Frames that were used with less frequency should not be seen as having no influence in conceptualizing immigration for this reason. Relatively rare frames, such as the “invisible rights” frame, were used as justification for discriminatory practices such as SB 1070 and denying undocumented immigrants access to public utilities. Rare frames likely still played a prominent role in defining the immigration issue despite their less frequent appearance in news accounts and should not be discarded as being irrelevant to framing immigration. Furthermore, the information provided here cannot determine causality. A frequency count showing that a frame grew in use in the wake of SB1070 could be a response to a host of factors, only one of which is prior or current national discourse.

National Immigration Coverage

One goal of this study was to determine how news coverage at the national level constructed immigration as an issue before SB1070 became a prominent news agenda item. In a nutshell, coverage during the year or so preceding SB1070 was quite diverse as news featured
every frame identified in the study to varying degrees with the exception of the “Washington doesn’t get it” frame. If frequency counts are any indication, several specific interpretations of immigration were emphasized above others. Immigration was primarily defined as a multifaceted issue that presented potential disruptions to native culture through the “assimilation” frame, burdens on taxpayers as immigrants were shown to be drawing undeserved benefits from society, and threats to safety in the use of the “national security” and “criminality” frames. Although immigration was commonly framed as a problem in national discourse, there also seemed to be an understanding that poorly implemented immigration policies came with consequences, especially when stories prominently used the “human cost” frame (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Total (percent)</th>
<th>Baseline (percent)</th>
<th>SB 1070 (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Americans first</td>
<td>1 (0.89%)</td>
<td>1 (1.79%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>21 (18.75%)</td>
<td>14 (25.00%)</td>
<td>7 (12.50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contentious issue</td>
<td>5 (4.46%)</td>
<td>2 (3.57%)</td>
<td>3 (5.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminality</td>
<td>16 (14.29%)</td>
<td>6 (10.71%)</td>
<td>10 (17.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human costs</td>
<td>31 (27.68%)</td>
<td>12 (21.43%)</td>
<td>19 (33.93%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegality</td>
<td>9 (8.04%)</td>
<td>6 (10.71%)</td>
<td>3 (5.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisible rights</td>
<td>4 (3.57%)</td>
<td>3 (5.36%)</td>
<td>1 (1.79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue ignorance</td>
<td>6 (5.36%)</td>
<td>4 (7.14%)</td>
<td>2 (3.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal reverence</td>
<td>5 (4.46%)</td>
<td>2 (3.57%)</td>
<td>3 (5.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meritocracy</td>
<td>8 (7.14%)</td>
<td>2 (3.57%)</td>
<td>6 (10.71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural nation</td>
<td>4 (3.57%)</td>
<td>1 (1.79%)</td>
<td>3 (5.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National security</td>
<td>18 (16.07%)</td>
<td>9 (16.07%)</td>
<td>9 (16.07%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political pawns</td>
<td>11 (9.82%)</td>
<td>2 (3.57%)</td>
<td>9 (16.07%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeserved benefits</td>
<td>13 (11.61%)</td>
<td>9 (9.38%)</td>
<td>4 (7.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington doesn’t get it</td>
<td>1 (0.89%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>1 (1.79%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. News accounts may have multiple frames. Frequencies and percentages refer to the number of news accounts in which the frame was found.

17 The sample used for this study is relatively small (n = 224) in comparison to the size of the sampling frame (N = 14,995). Thus, the absence of any frame within either discourse level might not indicate that the frame was entirely absent from that discourse. Because of the small sample size it is possible that news accounts that, in the sampling frame, drew upon certain frames were simply not part of the sample for this study. Perhaps it would be better to think of “unused” frames at any point in the study to simply be exceedingly rare.
Two of the most prominent frames, “assimilation” and “human cost,” differ somewhat in the framing devices journalists employed to express the frames in comparison to the framing devices used in post-SB1070 coverage and in Arizona. At the national level during the time preceding the passage of SB1070, the “assimilation” frame was the most common framing of immigration ($n = 14$). Immigrants were constructed as being both culturally dissimilar from natives and also past waves of immigrants. The “assimilation” frame generally highlights the disruptive influence of immigrants on society due to cultural differences between natives and Hispanic immigrants. At the national level during the time preceding SB1070, this distinction was made in several news stories in a more roundabout manner than in Arizona’s news accounts. In national discourse, Hispanic immigrants were sometimes indirectly distanced from native culture by conspicuously leaving immigrants from Central and South America out of news accounts that discuss “rich immigrant history” (Albo, 2009) or in revising immigration policy to make exceptions for “smart people” (Timmons, 2009). Where the traditions of Hispanics are derided as being offensive in some news accounts, traditions of new European immigrants, such as the Irish, face no such criticism. Semple (2009) discusses how undocumented immigrants from Ireland found a warm welcome in Manhattan and surrounding boroughs and quotes one undocumented immigrant as saying, “It’s nice to have some familiar traditions you’re used to at home,” referring to the Irish accents and pubs that spring up in immigrant enclaves. Such accents and business establishments were not framed as being disruptive or as a fracturing influence. The inference is that the Irish have successfully assimilated into U.S. culture. Again, Hispanics are conspicuously absent from this form of coverage.

The human costs of poor immigration policy were also used to frame immigration in this time frame at the national level ($n = 12$). Again, within this time period at the national level, the
“human costs” frame was uniquely manifested in news accounts. News accounts tended to discuss the negative impact of immigration policy on immigrants as part of wider systemic forces. The immigration system was described as having become “criminalized” (Albo, 2009) and prone to abuses of power that can result in physical harm to detainees (Bernstein, 2009) and harassment of U.S. citizens, and ostensibly immigrants as well, based solely upon their race (see Turner, 2009).

It is impossible to say whether discourse in Arizona prompted a shift in national coverage, but what is apparent is that there was a significant reprioritization of news coverage in discourse once SB1070 moved into the national spotlight. The “human cost” frame became the most frequently used frame in post-SB1070 coverage ($n = 19$). This shift is significant in the sense that it became used twice as often across news stories compared to any other frame. Highlighting the human costs of poor immigration policies during this time frame seemed to be a direct response to discourse in Arizona surrounding SB1070. Some news accounts dealt explicitly with SB1070 and characterized the law as “draconian” (“S.F. city attorney calls for boycott,” 2010) and as a way of “scapegoating” immigrants for problems in Arizona (Henderson & Murguia, 2010). These news accounts are obviously a direct response to happenings in Arizona, if not necessarily the discourse surrounding the law. Other news accounts highlighted the disparate treatment undocumented immigrants receive, pointing out that “lack of an immigration status does not strip away a person’s basic constitutional rights” (“When a lawyer is wrong,” 2010), an understanding of civil rights that was directly challenged by news accounts in Arizona and those drawing on the “invisible rights” framework.

