Stories Matter:

Field Frame Analysis on Immigration Reform

A FRAMEWORKS RESEARCH REPORT

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Introduction

An organizational field represents "those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life."[1] With the issue of immigration, the organizational field includes non-profit organizations, member associations, government agencies, foundations and research organizations, and others that shape the discourse around immigration policy. These organizations hold diverse and conflicting views on whether, why and how the immigration system should be reformed. As such, these organizations are engaged in a "framing contest" over the issue's guiding narrative.[2] The research presented here is designed to capture the dynamics of this framing contest and to interpret its consequences for those seeking to build public support for comprehensive immigration reform.

This Field Frame Analysis maps the competing narratives used by advocacy organizations to frame the debate on immigration and immigration reform. Specifically, this report identifies the various framing strategies currently employed by influential organizations in the domain of immigration and immigration policy, analyzes the effects of these strategies on public thinking, and makes recommendations as to how organizations working towards comprehensive immigration reform can communicate more effectively. By systematically documenting the communication habits of a field, a Field Frame Analysis provides a critical perspective on these habits. By comparing these habits with FrameWorks' research on framing effects, we can also assess the potential to insert new reframing elements into existing communications practices, thereby deepening public understanding and engagement.

This research was conducted by the FrameWorks Institute and is part of a larger, multi-method collaborative project sponsored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation as part of the Foundation's U.S. Immigration Policy Initiative. The overarching project goal is to design and test communications strategies that can be used by members of the field to generate broader public understanding of what the immigration system is and how it works. It is hoped that this research will serve to increase public support for the policies and programs that can improve the U.S. immigration system. The Foundation's U.S. Immigration Policy Initiative supports efforts to reform current systems so that they better address the economic, fiscal and social impacts of immigration. As a part of this effort, the MacArthur Foundation is supporting research by the FrameWorks Institute to investigate how policymakers and the public think about immigration, and to develop evidence-based recommendations for future communication. This research can help Americans reconsider their existing attitudes and assumptions about immigration, and appreciate evidence about

the contributions and challenges posed by immigrants in the United States. The goal of the Foundation in supporting this work is to inform and reframe the public discourse, such that the national debates over immigration result in the adoption of policies that are beneficial to all who reside in the United States.

Executive Summary

Based on a mixed-method analysis of immigration reform organizations, this report identifies the types of narratives that influential organizations in the immigration reform field are employing to argue for certain types of immigration policies. It also examines the implications of these narratives for public understanding and support for comprehensive immigration reform.

Findings

- Three narratives dominate organizational communications about immigration and immigration reform: Restrictive/Punitive; Moral/Expansive; and Economic. The Restrictive/Punitive narrative advances policies consistent with restricting the flow of immigrants and punishing those residing in the United States without legal documentation. In contrast, the Moral/Expansive narrative argues for expanding immigration and implementing reforms that better protect immigrant rights. The Economic narrative argues that the immigration system is not currently aligned with economic needs and advances policies designed to promote economic growth.

- The narratives used by organizations that support restrictive immigration policies are more coherent than narratives that support comprehensive reform. The Restrictive/Punitive narrative consistently includes logically-linked values, causes and solutions. In contrast, the Moral/Expansive narrative employed by supporters of comprehensive reform has many narrative holes. While this narrative identifies problems within the current immigration system, it does not consistently explain the causes of such problems or offer viable solutions. The Economic narrative provides clear policy solutions, but is less likely to include diagnostic claims about the problems with the current system or to recruit values to communicate the importance of reform.

Implications

- **The *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative is at an advantage with respect to both *content* and *form.*** Of the three narratives in circulation, the *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative is the most complete, cohesive and consistent. Put simply, this narrative is most likely to "stick" in the public's mind, because it most closely adheres to an expected narrative form. Elements of the *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative are also

closely aligned with the public's most dominant and top-of-mind cultural models about immigrants, immigration and immigration reform. These include the assumption that "immigration" means "*illegal* immigration," that increases in immigration are overwhelming the United States' economy and public infrastructure, and that the primary purpose of the immigration system is to track and control people seeking to enter the United States.[3] This one-two punch of a sticky narrative structure combined with cognitively familiar content makes the *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative very powerful.

- **Elements of the *Economic* and *Moral/Expansive* narrative are aligned with more recessive cultural models.** This is especially true of the *Humanitarian* model, as well as other models that help people think productively about the value of diversity. These models, however, tend to be more recessive. They are less top of mind and easily displaced by the dominant models that are invoked by the *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative.

- **All three narratives are thin with respect to how the immigration system works.** None of the dominant narratives explain *how* the immigration system actually works. Thus, they do not address the public's shallow understanding of the system and the policy solutions that could improve the system.

