

# How Do Policy Organizations Frame Issues and Shape Identity? Exploring the Case of School Choice

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## Abstract

Conservatives reject identity politics as un-American, yet a distinct conservative identity has formed around issues of liberty, antagonism toward government, and local control. This identity has been connected to policies, first helping build the coalition necessary to pass policy and later shaped by policy implementation. Policy Feedback theory explains the mechanism that connects conservative politics, policy, and identity. This analysis applies a specific aspect of Policy Feedback theory to the case of school choice to understand how organizations frame issues and shape identity. Using interest group communications data, the findings show differences between and within homeschooling and charter school groups.

## Keywords

policy process, interest groups, conservative movement, lobbying, school choice, education policy, Policy Feedback

In the midst of the 2016 election, Grover Norquist (2016), the influential conservative gadfly and head of Americans for Tax Reform, argued in the

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*Washington Post* for a new coalition of supporters for the Republican Party. Vapers, frackers, Uber drivers, concealed carry permit holders, homeschoolers, and charter schoolers were new voting blocs, not tied to Hillary Clinton, ripe for Republican mobilization. Norquist called this the *leave-us-alone coalition* and his ideal citizen as “the self-employed, homeschooling, IRA-owning guy with a concealed-carry permit.”

Conservatives have long decried identity politics as un-American (see David Brooks’ frequent *New York Times* columns<sup>1</sup>), yet Norquist describes groups of voters who are defined by identities: the gun owner, the e-cigarette smoker, or the fracker. These identities have strong ideological dimensions, unstated racial and ethnic ties, and are closely linked with public policy that has loosened existing government rules and opened new choices for citizens. Sometimes called *conservative freedom policies*, including eased gun ownership rules and lowered environmental regulations to permit fossil fuel extraction, these policies have long been tied to the conservative movement, suggesting there is interplay between conservative politics, conservative policy, and conservative identity.

The 14.5 million concealed carry permit holders in the United States have received considerable attention as an important part of the base of the Republican Party (Steidley, 2018). It is unclear exactly how many frackers, vapers, or Uber drivers there are, as each group has a relatively short existence. For Norquist’s other two categories, homeschoolers and charter schoolers, we know much more about who they are, but they have not received as much attention. Each group is tied to choice-based state public policies passed close to three decades ago and there are millions in each group: in 2018, there were approximately 2 million homeschooled students and 3 million charter school students, and there were many more associated parents and former students. Furthermore, although there is considerable study of the interest groups that shape the identity of gun owners, there is much less for homeschooling and charter schooling. The National Rifle Association (NRA), for example, is well known to use purposeful rhetoric to shape the identities of gun owners and the way that gun owners are viewed in the media (Joslyn, Haider-Markel, Baggs, & Bilbo, 2017). I ask in this paper: *Do homeschool and charter school interest groups pursue a similar strategy?*

However, despite the apparent similarities to Norquist, each policy was supported by a distinct political coalition and designed differently. Although there was variation across states in the make-up of each political coalition, and some degree of variation in policy goals, in general, conservatives and libertarians designed homeschool policies to give near complete freedom to parents to legally educate without public financial support, curricular control, or oversight, while a centrist coalition of civil rights groups and business

interests envisioned charter school policies as a way to improve educational outcomes by increasing competition and choice, granting some autonomy and local management control, but funding charters with public finance and maintaining accountability and testing rules (Bulkley & Wohlstetter, 2004; Murphy, 2012). Given these differences in policy design, *do homeschool interest groups frame issues differently than charter school interest groups and what is the potential consequence of framing differences for the identities of those participating in each policy?*

Answering these questions contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the development of conservative interest group politics, conservative policymaking, and conservative social identity. I apply Policy Feedback theory to original data on interest group communications to demonstrate how groups have strategically framed issues since the 1990s in ways that are consistent with the political history and design of the policies they care about. Based on these empirical findings, I also speculate as to how this may be connected to conservative identity formation among policy beneficiaries or group members. This approach differs from classic studies of Policy Feedback, because I focus narrowly on issue framing of interest groups, rather than other dimensions of the theory, such as changes in political attitudes or behaviors, which have been central to past Policy Feedback studies. I argue throughout the article why this focus is complementary to existing Policy Feedback research and a potential contribution to better understanding the mechanisms that link public policy to political behavior—which remains an important direction for future research.

## Historical Policy Development

Homeschooling policy and charter school policy share certain characteristics, including an association with the broad idea of school choice, support by conservative policy entrepreneurs (though much more so for homeschooling than charter schooling), and adoption in most states in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many view these policies as essentially the same as other school choice policies, as then-candidate Donald Trump did in a speech during the 2016 campaign: “Competition—the schools will get better and better and better. And that means a private school, a religious school, a charter school or a magnet school. School choice also means that parents can home-school their children.”<sup>2</sup> In these broad strokes, each is an example of *conservative freedom policy*: a category of policies designed and advocated by those associated with the conservative movement in the United States emphasizing freedom by providing (or at least claiming to provide) new choices (or incentives) to opt out of government social policy for health care, employment,

retirement, housing, and education. However, one significant way that conservative freedom policies differ is the extent to which lawmakers design the policy to be implemented *within* or *outside* existing public institutions. For instance, some policies grant exemptions from various public institutions, such as employment rules, data reporting mandates, health and safety regulations, and eligibility for public funding, resulting in implementation of the policy outside of government. Other conservative freedom policies permit new choices and grant limited exemptions, but largely require the policy to be implemented within government institutions. Homeschool and charter school policies fall on opposite sides of this continuum.

Homeschool policies—first adopted in the early 1980s at the state level—free parents to legally educate at home, rather than in a traditional public or private institution, and bind those parents to almost no rules on what or how to teach (Cooper & Sureau, 2007). State policies require different things of families who act on this freedom, and there are a variety of ways families practice educating at home, but what unifies these policies is the opportunity to opt out of a common curriculum, public education finance, and much governmental oversight (Murphy, 2012). For example, only nine states have a minimum requirement of education for parents to serve as a homeschool teacher and most states exempt homeschools from standard annual assessments (Huseman, 2015). As such, the policy is implemented *outside* of existing institutions, meaning once a family opts to homeschool, they leave many of the public/governmental institutions and connections to the public school system, such as public funding, public oversight of instruction and educational outcomes, and political representation (Reich, 2002).

Charter school policies—first adopted in the early 1990s at the state level—grant government and quasi-governmental agencies with the authority to charter independent, publicly funded schools (Nathan, 1997). Charter school policy is implemented *within* existing public/governmental institutions: charters are typically granted by publicly elected school boards or state education offices, public funds transfer with the student to the school, and public officials continue to maintain accountability for education, civil rights and liberties, and health outcomes (Bulkley & Fisler, 2003).