Unlike the uptick in use of the “human costs” frame, other frames remained more or less unaffected across time. Perhaps most notably, the frames that increased in usage in Arizona post-
SB1070 passage did not have a similar uptick at the national level, indicating that while SB1070 may have sparked additional immigration news coverage, the constructions of immigration used in discourse in Arizona did not receive substantial play at the national level in the debate over the law.

Arizona Immigration Coverage

Much like the national news coverage during the time preceding the passage of Arizona SB1070, news accounts in Arizona varied greatly in their framings of immigration. The only frames not found during this time period were the frames of “meritocracy” and “multicultural nation.” Primarily, coverage in Arizona was constructed by drawing on the frames of “national security” \((n = 19)\), “criminality” \((n = 14)\), and “legal reverence” \((n = 10)\). News accounts also used the “human cost” frame \((n = 19)\). Generally then, immigration was similarly framed in comparison to national coverage as a multifaceted issue within Arizona (see Table 5.2).

### Table 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Total (percent)</th>
<th>Baseline (percent)</th>
<th>SB 1070 (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Americans first</td>
<td>6 (5.36%)</td>
<td>3 (5.36%)</td>
<td>3 (5.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>6 (5.36%)</td>
<td>2 (3.57%)</td>
<td>4 (7.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contentious issue</td>
<td>4 (3.57%)</td>
<td>1 (1.79%)</td>
<td>3 (5.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminality</td>
<td>36 (32.14%)</td>
<td>14 (25.00%)</td>
<td>22 (39.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human costs</td>
<td>36 (32.14%)</td>
<td>19 (33.93%)</td>
<td>17 (30.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegality</td>
<td>5 (4.46%)</td>
<td>1 (1.79%)</td>
<td>4 (7.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisible rights</td>
<td>5 (4.46%)</td>
<td>3 (5.36%)</td>
<td>2 (3.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue ignorance</td>
<td>8 (7.14%)</td>
<td>3 (5.36%)</td>
<td>2 (3.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal reverence</td>
<td>24 (21.43%)</td>
<td>10 (17.86%)</td>
<td>14 (25.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meritocracy</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural nation</td>
<td>3 (2.68%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>3 (5.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National security</td>
<td>46 (41.07%)</td>
<td>19 (33.93%)</td>
<td>27 (48.21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political pawns</td>
<td>5 (4.46%)</td>
<td>3 (5.36%)</td>
<td>2 (3.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeserved benefits</td>
<td>8 (7.14%)</td>
<td>6 (10.71%)</td>
<td>2 (3.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington doesn’t get it</td>
<td>20 (17.86%)</td>
<td>6 (10.71%)</td>
<td>14 (25.00%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note*: News accounts may have multiple frames. Frequencies and percentages refer to the number of news accounts in which the frame was found.
As was the case with the national sample, there are some unique variations on frames within the Arizona subsample although the frequency of use in each was relatively similar. When the human cost of immigration policies was discussed at the national level, immigrants and undocumented immigrants were typically shown to be the victims of poor immigration policy, overzealous officials, or workplace raids. Workplace raids were shown to typically stigmatize individual workers while allowing employers to continue hiring undocumented workers after paying a small fine. In Arizona, on the other hand, immigration coverage that featured the “human costs” frame tended to focus on the costs borne by undocumented immigrants and their families (e.g. Gonzalez, 2010). The inferences audiences were encouraged to draw may have varied dependent on whether other frames, such as “national security” were also salient and resonated with audiences. The logical extensions of thought of the “human costs” frame at the national level would be that immigration policy should be designed in such a way as to reduce needless suffering of “legal” and undocumented immigrants alike. In Arizona, the human costs of immigration policy were typically shown to be borne by undocumented immigrants that were also connected to issues of national security (i.e. drug smuggling, human smuggling, terrorism) and criminality. Also, the “legal reverence” frame was used in a significant amount of coverage in the state during the run up to SB1070. The “human costs” frame could interact with these other frames or be overridden entirely, resulting in the conclusion that human costs, as long as they are rightly borne by undocumented immigrants (i.e. they get what they deserve), are either an unfortunate happenstance or perhaps desirable in that current and future “illegals” will be deterred from entering the county or residing in Arizona.

Much like the national news subsample, coverage in Arizona shifted dramatically in the SB1070 timeframe and reprioritized certain frames over others. Most notably, the “national
security” frame increased greatly during this time period. This is in part due to the death of Arizona rancher Robert Krentz in the time immediately preceding the passage of SB 1070, supposedly at the hands of an “illegal” immigrant and drug smuggler. Although no one was ever arrested in connection to Krentz’s murder, within news accounts the killer was universally thought to be an “illegal” immigrant that had connections to drug cartels. Most of the coverage of the Krentz murder occurred directly prior to the Arizona Senate’s approval of SB1070 and there was even some talk of renaming the bill in honor of the rancher.

Coverage in Arizona during the SB1070 timeframe also featured two highly congruent frames: the “Washington doesn’t get it” frame and the “legal reverence” frame. News accounts drawing on one or both frames operated from the assumption that politicians in Washington did not want to have federal immigration law enforced. Under the “legal reverence” frame, Washington was portrayed as being overly preoccupied with the possibility of racial profiling occurring despite racial profiling being illegal itself. Sources claimed that racial profiling had not occurred in the past and it would not occur under the new law; furthermore, individuals that SB1070 was targeting were “illegals” and there was arguably nothing wrong with singling out someone that is “illegal.”

Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, national coverage did not provide the same deference to the particular framings of immigrants in Arizona. The increase in the use of the “Washington doesn’t get it frame” may indicate that journalists or sources in Arizona recognized that their understanding of immigrants was not being reflected in national news accounts. At least within the newspaper outlets used in this study, news accounts in national subsample frequently featured the one frame that could perhaps be considered the most antithetical to the popular understanding of immigration within Arizona: the “human costs” frame. As stated
previously, the particular manner in which national news outlets used this frame prior to SB1070 was to highlight the problems citizens and immigrants experienced as a result of discriminatory practices. Within this framing of immigration, news accounts emphasized that journalists, politicians, and possibly even natives outside Arizona truly did not understand immigration the same way as Arizonans.