- **All three narratives contribute to problematic perceptions of government, and further entrench pessimistic views of the feasibility of meaningful change.** Each of the narrative clusters identified includes the government as the primary antagonist, either in general terms or by naming a specific political party. Previous FrameWorks research has shown that all three strategies are likely to further entrench public perceptions of the government as ineffective, corrupt and incompetent, and to cue a fatalistic sense of "politics as usual."[4]

Recommendations

- **Organizations that support comprehensive immigration reform would benefit from disseminating a consistent and cohesive narrative.** Such a narrative should include logically linked values, diagnostic claims and solutions. An effective narrative must diagnose the problems impacting the current system, explain why reform is important, and lay out concrete steps for addressing those problems.

- **Values are a critical part of building a new narrative for comprehensive immigration reform.** The findings presented here indicate that the organizations that argue for immigration reform based on economic rationale are regularly using

the value of *Pragmatism*. Organizations aligned with the *Moral/Expansive* narrative are ceding this value to organizations employing an economic rationale for reform. In light of FrameWorks' earlier work on values, all organizations promoting comprehensive immigration reform should begin to incorporate *Pragmatism* into their communications strategies.[5]

Theoretical Background

Research in the social sciences on communication and organizational fields offers insights into which messaging strategies are likely to "win" during framing struggles. The vast majority of this literature focuses on the *content* of issue frames, and assesses whether the substance of the message resonates with — and ultimately mobilizes — an intended audience. Along with content, however, social movement scholars are also concerned with how the *representational form* of a message affects public support and the importance of narratives in building social movements and recruiting potential supporters.[6] Narrative can be defined as "discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it."[7] In short, narrative as applied to social mobilization concerns not only *what* is said, but also *how* it is said. Communications that adhere to a culturally familiar narrative form, in which diagnostic claims about social problems are logically linked to values and solution claims, have shown to be more effective in mobilizing collective action.[8] Values, because of their ability to motivate people's engagement with an issue and provide a goal around which to structure their beliefs, are a particularly important component of the framed content of narratives.[9]

Based on this literature and previous FrameWorks research, the following analysis not only describes the content of the stories being told by immigration organizations, but also how that content is organized (or not) into a coherent narrative structure. We argue that the more an organization's framing is organized into a cohesive narrative, the more effective it will be in building public understanding and support.

Methods

Two specific questions guide this research:

1. *What are the types of narratives that influential organizations in the immigration reform field are telling, and how are these narratives structured?*

2. *What are the implications of existing narratives for public support for immigration reform?*

We addressed these questions using a multi-staged research process. The first step involved a link analysis that identified influential organizations in the immigration reform field. Ten to 12 communications materials, including press releases, mission statements and reports, were then gathered from each of these organizations' websites. Each document was coded using a coding scheme designed to track all the narrative components (e.g., causes, solutions, messengers and values) present in a given organization's materials. The last stage of analysis used a technique known as multidimensional scaling (MDS) to summarize patterns of narrative components within the data. This approach allows us to examine the types of stories being told within the organizational field, how tightly they are constructed (for example, whether they include logically aligned causes and solutions), and the extent to which ideologically similar organizations have coalesced around a coherent and consistent narrative of reform. A more detailed explanation of these methods can be found in Appendix A.

Findings

Below, we describe the dominant narratives that emerged from our analysis of influential organizations in the immigration and immigration reform field.

Figure 1 presents a visual representation of the way coded narrative components cluster within the full set of sampled materials. The proximity of narrative components reflects how likely they are to appear together in the same materials. Thus, narrative components that are far away from each other never appear together, while the ones that are right next to each other almost always appear together. For example, the solution "pathway to citizenship" frequently co-occurs with the value of *Compassion*, but rarely with the value of *Public Safety*. Similarly, the problem "not aligned with economic needs" is very likely to co-occur with the value of *Economic Development*, but is unlikely to co-occur with the value of *Opportunity For All*.

The graph is structured along two dimensions. The horizontal axis represents the extent to which a narrative element in question reflects a *restrictive* (on the right-hand side of the figure) or *expansive* (on the left-hand side) perspective on immigration reform. For example, "pathway to citizenship" is located on the figure's far left, while "restricting visas" is located on the opposite side toward the right edge. The vertical axis represents the rationale or justification for reform, and moves from *economic* rationales (at the bottom) to *moral* rationales at the top. The closer a narrative component falls to the center of the figure, the more neutral it is in terms of these two dimensions (*expansive/restrictive* and *moral/economic*). These axes were labeled based on a qualitative analysis of how the narrative components that fall along each dimension are used.