In general, each education policy option fits with the broad idea of school choice as a change to the status quo approach to education in the United States, but different political coalitions have backed each policy, especially at the point of policy adoption. The original political coalition backing charter schools included prominent civil rights organizations and business groups aiming, in part, to infuse competition and local control in public education to empower families as educational consumers and improve educational innovation (Kirst, 2007; Vergari, 2007). Bill Clinton championed charter schools

before, during, and after his time in the White House; George W. Bush and Barack Obama largely followed suit. Conversely, the movement behind homeschooling has long been tied (though not exclusively) to Christian Conservative organizations and the anti-institutional intellectual movement associated with (but not exclusive to) the Republican Party to fuse libertarian ideas about individual freedom and socially conservative concerns about religious liberty (Murphy, 2012). Homeschool advocates, though hardly in full agreement on nature of the problem, worried about the standardized approach of public education, believing parents should be at liberty to determine the content of student learning, including the freedom to add religious material which the courts have ruled as unconstitutional in public schools (Gaither, 2008; Stevens, 2003). George W. Bush, Mike Huckabee, and Michele Bachmann each relied on conservative homeschool families—an especially well-organized part of the homeschool movement—as volunteer “foot soldiers” to connect with Evangelical voters in recent Republican presidential campaigns (Sullivan, 2011). Because of these different political histories, what followed policy adoption was quite distinct for each policy, related to the particular policy design, implementation outside or within existing institutions, and disparate political coalitions.

Once adopted, who opted in to each policy differed considerably, resulting in dissimilar sociodemographic patterns related to each policy. The typical homeschool student is White, more than 80%, though non-White homeschooling has increased after 2010 (Redford, Battle, & Bielick, 2017). This is markedly different than just a third (36%) of charter school students who are White (Grady, Bielick, & Aud, 2010). Homeschool students typically have married, post-high school educated parents who are unlikely to be low-income or poor (62% nonpoor) (Ray, 2004; Redford et al., 2017). A small majority (56%) of charter school students come from two parent households, a quarter have parents with less than a high school education, and a majority (53%) are from poor or near poor families (Grady et al., 2010). Nearly three-quarters (72%) of homeschoolers live outside of cities. In comparison, the majority (64%) of charter school students live in cities. In short, though both are school choice policies, those participating in homeschooling and charter schools are quite distinct from each other.

Part of what has facilitated the increase in homeschool enrollment has been a dramatic growth of civic organizations following the adoption of state policies in the 1980s. This is in fact what Policy Feedback scholars predict about the impact of public policies: Policy can create incentives for civic organizing, and new civic groups can then shape the beliefs of policy beneficiaries, the media, and ultimately the direction of policy change (Skocpol, 1995). Consistent with theory (described in greater detail in the next section

of the article), Mitchell Stevens (2003) shows that homeschool organizations quickly formed to provide all sorts of services, from mentoring to curricular assistance to lobbying and advocacy, leading to his assertion that “home schooling is a world of *organizations* as well as a population of parents and children” (p. 14). By implementing the policy outside of existing institutions, homeschooling policy creates strong incentives for civic organizations to form *because* policy beneficiaries have been detached from existing civic, political, and democratic institutions, likely what Norquist had in mind for his leave-us-alone coalition. While other families receive needed services from existing institutions connected to the public education system, including political representation by traditional educational interest groups, homeschool families do not (as of 2018, homeschooled families received almost no direct financial support from government) and likely could not meet the day-to-day demands of educating at home without the support of effective organizations. This adds to the importance of what these new homeschool civic and interest groups do.

In comparison, even though there is variation across the 44 states with laws as of 2018, charter school policy is much more closely embedded within existing institutions, thereby creating weaker incentives for civic organizing and likely generating weaker Policy Feedback. After acknowledging differences across states, Katrina Bulkley and Priscilla Wohlstetter (2004) explain “the theory underlying charter schools rests on the idea that greater autonomy is traded for enhanced accountability to both government and consumers of the educational program” (p. 2). Charter schools typically receive public funds per enrolled students and must abide by most federal and state assessment, public health, civil rights, and disability regulations, though they are often exempted from teacher compensation agreements (Bulkley & Fisher, 2003).

Families opting to send their children to a charter school usually continue to receive services from existing institutions, lowering their demand for new services, and must abide by public health rules, such as mandatory vaccination. For example, in California, though charter school participation is voluntary, researchers found a majority of charter schools participated in the federally funded free or reduced price lunch program available to all public schools, reducing the need of low-income charter school parents for aid from private charitable organizations (California State Auditor, 2010). Although there are notable examples of charter school organizations forming, especially at the state level, this has not been a defining feature of the policy as it has been for homeschooling (Kirst, 2007). Illustrative of this, one study of schools in North Carolina found charter schools were significantly less likely to have a parent–teacher organization than public schools (Murray, Thurston,

Renzulli, & Boylan, 2019). In addition, because charters potentially threaten a scarce pool of public funds, there has been much stronger counter-mobilization against charter schools by teacher unions than for homeschooling which has spurred minimal organized resistance (Holyoke & Brown, 2019). These very different policy, political, and organizational environments suggest the possibility of different strategic behaviors by homeschooling and charter school interest groups.

## Policy Feedback and Interest Group Issue Framing

Policy Feedback theory offers a way to conceptualize the differences between homeschooling and charter schooling interest groups, and why these differences undermine Norquist's simple notion of a common conservative, "leave us alone" coalition. Broadly, Policy Feedback theory assumes that new public policies can directly affect outcomes, such as student learning or the level of poverty. As importantly, public policy also can indirectly affect political behaviors of individuals through resource effects—changes in material circumstance of individuals associated with a policy—and interpretive effects—changes in cognition of individuals associated with a policy—as well as changing the role of organized groups in people's lives. Policy Feedback scholars have closely observed variation in individual attitudes and behavior, such as Jamila Michener's (2018) analysis of the ways state Medicaid policy affects recipients' political efficacy, but most have spent less time dissecting the inner workings of the organizations that mediate and moderate the interpretive effects of policy; a gap in the literature I aim to address in this article.

Policy Feedback theory suggests that, once formed, organizations can influence policy beneficiaries, the media, policy makers, and ultimately the direction of policy (Béland & Schlager, 2019; Pierson, 1993). To understand how this may happen, I look to interest group studies and the literature on issue framing. To wield influence, interest groups (and other political organizations) use specific lobbying tactics to advance their causes. Scholars divide lobbying tactics into *inside*, direct lobbying of decision-makers through meetings about policy, and *outside*, indirect lobbying of the public (including an organization's own members) and the media via citizen action campaigns and communications to increase pressure on decision-makers (Kollman, 1998).