Summary

Although interactions between the discourses at the national level and in Arizona were found, an exchange of frames does not seem to have occurred. Rather, when conceptualizations of immigrants within Arizona were given national attention, news outlets at the national level responded by framing Arizona’s SB1070 immigration law in terms of its human costs. Coverage in Arizona shifted to focus on two specific frames that highlighted the rest of the nation’s lack of understanding of immigration “on the ground” through the “Washington doesn’t get it frame” and also contended that Arizona would enforce federal immigration laws if Washington wouldn’t through the “legal reverence” frame.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

What can be taken away from this study is an understanding of how immigration was constructed as a social problem, the manner in which audiences were encouraged—and discouraged—to think of immigration, and the ways in which these constructions varied between discourse levels. The most notable finding in this study is that there is no single frame or understanding that is applied or attached to immigration across all stories, except perhaps that of illegality. This is the case only by assuming that the mere application of the “illegal” modifier to either “immigrant” or “immigration” is sufficient to trigger the “illegality” frame. Due to its liberal usage across stories, the absence of labeling immigrants “undocumented” instead of “illegal” was, at times, argued to be a misnomer and as misleading audiences from an accurate, that is to say legalistic, understanding of the immigration problem (e.g. Cepeda, 2009). Also, if the “illegality” frame is sufficiently engrained into audiences’ conceptualizations of immigration, it is possible that the absence of any framing devices within the “illegality” framework would be glaring enough for some audience members to trigger the frame anyway.

Like the “illegality” frame, most of the frames used in interpreting immigration as a social problem and immigrants as a distinct social group encourage generally negative inferences regarding the effect of immigration on communities and society more broadly. Unsurprisingly, there were relatively few news accounts that showed how undocumented immigrants could provide benefits for communities aside from those that claim undocumented immigrants provide sales taxes. Those assertions were almost always paired with counterclaims that undocumented immigrants caused a greater drain on local resources than they made up for in local taxes. Before

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18 In this opinion article written by Esther Cepeda for the Arizona Daily Star, the author contends that “illegal” is an accurate and justifiable way of referring to undocumented immigrants. The rationale for this claim is that because immigrants that cross the border have broken a law and that the U.S. government classifies them as “illegal” immigrants, they should be termed as such in news accounts. Referring to this group as undocumented immigrants rather than using the “illegal” modifier is, according to the author, misleading.
the SB1070 timeframe, news accounts at the national level stressed how current immigrants are a culturally disruptive influence ("assimilation" frame) and within Arizona as a threat to national security ("national security" frame). When SB1070 was passed, national coverage shifted somewhat as the "human cost" frame was found to be used more often at the expense of frames such as "assimilation," "undeserved benefits," and perhaps "illegality." Journalists within national news outlets seem to have made a significant effort to reframe immigration and immigration policies within a "human costs" frame, switching from frames that encourage audiences to see immigration as a disruptive influence to ones that emphasize the humanity of immigrants and the cost of poor immigration policy. Also, there was a slight increase in the use of the "multicultural nation" frame, although it was still seldom applied in news accounts. This may have been due, at least in part, to a fear that continuing to show immigrants as a disruptive influence on society would lead to a backlash from audiences, especially Hispanics and other minorities, which may have found any favorable or sympathetic coverage of SB1070 offensive.

This reprioritization of the "human costs" frame was a stark contrast to that of the Arizona coverage. After the passage of SB1070, news outlets seem to have redoubled efforts to frame immigration as an issue of national security and criminality. Although the "human costs" frame remained widely used in post-SB1070 coverage within Arizona, this may simply reflect the need of professional journalists to maintain the perception of objectivity, typically accomplished by "balancing" sources’ competing perspectives against one another rather than through any truly accurate or contextualizing assessment of the issue (see McChesney, 2004). The lack of sympathetic coverage at the national level and perhaps a perception that national media outlets and politicians in Washington lacked a firm understanding of the problems immigration posed to Arizona may have also lead to immigration being framed as an issue that
was poorly understood outside the state. The use of the “Washington doesn’t get it” and “legal reverence” frames within Arizona seems to have emboldened local politicians and government agents in continuing to single out undocumented immigrants either through continuing existing policies (e.g. MCSO’s immigrant crime sweeps) or by creating new policies to make life in Arizona untenable for immigrants (e.g. Fischer, 2010). Through the continual use of the “national security” and “criminality” frames, criticism of the law, both from within the state and at the national level, could easily be discounted by audiences as originating from politicians that “didn’t get it” or that had no respect for the law. Any criticism of SB1070 that alleged that if it were put into effect that racial profiling or discrimination would occur could be discounted by drawing on counterclaims provided by available frames within Arizona: that critics did not know what it takes to combat “illegal” immigration (Washington doesn’t get it), that politicians were unwilling to enforce the law and the will of the people (legal reverence), or that nobody’s civil rights are at issue because “illegals” have no such rights (invisible rights). In essence, the baseline conceptualization of immigration and the subsequent reemphasis of the “national security” frame likely provide rich ground for counterclaims to any criticism of policies such as SB1070 that aim to solve “illegal” immigration, regardless of the methods any such policy would employ.

Surprisingly, there seemed to be a lack of consensus building toward a common discourse between national outlets and those in Arizona. Despite the lack of a common discourse between Arizona and national outlets, the interplay between the two was dialectical in that the SB1070

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19 In this news article, candidates for state utility regulators proposed checking the immigration status of all households, those without proper identification would be denied utility hookup. The rationale for denying services to households that cannot prove they have a valid immigration status was that undocumented immigrants’ use of utilities is more expensive than that of citizens or “legal” immigrants. Wong, the candidate proposing the measure, is quoted as saying “The illegal population does have an impact on rates,” even though no empirical evidence was provided to support this. Wong also stated that this measure might “… discourage some of them from coming here.”
timeframe coverage at both levels was responsive to the other’s conceptualizations of immigration. Although the nature of the frames between discourse levels was unlikely to build any common ground for resolving the conflict which SB1070 had spurred, both within discourse levels and between them, the two discourses were not deaf to the other’s conceptualizations, merely unsympathetic. Again, the response of outlets seemed to be to reaffirm past conceptualizations of immigration and challenge those used within the other discourse level. National coverage may have responded to the baseline frames within Arizona and perhaps early SB1070 timeframe coverage by reverting to the “human costs” frame once SB1070 became prominently featured in news accounts. Coverage within Arizona responded to criticism at the national level be both sets of frames would have helped establish a baseline understanding of immigration as a problem in the time preceding SB1070.