Figure 1: MDS Plot of Narrative Clusters and Organizations
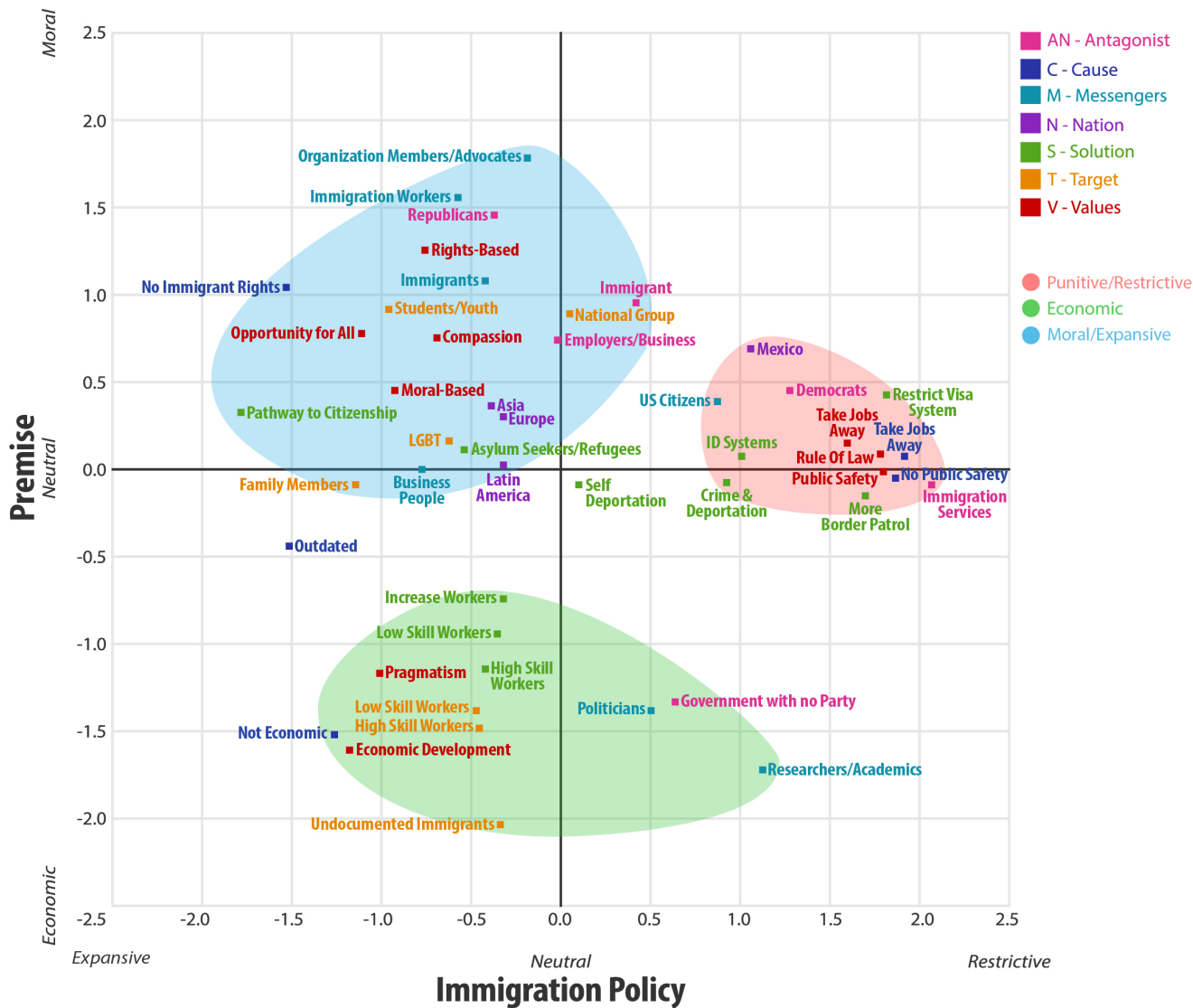
The 20 organizations sampled fell into three distinct narrative clusters: *Restrictive/Punitive* (highlighted in red); *Economic* (highlighted in green); and *Moral/Expansive* (highlighted in blue). Each cluster is characterized by the kinds of claims made about the current state of the immigration system. For example, how is the problem with the immigration system described? What is the key solution identified? What values are recruited to mobilize support?

Table 1 presents the organizations that comprise each cluster and lists the most common cause, value, and solution found in each organization's materials. We describe each of these clusters in detail below.