Inside lobbying is expensive, time-consuming, and dominated by well-resourced organizations able to hire professional lobbyists and support party candidates with financial donations (Walker, 1991). Overall, advocates for homeschooling and charter schooling expend relatively little in lobbying and campaign contributions compared with other interests such as energy, technology, or health care. The primary homeschool group, the Homeschool Legal



Defense Association (HSLDA) political action committee, for example, gave only US\$25,000 to candidates in 2008, the most out of any election cycle between 2002 and 2018, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.<sup>3</sup>

Outside lobbying, while not cost-free, involves a wider range of activities open to different types of organizations. Outside lobbying is also directly relevant to *interpretive* Policy Feedback. As Paul Pierson (1993) and others have explained it, interpretive effects involve developing identity, meaning, and self-efficacy. After a new policy is adopted, an interest group can shape public opinion and the identity of policy beneficiaries by communicating information about the ongoing policy problem and what it means to participate in the policy (Marchetti, 2014; Mettler, 2005). They do this by communicating with strategically chosen words, phrases, and images associated with a desired issue frame. For example, to mobilize resistance to regulations on firearms, the NRA regularly tells its members that they are freedom-loving patriots because of their decision to act on their right to own a firearm, and that their rights are under constant threat from government bureaucrats (Melzer, 2009). The NRA uses a frame for gun policy that combines liberty and security. Conversely, women's organizations in the 1960s defended new legal equality rights policies for women by framing politics in terms of a fight for social equity and inclusion, and mobilized members against discrimination threats (Goss, 2013). Women's organizations used a frame focused on equity and equality. The issue framing of the NRA and women's groups corresponds with the design of the associated policy and identity each group hoped to promote among beneficiaries.

By creating a purposeful identity connected to the policy, beneficiaries may develop stronger feelings of camaraderie with other beneficiaries—what might be called a *linked policy fate*—and feel more efficacious about collective action to defend the policy in the future. When this occurs in an increasingly polarized political and social system, these linked identities may be closely associated with partisan and ideological divisions. Because conservative freedom policies often detach beneficiaries from existing institutions—shifting families from collective public schools into the home or from relying on police services to protecting one's home with a firearm—newly formed or strengthened social identities may develop in the same isolated way Lilliana Mason (2018) has described as *social polarization* (Joslyn et al., 2017).

For these reasons, it is important to pay close attention to the ways that interest groups communicate with the public, media, and members as well as the impact of differences between policy designs on framing strategies. If interpretive Policy Feedback effects occur, it is likely that interest group communications will be integral. In the case of conservative freedom policies, there are particular ways that we might expect related interest groups to



shape the common understanding of the policy and the identity of policy beneficiaries, but limited guidance from the extant research literature (Patashnik & Zelizer, 2013). This is in part because much Policy Feedback research has focused on social welfare policies designed differently, often rooted in government-provided benefits and a push for social equity (Campbell, 2003; Mettler, 2005; Soss & Schram, 2007). In the case of conservative freedom policies, the central aim is rarely social equity or justice, and the policy design typically frees individuals from direct connections to government rather than binding them more closely.

Although limited, there are several excellent studies to base expectations of these very different conservative freedom policies. For example, Jacob Hacker (2002) shows how private policies, specifically related to private health care insurance, can undermine beliefs of recipients about an expansive role of government thereby presenting an obstacle to policy change to expand public health insurance options. This also may happen, according to Suzanne Mettler (2009), when public policies are submerged in the tax code; hidden even from those who receive benefits government and thus generating no positive feelings toward government action (Hackett, 2017). In addition, Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram (2012) suggest that there may be negative Policy Feedback when policy shifts the delivery of service from traditional government to nongovernmental contractors, in turn *reducing* the support of beneficiaries for government. Along those same lines, Kristin Goss (2010) contends that policies that encourage volunteerism and the role of civil society may, unintendedly, reinforce “the perception that problems adhere to the individual, not to the collective” and “encourage a psychological and behavioral disposition toward charitable service and to devalue collective action for welfare state expansion” (p. 26). We might infer from Hacker, Mettler, Schneider, and Ingram, as well as Goss, that because homeschooling and charter schooling share much in common with private, third-party policies and volunteerism, there may be similar Policy Feedback dynamics. Given homeschooling policy is the more extreme version of this type of conservative freedom policy design, operating far outside of existing institutions, I expect this feedback dynamic to be more prominent for homeschooling organizations compared with charter school interest groups, which operate within existing institutions and maintain a greater connection to government.

Furthermore, as was the case for the NRA and women’s organizations, the political coalition supporting a policy is likely to drive issue framing, but these coalitions are often loosely stitched together, not stable over time, and thus framing strategies may not be uniform and may change. For example, according to Clyde Wilcox and Robinson (2010), “As part of their efforts to adopt the secular language of politics, Christian Right candidates and

activists have couched their political arguments in the ‘rights’ language of liberalism” (p. 50). At the same time, issue framing focused on a feeling of assault by government and non-Christian values is increasingly at the center of conservative politics and public policy. To this point, Christopher Baylor (2017) argues, “Only when issues like the school prayer ban and abortion rights were framed as part of larger ‘secular humanist’ attacks on their values did theological conservatives actively oppose them” (p. 139). Framing policy issues at the intersection of a rights-claim and threat has been an evolving strategy of the conservative political coalition and its associated interest groups (Lewis, 2017). Another way to consider the communication of these interest groups is to look more closely at policy issues. Public policy typically involves lengthy public decision-making about spending, authority, rules, and regulations. Some interest groups are broadly based, such as the Chamber of Commerce, which focus on dozens of policy issues, whereas others are narrowly based, such as a farming association, which focus on a single industry or issue (Halpin & Fraussen, 2019; Heaney, 2004). Even narrowly based interest groups can focus on the immediate issues affecting its members or work on a more expansive array of policy issues. This is sometimes called *issue or conflict expansion*, which involves the strategic linking of disparate issues and policies to show how policies are joined together (Layman & Carsey, 2002). It often involves reframing a narrowly understood policy problem as a broader or more complex problem or explaining how a problem in one policy area is connected to problems in others all tied together by an ideological or partisan coalition (Knutson, 2018).

Interest groups eager to connect narrow policy issues to broader policy concerns or ideological debates may engage in issue or conflict expansion. Groups do this for strategic reasons, sometimes to increase the visibility of a hidden policy problem, to attract new allies to defending a policy, and to demonstrate that their policy is central to a larger project tied to a political party. For example, the Christian Coalition leader Ralph Reed (1993) wrote in the early 1990s, “The most urgent challenge for pro-family conservatives is to develop a broader issues agenda” (p. 32). Group members who now see the connections between their issue and others may be energized to work across issues for a larger cause or even volunteer on a political campaign. The media also may begin to pay more attention to the policy problem and the interest group’s framing of the problem as integral to broader social problems.

Other interest groups want to remain focused on the narrow parameters of their policy and avoid issue expansion, what scholars call an *issue niche strategy* (Gray & Lowery, 1996). For issues that are not obviously linked to a larger ideology, issue expansion may be an unattractive strategy, as it may

turn off nonideological supporters of the policy. Interest groups may believe that a niche strategy is favorable to expanding the policy problem to other problems which may dilute support for their favored policy or attract unwanted attention. Deanna Rohlinger (2015) demonstrates this within anti-abortion interest group politics and the divergent strategies pursued by the Christian conservative, Concerned Women of America (CWA) and the secular pro-life group, National Right to Life Committee (NRLC). CWA pursued a wide-ranging social conservative agenda, including vocal opposition to gay rights, whereas NRLC focused on opposing abortion with a moderate and single-minded approach.