The frames used in immigration news accounts also tended to conflate undocumented immigrants and Hispanics more generally. Criticisms of the current wave of immigrants that alleged they were unwilling or unable to learn English and assimilate were mostly aimed toward Hispanics. Undocumented immigrants, also assumed to be Hispanic, were also shown to be unwilling to assimilate and to be a disruptive influence although there is also the underlying inference in several frames (“illegality,” “criminality,” and “national security”) that assimilation by undocumented immigrants is undesirable. Undocumented immigrants, according to these frames, should not be accepted into society, regardless of how much they would like to fit in. Instead, “criminal illegals” should be rejected and sent “back where they came from.” On the one hand then, Hispanic immigrants are criticized for retaining their language and cultural ties; on the other, Hispanics are criticized for wanting to assimilate because of their inherent criminal nature.
This is problematic for several reasons, not least of which is that frustration with the perceived drain on resources can be directed at Hispanic minorities rather than at immigration policy, obscuring the historical and economic factors which have lead to the current immigration “crisis” and placing blame on undocumented immigrants already in the country. Furthermore, such dissatisfaction was typically framed as originating with immigrants’ status, poor immigration policy, or scheming politicians. Any allegations that SB1070 supporters were using immigration status as a convenient tool to marginalize Hispanics could therefore be disarmed: SB1070 was designed to combat the problem undocumented immigration caused. That Hispanics and undocumented immigrants were also shown to be culturally and socially disruptive was held to be further proof that undocumented immigration was a serious problem.

Due to the conflation between Hispanic ethnicity and immigration status, the discourse surrounding immigration was heavily racialized despite claims to the contrary. For example, Sherriff Joe Arpaio’s “immigration crime sweeps” are regularly held in heavily Latino neighborhoods. According to Arpaio, there is nothing wrong with conducting saturation patrols and canvassing Hispanic areas in search of “illegals.” The patrols are designed to arrest “illegals,” not Hispanics; it just so happens that most “illegals” in Arizona are also Hispanic. The justification is perhaps best encapsulated in the statement “illegal is illegal, what don’t you get?” The statement itself cropped up most frequently on comment boards but the sentiment was commonly echoed in news coverage. A similar claim was frequently made in justifying the provision of SB1070 that required officers to make inquiries into the immigration status of individuals with whom officers have contact. Sources and officials alleged that everyone would be affected by the law equally. Within the frame of “legal reverence,” law enforcement officers
were not allowed to racially profile, thus a white motorist had an equal likelihood of being asked about his or her immigration status as a Latina/o driver.

Further evidence of the racialized nature of immigration lies in where the “legal reverence” frame was employed in Arizona. Immigration coverage within this framework emphasized the requirement, sometimes phrased as a “Constitutional” mandate, for law enforcement officers to apply laws already on the books. In news accounts, when police officers stated they would not be able to enforce SB1070 they were criticized as violating their duty to uphold the law (e.g. Duarte, 2010). During the same time which SB1070 was thrust into the national spotlight, Arizona had begun a pilot program of speed trap cameras that were deployed across the state. Despite the cameras being heavily effective at reducing deaths and accidents (Newton, 2010), a nearly flawless ability to fine drivers caught breaking the law, a more efficient means of enforcing laws already on the books, and freeing up police officers for more serious crimes, the cameras received widespread criticism. Oddly enough, those criticisms were similar to those of SB1070. The speed trap cameras were criticized for violating privacy, for being selectively enforced, and as evidence of “Big Brotherism” in the state (“Arizona abandons highway speed cameras,” 2010). When the announcement was made that the cameras would no longer be used, the chairman of a ballot initiative against the speeding cameras, Shawn Dow, was quoted as saying, “We’re happy that DPS (Department of Public Safety) will no longer be violating Arizona citizens’ constitutional rights” (Newton, 2010). Similar claims that SB1070 would violate civil and/or Constitutional rights were discounted by lawmakers when applied to the immigration law. In other words, the speed trap cameras were denied the “legal reverence”

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20 In this *Arizona Daily Star* article, the Sunnyside School District joined a lawsuit initiated by a police officer to enjoin the enactment of SB 1070. The school district’s reason for joining the suit was because school administrators did not want to jeopardize the mission of local schools by having to check the immigration status of students with whom law enforcement officers stationed at the schools have daily contact. In this particular story, the allegations that the police officers are shirking their “Constitutional duty” originate in the online comment board.
frame and the criticisms eventually resulted in the speeding camera program’s discontinuation in
July, 2010. If the “legal reverence” frame were also applied to laws or policies that affected
natives (whites) as much as non-natives (minorities), it is unlikely that the speeding cameras
program would have been discontinued, or at least discontinued for the reasons stated above.

The conflation of Hispanics and undocumented immigrants also presents further
problems when immigration is framed as an issue of national security. An additional conflation
of drug smugglers and undocumented immigrants was quite common in news accounts despite
the distinct motivations of drug smugglers in comparison to undocumented immigrants. Drug
smugglers enter the country for a potential host of reasons but are primarily concerned with the
drug trade. Undocumented immigrants enter the country seeking employment. When drug
smugglers were apprehended in Arizona, they were commonly described as “undocumented
immigrants” that had attempted to smuggle illicit materials into the country. Technically, drug
smugglers that enter the country without paperwork would fall into the same immigration status
as undocumented immigrants despite the very real distinction between the role of each group in
society. This conflation has the unfortunate effect of associating undocumented immigrants with
the criminal drug trade. Due to the previously described conflation between undocumented
immigrants and Hispanics, Spanish-speakers more generally are also held to be involved in the
narcotics trade. It is no surprise then that the death of rancher Robert Krentz became an “unlikely
martyr, his violent death symbolizing to many everything that’s wrong at the border. To them, he
was surely the victim of an illegal, drug-smuggling alien” (Rubin, 2010). Although the
categories of drug smuggler and “illegal” alien are not mutually exclusive, continually

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21 The *Phoenix New Times* article actively challenges that assumption but makes it clear that many in Arizona
assumed that Krentz’s death was at the hands of an “illegal, drug smuggling alien.”
associating the two terms does much to blur the lines between problems associated with the illegal drug trade and those of undocumented immigration.