Table 1: Leading Narrative Elements Among All Organizations

Narrative Cluster	Organization	Most Discussed		
		Cause	Value	Solution
Restrictive/ Punitive Narrative	Numbers USA	Immigrants take jobs	Protect U.S. workers	Restrict visas
	Negative Population Growth	Immigrants take jobs	Protect U.S. workers	Implement ID system
	Center for Immigration Studies	Immigrants threaten public safety	Ensure public safety	Enhance border patrol
	Project USA	Immigrants take jobs	Rule of law/economic development	Restrict visas
	Federation for American Immigration Reform	Immigrants take jobs	Rule of law	Restrict visas
	American Patrol	Immigrants threaten public safety	Ensure public safety	Enhance border patrol
	Heritage Foundation	Immigrants take jobs	Pragmatism	Enhance border patrol
Economic Narrative	Cato Institute	Not aligned with economic needs	Economic development	Increase work-based visas
	Competitive Enterprise Institute	Not aligned with economic needs	Economic development	Increase high-skill visas
	American Enterprise Institute	Not aligned with economic needs	Economic development	Increase high-skill visas
	Migration Policy Institute	Not aligned with economic needs	Economic development	Path to citizenship
	American Immigration Lawyers Association	Not aligned with economic needs	Economic development	Path to citizenship
Moral/ Expansive Narrative	United We Dream	Policy outdated	Economic development	Path to citizenship
	Coalition for Humane Immigrants Rights LA	Denies immigrant rights	Protect immigrant rights	Path to citizenship
	America's Voice Online	Policy outdated	Economic development	Path to citizenship
	Immigration Forum	Not aligned with economic needs	Pragmatism	Path to citizenship
	National Immigration Law Center	Denies immigrant rights	Protect immigrant rights	Path to citizenship
	National Council for La Raza	Not aligned with economic needs	Protect immigrant rights	Path to citizenship
	Senator Schumer's website	Policy outdated	Pragmatism/economic development	Path to citizenship
	Dream Activist	Denies immigrant rights	Compassion	No solutions identified

The Restrictive/Punitive Narrative

The _Restrictive/Punitive_ narrative cluster contains narrative components that are associated with restrictive or punitive approaches to immigration reform. Organizations belonging to this cluster advance policies consistent with restricting the flow of immigrants and punishing those who are residing in the United States without legal documentation. The following mission statements from the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) and the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) exemplify the kind of language employed by organizations that subscribe to this particular narrative:

> _The data collected by the Center during the past quarter-century has led many of our researchers to conclude that current, high levels of immigration are making it harder to achieve such important national objectives as better public schools, a cleaner environment, homeland security, and a living wage for every native-born and immigrant worker. These data may support criticism of U.S. immigration policies, but they do not justify ill feelings toward our immigrant community. In fact, many of us at the Center are animated by a "low-immigration, pro-immigrant" vision of an America that admits fewer immigrants but affords a warmer welcome for those who are admitted._

> _The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) is a national, nonprofit, public-interest, membership organization of concerned citizens who share a common belief that our nation's immigration policies must be reformed to serve the national interest. FAIR seeks to improve border security, to stop illegal immigration, and to promote immigration levels consistent with the national interest — more traditional rates of about 300,000 a year._

Organizations in the _Restrictive/Punitive_ narrative cluster typically argue that the immigration system is dysfunctional because immigrants — particularly those who have entered illegally — are taking jobs away from American citizens and are engaged in criminal activity that poses a threat to public safety (see Table 1). The primary antagonists, or villains, in this narrative are Democrats, while the primary spokespeople are ordinary citizens who are portrayed as suffering the consequences of the strain that immigrants put on public resources. The following press release from the Heritage Foundation, focusing on the fiscal burden of illegal immigration, exemplifies how problems with the immigration system are diagnosed in this narrative cluster:

"No matter how you slice it, amnesty will add a tremendous amount of pressure on America's already strained public purse," said Rector, Heritage's senior research fellow in domestic policy studies. The vast majority of the fiscal costs examined are long-term — including costs associated with Obamacare, Social Security and other entitlements, plus more than 80 means-tested welfare programs.

Three key values dominate narratives calling for more restrictive immigration policies: protection of U.S. workers, protection of public safety, and the importance of adherence to the law (see Table 1). The following example, taken from the Heritage Foundation, illustrates how the value of *Rule of Law* is recruited in service to this narrative:

Amnesty comes in many forms, but in all its variations, it discourages respect for the law, treats law-breaking aliens better than law-following aliens, and encourages future unlawful immigration into the United States.

As might be expected, the *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative cluster contains the most restrictive policies to address problems with the immigration system, including increasing border control, restricting all visas to the United States, implementing an identification or tracking system for all non-citizens, and increasing the number of deportations (see Table 1).

There are two structural characteristics of the *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative that are particularly striking. First, the close positioning of narrative elements in Figure 1 indicates that organizations in the *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative cluster consistently employ *each* of these narrative elements in their materials. Put simply, this means that organizations employing this narrative are more likely to tell a coherent story — complete with an orienting value to help people understand why the issue is important, a diagnostic claim about the problems facing the immigration system, and a clear statement about appropriate solutions. In short, the "tightness" of the *Restrictive/Punitive* cluster suggests that these organizations are telling a narrative that is *coherent*, *complete* and *consistent*, which is in stark contrast to the structure of other narrative clusters described below.