Strategic decisions on framing and issue expansion all relate to whom the interest group is speaking. An interest group may have a specific goal for communicating with members—the organization's internal audience—such as energizing them for political action or developing a common identity, each forms of interpretive Policy Feedback (Walker, 1991). The goal may be different for communicating with the media and general public—the organization's external audience—including increasing awareness of an unfamiliar problem, improving solidarity between the group and potential allies, or shaming adversaries to fend off counter policy mobilization. Donald Haider-Markel and Steven Sylvester (2014) show that LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) groups influenced public opinion on gay rights with effective issue framing by increasingly public acceptance of the biological nature of gender identity. Overall, the variety of audiences and goals sometimes leads groups to adopt different approaches to communication, framing, and issue expansion.

Based on the findings from existing research, I examine several hypotheses. *First*, in general, groups interested in conservative freedom policies are unlikely to frame issues around social equity or fairness, contrary to the long-time status quo framing of public education.

*Second*, and more importantly, the specific differences between home-school and charter school policy design, different student demographics, and somewhat distinct political coalitions lead to differences in policy framing by related interest groups. Aurini and Davies (2005) explain that in North America "Homeschoolers strongly assert their right to choose yet do not espouse a market ideology . . . Homeschooling thus represents a choice without markets" (p. 471). Homeschool organizations are likely to promote and also reflect these beliefs in their communications. Consequently, homeschool interest groups should frame policy around individual liberty rights, much like the NRA (Lacombe, 2019). Conversely, because many, but not all, supporters promoted charter school policy to increase educational competition and choice, interest groups should frame policy around economic efficiency to promote an identity of savvy market consumers (Henig, 1995).

*Third*, it is less clear how this will bear out for hostility toward government. As homeschool policy is designed to operate far outside existing governmental institutions compared with charter school policy, homeschool interest groups may be more likely to frame the interests of policy beneficiaries as threatened or attacked by government and bureaucrats. Conversely, the relative proximity of charter schools to government institutions, including possible conflicts over abiding by accountability regulations, might make charter school interest groups more likely to voice opposition to government. As such, there is no clear basis to confidently hypothesize in one direction or the other.

*Fourth*, considering interest groups have at least two audiences—the general public and internal members—they will frame issues differently when they have a different goal for each audience. In the case of homeschooling groups, it seems likely that they will favor the individual liberty frame with internal members to develop a common, independent identity, while using more broadly accepted frames of equity and efficiency with the public and media, for whom identity formation is not a pressing goal.

*Finally*, because of the closer relationship to the conservative movement political coalition, it also seems likely that homeschooling groups will connect to issues outside of the narrow education policy domain—a type of conflict or issue expansion—to other conservative policy priorities. Conversely, the link between charter school groups and the political center will lead them to focus more narrowly on education alone.

## Data and Analysis

To explore these relationships, I identified key interest groups connected to homeschooling and charter schooling. I focus entirely here on data from these interest groups and do not attempt to measure whether observed differs in framing ultimately leads to changes in individual attitudes, the next step in the chain of Policy Feedback and an important area for future research. As there are relatively few relevant organizations operating, I nonrandomly chose four national organizations that have been central to lobbying for each policy area in a variety of ways over an extended time period: Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA, 1996-2017), Coalition for Responsible Homeschooling (CRH, 2013-2018), National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA, 2006-2017), and National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS, 1996-2014). These are some of the most active and influential interest groups operating at the national level. Although each national group does not speak for state and local groups, the messages that national groups disseminate are likely to influence affiliated groups and families

operating with fewer resources at the local level. The communications of these four groups are likely to be disseminated widely and thus represent a nonrandom sample of the communications of groups more generally.

Each group has used a variety of tools to communicate with the public and its members, including newsletters, magazines, and press releases. Since 2010, at least, each organization has used social media, and each has maintained a public website for even longer. The openness of the Internet allowed me to collect certain communication documents from each organization's website (Whitesell, 2019). I made extensive use of archived copies of each organization's website available via the Wayback Machine at <http://www.archive.org> to collect press releases for HSLDA and NAPCS back to the 1990s.

Although each organization limits access to some documents, press releases are regularly archived and made available to the public. Press releases provide a comparable source of information which social scientists have commonly used to analyze interest group strategy and tactics (see Bennett (2017) for a similar analysis of conservative legal organization press releases). Press releases capture the messages, frames, and issues an organization is eager for journalists to use in reporting on the policy. Although press releases do not capture the internal or private ways that an organization may discuss issues, communication to the public through the media is a central outside lobbying tactic and thus a way to analyze potential interpretive Policy Feedback effects. For additional analysis, I also collected publicly available member emails from HSLDA to compare outward-facing press releases with inward-facing emails (emails were not available for the other three organizations). HSLDA is especially interesting because of its large size and powerful reputation, claiming to represent nearly 100,000 homeschool families since the 1980s.

After collecting the documents with several graduate students, we read a sample of press releases to develop a coding dictionary of terms. We then tested an automated coding scheme using the terms and modified the scheme to adjust for obvious measurement errors and false positives. With the final coding system in place, we analyzed the data in Stata to compare the frequency of major themes derived from the data.

Conceptually, Deborah Stone's (1988) seminal book, *Policy Paradox*, offers a useful analytical framework that distinguishes issue framing between public goals to include liberty, efficiency, security, and equity. Stone argues that these goals are the basis on which political struggles take place and issues are framed, various interests debating what is meant by each goal, and how some policy (but not others) will best meet the goal or set of goals. I use that framework to analyze the different ways that the school choice organizations communicate and frame issues based on liberty, efficiency, security,

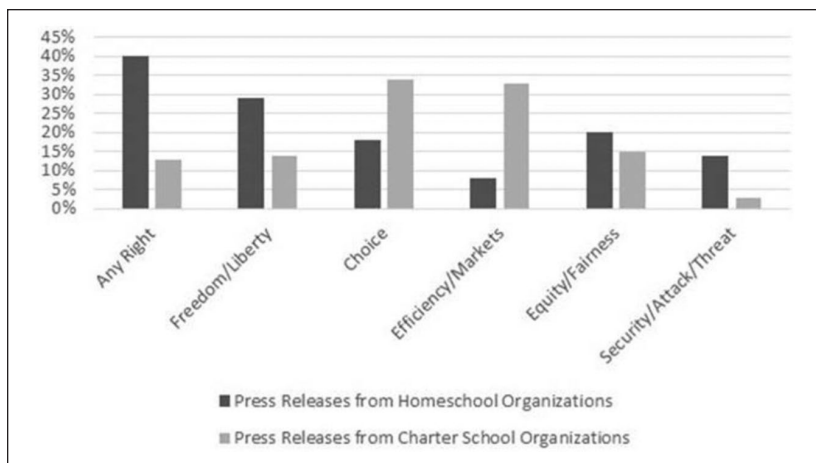
equity, and variants of each. I also operationalize the concept of issue expansion by capturing references to educational versus noneducational issues. A summary of the coding terms can be found in Appendix Table A1.