Keeping these conflations in mind, it is no surprise then that, according to news accounts, the border between the United States and Mexico is held to be a de facto warzone. The United States is shown to be the unwitting victim of the “failed” state of Mexico and drug cartels pumping narcotics into the country. As the federal government is shown to be either unwilling or unable to prevent “illegal” entrants out of the country (“Washington doesn’t get it” frame), armed vigilante/militia groups patrolling the desert in search of “border crossers” might seem to be an overreaction for audiences outside Arizona, even within the “national security” frame. Within the state, however, the “national security” frame helped justify armed vigilante patrols of the U.S./Mexico border. The few news accounts that covered organizations like the Minutemen Civil Defense Corps or other vigilante/militia groups drew heavily on this frame in describing undocumented immigrants, primarily referring to the purpose of militia patrols as keeping invaders out of the country and preventing drug violence.

Not all news accounts strictly adhered to one framing of immigration. That immigration was constructed using a wide range of frames, both within and between stories, should not be taken to mean that all audience members at either discourse level would draw on the entire range of framings when processing information about immigration. This is not possible due to the contradictory nature of some inferences when using opposing frames; in other words, some frames are not congruent and are not likely to be used simultaneously even if both were present in a news story. Similarly, the predominance of any set of frames over others should not be indicative that audience conceptualizations of immigration fall in line with news coverage.
Internalizing frames used in news accounts is not a simple matter of being exposed to framings and then using them to draw inferences from manifest content in immigration stories.

Depending on any individual audience member’s extant schema, there are a host of theoretical reasons to expect divergent interpretations of immigration based on any single news account featuring multiple frames originating within selective perceptions and individual differences. Such individual differences are likely to be used to bolster any partisan audience member’s preexisting beliefs on an issue (Klapper, 1960), even if the purpose of media fare is to challenge previously formed attitudes, beliefs, or stereotypes (Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974). Therefore, even if journalists were actively attempting to challenge preexisting attitudes or misconceptions about immigration, selective perception tendencies in audience members might defuse any such effort.

As evidenced by the relatively rare “issue ignorance” frame, journalists seemed loath to actively construct news accounts to reeducate the public about immigration. Keeping this in mind, it is likely that, as evidenced by previous findings (see Rhee, 1997), frames that were congruent with extant schema were more likely to be seen as having bearing on the issue of immigration. Therefore, frames that tap into extant schema are more likely to be used in interpreting news accounts. Any new framings to which audiences are exposed that draw on previously established cognitive frameworks are more likely to be brought to bear on an issue than those that do not (Shen, 2004). News stories that feature multiple competing frames inserted in a news account to meet professional standards of balance might be interpreted by audiences as reaffirming their own preexisting beliefs on the issue of immigration. Instead of creating news accounts with diverse perspectives and then letting audiences decide on their own which
perspectives to internalize, balanced news accounts likely do nothing more than further engrain previously held beliefs.

Additionally, ego involvement and partisanship can influence the frames believed to be perceived by others in news accounts. Highly involved partisans in an issue are likely to perceive coverage as hostile to their own partisan standing (Vallone, Ross & Lepper, 1985). In conjunction with the hostile media perception, partisan politicians and sources that view “balanced” coverage are therefore likely to draw upon widely held beliefs that others will be influenced by media coverage (Gunther & Schmitt, 2004).

Keeping the tendencies for audiences to use news accounts to reaffirm their own partisan views on a topic, it is no surprise then that actors involved in the framing process in national outlets and those in Arizona did not integrate cognitively incongruent frames into discourses. The presence of the “contentious issue” frame may have also predisposed those partisans that were highly invested in immigration to perceive coverage as biased against their position more so than with other issues. In other words, the “contentious issue” frame may moderate the hostile media perception, such that immigration as an inflammatory and debated topic created a greater hostile media effect than other topics would have done. The hostile media bias also lends credence to the notion that the “Washington doesn’t get it” frame arose in Arizona in the SB 1070 timeframe, at least in part, because sources in Arizona perceived that national coverage may have been swaying audiences against the law, invigorating politicians and sources in Arizona to frame the response by officials in Washington as poorly informed.

This raises a question regarding how or if journalists are capable of cultivating a more informed discourse on important partisan issues. If individual citizens are partisan stakeholders in the immigration debate, the hostile media bias would predict that news coverage, even if it
provides truly unbiased, objective assessments of problems posed by immigration, will be perceived as approaching immigration from an oppositional partisan perspective. Partisan citizens would be predisposed to discard many claims made in such news accounts, even if such assertions were accurate. The solution to such a problem may lay not in news coverage about an issue itself but rather about metanews coverage, that is to say, coverage about news coverage. Previous studies have shown that prior expectations about news media’s biases play a role in the degree to which viewers perceive a hostile bias (Hwang, Pan, & Sun, 2008; Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994), such that greater perceptions of media bias lead to greater perceptions of hostile media bias. Generating more informative news discourse then is not just a matter of altering patterns of news coverage but also of changing the popular belief that news media are biased.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. As stated previously, this study cannot determine whether audiences’ readily accepted and drew upon the framings of immigration identified in this study. This is the least consequential limitation as future research can easily determine whether the frames identified here have effects on audiences’ perceptions of immigration and immigrants. This question can be investigated using two approaches. First, a simple effects-based study that exposes individuals to constructed news accounts featuring the framing and reasoning devices described here might shed some light on how readily audiences attend to certain frames over others. Such a study might also be able to parse out the moderating effect the “contentious issue” frame may have on perceptions of hostile media. Second, a set of audience research analyses would be helpful to determine how audiences interpret frames, whether specific framing devices lead to the reasoning devices identified here, and how perceptions of immigration as an issue are affected. This approach to analyzing the effect of frames on
audiences may be more insightful. Where an effects-based study might be able to parse out short
term effects of particular frames in an experimental setting, audience analysis would be geared
toward identifying the effect of natural exposure to immigration frames longitudinally.