The Economic Narrative

Organizations that employ the *Economic* narrative to make the case for immigration reform are ideologically diverse; what is common across these organizations is their framing of the immigration reform debate primarily in economic terms. All organizations within this

cluster argue that the immigration system is functioning poorly because it is not aligned with current economic needs (see Table 1).

The primary messengers in this cluster are politicians and academics. The main antagonist is the government, without reference to a specific political party. As demonstrated by the mission statement of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), most organizations in this cluster emphasize the non-partisan nature of their organization and support for specific immigration policies:

> *The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) is the national association of over 11,000 attorneys and law professors who practice and teach immigration law. AILA Member attorneys represent U.S. families seeking permanent residence for close family members, as well as U.S. businesses seeking talent from the global marketplace. AILA Members also represent foreign students, entertainers, athletes, and asylum seekers, often on a pro bono basis. Founded in 1946, AILA is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization that provides continuing legal education, information, professional services, and expertise through its 38 chapters and over 50 national committees.*

Ensuring economic development is the primary value associated with this cluster, although some organizations also use the value of *Pragmatism* to make the case for immigration reform. *Pragmatism* is employed to argue for expanding employment-based visas, but also as a rationale to legalize undocumented immigrants. For example, the following press release from AILA advocates for a pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants, and frames this position in terms of the efficient use of government resources.

> *Instead of returning to these discredited strategies, our country needs smart enforcement. Criminalizing undocumented immigrants will not make us safer. What works is bringing the undocumented out of the shadows to register and start what is shaping up to be a grueling road to citizenship on our terms. Enforcement should focus on those who pose an actual danger to public safety or national security. We urge the House to instead move toward a strong bipartisan approach similar to S. 744, one that will establish tough standards, protect our nation, and provide a path out of the shadows for others.*

The most frequently cited solution in the *Economic* narrative cluster is to increase employment-based visas for high-skill workers. The organizations within this cluster that are more supportive of comprehensive immigration reform (AILA and Migration Policy

Institute, in particular) also promote the creation of pathways to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. This narrative cluster straddles the vertical axis of Figure 1, suggesting that its component organizations tend to advocate for policies that will both expand certain types of immigration and restrict others. The AILA passage cited above exemplifies this tendency: While advocating for the legalization of undocumented immigrants, the document nevertheless focuses on enforcement policies. Organizations such as the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) emphasize the expansion of employment-based visas, but still focus some of their materials on border enforcement issues and the protection of national security.

The structure of this narrative is notable in several respects. Unlike the *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative cluster, the elements that make up the *Economic* narrative are more dispersed in Figure 1, indicating a lower likelihood of co-occurrence. Policy solutions constitute the center of the cluster because they appear frequently among the materials of organizations that primarily employ the *Economic* narrative, but diagnostic claims and value statements are more peripheral (see Figure 1). In comparison to the *Restrictive/Punitive* cluster, organizations employing an *Economic* narrative are telling an incomplete story because their materials focus on solutions without explaining why they matter or what problem within the immigration system these solutions address. The following press release by the AEI illustrates this tendency in narrative form; it covers recommendations for policy solutions without reference to values, causes or the effects of reform.

> *Whether to regulate the entry of immigrants using prices or quantities: The current regime of legal immigration is primarily quantity-regulated, as Congress determines how many visas are available each year. However, a price mechanism, such as a visa processing fee, would attract workers with higher incentives to be productive during their time in the United States.*

In short, while advocates who talk about immigration reform in economic terms are clear about the policies that should be implemented, they are not consistently explaining the problems the system currently faces or why reform is important.

The Moral/Expansive Narrative

Organizations in the *Moral/Expansive* narrative cluster consistently argue that the immigration system fails to protect immigrants' rights, and that providing undocumented immigrants with a pathway to citizenship and expanding refugee services will secure these rights. Advocates and immigrants themselves are the primary spokespeople associated

with this narrative, while the central antagonist is members of the Republican party. These organizations tend to focus their attention on marginalized groups such as low-income immigrants or immigrants of color. For example, the National Immigration Law Center (NILC) describes its mission as follows:

> *Founded in 1979, the National Immigration Law Center is the only national legal advocacy organization in the U.S. exclusively dedicated to defending and advancing the rights of low-income immigrants and their families. We envision a U.S. society in which all people — regardless of their race, gender, immigration or economic status — are treated equally, fairly, and humanely, have equal access to justice, education, government resources and economic opportunities, and are able to achieve their full potential as human beings.*

These organizations often employ multiple values or rationales for reform — such as the need to treat immigrants compassionately and to provide opportunities for all people regardless of their immigration status — even within the same document. For example, the following excerpt from United We Dream demonstrates how organizations in this cluster typically reference several rationales for reforming the immigration system.