It is worth considering these categories of policy goals are distinct frames. For example, an interest group might defend a policy position based on established constitutional rights possessed by citizens, such as the right to choose. Conversely, another interest group might argue for a policy based on choice being a more economically viable policy approach, irrespective of underlying constitutionality. Furthermore, choice, liberty, and freedom share much in common linguistically, but may differ greatly in how groups strategically frame their political meaning, often based on which set of individuals the group represents. Finally, each of these terms may be connected to other terms, such that choice might be important to increase efficiency and reduced freedom might harm equity.

It is out of the scope of this article to unearth the exact meaning each group attaches to all of the language they use, but the potentially overlapping and ambiguous meaning of some of the key terms could confound the analysis and lead to null findings, if groups do not consistently and distinctly use the frames of liberty, efficiency, equity, and security. If, however, framing patterns differ between homeschool and charter school groups in predicted ways, it suggests groups do adhere to consistent framing patterns, and that there are theoretical distinctions between each frame. To test whether the five key variables measuring each frame are statistically related or distinct, I calculated a Cronbach's alpha measure of scale reliability. The coefficient was .49, lower than the standard .80 cut off to conclude that a set of variables are correlated, thereby showing that the variables are distinct from each other and suggesting the conceptual frames are distinct as well.

### *Findings on Issue Framing With Equity, Liberty, and Efficiency*

I speculated earlier that homeschool and charter school organizations would be alike in terms of rarely promoting the social value of equity, but homeschool organizations would be more likely to focus on liberty and charter school organizations on efficiency. The evidence suggests that two types of organizations are, in fact, alike when it comes to infrequently using the equity frame: Homeschool organizations use the frame 20% of the time compared with 15% of the time for charter school organizations, not a statistically significant bivariate difference (see Figure 1). When I unpacked the data in the general equity frame into subframes, there is a small difference in specific references made to race, ethnicity, and gender: The charter school organizations (8%) were more likely to reference race, ethnicity, and gender than



**Figure 1.** Homeschool organization versus charter school organization policy framing.

homeschool organizations (3%). This makes sense given civil rights organizations have been a part of the political coalition that originally backed charter. However, although there is a significant difference in the subframe, neither type of organization uses it often, suggesting that equity, generally speaking, and race, ethnicity, and gender, specifically, are not the primary ways that either of the school choice organizations frame issues.

The starker differences appear in how common homeschool organizations use the language of rights, freedom, and liberty. In nearly a majority (40%) of homeschool press releases, there is a reference to rights, and, within that general category, 12% specifically reference parental or family rights, 14% religious or Christian rights, and 4% privacy rights. This contrasts with just 13% of charter school press releases using the rights frame. Furthermore, nearly a third (29%) of homeschool organization press releases reference freedom or liberty, compared with 14% of press releases from charter organizations. As hypothesized, rights and liberty are in fact the primary frames used by homeschool organizations, but not charter school organizations, indicative of a different communications strategy that is consistent with the turn toward rights-based arguments in other conservative policy debates.

There are also some notable anecdotal differences between the two homeschool organizations: HSLDA which has long pursued a Conservative Christian approach, whereas the newer CRH which has been purposefully secular. Whose rights matter is a central difference between HSLDA and CRH. Although HSLDA almost exclusively focuses on framing homeschooling as an issue of



parental and religious rights, CRH rarely mentions religious rights but does evoke children's rights on occasion. In a 2015 press release, CRH founder, Rachel Colman, illustrates this distinction: "Homeschooled children have rights, needs, and interests that do not always align perfectly with those of their parents."

Also consistent with expectations, compared with the homeschool groups, the charter school organizations are much more likely to use the language of choice, efficiency, and markets. In a third of press releases (34%), the charter school organizations mention choice and in a third (33%), these groups mention efficiency and markets. This compares with just 18% of homeschool press releases mentioning choice and 8% mentioning efficiency and markets. For example, NACSA writes about its annual meeting "last week, *innovation* was discussed often and passionately" and in another press release "The charter school model was built on the premise of increased autonomy and *innovation* for schools in return for increased accountability for performance" and about charter schools developing in New Orleans "the vibrant charter school sector allows parents to have a *choice* in their child's education" (emphasis added). This fits what one would expect from the political history and design of charter schools which has long been tied to a central neoliberal argument about competition and innovation in education, not individual freedom and religious liberty.

In trying to explain these bivariate patterns, I use a simple quantitative logistic regression model that allows for statistical controls on other theoretically related factors. For example, it may be that over time these rhetorical patterns have changed (Year). Or, as Walker (1991) demonstrates about the increasingly close relationship between parties and interest groups, the changing political control in Washington relates to the choice of frame (Democratic vs. Republican control of the White House). I control for these factors, as well as whether or not a press release addresses an organizational issue (such as the announcement of an event or annual dues payments), to predict the probability that a homeschool organization (compared with a charter school organization) uses each frame.

Consistent with the bivariate relationship, in the multivariate model, homeschool organizations are significantly more likely to use the rights and freedom frame than charter school organizations (see Table 1). The predicted probability of a homeschool organization using the rights frame is 40% compared with 12% for charter and the predicted probability of using the freedom frame is 28% for homeschool organizations and 15% for charter (see Table 2).

On the contrary, also consistent with the bivariate findings and expectations, charter school organizations are significantly more likely to use the market or choice frames. The predicted probability of a homeschool

**Table 1.** Logistic Regression of Policy Framing With Odds Ratios and Standard Errors.

|   | Rights frame   | Liberty frame  | Choice frame   | Efficiency frame | Equity frame | Security frame | Noneducational |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| Homeschooling organization<br>(charter school<br>organization comparison) | 4.73*** (1.19) | 2.15*** (0.54) | 0.48*** (0.11) | 0.13*** (0.04)   | 1.42 (0.37)  | 6.76*** (2.98) | 3.30*** (0.82) |
| Year  |                |                |                |                  |              |                |                |
| Press release while<br>Democrat in White House                            | 0.96* (0.01)   | 0.94*** (0.94) | 1.07*** (9.02) | 0.92*** (0.02)   | 0.99 (0.02)  | 1.02 (0.02)    | 1.02 (0.01)    |
| Press release addresses<br>organizational issues                          | 1.59*** (0.37) | 1.53* (0.38)   | 0.93 (0.23)    | 1.05 (0.31)      | 1.03 (0.27)  | 1.70 (0.60)    | 0.70 (0.16)    |
| Press release addresses<br>organizational issues                          | 1.14 (0.41)    | 1.22 (0.45)    | 0.46 (0.23)    | 0.54 (0.28)      | 1.02 (0.420) | 1.61 (0.79)    | 1.95* (0.69)   |
| n   | 507            | 507            | 507            | 507              | 507          | 507            | 507            |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>   | .10            | .05            | .06            | .12              | .01          | .08            | .07            |

\* =  $p$ -value < .10, \*\* < .05, \*\*\* < .01.