This study has provided a wealth of data on the frames used in immigration coverage in
Arizona. Research could be undertaken to examine the routines of newsmaking, especially in
Arizona, to determine whether journalists recognize the logical inferences that the frames
utilized in news accounts encourage audiences to use. It is likely that journalists, through contact
with sources, their own secondary research, and first-hand experience with immigration-related
events and happenings, are far more knowledgeable about the issue than the lay public and are
probably in a better position to grasp the impact of problematic coverage better than most. Such
a line of inquiry would hopefully also uncover journalists’ rationale in constructing news
accounts around some frames and not others, providing insight into why frames such as
“illegality” are used over more humanistic frames. One potential approach to such a study might
involve cataloging, or at least collecting, the news accounts written on immigration from study
participants before interviews are underway to ask about the processes involved in generating
those accounts. If interviews were conducted over the course of several weeks or months, when
immigration related-issues spring up, journalists could be asked about their approach to certain
stories. In light of the findings uncovered in this study, journalists can be asked specifically
about the reasoning devices they may or may not have consciously inserted into news texts.

As previously noted, news coverage tended to conflate immigrants—undocumented or
otherwise—and Hispanics. Hispanics, just as other segments of the population, can be affected
by such coverage. However, when non-Hispanics are exposed to problematic framings of
immigration and Hispanics, the logical extensions of thought these individuals are encouraged to
take are in reference to an outside group. When Hispanics are exposed to such coverage, those same logical extensions are directly related to their own self concept. The question arises then, how does immigration coverage, such as that analyzed here, affect how Hispanics and/or immigrants see themselves? Indeed, Hispanics have personal experience on which to draw to challenge the reasoning devices in news accounts. Yet, it is also possible that Hispanics internalize some of the reasoning in news coverage, either about themselves directly or about other immigrants and Hispanics. Any survey that is designed to address this question must necessarily then be longitudinal and take into consideration local or regional variations in news coverage.

Each of these follow up analyses would be useful in its own right, but conducting a more extensive quantitative analysis using Van Gorp’s (2010) validation method would be particularly useful for two reasons. First, the results of this study could be validated against other samples from other populations and perhaps the differences between border and non-border state coverage might uncover differences in the application of some frames over others. Second, such an analysis conducted once again with a national outlet sampling frame might shed some light on whether prestige outlets, such as The New York Times and The Washington Post employ frames and encourage understandings of issues that are inherently different than local outlets.

The findings of this study should also be understood to be limited to a very narrow time frame. The baseline portion of the study (January 1, 2009 through January 31, 2010) was quite lengthy and as a result likely captured the full range of frames employed during that timeframe. The SB1070 portion of the study (February 1, 2010 through July 31, 2010) was far shorter. One finding of the study is that the only form of cultural discourse seemed to be that Arizona sources responded to what was seen as a lack of understanding at the national level for the problems
facing residents and lawmakers in the state. Since the study period has ended, there have been and will likely continue to be additional developments in relation to immigration and SB1070. As a result, it is not possible to say that the lack of consensus building discourse during the study period was necessarily the case in future months or years. It is quite possible that given enough time, possibly to let heated emotions cool, that a mutual understanding and reasonable policy measure will be put in place to solve the immigration “problem” that the state faces without infringing upon the civil rights of citizens, immigrants, and undocumented immigrants. The difficulty in assessing shifts in discourse in such a short time frame are clear in light of Gamson and Modigliani’s (1989) analysis of the frames used in coverage of nuclear power across several decades. Arizona SB 1070 may very well have been a critical turning point in discourse and an impetus for reexamining the manner in which immigration is understood. The change, however, may simply not have occurred quite yet.

Also, the manner in which news stories were gathered for this study prevented any coding of the design devices such as story prominence and section for most of the news accounts. Essentially, all news accounts were treated equally. This is a necessary evil of using database and website driven samples. It is difficult to determine whether some stories may have played a more active role in framing immigration because of layout design or the page location of a news account. In other words, the prominence of certain frames may play a role in the public’s conceptualization of immigration. It is possible that some frames were only used when on the front page or, conversely, buried beyond the first few pages in print publications. Additionally, the prominence of headlines, photographs, section, and proximity to other stories or advertisements could play a significant role in how frames are interpreted. Future work should
examine how the layout and design of print publications may affect the frames identified and described in interpreting news accounts.

This study treated all days as having equal weight as a stratified sample was employed here. Sunday editions of newspapers typically have higher circulations and, thus, it would be expected that frames used on Sundays would be more influential in constructing a social issue than frames used on other days. Also, because the news hole is directly tied to the amount of advertising available on any day, Sundays provide journalists with greater opportunities to create stories that are longer and more feature oriented than on other days of the week. Potentially then, news accounts that are created for Sunday editions may afford the extra space necessary for useful and contextualized news frames that might not be useful for shorter, more information-oriented stories during the rest of the week. Another potential follow-up study could examine whether Sunday coverage significantly diverges from other news accounts in the frames employed.

Future research can be conducted to shore up many of these unanswered questions. Additional work can be done using a similar study design to determine whether new framings of immigration have developed since the end of the study period. Work should also be done to determine whether a responsive discourse developed between national actors and those in Arizona after the study period. Both of these potential studies can be conducted concurrently using a similar design employed here. Perhaps the most promising area for future work lies in applying the same study design to other regions or states to determine how variances in distance to Mexico, minority populations, and broader political trends may influence framings journalists employ in immigration coverage. The rich descriptions provided in the results section may also
be readily applied to a broader study examining immigration in different timeframes and in different localities.

Broadly, frames used in immigration coverage rarely encouraged positive interpretations of undocumented immigrants’ roles in society. This could be in part due to politicians and other sources’ unwillingness to use such frames, the result of professional journalistic practice, or a combination of factors regarding immigration as an issue in Arizona. It is entirely possible that there are additional positive, more contextualizing frames that were not identified in Arizona as the state varies on several important factors such as its proximity to the border and the apparent high salience of the immigration issue. These factors alone may have precluded certain frames from being used that might have been seen as viable in another locale or time period. Arizona, in other words, should not be taken, *a priori*, to represent typical regional or state level discourses. Some of these unique qualities of Arizona are discussed below.