> *We organize and advocate for the dignity and fair treatment of immigrant youth and families, regardless of immigration status. UWD's current priority is to win citizenship for the entire undocumented community and end senseless deportations and abuses. We seek to address the inequities and obstacles faced by immigrant youth and believe that by empowering immigrant youth, we can advance the cause of the entire community — justice for all immigrants.*

There are several important structural characteristics of the *Moral/Expansive* narrative. First, problems and values constitute the center of the cluster, while policy solutions are more peripheral. This means that this narrative consistently identifies the *problems* with the immigration reform system and employs values to explain why reform is necessary, but is less explicit about the *solutions* that would address these problems. The disconnect between problem and solution represents a critical "hole" in the *Moral/Expansive* narrative. Furthermore, calls for the provision of a pathway to citizenship or other forms of legal status — a cornerstone of the policy agenda of organizations supporting comprehensive immigration reform — is cast only in moral terms, and divorced from economic arguments. The following press release from United We Dream demonstrates this tendency.

It shouldn't take a manufactured crisis in Washington to prompt our immigration agencies to actually take steps towards using government resources wisely or keeping families together. Our communities have experienced so much pain already. Now is the moment for real immigration reform that puts all of us on the path to citizenship and ends these inhumane practices. If one dream is at risk, all our dreams continue to be at risk.

Finally, as with the *Economic* narrative, the *Moral/Expansive* narrative is relatively "loose." The elements of this narrative are dispersed within the cluster, indicating they co-occur less frequently within a given organization's set of materials. Values and problem statements are not presented in concert with appropriate policy solutions. The looseness of this narrative contrasts sharply with the tightly organized, consistent and complete *Restrictive/ Punitive* narrative.

Cognitive Implications

Based on FrameWorks' analysis of dominant and recessive cultural models that the public employs to reason about immigrants, immigration and immigration policy,[10] we conclude that exposure to the organizational narratives described above is likely to activate the following particular ways of thinking about immigration reform.

- **The cohesion and completeness of the *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative will likely build greater support for its policy agenda than the narrative looseness of the *Moral/Expansive* or *Economic* narratives.** Organizations seeking to restrict immigration compose a tightly aligned field and promulgate a coherent and complete narrative. Their materials provide answers to the questions the public is likely to ask, such as "Why should I care about immigration reform?" "What's wrong with the system?" and "How can it be fixed?" In contrast, the *Moral/Expansive* narrative and the *Economic* narrative, as currently construed, leave out key narrative components. The likely impact of these absences is that the public will not come away with a clear sense of what is at stake in the immigration debate when they are faced with economic lines of argumentation. When presented with moral arguments, most people lack a clear sense of the best course of action to ameliorate these problems, and they are likely to fill these narrative "holes" with dominant cultural models that are not aligned with the goals of comprehensive immigration reform.

- **The *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative is closely aligned with several dominant cultural models that work against comprehensive immigration reform.** Not only is the structure of the *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative more cohesive, but the content of the narrative is also closely aligned with the public's most dominant and unproductive cultural models. FrameWorks' research has documented that the public consistently conflates immigration with illegal immigration and supports harsh measures for immigrants who did not legally enter the United States. The public also believes that increases in immigration are overwhelming the United States' economy and public infrastructure. Finally, members of the public consistently view the primary purpose of the immigration system as tracking and controlling people seeking to enter the United States.[11] Together, these cultural models form a story that is similar to that being told by organizations employing the *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative. This close alignment of organizational narrative with existing public discourse is likely to crowd out other, more nuanced ways of

understanding why comprehensive immigration reform can benefit both citizens and non-citizens alike.

- **The *Moral/Expansive* narrative is aligned with recessive patterns of public thinking that must be pulled forward in order for this narrative to find traction.** Although recessive, FrameWorks' research has also documented that the public can employ more empathetic models to reason about immigration. They employ these models when primed to consider the similarities between immigrants and non-immigrants and to employ "us" and "we" ways of thinking about populations and groups. When operating with these models, the public contends that immigrants, regardless of how they entered the country, should be treated with compassion. In addition, the public holds several models that point to the benefits of a culturally diverse society, although these models are not as robust as others.[12] These more recessive models echo elements of the *Moral/Expansive* narrative. Organizations that employ the *Moral/Expansive* narrative can pull forward these more productive models of immigration and immigration reform by consistently telling a complete and coherent narrative. These kinds of narratives will be more likely to find a foothold in the public's mind.