**Table 2.** Predicted Probabilities for Selected Independent Variables.

|                                | Rights<br>frame | Liberty<br>frame | Choice<br>frame | Efficiency<br>frame | Equity<br>frame | Security<br>frame | Noneducational<br>issue |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Homeschooling<br>organization  | .40             | .28              | .18             | .07                 | .20             | .15               | .33                     |
| Charter school<br>organization | .12             | .15              | .31             | .36                 | .15             | .03               | .13                     |

organization using the market/efficiency frame is 7% compared with 36% for charter. And the predicted probability of a homeschool organization using the choice frame is 18% versus 31% for charter. These multivariate statistical findings reinforce the earlier bivariate findings and largely fulfill the hypothetical expectations.

### *Findings on Issue Framing With Security and Relationship to Government*

Another way to compare the outside lobbying strategies of these groups is based on which aspect of government they focus. I coded the press releases on level of government (federal vs. state/local) and branch of government (legislative vs. judicial vs. executive). Homeschool organizations are much more focused on the judiciary/courts (35%, compared with just 4% of charter school press releases) and legislative branch (36%, compared with 27% of charter school press releases). Charter school organizations (49%) are more likely to focus at the federal level of government compared with homeschool organizations (34%). The two types of groups are no different in terms of referencing state/local or the executive branch.

These patterns are notable, but the more interesting question is if there are differences in whether the homeschool organizations or charter school organizations express more antagonism toward government, though I argued earlier that there was no clear way to hypothesize which type of organization would do this more often. To analyze this, I look at the final social value frame—security—which is significantly more common for the homeschool organization press releases (14%) than for the charter school organizations (3%). Homeschool organizations mention alleged threats and attacks on homeschoolers on a regular basis, and the predicted probability from the statistical model for homeschool organizations is 15% compared with 3% for charter school organizations (see Table 2).

Indicative of this, homeschool organizations often position a new regulation—including those that are tangentially related to homeschooling—as

threatening. For example, HSLDA explained that it filed an amicus brief with the court in a child custody case “which threatens to establish a rule that could be harmful to homeschoolers. ‘If left unchallenged the ruling by the trial court could mean that public schools would always be favored over homeschooling in custody disputes.’” Elsewhere, HSLDA described a proposed bill to curtail child abuse as “A misguided attack on homeschooling in Ohio may be a precursor to more general attempts to impose similar restrictions in other states.” Nevertheless, despite the greater prevalence for homeschool groups, for neither type of organization is security the primary way to frame policy issues, suggesting only some support for a sharp difference between the two types of organizations.

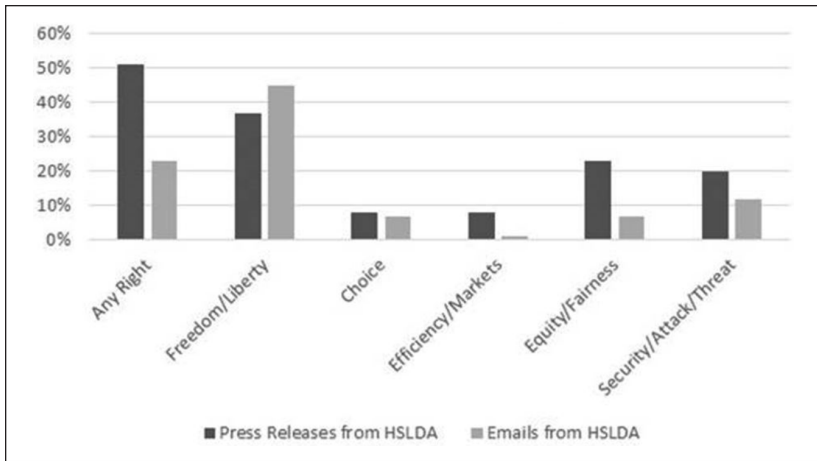
### *Findings on Audience: Outward- Versus Inward-Facing Framing for HSLDA*

What seems clear is that homeschooling and charter schooling organizations use different issue frames to communicate with the media and ultimately the public. Although there may be other explanations for these differences, one reason is an extension of Policy Feedback theory. As homeschooling policy is embedded deeply in the conservative movement and the policy is designed outside of existing institutions, it reasons that these groups will use related issue rights and freedom frames.

To further test this explanation, I collected more documents from HSLDA. In addition to communicating with the media via press releases, the organization also has communicated with its members via electronic mail. Although these emails are publicly available on the organization’s website, the audience of these messages is more likely internal or inward-facing rather than external or outward facing, as is the case for press releases. These emails provide a glimpse at the organization’s internal conversation.

If HSLDA was merely interested in shaping public opinion, then we would expect no real differences in policy framing across the two types of communications. If, on the contrary, and as I hypothesized earlier, HSLDA sought to shape the social identities of members as well as news coverage of homeschooling, then we might expect differences in framing. Internal audiences might be receptive to certain frames that external audiences wouldn’t be, resulting in different patterns of communication across media.

Using the same scheme as described earlier, I coded several hundred HSLDA member emails going back to the early 2000s and compare them with the set of press releases analyzed earlier (see Figure 2 and Table 3). The results suggest that HSLDA uses a significantly different strategy for internal members than for external media. First, the organization relies on freedom



**Figure 2.** HSLDA policy framing.

Note. HSLDA = Homeschool Legal Defense Association.

and liberty much more often in email (45%) than in press release (37%). The predicted probability of an HSLDA email using the freedom frame is 46% compared with 26% for press releases (see Table 4). For example, in 2002, HSLDA's staff attorney shared with Ohio members:

Long ago Edmund Burke said, "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance." For Ohio home schoolers this fall, the price of liberty means not providing a child's middle name and place of birth. Our resolve in the face of this request will preserve our independence in an ever more computerized age.

Later that year, the organization sought to energize members in Massachusetts as well as the larger community of non-homeschoolers: "You do not have to be a homeschooler to come out and show your support for homeschool freedoms, so please pass this message on to friends of liberty throughout Western Massachusetts."