In addition to validating and expanding the results from this study, future work should also specifically examine differences in immigration coverage between border states (Arizona, California, New Mexico, Nevada, and Texas) and other states to determine if the frames employed in immigration coverage identified here are unique to the state of Arizona or if the frames are characteristic of other border states. It is entirely possible that news framings are at least in part due to sharing a state border with Mexico. Logically, the porosity of the border and immigration policy will have greater salience for journalists and sources in border states than in non-border states.

Furthermore, immigration in Arizona may have been treated as a hot button issue, one in which individuals are highly invested and which tends to inflame passions and as evidenced by the “contentious issue” metaframe. Immigration may not be nearly as an inflammatory topic in
other areas of the country or for journalists writing for a broader audience, such as those used in
the national sample. It is possible that the frames used in Arizona might not have been drawn
upon because Arizona is a border state, rather, the frames employed may have been used because
of immigration’s “hot button” status. Differences between the state and national levels may have
been due to “hot button” status rather than differing understandings of immigration between the
two discourse levels. Although the effect might be the same, the difference in the theoretical
antecedents (discourse level, hot button status, or border state) is important because issues other
than immigration might be characterized by similarly decontextualizing frames. If “hot button”
issues are more likely to result in frames that fail to inform audiences in any meaningful way,
other important issues that the public finds highly salient may actually be receiving poorer
coverage as a direct result of such salience. Furthermore, in the case of immigration in Arizona,
being a border state may have been sufficient to raise the salience of immigration related
information. For other issues, such as the current and ongoing debate over state unions in
Wisconsin, mechanisms other than geographical location are obviously at play as unions, unlike
national borders, are a potentially universal topic.

States in which immigration is a salient topic might also differ in the frames found in
news coverage for another reason as well. The frames that journalists use are of course
dependent upon a host of factors, one of which is the complexity and rigidity of the audience’s
schema for an issue. Generally, individuals of the public who reside in regions or states in which
an issue has been highly salient for an extended period of time likely possess cognitive networks
(schema) that have developed as a result of weeks, months, or years of prior news coverage than
individuals in communities in which those same issues are historically not salient. Logically, it
would be expected that individuals in Arizona would have far more complex schema for
immigration as an issue and Hispanics as a group than, say, individuals in Maine. Although Maine is a border state, immigration, especially Hispanic immigration, is likely far less salient to the public at large in comparison to Arizona. Therefore, journalists and politicians, might have far less leeway in their choice of frames in a state like Arizona where the public has certain expectations for how immigration-related issues should be discussed. In a state like Maine, politicians and journalists may have greater opportunities to develop new frames as immigration coverage has not already entrenched some schemas in the public’s consciousness. Future work, especially that employing a measure for the complexity of participants’ mental schema for immigration or immigrants, could develop this line of thinking further.

Finally, the availability of frames might, in part, be due to the presence of interest groups. Interest groups are one potential source of frames and it is possible that immigration interest groups, either in favor or in opposition to undocumented immigration, play a role in framing immigration news accounts. Such interest groups may have greater freedom to frame immigration than politicians or journalists themselves and it is possible that such groups actively and consciously alter the available frames through their presence and vocal participation in the immigration debate. As interest groups would logically want to reframe immigration, or any issue for that matter, in a way that encourages the issue to be interpreted in favor of the group’s stance, these groups may insert new frames into local or regional culture that would not be available to journalists in regions without such groups. In Arizona then, groups like the Minutemen Civil Defense Corps (MCDC), for example, may make available or more salient certain frames that then become commonplace in immigration discourse. Additional research is needed to determine which of these factors (border state status, hot button issues, presence of vocal interest groups) play a role in shaping immigration debate.
This study also employed a unique approach to constructing a sampling frame. Without additional analysis, it is difficult to determine whether sampling from individual news outlet websites collects news accounts that are systematically excluded from searches using news databases. A simple study involving reanalyzing the data collected here by recreating two distinct samples, one drawing exclusively from news databases and another from both databases and news websites, would establish whether wider researchers do well in assuming that news databases provide an accurate and representative sampling frame. If no differences in the framing devices and reasoning devices are detected between these two samples, researchers may rest easy as research using speedy and convenience database searches provide a valid sampling frame. If such a study were to identify significant differences, it may be time for academia to reexamine investment in such databases and the use of Lexis-Nexis.

Continuing to conduct research in this matter is, of course, only possible as long as local or regional news outlets continue to offer content free online. The erection of any type of paywall will necessarily reduce the capability of researchers to access news content. Furthermore, relying on newspapers’ websites for data collection is inherently risky as stories are commonly removed from online access past a certain time period. Search engine results from websites may be less than reliable and researchers may find themselves at the mercy of unwieldy search result organization, as was the case with *The Arizona Republic*. The website for the *Republic*, for example, did not allow for search results to be organized by date and did not allow for results to be saved in PDF. Duplicate stories were also present in the search and had to be weeded out in a time consuming process of comparing every article to other articles for the same date. In short, although using newspaper websites for data collection may result in richer data, it
is not readily apparent whether the expenditure of time and resources to gather the data is cost-effective.

As more news outlets continue to reproduce news accounts online, many are also now offering readers the capability to comment on news accounts. This affords researchers the opportunity to validate news frames against reader comments by determining whether readers draw upon frames in discussion threads. As news accounts may also not be the sole source of framings for any particular issue, additional work can be done to identify what type of frames readers bring to bear on news accounts from outside sources.

**Practical Implications**

More generally, very few of the frames actually provided any contextualization that seemed capable of creating an informed public discourse on immigration. Rarely did news accounts ground the frames applied to immigration or immigrants in empirical evidence, systematic analysis, or accurate historical data. Rather, immigrants were framed however sources or subject matter seemed to dictate. Within the frames of “illegality,” “criminality,” and “national security,” undocumented immigrants were assumed to willingly break the law at greater rates than natives, be involved in patently criminal endeavors, or engage in terrorist activities, respectively. When immigrants were arrested for crimes or found to be smuggling narcotics, the “criminality” frame was then applied frequently. When the “criminality” frame was applied outside news accounts that explicitly dealt with law enforcement, it was assumed that “illegal” immigrants engaged in criminal activity at higher rates than natives. Within the “assimilation” frame, Hispanic immigrants were portrayed as being less willing to learn English than past waves of immigrants despite evidence to the contrary (Veltman, 1990; Pew Hispanic
Center, 2006). In both cases, such assumptions were seldom supported with anything but anecdotal evidence or through the use of exemplars despite readily available data in direct contradiction to both frames. It does not seem then that many of the frames used to describe immigration, especially in Arizona, are helpful for creating an informed public that has an understanding of the issue grounded and contextualized in accurate and useful information.