- **All three narrative clusters are likely to contribute to the *Immigration as a Bureaucratic Black Box* model.** All three narrative clusters begin with the premise that the immigration system is broken, but none explains *how* the immigration system actually works. FrameWorks' research demonstrates that the public has very little understanding of the system in general, and tends to think it is either overwhelmingly complicated or very straightforward. This "black box" is particularly dangerous for organizations employing the *Moral/Expansive* narrative. Embedded within this narrative is the critique that the current immigration system violates immigrants' rights, particularly if they do not have legal status. If the public fundamentally does not understand how the immigration system works, it certainly will not be able to understand how immigrants' rights are jeopardized within this system or how reforming the system will improve the provision of these rights.

- **All three narrative clusters are likely to cue the *Politics As Usual* cultural model.** Each of the narrative clusters described above includes, at least to some degree, government as the primary antagonist. While the organizations working in the *Moral/Expansive* and *Restrictive/Punitive* narrative clusters engage in partisan politics by naming specific political parties as the "bad guy," the *Economic* narrative cites government without reference to party. FrameWorks research has shown that

all three strategies are likely to further entrench public perceptions of the government as ineffective, corrupt and incompetent. This results in a fatalistic sense of "politics as usual," and dampens the public's belief that meaningful reform is possible.[13]

Recommendations

FrameWorks recommends that organizations seeking to promote comprehensive immigration reform create greater narrative cohesion in their organizational materials. Put simply, organizations should seek to tell a complete story that diagnoses the problems impacting the current system, explains why reform is important, and lays out concrete steps for improving the system. This will result in greater public support for comprehensive immigration reform. This requires that organizations working towards comprehensive reform collectively decide on a primary framing strategy, and promote this narrative in their public-facing materials and interactions.

The FrameWorks Institute is currently engaged in research to determine the most effective elements of that narrative. Values — a frame element that lays out the reasons why reform is necessary — have already emerged as a key component of this narrative. FrameWorks research has demonstrated that supporters of comprehensive reform who are able to deliver their message first, or who are unlikely to face counter messaging, are best served by leading off with a moral argument that emphasizes compassion and the protection of immigrants' rights. Staying "on message" in the face of opposition, however, can be counterproductive. Instead, reform supporters who find themselves in a contested framing environment need to pivot away from moral arguments and invoke the value of *Pragmatism* in order to maintain public support and engagement.[14]

The findings presented here indicate that the value of *Pragmatism* is more closely aligned with economic narratives than with moral or rights-based lines of argumentation. Considered in light of FrameWorks' earlier work on values, we recommend that all organizations promoting comprehensive immigration reform begin to incorporate *Pragmatism* into their own communications strategies.[15] Doing so would mean advocating for a "common sense" approach to immigration reform that considers all of the policy options and avoids "extreme and impractical" measures. In past FrameWorks research, *Pragmatism* has engendered a spirit of compromise and practicality that supplies an antidote to partisanship and gridlock.

FrameWorks is also in the process of developing an explanatory metaphor to help advocates explain how the immigration system works and why it is currently working ineffectively. This metaphor will provide organizations working towards comprehensive immigration reform the causal element of the narrative around which organizations can

organize their framing strategies, and explain *why* and *how* specific policy solutions are necessary.

Appendix A: Methods

Stage 1. Identifying Influential Organizations Using Link Analysis

In collaboration with program staff at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, FrameWorks researchers created a list of over 90 organizations currently involved in immigration policy and immigration reform. These organizations spanned the full ideological and political spectrum, and included governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, foundations, research organizations and member associations. This list of organizations was entered into Issue Crawler, a Web-based application that "crawls" an identified set of organizational sites and compiles all the shared links among organizations (including those both in the original set and those identified during the crawl). Issue Crawler then uses a method called link analysis to determine the "network" of organizations for a given issue area and the degree of prominence or influence of each organization within that network.

This method is based on the premise that "modern communication is increasingly organized around computer-mediated technologies," and that the Internet serves as a public repository for information about organizations and their goals, activities, networks and relative influence. On the Web, an organization's influence is "strongly correlated with the organization's reputation for providing reliable and credible information."[16] Reputation can be measured by using the density of links between organizational sites as a proxy for the reliability and credibility of that information.

As originally designed, this analysis included all organizations involved in advocacy, policy or communications about immigration reform in a single link analysis, irrespective of their particular policy positions. However, the result from this initial analysis did not yield sufficient ideological diversity among organizations. Therefore, we subsequently conducted two separate link analyses — one that captured influential organizations among groups that favored comprehensive immigration, and one that captured organizations supporting at least some restrictive policies. These more restrictive organizations ranged from those that that support expansion of high-skill visas but argue against legalization of undocumented immigrants, to organizations that oppose all new immigration.