Second, HSLDA focuses on rights much more often in press releases (51%) than in emails (23%). The predicted probability of an HSLDA press release using the rights frame is 34% compared with just 23% for an email. For example, in 2001, HSLDA released to the press,

Maine home schooling **rights** [emphasis added] are under attack. No state in the country requires home school children to take their state's assessment test,

**Table 3.** Logistic Regression of HSLDA Communications With Odds Ratios and Standard Errors.

|   | Rights frame   | Liberty frame  | Choice frame   | Efficiency frame | Equity frame   | Security frame | Noneducational |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Press release (compared with email)     | 2.24*** (0.32) | 0.55*** (0.08) | 2.33*** (0.50) | 17.76*** (8.28)  | 3.27*** (0.62) | 1.16 (0.23)    | 3.82*** (0.60) |
| Time                                    | 0.97*          | 0.98 (0.01)    | 1.10*** (0.02) | 0.95 (0.02)      | 0.99 (0.01)    | 1.04** (0.02)  | 1.01 (0.01)    |
| Message while Democrat in White House   | 1.26* (0.16)   | 1.49*** (0.20) | 0.65** (0.13)  | 0.44*** (0.17)   | 1.04 (0.19)    | 1.53*** (0.28) | 0.72*** (0.11) |
| Message addresses organizational issues | 0.67*** (0.12) | 9.21*** (1.72) | 0.68 (0.20)    | 0.22 (0.23)      | 1.01 (0.25)    | 0.93 (0.20)    | 0.67* (0.15)   |
| N                                       | 1,451          | 1,451          | 1,451          | 1,451            | 1,451          | 1,451          | 1,451          |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>                   | .02            | .11            | .06            | .21              | .04            | .02            | .06            |

Note. HSLDA = Homeschool Legal Defense Association.

\* = p-value < .10, \*\* < .05, \*\*\* < .01.

**Table 4.** Predicted Probabilities for HSLDA Communications.

|               | Rights<br>frame | Liberty<br>frame | Choice<br>frame | Efficiency<br>frame | Equity<br>frame | Security<br>frame | Noneducational<br>issue |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Press release | .40             | .31              | .15             | .07                 | .20             | .14               | .33                     |
| Member Email  | .23             | .45              | .07             | .00                 | .07             | .12               | .11                     |

*Note.* HSLDA = Homeschool Legal Defense Association.

but that's what some Maine legislators are trying to do with Legislative Document 405, also known as Senate Bill 129.

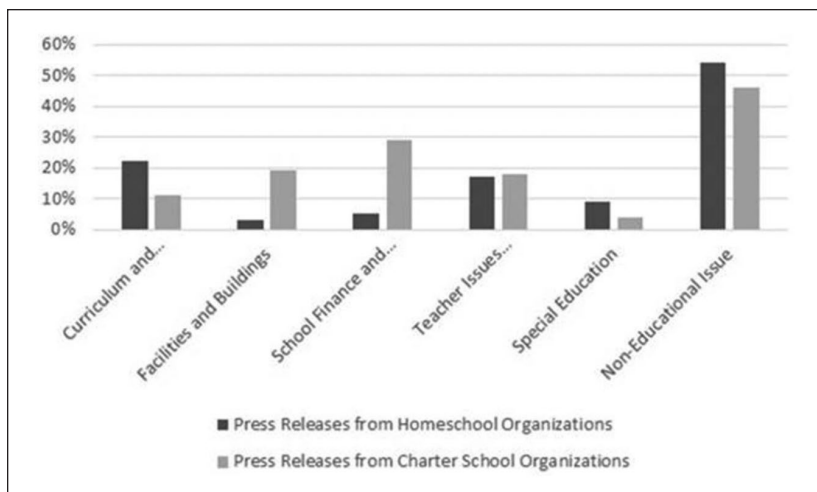
In celebrating the founding of the organization, a 2003 press release read,

"Fighting for a parents' **right** [emphasis added] to homeschool has been our mission for 20 years," said Somerville. Homeschooling is entering the mainstream and this is in large part due to the efforts of the HSLDA legal team. "Home school graduates are succeeding in all walks of life and consequently many families are gaining the confidence to begin homeschooling for themselves."

Third, HSLDA also uses the equity and fairness frame more often in press releases (23%) than in emails (7%), though there is no difference in the prevalence of race and gender (3% for both press releases and emails). The predicted probability of an HSLDA email using the equity frame is 7% compared with 17% for HSLDA press releases. There is no difference in use of choice frame, though the language of efficiency and markets is more prevalent in press releases (8%) than in emails (1%). Fourth, and somewhat counter to expectations, HSLDA uses the security/threat frame more in press releases (20%) than in emails (12%). This is curious because it would seem that the threat frame would help to mobilize internal members by stoking fears of government.

Overall, I infer from these differences that HSLDA has different strategic goals based on the primary target for each type of communication. It reasons that when targeting the press, where the goal is to shape the wider public debate and opinion on homeschooling, HSLDA favors the less ideological-laden choice and conventional equity frame. Conversely, in seeking to energize and mobilize its members, HSLDA uses the more charged ideological debate about freedom and liberty, either religious or parental. Although I do not have the evidence to draw this conclusion too strongly, the hypotheses described earlier and data do point in this direction. Future research should include interviews with HSLDA communications staff to confirm this speculation.





**Figure 3.** Educational and noneducational issues.

### *Findings on Issue Expansion*

Issue expansion is the final area of interest. In the case of the conservative freedom agenda, for those policies enacted outside of existing institutions, I expected those interest groups to use an issue/conflict expansion strategy, whereas for those enacted inside existing institutions with fewer connections to the conservative political coalition, I expected the opposite. I operationalized this by measuring whether each press release mentioned at least one non-educational issue or focused exclusively on educational issues. The evidence from Figure 3 shows a majority (54%) of press releases from homeschool organizations referenced a noneducational issue compared with 46% of charter school press releases, consistent with expectations.

This is partially explained by the salience of certain issues for homeschool organizations that are largely irrelevant for charter schools. For example, the issue of day-time curfews and driver licensing is unusually important for homeschool families, because regulations do not mandate that homeschooled students remain in the home during the traditional school day. As a result, changes in day-time curfews matter a lot to homeschool groups and are mentioned in 10% of press releases compared with not one charter school press release.

Conversely, there are some issues that matter to charter schools that rarely matter to homeschoolers, such as access to school buildings, a constant source of contention between traditional public schools and charter schools. Compared with homeschool organizations, charter school organizations were

more likely to reference facilities/buildings issues (19% compared with 3%) and school finance (funding, tax credits, and vouchers) issues (29% compared with 5%). There was no difference in terms of teacher issues, including teacher qualifications, certification, and pay.

Furthermore, as with the differences between what HSLDA press releases and emails in policy framing, there are notable differences within HSLDA communications. Although the evidence is less dramatic (and not statistically significant), there is anecdotal evidence that there are issues that HSLDA addresses with members through email that it does not in press releases. The organization did not mention opposition to abortion once in press releases, but addressed abortion in eight emails. In 2006, HSLDA shared information from the state-based Private & Home Educators of California on a state health care bill that would fund “highly objectionable services such as abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia.” In 2007, HSLDA recommended supporting a religious freedom bill in Utah because “A church sponsored hospital was denied accreditation for refusing to teach abortion techniques” among other reasons. Perhaps most clearly, in the run-up to the 2008 presidential election, HSLDA sent an email that read,

Dear HSLDA Members and Friends, With the 2008 election just around the corner, it is time to consider what we can do to change the direction of this nation . . . Among the important issues are the nomination of federal judges, abortion, and parental rights. It is imperative that we lay the groundwork to promote pro-family and pro-homeschooling.