This poses obvious and serious problems for any immigration policy based on such conceptualizations. If politicians are responsive to citizens’ desires for certain policies, public welfare would be best served if citizens draw upon well-informed rationales, not mere opinions and feelings, in supporting public policies. News accounts about immigration during the study period provide little information that is likely useful in fostering a well-informed public. By remaining “fair” and “balanced,” journalists seemed more intent on providing countervailing framings of immigration within and between news accounts than on checking to make sure such framings promote an accurate understanding of immigration. Journalists are likely to respond to any criticism of this nature and justify reproducing the frames that official sources, citizens, and interested parties provide. Such reproduction is, after all, reporting “just the facts” or “all the facts” and “then letting the public decide.” In this mindset, it is not the journalist’s responsibility to check assertions made by sources, only to convey such assertions to the public.

Encouraging journalists to use frames that accurately contextualize issues can itself be framed as an ethical dilemma. Journalists have competing ethical responsibilities in ongoing public debate about issues like immigration. On the one hand, journalists are tasked with not framing groups in such a way as to result in discrimination or stereotypes. On the other, journalists are also trained to convey the perspectives of politicians and legitimated sources of power to the public accurately. The dilemma arises when politicians consistently use frames that
actively discourage accurate understandings of the role certain minority groups play in society. In the past, as evidenced by the findings of this study, journalists seem to prefer to act as a mouthpiece of politicians rather than taking an active role in reframing debate in more informative terms. In past coverage, the ends result has been to generate news coverage that criminalizes and ostracizes minority groups. Challenging these misleading frames is one goal of “knowledge-based reporting” initiatives. The goal of such projects is to encourage journalists to base claims made in news accounts in scholarly work and empirical evidence, rather than solely on the claims and assertions of sources (Knight Foundation, 2011). Knowledge-based reporting is supposedly “without bias or ideological motivation” (Knight Foundation, 2011). Grounding claims in news accounts in empirical observations made through scholarly research certainly has its benefits, but no research or accounting of observed reality is frameless. To have news accounts that are entirely without frames would be to have news accounts that contain only raw information with no organization or structure. Rather than seeking to remove frames entirely from news accounts, journalists might be made to see their responsibilities as including the generation of a information that would genuinely inform the public.

The Internet is a tool which could be utilized to shift news coverage of important issues from a primarily episodic framework into one that is more contextually based by drawing on the ability to link from one news story to additional information. The manner in which collective knowledge is organized on websites such as Wikipedia could be a suitable model for future news coverage as sources, happenings, studies, and statistics can all be given proper context through linking. Within any single news account then it would not be necessary for journalists to insert additional information beyond “citing” their information. Much in the same way academics provide additional context for their thinking and observations by providing in-text citations and a
reference list, journalists could point readers to additional contextualizing information through the use of links. This would be a divergence from how current news outlet websites utilize hyperlinking, which typically involves pointing users to previous stories on an issue or happening within the same news outlet. This form of hyperlinking, which is really just referencing previous understandings of the issue based on what journalists and sources knew at a previous time, does not provide any additional context for an issue. Journalists might be loath to engage in providing such context as selecting the type of sources and information in which to contextualize any news account is a form of framing. For example, linking an immigration news story to crime statistics would certainly encourage a different interpretation of the story than linking to statistics on increases in border crossing deaths. However, what journalists may find is that much of what politicians purport to know or want the public to know about important issues is itself often taken out of context or purposefully misrepresented.

A news industry which engages in some of these practices would be capable of providing information that is more informative than current news coverage in two important ways. In the case of individual pieces of information, data provided to the public would take the form of accurate and relevant information about an issue in place of wildly conflicting perspectives. News accounts would be valuable not because they give “both sides to the story” but because they provide accurate information that has bearing and utility. When journalists are faced with the choice of allowing a politician to imply that undocumented immigrants commit crimes at higher rates than natives, the journalist would deny the politician the use of the “criminality” frame. This could be done by simply providing basic information about crime rates. Second, information would be contextualized so understandings of an issue would have at least a modest foundation in reality. Again, using immigration as an example, this does not necessarily mean
that all news frames would need to be “pro” immigration. Rather, frames that encourage
misconceptions about the reality of an issue (that undocumented immigrants are criminals,
assimilate at slower rates than past immigrants, or are a threat to national security) would be met
with skepticism by journalists.

Final Remarks

This study explored the constructions of immigration leading up to a highly controversial
law enforcement program in Arizona that would have potentially violated the civil rights of a
significant portion of the population. This study cannot determine which frames are accepted and
which rejected or the necessary antecedents for frames to be internalized. Even though the
framings used to construct immigration as a social problem were various and numerous, those
that contextualized immigrants within accurate historical contexts, framed immigrants as victims
of racialized and discriminatory politics, and as a group that continues to be a source of vibrancy
and diversity are potentially just as influential. At the outset of this study, it was apparent that
lawmakers were indulging in and drawing upon the former type of framings which were already
present in Arizona culture, as evidenced by the baseline study. It is possible that, given enough
time, Arizona journalist, politicians, and other actors with influence over news coverage will, of
their own accord or through outside pressure, make the transition into more useful and accurate
framings.


American’s face is changing, immigration or not. (2010, June 23). *Arizona Daily Sun*.


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22 The availability of page numbers for the news accounts was largely dependent on whether the database from which the account was selected provided sufficient bibliographic information. Sources gathered from Arizona news outlets also do not have page numbers as they were collected from the online edition of the webpage. Static and permanent URLs could also not be provided as the URL from each source’s search expired upon closing the web page. For a complete copy of any news account that cannot be located using the bibliographic information here, contact the researcher.


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Sources used in the analysis for this study, especially those gathered from the state of Arizona, deviate from the standard APA citation style in that there are no page numbers or URLs available. All sources from Arizona and some from the national sample were collected by either using one of the news databases or through the individual news source’s online edition. No page numbers were available in some databases, the URLs for those collected individually were only valid during each search, and other articles have since been moved to pay-as-you-go archives. If the bibliographic information here is not sufficient to access a news account either through news databases or through a news outlet’s online edition, please contact the researcher for an electronic copy.


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