We then consulted immigration policy experts to confirm the Issue Crawler results. From this process, we selected the following 20 influential organizations to include in the analysis:

- American Enterprise Institute (AEI)
- American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)
- American Patrol
- America's Voice Online
- Cato Institute
- Center for Immigration Studies (CIS)
- Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
- Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI)
- Dream Activist
- Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR)
- Heritage Foundation
- Immigration Forum
- Migration Policy Institute
- National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
- National Immigration Law Center (NILC)
- Negative Population Growth (NPG)
- Numbers USA
- Project USA
- Senator Schumer's website
- United We Dream

We then sampled 10 to 12 communication materials from each of these organizations. These materials included press releases, reports and "About Us" webpages. They were selected because they contain content about how each organization describes its mission, as well as the specific immigration policies that each organization promotes. In total, the sample consisted of 258 materials drawn from these 20 organizations.

Stage 2: Content Selection and Coding

Each document was coded using a coding scheme designed to track all the narrative components present in organizational materials. Each narrative component comprises a distinct category that contains a number of possible codes. Together, these narrative components map the stories that influential immigration organizations are telling about immigration reform (see Table 1).

Table 1: Variables Included in Analysis

Narrative Component	Description	Examples of Codes
Agenda	What is the document about? What is the primary issue or topic being discussed?	• Border security • Detention policies • Visa policies and the visa system
Cause	Why is the current immigration system not working?	• Border security is inefficient • Not aligned with economic needs • Immigration laws are not adequately enforced
Value	Why is reform important? Why is it necessary to reform the immigration system?	• Rule of law • Prosperity/economic prosperity • Pragmatism
Solution	What should be done to fix the immigration system?	• Restrict family-based immigration • Protect immigrant workers' rights • Increase the number of visas available to high-skilled immigrants
Character	Who are the antagonists or villains in the narrative?	• Immigrants • Republicans • Democrats
Messenger	Who are the quoted experts on immigration reform?	• Politicians • Researchers/academics • Advocates
Target of Immigration Reform	What groups should be the target of immigration reform?	• High-skilled workers • Low-skilled workers • Undocumented immigrants
Nationalities	What specific national groups are mentioned?	• Mexico • Asian countries • European countries

For each organization, we first coded the set of 10 to 12 documents belonging to that organization, then summed the number of times that each code was applied across the full

set of that organization's materials. This approach yielded a frequency count of codes *per organization*. Consider, for example, the frequency of codes in the *Cause* category for the American Enterprise Institute. Looking across all materials belonging to AEI, the code "not aligned with economic needs" was applied eight times, the codes "does not adequately protect public safety," "denies immigrant basic rights/inhumane," and "outdated and inefficient," were applied once, and the remaining codes were not applied at all.

Stage 3: Cluster Analysis and Multidimensional Scaling

We analyzed this raw frequency data using a technique called cluster analysis. The goal of cluster analysis is to identify patterns in a set of data. It uses a statistical algorithm to group objects together on the basis of similarity. In the present analysis, the "objects" are the narrative elements that appear in organizations' mission statements, press releases and reports, and "similarity" refers to the extent to which those objects co-occur in materials. The goal of cluster analysis is to identify clusters, or groups, in which objects within the same group are more similar to each other than to those in other groups (clusters) — in other words, objects in the same cluster should co-occur more frequently with each other than they do with objects in other clusters. For this analysis, we used a special type of cluster analysis called multidimensional scaling (MDS) that allows the mapping of clusters to take place in a space with more than one dimension.

Figure 1 in the main report summarizes the results of this analysis. Based on the MDS results, we determined that two dimensions account for all the variance in organizations' use of narrative components. We then used a statistical algorithm to assign coordinates to each object on this two dimensional grid, such that the distances between them reflect the extent to which they co-occur across all organizational materials. Objects that are closer together are more likely to appear together in organizational materials than objects that are farther apart.

Stage 4: Cognitive Implications

Finally, these findings were compared with results from FrameWorks' research on how experts and the public think about immigration reform.[17] This comparison allowed researchers to detect ways in which existing communications will impact public understanding of, and support for, comprehensive immigration reform.

About The FrameWorks Institute

The FrameWorks Institute is an independent nonprofit organization founded in 1999 to advance science-based communications research and practice. The Institute conducts original, multi-method research to identify the communications strategies that will advance public understanding of social problems and improve public support for remedial policies.

The Institute's work also includes teaching the nonprofit sector how to apply these science based communications strategies in their work for social change. The Institute publishes its research and recommendations, as well as toolkits and other products for the nonprofit sector, at www.frameworksinstitute.org.

Please follow standard APA rules for citation, with FrameWorks Institute as publisher:

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Endnotes

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