Abortion is not the only noneducational social issue that HSLDA addressed with member emails, but not press releases. There were 21 member emails that addressed LGBT and marriage equality issues. Related to a 2005 Wisconsin constitutional amendment to define marriage as only between a man and a woman, HSLDA wrote to members,

Your right to homeschool rests on another freedom: the freedom to direct the education and upbringing of your children. Underlying your right to homeschool are parental rights, which are supported by the sanctity of marriage. Anything that undermines marriage may ultimately undermine parental rights and therefore threaten your freedom to homeschool.

HSLDA urged members in Wisconsin to call legislators and “give him this message: ‘Please vote for S.J.R. 53. Give citizens an opportunity to have their voices heard in support of preserving marriage’.” They shared similar information when Iowa, New Jersey, Washington, and the federal legislators in DC debated marriage equality bills.

Finally, HSLDA frequently expressed opposition to policies that mandated vaccinations or even requirements that waivers from vaccination policies must be granted by physicians. In 2012, HSLDA wrote to California members, "Please vote no on AB 2109 (by Pan). I oppose requiring parents to arrange an office visit to obtain a doctor's signature as a new condition for exempting their child from vaccinations." HSLDA even opposed a meningococcal vaccination requirement for college students in Wyoming as a potential erosion of parental and student freedom. Notably, although gun rights have a solid place in the conservative movement, HSLDA only mentioned gun issues in two emails.

As with the framing differences within HSLDA communications noted earlier, the clearest explanation for the prevalence of these noneducational issues in member emails compared with press releases is the potential mobilizing and identity-development benefits of connecting other ideologically conservative issues to homeschooling, including views on abortion, sexuality, and marriage, but evidently not firearms. These are issues that are not mentioned at all by the charter school organizations, suggesting that homeschooling organizations may be seeking to develop a broad conservative identity in members, whereas charter school organizations do not have such aims.

## Conclusion

Conventional wisdom suggests that many conservative interest groups are so well resourced that most of their activities are insider, focused on lobbying and campaign contributions. This may be the case for certain conservative policy areas, such as those involving business interests. It is much less the case for school choice and many social policy issues. With some exceptions, the groups that advocate for homeschooling and charter schooling do not possess the large resources to engage in extensive inside lobbying, suggesting why to examine their outside lobbying and communications strategies. It may also be the case that shaping public opinion and the identities of members and policy beneficiaries is equally attractive for these interest groups. For policies that are closely tied to a specific ideology and party, the strategic framing of issues and formation of identity may pay dividends for longer term political ambitions and power, a possibility anticipated by Policy Feedback theory, but not often tested directly by scholars.

To fill a gap in the literature on Policy Feedback, the analysis demonstrates the ways that homeschooling and charter schooling groups communicate information about policy. Although many, like Grover Norquist, may assume great similarity between the two types of school choice policies and associated

groups, there are notable differences in issue framing. Homeschooling groups focus on freedom and religious or parental rights, whereas charter school groups focus on efficiency and markets. Homeschooling groups are more likely to use an issue expansion strategy by addressing noneducational issues, including socially conservative policy, on occasion. Charter school groups are much more likely to focus on a variety of educational issues, whereas home-school organizations are more likely to express anti-government views. Neither seems that interested in equity, race, and gender issue frames.

This aligns with the political history that preceded widespread adoption of each policy as well as the subsequent politics that has been shaped by Policy Feedback effects. Charter school groups seem to be issue framing charter schooling as mainly about efficiency and innovation, and shaping an identity of charter schoolers as independent market actors, *homo economicus*. Homeschool groups, especially HSLDA, seem to be shaping an identity of homeschoolers as freedom-loving patriots, out to defend their rights as parents against government intrusion into the home. It is not surprising that some figures in the homeschool movement were also instrumental in the Tea Party movement, whereas the political movement for charter schools remains at the periphery of recent national elections though it has been central to some local elections (Henig, Jacobsen, & Reckhow, 2019). There are clear differences in the framing strategies of each type of group which fit with the creation of purposeful identities, and this may be related to the durability of each policy over time.

The analysis also shows possible differences within the powerful homeschooling organization, HSLDA. HSLDA has been a lesser known political powerhouse for several decades, dominating debates about homeschooling, specifically, as well as participating in debates about related conservative issues, more generally, even as many homeschoolers decry its heavy-handed strategies (Gaither, 2008).

The evidence presented here suggests that HSLDA uses a different strategy for influencing the media and public opinion compared with internal members. It has been more likely to frame policy based on freedom and liberty with its internal audience and more likely to frame policy based on rights and equity with external. As motivation is hard to divine from these data, it is not easy to figure out exactly why these differences occur, but it may be related to the importance of constructing a social identity among members. As Policy Feedback theory suggests, interest groups created (or strengthened) as a result of a public policy decision can be instrumental in transforming how policy beneficiaries think about government, how they think about themselves as citizens, and what they value. Because of the relationship of homeschooling policy to the larger conservative movement, much closer than

for charter school policy, crafting a social identity among homeschoolers connected to the values of individual liberty and personal freedom, and connecting that to related policies on abortion, sexuality, and marriage, could serve larger political goals.

In this way, the findings of this research fit with other research on how other conservative groups, such as gun rights and anti-abortion organizations, have lobbied government, mobilized sympathetic voters, and shaped how supporters think about their identity, specifically, and politics, more generally. Homeschooling policy has been much less prominent in the study of the conservative movement compared with these other policy areas, but given the importance of education to shaping identity, more scholarship on this policy area will deepen knowledge of conservative political and policy development. In particular, this analysis was limited to interest group communications and issue framing, just one art of the theory of Policy Feedback. Future research should connect these findings to potential differences in political attitudes and identity of charter school and homeschooling parents and students to further explore how conservative freedom policies fit with the larger study of Policy Feedback.

Appendix

Table A1. Summary of Coded Items.

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| rights         | right*, obliga*, conscience, entitlem*   |
| freedom        | freedom*, liber*   |
| choice         | choice*, choose*, option*  |
| equity         | *equit*, *equal*, justice*, *fair*, discrim*   |
| security       | attack*, threat*, harass*, intimidate*, persecute*   |
| race/ethnicity | race*, racial*, ethn*, gender*, African american*, African American*, latino*, hispanic*, asian*, native american*, native-american*, ESL*, English as a second language, non-white* |
| market         | *market*, *competit*, innova*, *effici*, *capitalis*   |

Note. Additional coded items used for educational issues and subdimensions are available upon request.

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## Notes

1. <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2018/01/01/opinion/the-retreat-to-tribalism.html> and <https://nyti.ms/2ceeB6>
2. For the text of the full speech, see <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/09/full-text-trump-values-voter-summit-remarks-227977>
3. Data available at <https://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/expenditures.php?cmte=C00390526&cycle=2008>

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